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THE SECOND AMERICAN CARAVAN

A YEARBOOK OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

EDITED BY

ALFRED KREYMBORG

LEWIS MUMFORD

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The Editors dedicate

The Second American Caravan

to

RANDOLPH SILLIMAN BOURNE

(1886-1918)

in lasting fellowship

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JOSEPHINE STRONGIN

FIVE POEMS

1.

Tell Death to fly and tell him to be fleet!
I will lend being to Nothing and will raise
Armies of Nights—battalions of all days,
Ships of each minute—Fleets of hours: defeat
This enemy, this Death, if once we meet!

Tell Death to turn about! Say that I blaze
With deep impatience! Tell him to collect
His million selves and come: I would inspect
This careful enemy and find what phase
Most quickly turns from my detecting gaze!

Look to your finish Death! When I win you
Space will sing Time to deafness—Life lean thru
All its long dreams and stir the fringe of Fate!
Death! You had better come or go—I wait!

2.

Death be still and shut your rapid eyes.
The whole world sings your lullaby. Sleep, sleep.
Life mounts unstirring space and falls or flies
As your wind lifts or falters. Sleep, sleep deep.

I saw a seed merge into the dark earth.
I saw a beam strike slanting to its core.
I saw rain fall, a flower come to birth,
And go to seed. Sleep Death, I saw no more.

Death sleep. I counted on a distant shore
Long tides until my dim eyes closed, then dreamt
That Time came knocking on the world's high door,
Your agent, with his poisoned thoughts to tempt
Mankind in barter for his endless breath.
I did not dream another thing, sleep Death.

3.

O drop me—leave me—lose me—let me stop!
Here I am held unwilling—let me end!
Quiet my crying voice—O let me blend
Once more with Naught! I am a spinning top
Loosed by an unknown finger—let me drop!
I am a spinning leaf—Wind! Let me rest!
Swirled by the world, upon the restless breast
Of Life I rock. My ringing ear is pressed
Over its thudding heart. Uneven beat
On beat confuse my spirit.—In its heat
Unpassionate I droop. O end me lest
I live forever! Flood me! Let me greet
My finish now! O drown me in the crest
Of Nothing! Life! Send home the unwilling guest!

4.

Must wind and moon so blow and beam forever?
And life climb up the empty sky, a cloud?
And soul cross soul and ocean break aloud
On shore that echoes? Must release come never?
Down the diurnal centuries the mass
Of matter swings its planetary course.
Mid air is haunted by a phantom force.
The shadows on the face of chance repass.
What is the purpose of such vast recurring?
Must earth be turned for ages to be tossed
Over the grave at last of effort lost?
Where is an end to all this goalless stirring?
Must life climb on or may it falter soon?
When will you cease your moving, wind and moon?

5.

The cities clash their arms and raise their shout.
What are their spires pointing to through Space?
Even the heart of Death? And does Death's face
Turn pale as crowded planets build off out
Into the night with light and sound? Does doubt
Shake at his mind's door? Will we hear him pace
Over his Universal floor? Will fear
Knock at his dark heart? Will his rapid eye
Turn from the world's and seek the filling sky?
(Where is escape, Death!) Will he steeply hear
Our coming? Will he watch us drawing near?
Will he turn faint and tremble? Will he die!

The cities rise. Will Death unstartled fold
All of them in his close and fatal hold?

JONATHAN LEONARD

CAROLUS ELSTON

1. THE LETTER-BOX

THERE was a letter-box on the corner. A young man approached it in a furtive manner. His hair was red, his arms long, his bearing awkward and spasmodic. Although his general line of advance was straight, the movements of his legs seemed always to be taking him to one side.

He dropped a letter into the box. No awkwardness about this. The lid was raised, the letter hurried to its destination, all with fluent skill. There was a deep philosophy here. Women often put their letters half into the box and then pulled them back to see if the address was right—but he, never.

A boy came along the street and held out a card to the young man. The young man took it, saw that it was the advertisement of second-hand books, and turning quickly, dropped it into the letter-box. Then he smiled at the boy. To see the way he smiled was worth the price of a special-delivery stamp.

The letter which had been dropped into the box was addressed "Carolus Elston." But "Carolus Elston" was the name of the man who posted it. There was a deep philosophy about this too.

These tactics of Carolus Elston might have been called strategy. These manoeuvres might have been called a campaign. They were watched by a man standing in a window across the street.

The young man who was watching from his window the actions of Carolus Elston was named Edgar Donwin. He smoked his cigarette and struggled with a social problem. Should

he go to call upon Carolus Elston? It seemed that the fellow had connections of importance. Elston gave no sign himself, but he had the connections, disquieting creature that he was. And they had written to Edgar Donwin, and they had said, "Go and visit Carolus Elston. He has connections, and we are they."

Donwin was above all this sort of thing. He believed in taking account of what a man really was. It is true that when he allowed himself to associate with persons who came from across the Plains or up through the cellar, he knew that these persons, as a general thing, had already acquired a surface which would prevent anyone from guessing where they came from, or that they were acquiring one and would be grateful for his expert analysis of the process. This did not prevent him from believing that he was above social prejudice. He clung to his talisman, character. He thought he knew what character meant.

Elston was a new case, presented a new difficulty. If he had been a denizen of the Slums, he might have been hunted there, trapped like a rabbit, or shot with precaution like a panther. But he was in college. He wrote themes on Sociology; or if he was retrograde, he translated Horace. Yes, he was in college, and everything cried out against him, everything from his huge feet to his red hair. Red hair is often satisfactory, but not Elston's. Even his supercilious smile did not attract people as superciliousness usually does.

However, Donwin lighted another cigarette and voted for courage. He would go and look this chap up. Elston's face might be grotesque and his ideas miasmatic. But Donwin would look him up. It is worth while to be a man like Edgar Donwin.

Carolus Elston is gone now. The air has rushed in from all sides to fill the tract through which he passed. A strange figure for the University district of a great city. Perhaps not so strange in Europe. But in America, University youth remains safe and uniform. Are their powers and ambitions beneath this conformity? If so, the eccentricity of Carolus Elston is to be regarded merely as a symptom. Perhaps the physician would say, "You have a tenth of a degree of temperature, but as long as your appetite is good this need not be alarming."

In any case, Elston's eccentricities are hateful to the Undergraduates. He has written over the door of his room certain unreadable hieroglyphics, too complex to be runes, not elab-

orate enough to be Chinese. These hieroglyphics are generally interpreted to mean, in Elstonese, "Don't come in, you won't like me."

That afternoon Donwin went around to Elston's room. He omitted exercise to do it, reflecting that the man he was going to see probably did not take exercise. If he were an athlete, or even a five-mile-a-day hiker, he would not walk around the streets so much like an escaped pair of stilts.

As Donwin turned down the corridor he could hear Elston playing his *cor de chasse*. Donwin stopped three doors away to decide whether he liked it, whether he approved it, whether he tolerated it. The *cor de chasse* is a graceful instrument. It is plastic, like a jet of water playing in the sunlight. In a symphony, too, it is able to speak a few effective words. But it belongs with the corn-flower and the *coquelicot*. Coming from the transom of a third-rate dormitory its harmonies were cramped. Besides, Elston did not play it very well. He seemed to be trying obstinately to produce the impossible tones. Perhaps he was modulating it with the sleeve of his coat, and letting the buttons scratch against the bell.

Donwin knocked. Carolus Elston stood in the doorway, his hands and feet spread out like the flippers of a seal. He leaned forward as if peering into an unfriendly fog. "Why yes," he said. "Come in."

Donwin seated himself in the desk-chair. Elston grasped the back of a plain wooden chair and drew it toward him, as if his arms were part of a derrick. He remained standing, leaning against the mantelpiece. He tipped the chair back and forth so that it rested now on one leg, now on the other.

Donwin began to show his passport, his credentials. "These friends of yours—they are, you know—they feel a great deal of interest—they were kind enough—"

He gave the name without slighting it and without overemphasis.

Elston cut him short with a laugh. "Very well for that, Mr. Donwin. I am glad to see you. But you know you don't care anything about those people, and neither do I."

"It is strange that we have not met before our Senior year," said Donwin. "I believe that we are both Seniors."

"Yes," said Elston. "I have often seen you presiding over the class in the History of Renaissance Architecture."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Donwin.

Elston raised his eyebrows as far as they would go, but with his lips produced a conciliatory smile. "There was a salaried dilettante at the desk, and there were a lot of us there, taking notes. You had only an ordinary seat in the corner, where the alphabet shuffled you off. And attending lectures is only a fragment of your activity. Still, you presided. Never mind, you couldn't help it."

Donwin sat still and reflected. Why had he come to see this boor?

He wheeled around in his chair and faced Elston. "Suppose I say right out what I think, as you appear to do?"

"I know you won't," said Elston laughing. "And I shouldn't care if you did."

"Very well then," said Donwin, dropping his voice into the lowest register as a concession to good taste, "I think you are an oddity, that your presence at this University is almost enough to make a timid Freshman seek education elsewhere. People talk about you. In a way, you are one of the best known members of the Class. So you see I have some idea what you're like. You despise any valuable connections you have, and the way you take my letter of introduction is enough to ostracize you with all the people who ever felt an interest in you. But I have decided to see something of you. Drop the formalities. I am not afraid of you, or of the discords of your brass kazoo. What do you say to an acquaintance? I may find you are good for something."

Elston laughed softly, unmusically. "You don't think all that. You are trying to play up to me."

Donwin laughed in his turn. "It is true that I have no very serious meaning. I admit that I have dropped into a way of talking which seems natural in a meeting with you. Do you always throw people into an unnatural mood and make them drag out the trifles there may be in their minds? There is no reason why I should not come to your room and spend a few minutes. The acquaintance may not amount to much."

"But I want it to," said Elston. "You have no idea how few people I ever talk to."

The postman dropped a letter through the slot in the door. Elston picked it up. "Read this," said he, tearing the envelope.

Donwin inspected the letter. "It's nothing but a blank sheet of paper."

"Yes," said Elston. "I mailed it to myself this morning."

Donwin had nothing to say, but Elston went on, "I am going to give you a lecture on solitude. Solitude is a luxury, a sort of intellectual debauch which may last through the whole of life. You can think when you are alone, and there are no faces grinning around the corners of your arguments. You control your thoughts, or they control you. And that is the same thing. No man is a hero to his valet. But many a man has been a hero to his own muddy shoes, which he has taken off and stood before the fire to dry, and which no valet ever polishes. Loneliness goes to your head like whiskey, or tea. It is like the ozone waiting around the top of a mountain for someone to climb to the enjoyment of it. But solitude is so exquisite a luxury that there are always jealous people who try to destroy it. If they can get along with the owner of it at all, they give up their own pleasures and spend long hours with him and keep him company. That is, keep him from developing his individuality unhampered. If they can't stand that, or if he acts as if they were not in the room, they give up personal attacks and adopt indirect means. They keep up enough bowing acquaintance to be able not to see you. They notice that the postman never brings you any letters—but they say nothing about it. I was thinking of all these things this morning. I decided to change my ways a little, just enough to maintain intellectual silence in my surroundings. When I go to lectures I shall write on my door that I am not at home. Then I can seem to have all sorts of callers in those periods, and not be annoyed by them. And I have started a series of letters to myself, which I shall never have to read because they contain nothing. Thus I shall drink my solitude from the public fountain. But let's talk of something else. Are you interested, by any chance, in the courses you are taking?"

Donwin said that he found an occasional glimmer of humanity in the courses.

"Then we'll discuss them," said Elston, "just as if we had not come to college for the purpose of studying."

Donwin stayed an hour, and reserved judgment. Elston was a freak, of course. And his way of exploiting his unpopularity, and that business of the letter addressed to himself were in the worst possible taste. But he had ideas. On the whole Donwin was glad that he had gone to see him.

In the months which followed Donwin found that he was

beginning to regard Elston as a friend. It was a friendship of respect, in spite of shadows of distrust and antipathy which never wholly disappeared. The men were not alike, and never could become alike. Yet the friendship did not rest on contrast, on which it is said to rest most firmly.

The friendship was formed, the results must determine themselves. These men would play a game for each other's souls. Neither wished to influence the other, but neither could refrain from exerting an influence if he was able to do so. Very likely neither thought the other had a soul. All the better. It is real sportsmanship to play for an unreal stake. Elston had the advantage. His clumsy disillusionment with the whole world was more powerful than Donwin's refined contempt for an American city. Besides, Elston would not banter with the gods. He must either kneel or rebel.

"I notice," said Elston with his awkward smile, "that when I talk a good deal with people they generally begin to adopt my ideas."

"In that case," said Donwin, "it's a pity your ideas aren't a little clearer."

2. ACADEMIC SYMPATHY

It was the third of November and a moonlight evening. As Donwin came along the corridor he could hear Elston playing on his *cor de chasse*. "What is it you are playing? Why do you always play the same phrases?"

Elston wrinkled his eyebrows, as he generally did when he was giving an explanation which he knew would be considered inadequate. "Confucius learned to play the organ. He played the same piece for days, weeks. His friends came around him and asked, just like you, 'Why do you always play the same piece?' Confucius smiled. He went on playing for months, years. Then he knew how to play the organ. The trouble with me is I don't know whether I want to play this *cor de chasse*. I am thinking of giving it to the man in the room above who kicks on the floor when I play. He is out now."

Donwin made no answer. He was not very much interested in Confucius.

The desk was covered with moldy squares of cardboard. At the top of each square was a Chinese character and under this,

written in a crabbed hand, an explanation in English. Donwin examined the squares. "I can't make anything out of them, even of the English. What are you trying to do anyway?"

Elston handed him a faded letter which he drew from under one of the cardboards. "I am planning an attack. This is an ancient discovery. You know my family has always been skittering around the East, making faces at Buddha. A great-uncle of mine was out in the wilds—in civilization he would have called it if he hadn't happened to be thinking of religion—and he came across a queer old man. This old creature had more or less forgotten his own name. At least the name was never handed on to me. He was in the last stages of locomotor ataxia, probably worn out by climbing the Chinese end of the Himalayas or by ambling along the Great Wall and peering into the Tartar deserts. He spoke Chinese and dressed Chinese, but to begin with he had been white. Uncle Jeddidiah took care of him and talked about the New Jerusalem. The old fragment talked Chinese science and left my uncle these notes as payment for his Samaritanism. They come out of some native book that nobody, not even Uncle Jeddidiah could ever find. The bird-nests at the top are the references, and then comes the translation. Notice the paralytic style the old pilgrim uses. He must have made these notes just about the time his feet began to drag. But you can read them if you try hard. Don't try to read the hieroglyphics, you might get confused."

"How much Chinese do you know yourself?" asked Donwin.

Elston smiled pityingly at himself and went to the bookcase. "Here is a Chinese Bible. I read it now and then. 'In the beginning,' you know. This is my family's idea of how to enjoy China. They gave me this book when I started for college. But if I really want to know what Jehovah was up to in the old days, I generally consult King James in the usual way. Sometimes I decipher these characters. This one means 'God.' There's a chance that this one means 'void,' and this one 'waters.' If I am ever cast on a desert island with nothing floating ashore beside me but this book, I shall evolve the whole language by inference. But perhaps this city is the only desert island I shall ever see. You aren't paying enough attention to my documents."

"What are you going to do with them?" asked Donwin.

"Read the letter," said Elston.

Donwin read: "Mr Jeddidiah Elston, Dear Sir, I have ex-

amined with great interest the curious documents which you have been kind enough to submit to me. They appear to foreshadow in some respects certain of the discoveries of modern science. The influence of the abacus may be traced in them. I confess that the units of measurement adopted are not altogether clear to me. But that is perhaps a detail. Is it your understanding that the ancient author is endeavoring to lay down certain principles in regard to the intrinsic weight of different substances and so to arrive at a better comprehension of the world in which we live? At times as I read these curious definitions I feel that I am on the verge of the rediscovery, or the prediscovery, I may say, of the theory of infinitesimals. Is it not wonderful that in so barbaric a country as China the mind of man should be occupied with such thoughts, even in an intuitional form? I agree with you that this discovery, made by your paralytic friend and associate, is worthy of attention in enlightened circles, and I wish to thank you for your courtesy in communicating it to me. With best wishes for your success in unearthing the original manuscript, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

Whitby Brown."

"Whitby Brown," cried Donwin. "The Professor of Physics. I didn't suppose he was as old as that. The letter is dated 1845."

Elston explained that the letter was from the present professor's grandfather, also a Professor of Physics. "What do you think of the letter?"

"That the old Whitby didn't know much more than the young one. That he made nothing out of the thing."

"That, of course," said Elston. "I am going to take it around to the learned Whitby tonight. You had better come with me. My great-uncle never got over thinking he had found something worth while. My family, you know, is tireless. Let's see what the Whitby Browns have to say in the third generation."

They went to the house of Professor Whitby Brown. The roar of the city was around them, but in the streets and squares through which they passed was philosophic calm. Behind those unlovely house-fronts, so inappropriate for the dwellings of scholars, there might be at least the silence of thought. What theories might be there, what appreciation of literature, what well-poised judgments of history.

The maid said that Professor Brown was busy, but she took

in the cards. She came back and said that Professor Brown was playing bridge and wondered if his visitors could come at another time. Donwin opened his mouth to say that to come at another time was really a fortunate idea, that they actually preferred to come at another time, that it was extremely thoughtful of Mr. Brown to be willing to see them at all. Perhaps Donwin would not have said this, but he had such phrases ready in his mind and could be depended on to choose the right one, keeping them, as he did, parallel with the wisest of all rejoinders, silence.

Elston got ahead of him. He wished to see Professor Brown now. It was more convenient. He would not detain the Professor long. The maid went back with this message and produced Whitby Brown, who bowed stiffly and asked of what service he could be.

"I have these notes," said Elston. "They will perhaps explain themselves to you. And this letter from your grandfather to my great-uncle will explain more."

Professor Brown was a nervous little man with grayish hair. Was his mind working rapidly enough to justify the inertness of his face? He glanced through the pile of cardboards, dusting them first with his pocket-handkerchief. "Yes, yes, indeed. Extremely interesting. I wish I had time to examine them thoroughly."

"I will leave them with you," said Elston.

Professor Brown scowled. "No, I will look at them now. My time is rather taken up. Perhaps it would be just as well for you not to leave them."

"But look more carefully at the letter from your grandfather, Professor Brown." Elston began to show the irritation which with him was always too ready to break out. "That letter makes an interesting connection for you with the past. And a far-away past, too. For China was not so much known then as it is now."

Professor Brown read the letter again at increased speed. "Yes, my grandfather was something of an enthusiast. I do not say that he overrated this find, but—"

Elston picked the letter up and stuffed it into his pocket. "There wasn't much enthusiasm about your grandfather's letter, Professor Brown—unless you mean vagueness. But I was ready to forgive the excellent old scientist his vagueness. At least he answered."

Professor Brown flushed. "I suppose he gave the answer he considered called for. I hope he did not really think that Newton and Leibnitz had been anticipated."

"My dear sir," said Elston, "I have studied these fantastic squares of paper myself. I did not imagine that they anticipated Leibnitz. But neither did I think that they contained nothing. Wasn't it reasonable for me to consult you? Don't you want me to tell you how my uncle found them, and before him what sort of person had them in his possession? You do not know how much they meant to my uncle. He believed that there was a meaning here. It was a sort of romance to him and it has remained a romance in my family. My father, just before he died, told me to bring these notes to you. He described how he thought they would be received."

"I am afraid," said Professor Brown, "that my time is so much occupied that—"

Elston burst out laughing. The tones of his laughter were so harsh that he seemed purposely to be distorting his voice. As he laughed he scraped the pasteboards together and shuffled them like a pack of cards.

Professor Brown watched him until the laughter stopped. "And now, gentlemen," he said, "I must ask you to excuse me."

They walked down the street to where the gray church stood, aloof equally from the city and from the University. They stopped for a moment under the moonlight. "What did you really expect?" asked Donwin. "What did you take me along for if you were going to act like a buffoon? Were you as much disappointed as you seemed to be when you laughed?"

"What did I expect?" asked Elston. "I expected a little interest in past beliefs, past efforts. I expected to feel for a minute that I belonged to a community of scholars. But I know now that my old uncle was a better scholar than Whitby Brown. Yes, and the old maniac who tramped over China years ago and copied his notes from forbidden manuscripts. And the Chinaman, whoever he was, who wrote down his thoughts in the first place. I expected a different sort of mind, a mind which makes its discoveries in odd places, to which a half discovery is as holy as a prayer. Yes, as holy as that church spire there in the moonlight."

Donwin looked at his companion in surprise. "Are you as religious as that? Think of the blasphemies you pour forth."

"Don't imagine," said Elston, "that I am not religious. There has been something planted in me. You will have to take it or leave me alone. Call it religion. Whatever it is, I like it partly, and partly I hate it. Sometimes it makes me afraid, as if into whatever wilds of the mystical you track your thought you find the good there and the bad too. I go to church sometimes—because I don't like to. You could use the dentist in the same way. This is my idea about it. If a man gets into the habit of doing things that he doesn't like, even the things he is afraid of—though that is usually pride—even the things he thinks are wrong—unless he happens to be fooling himself and really wants to do them—then that is the sort of man who will be the hero. That is the man who will throw himself under a trolley-car to rescue a cat. Unless he shoots himself first because he wants to live."

Donwin laughed, but Elston raised his finger threateningly in the moonlight. "Look out for that thin, silvery spire," he said. "You may think you can go through the world with the sleigh-bells of frivolity bubbling behind you. But there are bells in that spire too, and when they clash they are not always kind. I will make you serious. You think not. But I will. I can't touch Whitby Brown. But as for you, as for you, Edgar Donwin, as you you—"

"Stop it," cried Donwin, shaking him by the shoulder. "There isn't anything to get excited about. You have intruded on one of the Professors and insulted him. That ought to be enough for you."

Elston shook his hair like a mane. "Listen," he said, "if I amount to anything I will collaborate with you. And you need some one to do that, you are so lazy. But if not, and when I am dead, you remember that it was I who pushed you over some kind of precipice. And what is behind me is religion. God himself may know whether that is diabolical or not."

They went back to Elston's room, and the moonlight went with them.

Elston played on his *cor de chasse*. "Ah," he said, "music is real. But I am not a musician."

"Why do you play, then?" asked Donwin.

Elston raised the instrument and balanced it like a vase of flowers. "I play because these notes bring back to me all that I have really cared for in the world. Sometimes they bring me

hopes, but then I am skeptical. They bring me memories, and those cannot be destroyed. Memories of the East and the Islands of the Sea. Other people read about these things. But I have seen them. The human beings, the surroundings, the air and the light come back to me. I could have lived in that world, and they wouldn't let me. They sent me here, and I don't want to live. Happy people, out there, because they take a little of what the world has in it, all they can understand. They wear conscience like a wreath of flowers. They may be afraid of being killed, but they are not afraid of life, or death."

Elston raised the *cor de chasse* to his lips and blew a long, light note. "Do you see that bare place in the wall between the door and the bookcase?"

"Most of the wall is bare," said Donwin.

"Well, look at just that space. Do you know what I see there? I see a girl's head. A dark head. Skin, eyes, hair, all dark and flashing. She was standing once on a strip of sand. I was walking by, and I turned my head. You know how I turn my head, with a sort of jerk."

"Yes, I know," said Donwin. "You ought to get over it."

Elston laughed. "Can I help it if my motions are uncouth? My mind has been trained to be so. You have a way of lifting your hand when you are pleased or amused about something, as if you were going to scratch your ear. And then you let it fall sideways, with a little curve on the end of the swing, as if your hand were too heavy, or your head too far away. Why don't you stop that?"

Donwin answered with some annoyance, "I don't like to talk about myself the way you do. But as you are so free with your comments about both of us, I am going to say that that gesture of mine has been noticed once or twice, and nobody has found any great fault with it. I will get after it now and stop it."

"Please do," said Elston. "It is always a good thing to worry about indifferent matters. The gesture is graceful enough in itself, but I don't admire it. As for me, I can't help the way my head moves. That articulation is too close to the brain. But we are getting away from the little girl on the wall. I see her there all the time I am discussing your attitudes. Do you see her yet?"

"No," said Donwin.

Elston took his *cor de chasse* and played another low, prolonged note.

"What do you do that for?" asked Donwin.

"I am clothing her in music," said Elston. "It makes her eyes darker and her skin more like satin. There is light under the olive, and violet splotches on her hair. Just as I see her now, I saw her when I jerked my head around in the way you don't like. A girl behind her raised a creamy scarf and waved it. And then across the space between us came a ray of beauty. I turned my head away again. I knew I had seen enough to float before me always and perplex me. I went down to the boat where my brothers and sisters were sitting, waiting to be taken back to the steamer."

"How old were you then?" asked Donwin.

"The same age as I am now. Look, she is fading out. She won't stay with you in the room. That world I had glimpses of should be dead for me, there is no chance of my seeing it again. I don't intend to be a missionary. But if it has been around you once, it will be always coming back. Sometimes I wake from it and see the tired slaves of the class-rooms instead of the free, full-grown children. Have you ever been at a dance, where there was rhythm in the air, and rhythm in the bodies of the dancers, and said to yourself, 'Now they are living, now they have forgotten all but the life that is in them, but themselves and each other?' Suddenly, before the music stops, you look again and see that they are not human beings after all. They are pretending. The light of the universe is a shadow for them."

"I didn't know that you went to dances," said Donwin.

"Sometimes I do," said Elston. "And I come away. I shall not have many more invitations. I understand those places too well."

He began again to play the *cor de chasse.*

Donwin listened patiently for a while. Then he cut the music short. "Tell me about your family. I am interested in them."

"They are a disquieting crowd," said Elston. "They are people who turn instinctively to what is worst in the world because they think it is the best. I think so too, half so. If anyone asks them their reasons for what they do, they put aside clear and rational methods of thought, of which they are not unaware, and reply foolishly, because they think that is wise. I think so

too, half. They are always putting conscience in the place of brain, and brain in the place of instinct, and instinct in the place of conscience. Thus they revolve backward in their orbits. But they think that is the right way to revolve. I think so too, up to a certain point."

"This is not an explanation," said Donwin. "This is a poem in prose done with a stencil."

"Yes," said Elston, "but it is correct. It describes my family better than you know. I am very fond of them. When my father died I was very sorry. He had exerted a horrible influence over me, but he was so kind and thoughtful about it—well, I missed him. He had examined every idea I possessed and sent it back to be repaired. He was a lonely man."

Elston walked twice around the desk. He blinked his eyes. He took his handkerchief from his pocket, but turning suddenly tossed it into the wastepaper-basket. "Yes," he continued, "my father was a lonely man. He never cared about anybody unless his ideas were right—and they never were right. That was the trouble, people's ideas were never right."

Was it possible that Elston was making fun of his family, of his father? Donwin stared at his friend. But the evidence of sincerity was too plain. The grief was too real. It was the kind of grief which must usually hide itself. "How was your father a bad influence on you?"

"Can't you see?" cried Elston. "Look at me. Am I fitted for anything? How would you like to live in Italy, or in some other pagan country, and look at the very sunlight with disapproval? I tried to find out what was the matter but I never could. Were the natives all bad? Not in the least, they were God's children. Then what was the trouble? Everything was the trouble. Was there anything wrong about what they did? Almost everything. Wasn't there anything right about their conduct? Almost nothing. And then Portugal, and then Brazil. Wasn't Brazil an interesting country? Wasn't it pleasant to live in Italy? Yes, but that was partly an illusion and partly a danger."

"Why do you worry about all this?" asked Donwin. "You are past it. Your father may have been a remarkable character, probably was. But he must have been almost alone in his opinions and fears. I never quite understood what he was traveling around the world so much for."

"Trade and idealism," said Elston, "one of the most subtle

blends. To outwit selfishly with one part of your brain and to uplift generously with the other. There have always been such combinations. I suppose the Crusaders felt a similar divine duality when they symbolized Jerusalem into a prayer and marched toward it, seducing the women of all nations on the way. But whatever my father's theory of life may have been, you are wrong in thinking that I can get away from it. And are you sure that anybody is getting very far away? Religion and art and all the other shimmerings are still evaluated in money, and business still goes through its prodigious tricks with a magnanimous leer. My father was the confidential agent of various promoters, and at the same time he scattered bibles like pollen from the leg of a bee. But he was superb, and I will not have him criticized. He made me serious anyhow, and that is beyond all the Donwins in the world. Energy, gentleness, perfection. I will not have him criticized." Elston was almost shouting now. "And if you try to criticize him—"

"I am not criticizing him," said Donwin. "I leave that to you."

3. CHOOSING A PROFESSION

It was the Christmas vacation. Donwin had gone out into the country to visit some friends. His own home was in the country, but in easy reach of the city by motor. This year he preferred to avoid his own family and to pass the ten days far from all possible moth and rust of responsibility, far from everybody who might inadvertently suggest that there would ever be responsibility. Sometimes he had serious thoughts himself. He realized that existence in college was drawing to a close, he feared that the rest of life might be less pleasant. It was only a vague fear as yet. He thought he should never be weak enough to put work in the place of pleasure. Still, a vacation is a vacation; and except for a few days at Easter this one was his last. Soon the soothing college courses would be gone, and nothing to take a vacation from.

Elston stayed on in the dormitory after everyone but a few proctors was gone. His family was far away and scattered. Perhaps he might have accepted or created a stray invitation. But he was not sorry to be alone at the University. He liked it better without the horde of students who did such listless studying, of athletic managers, of social climbers who were too sophisticated to climb. The day after the courses stopped there came a light

snowstorm which left roofs, paths, and the spaces between the buildings six inches deep in oblivion. Elston watched from his window and thought how much better it was that there were no hurrying feet, hurrying nowhere. He went out and walked from building to building, making a glittering pathway for himself, standing long on marble steps, hoping that the Spirit of Science would speak to him from the laboratories and empty lecture-halls saying, "I am alone. Come in. I will tell you my secrets."

He often had ideas like this. But after he had enjoyed them for a while, they made him nervous. He went back to his room to perfect the details of his plan.

Elston always had a plan. He must catch success by some bold stroke. But success was not exactly what he wanted. He must win happiness. Not happiness either, that was not enough alone, besides being more or less a delusion. He must have power, knowledge, truth. Besides this, he must do something or other for a living. Cent by cent the money which his family had saved for his education was disappearing. The last tatters of his bank-account might twist like a mournful ribbon around the diploma. After that, office-boy, schoolteacher, what? No, there must be a sudden stroke of some sort, some gambler's chance.

Elston went to the mirror and stood for a long time smiling at himself with satisfaction. Yes, the face would do, it was grotesque enough. He wished he could inspect his brain as easily. Perhaps the brain would do its part. To work with the brain is flattering to the ego. But at all events the face could be depended on. It was a Movie face if there ever was one.

It was Thursday morning, and Thursday would do as well as any other day. Elston took from the draw of his desk a letter of introduction which he had obtained by a series of adroit requests, slipped it into the pocket of his overcoat, and started for the studio. He had to cross the city diagonally, and he thought there ought to be more diagonal streets. "After all," he reflected, "if the streets ran diagonally, fate would probably arrange that I should have to go up or down town."

He saw armies of men clearing the sidewalks of snow, and he stopped and talked pleasantly to a number of them, trying to produce in each a different mood. It had all to be very subtle, because the average man must not be allowed to know that any one is tampering with his emotions. Horror, pity, fear must be drawn gently over the face of the observer like a silken mask.

The entrance of the Studio was narrow, but it opened quickly into a large square space. There were offices on all sides like the booths at a fair. At the farther end was a low railing which guarded the processes and mysteries within from ambitious amateurs and from broken down actors, from reporters, tourists, and taxi-drivers cheated of their fares. Behind the swinging gate in this railing stood a dwarf. Elston wondered why this dwarf should be here. Was he intended to make the whole place as forbidding as possible? Did he symbolize the Movies, ungrown as they were and already stunted, near the ground and yet, perhaps on that very account, strong? He was probably only a hanger-on, the brother of some successful villain or heroine. He was only partly a dwarf; dwarfs are never more than half in character. He was deficient only in length. In breadth and in strength he was formidable. Elston leaned against one of the rough-plank offices. He had the feeling that he must escape the dwarf's notice. It was evident, however, that the dwarf was in authority. Past this guardian he must go if he was to meet the powers beyond the rail and make his stroke.

Elston decided to wait a few minutes, until some one noticed him. The office opposite him had a little railing of its own and a grating across the window. Probably this was where the less important Stars came for their pay-envelopes.

Suddenly from somewhere in the darkness rushed out a radiant figure. She came through the railing, past the dwarf. She was like a fountain of light, and Elston knew that she must soon reach the summit of her curve and fall in glittering spray. But she came on and on, miraculously. She wore a light frock, almost white. But it might as well have been of all the colors of earth, sea, and sunrise. For those were the colors which Elston saw. There was an airiness of movement, a slimness of limb; there was joy in the face, and mockery. She went up to the grated office. Perhaps her business was to collect her salary, perhaps to hand in a formal complaint that other actresses appeared with her in her films. For she would know that no other actresses were necessary. But this was surely not her real business. Her real business was not only to live life but to be life.

She looked in all directions at once and saw Elston leaning against the wall. There was more mockery in her face now, and the vaguest sort of anticipation. Not likely that she would be willing to make an acquaintance, but not impossible. She be-

longed to the world in which everything is possible. Is there any other world which is worth belonging to? Elston's face became stern and hard. He knew that he must speak to this girl, and he knew that he couldn't. Suppose that she should show anger if he did? But he was not afraid of that.

Even a word would break the spell of abstractions in which he lived. After he had spoken the word, she might laugh at him, trample on him. He was not thinking of her personally, although that was a secret which she should never know. It was the word that was necessary, the simplest, the most respectful of words, but freighted with all the meanings which he could give to it. But this word Elston would never speak. He might give up the world and the beauty it contains. Or, driven by powers which he speculated about but could not control, he might become a gorilla and snatch some woman into the forest, mistaking her for the ultimate. But to speak to a girl across a corridor and question her about the weather because he liked the color of her hair—that was beyond him.

Elston stared at the girl. His mind was never more active. What was there about him which could be forced to appear interesting to such a person as she? He was an outsider. That was in his favor with her, very possibly, although not with the authorities of the Studio. Could he appear to be very rich? She was probably far richer than he, she couldn't well help being that. Could he look mysterious? That was something which on his side he couldn't very well help. He was used to being misunderstood. But what kind of mystery? Was there any other mystery than that his wish to speak with this girl must have been written all over his face, and that he would not speak? Why wouldn't he speak? Was it any feeling of propriety or of respect? Neither. He hated propriety. That was a monster which he was always hoping to hunt down and destroy—hoping rather ineffectually, as one might plan some day to destroy a few crocodiles in Africa. As for respect, he had no respect at all, not even for himself. And was there any shame so great as that Carolus Elston should act out a propriety which he did not feel? And was there any other man in the world who would not speak to this girl if he wanted to? Was the world against him even in trifles?

Something in Elston's face must have attracted the girl's attention. She looked at him again. But suddenly the dwarf advanced from his railing. The dwarf would not touch the butterfly.

Toads do not make war on butterflies and flowers. But he would annihilate Elston if necessary. The girl laughed and ran out of the door to her car. There is not the slightest reason to think that she had for a moment intended to do anything else. There was nothing for Elston to do, no battle to fight. He had not fought, but he had lost. He was accustomed to lose. He took his letter of introduction from his pocket and gave it to the dwarf.

The Manager received Elston with cynical kindness. "Why do you want to get into this game?" said he. "What have you got to put up?"

"My face," said Elston. "Look at it."

The Manager did look.

"I can grin horribly," Elston continued. "I can leer, I can pass from scorn through terror to ferocity, although in general I am afraid I have nothing more interesting in my mind than good intentions."

Elston laughed pityingly at himself.

At this the Manager commented, with squinting eyes. "That last jump around with your face muscles was the best you've done yet. But look here. Have I got to talk to you like I would to a pretty girl, just because you've got a sort of leathery face instead of a creamy one? You may think your face is a scream, a howl, a sickening groan. But the face isn't all there is to it. Perhaps you can act, perhaps you are one of those people who can't help acting. We'll see about it. But what do you expect me to do now?"

Elston continued to dramatize according to his abilities and to speak. "I suppose you will tell me to come back again some other day or not to come back at all. I suppose that in a case like this, if you should happen to think of me as a possibility, there are appointments and trial outs—trials outs—trials out. Really, this English is a wonderful language."

"Yes, it is," said the Manager, "but we aren't filming your vocabulary."

"I suppose," continued Elston, "that putting me off, or out, is about what your policy will amount to . But what I should like to have you do is to give me some sort of trial this morning. I suppose that that meet-you-half-way attitude toward talent would be very unusual."

"Yes, it would," said the Manager. "So I'll do it."

He scribbled something on the back of an envelope and gave

it to Elston. He pointed to a door at the back of the office. "Go out that way and find the Director."

The Director read the note from the Manager and growled to himself. "No, I'm not busy just now, but that isn't the Manager's fault. I'll look you over, size you up. Come out and I'll show you the studios."

They walked through various areas indoors and out. "Who is that man in there?" asked Elston.

"Oh, that's the Art Director."

"What does he do?"

"Oh, he makes little, dinky water-colors of princely interiors, and tells us what sort of armor the cow-boys wore at the battle of Bunker Hill, and puts lard on the corners of Louis Quinze mirrors to keep the shine from queering the camera-man's end of this industry."

They were walking now through a series of little rooms, some elaborately furnished, some plain and poverty-stricken. "Take that blue vase," said the Director, "and smash it on the floor."

"But it might be valuable," said Elston.

"It might be," said the Director, "but I told you to smash it. And when you do it, look—somehow."

Elston did as he was told. They went on through the rooms. The Director pointed toward a rocking-chair. "You see that sofa-pillow in that chair? Go over and strangle it."

Elston triumphed over the sofa-pillow.

"You see those big lights up there?" asked the Director. "Those reflectors sitting on the steel beam? They are new. They are very powerful. Why, sometimes when those lights are on—we aren't going to shoot this morning until eleven o'clock, and you'll be gone then—but sometimes when those lights are on, and anybody gets in front of them, girls and anybody, they go right through their clothes. You'd think they didn't have any clothes on."

He looked sharply at Elston.

Elston made no immediate reply. After a moment he said, "I understand why you are telling me that. But you are mistaken. I don't care whether anybody has any clothes on or not. I suppose you tell me about those lights for the same reason that makes you keep that dwarf ogre down at the main entrance. Damn it, I came here for a living."

The Director laughed but said nothing.

They had come to a sort of enclosed verandah. "Outside those windows," said the Director, "is a garden. There are two men talking together in the garden. You go over to the windows and hear what they have to say. Then you come back and tell me."

Elston listened at the windows. When he finally turned, with his face full of mystery, the Director asked, "Well, what did they say? What they got up their sleeve?"

"It's a frame-up," said Elston. "They don't like the heroine because she won't marry the villain who helped them steal the vibrant diamonds, and hid them in a vacant lot which afterwards became the property of her guardian uncle. Naturally they want to poison her. But they think it would be safer to take her on a tour through the Alps, lead her along under a precipice, and hire a yodler to push a chamois off from the top of the precipice so that it will fall on her and break her neck."

"You're a sleuth all right," said the Director. "Now you come along with me to my office and I'll tell you."

"Now," said the Director when they were alone in his office, "you aren't going to do for a star. It isn't impossible that I might use you occasionally to fill up space with. But tell me how you thought you looked when you smashed the vase."

Elston had his answer all ready. "I had symbolized that vase into a great ambition. When that vase smashed, it was as if activities so intense, so complicated that they might stand in value equal to the whole of a life went down in ruin. And that was not all. There was the fear of ridicule added to the fear of failure. I hope my face and my gestures showed all that."

But the Director said he was afraid they didn't. "You looked like a cat that was expecting to have a flatiron thrown at it for upsetting a pan of milk."

Elston made a quick change of plea. "Well, isn't it a good thing sometimes to look as foolish as that?"

"Sometimes," said the Director. "But there are lots of men who can look like a cat upsetting a pan of milk, when they don't intend to. And when you were listening out of the window, you had all sorts of things in your mind, at least to judge by the rigmarole you thought it was funny to make up. But you didn't show anything definite to me. Your business just then wasn't to write a scenario, but to make me afraid of the conspirators in the garden."

"I thought I was doing that," said Elston.

"Well, you weren't," said the Director. "And then that strangling business. You did that better. But that's one of the easiest things to do. It's like the fortissimo finale of a band."

Elston nodded. "I see. As long as everything keeps going, and the big drums roll over the discords, and the trombones work back and forth like the pistons of a locomotive, it's all right. And then the whole thing crashes into silence, like a head-on collision."

"Something like that," said the Director. "Killing is commonplace—though the public has to have lots of it. Look at the newspapers. We can get anybody to do that. Now, I'm sorry for you if you really have hopes of starring right off, or ever for that matter. You are correct in thinking that you are meant for the near-villain, and the weak hero, and the misfits. You'll have to come around with the crowd some other day. Perhaps you'll be worked in. I can't give you any more attention like what I've given you to-day. You must be one of those people who get queer things out of other people. But they never get anything good. You'll have to go around to all the Studios and stand in line. You'd better not."

"That's just what I'm going to do," said Elston.

"I thought you would," said the Director.

4. IF THEY WOULD LET ME

Elston was very busy for the next few days. But at the end of the vacation he was ready again for college routine and for conversation. "I am pretty nearly at the end of my rope, Donwin. A few more excursions into the regions of the mind and of reality, and I shall be ready to decide against myself with a clear conscience."

"I don't know what you mean by that," said Donwin. "I know that you have been looking for a job."

"It is worse than that," said Elston. "If I am simply looking for a job, I ought to be willing to wait and to be disappointed. It is more that I am looking to see if there is any job at all, if there is any job for the world. You know I want to reform the world."

Donwin bowed appreciatively. "That ought to be easy—for you. The real trouble is that after one gets the world reformed it is generally worse than it was before."

"That is the old cynicism," said Elston, "and not even dressed in a new paradox. But I am afraid it is true. The reformers seem always to be putting everybody, including themselves, to bed with a cold in his head. After they are all comfortably tucked in, they develop pneumonia."

Donwin further illustrated. "The reformers cut up the mainsail of the ship to make napkins and tablecloths for the forecastle."

Elston continued. "The reformers chase poverty and vice around street corners; and when the game is over, poverty and vice return, their faces glowing with health and happiness, saying, 'A few more of these cross-city runs and we shall be in training for the next half century.' But there must be some way to do it. Often I think I know how to do it. I have been trying to get into the Movies the last week."

"What for?" asked Donwin. "To reform them?"

Elston explained that he had no such plan. "I wished a source of income wholly divorced from moral ideas. If a man goes into business he is bound by certain obligations. Of course they are generally evil obligations, but one has to admit that they concern morals. If I went into some routine of teaching, I might be forced by the Trustees to refuse the cigarettes which school-girls would offer me. Even for me, that would be humiliating. If I tried to preach—well, I leave you to describe what that would be. Perhaps there is a kind of moral bondage in the Movies, for those who accept the religion of art. But I am not initiated into that religion. I felt that I should be free in the Movies, my earnings would come from no sort of compromise. All I should have to sacrifice would be my personality. I certainly had no idea of reforming the Movies. They are virtuous enough, provided they are amusing. But I do want to reform the world. It needs so badly to be reformed, and it has no artificial dimensions of its own, like the Movies, in which reform is easy—and silly. The Movies were to be my hermit cell, from which I was to issue with a pay-envelope in my scrip. I should have performed wonders."

Elston paused a moment and then added, "I don't suppose the schoolgirls would really offer me cigarettes. Girls don't do such things to me."

"Probably not," said Donwin, "since you don't smoke cigarettes."

Elston scowled angrily. "It is a matter of principle. You

can't understand principle. I insist on the cigarettes, I insist on the gesture of cigarettes. What gestures have we left to-day? All our immoral gestures are taken away from us by conventional society. And without immoral gestures there is no moral freedom. People are as bad as ever, but they have lost the opportunity to be good. I was going to attack the dilemma at both ends. I wished to keep my character unspotted from the church. Then I might myself have been the church. You might have been my acolyte."

"You are crazy," said Donwin. "How do you intend to reform the world?"

"Teach people to be happy," said Elston. "It would be very easy, if they would listen. *You* listen. As for Economics, that is just the kitchen on a large scale. Some people like to cook. Let them. If there are not enough people who like to cook, get your own meals on an electric stove, or eat breakfast-food. Of course you understand that by the kitchen I mean the farms and the factories too. It is all a very small part of life, although it looks large through the microscope of selfishness. After you have removed Economics, you have the other moral problems—chiefly, who is to be whose wife, and how long. This is easy too. The microscope that makes the difficulty is in this case constructed of scandal and blackmail. I suppose I shall not have to prove to you that scandal and blackmail are undesirable. So you see I should know what it is right to say to the undeveloped human beings who surround me. But I can't say it without money."

"Why not?" said Donwin. "Most reformers have been poor."

"Yes," said Elston, "but they have not been reformers. In the delirium of hunger they have invented new misfortunes for humanity. Besides, as you know, some reformers are rich. When they are rich, they are generally indulging the strongest of human passions, the passion for interference. Can you explain that passion? If you can, you will be able to say why the accomplished hostess, when she overhears two of her guests discussing the east wind in Boston, instantly wants to make them discuss the southwest wind in Florida. She generally succeeds."

Donwin sat still and reflected. Then he turned sharply on his friend. "Come, Elston, I will do two things for you. I will lend you some money, and I will introduce you to some girls I know, girls who have neither the conventionalities you hate nor the scruples you are ruled by without knowing it. You need both of these things."

"I need them," said Elston. "But I won't take them from you. Do you suppose that I am going to hold myself free of bondage to the systems of society, and then submit to personal bondage? I must go my own course. I know I am more or less a fool. Don't mention money again. As for the girls you so gracefully invoke, I don't mind your talking about them. I think about them a great part of the time."

"I knew you did," said Donwin.

Elston picked up a pencil from the desk and smoked it like a cigar. He blew out great clouds of imaginary smoke. "It has always been a mystery to me, this question of sex. How many girls I have seen, in the West and in the East. I could see them more plainly sometimes, in the East; they were without smoke-screens of propriety. And yet I have scarcely shaken hands with a girl, never more than that. By all means think I am lying, I had rather you would. Sex is a strange complication. It isn't any less strange because you laugh at me for saying so. Sex means too much in the fundamentals of the world for me to go and meet your chorus-girls. That isn't because I despise them, as very likely you do. How many faults they are free of! I am afraid I idealize them too much. They would never forgive me for that. There was one of them the other day at the entrance to a studio. I could have killed myself for that girl. She was superb physically, and I knew her character was much bolder and better than mine. I suppose her mind wasn't highly developed. But such as she was, and such as I was—what's the use? The most she would have done was to get me into some sort of trouble, if she could have done it without risk to herself. There would have been neither affection nor delirium. But I made sure she was in the world. That was some satisfaction to me. I know you will think that if my mind works in this way I am not fit to be a reformer. How little you know! It's a part of the religious temperament. Sometime I will go out from this room, I will walk through an unknown street, I will open at random some door, I will find there some woman radiantly beautiful. She will be waiting for me. I will clasp her in my arms. And if you are there—if you tell me to stop—if you object—if you—if you——"

"Stop it, stop it," cried Donwin. "I am not going to stay if you get excited. I suppose you don't intend to attack me with your fists. But I am very much afraid you will kill the joy of life by your eccentric manner of embracing it."

"Don't make fun of me," said Elston, throwing himself on the lounge. "It is more serious than you think. And now go home. Turn the light out as you go."

5. COURAGE

Elston lay on the lounge in the dark. He could see shapes of thought and sentiment from his boyhood, from his childhood, detaching themselves from the walls and ceiling, moving freely and decisively, bringing with them their own background and atmosphere. The first time he had seen Science as a person, with her ultra-violet robes, and heard her make soft promises of intellectual pleasures which she had been so reluctant to fulfill. The first time he had seen Music—she was more like a human being, but a goddess still. The first time he had seen Art, and heard her say, "You do not understand me."

"Do I not understand you?" he had cried, "Do I not? Your limbs of vital marble are as substantial as my own. Don't I understand you for that reason?"

"All the less," she had replied, and vanished.

And he saw around him rags and snatches of effort, fragments of accomplishment. He saw himself grasping a tiller—Oh, what strength, what intelligence of wrist! At once the ship responded, the course was straight, the sail no longer fluttered at the luff, the great world at last would win her millenial race.

And he saw himself on the top of a mountain reading a Chinese guidepost—This way to Sinai. He saw himself carving on stone: "First, Thou shalt not, etc. etc. Second, Thus saith Rabelais, '*Fais que voudras.*' " And he was bracketing the two phrases because he didn't know which was which.

And as he carved, a tremendous figure appeared, in grey robes. And he carved on and said to himself, "This is a figment, this is the externalization of fear."

And the figure said casually, "You may be clever, but why be blasphemous?" and vanished.

Next he saw himself descending into the practical world. He was digging a garden. Green stalks sprang up tumultuously, but so rapidly that they pulled their roots after them. The poor roots waved idly in the air.

He saw himself entering a huge factory. The shed was full of looms. He took charge. "Turn that little lever the other way.

Put a meal-ticket between the cogs of those wheels." But the cloth came out in the form of ribbons; and at the end of each streamer was a tiny snake's head, which hissed.

The foreman came up to him, clutching a monkey-wrench and gritting the jaws of it like teeth. "Your services are no longer required. I regret to inform you that there is at present no opening for you in this office."

"You are making a mistake," said Elston. "You cannot dispense with my services, you do not know what they are. You cannot allow me to resign my position, I have never been employed."

"That makes no difference," said the foreman. "You are discharged."

He brushed the foreman aside, jauntily. "At least I will flirt with this golden-haired workmanette."

The girl was turning her head away from him, smiling coquettishly at her loom. Suddenly she faced him disdainfully. "I know you want to make friends with me, but I won't let you. I am not a bit interested in your face."

"Why not?" asked Elston. "Don't I look as if I could think? Haven't I appreciative eyes?"

"To tell the truth," said the girl, "the theory that so many psychologists have advanced, that all a woman requires in love is admiration of her own beauty, that theory which has been so aptly summarized in the age-old proverb, 'The man loves the woman, but the woman loves love,'—I must insist that this theory is quite erroneous. Love is a partnership, and it deals with beauty and the admiration of beauty, not separately, but only when these elements are fused. Joy must go back and forth with inconceivable rapidity, like the phases of an alternating current. I could stand you if only you weren't quite so hideous."

Elston sprang from the lounge. "Was it worth while to send Donwin home and then give myself up to these visions?"

There must be some plan, some action. Elston analyzed his problems. It seemed to him that the last vision was the essential one, that until he settled the problem presented by the girl at the spectral loom, who mocked him, enticed him, confused him, he could have no hope of success with the practical conduct of his own life and—what was still more important to his egotism —of ultimate influence on the world's events. He was right, but right in a different way from what he supposed. For Elston was

a young man who could never drive himself with a loose rein. He could never settle a problem by ignoring it. If women did not admire him, or if he had concluded on insufficient evidence that they did not admire him, he could not say to himself that after all this admiration was not indispensable. If he had reasoned that without knowledge of human nature, and without that plastic mastery of human relationships which the society of women gives, he could not hope to be a leader of men, he never went on from there to the reflection that after all humanity seems to prefer to be guided by those who not only do not understand humanity but do not understand anything at all. And if he glanced back and forth from practical politics and business to the districts of science and art, and recoiled from the latter domain as from the nightmare of dilettantism, he never realized that the dilettante and the pure scientist have their place in the world too. His personality must stand four-square. Unfortunately it is seldom possible to stand four-square, if one has an analytic mind. The sketchiness of the universe, its mysticism as the mystics would themselves sketch its quality, prevents that.

And now Elston's mind was working, and working with definiteness and accuracy in proportion as the basis of his reasoning was shadowy. This very night he must act, this very night. He recalled what he had said to Donwin. "Some day I shall walk through some street, any street—no, through some definite street, guided by fate, or whatever you choose to call it. I shall enter a door. I shall find there, as if waiting for me, a girl beautiful as the eternities of thought, wise as a flower. She will greet me without surprise. She will make the world over for me forever."

It was still early in the evening, nine o'clock. Elston did not hesitate long. He put on his hat and coat and went out through the corridor. He left the room behind him dark; the path way ahead was illuminated.

Elston walked rapidly. He turned every corner as he came to it. He strangled his sense of direction, walking on and on until he stopped as if by necessity before the steps of a house.

6. LACE CURTAINS

As Elston went up the steps of the unknown house, he stared across at the lace curtains in the window. It was a satisfaction to

him that the lace was of such excellent quality. From long experience in the East he knew about fabrics. He had chosen the house at random, and the curtains were real lace. He laughed at himself. Had he not put himself in the hand of fate? Has fate anything to do with upholstery?

He rang the bell. There was a long pause. There was still time to run away. Even after the door was opened, it would be possible to say that he had mistaken the house and to leave behind him nothing but the mild annoyance of a servant. He knew, however, that this was not what would happen. He saw himself from the outside. The mouse would not give up the hope of his banquet behind the wires. Under the aspect of dignity, Childe Roland had come to the Dark Tower. But this was no time to quote Browning to oneself; he heard a step in the hall, the click of the lock.

But even supposing the supply of perverse courage to be unlimited, how was he to get past the door? Whom should he ask to see? He had no name in his head. Like a flash, a fully developed plan sprang into consciousness. He took a pencil from his pocket and broke off a piece of wood. He had always had the habit of carrying a few thumb-tacks stuck in the end of his pencil. Now he knew what these were for. As the door opened, he fastened with the thumb-tack a tiny button of wood to its edge.

The door was open. A maid was standing and waiting to know what he wanted. "Does Mr.——" Elston began.

It suddenly seemed to him humiliating to invent a name. He corrected himself. "I am afraid I have mistaken the house."

"Perhaps that is true," thought he. "Also, perhaps it is not true."

The maid shut the door.

Elston turned as if to go down the steps. Then he waited a minute or two for the maid to be entirely out of the way. Had the improvised burglar's wedge done its work? He tried the door. Yes, it opened. He was inside the hall. But he did not stop to examine his surroundings. He was caught again in the logic of his plan and carried on to its realization. There was an open door to the left. He passed through it into a sort of reception room.

A girl was standing by the fireplace. She was tall and straight as a birch tree. As she turned her head it moved on a rising curve which did not allow the glance of her personality to fall

weakly, but launched it boldly into the unknown. Elston saw again the strip of sand in the southern ocean which he had described to Donwin, and the girl standing against the background of sea and sky. This time, although the hair was dark and flashing, the skin was not olive brown but olive white. Better that it should be olive white. And behind her was not now the fluttering scarf which a crouching Polynesian waved aimlessly, but the flag-like flame of an open fire. Better that it should be the flame of a fire. There was dignity in her glance, but Elston avoided seeing that. Or if he did see it, he would not allow it to seem the dignity of defense.

There was no time for doubts or hesitation. Elston moved across the room and seized the girl in his arms.

But the girl, although she was real, an authentic resident of the city, was to Elston a vision. The moment Elston touched the vision, he sprang back. He had not thought how it would feel to embrace a real woman. He was not prepared for that. He sank into a chair on the opposite side of the room and covered his face with his hands.

We cannot live without the personalities around us. But what is a personality? Seen from a distance, these joyous faces will take their part in an earthly paradise. These idealistic features, these refined gestures and bell-like voices will lead and beckon us through the pathways of any dream. It must be that they will satisfy all the hopes of youth. But speak to them, surprise an answer from them in words. Perhaps they are masks. Or worse, they have a scale of values of their own. They intend to remain aloof.

In a moment of sanity, Elston saw all this as a newly acquired truth. He felt the shame of stupidity and insolence. He had come through the streets of the city like a hero of intellectual romance. He cowered now before this unknown girl like a bungling thief. What business had he to treat her like a figment of his own brain? His brain might be a beautiful machine, although as a matter of fact it was not quite that. But it was not the brain of the Creator. Besides, in the region of realities, what was to happen next? Was there any punishment severe enough for what he had done? Could he be tortured? Could he assist in his own torture, and creep away, a branded criminal and a cripple?

The girl by the fireplace had had no time to be frightened until the need for fear was past. She glanced at a bell she could

ring, at a door behind her through which she could retreat. For a second she had been beaten by waves of the unknown bursting against her from the night. But then had come the moral collapse of whatever force had been attacking her. The man before her now was like a half frozen child from the streets, brought in for help just before the life slipped away. Elston had the power of making people feel what he felt himself, an unconscious power which worked whether he intended it or not. And now all violence had vanished from his mind.

As Elston ceased to think, suffering too acutely to think, the girl by the fireplace began in her own mind to adjust the situation. She felt no anger against the pitiful creature across the room; rather a sort of sorrow, as if she were the spectator of some tragedy she could not understand. She seemed to see a dwarfed tree on the side of a mountain, a tree with no room for its roots, a tree with the glimmer of sunshine reaching it only two or three days in the year. The tree was courageous, resourceful. It had grown on and on, nourishing itself with crazy hopes, making a dangerous comrade of the north wind. Stealthily, patiently it raised a leaf or two above the cliff and had it broken off. The girl wondered why she could think all this about a stranger.

"You need not be afraid of me," said Elston. "I will go."

He looked too weak to go. The girl wondered if he needed help. Was he a criminal, an outcast? His clothes were badly made and old. Still, they were not those of an outcast—unless his period of disgrace was just beginning. Had he met with some accident? Was he insane? Her sense of duty was aroused. For she was a young woman of activity and responsibility toward the world. Did she not go out into the wild places of the earth to rescue, to do good? Was this perhaps one of the wild places, coming itself to her? In her own house, protected as she felt herself to be by the sound of her father's step on the floor above, she must not be afraid of problems which she had schooled herself to meet alone. She took a step toward Elston, wondering what could be the meaning of those ill-made features, so restless and so meek.

"Send me away," said Elston, "but don't look at me."

"Who are you?" she asked. "Why did you come here?"

Elston started as if from sleep. Was it possible that she was asking him why he had come? His mind ran back over the chain of reasons which had really brought him. Should he explain?

She would be sorry she had asked him to explain. Still, it was a fact that the mere question had relieved him at least in part of his overwhelming sense of disgrace. "Heaven help me," he thought, "if I get back my courage."

The girl was waiting for an explanation. No doubt she had a right to it. Elston smiled, and checked the smile awkwardly. There was no occasion for a smile. "Better not ask me to explain," he said. "I am not worth it. Better let me go without an explanation."

But the girl looked at him very seriously. Her strong regular face expressed the impersonal curiosity of a judge. Or rather it was as if she said, "I am not asking you to excuse yourself. I understand perfectly that justification is impossible. But what in the world are you?"

Elston shrugged his shoulders. "I will tell her something," he thought. "Yes, I will tell her the truth. She is very pretty, but I am past caring about that. I will tell her the truth. No doubt it is better that she should think me insane."

He began. "A man's mind contains too much. There is nothing in external conditions that the mind cannot grasp in advance of experience. Making changes in the earth's crust, canals and fortresses—that is only shifting the position of a few grains of sand. And I can hold in my hand—how many grains, do you suppose? Why, a whole handful. And the laws that govern the mixing of mortar, those that govern the sand-storm. I know those too, as far as anyone is likely ever to know them. To know more of the laws would be adding details, as inert as the sand itself. You will say there are still possibilities; above the facts floats the vision. Be sure I see that. But what of it? Can I explore the vision? Sometimes I try to—I did tonight. But is it anywhere outside of myself? Never mind then. I will move the objects of sense from place to place, like a child with his blocks. I will gloat like a drunkard over beauty. Yes, but how childlike a man has to be to do that.

"I live inside a life which is different from yours. You will find it hard to understand. Imagine a man with all his senses from the eyes down. Give him a cage which he knows how to break. See him sitting there through all the stages of advanced adolescence. Ask him why. He will not be able to answer.

"I know that I am strong, and I know that I am weak. If you think I am conceited, that is because I haven't had time to explain

myself. I came here tonight to break the cage—if, according to tradition, reckless admiration for a woman has power to break it. And what do I find? The old despair."

There was a box of chocolates on the table. Elston took one of the chocolates. "I oughtn't to help myself like this," he said.

The girl made no answer.

"No, I oughtn't to, really," he went on. "Anyway, it is not the thing for a man to eat much candy. But I have thought about that prejudice. You see, everybody, when he is a child, likes candy, boys and girls too. The boys even more so. Later on you hear the men say, 'I don't like candy,' or 'I like just one piece of candy, but I can't understand how anyone can sit down and eat a whole box.' What is the reason? I have decided that it is because women like candy themselves, and when they have children they want it provided for the children too. The men have to provide it. But if the men should eat a lot of it, it wouldn't go round so well. So the men are induced to think that eating candy is somehow unmanly—at most a piece or two out of politeness. And there's all the rest of the box for the family.

"This ought to be generosity, it ought to develop the men's characters. But I don't believe it does. I don't care for generosity which you're tricked into performing. This explains why men make such a row about their briar-wood pipes, and their meerschaums, and their Egyptian cigarettes sealed in their little mummy-cases. They have felt that tobacco is a sort of pleasure they can enjoy without being interfered with. And I suppose that's because smoking isn't really any fun. But by and by, as women smoke more, you will hear men say, 'One cigarette is enough for me,' just as they used to say, 'I don't like sweets.' And the mistress of the situation will smile encouragingly, 'I have married such a manly man,' and finish the box herself. It is too bad I understand all this so well, it may prevent me from wanting to marry."

The girl listened. Gradually a smile appeared on her face. "I suppose," she said, "it's of no great consequence if you don't marry."

Elston looked up suddenly and laughed. It was not often a pleasant thing to hear Elston laugh. His was a revealing laugh, as laughter generally is. What it revealed was chiefly amiable. Before it died away, however, there often came a few vibrations that made one forget the joyous frankness with which it had

begun. This time there were no such vibrations. The harshness, the sorrow, whatever it was behind the laugh, was either asleep or in hiding.

"No," he said, "it is of no great consequence if I don't marry. But I have interrupted myself. I generally do interrupt myself, and then people think I don't know what I am talking about. Listen. What I have said so far is nothing, my whole life so far is nothing. I will tell you what I really believe. I have never told anyone before. But that's not to my credit, I hate to be commonplace. As the facts fall away, and there is no help in them, and as beauty falls away, and the pleasures which I have never enjoyed disappear meekly with the trivial pleasures which I have stolen, there remains the happiness of others. If I had the strength I should try for that. If you don't give me that strength, you are a ghoul."

"But I will—I will!" cried the girl. "That is to say—but I don't understand you."

She stopped abruptly. Had she forgotten all that had passed in the last ten minutes? She wondered why she felt no anger, nothing but disquieting confidence and sympathy. Was she in the presence of some being lawless but lovable, one who had the right to break locks and snatch at illusions, and who could honestly say, "I wish the happiness of others?"

Elston was pacing back and forth across the floor. "What couldn't I do for people!" He smiled with twisted lips and raised his hand, the fingers tense and clutching. "But they won't let me. God in his Heaven has made the world. At least that is one way of expressing the fact that the world is here. How easy to eat the fruits of the soil and be happy! Not to kill each other, not to make fun of duty or pleasure. Not to interfere, and to be grateful. But I am not going to talk any more. This is the greatest illusion of all. Good night."

He turned to go.

"Wait," said the girl. "Tell me who you are."

"I am Carolus Elston," he said. "I am a student at the University. Don't tell me who you are. I have no right to know."

She called after him, "But I will tell you. I am Louise Wilberton."

He opened the street door, removed the thumb-tack and scrap of pencil, went down the steps. "I wonder where I am," he

thought. "Shall I ask a policeman, or enjoy the sensation of being lost? But the simplest is to read the sign at the corner."

When Elston was gone, Louise Wilberton stood in the same position by the fireplace.

The maid came in. "I thought I heard someone in the hall."

"Go and see if anyone is there," said Louise.

Louise reviewed what had passed. "I have not forgotten it," she thought. It seemed to her surprising that she had not forgotten it, as if it had happened many years before. It had for her the combined vividness and elusiveness which belong to the experiences of childhood. And as from those experiences, she derived from it sadness and strength. Was there such sorrow in the world, sorrow calling itself ambition, sorrow trembling behind irony? The sorrow is there, this hardly admits of discussion. Was there anything else? Was the whole world a shower of tears, refracting a rainbow? She did not think of the insult to herself. That had passed so quickly. It had not been offered to her as a person. The moment the intruder had become existent as a person, his insolence had given place to shame and repentance still more pitiful. The stranger had come into her world, inspired by some grotesque purpose. Purposeless and grotesque, he had departed. Had she been destined to see the climax of a broken life? How many broken lives there were with no climax.

She felt a strange certitude that she knew why he had come. She could not have explained it in words. How simple it would be to call it all insanity. Too simple. This was not a madman. Certainly this was not the candidate of some fraternity, proving by insolence his right to associate with distinguished persons. He had gone forever. How disgusting, how idiotic, what he had said about the box of chocolates! He ought to be punished for that. But he *was* punished. He was punishing himself while he spoke. He was a man who would punish himself beyond all the wishes of his enemies. Where was he now? Wandering through the streets like a ghost? Entering another house? No, Louise was sure that his experiment was without parallel in the past and would never be repeated. He was gone. But was it possible that his influence remained? Was he a phantom? Was he too unreal ever to be wholly gone?

Suddenly she was angry, terrified. She threw herself on the sofa and burst into tears.

7. SOCIAL SERVICE

Louise Wilberton had grown up as a child who could not be spoiled. When your daughter asks you for a rocking-horse, give her a Shetland pony. When she asks you to go to the theater, go, and add the opera. Louise lived in the midst of dangers. She laughed at them. They were childish dangers at first, but they grew with her growth. More remarkable still, she survived the development of her father's wisdom. He became a doctrinaire as soon as he realized that he generally gave the child the things which are thought to blight. She improved from day to day, as masterpieces are said to be produced through the accidental efforts of craftsmen so wise that they might if they chose avoid accidents altogether. Chiefly, however, she improved because she was born to improve and not to need improvement.

When she was eight years old her mother called her and said good-bye, as if for a visit but with tears. She never saw her mother again. Then her father called her and said, "Your mother and I do not agree. I believe I am not to blame. But your mother is not to blame."

It was true. The quarrel was a nest of boxes, and the world was never to remove as much as the wrapper. In the smallest box was nothing. Mrs. Wilberton went to Italy and lived graciously, without mystery. She died in a few years. Her death had no connection with the separation. Louise remembered her mother as the creator of a brief and perfect world. It was her mother who had taught her to look at the sea and the forest. Would they be brief too?

Sometimes it seemed to her that the reality of her childhood had been its sorrow. But there was no reason to blame her father. And with the years her father had grown to be the creator of a second world, more sombre but no less kind.

When the time had come for her to decide whether she should work or idle, her father had taught her to be learned with circumspection. She was to study the sciences up to the point of specialization, the arts up to the point of drudgery. But really, Louise was too genuine to do exactly this. Sometimes she worked beyond her strength. Sometimes she learned more than was expected, and appeared among the specialists like a day-laborer, a hod on her shoulder. Perhaps she would have remained more

consistently among the specialists if she had not had the intelligence to discover that the specialists too are sometimes slackers.

She attended lectures at the University. She had no interest in degrees. She learned to draw. She learned to sing. Sometimes she closed her piano with a bang.

Gradually she drifted into Social Service. Here was a domain as wide as the world. Louise developed definitions until she could use the word "moral" in its true sense, at least in what she supposed to be its true sense.

8. ACQUITTED

The evening after his escapade Elston wandered around to Donwin's room to confess. Naturally he did not know that he intended to confess. He supposed that he should be silent in regard to his interview with Miss Wilberton. He had intended to forget her name; he had really succeeded in forgetting the name of the street where she lived. But he might have known that he could not keep away from a subject so full of embarrassment to himself. He had formed a habit of confessing to Donwin. Domineering, full of the assumption of mental superiority, he nevertheless told Donwin nearly everything that he thought and did. He had to tell somebody. Donwin, on his side, concealed most of his own activities, considering them to be, as they really were, unimportant. Donwin listened to Elston's self-analysis with discreet sympathy. He gave practical suggestions when facts were at all involved, relieved with a friendly smile nervous pressure on dangerous subjects, watched Elston's struggling development with fatherly tolerance. It is to be feared that he cared less about Elston's difficulties than he seemed to care.

"Good old Donwin," said Elston as he came in.

Donwin was writing a letter. He looked up in surprise. "I never heard you say a thing like that. Aren't you afraid of becoming too much of a college man?"

"Not a bit," said Elston. "What did I say? I don't believe that phrase would get me far."

"No," said Donwin thoughtfully, "if you want to talk like a college man you will have to practice. You can't achieve entire lack of meaning all in a minute. Give the poor Undergraduate credit for his accomplishments. He likes the way he talks. On the

whole I think you would be better off if you were really a little more of an Undergraduate."

Elston twisted his eyes and all his features into a posture of infinite stealth. "Show me how. My family has a way of living in a town for several years in discomfort. They live in lodgings, they camp in stable-lofts, they pitch tents. Finally they buy a neat little house and make all the necessary improvements. Then they leave the country. It would be proper for me to become an authentic college man just at the moment I fail to pay my last term-bill. Show me how to do it."

"I can't," answered Donwin. "But if I were going to write a book about the college man, I should know where to look for the foil. How is your own book getting on?"

"It is not a book," said Elston. "I stand by the cross-roads, between my desk and the sofa, and think of the insolvable, of life and death, of all the platitudes. I speak, make a pronouncement. Then, since I have no disciples, I note down what I have said, being careful to get it a little wrong, as disciples generally do. I let the notes flutter around the room, some of them into the fire, some of them into the wastepaper-basket. This procedure was invented by the Cumaean Sibyl. The next morning, before the janitor harvests them, I gather up the fragments. They are precious."

Donwin laid his pen down with a gesture of receptivity. "I am going to read those fragments some time."

"Yes," said Elston, "you are. I shall attend to that." He raised his voice with the odd, whistling sound which had so often closed all ears against him. "I am not writing for myself. Did you think I was writing for myself? Do you suppose those little squares of wood-pulp on which I write are to be the coffins of my emotions? When I have reasoned about the questions which men have found too hard for them—when I have written down the word on the paper and seen it lying there calm and true —if you think you have the right—" His voice rose to a still higher pitch. "If you—if you——"

Donwin shook his head. "How often have I asked you not to get excited?"

Elston laughed. He began to pace back and forth. He took a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket. "Here is one of my loose leaves. It is the wrong one to show you, but it is the only one I have with me."

Elston continued to pace. Donwin read: "Carolus Elston—that is to say, I—was born in Damascus. But I know nothing about that city; my family moved patriarchally on. There may have been several oases on my path, but I must be excused for not remembering them. We arrived in Java. There is a country for you—warm and mild. My cradle was draped in batik. But it was in China itself that I awoke and heard the boatmen singing under my window. Their language was easy for me to understand, being much like what an infant says himself—ho, ha, hu. Would you like to know what a Chinese poem is like? It is made entirely of mental detachments.

" 'The bird—the bumblebee—love!
'A sword—oh anxiety—death!
'A tomb—a mountain-side—eleven thousand eternities!'

"The words mean this—or almost anything else. You make the connection to suit yourself."

The crumpled paper contained more than this. But Elston interrupted. "Do you remember what I said I was going to do some day?"

"You plan to do so many things," said Donwin.

"This time," Elston continued, "I did what I said I was going to do. I do that more often than you think. I went at random through the streets. I chose a house at random. I remember it had beautiful lace curtains. I went into the hall. I eluded the maid. I went into a sort of reception-room on the left of the hall. There I found a charming young woman. I talked with her for half an hour."

For once Donwin was angry. "This is going too far. If I didn't know you so well I should know what to think of your motives and your experiences. But you—I believe you are capable of intruding into a respectable house. Did she punish you as you deserve?"

"Yes," said Elston, "she punished me. But not at all as I deserved. She seemed to pity me. She hardly said a word, but she made her pity cut like a knife. That's why I feel so cheap about it the day after. She gave me her name—Louise Wilberton."

Donwin sprang to his feet. "You simpleton, you ape!" he cried. "I know her myself. She is one of my best friends. She has never done anything to deserve your attentions."

Elston looked at his friend blankly for a moment. Then he threw himself into the chair by the desk which Donwin had left. He took the same attitude that he had taken before Louise, covering his face with his hands. "I know it," he whispered. "I know it as well as you do." Then after a pause, "I am not surprised that she is your friend. Have I ever chosen anything for myself but humiliation? That interview can mean no good to me. But it was not a shot in the dark."

Donwin did not remain angry long. As with Louise, anger gave place to pity. Elston felt the pity, and braced himself as if for more suffering.

Neither spoke for a few minutes. Then Donwin laid his hand kindly on Elston's shoulder. Elston winced.

Donwin began to speak in a low tone as if he were speaking to a frightened child. He had had time to think. He was conscious of making a strange decision, a decision which was forced into the appearance of inevitableness by Elston's presence.

"Listen," he said. "Whatever you are, you are not a ruffian. I do not believe that you are capable of insulting a girl like Miss Wilberton, or any girl for that matter. You took her to be the realization of one of your crazy dreams. Very well, it was a dream. It could not happen. You understand, it did not happen. I will ask her to let me introduce you to her."

Elston smiled tolerantly. "Do as you think best. I did not wish a formal acquaintance. But I can stand that, too."

"You are not grateful," said Donwin. He went to the telephone.

Louise Wilberton answered the telephone herself. Donwin explained: "I have the wild man here in my room—Don't ask me what wild man. I know all about it. I might ask him to talk with you himself, but I am not sure he knows how to use a telephone —Is it so hard as that? Why not talk about it? Remember we are dealing with Carolus Elston—Carolus Elston—do you know what that means?—Oh, I know I am surprising. But be fair to me—just reflect that he is in the room while I am talking. You can't expect me to be anything but surprising. Isn't it better that you should meet him?—Yes, he is impossible. Don't be afraid he will hear. Of course he hears, I want him to hear. He must expect a few comments from the bystanders as he makes his inspired progress through the world. Besides, he is not as bad as he seems —I can believe that he made an odd impression. Why, the first

time I went to see him I barely escaped with my life. Still, odd is the right word. Don't change it to any other epithet. Let him be odd, that is the only thing he is ashamed of. That is why he is so odd—Can't you understand? We haven't arranged all this in advance. It is just an accident that I know he has ever seen you. I have never mentioned your name to him. Everything is an accident except Carolus Elston himself. Very likely he is the biggest accident of all. Isn't this the wisest thing to do—to talk it all over now, once for all, and then for all three of us to forget it ever happened? He is really not a blackguard, and crazy only part of the time. Won't you let me bring him to see you?"

There was a long pause. Donwin held the receiver to his ear and looked at Elston quizzically.

Elston laughed in a weak and timid way. "After all, what difference does it make to me? I don't want to meet her."

"Yes you do," said Donwin with his hand over the mouthpiece. "You do want to meet her and you shall."

Finally he said through the telephone, "Thank you. I accept for him."

He hung up the receiver. Then to Elston, "She has invited you to dinner tomorrow. You will come here and go with me."

"But I have no evening clothes," Elston objected.

"Good," said Donwin. "It is like you to think of that. What right could you have to disguise yourself in evening clothes? Come in any costume you happen to have on. You may meet some people as queer as yourself. But listen seriously. You have been tried and, with some reservations, acquitted. See to it that you are not arrested again."

9. THE MEDDLERS AT DINNER

Louise and her father were sitting by the fireplace waiting for their guests. Louise was nervous and a little sorrowful. But her nervousness did not come from her interview with Carolus Elston. She had made up her mind to take Donwin's adjustment of that episode at its face value. Something had happened in the course of her social-service work which annoyed and puzzled her. She was relatively new to the work. It surprised her to be annoyed.

"Father," she said, "today a man stopped me in the street and made me listen to him. I was on my way to the Playground.

I didn't want to listen but I couldn't get away at once. I was almost frightened. You know Mrs. Sodality says nobody ever speaks to a woman if she has a good errand and attends to it. Perhaps she is right. But I am not sure any longer."

"What sort of a man was he?" asked Mr. Wilberton sharply.

"A disagreeable, oldish man. He was so sly and mean. Underneath his slyness was a sort of brutality. He told me the strangest rigmarole, about children not having enough to eat, and about soap. 'We're supposed to need soap,' he said and grinned. He tried to borrow money of me, but I said no money could be given without an investigation. Then he asked me if I knew a lot of people I had never heard of. Toward the end he became quite angry and stamped his foot. 'What business have you to come down here if you won't help us?' But when he finally left me he made a low bow and said he was sure I did a great deal of good. I wasn't afraid until he tried to be polite."

Mr. Wilberton looked at his daughter with a glance half whimsical, half severe. "You are going rather far with these social experiments. These people who are dining with us this evening are all of the same sort, aren't they?"

"Not quite," said Louise. "There is Edgar Donwin. But they are all people who are worth while. They——"

She stopped abruptly. She realized that she had never grouped them before as 'they,' never grouped them under any title. But they were a group, each acting on her in his own way to drive her along a bewildering street. Was it a street of her own choosing or of theirs? Where one enters that street there is a sign in many languages covered with such words as 'noble,' 'true.' Could it be that at the other end there were gesticulating shapes like the man who had tried to bully and flatter her that morning? A strange, misleading path! Was it the symbol of what her life was to be? When she walked a while along that street and decided to go back, it was *they* who suddenly appeared on the corners and appealed to her better nature. Sometimes they warned. "Go on—stop—." Whatever they said, she went on. They descended stairs from unlikely buildings. They encouraged and explained. Some laughed. The result was the same—she went on.

Edgar Donwin was not in his own opinion one of the group. He belonged to them without knowing it. What motive power there had been for her in his mockeries. This was because she

admired him somewhat, of course. He was not altogether blind to the world as she saw it herself, although he generally preferred irony to vision. Why was it that a man like Edgar, so well fitted to be wholly useless, to enjoy in a refined and long-continued manner all that could be stolen for him from the universe—that such a man gave to humanitarianism enough attention to disquiet himself?

Her mind went back to early days when, as a child of ten, she was taken to school by her maid.

Edgar stood on the corner and argued with a peddler. "But you know you haven't any right to do that. You haven't any license to sell shoe-strings."

"Aw," said the peddler, "I gotta license."

Then Edgar stole a shoe-string from the peddler, and with a quick twist of his ankle tripped up a ragged child who darted from under the push-cart. Then he took five cents from his pocket and made amends, using for politeness an epithet derived from books, "Take that, gutter-snipe."

Then he gave twenty-five cents to the peddler because the shoe-string was not worth so much.

All this Louise saw on her way to school, and she saw it now. Edgar was late to school.

She looked again at her memories, at memories of later years. She saw Edgar Donwin sitting on the beach in the moonlight, talking of the stars and of atomic humanity. "They are like crabs," he was saying. "They bite off each other's hands and feet."

She had shuddered. But Edgar had been pleased that he could say such things. "And perhaps," he added, "I might help, I might do some good."

It was as if, in the full solemnity of night, he quietly dedicated a small fraction of his energy.

Helen Curtis was coming to the dinner, bringing the strength fed by intelligence and the courage born of frivolity. And the Turner sisters—with no frivolity and with some strength. Mrs. Sodality was coming. The excellent lady, how well she could think for others! The conversation would pass under the control of Professor Kleinreinstein. That was to be expected. Louise was afraid of this man. What he said she supposed to be true because with all her mental athleticism she was not athletic enough to out-think him. She had taken some courses under him at the

University. She remembered now those magnetic courses. A dim room, dusty and thoughtful. Professor Kleinreinstein, by no means wholly a European, stood before his class like a cactus, the product of breadth and aridity. No man so clever. To the young people around him it was a matter of life and death; theories counted, stood for blood and soul. To him it was hardly so tragic. It was asserted that he was kind, but it was never proved.

Ernestino might come to the dinner too. But he would probably be late. He had so much to do.

Edgar Donwin and Elston arrived after the other guests were assembled. Donwin had thought that in this way Elston might be presented to Louise without emphasis or explanation.

"Who is this Carolus Elston?" said Gladys Turner to her sister. "Do you know?"

"No," answered Harriet Turner. "I do not know who Mr. Elston is."

Mr. Wilberton was most gracious. None of his guests suspected how much he disliked them. Donwin was the only one capable of suspecting anything so unreasonable. And Mr. Wilberton half liked Donwin.

Mrs. Sodality was placed at Mr. Wilberton's right, Professor Kleinreinstein at the right of Louise. Across the table, which was a little too large for the number of guests, they might have exchanged silent, diagonal confidences. Professor Kleinreinstein might have thought and expressed with his eyes: "This is a good place for me to be. I am a fairly old man, older than I look. My father was a cobbler in—really it doesn't matter what city. My father believed in the ruling class. Now his son is a member of the ruling class. I wonder how long it will rule. Of course this is not the first time I have been invited to a luxurious dinner. Far from it. I have had things to eat since I don't know when. Miss Louise is a charming girl and most enthusiastic. I believe her enthusiasm will last for a long time yet. Perhaps it will last as long as the ruling class, perhaps as long as I last myself."

At this point Professor Kleinreinstein might have shivered a little. However, he seldom shivered or shook, although he suffered from neuritis in his left arm and had been obliged to compose pamphlets with his right hand. "Of course I should have preferred to stay at home and do my part in dislocating Europe. The pace was too rapid. Somehow they never believed in me there. I am

accurate in my scholarship, heartlessly accurate. They did not think so. Very well, in no country in the world is there a merrier silver-crystal twinkle against fine linen than in America."

Mrs. Sodality might have thought: "This is a good place for me to be too. I am an elderly society woman. I might have concealed my age partially, I do that as it is. But athletics is a broken crutch. I lose more than I gain by dancing. I detest bridge. Besides, I couldn't afford my habit of having the score against me. If I hadn't thought of social service, I should be lost. Lost, that is always the way, for I never could have stayed at home. Lost, Professor Kleinreinstein, lost. Do you know what that means, in the way I use the word?"

These are the thoughts that might have been exchanged. But although Mrs. Sodality and Professor Kleinreinstein were sometimes confidential, their confidences were not of that nature.

"Professor Kleinreinstein," said Elston, "you and Mrs. Sodality must be enjoying the evening very much."

He bit his lip. No one replied. No one was unwise enough to be tactful.

After a moment's pause Professor Kleinreinstein said, "We have hardly touched on any serious subject as yet. But Miss Wilberton, if I may be allowed to say it, when I come here I feel that our talk, even when it remains in the lightest key, has a tone, a substance of meaning which it would be hard to duplicate elsewhere. How much of the other sort of thing, how much—I do not say frivolity, for frivolity is itself a human aspect—but how much vacancy! In this house we dare to be half serious. We exert ourselves to be half serious. Perhaps Mr. Elston will help us to accomplish this."

"It isn't very hard to be serious," said Elston. "And being half serious is like jumping half off a bridge. If you've got yourself tied to the railing you might as well throw down a couple of pebbles and watch them splash."

"Come," said Professor Kleinreinstein, "let's jump off the bridge altogether. I admire your courage, Mr. Elston. Can it be that you are one of those people who try to solve problems by actually examining them? Be careful, young man. It is dangerous."

Elston chuckled. "Be careful yourself. Have you any remedy for the world's diseases? Don't train your pupils to know too much. They are younger than you are, they may still believe

in remedies. They may even resort to surgery. Tell me how people are to be happy. They have hopes and rights. You admit that. Does it help them much to have you admit it? If your pupils ever do resort to surgery, the first malignant growth they remove will be you."

Professor Kleinreinstein erased from his features every expression except tolerance. He was in his lecture-room again, unassailable, supreme. He moved his wine-glass slightly toward the right. He knew when to lean toward the Hegelian Left and all its ramifications, and when to be one hundred per-cent American. When he leaned toward the left he did so as gently as possible. When he leaned toward the right he usually emphasized it by some gesture.

He began to speak with the aloof, foreign accent which had so often proved effective. "Those who listen to me must know that I have almost no positive opinion about these things. I understand how a thinker comes to believe that the mass of the people can be raised to a new level. But suppose that the new level is the old one after all? An immensity, a great globe of water—perhaps the surface is a little higher at some points, or seems so. But the surface remains—sphaerisch, since the earth is, with salient persist—tenzia, a sphere. How can one raise the level of a sphere? Is it to be supposed that one can plunge to the center of the earth, and taking Newton's laws by the throat, renew the earth's dynamics at their critical—punctus?

"A child builds a multiple-unit structure out of those small rocks which we call sand. But the rocks are—molecules to the tide. They level out, return to their basic repose; and the child seems content.

"And now for practical measures. We no longer love our neighbor. Legislatures must step in to fill the gap. We must deduct ten cents a week from our wages to buy our neighbor's child toy balloons. We have perceived that the conventions of society, yes, of chivalry itself are but the elaborations of some Neanderthal taboo. We cast the conventions aside. But we must employ policemen to arrest us for flirting in the park. Happiness did not grow spontaneously on this planet; and decency has always been an undeveloped herb. We must enforce decency and happiness by legislation."

"Excuse me," said Elston, "but I can't see that there is any sense in what you are saying. The first part was a mush of illus-

trations worthy of a minor poet. I could understand the second part if you would define the word 'happiness.' "

"But I know what Professor Kleinreinstein means," exclaimed Mrs. Sodality.

"So do we," said Miss Gladys and Miss Harriet Turner.

"What does he mean?" asked Elston.

"I will tell you," Mrs. Sodality answered with a motherly smile. "We know in our hearts what people ought to desire. Professor Kleinreinstein has a great heart, beating under the crust of his austerity. Ah, if you knew how warm that heart is. Only the other day a minister in a suburb of Buffalo wrote him an appreciative letter. I believe this minister lives several miles beyond the trolley. He has been strengthened and comforted by Professor Kleinreinstein's books."

"Have you been comforted?" asked Elston. "You don't look as if you needed it."

Donwin thought it was time to interfere. But he caught in Mr. Wilberton's eye a faint look of irony which seemed to mean, "They are a little harsh this evening. Perhaps Louise will see it. However, there is no law that a host shall not be amused."

"You should not speak so," said Harriet Turner severely. "Mrs. Sodality strengthens others. She is never thinking of herself."

"I don't believe she ever thinks of anybody except herself. I know what she is like." Elston shook his hair into his eyes and out again. "Haven't I been brought up by Missionaries' wives? Haven't I partaken of their sugar in Hawaii and drunk their petroleum in the Caucasus? Charity should begin at home. God help the country now that it has begun to do so. Excuse me, Mrs. Sodality, I have given up trying not to be rude. You are about as fit to reform society as an elderly peacock would be to hatch a nest of barnyard eggs."

He looked angrily around the table and began again. "I know you all. That is to say—I don't know Miss Wilberton. Perhaps she is sincere. I haven't made up my mind about Miss Curtis. But Donwin has been tormenting me all winter. I know there is no sincerity in him."

Gladys Turner laughed nervously. "Am I sincere?" she asked.

"You and your sister," said Elston, "may play around in the twilight zone of society all you want to. What you do makes no difference one way or the other."

ELSTON BRANCH

Elston turned to Mr. Wilberton. "What I don't understand is why you support all this sort of thing. Are you planning to go into politics? You are taxed for a certain number of dinners every year. You subscribe to causes, no doubt. You are as futile as a chain letter. Don't you know there is nothing back of it all but your money?"

Mr. Wilberton made no answer. Elston stopped speaking. He sat with his head bowed forward, a glaze over his eyes. Everyone waited for him to speak again, but he was in the stage of regret.

"Where is Ernestino?" asked Mrs. Sodality. "I see, Louise, that there is an empty chair. I suppose that is for him."

"Ernestino will try to come," said Louise. "He is working very hard. But I wonder," she added, "if Mr. Elston would consider Ernestino sincere. I do not know precisely what standards of sincerity Mr. Elston is applying."

Elston made no answer. There appeared to be a silent agreement among the guests to forget Elston's expressions of opinion.

"Ernestino," said Professor Kleinreinstein, "meets our tests. He has assimilated the best thought of academic workers and he has seen the conditions, he has had them before his eyes from infancy. He fears neither librarians nor crooks. He is the man to lead up, where the skeptics see no path, from a life which all must admit has its good side, but which is frankly not tolerable, to one which is more wholesome. Who knows but he may lead us all to some plateau of human life which will long remain uneroded?"

The speaker's eyes remained calm and level.

"What makes you use so many metaphors?" asked Elston. "You generally talk statistics. I suppose you know your audience."

"This is too good to lose," thought Donwin. "I will join Elston in the disquieting minority."

"Ernestino," he repeated vaguely, "Ernestino Mosk. He will be here presently. No doubt he is well employed at this moment."

Mrs. Sodality frowned. She never felt sure of Donwin. "He is helpfully employed. He has his class in Commercial Arithmetic at the Playground."

"I can see just how he made his entrance into that class," said Donwin. "With his mandolin under his arm."

"Don't make fun of his mandolin," Louise objected.

"I have no idea of making fun of it," said Donwin. "It

proves he is practical. He wishes to teach the mandolin, does teach it, I believe. I asked him why he didn't study the violin. He prefers the mandolin. The mandolin is aristocratic. According to him no other tinkling sound is so familiar at Saint Jims and at Saint Timothy-among-the-Blueberries."

"You are always unfair to people like Ernestino," said Louise. "He does teach the mandolin. But what do you think you are making out of it? There are boys, little boys, and some almost his own age, whom he has taught to read, taught to swim and to fight in self-defense. He is brave and unselfish. Why is it that you always see what can be distorted and pay no attention to qualities too robust for you? You ought to admire him for playing the mandolin, for knowing one thing more, instead of hinting that he knows nothing."

"I am sure that he knows a great deal," answered Donwin. "There is one thing I have always admired in him, his Norman, his Gascon, his Sicilian canniness. I know he says he is not exactly an Italian. I will tell you how I first saw him. It was at that same Playground where he is now. And for all I know he was learning the same arithmeticisms which he now distributes. Anyhow, it was a class. The high-brow at the desk was young and peremptory. The only thing which redeemed his show of authority, and that only in his own eyes, was that he insisted only on principles which were self-evident. But naturally the boys resented being told so decisively what they were too timid and grateful to realize they knew already. And one of them showed his spirit and so expressed subtly the passions of the mob. Over the desk at the beginning of an hour appeared the words, 'Byt pa semu.' No one could read them, least of all the instructor—and he trembled like Belshazzar. But at the proper moment it became known that Ernestino had written them.

" 'Very well, what do they mean?'

" 'Be it like this,' Ernestino explained. 'That is the way the Tsar always begins an ukase, that is to say, a decree. I didn't use the Russian letters.'

"As a matter of fact he couldn't have used the Russian letters. His parents, in the course of their wanderings, had at one time lived in some part of the Russian Empire. And Ernestino liked to believe that in his childhood he had known Russian, and to hesitate over the question whether he had forgotten it. He admit-

ted this afterwards, and that he had taken the words from a story by Jules Verne. Still, the bumptious instructor dropped some of his mannerisms and treated Ernestino with greater respect, finding promise in his work whenever it was possible to do so."

Louise shook her head mournfully. "You have no sympathy. When a man like Ernestino rises toward a nobler life, carrying with him scores of people as unfortunate as himself, you regard him as a prestidigitator. Can't you bear to see the unfortunate rise?"

"How far can they rise?" asked Donwin. "The sad thing is that they wish to rise. They start with not enough to be happy, and they are almost happy. Probably no one is happy enough to acknowledge his happiness thoughtfully and honestly. They need a little more sunlight and water. They have freedom in some ways, no doubt they desire it in all. What they do is to buy soap and water at the price of what freedom they have. Why don't they take the soap from the corner grocery and the water from the hydrant? After they start to rise they go on poising themselves on the backyard fences and snatching at the conventions of society for balancing-poles. Perhaps they finally scramble out on the level. Then they quickly beat at other heads as they rise, so that the refined need not give attention to means of repression. They stand between two worlds, no longer able to sympathize with one and never able to understand the other. Their daughters, in order to protect themselves against street brigands, acquire the manners invented to attract the adventurers of courts. They perfect ignorance. What was dishonest but kindly becomes correct and ferocious. What was once repulsive and almost safe becomes sinister. The worst is that they no longer enjoy life, and their simple-minded censoriousness is even icier than the disapproval of the elect. What mercy can the Slum expect from its own post-graduate? This is the only way I can class phenomena like Ernestino. But perhaps he is an exception."

"He is an exception," said Professor Kleinreinstein. "He is a link. He is not only what he is now, an enlightened gentleman. He remains what he has been, still conscious of the hopes and struggles of humanity in the rough. He is a continuant."

Mrs. Sodality nodded appreciatively. "His very name shows how many elements he combines. Ernestino—the warmth and

genius of the Mediterranean—besides the encouraging suggestion of the etymology. And Mosk. Is that not odd? What do you make of the name 'Mosk,' Professor Kleinreinstein?"

"I have heard an explanation of that," said Donwin. "The ancestor of Ernestino—or his father, probably, for genealogy is brief in the Slums—— The ancestor was standing in the market-place, possessed of no name but an anti-Christian and a patronymic. It must have been far in the East, for across the baked earth of the market-place extended the shadow of a minaret. The ancestor was trembling and shivering in the sunlight. Some hoodlum army-officers caught sight of him. 'Go into the mosque,' they shouted. 'Take off your shoes. Beat your forehead on the mosaic to the glory of Allah!' But the ancestor with reptilian courage, muttered back, 'I won't go into da mosca, I won't go into da mosca.' They christened him Da Mosca on the spot. The name was afterwards abbreviated."

"You know that story can't be true," said Harriet Turner. "The man wouldn't have been talking pigeon Italian to the officers."

"Of course it isn't true," said Donwin. "But it is unkind for you to discover that."

Elston turned toward Donwin and made a low bow. "I would rather listen to Mrs. Sodality than to you. Does the religion of humanity exist for you to make fun of it? I will not have it—" He was shouting now. "I will not have it. If you dare—"

He raised his voice still higher. But he recovered himself and continued quietly, "Let me tell you that the world has simply got to be reformed. I beg everybody's pardon. We can't do it by law, we can't do it by irony. I shall try to do it myself. Don't answer me. There isn't any answer."

Coffee was to be served in Mr. Wilberton's library. The guests went up stairs. They dispersed along the fronts of the bookcases. They cast slanting glances at the sets of books, as if they hoped those silent committees might at last bring in their reports. It was a luxurious library. Tiny ladders ran along the shelves like spiders, to hide when not wanted among the Congressional Records in the corners. There were shaded lamps here and there, and each lamp threw one beam of light toward the titles and another toward a leather chair with broad, epistolary arms. In the center was a long table on which diminutive editions were scattered like billiard-balls. Many colors entered into the

decorations on the walls, but all the colors were subdued. Outside was the hysterical city.

Gladys and Harriet Turner stood one on each side of Elston and asked him questions.

Yes, he was a Senior at the University.

"Is that all?" thought Miss Harriet.

Yes, he had lived much in the East. Yes, his family, what was left of it, was there now. They knew Uplift at its source.

"*Ex oriente lux*," said Miss Gladys.

"How wonderful," said Miss Harriet, "to be a person who dares to say what he thinks. But you must be more respectful to Professor Kleinreinstein."

"I am sorry," said Elston.

Mrs. Sodality and Professor Kleinreinstein were watching this group from the other side of the library. "Enthusiasm," said he. "The cult of truth. But experience will correct that."

Mrs. Sodality nodded sympathetically. She could sympathize with anything from a bull-fight to a broken wrist-watch. "How wonderful you are! You are unconscious of insult to yourself. All in the cause."

"Let us talk of something else," he interrupted. "How are your latest poems?"

Mrs. Sodality smiled coquettishly. "They are not *vers libre*."

"Ah," said Professor Kleinreinstein, "I knew, Madame, that you would be in the current of tomorrow."

He made a low bow. Under other circumstances he would have kissed her hand. He also had the gift of sympathy. He could sympathize with anything from a bull-fight to *vers libre*.

Mrs. Sodality enjoyed for a full minute the appreciation which she had a right to expect. Then she excused herself. "I must speak with this interesting young man, this Carolus Elston. How much more meaning the name 'Carolus' has than 'Charles.' "

"My dear Mr. Elston," said Mrs. Sodality, extinguishing in a bath of sympathy the personalities of Gladys and Harriet Turner, "you don't know how much you have interested me. We who carry in our hearts the sorrows of humanity are sometimes self-centered. How could it be otherwise since these sorrows are so intense? But you have given me a lesson. Will you come often to see me, and keep me from being self-centered?"

Elston said he should be delighted to visit Mrs. Sodality.

Donwin was talking to Louise and Helen Curtis.

The two girls were somewhat alike in general appearance. Louise was a little taller, her features were a little more decided. But this energy of stature and of feature was not even in opposition to gentleness and grace. Louise's forehead was high, but the hair grew low on it, enclosing an oblong space of whiteness in smooth adjustment to the other planes of her face. Her hair was dark brown, with a touch of fire, and it curled just enough to suit the needs of the forehead itself and to correspond with the moods and expressions of the whole face. Her nose was straight, and narrow without being sharp. When she spoke, her lips expressed thought and looked as if they might express emotion. Her eyes were grey and contrasted aptly with the brown of her hair. They were set wide apart; and this stereoscopic vision must have emphasized for her the reality of the material objects around her.

"How do you like my friend Elston?" asked Donwin.

Louise answered vaguely. She liked Edgar Donwin. He was her oldest friend. But a phrase of Elston's was intruding upon her ideas of Donwin—"I know Donwin is not sincere, he has been persecuting me all winter."

"Have you really been persecuting him?"

"Doesn't he deserve it?" asked Donwin. "But he is more likely to be the persecutor of others. At least he is in the habit of persecuting himself."

"I can see that," said Louise. "But you listen and lead him on. You have no right to watch the sufferings of a man like that!"

Donwin looked at her in surprise. "How do you know that he suffers? How do you know that he is sincere? He has charged everybody here with insincerity. Does that prove that Carolus Elston is sincere?"

"Perhaps not," said Louise. "But I know that he is sincere."

"Then," said Donwin with a touch of bitterness, "I have brought him to the right house. Perhaps I have done more than I intended."

There were no further indiscretions from Carolus Elston that evening.

10. WHAT IS A REFORMER?

On the way home Elston expounded to Donwin his ideas of Uplift.

"If I listen to you," asked Donwin, "will that be persecution?"

Elston waved his hand wearily. "There are two classes of reformers, those who are sincere and those who are not. There are no reformers in the first class. Wait, though. If you were not here I should say *I* was in the first class. But I have already made a fool of myself enough times for one evening. If you will examine the motives of reform, you will see at once that I am right. To be a reformer a man must believe that he knows what people wish and need. Does he? When he has answered this question to his own satisfaction, he must fit the individual needs together into some scheme. For if he goes out with a loaf of bread and gives it to the first hand that clutches for it, he is too ludicrously a Christian. Besides, who says that people want bread? They want much more than that. They want pleasures, for instance. When they aren't starving they won't eat bread unless it tastes good.

"And right here is the difficulty. A pleasure is a dangerous weapon. One by one we beat into insensibility the nerve-cells from which arise such curious and satisfactory sensations. But what do the reformers do? Either they are people whose nerve-cells were originally undeveloped, hardly worth beating into insensibility. Or they have long since devoured their sensations. Or worse still, they follow the numbing stages of other people's pleasures with disapproving joy. When all the nerve-cells are destroyed, except those long-lived cells which convulse the digesting stomach, the reformers come forward as if nothing had happened—'Here's the good old loaf of bread. Gnaw this, and remain alive.'

"If people could only take their pleasures with moderation. They must snatch at them, they are so much afraid they won't get them at all. They are right, they probably won't. A little tolerance for each other, a little self-control, and all this would be corrected. But the reformers can't be contented with this truth. If they were, they would be hardly better than Marcus Aurelius.

"Thus there is no basis for reform. All the more active the reformers become. Lately they have rediscovered Happiness by Legislation. But I should be ashamed to make fun of their laws. Of course restrictive laws always bring on the Saturnalia. Never mind, let's hope the Saturnalia will be interesting. But if there are going to be restrictive laws, I should like to arrange some of them."

"I am going to leave you here," said Donwin at a street corner."

"Yes," said Elston, "you'd better go back and call on Miss Wilberton. It isn't too late for her. She's one of those people that sit up all night thinking how to make the world better. About half past one they begin thinking how to make themselves more aesthetic. The two states of mind go on for a while parallel, and they think they're the same state of mind. They say, 'bowers, flowers, towers—I mustn't use any chain-store rhymes like that —just get the rhythm. . . . And of course that settles house-rent for bricklayers. By and by something snaps. Then they clutch a ukelele, stand on their heads, elope with the chauffeur. You go back. She'll drug her father and receive you in the room where she wouldn't let me have the chocolates. And then, released by virtue, glorying in the release of art, she will——"

"Look out for yourself," said Donwin.

"What for?" cried Elston. "Haven't I everything to lose if I lose *her*. I tell you she is one of those people who can think and go on thinking, who can feel and go on feeling. She is worthy to be happy—so she won't be. The only hope for her and for me is to change everything all round. Then there'll be a place—then there'll be a future! And if you tell me that I'm not worthy . . . Go home. There are some things, Donwin, I won't stand from you. I want to think. You know I'm a reformer myself."

The more Elston thought the less he was able to feel the ground under his feet. Instinct told him that in the group which he had met at the Wilbertons' house he had his chance of an active life. He had insulted them and they had responded with flattery. Evidently he could say what he pleased and strengthen his position with every hostile criticism.

"They are not worth keeping up with," said Elston to himself.

Immediately his thoughts turned inward. "Are you, Carolus Elston, any more sincere than they are? Have you one purpose, accurately adjusted to your capacities, which you will follow to the end? What are your capacities? Given a little encouragement in one of the arts, wouldn't you play with that art regardless of the two problems which meet all artists, whether your talents are worth while, and whether the art itself, if achieved, is going to be of any value to the world? Given a little academic success, wouldn't you smile outwardly with your stumbling features, smile inwardly with pathos, and quickly become such a pitiful and

well-paid specimen of science's walking-delegate as Professor Kleinreinstein?"

"Yet there is something metallic inside me," answered Elston from the depths of his third or fourth self. "How sad when a crustacean has a metallic skeleton instead of a shell. Well, what is to be done about it? Nothing. Play on the *cor de chasse* until I wake up the Proctor."

11. SELF-INDULGENCE

Now Elston and Louise Wilberton were friends. What Elston wished day and night was to talk with her. But to the confident mood and the unreality of his first interview had succeeded respectful timidity. With Elston timidity was almost as drastic as boldness. A few days after the dinner he went to her house and said, "Miss Wilberton, I have dared to come. But this may be the last time. It depends on you. You have every reason to wish never to hear of me again."

Louise, struggling to keep the acquaintance on a formal and indifferent basis, made him welcome.

She did not know what she was doing. No mind ever came in contact with Elston's mind and remained as it was before.

"What do you think you are doing in the Slums?" Elston would ask.

Louise hoped she was doing a little good.

No, Elston would explain, she was doing no good. She was using the sufferings of unfortunate people to build in her own mind a harmony of reflected sufferings. Her own mind was beautiful, consequently the harmony would be there. But what of it? A microcosmic harmony, and outside—discord. She was collecting instances; she would make a theory, or read one from a book. But what of the theory? Whose life would it save? Or worse, whose joy in life would it save?"

Louise protested that he was quite mistaken. She would never form a mere theory. She was interested in the people themselves.

Elston shook his head. "Some day I shall think it all out and explain it to you. Whatever you are trying to do, I know you will fail."

Donwin was decidedly puzzled by this acquaintance. What could Louise see in Elston to interest her? He asked her indirectly what interest she found in Elston.

"You are interested in him yourself," Louise answered.

"Yes," said Donwin, "but I couldn't tell you why."

There was a slight tone of annoyance in Louise's voice. Donwin asked no more questions.

But between Louise and Carolus Elston the friendship grew rapidly and vigorously. "I respect you," said Elston. "You are the only thing in the world that I do respect."

Louise was not angry, although the word "respect," when Elston used it, never suggested that he really felt much respect. "I am afraid I am not worthy of it," she answered.

"No," he said, "you are not. But I have to respect something. If this faith snaps, everything snaps with it."

Louise laughed rather sorrowfully. "Just how am I unworthy of the respect that you are nevertheless willing to grant me? Am I to become more unworthy of it? What are you afraid I shall do?"

"This is what I am afraid of." Elston held out his hand with his awkward, preaching gesture. "I am afraid you will become a nun."

"A nun!" cried Louise. "That is the last thing I expected you to say. But there are nuns with beautiful characters. I suppose I ought to feel complimented."

"There are a great many good nuns," said Elston. "That is why I am so much afraid for you. But I don't mean literally a nun with a veil. Most of the Settlement Houses are monasteries."

Louise burst out laughing. "That is an idea! If you knew how different some of the Workers are from what you think—"

"Oh, I know all that," said Elston. "But if you read history, something can be said for the monasteries, too, in that direction."

"I never can follow your ideas," said Louise. "I don't want to follow them."

Elston pursued his theory. "The Settlement Houses are monasteries. They have all the symptoms. They are prim flowers growing, naturally, in extremely earthy hotbeds. How well the weeds would grow there. Merely because the weeds, or some of them, are pulled up, no one should conclude that the prim flowers have anything ethereal around their own roots. But how can intellectual beauty expand from vice? If it does, vice was probably the wrong name to give to the raw material. This is the first trait

which the Settlement Houses have in common with the ancient monasteries, that the inmates live in relation to vice. They observe it distantly, but it amuses them. Or they struggle with it, overcome it; yet they find it an absorbing enemy. If it didn't have such glittering antennæ, they would leave it alone. If the vices fail, they introduce a few of their own, blending mental escapades with mild experiments in reality, explaining their divergences from decorum by saying that they must show sympathy for all the impulses of humanity, and generally, I will admit, keeping themselves out of trouble.

"Another point"—Elston was becoming excited. "The Settlements are acquiring property. Nothing to criticize here, I suppose. But the old monasteries could give them points. No human beings have ever been so skillful in acquiring property as those who started by declaring that they were above the need of property, or at most that they would use property for the benefit of others."

"Can't you see any good in my friends' work?" asked Louise. "They are charming people."

"Of course they are," said Elston. "That is the reason I am sure they are monasterians. How often it has been said that life in a monastery has the flavor of old wine."

Doubt and discomfort were growing in Louise's mind. Was it possible that after all Social Service was self-indulgence?

"Yes, it is self-indulgence," said Elston as if she had spoken aloud. "It is the worst form of self-indulgence, because it is founded on the most violent passion. To dominate one's surroundings, especially one's human surroundings, that is what most people really want. The animals do it in their assemblies. Children do it, and throw their tops over the backyard fence for fear some one will spin them better than they do. Later, slander is requisitioned, and wit. Listen to people when they tell their own stories. Notice their vivacity. Watch their eyes grow glassy when others tell theirs. This passion, unlike some, never grows old. The old man will raise his palsied arm and dominate from the abatis of the grave. Can't you see that what the Settlement Worker wants is to dominate too?"

"But I won't have it!" cried Louise. "Oh, why do you make the world so hard?"

"Won't you have it?" Elston was speaking with his tone of

command. He himself liked to dominate. "Won't you have it? Well, perhaps not. Then go out into the desert of back streets with a new purpose. Lose your trail, don't come back. And don't take any Japanese prints with you to rest your eyes from the ash-barrels."

"What will happen if I do?" asked Louise.

"Destruction, chiefly." Elston's face had the expression of ungraceful cynicism which made him intolerable in those groups from which he was not disqualified by his lack of amiable dissipations. "Destruction, but you may save your soul. I am willing to bet that I don't save mine."

It was dangerous for Elston to play in this manner with a girl's life. He must be forgiven—he was most dangerous to himself. It may seem strange that Louise Wilberton paid any attention to Elston and his undirected radicalism. She did pay attention. He had a double power of mystery. Behind him was his missionary family, contending with inspired courage against forces far beyond their understanding. In his path ahead was the mystery of untried experiments, hopes for himself and humanity which he would never realize, the vision of the Prophets marred by a touch of modern self-consciousness. As far as he was a part of his own story, that story is almost too sad to tell. As far as the story is vital for those whom he loved, for the continuing world, it is too difficult to tell.

Elston had fallen in love with Louise. But he had none of the means of showing admiration which occur so easily, and with such appearance of subtlety, to the stupidest of men. He could not take some liberty, so slight that there would be no reason for offense, and watch Louise's eyes to see whether she would show tolerance or indifference. He had no preliminary words. When he spoke, he would have no clew to the answer.

Finally he did speak. "Louise, you must understand that I love you. Will you be my wife? Will you wait a few years for me? I may not always be a failure."

"You are not a failure at all," said Louise. "You are only beginning your life."

But she could not say that she would be his wife. She had no thought of that. He went away without a word of insistence, as if he had known from the beginning that it would be useless to speak.

12. AN INVITATION TO THE COUNTRY

"I am a gambler," said Elston to Donwin. Donwin had given up his Club evenings, dances, his social interests in general. He spent his evenings with Elston. This was unexplainable to Donwin himself. He still half despised Elston, but he was under Elston's influence. Such friendships seldom last, even when external facts do not cut through them. But they are the dynamic points of life.

Donwin was not receptive to the idea of Elston's being a gambler. "You never touch cards, you care nothing for sports. How on earth can you be a gambler?"

"Suppose," said Elston, "that a man should offer to build another man a house, knowing all the time that the house, if finished, would look like a broken hat-box? Wouldn't he be a gambler, even if the plans were wisely rejected?"

"Is it wrong to gamble?" Elston went on.

"Naïve idiot, no," said Donwin.

Elston nodded his head in agreement. "I cannot see how it is wrong, provided a man has a right to handle money at all. But back of it lies the mental mechanism of the lizards. Why should a man wish to make friendships, to sit on a country-club piazza, glowing with geniality and sporting spirit, and then reach forward with two or three aces in his claw, and brush toward himself the loose change of his friends, that is to say their glittering scales?"

"I give you up," interrupted Donwin. "You will never live amusedly in the world."

Elston agreed that amusement was out of the question. But he said he disliked to be called plausibly a freak.

Elston had an air of whimsical importance. Donwin noticed it and wondered what it meant. Finally Donwin went home. He was not going to sit up all night talking with Carolus Elston. He had always disapproved of people who didn't know how to go home.

When Donwin was gone Elston took a revolver from his desk. He addressed himself and the revolver in low, measured tones. "I am not doing this merely because Louise has rejected me. She was right to reject me, and if I didn't care whether she rejected me or not, I should not be to blame. There is something deeper than the love of a woman, although at the present

moment I am unable to realize that fact. The trouble is that I know I am the most complicated failure that ever existed. Look out of the round eye in the end of your muzzle and observe the dimensions of my incapacity. I am too honest to be a business man. I am too practical to be a poet. I am too visionary to be a prophet. Prophets are supposed to be visionary. But I have always had doubts about that. Confucius wasn't visionary. Buddha seems to have had lots of common sense. Of course their disciples are always seeing things. But when Confucius glanced around him in China, he had about as much imagination as a camera. If Confucius should pass the Board Examinations and come to this College, he wouldn't get low marks in his courses because he was interested in the subjects taught. Donwin can do anything here. How strange! He seems to be my friend, and he runs as smoothly as a chronometer. I wish I could admire that fellow.

"Well, it is all decided. I lose in the first bout. I preach my first and my last sermon in the cathedral, and leap fatally through the stained glass window. The world must kick itself to death like a stumbling horse tangled in the harness. I am not clever enough to get it on its feet."

There was a knock. Elston dropped the revolver into the desk drawer and opened the door. It was the postman, holding out a letter.

"What are you doing here at this time of night?" asked Elston.

"I forgot this letter on the last round. I live near here. I thought it might be important. I thought I had better bring it around."

Elston laughed. "I never heard of a postman doing such a thing. Did you ever do it before?"

"No," answered the postman, "I don't believe I ever did."

"Then I'll read the letter," said Elston. "I'll read the letter if you want me to."

"I don't care a damn whether you read it or not," said the postman. "I brought it around."

"Oh well," said Elston, "I won't read it if you think it isn't necessary."

The postman was getting angry. "I don't think anything about it. But you don't get many letters, and—"

"Promise me," said Elston, "that you will never do this sort

of thing again. Why, I might have been working out a poem in celestial mechanics, I might have been translating the works of John Knox into Vedic Sanscrit."

But the postman was already at the other end of the corridor.

Elston held the letter at arm's length and sat down under the hollow cone of his student-lamp. "Shall I read it? Will it make me wobble?"

The letter was from Louise Wilberton. "My dear Carolus."

Elston stared at his own name as if it had belonged to some one else. "That name 'Carolus' was always a jinx."

"My dear Carolus, I must write to you. I shall have to let you interpret in any way you please my having to write."

"I shan't," said Elston aloud.

"When you left me yesterday afternoon, I felt as if something dreadful had happened. I wish I hadn't answered you exactly in the way I did. It was cruel, and not quite, quite true."

"It was dead right," said Elston.

"Please think a minute. Weren't you rather sudden? I have not known you very long. What else could I say?"

"What else was there to say?" Elston muttered. "She couldn't tie herself to a fantastic bungler. Only a matter of time, I should have jilted her in her own interest."

"But please come back. I do not know what I feel, but you see I am asking you to come back."

"Better not do that," said Elston. "Better not ask me to come back. Anyway I shan't come."

"How shall I sign this? I won't even put my name. But you will know me, because I am writing to you."

Elston sat staring at the note as it lay on the desk. "Thank God for that letter. Thank God for that letter."

Finally he took his *cor de chasse* from its green felt bag. With an iron paper-weight he beat it into a flat mass. This made so much noise that the man in the room above rapped irritably on the floor.

Elston laughed. "He hammers when I play. He hammers when I break my lute. He'll have a fit when I pull the trigger."

Elston was smiling mysteriously as he always smiled when he was thinking out the details of some plan. "What was I sent into the world for? To ruin myself, but not to ruin two people. First thoughts are best. She felt by instinct that I could never

be worthy of her. I must not let her ruin her life at second thought and through pity. And yet, and yet, I should like to see her once more."

Another knock at the door. "Come in," said Elston. "Unless you're the postman."

"Why should I be the postman?" asked Donwin. "It is too early for milkmen."

Elston raised his eyebrows ironically. "I am sure I don't know. To-night is the night for stray postmen and all sorts of unwelcome guests." He had kicked the broken *cor de chasse* under the desk and crumpled the letter into a drawer.

"Did you know," asked Donwin, "that the Easter vacation begins the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes," said Elston. "Silence in the halls of *Scolasticus Modernus Industrialis*. All the Rah-Rah Boys can forget what they haven't learned. They can get out the golf-clubs and form their so valuable business acquaintances in haunts which they would have done better never to leave. The weary professors may rest from their efforts to prevent culture from being disastrous to the youthful mind. In the dome of this vast kindergarten the President will find time to write some plumber for a new endowment and a code of ideas for the Faculty. As you say, Ramadan is upon us."

"Stop talking, can't you?" cried Donwin. "You have too good a time when you talk. I didn't come around in the middle of the night to hear you talk. I have heard you talk before."

"Perhaps I'll stop talking," said Elston.

"Now listen to me," Donwin continued. "And don't answer before you have time to think. You assume that thinking is something you can really do. But I have had doubts."

Elston nodded encouragingly. "So have I."

Donwin went on. "I want you to come home with me for this vacation. You hang around in your room too much, or wander alone through the streets. One of the reasons why you don't get on better in college is that you never have any change. You have this idea that college is more or less a fake. At least make something different out of the vacation. I am glad you know Miss Wilberton now, and all her friends. They ought to be able to get you out of your rut. Make a change or two in your confounded conceited attitude. I suppose you don't know that you are conceited."

"Oh yes I do," said Elston.

Donwin waved his hand triumphantly. "Well, that's something. I have been thinking this over for some time. I really want you to—"

"I know how you have been thinking," said Elston. "You have been wondering whether you dared to take this queer fish along with you to your more than exquisite fish-pond. Would he learn enough to balance his incongruity? Would he scare the other fish? Would some gentlemanly swordfish stick him with his sword?"

"I didn't think anything like that," said Donwin angrily. "I give you the invitation. I hope you will accept. I am too well acquainted with your twists to be offended at anything you say. But please don't always be so anxious to slam yourself that you slam all your friends too."

Elston leaned back in his chair. He was thinking. Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. But he kept his ironical smile, and as he reflected the smile became almost kindly.

"Is it so hard to decide?" asked Donwin. "Don't come if you don't want to. But I am really anxious to have you with me this Easter. I want you to meet my father and mother. I believe you would like Dad. I wonder if you would call him—"

Elston interrupted. "I don't mind saying that this is a strange coincidence. But don't ask me to explain why. There was another conincidence too. Don't ask me to tell you what. You are very good to me, better than you think."

Donwin wondered why the decision seemed so hard to make. A few days in the country. "I am very glad I asked him," he thought. "The poor chap can't have had many invitations, he is so clumsy in handling this one."

"All right," said Elston finally. "I will come. I don't know what it will lead to. I am afraid I am acting queerly to-night. Yes, I will come. Shall I meet you somewhere to-morrow?"

"I'll come after you," answered Donwin smiling. "You don't get away from me. We'll consider it settled. I'll be around to-morrow to make sure you don't change your mind."

But it was not settled. Donwin had gone back to his room and was writing a letter or two. The hour was so late that he felt the difficulty in going to bed which the small hours of the night inspire. Elston entered without knocking. "Hello," said

Donwin, "you here again? Are we to call on each other until breakfast time?"

"I am sorry," Elston began, "but I can't go."

"Can't go?" asked Donwin. "Why not? What's the objection now?"

"I can't go, Donwin, and you needn't ask me why. Don't speculate about what I am going to do this vacation. I am not going to look for jobs. I am not going to invent new professions, having failed to develop interest and capacity for the old ones. I am not going to write poems in prose, or prose in music, or music in conic sections. You are my best friend, perhaps my only friend, but I am not going to spend the vacation with you."

Donwin shrugged his shoulders. "I am sorry. I suppose it's no use to argue with you."

"No," said Elston, "it's no use to talk about it. I don't go. And now I shall leave you. I see you are writing letters. Write one to Miss Wilberton. Leave the word 'love' lying around in one of your sentences. Say you just love ice-cream or football. Sign the thing 'Blunderbuss' or some other facetious, self-deriding epithet. Let her think that it is I who love football and ice-cream."

He turned abruptly and left the room. Donwin was angry. Why couldn't Elston find a better pose? Under the influence of his irritation Donwin began to regret that he had given the invitation at all. He had meant to help his friend. How sad that that is the thing which we can almost never do. Perhaps we don't try hard enough. It is difficult to train an oak tree on a trellis. Donwin reflected that after all no good could result from the attempt to force Elston into a more cheerful environment. The fellow was too self-centred, too repellant. Let him flounder among his ideas. Perhaps something would come of them, perhaps not. It was pitiful to think of all the things that Elston could not do. He could make no impression on his companions in college, he could form no plan of earning a living, he couldn't come into a room without arousing hostility. He admitted all this himself—that was the worst symptom of all. "Well," thought Donwin, "at least I shan't have to take him to the Club and watch him stir his tea with a tennis racquet."

Carolus Elston was busy in his own room. He locked the door and then unlocked it. Why not save people a little trou-

ble? He took from his desk a manuscript and a document. The manuscript was the record of his thoughts and a plan for the regeneration of humanity. Nothing else. But it had been easier to record the thoughts than to elaborate the plan. Elston weighed the manuscript in his hand and accorded it pity and a scrap of hope. With a blue pencil he wrote across the cover, "Unfinished, canceled, but left behind." The other paper, the document, he glanced through. It was brief. No one would quarrel for the possession of his legacies. No need to have witnesses.

A nickel alarm-clock struck. Elston got up from the desk and stopped the clock.

He took from the desk drawer the revolver, and held it at arm's length like a rattlesnake. Then he settled himself comfortably in the desk-chair. "Perhaps," he said aloud, "this is the most foolish thing I ever did."

The wound bled very little. There was a small, round hole in the center of his forehead.

NOTE: Carolus Elston is the first section of a novel in three parts, to be called: The Meddlers.

ROBERT FROST

THE WALKER

He gave the solid rail a hateful kick.
From far away there came an answering tick,
And then another tick. He knew the code:
His hate had roused an engine up the road.
He wished when he had had the track alone
He had attacked it with a club or stone
And bent some rail wide open like a switch
So as to wreck the engine in the ditch.
Too late, though, now to throw it down the bank.
Its click was rising to a nearer clank.
Here it came breasting like a horse in skirts!
(He stood well back for fear of scalding squirts.)
Then for a moment all there was was size,
Confusion, and a roar that drowned the cries
He raised against the gods in the machine.
Then once again the sand-bank lay serene.
The traveler's eye picked up a turtle trail,
Between the dotted feet a streak of tail,
And followed it to where he made out vague
But certain signs of buried turtle egg;
And probing with one finger not too rough,
He found suspicious sand and sure enough
The pocket of a little turtle mine.
If there was one egg in it, there were nine,
Torpedo-like, with shell of gritty leather,
All packed in sand to wait the trump together.
"You'd better not disturb me any more,"
He told the distance. "I am armed for war.
The next machine that has the power to pass
Will get this plasm on its polished brass."

WALLACE GOULD

TRILOGY

I. PERSIAN VOICE (*From Æschylus*)

Morning came, to the gallop of great white stallions. Morning
rode pompously toward Hellas. With the mere looming of
the resplendent beasts
there rose an Hellenic invocation sung to the god of war and
morning, uttered with unabashed assurance—
attuned to the spirited pace of the steeds and the flaring pomp
of the divine progress. Now a hush, and Persia wondered.
Now the blast of a trumpet, and the very beasts of morning
reared. We, Persians, aroused, but only in time to see
before us
the whole Hellenic fleet advancing in serene array. We startled.
Persia was outwitted. Persia was dumbfounded.

For a lying Hellene with a feigned contempt for Hellas had in-
formed us, but the day before, that on that night
his countrymen would flee from the waters of Salamis, would
evade conflict. Thus much for the Hellenic ruse. We, Per-
sians, now aroused—
gave cry for cry, curse for curse. Now a lone trireme sailed
saucily forward from the Hellenic line
and brazenly charged, breaking asunder the ornate prow of an
old Phoenician. Persia was challenged at Salamis.

Persia was brave at Salamis. Now came the onset, thunderous
with human uproar and the din of marine collision. We
sustained it.

We were not cowed by force of arms, but rather by the clutch of a lioness. Our ships huge, the ways narrow,
we were thus held all helpless, prone to the rage of Hellas. Not one able to aid the other,
each could only ruin. Our figureheads clashed, like timorous brutes. Oars broke oars,
as wings break wings, in flight, when migrant waterfowl are frantic. Persia herself was frantic.

For now the Hellenes encircled us, pressing their onslaught. Small craft wormed in amongst us,
charging, scuttling, scurrying. One by one our vessels lurched, lowered sullenly, or, too suddenly stricken,
perchance dismembered, sank with a sullen swiftness, to cries that were answered with pæans.
Now there was blood in the sea. The sound of the sea was merged in a wail. It was the wail of Persia.

The sea was vile with the very vomit of havoc. Sodden fabric, sodden wreckage, sodden flesh, all weaving into the tidal warps,
vested the wide translucence with a mottled horror. From the hideous undulations live arms rose,
or amongst them the arms of the dying sidled. Corpses huddled close to many a cliff. We, the despairing, huddled together.

We, now desperate, turned our ravished prows to the virgin sea. We, the glorious, turned from glory—
fled, followed by the Hellenes, who, rampant with destruction, darted through our entrapped masses
even as knives through a haul of dolphins. Only when Hesperus peered out, did the cries of Persia cease. Only with Hesperus peering
did silence try to soothe. It failed. It was only the silence of the lost. For Persia was lost at Salamis.

II. ÆSCHYLUS

I fought at Salamis, Aminias, my brother, lost an arm there. I bled there—
but only as I was glad to bleed. I came to the scene of the high festivity of triumph

in time to see the handsome son of Sophilus dance naked, holding
to his heart the lyre,
thus to lead the exultant step of the finest youthful bodies in
Athens, the rarest in Hellas,
all alike bared to the gaze of gloating gods. The body of this
boy
was the finest of them all, the whitest, the firmest, the most supple,
symmetrical, graceful, and the most mature, though apparently
virgin—
the smile of Helios lambent on the undulating flesh, and the flesh
silky,
and everywhere taut, but nowhere lank. He sang. He sang alone,
and,
though his voice was not the finest, the song that he sang was
memorably the best,
an inspired invocation, a virgin song veritably silken, with silky
words tonally lambent,
and shimmering phrases rhetorically lambent, lengthy but not
elusive, fragile but not flimsy—
for the silk of the song was not a silk that women wear, and well
I knew it. There,
at the time, I voiced my knowledge. I praised the son of Sophilus.

I fought at Marathon, long before, but only as I was glad to
fight.
I was not born to die there. I was born to write the tragedies of
heroic Hellas. I was born
to create the authentic tragedies of the very gods of Hellas.
I was ordained to do so. One day,
when I was a boy about as old as the dancing son of Sophilus—
more sinewy than he at that age, but not so fine of body as he,
not so silky,—
not so silky of utterance either,—
then, during the heat of the day, with Helios glaring down,
direfully, feverish with ire,
on the vineyards of Eleusis, even as if at odds with Demeter,
I sat alone in the gardens of the temple of Our Mother—
alone in the shade of an ancient grapevine draping the walls of
the sacred gardens.
I waited. My father was in the temple, pouring or praying at
the altar—

Euphorion, my priestly father, later to die at that very altar,
a victim of the Persian sword—
and, while waiting for him, I dreamed many dreams, waking
dreams, gazing long
at a cluster of ripe grapes, purple to the last, and hanging heavy.
Suddenly I discovered a visage forming in place of the purple
cluster.
I knew the presence of Dionysus. I sank down. Then and there,
and before my rigid tongue could utter fright, he told me that I,
son of Euphorion,
would I but heed, should write the holy tragedies of Hellas. I
wrote them. I was honored by Athens. But all too soon
my rightful honors were taken from me. It was the son of
Sophilus who took them.

It was the son of Sophilus, who, forever silky of utterance,
later remarked that I always did the right thing, but without
knowing it.
He, Sophocles, was right. For was I not born of the godly, reared
within the domain of a goddess, and even in the hearing?
From the very day
that amiable Dionysus, privileged guest of bountiful Demeter,
appeared to me in the sacred gardens,
I began to seek myself in him. I found myself. I exulted. But,
lest I should be presumptuous,
I wrote his own words rather than mine, wrote absorbedly, wrote
abstractedly, often wrote obliviously
over a cup of the priestly wine of Eleusis. By divine command
I shared with Athens
each largesse from the soul of my host, I, privileged guest of
Dionysus.
What wonder that I always did the right thing unwittingly?
And what matter? For he, Sophocles,
always doing the right thing, knew it, and let all Athens know it.

But Sophocles was above reproach. He took my honors only as
the just man takes—
taking unjustly. Or was it really he who took them? Or really
the Athenians who gave?
Or Dionysus, even he? Or did I, myself, unwittingly let my
honors go,

and thus once more unwittingly do what Sophocles, himself right,
would surely have called the right thing? Or did Nemesis glower
down on me? I can only say
that my Athenians loved new things, were enthralled
by a tedium of new things, were entranced
with an oceanic monotony of what they called the new—
racial surges, billows, whirlpools, tides like those of Euripus—
and were ever diverted easily, by mere foam, by lower of storm,
by sheen of calm, by all alike,
though rather by the wave than by the sea. Manfully fond of the
stormy lower,
they were childishly fond of the silky sheen, lambent, alight with
many a flash,
and ever acclaimed each flash as new. And now, with the Persian
storm subsided,
the sterner garb of the soul was cast aside, and silken raiment
donned.
Silk was the new thing. The Athenians loved silk, and silk was
offered by Sophocles.

There must now be nothing but silk, and for new things, new
silks.
Now came the silk of Simonides, with lachrymation lambent on
a shallow heave of simpering woe, a ghastly sheen,
a sickly shadow cast from a verbal cloud of thinly vaporous pride,
and now
the men of Athens wept as only weakening wives had ever wept—
as the men themselves had never wept, even by the pyres of
Marathon,
and as the dead at Marathon would have scorned to see them
weep.
Weeping was new to the men of Athens. Therefore the men of
Athens wept.
They turned their backs on me and wept. And now, for want of
some new thing,
they rose against me, roused by a whispered charge of profa-
nation—
that of my having bared, in verse, the secrets of Eleusis.
I, son of Euphorion—
I, beloved of Dionysus—
I had revealed the secrets of the temple of Demeter.

It was not the son of Sophilus who was first to whisper against me.
I doubt that the son of Sophilus even repeated the whisper, save to deplore it.
He who whispered, accused also, seeking the power to silence me.
He was of those who lived in Hellas and thought in Persia. At Salamis
he fought beside my brother. Early in battle he was assailed. He feigned fracture—
fell adroitly, fell at the feet of Aminias, who received the blow
that severed his arm, the blow that should have killed the traitor, now my accuser.
I was the only witness, and well my accuser knew it.
But I never told what I knew of him, never even to Aminias—
lest, because of my lack of proof, I should cause unseasonable dissention—
or lest, as time went on, I should rouse a needless enmity against my brother.
I could not now retort to the man who was first to whisper, who now accused me.
I went mute to the Areopagus. I went alone, despised, ridiculed, threatened even—
I, son of the martyred priest of the temple of Demeter—
I, Æschylus, I even, who had given to Hellas her drama—
I, hero at Marathon, at Salamis, at Platæa—
I, as a common culprit, hailed before the men of Athens. I was acquitted—
but only to face indignity in the hands of a raving rabble, a disappointed populace,
an unconvinced assemblage swayed by the propaganda of my accuser.
My people clamored, rushed upon me. I was barely saved by Aminias,
who sprang to my side in time to display the withered stump of his lost arm—
the arm severed at Salamis. It was not the justness of my people
that spared me, even to my life. My people had come with stones, to stone me. Now,

they ignored me for love of a new thrill. Better had they flung their stones.
I bowed my head on the maimed shoulder of Aminias, who murmured—

"I alone should bow my head. For you alone could I have done this thing—
for you alone have thus defiled the flesh made sacred at Salamis."

I had known gods and heroes. Now, for the first time, I knew my people—
and yet I did not hate them. I loved them, for I was a man of Athens.
Only as an Athenian did I come to the call of Hiero.
Only as an Athenian did I live at court, at Syracuse.
I loved my people better than they loved themselves, and yet I say—
I could not live among them. I and my people were estranged forever.
Never once did I curse them. But I took myself away in silence.
I shall never go back, for only too well I know, too deeply feel, too wisely fear,
the subtlety of prejudice, the insidiousness of stigma—
and only too well I know the subtle charm of the silk of Sophocles.
Yet only the gods may know the times that I have longed for Athens.
Not men, but gods only, could ever know how I love my people. They,
who call me the father of tragedy, ever give the ivy to Sophocles. I scorn them—
no, for I love them. Gladly would I die for them.
I fought at Salamis. I was made immortal there. I wish that I had died there.

III. PERSIAN VOICE

Off from the lioness of Hellas, but not far off, ostensibly asleep at the dugs of its couchant mother,
an insular whelp of Salamis lies, forbidding, sinister, wakefully napping, somnolently waiting—

over its headland the god of panic all the while prancing to the syrinx, forever ready
with either fantasy or fright, and followed revelously by his dancers. There Pan dances.

There we waited. There we hid, behind the rocky claws of the whelp, waiting not somnolently,
but alertly, for the despised Hellenes, who, surely to be driven ashore,
must flock there, stricken, desperate, doomed. We were to wait, to emulate the wily Salaminian whelp—
to crouch, to spring on easy prey and gorge on the hopes of Hellas. It was not we who sprang.

It was the hated Hellenes who sprang. Out from their little hulls they leaped, singing, singing,
uttering what was to us the hum of infuriate wasps, and swarming in a deadly gyre
about the littoral crags, fragments of which they hurled, all tellingly, aiming as if by the eye of Ares—
hurled like the bolts of Zeus, through an arrowy downpour. Now the whelp of Salamis devoured the hopes of Persia.

For suddenly there resounded many a cry that ended song. All song ended. The Hellenes closed in—
their very eyes hard shields of burnished hate. Prodigal of their own blood, as if it peopled the world, save Persia—
running headlong into assault, as if the encircling sea were armed and ready to follow them, these few, crying out
in the voice of maddened Eumenides, now strangled us with a narrowing cord of carnage. Persia reeled. Xerxes,

looking on from an eminence, beat his breast and bared it, ordered retreat. At the moment of alarm
there leaped into view the god of panic. Pan had been hiding in the boscage. Now routed,
pressed by battle, he sought escape. With distorted visage, threatening gesture, he ran off, or vanished. I know not which he did, for,

at the sight of him we turned, fled, breaking through the Hellenic
cord by force of mere precipitant flesh. We fled unarmed—
our hands left free to grasp rather than strike. We fled in all
directions, and therefore toward the sea.

All the great of Persia perished, all save the greatest among us.
He, with only the mean to obey him,
staggers back to a throne from which a great command, uttered
now,
would perish for want of shelter in fit ears. All perished. Even
the promise of new greatness perished,
with all the better youth of Persia. All hopes, the old, the new,
were devoured by the whelp of Salamis.

IV. SOPHOCLES

I danced and sang for Salamis. Mine was the finest body in all Athens.
Mine was the model body of the palæstra. Mine the symmetrically tapering trunk,
with each breast a Parian plateau, each forested with manly hair,
each web or mass of muscle dear to the dreams of youthful Phidias—
the placement perfect, the divine precision worthy of the will of Themis.
Mine were the spare and masculine buttocks, the trim loins dear to the eye of Hermes.
All the muscles of my body were alike responsive to command, were obedient to mere whim—
swift of response as Hermes to the slightest nod of desireful Zeus.
Mine were the honors of the course. Mine were the honors of the cast.
Mine was the honor of being chosen to dance, to sing, for Salamis.

Not like my body was my voice, except for its training. It was not feminine,
but faint. It was clear enough, and was later sufficiently resonant
for the song of the symposion. But at the time of Salamis,
my voice had never yet been raised to Aphrodite. She was as yet austere, was even repellent. She, herself,

at the time, in her own sweet way, would have been evasive, perchance, or even derisive—
promissory of patronage when my voice, at least, should convince her.
I had never implored the Cyprian, and my voice was as yet in its tenor.
It became in time sonorous, with a resonance to convince the goddess,
but not the men of Athens, and the hetairai, assembled together—
the many thousands. Even when I was a boy, and sang for Salamis,
I knew that my voice was inadequate. I ignored the fact, or braved it.
I depended on the words of my song, my maiden song, a poem
dedicating my beautiful body to Pallas Athena, to Athens,
with every word made worthy of my body. I wrote hurriedly, rapturously,
between selection and summons. I wrote fearfully, even, and read thus, once having written—
fearful because of having written so well and yet so quickly. But I thrilled—
and I made the men of Athens thrill, the heroes returned from Salamis.

There, without the flow of the flute, or the direful surge of the dithyramb—
there, with only the lyre to touch, for modulation or suspense—
there, to weary heroes, to the men of Athens, I declaimed
my rapturous ode, and as I sang I often glanced at Æschylus,
old Æschylus, the Zeus of declamation and the dithyramb,
grim, dread, inscrutable, as he stood among the heroes, himself one of the greater,
yet surely, to the hasty eye, merely a guest among them, for he seemed
immune from all elation of triumph, oblivious of distinction. I thought that the old man glowered on me,
and when I ceased, and when the men of Athens cried out, applauding long,
the great man stood immutable. I hated him. I loved applause.
I reveled in the noise that all the men of Athens made. I flushed. I quivered. But Æschylus,

ever inscrutable, came forward, while at his back there trailed a hush
eery as the wake of a god. I now quivered with wonderment.
Proud as I was, I cowered within. But Æschylus came straight toward me, stood before me,
embraced me, told me that my song was another triumph of Salamis.

And now I loved old Æschylus. I bowed my head. I closed my eyes for shame. But even so,
I made resolve to emulate him, innocently made resolve
even to surpass him, some day, in singing of the heroes, the gods, though never to mourn—
for Æschylus never mourned, but only mentioned, majestically—
never to mourn, but rather to immortalize. I was too young to mourn.
I was not born to mourn, but to make, to expand, to perpetuate.
In all my song of Salamis there was not a verse of mourning
over the heroic dead, not one for the ears of the weeping weak or the wavering strong—
not one for the ears of impressionable youth too willing to waver.
I was concerned with a living Athens. I was concerned with its glorification—
with the elevation of Athens as the acropolis of all Hellas.

I knew that glory was not born of siring strength alone. I dreamed of beauty—
dreamed of strength and beauty together, of equal poise, as in my body.
I often conversed with youthful Phidias, lolling about the palæstra.
He said that his master, Ageladas, taught that beauty was enervating—
fatal to consummation of strength, impossible to the heroic.
But Phidias thought as I did, and together we indulged our dream—
not one of beauty alone, nor of strength alone, but of both united,
even as in my body, and his, and others about the palæstra,
or in the faces of the hetairai whom we had seen at the theatre.
I wrote. All unexpectedly I took the honors from Æschylus.

It was by luck that I took them, only by luck. With the manes of Theseus
wrested from Scyros and now entombed at Athens, where they belonged, there was great pulsation
of the intellectual, the patriotic, and great political fervor, all unbridled,
with rivalry now an abstraction, itself unbridled, unconscionable, unobscured;
and at that time, when judgment was all undone, I was given a chorus. On the day
of Thespian contest, one of political wrangling, of worriment even, when the spectators,
mad with rivalry now a concretion, and led by incitors paid in the parados,
rose in tumult, and when the archon, Aphesion, failed to ballot the judges,
the daring Cimon, with his generals, having poured to Dionysus,
now ensconced himself as judge, and invited his generals to join him.
Now by the judgment of generals I took the honors from Æschylus.
Later, by word of legitimate judges, I took the honors from others.
I made the strength of Æschylus beautiful, made it symmetrical, made it expansive,
glorified it, gave to the crude a luster, gave to Athens
a Thespian parthenon, with a frieze of glorious phrases wrought of style
at once as pure as Parian marble and strong as that of Pentalos.
I gave to Athenians new things. I brought before them a third actor.
I set before them the painted scene. I completed the work of Æschylus.

Phidias wrought his forms as I my phrases. Pericles, working likewise,
masterfully wrought an ascendant city, making it beautiful, making it strong,
replacing the strong and the stern with the strong and beautiful, making beauty,

even as in his household, the equal of the strong, the feminine balance
essential to the poise of the great, but neither dominative nor seductive—
and not only replacing thus, but furthering thus the dominion of Athens.
Æschylus had ever spoken for slow expansion, cautious, conservative—
but Æschylus had gone his way, enshrouded in classic resentment, a resentment surely justified,
whether because of the scene at the Areopagus, when stones were raised
in the hands of the rabble, ready to be hurled at the bard of Eleusis,
or because of his having lost to me by the judgment of mere generals.
I was ever grateful to him for his praise of my maiden song of Salamis.
Not once did I ever forget that he was my father in Dionysus—
patriarch who bestowed on me the proscenium for my painted scene,
with the stage, the cothurnos even, for the strut of my third actor.

I looked on Æschylus with awe. If I used him only to better him,
it was because of the fact that I must rise to the call of the evolving—
even as Pericles rose, and as Æschylus himself had risen,
using and bettering Thespis. If I took the honors from Æschylus,
I did so sadly. I suffered. But the honors that I gave to Athens
tempered all sadness with a sense of justice older than drama;
for I, citizen, honored perchance too many times, by Dionysus—
honored again and again, as if through divine but inebriate habit—
never thought of the honors as mine alone, or even as mine at all. From the inner heart
I made of them a secret gift. I bestowed them all on my city.

I would have died for Athens. But I lived on, contemplative, active—
absorbed in Thespian glamour, or concerned with Athenian prowess. Pericles,

ever impulsive, and now impressed with what he called my wisdom, gave me command
in the Samian expedition, made me a general. Eager to add more honors to Athens,
and to myself, by some means other than merely writing of heroic Hellas,
I actually sought death at Samos. There, however, I gave good dinners.
There I found that plays, new plays, were haunting me, were distracting me—
that suicide was the only death that I might die at Samos. Pericles,
ever tolerant, ever indulgent, laughed, remarking that my verses
made excuse for my commands, and that so did my good dinners.
But later, as priest of Alon, I found myself capable, able.
And even later, when called upon to judge the reforms of Pisander,
I gained back all my Samian loss, the respect of the men of Athens.

Old Æschylus had long before resented the treachery of the rabble.
But Æschylus had never known the treachery of a favorite son. My Iophon,
my eldest, my only disciple in matters pertaining to Thespis, my embodied hope
of preserving the drama of Hellas, he, whose better lines I had written—
he, jealous of my affection for the child of his half brother—
Iophon, heir to my estates, he, scheming, lest he should lose them—
announced that I was beside myself, that I was unfit as master.
He cited my great age. He cited even my good dinners.
He charged me with being imbecile, charged me openly. I was not undone.
I said that if I was beside myself, I was not Sophocles. I said
that if I was none other than Sophocles, I was not beside myself. I arose.
I read new verses, written that very day. The judges, at once applauding,

themselves arose. They discharged me. They escorted me to my very door, where, to befit,
in the presence of all, I forgave my son. I entered the house with Iophon.

I lived on. I have outlived the serenity of my city.
Already the fear of Lysander makes the populace timorous, makes me tremulous,
fearful of the effect of subtle silk and Corinthian dinners, fearful even of the effect of my silky verses. In my alarm I wonder
if I, perchance alone, made silk thus dear to the heart of Athens. I would assume
all blame, could I make armor dearer than silk, once more, and harden
the precious flesh made soft by lust and by many Corinthian dinners. But I have outlived
all power to wield my conscience. I have outlived the conscience of my people.
I have outlived the strong. I have seen the beautiful made mistress—
a charming widow, sophistically virile, but ethically weak, and already
baring herself to the rabble, to the aggressively low, the inanely aspiring.
Now with the Phidian frieze upraised, there comes to an end all effort.
Now with the eyes of Pericles closed, there comes to an end all vision.
I have outlived the greater, for even Euripides is dead, he in whom our greatness wavered—
with only a day now having passed since I heard of his death at distant Pella,
heard of his mutilation by the hounds of Archelaus, hounds that were bestially incited
by human curs, two jealous minor poets.

Aristophanes
laughs on, laughs well, though I fear that his is the last Hellenic laughter—
the long last laughter of the great, if he be great. But he annoys me—

laughing when there should be a hush, and flouting instead of rousing,
making the lowly despicable, the loftly lowly, and even Ares, even Athena,
secondary to Momos, with the Athenians thus to the Spartans.
He will outlive me, laughing. I fear that he will outlive his laughter.

I have outlived the greater, and the greater renown of the lesser.
I have outlived their sway. I fear for the very sway of Athens, fear
that Æschylus was right, even without knowing it. He admonished us
ever against a rampant ego, ever against a lust of conquest. We should have heeded him, I fear.
I fear not only for the expansion, but now for the very existence,
of all that our heroes fought for, all that our thinking men accomplished, and that Socrates now undermines—
worming in search of mere self. I shudder for the fate of youth.
Lewdness already pervades the palæstra. The Lyceum now resounds with dissention.
The Areopagus looms with a leer, the Parthenon with a ghostly glower.
I have won the Elysian peace, and yet I dread it. I won it wrongly.
I should rather have died for my city, should rather have died at Salamis,
than have lived for the glory of mere verse, though such were the glory of Athens.
I wish that Salamis were tomorrow, and that I were young, an able commander,
I would put verses away. I would burn them. I would adjure them forever.

V. PERSIAN VOICE

I hate the name of Salamis. I sometimes hate the very sight of the proud white stallions of the morning. Were I to tell
the entire tale of Salamis, the stallions would appear ten times before I could ever say in full

all that I were to say. They would trample me as many times,
for well they know who fears them.
I am afraid of the morning, for all mornings are monstrous.
All mornings are one, the morning that followed Salamis.

All Persians left on sea turned seaward. As after a storm the
dizzy winds reel on, on, until utterly spent—
swift to the end, and yet, at the last, insensible of direction, so
our ships reeled seaward, onward,
vaguely feeling their outward way from the very sight of Sa-
lamis. All Persians left on land turned homeward—
all save those that Mardonius held. All the rest were abandoned
to a fate far worse than Salamis.

All reeled homeward, dizzy with despair of once more seeing
Persia. All went reeling desperately
into the Cadmian land of many springs. We drank at Crene.
There, by the law of the long thirst, many died
the mocking death of the first long draught. Many a straggler
drank too late. Many another
had long since fallen dead at the uttered name of Crene. We
who were left sustained ourselves with the uttered name
of Persia.

Now, like the blind winds nearly spent, we plodded into Phocis,
many by way of the Doric sweeps,
and passed on, plodding, famishing, into the lordly valley of the
Spercius, thence to Archaia—
thence to Thessaly, itself lordly but impoverished, itself spent.
Great numbers of us perished there
of old ills, old thirst, old hunger. Onward we plodded, onward
and ever toward windswept Thrace, on into winter. Now
by night

we staggered to the shores of icy Strymon. Those who had ever
defied their gods now bowed their heads
and uttered themselves madly to all deities. All night they
prayed in the evil Thracian wind. Now by dawn
we of the vanguard crossed the ice, which, suddenly, its own
strength spent, broke behind us with a crackling thunder.
Now with an uttered thunder thousands perished. I thought that
as many perished there as in the sea at Salamis.

Behind us death, before us deadly Thrace, we staggered onward. Men died of exposure. Men died of hunger.
Men died by their own hands. Men died by the hands of those who coveted the unshared portion.
Men died cursing all the deities adored by the Strymon. Men died shuddering even as I shudder—
merely to think of Salamis. I hate the very memory that enables me to tell the tale. I hate the name of Salamis.

VI. EURIPIDES

I was born on the day of Salamis. To Salamis the women of Athens fled for safety, or were sent,
when the Persians overran all Attica. There, with the rest, went Clito, my mother,
pregnant, staggering terrified to accouchment. There I was born—
though where in Salamis I do not know, save by word of tradition,
a tradition tragically masked. I only know that there and then
my mother, abandoned by her slaves, and beside herself, strayed off alone,
only to be found with me by strangers, compassionate slaves or commoners, who bore us back to Athens,
and went their way, at once, unknown, unquestioned. Nothing of all this did my mother remember, which is well,
for well I love tradition, and better if it wear the mask—
still better if the mouth of the mask be turned up slightly at the corners.

Had I been born as long before that fateful day as Æschylus,
I should have fought at Salamis. I should not have led the song of triumph, nor the dance either,
had I been only as old as youthful Sophocles, for not as yet
should I ever have sung at all, and my body, though at that age as carefully trained,
and surely as able, as any ever the product of the palæstra,
would not have been so symmetrical, so graceful, as that of Sophocles. The muscles
of the forearm, for example, were much too near the elbow, and were gross. My biceps rolled

even at rest. My thighs were bovine rather than human. I was merely strong.
Placement was anything but precise. Contour was anything but classic. I was merely able.
I won the Thesean ivy. I won the ivy at Eleusis. I might have won the Olympian crown.
But I should not have led the song, nor the dance either, for Salamis.

Even as my placement of muscle was irregular, so was my placement among men. I was never found among the chosen.
I forced my way. I forced my way to the Dionysia. Mnesarchus, my father,
credulous of all that I, even as a boy, had never believed in,
heard at the Delian fane that I should one day wear the ivy. He,
thinking only of the crown on the brows of the son of Mnesarchus,
willed me straightway to the palæstra, thus to prepare me for the wearing.
A kindly father, he, but impervious alike to faith and fact—
impervious to my dreams, which, voiced as mine, bespoke the irregular—
impervious to the fact that the heart might wear the triumphal ivy. Only through strong persuasion
did I ever procure from him the right to sit with Anaxagoras. Only through secret sacrifice
of luxuries, of my allowance even, was I able to pay the price of Prodicus. But, meanwhile,
the hated strygil had begun to lag, to linger, to pause. It was now discarded
for the rythmic reed, the whirring dart of the discos now ignored, and soon forgotten
for the tremulant flight of the dithyramb. Mnesarchus, unconvincible father,
shook his head concernedly, ashamedly even, and eventually bowed it.

I would have raised his head, but could not do so, save by lowering mine.
I would have willed his head high, but I knew that he alone must do it,

even as he had willed it low, with half will, half traditional gesture, the latter
much more dramatic than the former, and even tragic, for the mask
wore no subtle smile about the aghast mouth. I smiled for my father.

For no man did I ever bow my head, not even for Sophocles.
I persisted in my will to wear the Dionysian crown. I failed
the first time. I failed again. I failed successively for years—
and yet not once did I bow my head. I persisted unabashed. I waited.
The greater, the lesser, the mean, all strutted past me in Thespian pomp,
wearing the ivy well, or ill, or purposely askew, to ape the pose of Aristophanes.
Not even for him did I bow my head. He railled at me. He reviled me.
He set all Athens against me, carping theatrically, carping, carping—
in the name of Dionysus, or ostensibly thus, and thus creating
even in the minds of the more profound, the minds of all possible judges,
an airy indifference, trifling but subtle. I smiled at Aristophanes.

I gave to Athenians what they wanted, a new thing. I gave to them
the only drama eternally new, the drama of the human heart. I gave, as well,
the drama of the godly heart. The Athenians were heartless. Fools—
fools of old, who wanted the new, and yet were blind to its presence.
Ivy was given to the heartless, or if to me, heartlessly, sparingly, grudgingly even. The verses
of Xenocles, Euphorion, and other mere aspirants, were favored—
preferred over mine, by the judges if not by the populace. Discarded plays
by Æschylus, plays that died with him, were brought to life, at the offer

of a chorus to any poet who should undertake a revival. Plays were lauded,
all save mine, and some were called the new thing. Poets, good and bad alike, were crowned. Poets innumerable appeared, all manes
of Melpomeneian miscarriage, and ivy was bartered in the parados.

Not even before my apparent fate did I bow my head, but forever persisted
against the indifference of my people, persisted in giving to Athenians
what they wanted, what I also wanted, and what I knew by its presence.
I gave to them the heart of the drama. Others had given to them the trappings—
which, from the first, I had taken for granted, had used without improving. But trappings were considered new,
and the new must therefore be new trappings. Or, as a lone alternative,
new laughter, for, by good Athenians, laughter itself was regarded as merely a shift of the new. Aristophanes—
he who decried the tragic license, he, arch paraphraser of the phallic—
he who praised the archaic drama, he, defamer of Dionysus—
he who extolled the older gods, he, veritable priest of the upstart Momos—
he who preached a decline of Athens, he, ridiculer of innovation—
he was new, authentically new. I was merely irregular, myself an irregularity
of national progression, my placement in the age irregular, somehow wrong;
and that all too much was wrong with me became an intellectual chant,
with Aristophanes, corypheus, leading a popular parabasis. I was irregular—
I, dupe of Anaxagoras—
I, imitator of Prodicus—
I, monger of meters unsustained, undignified, themes unwholesome—

I, portrayer of women as they were, and not as they should have been—
I, creator of characters who suffered only because they must—
I, prophet of gods created by men, rather than by other gods—
I was irregular. Truth should be hewn symmetrical, even with a lie for the chisel.
Thus the chorus chanted. I ignored it. I never bowed my head.
Not the plays of Æschylus, nor the plays of Sophocles, were those
that Socrates attended to the exclusion of all others,
but my plays, mine only. Drama other than mine he scorned.
Not the verses of Homer, nor the verses of Aristophanes, his modest better, were those recited
at Syracuse, by Athenian prisoners, thus to purchase freedom. No—
but my verses, mine only, were those acceptable as gold. And yet—
not my plays, but those of others, won all garlands at Athens, all
except a faded five, which, to receive, I merely bent the head.

I say that I never bowed my head. I did bow it. Three times I bowed it.
I, poet, never bowed it. I, Euripides, bowed my head at the death of Mnesarchus, my father, who,
entirely of his own will had eventually raised his own bowed head,
with my once having worn the Dionysian crown, had raised it high—
now that the ivy had been won, as if he himself had won it.
I bowed my head when Anaxagoras died afar, at Lampsacus—
fugitive from Athenian wrath at his having dared to present the new.
I bowed my head once more. I bowed it for Pericles, the dead—
bowed it low, with even the head of Athena bowed, well bowed forever.

My people called Pericles their Zeus. They called Aspasia their Hera.
Well they called, though better would they have obeyed their god, and better

have offered mortal enthronement to his divine widow. Poor Aspasia,
now neglected, or ignored, in the cold Athenian ether, became chilled,
and looked on warm young Lysicles, and loved. Our human Hera,
treading her gray recession toward Elysion, looked on youth, glanced backward and perforce downward,
and saw love and forgot Elysion, and Athens, and me. Athens, too, forgot—
was lost in dreams of its former self, and often, ever more often,
muttered madly, incoherently, or cried out, squirming or writhing,
numb with the nightmare of the Spartan clutch. I grew afraid, with Athens,

I came to Pella. I came to escape the fate of Anaxagoras.
I had watched the slyly rising hand of ascendant Aristophanes—
the comic hand already creeping upward, to remove the mask,
like the hand of suave Hermippus, which had lately bared the livid leer
to Aspasia. One by one had such as we confronted face to face
these phallic mummers of the moral, virtuously vicious, chastely vile,
fearing to bed with any thought not quite effete, and sitting upright,
wheedling the senile, but laughing to scorn the potent, the courageous—
laughing on painted papyrus, but glowering from behind it.

I came to Pella to find repose, but there is no repose at Pella—
only the long and troubled languor that comes of desolation. I am desolate.
I wanted the repose that comes of rest in the vital. I often laugh,
sadly, as I walk through the halls of the merely animate. I am alone.

I laugh the laugh of all the desolate of kind. For only Zeuxis—
Æschylus of the brush, tragedian of the vanities—
only him do I have, and him only to uphold, unthanked,

for he is first my countryman and afterwards my friend, a child
not caring whence the apple comes if only it be rosy. Not for him, but only
for an Hellene do I feel concern, do I voice myself, defending him
against the decadent Persians, who assert that he paints in no new manner,
offers nothing esoteric, offers nothing but objective self
made over with what he steals from others, the visionary, the inventive,
only to classify, glorify, merge, make his, by force of mere genius,—
or that he never soars to look for signs of the new, but only struts,
one with his own peacocks, his worth well blazoned by a single sign—
his own posterior monogram, garishly golden. I fear the chatter,
for Archelaus is easily won to the semblance of the progressive,
the attitude of the elevated, the posture of the superior, such,
if only as matters of mere words. He assumes the pose of the rational—
ignores his intuitions. He succumbs to sapience. I hope
that his walls will not be piddled over with Persian paint.

But tomorrow
I shall go my way, if only to turn from a mockery of repose at Pella,
or from a worse, a mockery of repose in what I thought was friendship,—
for Agathon, whose every verse is luxury from Lesbos—
he, old friend at Athens, and my only friend at Pella,
obviously shuns me, to connive with pearly poets, professional exiles
ever as remote from brain as now from native habitat.
I shall not suffer an estrangement. I shall go back to my people, if only
to give my feeble flesh to the sword of Lysander, if only to offer it—
if only to do, too late, all that I would have done at Salamis.

I shall not suffer again what I did by the hand of Aristophanes—
or not here shall I suffer it. If I must suffer it again,
I choose the selfsame hand, the only worthy one, as the agent—
whether of mere annoyance or of eventual destruction.
I often laugh the laugh of the desolate of kind. I much more often laugh
the laugh of those who dream desperately, even as I once dreamed of Pella—
the laugh of those who dream deliberately, as I dreamed, only to be disillusioned,
as I am, who dream no more except of going back to Athens.
I came here hoping to forget. I live here only to remember—
only to cherish more and more the memory of my five immortal crowns, only to realize more and more
that the force from which I fled was the very force that created me, sustained me,
and that I am at heart an Athenian. I, Euripides, am an Athenian.
I, Euripides, now reclaim my birthright, all despite the fact
that the very earth takes back its dust in many a manner, none mattering—
nothing mattering, save that a clod be overturned or an urn emptied.
I, Euripides, know too well that the manner of my death at home
would mean no more than the chance replacement of appropriated soil. But I,
for one, shall follow the natural order of being. I should rather drink
Athenian hemlock than imbibe the Persian wine of Pella.
I might have known repose at Pella, had I not found, as if by sorcery,
all that I came here to escape from, all, with only the aspect altered.
I knew that I had fled from danger into another doom, had abandoned
impending storm for the calm of a foul pool. For I met among the pearly poets

two expatriates from Athens, driven from the Lyceum not long since, driven in disgrace together,
to the sound of masculine outcry and a wanton warbling of the flute—
two worshippers of the bearded Aphrodite, prophets, propagandists,
offering to Athens a new thing, a thing not new to insulted Athens. One,
voluptuous of hip, mincing of movement, roseate of complexion, dulcet of utterance,
free with the wit of the hardened woman, the insolence of the opulent bawd,
and with the airs of such, now plays on the prurience of Archelaus
and amuses him with insidious quibs at my expense. The other,
lean and pallid, weak rather than womanly, jaunty rather than mincing,
not only berates my verses with the airy slur, but inflicts on me
the effrontery of the lewd leer.

I know the cause of the leering, the quibbing,
for with my coming to Pella, these two rhythmic beings approached me
with insinuative certainty of my having much in common with them—
the mention avowedly confidential, and the fact a secret with them, but inferable,
naturally thus, as I was friendly with Agathon, and furthermore,
as all great poets were known to be perverse alike of sex and syntax.
I held my peace. I passed them by. I afterwards avoided them.
But they, together jealous of Archelaus, and envious of me,
began to wheedle the impressionable monarch, to praise new poets, poets of Persia,
diviners of abstruse forms, prognosticators of new orders, necromancers
of nebulous forces all superior to mere syntax. These two—
abstainers from wine, from profanity also, but wearers of earrings and anklets,

and of female garb in private, though in the presence of Agathon—
these two now began the quibbing and the leering, the annoyance which,
banal to its very source, and growing unbearable, sinister even,
obfuscating with intrigue, at length brought on an early twilight
void of any Hesperus to my hopes of repose at Pella—
brought on a primitive twilight fear.

I know that something more than twilight
closes in about me. I sense a lurking of obscure ill, imminent,
fatal to all repose.

And there are the hounds of Archelaus,
uproarious by night, when I am engrossed with the dithyramb, or absorbed
in contemplation of plot, or meditative of self. One hound, the leader,
hates me, but loves the pearly poet with voluptuous hips, fawns upon him, strangely, weirdly,
writhes to the joy of his caresses, responds revelously to his commands—
for the sensuous æsthete cooly spurs the cur to savagery.

I believe
that I am already doomed to a new annoyance, and a worse, for last night,
as I walked abroad by the lowering beam of a baleful moon, walked alone
along a southerly terrace, and gazed southward, ever toward Athens, all the while wondering
if Lysander had already sacked the city, I heard the muffled growl of a dog—
nearby, even in the bushes behind me. I glanced backward. I glanced in time, I dare say,
to see the poet suddenly change posture, lower a pointing finger.
I thought that I saw the other poet glide behind a cypress.

Even now I fear—
I wonder if I really fear that I shall never return to Athens.
Even now I wish—
I wonder if I really wish that I had died at Salamis.

VII. PERSIAN DIRGE

Let the fingers that sweep the strings now clutch the hair. Let the palms that pound the drums now beat the breast. O girls of Persia,
dream no more, for your lovers are lost. Sing no more, for the bones of your lovers lie by the wayside.
Laugh no more, for your lovers are tombed in the ice of the Strymon. Long no more, O girls of Persia,
for the forms of your lovers litter the shores of Hellas. Your hair shall be the taut strings, your breasts the lachrymal drums, of Persia.

Or if the parchment sound, let it sound with long and lagging strokes, to rouse the sleeping brides. O brides of Persia,
awake, awake, to the word that your lords are lost. O children of Persia, the bones of your fathers lie by the wayside.
Play no more, for your fathers are tombed in the ice of the Strymon. Bow your heads, old men of Persia,
for the wraiths of your sons now swarm by the cliffs of Hellas. Awake, Persians, awake, to the lachrymal drums of Persia.

Or if the strings be swept, let them sound with a lull that fawns on sleep and enthralls it. Let the tones resound
like the murmurs of martial wraiths returning by night, bringing kisses, bringing vows that are lowly vibrant—
caresses that are melodies played softly under the stars. O mothers of Persia, know that the sons of your lords are lost—
know, and sleep to the lull of the strings. Dream of the sons that were slain afar. Dreams are the only sons of Persia.

Or let there be a hush. Let there be the hush of desolation, of tracts unpeopled. Persia is unpeopled.
All save the weeping and the weak went out of Persia. Even the king of all the Persias crossed where Helle perished—

passed over with his nations, passed onward into Hellas. He returns, but as well alone
as with all that follow him from Hellas. The king brings back the weakened to console the weak of Persia.

No, let the strings be sounded. Let them not be swept, but seized in the grasp of woe. For woe must utter.
Pull the strings with rigid fingers. Force from the long strings lengthening moans to rouse a Persian woe now dreaming—
moans to ride the waves and merge in kindred moans remote and wistful. Pull from the strings a tonal call
to the wraiths that wait by the cliffs of Hellas. Rouse the eternal hate of Persia. Pull from the strings a tonal curse
like the curse that rode the Hellenic waves to meet the thousand prows of Persia. Sound the eternal curse of Persia.

Beat the drums, the palms now sheathed in clenched fingers. Beat with abandon. Beat to the ears of all Persia.
Sound a hollow horror for a land all void of lovers. Beat to the ears of the distant dead—
to the ears of those who long for graves that shall never gape in Persian soil. Sound the strings—
the sound of great winds rising in the night. Raise the clouds of impending woe. Sound the drums—
the sound of thunder in the darkening soul. Sound the crash of the bolt that shall now unloose the tears of Persia.

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

THERE SHE IS—
SHE IS TAKING HER BATH

ANOTHER day when I have done no work. It is maddening. I went to the office this morning as usual and to-night came home at the regular time. My wife and I live in an apartment in the Bronx, here in New York City, and we have no children. I am ten years older than she. Our apartment is on the second floor and there is a little hallway down stairs used by all the people in the building.

If I could only decide whether or not I am a fool, a man turned suddenly a little mad or a man whose honor has really been tampered with, I should be quite all right. To-night I went home, after something most unusual had happened at the office, determined to tell everything to my wife. "I will tell her and then watch her face. If she blanches then I will know all I suspect is true," I said to myself. Within the last two weeks everything about me has changed. I am no longer the same man. For example I never in my life before used the word "blanched." What does it mean? How am I to tell whether my wife blanches or not when I do not know what the word means? It must be a word I saw in a book when I was a boy, perhaps a book of detective stories. But wait, I know how that happened to pop into my head.

But that is not what I started to tell you about. To-night, as I have already said, I came home and climbed the stairs to our apartment.

When I had got inside the house I spoke in a loud voice to my wife. "My dear, what are you doing," I asked. My voice sounded strange.

"I am taking a bath," my wife answered.

And so you see she was at home taking a bath. There she was.

She is always pretending she loves me but look at her now. Am I in her thoughts? Is there a tender look in her eyes? Is she dreaming of me as she walks along the streets?

You see she is smiling. There is a young man has just passed her. He is a tall fellow with a little moustache and is smoking a cigarette. Now I ask you—is he one of the men who, like myself, does in a way keep the world going?

Once I knew a man who was president of a whist club. Well he was something. People wanted to know how to play whist. They wrote to him. "If it turns out that after three cards are played the man to my right still has three cards while I have only two, etc., etc."

My friend, the man of whom I am now speaking, looks the matter up. "In rule four hundred and six you will see, etc., etc.," he writes.

My point is that he is of some account in the world. He helps keep things going and I respect him. Often we used to have lunch together.

But I am a little off the point. The fellows of whom I am now thinking, these young squirts who go through the streets ogling women—What do they do? They twirl their moustaches. They carry a cane. Some honest man is supporting them too. Some fool is their father.

And such a fellow is walking in the street. He meets a woman like my wife, an honest woman without too much experience of life. He smiles. A tender look comes into his eyes. Such deceit. Such callow nonsense.

And how are the women to know? They are children. They know nothing. There is a man, working somewhere in an office, keeping things moving, but do they think of him?

The truth is the woman is flattered. A tender look, that should be saved and bestowed only upon her husband, is thrown away. One never knows what will happen.

But pshaw, if I am to tell you the story, let me begin. There are men everywhere who talk and talk, saying nothing. I am afraid I am becoming one of that kind. As I have already told you I have come home from the office at evening and am standing in the hallway of our apartment, just inside the door.

I have asked my wife what she is doing and she has told me she is taking a bath.

Very well, I am then a fool. I shall go out for a walk in the park. There is no use my not facing everything frankly. By facing everything frankly one gets everything quite cleared up.

Aha! The very devil has got into me now. I said I would remain cool and collected but I am not cool. The truth is I am growing angry.

I am a small man but I tell you that, once aroused, I will fight. Once when I was a boy I fought another boy in the school yard. He gave me a black eye but I loosened one of his teeth. "There, take that and that. Now I have got you against a wall. I will muss your moustache. Give me that cane. I will break it over your head. I do not intend to kill you, young man. I intend to vindicate my honor. No, I will not let you go. Take that and that. When you next see a respectable married woman on the street, going to the store, behaving herself, do not look at her with a tender light in your eyes. What you had better do is to go to work. Get a job in a bank. Work your way up. You said I was an old goat but I will show you an old goat can butt. Take that and that."

Very well you, who read, also think me a fool. You laugh. You smile. Look at me. You are walking along here in the park. You are leading a dog.

Where is your wife? What is she doing?

Well, suppose she is at home taking a bath. What is she thinking! If she is dreaming, as she takes her bath, of whom is she dreaming?

I will tell you what, you who go along leading that dog, you may have no reason to suspect your wife, but you are in the same position as myself.

She was at home taking a bath and all day I had been sitting at my desk and thinking such thoughts. Under the circumstances I would never have had the temerity to go calmly off and take a bath. I admire my wife. Ha, Ha. If she is innocent I admire her, of course, as a husband should, and if she is guilty I admire her even more. What nerve, what insouciance. There is something noble, something almost heroic in her attitude toward me, just at this time.

With me this day is like every day now. Well, you see, I

have been sitting all day with my head in my hand thinking and thinking and while I have been doing that she has been going about, leading her regular life.

She has got up in the morning and has had her breakfast sitting opposite her husband, that is myself. Her husband has gone off to his office. Now she is speaking to our maid. She is going to the stores. She is sewing, perhaps making new curtains for the windows of our apartment.

There is the woman for you. Nero fiddled while Rome was burning. There was something of the woman in him.

A wife has been unfaithful to her husband. She has gone gaily off, let us say on the arm of a young blade. Who is he? He dances. He smokes cigarettes. When he is with his companions, his own kind of fellows, he laughs. "I have got me a woman," he says. "She is not very young but she is terrifically in love with me. It is very convenient." I have heard such fellows talk, in the smoking cars, on trains and in other places.

And there is the husband, a fellow like myself. Is he calm? Is he collected? Is he cool? His honor is perhaps being tampered with. He sits at his desk. He smokes a cigar. People come and go. He is thinking, thinking.

And what are his thoughts? They concern her. "Now she is still at home, in our apartment," he thinks. "Now she is walking along a street." What do you know of the secret life led by your wife? What do you know of her thoughts? Well hello! You smoke a pipe. You put your hands in your pockets. For you, your life is all very well. You are gay and happy. "What does it matter, my wife is at home taking a bath," you are telling yourself. In your daily life you are, let us say a useful man. You publish books, you run a store, you write advertisements. Sometimes you say to yourself, "I am lifting the burden off the shoulders of others." That makes you feel good. I sympathize with you. If you would let me, or rather I should say, if we had met in the formal transactions of our regular occupations, I dare say we would be great friends. Well, we would have lunch together, not too often, but now and then. I would tell you of some real estate deal and you would tell me what you had been doing. "I am glad we met! Call me up. Before you go away have a cigar."

With me it is quite different. All to-day, for example, I have been in my office but I have not worked. A man came in, a Mr.

Albright. "Well, are you going to let that property go or are you going to hold on?" he said.

What property did he mean? What was he talking about?

You can see for yourself what a state I am in.

And now I must be going home. My wife will have finished taking her bath. We will sit down to dinner. Nothing of all this, I have been speaking about, will be mentioned at all. "John, what is the matter with you?" "Aha. There is nothing the matter. I am worried about business a little. A Mr. Albright came in. Shall I sell or shall I hold on." The real thing that is on my mind will not be mentioned at all. I will grow a little nervous. The coffee will be spilled on the table cloth or I will upset my dessert.

"John, what is the matter with you?" What coolness. As I have already said, what insouciance.

What is the matter? Matter enough.

A week, two weeks, to be exact, just seventeen days ago, I was a happy man. I went about my affairs. In the morning I rode to my office in the subway, but, had I wished to do so, I could long ago have bought an automobile.

But no, long ago, my wife and I had agreed there should be no such silly extravagance. To tell the truth, just ten years ago I failed in business and had to put some property in my wife's name. I bring the papers home to her and she signs. That is the way it is done.

"Well, John," said my wife, "we will not get us any automobile." That was before the thing happened that has so upset me. We were walking together in the park. "Mabel, shall we get us an automobile?" I asked. "No," she said, "we will not get us an automobile." "Our money," she has said, more than a thousand times, "will be a comfort to us later."

A comfort indeed. What can be a comfort now that this thing has happened.

It was just two weeks, more than that, just seventeen days ago, that I went home from the office just as I came home to-night. Well, I walked in the same streets, passed the same stores.

I am puzzled as to what that Mr. Albright meant when he asked me if I intended to sell the property or hold on to it. I answered in a noncommittal way. "We'll see," I said. To what property did he refer? We must have had some previous con-

versation regarding the matter. A mere acquaintance does not come to one's office and speak of property in that careless, one might say, familiar way, without having previous conversation on the same subject.

As you see I am still a little confused. Even though I am facing things now I am still, as you have guessed, somewhat confused. This morning I was in the bathroom, shaving as usual. I always shave in the morning, not in the evening, unless my wife and I are going out. I was shaving and my shaving brush dropped to the floor. I stooped over to pick it up and struck my head on the bath tub. I only tell you this to show what a state I am in. It made a large bump on my head. My wife heard me groan and asked what was the matter. "I struck my head," I said. Of course one quite in control of his faculties does not hit his head on a bath-tub when he knows it is there and what man does not know where the bath-tub stands in his own house?

But now I am thinking again of what happened, of what has upset me this way. I was going home on that evening, just seventeen days ago. Well, I walked along thinking nothing. When I reached our apartment building I went in and there, lying on the floor in the little hallway, in front, was a pink envelope with my wife's name, Mabel Smith, written on it. I picked it up thinking, "this is strange." It had perfume on it and there was no address, just the name Mabel Smith, written in a bold man's hand.

I quite automatically opened it and read.

Since I first met her, twelve years ago at a party at Mr. Westley's house, there have never been any secrets between me and my wife, at least until that moment in the hallway seventeen days ago this evening I had never thought there were any secrets between us. I have always opened her letters and she had always opened mine. I think it should be that way between a man and his wife. I know there are some who do not agree with me but what I have always argued is I am right.

I went to the party with Harry Selfridge and afterward took my wife home. I offered to get a cab. "Shall we have a cab?" I asked her. "No," she said, "let's walk." She was the daughter of a man in the furniture business and he has died since. Everyone thought he would leave her some money but he didn't. It turned out he owed almost all he was worth to a firm

in Grand Rapids. Some would have been upset, but I wasn't. "I married you for love, my dear," I said to her on the night when her father died. We were walking home from his house, also in the Bronx, and it was raining a little, but we did not get very wet. "I married you for love," I said, and I meant what I said.

But to return to the note. "Dear Mabel," it said, "come to the park on Wednesday when the old goat has gone away. Wait for me on the bench near the animal cages where I met you before."

It was signed Bill. I put it in my pocket and went upstairs.

When I got into my apartment, I heard a man's voice. The voice was urging something upon my wife. Did the voice change when I came in? I walked boldly into our front room where my wife sat facing a young man who sat in another chair. He was tall and had a little moustache.

The man was pretending to be trying to sell my wife a patent carpet sweeper but just the same, when I sat down in a chair in the corner and remained there, keeping silent, they both became self-conscious. My wife, in fact, became positively excited. She got up out of her chair and said in a loud voice—the fellow was within three feet of her and there was no need to shout. "No," she shouted in a loud voice, "I tell you I do not want any carpet sweeper."

The young man got up and went to the door and I followed: "Well I had better be getting out of here," he was saying to himself. And so he had been intending to leave a note telling my wife to meet him in the Park on Wednesday but at the last moment he had decided to take the risk of coming to our house. What he had probably thought was something like this—"her husband may come home and get the note out of the mail box." Then he decided to come and see her and had quite accidentally dropped the note in the hallway. Now he was frightened. One could see that. Such men as myself are small but we will fight sometimes.

He hurried to the door and I followed him into the hallway. There was another young man coming from the floor above, also with a carpet sweeper in his hand. It is a pretty slick scheme, this carrying carpet sweepers with them, the young men of this generation have worked out, but we older men are not to have the wool pulled over our eyes. I saw through everything at once.

The second young man was a confederate and had been concealed in the hallway in order to warn the first young man of my approach. When I got upstairs of course the first young man was pretending to sell my wife a carpet sweeper. Perhaps the second young man had tapped with the handle of the carpet sweeper on the floor of the hall above. Now that I think of that I remember there was a tapping sound.

At the time, however, I did not think everything out as I have since done. I stood in the hallway with my back against the wall and watched them go down the stairs. One of them turned and laughed at me, but I did not say anything. I suppose I might have gone down the stairs after them and challenged them both to fight but what I thought was, "I wont."

And sure enough, just as I suspected from the first, it was the young man pretending to sell carpet sweepers, I had found sitting in my apartment with my wife, who had lost the note. When they got down to the hallway at the front of the house the man I had caught with my wife began to feel in his pocket. Then, as I leaned over the railing above, I saw him looking about the hallway. He laughed. "Say, Tom, I had a note to Mabel in my pocket. I intended to get a stamp at the post-office and mail it. I had forgotton the street number. 'O well,' I thought, 'I'll go see her.' I didn't want to bump into that old goat, her husband."

"You have bumped into him," I said to myself, "now we will see who will come out victorious."

I went into our apartment and closed the door.

For a long time, perhaps for ten minutes, I stood just inside the door of our apartment thinking and thinking, just as I have been doing ever since. Two or three times I tried to speak, to call out to my wife, to question her and find out the bitter truth at once but my voice failed me.

What was I to do? Was I to go to her, seize her by the wrists, force her down into a chair, make her confess at the risk of personal violence? I asked myself that question.

"No," I said to myself, "I will not do that. I will use finesse."

For a long time I stood there thinking. My world had tumbled down about my ears. When I tried to speak, the words would not come out of my mouth.

At last I did speak, quite calmly. There is something of the man of the world about me. When I am compelled to meet

a situation I do it. "What are you doing?" I said to my wife, speaking in a calm voice. "I am taking a bath," she answered.

And so I left the house and came out here to the park to think, just as I have done to-night. On that night, and just as I came out at our front door, I did something I have not done since I was a boy. I am a deeply religious man but I swore. My wife and I have had a good many arguments as to whether or not a man in business should have dealings with those who do such things, that is to say with men who swear. "I cannot refuse to sell a man a piece of property because he swears," I have always said. "Yes you can," my wife says.

It only shows how little women know about business. What I have always maintained is I am right.

And I maintain too that we men must protect the integrity of our homes and our firesides. On that first night I walked about until dinner time and then went home. I had decided not to say anything for the present but to remain quiet and use finesse, but at dinner my hand trembled and I spilled the dessert on the table cloth.

And a week later I went to see a detective.

But first something else happened. On Wednesday—I had found the note on Monday evening—I could not bear sitting in my office and thinking perhaps that young squirt was meeting my wife in the Park, so I went to the Park myself.

Sure enough there was my wife sitting on a bench near the animal cages and knitting a sweater.

At first I thought I would conceal myself in some bushes but instead I went to where she was seated and sat down beside her. "How nice. What brings you here?" my wife said smiling. She looked at me with surprise in her eyes.

Was I to tell her or was I not to tell her? It was a mooted question with me. "No," I said to myself. "I will not. I will go see a detective. My honor has no doubt already been tampered with and I shall find out." My naturally quick wits came to my rescue. Looking directly into my wife's eyes I said "there was a paper to be signed and I had my own reasons for thinking you might be here, in the Park."

As soon as I had spoken I could have torn out my tongue. However, she had noticed nothing and I took a paper out of my pocket and handing her my fountain pen asked her to sign and when she had done so hurried away. At first I thought

perhaps I would linger about, in the distance, that is to say, but no, I decided not to do that. He will no doubt have his confederate on the watchout for me, I told myself.

And so on the next afternoon, I went to the office of the detective. He was a large man and when I told him what I wanted he smiled. "I understand," he said, "we have many such cases. We'll track the guy down."

And so, you see, there it was. Everything was arranged. It was to cost me a pretty penny but my house was to be watched and I was to have a report of everything. To tell the truth, and when everything was arranged I felt ashamed of myself. The man in the detective place—there were several men standing about—followed me to the door and put his hand on my shoulder. For some reason I don't understand that made me mad. He kept patting me on the shoulder as though I were a little boy. "Don't worry. We'll manage everything," was what he said. It was all right. Business is business but for some reason I wanted to bang him in the face with my fist.

That's the way I am, you see. I can't make myself out. "Am I a fool, or am I a man among men," I keep asking myself and can't get an answer.

After I had arranged with the detective I went home and didn't sleep all night long.

To tell the truth I began to wish I had never found that note. I suppose that is wrong of me. It makes me less a man, perhaps, but it's the truth.

Well, you see, I couldn't sleep. "No matter what my wife was up to I could sleep now if I hadn't found that note," was what I said to myself. It was dreadful. I was ashamed of what I had done and at the same time ashamed of myself for being ashamed. I had done what any American man, who is a man at all, would have done and there I was. I couldn't sleep. Every time I came home in the evening I kept thinking. "There is that man standing over there by a tree—I'll bet he is a detective." I kept thinking of the fellow who had patted me on the shoulders in the detective office, and every time I thought of him I grew madder and madder. Pretty soon I hated him more than I did the young man who had pretended to sell the carpet sweeper to Mabel.

And then I did the most foolish thing of all. One afternoon—it was just a week ago—I thought of something. When

I had been in the detective office I had seen several men standing about but had not been introduced to any of them. "And so," I thought, "I'll go there pretending to get my reports. If the man I engaged is not there I'll engage someone else."

So I did it. I went to the detective office, and sure enough my man was out. There was another fellow sitting by a desk and I made a sign to him. We went into an inner office. "Look here," I whispered, you see I had made up my mind to pretend I was the man who was ruining my own fireside, wrecking my own honor. "Do I make clear what I mean?"

It was like this, you see—well, I had to have some sleep didn't I? Only the night before my wife had said to me, "John, I think you had better run away for a little vacation. Run away by yourself for a time and forget about business."

At another time her saying that would have been nice, you see, but now it only upset me worse than ever. "She wants me out of the way," I thought and for just a moment I felt like jumping up and telling her everything I knew. Still I didn't. "I'll just keep quiet. I'll use finesse," I thought.

A pretty kind of finesse. There I was in that detective office again hiring a second detective. I came right out and pretended I was my wife's paramour. The man kept nodding his head and I kept whispering like a fool. Well, I told him that a man named Smith had hired a detective from that very office to watch his wife. "I have my own reasons for wanting him to get a report that his wife is all right," I said pushing some money across a table toward him. I had become utterly reckless about money. "Here is fifty dollars and when he gets such a report from your office you come to me and you may have two hundred more," I said.

I had thought everything out. I told the second man my name was Jones and that I worked in the same office with Smith. "I'm in business with him," I said "a silent partner, you see."

Then I went out and, of course, he, like the first one followed me to the door and patted me on the shoulder. That was the hardest thing of all to stand but I stood it. A man has to have sleep.

And, of course, to-day both men had to come to my office within five minutes of each other. The first one came, of course, and told me my wife was innocent. "She is as innocent as a

little lamb," he said, "I congratulate you upon having such an innocent wife."

Then I paid him, backing away so he couldn't pat me on the shoulders, and he had only just closed the door when in came the other man, asking for Jones.

And I had to see him too and give him two hundred dollars.

Then I decided to come on home and I did, walking along the same street I have walked on every afternoon since my wife and I married. I went home and climbed the stairs to our apartment just as I described everything to you a little while ago. I could not decide whether I was a fool, a man who has gone a little mad, or a man whose honor has been tampered with, but anyway I knew there would be no detectives about.

What I thought was that I would go home and have everythig out with my wife, tell her of my suspicions and then watch her face. As I have said before I intended to watch her face and see if she blanched when I told her of the note I had found in the hallway downstairs. The word "blanched" got into my mind because I once read it in a detective story when I was a boy and I had been dealing with detectives.

And so I intended to face my wife down, force a confession from her, but you see how it turned out. When I got home the apartment was silent and at first I thought it was empty. "Has she run away with him," I asked myself and maybe my own face blanched a little.

"Where are you dear, what are you doing?" I shouted in a loud voice and she told me she was taking a bath.

And so I came out here to the Park.

But now I must be going home. Dinner will be waiting. I am wondering what property that Mr. Albright had in his mind. When I sit at dinner with my wife my hands will shake. I will spill the dessert. A man does not come in and speak of property in that offhand manner unless there has been conversation about it before.

CONRAD AIKEN

THE DREAM

Sleep: and between the closed eyelids of sleep
From the dark spirit's still unresting grief,
The one tear burns its way. O God, O God,
What monstrous world is this, whence no escape
Even in sleep? Between the fast-shut lids
This one tear comes, hangs on the lashes, falls:
Symbol of some gigantic dream, that shakes
The secret-sleeping soul.

And I descend
By a green cliff that fronts the worldlong sea;
Disastrous shore; where bones of ships and rocks
Are mixed; and beating waves bring in the sails
Of unskilled mariners, ill-starred. The sea-gulls
Fall in a cloud upon foul flotsam there;
The air resounds with cries of scavengers.

Dream: and between the close-locked lids of dream
The terrible infinite intrudes its blue:
Ice: silence: death: the abyss of Nothing.
O God, O God, let the sore soul have peace.
Deliver it from this bondage of harsh dreams.
Release this shadow from its object, this object
From its shadow. Let the fleet soul go nimbly,—
Down,—down,—from step to step of dark,—
From dark to deeper dark, from dark to rest.
And let no Theseus-thread of bright remembrance
Shine in that labyrinth, or on those stairs,
To guide her back; nor bring her, where she lies,
Memory of a torn world well forgot.

HART CRANE

THE RIVER

> "—*Pocahuntus, a well-featured, but wanton yong girle . . . of the age of eleven or twelve years, get the boyes forth with her into the market place, and make them wheele, falling on their hands, turning their heels upwards, whome she would followe, and wheele so herself, naked as she was, all the fort over.*"

Stick your patent name on a signboard
brother—all over—going west—young man
Tintex—Japalac—Certain-teed Overalls ads
and lands sakes! under the new playbill ripped
in the guaranteed corner—see Bert Williams what?
Minstrels when you steal a chicken just
save me the wing for if it isn't
Erie it ain't for miles around a
Mazda—and the telegraphic night coming on Thomas

a Ediford—and whistling down the tracks
a headlight rushing with the sound—can you
imagine—while an EXpress makes time like
SCIENCE—COMMERCE and the HOLYGHOST
RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE
NORTHPOLE
WALLSTREET AND VIRGINBIRTH WITHOUT
STONES OR
WIRES OR EVEN RUNning brooks connecting ears

and no more sermons windows flashing roar
breathtaking—as you like it . . . eh?

So the 20th Century—so
whizzed the Limited—roared by and left
three men, still hungry on the tracks, ploddingly
watching the tail lights wizen and converge, slipping gimleted and neatly out of sight.

* * * * *

The last bear, shot drinking in the Dakotas
Loped under wires that span the mountain stream.
Keen instruments, strung to a vast precision
Bind town to town and dream to ticking dream.
But some men take their liquor slow—and count
—Though they'll confess no rosary nor clue—
The river's minute by the far brook's year.
Under a world of whistles, wires and steam
Caboose-like they go ruminating through
Ohio, Indiana—blind baggage—
To Cheyenne tagging . . . maybe Kalamazoo.

Time's rendings, time's blendings they construe
As final reckonings of fire and snow.
Strange bird-wit, like the elemental gist
Of unwalled winds they offer, singing low
My Old Kentucky Home and *Casey Jones,*
Some Sunny Day. I heard a road-gang chanting so.
And afterwards, who had a colt's eyes—one said,
Jesus! Oh I remember watermelon days! And sped
High in a cloud of merriment, recalled
—And when my Aunt Sally Simpson smiled, he drawled—
It was almost Louisiana, long ago.

There's no place like Boonville though, Buddy,
One said, excising a last burr from his vest,
—For early trouting. Then peering in the can,
—But I kept on the tracks. Possessed, resigned,
He trod the fire down pensively and grinned,
Spreading dry shingles of a beard . . .

Behind

My father's cannery works I used to see
Rail-squatters ranged in nomad raillery,
The ancient men—wifeless or runaway
Hobo-trekkers that forever search
An empire wilderness of freight and rails.
Each seemed a child, like me, on a loose perch,
Holding to childhood like some termless play.
John, Jake or Charlie, hopping the slow freight
—Memphis to Tallahassee—riding the rods,
Blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods.

Yet they touch something like a key, perhaps.
From pole to pole across the hills, the states
—They know a body under the wide rain;
Youngsters with eyes like fjords, old reprobates
With racetrack jargon—dotting immensity
They lurk across her, knowing her yonder breast
Snow-silvered, sumac-stained or smoky blue—
Is past the valley-sleepers, south or west.
—As I have trod the rumorous midnights, too,

And past the circuit of the lamp's thin flame
(O Nights that brought me to her body bare!)
Have dreamed beyond the print that bound her name.
Trains sounding the long blizzards out—I heard
Wail into distances I knew were hers.
Papooses crying on the wind's long mane
Screamed redskin dynasties that fled the brain,
—Dead echoes! But I knew her body there,
Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark,
And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair.

Under the Ozarks, domed by Iron Mountain,
The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools
Where eyeless fish curvet a sunken fountain
And re-descend with corn from querulous crows.
Such pilferings make up their timeless eatage,
Propitiate them for their timber torn
By iron, iron—always the iron dealt cleavage.
They doze now, below axe and powder horn.

And Pullman breakfasters glide glistening steel
From tunnel into field—iron strides the dew—
Straddles the hill, a dance of wheel on wheel.
You have a half-hour's wait at Siskiyou,
Or stay the night and take the next train through.
Southward, near Cairo passing, you can see
The Ohio merging—borne down Tennessee;
And if it's summer and the sun's in dusk
Maybe the breeze will lift the River's musk
—As though the waters breathed that you might know
Memphis Johnny, Steamboat Bill, Missouri Joe.
Oh lean from the window, if the train slows down,
As though you touched hands with some ancient clown,
—A little while gaze absently below
And hum *Deep River* with them while they go.

Yes, turn again and sniff once more—look see,
O Sheriff, Brakeman and Authority—
Hitch up your pants and crunch another quid,
For you, too, feed the River timelessly.
And few evade full measure of their fate;
Always they smile out eerily what they seem.
I could believe he joked at heaven's gate—
Dan Midland—jolted from the cold brake-beam

Down, down—born pioneers in time's despite,
Grimed tributaries to an ancient flow—
They win no frontier by their wayward plight,
But drift in stillness as from Jordan's brow.

You will not hear it as the sea. Even stone
Is not more hushed by gravity . . . But slow,
As loth to take more tribute—sliding prone
Like one whose eyes were buried long ago

The River, spreading flows—and spends your dream.
What are you, lost within this tideless spell?
You are your father's father, and the stream—
A liquid theme that floating niggers swell.

Damp tonnage and alluvial march of days—
Nights turbid, vascular with silted shale
And roots surrendered down of moraine clays:
The Mississippi drinks the farthest dale.

O quarrying passion, undertowed sunlight!
The basalt surface drags a jungle grace
Ochreous and lynx-barred in lengthening might;
Patience! and you shall reach the biding place!

Over De Soto's bones the freighted floors
Throb past the City storied of three thrones.
Down two more turns the Mississippi pours
(Anon tall ironsides up from salt lagoons)

And flows within itself, heaps itself free.
All fades but one thin skyline 'round . . . Ahead
No embrace opens but the stinging sea;
The River lifts itself from its long bed,

Poised wholly on its dream, a mustard glow
Tortured with history, its one will—flow!
—The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and slow,
Meeting the Gulf, hosannas silently below.

YVOR WINTERS

TWO SONNETS

1.

Death. Nothing is simpler. One is dead.
The face sets, to fade out, and the bare fact,
related movement, rhythmic and intact,
is reabsorbed, the clay is on the bed.
The soul is mortal, nothing: the dim head
on the dim pillow, less. But thought clings flat
to this, since it can never follow that
where no precision of the mind is bred.

Nothing to think of between you and All!
Screaming eternity of infinite
logic is grinding down receding cold,
O fool! Madness again! Turn not, for it
lurks in each paintless cranny, and you sprawl
blurring a definition. Quick! you are old.

2.

The fact tha. offers neither cause nor gain
nor a reflection of the mind, is God—
table or chair or spinning shrill tripod,
prie-Dieu to Jazz, will suck you like a drain,
suck you to shrieking. Real, the writhing grain
means nothing, makes you nothing, and the room
laid bare is God, the thinning saline Doom,
intrinsic cringing of the shadowy brain.

Spin on the tripod, let the music bang!
O metric oracle that found no clause
to regulate the meanings that you sang
When Heaven Doubted Its Eternal Laws!
O you were joyous when the doorbell rang
and God's pure presence froze your bony jaws.

GWENDOLEN HASTE

SOUR

Haggard words in morning,
Stony words at night,
Film of dusty hatred
Smeared against the light.

Where did rapture vanish?
Where was lonely joy?
Brooms and plows and dishes
Hid the golden boy.

Outside a flaming mountain
Leaped before her eye,
Clear as chiming steeples
Ran the burnished sky.

If she could but twist it—
The sad and frightened house—
Inside out each casement,
Free from web and mouse.

Let the bold wind through it—
Nonchalant—alone—
Scour it with the mountain
Clean of human bone.

ROBERT PENN WARREN

TWO POEMS

GRANDFATHER GABRIEL

Grandfather Gabriel rode up to town
In black French broadcloth, his hat-brim down,
A gold ring to his finger, hair on his chest,
So he rallied and whored and ginned with the best—
O an elegant son-of-a-bitch, I guess,
Whose boots and bones have fed the elegant grass.

Grandfather Gabriel rode from town
With Grandmother Martha in a white wedding gown.
Wine-yellow was sunshine then on the corn;
But swollen ran the river, the hills were brown
And wind in the east when a son was born.
"A fine little bastard," Gabriel said,
But Martha lay in a strict high bed,
No breath to her body or trouble in her head.

Gabriel, Gabriel, if now together
With Martha you keep any sort of weather
In fragrant hair and dissolute bone adrowse,
Your grandson keeps a broken house.
There's a stitch in his side no plasters heal,
A crack in the firmament, maggots in the meal;
There's a mole in the garden, fennel by the gate,
In his heart a curse hell-black as hate
For that other young guy who died too late.

PONDY WOODS

The buzzards over Pondy Woods
Achieve the blue tense altitudes,
Black figments that the woods release,
Obscenity in form and grace
Drifting high through the pure sunshine
Till the sun in gold decline.

Big Jim Todd was a slick black buck
Laying low in the mud and muck
Of Pondy Woods when the sun went down
In gold, and the buzzards tilted down
A windless vortex to the black-gum trees
To sit along the quiet boughs,
Devout and swollen, at their ease.

By the buzzard roost Big Jim Todd
Listened for hoofs on the corduroy road,
Or for the foul and sucking sound
A man's foot makes on the marshy ground.

Past midnight, when the moccasin
Slipped from the log and, trailing in
Its obscured waters, broke
The dark algae, one lean bird spoke.

"Nigger, you went this afternoon
For your Saturday spree at the Blue Goose saloon;
So you've got on your Sunday clothes,
On your big splay feet got patent-leather shoes.
But a buzzard can smell the thing you've done.
The posse will get you—run, nigger, run—
There's a fellow behind you with a big shotgun!
Nigger, nigger, you'll sweat cold sweat
In your patent-leather shoes and Sunday clothes
When down your track the steeljacket goes
Mean and whimpering over the wheat.

Nigger, your breed ain't metaphysical."
The buzzard coughed; his words fell
In the darkness mystic and ambrosial.
"But we maintain our ancient rite,
Eat the gods by day and prophesy by night.
We swing against the sky and wait,

You seize the hour, more passionate
Than strong and strive with time to die—
With Time, the beaked tribe's astute ally.

The Jew-boy died. The Syrian vulture swung
Remotely above the cross whereon he hung
From dinner-time to supper-time, and all
The people gathered there watched him until
The brown lean chest no longer stirred,
Then idly watched the slow majestic bird
That in the last sun above the twilit hill
Gleamed for a moment at the height and slid
Down the hot wind and in the darkness hid.
Nigger, regard the circumstance of breath:
'Non omnis moriar,' the poet saith."

Pedantic the bird clacked its grey beak
With a Tennessee accent to the classic phrase;
Jim understood and was about to speak,
But the buzzard drooped one wing and filmed the eyes.

At dawn unto the Sabbath wheat he came,
That gave to the dew its faithless yellow flame
From kindly loam in recollection of
The fires that in the brutal rock once strove.
To the ripe wheatfields he came at dawn.
Northward the printed smoke stood quiet above
The distant cabins of Squiggtown;
A train's far whistle blew and drifted away
Coldly. Lucid and thin the morning lay
Along the farms, and here no sound
Touched the sweet earth miraculously stilled.
Then down the damp and sudden wood there belled
The musical white-throated hound.

In Pondy Woods in the August drouth
Lurk fever and the cottonmouth,
And buzzards over Pondy Woods
Achieve the blue tense altitudes
Drifting high in the pure sunshine
Till the sun in gold decline;
Then golden and hieratic through
The night their eyes burn two by two.

LEWIS MUMFORD

THE LITTLE TESTAMENT OF BERNARD MARTIN AET. 30

PART ONE

1

Of the first five years nothing remains except goldfish spinning around a slippery jar, and the furtive light of a back-parlor window against the white faces that crept around upon the red carpet that concealed a carpet beneath a wardrobe that was really a bed: that and the figure of Bernie's Granmer grimacing in haste before a pier glass as she perched a black bonnet upon a head that had once been beautiful. Silence follows. One must be silent at play: Granmer is sick: Granmer is very sick: Granmer is not. Black ribbons and black veils and trickling eyes are all that remain of Granmer: black veils are mourning but mourning is not the beginning of day: mourning is the red rim of sunset about tired eyes. Goldfish gasp softly against the translucent boundaries of their existence. Goldfish spin eternally around a glass jar.

2

The days do not hurry: the days come slow: one peels the hours off as Nornie peels a mushroom. The days creep: the minutes clatter with emptiness: an hour with Granper in Central Park rattles like seeds in a gourd, the gourd of empty days. Pine needles do not prick: darning needles do not darn: policemen eat little boys: bugaboos do not scare policemen. Granper is a head waiter at Sherry's: he brings home detachable noses and falsefaces. When Granper wears a false face he is the devil: false faces and policemen are not bugaboos but they are even

worse than bugaboos. Granper is foxy: and when he bunches his breasts up they are like a woman's.

3

Seven goldfish play wavy hide and seek in wavy weeds. Granper mates yellow birds with green birds: on a spring morning cinnamon birds crack through the speckled eggs. Little boys have no business in the pantry where the yellow birds and the green birds sing. When a little boy leaves the pantry door open the cat eats the goldfish as well as the yellow birds the green birds and the weeny cinnamon birds. Little boys dream of false faces and policemen. Mamadear lights the light and holds the little boy's hands. Morning comes: the cage is empty: the cat is fat. The little boy smiles. Bernie left the pantry door open: the policeman did not eat Bernie: the policeman never even rang the doorbell and asked: Have you a bad little boy named Bernie here? But the goldfish and the birdies are dead: granmer is dead too. The eternal goldfish will never spin around any more in a glass jar.

4

The hands of the clock turn around. Tick lives: tock dies: tick lives: tock dies. Bong-bong-bong is the voice of doom. The clock never turns backwards: six says wake Bernie: seven says eat Bernie: eight says school Bernie: nine says classroom Bernie. Present: present early: late: present: present. Absent never answers for itself: present never answers for anyone else except when present is naughty. Blang goes the big bell: pling, pling, pling go the classroom bells. Home for lunch: back for school: present: present: tardy: late. The schoolyard is bare: school has begun: loitering is a crime. Little boys cry when their names are put in a black book but loitering is a crime: crimes are punished. Big boys make little boys show their penis in the lavatory: little boys go home at the end of the week with a certificate for good conduct. Five hours five days five certificates make an elementary education: there is also reading writing and arithmetic: drawing is nice but faces are not allowed. Sixty seconds make a minute: sixty minutes make an hour: six years make a little boy who knows that alcohol is bad for the health that trees are deciduous and evergreen that G.C.D. means greatest common divisor that all day suckers are poisonous unless consumed to

the last layer that one hundred dollars at six per cent for one year is seven goldfish spinning around a glass jar.

5

Sally is seven: she is a jockey's daughter. Her white face has been kicked in by a horse: her distorted beauty awakens six masculine summers. She cuts up her own food in the Children's Dining Room: she rides to the races in her uncle's buggy. A word from Sally is a golden ball dancing on top of a fountain: the touch of her hand is a glass of cold seltzer at the Spa. Kiss Sally: kiss Sally: hide behind the sofa: hide and seek: spring at her: kiss the hair of Sally's pigtail. But the cuff of Sally's hand behind the sofa is the splintering of a sun into sordid stars. Six masculine years long for Sally: they play with Sally before anyone else is awake: they show everything to Sally: she shows everything to them: but she is not the real Sally with the oily pigtail and the white knuckles that stung like marble against pink jelly.

6

The smell of stale onions on Nornie's cracked fingers means winter. When Granper's frock coat opens on a gold watch chain it is spring. In spring goats ramp for bock beer in front of swinging doors: behind the paving stone in the backyard parsley, pansies, geraniums, and flaxseed left over from poultices grow into flowers, green, purple, red, blue. Hot potatoes in a fire beneath mummied sunflower stalks is autumn: but marbles are always spring. Push wagons in the twilight with a cigarbox lantern are summer. Mamadear getting excited and saying: Isn't the air beautiful and what are the odds on Waterboy in the Brighton Handicap with a sip of beer at a smeary table on the lap of a boney man with yellow finger tips, Mamadear lifting her brown veil and drinking, too, is spring, is summer, is fall.

7

Tick-tock: tick-tock: tick lives: tock dies. Nornie buttons the last button and pulls the muffler higher. Mamadear says don't play with naughty boys in the lavatory. Tick-tock: man is in the nominative case, subject to the verb do: do good: do lessons: do memory work: present participle doing: doing this: doing that: doing nothing: negative particle not: not doing

what one wants: not telling what one dreams: not saying what one thinks: not arguing with the teacher: not looking around in class: not throwing boardrubbers: not making spitballs: not speaking out of turn. Tick-tock: report cards: A is excellent: Bernie's A's make a pattern of the months: Bernie is a grind: Bernie is the teacher's pet. When Granper walks with Bernie along Riverside Drive he shows him the ships and the freight trains and he tells him about his life in Paris, Munich, Copenhagen: when Nornie cooks she tells Bernie about the Holy Virgin and Ireland and how the nuns made a Novena and what one found on the strand of Youghal: Mamadear lets Bernie play with her embroidery silks and when she wants some thread she sends Bernie to the store and tells him to mind the change. Granper and Nornie and Mamadear show Bernie the rudiments of geography, ethics, mathematics, art: but Bernie shames them with his school knowledge. Granper can't do fractions like Bernie and he never knew how many states are in South America.

8

Portia's plea closes the Morning Assembly: Bernie wants to be a lawyer. But Shakespeare was a very great poet: Bernie wants to be a poet, too. But electricity is more fun than anything: if one had five dollars one could get a wireless set: a tuning coil and a detector bring musical dash-dots, and if one were rich and had ten dollars one could have a loose-coupler and a variable condenser and get louder music from remoter dash-dots. Barney is Bernie's best friend: Barney and Bernie share candy: Barney will buy a wireless outfit. Bernie is poor and will make his. The dash-dots are declarations of love in a foreign language. Wire and binding posts become exciting pieces of statuary. Bernie decides to be an engineer: Barney will be an engineer, too, and manage a sugar plantation in Cuba.

9

Summer is warm in the city: summer glows on the sear green of Central Park. Bernie meets a Princess: she tells Bernie he is her sweetheart. She is a real Russian Princess with a pug nose and blonde hair. He is convinced but not ravished. Summer is warm. Granper's flabby flesh falls over grayblear mournful eyes: Granper's flabby skin droops from lean shanks where the sheet parts. Kiss me Goodbye, Bernie: be good to Mamadear: be a

brave man! You will not see me again. Goodbye Granper: but I shall be back soon. And I shall go soon, says Granper. Twelve years are troubled: six times twelve are putting trouble far behind them. Bernie leaves the doubtful pleasure of a Princess's espousal to meet Betty. Betty helps with the dishes on the farm. To dry the dishes when Betty washes them is to smell the perfume of ferns in her hair and see the down on her neck fall into the hollow of a perfect back. One night Betty says: Kiss me! Jacob the smelly hired man laughs many laughs. Betty has her kiss. Granper dies whilst Betty calmly engages Bernie with more kisses. Bernie does not return till Granper is buried with his griefs and loves: Bernie still dares to dream of love that knows no grief or burial. Back in the city Bernie writes Betty fevered letters, exploding with passion like a milkweed pod in autumn. Betty never gets or never heeds them. Autumn is dank with vegetation and disappointment.

10

Russian faces: German faces: Italian faces: Jewish faces: a thousand faces cloud and scatter in the halls: smudgy faces: keen faces: blubber faces. In the lunchroom they munch and shout in Bernie's ear: Bernie eats his roll alone in the dark corridor. Faces leer at Bernie and call him sweetie: false faces: but old faces are kind faces: kind faces keep school. A patient face with a blind blue eye teaches geometry as if Pythagoras and Euclid were still alive: a black sardonic face above broad shoulders utters the words Philosophy—Descartes—cogito ergo sum. A long bearded face recites his Milton like a prayer: a pink solemn face beneath a carrot pompadour sits down with Bernie, Solomon, and Freddy to write a play. The hours do not crawl: the hours are not empty: the clock says neither tick nor tock. The moments become monuments: each monument shelters a memory. Happy faces turning wood into unbelievable chair legs that never get attached to chairs: anxious faces pouring white lead into green sand molds: blurred faces following the mystery of electrons into test-tubes placed over anode and cathode: wild faces describing elegant parabolæ with basketballs: jolly faces twisting in the pageant of a Christmas dance: serious faces walking home along Fifth Avenue, talking about God: these faces made Bernie's face: they translated passive tick-tock into the imperative mood and the active voice.

11

Engines are buckets and shovels dressed up for adults. Science is abracadabra and fie-fy-fo-fum. Electricity is interesting but not so interesting as love. Smooth binding posts are dull beside the frail throbbing fountain that leaps into the sunshine of Annabel's face: alternating currents do not reverse polarity so quickly as the heart that beholds Annabel. Engines are buckets and shovels dressed up for adults who have never known Annabel. Dynamos generate electricity: but Annabel generates the dynamo that generates the dynamo that generates the electricity.

12

The trees of West End Avenue drip warm steam. Annabel's body curls like a white mist against the sullen recess of an August afternoon. Thunder booms in the air: lightning darts gigantic butterflies. Annabel listlessly hovers over a book, her shoulder hunching near to Bernie's. Bernie scarcely dares to sigh on Annabel's neck: a lock of her hair on Bernie's cheek dances shivered sparks within his breast. Embraces that do not touch linger longer in the arms that do not hold: manhood shudders in mid-air on a swinging beam, swinging, swaying, slipping, sliding, edging into nothingness. The soft gloom of Annabel's passion reveals green eyes dew-honeyed with expectancy. The pavements spatter with wild rain: two bodies tremble on the verge of an apocalyptic revelation. Bernie quivers with frightened dizzy joy: the lips of Annabel are sultry with a kiss that is not taken. Like taut elastic all the tension breaks when Why are you sitting in the dark? comes from a portly gray solicitous bosom with an umbrella blocking a doorway that once held at bay a fugitive and unreal world.

13

The love of Bernie and Annabel evaporates into billets of white and blue paper that come every morning laden with philosophy, adoration, and reproach. Autumn lifts the leaves of West End Avenue into crackled nervous heaps. Autumn leaves Bernie with the agony of a reluctant surrender to a lackadaisical youth not keyed to hesitate before an obvious embrace. Engines are shovels and buckets dressed up for adults. Love is interesting but not so interesting as electricity. Without contact or induc-

tion electricity does not travel. When sparks jumped across the electrodes of Bernie and Annabel that August afternoon, what mysterious terror became the insulator?

14

Dreams are the color left in the water when acts are wrung out: dreams are blind arrows that never leave the bow: dreams are the remembrance of a courage that never went into battle. One ounce of distilled dreams would provide the plots of five hundred moving pictures or the reality of seven murders, eighteen rapes, fifty-five suicides, a hundred Carnegie medals, and the blushes of many bridesmaids. From a day's dreams one might stock a department store with chemises or get enough courage to quench a fire in a powder plant. The dreams of fifteen would create a menagerie and overflow the house of reptiles: a medical museum could be filled with the pre-natal reminiscences enveloped in dreams, and surgical skill could not unravel the physiological intricacy of the chimeric women known to sleeping adolescents. Dreams are the color left in the water: when life leaves dreams behind life is sad dirty white. Maturity is a white sad dirtiness without the dreams of fifteen: maturity means that the courage which quenches fires will stand by a principle: maturity means that the distillation which would produce a movie will build a home: it means that wild rapes and impossible copulations become the delicious commonplaces of connubiality. But at fifteen Dionysus has a wry neck. Dreams are the color left behind by a sad white dirty life.

PART TWO

15

Why is the city sober gray? Why are the stones white sober cold? Rocks crumble into parallelograms against a geometric sky. Black creatures run back and forth in the crevices thinking that civilization is composed of subways, traffic signals, and right-angles. If right angles and subways are emblems of civilization how wonderful are the tracks of a cow and the ways of a grasshopper!

16

What will Bernie be: what will Bernie be? In Broad Street white coats clack figures on a July morning: flicker-eyes watch

tickers through the sickish atmosphere of dessicated cigars. American Can at 87 is another way of saying tick-tock. Everyday Wall Street goes to school at ten and is dismissed at three: Wall Street has never gotten beyond fractions and elementary arithmetic. Five certificates make a gold star: five gold stars make a tip that almost came from Mr. Morgan and almost made a fortune. Good conduct means that little boys can get to the golflinks by five: good little boys can have bad little girls in nice little flats as soon as they can afford them. Begin at the bottom and work your way up is the rule of Wall Street. But even when Bernie dreams of undies he doesn't want bad little girls. Bernie does not like being a messenger in Wall Street. What shall Bernie do? What shall Bernie do?

17

What shall Bernie be: what shall Bernie be? At three-fifteen in the morning hot cocoa with malted milk is a plausible substitute for interrupted sleep. Ferryboats sound like the snores of nightwatchmen in the green corridors of a hospital: in the Herald Building, stale paper gives dirty mop water the smell of a bad cigar in a Pullman smoking compartment. When Bernie appears the boys in the corner scoop up the cards and go down to Nelligans for a last drink. Bernie lays out eight stacks of paper, buys egg sandwiches, balances three cans of beer, sweeps up the floor around the copy desk, and listens to the tedious sagacity of Rogan the night city editor labeling the morning's columns: Neb Gov: T R: Sex Fed: Pat Murd. Old news is wood pulp macerated and rolled into new news: Ships sink: men murder: wars wax: every day ships sink: men murder: wars wax. But reporters do not always remember that the verb must agree with the subject in number; and the drama of arising at three-fifteen is belittled by the fact that the sun reveals a dozen stale faces in a dirty office. To get up at three-fifteen: to report a fire: to write a stick—oh joy! but a thousand fires: a thousand sticks is tick-tock all over again. If Bernie remains a copy boy Bernie will become a reporter. Bernie will not become a reporter—and what shall Bernie do?

18

Buckets of gold on a chain curve over the hill on an autumn evening: in the solitude of an affected antiquity Gothic pinnacles

gleam whitely into fading purple. The diminished roar of distant elevateds creeps out under a blanket of patchwork silence. In the distance golden beer pours from electric bottles: flash signs display cheap jewelry on the bosom of Harlem: remote lamps melt into the feebleness of foggy stars. Bernie does odd jobs by day: Bernie reads by day: at night he seeks the company of students within walls of an affected antiquity.

19

Dim graygreen corridors swerve in solemn arcs: faces beautiful with thought make thought beautiful. How shall men behave in society and on what Ionic shore did men begin to wing their way above the matted forest of their daily life into the rarefied clarity of philosophic thought? Psychology deals with human behavior. The last entrail of a dissected grasshopper increases the wonder of life. If life is a tree, let us smell the flower and dig at the roots: if Annabel is worth embracing, so is the hypothesis of evolution: the organ that pries into the body of a woman is the instrument that drives excitedly into the womb of Nature: the brain is composed of erectile tissue: every living thought is a divine orgasm.

20

Brother Deperia wields over Politics a knife that cuts with unguents and balm: man is by nature a political animal and by ill-nature a dangerous one: monogamy is as valuable for the family as it is tedious for the parents: war is inevitable because men believe in the inevitability of war. The inarticulate passion of Selwin over a slide on the microscope beatifies the rosary of great names: Linnaeus, Buffon, Darwin, Mendel, Huxley, with a special prayer for the heretics, Oken, Goethe, Butler, Driesch, Jennings, Geddes, and nameless men who forever storm against the true Church and save it. Palmer who makes literature as familiar as the smile of a beloved mouth is a white ember of happiness: the happiness of Chaucer, Spenser, Shelley, Keats. His eyes are exhausted volcanoes peering over the winter landscape of a wistful smile. The Holy Ghost descends when Adonais beacons from his abode in Palmer's sanctuary: there is religion enough in his classroom to curse a hundred churches for their blasphemy. No word is too often profaned for Palmer to redeem it: no emotion so frail but it becomes a shaft of crystal dancing

on his tongue. Palmer disturbs Bernie with the joy of elevated thoughts. Life is neither Annabels nor Dynamos: life is not was not cannot won't be more than the point of calm in the moving whirlwind of God.

21

Palmer brings Bernie to the core of the whirlwind: it is the core of Plato: it is form: it is the core of Aristotle: every living thing fulfills its inner shape: it is the core of Spinoza: the intellectual love of the Universe: it is the core of Berkeley, that man and God have begotten the same reality. When Bernard thinks about Berkeley in the moonlight the dark bulk of almost antique buildings becomes the shadow of his own thought: the solidity of the ground is the exhalation of an ancient dream. There is not was not cannot won't be more matter and bottom to man's life than the ruffle of a passing thought on the brow of God. Man is a thought: cities are a thought: Bernard is a thought: and if the thought perished, what would remain? The universe is an idiot: man is God's first gleam of an idea. The world is a step in the equation of an incalculable theorem. If God knew the answer he would not bother to work it out.

22

This is life! This is learning! Bernard wants to drain it dry. But by day college is tick-tock on a useless metronome. Dull faces crawl through the iniquity of tortured lessons. Massed monkeys are the sport of inane tropisms called hazing, games, and college spirit. Fill out the form: sign the dotted line: report promptly: do not live with a thought lest the thought keep you from turning over memorizable papers and acquiring insignificant marks. Do this: do that: learn this: learn that: all goes towards a degree except the active use and exploration of the outer scene, the city, or the fruitful ground within where bean sprouts of ideas put forth their radicals. Never dwell on anything for more than fifty minutes at a time if you can help it: credits are credits! White worms gnaw at Bernard's soul: this is not meditation. White worms creep through Bernard's mind: this is not learning. White worms tear at Bernard's vitals: this is not living! White worms sallow nervous too much girls or what? Fever's irritation indicates a prolonged rest. The under-

taker's shop leers like a pimp at a carnival: white worms are the silent partners of black undertakers.

23

The hours come slowly: the day is wide: the city spreads before Bernard's feet like a gleaming map. Health is a matter of slow deliberate motions, warm baths, clean clothes, and walks along unending avenues, various with economics, sociology, biology, literature, drama, and art in the guise of people. People tell everything. The full waters of the East River are an invitation to explore brown barges with dingy good natured men. From the lower docks the bridges are plutonic fountains, meeting midway between the shores. Two months making systematic tabulations among the garment workers bring Bernard face to face with the blind drama of an industry seeking to achieve stability out of spasmodic and irrelevant enterprises that ebb and flow with fashion.

24

Michael Marx rises to hatred of the bourgeoisie out of a bed illegitimately soiled with bedbugs beyond the usual number: he knows the hey-nonny-nonny of finding the family furniture on the street, and in the handspring of adolescence he leaves behind I pledge allegiance to the flag and to all tick-tock at six per cent. He and Bernard stamp envelopes in a Second Avenue basement where twenty wobblies proclaim the immediate revolution of doing bad work worse. Mike and Bernie dream of education for the masses from soapboxes. Bernie writes an ABC of economics: Mike never forgets the bedbugs nor the soap boxes nor the verbal duties of class consciousness. Mike and Bernie hate the capitalist oppressors. Bernie equally hates the workers for being oppressed. But Bernie belongs to the bourgeoisie because he has an income of four hundred dollars a year and enjoys the luxury of gentlemanly indigence. Mike writes Bernie loving letters of excommunication.

25

Patches of iridescence on dull and slimy waters: the Art Museum is a patch of iridescence: plaster casts of Greek gods are iridescent on the flats of Yorkville: the library of spacious catalogues pointing to all necessary books is an iridescence on

the smutty night of Broadway. The towers of Manhattan gleaming across the upper Bay on a summer afternoon are iridescent: the Mall is iridescent with a hundred colors on a June Sunday joyblazing brightness. The meadows in Prospect Park on a misty April day are an iridescence hedged with phantom trees: the Westchester hills in October are petrified sunsets. In May the Croton Viaduct leads into Yonkers like a carpet unrolled for a dryad's wedding. Salt odors creeping along the Hudson on an August night uncage seagulls of memory. The smell of roasting coffee in Franklin Street brings perfumes from distant bazaars. The craggy face of Carl Schurz against a lavender night is a stark finger raised against oblivion. Dull and slimy waters creep around the city. Iridescent patches hide the slimy waters. Youth is an iridescence.

26

When the guns bluster with belligerency in 1914 Bernie says: This finishes my career! Bernie does not know what his career is but feels that a great war will finish it. When the cackle of insane apologetics breaks out like the tea-table gossip of Bedlam: when Thomas Mann and Henri Bergson and H. G. Wells share honors for being speciously dishonorable Bernard says: We must keep out of it—may no one win! By 1917 Bernard still hates the war but is carried away by the paper strategy of pragmatists and New Republicans: he whoops for Woodrow Wilson till Memorial Day. . . . Then he knows for sure his world is blasted. Cackles of insanity become requisites for polite intercourse.

27

Bernie's generation goes in for social service. They do not particularly care what Society does so long as the technique is good and whatever is done is done efficiently with a minimum wage for hired persons, examinations for the official caste, and well-designed badges of self-righteousness for those who do the thinking and direction. Universal compulsory voluntary pacifistic military service is the sum of liberal aspirations in 1917: this shibboleth will save an autocratic world for democratic unity. The dictatorship of war brings echoes of Armageddon where people who believe in the eight-hour day and the recall of judges battle for the Lord. War is inevitable, and the more we have of it the sooner will pragmatists make wise regulations for

instituting a Chautauqua of machine guns. In matters of instrumental technique, conscientious scruples about killing or doubts about the purpose for which one kills are out of place. Randolph Bourne knows better than the pragmatists; with him for rocket, the Seven Arts descends in glory-fire. He sees that chains are chains though called Democracy and Service that Hell is Hell, though called the vestibule of Heaven. How many paper warriors have said penance to the shade of Randolph Bourne?

28

Men are fighting: men are gasping: men are dying. Bernard smiles at his doctor and answers the undertaker's leer with a wink. Bernard is dying, too, but he does not die so fast as the young men who die in Flanders or in Picardy. The dread of dying excites the pugnacity of clerks and financiers who sit on stools all day and suffer from a constipation that only fear can relieve. Prepare for ripping guts out says the soldier: prepare for safety first and steen per cent says the financier: prepare for more preparedness say the clerks: prepare for the defense of Honor say the politicians, who know of Honor by reputation. Prepare to leave your wastebaskets and your vain motions says a tired God who knows that a hundred million efforts at divinity are already much more dead than they suppose. Living wastebaskets and white tape is the deafness of never hearing life's music. War is the attempt to squelch life's music in the imitative cacophony of brutal valor. In a world that is governed by tick-tock, War is a reasonable and beautiful mode of life.

29

Bernard is not dominated by his overt convictions: Bernard wants to live. But why should Bernard live? Twenty-one is a good time to die. Bernard can remember summer afternoons paddling in the White River of Vermont with heron passing overhead and the slippery flicker of trout in the shadows of aqueous stones: Bernard can remember shrews playing in the woodlot and kisses in the rose garden where Bertha sought white petals and concealment: Bernard can remember the austere divinity of a condescending Annabel, arguing about the basis of ethical conduct in a tawdry Morningside Apartment: no kisses will ever satisfy him like that chastity: no surrender will

ever thrill like that aloofness! Bernard can remember walks in the Westchester Hills with Agnes whose milky skin was the nectar offered at a feast of virgins, whose red hair was the last glow of the sun on russet walls. Bernard can remember the tender intimacy of Mamadear when they talked beside an open window above the rumble of the Elevated, domestically fomented with the smell of baking bread. Bernie had known grief without irreparable bitterness and joy without tedious responsibility. Bernie dear: think well: you are twenty-one. The clerks, the preachers, the politicians, the soldiers do not realize it: but perhaps this is your opportunity: twenty-one is a good time to die. Bernard alas! is not governed by philosophic arguments and appraisals: Bernard wants to live—and why should Bernard die?

30

At six in the morning the Flatiron Building shows yellow lights against a green April sky. Sleepy recruits summoned for inspection are told to return at ten for medical examination. At sunset Mamadear and Nornie become the faceless shadows of irretrievable years and it would not matter if Annabel had as many as ten lovers. Nightmares gallop convulsively through tedious days of shorn heads, weakly brackish coffee, steam-trickling clammy naked bodies, and inspection from medical gold-stripers who could learn human decency from veterinaries that handle hydrophobic dogs. Sleep is peace if you do not get bumped out of your hammock to mount guard for two hours over unassailable quarters girdled in quarantine. Sleep is peace, and under ordinary circumstances belly inspection would be funny.

31

Gruff seadogs who spit salt aren't always hardboiled. Even the little Greek C.P.O. grows husky when he tells how a man buried at sea leaves no enemies behind and all are shipmates. The mystery of the uniform of the day is that the sun always shines on over-shoes and peajackets and the wind from Narraganset Bay whips icy rain on leggins and no peajackets. Seventy men in a shack cease to be Ohio, Mississippi, Kansas, to become Jim, Bill, and Jack. A squareknot, a figure-of-eight knot, and a clove-hitch can easily be untied but nothing will untie the knot

in Bernie's throat on a Sunday afternoon when he sprawls on the crest of Strawberry Hill and watches the train steam-hooting around a distant curve. Men are court-martialed and sent to the brig for little offenses everyone has committed. The Catholic priest never asks Bernie whether he has any religion but gets him the impossible dispensation of a furlough and visits him in the hospital when the measles side with the commandant against God's ministers. At the Knights of Columbus Hut and the J.W.B. you can have plenty of writing paper: at the Y.M.C.A. it is doled out piece by piece, and go-getting business men preach Sunday sermons with enthusiasm for clean guts.

32

A morning on Narragansett Bay in a whale-boat takes the sting out of the Chief's nervous oaths. Sunset over the mainland makes evening muster a stale prayer in a magnificent cathedral. An hour before dawn on a rainy night wafts the perfume of lilacs and newmown hay from the misty ledge of Jamestown. Ratlike boats creep over the water in the faint lemon bleakness of sunrise. Magnolia petals make Bernie think of Agnes's bosom. The sea that surges against the cliffs is the whisper of an old friend who says: Never mind: you and I will be here when they are gone. O World! O Life! O Time! is a good poem for sentry duty on a quiet night.

33

Jerry and Bernie become friends: Jerry works in an office in New York. When the C.P.O. says: So you're wise guys from Toid Avenoo and Toity-toid street Jerry and Bernie look at each other and smile. Jerry has read Strindberg and Ibsen too: Jerry has gone to City College too: Jerry has been disappointed in love too: Jerry is going to be a radio operator too. Jerry and Bernie recite Dehmel and Rilke to each other: they laugh at the maudlin fevers of patriotism. They would like to talk to a Hun and find out whether anyone had taken Hauptmann's place.

34

Monday roast beef: Tuesday sea-gull: Wednesday sou-oup: all American mothers, we wish the same to you! Da-dit-da-da: da-da-dit-dit-dit: da-dit-dit-da. In the clamorous gloom of

Austin Hall in Cambridge Bernie wonders what it would be like to hear the signal of the flagship coming from a battle formation in the North Sea. Twenty-one is a good time to die. Captains and radio operators die first. The Heinies sat on their keys and beat the Limies with their radios in the Jutland fight, and if this was a good war we'd be fighting the Limies. In Hongkong or Guantanamo or Manilla we're always fighting the Limies. Perhaps when we've finished with the Huns we'll fight the Limies, too. The navy's been waiting a long time for a good fight. Dit-dit: dit-dit: dit-dit: stand by for a weather report, Arlington broadcasting.

35

The days become a vacancy of soft lassitude, yellowsoft in the haze of September. Nature has found a rival to poison gas: Nature has found that influenza can turn streets into trenches quicker than an army. On Harvard Field the gobs sprawl around in friendly games or stand at rest. Every once in a while someone falls in a heap and gets a free ride in the hurry-up. Jerry awakes in the bunk below Bernie with a chill: Bernie gives Jerry his blanket and in the morning draws his arm around Jerry's tired neck and walks him to the Sick Bay. When Jerry comes back the first rumor of the Armistice has turned the campus into a wild auction room where men offer ditty bags to each other and trample upon white hats hurled against a gray sky.

36

The clerks, the financiers, and the politicians have had a movement! College professors have become as important as overnight ensigns: they have worn iron mittens: at their command coal has got tangled up in the Jersey meadows. Millionaires have made the supreme sacrifice of becoming godalmighty for a dollar a year: a hundred iron ships are floating like paper boats in the Delaware. Irascible men with disordered glands have become patriots by the simple method of spying on their neighbors and selling other people's sacrifices in job-lots: woolen manufacturers, carpenters, riveters, the daughters of the best families have had their fill of money, lust, and glory. Bernie has lost his chance of dying, of dying gloriously, at any rate of dying.

37

When the grinning clerks empty wastepaper baskets and the remains of the candy the boss gave the stenographer upon the white-capped radio-boys that march through State Street, Bernie remembers that the navy was a decent place after all. When spy-hunting and witch-baiting go on after the Armistice, when patriotic people declare that little Huns should be boiled in oil, when investigators from political boobyhatches discover that Godwin's Political Justice, Marx's Kapital and the plays of Bernard Shaw can be bought at bookstores: when Red Flags take the place of foreign enemies and Blasto for constipation— Bernie remembers that the Navy was a good place after all. The Navy does its job without throwing moral spasms over the enemy: the Navy would like a wallop at the Limies, maybe, but everything else is part of the day's work.

38

Slush lies on the fields of Pelham Bay when Bernie checks out with his seabag and an honorable discharge. Amsterdam Avenue is a queer place to walk with a seabag. When a liberated gob marches along Eighty-third Street life is life is life is no longer a nightmare. Mamadear says: I knew you'd never have to go across after I visited you last summer in Cambridge. Nornie says: You've been gone a long time and everything's different: we eat toast instead of rolls in the morning my back hasn't gotten any better do you still wear your heavy woolen sox? Mamadear says there's been a letter here from Annabel I didn't forward. Annabel was married a fortnight ago and lives in Pittsburgh with Fred who believes in the Saturday Evening Post, flaked breakfast foods and oral antiseptics. Everything is different; and we eat toast instead of rolls in the morning.

PART THREE

39

Bernie is a radio operator: if the worst comes he can try a turn at sea. Bernie can pound a typewriter fast and if the very worst comes he might become a male secretary. Bernie writes better than college graduates usually write at first: but when Bernie asks for books to review at the office of Chronos he feels like a thief and a perjurer when he walks away with four of

them. Reviewing books is the summit of Bernie's dreams. With the love he puts into a book review he might write three sonnets or seduce a young lady. The cordiality of Richard Velvet has the hopefulness of Micawber tinctured by worldly wisdom: when Richard Velvet says Would you care for a half-time job as editor? the white fireplace capers behind a desk in time with the unexpected eructations of Bernard's heart. If Bernard knew what swooning was, Bernard would swoon.

40

To have a desk . . . to write an article . . . to offer an opinion! To pore through piles of books! to deliver more opinions! To offer the concealed cleverness of adolescence as the spontaneous breath of maturity! Pinch yourself, Bernard, is this real? Are you real? Are Velvet, Miss Herriott, Welsh, the slim impressario Harrison Martyn real? Is the Brotherhood of Man real? Is the Triumph of Labor real? Is the Russian Revolution real? Is Universal Peace real? Yes: it is all real. The peace treaty has not been signed yet: the revolution has not been choked by military oppression yet: the socialist cause has not died of infantile paralysis and hardening of the arteries yet: you are in the Reconstruction Period, Bernard. You are undertaking the Reconstruction of the Social Order. You know a great deal about it, Bernard: you have been thinking about it for at least five years: every day you are learning more. The ashen Veblen dreams of a heaven fabricated by logical engineers: the blobby Slosson dreams of a heaven concocted by poison gases beneficently used: Miss Herriott has not so much faith in engineers or chemistry as in Shop Committees and the creative impulse: Sam McGinnis, the dour young Irishman, thinks to reach Heaven, like China, by boring through the A. F. of L. There are twenty different kinds of heaven being offered in the streets in 1919, Bernard. Each heaven is a clear, chemically pure distillation of a sample from the present hell.

41

Beer provides good amber tickles in a clean dark saloon. Velvet and Welsh discuss ladies and Dostoyevsky and what Copey said to the graduating class after Lowell had abolished Eliot's fraternal keg and substituted the iniquity of compulsory Freshman dorms. The lean curves of Welsh's face are the edges

of a thought that evades platitude: the slight failure of focus in Velvet's green eye is the distraction of dance-music among old men in a smoking-room. When Welsh talks about women Bernard realizes he is a very virgin: when Welsh talks about women Bernard affects the boredom of satiety. At twenty-three young men should not be virgins.

42

In November, 1919, Bernard's world goes to sudden smithereens. Chronos, Reconstruction, Revolution, Socialism falter into rheumatic palpitations: youth becomes grizzled: illuminated hopes burst into bitter drops of soapy water: White Guards beat Red Guards: poverty beats revolution: safety beats adventure: doubt beats certainty: the almost goes along with the never-was: and the program of the British Labor Party no longer rises as the sound of birds in a still forest. Chronos slides into oblivion, and into the same but different oblivion slides Bernard.

43

Above Bernard's oblivion something shimmers and shivers as the sun shimmers through green crystal water to a rising diver: something is Eunice: Eunice is everything: Eunice is the perfection of an April day before the edge of winter has gone: hyacinth and daffodil: the shock of lavender and sunny gold: white trickle of anemone through dead leaves: the tinge of scarlet on the beech-boughs: a spring of many clustered possibilities is Eunice: she paints pictures: she is a girl: and the kisses of men have left her as untouched as the spring sun leaves the cold flanks of the April hills: the snow of inner chastity remains through many outer meltings. She is a tease to Bernard: she meets his earnestness with indifference and his passion with disdain: when Chronos crumbles, Eunice alone is left, a phantom for a ruin, a jackalantern toward which Bernard stumbles, just to find a hot breath whispering in his ear. Eunice fills Bernard's days: she makes wan and desperate the long hours of the night: but Bernard gets no nearer to the heart of Eunice than a mote gets to the eye: lodging there, he has a place of irritation: claiming place he spoils the trifling gallantries of other men but has no larger part in her himself. Bernard lives in happy torment: Bernard is a worshipful-wanting ecstatic coward, hanging be-

tween the desire for Eunice and the desire to remain free: the desire to avoid tragic complexes with Mamadears and the desire never to mind his own affairs: when Bernard vacillates Eunice is miles away: when Bernard becomes resolute, Eunice is still miles away.

44

Letters come from Hong-kong: letters come from Calcutta: they come from Jerusalem: Cairo: Marseilles: Paris: Brussells: Amsterdam: London, the New Forest: the letters are scraps of James McMaster: when Bernard reads them he partakes of the sacrament of discipleship: one of McMaster's ideas thrills Bernard like the touch of Eunice's arm: an invitation to collaborate on a book with McMaster causes shivers of frightened delight to run up and down Bernard's spine: to be a spoke in McMaster's wheel would be a short way of traveling far: Jerusalem and Hong-kong and the Sea of Japan are but suburban boroughs in James McMaster's realm: letters are dated there but the thoughts they bear edge slantwise toward infinity: a counter-love to Eunice plays in Bernard: if she is a warm sun, McMaster is the whole vault of sky: letters come from Aberdeen: letters come from Bergen: a letter from Pimlico invites Bernard to become a fellow in Comte House: a letter from Pimlico is a very hard letter to resist.

45

When Bernard and Eunice trudge through a soft mist of snow on Park Avenue, he tells her: I am going to London for a year. If I were not going away so long—the snowmist becomes a fuzzy carpet—the flakes cling to red wisps of Eunice's hair, unmelted, and flicker on her lashes—if I were not going to be away so long, says Bernard . . . if and if and if, mocks Eunice. If time in buckets, and gallons and gallons of ocean were not to part us, says Bernard firmly, I'd say I love you. That is very sweet says Eunice: did it take a visit to the passport office to find this out? I love you, says Bernard stubbornly: if you will marry me I'll not go off to join McMaster. If I loved you, says Eunice, I'd have to bid you go *because* I loved you: it makes no difference: I bid you go because I don't. Don't shake me so: I am not mocking now: I don't love you, but gee oh gee: I wish I did. I'll paint your picture and keep it near to me: if I say

yes to it, there's hope for you. There's something deep between us: I don't think we're going to part: but Bernard, you are very young, and I am twice as old as you already: so hurry up. My wild oats are nearly ready to be gathered: but yours are scarcely planted yet. Let's sow and reap together, cries Bernard. That's marriage, says Eunice: but marriage needs more love than I can muster for anyone: so let's be friends. I am not the girl you dream about: one never is: and you are what I want a friend to be, but nothing more. That night Bernard kisses Eunice: his warmth is far too courteous: it jeers at his illusion. The Sunday before Bernard sails is icy blank with jealous despair. Eunice's kisses have a mocking reserve, and Bernard's passion is too dispersed and fretful to convince anyone, even a virgin of eighteen. Virgins of eighteen know what love is without previous demonstration.

46

A hundred pounds a year in London is better than nothing at all a year in New York. Butter and sugar require ration cards in 1920 but Pimlico recovers from the effects of invalid soldiers by the application of paint to the gentlemanly grayness of houses that might have been friends with Colonel Newcome. Sociology was made by Comte the mistress of the sciences: but the concubines of science refuse to recognize the first wife of the Prophet. Comte House in Pimlico preaches the mistresship of sociology to spinsters who are looking for something useful to do as well as to the passionate souls who have watched the dawn of James McMaster's thought upon a gray world solemn with wheels, six per cent, and tick-tock.

47

Alighting from a donkey cart by a brick farmhouse whose thatched roof brightens to the gorse-gold moor at the edge of the New Forest Bernard beholds the man he has begun to call his master. Age has achieved the victory of a red beard beneath a spreading crown of silver hair. Gray eyes leap to Bernard with a friendly kiss: a knotted hand that seems a tough old root holds Bernard's hand and claps him on the shoulder: and through the beard a trickle of impatient questions runs off without an answer. The cuckoo calls across the moor. Bernard puts down his handbag. So this is he!

48

We do not dress for dinner says McMaster: but note the gorse Linnæus worshiped when first he trod upon these shores: ticker fools with country estates hoard their gold in banks and turn their backs to the gorse; of course you ride? New Forest ponies are perhaps too small for your six feet: my five-foot-six still finds them helpful: do you want to wash? or shall we climb that little rise and look the country over: don't bother about toilets: Cockneys pollute the rivers and deplete the land in the interest of sanitation while China keeps her civilization and her health by watching her stools: I hope you got your sea-legs quickly? a thermometer dropt into the water as Franklin did is a good way to study oceanography: did you remember? This is the common that keeps the widow's cow and some of Hampshire's yeomen independence: black days for England when enclosures broke up old folkways and prosperity: poor moles in London libraries now laugh at Goldsmith for picturing deserted villages they might find for themselves by leaving London for a day. You found Comte House and Mrs. Long? The place is a little bleak perhaps but tidy: a fine figure of a woman: they breed well in Inverness: but ay de mi! gray London will take away her scarlet cheeks: the clear thought of us Scots has all it can to penetrate the beer and fog that cover London from dawn to closing time: our bodies suffer: Henry the first——

49

Bernard's head bobs like a groggy bottle in a mountain torrent. The perpetual energy of McMaster's mind bulges the brain itself into a forehead that becomes him like a crown. Bernard longs for the slow digestion of solitude but is relieved to find a master looking like a master. . . . Stuffed furniture and stuffy coals hem in the night. McMaster says abruptly: What have your days been like? What have you done and seen? What have you thought? What have you got for me? What can I give you? Begin at your beginning not later than your grandfather. When Bernard puts himself and all he's been before the kindly sternness of those eyes he feels like children who in manhood still take their dolls to be the proof of their fecundity. The days have been crowded with emptiness; the days are the black embers of a letter with an irretrievable message.

50

A stew of paper! is McMaster's epithet. The brief diurnal flickers of your journalism have neither light nor heat enough to shame a candle. The worming through of books experience does not season is scarcely worth a worm's life, still less yours: the poor preservative of abstention is all that's kept your life from rotting utterly. You live like clerks and academic dunces who, wound in paper cocoons, prepare to metamorphose into dead butterflies. Soldiers, though stupid, have the discipline of drill: but you have neither discipline nor the strength that can forego it. Brace up, my lad, you're twenty-four and you have scarce as yet begun to live. Now look you here—

51

A panic sobs in Bernard's bosom. It is true. His days bear the imprint of tick-tock: they bear the imprint of escaping tick-tock: but little else is there. In the forest of Bernard's bewilderment McMaster spreads a map that diminishes the impenetrable confusion of the landscape: each contour is a shrunken reproduction of life's explored terrain. Life active and passive, now dominating circumstance by dreams, thoughts, and inventions, now submitting like soft wax to circumstance's mold: sea-shell and house, antheap and city, tropism and full-fledged idea march into an organic unity: nothing exists as by itself, but always reacting and being reacted upon as Life's pendulum swings from not-being into being and back again. Priapic beasts and the seven gods and goddesses of Greece reveal man's biological aspiration: at every stage the ideal is but the hidden uttermost of Life's own reality.

52

The natural history of life and life's environment, portrayed by Kepler, Newton, Boyle and Kelvin, by Chambers, Lyell, Darwin, Pasteur, Faraday, reveals a truncated panorama in which the foreground is forgotten—which is man. Upon the empty destiny of things man flings the challenge of himself: Pythagoras married mathematics and music to make the stars dance: Plato, Buddha, the Nine Muses and Shakespeare brought forms into existence that Nature, unfulfilled by man, did not suspect. Jesus Christ is just as real as Plato's Socrates: dead, each achieved a new life in the mind more powerful than any

Alexander knew on earth. How many men have followed Christ who would not recognize divinity in flesh? By idea, image, and ideal man makes new bestiaries: he dreamed himself out of some blinder shape: his thought imposes destinies and ends upon a formless world that chases its own tail. Man is the chimera and the centaur and all the devils in hell and all the gods above!

53

The donkeys from whose backs young Bernard had painfully unloaded their damaged wares had made of science something hostile and averse to life; and all that smelt of life became a wanton idleness and imbecility. Truth and beauty were at war among the donkeys: dead science was the counterfeit of endless externalities which might be turned to the practical account of tick-tock: literature and art were phantom faces dancing in non-existent fires. Good-truth is gospel! Truth beautiful is life's highest symmetry! But donkeys purposely kept truth in calico and curl-papers lest she be raped by ambushed admirers, whilst esthetic donkeys emptied out beauty's brains, because sawdust had been found more satisfactory for dolls. Among the tough and tender donkeys the real and the ideal could never meet: they gave each other the cold shoulder and the cut direct: the grounds for their divorce were science's frigidity, slightly aggravated by imagination's impotence.

54

Science and art were separate loads upon the backs of donkeys: but in James McMaster's thought Life had begot them both: they were the modes in which Life's rhythm, now turning egoward for sustenance, now turning toward the world for mastery, achieved that harmony of acts and facts and dreams and deeds without which life does not dance or leap at all but moves in palsy or droops in a paralysis, now overwhelmed by facts it cannot master or by acts it can't direct, now breaking out in wishful dreams that come from nowhere, lead to nothing, now galloping in vain achievements like the conquests of Napoleon or the misplaced ingenuity of printing presses whose precise and utmost excellence makes yellow journals spawn more easily each hour. Euclid and Plato are not at war: the reality of conic sections or electrons cannot deny the other life-reality of Goethe, Michelangelo, or Blake. Life spans all categories in its move-

ment and reconciles all verbal contradictions: we move in spite of Zeno! Our being is what makes the difference to an indifferent universe!

55

Living, men break through all the husks that keep them safe but undeveloped: the husk of status and profession: the husk of empty creed: the husks of brainless actions and inactive brains: the husk of fixed environments and habits: the husk of righteousness that clings to well-established evils lest it meet greater ones: the husk of comfort and security. Donkeys live on husks: they gorge themselves to sleep and balkiness. Their daily diet is a bag of husks, the husk of politics and mediocre letters, the husk of invention, business, scientific inquiry directed to the greater glory of card-indexes and tick-tock: the husk of acting, moving, thinking, planning, feeling with a minimum of discomfort and disarrangement: the husk of preparing for eventualities that never arrive and discoursing at length about unimportant contingencies so that stuffed donkeys may earn glass cases in museums. . . . *Vivendo discimus!* If appetites are ready, food will follow. To be alive means clear eyes and a good digestion: a readiness to risk one's neck or lose one's sleep: a willingness to work at anything one needs for bread or knowledge from catching fish to measuring an atom's dance: the will to be incorporated with others in a family, union, shop or city, and yet to keep one's proper self intact. A life well-keyed will find its way with equal ease about a landscape or a library. To be a man at all means sharing in the modes of life that men have found a help to sheer existence or to ecstasy.

56

These were McMaster's thoughts. They broke through many husks young Bernard had built up and labeled Education, Wisdom, Culture. They robbed his idols of their forehead's jewels: Bernard Shaw became a cockney limping on a crutch whose shape denied his limb's deformity: he proclaimed the Life-Force but forgot its main activities. Old Berkeley's ego-begotten world was the mooniness of lonely nights. Dear William James seemed but a half-philosopher whose appetite for life was what alone gave life to his philosophy. Dewey kept close to acts and facts but dared not embrace dreams and deeds, lest he be smoth-

ered: his better world was generated in an experimental vacuum. The socialists were cockneys, too, who took machines to be prime-movers, and forgot the sun, and what the sun does to the leaf, and how the leaf spreads through man's life. Science used Cartesian dialectics to despise philosophy: philosophy was cowed into forgetting it had forged the weapon for its defeat. Whitman, Emerson, Wordsworth, and Plato kept their seats in Bernard's pantheon: Tolstoi and Goethe joined them: most of the rest were called upon for kitchen duty or for music at vacant intervals. Rabelais and Dickens were the chief factotums in this refurbished household; but there were others. Bernard began to worship trees, because he found in them the vital harmony McMaster sought. If men were sycamores or beeches they'd know less movement and more growth.

57

Temples are built of solid stones: idols do not fall at once. The night McMaster talks till dawn with Bernard finds Bernard shrinking into a chaos of complicated resistances, half paralyzed by worship, weariness, and fear. He shrinks chamberwise with a trickling taper and cannot find the outer door of sleep, aghast at that great pride and energy of mind which takes life for its province and falters at nothing between the astronomy of distant stars and the aspirations of religion or the physiology of our inmost cells, but has a place for all, and an appetite to master more. The furious iteration of McMaster's voice, the gray eyes that look past sorrow and love into the core of the Whirlwind, become the image of the dreadful God that Gustave Doré had set up in Bernard's skies at five or seven. Eventually Bernard sleeps. Eventually Bernard awakes. Eventually the reality of his own sapless days is mixed with the memory of a conversational dream that ended in an intangible triumph. India rubber tubs chill the spine: Americans are not used to bathing in a can of hot water.

58

In London dreams evaporate and intellectual discourse is difficult after a breakfast at nine that includes oatmeal, kippers, eggs, marmalade, and toast. Men worship Mammon: but McMaster plays with him and Moloch: thrice each month he meets

with financiers who build railways in remote provinces of India in order to bring the curse of Manchester's dirt to a civilization that has long enjoyed its own ordure. On other days, McMaster plans museums and cities, plows through the muck of learned discourses to seize jettisoned diamonds, exhibits ideas like specimens in cases to the willing few who make Comte House their intellectual home, throws pearls to swine and goldpieces to beggars who achieve academic respectability and a modicum of fame out of the remains of McMaster's breakfast cogitations. Bernard does not rise at five. New Yorkers bred with perpetual janitors and steam do not like to arise in a cold room at five. Bernard's day with McMaster begins when the stuff of McMaster's thinking has already shaped itself in many folded wads of paper, each teasing symbol leading to a book perhaps that's still unwritten. Sanderson shares their quarters: a grizzled cherub whose pink skin is like his own translucent thought: whose blue eyes burst in merriment over entertaining ideas. When Bernard talks with Sanderson and McMaster all ideas are entertaining. Even Bernard learns to spend a whole day in discussion without feeling that breakfast dinner supper are more important. It is a great victory for an American to forget breakfast, lunch, and dinner—but even Sanderson and McMaster remember tea!

59

Twilight hours on the Chelsea Embankment: twilight mist: the snaily creep of smoke from distant chimneys: the words of Eunice's letters that never deepen beyond the twilight of scattered friendship into firm and starry night. Red Chelsea pensioners blotted against the green twilight of remote gardens: red Chelsea houses against the purple twilight of the afterglow. Human twilight! The white twilight of Carlyle's pain: the blue twilight of Whistler's sentimental cynicism: the dusky mottled twilight of the stones that whisper ancient titles to Henry James: the greasy twilight that swims around a Crosby Hall no nearer to Eutopia than Thomas More himself was! To strain for Eunice's words through the twilight of a summer's night: to find the words no warmer and no brighter than the evening: to drop one's hopes in the muddy slime of the receding Thames: to find no rest in the creaky twilight of a deserted house. . . .

60

Verhaeren and Van Gogh went mad in London: who would not? Miles of dull streets are miles of dull streets. Where does Whitechapel Road end and has anybody ever found Tooting or tried to walk through Clapham Junction or get a drink at the Elephant and Castle? To survive a beef stew in a yellowgreasy Lyons is to earn the Order of the Iron Stomach with bars: the sound of a coster hawking fresh filberts or white heather would make harsh the faint murmur of distant winds: but the English of Oxford is worse than the French of Stratford-atte-Bowe. Unsuspecting foreigners have been killed at the heart by an icy Euooh? aimed at the indecency of their candor. But a bus-conductor may be a friend in need: a weaver from Nottingham may turn a weekend labor conference at Morley College into an assembly of dignified and helpful men. Snout, Bottom, and Starveling have more humanity than the prigs, false-faces, uniforms, and worldly wisemen—and the crowd always feeds the pigeons in front of St. Paul's.

61

The red fog of a September morning by Green Park successfully counterfeits Joseph William Mallory Turner. When the barges slide past the Doulton potteries on a dank afternoon, they are better than almost anything in the Tate Galleries. Saturday night market on Churton Street has a levity that finds only feeble echoes in colossal music halls—and God never made a June day for anything but a walk up the tow path from Kew Gardens to Richmond. The shade of William Morris saunters under the willows to Richmond meditating news from nowhere: Bernard and Charlotte follow the shade, two friendly people drawn into the friendly world that Morris pictured, under willow, over stile, past a grass bank, by a lock, till Richmond Bridge and many punts and picnickers close up the vista.

62

Charlotte came from Aberdeen to help fallen women before she knew exactly what fallen women were. That was seven years before she found a post in Comte House and left a posey of tulips over the fireplace in Bernard's room when he arrived. Charlotte plumbed the depths of other people's tragedies so successfully she made them forget her own was deeper: but love,

despair, suicide, jealousy had singed the hem of every garment that she wore. She had watched her youngest friends go bitterly and unconvinced to death in France: she had worked with labor men and conscientious objectors in the face of a family that took comfort in the editorial certitudes of the Morning Post: her sweetness tartened as one side of her clutched loyalty, the other love. . . . She says: Oh dear: I thought so! when Bernard tells her about Eunice. She says: Remember to wear your evening clothes, when he almost goes to a dinner in Notting Hill Gate without a dinner coat. She says: They have Maids of Honor tarts some people call nice at Richmond: and there is an old tree in the park that was meant to shelter lovers or conversation. We have plenty to talk about she adds firmly. Charlotte dresses with the ambiguous primness of a private secretary. Her tweeds are a little too heavy and her shirtwaists not less serviceable than ugly. Her voice is a clear Northern voice. Her face and her body are a fine landscape, shorn by a November storm: her mind is a lake in the midst of the landscape, agitated but deep. When one sees her mind gleaming through a copse of hazel eyes one finds that her face is beautiful. Like a blindman, poor young Bernard plucks at the heavy tweeds and the assertiveness of metallic dress supporters, and takes a long time to discover that her face is beautiful.

63

Charlotte gently wipes clear the foggy patches in Bernard's mind. Charlotte smiles at Bernard's rages against old England: she finds the southern English funny, too, and likes the gaunt dank air of Edinburgh, drinking terror in black closes, more than the slatternly complacence of London. A Sunday spent discussing Eunice in the greenwet silence of the Chiltern beeches almost removes the thought of Eunice from Bernard's heart. When Charlotte recites patches of Chaucer from a northern Down-top near the grassy Pilgrim's Way, Bernard swoops with her to Canterbury, quite forgetting ties of Franco-German-American ancestry. The smell of marjoram and mignonette: the blush of Charlotte's prim-dancing face: almost make England a possibility if ten years and many customs did not come between their pairing. In complementary qualities, Bernard and Charlotte are well-married: but the parish register does not recognize marriages made in Heaven unless they come down to earth.

Charlotte feels too tender towards Bernard to let him come down to earth. She has an uncle who was a general in Afghanistan, and her father retired from the Hong-kong Customs Service with honors: Oxford, Cambridge, Eton, or Cheltenham are the prerequisites for marriage in her family. Charlotte has five equally maiden sisters.

64

The days are wrung by the dry torture of desire: the days crawl with the slow crawl of a thirsty man over a desert. . . . The days do not bring Eunice and the days do not bring peace. Ideas are gadflies that add to the sting of unslaked thirst. When Bernard proposes to Eunice again by letter she answers tardily that she prefers to keep her pastels fresh without such fixatives. She is a little diverted by the snorting raptures of a Spanish sculptor who has asked her to be his mistress: she disdains the fetters of such minor titles, too, but likes the bulky power that would impose them. She hopes that Bernard will remain her friend in any case: she does not love Bernard yet: his portrait made her brush go mushy: she's turned it to the wall: and she is rather overpowered by the Spanish bull.

65

Five boats go back and forth across the Atlantic before Bernard is reasonably sure that the bull has not immediately succeeded. When McMaster says: Come to Palestine to plan the New Jerusalem this fall, Bernard replies: I am going back to America: I want a terrestrial girl more than I want the City of God itself. McMaster says: Ask her to join you there! Bernard fuzzes a mournful and despairing reply. Ideas and sweethearts do not mix: marriage comes first or never. McMaster says: But girls are everywhere: so why turn back? And Bernard says: Such rootlets as Americans have they must preserve. Eunice was born in Brooklyn, I in Staten Island: we both know what a walk along the Palisades is like. Having no deeper roots, I keep those that I have: I'm going back: sometimes I think that Eunice is only America: I need America too. Tough French and Scottish roots are French and Scotch wherever they may be: but what is an American but a hope that has not taken root? Old stocks may rove: we pioneers must settle down. If you would understand it, read The Ordeal of Mark Twain. You have given me all that I

can take—a thousand thoughts still wait to be digested. I'll give them a sea-change and set them out in an American garden. Bear with me! And McMaster says: Marriage sometimes wrecks philosophy: but a married philosopher thinks with a double mind: one such in Athens stirred up Plato—all hail Xantippe! My thoughts must stand the biological test: if marriage brings oblivion to philosophy the fault's not marriage's. An old angler never blames the fish. Good luck! my lad. When you come back, bring Eunice with you. Don't mind if there's a bairn or two: we'll find a bit for all. Unless young folks live dangerously they'll only have skeletons for thoughts and rabbits for progeny.

66

Up and down goes the boat: back and forth ply the waves. At Tillbury Docks McMaster tosses a cheery beard that almost rivals Charlotte's coster-handkerchief. Bernard's thoughts lurch through dim corridors. Back and forth: up and down. Nothingness is just about as good as Eunice no meat thank you but a little soup and crackers. Americans that slobber over the Statue of Liberty are capable of evading customs duties and clamoring about unnecessary public expenditures upon health and education. Seagulls swoop up and down: slowsteadily the boat glides past the lower skyline. Tugs tediously nuzzle the ship into the pier; portholes snap the dinginess of grimy docks. In the dim crowd at the end of the pier Eunice's face lifts a sudden white peony out of a garden of dusky zinnias. Eunice's kiss is pertly intimate. The first five minutes are pleasant. By the time lunch is over Bernard and Eunice have quarreled. She promised ages ago to go to the opera next night with Lopez. . . . Also—there is more than one Lopez.

67

O Life: Life: Life: why do you torture Bernard: O Love: Love: Love: why do you torture Bernard. The more the tawny heifer frolics the harder the stags and bulls follow her. Moo! Moo! Moo! moans Bernard. The heifer is skittish: the Spanish bull is persistent. Bernard's pocketbook is empty: Bernard's face cracks wry smiles. The heifer and the bull dance together: the heifer and the bull drink cocktails in ostentatious restaurants: Bernard does not know how to dance: Bernard cannot pay for cocktails. Moo! Moo! moans Bernard every time he sees

the tawny heifer. Can't you say anything but Moo! asks the heifer. Spanish bulls do not say Moo. When Spanish bulls ask for something they act as if they were going to get it. O Life: Life: Life: why do you torture Bernard. Moo: Moo: Moo sounds more pathetic than passionate.

68

Dying of a broken heart has been physiologically demonstrated. A smile can alter the pressure of the blood: jealousy may upset the balance of the endocrines: but if Love could be reduced to its physical basis the mystery would merely be translated into another language. When the daffodils at last come out in Thorley's window, Bernard makes his will and commits himself to a physician and a dental surgeon. The pain inflicted in ferreting around Bernard's root canals is diverting anesthetic. By the time Eunice takes Bernard on a long week-end walk and says: Let's get married: spring is here! Bernard wonders whether he has not been a damned fool all along. What on earth made him think he wanted to get married? Eunice's huffled virginity when Bernard alludes to the antithesis of having babies makes him wonder if the prowess of Spanish bulls and the wantonness of girls have not been over-rated. Eunice warmsmiles a didn't-you-know-I-loved-you-all-the-time? Bernard whispers to Bernard Doesn't life beat hell?

69

Blow hot! blow cold! blow warm breezes of spring: blow through the leaf-dimmed windows: blow away dress, camisole and shift: blow against the dusk of reticent pink marble: the marble of firm trunk and rapid flanks. Blow orange fragrance from that Hymettus where no flower has withered, where no bee has sipped: blow twilight on the kiss whose shadow hovered hawklike over Venusberg: blow hot! blow hot! . . . Blow cold! blow cold! blow cold poison of embraces that others have taken: blow poison of often indifferent kisses: blow icebergs of aimless boredom and indifference: blow northeaster of manifold disappointments: blue-coldness of inadequacy and misapprehension: grey-coldness of recessive passion. Blow cold! blow hot! blow cold! . . . The rains scud: the sun comes out: the wind shifts again and yet again. In squall or calm or in somewhat between, Bernard and Eunice share a bed together and within a month or two accept a legal

durance for their love lest reproaches and hysterics should disfigure too many family meetings. Blow tepid winds of legalized reality!

PART FOUR

70

Pygmalion worshiped Galatea but found that marble was impenetrable: eager lovers do not easily unlock secrets that tired experience may disclose at a glance. When young men are too hotly eager, girls get colds and bad tempers: when the ardor of young men is dampened by colds and bad tempers, it is hard to live happily for more than a few hours at a time. Bernard's thoughts about the future of civilization become gloomy: Eunice's portraits become caricature and her still lifes are taunting and unabashed symbols of defeated fruit: nothing is more amiss than usual with civilization or vegetables, but something is deeply amiss with Eunice and Bernard. Eunice dreams of triumphant bulls and awakes with a satisfied quiver until she sees Bernard's head lying black and white-wan in the next room. Bernard also dreams of triumphant bulls and awakes with a nasty temper. The winter Bernard and Eunice spend on Washington Place is a winter of quarrels about nocturnal bulls. Daylight bulls often have a date or a family to provide for but nonexistent bulls are always victorious. Eunice hates Bernard when she dreams of bulls.

71

The cheery urgency of McMaster's letters makes Bernard want to go into a corner and howl. Bernard and Eunice buffet themselves through a succession of impasses: when spring comes again they decide to separate from a tangled past by sharing their kindred miseries in Europe. They dream of a hilltop in France where bliss may be properly consummated under the approval of a burning sun and understanding but indifferent peasants: they dream of a winter in Prague, a spring in Florence, a summer in Budapest: Bernard dreams of an obscure village in the Tyrol beyond the reach of McMaster's letters: Eunice dreams of a gala promenade at Lido and grand balls where she may dance with many men and stray from Bernard without rousing his jealousy. They compromise with their dreams: their money will take them as far as Paris if they are careful. Bernard is

still Bernard: Eunice is still Eunice. His love has frayed into a jealous exacerbation: her response is tenderly indifferent. They are bound together by a common disappointment. They are bound by the fear of acknowledging their disappointment.

72

Footfree in Europe, Bernard and Eunice still limp upon American soil: the common ground of their dissension. He wants a closer loyalty than she can give: she wants a firmer mastery than he has taken: she'd chuck her pictures and all her claim on other men if once he'd lose the balky tone of a defeated but jealous male. She welcomes Bertha on the steamer: Bertha's tall Northern limbs, a trunk that rises like a figurehead into defiant breasts and prow-like chin, her open, forthright ways, awaken something new in Bernard: Eunice leans in friendship towards Bertha, a firmer counterpart of Bernard, and Bernard leans toward Bertha too. Bertha and Eunice discuss the inwardness of sex and what experience is: when Bernard shyly joins them they continue: within a day both Bernard and Eunice have made her common confidante of half their bed and boudoir secrets. The trio share the railway ride to Paris, and at intervals exchange their feelings over lingual diffidence and love and unaccustomed beverages through several weeks of vague exploration in the Louvre and the Musée Rodin, not forgetting their disgust over the sick smell of candied lust that haunts the Boulevards and plies about the urinals which line the stately avenues as if the dogs of Paris were constrained by regulations to avoid all doorways.

73

In London, Bernard feels his competence more keenly: the streets nudge him with memories: he shares his friends with Eunice and Bertha and marvels both at English warmth, once friendship is established, and that iron ring of time which keeps one fettered to a skeleton whose spirit only offers calcareous satisfactions. Comte House is closed for summer holidays: the dust falls in tidy layers upon disordered papers: maps, diagrams, charts, photographs, left by McMaster before another intellectual jaunt to China. Bernard walks through it as through a cemetery, noting new graves of McMaster's progeny and the faint mounds of his own dead selves. What gaps! What gaps

between a tea in Bertha's maisonette in Torrington Square and lonely suppers in a chophouse, followed by dull-tossing long libidinous nights and days of agitated thought, uneasy reckonings, muffled uncertainties!

74

Bernard is restless and Bernard is without decision: if mastering Eunice is a man's business, he is almost ready to leave it to some other man. Once Bernard wanted Eunice here in London: Eunice is here: he wants his Eunice still and has her less than ever: and this is gall that lechery can only make more bitter. He wonders, too, if Eunice is his deepest want: or is that want illusion? Then what is real? To find one's work and bend one's back to it! Men leave their women for an icy desert to cross or a look at the stars; no woman ever had a soldier, a scientist, an explorer until he was too tired to go on with his work: a man says, that is over, now for the work: a girl says: that is over, now for the baby: and if no baby comes, she fashions substitutes. Now for the work, says Bernard: but what work? Tick-tock says Piccadilly: Tick-tock says Broadway: Tick-tock says the Boulevard des Italiens: tick-tock, under the present circumstances, is the best we can offer. Bernard goes back to Eunice, vexed, fretful, sad: Eunice is not very much of a comfort: but Eunice is better than tick-tock.

75

Release from jealous bonds comes unexpectedly to Bernard: he gains in age and wisdom in a single night. In Bertha's maisonette, Eunice makes excited epigrams with her eyes for the benefit of a young Dane who haunts the company to curse profoundly the Anglicanism of the English and have a taste of freedom. Bernard, broiling beefsteak in the kitchen, faces a sudden flame of interest in Bertha's face, and throws his bosom on her, like a rug, to quench the fire, only to find it catching on himself. They clasp and kiss as lovers, they who a little while before had talked of sex and love as if life were a textbook with sub-headings for each paragraph: head to head and chest to breast their strength and weakness make a unity of equals: in an instant, Bernard is unfaithful and forgetful: never can he give again to Eunice that jealous and unswerving love that had been his to give through all their quarrels, sorties, fears, remon-

strances. A spurt of flaming fat and broiling stench is all that keeps these two from being taken in adultery, platonic but complete.

76

Beneath a fog that smothers the policeman's lamp, Bernard carries Eunice off in an embrace that makes her think the port-wine stronger than it was and Bernard much more drunk—only to find in bed completer mastery than he had ever made her feel before. You lovely dear: where have you learned all this? In Bertha's arms, he grimly mutters to himself. Stop: stop: you glorious one: go on: you leave me breathless. Damn all the Danes and Spaniards, says Bernard: I've conquered you. And I'll be yours forever says Eunice. And now: says Bernard: and now goodbye. You cannot leave me now says Eunice. I'm yours. We shall have a thousand and one days of happiness before us and a thousand and one nights. I think says Bernard with irrational coldness that the other thousand are not for me.

77

In mastery Bernard feels a shock of indifference: Bernard awakes to find himself a thousand miles apart from the Bernard who married Eunice. Balloonlike, all the cords that held him to her cut, he bounces into rarer atmospheres. He triumphs with his indifference: she is jealous of Bertha: he mystifies her with his indifference: she is irritated with herself. When Eunice dabbles in paints he writes: when, to rouse him up once more she dabbles in love, he writes more seriously: when she challenges his indifference by assuming indifference he takes a boat back to America and smiles at the icy flames that follow in his wake. Eunice writes that he is totally heartless and that he has wantonly destroyed a beautiful thing. Bernard answers that he hopes her purse holds out but if it doesn't she can call on him.

78

Hopeless, Bernard feeds on hopelessness: faithless, he holds to empty faith: thoughtless, he spends his days on transient journalism—that treadmill where flayed oxen turn a wheel that grinds no grain: unsociable, he feeds upon the gregarious triviality of teas and dinners where conversation is strained through

the stomach and laughter is an irritation in the throat. How clever is young Bernard: how wedded to urbane existence: how easily he bears his emptiness: how complacently he plumbs his shallows for a weekly cheque or a weekend invitation! For quite six months he hides from Eunice behind this front which is not Bernard but the shriveled ghost of Bernard, the mummied wraith of what was once a vehement young man. How do live animals accept such empty days? How do they call such costiveness of spirit animation and all that makes it possible, success?

79

The girls that Bernard meets are all that make him run away from Eunice without the charm that keeps him turning back. The girls that Bernard meets are windfalls, dropt too quickly from the tree, bruised a little, mealy from lying on the ground: easy to pick up and scarcely worth the picking, the cidery smell of fermentation attending all too dankly on their scarlet charm: bruised apples, speckled apples, wormy apples, frost-bitten apples, green apples, sour apples, stunted apples, apples all, but all a little less than apples ripened on the trees. When apples lie too freely on the ground one picks them up and takes a bite and tries another and takes another bite—and tries another. The girls that Bernard meets are windfalls. He bites them gingerly.

80

Queasy with dissatisfaction, Bernard spends a summer fortnight rambling slowly through the Hudson Highlands. Too many weekends: too many girls: too many articles: too many glib opinions: too many bad dinners: too many sallow mornings: damn: damn: trees are not empty: they grow: the sun is not empty: it warms: railroad gangs are not empty: they pry with a crowbar and hammer with a sledge: mothers are not empty: they give mammalian nourishment to the young: damn: damn: damn: drifting is empty: flirtation is empty: incoherent cleverness is empty: bottles of disastrous liquor are always empty: the things that make people find you an agreeable dinner partner, or an affable lover are the emptiest things of all—denials of the fullness that might be within were it not for the emptiness that—damn! damn! damn!—occupies one without. In the midst of Bernard's damns he remembers that the fortnight is over: he

must catch the next deadline of the Causeur with an editorial, and Beatrice has asked him to a party the same night.

81

He who has bedded in the grass and thrown ascetic arms around a birch tree is not prepared to face Fifth Avenue in August. Fifth Avenue in August steams like a Turkish bath in haze: the breasts and flanks of maidens under a gauzy negligence of dress assault rusticated young men like an opened seraglio: the buildings swell the mood: the narrow entrances are amorous caverns: the towers are erections: the city is tumescent in the August haze: the girls walk with dangling breasts and insolent thighs: in another hour: in another minute: in another second the brief allurements of dress will be cast off: the orgy will begin.

82

Beatrice's parties are like a thousand parties that begin with sodden men who want their soberness to cease and dead girls who want their deadness to live: five dead people, with Bernard tanned and almost quick, pour a flame or two of gin upon their tired ashes: dry underbrush of food will feed the fire: wine sputters up like dripping bacon fat: more wine makes the fire sing and mount: Let us kiss, my slut: that joke, like wormy Roquefort spreads a giggle with its smell: how many lovers have you had this week? The wine is warm: the air is warmer: the light is giddy warm: in darkness outer dresses slip from languid shoulders: that is better: let us drink again: the lamplight in the street's a summer moon: ha! ha! these little moons are hidden by the thinnest cloud. Gunpowder-black shadows on candle-white faces: the cordials sting the lips like kisses: kisses pour like cordials down to the nether parts. You love me and have loved me since the day I spent five minutes in your office? How strange, says Bernard to himself, to use that word for such a mood: yes: this is hell and all of us are damned: those lips are mine: they were not mine till she was dispossessed with liquor: with that same stint of liquor any other male would do. She sinks: she sinks upon the blackened floor: that tired amorousness is scarcely fit for love: it needs bicarbonate of soda and some peppermint. If this be called a gay and merry life, a free audacious life, let me be bound and prisoned. Good gods: she

sleeps: black shadows entwine upon white carcasses that writhe in sleep and nausea: out: out: follow the pavement cracks: turn west at thirty-fourth street: the bleary lights will clarify in time: walk on: hell opens for the dead: the damned are damned: the living damned are damned indeed to think such frantic corpses are alive.

83

That leprous taste within the mouth must go away. Naked, Bernard lies between white sheets and loves their whiteness: through the fumes of his disgust, clearing slowly, a polar radiance enfolds his being. This is he, who was a boy and played, who grew beyond a boy's age and wandered and was vexed: who married and fled from marriage, who found no work to do that called him forth until a drunken stupor sounded desperate revolt: this is he at last: readier to starve than write of servile nothings, readier to transmute his lust in work than spend himself half-heartedly: this is he, who finds no pleasure but in the unity of deed with purpose and of purpose with life: this is the sayer of Yes who denies the maudlin affirmations of the lamed, the weary, the diseased. The leprous taste is gone: baptized in light and water, Bernard turns to Shelley, reading Adonais till the white radiance of eternity shines through the sullied darkness of the night.

84

The blankness of painless blank days, the spirit healing into unity: the furore of uneasy nights: the spirit dividing into seven devils married to incompatible desires: the ebb and flow of breakfast lunch and supper: the up and down of sunrise and sunset: uneasy dark suspensions before mirrors mirroring mirrors: the listening to sounds that echo sounds: attending to memories that remember memories: disattached from Eunice, Bernard holds a womb where Eunice grows in him beyond indifference and the blankness of painless blank days.

85

The days pass: the days pass: the lone days pass. Eunice grows within Bernard's womb and Bernard grows within Eunice. Each wonders whom the other has taken for a lover: Eunice does not know that Bernard has taken her: Bernard does not know

that Eunice has softly drawn him back into her: a part of each has sought to live on parts of other lives and finds it hard to be dismembered: the wholeness of Eunice wants the wholeness of Bernard: they want the disappointment of each other as well as the gladness of each other: they want what lover cannot give to lover if haste or parting be near. When Bernard proposes that they take steps towards a divorce, he really means: I love you still: why should we live apart? When Eunice says: Of course we must: she doesn't mean, I hope we're going to separate. She adds: but I must see you first, and Bernard steels himself against her contemptuous reproaches.

86

The gravity of Eunice has the pixie awe of a little girl who has learnt a lesson: Bernard's heart beats fast and loud with love whilst his words utter remembered defiance. I do not need you now, says Bernard: I have found my work and can keep going quite a while alone. I don't need you, you silly wretch, says Eunice: I have found no work worth doing and no man worth caring for beyond a day or two: but both of us might be the better for a child, I think. You've come to motherhood? mocks Bernard. Another life to breed instead of suicide? My ego was a bad, bad eggo, says Eunice: I ought to hate you but I don't. My experience was just as empty as your ignorance: it ditched us both. You've never been a mate to me: why did you leave me once you learned the art of holding me completely? Let's not recriminate says Bernard. I'm happy in my work: but you need straightening out: a baby or divorce? Let's both forget the past, says Eunice: I want a future not bounded by your you-ness or my me-ness. My Eunice! says Bernard tenderly: you cancel out my meanness: I need you too. Don't—don't pun when you embrace me! murmurs Eunice. There are no don'ts between us, answers Bernard, only do's. Let go: let go you brute: the dress unbuttons from the shoulder: besides: perhaps you want divorce? Nonsense, says Bernard: you're mine forever. Why did you put the thought of fatherhood in me?

PART FIVE

87

Safety razors make it hard to grow beards in America: America would be a better place if there were a few bearded, savage,

terrible old men. The old men Bernard loves are mostly in Europe: Bernard loves McMaster, Ellis, A. E., Geddes, and Shaw: he loves the passion of Unamuno and the sweet scorn of Tagore. The good die early in America: there are few splendid and terrible old men. The old men in America have slick faces and slack skins: their wisdom consists in saying: Boys will be boys: I am an old boy, too. Bernard likes the bitter steadfastness of Stieglitz: but he does not respect most American old men: nor does he learn much from his tired contemporaries. John Miel's quick spasms of exhausted da-da are realistic photographs of chaotic mental rubbish, little better than the revolutionary catchwords of Michael Marx, whose generosity and passion exhaust themselves in exclamations that do not lead to coherent actions. American minds are slot machines waiting for a penny to disgorge them: the mumbo-jumbo of behaviorist philosophy shows how little material is necessary for a successful textbook or an American mind. Jacques Loeb was stimulated to his researches on tropisms in the infusoria by watching an American crowd perhaps. The intellectuals are also infusorians who go in for the higher esthetics of advertising or burlesque, when they are not engaged in deeply proving that a two-penny candle from Paris boulevards is the incandescence of super-Tungsten lamps. The group that wrote Civilization in the United States scratched their backs before they turned over to go to sleep. There are perhaps twenty quiet fellows in the laboratories and studies who would make one sit up and think. Twenty is generous.

88

The days are empty husks: but something grows and stirs within. When wars are brutalizing, when laws are oppressing, when civilizations are decaying, when stupid men are governing, when empty heads are thinking, when tired bodies are starving, these things are sure: the trees will grow and the grass will fill up the chinks in the pavement: the sky will redden at sunset on a clear day, and in the evening the stars will shine and the clouds will march like banners or linger like smoke: animals will be happy in the sun: hens will cluck: chicks will peep: cubs will whine for their mothers: the rain will fall and the droplets will become runnels, the runnels brooks, the brooks rivers, and the rivers will widen to the sea: men will dig and delve and if nec-

essary invent fish-hooks and bows-and-arrows all over again: the juncture of a man and a maid will be fruitful: the sperm and the ovum will form a blastula: the blastula will become a gastrula: the gastrula an embryo: and the embryo will become a child. The days are empty husks. One hates brutal wars, defies stupid laws, doubts civilizations, resents puny men governing and empty hearts flourishing: but the sun and the grass and man's social ingenuity and the wisdom of having babies—these things remain. Only those who prefer cemeteries to cities and burial mounds to tilled fields may doubt them.

89

Autumn days are sadglad days: the shoots of next spring are hidden in autumn. The flowers of spring are already planted. Eunice's body is proud with the pride of a baby: Eunice's eyes sing with sadglad anticipation: Eunice's cross-tender aches are the aches of a plowed field open to the sun. Winter days are full days. Eunice's body swells with a great pride. Bernard is fretful over the virgin reluctance of pregnancy, but he realizes why men once worshiped the Virgin Mother. Bernard moans to Eunice's sadglad anticipation as the windharp to the wind. Bernard hopes it will be a girl like youngest Eunice: Bernard wants Eunice's first twenty years to leap proudly out of Eunice's body. Spring days are gladglad days. The knitting together of the life in Eunice is the knitting together of Bernard-and-Eunice's life. Bernard wants to see Eunice's baby and kiss Eunice good-bye and go wandering for a year by himself over the earth. Bernard wants to have a baby begotten by Eunice. The children of the body are the pledge of the children of the spirit. The children of the spirit are the pledge of the children of the body. June days are gladglad days. Girls meant for motherhood make easy mothers.

90

The indifference of Bernard's intellectual preoccupations quivers into sudden exaltation over the exquisite ugliness just three quarters of an hour old. Sharp agony leaves a solemn face mewed in pre-natal sleep. After the dizzy irresponsibility of gas Eunice takes everything calmly. The first week in the hospital brings strained faces to the bedside daily: after a while Eunice's breasts prevail over Little James's callous regrets at embryonic lassi-

tude. Bernard's sense of fatherhood surprises Eunice quite as much as himself. For a fortnight he clucks old-hennishly over James's bassinette. The wrench of leaving to join McMaster in Geneva drives Bernard and Eunice into an appreciation of the inevitable dearness and reality of their love. If love be not dead, parting is perhaps the tenderest form of union.

91

In the middle of the ocean Bernard has a bottle of Pommery to celebrate his thirtieth birthday with a young lady whose intense white face wears spectral glasses. Eunice radios him electric love. When the steward brings around the broth at ten-thirty Bernard regularly starts to think about life—at thirty it is now or never! At thirty one does not take deck flirtations as seriously as the old women who pretend to be asleep. At thirty the porters at Cherbourg could throw an epileptic fit without getting a double tip. At thirty La Vie Parisienne and Le Rire have nothing new to say. At thirty you cash your cheques at a little bank and keep away from the American Express Company. At thirty you do not feel singularly flattered when young ladies lean with an expression of innocuous indifference against your shoulder. At thirty you suddenly realize that you are capable of looking after yourself where porters, hotel proprietors, and girls are concerned. At thirty it is now or never. At thirty life is harmonized or hopeless.

92

The Lake of Geneva is green like the cavern of a glacier: the plane trees are clipped umbrellas throwing orderly shadows: the white swans by the Ile de Rousseau quarrel like stage beauties over morning breakfast. Geneva has the sleepy tidiness of a man who combs his hair while yet in his pyjamas. I come to Geneva, says McMaster, to redd my plans and thoughts: a city washed and swept each morning provokes the bourgeois virtues in the mind. The very weakness of the League incites reflection: it might be pitiful, were great States not far worse, mere pusbags of irritated pride, pretense, and power, ready to burst. I keep a school upon the medieval pattern: some fifty students come from every part of Europe to dust away the cobwebs I've forgotten: I stir them up to manhood's task: they keep me from a fixed senescence, fastened to garrulity. How is the

bairn and Mrs. Bernard? You took a long time man: I'm glad you're back.

93

McMaster's garden drops from an old close near Calvin's house onto the rooftops of the street below. The cobbled hill raps sharply to the feet that climb it: the sudden flame of dahlias at the end of a dank passage is the burst of a beautiful solution at the end of a day's darkness. In eager knots the students talk with Sanderson, with Mrs. Sanderson, or with McMaster, or between their british-german-franco-celtic-hindu-danish selves. The French and Germans continue a battle of incompatible ideas that fight on different planes: Urdeutschland is a cobweb left on cellared bottles put down before Hans Sachs or Martin Luther: French thought is like the Place Vendome, so lucid and correct that it seems cruel to thoughts that never find a uniform in speech. When an American from Wesleyan College says: Where is this talk getting us? let's do something! McMaster answers: thought must lead to life without short-circuits. You strive for action first, as most Americans do, because you do not like to sweat in silence: your paradise, as Bernard says, is the tick-tock of a succession of alarm-clocks. Squat on your hams in isolation for seven days: resist all food and action: you'll learn as much about the East as seven trips to India would teach, and find perhaps where you Americans fall short: you'll learn, my lad, that two and two is four—without the fertile abstract mode of mathematics even pawnbrokers would not have customers. Thoughts that divert from action are sometimes gay: but actions that lead away from thoughts, or pluck them still unripe, are the worst form of futility and idleness.

94

Bernard sees that these young men and girls have much to learn and much to teach: the Germans talk of Fritz von Unruh, Werfel, and a medievalism much renewed: the French of Jules Romains, Drieu de la Rochelle, the Cahiers of L'Esprit—a renaissance that brings to weary staleness last year's stale prophets —Gide, Maurras, the brilliant Marcel Proust: the tired men of twenty tired years that brought and fought and lived beyond the War. The sickish cleverness of Morand is Tzara's da-da for the bourgeoisie: they have a match in England: poor T. E.

Hulme deceased and Aldous Huxley who mocks at all he'd like to worship and worships jeeringly all that he hates. Yes: yes: says Bernard: we in America have known that mawkish liquid, too. But Eugene O'Neill begins to find himself: there's meat in Sandburg, Robinson, Brooks, Fletcher, Rosenfeld, and Frank: Kreymborg can make us dance and Frost lies like November's crystals on New England's fields. Mencken and Lewis ply their whips on Main Street: the smiles of pained self-accusation shriek to heaven. There's promise in all this. I see it better here than in America. New students and new teachers may call a tune for life, once whiskey flasks give out. When youth begins to swarm to an idea, beekeepers who want honey will find that masks are not enough to keep them off. We've energy to burn: once we can give it form, we'll make machines use handkerchiefs to blow their noses, and not speak in company until they're spoken to. We'll break the shells of cities that are rotten eggs, set free the gas, and build a hundred new ones in their place. Your German Siedlungen and prudent English efforts are just beginnings, don't you think? Our architecture will hug the land and dance with color and drink the sun again, instead of making murky setback canyons like imitations of bad cubist pictures. Electric power talks of culture, not subsistence, for the worker: I smell a hundred changes once workingmen have victory in their bones. You Danish lads can give us hints of this and that: you Germans too: if there were Russians here, we'd learn from them as well. This is not all a dream. The America you dread is just as much a dream. Radium disintegrates into lead! Once tick-tock begins to disintegrate it may become a rainbow—who can tell?

95

In the Geneva sun America is beautiful: in the Geneva sun Bernard approaches America as a confident bridegroom approaches a bride: in Geneva Bernard forgets about fundamentalism, poison gas, armored money wagons, aimless miles of aimless motor cars, the clownish religion of one hundred per centers. Geneva is a good place to think about America in. Mid the vast poplars of the Parc de Mon Repos Bernard thinks about America and Eunice: he is excited about America: he is excited about Eunice. He throws a verse for Eunice to the seagulls that hover over Lake Leman in early September: he says: Bring it back to

Eunice in Brooklyn Heights: ask any seagull near the Battery where Brooklyn Heights is.

96

The irony of overshoes and peajackets in the sun, and leggins and no peajackets in the rain is the recurrent mystery of life. When Bernard has spent three months in Europe he can think of nothing but Eunice: the mornings begin with Eunice and the nights end with Eunice. When Bernard was twenty young girls were not so reckless nor himself so confident: he thirsted for adventure: but now his desire is muted in an ironic aloofness. At twenty Bernard used to wear his knuckles down beating at formidable editorial doors: at thirty he crumples polite editorial notes with a gesture that might garrot a neck, and goes about his own business. Desire and fullfilment do not synchronize: life should stand still, or dreams should gallop! The self that finally achieves the dream is not the self that dreamt it: disillusion may be the fulfillment of an illusion—five years too late. Bernard has achieved all he ever wanted to achieve —five years too late. To flout this with a grin is thirty's last achievement.

97

When Bernard faces Charlotte in a restaurant in Greek Street, Charlotte's eyes snuggle into Bernard's broad shoulders. Three years ago I knew what hell was like, says Charlotte: I'm past that now: I'm thirty-nine. But you look strong and confident. I've danced on fiery stones and had my fill of nettles too, says Bernard: my letters about Eunice and myself did not begin to tell you half of it. The baby and my being thirty have made me feel mature: having lived through a first day in the Navy, a first year of marriage, and a first hour of childbirth, I'm fit for anything. Do I look strong? You do, says Charlotte: and you, says Bernard suddenly, are beautiful: how is it that I've never kissed you yet? At thirty happy married lads, though anchored fast, begin to realize another woman's worth. I'm glad you came and glad you're going, says Charlotte. A month of seeing you might bring an ache.

98

The shuffle of water against the side of the Aquitania, hovering at slowest speed in thickest fog, accentuates the intolerable

loneliness: within a fog a man has nothing but his memories and his dreams. The distant hooting of ships is the passing of days: the jog of the propeller is the incessant reminder of action: when the gong sounds for lunch tick-tock recovers. Wrapped in a cape, a blanket, and impenetrable loneliness, Bernard hovers in the Atlantic: fog abaft and fog abeam. The slush of water slapping at the sides, the noisy gape between the gusts of sound, make Bernard lean upon the rail and strain to see the ship that does not come. When fog descends, the captain shares the landsman's helplessness: the passengers and the crew grow almost chummy: the lookout and the man who shines the brightwork are no farther from land than those who pay their passage. One works or dances, dines or goes to bed: but sometimes fog creeps through the portholes of the cabins and takes the crinkle out of even wavy hair. Electric lights and stars are both bedimmed with fog: it lifts—upon blank ocean and blank sky. The ship recovers speed. Voices speak easily. Thank you! I like two lumps in tea: no cookies, but a bread-and-butter sandwich. But when the steward folds the chairs back in the night, we find the sprinkled sky is but another fog, the fog of distance and eternity. Life insurance and boat drill are the mumbled security of saying one's prayers with tick-tock. When fog drops down we see the unreality of all we hold most real: even ourselves are evanescent. But fog and loneliness are not the worst. If each man had to bear a hand there mightn't be so many idiots to go to Europe! A little honest work about the ship is good for bellyaches and Weltschmerz. Perhaps our work and days are all we shipmates have: perhaps the fog will never lift completely, nor even Aquitanias get to port. It will not matter much. To feel the smart sea spray and ride the waves a while is all a sailor needs for happiness. A minute is a sample of eternity.

MARGERY LATIMER

CONFESSION

WHAT do I care for the years that pass when I am not moving? Why should I bother about morning, then noon, then night, and weeks, months and years when I am not moving? My bones are changing, my face is slipping, my skin is opening its pores and tanning. But I am not growing as weeks and months and years grow. Something inside me is strong and steady, like a body there beyond my ribs. Perhaps it looks out through my ribs sometimes, seeing through the minute blood cells and skin cells into outdoors. Perhaps it doesn't care to look outdoors.

But this is what I want to say. I do not grow. My body grows. Weeks and months grow to years but I, this curled, deaf I, does not grow. It is not a presence. It is not like the pressure of air moving in colored folds about me. It is not something that can be seen or smelled or touched. I only know it is there and I imagine it lies curled up and demands food and I hate it, I hate it, I hate it. Its food is not bread and wine or flesh. It has other food.

I must tell you about this deep rotten knot in me because now my blood and my skin cells and my tears are revolving in remorse. I can feel a straining through my legs up to my shoulders and my head, beyond my eyes, in my ears, to see and hear this monster and drive it out so that I may inhabit my body and make it my own house and be at peace in all its intricate rooms and halls.

I tell you I am not to blame. This curled up thing makes me act. The first time I realized it was not myself that did the work I felt happy, then when I saw that I couldn't push the monster out I pounded my head. Let me show you what it does

to me. If you can imagine a girl twenty-eight years old with large, set eyes and bright hair and a small mouse-mouth you will have something of me from the outside. Now pretend you are in a basement room with a boarded up fireplace, an India rug on the floor with the tree of life in amber and jade birds flying in the branches. Imagine too, a Persian screen and beyond it a green glass bottle hanging from the wall. See the couch with a striped silk cover and the spoke of a bannister in a corner, left by a drunken friend. See the little white duck floating on the wooden stretch of bookcase top; her feathers are purple and red and green. Behind her is a tea set with lost ships rocking in a snowy sea. There are two chairs that have shiny seats and glossy bodies. Their legs are thin and bulging at the knee-cap. One expects them to hop across the room.

Now feel at home in this room and look around at the people, most of them men. It is ten o'clock. Outside is snow and cats are using their paws like hands at the shutters, pushing and clattering to get in. Carlo is sitting upright in a camp chair. He is small and his black suit is too large for him. His face is beautiful and ecstatic, no matter what is being said, and when he talks he pushes out his red lips and pauses before a large word which he always pronounces wrong. His face is in perpetual wonderment. I like Carlo. On the floor near the door sits Evan. He has light hair that makes his head in some lights look like a polished egg. His hands are long and white and he wears glasses without bows. Sometimes the light catches his glasses and then he looks very odd, like an aluminum man in his grey suit and glittering head and eyes. Gertrude I won't describe because I don't like her. She is one of those harsh people who laughs like this, "a-a-a-a-a-a" quickly like sheep or a train. She thinks I'm a hypocrite. I don't like Gertrude, she has no imagination.

Come to the other side of the room. In a red chair is Robin. He is twenty-two. He is very small. His tiny hands and feet and his small head, like a glossy acorn, make me very happy. Robin is a seven months child. He came out too soon. I'm always trying to make it up to him as if I were to blame. Florida is sitting on the floor with his head against the jade curtains. He looks very beautiful, I think. You may not like him. He is colored and his face and eyes look as if he were standing on a mountain top singing, "Little David Play On Your Harp."

I think he believes that angels live in the sky even though he has several degrees. He feels at home now but when he first came he talked about how educated he was and how many colleges he had been vice-president of and how many lectures he gave. He thought they didn't accept him. He thought right. Max Gold—I suppose you can tell he's Jewish. Once he got drunk and put his head on the table and cried, "I'm a Jew. God, God, they all hate me." There's the Armenian. He had a beautiful name and he changed it to John. His family were all murdered and his village was burned. Once he said, "Even if I had money to go back nobody would be there and no houses, not even the store."

Perhaps now you begin to see what I'm driving at. But look at me. Please look at me. I am walking toward the percolator that bubbles behind the screen on a shining white table. My hair is straight across my forehead and under the light it looks like gold. My ears show and the back of my hair is like a golden bush. From the side and with imagination I might be Alice in Wonderland. My dress is blue with sad white flowers and bands of blue velvet. I walk across the room on velvet slippers with slanting heels. I hear the slish of my skirts and I nod my head a little and feel quite-quite.

No one has seen the monster yet. No one even suspects that it lies curled up between my ribs, looking out with its dreadful eyes, reaching with its arms, its manifold arms. I serve the coffee. I try to decide which shall have the largest cup. Florida because he is colored or John because his parents were slaughtered and his village destroyed. Carlo has just mispronounced gigantic, automaton, and adamant, all in the same sentence. Everyone is laughing at Carlo so I give him the largest cup. He keeps on talking and mispronounces Spengler, Epicurus, Ulysses and rococo. Now he is going on just because they are laughing and he calls horizon wrong and occurs something very strange. They are all shrieking and the dreadful, unimaginative Gertrude is going "a-a-a-a-a-a."

I am ashamed to describe what happened inside me. It hurts to think I am not rare and wonderful, as unique as the golden bush of hair at the back of my head and the quite-quite walk on velvet heels. Perhaps Gertrude saw me truly and that was why she shrugged and pulled her horrid mouth down at the corner. Now I am telling, now I am revealing myself.

When I looked at Carlo I heard his brave voice challenging those wolves in snow, those beasts that were laughing at him. A gash opened between my breasts and then I seemed to be all breasts, millions of them up and down, great warm breasts for him to hide his face between and they were filled with myself and with the living substance of trees and flowers and earth. It was as if I was in blossom. I hadn't said anything or done anything but as I looked at Carlo it seemed to me that he knew what I was feeling and then when Max said something cutting and brutal I felt that I had gathered him into me and that he was lying safe behind my ribs.

They call me Angelica. My real name is Hertha. They call me Angelica for some unfathomable reason. They are none of them sentimental and they all seem to know their position and importance on this earth and the position of this earth among planets. I know that they like me and yet sometimes I feel that in the farthest corner of themselves they despise me as Gertrude despises me. And here I am with eyes that see waves of snow and in the next instant clouds of fruit blossoms and always the faces of people moving over this earth with all its changes, moving over the body of earth, eating and being eaten.

Let me show you another night. Florida suddenly begins to talk about how important he is. His dark face is strange against the Persian screen and his teeth are kitty-white. I ache with shame and torture for him as he expands and insists upon his importance, demands attention and homage from the white faces all around, those wolves in snow, ready to tear him to pieces. I cannot bear it. I can see him hiding behind his talk, frightened, small. I can see him on a mountain top singing, "Little David Play On Your Harp." I despise the way Carlo shrugs and turns his back. I hate Gertrude for her "a-a-a-a-a-a" and Max and John and Evan, aluminum again in the light. There were distances between them and this colored boy who was trying to prove his equality. Rivers and walls and houses and rocks were between. Impenetrable substances, invisible and infinite, shut off their bodies. Then his blood was my blood and I wanted him to see that between us there were no stones or rivers or walls or death-substances. I went over to him, before them all. I looked into his face and put my hands on his black cheeks. He was shining, rich singing filled my

ears. I leaned over and kissed his mouth lightly so that he could know there were no walls between. I was in flaming sun, I was wrapped in rich, deep music, my stomach was a rose.

Some one said, "You're a good sport, Angelica."

Another said, "I didn't know Angelica drank."

And another, "God, I'm tired."

Evan yawned, "I always wanted to see Angelica tight."

Their voices were soft and solemn. I saw them look at me covertly as if they considered me treacherous. Gertrude's "a-a-a-a-a" cracked like a whip in my ears. Florida ran from the house.

Look into this beautiful day. It isn't winter any more. It is spring and the park is full of babies and stomachs resting on spread knees and every one is smelling and tasting and hearing spring-air, spring substance from earth and branches and birds. The curtains blow into my room on sun and wind and Robin is on the couch. His glossy, acorn face is sober and his hair makes a little fringe around his head. Robin is a seven months child you remember. He came out of his mother's body too soon and he has never felt at home here except with me. Suddenly he screwed up his forehead and said, "People get so old and tattered after you've known them a while." For some reason he began to talk about his childhood. He told me about his father and how he would come home drunk and fall on his bed and lie until Sunday morning. On Sunday he would be up early, bathing and shaving, filling the house with hymns. He would put on his fine black clothes, kiss the children that he had beaten, kneel before his wife, and then pick up his stick and stroll to church in the warm sun. One day he bought a plaid suit for Robin and then on Sunday mornings he would make him put it on and wear it to Sunday School. Robin hated the suit. As he told about it his mouth fell at the corners, "I despise anything conspicuous." But he made him wear it and Robin would feel crying in him all day and crying with the memory of it and with the anticipation of that hideous plaid suit.

Suddenly I knew that I didn't want to be listening and suffering with Robin or making him suffer by my big gaunt look. I knew that I wanted to lead him out of that ugly knot into the outdoors, into clouds of fruit bloom and clear sky and let him feel the breathing and flowing of the body of earth, our

life, our God. I wanted to lead him out of those stagnant layers of pity. "That is not you any more, Robin," I wanted to say. "Leave the little sad boy, let him die, let him be buried like a boy in a book."

But all the time I was walking slowly toward Robin and suddenly I sat down and put my arms around him and pressed his head, that glossy acorn head, between my breasts, and then I was holding him on my lap and my flesh was spreading over and around him, like feathers over an egg and I was singing something down in my throat.

Days are making weeks, and months, and years, but I am not growing. I am not letting others grow. I am making them drain off their poisons and now they like it, they like to tell about their miseries and the cruelties and violence of their childhood. I am not showing them that their poison is food for my ugly black knot, the curled I lying behind my ribs, the monster. I am not making them see that they should move up out of death and stagnation-mud into light and do the mysterious and magical things that men can do.

Examine my name. Angelica. Look into my face. See the large, set eyes, the white cheeks, the mouse-mouth. I am twenty-eight years old but that means no more to me than four or six or fifty. I do not grow. See the folds of my cashmere dress and look at the lilac sprays all over it and the sandals on my feet. My hair is like gold wires, fine wires, all blurring together in sun and it makes a fantastic bush behind my white ears and my forehead is covered with hair to my brows. Don't let me tell what happened with Max and Evan and John. It is the same story, all the same story, all my life the same. I need not tell.

Finally I met blackness. I was deep in its soundless, infinite roar, far in its mouth filling sorrow. It was as if I must push away bolts of black. I must struggle as I had never struggled and push away black bars miles high and deep as the ocean and wide as our earth, this body we move upon. I put my head in my hands. I lay down on my bed and pressed my face into the pillow and my body into the mattress. I was all blackness, wrapped tight in blackness. I had no thoughts. Suddenly I had no emotions. My pores opened and let the darkness in and it spread inside and moved through me. And then I seemed to turn into earth, and then I was clay and

then a monster. Tiny wings, wings the size of a fly's or a mosquito's rose from the neck.

I opened my eyes and looked at the monster. I saw the face. It grew smaller and smaller as I watched. Blackness rolled away from me like ocean water. Then I seemed to be in tight clothes. I was strangling, without air, sick. The monster grew smaller and smaller and suddenly tears poured out of me, out of my pores, but it was not I who cried—I don't know who was crying. Images wrenched out of me. I was a little girl again in body. I was sliding around on a pond. A boy came. He picked up a black frozen branch and beat me with it. His snarls flung around my head. I felt no pain, only dumbness and wonder. I felt no pain the day I looked up and saw what looked like a strange, revolving bird in the air and was struck in the eye with it and knocked unconscious. A teacher grabbed my long hair and shook me back and forth by it in front of the whole school. I was rising into the sky. I was looking at clouds. I was on the back of a soft white bird. I was looking into the face of Christ. Then I felt blows on my cheeks and my head revolved and I fell against my desk and cut my chin. "a-a-a-a-a-" came from the children. It burned me with wounds inside. I did not cry. Days later at dinner I was given a dish of steamed dates and cream. I got down from my chair and ran upstairs into the dark end of the clothes closet. There I wound myself up and began to cry, there my body awoke and throbbed with sores. Then the butcher-boy, an ogre, the ice-man a terrifying oufe, Mary in the grocery a glittering cruel witch, my parents ice-images who never met my hopes, my sister, my sister. This is what she said to me one day, "Other girls have nice little sisters. But you—you're impossible. Scared of every one. And you don't know anything. You can't even tell time yet even though Papa did buy you that nice watch."

It was that little girl who lay curled up behind my ribs. It was she who kept me feeding her from the wounds of others and kept myself and others young while time was mixing with my curtains and my walls and my body but not with me, while days were making weeks and months and years. It was not Evan's sorrow that I arched over, or John's burned village, or Florida, or Robin or Max or any of them. It was this entombed child who had never been happy or praised or had a friend. It was this baby, curled behind my ribs, who was mak-

ing me all breasts, all tenderness and sorrow. It was she who filled my body so that I could not inhabit it and it was she who kept those others from their bodies and this is my confession and this is my shame. My body does not do my bidding. Haven't I proven to you that I am not to blame? And days are making weeks and months and years. Robin and Evan and the others are here I am not old and neither are they. Time is rolling up our lives while we sit, pouched over living children with arms that stretch out and mouths that are hungry and hopes that have never been fulfilled.

MARGERY LATIMER

ORIGINAL SIN

I FIRST got the idea of human beings as sheep in the University of M——. The way they went in droves up the hills, each following a leader, later sitting in rooms listening to professors who were each following a leader. The winter of 1924. Gersa Kimball. A cold day, the first snow of the year, me in the crowds after classes. I had never seen her before but I have seen her lately printed on cloth—a woman riding an elephant, the same woman with wolves leaping beside her and later with a lion chained to her wrist. Sometimes she appears with a large star above her head and a swan in her arms. One of her hands lies in its pouched feathers and her cheek is against its bill. Her eyes have a lifted, indescribable look and the sun outlines her body under a robe. Again you see the legs and breasts striking out of the robe as she plunges ahead, her face controlled, and yet her whole body strained toward something utter.

I can arouse some enthusiasm for her printed on cloth but to have her in real life. My God, what man would want her? Let her stay in the woods with her wild beasts and her absolutes. I haven't the power to describe the relief in being free of her, in seeing her no more except in my mind. If I believed in action I would throw up my arms and yell. Here I am, free to enjoy everything that is offered without questioning or dissatisfaction, free to sink and sink with the droves of restless sheep into acceptance of all. An ordinary cigarette, a cup of coffee, a soggy bed in an attic room—these things are paradise after such a woman. To sleep, to walk aimlessly in the streets flicking your trousers with the morning paper, free,

empty, contented with all, with rain or sleet or the derelicts that flap by with tortured bodies and glazed eyes, the girls who hurry from work, their faces hard and changing gradually into wrinkles and brown dust, children lost and shrieking, crazy hats grown too small on matted hair, arms raised over hollow faces, a dirty petticoat dragging over grotesque bowed legs. I am at home in the streets now. I dare walk, indifferent, and smoke and laugh a little or I dare be sightless, or if I choose I can rub my hands together and smile.

That first day Gersa put her hand on my arm as if it were hers, she looked into my face as if that too would be her possession, and said, "Walk out with me!" I had no desire to walk with her or oblige her but I went. I followed her down the slope, down the side of the hill to the lake where she stood very still looking at the ice. Her black hair came out in curls against the squirrel cap. The wind and snow beat and wrapped her. I put my lips together hard. I can taste her body now, electric, precious, more purely flesh because she tried so hard to give her soul to me.

Get excited, Roger Maddox, quake, long to see Gersa in that chair, her face between her hands, her elbows on the arm of the chair, her eyes staring at you—at *you*. Roger Maddox, famous young painter, determined to be famous by thirty. All alone in this room the night you made the vow. A pile of dirty shirts there in that corner with neckties and broken shoes. Up here in my mind, here in my chest, the secret hope that I am envied by my school friends who could do no better for themselves than to write advertising or sell insurance. Maddox, famous young painter. To-night I cannot seem to make myself the apple of my eye. I am crowded outside into the world with other sheep or dogs, each exactly alike, each roaming haphazardly over the hills and gullies, living as best he can, being pushed closer to ultimate slaughter with each dawn, one no better than another as they crowd together under black clouds and rain. It was Gersa who imagined in each a fire that could be vast and leap in the eyes and make of each a man.

Last March on a Thursday morning, three years after that meeting on the ice, she stood in this room after kicking and pounding my door. She stood over me, her teeth bared between taunts, her arms falling in a helpless passive way that was new to her, committing me to hell for my cruelty which

began, she claimed, on that first meeting in the snow when I failed to crush her in my arms, hold my lips on hers and swear eternal fidelity, declare to the falling snow that we had been sent together by the Gods or fate (which always kept us in mind, apparently, we two out of all the world) and then swear in her eyes that we were never to be separated, never to cease loving, and never to suffer one dark, lost hour of remorse.

"Every particle of happiness we have had, Roger Maddox, has been at the expense of my dreams and my better self." She sat on that broken chair, one hand on her throat and the other tightly closed and beating her knee. She dragged over to the window and leaned out.

I stared up at the ceiling, there's a place up there that I always stare at, and asked her where she wanted to eat and if she felt like paying for me. Of course I appeared like a villain but she had no reality for me then in her extreme of feeling, she had absolutely no meaning or significance with all that crying and pounding and denouncing. No one on earth could have answered her so I left her alone in her desperation and wildness.

She came back to me and took hold of my cheek, twisting it in her fingers, and then letting her weight down on that hand until I screamed, "Cut it out, you savage!"

"You've made a beggar out of me. I've lost my pride. I've lost everything about me that's good. I have come to you. I have to take any little thing you care to give."

Desperation agreed with her. Her eyes were brilliant, startling, she was majestic crouched down like a slave, her face wet, mouth shaking, but in the proud chin and brow hatred for all her softness.

"I want to worship you. I want you to tell me what to do." She was looking up at her dream of me, her hands clasped under her chin. "You're utterly good, honest, strong, sympathetic, tender—you understand me—tell me what to do. Shall I go with Lucien to-night? It would hurt you? You would rather I didn't? You would kill yourself if Gersa went with another man? Then I won't—I don't want to—I want to love just you forever. You know what's best for me. You're so strong . . ."

Then her fists came down on my head. She tore the covers away and dug her fingers into my cheeks. She tried to shake me. She wanted to be strong enough to make my teeth rattle

and my bones clank. "You have to be what I want! You've got to be great so that I can worship you without being ridiculous and hating myself. Oh God, you're so weak and flat."

"That will do," I said.

She withdrew and fastened her eyes on me as if I had blackened her, betrayed her. "Ever since I've known you I've been a dog, Roger Maddox. I've run after you through the gutters, hanging to your heels. I've never stood upright on my feet since the instant I looked at you. I've been going on all fours. And there's something on my back I can't shake off."

Could I comfort her? Could I hold her against me and murmur things in her ear and feel her lose herself in me, see those eyes close in peace? I put out my hand to stroke her hair and she pulled away from me glaring, her hands clutched about her. She was always describing herself in the most tragic terms and then defying any one on earth to pity her, to *dare* to pity her, or try to understand or comfort her. I remember the way she straightened up, her whole face inexpressibly sad and quiet. "I want to be a real woman," she said, "like the ones I always see in the street car."

What did she know about a morning three years before when I had wakened with her in my mind? in my bones? Day after day she was in me, eating me, devouring my freedom, my pleasures, until I was a dog licking her feet, trembling at the mercy of her whims. I knew how she felt but I said nothing. I stared at the ceiling, happy that I was no longer that dog, that never again could I be a dog for any one or tremble at the willfulness of any tongue. But her life! Well, what do I care for her life? It was made before she ever met me. Why should I worry about the hope that I took out of her and the pride and the bloom that was like the bloom of a tree, bent ripe with apples to the grass. I took the sun out of her. I dare admit that even though I appear monstrous and cruel, I took the sun out of her. Why not? Me or some other man. Did any one but Gersa, a romantic fool, ever believe that love is eternal? Could any one but Gersa believe that there is a sun in each person that burns and burns in endless streams through the chaos and horror of planets and space?

Now I am through with it and Gersa has gone somewhere and I know I should spend each waking hour, according to her notions, trying to find her, asking forgiveness when I have

done nothing, swearing eternal devotion and humility to her whom I am supposed, in some mysterious way, to have so hugely wronged. I don't want even the good part back, the times when she used to say my name over and over in awe, her eyes on me, her hands crossed on her throat. She could never be quiet, there was never calm acceptance of anything in her, not even of happiness. She must be wild like a beast with both delight and terror. She could never take anything rationally.

Thinking this over tightens my nerves. God, let me digress, let me now insert a hymn to be sung to the "Star Spangled Banner" or "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean" or any other grand tune. All ready! All you who long for romance, you business men with placid, card-playing wives, you dried intellectuals who fear and hope at once, be thankful for what you already have, kiss the feet of the placid, contented wife who makes no demands on anything but your purse and your good nature, serve her who struggles to keep your meager love instead of demanding always more and more of what cannot, dare not, be given. Sing to those docile women who bore you with their devotion and their emptiness and then praise heaven and earth that no Gersa has crossed your path. . . . Gersa in an orchard under an apple tree, her feet crossed, her lap piled with fruit and those eyes set strong on the sheep and moving leaves. Gersa near a stream in the woods, "I wish I could carry you across, Roger," and meaning, "Roger, roll up your sleeves and carry me. Prove yourself a man in all ways, Roger." And then as I did not offer to be gallant, tears coming in her eyes, her head lifting to the trees. "I wish I could hold you against me forever. I wish I could be melted into you and never be Gersa Kimball again."

Free, free to walk through the streets alone, to accept all—all, to shrug when young boys kill themselves—I don't know them do I?—free to read of injustice without a quiver. I can speak of earthquakes where thousands are covered like glistening earthworms without distorting myself with sympathy that I do not honestly feel. No, even this face is free now from all pumped up distress and pumped up love for people I have never seen and have no desire to see.

"Carry me. Prove yourself a man." Yes, indeed. I know all about that. I got over it too when I was eight years old. She lived up the street from us. Bessie Feaks. I would lie on my

stomach and squint out the front window at her. Passing quickly in snow. Bunch of violets in beaver hat. Fat, long curls beating thick coat. Suddenly hoisting up into a little run pretending to drive nettlesome colt, one mittened hand outstretched. My mouth would drop open, my eyes would go blind with awe, and then she would be sedate again, lifting her legs minutely, switching, nodding on all sides at the smooth snow. She passed with our washwoman's boy. I seemed to crack all over, everything broke into this and that. I ran out of the house as if I were an athlete, I sprang high over the crusted, hilled snow, I leapt the snow-clogged gutter, I passed them, like a famous runner, with my head up and my elbows pumping. But today I don't even have to buy a dinner for a girl. The girl invites me and is honored to sit and watch me eat ravenously and insult her politely. She flushes and giggles, hoping that her friends and enemies are seeing her with Maddox, the young painter.

Gersa's hands soft on my cheeks, her body between my knees, her breasts touching me—rot! Her gifts (I used to sell the books second hand within a week and the handkerchiefs, the socks and God knows what, I would hand out in exchange for a meal or tobacco. She was thoughtful about the tobacco though, particularly after a tantrum.) Then the suitable expressions for my face, the concern, the constant attentiveness, the sympathy that must swell my cheeks and knot my noble brow, the soft voice. Yes, she wanted me to be all things to her in payment for her trying so hard to be all things to me. It was one of her many ideas. She got them from books.

"If you are really in love, Roger," or "Never eat two starches at one meal," or "It shouldn't be that way, I won't accept it." Then with the morning paper, her face screwed in terror, "Think of them dying like that!" Her face closer, her nose in the print, "One thousand—one thousand. They had lives like any one else. They had homes, children, dreams. They went to work in the morning. They put up their hands to brush their hair and drink coffee and tie their ties. Some one shined their shoes. Each of them breathed. Each of them spoke." She jumped up. "How can anyone accept death? How can we be thankful for this miserable instant on earth when it takes eternity to know anything? Oh, God, speak to me! Oh Christ, how can you let us die . . ."

Some of you are already under the delusion that a person

like that is pleasant or interesting to have around. But all that hysteria and ignorance was much less irritating than when she began to catch on to things and was insane with bitterness and remorse. I did hate her for her ignorance, though. I had met her, oh, perhaps we had been friends for two months—and one night when we were translating Spengler and having a fruitless discussion about time and space she leaned across the table and said, "How do you get a baby?"

Naturally I thought she was joking. For a long time I was certain that it was some new pose or other that she had read about and was trying out on me—she had some theory about playing rôles—My God! But I know now that it was honest. That girl was ignorant—there is no comparison. It is a crime for parents to let such a creature loose in the world. I have tried to imagine her parents. I can't. For a long time she pretended she was an orphan. When parents were mentioned she would lift her eyes tragically as if hers had been taken away. Once I said right out, "Say, Gersa, are your parents living?"

First a marble whiteness from her neck to her cheeks and forehead, then her lids dropped and finally her chin set and she threw back her head. "I have renounced my parents," she said. She wouldn't explain.

"Sex," she said once, "I suppose you know all about it." She began pacing up and down the room. "But I don't see how women can let men support them. I guess they think they give up something after it happens. Now what has the average woman to give up? It's absurd. It should be an ideal exchange, each should be richer and more free. That's what we want, Roger,—freedom." She would sit by the lake at night, during that strange spring, looking at the stars and murmuring, "Freedom." I was mad about her. I had to hold my hands together to keep them away from her. How was I to know that the more she talked about freedom and time and space, her eyes on the stars, and the more energy she put into those abstractions, the more she wanted me?

"Let's live together," she said one day.

I looked at her suspiciously. I thought she might be planning some trap for me—men have to be careful—but she looked so honest and generous and foolish that I knew she was simply ignorant. It was touching and because she was so unconscious of convention and the "duty of man" I asked her to marry me. She

turned to me instantly. "But why?" I had supposed she was from an ordinary middle class home and her whole attitude rather shocked and delighted me.

"Love," she said, "is the only thing that can hold me. If I thought I was held through law like all the wretched respectable people in the world I would run away—I couldn't love you. This must be just us—the world is out of it."

It seems ironical that three years later I turned her arguments on her when she demanded that I pump myself up into wanting desperately to marry her. I told her that I was not monogamous to begin with and that marriage would be like a refrigerator and that the only possible way to hold me was to let me be free.

"What about me? Why don't you try to find out a way to hold *me?*"

"I don't need to," I said. "You're mine."

At first her outbursts and accusations used to come every two months, then every month, later every week and finally every other hour she would change. First there would be her terrible, angelic tenderness, her illusion of perfect understanding. "I'm happy. I feel like a vine around you. I love this —being owned by you." But her face would hold that ghastly joy and terror as she said it and tears would come down. She would throw herself at me, press her mouth on my hands, dig her head into my chest. "I'm complete. I love you." Sinking down with her cheek against my knee. "I've given up Dick and Lucien . . . I'm not going to see them any more."

At times I had felt jealous of her two friends, even though the relationships were obviously platonic, but I didn't speak about it. I didn't want her to have that power over me. As long as she saw that I was mild and generous about them she couldn't raise them over my head to win a point. I expressed a slight interest in her having given them up.

"I want just you forever."

"And you have me," I said sharply, scenting trouble.

"If you loved me you'd do noble things."

"Lord, we've passed the medieval age."

"If you loved me you'd do noble things."

She would grow stiff and remote all over, her face hardening and sharpening. She would back off from me as if I were something horrible, her hands closed over her mouth. She would back

herself stupidly into the wall and then throw her arms out and her head up as if she were imagining, or hoping I would imagine, that she was pinned to the cross. The red sash at her hips was supposed to be the blood from her heart I suppose, the blood of her hopes, pouring down.

Once she jumped up like a rocket. "I feel my own will. I feel like a—a person." She stood over me, too excited to speak, her eyes wild with hope. "I—I—I have power now." She put her hands out toward me and something in me shook. "Please," I said, "please don't."

"But I can force you. I have the strength. I haven't any pride. I can get what I want. It's easy." She began to laugh. "You have to marry me." She looked down into my face, her hands on my shoulders. "You have to make me a mother."

She began rushing around the room, she walked sedately with bowed head as if she were going up to the altar, then suddenly she sat down on the floor and began rocking her arms and singing, "Oh, baby, baby, Oh bears in the woods, Oh doves that come at the window, no, no, don't cry, you must make me worship you." I was frozen, half fascinated, I would have done anything for her. Then the tears, the hysteria.

Roger Maddox, I've given you everything."

"Just what have you given me?"

"Oh, you don't even know! God, I want to die. I want to blow my brains out. Oh, now I know how the world is run."

The more intense her understanding and appreciation of me, the more she renounced for me, the more ghastly became her desire for payment. A wealthy chap tried to marry her. She tried to make me tell her that she shouldn't marry him. I refused. I was so sure of her. She came to me perfectly radiant. "I want just you—I'm happy." I knew she expected me to rise to the occasion and beg her to marry me. Only Gersa could have been so ignorant of human nature. What other person in the world would have supposed that being generous ever inspired another person? No, I must admire the ordinary shrewd girl for her success in dealing with a man. If she wants him she gets him, usually through something base, but she gets him. Gersa loved herself too much. She loved her pride and her grand lady airs about nobility. Why didn't she tell me she was going to marry the man? Not Gersa. Honesty first, pride next, nobility over all. But her fanciness got her. She couldn't hold up for long.

"You selfish, worthless, loathsome person. Yes, I'm the sort that has to go into the streets and beg men to make me a mother. I can't expect what any silly shrewd girl gets as her own right. I'll have to humble myself and beg some man to give me a child and then support it myself and never have any kindness or love or protection—never. Oh, I love my parents. I love them now."

"Yes, and some time when you've known a real hard boiled man you'll love me."

She doubled up as if a pain had caught her in the stomach. Then she rolled over toward the fireplace, her hands on her throat. Her mouth wrenched open as if she were going to vomit and she shook and coughed, her lips drawing down bitterly.

"Poor little lost girl," I said.

"Then you think I'll know other men? You don't think you're the only one? Oh, my God!" She stretched out on the floor, holding tight to the carpet.

"This can't last forever, Gersa, we're too different."

She beat her head on the floor. She lay quiet then and helpless, her legs drawn up as if she had colic. I can't remember anything she said but it came out like one of those everlasting death agonies that opera singers love. Her voice had an edge like ice and yet it was deep and ran through me. She got up, trying not to look ashamed, attempting to be proud, and she began patting her mouth as she spoke, her voice moving on and on, something about a baby, her parents, a dog grovelling on its stomach, herself going through the world unmated, alone, never receiving what others got as their right. Suddenly she stopped short in her agony of complaint and panic. I have never before seen universal pity come on any face. Perhaps she saw herself swallowed up in the lives of millions, folded in their rags, held to their breasts, mixed with them and yet apart. She gave me a kiss. She put her hands in that queer position between her breasts.

"One day you were like a bird in me. You flew through me like a bird. I didn't want anything from you—you lived in me. It was a happiness that left no pain. That day it seemed as if all the people in the world joined hands and the animals and birds came and spread with them all over the land in the sun. Now they've turned black and empty, like a lot of ugly animals, and I wish I could drive them all from this earth. Oh God, make a new race!" Then in a shock that went down her and made her close

her eyes she seemed to sense the poison that was in herself and she said, "Make *me* new!"

I recall this often. It does not move me. While it was happening it struck me cold and dumb. I saw into her sentimentality and half-baked romanticism. I saw into the pathetic, weak dreams of the race. That night she went away and I have never seen her since. All the tumult and straining that she started in me for a new world and a new man has gone. No world is better than this. Give me this world with its war and murder and greed, let me walk through its streets a free, irresponsible man, and I shall ask for nothing more.

EVELYN SCOTT

SPEED

DICKIE, with curt haste, turned from the broken glitter of the shop windows along Eighth Avenue, into the shadow-bastioned dimness of Twenty-second Street. He was on edge tonight, and reluctant to concede the transition from thoroughfares in which people were walking with pep, to a dullness that suggested unlovely permanence. Broadway after midnight alone could provide him with the atmosphere in which he felt at home. Realizing as he did that the game he had been playing was up, he felt a sharp distaste for the disquieting familiarity of Lily's company. If he hadn't had her on his hands he might have anticipated with enjoyment the sheer bluff demanded for his program of the next day. Irritated in the contemplation of a possible scene, he walked the more briskly and jauntily, his heels sounding on the pavement. His sneer for the respectable always reached a climax when he was approaching Mrs. Gifford's boarding-house where he and Lily had been occupying a room and bath for over a month.

Keenly hostile to the usual, Dickie boasted, to himself, his peculiar distinctions of mind. His attitude when a youth among his companions had been masterful. Now, with experience in the success of his deceptions, he had become, secretly, more arrogant. People on The Gay White Way—at least people in his line—were to be recognized as superior, in their apartness, to the docile bank-clerks, and bookkeepers, and those employed in department stores. Those devoted to white-collar industries were boobs. The working-man, and especially the working-man of radical views, was defined as lower. Nuts, slaves of the plutocratic bosses. Why not be a plutocrat yourself? As for throwing

bombs and all that kind of bunk, what do you get out of it? Dickie's acquaintance constituted an aristocracy of devious aggressors.

He was twenty-nine years old. Nine years before, inheriting a small sum from his father, he had opened a movie playhouse in Leicester, Vermont. Disgusted when he discovered the town's meager opportunities for a swell business, he had, after some months devoted to smart innovations, left his élite establishment to the supervision of his brother, Charlie, and hoboed west. An alliance entered upon in San Francisco had admitted him to high life, and he had made use of advice and some intercepted information to another party to begin the career which, with variations, he had ever since pursued. He had learned to despise blackmailing as safe, but he was on the road to swifter enterprises which required more daring. Having now, so often, defied the police—even made friends with two or three of them—he was reaffirmed in an early, if sometimes shaken, opinion that he was a man with the emancipated outlook of a genius and all a genius's extraordinary capabilities. He saw himself, certainly, as a slick kind of a crook. Only once had he been run in, and then a Jewish acquaintance had worked things for him through a lawyer so that Dickie alone, among several suspects, had escaped conviction.

The perils which, on that occasion, had threatened him, had added a fresh, elating quality to recklessness. I know it all from start to finish, he was fond of saying. It was interesting to him to discover that he, who, at six years old had been called his mother's "baby," could confront the most menacing circumstance cold-bloodedly. No one had ever been able to show him that he lost his head. In Denver, in the last year—just before he met Lily—he had been caught again in a tight squeeze. A few weeks had been nerve-wracking. But the result had only accentuated the joy of concealed defiance.

Once he had feared the disturbing activity of his own imagination. Now he remarked, "You don't have to feel anything unless you want to." Consistently, and with contempt for those who had less control, he had cultivated what he called "the mind that does." When you looked back over history for its major spirits, they were always men of action—from Napoleon to God-knows-what. The Germans had already discovered that when they made the war. But they lacked brains. The Kaiser had been

a tin-pot despot without the sense to calculate his chances accurately. Dickie hadn't been to school much, because schools had bored him. But he could "say President Eliot's Five Foot Bookshelf backwards." "I'm a pragmatist," he would brag, to bewilder the less-informed. "If it works, it's right. The trouble with the high-brows is they don't keep a grip on facts." Effete learning he despised and resented. Yet it thrilled his conceit, almost humbly, to discover with what neat appropriateness he could apply "their" words for things.

All indulgences had to be carried on as a defense. His up-to-date-clothes, spick-and-span from a sponging at the tailor's, were, when displayed in the furry circle cast from a lamp, an item of which he was conscious as he walked home to Lily. It was important, in the game, to be a good dresser. Lily, despite her youth, and her familiarity with slang, reminded him too much of his mother. He would never let her catch him napping. Lily, too, belonged, though she cohabited with him, to the *other* crowd. His brains would always place him outside. And her slobber-pop gave him the stomachache. It was even a duty to get some of the fool notions she had out of her head. What the hell she'll say now, I don't know, he meditated quickly. It's up to me to make this getaway tonight before Kerney and Hornblow have a chance to squeal on us. If Lily aint ready to move, she can stay here. (That would leave her a menace.) No, I got to get rid of her somehow. Dickie wondered why he had ever wasted his time on women. There were men he knew who could show him something more jazzy. He longed for an atmosphere filled with lurid intimations. I'm scared of going stale. This razzle dazzle ain't enough.

Often there would beat on his brain the flood of all sorts of resisted experiences. But there was a wirey callousness in his body which seemed to brace his skull. He treasured the thickness of his senses.

The fading street lamps showed him, like an object in a dim interior, the front of Mrs. Gifford's rooming-house, with its silver-tinctured surfaces of windows. He mounted a short stair, avoided some empty milk bottles, and inserted, in the lock of the glass-paneled door, the key which, for some reason, the landlady had demurred about giving to him. As through the glitter of a mica veil, he could see to the hall, where, dependent in the vague profusion of shadows, a gas jet jutted a steady, small

illumination upon an ancient ceiling that was spotted with mould.

He opened the door gently. The hinge tweaked, but the red carpet on which he entered absorbed the labor of his shoes. On the oak hatrack floated an old raincoat with shredding seams. A tall, cracked, blue china jar contained an umbrella without a handle. Lying on a table under a rust-speckled mirror, two envelopes, long readdressed to a departed lodger, were tilted, upright, against a fern-dish out of which swam the browned fronds of a withered asparagus-fern.

The inner stair was narrow, the tubular oak rail, shot with glints from the gas flame, springing sparely into the wafted obscurity which hung above. Dickie's perception of his own isolation now became acute and massively emphasized. The indefinable atmosphere of sleep in houses where all but himself rested unconcerned always exalted him queerly. He was craftily aware, through an instinct which he ignored, of an augmented spaciousness for the operation of his own desires. Hick's in the pen all right, shot through his mind. And they'll get you next, Hornsey! Oh, boy! For himself, his professed aversion for the penitentiary was only an aversion for its literal uncleanness. I've got nothing to lose so I don't care. He could even imagine a fanciful court procedure with himself in the chair of guilt. They'd get their money's worth outta me. I wouldn't mind arguing my own case. I could put it all over some of the guys that get a fat fee for doing it. Yes, we have no bananas—no you bet we haven't. Banana h'oil for you, Lily old girl. If she pulls off any old-home stuff on me to-night, God knows what I'll do. That kid is a perfect wonder. I can't make her believe I ain't one-hundred and two per cent the guy she always thought she'd marry. But later on—

He felt ready for any contingency. The whole program of lawlessness had been forced on him. For his own clearer vision of matters, he was not responsible. They're happier than I am, he said suddenly, climbing the stairs with a swagger and amusing himself with an unreal somberness of mood. It was, simply, that he was so constituted that self-deception was impossible to him. You can't fool the gods, he thought—that's their funeral. He wanted to enter Lily's room jubilantly. Since the war, nobody believes anything anyhow. What floors me is the way they can keep the gaff up.

Lily was awake. In the second hall the darkness was substantial, filled, groaningly, with somebody's snores. But, at the end of the passage, a creeping blade of light pierced longitudinally a crack of the door. He had not yet removed his hat, and now he pushed it forward debonairly. It was his impulse to delay his entrance. He sidled stealthily nearer and listened. Spying diverted him. But he could hear no stir inside the bedroom. Then he was irritated. He'd see that she never kept anything from him. He made a gesture to swing the door open grandly, in a way to startle her. But to his chagrin, he found it locked. Lily must have been waiting for him, for her fumbling hand was on the key instantly, and he lurched past her awkwardly. He made no comment, gave no greeting. His glance at her blankly perturbed face was an accurate appraisal of her expression, but he made his look appear cursory.

She was too wise to ask unguarded questions, and closed the door after him very carefully, again turning the lock. Dickie sat down in a green-tapestried armchair from which the upholstery was bulging. Still he kept his hat on, pushing it to his crown, and wiping his forehead with a speckled foulard handkerchief, which had been tucked in his breast-pocket. Before he drew the handkerchief across his brow, he shook out its folds fastidiously. He could see himself in the large mirror over the bureau, as it glared in the radiations from the bald electric light. Let Lily sweat a little. It would do her good. His manners, in his own estimation, were faultless—*when* he liked. He didn't spoil Lily.

Dickie had large, cold, quick grey eyes under neat brows. His nose was heavy, straight on the bridge, but somewhat grosser at the tip; his nostrils always slightly expanded, but rather thin. His mouth was too tight, but the curve of his lips was almost gracious. He cultivated their sardonic twist. His crude, smoothly-modeled chin was cleft. He was critical of the dimple, and had never made up his mind whether it was an asset to his appearance or a detriment. Anyway, the women liked it. He remembered that he was going to throw the women over. They weren't worth the price. All I get from them I can get anywhere. They've got no subtlety, he thought. He gloated a little on the word "subtlety." There was a whole range of novel perspective that it conveyed. But why read books when you can get it straight in gobs by living a swift life. I'm grown-

up out of the fairy-tale age, he thought derisively. The suit he wore was a blue serge with a double hairline of black and white. His hat was a black derby. He could, and did, observe, with luxury, his white, immaculate hands. On his right hand he wore a large ring set with a beryl. The stone flashed importantly with a murky, ostentatious luster. There with the goods, he was, all right. The girls stepped on each other's feet trying to get after him.

Lily, awed in her constant admiration of his composure under strain, played with her fear of him, which was half actual and half affected. With an unpremeditated, automatic theatricality, she approached him yearningly, and clutched her pink silk dressing-gown upon her slight bosom. She was "beginning to let her hair grow again," and an iridescent blond braid was thrown consciously forward upon her shoulder. In this the nervous fingers of her free hand fidgeted.

Lily's mouth, diminished by painted contours, was originally small, and inclined to part moistly in wonder, or in admiration. She admitted all emotion, whether sad or agreeable, by quick intakes of breath. Her eyes were large and widely blue. When she was upset, the blue intensified, but the blankness which carefully overspread her features did not therefore alter. The distortion of pregnancy made her ill at ease. Her quality was of the immaculacy of a plaster madonna in a servant's room. Dickie had heard a high-brow movie director say that about her, and his evaluation of her had diminished since. He could see what was wrong with things around him quick enough if anybody showed him. If you tried to talk over his head, you got fooled. Maybe he ought to pick up the next one on Park Row. But she wouldn't be worth it either.

"I've waited for you hours. I was sure something had happened." Lily spoke in a sweet, breathless fashion. With a table, covered with an embroidered cloth, between her and Dickie, she came and stood near him. There were tears in her eyes. Dickie ought to see she couldn't stand much more. Usually she restrained weeping to indulge it in moments when he was absent. But she did wonder if she wasn't just a fool to put up with all she did. Most women in her fix had to be babied some. Dickie hardly did a thing for her. She knew he was worried—but just the same—

When Dickie stared at her incredulously, she was degraded

in her own esteem. He hadn't always been as cold to her as he was now either. She didn't like soft men. Yet he was *too* controlled. But she was always grateful to him when, before others, she could feel herself securely sheltered behind that masklike smile of insolence and the reserve so inappropriate as between man and wife. Her humility somehow left her helpless to resist his brutality. There was, indeed, voluptuousness in feeling herself abused by him. Through acceptance she insinuated her demands on him. He was baiting her, refusing to tell her what *had* happened today and whether he had gotten into trouble or not. Well, she wouldn't give him the satisfaction of letting him see how much she worried. She'd talk about the weather. "Mrs. Gifford was after me again," she said. "She's a regular old shefiend. I told her you'd pay her on Saturday. She says we are keeping her out of renting her best room—we have the only private bath in the house."

Dickie removed a packet of cigarettes from his coat and lighted one. A crisis was upon him, permitting the revival of that tense disdain with which he had first robbed his mother's purse. He knew, justly, what was passing in Lily's mind. Let her sweat. It gratified him that she was afraid to question him about the day's events. She was getting a *little* sense into her head, but not enough. She made him sick, cringing around. And that come-hither stuff never had worked on him anyhow.

"We're beating it tomorrow, Lil," he remarked at last, stretching his legs, throwing his head back, and blowing agile smoke rings toward the high electric lamp with its fringed ornament of silk slipped on triangularly. Why had he said tomorrow—why had he, why had he—He'd break her damned neck if she objected.

Lily's wetly defined mouth made a rigid reluctant "Oh!" and she sat down on the edge of the daybed. His elaborateness made her feel peevish, though, after all, she was relieved. She wasn't quite certain what she had expected him to do—not run away *from* her—but, oh, she didn't know what. "But—" she began, with the argumentativeness of habit.

"I hope you're ready." Dickie rose, threw his cigarette into a waste-basket, then stooped to squeeze the butt again and retrieve himself from the peril of his carelessness. He'd like to burn up the whole place—Lily in it. A vivid conjecture of Lily left here and the house ablaze, filled with cloying, unmerciful smoke,

put him off his guard. He smiled, lifted his arms above his head, shook back his spotless cuffs, and yawned imposingly. Lily's face in the mirror really did make him want to laugh. God, she was a nut. Any expression of grief or despair observed on the features of another person would arouse in him this same impulse to laugh. Such grimaces of his own were, however, but the simulacrum of a mirth he did not feel, the solution of a pain he did not recognize—partly nervous, he would admit to himself.

Physical suffering—his own—he could appraise—in a way. His aversion to it and an avoidance of its sources was obsessing. Where small miseries were inevitable, he could harden himself. Unadmittedly, the emotions of others excited him, drew from him, in his impatience with the unknown, the remark, "What the hell is it all about?" a sincere query.

Lily said, "Those men haven't laid down on us, have they, Dickie?" She couldn't keep her mouth shut any longer. He was acting almost *too* bored and indifferent to what was going to happen to them.

Without glancing at her Dickie knew that she was watching him solemnly and that her hands were clasped as if in suppliance. If he told her the truth, she'd cry and get hystericky. Well, *let* her! She got on his nerves. He wanted to bang something about the room. Instead, he took off his hat, and skimmed it sidewise toward a chair, on which it bounded and lay with the brim turned up. "Sure they have. Nothing else for them to do I guess." He looked at her sullenly. Careful, careful, old girl, he thought. He was giving her warning. If she tried any monkey-business, seeing how keyed-up he was, it was on her own responsibility. She ought to be thankful that he had let her hang around 'til now. Yep, little girlie, he told himself, if you know what's good for you you better watch your step. His nerves were like charged wires, cold and active in his body. I don't take dope because I don't need it, he would sometimes declare. But he was afraid to take dope. When you began on that it gave 'em a chance for the low-down on you.

Lily came toward him. She saw his face and sank helplessly on her knees on the carpet. She swayed there sitting on her heels. "I knew they'd be after you, Dickie. I knew it was no use after Kerney and Hornblow were pinched. If you'd only given them the slip last week. Hornblow acted so suspicious the very day we came here. I could see there was something on his mind

or he wouldn't have dared get so fresh with you. Why don't you *ever* listen to me?" She didn't mind it if he noticed her tears. They ought to stick together in a crisis. Once you used to call me your little pal, she wanted to remind him. But he got sore at the least bit of sentiment. She supposed a strong man didn't like to show how weak he was.

Dickie swung away on his heel and went angrily to the door. He had intended to slam it to rebuke her—of course she had locked it. "Well, you needn't tell the world about your troubles!" he jibed fiercely. "If *I'm* gonta get in Dutch because I didn't take your fine advice, don't fool yourself that you are out of it."

Lily was a dejected heap. She had made her dressing-gown herself, and one of the angel sleeves of pink chiffon had ripped from the shoulder and dangled wispily. The rosebuds of the fastening were crumpled and faded. She had cried so much that she must, she felt, look like a wreck. She was a little uneasy, realizing that, since she had so advanced in pregnancy, she had not made her usual efforts to remain attractive to him. Her features withered in the grimace of weeping. He ought to feel sorry for her. "Oh, Dickie, what *are* we going to do?"

"Yah," mocked Dickie, "what are we? *You* should worry!" Her silly admiration always aroused in him an excited resistance. He saw through her all right, yet he was convinced that she was trying to pull some trick on him. She tried to work on him. He had moods in which his sense of power over an abject woman would allow him to be almost affectionate. They were not frequent. He liked deceiving Lily. He was inquisitive as to what she might do if she found herself deserted. When he got good and ready he would make Lily see what a fool she was. She might commit suicide. Strangely, he grudged her the possibility of such a triumph. It wouldn't cost *me* anything, he thought—and still—Say, he reflected, wavering disturbingly in his self-approval, it's funny I don't feel things the way the others do—it's certainly funny! There were, perpetually, the "others." His helplessness to ignore them quite successfully was an intermittent oppression that enraged him. Damn Lily! She was as dumb as they come. She must think she had to deal with just an average person, like Hornblow or Kerney. The worst of being a great man was that you had to live with a set of fools around you. Let her watch out!

Tramping back and forth across the bedroom, he assumed

attitudes largely dramatic. The police never *had* got him flustered yet. They were a set of dubs. How could anybody who had once trafficked with the police respect the law? Swallow any amount of bull. A little money and you could get anywhere. The lawyers were a slick crowd, but no more immaculate. His present trouble was that he lacked cash. But why hang around New York waiting to be arrested. Dickie's brain seemed electric. His neat plans for escape, evasion, confused him only because they were so numerous. He said, "What do you say to skipping across the Canadian border? I got cut out of going to Europe in the war. What do you say to a look in on gay Paree?" Lily was not the person to confide in—but what was the difference! If she blabbed, she'd get what was coming to her.

Lily revered him, her tears forgotten. After all, the plan for flight was common. "It's easy for you to talk about a quick get-away," she argued impetuously, "but look at me. I'd look fine in gay Paree this time next month!" Her tone was vicious with fear of disappointment. Yet his courageous dismissal of risk indicated for her his access to some mysterious font of inner strength. Dickie could do anything with her—*anything*—if he only knew it. She thrilled physically to the blindness of her trust in him. "Besides, you can't arrange a passport."

"The hell I can't!" He took a document from his pocket. "What do you call that?" He only allowed her a glimpse of it. It was a fire insurance circular. Well, whatever I'm gonna do, I can't afford to let her in on it. I got to remember that.

"Oh," said Lily meekly, her eyes palely brilliant with jealous anticipation. She crawled carefully to her feet, wishing that he might be unobservant of her perpetual disarray, of the provoking handicap of her figure. "When this blows over, Dickie, I wish you'd start something on the level." It was an unwise petition, but she was avid for agreement. She was worn out with what they went through. Anyway, Dickie and wickedness could not be associated. Crime had bizarre contours, while Dickie conformed quite normally to her conception of an ideal mate. She had a very definite premonition of what it would be like to see him in the Tombs. To be always ill at ease with the respectable confirmed her estimation of the virtue of respectability. She regarded Dickie's present mode of living as an unhappy accident. "All these fellows end the same, Dickie," she persisted. "Why not have the world on your side? We could go some place where

nobody knows us and you could get a job. Maybe I could get in with that screen bunch again. I would have been a star by now if I'd stayed there. You're just wasting your life."

Dickie could have sprung upon her and shaken her. The drivel she kept up made his head buzz. He had believed her more appreciative. He hated her for leaving his existence suddenly empty of tribute. But he repressed his impulses. "Oh, shut up." He lifted his voice slightly. "Shut up or I'll break your head. What do you know about it? What do you know about anything for that matter? Get busy and begin to pack—that is if you want to leave when I do." And he mumbled under his breath. He went to a clothes-cupboard to fetch some bags. It made him angry to realize himself working while she was idle. "Here—hustle—get busy. I've got no time to fritter away on *you.* Chuck what you can find into things we can carry."

"Oh, Dickie—leave our *trunks?*" But she added, "Though I don't suppose we ever could get out otherwise without that old gollywog downstairs noticing."

Dickie was prone to inexplicable fatigues. In a moment of elevating stress, in which he was particularly self-assured, he often found himself as if attacked by an invisible enemy, and weak without warning, his nerves threatening to go on edge. An abrupt, vacant languor had descended on him. He fought against it, but he had the shakes. He sat down on the edge of the bed and let Lily collect the clothes. It took all the energy out of him, resisting her line, he thought. He lit another cigarette. He wasn't ready now—but later! Jesus, he owed it to her! "Get busy. Come on—that is if you want to come with me. I'm not leaving tomorrow. I'm leaving tonight."

Lily had expected this; but was no less crushed. It just proved that life was *hell.* Just when we were fixed nice, too, and this room's so cosy. Always the same old thing. I'm not an abnormal woman and I do crave a home. Nevertheless she obeyed him. "But why *now,* Dickie? If you have a night's sleep you'll be so much fresher to stand anything you got to go through tomorrow." With some underclothing, emptied from a drawer, hugged in her arms, she hesitated.

He was smoking jerkily. His smooth, sallow face was incipiently flushed and his grey eyes were quick, eager, and, at the same time, stony and shallowed of all revelation. He showed her a roll of bills. They were mostly ones, but he flipped them

over rapidly, and they made quite a bunch. "Pretty good, eh? If we can't see gay Paree on that, I'm dumb as they make 'em."

Still Lily, panicky when confronted by a new move, resisted optimism. She thought, I haven't got a cent of my own. O God, if I had only kept that wad I had hid—now it's gone. She said, "But can we afford to leave *all* the things we have of any value, Dickie? Couldn't you and me carry one trunk down together and then you hire a taxi?"

"I'll leave you here with the trunks if it suits you," he repeated, drooping his lids concealingly, and embarrassed by the leap of hatred in his chest which set a muscle in his cheek to twitching. "They're expecting me at Headquarters at ten-fifteen exactly. I promised the Chief a tip. They're looking forward to landing me when I show up. But I'll give 'em the raspberry. I know better." He hated her for failure to approve him utterly. Ordinarily, her tendency to interference he did not tolerate. She was taking advantage of him, the bitch. What kind of a fellow does she think I am, he wondered.

Lily, awed by a silence, became very active. She scattered clothing taken from the bureau, re-collected it, pressed some into a suit-case, began to pick up nick-nacks. Stubborn because he made her wretched, she appeared to hurry, but did not. Something terrible might happen—even if they got as far as Canada. It was Dickie's fault. He was a brute not to appreciate her more.

When she considered that she had taxed his patience as much as she safely might, she interrupted packing, to slip from her dressing-gown and prepare herself for the street. Thin, yet ungainly, she was left standing in a pink silk combination through which her flesh showed warmly. She had on satin mules, black with red heels. On these she stumbled hastily to the toilet-table and began to comb her hair. First she unloosed the braid, laying the released strands carefully over her shoulder. Then she shook out the whole mass, ducked her head sidewise, and combed vigorously. In the glass, her image was darkened, enclosed in the tingling nimbus of her hair. Her fingers were unsteady. She was being brave, a sport, standing by him right to the end. She could see him distinctly. He was not looking at her.

"Where's my whiskey flask?" At his harsh tone, she started, and was excited by the animosity his voice conveyed. Oh, he sounds as if he could kill me, she thought. But she was confident

that not even his anger could keep her at a distance. If he should strike her, it would be just the same. She loved him. That was what he didn't understand. Men had so little love in their natures. And she thought—even if he should be arrested—She could see herself conspicuous in the witness box, denying, denying, every one knowing that she was denying, that she had perjured herself —though they could not prove it—and all for him. Her beautiful devotion to him affected even the newspaper reporters. They could not look down on her too much for what she had done, because all, all, every sacrifice she had made, even of her good name and virtue, had been made for love. Anyway moral ideas were much freer nowadays. Dickie constantly told her that she ought to be broadminded; and she was. *He* was the one who despised her views. If he thought marriage was a lot of bunk, why did he hold out so much about getting married when it could save them so much trouble? He'd kept her away from her family and everybody she loved—all her old friends—and had no more consideration for her now than if she— Her just indignation shriveled as it sprang. Dickie was moving about the room distractedly. He had taken a black bag from the cupboard shelf and was storing in it shirts, collars, his shaving set. His jaw was like "steel." He never so much as glanced at her. "Where's my whiskey flask?" he again demanded. His tone made her shudder. When Dickie was in a rage, he gave her the creeps. Well—because you never knew what he was thinking about or what he was going to do next. She told him primly where the flask was. "*You* ought to know," she said. "You're the last one had it." Gosh, they *had* better hurry. It was getting late. Dickie wouldn't even tell her what train they were taking and where they were going first. She twisted her hair deftly in two buns, one covering each ear, and drew a blue silk dress over her head.

Dickie was standing under the light, holding the flask up before him and shaking it. "Been hitting it pretty hard, haven't you," he commented sneeringly.

Lily disliked drinking. Dickie was continually trying to get her drunk, but he seldom succeeded. Her father had been a drinker and had once beaten her and her mother. Then she remembered running up and down the hall of a boarding-house while her father chased her and her mother with a beer bottle. The spitefulness of Dickie's observation was flagrant. She had *some* spirit, thank heaven, and she said, "It's a damn lie, and you

know it. The times I've tried to keep *you* from making a fool of yourself ought to show who around here needs watching with a whiskey flask." Her eyes were wide, she stared right at him. Her sensation was of swooning. While she regarded him defiantly she had the indefinite impression of an abyss gaping behind her, as if she were toppling backward into blackness that would soon be punctuated by the luridness of blows. Once Dickie had really hurt her. She had tried to forget it. If he was going to start that again they'd better both stay here and be arrested and die.

Dickie wore a wrist watch. He pulled up his sleeve a little and examined the elegantly numeraled dial. "Got to make a train at the Grand Central at three o'clock," he said shortly. Drama, he thought. I'm some cute amateur psychologist myself. Lily seldom spoke of the child. He supposed most women would have talked of it. That's her little game, he reflected. She's deep. Honestly, he couldn't believe in this pregnancy stuff. To him she looked like the devil all right, but the baby wasn't real. Occasionally he considered some pulpy material of life that it would be curious to investigate. If he hurt Lily would the child feel it? But there was no child. That Lily could have such firm faith in something she couldn't see and touch, maddened him. Or did she sense something unexpressed to him? He wanted to blot out the existence of any creature sealed from his influence. He said, "From what you told me, your old dad hit the high spots often enough, and it wouldn't be a world wonder if you took after him."

Lily said, "I think too much about the welfare of—of our child, to poison myself with alcohol." She hated him for making the reference to the baby sound false. He never allowed her any fine feelings at all. She might as well be a liar. Because he ignored the child, she, also, had fallen into the habit of ignoring the responsibilities which the future was certain to thrust upon her. She did not forgive him for robbing her of all the pleasure to be found in natural sentiment. He had no "imagination," she thought, and he could never be persuaded to think about what was going to happen until the crisis was here. When she heard other women speak unctuously and self-commiseratingly of what they had been through in maternity, her rebellion seemed supported, and she would contemplate giving Dickie a piece of her mind.

Dickie had long before discovered that he could not endur the mention of the child. Why hadn't she gotten rid of it? Bu then he hadn't tried to help her. It had gratified him to see Lil in a fix she had to accept. It was her funeral, not his. She'll neve get away from me, he thought. That is, when the jamboree wa over he might clear out, but there would be Lily with the damne brat on her hands and swearing because she did it all the res of her days. *He* didn't invent the system, he decided callously He was interested in various aspects of it. People go on breedin like a lot of guinea pigs and don't have it on their consciences a all, and then when the world's too full, they have a war. Say, m natural bent is philosophy, but I know too much already. There' nothin' left to learn. Gimme some jazz.

Lily was a bitch that could go to hell. He laid a nifty shirt in the leather-smelling mouth of the open bag. He'd take a drink after all. He only drank to get Lily's goat anyhow. He took the flask out again and tilted it up, draining every drop of its contents. He began to feel hot in the collar. Now, why did I do that? Say, I must be more excited than I thought. I don't go in for hooch—not usually. His head ached slightly. Glad the time had come for a get-away. New York could pall like anything else—New York and Lily. To the —— hell with that woman! Why'd I ever bring her here? He thought, when he got to Canada, if he didn't go to Paris, he would buy a racing car. Doing three hundred miles an hour—that would suit me. He was sorry for himself. The reward for the genius he had displayed in outwitting the law now seemed to him pretty small. Never gone in for motor-racing or aviation or anything the swells did. Dancing, of course, was about the best thing. Oh, boy, come on girlie, you got the goods I reckon. Places where there were a lot o' hot mammas. Or where they didn't let women in. It didn't matter to him if there was movement enough, and an air of vice, of danger, of the sinister. What he was mutely afraid of was of finding nothing wicked any more.

To make himself more active, he removed his collar, almost tore it off. The blood was beating in his neck. He felt sickish. The worse he felt—the more that dread—"superstition," he called it, inclined him to abuse Lily. It was unwise. Not now, not yet. Wait till I drop her. She'll go to the —— dogs then. His beard had never fully matured. He rubbed his chin, and leaned to a weak pretense that he needed a shave. He laid a soap-case

in the bag. Missed a bath, too. He could gaze at his beryl ring and see it like a minute red lamp shooting glowing darts. Lily had often admired his gentlemanly hands.

She approached him, placed her own hands on his shoulders. "Don't keep on being mean to me, Dickie."

He admitted her caress stoically. Inexplicably, he envied her. Hell, if I was as much of a liar as she is! "Yeh, old girl, I like you, but I like myself better. Talk about the weather. I haven't got time for you." His voice trembled, but his determination to save his revenge made it steady, parental, slightly suggesting benevolence.

Lily picked up her hat. Suddenly her emotions made imperious demands, and she put the hat aside. "Dickie, I won't *go* with you if you act like this. If anybody says I'm mixed up in this mess it's because I'm so damned loyal to you I never pay any attention to what's good for *me*. Nobody would have a single thing to say against me if it wasn't for you."

He stooped lower over the black bag. Something hidden in his mind and half-uncovered was now buried again by the annoyance of her attack. He drew the mouth of the bag together. It was overpacked and would not fasten. "Oh, hell, shut up. Embalm your reputation somewheres else!"

Lily noted a vein that had begun to flicker and protrude upon his temple—like on an old man, she thought maliciously. If she didn't get everything off her chest, she only delayed the reckoning. "I'm glad you're leaving the house where that dirty Finch girl downstairs is," she said, "I could take *care* of my reputation if you'd ever taken the trouble to shut *her* big mouth. If you had any respect for me, you wouldn't have stood the kind of insinuations she makes—right in both our faces, too. Everytime she meets you she tries her tricks on you. Guess she thinks there's nothing you won't swallow. She's the one's set Mrs. Gifford against us if you knew it, while she was laying it on so heavy to you."

Lily observed the sightless brilliance of Dickie's quickened gaze. Maybe he's taking dope, she thought, dazed by the unpredicted violence of his appearance. He had known previously that she didn't like the Finch bitch. Why this excitement about it? She quailed before his anger. Of course, before, she had only joked about the Finch woman. A moment had undone her careful efforts of weeks. Maybe it was for the best. Dickie had to

show her *some* kind of love, or she couldn't go on. I know a lot about *him*, too, she thought weakly. I could get even if I wanted to when he don't love me better! She knew that she was acting crazy, and didn't care. "I suppose it ain't my affair when you and she start out to vamp each other right under my nose. I suppose even my condition don't—"

Dickie's eyes, between his squinting lids, were really—she couldn't say. O God, let him hit me, hit me, hit me! "Well, go on and hit me." She had detected the clenching of his fists. *He hates me sure enough.* She almost exulted. But they'd miss the train if they got into a fight. She didn't quite dare that. "You talk so high-hat sometimes anybody would think you were a gentleman," she said, "but you act toward me like I-don't-know-what."

He went to the mirror and began to fix his tie. He was pretending she couldn't get under his skin. She said, loudly, "You act like a dirty cur!" She *would* make him confess all the dirty things he was thinking about her. If there was anything she hated it was a hypocrite.

Dickie's two eyes, a black, radiant focus in the mirror, stared into the glass, stared at her not in the glass. It's only him, she told herself comfortingly, beginning to tremble a little. After all I'm the mother of his child. Oh, the dirty brute—she'd get down on her knees to him—but he needn't look at her like that. What had she done to *him* she'd like to know!

He spoke amidst the arrangements of his tie. "I'd give you a black eye, Lily, only they could identify you too easy." His jovial manner did not deceive her. "Why don't you?" she answered softly.

He wheeled. "You want me to give you a black eye?"

For a pause, she could not retort. Then she whispered, "Yes. Go on. *Give* me a black eye."

He approached. "Don't do it, Dickie. Don't do it. We're wasting time. We got to go. There's your coat. You'll wake the people in the house up, Dickie. You'll make me yell, Dickie. I can't help it. Honestly I can't. Ouch! oh!" She had screamed faintly though he had only lifted his bunched fist. He gave her a punch just to show her. "Dickie, don't. Don't. Don't hurt me, Dickie. You're getting my hair in a mess. We can't go out if you don't leave me alone."

He gripped her arm and shook her. She was closing her eyes

voluptuously. "Kiss me, Dickie. We'll go away feeling right toward each other. Then if anything happens neither of us will have anything to blame ourselves with." She added that—well, because I'm afraid, I'm afraid, I'm afraid. I'd almost rather they'd arrest him. "Ouch!" No, I didn't mean that either. "Dickie stop shaking me. Quit! Quit! I'll scream sure enough!" He clutched her throat and she gurgled.

He said, "*Will* you cut out all these stage effects!" He didn't know how it was he had got his hand on her soft throat beneath her plaintively uptilted chin. With his other free hand he smacked her on the mouth. "Oh," she said, mumbling, "my tooth, Dickie! You hit my tooth. It's bleeding. I'll be all over blood. I'll be a fright. Don't, Dickie! Don't, Dickie!"

Black specks were tingling before him in the light. He wasn't hurting her, of course. Behind all this moaning and screaming she was as cold as he was. That was it—cold. Couldn't feel a thing. Neither could he. But he didn't go on grimacing, making sickening faces. She spat blood upon his wrist. Then he had really hit her tooth. Up to this moment he had scarcely seen her. Now he began to examine her closely. He pushed her backward until she sat down on the bed very limply and suddenly, and he almost fell upon her. Her face was slightly purplish and her eyes were standing out. He forced her to topple. She was flat on her shoulders with her hips suspended at the edge of the bed and her legs and feet dragging. He reclined his weight against her, his knee pressing on her yielding abdomen. She felt funny under him, and he was dimly conscious of the other thing inside her that he wouldn't think about. "Oh, God, oh, God, oh, God!" she was saying, when his grip on her throat relaxed a little. Gee, she was funny! Her neck was as limp as a doll's, and her eyes looked mild and almost silly. He had never believed that Lily could look so ugly. He felt suddenly, viciously, that he knew too little about her. In some fashion she had tricked him out of the satisfaction of his chronic inquiringness. "Yelling at the top of your lungs, were you! Bawling like you wanted to wake the dead! Trying to get me pinched are you!" He shook her until her teeth rattled, and all the time he was attracted to her by a vague, loathely excitement which her passiveness provoked. No use to try and beat it. Just lie here until the cops come—*forever.*

She had laid her feeble, reaching fingers in his hair and was twitching at the locks convulsively. The pain her agonies con-

veyed to him was barely perceptible to his sense and rather pleasurable. God, you cow you, you look like the devil's own, he thought. "Come on! Yell!" he insisted. "Come on!"

He was trembling almost ardently, but felt an unnatural exhaustion, as after some extreme physical exertion. There was an intimation of rage in that grotesque, swollen face. It passed. All the features dimmed. "Come on, Lily," he said, half pleading, vexed that she was no longer making any responsive contortions. Her eyes were suffused and bulged peculiarly, like a crab's. "Come on, come on," he continued to whisper, encouraging her and himself toward some achievement of struggle which awe delayed. When he was certain that she would answer no more, he wanted to beat her. "You damned teaser!" he said. "You damn bitch!"

He was very still, almost as quiet as she was. A shudder passed through him. He scrambled to his feet. Moving from the daybed, he glanced around the room bewilderedly. It astonished him that the electric lamp, high in the ceiling, was yet burning fiercely, and that the room which enclosed him was filled by a brilliance more revealing than any of day. The strong searing glare of the electric bulb seemed to heighten the silence. While bending above Lily he somehow had an hallucination of darkness, had imagined that the lights were out. "Gosh," he whispered, glancing at her inert form, "Gosh!" And he seemed to have forgotten that a quarter of an hour before, they had been preparing for a departure.

He had to lock the bag and find his hat. Numbly he went about these things. The bathroom door was ajar upon the bedroom. In there it was gloomy. Dickie picked Lily up. Holding her in his arms, he felt nothing more alien than usual—just Lily. The tub was a concave space lined by a pallor which refracted iridescence from the room adjoining. He leaned heavily and disposed Lily against the porcelain. Her feet stuck up. Soiled towels hung grayly on a twinkling bar. Dickie threw the towels in a heap, down over her, covering her face. Perhaps it would have been better to try to burn the body, burn it with acids. To dwell on the practical aspects of plans for concealment revived a complacent conviction of his "sanity." He was surprised by what he had done—oh, very much so. I've got to watch my step *this* time, he thought. His crimes against property had been a challenge to the "others," but, compared to this, they

were unimportant. He could scarcely yet believe that half an hour divided epochs. But he could depend on *them* to let him know it did. *A minute ago she was jawing me.* He emerged into the light. The commonplace of the brilliant, disordered, noiseless apartment was the strangest of all. He had to pump himself up to realize there was anything actually wrong. Of course he *did* realize it. As a child he had scared himself by making up stuff like this, pretending he was going to set the house on fire, making believe to shout out in church some concealed fact known about a member of the congregation, some indecent word that, when he had once uttered it, had caused his mother to wash out his mouth with soap.

His hair was rumpled—*she* had pulled it. Before the mirror, he brushed the parting carefully. What a row they kick up about nothing. If it was *you*—the mirror said—her image was in here just now—*nothing* behind you. He gazed straight into his own glittering eyes. Gee, I look funny. *Murderer!* the mirror said. He was rather proud of himself. Very few ever dared to—and why not—cold as a fish. *Dead*, by golly!

He hurried, tip-toe, to the open bathroom, reached for the key, put it outside, closed the door, and locked it. I never did believe in a future life, he told himself. (*But if you don't, and they get you, it's all up with you, my boy.*)

He was impatient of this rumination. When last under arrest, when *they* had gotten him, he had sensed, with cold and thrilling relief, the irrevocableness of the words with which he had informed on some men who had been his associates. Writing important letters provided sufficient excuse for enjoying the pleasures of fatalism. An envelope in a mailbox could not be recalled. He had never posted any letter of importance without saying, It's done, by gosh. No use crying over spilt milk now, old bean. The stimulating fear of life came with the *if*, expressed after the act—if, if, if—and every gesture he perceived as final. That was the secret of his recklessness: there was no measure for calamity. Yet he would not have changed, had he been able, the miracle of fatality for the dry burden of free will. Let her rip!

She had the scare of her life before she *did* croak, he said to himself. Gosh, the way her eyes bulged. Golly! He was tingling with his boast that covered a faint, unnoticed shame.

He set about tidying the room. Lily's dressing-gown still lay on the floor. Fastidiously, he picked it up, holding it at

arm's length, and hung it on a nail in the clothes-cupboard. Her hat, also, had somehow reached the floor. He returned it to the hat-box from which it had been removed. Some of his own belongings he replaced hastily in the open bureau drawers. Jesus, the amount of stuff she had—creams, lotions, nail pastes, and all that. He wanted to nab her manicure scissors to take away with him—but maybe he better not.

Then he altered his tactical decision. It might be convenient, later, to have folks suppose that there had been a struggle. He pulled the spread from the bed, tossed a pillow softly on a rug, and cautiously upset a chair. Removing an imitation cut-glass vase which stood upon the mantel-shelf, he scattered all about the hearth the dry flowers of the neglected bouquet. How about making it look like he'd been kidnapped! He'd tear the coat of his soiled pyjamas—and he'd leave some of his own hair on his own pillow all matted with blood. He tweaked at his head, and made himself endure it while he pulled out strands. There must be no mark of blood on Lily. He'd have to slice his finger. He searched the carpet for a razor-blade he remembered having dropped. When he had found it, and used it, the pain in the nicked member seemed to him terrific. What a fool he was to make such a conspicuous wound. It would have been much better if he'd cut his leg. Perhaps the razor-blade was dirty, and he had given himself lockjaw. His expression, so unobserved by anybody, was agonized. Jesus, if he only hadn't drunk that whiskey up! He didn't believe in these precautions. Precautions always seemed to him so silly. He had to force himself to interest in the future, in the attitudes of others. His faith was so slight that, even in danger, it was insufficient to allow to the enemy a reality like his own.

Lily's vacant and reddened eyes bothered him. What had made them that way? He knew the "scientific facts" of strangling, yet he preserved an impression that he had hurt her very little. Suddenly it occurred to him that her tortured appearance might be in some manner involved with the annihilation of the child. He was intrigued and troubled. He luxuriated in the new sensual horror. Why, he wondered again, are people so afraid to do *it*, and make kids so easy? The fancy vibrated through him that he had impinged with power on that polypy life of darkness. He guessed he'd squeezed the guts out of the thing.

My kid. Say, am I different? He was fastening the black

bag which he had reopened to secure from it a clean collar. Got rust-smut—*bloodstains*—on my collar from this damn finger. He delayed and wrapped a handkerchief about his hand. Then he struggled with collar and collar-button. Maybe I'm crazy. He was aware that his present calmness, after such an incident as had just transpired, was beyond usual explanation. The tensity of his confusion constituted a kind of happiness which yet failed to be entirely agreeable. He elaborated the theory of insanity. You had no idea what you were. You went and acted like this—or might behave more oddly, without a lick of sense. All was decided by something equivalent to the tossing of a coin. *They're* crazy, too, for that matter, he thought. It was the first time he had yearned to class himself with them. Just for curiosity sometimes, he thought, I'm going to investigate this spiritualistic bunk. His finger ached clear up to his elbow. Cheese, what a fool idea that was—though the blood and hair looked good together on the pillow.

All at once he noticed a symptom of forgetfulness that weakened his estimation of the great man, himself. On the smooth-hanging yellow window-shade, his own silhouette, as he pushed at the knot of his necktie, was resting vividly. The fear of eyes was fear representative of conscience. When it came over him that every single move he had made might very likely have shown up on the shade, he got the shakes worse than ever. Time, abruptly, became more precious. The blunt tips of his fingers were clammy with sweat. It was just a joke to think of *him* ever being caught—but he was not ready for the chair yet awhile. He had a career before him. There was more than one trick up his sleeve, you bet. The college professors said a mouthful when they told you you came up from the lower forms of matter, and supermen were going to run the world some day. If you don't like the way you are, go out and hang yourself. A slob like Lily got off easy, *she* did, he thought.

He put on his hat, picked up his bag, and moved toward the electric switch. But he thought better of it. I'll leave it burn. Let old Gifford's meter tick up something extra. Actually, he had felt, as he prepared to extinguish all illumination, that he couldn't bear the dark. "Ta-ta, old girl! You oughta had better sense than to get my goat!" he whispered. There was the illusion, though imperfect, that she could hear him. He was still angry with her because she had led him on without giving him anything.

The interminable and familiar squeak of the door-hinge made gooseflesh on him. A pulse in his neck was beating like a bird's heart, exposed under a thin skin. He was in the corridor, in the dark. He bethought himself of further caution, and relocked the door from without. Let 'em break it in. His eyes, in the blackness, were preternaturally discerning. To be able to see so distinctly where there was no direct light rather disturbed him. He could make out everything—the stair-rail, the place where the carpet stopped, the inscrutable doors. His cheek muscles gathered in a mindless smile. He had a hard time not to laugh outright. Get 'em in a lonely place like Coney Island in off-season and push 'em overboard. Lots o' guys cut their lady-friends in pieces and burn them up in the family furnace. Remember a preacher that did his sweetie that way. He marveled, walking softly, trying not to make the stair creak. And *still* they got some idea that it *can't* be done.

He wondered about thumb prints. But what was the use of worrying. Four out of every five has got the itch, use Fordham's toothpaste. His head felt flighty. Anyway, think of this bunch of nuts sound asleep and nobody knew—Lily—Christ, he had hated that woman! His teeth ground, clicked, they were clicking nervously. Half way down the stairs, something crackled like the stair was breaking and he moaned aloud. He halted. *Say,* will you quit that, he admonished his thoughts. What had the cry, wrung from himself, *meant?* Cold feet? Not much. It was true that formerly he had felt superior toward murderers—fellows who didn't have sense enough to know when to stop. But that wasn't the point—the point was that now—well, now *nothing* could stop him. The sky's my limit, he said. It always had been, yet from this point he could argue—he could *feel* an advance, an expansion which he could not name, but which resembled the loss of another innocence. I could have led that Finch bitch on if I'd wanted to. Women would know, thenceforth, less than ever, the power, the danger, the sinister male strength bound by no mastery. As Dickie passed the Finch girl's door, he desired her—desired her less as an object for lust than as an audience for extreme experiment. When people talked of religious punishments, his intelligence, with pat, ready logic, showed their prophecies' pretense. He had his own superstitions, of course. Every man's got a streak of superstition in him. Dickie regarded it as a frivolous fault.

The quiet of the house weighed on his perceptions. Here below, the gas flame in the tarnished chandelier continued its deep, shrinking flutter in the hall mirror beside the raincoat. On the table he saw again the two letters tilted against the dish of drying fern. Maurice Hirsch, Esq., something-or-other, Poughkeepsie. The address was in his mind, permanent, useless, *permanent*. When he halted at the front-door and spied behind him, up the staircase, he felt Lily thinking about him, menacing him because he had left her. If he had left her alive, he wouldn't, now, be afraid of her. It was a funny notion. In some dim, fervent manner, he had a craving to verify those tortures of hell predicted. He had to *know*. Was it true? Go on, burn me with a hot poker. He never could stand waiting. He'd rush at the worst bully he knew rather than hold back.

He believed he was happy—yes, happy. But, in some strange way, the joy he felt was of the body only. Shut up, mind, oh, shut up, mind. I got no use for you—cause ain't it a shame to work on Monday, Monday. *That was yesterday.* Another life!

When he emerged into the out-of-doors, his brain seemed completely empty. The sidewalk was spread with a chalk-blue light crossed by impenetrable blocks of shadow. The glare, he saw, came from the moon just risen above the glossed roofs opposite. Its flat disk reminded him of a spotlight on a stage. Or there was a search-light, seeking, finding out— He descended the few steps. After all he couldn't carry the bag— But it would look funnier to take the train without any baggage at this time of night. The keys for Mrs. Gifford's house and rooms were still in his pocket. He crept beside a bed of cannas in the next iron-fenced plot. Under the broad, ragged leaves, and the red flowers, looking black just then, he would throw the keys. The cops would find them. Better take the keys up to the corner and throw them into a drain, throw away his clothes, throw the black bag down the sewer, too.

He skirted trash cans; stunted rows of them, fat in the moonlight. It was mildly windy, and bits of paper were scuffling along the gutters. The slate eaves of the houses ahead of him flamed. Reflections of Broadway appeared, all, to have faded. In the deep dusty blue, dim flashes suggested the moonwashed presence of stars. He resented the absorption in caution of attention he might otherwise have given to the sensations of escape

into fresh air. But he was inspired to further commonsense. He could quash his hat down, cock it toward his ear, as smartly as before. He would not indulge tentative impulses, but compelled himself to a firm, even ringing walk. The wind blew cool around his neck, like a scarf. No, it was *too* quiet!

He came to Eighth Avenue, and to the corner where an ancient Bar and Restaurant showed up in a glisten of street lamps on frosted windows. Christ, those were the days! Now the madness revived. He held in, tried not to run. Chuck the valise, or don't chuck the valise. A few misty people dazzled him with their little, distant figures, hurrying, as he was, up the long street. The electric signs were out. It was bland and unfamiliar. Times Square—up at Times Square the rain like embers continued to fall through the sky. A cop idled importantly upon a distant curb. Dickie went on, straight by him. There was another reach, and the moon on the housefronts spread a bright, indecent calm. The subway was at the next corner. The word above the trap, UPTOWN, was legible at a distance, the letters white and uninteresting on a dull blue ground.

Dickie rattled down the shallow, concrete stairs, and was glad of the contraction of his meditations to the size of the artificial environment. He modified his haste, and entered a tiled cave in which were scraps of newspaper lying in corners, cigarette butts, and stains that showed where people had spit. There was a sallow smell in here.

On the platform, several were waiting. The ticket-seller sat in a convex stall, and only a portion of his face was made plain by the lamp inside. Dickie slapped down a quarter on the ledge and pushed it through the half-circled aperture left open for the exchange of money. His cut finger made him awkward. As he remembered it, it seemed to ache again up to his shoulder. "Pretty warm tonight, Brother." No will could take the remark back, remark made to cover something. The ticket-seller pursed his mouth, sank his chin affirmatively in his collar, but evidently grudged a vocal response. He did not notice Dickie's face.

That was that. Dickie rushed on, butted against the brass wings of the turnstyle, and realized, with a shock of more pronounced distrust in self, that he had neglected to drop his nickel in the slot. When the revolving barrier had clicked on his entrance to the tracks, he wavered, perilously, near the abrupt gash in darkness where the platform ended. He was blushing,

shivering. There was a thickness in his pupils, but a burning iron in the way he stared directly at the fat man who rested, with spread knees and loose wrists hanging, on a bench against the white wall. Dickie wriggled his shoulders in his coat, jerked down his vest, and began to whistle. All guilt seemed to him in the black bag. If he could but hurl it away, he would be pure, free as the air. It was unpleasant to his hand. He set it down. Then he picked it up. Say, you old boy, you giving me the once-over, are you, izzy-izzy. Say, you can take your —— nose out of other people's affairs. He added, I done one in, and believe me I can get you where you live, too. The thrill grew, like an illness.

The pit of the tracks looked deep, and the murmurous rails were quick with trickling refractions of light. A steel superstructure divided the uptown tracks from the downtown tracks. The twinkling track nearest him ran, with a piercing glisten, toward a point in curving vacancy where a red lamp bubbled on the shadows and the concrete lining of the tunnel terminated in boards. When the downtown train spread its way past him, the noise it made sent a shock through him that elevated his spirits to the last height. He remained nervous and anxious, but there was a ghastly relief from all oppression. Gosh, this was the life! His desperation was buoyant. Free, free as Jesse James! Gimme the mazuma and with a little more nerve I could run the country. Then the shaking of the platform was accompanied by the flat protrusion of the headlamps on another advancing train. Wisht he could get rid of the whole push as easy as Lily. And if you get in trouble there's always the little old third rail—but not for mine. He was dizzy, dizzy, dizzy. The train, when he had boarded it, seemed to move faster than it ought to. The car was almost empty, and he seated himself where a newspaper had been left unfolded on an unoccupied bench. He placed his bag between his feet. The interrogative-looking stranger had entered with him and was resting before him in the weighty posture of a fat man, hands spread on knees, fingers dangling, frayed cuffs and freckled wrists exposed. The stranger wore a tow moustache. He had shallow blue eyes. He and Dickie watched each other. Plain clothes, Dickie thought, his head buzzing. Then he was ashamed of having thought so. Steady, steady.

The lapsing and flaring windows of another train streamed by. The dizzying cars rattled past him, shrank. His own car came to a standstill. With successive rumbles, the doors jarred

apart. All up and down his line of vision, he could see the sequence of interiors, a garnished emptiness, gutted of its daytime crowd. The train moved. The floor oscillated, and inside the car there was a giddy roaring which meant everything had lost direction. The car hung in limbo and ground its wheels frantically. Once Dickie, fumbling the handkerchief he had untied from his finger, glanced, as before, pugnaciously, into the stout man's eyes. The eyes, with that opacity of gaze which, when persons are unacquainted, springs readily to spread security across an unveiled scrutiny, revealed not a hint of knowledge, or of desire for knowledge.

Dickie folded his arms on his breast, resumed a whistle; and ceased it almost immediately he had begun. Light, spun from the pearly ceiling above his head, wrapped his fainting intoxication. The accuracy of his vision was so heightened that a glow was a blaze, every grain in the straw of the benches, every segment was legible. There was a greasy smear on the fat man's collar. One of his nails was broken, stained with green ink. *Drrrum, drum, drum.* The light played and bounded in his mind. Carefully, he caught, through it, the methodical ebb and flow of his own pulse, as in strange veins not his own. Its phlegmatic strokes astonished and delighted him. The pulse moved far, far behind the rapidity of his fancy, that was out of hand, like a clock unwinding, or a spring released too suddenly. Life at last, Dickie, old skate. No child's play for you any more, old boy, you're growing up! The élan had become like a pain, but the less to be relinquished—a purer joy.

The car was more animated. The floor jiggled. The girding noises of the wheels grew louder. It was as if a hollow rocket, swift and perpetual as a meteor, flew through an invisible space.

LOUISE BOGAN

SOLILOQUY

How can you be sure, my good girl, in the favor of maturity and the half-dignity of bridled affection, that this is not your place, here under the hoarse rails and in front of the bridge ramped securely to the shore with intricate bulk and solidity? Cigarettes yellow the teeth and grief hardens the heart, and the day will come, don't be certain that it will not, when a good sleep, with your chin on your collar bone, leaning against the radiator in the Periodical Room, that warms you down to your paper shoes, will prove the most beneficent straw in the fat sheaf. Sleep in the day, a rug of sleep, hairy and heavy, pulled by the will up over the forehead, while beside you, beyond the double interference of window glass and balustrade, people pass, to be seen from the corner of the eye (were it open), like water—each figure a moving hollow, rolling parallel to the shore. Grasp, now as then, the penny of poetry in the pocket, though it cannot be spent for mature ends, or even minted out of the grown-up nature, in the brilliance of its piteous copper. It is the season when joints of pipe in excavations are wiped with hot lead, and when brown crusty garlic appears in thin bent wooden boxes in the fruit-store windows. It is the hour when harrowed women push their idle men out into the street, to walk up and down, not speaking to the child whose hand they hold. The child drags a little behind, and swings its small handbag in the shape of a suit-case. Determined to be itself under the muffler and stocking cap, lagging behind, pulling the man's hand backward, swinging its box. You can wander up and down, too, in this street where white iron beds show in the corners of the windows. That's a sizeable fur collar that you wear—walk in it up and down, and

play that long game of forgetting, as though there were not enough lumber in the heavy mind, struck out of remembrance. Forget everything the moment that it happens: that's an excellent method of getting down a street, or up a stair, or into a house. Forget Bodwell's: the bar-room downstairs, and the bloody collar that made such an impression upon your young eye when you saw it lying in the gutter, one Sunday morning. Forget those faces stuck to the heart like leeches, that you would wish to multiply into many, but which remain so few. Go in more for metaphor, that cloak, that subterfuge, and less for wincing. "It is like—" "It is like—" that's the way to get out from behind that proud visage, that hearty, indelible sneer. Play at the hydrants getting up and walking at you, or invent one of those series of unrelated objects, that might do you proud, one of that swarm bred of Rimbaud's billiard table at the bottom of the lake. Why were you not taught the jargon of the metaphysician's impotence, or the philosopher's despair?

The street-car goes looping up the bridge. Mere juggler's sleight. As simple as the tread of the legendary crew locked into the zodiac's rim: up; Crab, Lion, Gemini, Aquarius, Ram. Up and over me. Once I saw a child try to kiss its mother's cheek, while she beat him off with screams. How any terrified adult can be blamed, after that. You will break my hand off at the wrist, you lag so far behind. A garden, looking between dahlia stalks, cindery, full of old sunflowers and goldenglows, facing the sun that walked down hill with you, to the wooden barn stuck over with advertisements. Who said that he had kissed the deaf-mute girl, behind the rusted tin sheath of an enormous signboard, at the edge of town, on Saturday night in the rain?

This is a well-bred rock garden. It has been to the best schools. It received a cane with a diamond ferrule on the occasion of its engagement. It breeds only in wedlock, and owns stock in bonded companies. In 1880 it was planted, from seeds dropped under a glass bell by shell-roses. I will show you all my rocks. At heart I am not a moralist. At heart I am a dropped smock fit for any quatrain of Swift's. But when I am tired I like to shop for clothes, and when I am hungry, I approve of patting on the head the defenceless, the docile deer. I also like to pretend that I am living in everywhere I have ever lived, at the same time. Do have some tea out of these cups of Florentine leather bought in that charming shop run by the gentlewoman with the

blue teeth. Upstairs I have love enclosed in a parenthesis. The feudal idea really sprang from the merchandising of sprockets and cams. Keep your relatives out of my way. They were brought up under a bureau. I don't approve.

Come home; come home. To the white iron bed and the scolding mother, the white dish of meat and potatoes on the table under the gas. There's a fire in the stove.

Be now, pure miracle. The dark rises and the rain falls. Within and without water speaks with two voices.

GAMEL WOOLSEY

FOR THE BODY

Your soul may go to heaven's bliss,
They may have that, it was not mine;
But the dear body loved like this—

O, will that whiteness bloom again
In cherry or in hawthorne boughs?
The body that was my dear house.

What is the Soul? Behind the eyes
A flickering candle flames and dies.

What is the mind? A bitter sword
Wounds the heart with many a word.

But the dear flesh knows lovely ways
To please us through the summer days.

And your kind body fair and strong
Sheltered me when nights were long.

The soul may go to heaven's bliss,
And the wind blow away the mind!
But the dear body loved like this—

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

THE ATLANTIC CITY CONVENTION

A COMPOSITION IN TWO PARTS: POEM AND SPEECH

1. THE WAITRESS

No wit (and none needed) but
the silence of her ways, gray eyes in
a depth of black lashes—
The eyes look and the look falls.

There is no way, no way. So close
one may feel the warmth of the cheek and yet there is
no way.

The benefits of poverty are a roughened skin
of the hands, the broken
knuckles, the stained wrists.

Serious. Not as the others.
All the rest are liars, all but you.
Wait on us,
wait on us, the hair held back practically
by a net, close behind the ears, at the sides of
the head. But the eyes—
but the mouth, lightly (quickly)
touched with rouge.

The black dress makes the hair dark, strangely
enough, and the white dress makes it light.

There is a mole under the jaw, low under
the right ear—

And the arms!

The glassruby ring
on the fourth finger of the left hand.

—and the movements
under the scant dress as the weight of the tray
makes the hips shift forward slightly in lifting
and beginning to walk—

The Nominating Committee presents the following
resolutions, etc. etc. etc. All those
in favor signify by saying, Aye. Contrariminded,
No.
Carried.

And aye, and aye, and aye!

and the way the bell hop runs downstairs:

ta tuck a
ta tuck a
ta tuck a
ta tuck a
ta tuck a

and the gulls in the open window screaming over the slow
break of the long cold waves—

O unlit candle with a soft white
plume, Sunbeam Finest Safety Matches all together in
a little box
and the reflection of both in
the mirror and the reflection of the hand, writing,
writing—
Speak to me of her.

—and nobody else and nothing else
in the whole city, not an electric sign of shifting
colors, fourfoot daisies and acanthus fronds going from
red to orange, green to blue—forty feet across

Wait on us, wait
on us with your momentary beauty to be enjoyed by
none of us. Neither by you, certainly,
nor by me . . .

2. THE CONSERVATION OF THE HUMAN SUB-SPECIES

Ladies and Gentlemen—

etcetera, etcetera . . . . .

It is generally believed, I take it, that we have always had and shall always have for our needs an inexhaustible supply of this essential material, in fact, that it is as common and available as seawater. But before I enter upon a qualitative consideration of such resources let me point out that, even quantitively, unless we conserve our wealth it is in some danger of exhaustion. Let us not forget that as elsewhere throughout nature the human fertilizing agent is in great measure scattered and destroyed during the series of acts leading up to impregnation and that therefore only the part of it can be considered to exist which has final access to the ripe ovum . . so hedged about by social and other impedimenta that the quantity which does finally come into contact with the mature egg is in many instances rapidly approaching the vanishing point.

It is quite conceivable, my friends, unless we arm ourselves against such an eventuality, that within a measurable span of years the sperm on which we thus naïvely rely for our continuance may so diminish as in the end completely to disappear from the earth. Or let me put it this way. Suppose for some perverse reason our germinal supply while it continues latent should become unavailable, as foreshadowed by the increasing number of individuals of all classes and for a great variety of reasons, who, from the psychologically lamed boy to the excessively specialized commercial male machine or burntout athlete, are to-day impotent. We must realize that a racial group may drop out—or has dropped out—just due to a lack of the requisite male sperm in sufficient bulk to keep abreast of the quantitative requirements. This is the stuff on which the race is founded. It must be thought of seriously. Unless it is fostered it can be lost and if so —the race ends. It is not within the scope of this discussion to say whether this would be of cosmic benefit or otherwise. My concern here to-night is not with that phase of the subject. The sperm may be lost in total bulk and so a major catastrophe arise, racial groups may vanish, etc., but that must be the preoccupation of a later day than ours. The thing of real present significance is not that such a gross occurrence may eventuate but lies rather among the finer subdivisions of the data under

consideration. It is that, qualitatively certain vastly important strains of men may die out due to lack of the penetration of their highly specialized reproductive material into adequate receptors.

It is stupid in the last degree for us to speak with the reverence we do of certain categories of the dead and then turn about and persecute the living representatives of that class until in one way or another we drive them out of existence. There are special classes of men just as there are special types of the physical brain. And these types or classes require certain specialized living conditions for their prosperity, access to certain special forms of nourishment and stimulation, leave for certain unusual periods of incubation—or hibernation and, mark the point, certain facilities for breeding which will be favorable to them and special to their kind if what we admire is to be continued for human enjoyment and benefit.

Too strongly adverse social conditions in the gross are antagonistic to the development of the finer characteristics. Vigor can make a virtue of adversity but not without end. Unless at some stage of the game there be specially conceived tolerances, honors, advantages incorporated into the social-moral code for the favoring of the higher human types, these must die out in the environment—as would be the case with dogs, horses or whatever other living thing—and lower types prevail and usurp the field. I am not making a plea against "race suicide," I say just that unless we take precautions certain tremendous types will continue to disappear and the whole fabric of the race be reduced by that much (Washington had no children)—whereas were the sperm of perhaps some one man, or some group of men, well used the whole racial fabric would be lifted and inestimable benefits to the whole mass be engendered.

This is inescapable from the viewpoint of the Mendelian law. It is sound heredity, sound biology; furthermore it is sound psychology. It is an unrecognized fact that men and women have a sure instinct in these things. When in highly specialized types the normal mental status becomes drawn too fine—as it must frequently happen under a stress of heavy work—and we approach a point of impending disintegration but before the breakup occurs (in genius perhaps, but a breakup for all that and this applies to women as well as to men) there is always, I think, a violent desire on the part of the individual to go back to some racial contact. There is a desire on the part of a highly organized man to breed with peasant girls and for women of the

same fiber to lust for the purely physical male. This is sound logic and of great psychic importance. The subject does not want to be socially responsible for the results of the encounter perhaps but there is no biologic need that he should be commensurate with the benefits gained.

And from the other side, it is well known that men of power and genius, even when quite old, have little difficulty in attracting women, who are moved also by an instinct which if permitted a certain acceleration would cause them to attach themselves, even to the point of maternity, to such men. Excellent mothers they might be to whom for life a distinguished father could be reasonably accountable. It is a potent theme and a sound deduction that the genius of a race does not come generated out of the air but legitimately or otherwise out of the bodies of men of genius. I mean that the actual anatomic brain of genius is in the germ plasm only of certain men and is from them only transmitted to the race and has been so transmitted, tolerantly, to healthy (or otherwise) female bodies. In a place such as England, where some good man is expected to come up from "the people" at all moments, it is only reasonable to believe that the germinal particles responsible for such a phenomenon were planted in "the people" by distinguished sires at some earlier date. It is certainly the plausible explanation for obscurely emergent men of understanding.

But if the completion of a thorough biologic sexual experience be denied men and women of eminence at the selective moment and unless a means for such legitimate or a tolerance for a similar illegitimate consummation be found, the full development of these individuals and their continuance as a type will be frustrated. Their work, rather, in a practical sense, will be affected, attenuated; to a great extent weakened. It will be as it is, let us say, with American painting as contrasted with the French where a better conception of the full male instinct is plainly shown upon the canvas.

A democracy of understanding has certain prerogatives which it will exercise: accessibility of sentiment, an appreciation for the material thrown up by the breakdown of discipline in the lower classes; but it has this glaring defect, that it cannot discover a satisfactory selective mechanism by which to discriminate in favor of the higher biologic types. Unless it find a way to learn from its lesser freedoms to gain a tolerance by which to liberate its more specialized members for a full fertilization of

the mass the vulgus will grow more lacking in the seeds of these types as time passes, or the types themselves will depreciate in effectiveness.

In summary let me say: Men desire vigorous girls for their occasional consorts and do not include in this a wish to be socially bound to them. Girls desire distinguished men as sires for their children and do not (necessarily) expect to hold them in leash except as economic requisites make it important. The young of both sexes entering upon these experiences do so by bringing into play an extensive mesh of uninsulated impulses of the greatest fragility. One of their own kind cannot hope to loosen this fine fabric or to take it into account. It is simply smashed in the impact. But a girl (boy) finding a man (woman) of proper understanding and who has been trained to recognize just this frailty—I do not speak of dotards—would receive, and does receive, at his (her) hands such a satisfaction, such a combing of the nerves as she (he) could never hope to achieve through any other type of contact during her (his) lifetime otherwise.

I have touched upon some of the degenerative processes the race must suffer from its present-day maladjustments to instincts governing a proper use of the male sperm. The race has been formerly wiser. We are to-day living upon the fruits of past planting but we are draining the mass of these fruits while we are doing nothing of adequate wisdom to replace their seeds. The future will suffer from this lack of foresight which must be attributable to our present imperfect standards of social theory. There are other phases to the subject as there are other solutions to the difficulties than I have presented. The race has generated what it needs by obscure means when it has failed by others. Nevertheless, if there is not a proper basic understanding, in all possible clarity, of the normal sexual impulses, it is stupidity itself when they are blocked to refine the study of the effects. If the cause of the disability and its prevention lies in a proper understanding of and tolerance for the desire itself and only dissections of the pathology are attempted, then simple statement becomes subtle and analytic subtlety grows nearly assinine. The male sperm has been so encumbered by custom and the social consequences of paternity that any contemplation of its cycle has of late become almost pure morbidity and any attempt to raise the discussion to a physiological level must seem itself perverse.

I thank you.

H. D.

NARTHEX

νάρθηξ: wand carried by initiates . . . original plant-stalk by means of which Prometheus brought fire from heaven.

AEONS brushed through her and made a sort of buzzing . . . which is ridiculous. She looked up into parallelogram and straight geometric static upright parallels upholding myriad geometric caryatids; the straight parallels of ceilings, roofs above ceilings, mapped out with T-square, with ruler for king and doge and emperor. Saint Mark's Square stretched side-wise, parallel to Saint Mark's Square stretched side-wise and Saint Mark's Square at her back was perpendicular to Saint Mark's Square at her left, to Saint Mark's Square at her right. Before her, set just there as if carefully placed by some careful child, was Saint Mark's. Saint Mark's, now she faced the thing, was a heap of child blocks and child stone-blocks and child box of building-blocks on obvious child stone arches. Set on top of Saint Mark's was an assortment of odd things pulled off the Christmas tree, oddments discarded as not neat enough, not shiny enough for "next year." Domes, half balls, Christmas-tree balls depleted of bright Christmas-tree gold and half Christmas-tree balls were set carefully so as not to show where and how some careless child had cracked them. Along the front of the preposterous edifice were cones, also tarnished, of prickly undefined ornaments, undefined, not fitting in with the neatness and the artifice that had invented just that box of building blocks with all its elaboration on the set convention. "Saint Mark's Cathedral is a sort of Christmas-tree sort of church, built up to be set under the tree, a sort of ten-cent store sort of cathedral" was the formula for Gareth.

Saint Mark's was that and wasn't that. The formula must do for Gareth. Gareth for some unprecedented reason had taken a dislike to Venice. Well, not quite unprecedented—Raymonde had said she would meet Gareth in Venice (and Daniel) in order to go on . . . Athens half-formulated, to take a boat . . . spring cruise, summer cruise, it was all unformulated. Saying "yes, I'll meet you in Venice" had meant just nothing, just how nice to have an excuse to leave one's work and tiny pied-a-terre at d'y Vaud and the rather sterile Alpine winter behind one and the still more sterile memory of last London summer, for . . . Italy. Mind blurred with thinking, too much work, things half-finished and only just begun, Raymonde had said "Gareth I'll come with you." She hadn't taken into account that X thing, that just wasn't but so theoretically might have been, Daniel. The X thing wasn't Daniel. It was Venice.

"Saint Mark's Cathedral is a sort of Christmas-tree sort of church" . . . Raymonde went on mechanically putting the thing into mechanical destructive thought, into mechanical destructive language so that Gareth, sitting stiff and upright in the little tin chair of Florian's, should get no remotest inkling of what the thing meant (in all its connotations) now, to Raymonde. "Saint Mark's Square *is* Saint Mark's Square, the thing *is* Saint Mark's Square" was safe anyhow and it *was* rather surprising to see it here, after years, after wars; the same pigeons, rather plumper, the same people, rather funnier; the same come and go and the same three orchestras playing against each other in the separate niches behind the separate groups of carefully arranged chairs (Florian's carefully differentiated from Aurora and Aurora from whatever the one across the way was) and little tables. All careful and secure as if there had never been wars and revolutions and people coming and going and ships sinking under pillars of sea-salt, swirling, child toys, lead weight, sunk into indefinite leviathan sea water. "There's nothing different about Saint Mark's except the tiny slab" (she had discovered it) "slightly to the right of the middle door-way as you face it" (Raymonde doled out information) "marking the Austrian bomb that didn't go off. Hundreds of bombs dropped mostly in the canals and never killed a pigeon" (common-place now though when that quatro-cento waiter said it, it had sounded quaint; words spoken out of some eighteenth century comedy—these jumbled æons—the right words, maybe it was the stylistic way

he had of speaking, *bel paese? caffe nero?* whatever he said became set, stylized with his pointed face, bad teeth and cameo-yellow eye-lids) "odd there being so many pigeons"—she must go on talking, with Saint Mark's Square to right, to left, hedging them in safe, holding them in safe; you may walk here, there, said the Venetian, here, there yet no further; geometric, Parthenon-like design, sparcity, purity, tempted yet restrained one. I hold you in, make confines for the spirit, then spill (wine out of formal goblets) my master-colour for you. This, in all strict consciousness, was pure Greek formula . . . then why should Garry plague them with her "Athens"?

Gareth wanted them to take the boat to Athens. Daniel was making thought-curves and spirals in the air. If one could see the thoughts of Daniel they would be gold, rare gold like marks on lilies . . . white garden lily, *that* in all consciousness, was notably Athenian but "Athens" as Garry named it became stark, hieratic like some stark unripe pale-greenish lily set against church pews. Athens wasn't that but Gareth, but Venice was making Athens seem that. Athens as Raymonde visualized it (if Gareth would leave her alone to visualize it simply, not drag her away to go there) was pollen-gold; for all its Parthenon arrangement it smelt of tumbled gardens, not of artificially forced open wax virgin-lilies behind glass in winter garden-suburbs. Gareth would kill Athens for her. How could one leave this just discovered garden, all this just-apprehended visual sensation, red lilies and small clusters of tiny snake-lilies growing a-symmetrical on tall stems and shades and shades un-named, undifferentiated? Garden reds had to be recalled, little old-fashioned bleeding-heart red, columbine red, things she had forgotten, to bring out, to differentiate red from red. Red brooded (rhododendron and carnation) hatched so to speak new combinations, incredible flamingo beauty. Static mosaic alike and fluid extravagance of drapery flung against polished agate, had reality, took on the oddest attribute; leave the thing at doge-red and be done with it. Cardinal-red, doge-red . . . they had their parallels with lilies.

2.

Into the air, climbing up into the air, Daniel's thoughts went in swallow-spirals . . . which is ridiculous. Daniel could think T-square and length of parallel lines as well as she could, better

than Gareth for all Garry's exquisite pedantry and letters after her ridiculous distinguished little name. Gareth sat ridiculous and exquisite, her small hands struggling with an unfamiliar burnt-brown dog biscuit of an Italian tea-cake, struggling to break it, putting all her intensity into just that thing like a child; as a child one could imagine her struggling with just such naïve intensity with a disproportionate garden rake or a watering-can dragged like a miniature tank across garden gravel. Gareth had a ridiculous way of putting too much dynamic energy into everything, whether it was some ridiculous little thesis signed with her ridiculous little distinguished name, or the collecting of rugs from refractory cab or motor, dealing with the "wrong" people or the "right" people in all the manifold phases of existence. People stared hypnotized into Gareth's hypnotizing gray eyes (she had hypnotized poor Rockway) eyes glazed and too intelligent, becoming blurred with impotence when she reached something to which intelligence has no answer. There was no answer, it was obvious to this thing; to Raymonde sitting too-happy in Saint Mark's Square, to Daniel making spiral-thoughts of swallow curves in sun-light.

Some one said "it's too hot in this corner, shall we move back?" It wasn't Daniel. Some one managed laboured words from somewhere but it wasn't Daniel, sitting nordic and elegant, slim width of shoulder, slim, mobile shoulders under grey London cloth and the head bent forward. The nape of exposed neck showed odd unfamiliar, bronze-honey tint, the comment, the seal of the Venetian sun on Daniel. Daniel was too white, had been too white. Daniel was a little too perpendicularly erect, had been a little too starkly erect in London. His shoulders drooped now suavely, unself-consciously. He seemed to have let go something. He was Hermes seated at a corridor's far end; heat and affluence of seated Hermes was in the forward bent shoulders of this London Daniel. Daniel newly inheriting his due inheritance (somewhat over-due) of sunlight was no one to have dragged the laboured words from nowhere, "it's too hot here in this corner shall we move back?" It wasn't Garry talking. It obviously was Raymonde.

"I'm obviously talking, saying things from nowhere, being nowhere, being right here." Time and set cycles of time had shifted for her, years had no bearing on things, had no meaning somehow. Fixed years, revolving on her set track through the

fever path of Europe, now meant nothing. Years with Gareth . . . hyacinth-blue years before the war cloud . . . separation (Gareth had swerved into activity, those diplomatic dodgings with poor Rockway) then renewal . . . all meant nothing. Going round like a Tibetan prayer wheel, out of peace, the blue waters of non-entity, into brakish "life," those war years. Now back again into the path of Gareth and another realm of daylight, of sunlight that fell pollen-dust, the edge of sun-eclipse—war-London?

Moving on her somewhat jagged yet none the less firmly preestablished orbit, Raymonde had moved (was it only just last summer?) into the track of Daniel . . . breaking brioche to the pigeons.

3.

The year moved backward as a clock-hand steadily pushed backward, encompassing the whole dial, to last spring. Last spring at this point on the clock face was a curious reversion, moving backward, some point in one's life where one said, "this isn't good enough, I'm getting nothing for it." Just that point a year ago, just a year ago that again was the actual replica of points back and back, moving the dial hand backward years and years, about seven, until one came to Katherine. Katherine made a luminous mark on any dial and to say Katherine brought years back of that into concentric circle. Keep the years straight, a sort of picture puzzle, this year and this year and the year I married Ransome. Fredrick Ransome was out of it . . . there was nothing left of them, they were the brakish fever cloud and they were best forgotten. Raymonde Ransome said, I have held on to Freddie Ransome, on to all they stood for and the result is that nobody cares, I'm getting old maidish and preposterous, people are only just worse, the sacrifice was nothing. Step so to speak (she had so stepped) out of the crimson dial face of fever stricken Europe and say "I won't be counted in it."

Katherine helped in that instance. People always do help. Say in the soul I want something, black or white, good or bad, anything just so you want it enough, up or down and something (with Faust it was Mephistopheles) will answer. Perversely at that moment Katherine answered.

One is pinned to the dial that is the overlapping cycle of one's

small years like the center pin point that holds the clock hands . . . Raymonde looked up and saw Mercaria clock marked just five. "Soon," she said to herself, thinking back to London, "the little bells will ding and dang and the bronze Gaul will pop out, like a bird in a cuckoo clock or the boy or the barometized ballet-skirted little girl in the barometer. One thing pops out, another thing pops in. Good, bad," she had said a year ago in London, "I'm fed up." Ding, ding, and the answering dings that made the just-arrived tourists in the square turn and stare up and one actually check off the "sight" in a little note-book. He must have just read "be sure to note the bronze Gauls on the Mercaria clock tower and the Virgin crowned with seasons." Germanic back turned toward her, heavy blocked-in square of back. He must be Swedish. "There's a Swedish boat in," Raymonde said to Gareth. Ding, ding, I go, you come. One thing counter-balances another. Years are held to flat years. We go round and round like clock hands . . . Garry was frowning at her.

Garry had frowned at her in London, frowned at Mordant. "Well, I'm tired of writing." Garry would always frown, a sort of steel blue recorder of her conscience, the sort of needle to her intellectual compass, the thing that Garry *was* pointed true . . . follow your own achievement. Garry couldn't know, odd dissociated half relationship with Rockway (Gareth divorced Rockway) emotion and all its tangled connotations. Garry moved in one cycle, had just one dial to go by. The dial of Garry's achievement was out of all time cycles. It was simply the needle of a compass. Garry didn't understand emotion and all its overlayers, the seasons so to speak, marked in zodiacal symbol like those seasons now part of a sort of coronal to the madonna. The Mercaria clock with its barbarians, the two bronze Gauls posed on the clock tower, were fit symbol of her own life. Love seated, so to speak, that blue garmented love-mother with time ticking away above it.

The sun fell warm on their somewhat London shoulders. London had meant spelt achievement and now London was a faded dial face, a handless clock, figureless, without meaning. O somewhat still with meaning. Wasn't London symbolized at this moment to her by just such sort of somewhat crude carved figures? The two bronze barbarians, the two Gauls posed for some reason surely (she must borrow some one's guide book) above the suave classic clock dial of zodiacal season and classically reposed woman

figure underneath it, was just London. Something barbaric, giving point and reality to the somewhat overdone suavity of classic form beneath it.

Mordant had given point last summer (as had Ransome during the war-shortened period of her marriage) to her somewhat faded acceptance of realities. "You ought to have two children," shoving her own somewhat faded incompetence and old maidishness at her, "you ought to have," was Mordant's stark appraisal and his somewhat Anglo-Indian brutality "children," seeing in her apparently something not quite outgrown its "usefulness," breaking into some layer of her subconscious by his stupidity. Saying "I want you to have my children," making her of some use, what use is hanging on to ideals, writing, the heady idealism that she lived by? Heady idealism grows in time sour, virgins without oil in lusterless intellectual vessels. "You ought to have two children" meant two things, actual realism of all life in its full emotional completion or actual destruction. Mordant glowering at her, bull face and ripe acceptance and infallible appraisal, someone somewhat of her own age and half-defeated fibre, having been "through" things, was a frank temptation. "He wants me to have children," she had said to Gareth. And Gareth "you're mad. Apparently you've gone mad. It's *that* . . . Katherine."

Gareth blamed everything on Katherine. Katherine was subterranean blue-fire, the sort of thing you think when you say Græco-Alexandrian. She was the late over-ornate winged Sphinx, a monster, all mind, having nothing to do with mind, achieving self-expression by wedding mire with mind, mind with matter, the logical conclusion of *know thyself*, haunches in the mire albeit marble haunches. Katherine was an Hellenistic monster but she *was* Hellenistic. Say Katherine even now and you saw blue mountains and you knew the somewhat problematical satisfaction of solving the Sphinx riddle would condemn you to an eternity of abandonment, emotional starvation; if you followed Katherine's tactic you sprouted premature psychic feelers, Katherine brought tiny tenuous roots out, Adonis garden to be as swiftly withered. One was all Adon-garden under Katherine's regime, all sudden premature spiritual flowering, to be as prematurely blighted. Katherine ripped souls from bodies, spiritual gynocologist. She had so endeavoured to "get at" Daniel, she had tampered with the very early pre-Gareth Raymonde. Gareth had something of Katherine's quality without her predilection for destruction.

Gareth had summed up Katherine "she has the face of a dying Athenian in the pit at Syracuse . . . and the instinct of a Harpy." She would gouge the soul out of any body. She had sent Raymonde, Mordant.

For reasons, Gareth insisted, for something malign and malicious. Put him up to marry, marry, knowing herself, *know thyself* means know everyone else; that is the smile on the cryptic face at Delphi. Know what will "get" Raymonde knowing what had "got" poor Katherine. For Katherine (at her own confessions) wanted to marry Mordant.

Mordant wouldn't have anything so drastic to contend with. He wanted (Gareth said) camouflage, a sort of whitewashing of the already whited sepulchre, Raymonde.

4.

Going round and round, enchanted magic wheel . . . dial of intrigue, something so ignoble yet something that forced open inhibition-sealed doors, doors with red seals, war seals, open the door and let down inhibition. Why hang on and on, electric fervour of intellectual integrity, where is this taking me? Say "where is this taking me" after years of valorous achievement and someone, something finds you. (With Faustus it was Mephistopheles. With Raymonde it was Katherine.) Temptation of water-blue eyes and the stricken features . . . "Katherine is beautiful with the beauty of Cassandra." Someone, something crying on a stricken portico, *know thyself*—knowing all the time that know thyself meant know everyone else . . . the catch of the whole matter, says the cryptic smile at Delphi, *know thyself* rips self from self and leaves one self a monster. Stricken with beauty, foreknowledge that stripped husk on husk means somehow counter-magic. The gift and the withdrawal. "Know" and the world stands off, staring, fore-warned, rejecting. Men shun Cassandra. So Mordant, Katherine. Cassandra's "I'll get even" sends apprehensive shivers of pre-knowledge into the chosen vessel . . . you . . . you . . . you . . . *get even for me.*

Mordant would love Raymonde . . . Raymonde would or wouldn't fall in love with Mordant . . . in any case, says Katherine, "heads I win, tails you lose." But Katherine's excellent formula of "tails I win, heads you lose" was somewhat crippled. Gareth broke across with her defaming features. Garry

sitting firm and secure on Florian's little tin-chair was the same Garry that had blazed at Raymonde Ransome back in London. "You . . . you . . . you . . ." You . . . you . . . you chosen vessel of iniquity would be useful still for potters. Katherine wanted to break Raymonde up (Raymonde wanted to be broken) but pestle and mortar are useless against silver . . . slime over the surface of intellectual integrity, let Mordant think you raw material for brick ovens. Mordant had thought her somewhat washed out clay that wanted coating with luminous vermilion. Under clay surface, something was spoiling something . . . malleability was being spoiled by something.

Turn vessel, Ray Bart (Freddie called her Ray Bart) in ingenious long fingers, forefinger like bird beak, Harpy out of Asiatic cities. What's wrong with this thing? Katherine knew all along . . . but it was worth trying.

Mordant saw washed-out clay colour that wanted revarnishing . . . Gareth saw pure silver.

Gareth stale-mated it with her heavy feudalistic worldliness. Raymonde hadn't taken into consideration any of her so tenuous "position." Position it appeared was something to hang on to . . . she hadn't realized she had it. "Mordant has no *position*, no means of getting in, of getting on. He thinks you'll marry him, coddle his pretentious little pseudo-literary ambitions." Wasn't that temptation? It's easier to lull the threadbare second-rate into smug contentment, lull oneself into self-effacement with it, than to compass fresh creation. Dope artistic consciousness out of all existence, bring carpet-slippers, mix a little night cap. Irony stalking blatant had enticed Raymonde, irony saying man, woman, you are woman, he is apparently man. Man-woman, a temptation. The intellect grows sterile being bi-sexual . . . or a-sexual. (The very use of the words would have frightened Mordant.) Mordant all suppression and vibrant vitality was the mate for her then cynicism. "You'd write better if you *lived* more," was his slogan then for Raymonde. "Wh-aa-at?" "If you lived, you might really write . . . something. Not this unwholesome introspection . . ." "You're quite right." Temptation had stalked rampant, Mephistopheles with dark eyes (as it happened) in somewhat burnt-brick visage. His colour that ought to have been repellent radiated warmth (in London) like bricks from Nineveh. Mordant was despotic by prepossession. Raymonde wanted to be shut up in a harem.

Daniel had said "O Alex Mordant" and dismissed him. Daniel had said nothing. Daniel was the crystal ball into which then Raymonde refused to be enclosed. "I won't be caught in sterile purity." Daniel was exquisite and unworldly, Daniel was so au fait with the whole gamut of affection that he simply didn't think or talk about it. Daniel, slim rod, was the neophyte's wand. If I accept Daniel (she had then said) I will be accepting still more intellectual initiation. I will be conversant with still more rightness out of evil. Peril was wrapped about her. She wanted to be warm (red bricks, sun-baked in Nineveh) not climb icebergs any longer. "You're young," she had said to Daniel. "You and your sort ought to do things, create. I'm tired of writing." She had watched a face outlined with frozen features. He was some unexplored planet ridged with planet mountains. "You're far and alert and intellectualized. I'm through burning in a vacuum."

Vacuum, steadily projected, chasm between herself and Daniel. Stepping down, so to speak, into some valley layer of obliteration (Mordant, burnt Nineveh), she had by the same token, to climb and climb into the sterile mountains. Two-fold, smiling, cryptic, "I give, I withdraw," said her ever-present deity. "Know thyself" with certainty, said the omnipotent deity, you have worshipped me . . . if you go down, you go up. Following "know thyself" to its logical conclusion, she had found herself gasping like a fish on dry land, a mountaineer whose tried heart stops beating. She had climbed the heights intellectually, spiritually with Daniel. Two-fold initiation said the keeper of the gateway, you want to get through a door, doors are Janus-faced, two sides to initiation. Said Katherine, here is Mordant. Katherine was Cassandra, tool of Delphi.

Gareth was wrong negating Katherine's streak of authenticity. Katherine had sent Mordant to her, Katherine had sent Daniel. "I want something" had drawn its answering quarry. "I want something" is a net set in a barren wilderness, a line flung into unplumbed waters. Say "I want something" in that tone of voice (*ask and you shall receive*) and you get it. I want something; *knock and it shall be opened*, answers the Janus-faced Hebraic prophet like the deity at Delphi. *Ask and you shall receive*, smiles its cryptic two-sided smile at Christianity.

Ask and you shall receive . . . Daniel. But it wasn't the an-

swer anyone expected. I said I want and I want and I want. I said I am tired of intellectually scrambling up a mountain. Ask to be let down into the numbing fever smitten valley. Ask to "be let down." Deity won't let you let yourself down. Smiling, Katherine was a coin tossed. Katherine really, doing everything, had nothing to do with it. Heads I win, tails you lose. Coin flung up, fell with a pretty clatter. Spinning on its (so to speak) tail the coin had weezed and settled to its final prophecy. Mantic coin flung up, Katherine and Mordant were one side, Gareth and . . . Daniel the other. Toss coin up, says the deity of Delphi, the smiling forerunner of the cryptic Jewish prophet, tails I win, heads you lose . . . no matter. Coin tossed carelessly, fell just as carelessly. Gareth and Daniel faced Raymonde in Saint Mark's Square.

Gareth and Daniel were flung beside Raymonde in Saint Mark's Square. The sun fell, gold streak across London grey cloth. The sun still fell on Daniel's nordic shoulders. Head bent forward, he was seated Hermes, isles and distances were to be measured by the length of Daniel, measure antiquity by the angel-rod of Daniel. Daniel was neophyte narthex . . . so far, so far . . . no further. Mordant glowering affable acceptance at her had minimized endeavour. Intellect was silver-bars melted in Nineveh, claustraphobia banished . . . Alex Mordant could have made me happy. Garry, symbol of intellectual vistas, was silver bars and claustraphobia . . . Daniel the Elusinian wand-bearer . . . so far, no further. Who knows anything of Daniel? Daniel in London had said nothing . . . facing her in London . . . eyes in a white set face had only said . . . "try to get away if you can, from your own self." His eyes had said "go it. Good luck. I don't believe you'll do it." If Daniel had said frankly, "take care. Be careful, I must warn you against Mordant," he would have frankly fired her. His eyes were so set in their foreknowlege, the edge of his irony whetted by his indifference. "Yes. I agree with you, intense people *must* have something." Because he agreed with her, the whole thing seemed so trifling. Bronze figures on a clock tower, Gauls, barbarians, soldiers, Englishmen, Mordant and Freddie Ransome. Stupidity of Mordant who hadn't even Freddie's excuse for that thing. Soldiery was ugly, had defeated its own purpose. Mordant was really ugly.

5.

Soldiering was ugly, had defeated its own purpose. Daniel was out of it. Is it possible, said Raymonde, facing a London Daniel, that anything was out of that thing? Wait, said cryptic deity, we will need this Daniel. Daniel (soul-sperm) was flung out after the perished Freddie Ransomes and surviving Mordants. There was, it was evident, another scale of values.

I have given up sifting spiritual values, I am tired of sifting, spiritual gold-digger striking a barren sub-soil. Barren subsoil, the just after war generation had proved so much rock and silt and little gleams of possible ore that vanished beneath one's fingers. My own people mattered but where are my own people? Gareth singularly all along remained a spiritual successor . . . but Garry had married Rockway. Garry was late war and early post-war, so was Rockway. Their hard clear eyes had stared and stared at Raymonde. "Why don't you cut loose?" Post war and late war eyes (unlike the very early shattered generation) had said "hell, what's the use?" Robin Rockway with his cap tilted with remembered flying unit grace had flung his "hell" and his "hell" until even Garry, stoic and sympathetic, had recoiled. Garry was pure gun-metal. She was vibrantly metallic.

Metal endured, Garry endured where Robin Rockway failed them. Rockway with his brilliant diplomatic genius, his odd personal discernment, his cosmopolitan outlook was a shattered winged high flying plane. He fell wrecked spiritually . . . perhaps he would pull himself still out of it—is spirit ever shattered? He was symbol of that crowd anyway, in or out, they had their own code. Some fell valiantly winged . . . some held on. Don't try to understand them. "Hell" and "hell" and "cut loose from everything." Garry was post-war. Link on link . . . Garry held true, fibre and valour but with strident inhibitions enough to drive any one let alone poor nerve-shattered Rockway, to destruction. Garry had to be like that . . . to be like that. Garry, gun-metal, held on from war to post-war. Raymonde was surviving war. Garry surviving post-war, Daniel, it was evident, was next link. Caught only at the last as a schoolboy in a training corps, Daniel was the one untainted. They were all tainted . . . but this Daniel.

Daniel would "carry on," it was evident, if they would hold

together. Garry links me up to the post-war people, I link Garry up to the war people. We have held on sometimes hating each other . . . as now. Now Garry and I are hating each other . . . we must hold on for Daniel.

The year moved backward . . . the year moved suddenly forward. The year went zip, zip, zip, swiftly past the quarter, the half, the three quarter . . . they were back in Venice. This is here, now, said Raymonde, watching the boy pose the girl (girl and boy escapade, were they off the Swedish Nord Stirn?) on the slab about the middle centre lamp post. The girl (from the Nord Stirn?) dropped corn kernels, the pigeons obligingly pecked. The boy said "good, Gladys," so evidently they were not off the Nord Stirn, but momentarily dissociated perhaps from the Cook crowd, hot from the Campanile, just now debouching (Camberwell, Camden Town) from the Campanile corner. The Cook crowd (the boy and girl had joined them) cut through an irregular trail of black shirts that just now emerged, highly dramatic, from the Piazetti dei Leoni. Small, smaller, smallest boys trailed after the cue's barrage, ridiculous, like dressed monkeys. Black pirates, the Fascisti made Saint Mark's Square alien to Italy; United Italy, this thing belongs to people off boats. It seemed the right of all the people off boats to shoo away Fascisti. This place belongs to people drinking vermouth or tea or lemonade at Florian's or Aurora's little tables, or the ones across the way whatever that place is called, where they play nothing but Trovatore. People, pigeons, who were these Fascist black-shirts? Crows had descended, a black flock, settled among garden colours. "Shoo off the Fascisti." "Wh-aa-at's the matter, Raymonde? Don't talk like that." "I wasn't saying anything." "You said shoo off the Fascisti."

The year moved forward, it was (it was evident) this year, it was now, here. The sun fell warm on Daniel's London shoulders. The sun left a bar now where it had fallen full weight, the touch of mantic fingers. "The sun's gone from your shoulder, Daniel." Daniel looked up, he seemed never to have moved, all that time . . . while time sped its reckless dial pace from last year to this year, now here. "Time it's apparent, is irrelevant." "Wh-aa-at?" "What, *what* exactly Garry?" "You said something was irrelevant. I wish you wouldn't shout so."

Garry was telling her that she must be more careful. Garry

of the "O hell" generation was saying Raymonde must be circumspect, be careful. Careful. What was careful? The clock was dinging again . . . bronze Gauls on the clock tower were side stepping out to ring little bronze bells, great notes over the sun-steeped piazza, this year, now here. Bells rang, it is here, it is this year. The sun would soon be setting. It couldn't conceivably go on pouring bars and rays of heavy molten gold in layers out of an old-fashioned steel engraving. There was nothing but gold bars . . . as last night bars of silver. "Everything's exaggerated. Do you remember last night?" Garry wasn't going to enthuse with anybody. Daniel was feeding pigeons. I must go on alone, thought Raymonde. Won't any one help me bear it? I love Venice too much.

The sun for all its dynamic heat, weighing them all down, would soon be setting. It would go suddenly, drop behind the campanile, drop suddenly behind the other (Georgio Maggiore) bell tower, drop swiftly behind the Giudecca. The sun would soon go suddenly but mites still swarmed within it . . . people . . . people . . . in the porches of the piazetta, in and out of the cathedral doorways. People swarmed and people drifted . . . Brixton and Camberwell (with the boy and Gladys) had disappeared quite suddenly while fresh Camberwells and Brixtons drifted (how can there be so many?) with Minneapolis, South Dakota, Winnipeg and Valparaiso, from the symmetrical *calle* leading out of Saint Mark's Square; odd (to mix metaphor) sea creatures drifted . . . insects in pollen gold dust became sea-creatures, drift, drifting from somewhat shaken sea centres, wondering vaguely (to mix metaphor) what high-tide of fortune had deposited them at the foot of the campanile, before cathedral gateways. The look of surprise on white London faces was the same look of surprise-on American faces gone dark with the spring sea-voyage, of Surbiton and Chatauqua faces, of Chicago and Minneapolis faces, things over the other side, remember what we've come from, how have we got here? "How have we got here" never left one alone to say "this is a clever face" or "this is a haughty face" or "this face shows years of turmoil" or "this face is merely vapid." Raymonde was debauched with the whole spectacle, "*how* have we got here" . . . faces, people all had a look of familiarity, of common denominator awareness, of surprise that just this thing should have overtaken them to their little odd back-water of Minneapolis, Berlin or Copenhagen. De-

bauched faces meeting debauched faces in the square were all somehow standardized, wearing one mask of sunlight, were odd (to mix metaphor) fish out of their element, flung by some sea-fortune into one pool, turning on themselves after some strife and some little wonder of readjustment, to stand upright, so to speak, on their tails and see whatever else it was that this same sea-tide, so favoring them, had flung in here beside them. The lowest or the highest common denominator was in all their faces. This is the thing—this is the thing—the blocked-in outline familiar from cheap tourist folders, or slap-dash posters, in railway terminals, Winnipeg, Valparaiso, come true, come *right* under one's very sea-wind sniffing nostrils. Classic Venice, romantic Venice (Raymonde was debauched with the whole spectacle) poster Venice, post-card Venice, Othello Venice, clap-trap stage Rialto Venice became real ("what news o' the Rialto?"); Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Wagner and Duse and George Sand Venice (she was frankly reeling with it) came true, became so many sets of feelings to be coped with, the feelings that made just those people come here, what they felt when here, still went on here; differentiate one from one, how Heine must have felt sitting just here, how Wagner. What must have been George Sand's reaction to just that sort of scr-aa-atch in the air the pigeons wing-points made in passing; bird wings scratched the very molten substance of that sunlight. Sunlight fell on all, obliterating . . . while miraculous ice forms remained unmelted in it, column and pillars and sets of separate pillars, the marbles of Saint Mark's Cathedral doorway. Mirage frozen . . . Saint Mark's Cathedral doorway.

Blocks of marble enclosed green fronds; stalactites, marble slab and inset triangle and rhomboid; column, twisted little group of columns and eclectic device on shield or carved coat of arms—Colleoni? Stampalia? names, people, jumble of moss and seaweed; amber pattern on a stone water step. Seaweed and sea-drifting creatures . . . dolphins curvetted and smiled at—dolphins—people, so many odd fish from so many foreign waters, all collected in little shoals, in little fish-clusters, a black shoal from the North Sea or a dark blue shoal from mid-Atlantic or a white shoal of people off Mediterranean boats in summer dresses. Umbrellas unfurled, sea-anemone shapes, blobs of colours static or heaving as if washed over by iridescent sub-marine tropic waters. Sea-green, sea-blue, rock and sea and stone and

Surbiton posing for its portrait. "She's actually got a dove to *sit* on her wrong-end of Oxford Street felt hat."

6.

. . . now there was no seaweed to it, it was all a garden . . . now there was no garden . . . it was one huge dynamo . . . the excitement of watching what might happen to other people, spiritual clap-trap, the sort of spiritual joke of the thing that had its parallel in remembered antics of a Coney Island side show . . . electric-charged side-walk and the people who had been "had" watching those who were in the state of being "had." Electric radiators under the piazza paving stones and the crudely initiated waiting in a state of permanent grin the advent of new victims. Something happens to everybody. They were all Marco Polos about to be dynamized into activity.

Marco Polo came back from the Orient to sit here; electric fervour, all the impulse that had driven Marco Polo to the Orient still throbbed here; vibration, steady and undeviating, still pulsed and drove people toward intellectual harbours of appreciation. Vibration, electric thing beneath them, throb-throb, steamer in mid-ocean, vibration, impulse toward understanding, spiritual comprehension, actual illumination. Pulse-pulse; they all seemed (atoms clustered about Florian's little tables) sitting on a huge dynamo, anything might happen; they were being re-created, heated above, beneath, "incubated" from some vibrant centre. They'd hatch soon, awkward chicks, flamingo-coloured, breaking the shell, Winnipeg or Valparaiso. "Athens is played out" Raymonde found herself surreptitiously pronouncing, barely breathing (it was as well Garry hadn't heard her) Athens vibrates too high (she got it suddenly). Greek vibration is ultra-violet . . . the sort of thing you sense with some super-vibratory nerve centre, piercing, shattering; the inhumanity of spirit. Greek light pierced, harrowed one to more intense flight; this sustained, held one enclosed, smothered down in beauty, suffocated, painlessly snuffed out, one's only exaltation being this loss of one's identity; loss of identity was the gift of Venice.

Greek genius is white lightning across daylight skies, lightning across already intolerable light, it was obvious how this sustained summerday heat had brought golden Veronese to flower, Palma Vecchio, tiger-lily Tintoretto. Lilies . . . she was

back now with a garden . . . sea anemone sunshades were so many lilies and the place was full of sounds that fill lilies, that radiate about lilies in late-summer gardens (Venetian painters are late-summer painters) leaf-sound, bee-sound, earth-sound of crickets, katydids, butterflies with furled butterfly coloured wings. Each bit of rumpled ribbon or lining of a bag flung open on a table or bright catch on another hand bag was manifestation of butterfly colour, insectiverous wing quiver of a hawk-moth, metallic green knob of a beetle. "I don't know why I didn't care for Venice" . . . she did know why she hadn't before this cared especially for Venice. If you just aren't keyed, attuned to this suave dynamo of vibration, the place is common-place. People, things exist in relation to the understanding; they don't exist obviously, unless *you* exist, dynamo of comprehension, catching dynamo spark from the object you're attuned to. "I don't know. I do know. I loved Florence." (Florentine painters—it came suddenly—are April painters.) "Perhaps one couldn't love the two together." Divided Italy has meant partisanship, perhaps that partisanship existed still in spirit. You give your soul to one thing, you can't give it to another.

7.

Yet *is* that true? She had given her soul to Gareth, she had given her soul to Daniel. Inappositely it was Daniel who was Florence, Tuscan fidelity, intellectual subtlety, clairvoyant physical intuition. Daniel said he would sooner *not* be found dead in Florence. Gareth went out of her way to jibe at Bellini, to attempt to scratch with intellectual contempt that quaint Harlequin of painters (Ruskin's phrase) Carpaccio. Garry's very sincere back-talk at the expense of Tintoretto made him seem a living person; they were all so real to Gareth in her hatred. Hatred or fear (another name for hatred) of the thing that she was. Gareth *was* that special Bellini in the Accademia, the sort of effect of small cherubs, raspberry shaped small Erotes, raspberry coloured sort of bee-wings to astral coloured angels. Gareth *was* Bellini. If Raymonde burnt a candle surreptitiously to Bellini (say in Saint Zacharia's) she found expression for her belated love of Gareth. Gareth *was* this thing. Raymonde had found formula for Gareth. Gareth was, it was obvious, the Bellini side of Venice as Daniel was obviously the Verrochio

Mina da Fiesole side of Florence. Daniel had made a detour to escape Florence, he wouldn't on any account ever "be found dead there." Gareth had come to Venice only on the distinct understanding that it was a *faux de mieux*, a port of landing, a stepping stone out to more sympathetic milieu . . . sympathetic? That was the catch of the whole complicated matter. Vibration of Saint Mark's Square wasn't reaching Gareth.

Ages keep coming up into ages where they don't belong, Raymonde was stricken with it, ghost ages like the dove in the light globe, Tintoretto swings, dove-sun into his barn annunciation in the Scuolo di San Rocco. Belated vision stalked blatant in Saint Mark's Square, belated words preserved in amber, words in amber melted in that sunlight . . . Greek words gone heady, life within life, Greek words "consider the birds" were sap, gold from a heavy tree, forest tree of Judaic, of Greek mythology. Philosophy was a great tree and words were flowing out, fragrant words, tree sap, maple trees merging to pine-trees near the water . . . there were pine trees near the water . . . but it was only flag poles. Her mind re-adjusted, contemplated naked flag poles, pine trees stripped of leafage. Malappropriate foliage, banners dripped from the three upstanding flag poles, stark green and red, poster-green and poster-red of the two Italian flags, and in the centre a third blatantly stressing the crude vulgarity of the others, the worn old-gold and leaf-gold of the ancient winged-lion-paw-on-a-book banner of the republic. Flags folding, unfolding before cathedral portals, reminded Raymonde of deciduous leafage and . . . Gareth is unhappy.

It was horrible of Gareth to mar this thing with bickering, to cut across the clear relationship they had established. Strangers met, had met last year in London, she and Gareth, had become strangers after five years' separation. Strangers more than brothers, like Hindoo lovers meeting in after lives, after vivid incarnations, to exploit and compare past experience. You . . . you . . . you . . . you look the same, are the same Garry. You . . . you . . . you . . . you look different, aren't the same, Ray Bart and their quarrel had begun as far back as last summer . . . London . . . so much further away than the not so distant, problematic Athens. They had quarreled then about Mordant, about Katherine. Katherine was responsible for

the whole fiasco, Garry had insisted—but why drag it all with all its connotations, back into this blessed sunlight . . . let Gareth stay a stranger, not come too close. The stranger, Gareth, the intellectual almost-twin was a creature of swift parallel thought lines running straight with her lines as if she had been (it seemed now that she had Gareth) all the intermediate years she had existed without Gareth, a useless direct thing, with all its integrity utterly useless like one single arrow-like line of prolonged double rails, half a rail-road running straight into some sudden wilderness. Now that she had Gareth, the intellectual track of her endeavor seemed to have been justified. There was, had been all the time, although she had not known it, another just such rail, running along with her rail. Intellectually she and Gareth made one track across a desert but morally, ethically, spiritually—Garry was sulking like a little girl. The thing hurt horribly.

Raymonde must propitiate Gareth, get her into it for somehow suddenly it seemed to her (herself so melted into heady molten sunlight) it was the person most unhappy that most mattered. Daniel couldn't matter, being molten with her, one substance with her; Garry was really bee-wings if she would let herself be bee-wings, she was an astral-coloured raspberry shaped ridiculous small angel with the war gear of Athene. Garry was ridiculous, was disproportionate. Garry was unhappy, "yes, Garry I know," propitiate, explain, be false in the gift (propitiation) but not false in the spirit that prompted propitiation. "I always *did* say I didn't care for Venice." Throw out with false frankness, this "between ourselves one must keep up a sort of bluff of appreciation," art and art and what is expected of one; throw the thing out with hearty falseness and even as Raymonde spoke firm-founded in her pre-conception that whatever self in her self she played false to, she wouldn't play false to her loyalty to Gareth, there was a whirring as of aeons. Aeons brushed through her . . . pigeons from niche, from coppice, from edges of Corinthian capitals and from Palladio statue bases. Pigeons emerged like bees from honey-comb suddenly for no reason that one could see (not the excuse of that orgy of established noon-grain) motivated by some common impulse. Pigeons emerged like bees from honey-comb, buzzing, burrowing into sunlight like flies, like bees into some molten amber. Things moved in this amber, saint-like, god-like—Saint Anne

with Sistine Sibyl eyes came toward them . . . "that old thing's come back," clock-circle of Saint Mark's Square, "the tiresome old woman" proffering carefully doctored blossoms. Buzzing, burrowing, burrowing into sunlight, into saint-light. Yet seen the other way round, picture post-card, "vulgar tourists" cheap poster gaudiness of colour, cheap green, poster-red of the Italian flag, crude, played out, horribly shown up beside the middle ancient paw-on-a-book Venetian republic banner.

Things showed up terribly, things were shown up by things, you could rip the whole show to rags with a bit of clear analysis (Garry was quite right) seen the other way round the whole thing was preposterous. Everything in the whole, equally everything in detail, everything was preposterous, the wired carnations for instance in the old hag's basket, looked as if they had been dipped in red ink, picture post-card carnations, streaked with as blatant crudity as the green, red, white of the king's flag. Paper carnations, paper carnival roses were hardly, were they, flowers? Raymonde said, "they aren't, are they, flowers?" and realized she was off the track, going off the rails, off the tangent and she was talking to Gareth, realizing that Gareth and she had spread wide wings or she had spread wide wings and Garry (this was the horror of it) hadn't. Garry was sulking visibly in sun-light.

8.

"So do you remember . . . do you remember . . ." Raymonde hazarded, get Garry into it. Let Daniel realize there were years of intimate concord, conflict or communion (it didn't matter) between her and Gareth. "Garry do you remember . . ." anything, it didn't matter, the Lynmouth Bretts and their hateful foster-son, that man who ate bananas with hot milk all the way over on the Atlantide, the two sailors that they took the collection for at the hotel (she had forgotten the name) at San Antonio. Make little side allusions and carefully and politely afterwards, with well-bred implication, explain them all to Daniel. Let Daniel see that she and Gareth were a sort of composite person she and Gareth, Raymondegareth or Garethraymonde, a person that had existed (Raymondegareth) before ever there was a Daniel. Let Daniel who was so terribly, terribly in it seem out of it precisely. "O Garry," Raymonde achieved a

stage peal of actual almost-hysteria, "that woman there with the dyed ostrich boa looks so terribly like Frieda Hochensteiner." Explain this particular allusion (Gareth was smiling faintly) exaggerate the importance of it, elaborate, appliqué allusion on it, get Daniel out of it.

Make Frieda Hochensteiner seem important though she never was important. Explain it, make a diagram, re-embroider on fresh frame-work, this year and this summer year and this golden sea year and this year before that when Renée Stark got married. People, things, net work of places, people, she and Gareth were linked, nothing could interfere, not even Daniel who was so terribly part of it, webbed into it treasonably, silver web of exquisite silk texture that shelters problematic twin grubs. She and Gareth were somehow dark things beside the thing called . . . Daniel. But they were twin things, had been twin things, Garethraymonde, Raymondegareth before there was a Daniel.

But it wasn't Daniel, whirr of wings entreated, you and Garry and Daniel were happy before you came to Venice. Venice. Before you came to Venice. Treason was prowling somewhere . . . Daniel mustn't break across them, but it wasn't Daniel, it was a more illusive, composite thing, a sort of superimposition, like vision superimposed on vision in some exquisite improbable screen version of something altogether out of the world and altogther not to be grappled with in mere crude language . . . something composite that was whirr of wings, that was furled and unfurled sun shades, that was the fact that nothing of the Orient (Marco Polo must have thought) held such charm, such dope simply as this thing: Saint Mark's Square set palpable, improbable in sunlight.

. . . bees hung, they must be doing, in the air above them. Whirr of wings that must tear the heat, let it drip like the middle banner in gold streamers. The middle banner of the three banners before Saint Mark's, dripped and flung its gilt edge against the middle flag-pole and the ends hung there, heavy as if the pole itself were some tall, slender exotic tree dripping exotic red leaves and gold leaves, dripping, dripping . . . they were being swallowed in it (she and Daniel) and Gareth wasn't. This was the terrible thing. Gareth was out of it.

Firmly incarnated, incarcerated almost you might have thought in her steel grey travelling costume (no bee-wings vis-

ible) hard perfect tailored lines of firm small square shoulders . . . Garry was Athene sitting in a London costume sulking visibly in sunlight. "Pallas Athene when she was angry produced incarnate anger." "Wha-aat?" "I said when Pallas Athene was angry she *was* angry." A Gorgon had stared at her . . . Garry was frightening but Garry shouldn't spoil this. Gareth rolled things up like you might that middle silken banner. The banner momentarily hiding and revealing that cathedral doorway, made a sort of drop-curtain, stressing dramatic interval, so that for a moment one was right with one set of values, Gareth, the mind, her singular acumen and the fact that in London she saved me, got me out of that vicious Mordant-Katherine cycle, and the next moment, (flap) one's mental outfit changed, one's values shifted. Time was indicated by this drop-curtain that rose, that fell, making moments into aeons again, this odd facility of dramatizing everything that was the gift of Venice; moods were dramatized, time sequence stressed, that flap and that flap of gold and crimson on a flag pole. "Gareth is worth all this mumbo-jumbo" one capitulated, facing those glazed Gorgon eyes in heady sunlight, remembering the intellectual stimulus they brought one, "all this incense and little carved naked cupids holding up sacred founts" and then (flap) Garry wasn't. "Classic blurred by late ornate colour and the late ornate quality that you get *true* in Florence" one conceded, "here is all gone to seed, great lilies, over-ripe, red and orange and everything about to fall like crimson leaves, ripe leaves, just not-rotten." The minute that came clear above or across the buzzing of wings (the usual pigeons) the formula was no good. The minute one said "Pallidio is no good, Garry is everything" the lion-paw-on-a-book banner of the Republic flapped apart, made a new scene. Every time the wind lifted it, blowing fresh down the funnel-like Piazetta from the lagoon and the Grand Canal, something *changed*. Every time the wind blew the symmetrically a-symmetrical fringes of the banner across the far side of the cathedral and the stone lions and the fountain and those other pigeons gathered on the carved raised well-head like flies on honey-comb or small quite ordinary day-moths on a flat flower, something dynamically altered. There was never getting anything straight. Every word made a change, pebbles dropped into deep waters, pebbles dropped into shallow water, everybody's words, not only Garry's, the words of the officer at the next table . . .

going on and on, Italian is voweled in spite of people constricting that special water-over-stones quality to Greek . . . "I mean, it was spoiled for me that last time. Just rushing in to get the boat—everything spoiled and the time before . . ." Raymonde, it was evident, was whole-heartedly enchanted, swept into this vivid cycle, every word she spoke, it seemed, was about to change infinities. Pebbles dropped into placid water, rings of thought, rings of water-like concentric circles that thought takes over the blurr and buzz of colour in Saint Mark's Square, were changed by the mere vibration sound made in speaking. Not my voice only . . . their voices. Wound round in a web of magic, just keep Gareth quiet, don't try actually to cope with Garry, "last time everything was spoiled" (say anything) "with all that pother about the Kerr-Webbs missing their boat to Constan."

9.

There was no use saying this is true or this is true. Nothing was true anywhere. Or everywhere everything was true. It was true eclectically that Garry had stalked into her apartment one day in London when things had reached their critical last climax and had said "clear out Raymonde." Garry like a sword flashing through late London mist (mist seeped into her little top floor London eerie; she always stayed too late) had driven Raymonde out, out. Eve naked with her one intellectual, so to speak, garment of the tried spirit into the . . . wilderness, "I don't want to go. I am fed up with writing." Garry had flayed her forth, out of the "sticky drug of the Katherine-Mordant cycle" (Garry would never give Katherine credit for authenticity) into the . . . wilderness. "I'll be so . . . so cold in d'y Vaud." Garry had driven her out, and up problematic intellectual icebergs and as if to make up for all that, after three months' stoic and horrible seclusion, had wired her, somehow telepathically knowing that she was sick to death of herself and of non-achievement, to join up with her in Venice in order to take a boat (they would discuss that later) somewhere. Garry's letters following straightway had made clear that Raymonde wasn't to bother about all the worry of the (as Garry tactfully put it) "extras" . . . so here I am more or less Garry's guest, Raymonde's mind would keep on insisting, this year's income shockingly overdrawn, little enough in all con-

sciousness but not enough for that sort of shoddy extravagance Mordant let me into. Dresses, the wrong kind, all shoddy and extreme and all the paraphernalia of keeping life from sinking. I was shoddy and extravagant in London, income overdrawn, ambition gone, I said "let everything go, Katherine is really right in these particulars" and Garry burst upon me. Garry was uncanny, had been acute and devastatingly accurate in her analysis. "It isn't this swine Mordant that you think you love, it's Ransome." "Wh-aa-at? I thought you hated Freddie." "I did. I do. He stood for the worst of England . . . that idiotic rotten public school attitude . . . and system. But at least he had the decency to die for his convictions." "It wasn't Alex Mordant's fault that he wasn't killed at Vimy." "Vimy? Viiii-my? Blimy. He never yet saw Vimy." "It's none anyhow of your, Garry, business." "Your business is my business . . ." "Your people shall be my people and your . . ." Raymonde had begun mockingly but she couldn't finish. Facing Garry in that surcharged little London apartment where too much always happened, she couldn't be just funny, remembering too much. What had Garry done for her in the past?. What had Garry done, what wouldn't Garry have done to have saved her from all the hideous war fiasco? Garry would have put her two small hands heroically into a red flame . . . but it wouldn't have helped . . . anybody. Raymonde would have let herself be sliced piece by piece for Garry . . . but Garry married Rockway. "You and I had to know . . . we had to *know* Garry." Knowledge holds out problematical inducements. Delphic Helios backed by all too one-sided Athene. Athene before the portals, Pronaos, that is what she was, what Garry was. Katherine after all was something on her own, a whim of some divinity. Katherine was Cassandra, follow her prophecy . . . believing. "I believe in Katherine." "Katherine wants to blight you." "How can anybody blight anybody? We are each his own three fates, each spinning his own pattern." "You spin rottenly." "How—rottenly?" "Vimy. Blimy. We had that Mordant pattern only something decent . . . once. It's war-reversion. You are reverted and introverted. You think by marrying Mordant or by being his greasy mistress, that you'll get back—" "Get back?" "The lost . . . that *is* lost."

Whither thout goest I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge . . . but it meant going alone to d'y Vaud, an icy

winter . . . nobody there, Daniel couldn't help her . . . pouring over pages and pages . . . I've lost time, I've slid back . . . and Garry's telegram at the last after three winter months and barren non-achievement, "I'm going on a Mediterranean cruise, somewhere. I want company. You come." All very vague, meaning nothing, meaning everything, meaning in particular shoving listlessly a few rags into a handbag and sliding through the Simplon. To find Daniel standing beside Garry outside the Ferrovia and Venice as Venice never had been . . . beautiful.

The sun being hot on her face nothing mattered . . . she had left the face that she might have wanted to hide, in London, pre-Raphaelite effect for a demodé Mordant. Candles on candlesticks and the sort of thing she knew Katherine had led Mordant to expect she would aspire to. "O this new art . . . monstrous." Cigarette holder in proportion to the decor and her hair frayed out, all unlike her. A listless, somewhat dreary, obvious Raymonde (What in London, anyhow could Daniel ever matter?) "O that boy Daniel Kinoull. Yes. I—like—him." She had said she liked Daniel Kinoull to a heady Mordant. Then having said she liked him she wondered why she had said that . . . the other was as easy, more non-committal. Arguing in herself, she realized that she did not want to commit Daniel to this Mordant and became fulsome, "charming boy . . . a sweet, sweet friend to Katherine." Slurring over the emphasis so that it might mean anything and Mordant was down on her . . . gouging bull with the instinct of a blood-hound. Gouge the thing to death . . . gouge Daniel to destruction. And suddenly Daniel meant something to her . . . malleable, he was to be held, crystal before a furnace. Knowing furnace heat can not mar crystal but rather more refine it, she had turned this Daniel round and round, a crystal cup before this heady Mordant. Mordant was heady furnace before which (she had that satisfaction) she had shaped molten substance, finally as . . . Daniel. "Daniel is so—eclectic."

Mordant wouldn't know what eclectic meant . . . but it did for Mordant. She was eclectic, Katherine was eclectic . . . so they were, all eclectic and hieratic and daemonic and all those things besides this .commonplace full blooded Alex Mordant who yet had power to make poor Katherine love him. They were superimposed like two mystic triangles, the two triangles that make a star, the seal of Solomon. Triangle pointing up, triangle

pointing down . . . the seal of utter wisdom. Alex Mordant, Katherine, Raymonde . . . then Raymonde again (the Ray Bart of Gareth's predilection) Gareth and Daniel. Raymonde doubled the rôle . . . they made a star between them.

Rip triangle from triangle . . . get out of London. Leave a frazzled weary simulacra of an image behind in the heart of Mordant. "An odd woman . . . you know . . . not altogether wholesome."

The sun being hot on her face . . . now here, here now in Venice nothing mattered. Here, now, things kept ringing from somewhere else, distinct bell sounds, sound on sound as if one deep bell had an echo, another slice of somewhere echoed back that echo, the very sunlight made wall against which resonous bells re-echoed. Now, here . . . sunlight melted frozen Alpine features, sunlight dried off the fog and stench of former Londons. Now here, Pythian sun-god shot arrows . . . all evil is simply dried out . . . Python discontent, I am being re-made.

Re-made, ready made, unmade she knew Italians loved her . . . in particular the group of officers, pretending not to see her, one in the middle, older with a bald head, with thin wolf lips, the mouth of some Appian were-wolf, hungry, sun-steeped, how can this old, old "decadent" race be so incredibly virile? Anglo-Saxons seemed played out (though obviously Daniel wasn't that nor Gareth) with fog-steeped features; wine-coloured tunics should flow from such limbs . . . they were really were-wolfish were Italians. Things being true weren't true. She was part of both the cycles.

She was part of the commonness of the three officers . . . they were utterly pretentious. She was part of the thing that made them aristocratic. (Illusion is renewed here.) She wanted to keep up her double rôle, base and tip of the pyramid at the same moment, up pointing and down pointing triangle of the star-seal of Solomon. "I am part of those three Italians." "Wh-a-at?" "Those three officers." "Don't be incredibly low, Raymonde." "I mean they see I see." You see, I see, they see, we see. There was no you, I or they anywhere. The only thing that made an I, that was spiked round with I-ness was Gareth. I, I, I spiked round Garry like a porcupine with prickles. Raymonde said "you're a porcupine with prickles" for Garry was saying, "I hate these smug Italians. I loathe Italy."

How could anyone loathe this thing called Venice? Gareth wasn't hating Venice, it was Gareth's phobia that was hating Venice. Gareth's phobia was armour plate about Gareth and Gareth, bee-wings, was about to be crushed by this heavy phobia of Gareth. Break Gareth from her phobia, how to break Gareth from her phobia? Under the armour plate, Gareth was being injured . . . don't argue . . . there's nothing to do but to soak up sunlight. I'm like a huge dry dusty sponge that's been put back into its element . . . inapposite simile but I'm like that only the sun is molten flowing in, around. I'm soaking up sunlight like a dry sponge water. "Garry, don't be insufferable."

Raymonde said "Garry, don't be insufferable" but Garry hadn't heard her. Garry had switched off, so to speak, the light . . . the connection between Garry and Garry was somehow disconnected. What can I do, what *can* I do, cried Raymonde but there wasn't any use trying to do anything. She was in the wrong. I am in the wrong . . . a sort of guest of Gareth. Garry had wired her, come along, don't worry about "extras" for all her this year's income was madly overdrawn, that insuperable waste with Mordant. Dresses rumpled and flung aside . . . that hideous bead thing he so liked. The more expensive a frock the more hideous . . . insufferable pseudo mondanity . . . Mordant had excruciating taste . . . wasted effort. Well, you can not serve . . . God and . . . Gareth. I am a pure sun-worshipper . . . consider the birds . . . Gareth isn't. I wish Gareth weren't such an intolerable little megalomaniac.

The flower vendor, vendoress, the old Sibyl hag had come back, counter clock-wise, making her clock and counter clock circuit of Saint Mark's Square. Her basket was the same, her flowers were the same. *Was* her basket the same? Things fitted in things, double triangle, the up and the down, the specifically trivial and the mystically illuminating. Flowers and basket changed . . . illusion was at work on paper-coloured flowers.

Things changed things . . . foot-steps, voices, pebbles dropped into widening circles, cycles, seasons as if that old Sibly's circle of the square had made zodiac season circle, carefully compassed in the set space of geometric parallel, parallelogram, people were cut in slices by zodiac passing. "Illusion is renewed here" twinkled back at Raymonde in the stage flung-in eye-glass of the bald central most Roman of the three Italian officers. She was enclosed in understanding, in the under-

standing of all Italy. Viva Italia, that vulgar red and poster-green war cry of the Savoia. Gareth was right. "They *are* vulgar." Illusion encompassed her. Garry shouldn't know this.

Garry spoke acidly, ignoring (to Garry) too, too obvious truism about the seated soldiers, "that old hag said this time 'get roses for the young man.'" "Wh-aaat?" Raymonde heard her voice across Gareth's scornful voice, "she couldn't have. Not in—in Venice." "She *said* Signore." "O—signore—plural—ladies. Us. She says get carnations—" "It was roses—" "—for the ladies."

10.

But nothing mattered, viva Savoia or viva Gareth or viva anything except just this exquisite aura of reality. The very earth seemed to be ringed with a saint's halo, light ringed Saint Mark's Square, patently the aura of some god-head, there wasn't room for bickering. "She said Signore." "O—signore—plural—ladies. Us. She says get carnations—" "It was roses—" "—for the ladies."

An echo of an echo of an echo of a quarrel. The words before they were spoken really had already formed an echo of an echo; hold this little quarrel to your ear, Raymonde, listen to an echo of an echo. This is the clue to something, something about Garry. Get Garry out of her phobia as you might prod a winkle from its shell, get Garry from her phobia. "She *said* Signore." Hold shell to your ear, words are only a shell of something other, echo upon echo upon echo . . . Raymonde couldn't catch it. There's something wrong with Garry. If I could analyse her as she did me, cruelly, crudely, dynamically it might be all right. But Garry is so composite, so apparently simple, so very, very trying. To get Garry from her phobia would be a question of inhuman (which I haven't) patience. I suppose it was Robin Rockway, something *he* did . . . O God.

But all that didn't matter, none of that mattered really. Husbands and wars didn't matter, death and estrangement didn't matter. The thing that really mattered, the only thing that could matter in the whole world was that a new sun-shade had opened in Saint Mark's Square, another parasol, quite a different shade (incredible) from any other. Now what colour is that sun-shade? You might call it crimson but crimson wouldn't

answer. Then how about magenta? Well magenta doesn't sound right, ah . . . it's . . . *fuchsia.* A fuchsia-coloured sun-shade, fresh opened in Saint Mark's Square was more important than wars and differences. Death and estrangement can't really matter in Saint Mark's Square. Two prim English women, escaped so to speak, from some provincial garden, some sweet scented dried-out sort of rock-border, sort of thrift herb, almost flowerless, profited by their emancipation from prim gardens to flower riotously. The Italianated Englishman is the devil. So the Italianated English old-maid, thought Raymonde . . . how wonderful for them . . . in Saint Mark's Square.

They were having really the very devil of a time in Saint Mark's Square. Just being there, having counted their handkerchieves and their stout stockings carefully this morning, having locked up the silver link bag and the pinchbeck locket (it was our poor mother's) and having primly demanded in guide-book Italian their week's pension bill, they felt the very devils. Things weren't as bad as they had half-expected, Fascisti had cleared *that* up. The Fascisti you know, my dear, corresponds to our church boy's brigade and really that is something . . . "there are *no* beggars" the one with button boots must have written to the vicar and the other, "my dear, dear Mr. Ridgway-Frith, you may think it too, too dreadful. I couldn't resist yesterday the holy water." Their letters would be read by the sewing society . . . those dear Miss Strothers. Miss Strothers and Miss Veronica Strothers were basking in Saint Mark's Square royally.

We are lizards escaped from shells . . . we are birds (Winnipeg, Valparaiso) hatched royally. We are all hatched but Garry. If Garry hatched she would be bee-winged, a sort of raspberry sort of astral-coloured angel. I can't prod out Garry. She must be incubated. I wish she would just let go like the Miss Smithers or the Miss Strothers from Newcastle-on-Tyne or Ashton-under-Lyme. The Miss Strothers or Miss Smithers were sitting sideways, like sitting wrong way round in a theater, not noticing they were noticed (but they weren't in that sense noticed) sitting sideways like people in a box, looking at Saint Mark's. The fuchsia sun-shade cast fuchsia colour on the face of the younger and her eyes were steadfast, Nordic grey eyes, stupid prim mouth (stupid people matter) Nordic eyes staring and staring at Saint Mark's cathedral. Say again "Saint Mark's

is too horribly like the postcards" for Raymonde was so happy, go back to that "ten-cent store box of blocks," be facetious, giggle. Shout out very loud as if to an assembled audience, hoping to placate Garry, "the whole place *is* preposterous" for the whole thing was so a sort of a saint's aura to its own banality, that if Gareth knew even now how terribly Raymonde was involved with all of it, how horribly and completely, she was as it were, compromised by all this beauty, Gareth would be beyond all reason, angry. Gareth sensed, obviously, with her uncanny sixth-sense just what the place was doing, not quite what it *had* done. The place has changed me utterly, people used to go on pilgrimages, this is how it changed them. You hatch out before you know it . . . make some remark to Daniel, "I do know what Gareth means about the Grand Canal. It is in that sense, terrible."

The face of Daniel lifted to meet her face. He had been breaking brioche, so extravagant. Gareth had said and she had said "but buy a little cornucopia of grain from that little man, they all do, it's better." Daniel's face lifted to meet her face. Daniel was trying to get crumbs across to the lame dove, the one that hopped and came just so far, and then back-slid on its worn tail, sliding back like a skidding bus across the square flags and waiting beside a great empty space, disappearing and re-emerging, never getting closer. "Life" Daniel had said "stepped on that bird and he never got over it." Daniel had been extravagantly throwing brioche crumbs to the lame pigeon that hopped, its shoulder hunching, terrible little journey from a chair leg to the little spike, spread claw-wise, that was the table leg, to the next chair, to the next spike of three, to the next, to skid again at the sight of a mountain foot emerging suddenly. Daniel looked up. His hands hung limp between his grey knees. "Elegant long line from the waist to the floor" as she had once described that curious frail length to him, making his eyes dilate a moment, and his eye-lids wait a moment and then close like shutters, shutting out some secret, something so dear and personal, his way of seeing a joke. Daniel was looking at her. His eyes were set in his face rather like the eyes of the younger of the two prim English women (Miss Veronica?) who had almost forgotten to be prim under the fuchsia sun-shade. His eyes were blank, just rather zinc-coloured cold bits of metal, somehow self-shuttered. Behind the eyes, Daniel was waiting,

the Daniel who said "life stepped on that bird. He never got over it."

"Did you get your bird its brioche?" Daniel said "one crumb out of say, fifty odd tossed bits. He did get one crumb." "A crumb to a bird," she rallied to it, "must be as big as a biscuit. Like a small petit-pain. He's had his." The sun seemed hanging, everlastingly hanging, invisible in mid air somewhere. Yet all the time the sun had been sliding gradually . . . had now slid . . . she wouldn't have noticed it, if the elder of the two very devils of Italianated old-maids hadn't furled her fuchsia sun-shade. "I mean nothing matters here. Everything matters. It's like God. Consider the birds . . ." now she was frightened at this. "I mean the cathedral and the lagoons and the sky all seem part of a plan, something planned and we are part of a vast plan, no more important than the lame bird, even than one of the stuffed greedy birds" didn't mean anything, what was she trying to say anyhow? Nothing mattered where everything mattered. Fuchsia sun-shade that caught the edge of a lapel of a coat and a flower pinned edgeways. The spray of lobelia-like blossom some one obviously off a boat (something he had snatched from a wall above a gondola) had stuck into his coat, caught colour and passed on fuchsia by way of the spray of—she had it—half opened dark wisteria, to the next bit of colour. Wisteria caught a blob of colour, thick Matisse paint blob from a bag lining, then the whole of a sprayed summer dress and artificial sweet-peas on a premature summer hat. Sweet-pea colour caught up the tassel on the tip of an erect parasol and from that . . . up, up to two women leaning out of an upper window. Above Florian's second door-way women peered across meagre leafage . . . the flowers might be petunias. Half-sensed intransient fragrance said "no . . . heliotrope." Smudge of colour in the window boxes . . . "I'm sure it's heliotrope."

Leaning above window-boxes, the shoulder of one woman, let light strike across the amber features of the other. Light refracted and reflected through half-lit corridors apparently as in the day of Tintoretto, still exploited its odd bag of old tricks. "Those women up there, preening down, remind me of a balcony" (Raymonde shied off "heliotrope" as neither of them answered) "in Veronese." Say "Veronese" and you think "balcony" so she had said nothing remarkable, nothing to bring the angry colour back into Garry's cheeks and to make the

eyes of Daniel go Book of Revelation's beryl or jasper or chrysoprase, one or all those colours, just for nothing, just for a change of thought, something that had automatically lifted the zinc shutter. Daniel's hands hung limp between his grey knees, his face was set straight like a face cut on a Hellenistic relief at (say) Ephesis. Ephesis. If you saw Daniel you couldn't get away from Greek things somehow, Garry was quite right. Garry saw in one dimension . . . outgrown trick of pre-war Raymonde's. Garry had inherited her outgrown Greek trick. "I did think Raymonde when you wrote me, you would take the boat to Athens."

Garry was quite right, Athens was integrity, Athens was somehow Daniel. But Athens made a jagged line somehow across Raymonde's so suave contemplation. It cut spearwise and silver flashed in this place of suavity, of colour, wisteria colour . . . she was reminded of wisteria above grey walls by a casual tourist. Wisteria, banners across walls, became violets of Athens etherealized, suave aura of reality. Garry was right . . . this was one remove, two removes from everything . . . but it was true (Garry was wrong there) as the halo is as true, perhaps more true than the brow that wears it. Distant flowers scented the air . . . as light, as ethereal as an aura . . . "it *is* heliotrope." "What?" "That thing that vaguely scents things." Heliotrope in window boxes above Florian's second door-way again changed everything.

A word, a foot-step or a sea-wind fluttered banner . . . waft of fresh scent, heliotrope in boxes, everything changed everything . . . wisteria pulled off a wall in passing, stuck in an undermannered tourist's coat flap . . . the eyes of Miss Smithers from Newcastle-on-Tyne, Daniel who sat unmoved, yet fully sensed it. Raymonde had only to say "Veronese," "balcony" and she knew he saw what she saw. Hierograph . . . beating in the air, dot and tick and tick and dot of supersensuous language . . . the fluttering of the streamers of the a-symmetrical symmetry of the lion banner, the tilt of a summer sun-shade, the fluttering of a pigeon . . . everything means something, a candle on a candlestick, a bird pecking at a brioche . . . heaven is getting things (thoughts, sensation) across in some subtle way, too subtle to grasp with intellectual comprehension . . . this hieroglyph language she and Daniel had between them.

11.

Hieroglyph language had beat in her room in London, things they hadn't said that she had from the first determined that they should not say. Gareth was right; say Daniel and you think Athens. Tall, with that odd light striking across his forehead, she had kept Daniel out of it, out of the book-shelf, out of the empty grate (it was summer) or the grate smouldering (it was autumn) or the wind beating down smoke, making her sophisticated little room seem a cottage room (it was early winter, she always stayed too late) in some sea-wind swept barren space of waters; sea and wind beating across London housetops. "I must be going soon now to d'y Vaud." Daniel was there, all the time and all the time she had pre-determined not to mix up Daniel with the furniture, with the beat and beat of countless outside matters, not to let emotion flood across and spoil the thing between them. Daniel had sat in her room pre-determined likewise, not to give in . . .

. . . to things, people, all in odd disproportion, glazed effect of some bearded bull (Mordant wasn't bearded) and the red tiles and the blue tiles of some utterly inapposite set of values, some simple Kindergarten red-blue, blue-red palace made of bricks; bricks were set in such simple red-blue in some heavy temple, in some court across which Mordant padded in great flat sandals, tassels swinging somewhere, Zoroastering smatterings . . . Anglo-Indian sort of atmosphere, hold on to that exact and precise falsity, "you must marry me," marry? Who, what and where was marry? And who and what was the thing looming up and up all disproportionate? Alex Mordant had loomed heavy shouldered; he was not heavy. He was sturdy with that sort of physical directness of some great bull. Heavy trampling of great hooves might trample out the thing in her that burned and burned . . . but the thing in her that burned and burned became like glass spikes under the great hooves of Mordant. "O, if you *will* be witty." "I wasn't on purpose, being witty." "If you *will* turn and catch a fellow up in every least particular." "I didn't, I wasn't. I only said that I didn't think you were quite right about Landor, that I don't think Shelly underrated, that I do think something sometimes can yet be said for Swinburne." Smattering of superficial criticism that made a little volume (his incredible poetry) turn

and quiver under her hands and her desire to deceive him into thinking she could accept him become so great that she overdid it, said his metres were not in the least Miltonian, that the volume (printed in such delicate grey by him privately) deserved better at the hands of the *Quarter* but everyone knew what the *Quarter* critics were like, what they were out for. "Tire not my love, weave grasses into chaplets" was *not* (the world knew what to expect of the *Quarter* critics) Spencerian by way of Francis Thompson. So anxious to make him think he was the more important that she leapt over, over the other side and instead of being trampled into numb obscurity, little glass spikes obtruded (why won't the gods let one just be trampled?) spiking little acrid pin points into his weighty ankles. Give up, give in. She had wanted Daniel to think she had given in to Mordant.

Katherine? Katherine didn't so much matter. Katherine was in the beat and slide of voices (Daniel's, Raymonde's) in their sliding off together, in their holding on together. Katherine didn't matter for they themselves exonerated and excused and negated and re-created Katherine in their every gesture. To talk about Katherine at all was to destroy her. To praise her was to negate her. They knew the thing she stood for. Katherine had shaped hieroglyph with them separately and now that they shared hieroglyph they were somehow sharing Katherine. Mystic language that they talked together yet not knowing either of them (Raymonde, Daniel) until the very last that the other one *had* shared it. The terrible excitement of the thing kept her spiritually alive, she was certain, over that otherwise profitless season, kept her going, while she sustained herself, psychic vampire, on the quality of Mordant. Dragging up Mordant and image of this Mordant in order to blind Daniel, to falsify herself, to satisfy herself that Daniel was unique, frigid, cold, remote and glacial. She used Mordant, as it were, furnace-red heat, to fix the brittle shape of Daniel. Daniel, brittle glass, became the more transparent, the more perfect in shape, in flawless contour, beside the thought of Mordant. "Yes, Mordant fascinates me. He *is* like a great bull," all the time the picture of Alex Mordant sustained her; she dragged it solemnly up, great captive bull (he too had come from Katherine) she needed this sacrificial thing between them, great bulk of remembered (in London) male body, heavy thighs, all the

time drag up Mordant; does Daniel hate Mordant? Play the old game, priestess of some arcane cult, let's find out what hieroglyph is and let us get some colour of picture and written symbol into the air. Cold days (she had stayed on as usual too late in London) Daniel still came, and each time he came, she reconjured in her little blue room, this image of Mordant, to sustain her. Without that odd image of Alex Mordant, she never would have got through that odd preparation for initiation with Daniel. Hold fast to something, she had urged herself on, on, on with it, hold fast to Alex Mordant. "It isn't" (this in London) "that I want a lover. Not exactly want a lover . . . Mordant is red flame of some sort of sacrificial poppies. Red and red. You know. Alex Mordant comes into this little room and sets it beating . . ." "O quite . . ." "I mean sets it beating. He comes into this room and there seem to be odd pyres, something Abyssinian, something of Asia Minor. He seems Zoroastrian . . ." "O quite . . ." "He seems like the priest of some cult of which I am ignorant, so something certainly not to do with intellect. It's obvious of course, you are Greek, Olympian. That's perhaps why you don't really so greatly interest me . . . you know what I mean. Men have a way (the world accepts) of sinking with women to their lowest. Now with a mind, a sort of blade beating itself raw in your raw forehead, a woman like myself must have some such like anodyne." "O yes . . ." "It's nice of you to listen. I never talk to people. You see it was my pre-determination not to . . . experiment . . . that led me to this impasse. I know what it's all like . . . I know what it all is. You are too high, too clear for me. You and I curiously don't belong together . . ." "Curiously . . ." "Now with Mordant . . ."

Mordant had been red but curiously Mordant never had been Venice. Rome, late Rome had been in that gladiatorial bend of head on thick throat, in the lift of muscled arm, in the slight swagger of him, the bully and the inapposite delicate gracious way he had of speaking. Mordant was no poet, was no Greek; himself of some slight Anglo-Indian connection, some hint of battles and some red of battle-fields was something so alien, so unlike her, that Raymonde had turned to him last (was it only last?) summer before the appearance of this Daniel. Katherine (witch) had sent them both to see her. Mordant was red of some dripping gladiatorial sword blade . . . "I

like the rich quality of Mordant . . ." all the time fascinated and somehow disappointed that she couldn't let go, that she couldn't let herself sink absolutely. "He has such a rare rich quality. There are actual fumes of reeking blood, pens in which cattle had trampled . . . war and war is in the face of Mordant. Mordant is the last person in the world theoretically I would like . . ." she went on with it, on with it, beating back and back the persistent thing that had stared at her in London. Daniel had been white against her walls like that painting in the Scuolo . . . he had been like a painting hung there, outwardly correct in all particular yet with his exact mondanity suggesting by some odd aura, some odd turn of head, other things, fine etched delicate Florentine frescoes, further back, perfect flawless reach upward of white throat on tall body, the turn, she could almost feel it, of fine collar bone under the grey or under the dark blue or under the fawn-brown of his shoulders. She had been so vivid, so certain of what had been there that there had seemed no reason for reaching across, drawing simply as one draws a curtain from before some holy statue, the cloth from those lean shoulders. Mordant was there too . . . Mordant was there too. The moment her fingers were impelled, drawn almost magnetically across, to dynamo of that alert correct tall figure, she would drag back this thing, this Mordant like some sacrificial figure, some image set between them. Ghost to talk must have some sacrifice of red flesh . . . ghosts to talk. She had led her thought, her words systematically back to Mordant, Mordant so that the hieroglyph might remain between them.

Walls in her memory were shaking and drawing nearer, walls were shrinking and walls were receding; walls in London were about to crush them together like two bees in some fine scented stiff flower stuff of fragrant petal. Walls would recede, go on and on like little transparent boxes set one within another, geometric spider lines showing little box within little box . . . hieroglyph. "I suppose it is wrong but one knows, one feels people must have . . . experience. Mordant that first day he called in early spring, made me see blue tiles, he is Assyrian." Mordant had to be called in to glower before them. Walls receded, walls systematically contracted. Eyes had watched her like some eyes of hypnotizing Gorgon. Eyes set in that white face, zinc eyes . . . when Greek meets . . . when

Greek meets . . . "Of course it's obvious you are late Olympian. Too late for my predilection. Now with Mordant. I suppose it was the hyacinths he brought me that made me think of blue tiles . . . blue tiles, red tiles, O it's *killing* . . . he writes poetry."

"Anglo-Indian?" "Yes. Anglo-Indian. Everything rhymes with everything. He's trying to . . . to . . ." Her breath had caught her, she would choke over it "reform me. He thinks I write badly. I do, I do write badly . . ." her voice had flung high and high breaking that fine superimposed skeleton affair of little crystal boxes. Crystal boxes, would anything break crystal boxes? Daniel had stared and stared . . . when Greek meets . . . but he should know, he should see that she wasn't going to give in, give in to this thing. Something stared and stared in Daniel, zinc shuttered self that wouldn't let her see him. Well, he shall see me. He shall think *this* is me. Katherine would be sure to have taken pains to tell him some yarn, spin some Arachne web, some perfect Circe stuff about me. "Katherine said you . . . you . . ." his eyes widened. He waited to hear what Katherine said about him. "Katherine said you were a silver image with eyes of agate . . . with death . . . with death under your wings." Daniel had stared and stared, zinc shutter again shut in Daniel. "Now with Mordant . . . she's frightfully fond of Mordant."

Staring and staring in Saint Mark's Square . . . it was that middle were-wolf officer who made her think of Mordant. She had forgotten Mordant. Mordant had served his purpose, sacrificial bull, slaughtered to make ghosts utter . . . ghost, white lily from Olympos . . . yet because Mordant had made this very ghost finally turn and finally bend before the rapture of her sustained negation, Mordant must remain (like those officers in the Square) part of her life, part of the thing that made her, part of the thing that saved her. No, not exactly saved her. It was Gareth who had saved her.

12.

Katherine (witch) had set the whole thing going. Katherine having set the thing ablaze was yet powerless to quench it. Katherine started it, Gareth stopped it . . . what had any one to do with anything? If Katherine hadn't started it, I wouldn't

have met Daniel, if Gareth hadn't stopped it, I would have blazed out with Mordant. Katherine, Gareth, they were two antique coin sides, Katherine one side, towered head, some Asiatic goddess, many breasted, something monstrous that yet holds authenticity, Gareth the other side, boy Emperor, slightly undershot little chin that gave a baby frailty to the hard clear profile, clear fine line of profile, short hair and the boy-turn of chin and that frightening intensity; power, power and that tyrannical forceful head-line somehow negated by the child chin, child chin of some pre-Byzantine emperor, authentic but late, late Greek, Gracco-Phoenician, my friends are all eclectic. Mordant was heavy trampling hoofs . . . just red fire. Katherine had sent the whole thing spinning, triangle set on triangle that makes a star, the seal of Solomon, masonic middle west wears upon its watch chain. Seal of Solomon, masonic seal that middle west tourists in gondolas wear upon their watch chains. Reach up and grab at a tendril of wisteria . . . it's all going on and on, "authenticity is in a middle west farmer grabbing at wisteria." "What?" "I said authenticity is in the middle west. I was thinking of a watch chain." "You're all over the place." "I know it. *You're* too perfect. You'll burst with your own perfection. Why don't you let *go* ever?" "I wouldn't let go in this place. It's positively evil." "You're wrong there." Katherine (witch) had set the whole thing going. Katherine was responsible for Gareth, Raymonde, Daniel sitting in little tin chairs, huddled slightly now that the sun was setting.

"We can't go on sitting in this shadow." Groups of chairs, still turned this way and that way as if ghosts were sitting on them, were left empty. Ghosts of parasols, ghosts of other parasols, all, all the many, many parasols, were furled, awnings were lifted, banners were somehow faded. Light struck a new note, a subtle harmony of things just about to fade out, colour was listless, ghost-colour, ghost wisteria. People had slipped off like ghosts slipping off while Raymonde had been thinking, while Raymonde had been quarreling with Gareth. In proportion as the room in London had become real to her vibrant imagination, this somehow faded. Gareth is right sometimes. "Venice is somehow faded." Raymonde said "Venice is somehow faded" meaning it this time. Katherine was responsible.

Katherine had set the whole thing flying like a pin-wheel. Triangle on triangle that made a star, set flying. Sparks went

off and off, sparks went off in London. What was left really but a bare skeleton of a star on a star? Rip star from star, Alex, Katherine, Raymonde, from star Gareth, Ray Bart, Daniel and you get clean star triangle and smouldered burnt out triangle. The triangle Raymonde, Daniel, Gareth was a sort of platinum-white self-luminous white thing, you couldn't dissipate it. Iron frame work of burnt out triangle of Katherine, Mordant, Raymonde being burnt out leaves residue of suffering. Gareth was insufferable.

What did Gareth know of the feeling of a burnt out frame work? What did Daniel? Alex Mordant knew things, Katherine was things. Why can't Gareth leave me alone to become something of the past? Just sink into things, part of a burnt out frame work? Burnt out frame work having performed its whirling function of trellis, so to speak, for flaming fire discs, yet *has* performed its function. Why can't Gareth leave me to be played out?

Gareth, Raymonde . . . she was sick of Garethraymonde. She would have been done long since with Garethraymonde if it weren't for Daniel. Daniel was flicking his white fingers and the lame dove watched disconsolate from a distance for crumbs that didn't now fall. "Don't get another brioche. It's too late." If she didn't make some move, drag herself out of Florian's, Daniel would get more brioche. The waiter had swept the tray off . . . Italians were ordering aperitif. There was a new mood at Florian's, the just before dinner aperitif glasses taking the place of tea things. Even sitting in Saint Mark's Square can't go on forever. She must get out of Florian's.

"You take Gareth. I'll come presently." She shot "you take Gareth" off suddenly, metallic voice that was not her voice. Her voice was not there, was shut up in walls that opened, in walls that receded. Wall shut her voice up like a bee in a flower petal. Flower petal on flower petal . . . who says that London's dreary? In London there was a huge flower, her wee apartment, and her voice was shut in walls. Walls opened telescopically, walls receded. Microscope, telescope of little London room-walls, vision, her own vision was the living optical lens to a burnt out iron frame work. I am only a lens, I'm really not a person. Gareth was staring at her.

Walls receded, walls opened. They were standing in Saint

Mark's Square. Somewhere, somehow, someone (it must have been Daniel) had reached long thin hands down into grey cloth pockets, had dragged out lire, centesimi, little crumpled temporary looking bank notes. Change ringing on an emptied tea tray, change making a little clatter, smallest change left, small silver coin while Daniel swept up rumpled uneven little heaps of paper bank notes. Tiny notes, five or ten lire, a lire was just nothing, little oddment of assorted change left there for the waiter who was sweeping up little heap of tiny moneys into his brown lean fingers. Tea tray swept up, swish of cloth, he was already signalling to two remote slightly dazed Norwegian looking people, people off boats, boats kept coming, new arrivals, clothes dusty with travel, perhaps only from the day trip to Padua . . . Raymonde had been to Padua, long ago . . . in those days Italy was just Italy, now Italy was something . . . other. How was I to know when I told Gareth I would meet her, that Italy had so changed? Italy had changed, rather I had developed feelers . . . in the old days I was a sort of Gareth who looked upon Italian art as Greek art gone rampant, dissipated. South Italy was bearable . . . being a part of Greece still. How was I to know that I'd grow awkward feelers?

Things, people, didn't exist now in any one dimension. How was I to know that Saint Mark's Square would hold so many different odd dimensions? She staggered slightly . . . laid hold on a steady chair back. She felt like a boat drifted, after peril, into a shallow hollow harbour. Saint Mark's Square was a hollow sheltered harbour. How could I realize how much suppression was blighting perception? How was I to know that I was going to love it? How was I going to know that I was going to love it . . . went on and on, a sort of tune beating synchromatically against Il Trovatore that had re-commenced opposite Aurora. Il Trovatore flung its challenge . . . its sort of sweetened bugle note . . . its call to sticky beauty. Say "Saint Mark's Square is a sort of a Turkish delight of beauty," say it emphatically as if you never loved it, say "Il Trovatore is the right music for such p'ayed out, breathed out beauty." Say all this with conviction, repeat, "I've been too long in Venice."

Beauty flamed after a moment of suspense, grey-dawn or grey twilight, some odd dimension ghost light that was the breath

of Venice as it died before its . . . resurrection. "Venice is played out," say rather "Venice *was* played out." For two minutes only, for a space of seconds only, for just as long as it had taken them to slide through little chairs turned sideways into the open space before the grouped chairs, Venice was played out. In just a second Venice was resurrected . . . it was the lighting perhaps of various windows, shop windows, throwing ghost sun-light. Lights from windows were like sun-light veiled with evening. A veil of dusk, veiled the shop light windows. Venice rose from its bier . . . being two minutes extinct.

Venice gone out like a flame in wind, is just as quickly lighted. I said "I've been too long in Venice." I said it with conviction. I'll reconcile Garry at any rate. I'll not let Garry suffer. "Venice is played out," and "Venice was played out" were both veils before a spirit. I want it so much that I'll go away to-morrow. "I understand, Gareth. We'll go away to-morrow."

13.

Dynamo of comprehension that had whirred with such a pretty splutter was played out. Dynamo was a metallic burnt out frame of a thing. . . . Venice like Mordant, Raymonde, Katherine has gone out like a sizzling pin-wheel. Say "Venice has gone out" and say it with conviction for metallic voice had hurtled forth words from nowhere, words from some metallic fortress, words from Ray Bart. "I understand, Garry. We'll go away to-morrow." Raymonde, a burnt out frame work, triangle on triangle stood facing Gareth in grey dawn-light. Dawn? "It isn't dawn, it's evening." "Dawn" she had said, not knowing that she said it. "It's not dawn . . . it's evening." Garry was staring at her.

Garry was staring at her. Be decent, Raymonde. Garry sent you the wire, got you out of vibrant, weary, over-wrought loneliness and tension. Garry paid your fare here. You're the guest of Gareth. Be decent. You have behaved horribly. "Garry . . . I'm awfully sorry." Say "Garry, I'm awfully sorry." Raymonde was too sorry to any more quite matter. Vibrant burnt out frame that had sizzled with dynamo vibration (the whole afternoon was one hectic dynamo vibration) still held frame work for a vision. I am nothing, a sort of lens at the end of a sort of telescopic, cannon-

like, useless long tube. Iron and metallic burnt out residue . . . of Freddie. Of Katherine. Of Mordant. I am nothing.

Garry was staring at her. "Do you mind Garry if I run along the arcade here and get one or two things? I told Marion I would find some leather for her . . . or those awful bead things." Gareth was staring at her. Garry said "go on . . . if you *must* buy things." Raymonde said before Gareth could say it, "I know they're simply awful. These awful old Christmas-tree sort of ornaments . . ." dynamo had said "Saint Mark's Cathedral is a sort of Christmas-tree sort of cathedral." Burnt out dynamo now said "these awful bead things."

Eyes refused to register things that wide eyes now saw. Window on window suddenly lighted as if from her own inner illumination. Venice isn't a dynamo any longer . . . is surface on surface of light, things exist (Marco Polo existed) in it. Venice was shelf on shelf of varying sensation, shelf on shelf, each separate shelf set with its peculiar array of glassware, spiritualized Morello goblets, bowl and dishes, dark blue, blue green and that green that isn't there at all, the green like a surface of translucent water that you must assure yourself is there by moving this way, that way before an arcade window. Arcade vaulting, doorway to each arch, each arch a doorway to some specific kingdom . . . "no, Daniel. I'll come later."

Daniel was staring at her but Daniel wasn't staring. "Where is Garry?" "She's waiting for me by the campanile. She doesn't like you going off alone this time of evening." "Garry hates all these tooled things. I wrote some people I'd find things. A girl I know—" she stumbled, "loved a portfolio I had . . . you know. To keep her things in." "To keep her things in" meant specifically pages, typed pages, pages and pages. A portfolio seemed the only thing that mattered. Raymonde remembered a shabby worn portfolio. "I got one of these things . . . years ago . . . in Florence. A girl I know always wanted one just like it." Daniel was staring at her. "To keep her stuff in."

"To keep her stuff in" meant "to keep my stuff in," pages and pages re-written, over-worked, scrawled and re-typed and copied. Writing was no inspiration . . . it was pages and pages and sometimes one got out of oneself because one wrote, people did things. "Garry liked my writing." Say "Garry liked my writing," what did it mean? It meant, Garry paid my fare here

and I have behaved outrageously. "Garry paid my fare here."

Daniel said "Gareth has a new plan." It didn't matter about Gareth and her new plan, it didn't matter about Daniel standing in the arcade before Morello goblets, it didn't matter that Gareth had a new plan. "Don't, don't keep Gareth waiting." Gareth was waiting alone by the campanile, hating Venice, hating Italians. "I have to do some shopping if I'm going. Tell Garry that I'll be back . . . in half an hour. I'll be back and do the packing. Tell Gareth that I'll be back, tell Gareth I'll be packing." Dynamo was burnt out . . . at the end of a burnt out iron frame or long cannon tube or frame work, was a glass lens. All that mattered was looking at Morello goblets in a lighted window.

Light caught light from light, the upslope of a green Morello goblet gave back dynamic highlight from the underside of a flat dish on the glass shelf above it. Light on a minute uplifted arm of a minute tall marble goddess repeated its reflection across the rounded marble head of a miniature discobolus. Windows reflected windows and the arches were repeated in bright surface of morocco, in gilt leather surface and fine surface broken by delicate inset gold leaf, tiny conventionalized tulip or rose pattern of more formalized Florentine leather. Leather, glass, beads; beads, glass, leather beyond Florian's little open partitioned porticoes and windows the other side of Florian's, leather, beads, beads, leather were hung outside windows that held marble discobolus, little minute goddess with uplifted minute forearm, so delicate, one flick of finger would break tiny replica of Praxitilean forearm. Books, books, books. Exquisite binding, leather again, leather with odd occasional lapse of taste, atrocious taste, leather inset like the stone inset on the front of the cathedral, atrocious taste blurred here into the general perfection of the whole thing so that you could not say, this is terrible, this glass dolphin with goggle-eyes peering so ludicrous and exaggerated is bad taste carried to its logical conclusion or this or this or this particular shelf of tooled leather is so much worse than that particular shelf or this string of beads is preposterous, for beads caught light, leather caught light, uplifted forearm caught light and gave it back in varying dimension . . . Daniel was standing by her.

Daniel was standing by her. How long had he been standing? "These awful, awful bead things." Say again "these awful bead things," indicating bunches of beads hung outside windows like

ropes of pearls. Glass beads were priceless pearls, all of Venice was priceless. Glass beads were under-water, deep-sea plunder, things collected by these odd sea creatures; anemone coloured beads were blobs of closed anemones. "Glass beads are so atrocious."

"Are they?" Daniel was looking at her. He was standing, tall neophyte's wand, the just so far, no further. Hat tilted a little forward, stick over one grey arm. "Don't, don't keep Garry waiting."

She would plunge forward (now Daniel had gone) become part of these things; individuality didn't matter, people mattered. He who loses his soul shall save it . . . soul flung away like a single pearl returned in highlights on glass goblets. Light caught light and Venice never had been lovelier. She was tenuous in it, under-water sea-grass, reaching out under-water sea-feelers that must encompass all this. Snail on the slippery glass outside of a glass aquarium . . . she was embodied having done with water-feelers and was as highly involved as a snail with protective shell in addition to long feelers. Gareth is a snail that won't stick out its feelers . . . small horn-feelers like a butterfly. I am greater than sea-grass having defined intention. I crawl up this glass pane like a snail inside or outside a square aquarium glass tank, filled, as it happens with Morello goblets. Light caught light (she passed to the next window), leather work again, not such atrocious bad taste. I should go in here . . . one grey Morello goblet was set like a chalice on a square of velvet. Wine-coloured velvet rumpled across a glass shelf . . . one goblet set upon it.

Grey glass . . . that goblet must be grey glass. If I go in and buy that goblet I shall hold the soul of Venice. I shall own Venice as King Canute owned England. I shall lose Venice as Canute . . . lost. *Back O back thou foaming brine.* Venice crept up, receded, crept nearer, retrogressed, drawing her further with it. I am hypnotized by Venice. Garry hypnotized me, Daniel hypnotizes me. I evade personal hypnotic eyes through these eyes. Venice is all eyes, a pattern on a bird wing. I have escaped . . . have I escaped? Eyes are the colour of that smoke grey, of that pearl grey. Grey with the texture of water, of dew before sunrise, of dew on a grey over-cast morning. The grey of water before the sun rises, these Venetians are diabolic, who would ever

think grey glass could be so beautiful? It is the grey of the intelligence of grey eyes. It radiates intelligence, the light that is spirit, that is matter, that is Daniel. Daniel in London was just some such colourless fine glass . . . Mordant had made him fine glass. Raymonde in her determination to keep hieroglyph between them had kept him fine glass. How long can I stand here staring?

Light caught light in varying dimension. New windows cast new squares of light and broken oblong of light fell across her shoulders, across shoulders of passengers off boats (loitering like herself before windows) before blue-grey Italian shoulders, small sturdy men, now a very lean one, bald, that lean one with his cap off looks age-old with his cap off, young chin thrust forward with his cap on again, his hand running along his sword-hilt.

Aurora was playing lustily again across the street and now in the open the swarm of foot passengers from under the Clock Tower pushed and swarmed, black river suddenly debouching into the lamp-lit open space before Saint Mark's Cathedral. Clock above her head, ding-ding, loud, then in a moment, there would be the answering ding-ding (seven times was it?) from the other odd (in Venice) Germanic figure of a bronze Gaul. Clock with figure of Scorpio, Balance, Twins. The signs of the Zodiac made a sort of coronal at the feet of the Madonna. Why can't Gareth see the joke the place is?

Swarm of black and grey, men mostly, soldiers with pleasant feathers upright in grey forester-like soft hats pulled sideways, the sort of hat Rosalind would wear in a school play, soldiers swaggering across the square, Orlandos and Mercutios. Why can't Gareth *see* the joke? Cathedral emitting an aura, a sort of mesh to enclose, to drag one in, to pull one in. It's true the place is dangerous, Garry says the place is dangerous . . . this reaching out of aura to pull one in, in, to drag one in, in . . . great flower, Saint Mark's Cathedral showed apertures in great flower. Pulling her in, pulling her in . . . she entered by the little further side door, she had staggered past the first door, "I won't go in." She had staggered past the great central door with her foot pausing a moment on that very flag stone she had so eloquently held forth on, over brioche, Austrian bomb that never killed a pigeon, staggered past valiantly, turned tail and slid surrep-

titiously into the little furthest door . . . just why is it Gareth hates Cathedrals?

Cathedral, church, temple. If you called this thing a temple then Gareth would adore it. This thing *is* a temple. Raymonde slid into grey. She slid from intersecting light on light, light from the Mercato broken with its swarm of foot-passengers, light from Aurora and Florian and light breaking across light in her avid brain, striking reflection from glass on a glass shelf or the rounded poised head of a minute Discobolus. If a tiny discobolus were placed in that empty niche and this were Byzantium, Gareth would say the thing was beautiful. Light across light in her tired brain. The cool slightly fragrant corridor rose, flooding her like water.

"We float like water, into water, float into some luminous state between us. Gareth is like water. Daniel is pure water. Water gone arid is dangerous. I drink Gareth like water and Gareth is tainted water." She had stooped to drink at a clear well-head and had shuddered back at the realization that the source was tainted. She drank in Gareth, had imbibed Gareth, intellectual sustenance for so long, it seemed incredible that Gareth should be tainted. Gareth is always right. Gareth is never right. Gareth is absolutely right, was absolutely right in her perception about Mordant. Gareth was quite, quite wrong in her perception about Mordant. Gareth hates Saint Mark's Cathedral, therefore Gareth is somehow tainted. Something has tainted Gareth. Call it some phobia if you will. I'm tired of Gareth's phobia. Gareth's phobia is a python rising in the loveliest surroundings to terrify me, to drag me back, back to my own forgotten terrors. Gareth has no right to terrorize.

Hysteria was through and around them. The whole fault is Gareth's. There is no fault in Gareth. Gareth is the purest thing I have ever yet encountered. She is tight and eastern, a lotus-bud. She is a child Buddha seated on a leaf regarding a spread lotus flower. Gareth is perfect and Gareth is perfection. There is a kind of perfection that turns devilish. Gareth is perfection turned a devil. How dared Gareth shudder yesterday (was it yesterday?) before the Tintoretto? Christ looks to John, young God with his friend, Christ and John, lover and lover God and God, young Helios with his friend, Hyacinth . . . Mordant brought me those blue hyacinths. How Gareth hated Mordant.

The room, the London room where Gareth hated Mordant

enclosed her, so that crouched now on the little wooden bench set against the far wall, far and far in the dimness of the cathedral inner door-way, Raymonde was in her own room, facing Gareth across blue hyacinths . . . "but I tell you he is evil." "How can you know a thing is evil that you never yet saw? You haven't and you won't meet Alex Mordant. How can you say so absolutely that Alex Mordant is evil when you never saw him?" "I feel him . . . I know when he comes to see you. The whole place reeks of Mordant." "You don't know when he comes to see me. You know he's been by the flowers. You can't say Mordant's evil." "I know anyone having anything however remotely to do with—with Katherine is perverted. I know that Mordant came from Katherine." "You know that Daniel came from Katherine." "Daniel is different. Daniel is something different" . . . hysteria in Raymonde's luminous brain roused its head, rose to confront her in the cool slightly fragrant darkness. A light was burning in the distance in the slightly fragrant darkness . . . pillars loomed, cut across by faint gold. Peering with concentrated attention, eyes peering upward like a water beetle from the depths of dark cool water, Raymonde perceived that the gilt, like tilted flower heads, was letters, faded letters, Maria in faded gilt Greek letters. Christos written in faded letters like the letters on the hyacinth. God, Theos, God, Greek for God, Greek God was written in faded Greek letters. Her mind, a lily, rising on tall stem rose out of confusion, out of hysteria . . .Gareth is quite wrong. This place is beautiful. To say "this place is evil," is to confuse beauty with destructiveness. Gareth's phobia is not Gareth. How to break Gareth from her phobia?

14.

Her mind, a lily, rising on tall stem, rose out of confusion, out of hysteria . . . loss of identity she had found this afternoon (among amber sunlit spaces and amber shadow and sun-shades like so many brilliant lotus lilies) is the gift of Venice. Occult gift of the Marco Polo orient, loss of identity. Loss of identity is the gift of Venice, power to crawl, snail self up the surface of high window and creep half-hatched moth in among tenuous rootlets and dynamic deep earth feelers. Her mind, a lily, rising on tall stem, rose out of confusion, out of hysteria . . . Daniel was sitting by her. How long had he been sitting?

"I've been praying, thinking." "It's the same thing" . . . She did not have to say "look at this drinking fountain." Daniel was staring at it. The fountain shone, polished agate, enormous agate cup, marble baptismal fountain that had stood filled with water, perhaps with a jet of running water in the hall of some Tiberius—"I mean, this baptismal fountain—" in the depth of a great hall; Saint Mark's columns rising out of dimness were in truth portals of the house of some high deity. Tiberius, Zeus, Jehova. God had built from man's bed-rock of leavings. "This thing expresses everything. The whole renaissance is in this drinking fountain." Baptismal fountain was upheld by dancing cherubs. Dolphins were ringed beneath it.

The footsteps of people, tourists, priests, all alike at home here ceasing suddenly, left them alone in some familiar hall-way. They were seated, it was obvious, in the atrium of a palace. When Greek meets, appositely, Greek . . . it was obvious Greeks talk hieroglyph. "Look at the drinking fountain" meant "and how is Garry?" Daniel knew that the "whole renaissance is in this drinking fountain" meant "I am worried about Garry." The mind, a lily, rising on tall stem, rose out of confusion, out of hysteria . . . "I loved her . . . terribly."

"I mean," a voice continued, her voice? "I have loved . . . terribly. It's terrible to love and know oneself inadequate and helpless." "So she says." "So—?" "Gareth. She says she is sorry for me if . . . I love . . . Ray Bart." "Being sorry does no good to any one. I am sorry for myself, harassed and lacerated loving . . . Daniel." Sparks were drawn into one tall light. One candle burned where inappositely darkness had made cornice and square mosaic shine like gold fish. Mosaic, now candle light had dimmed it, she realized, had been glittering gold fish. "I never noticed till this year that all mosaics, even the most banal here, have a sort of fervour. They glint and glow in the dusk like gold fish in grey water. I've been watching."

Inapposite turn of wrist that candle light showed was turned from a master chisel, made Raymonde say "I had enough of Greek things. I said I wanted something . . . so called Christian mysticism that finds complete co-relation with so-called classicism. I have found it this time and with you, in Venice. I never really understood, accepted the renaissance till this time." Turn of wrist that eyes fastened on (her own?) grey eyes, harpy

eyes like Katherine's. "Katherine and I were happy. We talked, gouged each other's souls out. You know how it was with Katherine." "O quite . . ." "I mean Katherine made it possible to accept . . . Gareth. Without Katherine there had been no Gareth. Without Gareth, there had been no . . . Daniel. I don't know what's the matter . . ." Mind rising like a lily, looked and saw the whole thing. "We're not three separate people. We're just one."

Ghosts to talk must have some sacrifice of red flesh . . . she had realized, phrased exact image, seen clearly. Now seated in Saint Mark's Cathedral toward the mid-ish lateness of an early evening, Raymonde was again reminded . . . people, things don't exist in themselves unless you, suave dynamo of apprehension, are there to re-create them. Daniel it was evident never had existed. Now Daniel was existing.

"Gareth is secular, clerical, a mechanical little wound-up little clock work. Her heart is where her brain is." Say "her heart is where her brain is," it means "my heart is where my brain is . . ." Say "my heart is where my brain is" realizing that flash on morse-code flash of mosaic above (now) a triple row of candles wouldn't be there for the heart to bow to if the brain, suave dynamo, were not there to receive it. Vibration reaches apposite vibration. Daniel was sitting by her.

Vibration that reaches, twists a little, shrapnel to cut soul neatly from a weary nerve racked body, that was Katherine. Vibration carefully attuned, little machine to catch, tick tick of mechanically perfect telegrammatic centre, that was Gareth. "Gareth is purely mechanical in all her reaction." "Purely?" "Well . . . not quite." There was, it was apparent, a catch somewhere. "You know what I mean, she sees me rather than perceives me." "How can that make the difference?" "She watches me . . . watching. She doesn't want to watch me absorbing. She wants to watch me watching." Glitter of triple row of candles set before madonna were so many leaping fire-flies. How could any one leave Venice?

If Daniel said "I love you" there would be obstructing matter. There would be red and red, cardinal red, the red of Freddie Ransome. If Daniel said "I love you" there would be red of countless un-named sort of people, the red, red, red of unremembered legions. "Cæsar. I mean Tiberius or Cæsar. Coun-

tries, Germany, England are it is apparent (or were) Roman." The candles went on flickering. This obviously was Athens.

"I mean this is, isn't it pure Greek? I mean this is, isn't it, the last of the last of the last of the tide wave of Greek beauty?" Saint Mark's Cathedral seemed to her apprehension now to be what it always had been. In text books one had been wont to read "Byzantine art reaches its climax in the Adriatic." Byzantine art of text books was Greek art. The wave washed across the islands, *lily on lily that o'er lace the sea* to Asia Minor. Inappositely somehow finding a scant foothold on a half Asiatic sea board, the wave flowed backward. The wave, flowing backward, flowed again forward. "Byzantine art finds its last, its subtlest expression here in Venice."

Say "Byzantine art finds expression," all things from an old text book. Say Byzantine art and that meant the back wash of the Greek-Rome that was Byzance. Bubbles set on Roman foundation, a Greek comment (says the text book) of Greek on Roman architecture, Byzance. The queen of the Adriatic held her treasure . . . it was Athens.

Tiberius outer hall-way held two pale Greeks . . . "I should so like to hate her."

When Greek meets . . . it was obvious they so seldom did meet that arches had to be placed on arches, stone on stone. Men, architects from across two oceans had to fetch Lybian lime stone, had to bring basalt from Assyria, had to plunder ancient temples for just this red stone. Red stone fitted into green stone, stalactites were a little twisted to form columns that upheld other columns. When Greeks meet . . . had to be prepared for. Just such a meeting had long since been predicted. Candles flickering in diminishing twin rows showed gold-fish mosaic. Christos was written in Greek letters, Maria, Theos. God was written in Greek letters for this moment. "I meant hating would mean consummate expression, to hate and to hate. To hate Gareth you see is to hate my own brain." Her own brain now was static, cloud of outward circumstance had so contrived it. Her own mind rising, a lily on tall stem out of hysteria, examined carefully *loss of identity is the gift of Venice.* "Crystalized and over static identity . . ." she stumbled. Words when Greek meets Greek mean nothing. "You crystalize identity."

"I always do have a queer effect on people." "I should think

so. So Katherine told me." Her heart which had a moment since been root fiber and tentacle and outreaching subtle sympathies, now almost palpably seemed elsewhere. Her heart which had spread wide, wide, many tentacled sea-anemone, now closed fast. Her heart was a red drop of stale blood. "O Katherine . . ."

"To love and to love and to love . . . was the gift of Katherine." "To hate rather . . ." "To hate and to hate and to hate . . . was the gift of Katherine." Katherine had been (in London) in the slide of their two voices, in their speaking, in their non-speaking. "She tampered with things." "O quite . . ." "With you palpably." Head bent forward was head of young Sebastian. Head bent forward had been head of seated Hermes. "She gives and . . . takes. She is the Trojan mistress, Cassandra left forsaken. Light, the manifold Theos, Greek for God, for Helios, left Katherine . . . left Cassandra. Cassandra shouting at a cross-road . . . that is Katherine." Saying all that, she thought, if it weren't for Katherine, where were hieroglyph between us? Then some one said "Katherine is the only person in the world who ever really loved me."

Daniel had just said "Katherine is the only person in the world who ever really loved me." How could that be true? To see Daniel was to see beauty. Beauty a narthex, the neophyte's wand, then was utterly rejected? How could one say, how could one ever have said "Daniel you are beauty." Daniel was so obviously beauty, had been, that it were waste to say it. Is it possible that hieroglyph never had been between them?

Theos god for Greek, Greek god is written in Saint Mark's Cathedral. If you want to worship Greek for God and Greek god you may do in Saint Mark's Square. Greek for god sat patiently beside her. Was it possible that Daniel didn't know he was that?

A shell and a ball of light, a snail crawling on a window . . . a mind reaching out and out, perceiving and apperceiving . . . soul tentacles stretched to their furthest like a harp wire breaking, was it possible it all meant . . . nothing? Her mind, a lily on tall stem, rose out of confusion, out of hysteria . . . her heart was where her mind was. "Little crystal boxes are all somehow breaking somewhere." Daniel said "O quite . . ."

Was it possible little crystal boxes then meant simply nothing? That holding on and saying in a little bee in a flower room

in London, "Daniel is simply perfect" to oneself, never committing oneself to that thing outright, had meant valour sustained for nothing? Is it possible that hieroglyph of "Katherine is always innate when it comes to outright vision, oracle manqué, she is a vision manqué" had meant nothing? Was it possible that sliding down a steep incline, a sort of undignified spiritual sleight of hand, sort of bob-sled on a tea-tray, the sort of talk with Mordant had meant nothing? Was it possible that "Gareth is unhappy" that "Byzance is Greek comment on Roman architecture" had meant nothing? Is it possible that all the time and all the time, shut up in crystal boxes had meant nothing? Was it posible that Daniel was a sort of long drawn out little boy, like a tall long drawn out little boy who sees himself long and drawn out, tenuous in water? Is it possible that Daniel was only Daniel seen in water?

Candles went on. More candles sprung up where old candles wilted. Bee drones were droning in a sort of bee-hive at the half broken off far end of the far Cathedral. Floor sagged under her feet, mosaic sinking downward as mosaic in Saint Mark's Cathedral always had done. "It's odd thinking of this floor flooded, isn't it? Garry was telling me that when she was a child she came here . . . the very Cathedral floor was under water." Was it possible that hieroglyph of reading newspaper headlines (thousands of dial-turns back) about the fallen campanile had meant nothing? Daniel, it was apparent, was hardly born when the campanile fell down. Venice flooded . . . campanile fallen . . . people, things existing in dial surface, back and back and a dial-turn further back than anyone can remember. "I remember how shocked my mother was when the campanile fell down . . ." years and years and years went back, a dial hand spinning backward. "They loved Venice."

"They loved Venice" was hieroglyph of another order. "They" was people who lived out of time, out of space, a sort of spiritual sifting of fine values, the sort of sifting of values and finding Daniel seated there beside one, like a drawn-out little over-weedy little brother. Brothers, husbands, people like that . . . was the sacrifice then nothing? "Brothers, husbands . . ." Raymonde began to Daniel. What was a brother, anybody's brother, but a forgotten relic? People had forgotten what brothers, husbands had done. People were forgetting. There was the after-math, the

Gareth-Robins. "Is Gareth worried do you think? Does Garry worry do you think about poor Robin Rockway?"

Brothers, husbands, Robin Rockway spiritually winged, made one see that hieroglyph was nothing. Daniel was somehow (how would it be possible?) the one thing untainted. Red lilies, cardinal red, doge red, the red of morning day-flowers, the brilliant tiger lily. Saint Mark's Cathedral was so many hollow lilies, some placed edgewise . . . bees crawl into martagons, into Turks-cap lilies. A yellow lily opened . . . it was her room in London.

"I go back, Daniel seeing my room in London. I'm afraid I didn't help you." Daniel was sitting by her. There was a scale of values outside the crystal boxes, outside the cerebral intensity that reached out, weed-fibres, into anybody's garden. There was herself shut up in crystal boxes and there was herself that crawled, a snail, outside a window. Snail outside a window had escaped Gareth. Self in crystal boxes in a little room in London had got away from Daniel. "All I wanted . . . was to get away . . . from people."

Spiritual values shifting means little boxes breaking. Would anyone in the whole world know what it meant to say (she was saying it) "that curious feeling that I've been here . . . it's easy to explain it. My mother came here . . ." How to go on now that one had started, knowing that pre-natal influence must mean something, that things happened before things happened, that things were always happening? Daniel was a little boy drawn out and out and out. Daniel was unprotected. Daniel must be protected. Daniel was herself drawn out like herself in water. Daniel in a little London room was herself drawn out in water. Room went vague in her head and room . . . like crystal breaking . . . made odd comment on things her tears were. Tears falling are crystal boxes breaking. "I never cry. I'm sorry."

If Daniel said "I love you," Daniel would be calling red sacrifice from quiet clods of dark earth. Red sacrifice was red sacrifice. Red sacrifice had become drab, had then been forgotten. All the time while there was sacrifice and sacrifice, Daniel was waiting for this. For a moment in Saint Mark's Square when there would be no wall of little boxes . . . she said "Gareth is waiting for us." *Is* Gareth waiting for us? All the time Daniel was a little boy, then a child drawn out tenuous and overgrown, then herself simply seen like her own self seen in water. Daniel was waiting,

a small long drawn out small thing grown over long and tenuous. When the campanile fell, Daniel was not grown . . . Daniel was now grown. "You'll take care of Gareth for me."

To say "you'll take care of Gareth for me" was a twisted way of saying "you'll take care of me for me." Courage ebbed out, seeing the wall was static. Lily rose out of confusion, hysteria was static. "It's good to have a real cry." Her handkerchief twisted to a hard knot really showed the cry was not real, it was the squeak that doors sometimes make in opening, that doors will make in shutting. Tears and the sort of hard little gasp that went with that sort of crying were simply hinges screeching. She hadn't had her cry out. She wouldn't have her cry out. Cryptic two-sided Delphi was weighing the whole matter. "I suppose Katherine kept you for me."

"I suppose Katherine kept you for me" meant "I suppose Katherine kept me for me." They were a sort of monster. "We have one eye between us." "One—?" "Eye. We're like that Gorgon monster. I mean the monster Perseus met going to meet the Gorgon. They had one eye between them."

Something, Helios, Perseus, light anyway incarnate was going to slay a monster. He needed their eye. I see, Gareth sees, Daniel sees. We rise to some height of vision and are as quickly blinded. We see too far seeing nothing. Something outside all racial scale of values, that was Greek so simply, was waiting to slay a monster. Thought, ambition were all designed for one thing. Keep yourself alert for the moment when it's your turn. Together they were all things, separated they were nothing. Take it, even, that one of the three of the odd claimants got the whole eye. That one would be lost in the world of super-vision without one or the other of the other two to guide it. Daniel was lost in the world . . . and so was Raymonde. It was obvious that somehow there was some catch. "Have we hogged the eye between us?"

Daniel said "what?" turning sharply toward her. "What hogging what between us?" He was questioning as Garry had been. Daniel watched her thought glint and vanish as Garry always would do. Her thought had a way of flicking bright sort of snake-tail while the snake head was elsewhere. Daniel waited for the thought head to re-emerge and sting him. He thought something was going to sting him . . . he saw . . . tears were

a door that's squeaking. "I mean you and I, have we in some odd way, intending not to do it, managed horribly to hurt Garry?"

15.

If a door opened, a door shut. Barometerized blue blotting paper, I go, you come. Little bells in the vault above her, beat their bell notes. Outside, booming like a thunder cloud of wild bees, more and more bees (bells) were burrowing into (she supposed) shafts now of brilliant moonlight. Sound like bees she was certain was now cutting across silver moonlight like wasps across white poplars. Bark of poplar trees, moonlight shining, the intolerable white of Greek light. The Greek was intractable, spiritual tyrant. Her mind a lily, rising out of hysteria, saw things clearly. Love and love and love are something other. Something transcending love and love was the gift alike of Greek and Jewish prophet . . . "we'd best get back to Gareth."

Daniel, soul sperm, yeast or leaven was thrown out, it was obvious after the perished Freddie Ransomes and surviving Mordants. Wasn't she exactly like everyone when Daniel faced her? Or more exactly when she was faced with Daniel? She was afraid of Daniel. Regarding now a Daniel with still half-frozen features marring and destroying the drug and oriental peace of that cathedral's odd interior, Raymonde (tall lily rising on stem) was faced with ardent issues. Mordant, Katherine were a coin tossed upwards. Coin fell, it was obvious with a pretty mantic clatter . . . Gareth, Daniel faced her. "I'm thinking still of Gareth." "Gareth is waiting for us." "I know . . . I knew all the time." "She sent me here to find you." "I know . . . I knew she would do." "I knew where I would find you." Things like that didn't need to be said between them. They shared one eye between them.

Soldiering was ugly, had defeated its own purpose. You can't go back, go back to Alex Mordant. Soldiering was ugly . . . with soldiering was beauty. You can't go back, having gone starkly through it, to exactly that . . . Beauty with War for lover. Ares and achievement. Achievement of that sort wasn't worth the having. But you had to have it. Stars shone above ravished war fields. So Daniel.

"I have understood better than I ever have done . . . these things." Her hand, tall lily rising out of darkness, was something she watched cutting the air before her. Her own hand, symbol

of her now firm crystallized intention, ploughed through air that was spiced with acrid tonic sweetness. Fumes drifting from a far altar were the incense fumes Simon the (was it?) Cyrenian had laid at a shut portal. Gates shut, gates opened, Christ, Janus-faced like the deity of Delphi, was keeper of shut portals. Portals were closed . . . they had been dead completely. Everyone was dead (not only brothers, husbands) had been for space of a many arid winters. Stars shone, were shining above battles. "I mean it's been going on all this time. We sit in a tomb with Mary. The tomb has been spread with symbol, cryptic letter. Look, there is symbol, cryptic row of letters." Christos in Greek, Theos, God in Greek and Mary. Christos, the light was waiting, Mary robed in blue who was everybody's mother. Hand on neophyte's rod or narthex. I am their sort of mother.

"I mean I wanted to get things across through Gareth. She stood there, a sort of silver dam across a flowing river. Robin Rockway leapt barriers, leapt the river, is lost, no irrigation stream (intellectual leaven) in him. I waited, champing, chafing at firm banks. Garry is a firm bank." Raymonde knew now facing Daniel, that Garry wasn't now that. "I have got away from my claustraphobia by coming here to Venice. I found I could get out, get away . . . but it was leaping barriers. I found I could break (almost) Gareth. But that was Robin's method. With you . . . I found a new sort of method."

But what did method matter? What did anything matter? Tall lily rose, mind facing stranger issues. "You see, I believe . . . in you." "Katherine is the only person who really ever really loved me" might have its counter coin side. "Katherine is the only person who ever really loved me" meant a shattered Daniel shut up in crystal boxes. Loving and loving was the gift of Katherine, they had been Adon gardens, both of them brought to swift premature psychic flowering. Katherine had nipped (had had all intention to nip) the bloom off. Flowers had been there (for both of them) adequately protected. Little crystal boxes formed conservatory glass for Adon premature swift flowerings. They had both been protected. "There comes a moment when protection's no use. It kills one."

There was this new protection, this going into all things . . . but it wouldn't do for Gareth. Gareth was protected by little iron scales of sheer intellectual plate mail. That was and wasn't (was

it?) crystal boxes. Garry was small bee-visaged, sort of astral coloured angel. "Garry is a bee-winged small sort of astral-coloured angel."

"We live in both worlds, don't we?" There was patent danger in this. Living in crystal boxes, it was obvious spelt danger, getting quite out spelt danger. There must be a sort of balance. Daniel was staring at her. She knew why people loathed him.

"You hurt horribly."

Fling acid, base into a crystal test tube . . . watch and watch things sizzle. So said the eyes of Daniel. Daniel's eyes were flooded with Daniel's eyes, black flooded across ice grey, pupils synthetized to darkness gleaned across fumes in a dead sepulchre. Daniel was staring at her. How long had he been staring? Turn clock dial back and back to last year, to that year I married Ransome to years and years back till you came to Katherine. Daniel was a tall child, was a flowering weed in water. Back and back and people said "the campanile's fallen" or "Saint Mark's Cathedral's flooded . . . danger to Saint Mark's Cathedral" and still Daniel's eyes were watching. Psychic pre-natal thought had moulded Daniel. Herself had moulded Daniel. Venice was in her, before ever she was yet born, my mother loved it; dial hand went swiftly backward, my mother came to Venice on her honeymoon, a small child boasting to other children. Small child paper doll distinctions. Where did *yours* go?

Honeymoons make children . . . so this psychic pre-natal sort of loving. I loved Daniel all the time, all the time Daniel waited . . . I was a sort of psychic mother all the time to Daniel. Katherine who would have marred him sent him to me. It was the act of Delphi.

"People hate you, it's now quite obvious, Daniel." His eyes went on watching things sizzle and rush round in test tubes. Things inside Raymonde went rushing round in test tubes. Keep yourself stark, be yourself a sort of test tube. Could Daniel know how horribly he hurt her? Daniel is looking at me. I won't fail him. I hate Daniel looking at me . . . when Greek meets . . . *Greek* something is bound to happen. No one else was ever quite that . . . Freddie was sort of Dionysus, a sort of affable acceptance. Mordant was like that. Mind concedes place to sheer physical ecstasy . . . yet stands on guard, still armour plated out-side. Athene could admit a Dionysus at the feet of the Acrop-

olis. This is no separation of self into little boxes, Athene and Dionysus who was no more than cyclamen light on silver. This is not that. This is equality . . . when Greek meets *Greek.* Daniel would like to break me. Daniel won't have me broken, he's too interested in test tubes. "I know why people hate you."

"People hate you for the same reason that they hate me, Daniel."

You give your soul to one thing, you can't give it to another. Yet *is* that true? She had given her soul to abstraction, little crystal boxes, she had given her soul to loss of identity, a snail outside an aquarium sort of window. Soul putting out feelers was lost without crystal boxes to confine it . . . soul shut in crystal boxes too long and too deliberately is in psychic danger. Daniel was, had been, in psychic danger. For the sake of some self, *my* self, she hadn't reached out to Daniel. In London it had been "Katherine is oracle manqué," pure hieroglyph between them.

Katherine, Delphic projection, wouldn't be negated. Katherine had sent them to her. Mordant opened war-sealed physically vibrant areas, Daniel linked her up to Gareth. If I had broken from Daniel I would have negated Gareth. They were a set of planets revolving round and round and round a central fixed intention. Intention preëstablished, cryptic, smiling. Intention said, I lie upon incense clouded tomb slab, I lie in a shut up cathedral.. Claustraphobia of christianity. Gareth was afraid of Saint Mark's Cathedral because it was (as seemed hieratically fitting) a fine carved and exquisite tomb for the body of a spirit. Weren't all cathedrals when they reached their occult high water mark just that? Crawl into Saint Mark's Cathedral like a bee into a furled flower head. Crawl in like a lobster into a lobster pot not wanting to get out ever.

"Garry hates this because it is a sort of, sort of . . . denial . . . not that . . . you know what I would say, sort of negation of the spirit." By negation of the spirit she knew she meant negation of the thing in crystal boxes. "I mean negation of *her* spirit." If you are that, you have to be that. Gareth was true to her gun-metal standards. "Gareth is true to standards." Raymonde knew that Gareth was true, that Daniel was true, it was herself had failed them. "I know I failed her. She would never have been angry." Numbing drone of great bees in the distance. "I want to be a great bee."

"I want to crawl in and forget everything in this thing." Slim intellectual wand bearer, herself narthekophoros, she regarded (seated still as he had been all this time) Hermes-Sebastian. Hermes-Sebastian smiled his cryptic two sided smile. "You are Hermes and Sebastian."

Saint Sebastian pierced full of arrows, smiling and numbed, self-hypnotized, valour of pure spirit, or pure mind in spirit that gilds itself with some hypnotic power. Or rather silvers itself over. Daniel's mind had the power of silvering over Daniel. He shone as if in armour, himself armour bearer and the slim thing beneath it. He said "you have the tortured silly smile of some archaic statue." "I know." "Rather tight. Looking mincing almost." "I know." "You don't know, I'm rather glad you don't know." "Why—why glad Daniel?" "It's—*horrible.*"

When Greek meets Greek . . . in Saint Mark's Cathedral . . . it's something that's prepared for. Something all the time when Lybian deserts had been searched for this red stone and this blob of lapis lazuli and this knot of emeralds that bulges above the cross set in with sapphires on the over-ornate late Byzantine little shutter before a holy relic. There were relics beyond them in the fragrant astral darkness, incense made darkness astral, mosaic filled it full of darting fish-gilt of gilt light. Mosaic glinted. They were safe under water. They were in water, pre-natal beings, un-born. The Kingdom of Heaven is within you . . . mind slit the thing to tatters. Pre-natal *come unto me all ye that are weary.* They were weary, heavy laden with intellectual burden. *Go preach the gospel* . . . of beauty, mind that slits dream from crass reality. "Dream is the reaching out feelers like a snail's horns. Reality is the shell or the thing of crystal boxes. We must have the two together."

16.

If *go preach the gospel* was indicated so was *love one another.* When Greek meets Greek in Saint Mark's Cathedral, Saint Mark's Cathedral is another name for Delphi. *You have conquered O pale Gallilean,* maybe, but there was another Gallilean waiting for them in the moonlight. Moonlight made all of the Square a toy set there by some ardent child, corridor and space before corridor and little set of steps and columns set up carefully under arches. Saint Mark's Cathedral was a child's paste-

board set of buildings, its toy village done to this columned pattern, forgotten in a garden. It was true that you could slit the thing to tatters, it had none of that quality Gareth liked . . . reality. Standing in the outer doorway of Saint Mark's Cathedral, Raymonde said to Daniel, "we must go back to Gareth."

RICHARD R. KIRK

PITY THE RICH

1.

Pity the rich, who can't be sure
They're envied by the average poor;
And stand exposed without a stitch,
Indecent to the excessive rich.

2.

Pity the rich, who cannot measure
Their riches with the rod of pleasure,
But estimate each stone and tree
In multiples of poverty.

WORSE OFF

I get some comfort thinking
Of droll Posterity
If all our ships are sinking
As they are said to be.

THE OUTER WALL

The prison-house within the prison-wall
Still overlooks, although the wall is high,
The larger prison-yard, around the small.
Nothing encircles that one but the sky.
I've known a man to jump it. On the sly.

FRANCES GREGG

THE APARTMENT HOUSE

THE people are moving in upstairs, and I have a sense, each day, as I come back from my work, of being observed from somewhere. I never surprise a face at any window, nor see a curtain stir, yet I know they see me.

It gives me a curious effect as though the house itself had some demon life in it, and could peer and mutter and judge. What does it think, I wonder? It was built for the housing of one family,—just one family of united interests, spread wide and comfortably through these spacious rooms; having a small pride in the little walled in garden in the back. They wandered freely,—the diningroom, the library, the drawingroom, were refuges for the solitary one: after dinner coffee was served upstairs, and they sat placidly about the fire, or played little quiet games of cards, and went tranquilly to bed. The servants were tucked away in their own quarters, and there was no impingement of the servants' point of view beyond where it belonged. Now the house has become a tenement and swarms with a heterogeneous litter of people.

My mother tells me of them all, a saga that goes on, like a toneless song evening after evening. My mother and I, with my tiny orphaned girl, have but just settled into these basement rooms. At some time, no doubt, a white capped cook has hovered above that great stove that huddles in the alcove of our living room: white pinafored maids have chattered by that window just level with the ground, and some pert house boy has whistled and capered over the polishing of boots in that dark, dank scullery that is now our kitchen. There is a vague atmosphere of cheer about these two rooms that I associate with something

homely and comfortable, like scraps of popular melodies, and morsels of overheard chaff, that emanated from the kitchens of other days. It is far different in our bedrooms. These front upon the street. Looking up from our beds, we can see the milkman's boots as he leaves his tins upon the steps under which these cellars crouch. There is a dank, cindery upward slant of earth that rises from our window to the pavement, cutting off the light, and throwing out a chill. Strange stenches make it seem like a grave that we enter to sleep. The paper hangs away from the walls in damp blobs, and lines of green mould, and of a flaky white fungus, edge the wainscoting.

We look about, my mother and I, and say nothing. Life has put us there. We are helpless. Strange, that Fate has doomed us together: that, with diverse blows, Destiny has flung us into each other's arms for shelter: no less rebellious, no less unsympathetic, no less fretted and chafed by each other's presence. Uniting us, the little girl, who grows each day more pallid, more silent and thoughtful, like a tiny drooping bird among these cold dank shadows.

Upon the next floor every thing is different. Here live a retired lady's maid, with her young sister, a manicurist, and a servant to look after them. They are a queer lot. The mistress goes to market in a fur coat; a satin gown, all aswung with chains and pendants; high-heeled slippers and bare hands. The maid hangs out of the window, or over the banister, chaffing the tradesmen, or spying upon the rest of us. She is a good girl, very hard working, and her semi-imbecile face, all agrin, adds a note of cheer to the household.

The mistress fills me with depression, my spirit shrinks, and all my morbidities clutch me by the throat, the more so that my conscience tells me that she is an admirable little person. But she sets my teeth on edge, and is like rasping metal to my nerves. She will hate us, too, instinctively, and make trouble for us, some senseless stupid trouble, and it bores me in advance. For the moment we are all painfully polite to each other, falsely enthusiastic and urbane: underneath, these three, for they are all servants together, are watching us like wild animals, wary, ready to snarl, their muscles tense to spring.

In reality the lady's maid is a nice, fresh, plump, merry little person, with round bright acquisitve eyes, a fuzz of rather pretty hair. Energy of a peculiarly aggressive kind radiates

from every inch of her oiled and perfumed and well-preserved body. She is the epitome of the well-constituted and the commonplace. She is self-assertive, vulgar, loud in her own praise, very simple, very sensual, very shrewd, very hard, cold, calculating, yet filled with kind and generous impulses toward any one who will accept her at her own valuation. She will be touchy, as only the vulgar are touchy: sensitive, with that peculiar maddening aggressive egotism of the coarse-grained. She represents everything in the world that is most intolerable to me, loud laughter, thick skin, and cheap vulgarity. Her sister, I have not yet seen. My mother dislikes her intensely and says that she is a common little thing.

Now the top floor people are quite different, and very intriguing. I have never seen a family quite like them. They are all—and there seem a lot of them—curiously white, like things that have grown in the dark. They are not fair, but are of a heavy, rather crass pallor. They are retired theatrical people with a grown son and a little son. I believe the elder is supposed to be something of a musical genius. My mother says that he is charming and that he will interest me. I have seen him, once or twice, as he left the house before me. In profile he is detestable, with something small and wary and mean in his aspect. His nose is very long and thin, and, as he turns out of the gate he seems to follow it down the street. I feel rather antagonistic to him.

His mother is Scotch, and in her height and build only escapes gauntness by some mysterious grace about her. She shines through her exterior of smug suburban good manners in a startling way. She makes an immediate impression of what I can only describe as potential ecstasy. Her manner is one of quivering, friendly fervor; something, at once generous and outpouring, and, at the same time self-seeking. She suggests an infinite capacity for tenderness, a light and superficial tenderness, but very sweet and unselfconscious. There is no denying that the truth is not in her, for contradiction, and exaggeration, simply bubble from her lips. As she talks a hidden beauty rises in her face, glows a moment and disappears; something fine, and beautiful, and really noble. This sudden glow of beauty is quite breath-taking.

I like to think that there is this beauty in the house, even though it is so submerged. Each time I see this change in her face, it is as though I had caught a glimpse of the face of a

hamadryad, or the shadowy silver gleam of a water fey under the stream. I know that she is shallow, and trivial, and unstable, but the shadow of beauty is upon her.

She loves her children, but so oddly. She sets up no resistance, nor any idea of control or guidance. Sons should be loved with a hard flaming all-surrounding love: willing constantly to form them out of the chaotic energy that they are, protecting them from within against all assaults. I should want my son to be beautiful, free, noble in spirit, clear-eyed, and unafraid, honorable. But she makes her sons weak in all sorts of ways, so that they will cling, and be the more dependent. Expediency is the obvious keynote of the household: honor and courage and fearlessness are discounted. She broods over her children, spreading her soft plumage above them, "let them be fearful, let them be weak, but let them be mine," she seems crooning over them. There is something exquisite, and almost divine about such mad, clinging love between this mother and her sons. The whole house is made dark, and sweet, and wild, and secret,—like a dark wood. There is something in it that comes out of the beginning of the world, there is a divine simplicity, a divine madness.

But it is a dangerous thing in a house like this. Such a strain of pure poetry will bring tragedy in its wake: it will demand its own. She will sound through our hearts.

Things would be different if we each had an entrance to our cage, but as it is we are forced to tumble upon each other's heels in the disposal of ashes and garbage, interviewing tradespeople, getting our post and the sharing of this patch of garden. Our destinies will clinch at the edges like overlapping limpets; even while the essential life of each flat will go on, hidden well, within impenetrable walls.

2.

Such an odd thing has happened. I felt, as I stood a silent observer of the episode, as though an invisible musician had laid a hand across the strings that bind up floor to floor.

That boy is beautiful, after all. These two mothers are quite right. And it may well be that he has genius. He was displaying some small painting to my mother, and his own, at the foot of the stairs, that neutral meeting ground where our amenities, as well as those brisk passages of arms over garbage precedence,

have place. His voice drew me and I joined the group. He has, and this is true of all artists, a timber in his voice that is quite unique. In that constant refining of the senses that goes on, more or less, unconsciously in the artist, the affectation of a peculiar and personal intonation and modulation of the voice is always marked. As I listened to the full, grave, slow notes of his voice, vaguely deferential, vaguely caressing,—this really beautiful voice wiped out all my malicious preconceptions of this youth, and there flooded through me the same protecting and humorous tenderness that I had felt for his mother. This boy has known beauty—whether consciously or not, does not matter.

For the moment I got no very clear impression of his actual material appearance. His personality claimed all my attention. I saw a thing that was both lovely and base. He was exaggeratedly tall in that dark encompassing nook of walls, and the hands that flickered among his paintings were long, fragile, and very animal. The long, unevenly set fingers were webbed half way to the knuckle with a loose and pallid skin. Looking from his hands to him, for a flash he seemed to crawl, like something out of a charnal house,—sly—replete. He cried, and bit the dust—writhed—cried—cried—cried. He filled me with horror and pity. He made some trivial answer to my mother, and as he spoke I realized with a sudden curious pang, that the face was beautiful, and that the slender leaning body had a fragile and pathetic grace.

My mother's manner with him was so well known to me of old. She played with him, like a cat tossing some little quaint bat-like thing from claw to claw, a sort of coquetting malice.

Our group was partially dispersed, my mother and his mother on their way down to our rooms, I going toward the garden, and the boy several steps up the stairway, when, at the sound of a key in the latch of the front door, he turned and waited.

The door opened, and I saw for the first time, the little manicurist from upstairs. She was lovely. She was dressed in some gray thing, very light and delicate, with a touch of green about the throat, that was startling and lovely in itself. Her face was small, thin, white, with a little pointed chin, and eyes that looked wide and immense in the shadow of her hat.

The youth back of me was so still that he seemed hardly to breathe. I turned to look at him. He gazed down,—not at the

girl,—but at her mouth alone. The glance was oddly impersonal, and yet bold, licentious, desecrating, contemptuous, all knowing . . . yet sweet, sweet. . . .

I realized that the potentialities of his glance were not really conscious in him. It was a glance as old as time, as old as corruption, as old as beauty.

The little thing by the door was motionless. Her white face flushed and paled, and a curious shamed exultance seized upon her. I felt sure that no one had ever looked at her in just that way before. No one had ever quite pierced her consciousness with, "you are woman, and as woman assailable." She looked outraged, violated, angry,—and delighted. She hated him, and adored him. She was humiliated, and loved her humiliation. Then, upon the incalculable impulse of a child-woman she turned and ran out, slamming the door behind her.

He looked desolate and appealing as he stood there, and yet, as I meditated upon the little smirk of self-satisfaction and gratified vanity that curled his thin scarlet lips, my heart raged, "how dare he, how dare he, that child!" But it is pitiful that at his age, for he cannot be more than twenty-one or two, he should have so much corrupt knowledge of life. It will destroy him, and he will carry destruction in his wake unless purification of some kind is forced upon him.

Looking up suddenly I saw the fuzzy head of the lady's maid peering over the banister.

3.

This is a quaint house!

We are all being dominated by the servant element, and heaven help me if I am going to have to live up to a servant's ideal of conduct. They have always been our most deadly critics, only fortunately their superiority is usually submerged. What we shall do with them running amuck all over the place! They creep, spying and lying, and making havoc of our privacy, upstairs and down, from the middle flat. Stairs creak under the weight of no visible presence; people descend, no door opens to let them out, yet they never ascend again. To-morrow, something that I have said to my mother in confidence, will come back to me, a garbled echo from the top floor. At the same time, a tremendous intimacy has sprung up between the top and middle

flat. They are very gay, upstairs, now: a great deal of braying laughter, thumping of piano, and thumping of feet: they are very gay and bright, "enjoy life,"—shilling dances, two bob masquerades, supper at Lyons, but they limit their pleasures to what is "very refined."

I find, to my distress, that the mother of those two boys drinks rather heavily. The younger boy is a white-faced child, very beautiful, with red red lips and deep set very old eyes. He and my little girl look at each other, still and wary, like a gnome and a witchling. They might have stepped bodily out of a Grimm's fairy tale. Looking at them, one could quite believe that a spirit lives between these walls: as though the whole house brooded over us all, urging and compelling us to fulfill its will. There should be odd loves, and strange deaths in such a place.

As I walk down the street, on my way to and from my work, I look up at the houses, wondering whether back of each set of walls with their blind windows, there is another such collection of odd and morbid characters. There is no reason why our house should differ from the rest, unless there is some mysterious attraction, like the attraction of certain metals for each other, that draws certain people inevitably together. Or is it that the house is evolving a composite soul of us all, more compelling than our individual will? Certainly something is toward. That pair upstairs, that mother and her son made mad by beauty as they are, have become involved in some terrific struggle in the house.

I have said, "made mad by beauty," for that, I believe, is what I saw in that boy. I believe that when the longing for beauty, or the apprehension of beauty reaches a certain intensity it produces a kind of vertigo in which all that is known as "reality" whirls past like the visions in a Bacchic orgy. The soul is possessed, preoccupied by its stupendous drama. Made personal, as it is between those two, it is destructive. Strengthened and purified and forced outward, toward life, made impersonal, it is the driving force of art.

This boy stands upon the brink of this abyss, into which to plunge means to find ecstasy, but to find anguish as well. When I said "both lovely and base," I meant that he looks both forward and backward, and his heart is divided. There is an exquisite sensitiveness in him, but there is some maladjustment between body and spirit. His eyes are grey, large, very still,

glacial; his mouth is thin and scarlet and evil. But there is crying—crying—crying. It is his spirit. The crying is all about my heart.

His mother flatters him openly, "he is such a handsome young man," she says, "that women look at him everywhere." She smiles knowingly. Then "he's so young," she whispers brokenly, hardly knowing that she has spoken. I seem to see an abomination that lifts its head to lie upon the breast of that serpent-bird, its mother. She draws it to her, loves, lusts, dreams, loves, loves. His mother: eyes like pools, like mist: mouth trembling, seeking, seeking. The whole house reeks and sobs of lust. The very shadows claw about our lips.

They have invited us to one of their evening parties. We dare not refuse again.

. . .

The peculiarity of this family seems to be the remarkable effect they produce upon first meetings. It is perhaps some manipulation of their theatrical arts, that inspires them to choose so aptly their effects.

We went upstairs, trailing my unwilling little daughter along. We are such an odd trio. The tie of blood is so strong in us. They would not like it if they knew how cold we really are. We will take what we want from these people, no more, and no less, and coldly. Even as we prepared to go up, my mother and I exchanged one of those odd, peculiarly intimate, humorous smiles, that sum up a situation between us. It meant, "Good Lord, what have we let ourselves in for this kind of thing for?"

A door above us opened and shut as we went up, and the sound of chattering voices burst out and was quelled again.

The first impression, as we entered the room, was of something tremendously sure of itself, with a fuzz of crinkled hair, that was making most satisfactory progress with a great deal of strawberries and cream.

Chairs were round the walls.

The father was there. A sharp, weak, quaint face; a shrewd, weak, ineffective character, but something faintly alive, and genuine in him. He must once have seen the beauty of his wife. I liked him, with a faintly contemptuous tolerance. His intelligence is very limited, and his nature shallow. At moments he has been surprised by beauty, but the very thought of it fills him

with a horrible dread. He wants to live a little, safe, ineffectual life, sure of himself, small, mean and comfortable. So that is the drop of baseness in that beautiful boy.

Under the table, looking extraordinarily isolated and pathetic, and, at the same time, aggressively self-possessed and independent, sat the little boy. He too had a great plate of fruit and cream that he was lapping up, with an odd, unpleasing effect of having snatched it away from some other animal. There was a cold greed about him that made me turn to study the father again. There may be more power, of a destructive kind, in him than I gave him credit for.

I thought of the great gray serpent that moves unceasingly through the roots of the tree of Life. I could see the tree in flower, and its leaf,—and these heavy, cold, writhing folds ever about its roots.

The boy himself came in. He looked charming. He held the sheer loveliness of his pose at the door for a moment, then the strength went out of him. He swept the room, with a glance of appraisement, taking up and valuing his effect upon each one of us, with the cold greed of the little boy under the table. Again my glance went back to the father and there was born in me an antagonism that was sure and unending.

I looked at the son, and the father, and that little boy. Once long ago I saw the Laocoön. They were like that. Something that was like the shadow of death seemed over us all for a moment. Then the room steadied, and I saw them all naturally again.

They were all more or less crushed under the weight of the lady's maid's obvious means and self-importance. They resented it bitterly, but they were toadying to her, as weak and gentle people do to all that is gross and strong. . . .

My lovely girl, the little manicurist, was there. She wore no hat this time, and two heavy locks of hair fell about her face, curving in like metal, framing it. Her hands were small and white. She was altogether like a small white flower that has been blown helpless in the path of the world. Her eyes dwelt within the eyes of the boy, as she sat within the shadow of her wealthy sister. His face grew mild and lovely this time, as he gazed at her. He seemed to struggle to draw sheltering wings about them both. They knew each other so completely, those two poor young things, and his face was so sad, and baffled and tormented.

I felt a great tenderness for him. But how could one be tender, or cherish that cold, small, aggressive soul. He, and the beautiful child under the table, were an affront to Beauty itself. I adored them, and was their enemy.

He had, I observed, a set of remarks that he was used to making: "You *see* things," he said, and "I know you are psychic," and "You have artist's eyes."

Something arid and pitiful and horrible about his mind made me feel ashamed as though I were spying upon some one's deformity.

Was any one surprised when they announced the boy's engagement to the lady'smaid. I was not, I know. I felt that it was the kind of thing he would lap up. "They are taking over the house and will run a boarding establishment." "They will need the basement." The white flower-like girl looked whiter. The father remarked that, "art never paid." The mother, her eyes blue and fantastic, like a person in a fairy tale, took the girl's hand and said, "Life was so hard for the young."

FRANCES GREGG

THE UNKNOWN FACE

I AM a woman, forty, and my life is over, for I am dying. No conflict has been completed, no problem solved, no argument settled. There is nothing more to be questioned, since nothing has ever been answered. There can be no elucidation of what cannot even be formulated. My life is passing, slowly demolishing itself. I am baffled and bewildered—and tired, more tired than I can say.

This life that I leave has so bizarre a complexity. Science and Art are destroying all known proportions, and opening up impossible vistas. Strange and mystic rhythms are calling urgently to senses that are not yet evolved.

I turn to look at the shadows that have passed through my body, to sit now, at either hand, a son and a daughter. What are they? What am I? Life for them is tangible, straight-forward, sweet, and will be for many a year. The shadows that envelop me, urging me steadily towards this adventurous dissolution, do not go near them.

. . .

I have left them and have come into a dark room. I have lighted candles on each side of a mirror. I want to see *myself*.

There is a face in the mirror, the face most rarely seen. The dark is behind my head, and there is my face in the mirror for all that I know of life. It is dreadful to come to consciousness of oneself when death is the only development. It is not a distinguished face: it is difficult to say, even to myself, what it is like. No, I cannot find words for it, and yet that face is mine. In it is the mystery of identity. To achieve identity is at the heart of all effort,—to lose identity is at the heart of all fear.

They have created a hereafter to still that dread. My expression changed at that moment. Other people know those expressions. I do not. And that thing says "I." Two thirds of a lifetime, and only the grossest summings up to clothe that identity torn from chaos at so much expense.

I imagine that beautiful women are protected from thought. They contemplate their own loveliness. Narcissus. In that is something more profound than thought. Narcissus—Death. It seems that that must sound at the end of all thought, and all emotion. But what is it, this contemplation of loveliness? Why does one's soul flutter before Beauty and lie placid? Not languorous, but full, as though brimming, something poised perfectly in space.

This is the idea that has dominated my life, this consciousness of Beauty: not a longing for it, nor a craving, nor, indeed, anything personal, but only the will to have faith in Beauty. It has been a mania—an obsession.

As lives go, mine has been full and eventful. There has been almost nothing commonplace in it. The people among whom my lot has fallen, have had individuality, in some cases even genius. Each one in turn, both men and women, has been unique and thrilling.

It is significant that there has always been about me, notwithstanding all my experiences, that something untouched and apart, that stamps those marked for early death. I have always roused the wildest suspicions in normal people. "Good people" have been confounded and baffled by me. The animal, sensual type, experiences a curious instantaneous antagonism, that so disorganizes their easy-going temperaments that they fall into an irrationally vindictive antipathy to me. They want to crush me, trample upon me.

Only where evil and good were in some uncanny blend, in some balance of conflict that fuses them into one,—only where evil and good were like the root and the flower; where the two were blent into one energy striving toward conscious expression, was the person attracted to me, and then, as a rule, the attraction transcended all bounds. Sometimes this energy has been spasmodic, flaming and lapsing by turns, so that it has happened that the same person has both loved and hated me for years.

I have lived as a spectator, refusing to yield myself, to commit myself, in any way to life. I have deliberately, wilfully

kept myself apart. Relentlessly, I have followed my idea: every event, every glance, every emotion, every sensation, every person, has been weighed, estimated, judged, and eventually, either rejected, or dedicated to my idea,—but always impersonally, as though I were the Priestess of some Cult too abstruse to be grasped by the human intelligence, but to be served blindly by certain given rules. And that idea was Beauty, though, in certain ways it is more exactly expressed as *God.*

My idea of God had little, or no relation to religion. Religion seemed, more often than not, the deification of the uninitiate; a bowing to expediency; an aggrandizement of the devastating Middleclasses. Only the Hebrews seemed to have been able to lift it from its mean and cowardly base. They made it a thing of song and fury, a futile thing at best, but with a dark strong beauty. But God was, to me, Beauty; a forming principle; a constructive moral Consciousness.

In actual practice, the serving of my Idea consisted in a relentless rejection of everything in existence,—no matter how alluring, or tempting,—that was essentially commonplace, trivial, or base. This necessitated a constant refining and refining and refining upon my perception that brought with it a concomitant susceptibility to pain.

As I go back now and try to reconstruct my life, I begin to wonder whether an abnormal sensitiveness and realization of pain was not the beginning; and that the process was really the reverse of what I have written. Certainly my first conscious impressions of life are of something dark and filled with cries. Pain. Pain was undoubtedly my first conscious reflection, a feeling of something dreadful and malign that brooded close down over the surface of the world like a dark cloud. And pity . . . Those two emotions must have been born in me at once. I seem to myself, looking back, infinitely small, when that first impression of life came to me. I have no idea of what the actual happening could have been. I can only remember the sensation, as though my small heart would burst with its weight of compassion. Life must have become unbearable to me at that moment, and undoubtedly it was then, with an instinct of self-preservation, that I turned to my worship of beauty.

That beauty meant something quite terrific in me I can remember well. I can still see myself, a small and shrinking child, running like a shadow by the side of a beautiful girl, losing myself in a maze of streets, only to keep her face in sight.

Side by side, plunging deeper and deeper, pity and terror: and beauty and love, have blown like consuming flames through my soul.

My mind could hardly keep pace with such intense spiritual perception, and it was only natural that my intelligence should have developed onesidedly, profound in its own sphere, brilliant even; but outside its own peculiar sphere curiously undeveloped.

My character was weak, though I was capable of tremendous endurance, and a dogged persistence along certain lines; yet, at the same time, there was something oddly unstable and unreliable in me, a wild impatience, and a nervous and fretful wilfulness that has been my undoing more than once in my life. I can only explain it by saying that my heart was broken. Long, long, before I had begun to live consciously Life had broken my heart. That is an incredible thing to say of a child—and yet I am convinced of its truth. I lived as one already dead.

It is odd to be going back this way over my tormented childhood. How astonishing to find myself so little changed! I remember a strange impotent fury that possessed me from time to time at the limitations of my own senses. I could feel, at moments, agonizingly conscious of the invisible, the unheard, the apparently non-existent all about me.

Later on, I felt myself as dual: Mind: Body. Mind was unique, personal, and omnipotent, intact and unassailable. The Body was an instrument of apprehension, registering imperfectly, making crass inaccurate deductions, throwing up endless defenses against the refining by the intellect.

I always felt myself essentially secure, safe-guarded against the material. There was Life, and Life was eternal. Identity was probably ephemeral. In either case, ephemeral or for all time, the *events* of life were essentially immaterial. It was in God, God as I understood it, a perfect balance of Beauty and understanding that I had my only sense of security.

Certainly there are people who can *accept* the universe, who can look out upon the hills, trees, the upheaval of the earth's surface, and it seems *natural* to them. But I had never a sense except of unillumined power about me. Anything might happen; and, more dreadful, nothing explicable could ever happen. The unknown, the unknowable were like a sea about me. Sometimes, on the impulse of Beauty, my soul would wing a slow full circle, a flight of dreadful and ecstatic calm. That tragic exaltation sounded a note of beauty from the inexorable mold, like the

clapper of an iron bell . . . "bound, bound, bound," the sound seemed to come faintly back to me, hurtling from world to world. My consciousness strove for comprehension of these illimitable spaces.

There seemed a unity of Emotion in the world, that I felt at great crises like the War. It rose, massed and heavy, and beat its way through the universe upon a multitude of wings. In that curious dragging over from Chaos to Consciousness there seemed the whole of our struggle.

That was the tremendous drama, without beginning and without end, that was being everlastingly enacted before our eyes. It was this drama that engrossed me to the exclusion of more than a passing interest in my more personal life. There appeared to be two tremendous forces at work: the will to destroy: and the will to create. Something horrible, inert, amorphous seemed to lie at one extreme of existence; round that swirled chaos. At the other extreme was a living flame, round which circled, in adoration, rhythms that emanated from all the struggle toward consciousness, or art, philosophy, religion.

This duality seemed endlessly repeated: Life and Death: love and hate: body and spirit: good and evil. A tremendous inertia in us all drew us back toward Chaos: a tremendous aspiration in us all drew us on toward the Flame. Death, hate, sensuality, evil, were but different ways of expressing the will to destroy, or the attraction to Chaos. I believed that Consciousness was the hazard of existence, that Life willed toward Creation, and my will was, at any cost, to flow with the creative energy in life. Beauty seemed our only guide.

It interests me now to put all this down, now that my life is over, and I am looking back.

. . .

It is several months since I jotted down an attempt at summing up what I am.

My own state of mind interests me so much. I seem so horribly capable of living indefinitely. I say to myself, that my life is over,—but in reality life is panting and eager in me. The thing is, that I have lived so long a shadow, that now that I am venturing out into death, that may be life, I am appalled. Why, I know nothing!

I wish now that I had made more friends among women. I have always had an odd repulsion from them, and a ghastly

fear of their confidences. They do not like me. My preoccupations are not those of my sex. I care nothing for appearances, conventions, intrigues, physical adornment, petty triumphs. Women have always loathed my passion for life, for reality, for dissecting and analyzing, for tearing away veils: my flagrant curiosity; my shameless experiments; my love of looking, looking, looking, everywhere, at everything, with unclouded eyes. Women love to live in a glow of sentimentality, that debasing of imagination to the needs of sensation; they want their eyes to swim; their senses to reel: they want everything hidden and dark and sweet: they are secret and sly and treacherous and alluring.

Between men the air is bright, there is a radiance of communing, but let a woman come into the room and all values change. There is an instantaneous blur, a solemn self-communing of sex: the woman demanding her tribute: the men appraising her value, an aggrandisement of all the things that I had not. It bored and irritated me, yet it could be proved that all the things that had gone before, the clear white thought, the chatter of philosophy and art and religion, were less profound, less valuable and mysterious, than the force that had come into the room. It was easy to attract this sort of attention to myself. Any woman can be loved who has a mind to be. Those fevered lovers! loving not me, except incidentally, as a symbol,—but hungering. There was never anything from any one of them to still my longing to *be*, to exist, to be loved. I should have liked to have been loved once in my life.

My marriage was so tragic a comedy, so comic a tragedy, I can remember how my whole nature returned upon itself, how I flew back and back and back, concealing myself forever. The greatest possible affection, and mutual trust existed between us, but nothing that in any way resembled actual love. With a different type, perhaps, one more awake to the poetry and beauty of life, one can imagine being led slowly, through love to an understanding of a miraculous and exquisite union of flesh to flesh. But in fact, anything so incredible, so overwhelmingly fantastic as the attraction of man for woman, and the mystery of creation, was beyond the fantasies of imagination.

I moved among them all, men and women, like a woman Judas. I spied upon them, led them on to confide in me, to put their souls into my keeping. All the time my secret intent was to destroy their comfort, to lead them blindfold to pain, to

tangle their feet in morasses of their own vanities to their own destruction, to betray them into a knowledge of Beauty: then watch them struggle, watch them deny their own souls, destroy the spirit that was in them, clutching at baubles: or watch them succumb to the agony and beauty that is life. I could not let anything alone. My instinct was to draw a thing to me, then strip it of every defence, every self-illusion, every self-deception and when it, at last, stood a naked and shivering soul, to thrust it through the Portal that led to Heaven or Hell, and leave it to fend for itself.

I think that there must have been in me something of the malice and the fury and the suffering that inspired God in his creation of worlds.

Certainly there was a fury in me, a bitter hatred of people, and a vindictive malice toward life,—but there was, too, a love, and a pity that broke my heart. I am queer. I am solitary.

. . .

It is again some time since I have written in this ledger. All sorts of changes take place in me. I feel like a creature very timidly stretching its muscles after some long imprisonment. I look out upon the world like a person who has been blind, and I step timidly, not trusting my untried muscles.

I interest myself frightfully, and that is not egotism; I am the nearest approach that I have to the universe. All that I shall know must come to me through the medium of what I am,—"through a glass darkly," perhaps, at the best. But I must study myself furiously if I am to know anything at all. Time is so short now, and I feel that I am only on the threshold of knowledge. What strikes me as I reread this, is the curious duality of my nature. There is something there, strong, hard, clear, vigorous, very fresh and unaffected,—and then, when it seems really purposeful and full of meaning, it breaks down into plaint, into lamentations and cries.

And it is only now, now that all my strength has gone out of me, now that I am exhausted by actual material existence, by all the clumsy paraphernalia and machinery of life, by illness, by grief, it is only now that I realize what I have done. I am a shadow, a phantom,—and my life is over. There is nothing left but this unknown face.

KAY BOYLE

A CHRISTMAS CAROL FOR EMANUEL CARNEVALI

1.

This year I have sent you
A small chocolate heart entirely surrounded
By roses carved in sugar
In the middle there are two hands in paper
Clasped with a yellow charm at the wrist-bone
In the veins of it there is a music running
Of days spread like peacock tails
Of days worn savagely like parrot-feathers

I believe the truth should be spoken but if it be questions you are asking answer that in youth the day is so full that the voice swells loud and wide to surround it and with age does the day wear thin like an old beast boned with pain; answer that the years run through the fingers and the trees set aside their leaves as if they were tears falling

Ask that the wind rattle sleep to a heart that turns and turns in its own anguish, warmth of the breath upon it shuddering and smouldering it to ashes stirred by the wind; that winter be softened by flames that leap like horned stags in the chimney: not a man scarred with the cold, tied stiff by it, frozen with his own water fallen fan-wise upon a wall where lizards no longer burrow for shade and slumber with grains of the sun fallen in stars between their claws

Behind us lie nights feathered with sleep, the mouth saluting feet swifter than sea-gulls. Next year I shall make you a carpet

of many small faces, the petals of almond-flowers, with temples split upon the volcanic tip of a chianti sunset: and land like a child's ear lying open for speech to whittle and pierce it.

2.

THE LEGEND

There were two men as fine as wild beasts, and as savage, with silky coats and tongues as red as satin, who set out to cross the snow, leaping and sporting together like young dogs in the cold. They had not gone far, with the memory of their own hearths still burning in them, when they came upon a traveler who, like a scarecrow fallen among white sheaves of wheat, had dropped in his own steps in the snow. He was an old man and as the two fell upon their knees beside him to lift up his hands and his head in order to breathe upon his flesh, they could see the scars and the blemishes which time had laid upon his skin.

They had kneeled down by his side and they emptied their mouths in blasts of sweet breath upon his neck and his palms, but in his veins they could perceive no stirring of life, and not only did their breathing upon him fail to revive him, but the breaths themselves strangely enough floated away in pure little haloes as perfectly formed as the rings which hang about the necks of doves.

As they chafed his hands between their own and sought upon their persons for warm drinks with which to thaw the saps of his body, they were filled with a fear and a dismay of this man's flesh. On the backs of his hands sprung thin forests of gray entangled hairs which grew thicker upon his wrists and his forearms, and in his neck were scars illy-sewn in angry welts, and his great ears were planted with stained grey ferns of hair.

They looked upon him, and as they looked into each other's faces over the stiff flesh of the old man, they were aware of their own beautiful bodies, clean and without blemish in their clothing. And then they let fall his hands from their own and they made haste to be off and so abandon him to the ferocity of his own death.

But as they fled over the snow from where the old man was lying, their shadows pursued them as if with evil intent, and their hearts began to smite them. One thought, "were I to give to this old man my fair hands and the beauty of my arms to bear him, then to be sure I would save him from death." And the other thought, "were I to bestow upon him all the fire of my limbs and the wit of my clear mind, these gifts would surely bring him to shelter and spare him for many long years to come." And thus they went on, questioning and chiding themselves in their own hearts.

But before long they had succumbed to the doubts which the old man's plight had stirred in them, and with ennobled and richer decision they turned upon their steps to regain his side and to bear unto him the gifts of their strength and their good-will. But as they ran the snow fell suddenly apart before them and a youth of great beauty and gentleness emerged from the cruel ground. His feet were bared to the cold, but white violets and all manner of early blossoms were springing up between his toes. With his fingers he played upon an instrument of which they had no knowledge, and to this melody of his own making he said to them:

Wiefor shud ye feer deth fer hyme
Ande wiefer shud ye tremble
Fer hev not I suffered that ther shud be pece
in yur harts
And hev not I dyed fer ye
That ye myghte liv to a gret olde age
Now do I aske won favoure of ye
Ande it is thet ye giv not yur beautye
Unto thum who hev no eyes fer it
Ande thet ye luv not thum who hev killed me

The beautiful youth struck his instrument with his fingers and he looked upon their wondering faces, and he spoke again to them:

Won daye I shall aske of ye to giv yur blud
Fer the lyfe of a yung lamb
But thum who hev never looked upon me
Giv not the breth of yur mouths to suckle thum

And as they gazed in wonder upon him, the earth closed again upon the elegant youth and the snow fell again in the same way that it had fallen, but it was as if a weight had been lifted from their hearts that he had spoken to them. So they joined hands together and continued lightly on their way. And no more thought did they give to the old man who had perished until at the change of the season they chanced to pass again by the place where he had fallen, and lo, there had grown up a great tree, and its branches spread out over them as they paused, and sheltered them from a passing shower.

3.

Now there are voices of children
Hard cold at the door singing
And in the blood a tide rising as if an army were stirring.
I would say that a man and his country wither
When a sea runs between them
But the words of my mouth take flight as I come to them
And the word of truth lies still in my heart.

Italy, contained in you
As richly as in the skin of a grape
I would find on your tongue some flavour
On your lips some word of him.
Italy
Like opening a window upon a garden
Which need not be pruned, pathed, swept, or weeded,
A land sown with miracles
Before which the snow parts into spring,
A coast you walk drawing
The warm sea back on your shoulders
The sun down over your brows.

Here the wind has fallen in strange ways
And the vanes fly in the storm crying
East, west to the lost elements.
I would go down

Into the towns that remember
The hills turned green again
The roads bitter with dust
I would talk of him
for whom the waters fall softly.

4.

Houses are not teeth in the hill, nor claws deep in the rock's bark, but riders got weary, dismounted to lie down at the side of the water, to touch the pine-needles and stare at their own faces. They come up out of the grass and into the hard leather of the boughs and go off over the roads, shod feet among the thistles and loose rock seeking the spare places and points high as needles.

Here in the north are the riders got weary, laid down with fires built at their hearts, with mouths humming of corn-bread, of white meal, of fox-feet, with thought of you warmer than any fuel winged in the chimney.

Now in forests and forests do the trees stand dark and sorrowing, and I say to them that their fine limbs shall kneel to you, their nimble necks arch to you. I say to them you will put in their mouths reins of light flexible as minnows, and out, out, the dark far earth will be soft under the hoofs of the wind

galloping

galloping galloping

galloping

with nostrils like wild black pansies opened on the fog.

KAY BOYLE

MADAME TOUT PETIT

ONE day in June the traveling-man brought a squirrel scarlet as holly to the little girl who was learning to walk around the garden. With the ends of her fingers she clung to the points of the rose-bushes and the blades of iris-flowers. In the air even there had been a sort of preparation for him, as if so much was expected of his coming up through the garden to the chimneys clean of coal and of fire, and in the garden the air itself was like a miracle blinding the eyes. He said I have brought an animal to your little girl who is learning to walk, and at intervals he averted his face and leaned down to pinch a daisy off its stem with his thumb and forefinger. The June afternoon had settled agreeably and gracefully down into a pleasant swoon, and beyond on the hills the English meadows were flowing steadily into the cropping muzzles of the cattle. The traveling-man was changing the cigarettes from the packet into his case, and skipping lightly from side to side so that his shadow would fall upon and protect the little girl from the sun. Last June, he said, my family were waiting for me to come home from England, he said. And well, he said, do you know what I did? I went off with a little friend of mine up into the Alps for a week. Fancy, he said. I went off. And I thought maybe this was what was always in the back of his mind, and what he wanted to be saying to everyone until he would find the words in someone's mouth that would give him some ease from the rebuke in his own heart. And when I got home, he said. He stood tapping a cigarette in his hand and smiling steadily over the prostrate garden. My father had died. Fancy, he said. I mean after all there was nothing I could have done, was there, he said.

On Monday morning he went off in his car, with his little blue alpine hat on one ear more than the other, and his road-map with Derby, Buxton and Nottingham large and brilliant, squared open on his knee. He had broken a red button from the rose tree as he went down through the garden, and it was in his coat, and when he closed the door his eyes returned and moved strongly across the windows. In me even there was a sorrow that he was going away, for he went as if it were bitter for him, lingering and turning on his heels and slapping the little back-pockets on his trousers.

Behind the house Madame Tout Petit crossed the bricks, balancing a sauce-pan of milk stained with coffee, walking carefully so that the wet earth would not spit its foul juices on her silk stockings.

"I cannot express to you," she said, "what has taken place in me . . ."

And on Friday night there would be a preparation, as if a top had been set spinning in everyone's heart. The traveler would be coming in dusty and dark with his week's trip wearying and animating him. In the men there would be a solid absent preparation because he would be bringing them pipes with the trademark of his business-house stamped on them, or be bringing them small clocks with gold faces. The men would come into the dining-room of the boarding-house and be pretending not to see him at first, because in their minds they were wondering what he had brought this week to them. And he would sit, as if expiring and done with weariness, until they began talking to him. He was a Frenchman with a soft voice, and so perfectly he parroted the English that there was no telling him from one of them.

In me I would be pleased. I would come downstairs earlier at the end of the week to talk with him in the parlor. He had a sympathy for women which charmed his eyes into warm heavy tents and which set shadows in his cheeks when he smiled. He would tell me it was not a life for him, it was not a life with a night always in a different town, and the age of the other men who were traveling setting him apart by himself. And always this sort of thing, he said, which I think rather rum, rather rum, (so like an Englishman that it was a disgrace to the race of them): "there was," yes, "there was an old lady of Sheen whose hearing was not very keen." And Madame Tout Petit would

come suddenly in, smelling like a fresh rose in the parlor, and she would begin stitching at her embroidery and lifting her head brightly and rapidly when she spoke. When we talked English she listened sweetly and sharply with her head, and she laughed because the words collapsed before they came to her ears. Not a life, he was saying, not, you know, a life, and always the other men who are traveling with this sort of thing in their mouths: she said it is odd but I cannot tell God save the weasel from pop goes the Queen.

The rooms are very small, he said, and the beds narrow as a board. He stood up and lit a cigarette on the end of his tongue. His beard was pushing stiffly against the dark skin of his jaw, as if it must pierce his flesh and escape to protect him from the world. Mr. Dickens and Mr. Trollope, he said, having said all there is to say about voyageurs, as if they were pigeons. I am not, he said distinctly, a pigeon. I am a man.

When I was married, said Madame Tout Petit brightly dropping her words through whatever his silence was suggesting. I cannot tell you what took place in me. My husband's hair had been curled up in a wave for the feast and the priest himself was slapping holy water on it to make it lie flat. The priest himself. She shouted delicately with laughter. She looked at the traveling-man with her laughter scarring her face. *Bande de alauds*, she said. Oh, rather, said the traveling man. Oh, the Jesuits! He skipped across the room like a Nancy-boy. Madame Tout Petit's pure virtuous creed flamed in her face. I was speaking of Désirée and the band of them, she said in confusion. He handed out cigars to them all to keep them quiet. I cannot tell you, she said, what took place in me. I pinned the curtains of the bed-spread from top to bottom with nursery-pins, with myself in the middle like a jelly-roll. Breath by breath her laughter exploded across the room.

There was going to be a dance in costumes and we had taken out my old grandmother's dresses, and one of these the traveling-man held up in front of him, and with the big skirts of it swinging around his thin body he danced between the table and the cooking-stove in the parlor. It is not often, he said, that there is not somebody's conversation standing between us. He was deciding then which dress would be the oddest on him, and he sat down with a letter in his hand and read it to me, quickly as if before his mind would have time to change. And in this

letter Madame Tout Petit had said to him that love without sincerity and without simplicity was a sorrow rather than a peace to her. Sophistication, he said, where is thy what-not. And her husband is rather a good sort, he said, rather, you know. He twisted the letter into a little cornucopia of sun. Women resort to God bless you, he said. Because this thing has happened to me it is more beautiful than if it happened to any other woman. If I could find one woman, he said, to damn my soul to hell. Oh, love, he said, and his mouth turned the points of its smile into his own flesh. Without the simplicity and sincerity, he said. What shall I do with them? If I had the ears pierced the simplicity and the sincerity would make the nice earrings.

At dinner there was a Camembert on the table stinking and running in its own juices, and the traveling-man sat drinking his coffee with the other men, with the early darkness drifting in clear and sweet across their faces. He sat talking as if he could never draw himself up out of his chair; talking to them about the English roads and the left-handed way of driving, and the ashes of his cigarette fell like frost down his long legs. And then he came up to dress himself in my old grandmother's clothes, to leave his throat out bare and put rouge on the small lobes of his ears. He had a fine gold chain around one wrist and he was as happy and wondering before the glass as a young girl. His eyes had a special wonder and admiration for his own face and throat, and when they came upon my face and my hands fastening the dress up his back, they collapsed in small indifferent bits as if my flesh intruded.

We were dancing together, and he would hop about on his feet with his legs doing the Charleston in a French way as if he could not afford to be ungraceful. And my old grandmother's shoulders were fuller than his so that the sleeves slipping down he would keep putting back with his fingers. It is not a life, he said, it is not a life consisting of sleeping upon a board. What if you sleep with the femme-de-chambre, I said to him. Martyred, said he, proudly femalely martyred to narrowness so that I may. Madame Tout Petit clapped her hands and screamed with false delight. Oh, what a beautiful woman he is, screamed Madame Tout Petit, and her sorrow and her love for him were ready to fall in tears from her eyes.

I cannot tell you what took place in me, she said, when he appeared before me dressed as a woman. Slowly and steadily

we walked in the dark warm garden. I cannot tell you. Am I asking too much of you? she said. To write again to him. This time, she said, you could perhaps, my darling, bring in a word or two concerning the eternal constancy of a *femme honnête.* I can forgive him, she said, anything. And if he still refuses to respond, I shall ask the priest to employ me with charitable work in the parish. I shall succor the young, she said. She turned wearily to the lighted windows in which the traveler and the other dancers were passing to the measure of the music.

"*J'ai une cafarde horrible,*" she said.

CONRAD AIKEN

JOHN DETH

I: THE STAR-TREE INN

1.

John Deth and his doxies limped to town.
By the weeping-cross they sank them down.
They were in rags, in rags was he.
A branch of blossom, across his knee,
Spun, in the drifting smoke of the moon,
A hawthorn sweetness. It was June.
"Go now, you, Millicent Piggistaile,"
Said Deth, "to find an inn, and ale.
You,—Juliana Goatibed,—
Carve the black rock and rest your head.
This night, with Millicent I lie;
You, like the mind, once more put by.
Hurry! and at the Star-Tree tavern
Rouse the musicians; have the seven
Fiddles playing, and devils drum,
To jig to . . . Tell them that I come."

2.

Then, in the smoke of the moonlight, rose
Bitter of mouth and weary, those
Tall gypsies: she whose eyes were flame,
And she who bore the shameful name:
The golden-haired, who loved her lord,
And the dark demon, who abhorred.

Pat-patter went they; and the moon
Dipped in a cloud and they were gone.
And Deth, with chin in palm, sat on,
Staring; and in his musing, saw
The crablike moon thrust out a claw,
Wave at the sea-weed cloud, and swim
In a blue pool; then dive and dim.

3.

Above the churchyard wall he leaned;
Under a wet stone, lichen-greened,
The cricket sang. How slept they now,—
Madeline, of the golden brow;
Elaine, whose eyes were swift to speak;
And Petronilla, of satin cheek?
The laughing mouth, the greedy hand—
What found they now? Deth raised his wand,
And held its flowers above the dead.
"Take this—and this—and this—" he said;
With each quick hiss a blossom fell
Softly in moonlight, slow and pale,
Upon the dark ungarnered grass;
And lo: each grave became of glass;
Each coffin was of crystal bright;
Wherein glowed sadly a blue light.

4.

"Elaine, how sleep you? Madeline,
Where works the worm whose name is sin?
What dreams hard Petronilla, there,
Under her cobweb tent of hair?"
He leaned, he stared, he laughed a little.
Bare under glass the bones lay brittle,
The bones lay mute; but at his word
In the queer light they loosely stirred;
The jointed fingers clenched and turned;
The deep eye-sockets filmed and burned;
Over black rib and pelvis went
A flush of breathing color, blent

Of pearl and Shiraz, fiery mesh,
Dim heart, and insubstantial flesh;
And Petronilla touched her hair;
And Madeline opened eyes, to stare
Upward, beneath the coffin-pane;
And softly, betwixt the two, Elaine
Woke, weeping . . . "Ah! you remember—wake
Once more—to anguish—for my sake? . . .
You'd live once more, to dance with me,—
To kiss my claw,—to feel my knee? . . .
Sleep, now! but at the stroke of ten
Run to the Star-Tree Inn again:
You'll have, before this night is past,
Your one dance more; but this the last."
He leaned, he stared, he laughed a little.
There under glass the bones lay brittle,
Lay still; and softly died the light
That made those coffins greenly bright.

5.

Under the moon the yard lay dark,
With tilted moss-grown stones, to mark
Where slept in earth his weeping slaves:
A wilderness of rusted graves.
He twirled his wand. He limped, he moved
Beyond the lych-gate, loathed and loved.
St. Mary's laboring clock he saw;
Measuring hard the double law
Of life and death; life and death;
Dust and breath; dust and breath.
Like an old heart, in the dark tower,
With groaning wheels it turned the hour.
This too would end; would sink and pass,
Like other dead things, under grass.
The choirs, humming in candle-light,
Stirring carved aisles with scented white,
Would pace, with golden books, away;
And the stone tower be sunk in clay.
Darkly dreaming, he caused to fall
One pebble from the rotting wall.

He felt it strike, in his deep brain;
And shrank, as one who shrinks from pain.

6.

And turning, so, he heard begin,
On throbbing air, a violin
Prelusive; then a ticking drum. . . .
"So! the musicians now have come,
And I must hurry; they wait for me. . . .
Be healed now, ancient foot and knee!
Be strong and young, poor bird-claw hand,
And fit to hold this youthful wand! . . .
Heart, be heartless! . . . Dropping rags,
Be burning satin! . . . You, my hags,
Be queens for me, your wretched king!
God hides his eyes behind a wing."
And stately then, and wrapped in flame,
King Deth before the tavern came
And angrily smote the hated door
Beneath the magic sign that bore
The bright-eyed Tree, whose branches shone
With winking star and staring moon.
"Come now," he cried, "and bid me in,—
All you who groan at life and sin!
Queen Millicent, and Parson Prude!
Queen Juliana, and Doctor Lewd!—
You, Farmer Trufit! with your dame
And silly son and daughter lame!—
You, Gardy Finch, with your two girls
Whose small white necks are crisp with curls. . . .
Open the door! For John Deth comes
To beat his feet to the beating drums."

7.

Then, as the Inn door opened, he
Proud as a god stept merrily
With golden feet and wand of thorn,
Dark ivy fringing eyes of scorn.
Barlyng, the Host, before him stood,

Ruddy Silenus carved of wood,
His ringed hands plump upon his paunch.
"Welcome!" he sang, "a friend so staunch!
Come in, and sing, and dance, and drink,
And, if you like" (a watery wink)
"Make love, among the trilling glasses
To our poor simpering country lasses!
Take whom you will! Be welcomed, lord!
By Barlyng, your old host, a bawd."
The girl-faced flute-player tipped his flute;
And while the rout stood chilled and mute,
Blew across it a gleeful note
Like rainy eve in blackbird's throat;
And straight the dancers seemed to float,
Beating the air with feet like wings:
The fiddlers struck the buzzing strings,
And sang, and nodded polished skulls,
While round them frolicked the frumps and trulls.
The Bishop passed them with a caper,
Waving aloft a learnèd paper.
Behind him tripped the sad-eyed vicar
Who beamed on Millicent, the liquor
Seething his blood to frothy ichor.
"Come, Millicent, my spangled queen!
Come thump your shivering tambourine—
And dance me to the realm unseen!"
But Millicent gave his arm a shove:
"No, no! it's not the dead I love!
This youth I'll take; his lips are sweet;
I'll ripen him for a winding-sheet;
I'll wrap him for the Paraclete!"
He kicked the drummer's brass a clang,
And swore. Queen Juliana sang
With far-fixed eyes, red thumbs on hips,
Treading a measure, while her lips
Grew savage; and then led away
Into the dark, to kiss and play,
Old Farmer Trufit's gaping son,
The smiling simple-hearted one.
"My Lord," the rosy Bishop cried,

"Take me! Long since I should have died!
And in this treatise I have read
That flesh, corrupt, no sooner dead,
Grows up in beauty like a flower!"
"Bide, then," said Deth, "until that hour."
"But I am tired, and I would die!
Be merciful, and let me lie
In earth, among your blessed host,
Forgetful of the Holy Ghost.
When slowlier the thin blood flows
Than sap in brown November rose;—
The house of life a dwindling storm
Of sunset clouds, and not so warm—
When ice creeps over heart and eye—
What use to live, lord? Let me die!"
"Dance, then; and you may come with me."

8.

The clock struck ten. And those pale three
Who slept beneath untended grass
In coffins blown of lucid glass,
Came laughing through the open door,
Joined hands, and danced across the floor
To Deth, and kissed him. Madeline
In scarlet gown and slippers green;
Petronilla in amethyst,—
A white owl winking on her wrist;
And last, in black, demure Elaine
Bearing a peacock-silver train.
Madeline touched, ere he could speak,
The frosty sparkle on his cheek.
Pale Petronilla kissed the hand
That held the many-flowered wand.
Elaine was shy, Elaine was grave.
"My lord!" she said, "such joy you have!—
What pleasure can you have in me?" . . .
Deth smiled, and took her on his knee,
And kissed her mouth. Her eyes grew dim
As shyly she looked up at him.

9.

"Of all the lovely dead," said Deth,
"That weep twixt here and Nazareth;
Of all who once had shining hair
But now in dungeon lie and stare
And, if they dream of braiding, must
Consign the braiding unto dust;
Unthinking, unremembering,—
Or stirred by bird-song in the spring:
No, there is none so fair as you;
A mouth so sweet I never knew. . . .
Look up—lift up your eyes, Elaine—!
That down them I may pass again
Into that sad eternal light
Where still you treasure, phantom-bright,
Our night of love, your bridal night!"
She murmured softly, like one chidden:
"My lord, I did as I was bidden. . . .
Would you have less? Or is there more?"
Deth's eyes strove darkly to explore
Her eyes. "Ah!—there I see you still—
There, as at night I climbed the hill.
Clearly, as in a crystal ball,
I saw you, behind door and wall.
What black dream flowered in your brain?
What wormy vision, deep Elaine?
That you uncoiled, then coiled again,
In the small room, your shining hair?
What made you lift the flame, and stare
Into your eyes so long a while—
Your mirrored eyes—and sadly smile?
Did you hear footsteps on the hill?
And hearing footsteps were you still?
Did they come subtly up your blood,—
As there in candlelight you stood—:
The soft, the whispering, gold-shod feet
That nearer, clearer, louder, beat,
So loud at last they made you start—
Lest they should tread upon your heart? . . .
And tread they did; and tread they did."

"As you are bidden, so you bid,
My lord," Elaine said; "Flower and bird
Fall down before the instant word. . . .
My hair uncoiled I coiled again
Because I heard your summons plain;
Yet though I loved you, Lord, I grieved:
And gladly longer would have lived."
Each gravely smiled; and smiling still
Each kissed the other's smile; until
Their sad eyes closed, as in excess
Of dark, unhappy, blessedness.

10.

But Petronilla, owl on wrist,
Laughed down upon them as they kissed:
"See how these lovers keep their tryst
With string and cymbal loud about them
And coffin-maidens come to rout them!
Is this our lord who rules the dead?
And have his lips too often fed
Upon the living, that he wakes
This coffin-girl, Elaine, and takes
Her insubstantial heart again?"
She laughed; and as she laughed, Elaine
With opened eyes stood up; and tall
Behind her, Deth, against the wall
In scarlet rising, seemed to change
Into something still and strange:
Clawlike again became the hand
That stiffly held the flowering wand.
"What Petronilla says is true!
Go now, Elaine! I've done with you.
Go mark your victims with a kiss
And dance them out, while cymbals hiss,
Dance them down the moonlit street
To opened grave and winding-sheet.
In the beginning is the Word!
You, Petronilla, with your bird,
Lead out the Bishop, make him spring
Like a rheumatic goat, and sing

Such carols as will wake the dead
To laughter in their rooty bed.
You, Barlyng! Open now your door—
You'll fleece poor travelers no more;
This night I'll cancel out your score;
Come with me—dance! Here's Juliana
To take your hand and sing hosanna!"
"My lord—" said Barlyng, "I! your friend!
And must I come so soon to end?
Is this, at last, a just reward?
Have mercy on your servant, lord!"
"What words are these—unjust and just?
Sing now! By midnight you are dust."
Deth grazed the angry brow; and straight
Old Barlyng, shrinking, seemed elate
And wildly laughed, his face gone white,
His eyes become divinely bright.
He kicked his heels on the petaled floor
And spun, and opened wide the door.

11.

In wavering row the rout came dancing;
Now backwards drawn, and now advancing;
And Deth, with delicate wand, caressed
Each, as he came, on brow or breast:
And those, foreseeing, who wept before
Went lightly laughing through the door—
Old Trufit and his nodding dame
And silly son and daughter lame:
Gardy Finch; and his sweet girls
Whose small white necks were crisp with curls;
Juliana and aproned Barlyng;
The toothless Vicar; and his darling
Millicent, the spangled queen,
Beating aloft her tambourine;
And after them a score of others;
Fair boys and girls; and smiling mothers;
And last of all, with Doctor Lewd,
Elaine; who, weeping as he wooed,—
Led out in his obscene embrace,—

Covered with shameful hands her face.
Then stepped the drummer with his drum;
The fiddlers fiddling Kingdom Come;
The staring flutist, short of breath;
After them all, gaunt-shadowed Deth.

12.

Above his head the Star-Tree swung.
The ragged chorus now was sung—
"*Day of wrath, upon that day,*
When (as David and Sibyl say,)
Time, dishonored, comes to clay! . . ."
"Dies Irae!" whispered Deth.
Upon the Argus tree his breath
Rose like a vapor to deflower;
And softly fell an elfin shower
Of tinily winking stars and moon
Upon his cloak, and dimmed as soon
As snowflakes die in April air;
Twinkled, and left the Star-Tree bare.
"*Day of wrath—upon that day!*"
With angry claw he waved away
The Star-Tree sign, the Star-Tree Inn;
And laughed, to see his feet begin
Themselves the dance so deeply learned:
The dance of bones that beat and burned.

13.

The lych-gate green was opened wide.
The dancers rocked from side to side.
Fairy lights burned in the grass.
The churchyard now was roofed with glass.
And down a crystal stairway, bright
With goblin candle and glow-worm light,
Under the ground the dancers went:
Juliana, and Millicent,
And Parson Prude and Doctor Lewd
With small Elaine whom still he wooed;
Gardy Finch; rapt Madeline

Bearing a light beneath her chin;
The Bishop hale; tall Petronilla,
Who loudly sang the "*dies illa*";
Two by two Deth saw them pass
Under the catacomb of glass;
Watched them wind far down, and go
Among the cells, in honeyed row,
Till each had found his crystal bed
And stretched his length and propped his head:
Each with his hands upon his breast,
There, singing still, they lay at rest.

"*Horn of wonders, scattering sound*
Through all dead regions underground!"
Deth raised once more the clawlike hand
That bore the moon-white-flowered wand;
And held its blossoms above the dead.
"Take this! and this! and this!" he said.
With each sharp hiss a petal dropped
In withered grass. The singing stopped.
The crystal roof, the lights, grew dimmer.
And nought was left but a wannish glimmer
Where Petronilla, with upward stare,
A last time, drowsily, touched her hair;
And Elaine lay weeping; and Madeline
Blew out the light that warmed her chin.

14.

Above the churchyard wall Deth leaned,
Counting the tombstones, carved and greened,
In pallid rows; whence slowly came
Those two; the one with eyes of flame,
And she who bore the shameful name—
The golden-haired, who loved her lord,
And the wise demon, who abhorred.
Loud-whirring wings in Mary's tower
Foretold the striking of the hour.
High up, the hidden small-voiced bell
Shook out twelve silver birds, that fell
Slowly to earth on whizzing wings

Among the churchyard whisperings.
And lo, commingled with the ringing,
Were heard five ghostly voices singing:
"*The quick to church, the dead to grave,*
We ring: such usage let us have.
Who here, therefore, doth damn, or swear,
Or quarrel, though no blood appear:
Who wears a spur, o'erturns a bell,
Or, being unskilful, spoils a peal;
He'll sixpence pay for every crime,
To warn him 'gainst another time.
Let all in friendship hither come
While Treble sings to Thundering Tom;
And since bells are for recreation,
Let's ring, and fall to admiration."

II: MILLICENT PIGGISTAILE

1.

"My lord," said Millicent, "now rest
Your head on this exhausted breast,
This breast that is a ruined world.
Here rocks decay, and seas are whirled
To nothingness; here God is not;
And all things living are forgot.
Dark Juliana, on her tomb,
Angrily stares against her doom;
There, like the robin, leans her head
To hear the whispers of the dead:
She loves you not. Come lord, and rest
Your head on this exhausted breast."

Under the churchyard yew they lay,
In shade, those two. Not far away
Dark Juliana stretched herself
Along a narrow marble shelf,
Watching, with wide unfathomed eye,
The bat at caper. . . . "Come and lie
In this cold grass, your arm above me,
Once more, and tell me that you love me.

Here, in this breast, all things are dead.
All is at peace. Here make your bed."
"This night," said Deth, "I lie with you:
Our deathless sorrow we renew.
I'll see once more, through your deep face,
The horror huge of ruined space—
Where all that grew no longer grows;
The tomb, wherein the whirlwind blows.
There will I lie! there slowly thrust
Dead roots, to crack that sterile dust."
"Look deep, my lord! And do you see
The whirlwind-besomed tomb in me?
This is not flesh! This is a world
In which no living seed is furled;
No anguished root, to threaten spring;
No bough, to bear; no bird, to sing.
Come now, my lord; and be a tree;
And grow with pitiless roots in me."

2.

The sidling crab-moon plunged itself
In weedy cloud. And from her shelf
Among the tombs the demon saw
The silver-jointed awkward claw
Wave at a vapor and withdraw.
The churchyard drowsed, without a breath;
Save there, where Millicent and Deth,
In the black yew-tree shadow, strove
To warm in bone and rock their love.
There Millicent lay back, and pressed
Deth's scythe-sharp chin against her breast
As though to cut, with that bright bone,
Into her heart of hollow stone.
"Now, lord, at last we are alone,—
Alone in all the world," she said:
"There are no living and no dead.
The graves, that were your torment, gone,
All graves at last become but one;
And that grave shapes itself in me
For you to grow on like a tree.

Grow here! Here thrust and knot your roots.
Tower to leaves and flowers and fruits!
God hides his eyes behind his wing
While we perform this sacred thing."

From the dark labor of his love
Deth rested then, and did not move.
Downward he brooded on that face
Below his own, which now like space
Grew vast and meaningless and strange
And eyeless. Then he felt the change
Come upward through him; cold and deep;
Like clotting water felt it drip
Into his heart; there saplike spread.
On the black stone he dropped his head.

3.

And now the moon-white petaled wand,
Fallen down from the rootlike hand,
Alone in darkness breathed and glowed
And writhed its living leaves, and showed,
Like a live thing of wounded light
That wreathed its anguish, how the night
Emptied itself of shape and sound,
A horror deep that had no bound;
Within whose glimmering hollow was
An island of tall churchyard grass;
And there, upthrust in dripping gloom,
A black, dishonored, cracking tomb.
And on the tomb there grew a tree
Which moved its white roots rapidly
Now here, now there, from side to side,
Like vipers blind that struck and pried
Over the stone, until a crack
Was found upon the vaulted back;
Wherethrough a taproot whistling thrust
Into the sighing vault of dust
And swelled and reddened and rived apart
The aching stones and pierced the heart;
While hissed the other roots, a crowd,

And fed and throve. Then cried aloud
The injured tomb: "Your roots have found
The core of anguish, underground!
My inward walls they search and scrape
And I am blest! . . . My lord, what shape
Take you above? And do you grow?"
The dark tree answered: "Grief I know,
And feed on; my increasing leaves
Are syllables of one who grieves.
Swiftly I grow! My branches turn
Like burning boughs that as they burn
Twist upward through the twisting fire
And feed upon it as on desire."
The tomb made answer to the tree:
"Queen Juliana—where is she? . . .
Does she, like Sybil, read her book
Angrily,—and forbear to look?
Or does she watch the furious root
That brings its misery to fruit?"
The dark tree clashed its leaves and said:
"Queen Juliana preens her head
Beneath my bough, against a knee
Of gnarly root twixt you and me.
She stares and dreams. Her chin is propped
Upon her palms. Her book is dropped."
"What is it that she stares at? What
Is that she dreams of?" "Things forgot
By you and me. All hideous things.
Root-rived mouths; and festered wings.
Petronilla, whose hair is rotten;
Elaine, who weeps alone, forgotten;
And Madeline; whose breasts are gnawed
By the sharp worm that was a bawd."

4.

Five chains of moonlight shot the gloom
Of swelling leaves; and showed the tomb
Wrapt every way with roots, that gript
The falling stones; and slid and slipt
Through grinning cracks, as though to smother

And coil and bruise and crush each other
In slippery knots convulsed. And there
Among live roots that made a chair
Dark Juliana sat to stare
A gold crown winking in her hair;
Beneath her chin strong knuckles folded;
Eyes black; and forehead fury-moulded.
Her opened book that lay in grass
Mirrored the crab-moon like a glass
And a wheel of cobweb; staring down
She saw her knuckles, saw her crown;
And under, moon-shot, swirling, dense,
Swollen each second more immense,
The frightful tree, world-bearing tree,
The tree that cracked infinity.
And now she watched the slow roots tighten
Against the shrinking tomb and brighten
With what they fed on. Now she heard
Out of the tomb, word mixed with word,
A windy murmur, sighed complaint,
Deep underground, confused and faint;
As though, far down, the host of dead,
Imprisoned in a mighty bed,
Cried out in sleep, or babbled words
Misshapen, like sleep-charmèd birds
Who feel the snake among them pass
And dare not wake. And now with glass
That wilderness was paved. And there
Came running up the crystal stair,
Naked and small, with rose-wreathed hair,
Miriam Finch, who bore a light
And thrust it against the leafy night
And "Father!" echoing called, and then
Turned, and fled down deep stairs again. . . .
Then all grew dark. And through the book
Queen Juliana leaned to look;
And saw, far down, a long root reach
And wrap the child, who without speech,
Let fall the light. Then spoke the tomb:
"My lord, strange voices fill this gloom;
Make haste; unpeople my deep womb;

For I am tired, I would be still!"
"Voices? Then let them have their will,"
Hissed from his heart of leaves the tree.
"Three voices will we hear; we three.
Listen! far down the first one cries!
Who's this, deep hid within us, dies?"

5.

Then spoke the tomb: "Thus ends the world!
Now, with the last of roots uncurled,
You hale away these prophets three. . . .
Now I am still. Now buds the tree,
That soon will strangely bloom, and bear
A fiery world in phantom air. . . .
Make haste, great tree! And break me, now.
Shatter my vault for bud and bough.
Let the last breath of my foul bosom
Rise bubbling through you, break in blossom,
And magically bloom and blanch,
A moon, upon your topmost branch! . . ."

The tree no answer made. No bird
Among its maze of boughs was heard.
But it grew vast. Its massed leaves shook.
And Juliana, in her book,
Saw how it raged, a world in size,
And filled with thrusting boughs the skies;
Vast boughs that leaned as if to breach
The glassy infinite, and reach
Across the ridgy ice of time
To the vague God who hung sublime,
Like a great cloud, enfolding space,
With bright wings tall before his face,
Unmoving, rapid, rapt in light.
And a soft roaring filled the night
Of boughs. A whistling wind came through them;
A wave of chaos blind, and blew them;
Till buds of planets winked and shone
And burned the boughs, and fiercely blown,
Opened enormous staring flowers,

And dropped hot petals, blazing showers,
A rain of flame. The demon saw
The tightening roots, a grifon's claw,
Crush the weak tomb; it sighed; it spoke
"Peace!" and was lost; a puff of smoke
Thinned from the clutching roots, was gone;
Nothing but powder left of stone.

Then cracked the tree. The branches split.
Ripe moons and pale suns swelled in it
And bore it over. The branches sagged
With heavy stars that blazing dragged
The treetop down. And swift, and strange,
The tree itself began to change:
Shriveled: along each palsied limb
Crawled a flame: the suns grew dim,
And dwindled showering; bubble moon
Burst, and hovered in sparkles down;
The leaves exhaled, the small tree sunk,
Twisted and wizened, writhed and sunk,
In a soft blaze like tinsel melting;
Till nought was left but a flimsy pelting
Of firefly glints on the brow and hair
Of dark Juliana who brooded there . . .
It died, like snow in April air.

6.

Then all was still. No sound there was.
The cricket slept in dripping grass.
Nought was breathing, nought was stirring:
Until from the ivy came a whirring
And waking wings in Mary's tower
Foretold the striking of the hour.
Slowly, the little small-voiced bell
Shook out four silver birds, that fell
Softly to grass, on whizzing wings,
Among the churchyard whisperings.
Dark Juliana closed her eyes
And nodded among her mysteries;
While there, beneath the churchyard yew,

In chilly shade they stirred, those two,
And heavily rose, as if from sleep
Of passion fathomlessly deep.
"Come Millicent—my doxy queen!
Come upward from the vast obscene.
Swim swiftly upward—breathe; escape
The fetid tomb; resume your shape!
Day creeps; and Juliana sleeps;
Deep in her sleep the demon weeps
For us, and for all suffering things—
Root-rived mouths, and rat-gnawed wings;
The broken tomb; the phantom tree;
Herself, a part of you and me.
Look, how the spasm takes her face
For dreaming deep of God's disgrace!"

Queen Millicent no answer made,
But palely rose in the yew-tree shade;
Among the pallid tombs they stept,
And watched, where Juliana slept,
And in her slumber shook and wept.
So brooding stood. Then with quick wand,
Gently he touched the sleeping hand;
And Juliana sucked her breath
Opening wing-filled eyes at Deth;
Profound, estranged. "And has day come?
And are you from your wanderings home?"
Deth answered: "Home from tomb and tree.
The day has come." They turned, those three:
Out of the-churchyard darkly went
Juliana and Millicent:
And Deth, in twilight, loitering after,
Stifled in heart a rabid laughter;
Insane, the raging laugh of grief;
Hysteria of the withered leaf.

III: THE FALLING OF THE BIRDS

1.

"Come birds! Come chirp, come laugh, come sing!
Come goudspink, whirl your flimsy wing!

Come teewhaup cry, come nightingale
And mourn for Millicent Piggistaile!
Eagle and heron, blackbird, lark,
Hurrying sparrow, and booming hawk—
Come, stumbling owl, and blink and stare
Caught in the sunlight's blinding hair!
Tuwhoo cry out! red robin come,
Where Deth's hand flings your daily crumb!"

In a sun-shot flash of powdery rain
Deth singing sped down Dead Man's Lane,
Where murdered warriors, long since dead,
Lay, bones akimbo, heel to head.
The spider's trembling web he broke
That burned in air twixt thorn and oak;
The rain-bright wheel sunk softly, broken,
The spider swung, with no word spoken;
And Deth, with dripping wand, went on
While birds above him sang for dawn.
"See how they mount," he cried, "and fill
The sky with flickering wings, until
High up a swarm of gnats they seem,
Waver, and hover and flash, and gleam
And weave, like motes in a fever-dream! . . .
Come birds! Come cry! Come moan! Come rage!
Come weep that heaven is but a cage!"

2.

He was in rags; a pilgrim, he
Sang down the deep lane merrily,
Struck off, with whizzing wand, a leaf,
Shook showers of drops, and hid his grief;
While murdered men, behind his back,
Moved tongues of clay; and clucked "Alack,
That Deth must take the harmless birds,
Who have but song, who have no words!
See how they come, poor darlings, come
To sing their souls out and be dumb!
Go back, bright feathers! Eyes of light,

Be hooded, lest you're clay to-night!
Look not beneath the serpent's lid
To see what seed-pearl there is hid:
What blood-drop stone, what topaz clear,
Or frozen amethystine tear!
It is the stone of light that kills:
The stone that thrills: the stone that stills."
The red sun sent a stinging shaft
Through the wet boughs; wherein Deth laughed
And whirled his rags, to skip and frisk
With a scudding shadow, ribbed, grotesque;
Three oak-leaves tore; one twig was shattered;
A hundred scarlet drops were scattered;
A bee cried out in a foxglove bell,
Both slain in the grass; and Deth stood still.
"Stoop, birds! Stoop, feather-brains! and say—
Shall I come as bird or snake to-day?
You, Miriam Robin, on your nest—
Warming five eggs beneath your breast,—
Command now: how would you like me best?
With beak and claw? Or were it better
With rainbow rings and eyes that glitter?"
Lifting a rag he flashed a wing
And hawklike screamed and swerved, to fling
A gliding shadow. Winged and blue
It hung with sickle edge, and grew
Enormous, roaring, shook a cry
From Miriam Robin, dull of eye—
"Pity! Pity! Not I, not I!"
Deth laughed; and coiled him like a spring.
The laugh became a hiss; the wing
Wizened, and winked with rainbow scale;
By quivering primrose slid the tail;
The eyes were sparkles; flat the head;
Deep the thin mouth; the tongue of thread
Flicked out and in; and, hushed, the bird,—
Lids drooped, beak open—spoke no word.
Then croaked the dead men underground—
"Sing, Miriam, sing!" . . . The bright snake wound
On a gray-footed ivy-stem;
Dropped head and opal diadem;

The tiny eyes, red seeds of fire,
Unwinking, glowed their shrewd desire.
And dead men clucked their tongues of clay:
"Sing, Miriam, sing! and fly away!"
Miriam whispered: "The eyes are red:
Smiling, they leave the smiled-on dead.
Poppy, let fall one silken petal
Upon the jeweled head to settle!
One petal drop! your hour is come!
Die now, and save me from the worm!"
Gauzy-throated, the poppy sung—
"Spare Miriam, lord! for she is young!"
One petal dropped. The scarlet hood
Mantled the cunning head like blood.

3.

With myriad voices grass was filled.
A beetle clicked. A cricket shrilled.
A host of ants, deep underground,
Murmured in earth a mournful sound,
Sang slowly, rolling grains of sand.
The scarlet eft, with scarlet hand
Clutching a twig, and small dark eye,
Under an oak-leaf ticked his cry.
And buttercups, like sea-surf swinging,
Their countless gentle gold-bells ringing,
Tinkled for gnats and tolled for bees
And chimed for dragon-flies. Vast trees
Flung down their blossoms green that fell
Roaring through air, each clanging bell
Quenched in the grass. White moth on thistle
Fanned with his wings and made them whistle . . .
And Deth, deep-sunk in the surf of tune
That seethed the flowering sea of June,
Drunk with the voices, bells, and zithers,
Passionate choir of all that withers,
Flickered his tongue and arched his head
From Miriam's nest and Miriam dead.
Horned mouth and jeweled pate he thrust
Through twanging web and lichen crust;

A red-furred spider caught, that trilled
Loud as a fly; then all was stilled.

4.

"Come birds! Come cry! Come moan! Come rage!
Come weep that heaven is but a cage!"
Deth, on the hilltop, flung his cry
Hard as a flint against the sky.
In grass he sat. The birds, a cloud,
Darkened the hill. Their wings were loud.
No voices had they—tongues were still;
Like falling leaves they touched the hill;
Winnowed the grass with fanning wings;
Among the daisies fell in rings;
While Deth, unsmiling, never stirring
Amid the fluttering and the whirring
That blew his rags and fanned his face,
Sat stonelike, staring, in that place.
Between his knees in nodding grass
A golden cage of osier was,
Shaped like a bell, no bird inside;
The door of osier opened wide.
This twice he turned. With nodding head,
Sadly, at last: "Speak, birds!" he said.
"Miriam on her nest lies dead.
Five eggs beneath her breast grow cold.
This is the day of wrath foretold.
Who knows my secret? . . . Whose bright eyes
Have seen in the wood the light that flies?
That bird who tells me, he shall have
This cage of osier, he shall live;
Think well! for all who do not know
Shall melt upon this hill like snow.
Within my humming web are heard
Caught worlds that cry. What means a bird?"
Bubbled the clay in Dead Man's Lane:
"For him, within whose net complain
Suns that whistle and moons that die,
What means, alas, the sparrow's cry?
Miriam on her nest lies dead,

A poppy petal hoods her head.
The wormfly dances in the sun
And sings; her sexton work is done. . . ."
"Think birds! Think deeply! Think! Recall!
One lives, one only, of you all!"

5.

Tranced were the birds in tree and grass.
Their lively eyes were still as glass.
They looked at Deth. They hunched. They stared.
Their bright wings drooped; they all despaired.
"Come, birds!" cried Deth. "Can no one speak? . . .
You there, Mag Oolie—feather-beak!
You—bloody-claws!—round-amber-eyes!
Old howlet, you who look so wise—
Tuwhoo! cry out, and sing it plain—
Where flies the light in wind or rain?
Where's beauty fled? Where's brightness lying?
Where runs the nymph with tresses flying? . . .
What hollow oak-tree hides her now
Till twilight? By what singing bough
Leans she her head to twist her hair
And stands, with bright eyes, listening there? . . .
Speak, owl!" . . .

Then spoke the owl: "Tuwhoo! . . .
Last night by China Wall I flew.
I saw Confucius lapt in red
Among the brown Cataian dead.
'Beauty is in the mind,' he said—
'Beauty is in the eternal way.'
The lips that spoke were deep in clay.
. . . Rank grass above his bones was tangled.
Wild herds above him pawed and jangled.
The Tree of Heaven pierced him through
With one deep pillar-root. It grew
With arrowy leaves; twelve fathom high;
With massy column toward the sky.
'Beauty is in the mind!' said he—
Five carrion crows were in the tree.

One of them slipped and gave a caw.
And there I fed. And there I saw
A horde of phantoms pale, like waves
Break softly on that land of graves.
Rapid and soundless lap and glide;
Over the wall; to deserts wide:
Through gorges; among grassy seas;
By jingling streets; and under trees
And into hovels and out again,
Through walls, with neither sound nor pain.
Your slaves, my lord! Cataians dead. . . .
'Beauty is in the mind!' he said—
In seven silver bubbles broke
The clay-bound syllables he spoke.
The moonlight, white and cold as snow
On Tree of Heaven and carrion crow,
Made all seem strange.—The fool said 'Caw!'—
And the rapt carrion answered 'Law!' "

6.

The owl was still. Then cried Moll Hern—
"Is beauty, thus, a thing to learn? . . .
No, lord! It is a thing to see.—
Thrice has the vision come to me!
It is a golden eel that weaves
Twined light beneath dark water-leaves.
By Nile Bank I have seen it twice:
And once beneath Kamchatka's ice!"

Low laughter flew among the birds
Derisive of the heron's words:
Of golden minnow; golden gnat;
And jeweled frog; and silver rat;
And pearly newt; and ruby ant;
"And ivory fish!" cried cormorant,
"Inlaid with gold!" "And silver lark,"
The merlin laughed; "a pretty mark
For sluggish claw or greedy beak!"
"And golden mouse!" said owl, "with squeak
Melodious, shining soft and sleek!"

They laughed, they ruffed their throats and crests,
And shook their tails and puffed their breasts;
And nudged each other with their wings
And chuckled throaty obscene things
And trilled and clucked with mirth-shut eyes.
But Deth was sad. "Is none more wise
Than plump Mag Oolie, skinny Hern?
Let Whistling Dick now have his turn.
Think well, poor thrush! and be more sage
Than these, if you would win the cage."

7.

Then sang the thrush: "A wasp-filled thorn
Twists from the heart of dead King Horn;
Where, half the year, the snow lies deep
On aching bones that never sleep.
There have I sung: and there have heard
Defiant of my voice, the word
Of Horn, who once a pilgrim came
To Rimenhild, white heart of flame.
She, she was beauty! She has still
On April evenings green and chill,
Blown on the wind, the power to thrill
The agued bones of that poor king.
Twice in the tomb he tries to sing.
Twice he cries: 'The dream was strange
That bade the king to fisher change! . . .
I flung my net, and in it drew
No fish; but that gold ring you knew.
Pour me no ale, but fill a cup
With mead; and I will drink it up,
And leave the ring; thus may you see
That I am Horn, and welcome me. . . .
. . . Horn, the son of Murry, am I! . . .'
Twice in the thorntree shakes his cry;
And stammered praise of Rimenhild;
And a curse on Mody and Fikenhild . . .
She, lord, is beauty, who can make
So grievously dead earth to wake!"

8.

The pipit, from the swinging tree
Dropped briefly singing, "Can it be
That beauty is so basely born?
Then beauty were a thing to scorn!
Is beauty prisoner to the flesh—
A gold-bird in a leaden mesh?"
Deth turned the cage; from idle hand
He dropped in daisied grass the wand.
"Speak, Crow! Speak, Heedy Royston! tell
Of beauty in a parable!"

"Ha!" said the Crow. "The silly pipit! . . .
I'll paraphrase him! *Hic incipit!*
. . . When the green damsel, with sad pace,
Came at dusk to the trysting-place;
And saw in the blue pool, mirrored fair,
White hands, and golden wavering hair;
And thought of the seven kisses given,
And seven nights of sin unshriven,—
Of beauty's lips that age with the kiss,
The burning body that dulls with bliss:
She broke her girdle, and flung it down,
And stained with dust her green silk gown;
She looked at ripples, and longed to flow
As clearly bright as the waters go.
She sighed; she stooped; she filled her hand
With tinily twinkling grains of sand;
She spread five fingers in grasses green—
The dark little blades looked up between;
And tears made doubly bright her eyes
As long she stared at hills and skies,
Thinking how once she had walked with these
In young clear innocent daybreak ease. . . .
She dropped three pebbles: they broke the stream,—
The wandering ripples ringed her dream.
White, among leaves, she desired to go,
Like grass to quiver, like wind to blow. . . .
Alas! of a sudden her lover came
And stood by a tree and sang her name;

And she, forgetting her moment's whim,
Jumped up, and laughed, and ran to him."

9.

"Ah, heedless Royston, cynic bird,—
And cynic still with your last word!
On heaven's blue stone you whet your laughter,
Your scornful 'haar!'; and what comes after,—
What under, or before, might go,—
You flout . . . Good, brave, deluded crow—
You shall be made as white as snow! . . ."
"You, little goudspink, chalandire,—
Where's beauty? Where's my heart's desire?
Where sleeps she now?" Sad-voiced was he;
And smiled at gold-finch listlessly;
As one who sees, yet sees not, dreaming
Of secrets dark beneath the seeming:
The speck of blackness in the seed
That gulfs infinity in its greed:
The yawning ruin, in the flower,
Whence Hinnom vale will come to power.
And sad-voiced was the gold-finch too;
And slow; as he in midnight flew;
And knew his flight the last; and knew
His error destined. "Ah, my lord,—
What wisdom can a finch afford,—
Who only knows the thistle well?
Is beauty in the thistle bell?
The thistle seed on my small tongue?
Of this, this mostly, have I sung;
Yet wise enough am I to know
This is not beauty. What may show
As beauty's golden seed to me
For you a mite of dust may be.
I yield my will; I sadly guess
What may, for you, be loveliness.

10.

"By Nanking pool, I saw one ghost
Speak with another; of that host

Mag Oolie knew.—Cried Yuan P'ien:
'Alas—among the dead, again
We meet, old friend! unresting blown
On the dry wind that whirls us on
To Nowhere out of Nothing! Speak!—
Before the wind his hatred wreak
And part our hands!' . . . Then Hao Shih Chin,
Poet and potter, old and thin:
'To what can hands of vapor cling? . . .
How fly the hawk without a wing? . . .
Yet sweet it is twixt gust and gust,
To pause with you, remembering dust,—
Long since, poor garment, laid away. . . .
My Teapot Cottage, made of clay—
Alas is gone; barbarians dwell
Above the buried temple bell;
The wine-cup that I loved the most—
Deep in the nine-bend stream is lost.
My window was a broken jar;
My door, a mat; my light, a star.
Each pot and cup I shaped of clay—
One footstep on the Eternal Way.
Old friend, how blessed to recall
Those humble lives! my tears would fall,
If tears I had, remembering how
I moulded under the cherry bough
Three wine-cups, exquisitely thin
As the white curtain hid within
The egg-shell; red as snow-peaks drenched
In dragon glory! These we launched
With laughter, from the orchid arbor;
Frail scarlet ships, they found a harbor
Mid blue-flags by the nine-bend stream . . .
Deep in my heart I hug that dream.'

Then Yuan P'ien: 'And do you think,—
As I do,—of the Forest of Ink?
Talking, we sat at tea for hours.
Half-opened, frail, hibiscus flowers—
Our tinted cups! . . . My friend, we knew

The temple fair at Pao Ssu;
The curio-dealer in his stall
Beside the damp Nine-Dragon Wall,
And all his curious treasures laid
On orange silk in mulberry shade.
Rouge-boxes like persimmons ripe
With lustrous glaze and juicy stripe
And covering leaf: a cricket cage
Of Hsiu, the cunning archimage:
Globed bursting peony cups of Chun;
A perfume box by Hsiu's son.
But ah, but ah, the loveliest thing
Here, once, I saw in dead Nanking!
A censer jar: fish-handled: red
In guise of dawn-clouds spread and sped
In sunshine bright: the upper part
Red as the deep-cleft sunrise heart.
Two-thirds was this; and then, below,
A white as pure as mountain snow;
The white and red together came
In wavy lines of dazzling flame . . .
What beauty have we seen, my friend!'

'Beauty is that which has an end!'
Said Hao Shih Chin. 'The lovely face—
Tao, that suffers time and space!
Let it from space and time escape—
It is eternal, has no shape.
Ghosts here—what have we? Dead and wise,
We know but feel not; have no eyes
For beauty: beauty is that which dies
To-morrow; but is not yet dead.
It is the whiteness in the red. . . .
Beauty we knew, but know not now—
The ice-white bowls of Yueh-Chow;
And those of Hsing-Chow, white as snow.
Like snow, like ice, they come, they go.'
'And the Sung potters' crackled glaze—
How often have we stood at gaze
Lost in its thousand ways and rays!

Cobwebs woven in fine device;
The snow-stars knocked in splitting ice;
Fish-roe and fish-net; red eel-veins,—
Crackle the potter fed with stains
Till they were living, one could swear,
And fed the glaze!' . . . 'And Te-Hwa ware
White as the moon; its bearded sages
And toads and cranes; and crabs in cages;
Kuan-Yu, the warrior; tall Kuan-yin,
Goddess of Mercy; Arhats thin
Riding on tigers, wound in thought;
Bowls with phoenix and pheasant wrought . . .
These had the beauty of the leaf;
Which comes from Nothing, and has a brief
Delight in Being; and weeping goes
Once more to Nothing, and Nothing knows.
Beauty is briefness: it is the death
That cries "I live!" twixt breath and breath.
It is the softly taken breath
That mourns "Alas!" twixt death and death.'

'Beauty is life!' cried Yuan P'ien:
'How gladly would I live again! . . .
How gladly give the All for Little,
And the Enduring for the Brittle! . . .'

'. . . I think of Chen Chung Mei; who died
Because with his weak soul he tried
To make the Little say the All.
He shaped a Kuan-yin white and tall,
Mixing his soul with soulless clay.
Divine, she smiled! But Chen Chung Mei—
Dropped down before her, senseless lay,
Died in his dream. He knew her not.
Potter had turned himself to pot!'
Thus Hao Shih Chin. And Yuan P'ien
Opened sad lips to speak: but then
The long wind blew their hands apart
And whirled their white beards. 'Have good heart!'
Each cried to other; and their ghosts
Flew off, like leaves, with Tao's hosts."

11.

. . . The goldfinch ceased. And Deth was still;
And kindly, gravely smiled; until
The cormorant (head sunk and dozing)
Stirred from his dream (one eye unclosing)
And shook a wing, and chuckled—"Krell!
I like the goudspink's story well!
But what, pray, is it all about?
Here's neither beauty, no, nor trout! . . .
What's this of ghosts, and sunset-bowls,
Where potters mix with clay their souls?
Moll Hern's a fool; but we might learn
Something, I think, from fool Moll Hern.
Beauty is food,—food, beauty! there
Is all we know, and all our care!"
He sunk his head and closed his eye.

"Here," said the sparrow, "speaks the sty:
Malodorous chords from bubbling ooze.
Vermin and worms will have their views.
My lord, last night I fed, at Rome,
In grass where once was Lesbia's tomb.
There chickweed creeps, and clover red,—
Above that once transcendent head;
And there, amid the bindweed, grows
One tulip lovelier than a rose.
There sleeps the bee at night; and there,
I heard, or dreamed, in that sweet air,
A voice—whose voice I do not know—
Murmuring out of the ground below:
'Tulips, freaked in pink and white,
Are lifted for the heart's delight. . . .
Raindrops, pelting on broad leaves,—
Loosening silver from black eaves,—
Fall in the secret heart; and sing
A nameless and bewildering thing . . .
Sparrows—though of little voice—
May make the tired heart rejoice;
Winnowing quick-winged from the brain
Web and windlestraw of pain;

Even in shadow, there may be
Beauty for you, beauty for me . . .
Be glad to think—when we are dead—
Great clouds will still sail overhead;
Scattering slowly, as they pass,
Jewels of rain, to light the grass:
To lift, for other men's delight,
These tulips, freaked in pink and white.'"

12.

The sparrow ceased, and one brown wing
Preened and ruffled. Not answering,
Deth closed his eyes; the birds were still.
Then Philomel: "To Sanchi Hill,
Seeing the heavens smoke with shame,
At night great king Asoka came.
The moon rose: and the moon was red.
Then cried the king: 'Ten thousand dead,
Kalinga sunk in crimson mud,
And Ganges like a vein of blood.
The moon is scarlet, for my sake.
The war must end! And I will make
A temple here, where men may read
The eight-fold path, Nirvana's creed.
Here build a stupa! here enshrine
The relics of Gautama's line.
Groves, here; beneath whose wings may rest
The singing pilgrims; east and west,
Four gates of granite, huge, to show
Where everlasting peace may grow. . . .
Carve in the Eastern Gate a tree
With mangos hung; and let there be
The caryatic nymph, to cling,
With bracelet ring, and anklet ring,
Beneath its boughs; the fruits above:
The Buddha's mother, Sacred Love.
Cut deeply in each architrave
The story of dead Chandra. Grave
The Peacock with his thousand eyes,
Brief emblem of our dynasties;

The massive stone-ends be volute;
And all the rest with flower and fruit
And beast and man and bird designed,
In blessed harmony entwined.
Henceforth forever is no war;
But peace; and rest; and Buddha's lore.'
Thus cried Asoka to the moon.
Alas! what is brute Time, that soon
Must dynasties, as men, devour?
Wise King Asoka spoke his hour;
His dream is vanished; like a flower."

"Often at night," said Deth, "have I,
Under a forest's leafy sky
Heard in the listening dark your cry,
And thought it beauty, Philomel,
And mourned. But, ah, this tale you tell,
Of King Asoka, gone to dust,
With drums and dreams and gates that rust—
Here's nothing, no! . . . Speak now, some bird—
Where's Beauty, Beauty? . . ."

13.

No wing stirred,
No beak was opened. Then was heard
The squeaking bat, who flapped in grass,
Awkward and purblind. "Let me pass,
Sisters!" And they with shudders drew
Aside, and let the creature through,
Who, stumbling, fell before the cage;
And squeaked: "My lord! I am not sage!
Yet, used to darkness, know some things
Hidden from timid daylight wings.
No virtue, truly, that I rove,
Moon or no moon, the haunted grove—!
Why should I either blame or praise
My sisters, Lord!—to each her ways.
Yet happened it that last night, dancing
Out of a well, in starlight glancing
From oak to willow, hunting food

From Saxon vale, to Wickham wood—
Beyond Dumb Woman's Lane I found
A cavern, slanting underground,
Hid in a thicket; the beechen grove
Showered a moon-pierced shade above,
Where, all unwitting, Philomel
Sang to the dark. And there befell
That as I dropped my hands to see
This cave,—before unknown to me,—
Venus Anadyomene,
Foam-born Venus, goddess of Love,
Came from the vault, and in that grove
Stared at the moon. Naked was she,
Whiter than shell her breast and knee,
Cold as the moon her fair face shone,
Her hair like frost in the light of the moon.
The leaves about her a sea-sound made,
Seethed, seethed. And the beechen shade
Was dark and cold as shade must be
In moonlit cavern beneath the sea.
She, lord, is beauty! Seek her there!
Strangle the goddess with her bright hair!"

The cage was open. The bat flew in.
The air grew loud with a whistling din
Of wings. A thousand birds as one
Went from the hill against the sun.
Beneath the multitudinous cloud
Deth raised his wand, and cried aloud:
"Be snow, bright birds!" . . .

Then fell the snow;
The hill was white. And bent, and slow,
His shoulders bright with frost, one hand
Clutching the cage, and one the wand,
Deth stooped down from the voiceless hill.
The sun broke forth. The bat was still—
Head downward in the cage he swung;
The cage a bell and he the tongue.

IV: VENUS ANADYOMENE

1.

"My lord," said Juliana, "wake!
The hour of peace is coming. Take
The osier cage, and let the mouse
Guide us once more to Venus' house.
All things, as heretofore, have run:
The tamarisk devoured the sun:
Burning, the snake-fed buzzard flew
And screamed by Fairlight Cliff. Thrice crew
The roosting cock. The forest was,
With all its acorn-cups and grass,
And forkèd boughs, a sound of singing;
The myriad bells of goblins ringing . . .
Wake, lord, and come!"

2.

John Deth awoke,
And shook the dew, and no word spoke,
And at the demon, long and hard,
Stared, and the heavens thickly starred,
As though he comprehended nought;
But in his eyes deep-coiling thought
Struggled, like pitchy smoke; and soon
Memory rose there, like the moon.
Darkly he rose; and taller grown
By starlight carved of granite stone,
Towered above his doxies, bent
A clouded brow on Millicent,
Murmured: "The birds—like snow they went.
The sky was dark. The cold flakes fell
Loud on the leaden grass. The bell
Of osier, that before has sung,
Was shut upon its living tongue . . .
And down the hill I came to sleep. . . ."

3.

Then Millicent, who seemed to weep,
Where on a forest-stone she sat,
Cried out: "My lord, now take the bat,
The rere-mouse foul who guides our way,
And do this thing! Soon comes the day.
Speak to your servant, lord!" she said.
(The cage hung dark above her head,
Deep-lodged within a holly tree.)
"Speak to your servant, lord!" said she;
And upward, weeping, looked, and saw
The vampire, hanging by a claw;
Fox-eared; and still; with burning eyes.
"You who alone," cried Deth, "were wise,
And knew the goddess of all blood—
Now guide us to the shameful wood
That hides the torment! Speak, foul moth,—
Whose wings are webs of Stygian cloth! . . .
Speak, and forever live. . . ."

4.

Thereat
Made answer slow the weak-voiced bat:
"My lord, your power this osier shows;
As on the hilltop showed the snows.
My life is yours; your will is law.
And yet, eternal wing and claw,—
Franchise for everlasting grief,—
These seek I not! Better the brief
And dumb existence of the leaf.
Who knows naught—let him live forever!
Who knows and mourns—pity! and sever
From the blind sap that bears him, lord;
Deep death alone is his reward. . . .
—And yet, forgive! I do you wrong?
Not over all things are you strong:
And I am he you cannot kill;—
I cannot die." The bat was still,
And dark amid his osier hung.

Then found the cage again its tongue:
"But you must go! The way is plain.
Hurry. And by Dumb Woman's Lane,
Betwixt two silver birches, break
The spider's wheel; and you will take
Venus, who twists her frost-white hair
And stands, with bright eyes, listening there."

5.

The bat-voice dropped. The moon behind
A small fog flew; the night was blind.
And Deth unhooked the cage, and bent
With Juliana and Millicent
Beneath dead boughs; across a wall;
And up the lane, where chill and tall
The wych-elms whispered. Now the singing
Of myriad leaves began; the ringing
Of goblin heart-bells softly thrilled
Deep in the haunted wood, and filled
The night with grief. In Deth's left hand
Glowed like a snake of light the wand,
And showed how Juliana stept:
How, in his cage the vampire slept:
While Millicent, in silence, wept.

Between two branching birches hung
The cobweb wheel. Against it swung
The cage, and tore the little thread.
Silent, with unuplifted head,
Staring at dead leaves, swiftly came
Behind their master's cloak of flame
The hurrying two; pursued the hand,
Clawlike and bright, that clutched the wand:
And stopped, where moonlight poured to pave
A floor of bluebells. Black, the cave
Yawned at the moon; and moonlit, there
Venus, twisting her flowered hair,
Venus Anadyomene,
Foam-born Venus, cold as the sea,
Shone like frost. Loud in the wood

The goblin heart-beats rang, while stood
The three before her. And she quavered,
Frightened—like flame that backward wavered—
Her long hair slipping against her knee:
"Lord Deth, what seek you here with me?
You, Millicent, what do you here—
Your deep eyes thronged with wings of fear?
And you, black gypsy, all things knowing—
Where, among ruins and starlight going?
To what can copse and cavern lead you?
What weed-grown shameful grave can need you?
This grove is mine. The hour is late.
What brings you here to break my gate?"
Then Deth: "Here in this wood you die.
And we have come to crucify."
The goddess stared. "The birds,—" she said,
"Will blind you, save me!" "Birds are dead,"
The other answered, "all save one,
Who slumbers in this cage, alone.
The bat betrayed. The rest are snow."
Venus was still. Then deep and low,
Angry, the bell-like laughter rang,
Lovely derision; and she sang
"The foxes, then!" and hid a star
Behind one finger. Near and far,
Deep-mingled with the goblin singing,
They heard the bells of foxes ringing;
And footsteps pattered, thick as rain,
The leaves that strewed Dumb Woman's Lane.

6.

"Foxes!" Deth hissed. The word was chill.
He raised the wand. They listened. Still
Were bells and footsteps. Dark the wood
Leaned in on Venus where she stood. . . .
"Pity!" she cried. The petalled bough
Lightly caressed her, breast and brow:
The eyelids closed; breath shuddered deep;
She swayed, like one who stands in sleep.
"And are you,—Venus,—bound at last?"

—Over the white face strongly passed
A sleeping grief. The drowsy lips
Murmured slow, in the moon's eclipse;
The shut eyes wept; the golden head
Fallen forward as it were dead:
"Caught, as it was predestined, lord!
In the beginning was the word.
Hang the bat in the hemlock tree.
Nail my hands. Crucify me."
"You call me lord, and master?" "Yes:
You burn my body to nothingness."
He touched the fluttering eyelids. Sleep
Burned in the white god, sinking deep.

7.

Dark Juliana above her bent
Evilly smiling. Millicent
Shrank back and leant against a tree,
Hiding her white face, not to see;
Yet heard the goddess, overthrown,
Fall among stifled bluebells, moan
Once, twice, and weep; the demon wove
A crown of flowers, under, above,
Fast as poison about the head;
Venus in moonlight slept as dead.
The palms were pierced. The feet were bound.
Millicent heard the mallet pound:
And the goddess cry; and, then, from Deth,
Whistling, a sharply taken breath:
And footsteps going; and farther, after,
Deep-ringing, rich, the demon's laughter,
And laughter again, with no word spoken;
And swish of leaves, and a tree-branch broken.
And suddenly, in the hidden cage,
With prophet's cry began to rage
The folded bat: "Turn, Millicent!
And see the god's white ichor spent!
Daughter of Venus, turn and see
Venus nailed to the hawthorn tree. . . .
The foam-white goddess, forever young,

There like a bat in a cage is hung;
Death and the Demon crucify
Venus, that you and Deth may die. . . .
Vision of blindness! Empty illusion!
Error! error! and sad confusion. . . .
Millicent, turn! your eyes uncover!
Regard the demon, the demon lover:
See what cruelty Deth can fashion,
Bloody device of hands of passion!
Triumph was dreamed, and folly born,
And Deth for his own brow weaves the thorn."

8.

Then, in the moonlight, Millicent, turning,
Saw in the thorn tree, golden, burning,
Radiant, white, a body of snow,
Where veins of fire began to glow,
The immortal god, her wounded bosom
Burning whiter than white-thorn blossom,
Her arms outstretched amid leaves, her hair
Caught among thorns, her white flanks bare.
Burning brighter than moon in cloud
Or lamp in tomb or torch in shroud,
Her eyes wide open and fair to see,
Her beauty burned in the hawthorn tree.
White among boughs the white doves came
And beat white wings against the flame;
Circling and crying, their wings were bright
Against the burning body's light.
Foxes crept in the wood, green-eyed,
Crouched in a ring. And Venus cried,
Lifting once more the fallen head:
"Think not, my people, the god is dead,
Who in this hawthorn seems to die!
Twisting in death, and burning, I
Live in the hearts that crucify. . . ."
She ceased. The head fell forward. Light
Coiled from her eyes. The forest night
Leaned closer about her. Breast and limb,—
Their brightness swarmed with leaves,—grew dim,

Darkened, were lost. The haunted wood
Devoured the goddess of all blood.
Densely, about the hawthorn, grew
A poisoned thicket: where vainly threw
The moon her breaking spears of blue. . . .

And Deth, and the Demons, turning slowly,
Tongueless went from the wood unholy:
Climbed up the westward hill, and saw
The moon go down: one red-tipped claw
Waved at a vapour and withdrew:
They sank, were nothing, and nothing knew.

Save Juliana; who stared at space
Till deep as the world became her face:
She and the world became but one.
Stone was the world: she lay like stone.

V: JULIANA GOATIBED

Then Juliana Goatibed,
Carving the rock beneath her head,
Carved it vast, with hammering thought
Out of terrific vision wrought.
It was the world. Nought else there was;
No living voice; no cloud; no grass;
Only the rock, whereon, in space,
She sat, with dark all-knowing face.
No shape it had: it had no bound.
Mist was beneath it: mist around.
No sun woke there; no star, to light
That ship of granite infinite.
But there the demon (chin on breast)
Who crouched and stared and found no rest;—
From laboring dream found no escape;—
Hewed of the world a tombstone shape;
And then, with deep-thrust hands of thought
Drew darkly upward, out of nought,
The carver's self. Old, old was he,
Old as the world itself might be;
Swam slowly upward, kept a gleam,
Still dripping, from the dark of dream;

And sat, cross-legged, an atom size,
Unconscious of the demon's eyes.
"Carve, now!" said she. And he, unhearing,
Unhurried, old, and nothing caring,
Conscious of stone and nought but stone,
Stone to be cut by brittle bone,
With tiny chisel and mallet, smote
The ancient base of rock; and wrote
Small words thereon: Deep words that first
Glimmered in darkness, budded, burst
Like lilies in the demon's brain:
Then in immortal rock made plain:
"Here lies John Deth; and by his side
Millicent Piggistaile, his bride.
Creator and destroyer keep
Henceforth their everlasting sleep.
And she,—the flame between,—who drove
Their anguish on, accursèd Love,—
Who died before, that they might cease;—
Shares with them their eternal peace.
Dated: heart of the timeless word
Before and after the sundered Lord."

The Carver nodded; nodded; slept;
Yet in his hand the chisel kept. . . .
And Juliana, who leaned to laugh
Above the dusty epitaph,
Looked through the stone. And there she saw
The moon go down with red-tipped claw;
Dumb Woman's Lane; the Westward Hill;
And in the charred grass,—shrunk and still,—
Deth sleeping, but about to wake;
Millicent, weeping for his sake;
Herself, beside them, wide-eyed, weaving
Vision of peace beyond believing. . . .
The birds behind them, in the wood
Still flapped about the burning rood. . . .
"Peace now!" she cried. She dropped her head,
Her mind grew dark. The world was dead.
She dreamed. The Carver and she, alone,
Would sleep forever upon the stone.

GERTRUDE DIAMANT

PREGNANT

THE first time she had the feeling that it was watching her, she was in the kitchen arranging the cereal boxes. She could not tell how it looked or where it was standing—off in a corner, no doubt, because it was watching her so intently; and probably it kept its arms folded stiffly in back, like a child taken to visit its aunt.

She was aware of it while she filled the jars called coffee and sugar and barley, and made them all stand with their letters to the front . . . cleaned the sink and put the rag to dry . . . piled the dishes according to their sizes and piled them into a pyramid. It saw her do all these things.

It followed her into the other rooms. She found a hat in the wrong place, and a pair of shoes that were not walking parallel. She straightened the shoes and hung the hat back into the closet. It noticed that.

It noticed also that there were different rooms in the house, and that everything belonged to its own room. But because she felt so tired taking everything back to its own room, it felt sorry for her. It felt sorry because she had committed herself to keeping everything in different rooms.

Then she pulled a bundle of rags down from the closet, untied the green blouse that held them, sorted them in two piles on the bed. But because she couldn't find any rags to throw away, she thought there could never be an end in anyone's life to the sorting of rags. It knew that.

All this was nothing to wonder at . . . all this had happened before. Because she remembered herself standing in a bedroom and watching, meanwhile *her* mother was sorting out rags . . . holding each one at arm's length for a moment . . . stroking

the corners of it with her thumbs . . . saying, as if the rag had told her to say it: "A fine piece of silk," or "From your aunt's black taffeta . . ." But if the rag said nothing it was thrown away.

And she remembered a red cloth that always drooped in two pleats when it was held up, as if it were a little boy taking a special posture for being scolded . . . a mysterious rag, living secretly from one bundle to another . . . and once, lifting her eyes carelessly from the floor, she had caught it signaling to her while it was being carried back to the closet. Or they were in a hall together. It was dark, and her mother had all the rags in her skirt in the hollow of her lap, like a witch's bright waters in a pot. Surely it was countless times she had stood watching, while bundles were being transmuted endlessly, endlessly . . . according to a mysterious logic of rags that only her mother understood. And now *she* was being watched . . .

It was too still, this thing. It made her afraid, being so still. When she lowered the shade and turned on the light, the room made its accustomed motions. Light swung under her feet like a wave diffusing, the bureau stepped back and shook out a skirt of shadow. But it did not move from where it was. It seemed to be the quiet core of the room standing somewhere upright within it . . . only there were two thickening points in it, like nipples forming in matter, and with these it watched her. . . .

Quickly she kneaded the rags into a compact bundle, laid them like filling for a dainty on the green blouse, drew the ends together and made the knot tight. But before the knot was tight her hands paused, waiting for a signal, for a subtle orchestration with her thoughts, to which the tying of the knot would be a sharp, conclusive note. And then it came to her, swiftly and certainly, the thought for which her hands were waiting: that something was watching pregnant women all the time . . . watching with the inchoate eyes, with the intent gaze of nipples; and that all the rooms where a woman was pregnant, were watching, and the furniture rippling back all the time from a furtive mimicry of her body. As she stood before the mirror she saw the curtains behind her slowly bellying out with the wind, as if they were two children following her on the street, laughing and thrusting their hips forward. And everything in the room was moving nearer with the motility of fine, invisible feelers, to crowd within

the frame of the mirror, to look at her body with ribald curiosity, questioning . . . until she was afraid of the rooms. She had been pregnant in them too long, she had made the rooms crowded with a premonition of the child that was to come. The fœtus of a presence was in them, in the bedroom and through the whole house, shaped to all the walls as if to a tortuous womb.

She had been pregnant too long . . . now it was only a trick that her body could not stop doing. She could not remember any more a time when her body walked swiftly, quickened with its feeling of grace, that had always been to her another transcendent sense. She could not remember a time when she was not standing before the mirror, looking at herself appraisingly, feeling herself with her thumbs, as one feels fruit to see if it is ripe . . . waiting for the doctor to ring . . .

When he came she would open the door and he would go before her into the bedroom. They would be alone there, and his eyes would leap out to her body in possessive intercourse with it. She hated him because his eyes were quick with knowledge of her . . . with a knowledge of all the women in the world going about, hiding a secret irritation of the womb that only childbirth could scratch. Then her husband would come in and the doctor would talk to him about the child. While they talked they would look at her as if they were sharing a joke at her expense. She hated them both for believing in the child . . . she hated her husband because he was so thoughtful of it. If she stumbled only a little, he ran to her . . . he was always making her sit down. Oh, he was careful of her now . . .

Then she would have to tell the doctor everything she felt during the day, and at everything she said he would nod his head, as though she were dealing him cards in a game. And when it was over he would narrow his eyes and look off into space, like a player wondering how to arrange them. Then her husband and the doctor would go out and talk about her in another room. They would both come back and stand thoughtfully before her for a while, as if she were something being carefully cooked . . .

If there were a way to spoil it for them! She thought of children using the mirror to take revenge on their elders . . . she remembered all the times when she stood before the glass making faces, and it was like making forbidden gestures at them. Now

she wanted to take revenge on *him* . . . she wanted to distort her whole body. He had harried it too often, he had harried it into ugliness. Now she would find a way to enjoy it herself, to use her own body so that she might betray him. She would stand before the glass and masturbate with her own ugliness . . .

She thrust the mirror back and saw herself . . . thighs and legs telescoped, her whole body foreshortened like a reflection in water. She danced a few steps, and it was grotesque and funny, like the time she had seen her legs dancing distortedly under her, when she was bathing in clear water . . . like the dwarf that had walked beside her on the street that morning, keeping pace with her, throwing his legs ahead with a terse, defiant gaiety. She turned to see the profile of her body, bending back and strutting at the same time, yielding to its burden as if to a lover. Only her face, turned sidewise over her shoulder and watching, was distant and absorbed . . . the face of a dancer who pantomimes a secret obscenity. Now let her husband come . . . let him stand in the doorway and see, and call her name, unbelieving. He had not dared to look at her body for so long. Let him see it now in a heightened nakedness . . .

She had been pregnant too long. It was no longer tolerable . . . the strangeness of this thing that did not fall when she bent over and perched on her when she lay down. It turned with her as far as she turned, they stood still together . . . two performers in a circus, one the ugly mimic, guessing greedily what's going to be done next, doing it almost in the same moment . . . or a conjuror balancing something that secretly grows to his body while every one watches. It was only a trick that her body could never stop doing, a conjuror's trick turned into horror. Now, now she would be rid of it! She could make it come . . . she could stand before the mirror and watch it, working it down with her hands, the way she worked the pulp down from bags of jelly. And when it was all over and *he* rushed in . . . when he came in looking for the baby with sweet names ready for it, she would laugh and point to what had come, like a child pleased with the wayward pattern of excretion.

But as she turned away from the mirror, nauseous with the thought of it, the thing that was watching came to her. It was no longer still . . . it was swift and terrible. It ran between her and the mirror, it came to the bed before her. Whichever

way she turned it was there first, they seemed to be playing a game and it wanted to be caught. She stood still; and the bed and the door and the mirror, caught within the frame of her vision, wavered into a more acute stillness . . . they were only geometrical shadows hanging inside her eyelids. But her eyes were seeing it. They were looking intently before her, as if the child that lay within her had suddenly given off a mirage. For the first time they were seeing it . . . it was floating within her and it was not terrible to look at. Only like the dark shadow of a child floating on water . . . like a pattern cut round a baby in dark paper . . . being cut nearer and nearer until it was clear and she saw its face, and she called it by name, and it moved, seeming to hear . . .

Then she turned, carefully, as a ship turns with one rigid motion. She walked to the bed and her body was without weight, as if she was walking under water that carried her pregnancy for her. She sat down on the bed and waited, while everything swung slowly back from the pendulum of her nausea.

Now she lay down. The room was empty again. The curved top of the mirror looked at her over the bed, white and blank as an eye without a pupil. All things stood planted where they were. She lay on the bed tired and at ease, like some one just awakened to the day and trying to remember all the sweet premonitions of it that came in sleep; and she remembered that she had seen her child, and whatever would come now, she knew, whatever pain of childbirth, could not matter . . . she had lived her childbirth already in that moment of seeing the child. Now she would no longer be afraid of the few days that were left, but yield her body to them, as her ear yielded to the wayward drifting of notes, through which it hears the peaceful magnetism of the closing chord. That chord she had heard already, and once it was heard all pain would have the quality of music.

Now there was only a great desire to rest . . . to possess the moment fully, exploring it languidly for all its sweetness . . . the sunlight drifting in through the edges of the shade and uniting with the lamplight in a warmth that could not hurt her, that was only a distant principle of warmth in the room . . . the shade breathing at odd intervals with an indrawn rusty sound . . . people outside returning from work and the noise of traffic

strained through the shade and the curtains tenuously and rhythmically into the room . . . someone cleaning on the stairs and knocking the brush against the wood. The moment seemed to her eternal, with no time to come after it . . . the plane of time was changed from going forward, and went down vertically instead, and fathomed the lowest sweetness of it.

But she was falling asleep, with the light on and all the sounds of day in the room. She remembered drowsily how it used to be when she was little. People came and went in the room where she was sleeping, she could even hear them speak, and open her eyes a little without waking up. Sleep was, in those times, a great security, a sea in which one could float and rise, and never reach the surface.

Then she saw herself standing at the window with the baby in her arms, between the curtain and the window, the room dark behind them. She had been standing a long time, but she was not tired. Standing, sitting and lying down are nothing, because there is only one way to rest, and that is holding the baby. They are both looking thoughtfully into the street. From time to time she lifts the baby's fingers to her mouth and kisses them, but she looks into the street all the time, and the baby does not notice it. They are both terribly preoccupied . . . But while she stood there the street was mysteriously changed. She was pressing her forehead to the glass, and looking down at a little boy with his nurse, and she remembered having seen him one day in the park. It *was* a park, and the nurse was playing ball before him . . . throwing it and catching it, rolling and bouncing it . . . trying to make him see how wonderful it was. But the boy stood there without looking up. He kept turning his hands in a queer way, and looking at them . . . now at the palm, now at the back, as if he had written something on them and mislaid it . . . not noticing all the miracles of the ball, even when it bounced away by itself in lower and lower zigzags, and ran disconsolately under a fence. She wanted to call him, to make him look up at her, but the way he kept looking at his hands frightened her. Something terrible would happen, she knew, if she did not see his face, and one moment he seemed on the point of looking up. But that moment did not end, but stretched itself out into an infinite arc, that curved slowly, imperceptibly, down to a solution, yet always kept going ahead . . . until the sight of his cap bending over his shoulders and hiding the secret

of his face became unbearable. She thought she was opening the window and shouting to him; but there was something loathsome in her throat, rutting there with its head, and her voice could not get past it. But when at last she opened her eyes, she saw that the window *was* raised . . . a man was standing near it, his face hidden between his hat and his shoulders, and he was looking at his finger-nails . . .

Then it seemed to her that she was sewing, and drawing the cotton out to a fine point before threading it, and she understood that the thread of cotton and the dream were the same thing, and that she must not let herself wake up, until she had drawn her dream to the finest point, and could see the little boy's face. The man came to her and lifted her up and laid his head on her breast. "So tired . . . tired . . ." he murmured. And with those words her dream changed again, and she was moving swiftly through space, a motion with two different swiftnesses, like two trains running near each other, and in one train she was sitting, watching the other go off at an angle; until suddenly it was gone, and both motions stopped together. With that she was fully awake, she opened her eyes and made a movement away from him. But his hands caught her breasts possessively, and his eyes became wary. It was a look she remembered . . . she had seen it before in babies being nursed . . . they did not ask with their eyes, they were only wary of something. Then she knew that she was seeing the little boy's face . . . she knew the face of the man and the little boy were the same . . . and the thing in her throat sounded as a long, far-off scream.

At once he was kneeling near the bed, looking reproachfully at her . . . saying words incoherent with fear and tenderness: "Beloved . . . my beloved . . . what is it . . . what is it . . ."

She stroked his cheeks, plucked his sleeve . . . fluttering from one reassuring gesture to another, smiling to him.

"It was nothing . . . nothing. Would you believe it . . . the child . . . I thought I saw the child . . ."

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER

ROPE

On the third day after they got to the country he came walking back from the village carrying a basket of groceries and a twenty-four yard coil of rope. She came out to meet him, wiping her hands on her green smock. Her hair was tumbled, her nose was scarlet with sunburn, he told her that already she looked like a born country woman. His brown flannel shirt stuck to him, his shoes were dusty. It was a hot June day. She thought he looked like a country man on the stage.

Had he brought the coffee? She had been waiting all day long for coffee. They had forgot it when they ordered at the store the day before.

Gosh, no he hadn't. Lord, now he'd have to go back. Yes, he would if it killed him. He thought, though, he had everything else. She reminded him it was only because he didn't drink coffee himself. If he did he would remember it quick enough. Suppose they ran out of cigarettes? Then she saw the rope. What was that for? Well, he thought it might do to hang clothes on, or something. Naturally she asked him if he thought they were going to run a laundry? They already had a fifty foot line hanging right before his eyes. Why, hadn't he noticed? It was a blot on the landscape to her.

He thought there were a lot of things a rope might come in handy for. She wanted to know what, for instance. He thought a few seconds, but nothing occurred. They could wait and see, couldn't they? You need all sorts of strange odds and ends around a place in the country. She said yes, that was so: but she thought just at that time when every penny counted, it seemed funny to buy more rope. That was all. She hadn't meant

anything else. She hadn't just seen, not at first, why he felt it was necessary. Well, thunder, he had bought it because he wanted to, and that was all there was to it. She thought that was reason enough, and couldn't understand why he hadn't said so, at first. Undoubtedly it would be useful, twenty-four yards of rope, there were hundreds of things, she couldn't think of any at the moment, but it would come in. Of course. As he had said, things always did in the country.

But the coffee? Oh, look, look look at the eggs! Oh, my, they're all running! What had he put on top of them? Hadn't he known eggs mustn't be squeezed? Squeezed, who had squeezed them, he wanted to know. What an idiotic remark. He had simply brought them along in the basket with the other things. If they got broke it was the grocer's fault. He ought to know better than to put heavy things on top of eggs. She believed it was the rope. That was the heaviest thing in the pack, she saw him plainly when he came in from the road, the rope was a long package on top of everything. He desired the whole wide world to witness that this was not a fact. He had carried the rope in one hand and the basket in the other, and what was the use of her having eyes, if that was the best they could do for her?

Well, anyhow, she could see one thing plain: no eggs for breakfast. They'd have to scramble them now, for supper. It was too damned bad. She had planned to have the steak for supper. No ice, meat wouldn't keep. He wanted to know why she couldn't finish breaking the eggs in a bowl and set them in a cool place.

Cool place! if he could find one for her, she'd be glad to set them there. Well then, it seemed to him they could very well cook the meat at the same time they cooked the eggs and then warm up the meat for to-morrow. Cooking would keep it from spoiling. She thought she would choke with contempt. Warmed over meat, when they might as well have had it fresh. Second best and scraps and makeshifts, even to the meat! It doesn't really matter, does it darling? He rubbed her shoulder a little. Sometimes if they were playful, he would rub her shoulder and she would arch and purr. This time she spit and almost clawed. He was getting ready to say that they could surely manage somehow when she turned on him and said, if he told her they could manage somehow she would certainly slap his face.

He swallowed the words redhot, his face burned. He picked

up the rope and started to put it on the top shelf. She would not have it on the top shelf, the jars and tins belonged there, positively she would not have the top shelf cluttered up with a lot of rope. She had borne all the clutter she meant to bear in the flat in town, there was space here and she meant to keep things in order.

Well in that case, he wanted to know what the hammer and nails were doing up there? And why had she put them there, when she knew very well that he needed that hammer and those nails upstairs to fix the window sashes? She simply slowed down everything and made double work on the place with her insane habit of changing things around and hiding them.

She was sure she begged his pardon, and if she had had any reason to believe he was going to fix the sashes this summer she would have left the hammer and nails right where he put them: in the middle of the bedroom floor where they could step on them in the dark. And now if he didn't clear the whole mess out of there she would throw them down the well.

Oh, alright—alright—could he put them in the closet? Naturally not, there were brooms and mops and dustpans in the closet, and why couldn't he find a place for his rope outside her kitchen? Had he stopped to consider there were seven God-forsaken rooms in the house, and only one kitchen?

He wanted to know what of it? And did she realize she was making a complete fool of herself? And what did she take him for, a three year old idiot? The whole trouble with her was she needed something weaker than she was to boss around and tyrannize over. He wished to God now they had a couple of children she could take it out on. Maybe he'd get some rest.

She reminded him that he had forgot the coffee and bought a worthless piece of rope. And when she thought of all the things they actually needed to make the place even decently fit to live in, well, she could cry, that was all. Her face suddenly turned so forlorn, she looked so lost and despairing he couldn't believe it was only a piece of rope that was causing all the racket.

What *was* the matter, for God's sake? Oh, would he please hush and go away, and *stay* away, if he could, for five minutes? Oh, by all means, yes he would. He'd stay away indefinitely if she wished: Lord, yes, there was nothing he'd like better than to clear out and never come back. She couldn't for the life of her see any reason why he shouldn't, then. It was a swell time. Here

she was, stuck, miles from a railroad, with a half-empty house on her hands, and not a penny in her pocket, and everything on earth to do: it seemed the God-sent moment for him to get out from under. She was surprised he hadn't stayed in town as it was until she had come out and done the work and got things straightened out. It was his usual trick.

It appeared to him that this was going a little far. Just a touch out of bounds, if she didn't mind him saying so. Why the hell had he stayed in town the summer before? To do a half dozen extra jobs to get the money he had sent her. That was it. She knew perfectly well they couldn't have done it otherwise. She had agreed with him at the time. And that was the only time so help him God he had ever left her to do anything by herself.

Oh, he could tell that to his great-grandmother. She had her notion of what had kept him in town. She had considerably more than a notion, if he wanted to know. Oh, so she was going to bring all that stuff up again, was she? Well, she could just think what she pleased. He was tired of explaining. It may have looked funny but he had simply got hooked in, and what was a man to do? He had never even thought of doing anything—he had never believed she was going to take it seriously. Yes, yes, she knew how it was with the men: if they were left by themselves a minute, some woman was certain to kidnap them. And naturally they couldn't hurt her feelings by refusing! Well, what was she raving about? Had she forgot she had told him those two weeks alone in the country were the happiest she had known for four years? And how long had they been married when she said that? All right, shut up! If she thought that hadn't stuck in his craw.

She hadn't meant she was happy because she was away from him. She meant she was happy getting the devilish house nice and ready for him. That was what she had meant. And now look. Bringing up something she had said a year ago simply to justify himself for forgetting her coffee and breaking the eggs and buying a wretched piece of rope they couldn't afford.

Lord, it was a good thing for him *she* didn't hold grudges forever. If she did! But now she wanted only two things in the world. She wanted him to get that rope from underfoot, and go back to the village and get her coffee, and if he could remember it, he might bring a metal mitt for the skillets, and two more curtain rods, and if there were any rubber gloves in the village,

her hands were simply raw, and a bottle of citrate of magnesia from the drugstore.

He looked out at the dark blue heat waves glimmering on the slopes, and mopped his forehead and sighed heavily and said, if she only could wait a minute for *anything*, he was going back. He had said so, hadn't he, the very second they found he had overlooked it? Oh yes, well . . . run along. She was going to wash windows; the country was so beautiful! She doubted they'd have a minute to enjoy it.

He meant to go, but he could not until he had said, that if she wasn't such a hopeless melancholiac she might see that this was only for a few days. Couldn't she remember anything pleasant about the other summers? Hadn't they been sort of fun? She hadn't any time to talk about it, and now would he please not leave that rope lying around for her to trip on? He picked it up, somehow it had toppled off the table, and stood with it in his hands. Then he walked out with it under his arm.

Was he going this minute? He certainly was. She thought so. Sometimes it seemed to her that he had second sight about the precisely perfect moment to leave her ditched. She had meant to put the mattresses out to sun, if they put them out this minute they would get at least four hours, he must have heard her say that morning she meant to put them out. So, of course, he would walk off and leave her to it. She supposed he thought the exercise would do her good.

Well, he was merely going to get her coffee. A four-mile walk for two pounds of coffee was ridiculous, but he was perfectly willing to do it. The habit was making a wreck of her, but if she wanted to wreck herself, there was nothing he could do about it. If he thought it was coffee that was making a wreck of her she congratulated him, that was all. He must have a damned easy conscience. As for the mattresses, he didn't see why they couldn't very well wait until to-morrow. And anyhow, for God's sake, were they living *in* the house, or were they going to let the house ride them to death? She paled at this, her face got livid about the mouth, she looked quite dangerous, and reminded him that house-keeping was no more her job than his: she had other work to do as well as he had, and when did he think she was going to get time to do it at this rate?

Oh well . . . if she was going to start that again. She knew as well as he did that his work brought in the regular money,

hers was only occasional, if they depended on what *she* made—

That was positively not the question. The question was, when both of them were in the house all day, was there going to be a division of the house work, or wasn't there? She merely wanted to know, she had to make her plans. Why, he thought that was all arranged. It was understood that he was to help. Hadn't he always, in summers?

Hadn't he, though? Oh just hadn't he? And when, and where, and doing what? Lord, what an uproarious joke!

It was such a very uproarious joke that her face turned slightly purple, and she screamed with laughter. She laughed so hard she had to sit down, and finally a rush of tears spurted from her eyes and poured down into the uplifted corners of her mouth. He dashed towards her, and dragged her up to her feet and tried to pour water on her head. The dipper hung by a string on a nail and he broke it loose. Then he tried to pump water with one hand while she struggled in the other. So he gave it up and shook her instead.

She wriggled away, crying out for him to take his rope and go to hell, she had simply given him up: and ran. He heard her loose house slippers clattering and stumbling on the stairs.

He went out around the house and into the lane, he suddenly realized he had a hell of a blister on his heel and his shirt felt as if it were on fire. It was funny, things happened so suddenly: how different she was when she wasn't furious about something. She was terrible, damn it: not an ounce of reason. You might as well talk to a sieve as to that woman when she got going. Well, what to do now? He would take back the rope and exchange it for something else. Things accumulated, things were mountainous, you couldn't move them or sort them out. They just lay and rotted around. He'd take it back. Hell, why should he? He wanted it. What was it anyhow? A piece of rope. Imagine anybody caring more about a piece of rope than she did about a man's feelings. What earthly right had she to say a word about it? He remembered all the useless things she bought for herself. Why? Because I wanted it, that's why. He stopped and selected a large stone by the road. He would put the rope behind it. No use carrying it. He'd just put it in the tool house when he got back. No use bothering her with it.

When he got back she was leaning against the post box beside the road waiting. It was pretty late, the smell of broiled

steak floated just nose high in the cooling air. Her face was smooth and fresh and young looking. Her funny black hair was all on end. She waved to him from a distance, and he speeded up. She called out that supper was ready and waiting, was he starved?

You bet he was starved. Here was the coffee. He waved it at her. . . . She looked at his other hand. What was that he had there?

He stopped short. He had forgot he carried the rope. Well, it was the rope again. He had meant to exchange it but forgot. She wanted to know why he should exchange it, if it was something he really wanted. Wasn't the air sweet now, and wasn't it fine to be here?

She walked beside him with one hand hooked into his leather belt. She pulled and jostled him a little as he walked. He put his arm clear around her and patted her stomach. They exchanged wary smiles. Coffee, coffee, he said, coffee for the Ootsum-Wootsums! He felt as if he was bringing her a beautiful present.

She declared that if she had had her coffee in the morning, she wouldn't have acted so funny . . . there was a whippoorwill still coming back, imagine, clear out of season, sitting in the crab apple tree and calling all by himself. Maybe his girl stood him up . . . maybe she did. She hoped to hear him once more, she loved whippoorwills. . . . He knew how she was, didn't he?

Sure, he knew how she was.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD

PREFACE AND TWO CHAPTERS FROM THE BOOK OF MERRYALL

MERRYALL land is in upper air.
People there
Follow an airy logic out of sight,
Far out of sanity, into white light,
Into pure being.
What they do
Using their hands, following through
Circles of tasks, circles of sternest
Plainest labor
maps an earnest
Obvious tract in the country of their brains.
Habitual grasp of hands on worn tool-handles,
Feet, finding, winter and summer old furrows and lanes,
Groove the mind deep and toughen to annual strength.
Four seasons instruct the mind at its mute business.
The grievance not solved in summer is solved often, at length
With a winter symbol; or a summer thunder has
An answer for November agony.
Nothing can root them from the earth, and they
Are therefore safe in their dreaming and serene.
I only tell the actual things I saw,
I only state
The actual men and women, anxious to draw
An earnest obvious map to the country of their brains.
—They, being so worn in the cold, thin
Unearthly air, are most beautiful in their discipline,
Like trees that have been polished by the wind,

And like hills,
In everlasting sweetness and wide line
Poured on by rains.

WOMEN ARE WOOED BY CHILDREN

Emma and Tom made love while the child slept
In sleepy summer in between the elms
That fountained up around the open bedroom
In the long still night.
She went to cover
Her child up from the chill
And then in her white night-gown
Went down and sat,—and sat to watch the moonset,
And saw the silver dew on curls of grass;
Then feeling very sleepy, came back in
And fell away, not knowing she conceived
In that pure summer happiness and peace.

Women are wooed by children. It was Mary, the Virgin,
Seeing the ugly vain earth, who turned to the glory—
The fierce, bold pitiful dream of beautiful children.

Women despair and conceive. At the depth of each anguish
A child is the answer for women . . . to bear into madness,
The new, the desperate flesh on the lap of sole failure.

But Emma in peace, not anguish, now conceived.

And now conceived as any woman does
Who lives with seasons and the fact of earth
And beds herself with a man who has his way
With beasts and heavy crops
as well as with her.

Not wanting children, still Emma was wooed by children.
Earth, not yet ugly and vain, connived in her sleep.
She had no grief nor anger, nor ever had
She seen a shadow of fungus-death go by—
Pause, stealthy and large between the summer leaves.

So in the night was Emma's body changed.

Her skull held streaks of mellow-humming hordes,
Light-twisting stars, yellow and white, alive—
Troubling as bees.
Under a grave-stone flag-stone next
A hairy cyclamen leaf in Emma's garden
A sudden fungus squatted, drank a dew. . . .

So in the night was Emma's body changed.

There is a quiet hour when plants grow
And shed their poisons, open their green veins.
Then under ground they feel an energy flow,
Quicken with darkness, while the clear star rains
The colored light they love. O chemical
That makes our increase, moment miracle,
Starting a star that will rise if we fall.

Above, this drama in the starry air:
Oh, Earth, such bright things circle in your hair,—
The teeming night, the meteors, beware,
Beware this bliss's sting;
Stars follow in a ring;
Leap to the long alarm,
Fly Earth, elude the swarm,
Run from the nebula of silver bees,
. . . So stubborn, Earth, so wary of mysteries.

But Earth is crossed and colored by her Lord,
The Sun in his mute splendor; and the stars
Have speech with men, and Earth cannot say no.
Though Earth spin on forever, she will wear
Signs of this tortured language—
Let Earth shake;
Whirl as she will, these have her in their wake;
Plunge as she will, these have her in their net;
Whatever winds blow on her there will still
Be on her waves, her city peaks, her plains,
These lines, her lovers, varyingly set,
These frantic marks, these angles blue with wrath,
No avalanche of wind can hew down for a path,
Tattoos that will not wash
With snows or rains.

THE BELLED COW

Mornings are bright
With old, immortal light
In Merryall.
In Merryall,
A child wakes up at five and bursts her covers
To come with sunlight spreading on the floor,
In Merryall, in the morning,
To crawl in bed beside sweet smelling mother
Whose warm flank is a better bed, another
Deep crib for sleep.
And if warm mother goes
Blinking on her bare feet to start the fires,
There is the mountain father who will hug
You till you ache,
And tickle you,
And make
A song about a little owl, a funny
Little owl, a silly
Brown speckled baby owl that lost its mother,—
While he is stamping on his heavy shoes,
And buttoning up his lumpy overalls.

And after breakfast, after the slow milking,
The noises, running hoofs, yells from father
When they are turned out to Blueberry Pasture—
The cows . . . their sliding backs . . . the uff-uffs when
They turn and sway their heads . . .
Flat clack of bells. . . . They eat the wayside, . . . stop . . .
Or drop their dirt in blackish piles
Lifting their tails.
Then snuffing on and yanking
Grass. More grass. And one tall buttercup.

Tom was haying down
Below the hill alone.
He took his scythe
And went off singing of the little owl—
A song that started to be Nan's but now

And Nan sat down,
Too young for making songs of any kind
Near the nasturtiums in an iron tub
And called the puppy floundering in the grass,—
(The tall wet grass that no one cut,
And nothing ate, and no one trod upon.)

Tom's owl song stopped. Inside, her unhurried mother
Sang as she wiped the dishes while she turned
From shelf to sink:

Fairest Lord Jesus
Ruler of all Nature
O Thou of God and Man the Son
Thee will I worship
Thee will I honor
O Thou my Soul's Glory Joy and Crown

Then Tom came back to call without the time
To come clear in:
——Emma,
Tell Mama, Nan, to find the Brindle Fanny.
Emma, she's hidden before I got the bell put on her.

Then Emma ran out in the sunny air,
—What do you say, Tom, what, is it
Time for her yet?
—Not by my count,
Only she thinks so, she,
She thinks it was that young bull from Gillespie's,
She wants her calf now,—you
Know how a she is waiting for a baby.

Tom evaded her eye. He was pure and at work,
Chaste in the morning, simplified by having
Hay laid in rows as neatly as a woman.

But she, this dazzling Emma, with a snowy dish-towel,
Curious about a bull, standing above him,
Pure, too, and gay, smiling, wicked, remembering;
Wanton and pure together, her pansy eyes . . .

(It was because I said, *You know how a she is*
Waiting for a baby. That made her face take
The queer electric look, the heavy eyes.)

Nan hurt herself, the pansy eyes went blue,
And Emma flew to pick the baby up.
Tom sped to the woodshed, safe, there to pretend
That he must whet his blade.
Then Emma ran
Up the grass tunnel to the pasture fence
Like a good girl, her dish-towel on her shoulder
Obedient and happy in the sun.

The heaving cow that was about to calve
Plunged up on her thin legs behind a screen
Of apple-seedlings.
While from her gaunt back-bone
The great sides sagged. With gnats aboard her,
She, nimbly stumbling, took across the clods
Cut from the swamp-dough by the cattle-hoofs.

And Emma sauntered, softly given to wonder
What joy had happened to her blood that morning,
That she might sing the old hymn to fair Jesus
She had not sung except in memory
For barren years!
(Fanny brushed past
A clump of bushes with a little trot,
And went on in, cross and obedient, too.)
. . . To be so happy to look after Fanny
Through blackberry tangles in the double sunlight
And not have said to Tom,—You see I'm busy,
The stock is not my job, is it?
I can't
Go get them in each time you are forgetful.

Instead she came on singing, and put up
The pasture bars as if they were most precious,
As if she had just moved in
and must taste

Some pleasure for the first time
and the last.

Fanny stood still, a barge-cow, breathing hard,
Incredible, the mountain of her middle;
Her wild soft eyes turned over back to find
What Emma meant by this rude injury.

Legs pegged apart, confronting Emma as
A creature with a solitary trouble. . . .
Whisked her sad head, as if to threaten her,
When Emma put the bell on, swung it sharp
In indignation, sounding it and went
Off veering toward some bramble where she might
Lie with a heave and hide and no one come
Or see her when she choose to have her calf.

Nannie must sleep, Nannie must sleep till noon,
And Emma pulled the shades down to the sill,
Then ran outside and wandered up the pathway,
And found a rock beside the apple tree
That bore the early apples.
In the sun
She tried again, but still not very hard
To tell herself why this day was more near
The center of all joy than other days.
There was a grace, a certainty unflawed
That fell with every instant in still shine
On crests of air. The leaves had rightness in them,
The arch of trees was her beatitude,
And somewhere in her loneliness a bell
Seemed hung and ringing.
(Fanny again
Changing her child-bed.) Emma had
Never in all her days yielded to dreams,
But now they crowded on her lustfully
And she felt as she lay on her slant stone
That earth was so instinctive to her touch
That she could feel the strokes Tom made his scythe
Wear down the grass with, over just the curve
Of land below her orchard.

Tom would move,
Silent, she knew, abstracted by his toil,
Remote from even the earth he bent upon;
She felt his bones lock in the side-wise swing
And unlock as he cut the swathe up soft;
Swing on, upon another wave of grass. . . .

Now no more separate than when they lay,
For Tom was laboring still, and taciturn. . . .

The day was mad. Her sleepy, sleepy heart
Beat much too hard.
She lay spread out to the sun.
It was all the green morning that she lay so.
More than a morning of
One bright good day; morning of some dim
Good slow beginning, however bad its end,
Its end in summer under sudden rain.

JOHN HERRMANN

ENGAGEMENT

Ruth Mason was willing to marry George Harvey who was slow and steady and not particularly brilliant because she had been disappointed in a love affair she had been having with Harold Riley, who was not stupid or slow at all. Harold Riley always made people think he was a very brilliant fellow and a man to whom success would hasten.

Harold Riley, when he was graduated from college started in selling stocks and bonds and he was very quick and he impressed people with his brilliance. He made money and bought a fine motor car and impressed people very much with the way he was succeeding. Ruth Mason was graduated from college just about the same time that Harold Riley started in being so successful. Ruth had been a popular girl in college and had belonged to the best sorority on her college campus and the young men took her often out to dances. They tried to make love to her and sometimes she kissed them and felt them warm and passionate and eager for her and then she always suddenly felt that she had had enough of kissing. She felt that the eyes of the men who kissed her grew wild and too bright and she was frightened and didn't enjoy it any longer. She liked better the dancing and talking and the silly chatter. She was a good hand at conversation and could always keep the men where she wanted them.

Ruth Mason met several men in college who were very fond of her and there were two men who would have married her had she given them an opportunity to propose. But when one of them made love to her she grew frightened and stiffened and told him that he mustn't do that. She had heard somewhere that

it was not good for men to do it. So the young man never got around to a point of asking her to marry him. It was almost the same way with the other young man in college. He was very slow to start lovemaking and took her first to many dances and also took her out to dinner. Then one night when he was leaving her he said he had to kiss her. And she said it would be all right, but just a little kiss. He kissed her and he suddenly became very excited and drew her close to him and kissed her on the neck and tried to kiss her breasts through the thin dancing gown she wore. His eyes were bright and he seemed to her no longer the young man who had been nice to her and taken her to dances but another person altogether. She was very frightened and she told him that he must not do that, it was bad for him. This young man would have asked her to marry him but she seemed so cold and distant that he couldn't quite get up his courage and he left her discouraged and feeling so cheap he never had the nerve to call her up again and ask her to go to dances or dinners.

Both of these young men who had liked her so well in college were bright young fellows, much brighter than George Harvey whom she finally decided to marry. But neither of them was as quick and bright as Harold Riley.

Harold Riley had the reputation of knowing more about women than he really knew. He knew a lot about the kind of girls that hang out in the dance halls and in college he had always known the fastest of the so-called college widows and he had been mixed up in a scrape where he and two other boys had almost been fired from the college because a girl had become pregnant and had informed the authorities that these three boys had been having something to do with her. She hooked one of the other boys however and to avoid college scandal Harold Riley was allowed by the authorities to complete his education. He had belonged to a very good fraternity in college, one which discouraged its members from social intercourse with women students, so he always went around with girls who were not students and these girls were mostly girls that hang around dance halls in the evenings and work in shops and offices in the daytime. He was very popular among these women and it was easy for him to make them care for him. But he knew few girls of his own station in society and when he was [illegible]own together

with them he felt selfconscious and shy and bashful. The girls of his station in society were very fond of him and thought him a perfect gentleman and the stories that were sometimes told about him by boys who knew these girls were very much discounted. And then the fact that he never sought out the girls in his station to take to dinner and to dances had something to do with the way they felt about him. Harold Riley really knew very little about the nice girls but he knew that he didn't care to take them to dances. To him they were too stiff and formal, there was nothing real and human about them, and they were very hard to talk to. The little girls around the dance halls were very easy to talk to. And with these he had little fear of trouble. Before he was graduated from college he had given two of these girls gifts of one hundred dollars each to make them keep their mouths shut and to help them pay a doctor. Harold Riley sent them to a doctor and that was all there was of that. And then he took up with another because he could not be bothered patching up romance that was completely busted.

Harold Riley was not a good student in college but he was a good bond salesman after his graduation. He became a licensed broker and had a small two-room office and a stenographer. When he started in business he grew a moustache and became very serious looking. He had always been very handsome. He wore clothes that made him look like a wealthy successful young banker. Almost overnight Harold Riley became the most sought after young business man in his city. He led a quiet life and did not run after shopgirls and he didn't go out much in society but he tended almost strictly to his business. This made the older business men respect him and it made their wives think he would be a good man for their daughters. The talk about the fast life he had led in college was now passed over by the men as well as by the women. Harold Riley was respected and admired and considered the most promising young man in his city.

Ruth Mason had a real affair with Harold Riley and after this was all over she was willing to marry George Harvey. When Ruth Mason got out of college she went to her home and lived with her father and mother and went to teas and receptions and played bridge with the younger people of the city. She did

these things for several months and she found herself becoming bored and tired and she began to think that maybe she would always just go to teas and receptions and bridge parties. She began to wish that she had let the boy in college kiss her neck and breasts and make love to her. And marry her. For she began to think now that what she wanted most was marriage.

George Harvey worked for his father who was very successful and who thought that George would also someday be very successful. George had all his life known Ruth Mason and since she was not married and no other men were taking her around to dances he began to ask her to go to the country club with him. She went because it helped to relieve the boredom of living a quiet life with her parents and George grew very fond of her after they had been to dances. One night he tried to make love to her when he was taking her home from a party. He stopped his car and put his arms around her and he didn't seem slow and stupid, for he was suddenly very quick and excited. He tried to kiss her and she was so surprised that George Harvey would do such a thing that she let him kiss her. Then he grew very excited and grew warm and passionate and she grew frightened. It was dark but she knew his eyes had that hard fire in them and she stiffened and told him he must not do that. She told him he must take her home at once, that she was surprised that he, a gentleman, would act that way. George Harvey thought that he had done wrong to kiss her that way and he tried to apologize and asked her to forgive him. But she said she never could forgive him for acting in that way.

That was when she had just been a short time back from college.

George Harvey did not invite her to the dance the next week but he sent her flowers. Then every week he sent her flowers and didn't invite her to the dances. He even sent her flowers after she began to go to dances with Harold Riley.

Ruth Mason's father kidded her about George Harvey when he saw flowers coming for her every week and knew that she was not going around with George any more. Mrs. Mason did not make fun of her daughter, she only said that she was glad Ruth was not going around with George Harvey any more. But she did think quite seriously that Ruth should not accept

flowers from him. Ruth only said she couldn't help it, she didn't want him to send her flowers, she told them. But she did like to get them and know that George Harvey thought enough of her to send them every week. But she thought less and less of him because he sent them and she began to realize that he was only a slow stupid fellow and she was glad that she had not let him make love to her. It would teach him a lesson. Men didn't know how girls should be treated.

After he had stopped taking her to dances she again began to be bored but she had no desire to go again to dances with George Harvey. She began to think that she would like very much to go to dances with Harold Riley. Mrs. Mason told her that Harold Riley was the most promising young man in the city. Ruth began to think she would like to know him better than she knew him. Mrs. Mason told Ruth that Harold Riley was of all the young men the most marriageable in the city. Nearly all the women agreed on that.

Mr. Mason bought bonds and stocks through Harold Riley and one time when they were about to close a fairly large transaction, Mrs. Mason hearing of it suggested that her husband bring the young man around to dinner. After dinner they could talk business in Mr. Mason's den. And it would be very nice to have Harold Riley come to dinner. Ruth would enjoy having the young man come for dinner. Ruth should know nice young men like Harold Riley, Mrs. Mason told her husband. Mr. Mason brought the young man around for dinner.

Ruth showed very little interest before the evening of the dinner and she even said that business would be better transacted outside of the home. She said she didn't mind a social dinner but why should she be asked to entertain a guest invited to their home on business.

Ruth was really very glad and on the evening of the dinner she was careful to appear as charming and as lovely as she could.

Harold Riley was very shy at dinner and a thorough gentleman. Ruth Mason looked at him with smiles and chatted gaily and related little anecdotes with a very slight hint at a double meaning. Harold Riley felt less shy before the dinner was over and he grew talkative as he always was with men. He began to think Ruth Mason was a real girl and one that men could talk to. She seemed to him as self-possessed as any

man and he thought that she would be a fine girl to go around with. He had never really seen a girl of his own station in society that could make him feel the way she did. He had really never known the girls in his station in society and now he realized that one at least was very charming and also very good to talk to.

When Mr. Mason and Harold Riley were discussing business in the den the two women sat in the living room and talked and Ruth agreed with her mother that Harold Riley was very charming. Mrs. Mason said she thought that Harold Riley seemed interested in Ruth. Ruth denied it and said that he was the kind of man that didn't care for women. He was interesting, but after all, she said he doesn't seem to be the kind of man, mother, that a girl, well to tell you frankly mother, I don't care especially for him. Ruth really thought he was all of these things herself and she hoped that he would some day ask her to the country club to one of the dances. The girls would all look at her if she went to the country club with Harold Riley.

I think we might have him here again when he doesn't have to talk so much about business, Ruth Mason told her mother.

When Harold Riley went home that night after the dinner and the business talk with Mr. Mason he thought a lot about Ruth Mason and he thought also about marriage. He thought that it would be a very good thing for him to be married. He could make enough money to have a good home and raise a family and it would only help him in his business. There was no girl in the city that would make a better wife than Ruth Mason, he was thinking. He decided he would ask her to go with him to the country club to one of the dances. He was a little bit afraid to ask her. It would have been easier for him to ask a shopgirl than to ask Ruth Mason, though he knew he couldn't afford to be seen in his city in company with a shopgirl. And he didn't really want to go around with shopgirls any more. He wanted now to go around with only the best people and make himself appear always more and more successful and steady and dependable and a good man to buy stocks and bonds from.

Ruth Mason was quite excited when Harold Riley called

her on the phone and asked her to go with him to a dance at the country club. She was so excited that she told him she would be delighted. She was sorry after she had told him, that she had been so plainly anxious for him to ask her. But Harold Riley had also been excited and afraid that maybe she would think it best to refuse his invitation. He did not even notice that she had acted over-anxious to go to the dance with him.

Ruth Mason told her mother in a very quiet tone of voice that Harold Riley had asked her to go to the country club. Mrs. Mason only said that she was glad and hoped that they would have a good time dancing.

Ruth Mason went out that afternoon to play bridge with some of the younger women. After they had all played bridge for quite a while and were drinking tea with lemon and eating dainty sandwiches, Ruth Mason hearing some girl speak about the dance that week-end at the country club said very quietly that Harold Riley had asked her to go with him. The girls all heard her say it and they turned to her and asked her, did he really. My, I think that's nice. He's such a fine man. And father says he's so successful. Ruth was very happy and the girls were not without envy. Then there was talk about other young men in the town and Harriet Sheldon asked Ruth why she never went out any more with George Harvey. Ruth told her, so all the other girls could hear her, that she thought George was a nice boy but he was not very interesting. He is very steady though and he works hard, Harriet Sheldon said. Ruth heard Harriet say this and she eyed her closely and thought that probably she would like to have George Harvey take her out to dances. He sends me flowers but we don't go out together any more, Ruth told them. They played more bridge and then the party broke up and Ruth Mason went home feeling quite elated and hoping that Harold Riley would like her better after they had been out dancing.

Harold Riley took Ruth Mason to the country club that Friday night and they danced together and talked together very gaily and were very happy. Harold Riley was a very good dancer because he had learned almost all he knew about dancing in the tough dancehalls where the dancers are always the very best. Ruth Mason was envied by the young unmarried women and also by some of the married women of the younger set.

Harold Riley was a perfect gentleman and he talked so well about his business that Ruth became quite interested in stocks and bonds and how to meet a customer and sell him. She said she thought it was very romantic and a most interesting life-work for a man to be engaged in. He drew a little leather covered book from his pocket and showed her how he could figure profits for almost any period of years in just a minute and showed how by saving just a little money every week she might some day have a million dollars. She was fascinated and thought that everybody ought to buy more bonds and stocks and what a fine man as Harold Riley.

They were gay and happy in the country club with music and dancing and conversation all about them but when they were in the car going toward her home they were very quiet and Harold Riley could not think of glib interesting things for conversation and Ruth Mason could not think of things for conversation. He wondered if he would try to kiss her. She hoped he would because then it would show that he cared for her. Harold Riley thought that he would like to kiss her but he knew that with girls like Ruth Mason you should not try to be too quick about kissing. He knew that he would have to treat her differently than he had treated the shopgirls. He didn't know just how he ought to treat her though. So he took her to her home and shook hands and said goodnight and asked her if she would go with him the next week to the country club.

This time he did feel that after all he really cared for her and she wondered if he was really as slow and bashful as he had appeared to be when they were riding home. She began to wish he had kissed her.

He took her to the dances nearly every week for a long time before he tried to make love to her. And then when he did begin he did it very slowly by squeezing her hand a little and caressing her a little as he helped her on with a coat. And every week when he did not try to make love to her she wanted him to more and more. As the weeks passed she wanted him to make love to her so much that she grew a little irritated being with him at times. She thought of the boy in college who had kissed her bare breasts through the thin dress she wore and she began to wish Harold Riley would kiss her as this other boy had kissed her. She thought of the wild cruel look in the boy's eyes and wondered if Harold Riley's eyes would look that

way. She even began to think he would be very beautiful with his eyes burning wildly, if he would only once grow warm and passionate and want her. She wondered why he did not kiss her. She was glad when he at last began to give her little caresses and to squeeze her hand. She thought that at last he was going to kiss her and she was glad the time was drawing near. She decided that when they went out dancing the next time he would try to kiss her. If he didn't she would kiss him, she decided. Then he would have to kiss her whether he wanted to or not.

Harold Riley did kiss Ruth Mason after the dance and he made love to her and his eyes did have that look in them but he was careful not to become too passionate because he knew that it would be a mistake for him to treat Ruth Mason the way he had treated girls he had known when he was in college. And they began then to have a love affair which lasted for a long time and which was finally ended by Ruth Mason being very much disappointed with Harold Riley. It was the way Harold Riley turned out to be something no one in the town had thought him that caused her to be disappointed in him and to want to marry George Harvey.

After the dance he told her he loved her and she told him she thought he was awfully nice and they kissed sitting in his car together. Ruth Mason felt very happy and knew at last that Harold Riley did really love her. He was now her man and everybody ought to know it. She thought it would be fine for him to say he wanted her to marry him. Then she could tell people that Harold Riley was her man. But he didn't say anything about marriage. He did ask her though, when he left her at her home, to let him come and call on her some evening. She told him he should come on Sunday night for dinner.

Ruth Mason was no longer bored with her life and she enjoyed the teas and receptions and bridge parties more than she had ever enjoyed them before. When girls spoke of their husbands or their fiances she felt that she had a man much better than any of the men they talked about. She had succeeded in attracting Harold Riley and he was the most promising young man in the city. She began to feel sure he would propose to her. If he didn't propose to her she would make him some way.

Harold Riley came on Sunday night for dinner and though the conversation was not as bright and happy as it had been the first night, he had a very good time. He liked Ruth's father and her mother and thought that some day Ruth would look very much like her mother. She would make a very dignified and attractive middle-aged woman, he thought, as he sat there watching her and looking at her mother. She would be a good wife. Mr. Mason talked some about business but not with the enthusiasm he had shown in talking the first night Harold Riley came there for dinner. Mrs. Mason talked about the social life in the city and spoke about Ruth and told Harold Riley that Ruth had been very popular in college. Ruth looked at her mother and hoped she wouldn't say too much. She felt there would be danger in letting her mother get a hand in what she was doing. Harold Riley looked at Ruth Mason and she smiled at him and they sat there vaguely feeling that they were both united against the two older people at the table. This feeling made them close together and they both felt indistinctly that they were a married couple sitting with two guests for dinner.

After dinner Mrs. Mason said that she and Mr. Mason would have to call upon some friends of theirs. Then a few words were spoken and Mrs. Mason gave an understanding quiet look to her daughter and left the room feeling she was doing the best thing in taking her husband calling. Ruth pretended surprise and embarrassment and told Harold Riley that they would have a better time alone than with her father and mother. He agreed at once and said he was happy to be alone with her and in her home. She suggested that they play the victrola and dance and then she brought out some of her father's initialed cigarettes and then she thought that Harold Riley might like a little of her father's old French brandy. So she went herself to the liquor cabinet and brought the bottle and two little glasses. Harold Riley thought it quite a treat to have a drink of good old French brandy in a day of prohibition, so he drank several glasses and exclaimed upon their goodness. Ruth drank two herself but said she couldn't drink more than that without becoming woozy. She played the victrola and they sat and listened and talked a while. Harold Riley wanted now to kiss her and she began to wish he would make love to her. But Harold Riley could not find it in himself to get up from his chair and go to her and kiss her.

Finally Ruth said, let's dance, and started the victrola. As

soon as Harold Riley had his right arm around her waist he drew her to him and kissed her on the lips. She slightly drew back from him and said the maid might come in though she knew the maid would never come unless she had been called. So they danced a while together and then sat on the davenport and he put his arm around her waist and drew her to him and told her he loved her. He told her he wished she would marry him. He told her they could have a nice home and he loved her and he would try to make her happy. Ruth Mason drew away from him and put her two hands on his arms and looked at him straight in the eyes and told him, Harold do you really mean you want me to marry you. Do you really really love me, Harold? Tell me honest now.

Then Harold Riley said, Why, of course, I love you. I will always love you. Don't you believe me. I have always loved you, all my life.

Oh Harold you are too good really, you are a dear. I love you, Harold. Yes, of course, I'll marry you. I love you.

Then they kissed and Harold Riley became warm and passionate and his eyes had in them that hard fire and Ruth Mason felt him warm and near her and she was frightened but she wouldn't let herself become too frightened to kiss him. She did draw back from him and try to make him be less eager. She suggested that they dance again. She suggested that they eat some candy. Then she suggested that they have another glass of brandy. So they drank another glass and Ruth Mason felt strong love for Harold Riley and they were very happy together and they kissed and planned the home that they would have and planned how they would entertain and both agreed that they would have one or maybe two children and be very happy. And Harold Riley would make lots of money and be honored and respected.

After he left, she sat down excited and elated and happier than she had ever felt. She wanted to tell everyone about it. She wanted to call up every girl she knew and tell her she had just become engaged to Harold Riley. She wanted to go to the dances at the country club and take Harold Riley's arm and tell everybody that he was her man. She was engaged to Harold Riley after weeks of waiting. She was even anxious to tell her mother and her father, more anxious though to tell her mother than her father. She knew her mother would be very happy. She knew her

mother thought that she had partly engineered the whole affair. But she was happy just in herself and she sat in her chair smiling broadly, tossing her head from side to side and thinking always to herself, Now I'm engaged, engaged to Harold Riley. I will marry Harold Riley. He's mine.

Driving home Harold Riley felt very happy. He thought again and again that Ruth Mason was not so different when she kissed him from the girls he had known so well while he had been in college. Ruth Mason was better than any of them had been but she was also just as real and human. He thought how wonderful it would be to be married to a girl like Ruth Mason. He felt anxious to be married to her. And he thought that he was very lucky to have won her.

He decided he would have to make more money than he then was making. He would have to clean up some way and make a lot of money and give Ruth Mason everything that she had been accustomed to. He began to realize that he was spending on himself the whole sum of his earnings. He thought it would have been better if he had bought a cheaper car and saved the money. Then he was glad he had the car, for it was better to have people think he already had a great deal of money. He decided he would find a way to make a lot and have a lot in the bank and then he would marry and he and Ruth Mason would be one of the richest and best couples in the city. He could hardly believe that she had kissed him and told him she loved him. It was new and wonderful and he was very very happy.

The way Harold Riley took to make a great deal of money was not strictly honest and this was one of the reasons for Ruth Mason becoming disappointed with him and later being willing to marry George Harvey who was so slow and plodding.

After the night when Ruth Mason had told Harold Riley she loved him and would some day marry him, he was very happy and thought to himself that he had found an ideal mate. He worked very hard selling stocks and bonds and planned a way to make a great deal of money so that he could have a fine home for Ruth Mason and give her everything that she deserved in life.

He planned a way of earning more money by selling stocks to customers, and then, when he thought the stocks would fall in value, not buying them up. Then when the customer told him

to sell, Harold Riley could pocket the customer's loss. He seemed always to know when stocks would rise or fall in value; he was a regular wizard in the stock and bond business. Often when he thought a stock would fall in value he would tell his customer to buy it and then when it had fallen in value and his customer had asked him to sell, Harold Riley would find himself as much richer as his customer was poorer by the deal.

It was his playing with the market and using his customers' money that finally got him in a lot of trouble. But for quite a while after the engagement, he made a great deal of money and did not find himself in any kind of trouble.

The evening after he and Ruth Mason had decided they would marry he went again to call upon her and this time her father and her mother talked to him and said they were very glad to hear about what had happened and said they hoped he would be good to their daughter. Mrs. Mason did the talking and Mr. Mason only smiled his broad jovial smile and shook hands and patted Harold Riley on the back and told him he was glad they were going to have him in the family. Ruth was very happy and smiled at Harold and acted just a little bashful and embarrassed. The four people sat down in the living room and talked and Harold Riley found that he was not enjoying the conversation and the way the older people were assuming their maternal and paternal airs. Mr. Mason asked him how things were going in his business and told him that there was no reason a young man with the ability in the stock and bond game that young Riley had should not make a pile of money. Mr. Mason said it was a game that required a man of fine ability and a strong sense of honor and integrity. He said he felt sure there was no man in the city better fitted to be a success in the stock and bond game than Harold Riley. He knew no man in that business whom the men of the city would rather deal with than Harold Riley. He said he hoped Harold Riley would always have the confidence and respect of the business men of the city.

Harold Riley did not like to hear the things Mr. Mason was saying and he did not like the way Mr. Mason said them. He felt that Mr. Mason must know what he had been planning in order to make a lot of money. He began to think Mr. Mason was giving him a warning not to do it. He thought though that he knew more about the stock and bond business than Mr. Mason

and he was planning so carefully that no one would ever know about it.

He decided that he would agree with Mr. Mason and so he told him that he thought it was a business where success depended upon small profits and a steady winning of the confidence of clients. He said there was nothing he would rather do than make his client gain money and there was nothing that would hurt him more than to have a client lose on any advice he gave.

Mrs. Mason joined in and said she knew that Harold would be a fine business man for she could tell, she said, by a person's face exactly what kind of a person he was. She said she knew Harold, for she called him Harold now that he was engaged to her daughter, would be very successful in his profession. Harold Riley liked Mrs. Mason's talk about him.

Ruth said she knew Harold would go way beyond everybody else because she could tell, she said.

But even at that, Harold Riley told them, a man is not in business only for his pleasure. He has got to make money. And I know that I can make money. I know the stock and bond business.

Ruth Mason was sure he knew his business. She was proud to feel that he would be so very successful some day. He already seemed to her very successful. He had a fine car and he looked successful. She thought that she herself was very successful. She was engaged to Harold Riley and he was making money and was highly respected and admired.

Harold Riley said that he had bought a ring for Ruth and if she liked it she could keep it and if she would rather have another ring she could exchange it. He took from his pocket a beautiful ring with a large diamond set in a heavy platinum mounting which was studded with little emeralds. It was a bigger ring than Esther Waley, the daughter of the richest man in the city, had received upon her engagement. Harold Riley had decided he would give Ruth Mason the most expensive engagement ring he could buy for her. Mrs. Mason was very much impressed and thought that now her daughter could show the ladies of the city what it meant to be Ruth Mason and be engaged to Harold Riley. Ruth was very happy and delighted and little tears came in her eyes and she kissed Harold Riley lightly and thanked him and said right in front of her mother and her father that

he was the dearest boy in the whole world. Mr. Mason didn't say much but he did ask to see it and when he looked he said to his wife that she had never had such things when they had been young. This embarrassed Mrs. Mason who said nothing. Mr. Mason said he thought people would not be able to see Ruth any more at all wearing such a brilliant diamond. Mrs. Mason looked at him and didn't say anything more about it. Harold Riley felt quite satisfied with the stir the ring had created and thought that it was lucky he had decided on the best thing he could buy. He decided it was always best to do things in the very best way and never be halfway about doing things. Business would only be better if people thought that he was making lots of money.

Mrs. Mason told her husband that she thought they should leave the young people alone a while to talk over their engagement.

Ruth Mason and Harold Riley sat on the davenport and made love and talked and Harold Riley wanted Ruth Mason always to show him more than she did how much she loved him. Ruth told him there was plenty of time and she had heard it was not good for people to make love too much. But she did kiss him and make love to him and they were very happy though Harold Riley felt always more and more that he wanted her to show him in more ways how much she loved him.

They talked about the home they would have and he told her he would like to buy a very fine apartment in a new co-operative apartment house which was just being erected. Ruth thought it would be fine to live in an apartment and have maid service and elevator and meals served in the apartment when you wanted them. She thought that it would be quite nice if Harold were to take one of the apartments. So they decided then that they would live in this apartment. But they hadn't yet decided just when they would be married. Ruth Mason felt that she would like to be engaged a while before she was married. She thought that it would be very nice to be engaged for quite a while and then before the marriage there could be parties and showers and dinners. She was very anxious to go out and show the girls she knew her ring and tell them all about Harold Riley and about the apartment they were going to have. And she thought it would be nice to tell them that they had not yet decided just when they were to be married.

When Harold Riley drove home in his fine car he got to

thinking that Ruth Mason had not been as warm and loving to him as he wanted her to be. He began to think that they would have to marry before she would really strongly love him. He was anxious for the marriage to take place. He thought that once they were married Ruth Mason would be warm and passionate and loving toward him. He saw no reason why loving should be harmful to them and he did not like to have her draw away from him when he kissed her hard and loved her. He decided then that he would hurry and make a lot of money and then they would be married.

Ruth Mason was very happy with her engagement ring and the thought that Harold Riley loved her and was going to be her husband. She liked the thought of the grand apartment and the thought of entertaining and being Mrs. Harold Riley. She liked to have Harold Riley kiss her but she cared more to have him engaged to her and love her and want her for his wife. This is the way she felt after she had just become engaged to Harold Riley.

Harold Riley was planning how he could make a great deal of money and he was beginning to speculate quietly and was really making money. He decided he would not play the game too fast but would take his time and walk carefully and make every gain a sure one.

Nearly every day he went to see Ruth Mason and they kissed and made love and talked about their home and their marriage. They had not yet decided just when they would be married. Ruth Mason told Harold Riley that she thought it would be better just to wait a while and decide later. They could decide anytime. He told her they ought to decide to be married as soon as the apartments were ready. She asked him how long that would be and he told her it would be in four months at the latest. She told him she thought a young couple should be engaged at least six months and even longer. He told her he did not see why. She said that by that time they would know whether they would always love each other and it would be safer then to marry. He told her he would just as soon wait six months to marry because he was making money and would like to have quite a lot saved up so she would have plenty of money to do the things she wanted with. But he said he did think they could get married when the apartment was ready. She said that maybe they would

be married then but she asked him not to make her decide just then. He said he wouldn't.

After they had talked about the time of their marriage they made love and he wanted her to be more eager and he wanted her to show him in more ways that she loved him. She said they must not make love too hard because it would not be good for them. But she was really loving toward him and she kissed him and held him to her and told him that she loved him more than anything in the world. He kissed her hard and his eyes had that hard look in them and he told her that he wanted her and wanted so to be married to her. He told her he could hardly wait until they were to be married.

But we must wait, she told him. We must wait.

He said he knew it, but that it was very hard for him to wait. She was so lovely and he loved her so much he told her he must have her.

She told him that it would not be long before they would be married and he would love her even more then after waiting for her.

Harold Riley said goodnight to Ruth Mason and went home tired after talking and making love to her and thought to himself that it was not easy to love a girl like Ruth Mason. He thought that it was easier to be in love with a girl like the girls he had known in college. His nerves were tense from the excitement of the evening and he felt that it would be better if she were more like some of the girls he had known who hung around the dancehalls. He thought that being engaged to her should make her feel more free and open with him and more anxious for him to make real love to her. He decided that he would make love to her and make her want him and he would not wait all that time until they were to be married. He thought to himself that since they were engaged to be married there was no reason why they shouldn't know each other better. He wanted very much to be completely married to her.

Ruth Mason was disturbed when Harold Riley left and she hoped he wouldn't want too much love of her before their marriage. She knew that they should wait until they were finally married. She did not like it having to tell him she could not make such strong love to him. She loved him and she wanted to marry him but she wanted to be engaged to him before they were married. She liked being engaged so much.

Harold Riley went ahead with his plans for making money and he found himself gaining every day on his investments and his speculations and he began to think that it would not be long before he would be one of the richest men in the city. When he saw money coming easily to him he thought of his mother and his father, who lived in a smaller city and had very little money, though they had a good name and a stable reputation. He thought of the pride his mother had in him. He remembered how happy she had been when he had made a good fraternity in college and later when he had settled down in the stock and bond business. He thought if he made a great deal of money his father would not always be feeling that he had not been a success in life. His father had always felt that he should have made more money. His father had had money from his own father and had never had to think much about making money. But by the time Harold Riley was through with college his parents really had very little from the money Harold Riley's grandfather had left to Harold Riley's father. Harold Riley was quite sincere in wanting to make money for Ruth Mason and for the pride it would give his own father and his mother. He thought that if he was careful and did not make foolish uses of his money it would be all right for him to speculate and try to earn a great deal of money in a hurry. And all the time he kept thinking that he would like to have Ruth Mason completely and not have to wait until their marriage.

The next time he saw Ruth Mason he talked to her about this and he told her he could see no reason why, since they were surely going to be married in just a few months, they should not know each other more completely. He told her that he knew that Esther Waley had had a child only six months after she was married, and she was the daughter of the richest man in the city and nobody thought anything about it. He told Ruth Mason not to be afraid, that they would not have a child but that he would certainly like to know her completely. He told her that when two people loved each other it was only right that they should know each other.

Ruth Mason was very frightened at the things Harold Riley told her and she said she didn't think that it was right for him to talk that way. She said that he would love her better after he had waited for their marriage and she said that she knew she would only love him better. Harold Riley kissed her hard and

made love to her and told her he thought she was right but he told her that he loved her so much that it was very difficult for him to understand completely all the things that she had been telling him.

Again Harold Riley went home feeling disappointed and Ruth Mason sat at home after he had left her feeling that Harold Riley was asking more than he should ask of her. She was afraid to give in to his wishes and she was beginning to be afraid that things would be bad if she did not give in. It was so nice to be engaged to Harold Riley and to have people know all about it but it was not nice to think that the simple fact of their engagement called for things from her which she wasn't at all willing to be giving. She hoped that Harold Riley would not be always asking things of her which she did not want to give him.

Harold Riley felt that he knew all about Ruth Mason that he could possibly know before their marriage and he wondered a little if he had not been a little foolish to want to marry her. He wondered if after all he would not be just as happy if he had not asked her to marry him. Then he thought of the standing the Mason family had in the city and of the beauty of Ruth Mason and he thought then that it was a very good thing that they were engaged and he was sure that they would have a very happy married life together. But he still did not see any reason why he couldn't know Ruth Mason better before they were to be married. Then he decided he would go on with his plans and make money and then he could urge her to hurry up the marriage.

Harold Riley had been engaged for several weeks before he wrote to his parents and told them about his engagement. When he did write to them and tell them about the Mason family and about the high position they occupied in the society of their city his parents were both very happy, though his mother wrote him a rather sad letter telling him about the troubles she had had in bringing him up and giving him an education and telling him that she hoped he would be happy and always be a good boy and worthy of the love they had always felt for him. She told him she hoped Ruth Mason was worthy of him and she hoped that he would be a fine upright man like his father. His father wrote him too and told him that he should always be upright and that

he should try to be worthy of such a fine girl as Ruth Mason surely must be.

Harold Riley did not like hearing from his parents. He felt that they knew nothing about him and had no right to give him advice and try to tell him what he should be doing. He felt that both of them were old fogies and could not possibly understand what he was after in life. He knew that he was mainly after money and position and marriage with Ruth Mason.

Harold Riley began to really make money in the stock and bond business. He sold stocks to his customers and then waited to buy them when he thought he could make a profit on the margin and he seemed to know how to gain money each time he tried this. He began also to speculate and he made money in this way for a long time.

Harold Riley always told Ruth Mason about the money he was making but did not tell her about the way he was speculating. She in turn told her mother and her father and her mother said that she thought Harold was a very bright and capable business man but Mr. Mason always said it would be better for the lad not to try and make too much money in too short a time. He said that he had always found it true that slow gains were the surest and Harold would profit if he followed a simple business rule of that kind. Slow gains are the surest. Ruth Mason said she was sure Harold knew exactly what he was doing and would not make money too fast and lose it. She told her mother and her father that Harold was one of the brightest men with money matters she had ever heard of.

As Harold Riley saw himself making more and more money he became careless and wilder in his speculations but luck seemed always with him at this time and he didn't seem to be able to drop a penny on any one of his investments and speculations. Seeing luck always with him he became swellheaded and very snobbish. Ruth Mason liked this in him and thought it added to his air of distinction but other people in the city began slowly to dislike him. Mr. Mason did not like to see the young man become too swellheaded and he cared always less and less to carry on conversations with him. Mrs. Mason felt very much as Ruth did and thought that Harold was only acting quite distinguished.

Ruth Mason found herself also becoming more and more snobbish. She was so sure she had the best man in the city that she felt like lording it over all the other young women who were

of her age and were without men to marry. At the teas and receptions and bridge parties she had a way of absentmindedly carrying on conversation and holding her head in an elevated position which asserted her superior position in society. She was engaged to be married to Harold Riley and these other people in her social set were really far beneath her. Harold Riley was the most up and coming young man in the city.

The girls Ruth Mason knew did not like the change in her and so talk began to go around the town that Harold Riley and Ruth Mason were too snobbish for any use. People said that they should go off by themselves if they felt so much better than everybody else. But this was not what they wanted. They wanted more than anything to go among people in order that they could show these people the obvious superiority in themselves.

And Harold Riley kept right on making more and more money.

Things began to move very rapidly in the lives of Harold Riley and Ruth Mason. They were always getting nearer to the end of their engagement, to the time when they would be married. And he was making a great deal of money and she was making arrangements for the wedding, the date of which had not been definitely set but which would be held before many more months. The apartments were almost completed and Ruth Mason and Harold Riley could now go and look at the bare unfinished rooms. They were together every day and every day they found time for a certain amount of kissing and lovemaking. Harold Riley always kept on talking about how much he wanted Ruth completely and how anxious he was for their marriage. He told her about the money he was making and said that he was going to keep right on making money. He bought another fine car for himself. Now he had a fast roadster and a big enclosed car and he seemed very prosperous. He talked more to Ruth about knowing her better than he could know her before their wedding and he finally made her feel that the best thing for her to do would be to let him know her completely. She was more and more afraid that if she did not do this he would tire of her and might never wait to marry her and she did not want to marry him yet. She liked it too well just being engaged to him and she wanted to wait longer before she married.

One night when they were alone in her house he convinced

her that there could be no harm in knowing one another completely. They had been drinking some of Mr. Mason's old French brandy and Harold Riley had begun to cry and plead and he made Ruth Mason feel sorry for him and think maybe he was a weaker sort of man than she had thought him. She didn't like to see him feeling so unhappy. She liked better seeing him when he was feeling happy and telling her about the money he was making in his business. She didn't want to do what she did but she felt that she would almost have to or he might never really love her and want her for marriage. She was very frightened but also very cool and calm and thought that now she could make him feel contented and happy and he would not always be talking to her about how they should know one another better. She thought that he would only love her better afterwards. She thought also for a minute that maybe he would not like her as well as he had been liking her. She remembered hearing someone say that sometimes men did not like women after they knew them this way. She was very frightened because it seemed to her that this was a very important moment in her life. She didn't want him, she only wanted his kisses and his saying to her over and over that he loved her. Ruth Mason was becoming very mixed and uncertain and wildly frightened and she said to herself that she didn't know what to do.

After they were together she kept saying to herself over and over that she was not a good girl, that she didn't think she should have let Harold Riley know her this way. Ruth Mason was frightened and began to think that anything might happen, children, or even, if all the stories she had heard about Harold Riley from people that did not like him were true, she might get something awful. She didn't know why she felt this about such a fine, clean, upright man as Harold Riley. She was almost hysterical and she cried and Harold Riley became very cool and collected in his senses and he looked at Ruth Mason and thought to himself, after all Ruth Mason was not much different from the girls he had known when he had been in college. But he couldn't stand it seeing her crying and almost hysterical and so he talked to her and told her that he loved her more than anything in the world. If they could only soon be married, he told her. He told her that now he knew for sure that she loved him and was his and now, he told her, he was sure that he loved her. He told her he had never been so happy.

Ruth Mason was frightened and sorry and wished she had had more strength and will and had not been weak. She saw Harold Riley, now so strong and reassuring and she thought to herself that she had been a fool to think him weak and needful of her. It made her a little angry and it made her feel that someway he had tricked her.

Harold Riley talked to her and tried to make her feel less frightened and he thought to himself that she was not much better than other girls he had known and he could see no obvious reason why she should feel so frightened. He began to dislike her though he continued to tell her not to be frightened and he told her that everything would be all right because they would soon be married.

Nearly the whole night Ruth Mason remained awake thinking she had been a fool and maybe now Harold Riley would no longer love her. She was worried and anxious and now began to think that she would have to decide upon a date for their marriage. She was not sure she wanted this side of marriage if it had no more to offer than the thing she had just experienced. She liked it so much better just being engaged and kissing and making love. She didn't like to be so frightened, because it made her think that her whole life was worthless, that there was nothing more in life and that love itself was not wonderful.

Harold Riley thought to himself that Ruth Mason was weak and no better than the girls he had known. He thought to himself that there was no use marrying a girl that could not give him more than he had already had from girls. He thought he had been a fool to put so much stock in Ruth Mason. He thought he would like to tell her exactly what it was he was thinking.

When he reached his home he thought that it might be the best thing he could do just to end everything and not marry Ruth Mason. He would rather just go on making money and not marry and when he wanted girls go get some girl that could show him more than any other girl had ever shown him. But he wanted to be respected and a big man in the city and he knew that marriage with a girl like Ruth Mason would help him in his business. He thought that even if he married her he could see other women. He didn't at this moment like Ruth Mason. He only pitied her a little. But he did decide that he would see it through, the marriage.

The next day Ruth Mason felt more strongly her love for Harold Riley and she wanted now more than ever to hurry up the marriage. Things were moving fast in the lives of Ruth and Harold. Now Ruth wanted only Harold Riley and though she was not sure she cared much for the things he had shown her she knew that she must have him for marriage. If anything should happen to break up the engagement Ruth Mason felt that she would die.

Around the house talking with her mother she tried very hard to act as if nothing of importance had happened to her and she did her acting so well that Mrs. Mason never had the slightest suspicion of what had been going on. She had so much faith and trust in the goodness of Harold Riley that she never would have suspected him.

Ruth Mason got up late in the morning because she somehow felt that she didn't want to speak to her mother and her father. She was afraid they might see something about her that was different than she had been the day before. She herself did not feel any difference but she somehow thought that other people might be able to see it in her. When she did get up and go down to breakfast she complained of a headache and her nervousness that day was repeatedly ascribed to a headache. As the day went on she became more calm and quiet and only worried now about the danger of finding herself with child. She worried and decided they would have to marry in a short time. She told her mother she had decided that she and Harold could as well as not be married as soon as the new apartments were completed. Mrs. Mason said that she would like to talk it over with Ruth's father, but that she herself thought there was no reason why the young folks should delay their marriage.

Late in the afternoon Ruth Mason went out to tea and as she sat around and listened to the conversation she began to feel that the girls she knew were acting strangely toward her. She did not realize that they were only acting this way because they felt she had been trying to snub them. She was alarmed and wondered if the girls, sitting around there talking, could possibly know anything about her. She turned to one girl who had always been a close friend of hers and started a lively conversation. The girl was very glad to see Ruth Mason again acting natural and she became very friendly and the two girls had a good talk together.

When Ruth left the tea and said goodbye she began thinking that now, since she had really become a woman, even if these people did not know it, they would surely care more for her. She really thought that her experience had someway added to her personality. She hoped the change would not be too apparent. She was still sorry she had learned to know Harold Riley. She thought, going home, that it would have been as well and probably better if they had waited. She kept thinking there might be a baby, even though Harold had told her it was quite impossible. She had once heard it said that there was no sure way, and now she felt worried. She hurried home because she wanted to be there, looking nice, when Harold came to call that evening.

Ruth Mason sat at dinner with her father and her mother feeling in herself a tenseness and also an air of defiance. She didn't want them to see any difference in her and yet she felt like standing up and daring them to see this difference. She felt like telling them, I dare you to see anything out of the way about me. And then she thought she would tell them right after, I am going to marry Harold Riley in a short time and everything is all right. I am my own boss and if I do something I am willing to suffer, so don't any of you people look at me funny. I won't stand it.

Ruth Mason thought these thoughts and smiled all the time and chatted with her parents and then started in again feeling tense and with some degree of fear at the thought of seeing Harold Riley again in just a few minutes when he would be coming to call. She began to wish nothing had happened. She didn't know just how she would greet Harold Riley when he came to call. She hoped he would act the way he had always acted with her. She hoped he would not act in a way to make her feel a strain and tenseness. She began wishing now that the dinner would soon be over. She felt that she couldn't sit there eating, waiting for Harold to come to see her.

Her father and mother started talking about the wedding and Ruth spoke up quick and said that she and Harold were going to be married as soon as the apartments were ready. She said she thought it was silly for young people to be engaged so long.

Both her father and her mother answered her and told her, Of course we never said a word about your waiting. You have

always been the one who didn't want to set a date for the wedding. You and Harold can get married when you want to. Only do let your mother know a while beforehand.

While they were all talking about Ruth and the marriage she forgot to be so nervous and before she realized it the dinner was over and she went upstairs to put more powder on her face and make herself ready to see Harold Riley. Alone she again became nervous and wished that he would hurry. She could hardly stand it waiting for him. She was afraid he would be entirely different than he had ever been before. She was afraid that he might not love her now that they had been together. She grew more nervous as she waited and she watched the clock and wondered why he was later this night than usual. She thought that maybe he would not come to see her. She grew very anxious and excited and watched the clock and waited for him.

Harold Riley's day had been as uneasy and uncomfortable for him as Ruth Mason's had been for her. He had felt, the whole day, that he cared less for Ruth than he had ever cared before and he began to wish that he had not so hastily thrown himself into an engagement. He remembered a little girl whom he had known in college and remembered the fondness she had always shown for him. She had loved him without restraint and had always told him how much she loved him. She had sent him notes and flowers and books and whenever they had been together she had been so kind and loving that, now in looking back upon this experience, Harold Riley thought that she would have made a better wife than Ruth Mason, even though her station in society was far beneath his own. He remembered that he had really run away from this girl because she loved him more than he had wanted her to love him. He had been afraid he was getting too deeply involved and he was afraid it might get back to his parents. So he had ended the love affair and left her feeling very broken-hearted. Now Harold Riley thought of this girl with sentimental longing and began to feel that he had let real true love go past him. He could not see that Ruth Mason was superior to the girl he had loved in college.

He thought of the night before and thought to himself that he had been a fool to let himself go so far. He felt a little bit as if he never again wanted to see Ruth Mason. He certainly felt that he did not want to marry her.

Harold Riley went to his office and sat around and read his mail and smoked a great many cigarettes and thought about Ruth Mason. He made no move to do business. He thought that it might be the best thing for him to leave the city and go somewhere else and just forget about the whole thing. He began to think that Ruth Mason did not really love him but only wanted him for marriage because she thought he would make a good husband. He resented her thinking this way about him. He thought of Mrs. Mason, and he felt in her case even more strongly, that she thought him a good man for her daughter to take in marriage. He began to think that the Mason family had trapped him into marrying Ruth. He even went so far as to think that Mr. Mason had been mixed up in it some way. He felt that he never wanted to go to their house again. He hated to think of going there that night. Ruth Mason was no better than the girls he had known in college.

Harold Riley had a very uncomfortable day. The only thing that relieved him was the fact that three stocks he had been speculating very heavily in were now going the way he had anticipated and he was making money from them. In one of them he made a great deal of money and it relieved him to see how good his judgment had been and he softened a little toward Ruth Mason and began to think of the way she had acted the night before and he thought then to himself that she did really love him, she only lacked experience. He began to think that he was willing to go through with the marriage, and then, if worst came to worst, he could leave. He was thinking of divorce even before his marriage. Ruth was a nice girl, he thought. She would learn better how to love him. He felt sure that he had been the first man she had ever been with. He felt a little sorry for her.

In the afternoon he felt so sorry that he went to the jeweler and bought a beautiful pearl necklace and decided he would give it to her that night in order to let her see that he loved her. He was not absolutely sure he loved her but he no longer felt mean toward her.

After he had eaten an early dinner he went to his home and shaved and changed his clothes and sat down and smoked for a while. He noticed that it was nearly time for him to go and see Ruth Mason. As the time grew nearer he grew more afraid to go and see her. Harold Riley felt that possibly her mother and father had found out what had happened and he also felt that

it would be hard for him to greet Ruth after what had happened. He didn't know how she would take it. He was frankly afraid to go and call but he knew he had to. It would not do for him to stay away this night, of all nights. He sat there and smoked and drank some bootleg whiskey which was not as good as the old French brandy Mr. Mason kept in his cellar. He felt again that he had been trapped. He wished nothing had happened, then it would have been easy to break the engagement. Now he knew Ruth would be broken up about it, if he tried to end things. He knew he hadn't been alone to blame for what they had done but he felt that he had been more to blame than Ruth, because she had protested and he had always kept on insisting. It would be better, he thought, if a man didn't have such feelings in him. Then he would tend more to business. If it wasn't for such feelings a man would have no trouble in life. He could just go on with business and there would be nothing to take him away from it. The time was going on and it was already later than usual for him to go and call on Ruth. But he just took another drink and sat there in his chair, wishing that he did not have to make a call. Finally it was so late that he had to rouse himself and start out toward the Masons.

Harold Riley drove his car very slowly. He felt in his pocket for the case with the pearl necklace. Maybe it would be better not to give it to her, he was thinking. It was a little like giving money to a whore, he thought. No, it would only show that he loved her more than ever and wanted her to know it. He liked thinking that it would show her that he loved her more, because he felt now that he didn't love her nearly as much as he had loved her.

Ruth Mason saw Harold Riley stop his car in front of her house and she walked downstairs in order to open the door for him. She wanted to be the person to let him in. She waited in the hallway, for what seemed a long time to her, until he reached the door and pushed the bell button.

Harold Riley came in the door and seeing Ruth, put his arms around her and kissed her lightly. She felt herself trembling a little with excitement. He felt himself excited and nervous. All he said was, Oh, Ruth you darling. She said to him, Oh, Harold darling. That was all either of them could think of to say.

Harold Riley took off his coat and hat and then told Ruth

Mason that he had something for her. Then he gave her the pearl necklace. She was very delighted with it, though for a minute her face clouded and she asked him whether pearls meant bad luck or not. Harold told her he had never heard that they did and couldn't see how that could be possible. She told him then that she was sure they didn't and that she had always wanted a nice string of pearls. They are so beautiful, she told him. Oh, I love them Harold. You are such a dear boy.

Oh, that's nothing, Harold Riley told her.

The young couple walked into the living room together and found Mr. Mason reading the paper and Mrs. Mason talking to him as he read. Mr. Mason always was talked to as he read the paper and he had gotten so used to it that he didn't seem to mind it. When Harold and Ruth came in the room he put down the paper and took off his glasses. The four people talked and Mrs. Mason said that Ruth had told her the young people had decided to get married as soon as the apartments were ready.

Harold Riley looked at Ruth Mason and she smiled at him. Then he told Mrs. Mason, Yes, we thought we might as well. We didn't see why we should wait so long.

After he had said this he wondered when it had been that they had decided. He guessed they must have decided but now he felt that he would just as soon have waited a little longer. The new apartments would be ready in two months and he wasn't in a very great hurry to be married. He turned his head down a little as he thought and Ruth Mason felt herself puckering her lips and looking over toward the piano. She wished her parents would leave the room and leave them alone. The older people made no move to go, so finally, after a silence she suggested that she and Harold go to a movie. Harold was glad of the suggestion and said he would like to go and see a movie.

The ride downtown was a quiet one. Both Ruth and Harold felt a strain and did not feel like talking. Harold wondered why Ruth Mason had not shown the pearl string to her parents. Finally she asked what he was thinking.

Oh, nothing, he told her, only I wondered why you didn't wear the pearls tonight. I wondered whether maybe you didn't like them. You didn't put them on and I just wondered.

She answered him and told him she had been so excited getting them that she had forgotten. I haven't felt well today, she told him.

He asked what was the matter and said he was sorry.

She told him he knew what was the matter.

Then Harold Riley became very uneasy and nervous and wished more than ever that he had stayed home. He couldn't think of the right thing to tell her. Finally, after waiting for a minute or two, he told her, Oh, Ruth, you know I love you. I don't want you to feel bad. We are going to be married pretty soon and I love you Ruth.

Ruth Mason told Harold she had been afraid all day that he didn't really love her anymore. She told him that she was afraid after what had happened he couldn't love her.

Harold Riley told Ruth that it had just made him care more for her.

She asked him why he had not come earlier to see her. He had kept her so long waiting.

He said that he had been very busy with a big deal he had just put through. He explained the big deal to her which he had not put through at all. This eased her mind a great deal and she slipped her arm through his in the car, and then put her head upon his shoulder and told him, Harold, I love you so much. You are such a fine big man and such a good business man. Everybody says you are the best business man in the city.

Harold Riley began again to feel real affection for Ruth Mason, and he now felt that they would be a good happy married couple. He was glad that she understood that he was a good business man. It showed that she could really appreciate him, and he enjoyed the moving picture.

Ruth Mason could see now that Harold Riley cared for her as much as ever. She felt it the minute he had cast off the doubts he had been feeling, and she felt less and less sorry about the thing that happened the night before. But she decided it would not happen again until they were married.

Harold Riley and Ruth Mason had an ice cream sundae after the moving picture and then drove home. Harold Riley only began to feel the effect of the bootleg whiskey after the excitement of first talking to Ruth Mason had died down. He had been so nervous and excited that he had not felt it. In the moving picture theater he had begun to notice that he was a little bit drunk. The pictures were not absolutely clear to him. He could talk all right, but his eyesight was not as good as it usually

was and he knew from this that he had had a little more to drink than he should have taken.

In the ice cream parlor he hadn't felt like eating but he could still talk and Ruth Mason had not even noticed that he had been drinking. The two people drove home and Ruth asked Harold to come in for a while. He told her he would like to have a little drink of brandy. Mr. and Mrs. Mason had gone to bed, so Ruth and Harold sat in the living room and drank a couple small glasses of brandy. Coming home from the picture and very casually taking a drink of brandy, both people felt as if they had always been as they then were. Harold Riley felt very much at home and Ruth Mason felt that it was only usual for Harold to come home with her and say that he would like a drink of brandy and sit down and sip it and talk to her as if they were really an old married couple. There was no strain or nervousness in either of them. Ruth Mason liked it feeling this way and so did Harold Riley. Ruth came over to him bringing with her the carafe of liquor and poured him out another drink. He drank it off hurriedly and reached out for her arm and told her to come and sit beside him. He was feeling now a little drunk.

Ruth Mason sat down beside him feeling again just a little nervous. She noticed that Harold was not acting exactly natural and she was a little frightened. He drew her to him and kissed her and told her that he loved her. She felt warm toward him and hugged him tight and kissed him and told him that she loved him. She liked it kissing him and telling him she loved him. She felt now as though they had been a long time married. But she was afraid to have anything happen again as it had happened. Harold Riley kissed her very hard and told her again he loved her and said that everything was just as if they were married. He made love to her more and more and she grew frightened and told him that they mustn't any more.

She told him, We will soon be married, Harold. I love you so much, but please don't ask me. Please don't ask me again, Harold.

Ruth Mason in saying this to Harold Riley made him feel resentful and he turned to her and told her he would never ask her. He said he was sorry he ever had. He said, I don't see how you can say that, Ruth. That hurts me.

Oh, Harold, Ruth told him, I didn't want to hurt you. I don't

mean that. I love you. You can do anything you want to. Only please, Harold, don't now.

Harold Riley told her that he saw the way she felt and that he was sorry anything had happened. He said he didn't think that when two people loved each other there was any harm in feeling as he had felt. He said he didn't like it that Ruth should feel as she did about it.

Ruth Mason became more frightened and began to think that if she didn't do as Harold asked her, he would no longer love her. But she was so frightened she couldn't. She told him, Harold darling, you know I love you more than anything. How can you say you think I don't love you. I would do anything, Harold, but please not tonight. I can't, Harold. I will just simply go crazy. Please, dear.

Harold Riley had by this time become quite sober again and he sat up straight on the davenport and told Ruth that he was sorry he had said anything. He said he loved her very much and then he kissed her lightly and said he thought he had better be going home.

Ruth Mason told him that he must love her and not feel bad, and then when they were married they would both feel differently. She told him she loved him so much that it would kill her if he didn't love her. He said he did love her and thought that she was right in the way she felt. She was glad he understood and sympathized with her. She loved him more than ever because he had understood what she had meant and had not pressed her further. She went to bed feeling that they understood and loved one another.

Harold Riley drove home feeling deep down in him, anger because Ruth Mason had held him off and had not made love to him the way he wanted.

Next day Harold Riley was still angry. Ruth Mason no longer felt so sure that they did fully understand and love one another. She began herself to be afraid that Harold might have been offended. She worried too about not showing the pearl necklace to her father and her mother and wondered if Harold could be really angry because she had not done it.

Harold Riley called her on the telephone at noon and told her he could not be around to see her in the evening because he had to make a business call in a city about fifty miles away. He

said he would have to drive over there in the afternoon and wouldn't be back until late.

Ruth Mason suggested that she would like to go with him but he told her he would be such a long time in conference with his client that he couldn't take her with him. He told her it would bore her too much, and besides he said he didn't know just how long it would take him to transact the business he had in mind. She told him she was sorry that she wouldn't see him. She said she hated to go a whole day without seeing him. I love you, Harold, she told him over the telephone.

Harold told her that he would see her the next night and that it almost broke his heart not to be able to see her this night but that he must work if they were to have money and a happy time of marriage. She saw his point and agreed that he was right in thinking so much of business. She said she hoped he would be successful on this evening.

He was glad when the telephoning was over and he smiled to himself to think how easy it had been. He was going to this other city to see a girl he had known when he had been in college. She worked as a cigar clerk in a hotel there and had always been kind to him. He thought that it was almost necessary for him to see another girl before he married Ruth Mason. He felt that he needed some real excitement. Besides one of his stocks had taken an awful fall and he felt sure he was going to lose money on it. Some other stocks he had bought on margin for a local business man were dropping and losing him money. His other speculations did not give him any cause for worry, but these two losses were enough to make him want a little excitement, drinking and a woman.

In the afternoon he drove over to this other city with two bottles of Scotch whiskey in the car, which he had bought that day from the office bootlegger, and then went to the hotel and spoke to the girl who was on duty. She told him she had to work until nine-thirty, but after that she said she could go out with him and would like to.

Harold Riley walked out on the street and got in his car and sat a minute thinking. He hated to have to wait so long. It was only six-thirty and that left him three hours to wait. One of his college fraternity brothers lived in this city, so he decided to look him up. He went to a drugstore and looked up the name Douglas Holt in the directory. He spoke to his old friend and

they agreed that they would meet at once and have dinner together.

Sitting, eating and talking, conversation turned to the girl at the cigar counter and Harold Riley told Douglas Holt that he had a date with her for nine thirty. Douglas Holt decided he would like to go out on a party of the kind they were discussing, so after eating they went back to the hotel and Harold Riley asked the cigar girl if she had a friend for Holt. She said, Yes she did know a girl. She was sure the girl would come along. I'll call her up and I know she'll come with us. You be here at nine-thirty and she'll be here or we'll know where to get her.

The two men went out and played a game of billiards. They had both been good players in college but hadn't played for some time and the game bored them. They decided they would take the girls to a roadhouse about thirty miles outside the city in the direction of their old college town.

They called for the cigar girl at nine-thirty and then drove to an outlying drug store where the other girl was waiting for them. After the introductions they started the car and Douglas Holt slipped his arm around his partner's waist. She offered a small amount of resistance but he said it was all in fun and then they drew out the whiskey. An air of familiarity was immediately established. Talk went around about various grades of bootleg booze and the effects of gin, and other prohibition beverages. The girls thought they would like to go to the roadhouse. They both told of certain times they had been there, mainly to impress the young men. Harold Riley liked it all. He liked the conversation, the spirit of the girls, and the good natured manly drinking they were doing. He liked it and felt himself strong and no longer nervous or angry about Ruth Mason. He was having a fine time and found it easy to forget Ruth Mason.

When he was driving the car around a detour he lost the road and went straight on in a wrong direction until he had gone so far they all could see they had lost the way. They all agreed to just keep on driving, and so the drinks were passed around again, and kisses were exchanged by each man with both girls. The party was very jolly and congenial. They drove on farther and the road grew worse and then finally they heard a grinding noise underneath their feet and Harold Riley told them they had surely burned out a bearing. The girls kept

shouting that they wanted to dance and not be stuck out on an old hard frozen road so deserted that not even a farmhouse was in sight.

Harold Riley was sore as the very devil and he found it hard to say anything. He suggested that he and the cigar girl walk to the first farmhouse and get a garage with a wrecking car to haul them to the nearest town or city. They got out and started walking and took what was left of one bottle with them. It was very cold outside but they were gone longer than they really need have been gone. Douglas Holt and his girl sat in the car and drank more whiskey and made love.

The two girls exchanged meaning glances when the four people were again together and the two men sort of winked at one another. That made it clear all around that something had been happening.

Harold Riley announced that a car would be out from some little hick town near there and would haul them in and fix the car up. They waited and drank more whiskey and started in telling dirty stories and Harold Riley again began to feel that he was really having a good time of it. Finally the wrecking car came and towed them into the small village. In the garage Harold Riley, by offering a big sum of money, arranged to have the car fixed for them by morning. It would take at least that long to do the work the man told them. The girls were very worried and both complained that their mothers would worry about them. Finally the cigar girl said that each could tell her mother she had stayed all night with the other girl.

Harold Riley and Douglas Holt asked the garageman about a hotel and after inquiry had been made it was found the hotel was filled up for the night. He suggested a good clean boarding house and said he would find out if there were any rooms there to be had. He said, I don't know, but I guess I better tell the old woman. Are you folks married? Harold Riley was just about to say they were, when he saw the girls look at each other with glances which would have denied him had he said it. He answered and said, No, we're not, two rooms will be all right, though, the girls can sleep in one and we can sleep in the other if you can't do any better. The garageman left and said he thought he would find a room for them all right.

The four people went to the boarding house and the nice old woman who ran it told them the whole house was empty just

then and they could have the two rooms flanking the bathroom on the second floor. They told her to call them at seven o'clock for breakfast. Harold Riley and Douglas Holt were going to have the end room and the girls the one nearest the stairway.

After the old lady left them supplied with towels and soap and had gone down to her room on the lower floor, Harold Riley went into the girls' room and told Holt's girl to go in the other room with Douglas Holt. She left Harold and his girl feeling a little uncertain and afraid. In fact all four of them felt a little afraid, even Harold Riley. Next morning when the good old woman came upstairs to wake them Harold Riley answered when she rapped upon the girls' room door, and Douglas Holt answered when the rap came at the door of the boys' room. The good old woman went down stairs feeling that her boarding house had been turned into a den of vice and she was so unhappy that she set the breakfast dishes before them without once speaking. She felt outraged and she telephoned her son, who worked in the village feed mill, and told him to come right to the house.

The son came there running and his mother told him about what had happened. The son became more angry even than the mother. He said he would get after them swell city fellers. He said he would not stand and have his mother insulted. He walked out of the house toward the garage and saw the four people standing in front beside Harold Riley's fine big car which showed very plainly that he was a rich and prosperous young man. The son slowed up his pace and pondered on the way he had better take to bring these people to justice. He was afraid to start anything, but he knew he had to do something. He saw Harold Riley unroll some bills to pay the garageman and then he saw the four people step into the car. Then he hurried as fast as he could and just as they were starting he yelled, Say, I got your number, you crooks. I got the number on your car there. I'll get you.

Harold Riley heard the yelling and stopped the car, and opened the door and looked behind.

The son was standing there and shouting. He said, I'll get you fellows under the Mann act, by gorry. I'll have every one of you arrested. The girls, too. You think you can get away with that stuff in my mother's house. I got your number, seven, one, six, five, five, ought. So there.

The four people in the car were very frightened hearing this talk and all began to feel that they would now be arrested for having been together in the boarding-house. Harold Riley slammed the door and started the car ahead at a fast speed and went fast that way for miles until they felt they were not being followed.

Harold Riley was more frightened than any of them. He now felt sure that he would get in some awful mixup in his city and probably would lose Ruth Mason and his business. He hated most to think that scandal might upset his whole business career, just as he was getting well started.

He told the other people in the car they had nothing to worry about, it was he that would get it when the time came for reckoning. I wish that bastard had got the number wrong or something, but he didn't, damn it, he said aloud. They tried to console him because it was easy for them to see that he was the one most apt to suffer. They tried to console him too, in order that if he did get into trouble he wouldn't be apt to squeal on them. They all said they hoped nothing would come of it. They said they really didn't think anything would come of it because that fellow wouldn't be apt to do anything.

Harold Riley was not convinced but seeing that they all seemed to think he might let them in on the trouble if it ever came about, he told them not to worry, that no matter what happened he would never tell on them. It made him dislike all of them a little when he thought that he was the only one who really had anything to worry about.

After he left the three people in their city and started for his own he began thinking of alibis, but none of them sounded convincing. He decided he would say that his car had been stolen from the main street while he was in talking with the man he had supposedly seen on business and had not been recovered until next morning. It was no good though, as an alibi, because if he got into trouble there would be witnesses to identify him, the police would have no record of his having reported a car stolen, and it would come out that he had lied. He was getting more frightened as he got nearer to his city. He was afraid policemen might be already waiting for him. He wished many times that he had not started out to have some fun the way he had the day before. It was too uncomfortable and it got him all mixed up thinking about it.

Things were now moving fast in the lives of Harold Riley and Ruth Mason. It was not long after the incident of Harold Riley's visit to the neighboring city that Ruth Mason came fully to the conclusion that she would marry George Harvey. In February she decided she would marry George Harvey even though he was slow and plodding and decidedly not clever, as Harold Riley had always been. She decided that she would marry George Harvey in May or June.

Ruth Mason's decision had nothing to do with the incident of Harold Riley's visit to the neighboring city. This she never knew about.

Harold Riley told her a story about his car having been stolen, and also said it was returned with no damage done, and he didn't seem to think much of it, so Ruth Mason asked him very few questions. She had been sorry not to see him that night but when he came the next night she was happy, for he seemed to her to be quite loving and she didn't feel that she had offended him, in refusing to make love to him, two nights before. She had in the meantime told her mother and father about the pearl string and they told Harold Riley they thought it very beautiful, and Ruth Mason found herself beaming with pleasure.

After Mr. and Mrs. Mason had left the young people alone Harold Riley began telling Ruth Mason about the way his car had been stolen and how it had turned up in the morning absolutely unharmed. Ruth Mason did not think much about it.

She was much more interested in their love affair and their engagement. She had been worried about things since the night they had been together and, though she sometimes felt things were all right between them, she more often had fears that things were not going well. She became desperate in her insistence, within herself, that she must hold fast to Harold Riley and not let him cease to love her. When they were sitting together in her home she felt better and smiled and did little things to show him that she loved him, and to make him think that she was just the right girl for him. She did not know herself why it was that she felt a fear that she might lose him. She knew that they were engaged and he had assented to being married when the apartments were ready. This would be in two months, she thought.

Harold Riley did not try to make hard love to Ruth Mason this night. He only kissed her and told her that he loved her and held her close up to him. She liked it for him to be making love

to her in this way. This was the way she had always liked making love. Only she felt a little that it was not Harold Riley's way and she began to think that something was on his mind or that he was losing his love for her. She had never seen him, since their earliest days of courtship, kiss with as little real deep passion as he showed this night. She would have liked his eyes to light up with more of wild desire in them, but she would have been afraid if this had really happened. She felt a little that his form of loving her was only a result of her asking him once before not to make such hard love to her. But the whole trouble was, she didn't really know what she wanted from him, more than marriage, and she was going to have that when the apartments were ready.

Harold Riley knew that he was only half-heartedly making love to Ruth Mason. He had somehow lost his taste for love-making. The night before had so upset him that he wasn't sure he wanted any more for a long time. Certainly he did not want it if it were to bring the law down upon him, as he thought it would in this case. He began to think that a good married life was a safe life. He wished he had more feeling, of a physical nature, for Ruth Mason. He didn't seem to feel any more the strong desire for her which had been his when they first became engaged. He hadn't felt this since the night he had had her.

Harold Riley did feel that he was willing to go through with the thing and be married. He couldn't think of another girl he would rather have for a wife than Ruth Mason, even though he knew he did not really love her as he should for marriage. The cigar girl, he never would have married. If the girl he had known in college had been a bit more polished, he would have thought her a good girl to marry. Of all the girls he knew in his city he could think of none that was better fitted to be his bride than Ruth Mason.

He was thinking of all these things as he kissed Ruth and made love to her, and he was also thinking of the possibility of his being arrested for the misdemeanor of the previous evening. He grew so worried and depressed in spirits that he said he had a headache.

Ruth Mason told him she thought he was working too hard, with his having to chase all over the state after clients, and staying up all hours trying to sell them bonds and stocks. She said she thought it was not necessary for him to work so hard.

She said she knew he would make lots of money even if he didn't wear himself all out working.

He told her that he simply had to go after prospects when they were in sight. He told her that he wanted her to have everything that she deserved in life.

She told him she thought he was sweet, but that if she just had him that would be all she wanted.

He felt a little encouraged and a little more tender toward her. He thought that, after all, they would probably have a very happy, contented married life.

They said good night to one another.

Harold Riley was no sooner out of the house than the fear of policemen coming after him again made him nervous and excited. He didn't want to go to his home that night at all. The cops might be waiting there for him at the moment. When he thought of the cigar girl and his old friend, Douglas Holt and his girl, Harold Riley became angry. Then he thought of Ruth Mason and her cool, calm ways, and he became more angry. He wondered why he had felt that he loved her even a little bit, when he had been in the house with her. He couldn't see now that he had a bit of love for her. And he was all the time afraid that he would be arrested. He was afraid that his position in the city would be completely wrecked. He thought that it would at least completely break the engagement with Ruth Mason, and in thinking this he had a certain definite satisfaction. But he didn't for one minute want to really be arrested.

He drove his car past his home twice before he stopped it. When he stopped it he waited a minute or two before going in. There were no signs of policemen waiting there for him. He went to sleep thinking about lawyers and wondering what lawyer could win the case for him if he was going to be arrested.

Harold Riley dreamed that Ruth Mason was trying the case for him and when he woke up next morning he decided absolutely that he would not marry her. He decided that he would have to find some way to let her down easy. He felt a little bit as if she had been the one to get him in all his trouble. He thought that if it hadn't been for her he never would have done what he had done.

Harold Riley called on Ruth Mason every night, and for the next three nights he acted much as he had the day after his trip

to the nearby city. He did not openly show, by his actions, that his love for Ruth Mason had entirely died away. But he did not attempt to make strong love to her and he seemed always to be preoccupied and far away in his thoughts.

Ruth Mason was not one to admit that the man she was engaged to did not love her. But she felt that he did not care as much for her as he once had. She thought it must be all because she had allowed him to be with her. She had heard that men cared less for women after they knew them as Harold Riley had known her. She tried very hard to find a way to bring him back to her and make him again be ardent and loving. She tried, by kissing him hard and holding him close to herself, to make him care more for her.

Harold Riley did not like her to do this. He only felt colder toward her when she drew him close and kissed him hard. He wished he could find some way to break the engagement. But when he was with her he could do nothing, except act more quiet and reserved than usual. He could not tell her out and out that he did not love her. He told her instead that he had been feeling sick ever since the night he had had the headache.

Ruth Mason was alarmed at this, though she only half believed it. She urged him to see a doctor and have himself looked over. She wondered if there could be some deep seated illness in him. It worried her even though she didn't entirely believe that he was sick. She thought that probably she had not been using the right tactics to keep him interested in her. She knew that even after marriage women had to be constantly doing things in order that their husbands would not cease to love them. She wished that she had let him make love to her that time she had denied him. But the thought of that to her was ugly. She wanted to wait until their marriage, but she wanted to hold his love until then. She wondered what she could do to rouse his love. She had read once that the best way to do this was to make a man jealous. She wondered how she could go about it to make Harold Riley jealous.

If George Harvey only would continue to send her flowers then Harold would have some cause for jealousy. But Ruth Mason did not want flowers from George Harvey at this time. Now she didn't care a rap about him and could hardly find it in herself to even think of using him in order to make Harold Riley jealous. But she felt that something must be done to

bring Harold back to himself and make him act sensibly toward her, as he had done in the past.

Ruth Mason told her mother one afternoon that she thought maybe Harold Riley was sick, he acted so funny, or, I don't know, she said, perhaps now he doesn't care so much for me. I feel bad mother, I don't know what to do.

After Ruth had spoken to her mother she was sorry she had said anything. She didn't want her mother to know that she had any doubts about Harold Riley's love for her so she spoke up again quickly and said, I guess it's nothing really. I just don't feel very well myself. I'm sure Harold is just the same. He has really been ill though. He told me so.

Her mother said, Of course, that's all it is. Don't get silly notions in your head. What is the matter with Harold? He doesn't look like a sick man to me. You'll both feel better after you have been married. It's just that the time is drawing near and both of you are probably a little nervous.

Before they ended their conversation Mrs. Mason told Ruth quite casually that she thought Ruth should not see Harold every night the way she had been doing. It would be better for her to go out with the girls more often and let Harold Riley sit at home and think about her. Mrs. Mason was herself a little worried though she had no idea of letting Ruth know the way she felt. She had seen that Harold Riley was more dull eyed than usual on the last few nights he had been there to call. She knew that it was not the best thing for girls to always be very eager to see their fiances. It was better to hold the string yourself and push a man off once for each time you drew him toward you. She had used that technic with Mr. Mason. It had worked very well in their case.

Ruth Mason knew her mother was right but she also knew that her mother had no idea of what had happened between herself and Harold Riley. Their being together had made her almost lose sight of the fact that there was a technic to be used in keeping the young man in love with her. She could see now that Harold Riley really did love her but he wanted her to play with him in this way. She knew that every man wanted that and she decided she would soon find a way to bring him back to her as much in love as ever.

She decided that she would not let him come to see her

that night. She telephoned him at his office but he was not there. She tried his house but he was not there either, so she left a message for him telling him that she had been invited out that evening and wouldn't be home.

She thought that doing this would probably start to bring him back to her. She felt very satisfied and happy because she had done this. After this she would have more dates with the girls and invitations out to dinner. Her mother had been wise to suggest that it would be good for Harold Riley to sit at home and think about Ruth Mason. Ruth could think of nothing better than having Harold Riley sitting in his rooms, in dressing gown, and smoking, thinking and longing to be where she was. It pleased her so much to think that he would be sad and lonesome that she grew very happy. She was sure he would love her more madly than ever in just a very few more days.

Harold Riley had not been working hard, he had not tried to sell bonds and stocks, since the evening he made the excursion to the city fifty miles away. In the first place he had been too much afraid that the police would be down on him and in the second place he no longer loved Ruth Mason and wanted to break the engagement and didn't have the heart to say right out that he was through with her. All this made him upset and so mixed up in his mind that he didn't feel like doing any business. But more than this his speculations were all going to the devil and he was losing money. The day after he got back from the city fifty miles away, if his head had been clear, he could have saved several big losses. He had let them go and the next day had not even looked at the board or the reports in the papers. The third day he saw that he had been bungling and losing money and he was worried but did nothing. The fourth day he was way down and it looked to him as though all his savings were going to be eaten up.

He borrowed money with all the security he could scrape together and used it all in speculations. He borrowed some more money on some stocks he was holding for a customer. He watched the markets all day long, and bought and sold and traded. He had to recover his losses some way. If he didn't then he would be left without a single penny.

He went home that night and was glad to find the message saying Ruth Mason would be out and could not see him that

evening. He went to his rooms and sat down with pencil and papers and figured until late in the night. He drank whiskey and smoked cigarettes and bent over his desk completely absorbed in studying the markets. It was a great relief to him that he didn't have to see Ruth Mason. He was much more interested in stocks and bonds than in Ruth Mason. He forgot the policeman and began to think he had been a damn fool ever to be afraid of anything happening. That old country fool would never do a thing, he thought to himself. And he kept on with his pencils and his papers, figuring way into the night. He went to bed very late but set the alarm clock to waken him early. If things did not go well the next day he didn't know what he would do, but he wasn't really worried. He knew things would go well. If he had been watching he never would have dropped the way he had. He laid it all to Ruth Mason because she had been to blame for him making the excursion to the city fifty miles away and that had been the beginning of his carelessness which had resulted in all these losses.

He was afraid business men might hear of his recent speculations and might possibly lose confidence in him. He was worried, worried about Ruth Mason, about his losses, and there was still a lurking fear, which he managed to laugh at, that the policeman might still be after him. The next night he called Ruth Mason on the telephone and told her he was sorry but it would be impossible for him to come around that night because he felt so sick with a headache. And, he told her, business has not been going too well, and I must have some rest to-night.

Ruth Mason was worried herself now and wondered if it wouldn't really have been better for her to let him come to call the night before this. She was a little afraid her plans were not working just the way they should work. She began to think that her mother really knew nothing about her problem with Harold Riley. She was very lonely sitting in her house thinking about Harold Riley.

Harold Riley, in playing the stock market, neither won heavily nor lost heavily. He seemed to keep all the time about even. He could not gain back the money he had lost in those few days after his trip to the nearby city. He was very clever but luck was not with him and so he kept on getting more and more worried. He did not tell Ruth Mason about his heavy

losses, though he did intimate that things were not going as well as they had been going. She was interested at once and wanted to know all about his troubles. He didn't care to tell her so he said it was nothing of real importance, only a few very minor losses which could easily be made up again.

Ruth Mason felt sure that Harold Riley could make up a few minor losses. She told him not to worry because she knew that everything would be all right, and anyway, she told him, you have plenty of money already without working so hard and worrying. He agreed that this was true and said he didn't intend to worry about little matters. His saying this did not prevent him from worrying. It only made him mask his face and not let Ruth Mason know about the worrying.

Harold Riley still called upon Ruth Mason and kissed her but he was only waiting now for a chance to break the engagement. He wondered if she knew how little money he had, if it would make a difference to her and make her lose her love for him. He thought often of telling her that he was cleaned out and had not a single penny. But this cut too deeply into his pride, he could not bring himself to tell her this. He felt too much ashamed of the losses he had made. But he felt also that Ruth Mason was partly responsible for his losses.

Harold Riley couldn't imagine what it was that made him go and call on Ruth Mason and kiss her when he knew all the time that he didn't love her. He was always making it more plain that he didn't love her. One night he saw her start to cry and heard her saying that she didn't think he loved her any more. I can tell, she said to him, the way you act, any one could tell. I don't see what it can be.

Harold Riley only told her that she was wrong, that the trouble was that he was not feeling well and had been so busy he wasn't really able to act the part of an ideal lover. He took her in his arms and kissed her and made her feel better.

It was always a going back and forth with him these days. He did not love Ruth Mason but he didn't have the guts to come out and tell her and stop the engagement. Sometimes when he was sitting talking to her and kissing, he felt that it might be bearable to go through with the marriage, but this feeling never lasted long with him.

Ruth Mason could see very clearly what was happening but she would not face it and admit it to herself. She was not

the kind of girl who would be willing to admit that the man she was engaged to did not really love her.

One afternoon Ruth Mason went to a bridge tea, and late in the afternoon when the girls were ready to leave George Harvey drove up to the house the tea was at, and came up and asked for Harriet Sheldon. Harriet Sheldon was quick to put her coat and hat on and leave the party. The young men of the city so seldom called for girls at these afternoon tea and bridge functions that everyone took notice of the caller. Ruth Mason put her head around the hallway door and looked straight into the eyes of George Harvey. She was embarrassed but did not show it. Instead she smiled a happy almost flirting smile at George Harvey and set his heart bounding. She said to him, Oh, it's you, is it, George, how are you?

He said that he was pretty well, and colored noticeably.

Ruth Mason did not think him now a person so absolutely impossible. She smiled again and said to him, You're getting to be a great man with the ladies, George.

George Harvey was not sure he liked to have her say this. He tried to think of something that he could say to reproach her. He wanted to tell her right out that if she had cared as much for him as he had cared for her he never would have even looked at Harriet Sheldon. Ruth Mason understood what it was he wanted to say even though he didn't say it. She smiled broader and all of a sudden said again, You're a nice boy, George, I like you. Then she pulled her head back from the doorway and went back where the girls were standing around and talking. It made her happy to think how easy it would be for her to get George Harvey away from Harriet Sheldon. She decided she would use George Harvey some way to make Harold Riley jealous. Then Harold Riley would again be wild in love with her. She knew that this would happen.

The next Friday evening Ruth Mason and Harold Riley went to the country club for dancing. Ruth Mason had told Harold Riley that she thought it would be nice and they had not been there for a long time. Harold Riley thought it would be better to go dancing than to sit around the house making love and talking.

At the country club they saw George Harvey and Harriet Sheldon. Ruth Mason managed to stop dancing near the other

couple and the four young people fell to talking. George Harvey was plainly embarrassed but Harriet Sheldon felt no embarrassment whatever. Ruth Mason enjoyed the moment and Harold Riley was a little bored. He was thinking of his losses and wondering what luck the next day would bring him.

Ruth Mason suggested they trade the next dance and looked at Harriet Sheldon. It was decided. All during the dance she talked with George Harvey and let herself be held closer to him than she generally did. George Harvey began to get red in the face and tried dancing a little farther away from Ruth Mason. Not that he didn't like the feel of her body near his. But he didn't want to be embarrassed after the dance was over.

Harold Riley and Harriet Sheldon danced and did little talking. Harriet Sheldon was watching Ruth Mason and George Harvey and she could see that something was wrong. She began to dislike Ruth Mason more than she ever had disliked her. She tried to draw Harold Riley's attention to the close way the other couple was dancing. She said, My, they act like a couple of school kids. I'm going to tell George that it's disgraceful to hold a girl so close that way.

Harold Riley didn't care himself because he was thinking about the markets and besides Ruth Mason could dance any way she wanted to for all of him. He looked around and saw them. Now he could see that Ruth Mason was really holding herself close to George Harvey and she had her arm up on his shoulder. He looked again and scowled a little. Harriet Sheldon could not see him scowl, she was too short to see what was going on on his face. But she herself was feeling like scowling. She didn't like Ruth Mason any more at all.

Harold Riley began now to think that Ruth Mason was deliberately flirting with George Harvey. He knew that she had once gone with him to dances and he began to think that maybe she cared for George Harvey more than she had let him know. He was a little angry and he drew Harriet Sheldon closer to himself and went on dancing. Harriet Sheldon liked this and looked around to see if George Harvey could see them dancing close together.

Harold Riley kept on thinking about the way Ruth Mason and George Harvey had been dancing. George Harvey had been quite red in the face. It looked like something dirty to Harold Riley. He thought that all the two people were doing

was indecent dancing and he felt angry. If he hadn't been engaged to Ruth Mason he wouldn't have cared a bit, but now he felt that she had no right to act that way. He held Harriet Sheldon close to himself and felt that he had a real grievance against Ruth Mason. He held Harriet Sheldon farther away from himself again for fear that Ruth Mason might see them and also have a grievance. He wanted to be the one with the grievance. Now he had something that would make a good reason for breaking his engagement.

After the dance was over the four people met and Ruth Mason was smiling very broadly, George Harvey was flushed and had his hands in his pockets, Harriet Sheldon was pleasant enough, and Harold Riley just acted a little bored and indifferent. Harriet Sheldon led George Harvey away with her to get a drink of water.

Ruth Mason and Harold Riley sat down and did not speak for a minute or two. Finally Ruth Mason decided that she might as well begin to play her cards, so she told him, That was a nice dance, Harold. Did you like to dance with Harriet Sheldon?

Harold Riley waited for a moment and then said, I guess you liked it dancing with George Harvey, the way you two were hugging one another. Everybody could see it. It puts me in a bad light all right.

Ruth Mason thought that the cards were working. She told him, Why, Harold, how you talk, George and I were just talking about old times. Why, we weren't dancing a bit differently than anybody on the floor. Don't say that Harold, do you think for one minute that I would let that George Harvey dance with himself held up close to me the way you say. Why I should say not. That's ridiculous, Harold.

Harold said, I saw you. I don't like it either.

Ruth Mason began again to be frightened. She wondered if Harold Riley was now really jealous or was he angry at her. She said to Harold Riley, Now, Harold, please don't be silly. You know that I wouldn't do that, or let him either. You know that. You know how much I love you.

Harold thought of something that would be pretty good. He told her, That was it, it wouldn't be so bad if you didn't love me, but to do that when you say you love me, that's enough to make me feel that you don't love me at all. It makes me feel bad. I don't see how you and I are ever going to get along

when we are married. If that's the way you act. I never thought you would be that way. If you want to act that way I guess we better just call it off, I mean the marriage. If you're going to go dancing that way.

Ruth Mason was by this time very very frightened and afraid that Harold Riley did not love her at all. She could see that her tactics for gaining back his old strong love for her were wrong tactics and was more worried than ever. She told him again that he was very silly. She told him that she loved him and wasn't really dancing close with George Harvey at all and wouldn't even think of doing such a thing. She told him she had no use at all for George Harvey and that Harold Riley ought to know that. She told him that she didn't like to see him in that mood he was in, she said it made her so afraid of him. She said again in whispers that she loved him.

Harold Riley only acted bored and indifferent. He said again that he had seen it and he knew what it meant and it wasn't any use for her to try to explain.

Ruth Mason said, Oh, Harold, you are just acting stupid. Harold, come let's go home. I can't stay here.

He said, all right, and they left the country club and drove to her home. He said very little and did not answer half her questions. She thrust her arm through his and kissed him on the neck and told him not to be cross with her because she hadn't done anything. She asked him to stop the car and kiss her but he only said that she had asked to go home and he was doing what she had asked him to do. She grew indignant and told him not to be silly. He told her he was not silly. They kept it up this way all the way to her home and when he left her Harold Riley finally felt himself giving in, so he kissed her good-night and left her at her home.

He kept thinking to himself, all the way home, that he had been a fool to kiss her. I should have broken with her to-night, he kept on thinking. That was my chance and I let it go by. But I'll remember it and if I ever see her doing any funny business any more I'll show her.

Even though Harold Riley had kissed her good-night, Ruth Mason could feel within herself that he did not love her as he had, and she was very sad about it. She no longer felt any worry about having a baby but she could not stand it to think

that Harold Riley might possibly not marry her after all. If he should cease to love her and not marry her she felt at this time as if she would be completely heartbroken. She remembered everything that had been said between them and she grew sorry that she had danced at all with George Harvey. She admitted to herself that she liked George Harvey better than she had liked him but she also said that he was nowhere near as good a man for her as Harold Riley. She cried when she thought of the way Harold had treated her on their drive home. She felt that he was very mean and hard to her. She had never done a thing to deserve this sort of treatment. She laid it all to the fact that they had once been together. She blamed herself again for having been weak and having given in to him. She thought that possibly if she had not refused him the following evening things might have been better. She thought she had been doing the wrong thing at every step. It had been no good trying to make him jealous. She had only made him angry, or indifferent toward her, and this thought was worse to her than the thought of making him angry. She thought it would be really nice to make Harold Riley angry, but she couldn't stand it thinking that he had been only indifferent. She felt her pride suffering from the way she had been treated. The kiss they had exchanged upon leaving one another hardly seemed a victory to her. It was too half-hearted. Ruth Mason felt very miserable. The day after the evening at the country club Harold Riley called her on the telephone and said he could not come around in the evening. Ruth Mason felt that everything was slipping from her, that she was slowly dying. She was very unhappy.

Mrs. Mason noticed that Ruth was not feeling well and when she questioned her daughter, Ruth only said that she had a headache. She felt that she would always be having headaches. She really had one now.

She sat and tried to read during the evening but it was no good. She didn't feel like reading so she went to bed very early and cried and thought far into the night about her misery. It was a relief to cry and think of the unfair way in which Harold Riley had been treating her. She didn't know how she could go about it to win his love back to her but she determined to make a last big effort. She thought that if she could be alone with him for a few short hours she might win him back to her

completely and make him love her. She decided she did not want to marry him if he loved her so half-heartedly. But she changed her mind again and knew that she wanted to marry him no matter how he felt about her. She must marry him. She felt that she couldn't marry any other man than Harold Riley. She was already his wife, she felt. He would have to love her.

Harold Riley was as unhappy as Ruth Mason though his unhappiness was for different reasons. Instead of *gaining* money he was steadily losing. He had borrowed money on some stocks that had been paid for and should have been delivered. He borrowed some money on his automobiles. He had borrowed more money than his securities would cover. The bankers thought he was a rich young man and they knew that he was engaged to Ruth Mason, whose father was one of the richest men in the city. He had not found it hard to borrow money though he had had to resort to every trick he knew to do it. He found himself steadily losing.

Harold Riley wrote to his mother and did not tell her how badly off he was financially. He told her that in order to make a big deal and a lot of money he needed some cash right off and asked her to try and raise two thousand dollars for him. He said he needed it very badly and almost must have it. He knew that his parents had almost no money. They had a fine old house and a good position in society but no money. But he thought they might borrow a couple of thousand dollars for him. His mother wrote back and said that she and his father couldn't raise that much money but they might send him five hundred if he could send it back to them in a short time. Five hundred dollars didn't seem like much money to Harold Riley but he figured that with even that little he might do something. He told his mother to send it. His manipulations with the market went on. Sometimes he felt that he might make back his losses but generally he only felt disheartened and sure that he was headed for a fall. He laid it all to Ruth Mason. He was sure it was her fault.

He began to think that it might be a good idea to marry Ruth Mason immediately. If he married her he was sure her father would come to his help when the crisis came. But he didn't want to marry her. He thought he would rather fail in business, with a number of debts, than to marry Ruth Mason. But

he couldn't keep himself from continually letting the idea of marrying her, in order to get her father's help, run through his mind.

He went to call on her thinking of this and wondering if he would ever be able to do a thing of that kind. It seemed to him more immoral than anything else he could think of. He would rather steal than marry a girl for money. His pride was lowered but not enough to allow him to do such a thing. He wondered if it would not be a good idea to tell Ruth Mason all about his troubles and see what she had to say about it. He wouldn't have minded borrowing some money but he wouldn't think of marrying in order to get it. He acted more loving toward Ruth Mason than he had the night they had gone out dancing. But it was plain to her that he cared less for her than he had. She wanted to do something to win him back to her. She even thought that if they were again together it might bring him back to her. But she couldn't get herself to think of actually being with him until they were married. That was the one thing she would not do to win back Harold Riley. Harold Riley did not seem to want it either, and that was one reason she did not want to do this. She wanted him to want her, but she would not consider again being with him, not until they were married. She tried kissing and talking and also petulant scolding, but all of these things did not bring Harold Riley closer to her.

Finally Ruth Mason asked him right out if he loved her.

Harold Riley spoke up and said he didn't love her the way he had.

Ruth Mason broke out crying and Harold Riley became worried and thought he couldn't stand it having her cry that way. So he put an arm around her and said he loved her all right but that business was going bad and it made him feel so mean that he didn't love her as much as he had. He said that she shouldn't mind it because he would probably love her again. He asked her not to cry. She didn't stop crying and so Harold Riley, who did not like to see Ruth Mason crying, got up and walked to the hallway and got his coat and hat and said he was going home.

Ruth Mason told him he mustn't. She said he must sit down and talk about it. She seemed cool and was no longer crying. She told him that they must talk it over if he felt that

way. Harold Riley was frightened, seeing Ruth Mason in this defiant mood. He sat down without saying a word. His coat was on his knees and he sat there. Ruth Mason looked at him and started in talking. She said, Why, Harold Riley, you don't mean that you don't love me. I know you love me. It is something else that is the matter with you. What is it, Harold? I have seen it coming on you and I know it's something else. Something has happened. You do love me, don't you?

Harold Riley said, Maybe I do then.

This was not at all pleasing to Ruth Mason but she went on talking. Something has happened and it isn't fair of you to take it all out on me. Why, you've got to love me after everything.

After what? said Harold Riley.

Ruth Mason said, Why you know very well.

Harold Riley asked her if something had happened. He told her he didn't see how it could be possible because he said there wasn't any way he could see that she could be with child.

Ruth Mason broke out crying again and Harold Riley was more disturbed and anxious than he ever remembered being in his whole life before. He couldn't understand how it was that Ruth Mason was with child. He wondered why she hadn't said something before about it so they might have taken some means of ending the anxiety. He saw himself trapped now absolutely. He didn't know what could be done. He asked her again if that was the trouble with her. She only cried the louder and he was sure that was the trouble. It made him very mad for a minute. He hated Ruth Mason. He never had known how much he could hate a person. She was nothing, a damned lousy son of a bitch, a whore, a bastard, a bag of dirt, he hated her so much at this moment. She was the cause of all his losses and now she said that he had gotten her with child. He couldn't believe it but it must be true. He hated her so much that he could have kicked her and spat upon her. He sat there holding his coat on his knees, red in the face and angry.

He said to her, Well, let me tell you something, Ruth Mason, I haven't got a damn cent in the world and I'm in debt and I've been using other people's money and it's all your fault. If it wasn't for you I would have been something but now I can't get out of the hole. I'm done for, Ruth, and damn it if you want me to love you and marry you, I'll do it. You'll be sorry

though, I tell you that. I haven't got a damn red cent. Do you hear me?

Ruth Mason looked up startled and started staring at Harold Riley while he was talking. Do you mean to say you haven't any money and two cars? Where is all your money? You are lying, Harold, I can tell.

Harold Riley grew somewhat calmer and looked at Ruth Mason and, now that he had said it, he said again that he really had no money and that had been the trouble with him all the time. He grew sorry for himself and told her that he tried to make money for her and had lost it and that was why he didn't love her.

Ruth Mason was sorry for Harold Riley but she was so relieved to hear him tell her that there had been a good reason for his ceasing to love her that she could only feel happy. She got up and went over to him and told him that he shouldn't mind, she could find a way to get him out of all his troubles. She suggested that he take the ring and pearls and turn them back to pay his debts and then just work along and not let people know that he had no money and he could keep on working and he would soon again have money and no one would know about his having lost it all. She was practical in her thinking.

Harold Riley declined taking back the pearls and ring. He said he never would do that if he went to prison. He knew that they were not yet paid for or he might have thought differently about the matter.

Ruth Mason was much disturbed about Harold Riley's financial condition but she was very happy to think that he surely loved her.

Harold Riley, after having made such an outburst, felt calmer and a little bit like crying. He was glad to rest his head on Ruth, even though he knew he did not love her. She grew thoughtful and cold blooded and said that he could get money from her father. She told him to ask her father for five thousand dollars in order to furnish the apartment and to tell her father that his own money was tied up and he wanted to make a payment on the apartment and buy some things. She said that she would speak to her mother, who in turn would speak to Mr. Mason. She said she knew that things could be arranged that way.

Harold Riley was still wondering about the fact of Ruth Mason being with child. He asked her again if it was really true and she looked at him and started crying a little and asked him please not to talk about it to her. He told her he wouldn't say anything more, but he felt very worried and uneasy and couldn't quite see how it had come about.

He told her five thousand was too much to ask for under such pretenses. He suggested that he might think of some additional reasons for needing the money and add them to the list of reasons they had just thought out. She said to go ahead and think about the reasons and in the meantime she would find a way to make her father willing to lend him the money.

Harold Riley said that he could ask for it just to use in his business. He said it was very often that he had to borrow from the bank and nobody thought about that. He said the only trouble now was that he couldn't borrow any more from the bank. Ruth said that he must not tell her father that. They decided then just how he would go about it and Ruth Mason was sure he would have no trouble.

Harold Riley and Ruth Mason were feeling happier than either of them had felt for some time. Harold Riley felt like kissing her and making love to her even though he didn't love her, and she felt sure that now again he did love her, wildly as he had always loved her before.

Harold Riley did not go the next day to see Mr. Mason. On the evening of this day he called on Ruth again and she told him that she knew it would be all right for him to ask Mr. Mason for a loan. She warned Harold Riley not to let her father know about his financial condition. She said her father had said something about young men speculating and she was afraid he might think Harold had been making foolish uses of his money. She said that her mother had told her it was better to keep business in the family than doing it all through banks and that if Mr. Mason had the money handy he would most surely lend it to Harold. She thought that perhaps she had gone too far the night before in letting him think she was with child, but then on further reflection she decided that considering all the good it had done for both herself and Harold Riley, her actions were justified. She knew that any time she could easily tell him that it had been a false alarm, that there had

really been nothing, that she had just suspected and had been wrong in her suspicions. But she was happy to have caught upon the idea as she had. And she remembered that she had really never said that she was with child, she had only cried a little and that had made him think what he was thinking. She had no guilty conscience about it, because it had done both of them so much good.

They talked together about the apartment and about the time when they would be married. Harold Riley was very nervous talking, for he had no idea of ever marrying Ruth Mason. But he told her his nervousness was all due to his being in debt. She told him not to worry, her father would be sure to help him. But he did worry because he had decided that after he got the money and had made up his losses and gotten a bit ahead, he would pay back what he borrowed from Mr. Mason and tell Ruth Mason, out and out, that he did not love her and did not intend to marry her. His decision to do this made him nervous in her presence. He found it hard to kiss her and hold her in his arms. He found it more pleasant just to sit and talk about the way he had lost money. Ruth Mason told him to go to her father next day and borrow the money. He said he would.

The next day when Harold Riley went to speak to Mr. Mason about the money, he was very nervous. Things were near a climax for him. He had to have money soon or he would find himself in a bad mixup. He found it difficult to talk to Mr. Mason. Mr. Mason was a different man in his office than he was in his home. He was so successful and such a solid type of business man that he frightened Harold Riley.

Harold Riley started in telling Mr. Mason that he needed some extra cash at the moment and thought that Mr. Mason might be willing to help him out. He explained that he would have gone to the bank but that he thought Mr. Mason would be willing and glad to do it, and that also he had quite a bit of money tied up just at the moment.

Mr. Mason asked him what he meant when he said he had money tied up just then.

Harold Riley hedged a little and explained very carefully by telling a good sized lie and backing it up with figures. He went on to say that he needed the money to see about furnishing the apartment and also to make a payment and besides he needed some more money in his business. If he hadn't wanted

so much at the time, he said he would not have come to Mr. Mason. He said he had been doing a lot of business and had been using the banks heavily and he went on to say that this would be a big help to him.

Mr. Mason seemed to know at once that Harold Riley was in serious financial difficulties. He could smell it some way. He muttered something about slow gains being the surest, to which he got almost an instant affirmative response from Harold Riley. He went on to say that in money matters a young man had to be careful.

Harold Riley told him that that had always been his plan in business, to be careful.

Mr. Mason then asked him how he stood financially. He said he didn't want to pry into the lad's business but he just wondered and since they were soon to be such close relatives, he said, he didn't think it was too much to ask Harold how he stood.

Harold Riley did not like this and became more nervous. He had no intention of ever being a nearer relative of Mr. Mason than he was at that moment. But he did not dare refuse to answer Mr. Mason. He told him that his financial status was as good as ever, but that he had not been making a great deal of money of late. Then he went on and had the cheek to tell Mr. Mason that slow gains were the surest.

Mr. Mason was pleased to hear him say this though he had expected to get a complete statement of Harold Riley's finances. He asked Harold how much money it was he needed. Harold Riley said he needed five thousand.

This almost brought Mr. Mason to his feet. He asked if that was to be used for rent and furnishing the new apartment Harold told him only some of it, the rest he needed in his business. He said he would be glad to tell Mr. Mason just what it was but the people he was dealing with would consider this unethical and he didn't want to do anything ever in business that would be considered unethical. He told Mr. Mason that if he himself was not so much interested in financial matters he could tell him all about it. He assured Mr. Mason that he would explain it to him later, that now he was only asking a favor. Mr. Mason thought it all sounded rather fishy. There was no ring of truth in the things Harold Riley had been telling him. Mr. Mason thought he had never seen Harold Riley

look so absolutely dishonest. He lost all his old liking for the young man. He was sorry that his daughter was engaged to Harold Riley.

He said to Harold Riley, I don't know, Harold, I can let you have three thousand but not five thousand. I'm sorry but under the circumstances that is all I can let you have. If you need more you can get it from the bank; you have plenty of security and will have no trouble.

Harold Riley said, Yes, that's true, I could get it from the bank, but it would have helped me if you had let me take the whole amount. But I'll take the three and sign a note for sixty days.

Mr. Mason was sure that Harold Riley had gotten into difficulties. He had never seen him so nervous and dishonest looking. Mr. Mason knew that Harold Riley would not have come to him the way he had if the banks would give him money. He didn't know why he offered even three thousand to Harold Riley. He wanted to demand a complete financial statement, but this he felt he dared not do. He was afraid Harold Riley might be in just such difficulties as he was in.

After Harold Riley had left Mr. Mason with the three thousand dollars, Mr. Mason called his wife on the telephone and told her what had happened. Mrs. Mason said she thought it was very nice for Mr. Mason to lend Harold the money, it was nice that the two men could help one another and do business with one another. She asked Mr. Mason if that was all Harold wanted, just three thousand. When he told her Harold had asked for five she said that Mr. Mason should have given it to him. Mr. Mason said he guessed he had done the right thing, it didn't look just right to him, he said he had never heard of such slim grounds for wanting to borrow money.

Mrs. Mason also felt that Harold Riley had gotten himself into financial difficulties. But she was sure it would not take him long to get out of them. She thought she was the only one who knew this. She was determined to help him out of any trouble that he might get into. She liked Harold Riley very much and was very happy at the thought of having him for a son-in-law. She even said jokingly that she would like to be in Ruth's place, but she always made it very obvious that she was making a joke about it. She liked Harold Riley very much.

Mr. Mason nosed around among men who frequented the

exchange and found out that Harold Riley had been doing more dealing than he was used to do. And yet he had said that he had not been doing much business. Mr. Mason knew very well that Harold Riley had been speculating on his own and was losing money. He began to think that Harold Riley was desperate and on his last legs. He wished that he had been firmer and had demanded a financial statement and had given the young man a good talking to: he was afraid that Harold Riley would just go to pieces and drag his daughter Ruth Mason down with him. His whole day was spoiled after lending Harold the money. He didn't know when he had regretted doing a thing as much as he regretted lending out that money. He almost hoped that he would never get it back in order that he might tell his wife that he was right about Harold Riley. He had no more use for the young man and wanted to see the engagement with his daughter broken. He would be glad to lose his money if he could break up the engagement. Harold Riley was no good.

Harold Riley bought more stocks and borrowed more money on them. He had by this time signed several sixty day notes and was beginning to feel that he would not be able to meet them. He knew he could not gain back the money in so short a time unless he managed to hit some extremely lucky buys. He found that it was no good playing the market with any system. The best way was to buy hit or miss and take a chance. He was beginning to feel that there was no use trying. He knew he would lose.

When Harold Riley met men he knew, he tried to act the same as usual but he couldn't do this. His eyes would not look straight into another man's. He smoked cigarettes rapidly and threw them away half smoked to light the next. His hands shook and his eyes were getting black underneath. Harold Riley could see all this happening and he laid it all to Ruth Mason. He hated her but when he saw her he didn't have the guts to tell her this. He knew that within a few days all the money he had borrowed would be lost and he would be unable to pay it back. He knew that creditors would be on his heels for the money and that if he didn't get it back to them there was a good chance of his being arrested and sent to prison. When it occurred to him that he might be sent to prison he began thinking on just what grounds this could be done. They couldn't jail him for his debts.

He might get into trouble for using undelivered stocks, which had been paid for by a customer, to borrow money on. That was fraud he figured. Also he had borrowed on his automobiles from two people without turning over the bill of sale or the cars. The men had taken his word and had really lent him money on his face. It was their loss, he figured.

Harold Riley knew that three thousand dollars would not be enough. He thought that if he had just one thousand more he could buy some stocks that would make a quick profit. He didn't know a single person in the city that he could get this money from. If he had an extra thousand for just a week he thought he could double his money. He thought of forging a check but that was far too risky. Still he had to have the money. At last he decided that if he had a checkbook from a San Francisco bank he could make checks out to himself and sign someone else's name and cash them in stores in the city. San Francisco was so far away that it would take the checks at least two weeks to come back. If the checks were only two hundred dollars each he could cash them this way. He could say a customer had sent him the checks and when they were returned he could say that he was absolutely innocent and that he would telegraph the customer and find out what was wrong and by that time he would have enough money from his speculations to pay back the merchants who had cashed the checks. He could pretend that he was more injured than the merchant because the man whose name he would sign to the checks owed him the money. It was simple. All Harold Riley needed was some blank checks on a San Francisco bank.

Harold Riley walked to one of the banks and asked for some checks on the First National Bank of San Francisco. He explained casually that he had a customer who wanted to pay him some money and had mislaid his checkbook. The bank clerk handed a checkbook to Harold Riley who nervously tore out five blank checks, handed back the book and left the bank. He was nervous and his hands shook a little. Back in his office he carefully typed the checks, each one for two hundred dollars. He made them payable to himself. When they were ready for the signature he put them in a drawer of his desk and sat back in his chair thinking. He took the checks out of the drawer again and taking a pen between the middle fingers of his hand, he wrote in a backhand scrawl, James Burke, on each of the five

checks. He put the checks in his wallet. Then he went down to look at the board.

After Mr. Mason had loaned Harold Riley the three thousand dollars and called his wife on the telephone and ascertained for himself that Harold Riley had been speculating he put the matter aside in his mind and went on with his work. When he went home in the evening he did not speak about the loan. He acted calmly and did not betray the thoughts he was thinking. He had decided that the engagement between his daughter and Harold Riley should be broken up. He was now trying to think of the best way to do this.

Mrs. Mason knew that it was best for her not to speak about Harold Riley to her husband. She knew that he was upset and she knew that she would only make him more upset if she started talking about Harold Riley. She tried to act as she always did.

Ruth Mason was anxious to find out if her father had loaned the money to Harold Riley. She didn't dare ask him. She talked to him about things in general and made a few little jokes and asked how he was feeling. She put her arm around his neck and tickled him under the chin and made him smile and pucker his brows. She told him he was a sweet thing. He liked all this from his daughter but he didn't feel exactly in the mood for it on this evening. He even wondered if he had a right to try to break the engagement, which had made his daughter so happy. He knew it should be broken. He was absolutely sure that Harold Riley was no good.

Harold Riley came later than usual on this evening. He hoped that Mr. Mason would not be in the living room. He had no desire to speak to either Mr. or Mrs. Mason and he was not very anxious to see Ruth. He had decided that the next day he would try to cash the checks. It would be Saturday and in the afternoon the banks would be closed so he would have a good excuse for asking merchants to cash them. He wondered what Ruth Mason would have to say when she heard that her father had loaned him only three thousand dollars. Harold Riley hoped Ruth had not already heard this because he wanted to spring it on her. He felt that it was her fault and he was really happy thinking of the way she would act when she heard that

he had got only three thousand. He remembered he had told her that even five thousand would not be enough to get him out of debt. Three thousand was nothing. He began to feel strong and powerful thinking of the way he would tell Ruth Mason these things. He would let her know that it was all her fault, his getting himself in trouble. He decided he would say nothing about the checks he was going to cash the next day.

Mr. Mason was sitting reading the evening paper when Harold Riley reached the Mason home. Ruth Mason and Harold Riley walked into the living room and Mr. Mason half rose and extended his hand to Harold but did not look him in the eyes. Harold Riley was glad of that. Mrs. Mason came downstairs and spoke very kindly to Harold Riley and told him he was looking well. He knew he was not looking well and so did Mrs. Mason. Ruth Mason had not yet noticed that Harold was not looking as well as usual. She was excited and wanted to talk to him and find out what had happened about the loan. Her mother had told her she knew nothing about it.

Mrs. Mason looked at Mr. Mason and nodded her head a little to one side. Mr. Mason got up from his chair carrying the paper in one hand and said, Good-night children, and left the room. He did not like it being made to leave the room when he had just gotten well into his evening paper. He resented the intrusion of Harold Riley into the Mason household. Mrs. Mason called a cheerful good-night.

Ruth Mason and Harold Riley were alone in the sitting room. Ruth Mason put a jazz record on the victrola. Then she went up to Harold Riley and put her arms around his neck and kissed him and asked him if he was feeling better. He said he wasn't. She told him he must not worry, everything would be all right. Then she asked him if he had got the five thousand. He said he had got only three. Your father wouldn't give me five, he said.

Ruth Mason was quite upset at hearing this and said she would go right up and speak to her father. Harold Riley told her she had better not.

I will, she said, and then started to leave the room. Harold Riley followed after her and called her when she reached the hallway. He told her she had better not say anything to her father because, he said, he thought her father was angry at him and it would do no good. Ruth Mason thought about it and

decided she had rather not speak to her father. She told Harold she would speak to him in the morning. He told her again it would be better not to. Harold Riley was afraid of Mr. Mason.

Ruth asked Harold if he thought things were going to get better in his business. He told her he didn't think they could get better. He said he was sure he was going to fail. Then he thought he would be magnanimous. He told Ruth Mason that since he was sure he was going to fail and have a lot of debts he thought it would be best for them to break the engagement. He said that he would start in again in a small way and when he finally got back on his feet they could become engaged again and be married. He told her he did not think it was fair for him to ask her to go with him through the disgrace of bankruptcy and the scandal which would follow.

She told him she didn't see how there could be any scandal. He reminded her of the things he had told her two nights before, and said that he would really get into trouble. He said he was sorry but that it was inevitable and it was not fair of him to ask Ruth Mason to remain engaged to him.

Ruth Mason really didn't like the thought of a scandal and being dragged into it by Harold Riley but she saw right away that Harold was only trying to get rid of her and she was afraid and told him she would stay by his side no matter what happened. He told her she was silly to talk that way because in a few months or a year he could get back on his feet and everything would be forgotten and then they could be married. Ruth told him she did not want to wait so long for marriage. Then she cried a little and told him she couldn't. Harold Riley had forgotten that Ruth Mason was supposed to be with child. He went up to her and put his arms around her and explained that when he told her that about breaking the engagement he had forgotten and that he wouldn't have said it if he had thought. He said that it just suddenly occurred to him and so he had come out with it. He began to think of running away from the city and leaving everything behind him.

Harold Riley knew that he couldn't stay in the city and not marry Ruth Mason. He couldn't see how she could be with child. He began to suspect that she was tricking him and when he thought about it he became sure that she was only telling him this to keep him. The more he thought of it the more sure

he was that she could not be with child. He grew very angry. He turned away and said, Ruth, you can't be with child. It's impossible. You're just lying to me. Tell me now, how about it?

Ruth Mason was quite astonished at this outburst and started crying again. She said she thought she was and he said she couldn't be and she answered that maybe she wasn't. Of course, you're not, he told her. She said she couldn't tell and she felt funny. He said that was no sign and he went on and said that he was very angry because she had given him all that worry. It wasn't fair of you, he told her. He felt strong and powerful talking to her now. He went on talking and told her that her father had not done enough to get him half out of the trouble he was in. It's all your fault, he said. I wouldn't have gotten into a mess if it hadn't been for you. How do you expect me to love you. I hate you and I'll be damned if I'll marry you. I'm through right to-night.

Ruth Mason was more excited than she had ever been. She told him, No, you're not through. You've got to marry me. You're terrible to talk that way.

I won't marry you, Harold Riley said. He went into the hallway and took his coat and hat and started to the door without waiting to put them on. Ruth Mason followed after him and called to him as he went down the stairs of the front porch. He walked straight out toward his car, which stood beside the curb. She followed after him bareheaded and said to him, Harold, don't act this way, be sensible, listen to me. I can explain everything if you will just let me. I love you, Harold. You misunderstood me.

I don't love you any more, Harold Riley told her.

You'll kill me, Harold, Ruth Mason said.

It won't hurt you any more than it hurts me, he said.

Ruth Mason said, Well, Harold, if you are going to be so stupid and senseless take back your ring here and the pearls too. I would have gotten you out of that trouble you talk about if you had let me. I could get the money from my father. You're just mean. Take these things if you're going to be that way.

You can keep them, Harold Riley told her. I don't want them. Look out, I'm going to start the car.

When Harold Riley drove away Ruth Mason walked slowly back to the house feeling as if all her strength had left her and

as if she would as soon fall down on the sidewalk as walk back into the house. She felt as if she were less than half alive. Everybody in the city would know that Harold Riley had jilted her. It was awful. Harriet Sheldon would laugh when she heard about it. Ruth Mason wished she could kill Harriet Sheldon. And she wanted to kick Harold Riley. He had just acted stupid. She began to hate him but she thought she loved him.

Ruth Mason sat down on the davenport and thought about the times they had made love there. She thought about the night they had been together. She knew that that had been her mistake. She shouldn't have let him learn to know her so intimately. She didn't feel like crying, she just sat there thinking and wondering if there wasn't some way to make things all right again. It would be terrible for people to know that Harold Riley had broken the engagement. It would be better for her to have broken it. She could not help crying.

Mrs. Mason had heard the loud talking of the two young people before Harold Riley left the house and she had stood in the hallway upstairs and listened to most of what had been said. She thought it was a lover's quarrel and nothing really serious but she had heard something that made her suspect the young people had been together and she wondered if Ruth had said something about going to have a baby.

When Ruth Mason came back into the house Mrs. Mason went downstairs and stood in the next room for a while. She heard her daughter start to cry and walked up to her and sat down on the davenport. She asked Ruth what the matter was and said that Ruth should not cry. Mrs. Mason put her arm around Ruth Mason's shoulders and told her to just tell her mother everything, that everything would be all right. Ruth felt very much like crying and very much like telling her mother everything that had happened between herself and Harold Riley. She told her mother that she could not tell her, that she felt too broken-hearted, and that Harold Riley had not been nice.

Mrs. Mason told Ruth not to worry because all young couples had little quarrels and disagreements and the best thing was not to take them seriously.

Ruth Mason said, But, Mother, you don't know anything about it. Harold says he doesn't love me.

Mrs. Mason said, Oh, that's nothing, all young men say

that sometimes, you mustn't think anything about it. He'll be all right.

But he hates me mother, Ruth Mason said.

Mrs. Mason said, Now come, Ruth, don't get so all upset. Just tell me everything. How did it start?

Ruth Mason then began to tell her mother how Harold Riley had been losing money and that he had tried to make money so they would have plenty when they were married and how he had begun to lose and how Mr. Mason had loaned him only three thousand instead of five thousand dollars. She said if Mr. Mason had given Harold all the money he asked for, everything would have been all right but that he would be ruined now and he didn't want to marry her if he didn't have money.

Mrs. Mason knew that Ruth was not telling the story. She had heard enough from the upstairs hallway to know that this had not been the cause of the quarrel. She told Ruth that she thought there was more than that to it. She said, Ruth, did I hear you say something about babies or something like that?

Ruth Mason was nervous now and afraid that her mother had heard every word that had been said. She turned to her mother and asked her if she had been listening to them talking.

Mrs. Mason said that she had been walking from her room to the bathroom and had overheard some very loud talking and she couldn't help hearing it. Ruth Mason was sure her mother knew everything that had been said so she started telling the story of how they had been together. She said that Harold had really made her be with him and she hadn't wanted to and she felt terrible about it because she knew that that had been the reason for his no longer loving her. She began to cry and tremble and kept on talking fast to her mother.

Mrs. Mason patted her on the shoulder and told her not to take it so hard, that it was really not such a serious matter. Don't think about it, Ruth, she said, I could tell you something about your father and me. That happens often dear, you mustn't feel so bad. Ruth began to feel better. She went on with the story and told about the way she had tried to make him jealous at the country club because her mother had said it might be a good thing.

Mrs. Mason said that she had never told Ruth to do a thing of that kind. She said that Ruth should have known better than

to do that. But go on and tell me the whole thing, dear, she said to Ruth.

Mrs. Mason was trying very hard to comfort Ruth and find out the whole truth about the quarrel she had partly overheard.

Ruth Mason told her mother about the quarrel they had had a couple nights before when Harold hald told her about the way he was in debt and losing money. She said that Harold had blamed her for everything and she said that wasn't fair of Harold.

Mrs. Mason agreed that it wasn't fair of Harold but she said, Go on and tell me everything. When did this happen, you and Harold.

Ruth told her mother that it had been a long time before and that she had been afraid she might have a baby and that was why she wanted to get married so soon. She said she knew now that she wouldn't have a baby.

Mrs. Mason asked Ruth if Harold thought she was going to have a baby and then Ruth had to tell her that she had let Harold think that in order to keep him loving her because he had threatened to leave her and not marry her. She told her mother that the quarrel on this night had been because Harold found out she wasn't really pregnant.

Mrs. Mason said she thought everything could be fixed up some way and that Ruth should not let Harold know that she had told her mother anything about it. She told Ruth that it was too bad the young folks would forget themselves but that she shouldn't be so cut up about it. She envied her daughter somewhat and she did not want to censure her.

Mr. and Mrs. Mason had a long heated discussion which lasted late into the evening. Mrs. Mason had told her husband a few of the things Ruth had told her, though she was careful not to say anything about the young folks having been together. She decided she would save that and use it for the last card if she needed it. She didn't want to share it with her husband either. She found herself enjoying too much the carrying of it around in her mind, thinking of Harold Riley and her daughter, to want to share it with any one.

Mr. Mason said he knew all the time the way Harold Riley would go and he said he had no idea of sinking any money

into such a worthless young fellow. He said he had felt for a long time that Ruth should not marry such a fellow and he was glad they had quarreled and hoped the quarrel would not be patched up. He said that George Harvey was a real solid fellow and it would have been a good thing for Ruth Mason to have hung onto George Harvey when they were gadding about to dances together. Mrs. Mason told her husband that she thought Harold Riley was infinitely superior to George Harvey. Mr. Mason said it looked that way, the way Riley ran through money and threw it right and left. Their discussion almost turned into a quarrel several times but Mrs. Mason always managed to save it at the last moment.

She insisted that Mr. Mason should take over all of Harold Riley's debts and put the young man on his feet and do it for Ruth. She told Mr. Mason that it would break Ruth's heart if she were to lose Harold and she went on to say that it was not a good thing to tamper with a young girl's heart. This line of talk began to bring Mr. Mason around. He had a very sentimental feeling for his daughter and didn't want to see her hurt. He would have done anything Mrs. Mason suggested if he hadn't hated Harold Riley so much. He told Mrs. Mason that he would speak to Harold Riley and find out how he stood financially and see what he could do. Mrs. Mason told him he had better not speak to Harold or it might spoil everything. She told Mr. Mason to let her do all of that. She said she knew how to approach the young man. He said he didn't think that was business-like enough and didn't think he wanted to do anything like that.

Next morning Mrs. Mason told Mr. Mason that she might be downtown to see him during the day. He said he didn't think he would have any time to talk. She said that he could find a few minutes.

When Harold Riley drove away after telling Ruth Mason he was through with her, he felt almost as upset as she felt. The relief of feeling that the engagement was ended was genuine but Harold Riley was anxious and worried about the result of ending the engagement so abruptly. He knew he had thrown away any chance of further help from Mr. Mason and he thought he would never dare face any of the family again. He was glad that Ruth Mason was not pregnant but he was afraid

she might cause him some trouble. She had said she could have gotten her father to help him and now he had lost that chance. He couldn't help regretting his haste for this reason, and he also could not help feeling relief to know that the engagement was at an end. He decided that if he cleaned up within the next two weeks he would stay in the city and if he didn't he would leave and go to some place where he was not known and start in again. He was very anxious to see what would happen to his stocks on the next day. He decided if things were looking brighter he would not cash the checks he had made out. If things were still going bad he would cash them. He wished he had taken the ring and pearls back when Ruth Mason offered them to him. He wondered how he would get them back. He thought of the bills he owed around the city and decided if he got the ring and pearls back he would give them back to the jeweler. He couldn't possibly pay for them, they were too expensive. He thought of cashing the checks and running away but he decided not to do that. There was still a chance that he might win back his money. He didn't want to leave the city until he was sure that he had lost everything. He wondered what Mrs. Mason would think of the engagement being broken and he wondered what Mr. Mason would have to say about it. He hoped he wouldn't meet any of the family. He wondered what would be said about the three thousand he had borrowed. Mr. Mason would expect it right back now that the engagement was broken. He couldn't pay it back, and anyway he had given a note for the money so he had sixty days to wait to pay it. He kept thinking that it was a good thing to break with Ruth Mason the way he had. It made it seem to be more her fault than his. He knew that she would see through it but obviously it had been more her fault than his. He hoped it wouldn't get around until he had gotton on his feet again. He didn't think that Ruth Mason would be apt to talk about it and he hoped she wouldn't. He also hoped that her parents would not find out that he and Ruth had been together.

When he reached his home he sat in his rooms and smoked and drank some whiskey and looked over the market quotations and wondered what he had better do. He worked up a feeling of hatred against Ruth Mason and finally went to bed and slept. He was dead tired with all the nerve strain and excitement of the day.

The next morning Mrs. Mason decided it was her duty to talk to Harold Riley. At ten o'clock she went to his office and found him sitting alone at his desk playing with a pencil and apparently deeply thinking. She walked right into the office and said, Oh, Harold, I felt I ought to come and see you. It's too bad you and Ruth had your little trouble last night. I'm awfully sorry. I want to talk to you.

Harold Riley did not like having Mrs. Mason come in on him as she had. He was nervous and hoped she wouldn't stay there and make him talk about the quarrel of the night before. That was exactly what she had come for and he knew it. He said good morning and shook her hand. He looked very helpless in front of Mrs. Mason.

Mrs. Mason said, Now, Harold, please tell me all about the trouble. I'm sure it isn't so bad. Won't you tell me about it. Ruth is all broken up about it. I'm sure it's nothing serious.

Harold Riley told Mrs. Mason that he and Ruth had decided that they had better not get married. We didn't get along very well, he told her.

Mrs. Mason said that he should tell her everything and they could fix things up some way. She said again that she was sure Ruth loved Harold very much. Harold Riley did not answer her and only stood there. She sat down and told him to sit down and tell her about it.

Harold Riley sat down and then Mrs. Mason said that she knew Harold had not been doing very well in business and that she was sure that was the trouble. She said that she and Mr. Mason would help him out and that he mustn't feel hopeless. She said that it was in just such bitter situations that love was often trampled on and spoiled and that the excitement of losing money had made Harold highstrung and nervous. She said that when he again felt secure he would love Ruth and they would be happy.

Harold Riley began to feel like crying. He felt sorry for himself and seeing Mrs. Mason so sympathetic he felt that she understood him better than Ruth Mason ever could. He wanted to cry and tell her all of his troubles and explain to her that he really never had loved Ruth Mason.

Mrs. Mason saw him begin to cry and she felt very tender toward him. She told him not to feel bad, that he was just like a son to her and that she would see that everything was fixed up

all right for him. He sobbed more and more and Mrs. Mason could not stand it seeing him crying so she went up to him and put her arms around him and kissed him on the forehead. She felt that she would do anything in the world for Harold Riley.

Harold Riley felt some comfort in Mrs. Mason's caresses, but when they became more pronounced he did not like them. He told her, please not to, he would feel better in just a minute. She told him to tell her everything.

Harold Riley then started in telling Mrs. Mason that he had loved Ruth and that finally he had decided that they wouldn't be happy together and that, with all of his losses, had made him decide that it would be better for them not to marry. He said he liked Ruth better than any girl he had ever known and he said he certainly liked Mrs. Mason because she had always seemed to like him and understand what it was he was after.

Mrs. Mason patted him a little and kissed him on the forehead. Harold Riley did not like it but Mrs. Mason enjoyed doing it very much. She told Harold that if he would just tell her everything she knew things could be fixed up and he would love Ruth because she cared so much for him, in fact the whole family liked him. She said that Mr. Mason would be glad to help Harold if he knew that Harold needed help.

Harold Riley felt that he would like the help but he did not feel that he could go back to Ruth Mason. He was stubborn in his decision never to marry her. He did not like it having Mrs. Mason keep her arms around him. But he kept right on sobbing and she patted him on the shoulders from time to time and said that he should tell her everything. He began to wonder if Ruth Mason had told her mother everything. He asked Mrs. Mason what Ruth had told her.

Mrs. Mason said that she could get nothing out of Ruth, that she had tried, but that Ruth had not wanted to talk, and so all she knew was that they had had a quarrel and had decided to break their engagement. She said that she could not think of them breaking the engagement.

Harold Riley felt relieved because Ruth Mason had not told her mother all about the quarrel. He hoped Mrs. Mason had no suspicions about his having been with Ruth. He kept right on sobbing and was becoming somewhat hysterical. He wished Mrs.

Mason would not keep her arms around him. He didn't like it because it made him uncomfortable. She was holding him just as Ruth had held him. He didn't like it but he put one arm around her. She knelt down beside his chair and kissed him on the cheek and called him a dear boy and asked him not to worry and to tell her all about the trouble. Harold Riley started in telling her again that he and Ruth were not well mated, that they shouldn't marry, they would just be unhappy. She told him there was more than that and said that he should trust her and confide in her. She hoped that he would tell her about the time he and Ruth had been together. That was really all she wanted him to tell her. She felt that if he told her about that she would be happy. She was excited waiting to hear Harold tell her about the evening he had been with Ruth.

She said, Oh Harold I love you and so does Ruth and we want you to know that we feel that way. You must see Ruth again and fix things up. I know that you will be happy. Will you do it for me Harold. She held Harold close to herself and kissed him on the lips. Harold didn't like it. He told Mrs. Mason that he guessed it was no use. She asked him if there wasn't more to the trouble than he had told her. She told him he could tell her because she would understand. Harold Riley began to see that Mrs. Mason suspected he and Ruth had been together and wanted him to confess it to her. He would not do that.

Harold Riley said, I guess I have told you all there is to tell, I don't see how Ruth and I can ever make it up. He continued crying.

Mrs. Mason's knees hurt. She decided that she had talked enough with Harold Riley for one day. She told him she would have to go and that he should think it over and she would see him again. Her knees hurt her so much that she didn't feel like kneeling beside him any longer and she could see that he didn't want to tell her about being with Ruth. She said, Now Harold you just think it over and let me know if we can help you and in a day or so you see Ruth again and everything will be all right. I think it will be a good thing to wait a day or so to see her. That's a nice boy, she said and kissed him.

Mrs. Mason left Harold Riley's office very hurriedly and began to think that she should not have been so demonstrative. She hoped Harold Riley and Ruth would make up and marry. It would be too bad to lose Harold.

Harold Riley sat still in his chair and began to feel angry at Mrs. Mason for coming up to see him. She had no right to put her arms around him and kiss him. He was mad at himself for having cried and he dried his eyes quickly. He decided he would rather fail than take any help from the Masons. He never wanted to see any of the Mason family again.

Mrs. Mason told Ruth Mason that she was sure Harold Riley loved her, but that it would be best not to see him for a few days. She said that she would have to talk with Mr. Mason. She told Ruth that she thought Harold Riley had only been very nervous and upset about his financial losses and that when these matters were straightened up he would be as much in love with Ruth as ever. Ruth Mason told her mother that she was sure Harold Riley would never come to see her again. She said that she was absolutely sure he didn't love her and would never want to see her and she said her heart was broken. She said she didn't think she had ever done anything to make Harold act that way. Mrs. Mason said that Ruth should not get so upset, that all lovers have their quarrels. She said she was sure everything would be all right.

Ruth Mason knew inside herself that it was too late to bring Harold back to her. She wished there was a way it could be done but she didn't think there was. She felt very low and could find nothing around the house with which to occupy her mind. There was a bridge party that afternoon but she did not feel like going to it. She was afraid to sit with the girls she knew and talk, but it would be worse to stay away than to go. She did not want any of the girls to think that she was broken-hearted or even hurt by Harold Riley. She decided that no matter what happened no one would be able to say that she had been upset about it. If Harold Riley wanted to act like an ass he could suffer for it, she wouldn't. Ruth Mason felt hard when she decided that she would go to the bridge party and she felt that Harold Riley was of very little consequence to her. After the party was over she was again broken-hearted and upset and again she felt that she would do almost anything to bring Harold Riley back to her.

All the girls at the bridge party treated her as they had always treated her and Ruth Mason could not see a sign that anyone knew what had happened. It cheered her to see the girls

all acting as they had always acted. She forgot Harold Riley in her interest in the game of bridge and the gossip that went around the tables. George Harvey called again for Harriet Sheldon. Ruth Mason thought that things were getting thick between George Harvey and Harriet Sheldon. She thought to herself that George was not a really bad sort of fellow. He was only slow and plodding and not as clever as Harold Riley, but he was a good steady sort of fellow. She went into the hallway where George Harvey was waiting and said hello to him. He answered her and she felt sure that it would be easy for her to get him away from Harriet Sheldon.

In the afternoon after Mrs. Mason had been to see him, Harold Riley thought about cashing the checks he had made out to himself. He walked down the street and went into a men's clothing store which was owned by a young man Harold Riley knew very well. He went up and spoke to the young man and explained that he was a little low on cash to run him over the week-end and that his balance in his checking account was not very much at the moment and that he had a check for two hundred dollars a customer had given him. The young man who owned the clothing store said he would be glad to cash the check for Harold Riley if he had that much money on hand. He explained that on Saturdays he had to cash a lot of pay checks and that he didn't dare give out all of his cash. Harold Riley told the young man that he certainly would appreciate it because he had forgotten to go to the bank in the morning. The young man said he guessed he could do it and gave the money to Harold Riley. Harold Riley did not feel very nervous as he had expected to feel. It had been too easy and the young man had not the slightest suspicion. Harold Riley thanked him and offered him a cigarette and left the store. When he got out on the sidewalk he wondered where he had better go to cash the other checks. He stood still a while thinking and decided that he wouldn't cash them just then. He again felt nervous and thought that it would be better not to cash them. If he couldn't raise the money to pay them back he might get in a lot of trouble. It would not be so bad to go bankrupt but to get caught passing worthless checks would cause a lot of trouble. He thought he would wait until Monday and see how matters stood with his stocks and speculations. Things were going bad all the time

and he didn't seem to be able to think straight any more. Mrs. Mason had upset him and his nerves were so shot that his mind was dulled and he found it very hard to do any thinking.

He no longer felt anything about Ruth Mason and he felt very little anxiety about the money. He wasn't frightened as much as he was curious to know what would happen to him. He turned toward his office and walked along slowly not feeling anything. He sat in his office for over two hours, stupidly staring ahead of him and trying to think but not thinking. He began to feel that he didn't care what happened to him. Only he wished something would happen soon. It was very boring just sitting waiting. He didn't feel like trying to sell stocks and bonds, he had not felt like doing any work for a long time. He finally went to his home and sat around smoking and drinking and wondering whether he would get in some kind of trouble or not. He hoped he had seen the last of the whole Mason family.

That night Ruth Mason thought late into the night about what she had better do. She felt so sure that everything was over between herself and Harold Riley that she hardly saw any use in thinking about it. But she could not keep herself from thinking that there was still a slight chance of Harold coming back to her.

Next morning she wrote a note to Harold Riley. Dear Harold, I cannot think that you meant everything you said the other night. I can't believe it. After everything that has happened between us it doesn't seem to me that you can so easily cast love aside. I am unwilling to believe that you could be that way, and I won't consider that our engagement is broken until I hear from you definitely that you do not love me. I am sure you realize that I understand the situation you are in and want only to sympathize with you. At any rate until I hear from you either in person or by letter I won't believe that you do not love me. With Love, Ruth.

She wondered if she had said the right things. Harold Riley might think her a damn fool, she thought. She read the note over very carefully and finally in desperation sealed the envelope. She hoped the note would move Harold Riley and make him feel some kind of love for her. The time they were to have been married was very near and Ruth Mason couldn't see just how

she would explain to people that the engagement had been broken.

When Harold Riley got the note from Ruth Mason he decided that the best thing for him to do would be to answer right away and tell her that it was absolutely all over and there was no use trying to make things last any longer. He knew that he would have to write to her right away because if he waited it would be hard for him to write and throw aside the last chance he had of getting out of trouble. He was sure he would never be able to make up his losses in speculations. He was also sure that he could never go back to Ruth Mason. He felt too cold toward her. It made him mad to have her write the note to him. He wondered what she could be thinking of when she said that about what they had been through together. He felt that she was not as good as the lowest streetwalker. But he hardly had the energy to write to her and tell her it was all over between them. He felt as if there were no strength in his arms or legs and his head was dizzy and dull. He couldn't think what to say to Ruth Mason for a long time. Finally he wrote that it was really all over and that she should know that and that she could send the ring and pearls back if she wanted to. He said he didn't care whether she sent them back or not, but he was really very anxious to get them. Before he finished writing the note he decided it might be a good idea to add something about not disliking her and only feeling that he didn't love her enough and hoping that she would not hate him but that he couldn't help it how he felt. He thought it would be a good idea to soften the note a little in this way.

Ruth Mason knew all the time what kind of an answer she would get from Harold Riley but she wanted to actually see it and when she saw it she was mad. She was mad more because he had tried to soften it at the end than because he had said he didn't love her. She called Harold Riley every mean and dirty thing she could think to call him. She hoped he would get in trouble and get sent to prison and lose all his money and never get on his feet. There wasn't any more love left in her for Harold Riley. She began to think of George Harvey and decided that she would get him some way and show Harriet Sheldon what she thought of her. Harold Riley seemed like nothing to her now. He seemed like a worm or a road apple.

She began to think that George Harvey was not slow and stupid and plodding but was a fine good straight fellow who would make a good husband. She wished she had never seen Harold Riley. She hoped George Harvey would never find out what had happened between herself and Harold Riley. She felt sure that she would some day marry George Harvey.

Ruth Mason told her mother, It's all up mother, and I don't care. I hate Harold Riley. I think he's awful. I don't see how I ever thought that I could marry him. I was such a fool all the time.

Then Ruth Mason began to cry a little and thought that it wasn't a good thing for her to act so happy about the breakup of the engagement. She told her mother she didn't think any man would ever want to marry her after all that had happened. Then she cried some more. She said again that she hated Harold Riley and wouldn't marry him for anything but that she thought her life was probably ruined now with everything. She almost grew hysterical telling her mother these things. Mrs. Mason became alarmed. She told Ruth Mason that she musn't take things so hard. She said that probably Harold Riley still loved her and things might be patched up.

Ruth Mason said she did not want things to be patched up. She said she had more than she wanted from such an awful low down terrible person as Harold Riley. But she said that she thought her life was maybe spoiled.

Mrs. Mason said that Ruth Mason's life was not spoiled but it might be just the opposite, that she now knew more about men and would never make a mistake of that kind again. Mrs. Mason said that she had made two or three mistakes but that she never talked about them because Mr. Mason would not like to know about them. Mistakes are something people should never talk about, Mrs. Mason told her daughter. Talking about them is apt to make people jealous, she said. She said that Ruth Mason would have nothing to worry about and that if she was really sure that she was through with Harold Riley the best thing to do was to forget about him and never say anything about what had happened.

Mrs. Mason said that it might be a good thing to go out with other young men if any of them asked Ruth Mason to go out with them, and in that way, Mrs. Mason said, it would be

easy to forget about Harold Riley. Ruth Mason said she had thought about that and believed there was a certain amount of truth in it and she said that she thought a little about George Harvey. Mrs. Mason said that she had never thought very highly of George Harvey but that she had heard he had been promoted to be the manager of his father's big department store and if he was good at such work he might be a better sort of fellow than they had always thought. Ruth Mason said she always had thought George Harvey had something in him. She said she didn't see how she had failed to notice it when she had been going to dances at the country club with him. She said again that Harold Riley was no good and that she was glad to be rid of him.

Mrs. Mason didn't answer right away but sat thinking. She was a little bit glad that Ruth and Harold Riley had broken their engagement. She didn't know why she felt that way. She liked Harold Riley but she was glad that he was not going to marry her daughter. She did think to herself that if she were young she certainly would marry Harold Riley if she could. She thought that Harold Riley would make a fine strong husband, but just the same she was glad that Ruth was not going to marry him. She decided that she would like to go and talk to Harold Riley and console him and let him know that she thought well of him even though the engagement had been broken. Then she remembered her other visit and was a little ashamed of herself for feeling so strongly her affection for Harold Riley. But she thought she couldn't stand it not to see him just once more and she knew that he must be feeling badly, with the breakup of the engagement and with all his financial losses. And she thought it would be only a kind thing to do, to go to him and try to make him feel better.

Mrs. Mason then told Ruth Mason that she herself thought George Harvey might make a better husband than Harold Riley, but she said that Ruth should not blame Harold too much. She said it was very trying to have a lot of financial losses. Ruth said she knew it was but that was no reason for a person being such a good for nothing fellow as Harold Riley had proved himself to be. She said George Harvey was better than a million Harold Rileys.

Mrs. Mason told Ruth Mason that she should go to bed and sleep and next day she would feel better. She said there

was nothing like rest to calm down the nerves. Ruth Mason left her mother and felt happy to have told her about the breakup. She was glad her mother had taken it the way she had. Ruth Mason no longer felt broken-hearted, she just felt that it was good riddance. She thought more of George Harvey than of Harold Riley. She packed up the ring and pearls and had the chauffeur take them to Harold Riley. She decided there was no use sending a note with them. Harold Riley would see well enough that she didn't care a bit about him. She wished she hadn't signed the note she had sent to him before with the words, with love. She didn't love Harold Riley. She wanted to marry George Harvey. She didn't love George Harvey either, but she wanted to marry him.

Mrs. Mason talked to Mr. Mason that night and told him that she had been thinking a lot about the conversation they had had about Harold Riley and that she had decided that Harold Riley was not a good man for Ruth to have for a husband.

Mr. Mason said he had never thought, except for a little while, that Harold Riley was a good man. He's too clever, Mr. Mason said, and I know he's not honest. He acts as if he were trying to break the whole town and pocket all the money. He'll get fooled, I think he's in the hole already, in fact I know damn well he is. Slow gains are the surest every time. I never thought much of him. I'm glad you see through him. I don't like it Ruth marrying him.

Mrs. Mason said that that was just what she was trying to talk about when he interrupted her. She said she wished he wouldn't always interrupt her when she was trying to talk. She said that she had seen Harold Riley and had talked to Ruth and the engagement was ended.

It's ended is it, Mr. Mason said.

Yes, I talked to Ruth about it, Mrs. Mason said.

Well, I'm glad, that Riley is no good. I've heard men talk and I know. I wish I hadn't let him take that money. I may not ever get it back.

That's what I want to talk to you about, Mrs. Mason said. Now we don't want any scandal and he may get in some trouble and it would be better if it didn't get around too much. It's worth a little money to keep out of a mess.

Is Ruth still wearing that ring, Mr. Mason said. I thought I saw it on her hand at dinner.

No she's not, she sent it back and the pearls too, Mrs. Mason said. You dreamt it if you saw it on her finger.

I'm glad she sent them back, I don't want anything to do with that fellow, Mr. Mason said. Mr. Mason had always thought the diamond in the ring was too big. It was three times as big as the diamond he had given Mrs. Mason when they were married.

Mrs. Mason said that Mr. Mason should not be so angry, that Harold Riley was not entirely bad, and that now he was in a place where he needed help and if ever a man claimed to be a Christian now was a good chance to show it and help Harold Riley.

Mr. Mason was so glad to know that the engagement was ended that he said he wouldn't mind helping Harold Riley only he didn't want to spend all his money helping him.

Mrs. Mason said that she knew it wouldn't be much that Harold Riley needed and that it would be very kind of Mr. Mason to help the lad. Mr. Mason said that they would talk about it later because he was tired and wanted to go to sleep.

Next day Mrs. Mason went to Harold Riley's office. She walked into the anteroom and right past the stenographer, as she had done the other time she called, and went into Harold Riley's private office. Harold Riley was sitting at his desk biting the end of a pencil. He had got the pearls back and was glad and hoped that there would be nothing more to the whole thing. He saw Mrs. Mason come into his office and he felt angry. He felt she had no right to come in that way, without being announced by the stenographer. Besides he didn't want to see her.

Mrs. Mason said, Good morning.

Harold Riley said, I don't want to see you. You come up here like this and I don't want to see you. You know how it is with Ruth and me and I don't want to see you and I wish you would get out of here.

Mrs. Mason didn't say anything but she grew red in the face and felt insulted.

Harold Riley said that she was just a prying old woman.

Mrs. Mason was now angry. She told Harold Riley that

she had intended to help him out of his trouble but she wouldn't now and she hoped he went to jail and went broke and got into every kind of trouble. She said that he was no good and that everybody knew it. She said that she had never been insulted by a puppy before and she would make him pay for every word he had said.

Harold Riley said, All right go ahead, do anything you want to, only get out of my office or I'll have you put out.

Mrs. Mason turned around and started out and just as she was going out of the room she spat against the wall. She didn't know what made her do that.

After Mrs. Mason had gone Harold Riley sat down and thought that he had been a damn fool. He was mad because she had spit against the wall. Perhaps she had really intended to help him even if the engagement was broken. He remembered how she had kissed him when she had called at the office the time before and he began to think that maybe she wanted more than just to help him. When he thought this he was glad he had told her to get out, he thought of her as nothing better than a dirty madame in a cheap brothel. He hoped he was through with the whole Mason family. He wished something would happen about his financial troubles. He expected his customers to come and demand the stocks he had bought for them. He wished something would happen so that everything would be over with him. He wished he had never wanted to be a stockbroker. He thought of the cigar girl in the nearby city. He thought of his mother and father and wondered what they would think when he finally came to the showdown. He didn't care much what they might think. He didn't care very much for either his father or his mother. He didn't care much for anybody any more. But he did wish something would happen soon. All the excitement of waiting was just making him numb. He didn't feel that he had strength enough to get up from his chair. And then that damn Mrs. Mason coming to call on him. He wanted to leave the city. But he didn't dare do that. It was better to sit tight and face the music. He got up and went to the anteroom and told his stenographer that she could go for the rest of the day because he didn't need her and thought he would close up the office anyway. She asked him if he was feeling bad. He said he felt very sick. She said he looked kinda sick. He said he was sick.

When Mrs. Mason left Harold Riley's office she was so mad that she went right to Mr. Mason's office and walked up to Mr. Mason as abruptly as she had walked up to Harold Riley. Mr. Mason asked her what was the matter. Mrs. Mason said that there was plenty the matter. She said, That Harold Riley is a scurvy pup and I'm sorry I didn't know it all the time. Why the very idea of that fellow having the presumption to think that he could marry into our family. If that engagement wasn't broken already I'd break it soon enough.

What's the matter? Mr. Mason said.

I'll tell you if you let me talk, Mrs. Mason said.

I'll let you, Mr. Mason said.

Well, I went up to his office and was insulted as I have never been insulted in my whole life before, Mrs. Mason said. That young fellow has no manners and no breeding and I hope he comes to a bad end. I want you to demand that he pay you that money back right away.

I can't do that, Mr. Mason said. He signed a note and I have got to wait until it falls due.

Well, can't you do something, can't you just go up and make him pay some way. I don't think he's got a cent in the world and it would do him good.

You can't do anything like that with a note, said Mr. Mason. It seems kinda funny to me the way you were saying so much about being a good Christian and helping out that fellow. I never thought much of him, I told you that, but you always acted as if he was a fine young man. I don't think you ought to act so hard to him. When a fellow is in trouble like that he needs sympathy. That's what you told me, didn't you.

Mrs. Mason didn't like this from Mr. Mason. She told him that he better not talk like that to her. She said it was all right but that no man had a right to sit so quiet and talk that way when his wife had been insulted.

Mr. Mason said he didn't see why Mrs. Mason ever went up to Harold Riley's office. He said there wouldn't have been any danger of being insulted if she had stayed away from him.

Mrs. Mason didn't know just what to say because she wasn't exactly sure why she had gone to Harold Riley's office. She told Mr. Mason that she had thought Harold Riley was a gentleman and she had wanted him to know that the family did not think ill of him even if the engagement had been broken.

Mr. Mason said that it was better not to meddle in things and let things alone.

Mrs. Mason said she never had had an idea of meddling but that now she intended to meddle. She said she intended to show that pup that he couldn't insult her.

Mr. Mason asked her not to talk so loud. He said somebody in the next office might hear her.

Mrs. Mason said she wasn't talking loud.

Mr. Mason said, Well, don't think anything more about it. You ought to rest up and quiet your nerves. Maybe the trouble with young Riley is his nerves are all gone to pieces if he has got all that trouble. I feel kinda sorry for him someway but I admit he had no right, so far as I can see, to say anything to insult you. I wouldn't think so much about it. I don't think he meant to insult you.

Mrs. Mason said that she knew very well when she was insulted and she said she would make Harold Riley pay for what he had done. She told Mr. Mason that the least he could do would be to give her a little sympathy and not sit there acting so quiet, as if it had been her fault.

Mr. Mason said that if Harold Riley was a bad one he would come to a bad end and it would be better not to meddle too much with him. A fellow like that generally comes to a bad end, Mr. Mason said.

Mrs. Mason went home.

Two of Ruth Mason's friends came to call on her. They had got wind some way that there had been trouble between Ruth Mason and Harold Riley and they were very anxious to find out about it. Ruth Mason invited them into the house very cordially and the three young women sat down and started talking. Finally one of them could not hold in any longer so she said that she noticed Ruth was not wearing her ring. Ruth Mason smiled and said that she never would wear it again. She said that Harold Riley had proved to be no good and she had simply had to break off the engagement. I can't tell you all about it, she said, but I simply could not have gone on with it. Then both girls drew in their breath fast and said, Why what is it that's the matter. Everybody thought everything was all right with you and Harold Riley.

Ruth Mason said that she would tell them sometime but she

didn't want to injure Harold Riley too much by telling them now. She said she felt very sorry for Harold Riley but that she never could have married him. It's too bad, she said, but I simply had to break off with him. She said that Harold Riley would have a hard enough time of it without people saying things about him. She said that she was very glad to have the thing over because she had seen all along that he wasn't the man for her to marry. I simply had to end it, she said. But let's not talk about it.

Then they started talking about other things and Ruth Mason asked about Harriet Sheldon but didn't say anything about George Harvey. The girls said that Harriet Sheldon was certainly stuck on George Harvey. Ruth Mason said she didn't think George Harvey cared an awful lot about Harriet Sheldon. The girls said they didn't think he did either. One of them said she thought George Harvey was still crazy about Ruth Mason. She asked Ruth Mason what in the world had ever made her stop going with George Harvey. Ruth Mason said that she had liked George Harvey well enough but that she had just stopped going with him. The girls both said that George Harvey was a nice boy but awfully slow and sometimes a bit stupid but he would be a fellow that would get ahead because he was very steady. Ruth Mason said that that kind of men made the best men generally, and she went on to say that she thought George Harvey would probably some day be a very big man in the city.

When they walked away from the house the girls said to each other that they bet Ruth Mason would be after George Harvey the way she had been talking. They also said that they bet there was more to the business about Harold Riley than Ruth Mason had told them and they decided that Harold Riley probably had had as much to do with the breaking of the engagement as Ruth Mason. They said that Ruth Mason didn't really have enough style and cleverness to hold a man like Harold Riley. They wondered who Harold Riley would be running around with now that he was no longer engaged to Ruth Mason.

Ruth Mason didn't feel like playing bridge the next day because she knew that everybody at the bridge party would know about the breakup of the engagement. She hated to go but she knew that she would have to if she wanted to keep the

girls from gossiping about her and thinking that Harold Riley had thrown her over. She no longer felt that Harold Riley had thrown her over. She felt now that she had broken the engagement herself and she felt justified in having done it. She felt that Harold Riley was far beneath her and unworthy of her and she hoped that he would get in a lot of trouble and then people would see why she had thrown him over. She decided she would go to the bridge party and smile and act happy and then the girls couldn't say much about her. She hoped that Harold Riley wouldn't go around talking. She didn't think he would but she decided if he did any talking she would make it hot for him some way and she would deny everything he might say and call him a liar. She decided to see George Harvey as soon as she could and see if she couldn't get him interested in her. She wondered if he would come to the bridge party and call for Harriet Sheldon. She hoped he would. She thought she might have a chance to speak a word to him and smile and tell him she was not engaged and ask him to come and see her. Ruth Mason wasn't sure just how to go about it but she was sure that she was going to get George Harvey away from Harriet Sheldon.

At the bridge party the girls acted just the way Ruth Mason had thought they would act. They smiled with puckered lips and made Ruth Mason feel that they were grinning at her. She felt very uneasy but smiled bravely and chatted and said, Yes I'm free again and it feels awfully good. No there wasn't anything the matter, we just couldn't have been married though. No Harold and I are still the best friends in the world, only you know how those things are. Ruth Mason was acting very brave and smiling and chatting. She succeeded in disarming all the girls and making them open and friendly with her. All but Harriet Sheldon. Harriet Sheldon was sure Harold Riley had jilted Ruth Mason and she didn't like it that Ruth Mason was no longer engaged. Harriet Sheldon knew that George Harvey liked Ruth Mason and she was in love with George Harvey and could see now that there was a chance of losing him. She was afraid Ruth Mason would start after George Harvey and she knew that Ruth Mason would have a good chance with him. She remembered how they had danced together at the country club and she was very frightened. She decided that she would do everything she could that afternoon to make George Harvey

say he would marry her. She would do anything to make him marry her. She wasn't going to let Ruth Mason get George Harvey.

Ruth Mason found herself enjoying the bridge party and the talk with the girls. She avoided Harriet Sheldon as much as possible and kept on smiling. She was anxious for the time to come when George Harvey would come to call for Harriet Sheldon. The telephone rang and it was for Harriet Sheldon. When she came back from talking on the phone she didn't say very much. George Harvey didn't call for her that afternoon and she walked home with another girl who had been at the bridge party. Ruth Mason was glad George Harvey had not called and she wondered how she would go about it to see him and let him know she was no longer engaged. Then she thought that he must know it. Everybody already knew it. She thought that that might have been the reason he didn't call for Harriet Sheldon that afternoon. She felt sure George Harvey loved her. She could tell the way he had looked at her the last time she had seen him. She was happy and hated Harold Riley and hoped he would get into a lot of trouble.

Harold Riley kept right on losing money on his speculations and began to think he would soon be forced into bankruptcy and would get in trouble for bucketing and holding out his customers' stocks. He was frightened but his nerves were so shot that he felt only a dull stupid feeling of languor and every now and then a jerking of his nerves that brought him up quick and made his mind clear and made him realize that he was headed for a big fall. He liked it better when he just felt dull and stupid. Everything was going to hell and as long as he knew that, that was enough.

He wished Mrs. Mason would come in again. He decided he would like to tell her some more things he had begun to think about her. He felt a little bit sorry for Ruth Mason. If he had known how she felt he wouldn't have felt a bit sorry. He wondered what he would do when the bad check came back, marked no funds. It would be interesting to see what would happen, he thought. Then he had one of those feelings of his nerves suddenly twitching and his head getting all clear and he stopped wishing for calamity and began to wonder how he could get out of the trouble. He was afraid he would have to go to prison and he

didn't want to. His eyes got wet with tears when he thought of going to prison and he thought of his mother and father. He had never really liked either of them but now he was sentimental about them. His mother had said she could raise only a few hundred. Harold Riley knew they could raise several thousand. They owned the house and Harold Riley didn't see any reason why they shouldn't mortgage the house if it would keep him out of prison. He thought that it was a fine house that ought to raise a lot of money on a mortgage. He knew that if it came to a question of prison his parents would do anything. He decided he would get some money from them that way. He felt ashamed to have to tell them but he didn't feel very much ashamed. He felt that his parents had brought him into the world and it was their fault he was born, so why shouldn't they suffer a little for him. He had thrown that up against them a couple of times when he wanted things and he knew it would work again.

He would be bankrupt and that was all there was to it and he might get into a lot of trouble. Harold Riley didn't mind the idea of getting into trouble but the idea of going to prison frightened him. He decided that he had been very foolish to come to this particular city when there were so many others he could have gone to, to make his start in business. And then when he had started he should have known better than to think of getting married. He knew that if it hadn't been for Ruth Mason, he would have had a lot of money and would have been succeeding and always making more. But he didn't hate Ruth Mason as much as he had hated her. He just didn't feel much of anything toward her.

Mrs. Mason talked to Ruth Mason and said she was very glad that everything was over between the two young people. She said that she had seen Harold Riley and he had showed himself up in his right colors. She told Ruth Mason that she realized she had been deceived all along about Harold Riley. Ruth told her mother she was very glad the engagement had been broken. She said that George Harvey was very fond of her and she was sure of it. Mrs. Mason said that George Harvey was a much better man than Harold Riley because Harold Riley was just a good for nothing puppy. Ruth Mason said she didn't see how she had been deceived so long about Harold Riley.

Ruth Mason went into the next room and came out with a large bunch of roses. Mrs. Mason asked Ruth Mason where they had come from. Ruth Mason said that George Harvey had sent them to her. Mrs. Mason was surprised and wondered what would make George Harvey start in sending flowers to Ruth again after everything that had happened. She asked Ruth how George Harvey happened to be sending her flowers. Ruth said she didn't know but that the flowers had been at the house when she came back from the bridge party. She said George Harvey had sent a note with the flowers and asked if he might come to see her. Mrs. Mason spoke right up and said that it would be a good thing for Ruth to let George Harvey come to call upon her. Ruth said she was going to let him.

George Harvey had heard that the engagement had been broken and had gone right to a florist and ordered a bunch of roses to be sent to Ruth Mason. George Harvey had loved Ruth Mason for a long time and he saw his chance. He had never really cared much for Harriet Sheldon. He wrote a note to be sent along with the flowers. In it he told Ruth Mason that he took the liberty of sending her flowers and that he hoped she would like to have them from him. He also told her that he would like to see her. He told her that he had known that she had not been happy by the way she had acted at the country club.

Ruth Mason did not like to have him say that because she didn't want George Harvey to think that he could tell what she was thinking. She had a good mind to tell George Harvey that he knew nothing about the way she had felt that night at the country club when they had danced together. But she knew it would not be wise to say anything like that to George Harvey. She wanted George Harvey for a husband. There was really nobody else in the city who would make as good a husband for her as George Harvey.

Ruth Mason didn't tell her mother everything that George Harvey had written in the note. The last sentence he had written was not the kind of thing Ruth Mason wanted to repeat to anybody. She was glad that George Harvey had asked to come and see her and she was glad to be able to tell her mother that he had asked this of her. She thought that Harriet Sheldon was not even worth snapping her fingers at. Ruth Mason wondered what had ever made Harriet Sheldon think that she could get

George Harvey. Ruth Mason thought that Harriet Sheldon would have a hard time getting anybody.

Ruth Mason felt very happy about the way things were going. She still hated Harold Riley but she didn't hate him as much as she had hated him. She thought it would be very nice if she and George Harvey would announce their engagement in a short time. Then Harold Riley would see that he wasn't so important. Ruth Mason felt very happy thinking that Harold Riley was going to get a good lesson.

Mrs. Mason told her friends in a very roundabout way that the reason her daughter, Ruth Mason, had broken her engagement was because Harold Riley had turned out to be a good-for-nothing. She told her friends that Harold Riley was not dependable and that she was afraid he was not what people would call absolutely honest. Mrs. Mason was very careful telling people things about Harold Riley and did not say right out what she thought about him. She was careful to just say enough so that the other women would be able to guess what it was Mrs. Mason wanted them to know about Harold Riley. Telling about Harold Riley in this way Mrs. Mason succeeded in making the women she was talking to, think much worse of him than she really intended they should think. Mrs. Mason had no use for Harold Riley.

The women Mrs. Mason talked to told their husbands what had been told them and put their own interpretations on it and in a day Harold Riley was practically ruined. The husbands of these women, many of whom did business with Harold Riley, were afraid that they might be losing money through him and were anxious to see that things were all right. It only took a few hours to make the whole city suspicious of Harold Riley.

Ruth Mason now felt happier than she had felt for some time. George Harvey telephoned that evening and she said she had gotten his flowers and thought they were very lovely. She said she would be awfully glad to see him. George Harvey said he would like to see her that same evening if she really felt that she would like to see him.

Ruth Mason now felt happier than she had felt for some time and she determined she would go right about it to make George Harvey want to marry her. She hoped that he would

want to kiss her and would have that wild look in his eyes and would hold her up close to himself and be warm and passionate. She knew if George Harvey ever did that, then it would be easy to make him say he wanted to marry her. Ruth Mason was happy and excited and felt sure that she would have no trouble making George Harvey ask her to marry him. She thought it would be nice to announce the engagement and show Harold Riley something. Harold Riley needn't think he was so smart.

When George Harvey came to call upon Ruth Mason she was all smiles and looked very lovely. George Harvey seemed happier and brighter than he usually seemed and he did not look slow and stupid any more, the way he had looked. Ruth Mason thought that he would make a very good husband and it would show Harold Riley something. Mrs. Mason also thought that George Harvey would make a good husband and she hoped that Harold Riley would get into a lot of trouble.

Mrs. Mason smiled at George Harvey and tried to make him see that he was very welcome in the Mason household. She congratulated him on being promoted to the managership of his father's big department store. She said she thought that he would some day be a very big man in the city. She said it made her very happy to see the young men whom she had been watching as they were growing up, become such big, fine men in the city.

Mr. Mason said, Slow gains are the surest. A man should never try to get ahead too fast. It's bad business. Now you take that young Riley, I always said that about him.

Mrs. Mason said, Let's not talk about the poor boy. He has a hard enough time of it as it is.

Then Mrs. Mason nodded to Mr. Mason and the older people left the young couple alone in the room. George Harvey began right away to feel embarrassed. Ruth Mason still kept on smiling. Then she put a record on the phonograph and said to George Harvey that they ought to dance a little bit together. George Harvey said he thought that would be a good idea. When they danced together Ruth Mason held George Harvey close to herself as she had done that night at the country club when they had danced together.

George Harvey became very nervous and excited and held Ruth Mason close. He told her that he thought an awful lot

of her and wished she would think a lot of him. Ruth Mason said she thought he was one of the best fellows she knew. They danced around that way together and talked and finally George Harvey tried to kiss Ruth Mason but she drew away from him and would not let him kiss her. George Harvey told Ruth Mason he was sorry he had tried to kiss her but he thought she cared enough about him to kiss him and he cared so much for her he wanted to kiss her. Ruth Mason decided she had better let George Harvey kiss her so she turned her head up toward him and they kissed one another while they were dancing to the music of the victrola. Ruth Mason enjoyed having George Harvey kiss her much more than she had enjoyed being kissed by him before. She told him, Let's stop dancing and sit down a while, do you want to. They walked over to the davenport and sat down and Ruth Mason turned right toward George Harvey and put her arms around his neck and said he was a sweet boy. George Harvey liked it and he kissed her.

Ruth Mason saw that George Harvey was getting warm and passionate and he had a hard look in his eyes that had frightened her the first time she had seen it. Now she liked to see it and it made her feel that she was much stronger than George Harvey. Ruth Mason decided she would not let George Harvey make too much love to her. She decided she would let him make just enough love to her and then she would put a stop to it. George Harvey had no idea of making too much love to Ruth Mason. He wanted to marry her and wanted to ask her then if she would marry him. Instead he said that he was glad she wasn't engaged to Harold Riley any longer. He said, I never liked that Harold Riley. He isn't good enough for you.

Ruth Mason was going to say something about Harold Riley and explain about breaking her engagement with him but she thought after what George Harvey had just said to her the best for her to answer would be, Who do you think is good enough for me, George?

George Harvey said he wished Ruth Mason would think he was good enough for her because he certainly would like to marry her. Ruth Mason told him, I like you very much George, you know that all right, but how do you know we would be happy together. She thought she ought to say that.

George Harvey said he knew they would be happy because

he loved her so much and would always love her and would do anything she wanted him to do to prove it.

Ruth Mason said, Then, George, if you love me that much, don't hold me so close to you, that way, it takes my breath away. You are nice, George. I think you really might make a good husband.

I know I would with you for my wife, George Harvey said.

Ruth Mason felt that she could almost wrap George Harvey around her little finger. She liked it that it was so easy for her to handle him. Everything had been going off as she had planned it. She was having more fun with George Harvey than she had ever been able to have with Harold Riley. But she didn't love George Harvey the way she had loved Harold Riley. But she did want to marry him, that was sure.

George Harvey said, Don't you think that you could marry me, Ruth. I love you and you'll always be happy with me. You know I always loved you. I only went around with Harriet Sheldon because you were engaged that way.

Ruth Mason said, I don't see how you could care very much for her. Oh George, you are a sweet boy. I guess maybe I do love you George, do you think I really ought to marry you.

George Harvey said, O please now, don't always be kidding about it, Ruth, you know I love you and I want you to love me. Tell me will you marry me, Ruth.

Why sure I will, George, Ruth Mason said.

It had been very easy for Ruth Mason and she didn't enjoy winning George Harvey so easily. She wasn't sure she wanted to marry him, it had been so easy. It had not been easy that way with Harold Riley. If it hadn't been that everything was over with Harold Riley, and she felt that she had to show him something and let him know that he was not important to her, Ruth Mason would not have consented so quickly to an engagement with George Harvey. She told George Harvey that she didn't think they ought to announce their engagement until people had stopped talking about Harold Riley and herself. George said he didn't care a damn about Harold Riley, he said that he had heard that Riley was no good and everybody in the city knew it, so what did they care whether people heard that he and Ruth Mason were engaged. George Harvey was afraid some other fellow might come along and take Ruth away from him. Ruth Mason knew George was afraid of this and she

was happy knowing it. She said she thought that in a few days they could announce the engagement. He said he had never been so happy and he kissed Ruth Mason. Ruth Mason said that she had always loved him too, and didn't see what had ever made her care a fig about Harold Riley.

George Harvey said, Do you mind telling me, how it was with you and Riley. I knew you had broken off with him but do you mind, I wondered what it was made you. I know he isn't any good and he may be getting in trouble but was it something else, or that.

Ruth Mason said, Oh, George, you ought to see that I just couldn't marry him. It was that way a long time. You said you noticed it at the country club. Well there, you see it had been going on a long time. I almost told you that night at the country club that I was crazy about you. I should think you could have told that.

I knew it all the time, said George Harvey. I could tell that night, didn't I write it in that note. I didn't like Harriet Sheldon, only you can't blame me for going around with her can you.

George Harvey went home that night feeling very happy. Ruth Mason wasn't sure she felt very happy. She was glad that it was all settled between herself and George Harvey but she hated to think that it was absolutely all over about Harold Riley. She didn't like Harold Riley and she wanted to show him something but she was afraid he might not be really hurt to hear that she was going to marry George Harvey. She hoped he would feel hurt and would cry about it and be broken up to hear it. She didn't hate him any more the way she had, and she wasn't sure she really wanted to see him get into a pile of trouble. She wondered what Harriet Sheldon would have to say about the turn things had taken. She hoped George Harvey would put on more style and polish and would see that they had as good a place to live in as Harold Riley had been planning to have for her. She hoped George would never find out about what had happened between herself and Harold Riley. She said to herself, Oh he'll never know, how could he, I can kid him into thinking anything I want to.

Mrs. Mason was waiting in the hallway to speak to Ruth Mason when she came upstairs. She wondered what had happened and she felt quite sure that something nice had happened.

Ruth saw her standing there and waiting so she went right up to her mother and said, Oh mother, George is such a nice boy. I'm just crazy about him mother. He is much nicer than Harold Riley really.

Mrs. Mason said, George is a nice boy.

Ruth Mason said, He asked me to marry him mother.

Did you say you would? Mrs. Mason said.

Ruth Mason said that she had said she would but that she wasn't exactly sure whether she really wanted to, but that she guessed she did.

Mrs. Mason said, Of course, you do, Ruth, you'll want to when you think about it. George is an awfully nice boy, Ruth. Oh, I know that you and George will be happy.

Mrs. Mason kissed Ruth Mason and they went to their rooms and went to bed.

Mrs. Mason told Mr. Mason that she was sure Ruth and George Harvey would become engaged. She said she thought it would be a good thing for Ruth and she said again that she was very glad that Ruth and Harold Riley had broken their engagement.

Mr. Mason said that he didn't think it took Ruth very long to fall in love if it was already so certain she was going to marry George Harvey. He said that people didn't even know yet that she was no longer engaged to Harold Riley. She ought to wait a while, Mr. Mason said.

I think Ruth is very wise, Mrs. Mason said. And George Harvey is a fine young man and much better than Harold Riley.

I feel kinda sorry for that young Riley, Mr. Mason said.

The next day Harold Riley knew for sure that it was all up with him. He had been misusing other people's money and he knew that he could get into a lot of trouble for doing such a thing. He knew that some of his customers would be after him to liquidate their stocks and he had never bought the stocks so there was nothing to do about it. He decided that the only possible way out of the trouble would be to get money from his parents. He hardly had the nerve to ask them but he didn't want to go to prison. A customer called him on the phone and told him that he needed some cash because he was pressed for money and would Harold Riley just as soon sell out the stocks he had ordered bought for him. Harold Riley said he would do it.

Harold Riley had never bought these stocks because he had thought they would fall in value and he could then pocket the customer's loss. They had risen in value. Harold Riley had to ask his parents, that was all there was to it. If they didn't mortgage the house and raise at least twelve thousand dollars in cash Harold Riley would stand a good chance of being sent to prison. If he could get twelve thousand he could pay back the money he owed around the city, sell his cars, cover the amount of the checks he had forged, straighten up things with his customers, and he would at least be out of the way of trouble. Harold Riley knew twelve thousand dollars was the limit his parents could borrow on their house and he knew his father would not like to borrow that much. He was almost afraid to telephone and ask his father to do it but he didn't want to go to prison. If he had still been engaged to Ruth Mason, her father, Mr. Mason, might have helped him out, but now that chance was gone. Harold Riley didn't yet know that Ruth Mason had promised to marry George Harvey just the night before. If he had known it he wouldn't have cared much. All he cared about now was to get his parents to mortgage the house and give him enough money to keep him out of trouble.

Harold Riley didn't want to telephone from the office so he walked out and went to a public telephone booth. He put in a long distance call for his father and waited until the call was put through. When he started speaking to his father he told him that for some time back he had been getting into financial trouble and had had bad luck and now he was way in the hole and might even get sent to prison if matters weren't fixed up some way.

Mr. Riley said, What was that you said about prison. Don't talk like that out loud, somebody might hear you. What's the matter son.

Harold Riley went on talking and said that he was twelve thousand dollars in the hole and people would think he was dishonest, although, he said, there was nothing dishonest about it, it was only bad luck. He said again that his father would have to raise at least twelve thousand dollars for him right away, the same day if possible, or he might be sent to prison. He said that he was absolutely innocent of anything. Mr. Riley heard him but did not answer. He wondered what kind of trouble his son had gotten into. Mr. Riley had always been afraid of money

and had always said that he would never want a job where he had the handling of money. He had always been afraid that his son Harold might someday get into some trouble about money. Now he was sure his boy had been dishonest and was really in trouble. It took his breath away and he couldn't say anything to Harold for a minute.

Mrs. Riley was standing beside the telephone excited and nervous and kept interrupting and asking what was the matter with the boy.

Mr. Riley paid no attention to her.

Finally Harold Riley spoke up loud over the telephone and said, Are you listening to me, father? I'm in an awful mixup, listen. I've got to have twelve thousand, do you hear me? I ought to have it right today. They may get me if I don't get it quick some way.

Mr. Riley said, I hear you son, what is it all this trouble, what have you been doing. What was that about prison. Mr. Riley whispered the word, prison. He was frightened.

Harold Riley said, I haven't been doing anything at all father, only don't you see, I had bad luck, that was it. You have got to get twelve thousand dollars for me some way. Mortgage the house, you can get twelve thousand for it easy. Do you hear me?

Mr. Riley said, Yes, I hear you son, but I don't know, I don't think I could get that much, I hate to mortgage the house. I always said I never would mortgage the house. I don't like it.

Harold Riley said, Well, all right then, if that's the way you feel, if you want me to go to prison, all right then, that's all there is to it. Harold Riley almost shouted the word prison. Mr. Riley was very frightened and so was Mrs. Riley. She kept saying, What is it, what is the matter with the boy. Is he sick or something.

Mr. Riley said to Harold Riley, I'll get it, son, I'll take the train and be with you as soon as I can. I'll get it, don't talk to your father that way. You ought to know I'll get it for you. I'll take the first train.

Mr. Riley when he finished talking felt more like sitting than standing. He walked slowly into the next room and Mrs. Riley followed after him and kept asking always what it was that was the matter.

Mr. Riley said he didn't know exactly but that he guessed

the boy had gotten into some kind of trouble and needed money and there was nothing to do but mortgage the house if they wanted to keep the boy out of trouble. I don't understand it, he kept saying. Harold always said he was making money and was going to get married. I don't see what it's about. It's going into that kind of business where you handle money that way. It's a bad thing for anybody handling money. I've known lots of good men get in trouble when they handled money.

Mrs. Riley said, What was that you said about maybe prison, what was it?

Mr. Riley said again that Harold was in trouble and if he couldn't raise twelve thousand dollars he might have to go to prison.

Mrs. Riley said, Oh, the boy can't go to prison. Why we can get him the money, we can't have him going to prison. Why we can get him the money. I'll bet it's that girl. I didn't like the idea of him being engaged to a girl I never even saw.

Mr. Riley said, Don't worry mother, I'll get the money and I'll go and find out what the trouble is. I won't let Harold ever be in any more business where he handles money. I'll make him come back here and take some office work and settle down where we can watch him. I was always afraid something like that would happen. I'll take the first train, but I've got to go to the bank first. It won't take long. And I'll bring Harold back with me and put him to work too.

Mrs. Riley said, He can't go to prison. Let me go along with you, father, won't you, I want to see the boy.

Mr. Riley said, I don't think you better, you don't understand these things the way I do.

In a few days Mr. Riley and Harold Riley settled everything so that Harold Riley could be kept out of serious trouble. Mr. Riley did it only on condition that Harold Riley would go back with him and settle down into a steady office job and not do any work where he would be handling money. Harold Riley said he wanted to start up again somewhere else and that he knew he would be all right in some other city, but Mr. Riley would not listen to him and in order to get the money Harold Riley had to promise to go back home and work in an office. Harold Riley thought that that would be much better than going to prison.

Ruth Mason was glad that Harold Riley had gotten into trouble but she was also glad that there had been so little talk about it. When she heard that Mr. Riley had made Harold go back to his home town and work in an office she thought it would be a good thing for him, and she felt perfectly willing to marry George Harvey.

It would certainly show Harold Riley something.

JACQUELINE EMBRY

SHORT STORY

She saw that he was full six feet and thin,
And liked exceedingly his narrow head.
He fancied her grave eyes and secret grin,
The coolly clipped, amusing things she said.
She marked his gray homespun, the snug cravat—
Purple and gray—and thought him slightly vain.
He had the sense to like her tricorne hat.
They found they shared a passion for chow mein. . . .

It wasn't fair, of course, for still she'd start
Out of deep sleep thinking she'd heard a voice—
The voice that pierced her like a winging dart.
She rather hoped she, too, was second choice. . . .
He said: "Why not be Mrs. Smith with speed?"
She burnt her bridges with: "Why not, indeed!"

SAVILLE T. CLARK

CORPORAL TRIM

THE BULL MOON, *the adventurer.*
SENTARG, *anagram (greatness).*
JEHOVAH, *Lord of Battles, disciple of the Bull and confrère of Sentarg.*
JESUS, *Son of Jehovah, lost to the brotherhood through his love of Sorca.*

CORRUPTER JOHN, *the interpreter.*
SENISUB, *anagram (business).*
SOMED, *anagram (demos); the strangely begotten son of Senisub.*
SORCA, *anagram (a cross).*
YENOM, *anagram (money); sometimes identical with Sorca.*

DIAPHON, *derived from diaphanous.*
CORPORAL TRIM, *identical with "I" in other poems.*

Two old seamen on the waterfront
Remember the high, white noon
That the ship weighed anchor
And stood out of the harbor
For the new moon.
They say her crew were sunset men
Whom Sentarg led;
That the Bull was there,
The great Bull Moon with a leonine head,
And Jehovah, still mightily sad
For Jesus.
And Corporal Trim of the khaki men,
Who said:

"O, I have been to Church at Ephesus,
And there I met Corrupter John:
Not Prester, nor the brother of James,
Nor he who fled the king
In the greenwood from the river Thames,
Nor yet the gaunt Baptist,
But one who was more suave, Corrupter John."

Then Jehovah gave a toast to him,
And Sentarg drank it, and the Bull,
And so did Corporal Trim,
Though the cup was bitter to them all,
And was as wormwood and as gall,
To drink to Corrupter John.

Sentarg now spoke to Trim:
"How are you here,
Straight of back and strong of limb,
Who have not companied us before?"

"For you, O Sentarg, I sought
Year on arid year,
After I learned my father was not,
Nor had been more
Than the golden clink of gold
Spilling in a pile of gold
Beside my tower-prisoned mother.
Then in khaki from the TEXAS,
At the time of the sixth Senisubian Congress,
That time in Havana
When the bands played Star Spangled Banner
In honor of Calvin Coolidge,
O I went ashore and drank good Scotch,
And I felt good and was carefree.
I thought of Calvin Coolidge
And I was a better man than he,
Who should not command such men as me.
So I went over the hill;
And a vision I saw
Of a ship with a single sail
Standing out from a defecate Earth,
That was left so pure and sweet and still

In the arms of Somed, hunchback fool,
And I alone was left too full
Of storm and mirth.

So I am here, O Sentarg, Jehovah,
And you, O turbulent Bull."

And then there spoke another one,
A bitter man named Diaphon:
"Two things those sons-of-bitches hold good
And they are god and womanhood.
They are right as they always are,
But such a god and such a Frau
They have.
The one they lead down the nave
Of the other's house;
And after that they must behave.
O they are good, and they are mice."

Then Trim addressed this Diaphon:
"Among the tall gone khaki men
This is said of god
And that of womanhood."

"SQUADS RIGHT"

"Cuff 'em boy,
Squads right!
You can say
Your prayers tonight,
But in the Bundocks learn to fight,
Leave praying to the Spik.

God is just
A syllable
In Jesus-Christ-
Goddam-to-hell,
And he's not skipper till Gabriel
Is company Top-kick.

Men deploy
For tropic fight,
Cuff 'em boy,

Squads right!
You will fall like a ton of brick
And your face bleed white."

And then Jehovah gathered close,
For of them all, he alone
Had loved a woman and was worse.

"SQUADS LEFT"

"Cuff 'em bud,
Squads left!
If she could
Love you, she's daft;
And she is now three points abaft
Your starboard beam and miles away.

En los Antilles
Buena Señorita,
Labios brillantes,
Bésame, chiquita!
And whores from France in Panamá
Are all men want for pay.

It's in the blood
A woman's gift,
Cuff 'em bud,
Squads left!
From York to Pedro you've hit the hay,
And loved and laughed."

He ended and Sentarg said "Drink."
And all drank deep,
And all were bold enough to weep,
For good the earth had been, and long
The marching from Shantung
To the Rio Gran'.
Then Sentarg sang his song:

"The gargoyles
Have stopped their grin
At succulent priests
Confessing sin.

For to them the signal
Is finally come,
The hairy dwarf beating
His leopard drum.
Bacchantes, Bacchantes,
Gather south,
Lean on long-and broad-sword,
This is truth:
'The evil star has warmed
The egg of alabaster
That mother hid in the desert
Of ancient disaster.'
Bacchantes, Bacchantes,
Scatter north,
Build your ships to sail strange seas
And sally forth."

He ended and Jehovah said, "Drink."
And all drank deep,
And all were bold enough to weep,
For good the earth had been, and long
The marching from Shantung
To the Rio Gran'.
Then Jehovah sang his song:

"The delicate lady
Is about to unfurl
From her soft body
The seventh and purple veil.
I will take it
For a shroud,
Who heard when the silver morning
Cock crowed.
One unwinking star
Shone on the marble court
While the herald read me
Of strange import:
'. . . Black diaphragms
Extol in measure
The virtue of sleep . . .'
This is the great Khan's pleasure,

The great Khan spat
And the delicate lady revealed
Her soft, soft body
To stricken blue eyes unveiled."

He ended and Diaphon said: "Drink."
And all drank deep,
And all were bold enough to weep,
For good the earth had been, and long
The marching from Shantung
To the Rio Gran'.
But Diaphon
Cut short his song
And to the same tune
Only sang:

"Wise Cheops
Built at Gizeh stone
To rest his head
For centuries on."

He ended and for the Bull Moon
There played the Fierce Musician:

"The wife of the man
In the Moon
Will hang up
New silk curtains soon.
The signs portend,
For dust is gathered thick
In the corner,
And the Sun's lamp shows a smoky wick.
So says the Naked Owl
With wisdom in a dead oak—
After tea she knits, knits
Sweater and sock:
'I saw a wounded child
Walk on purple feet with poison
And sell his packets
By the dozen.'
O, for those who will weep
There is a large brown book

Where any man may sympathy find
If he diligently look."

The songs all fell to earth
Like streams of rain from gentle heaven
That fall on hills, high, unshriven
And full of mirth,
And make them low and even.

Then Trim arose and said, "My friends,
Now we are close to the wilder winds
Of the moon,
And I would damn Corrupter John
With this last from the khaki men.

"SQUADS EAST"

"Cuff 'em lad,
Squads East!
When men are dead
Things matter least,
And like a silver bugle's blast
On bony hills you die.

Three inches steel
In yellow meat,
Break and kill
With bayonet,
On to China in a butt,
Ships are sailing for Shanghai.

To dragon's head,
The dragon's feast,
Cuff 'em all, lad,
Squads east!
And choose what corner of the sky
You want for rest."

The two old seamen on the waterfront
Who saw the ship at high, white noon
Up anchor,
Say that after a sun set
The tall ship melted into the moon.

C. HARTLEY GRATTAN

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

PREVIOUS to Emerson's day the burden of maintaining the intellectual life in New England rested on the ministers. They did the bulk of the studying, thinking and writing. Setting aside a few valuable memoirs and diaries written by laymen, usually those holding political positions, all that is interesting either intrinsically or extrinsically came from them. Furthermore even the writings of laymen were deeply impregnated with religion. Two figures thrust themselves above the average. Increase and Cotton Mather, father and son were both possessors of incredibly active minds and a capacity for study and writing far beyond the usual. Between them they affected the whole current of thought in their spheres of influence. Both of them subserved themselves to a fixed, immutable orthodoxy, and in no sense can one call them seekers or seers. Yet there is small doubt that both of them were sincere men. The latest and best biographer of Increase Mather discovered him to be, in the light of seventeenth century standards, a tolerant minister, a skilful politician whose standard was the general welfare and not the welfare of his church alone, a diplomat governed by the same broad standard, and an educator who sought no more than any convinced denominationalist would have in a similar situation. To be sure he aimed to make Harvard solidly Congregationalist, the stronghold of the Congregationalist faith, and he was justified in doing so because Harvard was founded by the Congregationalists. To understand him we must realize the seriousness with which a convinced Congregationalist of the seventeenth century regarded his religious ideas. To Increase Mather, and equally to Cotton Mather, Congregationalism was not simply

a variety of religious opinion. It was the revealed Truth, and both of them were prepared to do battle for it on every occasion. It inevitably colored their judgment in all other fields. Nevertheless, however much we may concede to them, it is impossible to argue that either of these men was in any sense a scientific thinker. Increase Mather read widely, and mayhap deeply in the scientific literature of the day. Cotton Mather literally risked his skin in defence of vaccination. Both of them were creatures of their time in the matter of witchcraft, and were zealous to blackguard the only man of their community who rose superior to them in the matter and denied the reality of demoniac possession. Scrupulous as one may be in acknowledging the quality and temper of the minds of these two outstanding representatives of early New England intellectual life, it is impossible not to conclude that their position was hostile to the best interests of the human mind, and that when time conspired to destroy their influence it was all to the good.

When Emerson came of age their influence was dead. Yet they stood behind him like reluctant ghosts, or rather they dwelt in his unconscious, and while he could deny them he could not disown them. For like all thinkers Emerson had very definite relations to time and place: to earlier thinkers and to his surroundings. He made clear his attitude toward his religious inheritance. To the end of his life he held his Aunt Mary Moody Emerson in high regard, and it was from her that he received whatever taste of Calvinism that came to him. It will be recalled that Emerson was bred to and preached in the Unitarian church. However much he may have, from his earliest thinking days, contemned the outlook of his ancestors, he never reviled it. "Let us not," he wrote, "be such coxcombs as to dishonor the grey hairs of the Puritans." He discovered in them admirable qualities: solid sense, expansion of the inner man, great reverence for history, and reverence for law. And he felt his debt to them: "I acknowledge the debt of myself . . . to that old religion which in those years [his youth] still dwelt like a Sabbath peace in the country population of New England, which taught privation, self-denial, and sorrow." This is not the attitude of a fanatic for new ideas. Emerson was never a fanatic. He was a calm, cool, judicious thinker.

Surveying the years before he came to maturity, he concluded that "from 1790 to 1820, there was not a book, a speech, a

conversation, or a thought, in the state." In 1820 an intellectual fermentation was started by Webster, Channing and Edward Everett. To the last-named Emerson paid much attention and granted high praise, but to none of them did he in the final analysis owe more than mental stimulation. In his later diaries he calmly recorded Channing's limitations, Everett's sad and contemptible course in life, and Webster's defection from the path of honorable men; his judgment of the last culminating in the terrible denunciation: "every drop of his blood has eyes that look downward." Massachusetts and America were still, in 1820, devoted to the "grocery business." There was no great enthusiasm for literature or high thinking. In 1833 Emerson noted in his Journal that "In this world, if a man sits down to think, he is immediately asked if he has the headache." The cause of this situation is that which eternally recurs in discussions of American intellectual life: the emphasis of society was on commerce. Seeking to explain to himself the lack of significant literature in America, Emerson hit upon three reasons: (a) our devotion to property, (b) the over-influence of Europe, and (c) the fact that such art as had come was not called out by the necessity of the people—it had no roots. It was in an environment where these conclusions were valid that he worked. The people of his day little felt the necessity of art, if indeed they ever do at any time. Europe still stifled what genius was developed. And property laid an iron hand upon the land. Yet its domination was not absolute, for Emerson could not have thrived had it been. He noted that after long years devoted to commerce New England was in intellectual ferment. There was not as yet sufficient social surplus to develop a leisure class, but men did have sufficient leisure to read books. The commercial success of Carlyle in this country eloquently testifies to that fact. The intellectual groping also found expression in an institution which made it possible for Emerson to live without tying himself to any specific occupation—the lyceum. Without this "lecture system" it is doubtful if he could have survived. There was, however, no intellectual class. In 1838, two years after printing his first book, Emerson complained that "For want of a learned class here, I am in ignorance where valuable facts and theories are found until years after their promulgation." The moneyed man too continued suspicious of unconventional thinking: "The view taken of Transcendentalism in State Street is that it threatens

to invalidate contracts." The world was still up to its old tricks:

"People hold to you as long as you please yourself with the Ideal life only as a pretty dream and concede a resistless force to the limitations of the same, to structure, or organization, and to society. But as quickly as you profess your unlimited allegiance to the first, so far as to be no longer contented with doing the best you can in the circumstances, but demand that these mountain circumstances should skip like rams and the little hills like lambs before the presence of the Soul, then they distrust your wisdom and defy your resolutions."

Fortunately Emerson's philosophy made him peculiarly resistive of outside pressure. "Man contains all that is needful to his government within himself," he wrote in 1833. But no man can declare and maintain his intellectual independence. All men are borrowers and leaners. Emerson chose to lean most heavily on Plato.[1] Emerson's thought also had roots in New England; it was not entirely exotic. His conscious relation to Calvinism has been noted, and it found expression chiefly in his austere rectitude in personal and intellectual conduct. He was also very much indebted to Unitarianism. It is not wise to assume that Emerson was a thorough Unitarian at any time just because he happened to be a minister of that persuasion. He himself confessed that had he been thoroughly examined he would never have been admitted to preach; and when he left his church he left, as has been remarked, "with a yawn." His entrance into the ministry appears to have been more a matter of accident than of conscious wish. His intellectual evolution had not reached such a point at the time that he could yet chart his course with precision, and the church was not disagreeable to him. He came, in time, to speak of the "pale negations of Boston Uni-

[1] Woodbridge Riley, *American Thought from Puritanism to Pragmatism,* Chap. VI, Sec. 2. This question of Emerson's origins has been much debated. I follow Riley; why will be clearly seen in the section, "Emerson and Science." H. C. Goddard in *Studies in New England Transcendentalism* (1908) recognized that "the whole impression left by his various statements is that Emerson came as near really *studying* Plato as any writer he ever read." For a probably over-exuberant statement of Emerson's debts to France see Regis Michaud: *Mystiques et Realistes Anglo-Saxon,* the essay "Emerson and Montaigne." His debt to German thinkers, from whom he is conventionally derived, seems remote and secondary, through Coleridge, chiefly, and Carlyle. His debt to any thinker is always difficult to state. He took hints from many, but subserved himself to none.

tarianism." "Pale negations"—that is a significant phrase. The chief significance of Unitarianism to him at last was the freedom it made possible, and the emphasis it placed upon the goodness of human nature. It had negated Calvinism, and so cleared the air for further change. Emerson, and many others, could find no permanent satisfaction in mere negation, or in anything pale. They sought something positive and fervent, and it was Transcendentalism. But Emerson did carry with him the central peculiarity of Unitarianism. "The chief point of attack," an historian has written, "was not in the field of theology proper, as the name 'Unitarian' would seem to imply, but in that of anthropology. It was the Calvinistic view of human nature which provoked Channing's bitter arraignment of traditional dogmas. Only later was attention shifted to the Trinity." [1] "Unitarianism," says William Fenn, "was at heart a human protest against a lopsided doctrine of divine sovereignty which robbed man of real freedom and worth." [2] Obviously, then, Emerson simply carried to a more radical conclusion this emphasis upon the freedom and worth of man. His central doctrine, he emphasized again and again, was "the infinitude of the private man." His central doctrine was self-reliance and in consequence his central trait was iconoclasm.

2. EMERSON AND SCIENCE

Philosophically Emerson stands in a tradition one of whose bases is antipathy to science in so far as it pretends to be the sole method of arriving at truth. Emerson was not hostile to science, but his position toward it was such that he to a large extent negated the importance of science; he was beyond science. Yet this must not be interpreted as it would be if asserted in connection with a conventional Christian. It is perfectly obvious that, however philosophy may fluctuate, science will continue to function, and it seems equally obvious that any future philosophic formulation should include science in its synthesis. The position which Emerson, in common with others of his day, maintained, has become more and more untenable, for the progress of science has in every way tended to discredit transcendental

[1] J. W. Platner, Essay on Congregationalism in *The Religious History of New England.*

[2] William Fenn, Essay on Unitarianism in *The Religious History of New England.*

thought. This, then, is the weakest aspect of Emerson's position, and the discrediting of him in this connection has tended to discredit him in all connections, which is patently an injustice. There is much of Emerson which remains untouched by time, and which should serve to make him permanently important—chiefly his doctrine of self-reliance. Adequately to understand all aspects of his thinking it is necessary, however, to deal in detail with his attitude toward science. Then, recognizing that much of his positive doctrine is discredited, effort may be made to demonstrate that this does not presage his extinction.

His psychology must first be firmly grasped. Emerson believed that "the intellectual power is not the gift but the presence of God." God permeates all things, and all things are related to him. He is the unity behind all diversity. The recognition of this unity existing behind, or the Over-soul, is the highest of all wisdom. In addition God's universal presence makes all things sacred. The purpose of the intellect as applied to Nature is not to pile up facts in the hope of arriving thereby at a law, but to discover in Nature revelations of God which will be known by their correspondence with the laws of the mind. He may be equally discovered in all things; he is in small as well as large things; in microcosm as well as macrocosm; consequently "who telleth one of my meanings is master of all I am." The intellect, then, profits in the study of nature by revealing unto itself the presence of God which is in itself. All is circular, and the circle here is God into man, God into nature, and man through nature to God. The purpose of science, then, is not to understand the way in which nature operates, not to assemble as many concrete, verifiable facts as possible, but to discover Law, or Idea. And the law is not desirable because we thereby add to our comprehension of nature, but because it is further revelation of the presence of God. Once the law is discovered, the facts become worthless and may be cast away and forgotten. "The physical sciences are only well studied when they are explored for ideas. The moment the law is attained, i.e., the Idea, the memory disburthens herself of her centuries of observation." The law then assumes paramount importance because in it we have a clear bit of evidence of God. Science, consequently, becomes a mere convenient means for the mind to discover God, for the laws receive their validity by corresponding with the laws of mind, or in other words God in the mind recognizes God in nature. Science is a

method for bringing the mind to a recognition of God in itself. This accounts for "the sublime delight with which the intellect contemplates each new analogy appearing between the laws of Nature and its own law of life." But this relation of the laws of nature to the laws of the mind is not direct. The mechanism or method by which the relation is revealed is the doctrine of correspondences. For nature is not God but a sign given by God. Nature is the language of God. This is given validity by a syllogism: (a) words are signs of natural facts, (b) particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts, and (c) nature is the symbol of spirit. It is of supreme importance that one be able to read the spiritual meaning from the natural text. "The poet alone knows astronomy, chemistry, vegetation, and animation, for he does not stop at these facts but employs them as signs." This is directly related to Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences. Emerson regarded Swedenborg as the greatest practitioner of the art of detecting correspondences. It is extremely interesting to note that Swedenborg was a scientist (particularly a metallurgist) of very considerable skill and significance.[1] Two points remain: (a) Why is the mind forced to search so laboriously for the laws of its own being when God permeates it as well as nature? and (b) Why are laws continually being revealed—that is, why is science progressive? "The world," wrote Emerson, "proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man . . . But it differs from the body in one important respect. It is not, like that, now subjected to the human will. It is, therefore, the present exposition of the divine mind." This is tantamount to saying that the will is what keeps men from being divine, and it is not surprising that the doctrine is given no emphasis. Man, however, is in every way superior to nature, in spite of this disability. The second point is as quickly answered: ". . . if any phenomenon remains brute and dark, it is because the corresponding faculty in the observer is not yet active." The observation serves to emphasize again the centrality of the mind. The end of science is not to understand Nature but to reveal the laws of mind, or in other words it is a way of discovering God to man, because God and intellect are one. The justice, then, of saying that Emerson was beyond science is evident. He was not hostile to science, but his attitude was inimical to it, as will shortly appear.

[1] Regis Michaud, *Autour d'Emerson*, the essay "Swedenborg et Emerson."

Emerson's first course of lectures after leaving the ministry was concerned with science, and all during his lifetime he continued to read the scientific books of the day. He once set down the eras of human progress thus:

(a) When the 47th proposition of Euclid was demonstrated.
(b) When Thales measured the pyramid by its shadow.
(c) When Kepler announced his three laws.
(d) Dalton's atomic theory.
(e) When the Doctrine of Idealism was first discovered.
(f) The Doctrine of Correspondences.

This list was not made by a man hostile to science, but the order reveals his bias. "Idealism," he once noted, "is a hypothesis to account for nature by other principles than those of carpentry and chemistry," or, in other words, than those of science. But science has its place, for of the three problems of nature put to the mind: what is matter? whence is it? and whereto? the first only "the ideal theory answers. Idealism saith: matter is a phenomenon, not a substance." It is not a thing, but a sign. It is the language of spirit. And it is not self-explanatory. Science steps in to explain with the help of the doctrine of correspondence. This attitude tended to make Emerson impatient with science, which he often denounced as a fact-grubbing, materialistic affair. But his impatience was usually stayed by his remembrance that God was equally in all things. It was not possible to discover correspondences for the multiplicity of facts, and in his passion for Ideas, Emerson often failed to grasp the significance of facts. For Ideas the process was easier. "The law (idea) dissolves the fact and holds it fluid." This failure in comprehension is illustrated nicely by his attitude toward Sir Francis Bacon:

"His rules or reform or influence is nothing . . . when a man comes who distrusts theory, discredits analogy, believes men must go on for ages accumulating facts before any sane generalizations can be attempted, it is certain that such an one has no poetic power, and that nothing original or beautiful will be produced by him."

On the other hand his quick and sympathetic recognition of the worth of ideas made him receptive, and potentially receptive of the generalizations of modern science. His profound conviction

of the inner identity of all things made it easy for him to accept the implications of science in so far as they changed markedly the status of man in the universe. One of his reiterated complaints against the contemporary science was that it had no relation to man. "All our science lacks a human side." This leads to the speculation that he would have eagerly welcomed the social sciences, and have readily adopted their findings and conclusions. It is the human implication that Emerson seizes upon every time. "Astrology," he remarked, "interested us, for it ties man to the system." This bias proceeded partly from the fact that he believed the laws of nature and of morals were subtly identical, but more from his engrossing interest in man. Furthermore, he foreshadowed the present day fear that science was triumphing over man because of this very dehumanization. This is reflected in his famous observation that "things are in the saddle and ride mankind." Always Emerson's central protest was on behalf of the individual man. He played many songs to the tune of self-reliance. He returned again and again to the idea that "the most important effect of Copernicus was not on astronomy, but on Calvinism—tapping the conceit of man; and geology introduces new measures of antiquity." The last clause is interesting, for he heatedly denounced the contemporary geologists who ran hither and thither naming things merely, and having no Columbus among them. His eager reception of any promising novelty is attested by his admiration for *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844), by Robert Chambers. This book summarized the hints then available pointing toward the evolutionary hypothesis. "Everything," Emerson wrote in his Journal, "in this *Vestiges of Creation* is good except the theology, which is civil, timid, and dull. These things which the author so well collates ought to be known only to few, and those masters and poets."

Undoubtedly Darwinism too would have been reserved to "masters and poets" had it swum into his ken in an impressive manner. But there is no evidence that it did. Emerson failed to recognize Darwin as a Columbus of science. He read Darwin, but he was not excited either to enthusiasm or anger; he was unimpressed, probably not catching the entire import of the newly stated doctrine. "Darwin's *Origin of Species*," he noted in 1873, "was published in 1859, but Stallo, in 1849 writes, 'animals are but foetal forms of man.' " As early as 1838 he was ask-

ing "When and what is the genesis of man?" In 1848 he noted in his Journal, "There are a great many talents in a drop of blood, and a little suppression or retardation would unchain or let out what horns and fangs, what manes and hoofs, what fins and flippers, what feathers and coats of mail, which are now subdued and refined into smooth and shapely limbs, into soft white skin, into the simple, erect, loyal form of man." And at another time he noted:

". . . but men and women are only half human. Every animal of the barnyard, the field, and the forest, of the earth and of the waters that are under the earth, has contrived to get a footing and to leave the print of its features and form in some one or other of these upright, heaven-facing speakers."

The point is, however, that Emerson's attitude, universally accepted, would have defeated science in the beginning, for it forced on science a presupposed conclusion for all its efforts. There could be under its domination no disinterested pursuit of truth. In fact the very thing which science sets itself to investigate—matter—was in the Emersonian scheme of things discredited, as is illustrated again by his complaint against the physicians, that "they believe only in the existence of matter, not as an appearance, but as a substance." Then, too, there are no objective criteria whereby the Ideas or Laws discovered can be labeled revelations of God, or delusions of sense. The only possible result is a hopeless confusion, and a purely arbitrary, quixotic acceptance of the conclusions of science. Finally it is a manifest impossibility to apprehend nature in Ideas, without reference to the multiplicity of facts. The utilization of the resultant ideas may be the only interest of a philosopher in science, but his interest cannot determine the methodological procedure of science, as Emerson seemed to think. The truth is that he did not understand or value science sufficiently accurately to assess its significance. "We must," he wrote, "hold science as mere convenience, expectant of a higher method from the mind itself."

Nevertheless there is abundant evidence that Emerson would have been widely sympathetic to the conclusions of modern science. He makes a clear statement of modern trends in these passages written in 1836:

"The lover seeks in marriage his private felicity and perfection, with no prospective end; and nature hides in his happiness her own end, namely, progeny, or the perpetuity of the race.

. . . and I am persuaded that by and by we shall find them [temperaments] in the chemical element, that excess of oxygen makes the sinner, and of hydrogen the saint."

He clearly recognized, too, the legitimacy of investigating many phenomena then unexplained, and thought inexplicable, such as "language, sleep, madness, dreams, beasts and sex." Emerson would have given more attention to Freud's psychology than to Watson's. And he concluded that "man is reconciled to his losses through the progress of science when he sees the grandeur of his gains."

Obviously Emerson's attitude cannot be interpreted as hostile to science, if hostility means active antagonism, but it should be equally obvious that his attitude was not in harmony with the best interests of science, and that science has discredited the bases of it. Even though beyond science, in a sense, he did not escape destruction at its hands. His attitude was more obstructive than helpful. On the other hand he was much more sensible and discerning than the romantics with whom he is closely related. Carlyle, for example, was actively opposed to science. This peculiarity of Emerson is attributable, I believe to the influence of Plato, from whom indeed his whole attitude seems derivative. In Plato the emphasis is on the discovery or apprehension of Forms. In Emerson the emphasis is on the discovery of Ideas, or Laws. In neither is there much emphasis given to the close investigations of nature as a way to these Forms, Laws, or Ideas. Emerson's attitude, then, corresponds to Plato's. When the emphasis is shifted to a close scrutiny of facts, as in Aristotle, Emerson is immediately indifferent. "Plutarch," he wrote, "I esteem a greater benefactor than Aristotle."

3. EMERSON AS ICONOCLAST

"I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred, none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker, with no past at my back." Thus spoke Emerson the iconoclast, who in breaking images carried no hammer. He destroyed by asserting. He

was by nature a believer: "all my opinions, affections, whimsies, are tinged with belief—incline to that side." But he did not believe in the common manner, the ordinary fashion, his believing was no mouthing of platitudes, no reiteration of mouldy "wisdom." The coins he passed were not worn smooth by many and soiled hands. His wisdom was grounded firmly in self-reliance, and he gave no ear to the masses and the majority.

Self-reliance was the simple, central doctrine that Emerson preached. His doctrine was "the infinitude of the private man." His supreme essay is that on "Self-Reliance"; his supreme book is *The Conduct of Life.* Self-reliance is the obvious essential to a civilized life. But it is not mere self-assertion, bumptiousness, ignorant whimsicality, vanity, or egoism. To be fruitful it requires that one be severely disciplined to distinguish between perception and notion. Self-reliance is deeply dependent upon a disciplined and cultured mind. It is an interior state of being, more than an outward mode of conduct. To Emerson, of course, the great necessity was to be convinced that the ideas which came were in harmony with the Spirit, or God, which was within the mind. The great compulsion laid upon the self-reliant man was to distinguish intuitive perception of the truth from mere notion.

Society is in an eternal conspiracy against the self-reliant man. No one knew that better than Emerson. "Society," he wrote, "is in a conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. . . . The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion . . ." It is necessary, then, to affront the masses, to condemn their values, to escape their regimen. He strove in his doctrine to provide a protection against the tyranny of society. "Leave this hypocritical prating about the masses," he wrote with great vehemence. "Masses are rude, lame, unmade, pernicious in their demands and influence, and need not to be flattered but to be schooled. I wish not to concede anything to them, but to tame, drill, divide, and break them up, and draw individuals out of them. The worst of charity is, that the lives you are asked to preserve are not worth preserving. Masses! the calamity is the masses." The self-reliant man is not a democrat but an aristocrat, thundering defiance at all masses whatsoever, and when he is with his fellows he is not with a majority, but with an embattled minority. It is by the minority that a country should be judged.

The masses are of use only as a source of individuals. "I wish . . . to draw individuals out of them." [1] The force which will distinguish the individuals from the masses will be "power." "Life," said Emerson, "is a search after power. . . . All power is of one kind, a sharing of the nature of the world. The mind that is parallel with the laws of nature will be in the current of events, and strong with their strength." [2] The will expresses itself in power. All power, then, is admirable, and Emerson clearly saw that success hinged upon a certain plus of power. He saw clearly, too, that all power was an expression of the same fundamentally valuable urge—that the drive behind the political boss was the same as the drive behind Michelangelo. The great necessity is to sublimate it into socially desirable channels through the discipline of culture.

"Culture is the suggestion from certain best thoughts, that a man has a range of affinities, through which he can modulate the violence of any master-tones that have a droning preponderance in his scale, and succour him against himself. Culture redresses his balance, puts him among his equals and superiors, revives the delicious sense of sympathy, and warns him of the dangers of solitude and repulsion. . . . The antidotes against this organic egotism are, the range and variety of attractions, as gained

[1] Cf. the poem, "Alphonso of Castile," the lines:

Earth, crowded, cries, "Too many men!"
My counsel is, kill nine in ten,
And bestow the shares of all
On the remnant decimal.
Add their nine lives to this cat;
Stuff their nine brains in one hat;
Make his frame and forces square
With the labors he must dare;
Thatch his flesh, and even his years
With the marble which he rears.
There, growing slowly old at ease
No faster than his planted trees,
He may, by warrant of his age,
In schemes of broader scope engage.
So shall ye have a man of the sphere
Fit to grace the solar year.

[2] This suggests Nietzsche. See, Regis Michaud, *Autour d'Emerson*, the essay "Emerson and Nietzsche," where the parallels are worked out in detail. His closing words are: "Si Nietzsche avait developpé la partie positive de son oeuvre, il est permis de croire, d'après ce qui precède, que les aphorismes de Zarathoustra se seraient rapprochés encore plus de ceux d'Osman." (Osman; a fictitious character to whom Emerson sometimes attributed his own opinions.) Beethoven, and indeed almost all worth-while thinkers, have arrived at this conclusion, for he wrote (in 1798) to his friend von Zmeskall "*Power* is the morality of men who stand out from the rest, and it is also mine."

by acquaintance with the world, with men of merit, with classes of society, with travel, with eminent persons, and with the high resources of philosophy, art, and religion: books, travel, society and solitude."

Power, then, is the basis of self-reliance. Power is rare; self-reliance is rare; there is no danger in this forthright preaching. There is no danger of having a superfluity of self-reliant men, for even the best of men are but intermittently at the height of their development. The masses of men will always be docile slaves. Mankind divides itself eternally into two classes, inventive and uninventive, creative and accepting, benefactors and malefactors. And always "The second class is vast, the first a handful." For:

"The key to the age may be this, or that, or the other, as the young orators describe;—the key to all ages is Imbecility; imbecility in the vast majority of men, at all times, and, even in heroes, in all but certain eminent moments; victims of gravity, custom, and fear. This gives force to the strong—that the multitude have no habit of self-reliance or original action."

The mass must not be heeded. "The mass are animal, in pupilage, and near chimpanzee—the quadruped interest is very prone to prevail."

The rejection of the values of the masses implies some mechanism for the creation of values for the emancipated man. For Emerson, the transvaluator of all values was the mind. This centrality of mind has been emphasized in the discussion, "Emerson and Science." It is the intellect which annuls the destructive power of Fate. "So far as a man thinks he is free." Emerson's method, however, was not to denounce, to destroy, but assert and create. He maintained the assertive attitude, deriving his conclusions from intuitive perceptions. Therefore the full force of his iconoclasm is not easily measured, and a reading of his essays must be accompanied by a lively sense of conventional values. One must be constantly comparing Emerson's utterances with the common belief. It is then that he appears most destructive, most astonishing, for he is "spiced throughout with rebellion," and it is then that we realize that he has destroyed the idols by

making them dead, lifeless, and ridiculous, and not by pounding them noisily to dust.

The self-reliant man, to sum up, is a man of power, of culture, an aristocrat, a master. He stands in isolation from the masses, but "the isolation must not be mechanical, but spiritual, that is must be elevation." We can perhaps cast light on the significance of Emerson's attitude by turning to the case of Longfellow. In considering Longfellow let us first bring to mind Carlyle's observation in his "Essay on Burns": "Has life no meanings for him which another cannot equally decipher? then he is no poet . . ." Longfellow was born into a relatively simple environment and remained in one all his life. Its basic tone and direction was, as subsequent history disclosed, not æsthetic but commercial. All his life, too, he lived apart spiritually, however much or little he may have mingled physically with his contemporaries. Yet on close scrutiny this spiritual alienation is very superficial. He was alien to commercial and industrial ideals and activities. He did not feel the urge that made pioneers. But he voyaged into strange intellectual fields and brought back fascinating and glittering cargoes to beguile his fellow countrymen. Furthermore, like most merchants his foreign ventures did not touch his mind or personality. He voyaged in strange places like a sightseer, picking up interesting mementoes and brought them back to rest somewhat incongruously on his shelves. In spite of his many voyages into far countries of the mind, he remained the same Longfellow at bottom. There was nothing to distinguish his emotional reactions from those of a Boston merchant, or indeed from those of a Boston mechanic. It was that unaffected basis of emotional universality that gave such immense popular appeal to his poetry. He never achieved that intellectual independence, intellectual arrogance if you will, that distinguished Emerson's self-reliant man.

Longfellow's father had cast off the shackles of Calvinism, releasing his son from the toughening, if restrictive, effects of that doctrine, and since neither of them was at all influenced by Transcendentalism or any other philosophy that would have given verve to their minds, placidity was characteristic of their intelligence and not resilience. In morals Longfellow remained a Puritan. His profit was his release to æsthetic activity, for Puritanism was not strong enough in him to defeat his æsthetic urge. At home he was thrown more into the society of his mother than of

his father, and she had a circumscribing effect upon his intellectual life. At college he acquired a love of learning, but it was the love that finds expression in the knowing of many things, rather than the love which results in penetrative and creative understanding. The fundamentals of Longfellow's mind were as untouched by learning as though he had never studied a line. All his adult life he spent within college gates, and even there he felt uncomfortable, preferring the shelter of his library where he could look into his books and write. That his books meant nothing fundamental to him is perfectly illustrated by his having translated Dante. There is something delightfully incongruous about the benignant, mild, and gentle Longfellow spending days and weeks over the "austere, sarcastic, pregnant-witted, silent acrid man." Was not Dante a "howling dervish of song" so distasteful to Longfellow? Longfellow's learning undid him to a considerable extent, for the ideas about poetry he drew from it guided his steps into paths he had not the strength adequately to pursue. Coupled with the simplicity of his mind it ruined him as a poet.

The conventional intellectualist position toward Longfellow was long ago summed by Margaret Fuller:

"Longfellow is artificial and imitative. He borrows incessantly, and mixes what he borrows, so that it does not appear to the best advantage. He is very faulty in using broken or mixed metaphors. The ethical part of his writing has a hollow and second-hand sound. He has, however, elegance, a love of the beautiful, and a fancy for what is large and manly if not a full sympathy. His verse breathes at times much sweetness; and, if not allowed to supersede what is better, may promote a taste for good poetry. Though imitative, he is not mechanical."

And Walt Whitman complemented and supplemented her when he wrote that Longfellow was the "universal poet of women and young people." Indeed it is now apparent that Longfellow has lost his exaggerated position in the history of American literature and has assumed a large place in the history of American taste. Longfellow, like Lowell to a lesser degree, introduced the Americans of his day to the notion of poetry and foreign culture. Foreign culture was at once his contribution to his country's intellectual life, and his own place of escape from the anti-æsthetic environment in which he found himself. As Mar-

garet Fuller pointed out, he is useful for promoting a taste for good poetry. His verse has little experiential value, however. Longfellow was fitted to promote taste because while his perceptions of life were no deeper and no subtler than those of the crowd, his sense of form was highly developed. But the cause of his failure as a poet is summed up in the words "his perceptions of life were no deeper and no subtler than those of the crowd." Revolt from the crowd is a necessity to those who would be truly great. They must have boundless freedom.

Freedom is the last right conceded to their fellows by men, for freedom is destructive of unity, of harmony, of herd thinking. Once a man achieves freedom he is as dangerous to the herd as though he cultivated a permanent berserker rage, and ran always amuck. The ultimate test of freedom is to desire it as ardently for others as for oneself. This implies a latitudinarianism which few men achieve. The free man signs no pledges, accepts exterior restraints with no grace at all, decries discipline from without and vaunts discipline from within. Emerson had a large sympathy for reform and reformers, but he had nothing but disapproval for reform through exterior pressure. He rejected all crusades for restrictive laws, for reforms *en masse*, all Brook Farms and Fruitlands. He wanted "freedom boundless." "I will not pledge myself not to drink wine, not to drink ink, not to lie, and not to commit adultery, lest I hanker to-morrow to these very things by reason of having tied my hands to-day." Naturally, or perhaps to his higher credit, wonderfully, he carried his urge to freedom so far as to reject disciples. He wanted none of them. A disciple of Emerson is a contradiction of his aim and object. He wanted to set men on their own bottoms, to free them to be men; and not slaves. Men should not be disciples but masters, and should study other men's works to increase their own power only. Only unbalanced minds subordinate themselves ". . . so that the walls of the system blend to their eye in the remote horizon with the walls of the universe; the luminaries of heaven seem to hang on the arch their master built." Emerson wanted no gawkers mistaking his arch for the high heavens. He announced his principles, not with the aim of converting others. His ideas

". . . did not go from any wish in me to bring men to me, but to themselves. I delight in driving them from me. What

could I do, if they came to me? They would interrupt and encumber me. This is my boast, that I have no school of followers. I should account it a measure of the impurity of my insight, if it did not create independence."

This comprehensive desire for freedom extended into all fields. Personally Emerson was a Puritan. He was a calm, cool, self-contained person, not indulgent of the senses, finding it difficult, even, to expand in private conversation. ("Let us learn to live coarsely, dress plainly, and lie hard.") But his austerity was not his ideal for all. His tolerance comprehended even those practices which he regarded as vices. This latitudinarianism was brought about by a wide extension of his doctrine of compensation. He held that the universe was in eternal balance, that for every vice there was an equal and corresponding virtue (to speak of morals only). The ecstasies of devotion are compensated in the exasperations of debauchery. "In morals, wild liberty breeds iron conscience." The world will always balance, and virtue will always come, even if only from a surfeit of vice.

Surely we have here a "rattler." Surely every principle here is a "war note." Surely this man was "fighting a campaign." In this advocacy of firm self-reliance, and this resulting comprehensive freedom, is the secret of Emerson. Here in this expression of plus-ness is the basis of his assurance that "Life is an ecstasy." When Nietzsche read him and recommended him to his friends, one Dionysian saluted another. In planting this doctrine at the center of his system, he assured, consciously or unconsciously, its destruction. But he viewed the prospect with equanimity. He desired no disciples. He knew, too, that many of his doctrines could be looked upon as valuable only as indications of the subtle bait which caught his intellect. "The intellectual man requires a fine bait; the sots are easily amused. But everybody is drugged by his own frenzy, and the pageant marches at all hours, with music and banner and badge." This recognition of the power and necessity of illusion is the culmination of his culminating book—*The Conduct of Life.* The essay "Illusions" pales a rose-and-dish-water book like Anatole France's *Garden of Epicurus* into insignificance. It is a high flight of a mind so powerful as not to shrink from announcing its own destruction, finding in illusion one of its chiefest strengths.

4. EMERSON AS POET

From his earliest days Emerson believed himself a poet. As a boy he entertained himself with rhymes, but he never thought that rhymes were poetry. It is in fact the high ideal of poetry that Emerson came to hold that makes his poems so great and so difficult to appreciate. It is necessary beyond everything else to cast away the idea that good poetry consists of a maximum of pleasing sound and a minimum of sense. At the same time one must admit that the essence of poetry is emotional experience. Such experience in a complex personality will inevitably result in complex poetry. And when, as in Emerson, the situation is further complicated by the poet's having a mind trained to apprehend and discuss ideas rather than emotions, and a personality developed along anti-emotional lines, the wonder is, not that the poetry is fragmentary and jagged, but that there is any poetry at all. Emerson's difficulties in situations where emotions are necessarily essential are notorious. His letter to Margaret Fuller in which he explained why he could not, as we say, "let himself go" in conversation with her is pathetic and revealing. Intimate friendship is an emotional matter, and how hard it is to rise to the situation can only be appreciated by an essentionally self-contained, unemotional person. Miss Fuller suspected him of standing her off. It is not necessary to cite his own disclaimer of any such intention, for the same difficulty was experienced by Henry James, Sr., and Bronson Alcott, to name but two, both of whom Emerson enjoyed. Furthermore, Emerson was reserved even in his intimate family. Emerson's friendships were sustained by the charm of his personal presence, not by the power of his mind in conversation, nor by emotional openness. When he wrote his poetry the same difficulties presented themselves. Only rarely could he completely express himself. He felt vastly more than his reticence would allow him to express. He stuttered and stammered—but it was poetry he stuttered and stammered. A further complication was his greater facility with ideas, making his poetry "rhymed metaphysics." He might well have echoed the letter of Schiller to Goethe, written in 1794, with the reservation that the situation was permanent with him:

"This it is which gave me, especially in early years, a certain awkwardness both in speculation and in the realm of poetry;

as a rule the poet would overtake me when I would be the philosopher, and the philosophic spirit hold me when I would be the poet. Even yet it happens often enough that imaginative power disturbs my abstraction, and cold reasoning my poetry."

It cannot be denied, however, that Emerson was always a poet. Writing to Mary Moody Emerson from Washington D. C., in 1827, he speculated that he might be a poet. Eight years later he avowed himself a poet, and in 1839 he wrote ". . . when I walk in Walden wood . . . I seem to myself an inexhaustible poet, if only I could once break through the fence of silence, and vent myself in adequate rhyme." But the fence of silence was never successfully broken through. He remained always a fettered poet. Consequently by far the most interesting utterance, one which states his difficulties and the nature of the poetry he did succeed in writing, is that made in 1862:

"I am a bard least of bards. I cannot, like them, make lofty arguments in stately, continuous verse, constraining the rocks, trees, animals, and the periodic stars to say my thoughts—for that is the gift of great poets; but I am a bard because I stand near them, and apprehend all they utter, and with pure joy hear that which I also would say, and, moreover, I speak interruptedly words and half stanzas which have the like scope and aim: *What I cannot declare, yet cannot all withhold.*"

Emerson did not lack the skill to fill out partial lines with deliberately invented expedients, but his conception of poetry forbade him to do so. He observed, "we lose ever and anon a word, or a verse, and substitute something of our own, and thus mis-write the poem." It is a grave error to say that he wrote jaggedly because of ignorance. He wrote jaggedly because his poetry came to him jaggedly. He would not fill in the gaps with putty, for he believed that "poetry must be as new as foam and as old as the rock," and he believed that it could only come from a fundamental inspiration. Inspiration to him was a deeply felt emotional experience, and not the silly affair cheap-jack poets talk about. Poetry was produced when this profoundly shaking experience overflowed into words. Naturally it could not be simulated. "A poem," he wrote, "is made up of thoughts each of which filled the sky of the poet in its turn." When inspiration came Emerson was "its reverent slave."

Emerson's poetry, like his prose, asserts. As a poet he legitimately and frequently sings about the more intangible phases of his philosophy. Particularly does he emphasize nature, as the reconciling symbol or principle. He regarded the poet as a maker of symbols, but, unlike the mystic, the poet seeks for symbols which will be at once particular and universal. The symbolic use of a fact, he thought, should heighten the significance of the fact, should increase the subtlety of its nuances, should cause it to dart new lights into the darkness of the universe. Any fact so used immediately loses the sordid or gross associations which it may have acquired in its everyday usage. In poetry there can be no grossness, for the poet has, in using gross facts, raised them to a higher plane. To him they are not so much facts as signs. Consequently to a true poet there are no "poetic words," no "poetic subjects." He believed that all things are actually or potentially poetry, and his power as a poet may in part be measured by his capacity to discover the poetry of the previously unpoetic. Emerson, with Wordsworth, believed that industrialism would eventually find its poet. The true poet is an announcer, a discoverer, a critic of life. His appetite for facts is only limited by his capacity to digest them. It is the lesser man, who has "poetical talents," the poetaster, who seeks to confine the field of poetry to conventional limits. "Talent may frolic and juggle; genius realizes and adds." The fact is that in his essays "The Poet" and "Art," Emerson laid down what is probably the most comprehensive and most valid theory of literature ever put forth by an American thinker. In them he prepared the way for Walt Whitman, whom of course he immediately recognized as fulfilling the ideal, and he provided the dynamite to blast most of the poetic reputations in American literature.

He was so acutely conscious of his ideal that he was hampered in his practice. It is altogether probable that he was more critical of his poetry than any of his critics have been, and one can well imagine his horror if he knew that his juvenile rhymes are now printed with his best work. There is no better illustration of his scrupulousness than the fragments of his long poem "The Poet." There he gave us magnificent hewn blocks never now to be set up into a building. Emerson waited patiently for the time when he could place one upon another, but it never came, and he chose not to fake a superstructure. Any figure of speech that one may hit upon must emphasize the potentiality of his verse as well as

the unfinished nature of it. It is curious to note that the very poets who have most scathingly denounced Emerson are the very ones most thoroughly disposed of by Emerson's theory. They, too frequently, erected slick and smooth wooden houses now fallen into decay, while Emerson's unfinished castles weather well.

Setting aside the form in which it is cast, it is difficult to discover a qualitiy in Emerson's poetry that is not high. Probably no American poet more immediately translated his actual experience into imagery. In doing so he was confirming and illustrating his theory, of course, and his success demonstrated the validity of the theory. Examples are innumerable. In his Journal for March 15, 1845, he wrote: "How gladly, after three months sliding on snow, our feet find the ground again," which becomes in "May-Day":

> "The feet that slid so long on sleet
> Are glad to feel the ground."

This concreteness of imagery gives an actuality to his poetry that is quite exceptional. Ingenuity may be lacking, but it is more than compensated by actuality. "Actuality" encompasses the outstanding merit of Emerson's poetry, and also the quality that he sought in poetry. In his own work it hammers on the mind. Partly this is due to compression, a further outstanding quality of the poetry. The compression is frequently so great that one is tempted to generalize that Emerson's poetry should be read only after a thorough grounding in his prose writing. Stammering is also conducive to compression. It was, further, a fundamental trait of Emerson's mind. The complaint frequently raised, that his prose is fragmentary, is an uncomprehending recognition of this fact. Once these compressed ideas get into the mind and are soaked in the juice of Emerson's thought, they expand, explode, and reverberate.

Probably the greatest example of compression is the poem "Brahma," also the object of much ridicule.[1] The legend, care-

[1] The funniest parody of it is that by Andrew Lang:

> "If the wild bowler thinks he bowls,
> Or if the batsman thinks he's bowled,
> They know not, poor misguided souls,
> They, too, shall perish unconsoled.
> I am the batsman and the bat,
> I am the bowler and the ball,
> The umpire, the pavilion cat,
> The roller, pitch, and stump, and all."

fully fostered, that this poem is an absurdity foisted on the public by a humorless man, is nonsense. No poem is more deeply rooted in Emerson's mind. Those who find it beyond them have never understood Emerson. In other poems he touched upon the central idea. Consider this passage from "Woodnotes" II:

"Alike to him the better, the worse—
The glowing angel, the outcast corpse.
Thou metest him by centuries,
And lo! he passes like the breeze;
Thou seek'st in globe and galaxy,
He hides in pure transparency;
Thou askest in fountains and in fires,
He is the essence that inquires.
He is the axis of the star;
He is the heart of every creature;
He is the meaning of each feature;
And his mind is the sky.
Than all it holds more deep, more high."

And these verses, entitled "The Informing Spirit":

"There is no great and no small
To the Soul that maketh all:
And where it cometh, all things are;
And it cometh everywhere.

"I am owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and the solar year,
Of Caesar's hand, and Plato's brain,
Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain."

"Brahma" is simply the final precipitation of the idea:

"If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

"Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

"They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

"The strong gods pine for me above,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on Heaven."

The idea, if I must now say so, is that God is in all things, and all things are of God.

Actuality of imagery, compression of thought, and emotional depth seem to me the outstanding qualities of Emerson's poetry, and high qualities they are, indeed. To touch upon emotional depth is to recall "Threnody," the poem on Waldo's death. It is one of the great poems in American literature. It will be recalled that Emerson observed that poems should deal with subjects that fill the author's mind in turn. The death of Waldo struck Emerson down. On January 28, 1842, he wrote: "I comprehend nothing of this fact but its bitterness. Explanation I have none, consolation none that arises out of the fact itself; only diversion; only oblivion of this, and pursuit of new objects." Yet he did escape the momentarily intolerable disaster, for he sloughed off the burden into poetry, informing the poem with emotional weight of his experience. And as time lightened his burden he recognized the inevitability of his release. We find him saying in "Experience": "The only thing grief has taught me, is to know how shallow it is"; that is to say, how unenduring. But at the moment of its greatest poignancy the poet rendered it in verse and preserved the essence for his readers. Thuswise he achieved an emotional tone unquestionably genuine. This is not cruel, nor hypocritical, nor despicable, unless art be all of these.

There is not a poem to which Emerson gave final approval that has not distinctive quality. It would be pleasant to demonstrate this, but a lengthy task. Certain poems press to be mentioned, however. It is hard to imagine a finer poem than "Hamatreya," or one that better illustrates what is meant by the symbolic use of commonplace fact. Nor do I know a greater expression of all-embracing optimism than Emerson's celebration of

Spring called "May-Day." Nor a finer presentation of the will to live, or physical life; of the will to power, or the ecstatic life; of the will to God, or the religious life, than "Initial, Daemonic and Celestial Love." And as I believe "Illusions" to be a great essay, so I believe the poetic motto which prefaces it to be a great poem:

"Flow, flow the waves hated,
Accursed, adored,
The waves of mutation;
No anchorage is.
Sleep is not, death is not;
Who seem to die live.

"House you were born in,
Friends of your spring-time,
Old men and young maid,
Days' toil and its guerdon,
They are all vanishing,
Fleeing to fables,
Cannot be moored.
See the stars through them,
Through treacherous marbles.
Know the stars yonder,
The stars everlasting,
Are fugitive also,
And emulate, vaulted,
The lambent heat lightning
And fire-fly's flight.

"When thou dost return
On wave's circulation,
Behold the shimmer,
The wild dissipation,
And, out of endeavor
To change and to flow,
The gas becomes solid,
And phantoms and nothings
Return to be things,
And endless imbroglio
Is law and the world,—
Then first shalt thou know,

That in the wild turmoil,
Horsed on the Proteus,
Thou ridest to power,
And to endurance."

5. CONCLUSION

Many sins are laid at Emerson's door, and more have been committed in his name. A good deal of his unpopularity is to be accounted for by the false emphasis placed upon his idea of the Over-soul. There is a tendency to regard it as his central doctrine. The Over-soul is an integral part of his system for explaining the world; it was part of the bait which caught his subtle intellect; but his central doctrine was self-reliance. It must be remembered that Emerson was of a religious family, of religious training, of religious disposition.[1] His search in life was for a religion that was broad and inclusive. His disrespect for creeds and churches never included the experience of which they were, to him, a disappointing expression. Idealism was a larger, freer, more inclusive religion. Emerson preached it all his days, but he considered it valid only for himself and those whose personal experience convinced them of its truth, and he never precisely formulated what he believed; there is a large vagueness about the matter. Unfortunately largeness and vagueness have a great attraction for a not uncommon, but extremely nonsensical, type of mind. It is from this class that Emerson's admirers have been too often recruited. These annoying people,

[1] But he did not lose his independence when confronted with the personality of Christ as so many thinkers with a religious background have done. He saw clearly that Christ was an enemy of the self-reliant man. It is instructive to note that Emerson's attitude toward Christ is diametrically opposed to that of Dostoevsky. With relentless persistence Dostoevsky explored the resources of the intellect and concluded that it led only to destruction. Baffled and seeking an ideal he turned to Christ. But did not become a Christ-monger. After creating Svidrigailov and Myshkin (introvert and extravert), Stavrogin, Dmitri and Ivan Karamazov, he created his ideal in Alyosha Karamazov. But Alyosha is not Christ. He does not seek freedom in unfettered action, nor does he seek it vicariously in assuming the evil committed in the world. He is the perfect rounded man so far as Dostoevsky could create him and in his lineaments he approaches those of Jesus. Dostoevsky wrote: "If anyone can prove to me that Christ is outside the truth, and if the truth really does exclude Christ, I should prefer to stay with Christ and not with the truth." In other words, Dostoevsky did not find it possible to accept the personality of Christ as the highest development of which mankind is capable, but he still did not find him so wanting as to reject him as an ideal. Emerson did reject him because of the sad gaps he discovered in Christ's character. Those who find themselves following Dostoevsky, like André Gide, are far away from the self-reliant man, and hence enemies of his continued existence.

of course, abandoned all the self-reliance which Emerson had preached, and in consequence removed from that part of his work which they did select all the bone and sinew it possessed. His style is not closely knit, and admits the selection of pieces for special use rather too readily, especially when one has not apprehended the root-basis of Emerson's thought. It is time that he be rescued from out of the hands of his self-appointed friends, and presented to the world as the iconoclast that he was, remembering always that:

"I have an arrow that will find its mark,
A mastiff that will bite without a bark."

Emerson placed endless confidence in man, whom he regarded as the greatest product of nature; but not in the masses of men, but in individuals. He was confident, moreover, that the possibilities of a powerful, self-reliant, cultivated man were infinite, and that

"When half-gods go,
The gods arrive."

This endless and exultantly optimistic confidence in the powers of man, once freed from the shackles of the herd, went to altogether astonishing lengths. Even in periods of complete sobriety, Emerson was certainly more optimistic than is quite necessary, and many of his crimes are alleged to stem from this optimism. It is pertinent to point out that this optimism was pretty much confined to the self-reliant man. He entertained few illusions about the virtues of the masses, whom he probably denounced as thoroughly as any American writer. Nor can it be justly laid at his door that his philosophy fitted rather too neatly into the rampant individualism of the American business man. No man is responsible for the vulgarizations of his doctrines. Furthermore it must be pointed out that the danger which inheres in any doctrine which centers in self-reliance is that it will be taken up by persons quite incapable of achieving a corrective interior state of being. Self-reliance may be extremely dangerous and indeed anti-social without a deep and subtle interior life. Emerson clearly realized this as clearly as he realized the reverse truth. His poem "Philosopher" reads:

"Philosophers are lined with eyes within,
And, being so, the sage unmakes the man.
In love, he cannot therefore cease his trade;
Scarce the first blush has overspread his cheek,
He feels it, introverts his learned eye
To catch the unconscious heart in the very act.
His mother died—the only friend he had—
Some tears escaped, but his philosophy
Couched like a cat sat watching close behind
And throttled all his passion. Is't not like
That devil-spider that devours her mate
Scarce freed from her embraces!"

With all his optimism Emerson never quite managed to ignore the evils of the world. He took an active part in the anti-slavery agitation when it was dangerous and not at all respectable to do so. Consequently he found frequent occasion to denounce the contemporary politicians. He had no truck with the Jacksonians, insofar as they represented a "philosophy," though superficially it corresponds with his own. Recognizing clearly that builders of factories and railroads were conferring a boon upon America, he yet did not hesitate to denounce the slavery and corruption that often accompanied the construction. He wanted no boon that in any way involved the crushing of the individual man. He was not, however, a popular Jeremiah, viewing with alarm every passing manifestation of the devil. "If I can," he wrote to Carlyle in 1844, "at any time express the law and the ideal right, that should satisfy me without measuring the divergence from it of the last act of Congress." Emerson was an independent thinker incidentally interested in liberating reforms.

Emerson was not one who could approve of but a single approach to life. He saw that the world was "an academy to the scholar, a butt to the satirist, a church to the devotee, 'the scaffold of divine vengeance' to the Calvinist, good society to the fashionist, a market to the merchant, a conquest to Alexander . . ." All Emerson demanded of a man was that he be self-reliant. If he was that all else that was desirable would follow.

BABETTE DEUTSCH

TWO POEMS

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL

PLAY me nothing Spanish, but such music
As that Greek, whose lean saints hallow Spain,
Would command while choosing blues and sallow
Greys, as sad and fine as distant rain.

Do not talk philosophy in Latin,
With eyes screwed as one who grinds a lens:
Shrill delight becomes the one who finds a
Skylark quill among goosefeather pens.

If the miracle will serve, accept it:
Let one hour cancel plague, death, wars;
Let enchantment wrap you in its vague breath
As a snowy night is wrapped in stars.

Inaccessible and ivoried mountains,
Pools as mute as shadows lying asleep,
Pale, and dark, remote,—and something flying,
Wings or melody you cannot keep.

THE HUNT

Where the cement-lined bowels of the city
Noisily churn their pallid human food,
I drew my mind away from anger and pity,
Freed it from time, and lost the multitude.

Time lay behind, like a thin river sinking
Into those sands whose silence cannot crack.
Space lay below, wrinkled and grey, and shrinking
Like some old elephant's retreating back.

And there was peace, though my poor carcass shifted
Uneasily, remembering the chain
At which my mind, being so far uplifted,
Blindly would tug and mercilessly strain.

Yet did I cry: Go on, and find the marrow
Of that shy, arrogant creature, slim of horn,
Whose eyes are large as love, whose flanks are narrow
As truth, though in the hunting you be torn.

But then my stupid carcass pulling meanly
Upon the leash, my mind turned back, and there
Was Space, the giant, spurning suns serenely,
Was Time, the serpent, with his freezing stare.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

THE HOUSE OF SINGING BIRDS

The first Professor said:
"Why do they go on singing there in the dark?
The mind is an old madhouse, dusty and dead,
Nor is there any spark
To light the way down which man's longing fled
Wringing its hands, knowing no gods could mark."

But, still,
As drawn out of infinite distance,
To cries of pain and triumph, throbbing on,
Long after the season for them was quite past,
The house of singing birds
Greeted the waking sun.

The second Professor muttered:
"They do not sing now as once long ago,
Better than this have braver souls once uttered
In the far past; I only have to show
That not a single throat in these bad times has fluttered
To the old thoughts that once stirred joy in its heroic glow."

But louder
As if to parry the onrush of the hands
Of fate; free, daring, prouder,
Song once again awoke; and in all lands
Amid the fall of thrones,
The crash of axes battering down the past,
It travelled on as if it were the sole thing born to last.

The third Professor croaked: "Sex is the cause
For this disturbance; men build monstrous lust
To shapes of glory and terror: there are laws
That soon will lay these obscene fires in dust.
In every song there are neurotic flaws,
Soon will we learn to silence them, renewing cool mistrust."

But pure,
Austere and ardent, arched on thoughts few could attain,
Song ruptured the silence of dumb night and soared,
A Gothic pinnacle splintered by the pain
Of mind and will aspiring to set free
Flesh from its failing fires, and find Christ come again.

The last Professor growled:
"No, no; all wrong! Not with such dreams I hold:
Your throats are fouled
With the vile taint of profit, and the old drug, gold.
Make first all common; standardize all men,
Ere you begin your strain.
Hear the great engines racing clean and strong,
From them learn now your song!"

But deep,
As stirred within by a million-breakered tide,
Dragging the sea towards a moon-god's sleep,
The buried song persisted: long may it abide,
Long as a human soul can struggle, hope, and weep;
Long as the human body walks the earth clad in the senses' pride.

JOSEPH T. SHIPLEY

FALL

The street re-echoed memories. Thump,
Thump, his step beside her rang as when
She saw his smile, and knew the scurrying clouds
That raced their joy along the footless ways
Joy travels . . . "Want a ride?" She passed without
The turn of a lash—as always. Yet . . . Not here
The shadows of his laughter; the vain wraith
With whom or where forget, what matter? "Yes."

Yet there was one she cried for in his arms;
Her arms were empty though his lustful flesh
Heaved in embrace. She felt the crushed grass press
Patterns upon her body; a cricket at her ear
Called busily to darkness; a sleeping bird
Broke from the nest, startled away, wheeled,
Hovered, watchful, and returned, and slept
Once more. She moaned, quietly. She did not see
The leaves that were a darkness laid on dark
Over her, but they formed a dark design
Her thoughts traced wearily to no clear end
And clustered. The restless body at her side
Renewed its brusque demands, and sank again
To torpor. That was a star falling through
Eons of space. Time had fallen. Where was earth?
He rose, for the hush hinted morn-break, but she lay
Inert. He bent. He—turned in fear, and fled
Across a chasm of fear he slowly bridged
With furrowed beams of days.

JAY G. SIGMUND

Over the sky
Scurrying clouds race autumn. Birds fly south.
The trees grow gaunt. Life grimly girds its loins.
Day tangles light with waning memories
Until dark strikes with sudden blow the sun
That shivers into myriad points of light
The heavens gather in their midnight bowl
And morning reassembles. The new day
Opens the wings of winter over the land.

JAY G. SIGMUND

RIDGE ROAD WINTER

The dream-stuff of his cornfield knoll
  Was safe in jugs beneath his sills:
Oh, it was good that rutted hills
  Could offer something for the soul!

The slaughtered litters from his sties
  Filled up great casks of seasoned wood:
None can deny a year is good
  Which sees a crop before snow flies.

But when the brant trailed South that year
  Their necks were snaky and their beaks
Gave out the sort of mouse-like squeaks
  That timber folk have learned to fear.

The husks were heavier by far,
  Betokening the deepest drift
And each night saw the moonlight sift
  With only here and there a star.

The husking done and then the day
  For killing lambs and then such toil
As follows when the oatfield soil
  Is bare and hard and ashy gray.

The jars and bottles and the still
  Upon the hardened cellar floor
Were free of spider webs once more
  When sacks of grist were brought from mill.

But in the kitchen by the stove
  A woman mumbled at the sun
Which, long before her rounds were done
  Went molten-red behind the grove.

The drops of dream-stuff slowly ran
  In steady, crystal, burning beads:
The wind groaned through the roadside weeds—
  The woman lay beside her man.

One night before the dooryard oak
  Made shadows on the frozen lane
The woman's throat went tight from pain
  And gurgled strangely when she spoke.

"The kitchen's dark . . . the winter's hard
  The days are empty like a drum:
Oh, God I wish that spring would come
  And start the green grass in the yard!"

Her sodden bed-mate groaned and stirred
  And groped to touch the broken frame
From which these stifled pleadings came
  But it is doubtful if he heard.

MARK VAN DOREN

THE TREE

The pavement of the little court was cracked.
Zigzag they ran, the blackened lines,
Going across and off and climbing four
Brick walls that leaned and held each other up,
And penned an aimless wind.
Most of the days there was but dust to blow,
Round and around and up; but in the fall
Leaves trickled from the one stiff tree,
Leaves dropped and walked in death.
There was a yellow spigot by the door,
And from the door an old man always came
And filled a pail, and turned, and called a word.
So an old woman, clutching at the knob,
Came too and they would take four steps and stand,
Squinting among black branches
At the squareness of the sky.
In the cool spring they sat; and with the summer,
Needing to look no longer for the sun,
Looked anyway.
What saw they more than we in our deep window?
They did not know we came each day and found them;
We did not know what thing they now beheld.
Only it was as if the tree were greater,
And somewhere else, and had companions by,
And the green ancient grove—if grove it was—
Bewildered two young walkers, striped with shade.
Their eyes were fresh with fear as they were lifted
Into old boughs too high to be believed;

Their eyes were round and awful as their feet
Moved one before the other, slow and slow;
Their eyes were mice's eyes in a lost wood.
What saw these old eyes now?
They did not know we came each day to watch,
Nor did we know what thing they saw; but knew
Pity for two large wrinkled faces peering
Into a little tree that could not hold them.

HORACE GREGORY

HUSBANDRY

"When I saw Jane
abed with John
I laughed aloud
and felt my brain
go dancing through
my blood. I saw
white, rotten earth
that John's knees plowed,
moist with young worms,
blind, giving birth
to new worms. . . .
Law
of Abraham,
erect, from high:
'Go ye forth
and multiply' . . .

I saw Jane's thighs
locked round a
lamp post. Knowingly
her cool flanks moved.
A slow moonrise
clarified
my cuckoldry.

I felt myself
go underground
with mildewed kings
and murderers
and poor damned fools
where no one stirs
(even Caesar
makes no sound)
and fools are
afraid to weep . . .

while Jane and John
kissed again
(sweet dreams) asleep."

LINCOLN FITZELL

THREE POEMS

A DAY OF EARTH

THOUGH earthly day and night afraid,
Cloud-mountainous and vastly sought.
Turn pilgrim for the rock is made
Eternally the steel is wrought.

Ruins of silence rest your feet,
Breath is a wide and ringing grave
And thought like shadow on the wheat
Describes cloud-threatening the stave.

Then make no mountain of the day,
Plains darken and subordinate
The pilgrim on the rocky way,
The startled hare beneath the gate.

CONFLICT

Within this stumbling ground for bulls
Breath is of odorless decay,
And hair of grass to hide worn skulls
Long since from terror put away.

The centipede climbs up the walls
Man built to keep the tiger out,
The snake into the crevice crawls
Made by the thunder-break and shout.

And one, a bull, stung at the life
In his proud arc of challenge turns
But finds no breast to meet his strife
More thundering than that of worms.

TWO AND A SPADE

A planet worm across the dust
Keeps secretly the broken statue:
Mountain-deep the roses rust
In the black and guarded rock-dew.

Yet while the heart keeps out the night
Within the clock the minutes marvel.
Tree-shadow on the face is light
Between; the moon is snow on marble.

Breath, as the pulses gloom and shake,
Quickens the hair upon the fore-head,
Lips dreamed apart are deep awake,
Night and dark the eyes are shaded.

Thought has no ceiling and no vow
To be more than truth, a lover,
To look with dread upon the brow
Or touch the hand upon the cover.

HOWARD BAKER

CITY OF THE SAN JOAQUIN

The Founding of the City

In the center of the Great Valley
Where the live-oaks, black
In the glare of the sun,
Loomed out of the sea of crisp grass,
And the click-click of cicadas
Clashed the white radiance—
But where at dawn
Rose light gathered as in a bowl,
And at evening the Valley
Filled with shadow, leaving
The rim in a crimson flare—
There they came and built the City.

They built it of the sun-baked adobe
And with the logs of the sun-purged live-oak.
Straggling wagon trains came there,
And worn families pushed out
To wrest farms from the desert.
In the winter when the mists came
They bought whiskey and quinine in the city.
They waited for the sun;
Then the people became worshipers
Of the sun and the sun-filled Valley.

HOWARD BAKER

The Skyline of the Modern City

The Builders of the City
Are unconscious worshipers.
They have reared tall white idols
To the sun and the open valley.
The ivory cubes of the City,
The gray rectangles, the niched pyramids,
The squares inlaid with round severe trees,
Are gods—gods who have lent
The Builders power to suck life from the earth.
They command you, O Valley.

They have bound the City to you,
Valley of the San Joaquin,
Bound it with the radiating roads
Stretched like strands of a web
With their City at the center.
They worship you, O Valley of the Sun.
I saw them build another tower,
They toiled slowly, with a deep purpose.
Deftly, methodically, they dissembled the old building.
Beam was separated from beam with slow precision;
They chiseled brick from brick.
They brought a huge steam shovel and forced its teeth to bite into the earth.
They made it swing over its head and spew the load of dirt into a truck.
They dug a great canyon into the innermost fastness of the earth.
They poured the concrete for the foundation.

And then they erected the steel skeleton.
They added girder to girder.
High above the street they walked the framework;
Exultantly they rode the swing girders, one of the builders fell, crashed down, the steam closed over him.
The elevators mounted and descended carrying the concrete.
They filled the frame, completed the tower.
It stands square, strong, bright to the sun.

PHILIP EDWARD STEVENSON

NIGHT CRIES

ORANGE light is soaking into the mud-chinked walls of Kate's kitchen. Don's old Stetson, caked with adobe dust and blotched with sweat, lies on the table, limp and tired-looking. Don left it there when he took the milk-pails from their hooks. In the corral the cows stand lowing to be relieved of their milk. It's long past milking-time—supper is over—but it can't be helped. That's the way things go. Don can't hurry. Little Jackie skips ahead of him through the chicken-yard, shooing sleepy hens toward their roost, but Don doesn't increase his pace a bit. The pails creak a little, one on each side of his knees.

Kate is dreamy to-night. She decides to let her dishes soak awhile. In the doorway she leans her weight against one jamb, presses her fist against the jamb opposite, and lets herself go slack, bathing in the glow.

The sun is gone; the mountains are drowning slowly in thick, thick purple.

Again it didn't rain to-day—not on the plain—and Kate resents it. On all the surrounding hills and mountains, north and west of Santa Fé and round about Cerrillos, rain fell. There was a sort of battle in the sky; and in the hills and mountains, earth won. Earth won and drew down rain in veils of tarnished silver. But here, on the plain, earth was defeated again. Earth lost, and the fields are still brittle and crusty with thirst. It isn't fair!

The battle is over now, the clouds are retreating, disentangling from each other, melting away into the flames of sunset. . . . In her state of dream the defeat of the earth is personal to Kate. It causes her physical pain. It must not be! . . . But

the sky is almost clear. There are but two clouds—no, there is only one cloud . . .

At first Kate thought the cloud was two; now she sees she was mistaken. The cloud was a big soft orange egg in the sky; but something has torn it into equal halves connected only by a frayed strand of gold. The strand is thin, but it seems to hold. The cloud is still one cloud.

To Kate it seems that God was in a hurry to disperse the storm, break it up before the earth could slake its thirst. In His hurry He must have grasped the cloud in His two hands and tried to tear it asunder so as to break up the storm more quickly, so as to assure the defeat of the earth. Kate imagines God resting now, panting a little, waiting with a smile for the cloud to disappear.

Then it begins to seem to her that the cloud has a life of its own, a will of its own, apart from God. She has been watching the cloud intently, watching its flank change from gold to orange, from orange to crimson, and to a dull magenta shadow; she has expected the connecting strand to give way, the two massed halves of the egg to separate, and gradually to dissolve. But instead, the strand begins to exert a pull, like a stretched elastic thing. Slowly the two halves of the egg approach each other. Now they are touching. Now they interpenetrate, it seems. And now they blend into one.

The twilight fades; a bright quarter-moon blots out the stains of sunset; the cloud is slowly shrinking—shrinking as a single mass, a unit. . . .

The sound of voices brings Kate's eyes to focus on the earth, and then she realizes how her heart is pounding, how tight clenched are the muscles of her fist, how rigid the lines of Will in her mind.

She looks toward the voices. Something spacious and warm goes out of her, and the chill of night seems like the breath of her despair.

Don is tired—more so than usual. He acts old. His hair, thin and lanky and shot with gray, sticks flat to his head. His skin is leathery with sun, but there is no colour under his tan; his face is yellowish, speckled with unshaven blond and gray hairs. The milk-pails drag his shoulders forward; his knees seem always to sag. Kate knows it's not just the burden of milk. Little Jackie is carrying a pail too, a small one; he is using both hands,

panting and staggering and grunting; but she can tell the difference. With Jackie it's the burden.

Kate feels suddenly strong, as she did when Jackie was little and she could toss him about so easily. She pushes the screen door and runs to meet them.

"Here, let me have them pails, Don!"

But Don doesn't stop. He leaves her there with empty hands and plugs on, his neck and shoulders dragged forward.

"I'm doing this," he says. "You open the door."

For a moment, in spite of herself, Kate is angry. She takes Jackie's pail instead, passes Don, gets to the door first, opens it. They go in. Jackie waits outside.

"I'll water the horses, Dad," Jackie says, but Don is already going out. They make for the water-barrels together.

Kate lights the lamp. She is glad of the light that shuts her into her kitchen, glad of the dishes to be washed and wiped white and shining. She tries not to think about Don, but she can't help it. Her mind will not fasten on what she has to do; her hands do it all for her. Reality sinks away, and her mind goes all the old rounds of pictures and words.

"Don loves you, Kate." "Kate loves you, Don." "Don loves you more and more." "Oh! more and more." "Don wants you, Kate." "Don! Don!"

She lingers over early years—the years of good living, generous impulses joyfully sped and gathered, exquisite concatenations, synchronisms, interdependences. On her part, perfect peace. But on his? A shadow—yes, always a shadow. Of competition or something.

Something about his father—something about his father!

"They're selling like hot-cakes, Girlie. I guess I knew what I was doing all right. Next year . . . ! I guess I put one over on him all right." . . . "You ought to seen him the other day—barged in with dung all over his boots and laughed at me for being so spick and span. Kidded me about making a living just sitting around and selling Fords. Told me this was a country where men was men and still rode horses. I didn't say a thing, Girlie, but I knew I was putting one over on him all right." . . .

Her mind coasts over the swift fall. "Christ! they keep sending me more than I order—more than I can use! I can't pay for 'em. I got to borrow again." "Kate loves you, Don." "But I got to pay, Girlie! If I don't they'll hand the agency to somebody

else—Hank Stires is itching to grab it out of my hands. I *got* to pull through. How he'll laugh! O Girlie! just believe in me, that's all!" "Kate loves you, Don." . . .

"A thing I got to tell you, Girlie. It's tough on you right now, but . . . they cut the price again. Commissions won't hardly pay the interest now." "Kate loves you, Don." "And there ain't any commissions. Nothing coming in. Country's broke." "Never mind, Don, never mind."

Then Jackie—dear little Jackie!—arriving in the midst of the ruins. . . .

Kate closes her eyes. Her hands fumble in greasy water. No use—she goes on remembering and suffering. . . . She remembers she didn't mind, not really. Don and she had something between them, something that was not they and yet cradled them, something that forced her not to mind. Only Don minded, terribly. He forced himself to mind. He hated her for not minding—hated the things she did, and was glad to do, to keep them going. He hated her for not hating him. She remembers that night in bed when he tried to make her say she hated him, then suddenly lost his head, loved her tempestuously, and afterwards redoubled his hate of both himself and her.

He didn't get a job in town. He wouldn't get a job in town. He wanted to be sure this time. He wanted to be too sure. . . .

The walls of Kate's kitchen space out a bit. They are adobe walls now, scarred with knocks and spotted with the shells of vermin. Their bed is in the corner, Jackie's basket beside it. The air is thick with the smoke of frying meat. Kate sees herself standing in front of the stove, a greasy fork in her hand; then the door opens and Don's voice says:

"Here's father, Girlie."

She faces the big bronze man, his cold arrogant smile; but all the time she's looking beyond him, to Don's face. Don has a smile she's never seen before, the kind of a smile a party man keeps for his district boss. And Don is talking all the time in a way she's never heard him talk before—salesman's talk—the sort of thing he used to laugh at and never would think of using when he was a salesman. He explains, before father has a chance to sit down:

"Father wants to help us. He says he needs hands on the ranch, says I could get better than a living out of it. I tell him No, but I haven't told him about the Good Thing yet."

Good thing? What good thing? Kate is in terror. Don avoids her eyes. He swaggers up and down the room, loud with confidence.

"Fact is, father, I've filed on a piece of gov'ment land between here and Cerrillos—a whole section. I'm going to do my own ranching. Feller out there decided to move into town awhile, and I'm going to watch his stock for him. Made a pretty slick deal with him too—so much a month and a percentage of the increase. Sounds pretty nice, eh Girlie? I'll tell the cock-eyed world! I'll have a shack up there inside of a month, and by fall we'll have a crop. And Kate's good with chickens, father. Kate's willing, all right, aren't you Girlie? I guess she'll be tickled after this place—her working out and all."

Silence begins to fall about the room. Father clears his throat. But Don won't let him speak—not yet. Don will say it for him:

"Finest place in the world out there to bring up a kid, father. Air like champagne—and some view! You ought to see the view we got! Out in this country there's no money in the towns. Things look good for a while, and then—— Oh, you can't make a go of sitting around selling things. But land is plenty here—the gov'ment gives it away free. And animals. That's the way to make a go of it, I've decided." . . .

Floods of dark water rise up to drown the horror of that meal, that evening.

Why didn't you tell me, Don? Why didn't you tell me?

Oh I didn't think afraid you'd think I thought I really didn't want might be just for you and Jackie I did it. But it wasn't that. Real men, in this country . . .

But it's hard. You shouldn't, Don. You're not just a man, any man! . . .

But it's done. There's nothing to say.

Tawny fields, infinitely long, endlessly wide—a dot of blue, blue-shirted shoulders of a man inching along behind tawny rumps of horses—faint feather of dust from invisible plow harrow go-devil—dot of blue crawling the slow stretch of convergent furrows. . . . Glare of noon, fusion of earth and sky—the sweat panting hunger dogged silent stoking of food and loud departure. . . . Night: the tiny shack—railroad ties chinked with mud—tiny square container of life: containing child in packing-box asleep; man asleep in working clothes,

sweat drying on him slowly, dust-crusted; woman moving about, brooding, fumbling, perplexed, a speck of energy crushed in the huge inertia of moonlight. . . . And there was winter——

A jelly-glass used for drinking slips from Kate's fingers, thuds on the adobe floor. It's doing things to her, too, it's doing things to her. She hadn't ought to think about it all the time like this.

It isn't that she's getting old. The other day, when man and boy were building fence, she took off all her clothes, let down her hair, and ran the mirror up and down in front of her body. It wasn't an old body: it was young and strong. Don's hair was graying—hers wasn't. Dry-dusty, maybe, but no gray. Her blood was ruddy and warm under the brown of face, neck, and arms; the skin of her legs and torso clear and creamy, like a girl's. Even her breasts looked young. Having Jackie hadn't seemed to make much difference. It was the same body, the same Kate Don had come to once as pious people come to a church. . . . But something is happening all the same. She is getting strange to herself. She used to ache over Jackie—and before that over Don; now she aches over thoughts that have no meaning. Tears rush to her eyes; she goes at things savagely; breaks things. Sometimes, even when she knows herself most strong and full of life, she feels terrified alone in the house. She imagines an intruder; sometimes he is tall and hard, bronze like Don's father; she fights him and defeats him, easily, with a great surge of strength; but afterwards she is weak and trembling. And she gets so stirred over things!—even things that happen, quite apart from her, in flowers, snakes, and clouds. . . .

Turning to pick up the jelly-glass she sees Jackie lying along the bench asleep. She remembers now, he came in a little while ago, without a word, and lay down there. A rush of the old pity, the old understanding grief, nearly overwhelms her. Softly she picks him up, carries him into the dark cubicle of the bedroom, lays him in his packing-box, takes off his shoes, kisses his silky hair, covers him. The moon shines on the side of his box, above the little brown fist. He sleeps like his father, drugged . . .

Clack! Through the window the sound of bucket striking cistern-water. Don doing her job. Her job!

Don is so insistent. Each has his job. The ranch is two ranches. Don does the Man's Work. Kate does the Woman's

Work. Don doesn't do the Woman's Work, and Kate is never allowed to touch the Man's Work, though Jackie helps all he can. But now Don is doing her job. He must be angry. To-night! To-night he is angry.

He is always tired, always, but to-night he seems ready to break. He is going to pieces. And he is doing her job, and he is angry. To-night! She runs out to him.

"Here Don, let me do that. It's my job."

How ghostly Don's face in the moonlight!

"It's all done," he says, and starts to push past her.

Kate is angry again. This time she gets the bucket.

Don lets her have it and goes in ahead of her. She sets down the bucket. Don unhooks the dipper and starts to drink, while she stands there, trembling.

Always before, when it has become unbearable, this manner of Don's, something has happened—oh perhaps the most insignificant thing—to tell her it's all right between her and Don; and then she has found a way to prove it to herself, she has found a way to creep through the crust of this beast-man, this machine-man, to where he is not beast, not machine, where she knows him—and herself—again. But to-night, as she stands there trembling, listening to Don gulping water, it doesn't seem as if anything could happen. Even his hate, back in the old days after the crash, was better than this.

"Don," she says; but he doesn't answer, fills the dipper again and pushes the bucket under the table with his foot.

"Don, you got to let me do my job. You know we each got to do our jobs. Drawing drinking-water's mine. You got to let me do it."

That isn't what she wants to say at all, but there aren't any words for what she wants to say. And she has to say something.

Don turns around after he hangs up the dipper. His mouth is pulled down at the corners; his eyes are almost sightless in hers; but suddenly he smiles, arrogant, cold, feral almost, and she stops breathing for a moment, recognizing, for the first time, the face of his father.

"Why didn't you do it then?" he says.

She oughtn't to say it; but she can't bear to keep still. "Why didn't you ask me to do it?" she says.

That gives him his chance. He's off now.

They've got to prove up in three weeks or lose their land.

Inspectors will come to look the homestead over. And there's all this fencing still to do, ground to break again where he's had to let it go two years, besides all the regular chores: tending the stock, milking, setting poisoned bait for coyotes and prairie-dogs, mending damage done by storms to house and barn. *And* hauling water for animals; borrowing tools he can't afford to buy; working on neighbors' ranches for money to buy food, fence-wire, provisions; all the endless, impossible procession of duties. He goes over them all. They got to be done. He's got to do them. He's wasted three years caring for other people's cattle so as to get some of his own. He couldn't help it. But now he's behind. Each one has got to do his job—it's the only way to get through. She's got to look after the house food drink clothes chickens garden, make butter and market it. If she doesn't do her job, he can't wait to ask her why. He's tired. If he wants a drink and the bucket's empty, he'd rather get it. It's easier.

He's down now, sitting on the bench Jackie went to sleep on. His hands are twined together and his head hangs almost touching them. Kate's mind takes a running start against the current of his accusations.

"Don, I tell you what I'm going to do. You got so much extra now, I'm going to start doing the milking, hauling water and setting bait. That'll leave you just the fields and the fencing. You got too much, Don. I can do some. I'm strong, Don, look at me!"

Don raises his brows and looks up. But he will not see; a veil covers his eyes.

She goes to him, kneels by him, forces herself into his sight, into his life.

"Don, let's go halves! Let's be a team, and pull together!" There—the words have come for something she wanted to say. Not all, not all, but something.

"I'm the man around here," he says, looking away. "I can do it. You think I'm asking you to do my job? You think I can't?" he challenges her. "I know that's what you think! All right, you watch me. I'll put one over on you! Just you do your job and I'll do mine—a man's job too! I'm a man!"

He's up now, and that smile is on his face again. She can't stand it. Anything but that!

"Don't worry so much about being a man," she says, cring-

ing before the sound of her own voice. "Men that know they're men don't have to keep telling their wives about it!"

That reaches him. Oh! that reaches him all right. He staggers, almost, and for a tenth of a second she sees Don again, a Don she knows, the Don who hates and craves hatred.

There is only one way he can take it. He pulls away from her, feral, into the dark cave where their bed is, into his doggedness, silence, hate.

She can hear him taking off his shoes, one at a time, and now the rusty spring squeaks as he collapses in his clothes. That's the end now, that's all. . . .

Kate must keep busy. She strains the milk, tidies the kitchen, banks the fire, begs of herself an excuse to go out. Oh yes—the hatch in the hen-house is open. Isn't it?

Outdoors the breeze is steady, like an even breathing. The long fields, and beyond them the plain, spread white with moonlight, frosty-looking, still. The nearest homestead is a mile away; she can just see the house, a tiny black block on the low hill. There is no light in it; the neighbors are in bed.

Three mountain ranges lie about the plain. They look hazy now, mist-mountains, mere ghosts of the solid iron masses she knows by day. Dead, they're dead. The plain lies dead, ringed round by dead ghost-mountains.

As she steps back in the door the lamp frightens Kate. It is a cry out of the past—a cry of life in the world of death. She has heard. Quick she blows out the lamp. Too late. She stands shivering, for she has heard.

Undressing in the cubicle, she slips into her cotton nightdress before she has taken off all her clothes. She can't bear to be uncovered even for a moment.

She gets in beside Don. He lies collapsed, sodden with sleep, the sweat dry on his clothes. With one hand he has pushed down the bedclothes, and his diaphragm lifts and falls slowly. The other wrist lies across the lines of his forehead; from it the hand droops, half-open, as if just robbed of something. He seems restless, he moves, his tired mouth opens and closes, swallowing.

She whispers: "Don."

No answer. Even if he were awake—— She reaches over and touches the shirt stretched across his heart. Slow, faint shocks against her fingers. Again he moves, face toward the wall, thin

buttocks against her knees. The empty hand drops; the lines sag under the stiff hairs of his cheek.

Patient between pity and scorn, she persuades herself that Don is more restless than usual, as though in his sleep he sought something he'd lost in consciousness. . . . Generally he is dead-weight, unmoving. Isn't he? To-night——

Or is it only that she has been lying there so long? It doesn't seem long, so much is happening to her. All the time she has been watching Don, she has been watching herself, too. Within her vigorous body, she knows, a battle is being fought. All her strength is involved in it. Although her body doesn't move it is involved in a fury of struggle. She feels tremendous energies being drained from her—not calmly, as a river slips into the sea, but savagely, as a torrent splinters on rocks in a wild ravine.

Her mind looks on, very quiet, very curious. It is as though her body were in a warm spacious hall echoing with action, while her mind lay somewhere outside of it all—in the white shine, perhaps, of moon on the plain. . . .

She doesn't know if she has slept. Suddenly she is looking at the rim of Jackie's box, gilt by the lowering moon. A faint cry echoes in her ears. Did Jackie call? Or was it a final cry accompanying some final act in her body? She listens. Tiny sounds breathe from the thirsty land: leaves of young corn rattling; crickets timidly tinkling; tough thud of horses' hooves muffled within the barn; far, far away the organ-note of a night-hawk's wings. Half-life. Life just alive.

Jackie moves. Vague speech-sounds bubble through his lips, followed by a small staccato cry. Joy leaps within Kate, and with her, out of bed. She kneels beside the child, sweat trickling between her crumpled calf and thigh. Her joy is unutterable love. Jackie lies in the pose of a runner finishing a hard race. His fist is clenched, one elbow tautly crooked, features screwed up with Will, legs apart, running.

Jackie! He is like that. He goes at things so hard, and so quietly. Such a little fellow—yet already a help to his father. Jackie!

Kate takes him up and crushes him to her in a sort of esctasy. He wakes, hurt and frightened.

"Ow! What's the matter, Mama? You hurt me."

"Hush!" She points to Don asleep. Suddenly she is slack and

empty. "You cried in your sleep, dear. I thought you were sick and needed me."

"Did I cry?" Jackie yawns. "I don't remember."

"Yes. Did you have a bad dream?"

"No, Mama. Well, I don't know. I was riding a horse, I guess. Fast, Mama."

He yawns again and relaxes against her, loose and gawky, too big somehow. She feels she has made a stupid mistake, like turning the wrong corner and coming back to the very place she wanted to leave.

"Good-night, dear, go to sleep now."

She kisses him softly and lays him back among the bedclothes. By the time she has tucked him in, he sleeps. Somewhere, far off, Kate hears the clash of battle. She must be very wary, very sly.

Don is lying across the bed, head and shoulders flung across her pillow. Careful, she must be careful. Moonlight is yellow now. The dark is full of strain, like the strain that fills the liquid place of dreams.

Herself a part of the strain, yet obeying it, she takes hold of Don's shoulders, lifts, pushes. His head lolls. He wakes. Terrified she drops him on his pillow.

"Hey! cut that." He sits up, rather sodden still. "Any trouble?"

His voice! in that strain of darkness.

"No, Don, no!" she whispers in agony. "Jackie cried. I thought he was sick. But he's all right."

"Aw ri'."

Don goes on mumbling "Aw ri' " as he sinks back pulling at the bedclothes. Careful not to touch him, Kate creeps in beside him and lies there, listening, far off, to the sounds of warmth and battle. . . .

Now she is alone in the little mud-chinked house. From somewhere on the hoary moon-plain of the future comes the intruder. He has left his horse outside. His tall bronze figure nearly fills the house. He has a cold calm smile; he is very sure of himself. Confidently he joins with her in silent, panting struggle. Kate's whole strength leaps to meet his strength. Their battle is a battle indeed; every ounce of her flesh sings exultantly. Oh! how easily she copes with him. How obediently her

flesh overthrows and defeats him! And how glorious the moment of victory!

But almost immediately she is filled with icy fear. From where he fell a thick serpent comes unwinding, slithering toward her. She cannot move, cannot utter sound. At will, metallic scales rasp her skin to a chafed burning. At will, the serpent explores her body, drags his thick length across her breast.

There he pauses, there he balances, about to strike!

Her cry, wrung from an agony of joy, wakes her. She spins in a frenzy of happiness. Don is stirring again, and muttering "Girlie, Girlie." His arm has slid across her body, his fingers grope about the nipple of her breast. They have found, and now they are quiet, except as they are shaken by the pounding of her heart. Her heart, her flesh, all of Kate sings an exultant madness.

It is there, the strand, frayed and thin; and the cloud is there! It fills the darkness with orange light. All strain is crowded out. Struggle is useless now, battle impossible. High up above the defeated earth there is only warmth, and exultant song, and the strand that works its mighty Will upon the cloud. Once it felt the pain of dissolution, once it was nearly torn asunder; but something happened, a song burst out of the orange warmth, and the cloud is still one cloud!

"Don!" she cries with a wild voice, "Don!"

Moonlight will blot out its glory, moonlight will dissolve the cloud to nothingness. But when it is night and the moon is risen, who will care?

JOSEPHINE HERBST

SUMMER BOARDERS

If George and his wife had had their way the Wood boys would not have come to board in June. But it was only the second summer after Captain Huniwell's death and they were a little ashamed not to let Aunt Jennie do as she pleased. She wanted to work, she liked work and she wanted the Wood boys. Frieda thought that as long as Aunt Jennie was willing to do the cooking they had better give in to her. It would bring in twenty-eight dollars a week and they would get a share of that. Everything on the farm had to be divided between Aunt Jennie and the young Huniwells. The Captain had made his will like that, a life share in half the estate to his widow, and half to his nephew, George Huniwell, the whole to go to George at her death.

It made it a little hard all around. Aunt Jennie felt less and less that the house was hers. She had married the captain, thirty years her senior, when she was a young widow herself. He used to come to the lunch room at Bath where she was cook. After they married she bought out the lunch room and went on cooking. She kept at it until they had saved enough money to buy back the homestead Captain Huniwell had been brought up on as a boy. Jennie Huniwell had watched every pail of milk, every blade of grass, every potato dug on the place. She had worked in the fields with the men pitching hay. She had cooked and washed and made beds for summer boarders. They had bought more land, it swelled all around them into little hills, with orchards in the hollows, it ran down to the shore. On speculation they bought up Pine Island, full of firs and cedars and oaks. The island spread out on the water of the broad tidal river and more than anything else, showed the extent of the estate. They owned an island. Some

day they would build summer places there and rent them at big prices or they would sell to a boys' camp. Aunt Jennie was a great one for schemes and she thought of many as their bank account grew.

The captain was pretty old. He sat on the porch on hot days drinking lemonade out of a cool frosted pitcher. He could look past the barn to the fields, where his wife, short and thick with arms like a man, caught the forkfuls of hay. She was a good woman, she was as good as a man for work. She had helped him get all this land. People passing in cars could point out the Huniwell place. The name Huniwell meant something now. He had married too late for children but he wanted the name to go on just the same. He favored his nephew George in his will and every one except Aunt Jennie was surprised.

She took it very quietly. Without her there would have been no Huniwell place, but she bore the Captain no malice. His picture in a silver frame was on the mantel piece and when she spoke of him her voice softened. She understood the respect due the dead. Besides, the bank account had been willed to her outright. It was money earned exclusively by Aunt Jennie in cooking for summer boarders. With all her farm work, she had taken boarders, she had cooked hot meals in mid-summer and she had cooked very well.

The Wood boys had heard of Mrs. Captain Huniwell by chance. They had come up to Maine from New York wearily looking for a vacation and in Bath a drug store clerk spoke to them of the Huniwell place. They had hired a car and driven out the same evening. The house was so white and clean and cool looking over the water and the supper so hot and good, all for fourteen dollars a week, that they fell to praising. Aunt Jennie, worn out with the nursing and the death, was glad of the praise, of the work and of the talk of the young men. They weren't like her regular boarders. They had no fussy wives and no noisy children. They came from New York where there were many fine restaurants and yet they praised her food. They said she could make money anywhere with a talent like that. She turned out cream pies for them, hot dumplings and rich layer cakes. The Wood boys got fat with her care, they got brown in the sun, they went back to the city full of gratitude.

Frieda Huniwell had helped very little with the care of the Wood boys. She and George weren't in sympathy with boarders.

George had been a city fellow, a mechanic in a garage in Bath when he suddenly fell heir to the Huniwell place. He and his wife wanted to get up in the world and forget that Aunt Jennie had worked in the fields like a hired man. They wanted things to be pretty and to sit around as the summer folks did. They hated to be servants to city people. They said they were just as good as the people whose beds they must make, whose slops they must empty. Frieda didn't want to stand around while the guests were stuffing themselves, asking "You making out all right? Want more coffee?" She wanted to raise their own food and to eat it themselves, to get along as best they could and some day to have a fine car.

She had come into Aunt Jennie's house humbly enough. Both women were determined to get along together. They were always telling their friends how well they got along together. When the fad for knickers came, both women got knickers and took long hikes on the country roads. Aunt Jennie was a sight in her knickers, short and round as a butter tub, but she didn't care. She had never had time to pick up fads before. When the young folks' van load of furniture was arranged in the house, things had gradually settled themselves. Aunt Jennie had moved her things aside for Frieda's best pieces. After a while, she began to take away her own stuff, piece by piece, and store it in the attic. When she braided rugs, she put one of each kind in a chest drawer. "I'm saving this until I get my own home," she said.

"But Aunt Jennie, this is your home. You can't do that, you know you can't," Frieda said.

But Aunt Jennie kept right on putting things away and talking about her own home. She would have liked to have bought George out but she knew he wouldn't sell. There was nothing to do but wait. Now Aunt Jennie realized what a lucky thing it was that she could cook. The Wood boys had put ideas into her head. If she could get a place of her own again, she could have summer boarders like the Wood boys, young bachelors from the city who were pleased and polite and easy to do for. It would be a high class place with a screened porch and hammocks in the yard under the trees.

In the fall after the Wood boys left, she was happier than she had been in years. She was hard and round and with her new clothes, was considered a fine-looking woman. When company came on Sunday she would see to it that an old book of photo-

graphs taken when she had worked hard in the fields, was on the table. Some one would be sure to pick it up, to turn the pages over, to see pictures of Aunt Jennie on a load of hay, feeding chickens or carrying heavy milk pails, some one would call out, "Well say now, look at this, well now Aunt Jennie, you look twenty years younger. Doesn't she look twenty years younger, Fred?" And the book would go around and every one would exclaim how much younger she looked now than she had in the old days.

"I've worked hard in my day," she would say and sober for a minute. When she wasn't smiling, her face looked heavy and there was something grim about it that people didn't like to see.

Aunt Jennie didn't deny herself pleasures that winter. She went often to Bath to the movies or to shop around. She always stepped in the store on the Woolwich side to keep warm until the ferry came, and got in the way of talking to Jim Fagin. He ran a taxi route on the Woolwich side of the river but as business was slow in the winter months he spent most of his time in the store. The widow and Jim Fagin got confidential talking together. He let out that it was only circumstances that kept him from doing something big in the way of earning money. He had an old father in Woolwich and as long as the old man was alive, he was tied down. He soon began to drive out in the evenings to see Jennie Huniwell.

After Jim Fagin began to call regularly at the Huniwell place it didn't sound so funny to hear Aunt Jennie talk about a place of her own. A woman alone in the world would be foolish to keep on talking like that but if Jim Fagin meant business there might be something to it after all. The idea disturbed the young Huniwells just the same. Suppose Aunt Jennie married this Fagin? She would bring him into the house and he would be on their hands too. They didn't think Fagin was good for much, he was no hustler and even if Aunt Jennie should leave and go to a place of her own, it would be bad for them. They would owe Aunt Jennie money as half owner of the property, and whatever they made on the land or with the truck garden would have to be accounted for to her. Whatever happened, it was bad business. They were a little afraid of Aunt Jennie and also a little ashamed of their own position in her house. Any one could see that she didn't feel at home there any more. The young Huniwells kept saying it was a shame and all the time they kept nudging up on

their rights. By the second summer the young Huniwells had the say of almost everything.

But about the Wood boys they had to give in. Aunt Jennie was set on having them come to board again. She had her own special reason. She wanted Jim Fagin to hear the Wood boys praise her cooking and her talents. They had a gallant way about them that Aunt Jennie wanted Jim to see. She hoped that if Jim could see how the Wood boys appreciated her, it would make him more eager about her. She was counting a great deal on the Wood boys to hurry things along with Jim. She felt that he was pretty soft toward her and that all he needed was a final push.

Jim had come to see her regularly all winter and he stayed late. The young Huniwells would go to bed and leave Aunt Jennie and Jim all alone in the still house. They would put more wood on the fire and talk in low voices. They had a great deal in common. Jim had worked in a restaurant too, he was a pretty good chef. He had been all around the world too as under steward on a private yacht. He was full of scandals and details about the lives of the rich. His great respect for rich people was shared by the widow. She had waited on people all her life, and when she was younger had gone as helper to the cook in the Starling household in Augusta. The Starlings were very wealthy and in their house she had had to wear a uniform with a little cap. She and Jim would spend hours comparing the different ways of doing things in the different rich households they had known. They would giggle and draw their chairs closer together like a young couple; the fire would be hot, late at night she would tiptoe out and get him a nice lunch, a glass of creamy milk and thick cake with heavy frosting. Sometimes when it was very stormy, Jim would stay all night, sleeping in a little room off Aunt Jennie's. It was all very regular so far as any one knew, and if it wasn't, who was there to complain? The young Huniwells couldn't say a word about it and they knew better than not to be very polite to Jim. They figured that the best thing would be to keep Aunt Jennie satisfied just as she was, and if Jim didn't actually come into the family, so much the better for them.

The Wood boys brought another young fellow with them from New York when they came up in June. They arrived unexpectedly one night when Aunt Jennie was out riding around with Jim Fagin. Frieda got them some supper but it wasn't anything like the feed they had had the year before on their first night.

Fred and Dave Wood were explaining to Ed that it wasn't anything near as good as the old lady would do for them when Aunt Jennie sailed in with Mr. Fagin. When she saw the Wood boys she blushed and was embarrassed as a girl. The boys got up and shook hands. Aunt Jennie kept looking at Jim to see how he would take it and she could see he was impressed with the city fellows. They all sat around talking, Aunt Jennie in her new wine colored velvet dress. It was an elaborate dress and made her strong stout body look hard and bustling. Dave whispered to Ed, didn't she look just like a whore house madame now, didn't she, but Ed didn't answer because Aunt Jennie's eye was on them.

Aunt Jennie cooked some swell feeds for the Wood boys and their friend Ed. The Wood boys appreciated it but not quite so loudly as the year before. They were more preoccupied and having Ed with them, they talked more to themselves and less with the family. It offended Aunt Jennie and she cut down on the food a little. She was still counting on the Wood boys to hurry things along with Mr. Fagin and on the second day of their stay she brought a card to Dave and said, "If you boys ever need a taxi, a friend of mine, Mr. Fagin, runs a taxi service."

Dave knew from the way she talked who Mr. Fagin was, and smiled a little knowingly. "Much obliged, Aunt Jennie, we'll need a taxi this summer I guess. Fred's got a girl coming to visit over at Wiscasset pretty soon." Aunt Jennie smiled archly as if to say she knew what that meant and Dave kidded her with his eyes. She was so pleased that she gave them their favorite Washington cream pie for supper.

When Fred's girl came, the Wood boys called up Jim almost every day. They didn't seem nearly so careful of their money as they had been the year before. Night after night Jim would be away taking them over to Wiscasset and bringing them back. Aunt Jennie didn't get to see so much of him and she grew worried and cross. Things weren't working out as she had planned at all.

When he did spend an evening with her, things seemed about the same and she calmed down a little. Jim Fagin even stayed all night the way he had been doing in the winter time. When the Wood boys heard a car start up in the yard early in the morning, they looked out and saw Mr. Fagin just leaving. Ed gave a whistle, "So that's it—now what do you suppose?" The boys

couldn't figure it out. Dave said it was all regular and they just mushed but Ed thought there was more to it than that. Whatever it was, the boys agreed that there was something obscene about it. At that age, that soft as tallow, calf-love had something indecent about it.

Fred said, "It's kind of dreadful—to see her come away from the phone so darned coy. If they only weren't so darned coy." The Wood boys were a little uncomfortable and they laid the falling off of the food to Aunt Jennie's being so much in love. They began to be very discontented and among themselves they found fault with the food and with the way things were run. Frieda got on their nerves and they complained that she talked exactly as if her mouth was full of mush.

They were so often away for meals that Aunt Jennie became very indifferent about her cooking for the Wood boys. She didn't take any pride in it any more. The Wood boys were too busy chasing girls to eat or to pay compliments. Fred's girl knew other girls and the three fellows were always on the go. They would call the girls up on the telephone but it was all brisk talk, no mushy stuff. Aunt Jennie would stand in the kitchen straining to listen, mystified at the talk. What were the girls like? And the dances they went to? Mr. Fagin took the young people and what did he do when they were dancing? She had heard the Wood boys talking to Jim and they treated him as if he were a young fellow too. They consulted him as to which dance would be the most fun and one night she overheard them asking him could he get a little liquor for them. More and more Aunt Jennie felt out of it.

The young Huniwells went their way. They had a little girl and the three of them would stroll down the road toward the cemetery in the evenings, the little girl carrying a small hard nosegay to place on the grave of their benefactor, the old Captain. Left alone, longing for Jim to come, Aunt Jennie spent many evenings on the back porch looking down at the little island. The air was so clear she could see the dark heads of seals come up and then disappear. She had been the one to think of buying that little island and now it wasn't even hers. It wasn't her fault she had had no children, but because of that, the island had been taken away from her. She had married an old man and this is what had come of it. She couldn't have kids any more but she wanted a place of her own, some land. The fields were so beautiful, she longed to call them her very own. She had never really

had anything her very own. Her first husband had owned a restaurant and wanted a good worker when he married her. She had worked for him and she had worked for the captain. It was the only way that she knew. Without a man there wasn't much purpose in working. She had to have Jim. She would work hard, save money. Jim was always making excuses about his father, how he was tied to his old man and not his own boss just now. Perhaps that meant he didn't want her at all. When she thought of that, she felt kind of crazy. She was ashamed at her age to feel like that. How did the young girls keep so cool? They were so cold nowadays and when she saw Jim she melted and acted silly. Something was wrong with her, she was a fool. If she could only be high hat the way the girls were. But she didn't know how. Suppose Jim fell for one of them? But no, he wouldn't do that. He wouldn't want to work for one of them the way he would have to, he couldn't get one of them to work for him the way she would.

But the Wood boys hadn't helped her with Jim at all. They had been bad for him, had put ideas into his head. She could see it when they sat together and Jim's eyes looked at her sharper than they used to. She wanted to stop cooking for the Wood boys altogether, she had no joy in making good things for them any more.

One night it grew dark as Aunt Jennie was sitting there looking down at the little island. A car drove up and the Wood boys and Ed piled out with three girls. Then Jim got out from behind the wheel. Every one except Jim was in a bathing suit. She could see the white legs and arms in the darkness coming toward her. She got up and went into the house and they clattered in after her. When she got the lamp lighted, Jim came in blinking a little. The Wood boys introduced her to the girls. Dave began working away at the radio. They all wanted to get news of the Sharkey-Dempsey fight. They had been in swimming and then had remembered the fight. Bets had been made.

"I bet on Sharkey," said Dave smiling at Aunt Jennie. But his smile only made her feel more left out. She was all clothes, she was fat and awkward and she couldn't keep her eyes off Fred's girl in her bright green bathing suit. All that glistening flesh and Jim sitting in the midst of it, smoking a cigarette like one of the boys. But he wore clothes too, he was fat and round in his sweater. They were both old and fat and dressed and she was glad. She didn't care so long as she and Jim could be old to-

gether. She tried to get his attention but he kept his eyes on Ed's girl, who was turned toward him, half smiling.

"Gambling," Jim was saying, "that's fascinating all right. Knew a fellow in France when I was on that yacht I was telling you about. This fellow was steward or something to a high up fellow, a duke or Prince of Wales or something. This fellow was a great guy for gambling. Out every night playing. He played roulette too. Never in uniform, but dressed up in swell clothes with a cane with gold knob, and a stiff hat. He was pretty tall and all the waiters knew him. He had a system, he had, with roulette."

"They all do," said Ed, "and sometimes it works and sometimes not."

"I never win," said Ed's girl. "I played in France too. All the watering places have roulette. In Germany at Homburg. But I lose. I bet on Carpentier too with a kid that time he fought Dempsey and lost fifteen bucks. He was so handsome—I had to bet on him."

"Dempsey's had his nose fixed, he's handsome now," said Dave's girl.

"Much good it will do him," said Ed, "he can't come back."

"No, he won't come back. Once they're out, they're done for," said Fred. "He can't come back."

"I'd like to see a guy come back," said Ed's girl. "I'd like to see that."

"The way these experts have it doped out, it's bound to be wrong," said Dave. "But he might come back."

"They never come back," said Jim. "You take it when a guy's out, he's out. That's the way I figure it."

Dave stood twirling the radio disks. "Some damned choir practising." Then another twirl. He couldn't seem to get a crack about the fight. Every one was disgusted. Fred took a turn and then Ed's girl wanted to try.

Aunt Jennie sat on the edge of her chair. She felt like a stranger. The room seemed so noisy and bright, it made her dizzy. If she could only get Jim alone for a few minutes. He kept looking at the girls, he would forget her, he would even forget he wasn't so young himself. That was the way men were.

"Jim," she said, "I got some nice pie."

Jim looked at her then, a little embarrassed. Dave helped out with "Gee, Jim, you don't want to pass that up. We had some for

supper and it can't be beat." Jim grinned and said he was never one to pass up a good thing. Aunt Jennie's heavy face flushed, she got up and hurried out, brushing past the girls with her head down, coyly. Jim followed her into the kitchen. She cut a quarter of a pie and set it in front of him. He tucked right into it as she sat watching him. The kitchen table was near the window and Aunt Jennie got up and shut the door into the dining room. Beyond was the parlor where the young folks were.

"Jim, do you like the pie, Jim," she said.

"Sure," said Jim, his mouth full, "it's swell." But he hated to look at her, he sat with his head down, a little annoyed and ashamed.

"I never see you any more, Jim," she said.

"Well, I'm so busy, you see this is the busy season," he said, chewing. He couldn't think of a thing to say. It was dark outside and June bugs bumped and whizzed against the open screened window. Once on a night like this when Frieda and George had company, Aunt Jennie and Jim had sat on the porch close together. She wanted to coax him out there now, but she didn't know how. He was busy scraping his plate and now he cocked his head listening. Some of the young folks had gone outside and were standing near the car. She could see their lighted cigarettes. Jim got up, buttoning his vest.

"Well, thanks a lot for the pie," he said. She could hear him walk across the porch, down the steps.

"Naw, kid, you're all wrong," Ed was saying, "he can't come back. Once out, always out." They were still at it about the fight.

"Just the same," Ed's girl said, "I'd like to see it happen once. I'd like to see a guy come back."

GERALD SYKES

THE DEFENSE OF THE SAND FORTRESS

"Do you like roast beef?" Uncle Alfred asked.

"He only eats the outside pieces, only well-done and no fat," said my mother.

"I like Yorkshire pudding," said I.

"Well, that makes him half an Englishman anyway. Of course, it would be unjust to blame the child. Blame the father. And the mother who married the father. If it hadn't been for you, Amelia"—he was my mother's uncle as well as mine—"we might have had a sound unEnglish child."

"Do you know why mother's laughing?" I cried. "Because she's ashamed she married papa!"

But I had surmised my error while I made it and certified it now. It became impossible to bait me to a single further comment, a sob might have clung underneath a word and escaped. After five minutes censorship that I deplored myself—during Uncle Alfred's presumable silent derision—as awkward and unreasonable of me, when an opportunity came, the imminence of friends, which I would rather have disdained while I snatched it, I got up and ran down the beach into the ocean.

If it were ever interrogated by my imagination as to the life rich people lead my stinted memory would be obliged to rely altogether upon two summer months that I spent at thirteen as the guest of my greatuncle Alfred—or, really, of his son, my second cousin Roderick. On June twenty-fourth I walked home with my mother from church where we had offered the carfare that walking saved, irritably ridiculing our small Middlewestern city and the plight of our poverty; on July first we rode home from church in Southampton in an imported automobile driven

by my cousin's chauffeur while I amused myself counting the windows in the third stories of the summer homes we passed. The interval week disclosed to me for the first time the ocean and my mother's relatives. I am only now aware of the unusual part the latter had already played invisibly in my childhood. After appreciating my father's financial failure I had founded the tradition, upon a costly Christmas toy, of their superlative wealth; and when in time I discerned my father's eccentricity and felt my share of his general discredit I needed only a rotogravure clipping of my cousin Leila in her bridal veil on which to establish the ancient normality and esteem of my mother's side of the family. When the young creator of his antecedents came East at last, as their critic, though his paternal ordeal had led him to doubt habitually whatever was his own, it was impossible not to find them wealthier and more estimable than any of those whom he had envied at home. There was no time to exult in this; all his wits were ordered at once to the encounters that had already begun with his greatuncle.

"It looks grim," said Uncle Alfred over my shoulder of a fortress I had built of sand, standing behind me on the beach.

"Why, I think it looks fancy!" I said.

"Oh no, it is grey and severe and grim. A fortress wouldn't look fancy."

"You're right, it looks grim," I said. His single correction led me to eclipse my view with his at once, although beforehand the fortress had appeared to me as an ornamental plaything rather than a forbidding defense.

"What are you doing!" he asked with disappointment.

"This is Big Bertha." I punched my fist through a cool battlement. A partial bombardment seemed to oblige demolition, but when my fortress was scattered in ruins I felt disturbed. It would have been preferable to let the neighboring sea, which had already filled the moat, tide in without anger and dissolve my conical turrets. "I guess I lost my temper over being wrong about fancy," I confessed to Uncle Alfred. The artillery had sprinkled sand on his shoes. "You don't know how sorry I am."

"When you lose your temper you mustn't apologize for it immediately afterwards. You will be very unhappy if you can't lose it altogether. I have noticed your uncertainty before," he said.

"I know where I get that from! I get it from papa!"

"Your father never questioned his temper in his life."

My opinion changed at once. "You're right! you're right!"

He was silent; I imagined his contempt.

"You don't like my father, do you?" I asked.

"Of course I do," he replied.

Once again I was left in the company of an error I had just made as my greatuncle departed, halting far up the dimpled beach at a striped canopy to acknowledge the address of John Drew. (We bathed at Easthampton.) Although Uncle Alfred had appeared hardly ever in public after his bankruptcy, both because of a special sensibility on this point and his declining health, he seemed to be widely acquainted still.—My cousin Anne explained after his death that his exceptional interest in me had probably caused him to visit the beach so often that summer for the first time in several years.—Does it seem remarkable that his simple affirmation was enough to make me reproach myself with a tactless and unfair question, when only the night before in bed my mother—I came to hers to sleep each night although I had been assigned my own first private guest room—had told me that Uncle Alfred had detested my father ever since suspecting him years before, from some remark of hers, of hitting her in the face? It must be considered that my great natural self-doubt had greatly increased in daily conflicts with a faultless opponent. It had become my mind's instinct to cede him each issue arising at once; I did not consider it from my own point of view until hours or days afterwards. And even then his opinions, recollected, were able to resist the pressure of my vision, which I thought was deeper than his; although sometimes I was convinced that what he had said was superficial and other times, as in the case of whether he liked my father, I knew that what he had said was false. When what he had said seemed superficial it was so worded —or my mind was so habituated to surrender—that at length it appeared the best plan to relinquish my superior but inexpressible vision for the simple surface truth that he had pronounced, which deepened upon reconsideration. When what he had said was false—whenever my father was concerned—I appreciated his energetic refusal to let personal dislike lead him to interfere with my natural childish love, especially since he probably imagined, I imagined, that he had already hurt my feelings with the question about roast beef, etc. . . . It may be thought that these skirmishes in criticism, always defeats, were painful to me and

that I avoided them; on the contrary I looked forward to each new encounter with pleasure and with confidence. I believed every time that I was going to perceive the inner significance of our subject and reveal it to my uncle and win his respect and, since frequently sensitiveness made me doubt it, his affection. Our subjects were most regularly the few small paintings that he had at Southampton of his New York collection which, my mother said, he had once been obliged to sell and his son Roderick had bought back again for him where possible.

I rose from the sand where I had been lying on my back, my gaze zealously purified of any mar upon heaven—passing bather, bird, or cloud—and pursued the retreat of a wave down the drying beach into the spume. When the water was chest-high, where the white foam of advancing breakers loomed over my head, it was necessary for me to cling to the lifeline because I had not yet learned to swim. After noon I left the ocean and went to my bathhouse which my cousin Anne's fiancé, Freddy Stirling, shared with me for a few weeks. There his lieutenant's uniform—it was 1917—was hanging. Although our country had joined the War only a few months before I was already an expert on military insignia and when Freddy came in I showed him that while he buttoned his tunic with the national eagle the two tiny buttons at the sides of his garrison cap still bore the state militia seal. He regarded this as a prodigy of observation and reported it when we were dressed to Anne.

"Why, didn't you know that he knows everything?" she said to Freddy. "He's just like his father."

"Of course you're not exactly like your father. You know what I mean," she said to me.

"We're all awfully fond of him. I wish I were half as clever," she said to Freddy.

I smiled as though she had flattered me.

We joined my mother and Uncle Alfred and all five of us rode home together. I sat at Uncle Alfred's feet. As we were passing a model farm I exclaimed to him: "I hate farms! don't you? They're always so dirty."

"That one seems to be the last word in cleanliness."

My disloyal eye looked out again and discerned a serried sprinkler system and workers in white uniforms—only items that would affirm his remark and negate my own.

"Now if Gaddy were here he would be telling us how many

more potatoes can be grown to the acre with sprinklers than without," my mother said.

I read the lines of Freddy's muzzle after my father's ridiculous nickname had been pronounced.

"Yes, Gaddy always knows everything," said Anne.

"I wish he knew more about making money," my mother said.

I wondered how she could make two such blunders in Freddy's presence: first to use my father's nickname and then imply, almost state, his business unsuccess. In the midst of this painful consideration it was possible for me, upon an inconsistent recollection, to exclaim suddenly to Uncle Alfred: "Did you ever hear about the time papa told some man on the train all about pari-mutuel betting and then found out that the man owned a stable of horses!"

Uncle Alfred's hesitation half a second to reply was enough to fire my conjecture that he considered what I had said unfaithful of a son about his father. Also, it seemed to me that I might seem to the others, especially Anne, unboyish in using the expression pari-mutuel. (When I feared appearing too thoughtful to older people I chose recognizably boyish terms and themes.) Also, I did not fail to notice that no one besought me to continue my anecdote.—It was at this point in my reversals that I employed my earliest conscious stratagem: forbearance from any speech. It was within my powers to hold myself in check until after Freddy told a story ridiculing the English major who had taught him trench warfare at Plattsburg. Then my prohibition expired.

"I think English people are silly! don't you?" I exclaimed to Uncle Alfred and once again believed immediately afterwards that he considered me treasonous and unfaithful to my father.

"All of them?" he inquired.

I surrendered without elucidation. "Oh yes, you're right! you're right! you're right!" I exclaimed.

That night in bed a recollection of the backyard war garden at home that my father required me to work despite my abnormal reluctance led me to recall the model farm that we had passed in the afternoon. From the memory of my tender finical fingers inserting seeds beneath dry clods sprang a conviction so personal that not even such an inveterate mistruster of self could doubt it: that in reality all farms were dirty and I had been at fault in surrendering so soon to Uncle Alfred who in seeing the

model farm's cleanliness had seen only its obvious and deceptive side. I believed likewise that I had been fundamentally right about the sand fortress and on several other occasions as well where I had yielded to him a truer vision for a rounder word. This last thought gave me what I considered a clew to a foremost principle of his critical technique: to describe by the most widely defensible term. (To describe the model farm as clean would be acceptable anywhere; to describe it as dirty, though it really was, would require special explanation and was liable to dispute.)

On the beach the next morning I awaited our daily encounter expectantly. The night had endorsed me with sober reasoning. It had been one of the precepts I had formed in bed to let my opponent commence the attack, but at length through impatience I was led to remark, as casually as possible: "What do you think of the sea?"

"I don't understand what you mean."

"If you had to find some one word to describe it what would you say it was?"

"I don't know."

"Can't you think of some one word?" I persisted.

"It seems to me that the only way it could be described by one word would be in relation to something else—in some context."

"Yes, but wouldn't it be possible to think of one word that would fit it all the time?"

"What is the word you have in mind?"

"I asked you first."

"But you thought of the answer before you thought of the question."

This, I let myself believe, absolutely constrained me to deliver my secret. "The sea? In one word?" I said after a pause. "Why, I would say the sea was wide."

He smiled. "This is another time when you have been planning the night before what you were going to say to me to-day."

His insight was more humbling than astonishing. "Well, anyway, I admit I'll never be able to call things by one word the way you can!" I exclaimed.

"In that case you shouldn't attempt what you know you can't do."

I had not expected my modesty to be cashed so soon. "Don't you think I ever will be able to?" I asked, extremely disappointed.

"No," he said after reflection.

"Why won't I?"

"Because of something within."

"Do you mean my father?"

"Your father? That means I have hurt your feelings again. Perhaps your father's blood will be your greatest advantage. Who knows?"

This cheered me very much. "You know, I thought the same thing myself last night about the combination of blood," I confided.

Roderick whom business had previously kept each weekend in New York was able to come to Southampton for a few days in August. Mother had told me that he had made a fortune in Wall Street, where Uncle Alfred had lost his, reestablishing the family after five years' obscurity (when to appear as though able to afford to leave the city during the summer months they boarded their house between May and October and passed in and out the servants' entrance). At thirty Roderick was wealthy; he had made our vacation possible and had even offered to free my mother from my father with an annuity. To me, going upon my mother's Western portrayal, his generosity was as traditional and as much to be expected as his magnificent height, and neither disappointed me on being seen with my own eyes for the first time. But it was also the first time that my eyes had noticed the payment of homage; he received it from my mother, from Anne, from Freddy, from at least a dozen women, from every one except Uncle Alfred; and in the end, although he admired me, complimenting me once memorably upon knowing the percentage of a broker's commission, I became deeply envious of Roderick. I pointed out minor flaws in his character to my mother and insisted unnecessarily that I preferred his father to him. This did not affect her admiration, which I saw was reciprocal and genuine by their pleasure when it was found that they could arrange to pass the tiresome journey to New York on the same train. (She had been called home by my father in an emergency that later proved to be not really exigent. I was left in Southampton to stay two weeks longer, or until the opening of high school which I entered that fall.)

On the beach the morning after their departure I was surprised to find that Uncle Alfred had been aware of my envy of Roderick. When I questioned him concerning Roderick's success he said: "Remember, he is thirty and you are thirteen. Let that

be your consolation. And don't accept the usual notions of success too readily."

"Why, wouldn't you call Roderick a success?" I asked.

"Perhaps he couldn't be considered so."

This made me recall Roderick's humility before his father, and every one else's in the same presence—the humility which no one seemed to have difficulty in feeling except me.

One day Anne said to me in surprise that I had disputed a point with Uncle Alfred: "Why, didn't you know that he is always right?" This was the expression of more than her pride; it was a discovery that must have absorbed her attention at one time in the same way that it was absorbing mine. It dwelt in me so much of those two months that now I can remember my struggles first to deny it and later to accept it much more vividly than, for example, the sea which has become three or four darkening retinal photographs. After a time I abandoned my stratagems and all other efforts toward resistance and rebuttal and admitted—as the rest of the world did, it appeared, with no loss of independence—that every opinion he uttered was right. Next I rediscovered points at which his character differed from mine, positions he took that it would have been impossible for me to take; and again became his critic. My hope mounting, I found him rather insensitive, too highly polished, and even heartless. Then I had to readmit that I had merely envied his polish for a time and that his extraordinary insight was the result of two things, hypersensitiveness and fullness of heart. In the end I returned again always to my greatuncle's greatness and its injustice to me.

On my last morning in Southampton, at the breakfast table, I had a dispute with Anne over Roderick because she had referred to his discernment as a judge of paintings.

"I don't see how just because he's made enough money to buy some good paintings it means that he's a good judge of them," I argued.

"I suppose I imagine he's perfect at everything," she said.

"Why? because he's your brother?"

"No."

"Because he's done so much for you?"

"Maybe that's it."

"That isn't any reason!" I began. I had recalled that Uncle Alfred, although his dependent, had not hesitated to make a

statement not wholly congratulating Roderick. But I feared to express this argument and checked myself. "Oh well, maybe you're right."

"What were you going to say?" she insisted.

"Nothing."

"What was it?"

"Nothing!"

"What was it?"

"Well: what about Uncle Alfred?"

"What do you mean?"

"Isn't he supported by Roderick? The other day he said that maybe Roderick couldn't be called—considered—a success. I'll bet he'd tell you I'm a better judge of paintings than Roderick. I'll bet he'd rather talk to me any day."

It was my last remark that made me abruptly conscious of Uncle Alfred's presence and of what he might be thinking; but Anne had heard me no further than my first.

"Why! I never heard of such an unfair thing to say!" she protested. "Didn't you know that father has always had his own resources? Why, without him Roderick never would have had anything!"

Uncle Alfred's special sensibility on precisely this point was demonstrated by his failure to correct her lie. He merely silenced her and declared in a straitened tone of justice that what I had said had been natural enough to suppose and fair enough in an argument to cite. A few hours later, although it was my first unaccompanied journey by train and we had been inseparable companions before, he said that he felt too unwell to ride to the railroad station and see me off. I wrote him on the day of my return, but he never replied; he was in bed, Anne explained. In October he died. I naturally assumed that his Achilles tendon had been found at last by the parting shot in a minor coastal warfare whose bitterness, despite his amazing perception, he probably never imagined.

MORLEY CALLAGHAN

AN AUTUMN PENITENT

JOE HARDING, at forty-seven, was plump and soft and a little bald, and having an easy time in Eastmount because he was a carpenter by trade, and there were only odd jobs for him. He had a large garden and carefully cultivated potato plants, but his wife, Lottie, was interested mainly in vegetables, like beets, peas and tomatoes. Joe Harding's sixteen year old niece, Ellen, every morning took the radial into the city to high school.

At one time the macadam highway from the city had extended only as far as the radial terminal a mile or so west of the village. The natural road was through the village in a line from the radial tracks down a sloping road between two heights of land, the road dipping down to an old river, its bed worn into a flat stretch of land. Houses were built along the road in the valley. Two roads crossed this main road and houses had been built at the corners and a little ways up the intersections as if people had intended these new roads to be streets one day. The main road crossed the river and climbed up the hill on the other side of the valley to the macadam highway, a handsome new road house was there on the highway.

Down the river below the old Eastmount road was the big new high level bridge, massive steel and cement work spanning the whole valley. The new macadam road curved in an arc from the radial terminal along the height of land, across the high level bridge, missing the village on the ancient road through the valley.

On Friday evening after an early supper, Lottie, her white waist open at the throat, was slowly washing supper dishes, a

band of moisture on her forehead. Ellen, drying dishes, did not seem so hot. Joe sat by the window, looking indifferently into Henry's yard next door, at Lou Henry and her sloppy old mother squatting on their haunches on the back doorstep, knees hunched up to their chins. Looking directly at Lottie he saw that she was hurrying, excited because Hodgins the young man from the Baptist College in the city was holding the first important service in the old barn down the road.

Ellen hung up the dish towel on the pipe behind the stove and walked into the parlor, looking for something to do. Watching her, Joe knew she wasn't interested in going to service in the barn, and was pleased, and turned again to the window, but suddenly he felt uneasy, thinking of all the words the young evangelist might use while she sat on a bench for an hour listening to him. He didn't like thinking of it, and anyway, was sure nothing would happen.

"Here's the paper boy," he said, going to the kitchen door. The boy left two papers. Joe went into the front room and taking off his shoes stretched himself on the lounge near the window, preparing to enjoy himself. He started with the police court news, turning later to the front page, then to the sporting page, reading every news item. He read slowly, but when recounting a murder trial, a political speech, or even a story of a parade, he felt that he had been close to these people who got their names in the papers and he was caught in a stream of life swimming around him.

It was getting dark in the front room so he selected five or six stories from the papers. Putting on his shoes he went into the kitchen. He sat down at the kitchen table. Mrs. Harding was combing her hair in front of the mirror over the sink.

"Listen Lottie," he said. "This is worth reading." He spread the paper on the table.

He read one of the six stories selected from the papers. Lottie listened, commenting tersely, while she combed her hair. They talked about the story, a man had imprisoned his young wife in his cellar after binding and gagging her and had disappeared. The imprisoned wife had no reasonable explanation of her husband's actions. Joe looked at the matter from all angles as if he understood the difficulty between the young woman and her husband. Then he read another story.

Almost every night he read stories from the papers to Lottie

and Ellen. He liked it better if Ellen were there because her imagination was lively and she was emotional.

After reading the stories he said casually. "I guess I'll go and sit on the front porch. May go down the road for a little while."

He sat on the front porch. There were no sounds on the road. Looking over the tops of houses on the road, he could see the high level bridge spanning the valley, an automobile moving across, then he wondered where Ellen had gone after drying the dishes. She might have gone over to see Doris Kremer, he thought, remembering how he had seen the two of them last night when he came home from the hotel. Ellen had been talking to a young fellow under a light on the road. They had walked down the road still under the light, but going toward Fraser's orchard. He had felt like hurrying after them to tell the fellow to go chase himself. She had passed out of the light into the shadow and looked full grown. The fellow might have been Zip Foster who smoked cigars and tried to interest older men around the hotel with smutty stories about young girls in the neighborhood. Zip wore a derby hat when he went into the city. Joe could still hear his loud laugh accompanying the story about poor Katie MacIntyre.

Down the road, someone was standing at the entrance to the barn, and watching him, Joe's thoughts were interrupted. He had helped fix up the barn, his carpentry useful in the making of rough benches. They had worked after supper. The tall barn, big and old, was back a ways from where the road began to climb up the hill to the roadhouse and almost opposite the Harding's. The barn was a stone's throw from the river and in the night time could hardly be seen from the road, overshadowed as it was by one of the wooded hills, humping up in the valley. The board walls were weather warped and a wind blew through the cracks. The barn smelt of manure, though horses had not been in it for a year.

Before it had got dark, Ellen and Doris Kremer, a skinny dark girl, had come over from Kremer's place to watch the men fixing the barn. Ellen's dress, a little tight at the bosom, outlined her breast, and he remembered clearly how she had leaned against the door. He felt uneasy.

Lottie called from the kitchen and he answered almost nervously. He went into the kitchen. Lottie smiled encouragingly,

pleased because he was going with them to the service. She looked good in her black silk dress with the long sleeves, and her hair parted in the center. He put on his coat. Then he heard Ellen coming downstairs and wondered why he had thought she had gone out.

2.

The three of them walked down the road to the barn. Many people coming along the road nodded to Lottie for it was understood Hodgins relied on her judgment and thought her an excellent woman. Lottie bowed politely and gracefully. There was a warm glow in the sky. It would not be really dark for an hour, but in the barn it was almost dark. The windows were small and far apart. Joe and Lottie and Ellen sat on a bench three rows from the front.

On the platform, enlarged since Joe had helped erect it, were two rows of empty chairs in an arc. Three lanterns swinging from a beam at the roof and two lamps on posts at each side of the barn, gave a pale yellow light. The horsey smell had not left the barn and seemed to come from under the rough worn floor. People came in the wide door, walking uncertainly, unaccustomed as yet to the rough benches and the stable odors and the yellow lights at the roof. Joe knew all these people who sat down awkwardly and whispered.

Mr. Hodgins smiling with agreeable determination came in with Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Simpson. Most of the benches were soon filled. Over a hundred people sat on the hard benches and watched Mr. Hodgins smile encouragingly at Harvey Simpson and take the short steps to the platform.

Joe said to Ellen, "Do you know how they go ahead?" He didn't know why he whispered.

"We sing soon," Ellen said, not too seriously.

Hodgins began to talk pleasantly about the progress of evangelical work in the village and how it was time for many to make an open profession of faith. The young man cleared his throat, turned quickly the pages of a hymn book and nodded encouragingly to Mrs. Kremer, sitting at the piano on the floor to the right of the platform, her hand holding down and creasing a page in the hymn book. The piano looked simply splendid in the barn, Joe thought. Everybody stood up, coughing and clearing throats. Mrs. Kremer pounded a chord, looked hard at Mr.

Hodgins, nodded, and then looked encouragingly at the people on the benches. Hodgins started the singing, pumping his arm up and down regularly, vigorously.

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold."

Joe did not have a good voice but made a gruff friendly noise in his throat. Lottie and Ellen shared the same hymn book, Lottie singing seriously, her voice rising strongly. Ellen had a good voice, Joe thought.

"But one was out in the hills far away."

Mr. Hodgins began to talk in a low confidential tone and Joe counted the chairs on the platform. Twenty-five chairs on the platform. Joe glanced at Lottie sitting stiffly on the hard bench, but Hodgins' rising voice cleared away his thoughts. Hodgins, a young man at the University, had thought only of having his hair slicked back. "I used to think a good deal of my hair," he said sadly, his large hand brushing back the black hair standing up stiffly. His face was sallow in the lamplight. At one time he had flaunted himself before women, he said. In the even tone of his voice the word "women" had an emphasis like the crack of a whip.

Joe saw Hodgins lean forward, his lips moving quickly. Flinging his arms wide, he offered to lay bare his soul. At one time he had kept company with a girl in her teens who was very fond of him. That girl's father had one evening accused him of leading her into dark places where the young soul longed for the fleshpots. He had said to the father of the girl. "I haven't dragged her down, but I will lift her up in spite of you," and he had lifted her up and was going to marry the girl.

Joe at first thought he was smiling goodnaturedly but couldn't prevent himself thinking seriously of Ellen, and the evening they had walked down to the beach. For a single moment he thought of Hodgins and himself as one, then resenting it irritably, he looked around seriously, almost believing people were fully aware that Hodgins was practically talking to him alone. Remote, and far away, he saw himself standing up there beside Hodgins and talking rapidly, and he muttered to him-

self, "For God's sake, don't be such a damn fool." Then he got in the frame of mind where he could see and hear distinctly without feeling the force of words.

Everybody on the benches was interested in Hodgins' one time proximity to sins of the flesh. He was vaguely pleased to hear Hodgins had been accused of carnalities, and feeling more comfortable on the bench, wished he could have seen the girl.

Hodgins was telling a story about a little boy from Galilee, his voice controlled, pauses giving time and movement to his words. Joe, looking out of the corner of his eye at Lottie and the people around him, expected something to happen, everybody was leaning forward watching Hodgins. Joe was getting intensely interested in the story of the little boy from Galilee.

Hodgins droned rhythmically. "He went out and was beaten and stoned and was robbed. He went out and was beaten and stoned and was robbed." His face yellow in the lamplight assumed a fierce expression, but his voice grew softer. Joe fidgeting with his hat thought something inside him would crack. "What would you have done?" Hodgins asked mildly. "You would have cringed," he said suddenly. He yelled, "You would have cringed, cringed." He bawled, "You would have cringed."

Joe nervously avoided Hodgins' bulging eyes. Many people in shame bowed their heads, admitting they would have cringed. A few women crying softly, muttered, and shook their heads sadly. Joe wished Lottie would do something, move or speak, instead of sitting motionless and tense. Hodgins was talking of hell.

Had anyone in the barn grasped fully the significant warning and awful terror in the threat of hell to the wilful sinner whose brazen carnalities jeered at an omnipotent God who would exact a vengeance awful in its completeness and just to the smallest degree. Had anyone heard the screams of the suffering in a hospital? Had anyone beheld the skin being slowly eaten away from the flesh of a mortal afflicted with leprosy or a corpse green and dank, eaten by worms and rotting away?

A woman gasped and Joe wished he was outside. Hodgins turned quickly to Mrs. Kremer and told her to strike up a hymn. The hymn was started nervously and taken up eagerly. Between the stanzas the piano had a hollow lonesome sound in the big barn.

Hodgins walked back and forth on the platform, his eyes

on the boards, his hand slowly brushing through his hair. "Beaten and stoned and robbed and crucified," he was muttering while they sang. "And yet what would they out there have done?"

"Bringing in the Sheaves, Bringing in the Sheaves."

Before the hymn was over Hodgins stopped moving restlessly on the platform and shouted, "Who will walk with me in the path of the Master? Who? Who? With me? With me?"

Lottie was breathing heavily, shifting her weight, getting ready to stand up and go forward, her eyes rolling, and showing the whites. She stood up trembling, but Mrs. Harvey Simpson got up quickly and went forward to Hodgins who leaned from the platform, waiting with his hand stretched out. He took her by the hand and helped her up to the platform. "A helping hand to you, sister," he said.

Joe saw Lottie's face flush angrily, jealous of Mrs. Harvey Simpson, the first to be saved. Lottie sat down sullenly, then recovering her composure got up and followed Mrs. Simpson to the platform. She sat next to Mrs. Simpson on one of the chairs in the arc.

Ellen's face was colorless and her hands were folded in her lap. She made no effort to follow Aunt Lottie and did not look at Uncle Joe.

A young girl with pale face and big blue eyes went up to the platform and sat down beside Mrs. Harvey Simpson and Lottie. Hodgins kept urging all to come forward. The lamplight at the roof flickered and shadows waved over the platform. Hodgins started to sing a hymn in a loud voice and Mrs. Kremer played the piano. Everybody stood up mechanically and started singing. Joe, wondering what Hodgins would do next, heard him yell, "Who will come? Who will come?" as he stepped down from the platform.

Harvey Simpson went up to the platform smiling weakly at Hodgins who helped him eagerly, the first man to go forward. It was encouraging. Joe had never liked Harvey Simpson very much.

Hodgins stood in the aisle repeating rapidly, "I want young men, strong young men," but there were few young men in the barn.

The four on the platform looked straight out over the heads of the people standing up, seeing nothing, apparently hearing nothing.

Hodgins moved along the aisle, then stood still suddenly realizing that the hymn was over and everybody was standing up. He wheeled and stuck out his arm at a short, red-faced farmer standing near the aisle. "How about you?" he said, pointing his finger full in the man's face. "Will you? Will you? Will you walk with me?" The farmer's hand twitched at his side and his lips moved weakly. "I dunno," he said hopelesly, but changed his mind and walked up to the platform and sat down nervously beside the others.

Joe wanted to sit down, or go out and walk home and read the paper. He was sorry he had come. He was afraid Hodgins would point his finger at him and Lottie would be offended when before all the people he refused to move. He had his mind made up to refuse to sit on the platform.

They were all standing up, not certain what to do. Hodgins walked back to the platform and impatiently waited for someone to go forward. He stood there with his arms stretched out, silent. Three women walked up to the platform.

"A helping hand to you sister and you and you, too."

Joe wanted to sit down. He heard muttering, and a woman crying and sniffling, and looked around at the women on benches. Beside him a thin woman, gripping and twisting her fingers, muttering incoherently, could not bring herself to go up to the platform. "Oh Lord, dear Lord," she said. Joe knew she was trying but she could not move toward the platform. The thin woman, so miserable, and Lottie sitting on the platform in the depressing silence, made him unhappy. In the barn there were over a hundred people and he wondered why only ten had gone up to the platform. Some men were pale and some women were crying but they would not answer Hodgins' insistent appeal.

After singing and exhorting and praying for three quarters of an hour Hodgins had twenty people on the platform, filling most of the chairs in the arc. One of the women was humming audibly, "We will be saved, we will be saved."

The restless excitement had gone out of Joe's thoughts, and he knew everybody in the barn felt more comfortable because Hodgins was apparently satisfied and interested mainly in the twenty willing souls on the platform. He walked across the plat-

form counting slowly, the eyes of the twenty following him closely.

Leaning over to Ellen, Joe whispered jokingly, "It ain't too late yet, Ellen." He wanted to be funny so she would not be too seriously interested, but Ellen shook her head doggedly, watching Aunt Lottie intently. Then she watched Hodgins moving across the platform. Joe felt silly and out of place, sitting there on the bench when everybody else appeared so interested. He had been interested earlier in the evening when something inside had been moved by music and words and Hodgins' arm beating time, but it was all gone now and he was losing interest.

The twenty on the platform were told to move close to the edge and all knelt down together. Hodgins knelt down too and they prayed, repeating slowly Hodgins' words, but Joe feeling suddenly lonely and unhappy, wished he could have taken Lottie home away from the platform and the people in the arc, but he knew she was pleased to be there and had looked forward to it.

"It's no good now, it's all over," he said to Ellen.

"Sh, sh, sh," Ellen whispered.

The prayer finished, Hodgins arose and the others arose and sat on their chairs. Hodgins called for a certain hymn. Mrs. Kremer struck the piano keys twice and everybody was ready. On the platform and on the floor they stood up and sang the hymn.

They came out of the barn quietly. The twenty men and women on the platform hardly spoke to each other until they had stepped down from the platform and were outside. Hodgins was tired but satisfied. Joe and Ellen, standing together at the door, waited for Lottie to come down from the platform. Lottie looked tired but smiled happily at Joe and Ellen.

Joe took Lottie's arm to comfort her, then noticed that Ellen had moved away.

She was a few yards up the path, talking to Doris Kremer who had not been to church. Doris was coaxing Ellen to do something, pulling her sleeve, explaining impatiently. Ellen hesitated and would have followed Aunt Lottie and Uncle Joe who were passing, but Doris held her arm. Lottie, passing, reminded Ellen that it looked like rain.

They walked slowly along. Up the hill further he could see a pale haze of light hanging over the city of Toronto. Someone was coming down the road, footfalls sounding loud, and he did

not feel like meeting anybody. He noticed the Anglican Church steeple sticking up over the crescent curve of the hill. The hooting of the ten o'clock train curving along the lakefront irritated him. He remembered vaguely that his father was buried somewhere on the hill, a good Anglican who had not wanted him to marry Lottie, a Methodist. Nobody in the village now cared very much about religion at marriage unless it was Mrs. Moore who never forgot she was a Catholic.

He was holding Lottie's arm firmly, aware that she was making some inconsequential remark, but was experiencing a weary feeling of disgust, something like he had felt years ago when, a young man, he had been sitting on his bed reading of three trials he had been following closely. Three girls escaping from a city jail had accidentally strangled the matron. He had sympathized with the girls until the trial when the papers told they were diseased. In the same paper he read of the trial in Windsor of a pretty young wife who had shot her illicit lover on account of becoming diseased. In another part of the paper was the story of a young man who had killed his wife rather than have her bear a child who, too, would have inherited the taint, and his head had felt queer, and then he had got very dizzy.

He held Lottie's arm much tighter, and noticing it, she smiled. They were at the front porch. They went through the kitchen. Joe lit the lamp. Lottie put her hat on the table and sat on a chair. Joe looked at Lottie and decided to be agreeable.

"I think I'd like a nice cup of tea," she said thoughtfully.

"All right. Maybe you got some cake, too."

"Look in the pantry, eh Joe."

Joe went out to the pantry and returned with a big piece of layer cake left over from supper.

"I'm kind of hungry," he said.

"Not all that, Joe."

"No use saving it."

"It might do to-morrow, put a little back."

Joe cut the big piece in two and put one half back in the pantry. Lottie did not want any cake.

"How would you like to light the heater and put the water on?" she said.

He filled the big copper kettle with water and lit the oil stove. He took the tea pot, shook it and poured a little water

in to move the dregs from the bottom and went to shake the pot in the sink.

"Go outside Joe," Lottie said.

Joe went out through the woodshed to the door step. He jerkily shook the pot and threw the tea leaves in the yard.

They sat down at the table and drank tea, but Joe didn't feel hungry and couldn't eat the cake. Lottie talked about the Harvey Simpsons and Joe listened patiently.

"I thought I heard rain on the windows," she said looking up peacefully.

He said suddenly, "Ellen should be in. You know she should be."

They heard the front door open and Ellen came along the hall into the kitchen. He did not look directly at her but knew she had been hurrying. She was puffing. A few drops of rain had fallen on her fawn dress. The toes of her canvas shoes were wet.

"Where you been, girlie?"

"Over at the barn. Doris and I, we took a walk. It's not ten yet."

She went over to the window and pressed her face against the pane. "It's sure raining hard, we just missed it," she said.

Lottie asked casually where Doris and Ellen had gone walking and Ellen, still looking out the window, answered evasively. Joe was disappointed, a little excited because she had answered evasively.

The rain came down hard. It pattered against the windows and drummed on the woodshed. A wind had come up from the lake.

"You better see all the windows are closed, Joe," Lottie said.

Joe got up slowly. "I'll have to light another lamp," he said.

He lit the lamp and closed all the windows, and the three of them sat near the stove, as they did in the cold winter. He began to feel uncomfortable because Ellen didn't look happy or have much to say. He would have liked to talk to her but could think of nothing interesting and she wouldn't look at him. Three of them sitting together around the stove and Lottie the only one at all comfortable. Everything had been satisfactory until Ellen came in. The tea had been good. Lottie was all right. He had wanted Ellen to come in but now he was disappointed

and sure Hodgins, who had no business talking that way, was responsible for Ellen's unhappiness. It was all right for old women, but a young girl had to live and enjoy life.

Lottie yawned and stretched lazily in the chair, very tired. She got up and said a good sleep was just what she needed. Joe thought suddenly that he would be alone in the kitchen with Ellen, and would have a long talk with her but she said casually that she might as well go to bed too.

Lottie and Ellen went upstairs together. Joe stroked his cheek with his right hand, and decided that if he were only hungry he would feel better. He got up and went into the pantry to cut a big slice of cake, then lit the oil stove again. Restless and tired of waiting, he poured tea and some milk in a cup and put in sugar. The water was starting to boil. "That stove's no good," he thought. "Lottie should have a new stove to cook on, a big oil stove." He poured the water in the cup and sipped it. Too much sugar. He threw it in the sink and made another cup of tea to suit him. He sat down at the table and ate the cake slowly for he was not really hungry. The tea tasted good. Lottie always had good tea. He was a long time eating the piece of cake.

So he could get into bed quickly he took off his shirt in the kitchen and put his foot on the stove damper to unlace his boot. One of his shoelaces was knotted, and he swore quietly. The knot bothered him but he got it. Carrying his shirt in his arm and in his stocking feet he went upstairs. Lottie was asleep.

3.

Joe stretched himself flat on the sloping roofs, heels against a scantling rest. The sun was not shining on this north side of the roof and it was cool lying on the shingles where the roof caved from age. Joe had re-shingled a good section of that side of the roof, the new shingles standing out like an ochre blotch on the dark brown of the old shingles. Lying on the roof, he liked the fresh cedar smell from the new wood.

He had done a good four hours work for Milburn, two in the morning, two in the afternoon, and was in no hurry to go down from the roof. If Hen Milburn had been at home he would have gone to talk to him, but he didn't feel like talking to Mrs. Milburn who never had much to say. Joe looked down into MacIntyre's back yard next door; a queer family, one of

the queerest in Eastmount, but nobody bothered about them. It occurred to Joe a man could go on doing anything he wanted to do in Eastmount, providing he had been doing it for some time.

Katie MacIntyre came into the yard to hang clothes on the line. She'd pin a part of a garment on the line, holding a clothespin in her mouth for another part. In her big apron, uncombed dun colored hair, her indefinite features and freckled cheeks twisted out of shape by clothespins in her mouth, Katie was not much to look at.

Joe wondered could Katie see him lying there on the roof. Katie was interesting, in a disreputable way, of course. Everybody knew she had been taken down to the beach, up in the hills and in her own parlor by most men in the village, but never nasty, never charging a cent, she rarely offended even religious people in the village. Katie was no good but everybody had long ago decided she was no good; there could be no difficulty or fuss about her. And she didn't look so bad with her face powdered and hair tidied.

Katie, looking up at the sun, the clothespins in her mouth, saw Joe Harding on Milburn's roof. She took the clothespins from her mouth, used one on the line, and waved her hand at him. "Having a rest, Mr. Harding," she said.

Joe sat up. "Hello, Katie, how are you?"

"Why don't you come down if you're through?" she said.

"It's nice up here, it's comfortable."

Katie moved over from the clothes line to the apple tree. "Do you want an apple?" she said, reaching up to a branch.

"They're too green, ain't they, Katie?"

She picked an apple from the tree and tossed it up to the roof but it rolled in a wide arc beyond his reach, falling off the front of the roof. Katie tossed up another apple that bounced over Joe's head but he caught it rolling down. He didn't want to sink his teeth too quickly in the hard green apple, his plate might come loose. Sitting up he scraped the skin with his teeth and took a small bite. It had a sour unpleasant taste, but he didn't like to throw it away because Katie was watching him.

"You ain't got any salt down there, eh Katie?" he said jokingly.

"How'd you like me to go in and get the salt cellar and toss it up," she said willingly.

"Naw, don't be crazy, Katie. I don't need to eat the apple," Joe said.

"I got to go in now anyway." She grinned going in the house, and attempted to kick her leg suggestively, but her long flowing apron spoiled the effect. Joe grinned to himself, sliding along the roof to the left, going down to the ground. Going down the ladder he was still thinking of Katie. She was tough but friendly.

Picking up his tools he thought of people saying Katie had always been immoral. No one seemed to remember a time when she had not been loose and eager for it, though only about four years older than Ellen. Her mother hadn't been much good, her two older brothers had used Katie as an outlet for their lusts as soon as she was old enough to perform such a service for them. No one knew why Katie had never had a baby. Some men in the village appreciated Katie's discretion in this matter, and when with her used more confident methods.

Joe rapped at Milburn's back door to tell Mrs. Milburn the job was done. Mrs. Milburn, a tired, solemn-faced grey woman said Henry would pay Mr. Harding when he came home. Henry would take it over to Mr. Harding, or maybe send over one of the children.

On the way home Joe found himself again thinking of Katie MacIntyre, a few years older than his niece, much harder, much tougher. Zip Foster had a few stories to tell about Katie and hadn't he seen Zip and Ellen walking over to the Orchard. It mightn't have been Zip, but it looked like him under the light. What was there to prevent Ellen turning out like Katie, Joe thought nervously. People didn't say he was tough and no good like the MacIntyre brothers, but he had done to Ellen just what they had done to Katie. The MacIntyre brothers were good-for-nothings but he was respectable, that was the difference. Joe felt like meeting Zip Foster, who had gone off to the city, and taking him by the neck to find out if he had gone into the orchard with Ellen. If it hadn't been Zip he would feel silly. Joe was sweating at the forehead. He picked up a stick and knocked it impatiently against his boot as he walked.

Joe walked faster. If he had wanted someone younger than Lottie, what was wrong with Katie, who would have been willing and the affair would have offended no one. Katie, with her warm comfortable body and moist, loose lips. Katie should have gone

into the city if she was going in for it and wanted to be a whore. Thinking of the young and easy going Katie in this way made Joe forget temporarily about Ellen. He decided none of the MacIntyres had any ambition. That was the trouble with Katie. Joe was now walking slower. It was funny that Katie could be living next door to Hen Milburn, the constable.

He tried to keep on thinking of Katie, but couldn't. Katie became Ellen no matter how he tried to direct his thoughts. And he was afraid of thinking too much about Ellen. Sometimes he was miserable and cursed himself, but other times restless, he thought again of walking down to the beach. Just the same he was glad Ellen was going to church with Lottie. If Katie had been able to go to church and had been scared young, maybe she would have grown up respectable.

Someone was coming down the road. Joe saw Hodgins coming towards him and thought he would be surprised to know the thoughts in his head.

"How do you do, Mr. Hodgins."

"How do you do, Mr. Harding. Lovely weather we're having."

"Yeah, we're having lovely weather."

Hodgins smiled encouragingly at Joe. "I was pleased, really pleased to see you at the service the other night. How did you like it?"

"I liked it fine."

Hodgins looked at Joe steadily and said solemnly, "Let's be frank with each other, Mr. Harding."

"Sure Mr. Hodgins, I never thought we aint."

"Well then, did it get inside you the other night? Did you feel something moving around inside that had to come out?"

"In a kind of way," Joe said embarrassed.

"Good, that's all right. That something inside you gets bigger and you just have to let it out. That's when you know it's time to go forward and profess. See."

"Well, 'taint quite that way with me yet."

"You'll be all right, Mr. Harding."

For a moment Joe thought of talking to Hodgins about Ellen but grew resentful suddenly and decided it was none of Hodgins' business. They parted amicably. Joe got home just in time for supper.

As soon as he came into the kitchen, Lottie said she wanted to go swimming after supper. Ellen and Doris were going down

to the lake together. Joe wouldn't promise to go swimming but was willing to go down to the beach afterwards and meet Lottie, if she would go swimming with Doris and Ellen.

Lottie had some fine pan cakes and maple syrup for supper. Joe liked the pan cakes so much he said he might go swimming after all.

Lottie in good spirits was a little excited. Mr. Hodgins had called to talk over a plan for a baptism in a month or two and had asked her advice on the time and place. She had been so pleased. Sitting in the parlor he had talked as he had never talked before, imagining himself preaching down by the water, taking his people one by one to be baptized in the lake. He had assured Lottie a report of such a baptism would spread across the country and a small host would be there to see the chosen ones accept the Lord, a Christian demonstration to be remembered for years in the country. He had asked Lottie confidentially how many she thought would be ready for baptism in a month or two. They had carefully considered the religious tendencies of all who at any time had been to service in the barn.

Lottie told Joe she felt sure Ellen would be ready and willing for the baptism, she would see to that. Hodgins had asked for eager young people. But she was a little disappointed that Hodgins had not stayed for supper.

Joe, pleased and happy, was sure everything would be all right between Ellen and him because he was sincere and would not be merely temporarily excited by a religious ceremony.

"How does it strike you, Ellen?" he asked.

"Oh, Aunt Lottie seems to think it would be a good thing," she said, slightly interested.

Lottie had been talking to Ellen, arousing her lively imagination by a picture of a host on the beach awaiting the ritual of the baptism. Ellen had even promised half heartedly to try and interest Doris Kremer. Mr. Hodgins wanted eager young people.

After supper Lottie and Joe put long coats over their bathing suits and walked down to the lake. Joe, in good humor, laughed merrily and was sober when Lottie started talking about the baptism. He was always interested in anything that interested her, he explained, and was glad she had made up her mind to influence Ellen at a time when the girl was at an impressionable age. Joe knew the baptism would be the strong thought in her life of the next few months. Lottie was that way.

They were walking down the river, Joe holding Lottie's arm, walking her so briskly, she said, "Joe you got to stop, you got to stop pulling."

"Step lively there young lady," Joe said affably, "you'd think you were an old married woman."

"Stop Joe, be sensible, don't be so silly."

"Come on Lottie, get moving."

The water was warm and they had a good swim. Everybody enjoyed it. Joe and Doris and Ellen and Lottie were all happy, because the water was warm and Joe was feeling jolly. When Joe was in a jolly mood everybody was in good humor. After swimming they sat on a log on the beach in the moonlight and Joe told a number of stories with unusual endings.

In bed, however, Joe found himself thinking of Katie MacIntyre. He did not care how much he thought about Katie, but wanted to avoid thinking of Ellen going to bed in the room down the hall.

4.

By the middle of August it was apparent Hodgins had established himself securely in the village, and Lottie displayed to the neighbors a triumphant indulgence. Joe too had come to regard the old barn as something attached to his family, though he would not take part in the services. The Rev. John Adams and the Methodist Church had lost prestige. Everybody now admitted Hodgins was more interesting, and many people who called themselves Methodists went to service in the barn, disgusting the Rev. John Adams. Only old incorrigible Methodists spoke bitterly of the Baptist intrusion. The baptism in the lake, the second Sunday in September, promised to be far too interesting to be disregarded.

Joe had refused to be baptized but Hodgins told Lottie her example would be a strong influence likely to affect him at the last moment. Though Joe admired Lottie's skillful suggestions that had persuaded Ellen to look forward to the baptism in the lake, he was merely amused when the same influence was brought to bear on him. Ellen's baptism would give Joe a feeling of security he had not enjoyed for some time. He said to himself Lottie would be completely satisfied with her success and he could live as securely in his old way. It was better to have the thoughts

of Lottie and Ellen definitely attached to some idea, a kind of rudder for them in everyday life.

"I'd just as soon see you and Ellen go to church," he said to Lottie.

"You didn't always say that, Joe," she said.

"No, but it's best, a woman and girl should have something."

Lottie was delighted to hear Joe talking like that. She assured herself he was progressing, his thoughts trying to fit into the proper groove, and she told Hodgins of the conversation. He was pleased and urged her to bring pressure in the small intimate matters between them, not obtrusively, never nagging, but with a kindness and a human understanding that would bring home to him the necessity of a spiritual compact between them. Lottie did try talking intimately to Joe, tried to come to an understanding and was not discouraged when he laughed amiably.

Joe did not want Ellen to get too excited about the baptism nor come too much under Hodgins' influence, and though encouraging her interest, he was disappointed to see her giving up careless easy ways for the strict manner of a young lady of religious practice. It did not become Ellen, who was quick, light, restless, but it was the best thing that could happen to her. Joe often thought it was best she should not fool around with the young fellows in the village.

The summer continued hot and for the most part dry. People said a week's rain would help the crops. The harvest apples were ripening. Joe and Jerry Hammond were dickering with Ab Fraser to buy the apples in his orchard for a venture in the City. At this time Lottie quarreled with Lou Henry and they exchanged bad words. Lou called Lottie a lousy old hypocrite and Lottie said Lou was a filthy disgrace to the neighborhood. Georgie Henry was to blame. He had hidden behind a tree and yelled "Old lady Harding, old lady Harding," and thumbed his nose at her. Georgie was a terror. Lottie indignantly insisted Joe call on Mr. Henry, but Joe said it was no use, if they were no good, they were no good, and that was all there was to it. Lottie had tried talking over the fence to Lou with unhappy results, and being a nervous woman, had gone in the house and cried bitterly.

Next day Joe found out the Henrys were moving in the early fall. He was glad to tell Lottie, but was in a way sorry to see the Henrys go, having always been interested in the vacillating in-

terests of Lou's sloppy mother. He might come down the road one day and find every window sill in the Henry house holding a flower pot, and then a month later the flower pots would disappear and the old lady would take to bird cages, canaries would sing on the porch in the back yard beside the hencoops. The old lady had never been able to irritate Joe, though she had leered at him from the window looking for trouble. It was too bad they were going. They knew how to look after potatoes and had laughed at Hodgins.

August was nearly over and the Henrys were moving into the City. Lottie and Joe sat up one night talking over the peculiar history of the family, and Lottie was interested now they were going. Lottie did not bear a grudge, she simply did not like the Henrys. The night they were talking about the Henrys, Lottie contrasted the good-for-nothing George with Ellen who was trying to increase her spiritual value to the community, and said it was entirely a matter of home training.

"Ellen's more serious minded now," she said.

"I don't know as that's so good," said Joe.

"It makes her a better girl."

"Oh, I suppose it keeps her out of harm. That's all I care."

Ellen, helping Hodgins in little ways, forming a Ladies' Auxiliary and singing in the Church, was pleased to be considered worthy of being treated as a woman. Lottie now talked just like Mr. Hodgins, whenever she remembered to do so. Joe thought it extraordinary she should be able to remember so many of Hodgins' words and phrases.

August was a dull month for Joe. He did little work. Hodgins knew he did not want to go to church and there was no use arguing about it. Joe was now able to take long walks with Ellen since she no longer encouraged attention but tried to be friendly, reserved and obedient. Too often she was almost servile to Lottie. Once with quiet simplicity, she told Joe Lottie had been wronged and they should do all in their power to please her. Joe had agreed with her but had at the same time laughed easily, intimating the incident was old and was after all a silly incident and since it had passed without trouble there was no use thinking or talking about it. Joe was glad he had been able to talk so clearly to Ellen, even though he hadn't quite convinced her.

He had not been able to forget the incident as easily as he would have had Ellen believe. Ellen was young. Often he found

himself thinking of young women. There were nights he tossed restlessly in his bed thinking of Ellen sleeping in her room down the hall and he tried to think of Katie MacIntyre, warm and comfortable and easy going, young, good natured and willing but in the day time he never talked to Katie or paid any attention to her.

He was sympathetic and good natured to Lottie. He would rather have been decent with Lottie than with anyone else in the world. He was willing to humor her whims. One night going to bed, Lottie coaxingly asked Joe to kneel down and pray with her. Joe said, "Aw no, Lottie, we'll pray if you want when we get in bed." But insisting, she said not for years had he tried to please her in such a way. In their nightgowns they were standing on the old carpet in the bedroom, the sheets rolled down on the big wooden bed, and Joe was trying to make a joke of it, but Lottie was sullenly disappointed and Joe said finally he would kneel down if she would turn out the light. He couldn't explain why he wanted the light turned out. Lottie smiled understandingly and reached over to the little table at the head of the bed and blew out the light. Joe sometimes hated the understanding smile. She had never smiled like that until a few months ago. He knelt down awkwardly and put his elbows on the bed and Lottie knelt with her back straight, repeating the Lord's prayer out loud. Moonlight coming through the window shone on the soles of their bare feet, toes on the ground, heels in the air. Lottie was praying and Joe was hating Hodgins but after a moment thought it didn't matter and let thoughts slip easily through his head.

They got into bed together, Lottie putting her arm around Joe's back, and saying happily, "You did it for me, Joe, and I'm so glad, Joe." And Joe wondered if she would tell Hodgins to come around and talk confidentially as he had done after Joe had advised Lottie to encourage Ellen to go to church because religion was a good thing for a girl.

After the night they had knelt down and prayed, Lottie humored Joe's slightest whim, avoided arguing with him, gave in to him every time there was a difference of opinion. Joe did not like it. He had liked the arguments with Lottie, as for example those following her terse comment on a story he read from the newspaper after supper while she went on with her housework, but she now listened carefully, apparently highly valued

his remarks, and seemed to have advised Ellen to humor Uncle Joe. Joe was disappointed but could not talk to Lottie about it, so he went over to the hotel as much as possible and drank home brew with Ike Kremer, Jerry Hammond and Reggie McGinn. Lottie had formerly been accustomed to seeing him really lit up once a week but now he felt obliged never to go home drunk.

At the hotel they talked about the baptism and Dan Higgins thought it very funny. Ike was going to be baptized but said a religious ceremony had nothing to do with wanting a little beer occasionally. Everybody in the village was talking about the baptism, which was to be in two weeks' time, though it was not definitely known just who were to be baptized. In the arguments at the Hotel, Joe steered a middle course between the views of Jerry Hammond and Ike Kremer, pointing out he could sympathize with Ike and yet understand Jerry. He was pleased he could really feel that way. Jerry joshingly explained Joe had to talk like that because of his wife. The arguments never got too personal because they all liked the beer better than the argument.

In the passing days Joe thought he could see a change in Ellen. She was more nervous than usual, too easily excited. At first he thought it the excitement of doing what she considered important religious work for Hodgins but he decided that wouldn't make her so impatient, so willing to quarrel without provocation. Ellen was keeping to herself, though she was still earnestly interested in the baptism. She began to avoid Joe, but was eager for Lottie's company and they walked together in the evening arm in arm, went to church together and seemed very intimate.

Joe decided it was no use worrying about Ellen. It was all over and there was no use thinking about it. He wasn't going to think about it no matter what had happened. But nothing could happen because he never encouraged her and did not want to feel like it. He had encouraged her to go to church.

Every night now at the supper table something was said about the baptism. So much talk about it irritated Joe and once he referred jokingly to it as the social event of the year. Such a frivolous attitude annoyed Lottie but Joe had made up his mind to be independent, though willing to please and encourage her. He had assured himself a little cold water thrown on Lottie's enthusiasm would prevent her from becoming fanatical. He determined to make it hard to talk too long about religion by chang-

ing the subject as often as possible. So they still talked about the neighbors and the things happening during the day.

Near the end of August Joe was glad she got indignantly excited for two days over three magazine salesmen working their way through college who had devoted three days to Eastmount and the rurals. One of the young men had stuck his foot in Lottie's door, preventing her from closing it. Lottie had indignantly pushed him away and the fellow had pushed her back in the hall. Lottie had threatened to get the constable. The three young men had cleared out that night. It was something to talk about. Lottie was excited and eager to tell Joe when he came home. They talked about it for an hour. For two or three days she never mentioned the baptism but talked to the neighbors about the magazine salesmen.

But the magazine salesmen were soon forgotten and Lottie turned her attention to interviewing neighbors, soliciting subscriptions for a building fund for a new church. Hodgins had asked a few of the prominent workers in his small congregation to see what could be done about it. Remembering the fuss Joe had made the time she had wished to make a small donation, she guardedly mentioned the subscription to him and was agreeably surprised when he said they would not lag behind the neighbors, if everybody was giving something. He said he would give one half of his profits from the joint venture with Jerry Hammond in the apple market.

Lottie was slightly disappointed. She didn't approve of Joe and Jerry buying Ab Fraser's apples, because she did not think that Jerry was reliable and she knew Joe would not work too hard. But Joe was not stingy. Everybody in Eastmount spoke of him as a generous-hearted man and she knew if he was in good humor he would not have her make a niggardly donation to the church.

5.

Jerry Hammond's head appeared between two branches and he brushed away the leaves with his hands, climbing up another rung on the ladder to yell at Joe, picking at another tree a few yards away. "Don't you think it's enough for the day, Joe?" Joe climbed down the ladder, lifting the basket hook from the rung. The basket was only half full of red astracans but Joe had nearly cleared the tree. He carried the basket over to Jerry and

together they walked over to the heaping pile of apples on the ground and dumped their baskets.

"They got to be sorted now," Jerry said.

"Can you do it?"

"Sure I can do it but I don't feel like it now. I've a mind to leave 'em till tomorrow morning. The ground will only hurt a few."

"What'll we do now then. You're the boss, Jerry."

"Let's take it easy. Let's lay down awhile."

"Got your pipe, Jerry?"

"It's in my coat on the tree." He went over to a tree and took his pipe from the coat pocket.

"Hold the light, Joe."

"All right. Got it?"

"Yeah, all right."

"I'm gonto lie in the shade here for a while," Joe said.

"I'm willing. The Missus don't have supper till five and there's an hour yet." Jerry sat down beside Joe, his back against the tree trunk.

"Did Dan Higgins ask you to go over to the hotel tonight, Jerry?"

"He did, and it'll be a hot time, leave it to Dan, eh?"

"Don't you think Dan was kiddin'?" Joe asked.

"No, I don't, Joe. He's done it before and it ain't hard to do. Lots of trollops drop in from the highway."

"He said they'd be back tonight."

"Sure they will, too."

"Dan got any hard stuff, Jerry?"

"He got a quart from Rivers, but Rivers like as not made it himself."

"You bet, and it may be poison. That's it. Prohibition, sure, and I fill my belly with rotgut."

"They're watchin' the bootleggers pretty close," Jerry said. "I heard tell of a man on the Kingston Road who made a still for a man workin' for the Revenue Officers. They pinched him and he paid a big fine."

"Cripes, Jerry, it's awful but you know how people feel about it. It's a dry province. What happened to the man and the still?"

"They fined him I told ya, but the judge gave the fellow

that coaxed him to make it a hell of a bawling out and is goin' to have the fine remitted. It was all in the papers."

"It's no good, Jerry, all no good."

"Me too, but we get our snort don't we?"

"Yeah and I guess we'll have it tonight."

"Sure."

Joe rolled over on his side, pillowing his head in his arms. "Ho hum, I wouldn't mind a little snooze," he said. He lay on his side for a few moments, saying nothing.

Jerry sat up. "Did you hear about Katie MacIntyre?"

"No, what about Katie, Jerry?"

"Hodgins got talkin' to her and one thing and another."

"I guess the old woman sicked him on her."

"I guess so, but anyway she's gonto go to church and Hodgins is talkin' about baptizin' Katie. He's as proud as hell about gettin' Katie."

"That means Katie's gonto be respectable."

"Yes sir, it looks it."

"I can't say as how I'm altogether glad, Jerry. A man gets used to things. We got used to Katie the way she was."

"My pipe's out, got a match?"

"Nope."

"Damnit, I got to get up and get my coat."

"Why didn't you put a match in your pocket?"

Jerry got up and went over to his coat.

"Say, Jerry."

"What?"

"Bring me a pipe full, eh?"

"You could of got up instead of me." Jerry brought his pouch over to Joe, who sat up, knocking his pipe against his heel. Jerry looked at his pipe and decided to refill it.

"I guess Hodgins is really going to build a church," Joe said.

"I forgot about him. I'm looking for him," Jerry said, sitting down. He talked about a trial in the States, in Dayton, Tenn., where Clarence Darrow, a famous agnostic lawyer and W. J. Bryan, an eloquent Christian politician had clashed because a high school teacher had taught the theory of evolution. Jerry did not like Bryan.

When there remained nothing interesting to talk about they

got up and walked slowly out of the orchard. "We want to get at the apples early tomorrow," Joe said.

They parted near the hotel. "See you tonight," Jerry said.

"All right, Jerry."

Joe, in good spirits but rather hungry, walked along the road. Lottie would have something nice to eat, she always had something nice. Ever since they got married Lottie had been giving him good meals. So long as she would go on giving him good meals he would be satisfied. Turning along the path to the house he stopped, looking at the haw tree. "The haws are getting ripe," he thought, and picking one, nibbled at it. He went along the picket walk to the back door and into the kitchen. Lottie was moving around the table, pouring milk on three saucers of raspberries for Joe, for Ellen and herself at the foot of the table. Always they sat at the same places at the table in the kitchen, though on Sundays and special occasions they moved into the dining room.

"You're just in time, Joe," she said.

"All right, I'm ready, Lottie. I just got to wash."

Lottie called Ellen who was upstairs. Ellen did not answer or come down, so she went up to get her. Joe could follow Lottie's footsteps upstairs and into Ellen's room where they could no longer be heard. Joe took off his coat, put it on the back of the chair and sat down at the head of the table, waiting. Lottie came down alone.

"Ellen's not feeling well, she says she'll be down afterwards," she said, sitting down.

She put some cooked ham on Joe's plate. Joe wondered what was the matter with Ellen. He wished she had come down and now didn't feel much like eating.

Joe had intended to talk gaily to Lottie at the supper table, but was quiet. Lottie did not have much to say and Ellen did not come down at all.

After supper Joe walked around the back yard, waiting for the paper boy to come. He was not exactly worrying about Ellen because she was just not feeling well and Lottie was not worrying about her, so he wouldn't take it too seriously. He saw the paper boy's bicycle on the road and met him at the front of the house.

With the paper to read Joe felt comfortable. He went into the kitchen, got his glasses, put the paper under his arm and

went out to the front veranda, intending to read until nearly dark, then go over to the hotel. Dan had said they would have a good fast time at the hotel. Dan really didn't know much about it, was just talking, but had promised to have a string of lively women in for the evening, who knew how to give a man a good time. Dan took chances and would get arrested if he didn't watch out. Hen Milburn, the constable, in a friendly way had told him if they got noisy drinking in the hotel, neighbors would force him to take action. Hen was a decent sort, but Dan was a gentleman in his own way.

Joe went on reading the paper but the police court column was the only one with life in it. The sporting page was just fair with a good comic at the foot of the page. That comic was always good, one of the best things in the paper.

Joe took off his glasses, folded the paper neatly under his arm and went in the house. Lottie was out in the backyard but would be going to service in a little while. He would go over to the hotel. It was early but Jerry would likely be over there and they could sit on the veranda and talk. Going along the hall Joe thought he heard someone upstairs crying. Ellen was crying. Lottie was out in the backyard so it was Ellen all right. Joe took a few steps upstairs, his heart pounding unevenly, hesitating to go up to the room and talk to her. He thought of calling Lottie but was afraid she would go up and talk too much to Ellen.

Joe went out quickly, taking his hat from the hall rack, but did not care where he went. He was sure he was going to be unhappy, though he assured himself he had possibly been mistaken and had not heard Ellen crying. But Ellen hadn't come down for supper. She had told Lottie she was sick and he had heard her crying.

6.

Joe went over to the hotel but Dan was not there. He knocked on the bar and asked the housekeeper but she did not know where Dan had gone, so he sat alone on the veranda until nearly dark. Jerry Hammond came along the road whistling. Joe with his legs stretched out, his thumbs hooked in his belt had not minded waiting because he could look straight up the short road to the highway. Jerry slapped him on the back and sat down beside him. "Feelin' good, eh, Joe?"

"Just so so, Jerry. Dan ain't around."

"Maybe he'll come back with his lady friends."

Jerry took out his pipe, a knife and a plug of tobacco. Sticking the pipe in his mouth, he cut away at the plug, then rolled the makings in his hands. He looked at Joe, filled his pipe, lit it and smoked in silence. They could see people down the road going to prayer meeting in the barn. Jerry understood Joe did not feel like talking. A cowbell jingled unevenly down by the river. From the veranda they could see the river and the cement bridge. A boy was driving a cow down the river and up to the road. The cow would not willingly take the short climb to the road at the bridge and the boy slapped it, cutting at it with a gad. The cow switched its tail and climbed clumsily.

"It's funny Dan never got married," Joe said thoughtfully.

"It's funny but he don't think he missed much."

Joe was silent again and Jerry smoked his pipe. For about half an hour they sat there hardly talking, till Joe could no longer see smoke but only the hot bowl of Jerry's pipe. On the road in front of the hotel a man with a leather bag at his hip got out of a buggy and lit the lamp which burned with a pale light. Joe absently watched winged insects gathering around the light, a ring of them streaming tirelessly around the light. When it gets darker, the ring will get thicker, he thought.

"That looks like Dan now," Jerry said.

A small car was coming slowly down the short road from the highway to the hotel. When the car came closer they could make out Dan and a woman beside him on the front seat. "I'll go down," Jerry said.

Joe watched Jerry go over to the car and raise his hat to Dan who spoke quietly to him and introduced him to the woman at his side. Jerry got on the running board and helped two women out of the back seat. All walked up to the veranda.

"Having a nice sleep, Joe?" Dan said.

"No, oh no."

The ladies, dressed poorly but brightly, were introduced. Miss Switzer, a dark girl with a lean face and thin lips, Miss Gorman, in a shoddy suit, the short skirt showing her bowlegs, and Miss Shipman, fair, fat and a little sloppy, all over thirty and free and easy. The women giggled at each other and looked expectantly at the men. Dan insisted they all go in the house and sit down. Dan was feeling good and was very friendly with

Joe heard Dan talking with dignity to him. "It ain't fair that's all I got to say," Dan said.

"No it ain't. But that singin's kind of loud, ain't it Dan?"

Dan listened carefully, smiling broadly. "That's right, they're singing, but when they're singing it keeps them out of trouble."

Miss Shipman put her arms around Joe's neck. Without smiling, Joe put an arm around her neck, but didn't like the stale smell of cheap powder or her skin. She was smoking, blowing the smoke in his face provokingly so he half heartedly pinched her and she giggled sloppily, reaching for her glass to give him a drink. Miss Shipman, jealous of the success of her friends, was eager to excite Joe. She was trying not to get drunk too quickly. She had on a blue blouse that fell away from her fat shoulder. She had a nice neck, Joe thought. He patted her neck and shoulder and then lost interest in her suddenly and listened carefully, strangely aloof in melancholy dejection.

"Gather with the Saints at the River."

"The damn fools," he said.

"Who?" said Miss Shipman leering grimly at him. "Not me and the girl friends."

"No," Joe explained, "the bunch down the road singing."

She cocked her head to one side, listening.

"Oh, the happy Sals. Sure, the damn fools," she said affably, feeling encouraged.

Joe got up and walked over to the table to fill his glass with bootleg. He looked bleerily at Dan huddled in the corner with Miss Switzer, who would not get drunk. Dan's eyes were moist. Laughing and babbling, he hung on tight to Miss Switzer. Jerry Hammond was arguing with Miss Gorman who was sitting sullenly on his knee. Jerry put his arm on her shoulder but she brushed it away, swearing horribly at him. He regarded her doubtfully, trying to make up his mind, then whispered to her and she smiled, putting her head on his shoulder and Jerry smiled and they were both satisfied.

Joe standing at the table emptied his glass and filled it again. Miss Shipman, alarmed, got up and grabbed his arm. "Not just now, honey, later on, you and me," she said. Joe pushed her away and she sat down heavily in the chair. Joe leaned back against the table his arms folded across his chest, in an ugly mood.

Jerry started to sing, his voice quavering. Joe turned on him viciously and told him to shut up. Jerry surprised and very much offended, disdained to answer him.

Miss Shipman had tried to be sociable but now she was offended. "I'm not wasting any more time with that hick. I'm quitting. He gives me the willies," she said.

Joe spoke apologetically to Dan. He was feeling better. He could no longer hear the singing and the bootleg had warmed him up inside. "I guess I got a headache," he said to Dan. "But it's feelin' better now." And he reached out to put his arm around Miss Shipman who, mollified now it was assured she would not be neglected, sat plumply on his knee and showed talent as an entertainer. She told one joke after another, though only Joe was listening.

Then they all heard some one moving outside, some one had come in the hotel wanting attention. Dan muttered to himself and stood up.

"You go Jerry," he said.

"Naw, get out."

'You go, Joe."

"I don't want to go," Joe said.

Dan left the room uneasily. They heard him moving around outside. After a few minutes he came in grinning. "Just a man in his car wanting a cheese sandwich and a cup of coffee," he explained. "I was afraid it was Hen Milburn, peddlin' around lookin' for trouble." Dan was quite steady on his feet but still wanted entertainment from Miss Switzer. He sat down on the chair with her but was uncomfortable and decided to sit on the floor and he pulled her down with him.

Joe still brooded unhappily. Miss Shipman, disgusted, shook him by the shoulder. "This is a hell of a party," she said, but he was not listening. She got up and took another drink. "And this bottle's nearly emptied," she complained bitterly.

Down the road in the barn they were singing again, starting a verse slowly but swelling into a loud burst, dying away into a droning muttering of voices.

A long silence was followed by more singing. Joe wondered what Hodgins was saying and what Lottie and Ellen were doing in the barn. He thought Lottie would be there all right, but was not sure about Ellen.

Miss Shipman guffawed loudly, bending down with her hands

on her belly. He tried to take an interest in Miss Shipman but the liquor was going to his head. Joe concentrated and found his stomach was lifting up, Miss Shipman was turning turtle and he was hanging on almost upside down until the room rocked back into position again.

Miss Shipman wanted to know if Joe would go upstairs. She was eager to be the first one of the women to go upstairs. "I got started later than Lil and Dot but I'm finishing stronger," she explained. She was sucking her loose lips, trying to appear enthusiastic.

Dan, laughing happily, pulled Miss Switzer, who playfully resisted, out of the room and upstairs. Jerry and Miss Gorman walked out of the room with more dignity.

"I guess we stay here," Miss Shipman said sullenly.

"I guess so."

"You ain't got the guts of a fish," she said.

"Aw shut up," Joe said, turning away from her, dropping his head over the back of the chair.

One more burst of singing came from the barn and died away and Joe dimly realized the service was over.

"What time is it?" he said.

"It's only ten o'clock."

"I got to straighten up. I got a home to go to."

Miss Shipman, flustered, decided to be sympathetic. "Do the happy Sals make you creepy?" she said.

"I don't like the singing," he said shortly.

"I don't either," she confided, slapping his head. "I never did like them, eh, Baldy," she said, pressing her breast against his shoulder.

"Why don't you like them?" Joe said indifferently.

"They get on my nerves. I don't like them, never did. They looked after me once for a week and I didn't want to be saved. What you got against them?"

"They get on my nerves."

"Well, they get on plenty."

"Yeah."

Miss Shipman, feeling more comfortable, slipped down frankly on Joe's knee.

"What's the use of looking glum," she said.

"I think I'll go home."

"Be a sport, for gawd's sake be a sport. If you leave me flat, think of the laugh they'll have on me."

"I don't care."

"Yes, you do."

"No, I don't."

Sleepily indifferent because of the liquor, Joe no longer wanted to get rid of her and let his arm rest snugly on her hip, bending his head against her heavy breast. He wanted to sleep. He didn't want to think or talk, only to sleep and forget Lottie and Ellen and the hymns. Miss Shipman was all right because she didn't bother him and if she would only keep quiet he would be glad to have her there close to him. He closed his eyes and tried to keep every thought out of his head so his mind would be a blank, but Miss Shipman was getting restless, shifting her weight from his knee, removing her elbow from the arm of the chair. She grunted uneasily and put one foot on the floor.

"I might as well be sitting on a fence," she said.

Joe didn't answer. She jumped up and slapped him on the head till he woke up. "Try to go to sleep on me, will ya," she said. "You dirty rotter, getting a girl on your knee and trying to go to sleep."

Joe blinked his eyes and looked thoughtfully at Miss Shipman. "What time is it?" he said.

"I don't give a damn what time it is."

"It don't matter, I'd like to go to sleep."

"You got to gimme something then."

Joe sat up straight suddenly. "What time is it?" he said. He looked out the window and down the road. No lights in the barn windows. No lights on the road, only the bluish white corner light near the hotel. Joe wanted to go home. He was sure he was quite sober enough to talk to Ellen and Lottie. It was time to look clearly at the matter.

"Where's Dan and Jerry?" he said.

"Search me," said Miss Shipman, who was sitting on the table, looking scornfully at Joe.

Joe stood up and went to go out but he heard some one coming downstairs. Dan and the dark woman came into the room. Dan had his arm around her waist and they both seemed to be happy and satisfied.

"I'm going home," Joe said.

"Dang it all, Joe, be a sport," Dan said.

"I got to get home, that's all there is to it."

"What about the girls?"

"I dunno. You look after them."

"Sit down for a minute Joe and the girls'll go."

Dan was satisfied and did not care very much. Joe sat down and waited and brooded.

7.

Ellen lay on the bed, one leg dragging on the floor. The crumpled pillow was pushed back to the middle of the bed. She had been crying but now could only listen to the beating of her heart. Her head was aching, but listening carefully she forgot about her head for the moment, but it throbbed when she could not hear her heart beating.

For three days Ellen had not been feeling well, conscious of something taking place inside her. Knowing what it was made her nervously restless but thinking about it made her head ache.

After supper she had gone upstairs to her room to lie down and decide what to do. It would be a long time before Aunt Lottie found out anything was wrong with her. No one would know for months. She was sure of it. Then she thought of Aunt Lottie and Uncle Joe, and hating herself, did not care about living. Now it was necessary she tell Aunt Lottie. At first she had thought of going away to the city but now it had become a duty to tell. She was scared, and feeling small and unimportant, wanted to find out from Aunt Lottie what to do about it. She repeated over and over to herself lying there on the bed, "I got to go 'way, I got to go 'way," but knew she would first go down stairs, looking for Aunt Lottie.

Sitting up on the bed, too tired from crying, she looked at her shoes kicked off on the floor, and reached down, picked up one and putting it on her foot, discovered a loose thread in her silk stocking just above the heel. "If I pull it, it'll all unravel," she thought mechanically and put on the shoe without pulling the thread.

She sat on the edge of the bed thinking vaguely of talking about unimportant matters to Doris Kremer, and began to hate Uncle Joe. She lay down again, crushing the pillow fiercely and said, "Damn him, damn him, damn him, damn him," until she didn't care about anything.

Ellen tried but could not reach the other shoe from the bed

and had to get up finally and get it. She was going downstairs to look for Aunt Lottie and maybe Uncle Joe. If she saw Uncle Joe she'd show him how much she hated him. But she thought he had gone out. Going out of the room she felt scared suddenly of seeing Lottie, but depressed anyway, didn't much care what was said to her. At the head of the stairs she felt better and went back to the room to tidy her hair and straighten her dress. Looking in the glass she remembered she was supposed to go to service tonight and it suddenly became important that she should tell Aunt Lottie before going over to the barn. She didn't want to go in the barn again. That was all over, all gone. She had tried to think about praying but her thoughts had got twisted with things far away. She was no good, that was the trouble.

On the way down stairs, she heard Aunt Lottie at the front of the house talking to some one. Ellen didn't go through to the kitchen, but waited in the hall until Aunt Lottie could come in. Ellen knew Lottie was talking to Lou Henry, who was passing down the road, friendly because Lou was going away. Lou sounded glad to be friendly and Lottie was politely interested. There was a long pause. Ellen listening in the hall knew neither one had much to say and Lottie would come around to the back door. Lou said good evening and Lottie came along the picket walk and into the kitchen, walking over to the mirror. Ellen could not see her but knew just where she was walking in the kitchen.

"Ellen, Ellen, you'll be late, if you're coming," Lottie called. Ellen walked into the kitchen.

"Hurry Ellen," Lottie said impatiently. "You're not nearly ready."

Ellen walked across the kitchen to a chair at the end of the table.

"I don't think I'll be going," she said bluntly and sat down.

Lottie stopped putting on her hat before the mirror and said quickly, "Why don't you want to go Ellen?"

"I just don't want to."

"Aren't you feeling well?"

"I guess I'm all right."

"Don't be so silly, if you're not all right say so and no one will expect you to go."

"I don't know, I just don't know," Ellen said absently.

"Then you'd better go," Lottie said with peevish disappoint-

ment, turning huffily to the mirror. Ellen did not move. Lottie looked at her again and saw she was pale and worried. Lottie, adjusting her hat, went over to the table to put her arm sympathetically around Ellen's shoulder; she oughtn't to be cross to a sick girl, she said. Ellen pushed the arm from her shoulder and looked at Aunt Lottie stupidly. Lottie was indignant.

"You don't need to be bold," she said crossly.

"I'm not bold Aunt Lottie."

"Well, I call that bold, but suit yourself. I'm going to church," and she went out of the kitchen.

Ellen said quickly, "Please don't go to church, Aunt Lottie."

"What's got into you?" Lottie said, standing in the hall. She took her coat from the hall rack. "Of course I'm going to church and I'm surprised you don't seem anxious. If you're not feeling good, it's not wrong to miss."

Ellen kept on looking uneasily at Aunt Lottie and would have spoken but her lips were trembling. Aunt Lottie opened the front door. She heard Ellen crying. She hurried back along the hall.

"What's the matter, Ellen," she said, looking hard at her.

"I dunno, things are wrong," Ellen muttered almost to herself.

Lottie pulled a chair back from the table and sat down slowly, looking earnestly at Ellen. She wanted to be motherly but did not know how to approach Ellen who looked up wearily.

"There's no use crying," Ellen said.

"Sometimes it helps," Lottie said.

"It don't help me."

"Well, it may."

"Well, it can't."

Lottie took off her hat and put it on the table. "I won't go to church," she said deliberately. "I'll stay home with you."

"I want to tell you, but I don't know how to tell you," said Ellen, a puzzled expression on her face.

Lottie looked at her suspiciously and said sharply, "What have you been doing? Tell me now, do you hear, or I'll find out."

She took hold of Ellen's wrist, jerking her sharply forward and Ellen straightened up. She was scared and wanted to go upstairs but Aunt Lottie held on tightly to her wrist, her lips hesitating to voice the thought that was making her sit stiffly in the chair. Looking directly into Lottie's eyes, Ellen wavered once and thought of lying, but then her whole body felt limp,

she didn't care, and looking away from Aunt Lottie, told in a hesitating, stumbling fashion of the night down by the river. Lottie, listening with contemptuous bitterness, pressed her lips into a firm line and when she had finished said in a hard, precise voice, "Now who was it?"

Ellen looked at her vaguely and said, "Uncle Joe."

Lottie's body was rigid, she was motionless and mute, then her hand slowly caressed her throat.

"Uncle Joe," she repeated mechanically.

"Yes."

"Joe?"

"Yes, Uncle Joe, oh, Aunt Lottie, you're hurting my wrist."

Lottie, dropping her hand suddenly to the table, whined, "Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, oh my Lord," but she held hard to Ellen's wrist, her other hand flailing the table helplessly. Ellen was crying and watching Lottie.

It was getting dark. A light in Henry's place could be seen through the kitchen window. Ellen could not see into the corners of the kitchen but they sat there at the table. Ellen no longer cared how hard Aunt Lottie squeezed her wrist. Lottie's moaning frightened her and it was getting dark. No use moving. No use trying to do anything but sit there and watch the shifting line of Lottie's back. Ellen wished it would not get dark so quickly.

Lottie's head shot up suddenly and she screamed, "You reptile," and pounded Ellen's knuckles on the table, muttering over and over drearily, "My Joe, my Joe." And then she was still. Ellen slumped in her chair and cried quietly.

Ellen couldn't see Aunt Lottie very well in the dark but knew she was sitting up straight.

"It's no use," Lottie said softly.

They could hear the singing in the barn across the road. Lottie started to cry again and Ellen knew she was thinking of Hodgins and the baptism in the lake, but all that no longer mattered to Ellen. She was sorry for Aunt Lottie but nothing was important now.

"What will people say?" Lottie whispered.

"Oh, I don't know why it had to happen. It just happened. I don't know why. It just happened that's all, Aunt Lottie."

"I guess we should light the light," Lottie said absently.

"I don't want the light lit."

They sat close to each other in the dark and Ellen heard Lottie's heavy breathing.

"We've got to do something," Lottie said harshly.

"I know something's got to be done."

"I won't live here," Lottie said quietly.

"I don't want to live here, I don't want to live at all," Ellen said.

"You do want to live. That's why you did it. You're no good," she said bitterly.

"I'll go away. I'm going into the city," Ellen said eagerly.

"You little fool, what are you going to do in the city?"

"I don't know," Ellen said. She was becoming afraid of Aunt Lottie, who stood up and seemed to tower over her. Ellen could hardly see her take the few steps toward the door. "Where you going Aunt Lottie?" Ellen said, frightened.

"I don't know, I don't care," she said wearily.

"I'll do anything you say, Aunt Lottie."

Ellen knew Lottie was turning around at the door, a black object in the shadow. Lottie came back slowly, her legs striking against the chair, and sat down again. She was getting excited. She sat down but stood up nervously. Ellen began to fidget in the dark.

"Light the light, Aunt Lottie," she said.

"I don't ever want to see Joe again," Lottie said lifelessly.

"I hate Uncle Joe now, but it's no use."

"We'll be driven out of the village. We'll be driven out of the village, but not me, I'll see to that," she said excitedly.

"Oh, I wish I was dead, Aunt Lottie."

Lottie gripped the edge of the table, shaking it. "I wish you were dead. I wish you weren't born. We might as well all be dead."

"Aunt Lottie I'd die if I could. You know that, Aunt Lottie."

"Let's not stay here, Ellen. Let's go out of here," Lottie said.

Ellen was glad to be able to do something, would have done anything Lottie suggested. She got up and put her hand on Lottie's arm and said, "I don't care where we go but I don't want to stay here."

"I wonder if I'd better light the light," Lottie muttered. She was accustomed to lighting the light before this time.

"Not now, Aunt Lottie. I don't want to look around."

"I'm going to light the light," Lottie said deliberately.

She went over to the shelf near the pantry and Ellen heard a fumbling in the match box, the match was scratched and the yellow light flared close to Lottie's face. The light flickered and went out but Lottie had taken the globe off the lamp and another match lit the wick. She put on the globe. She carried the lamp over to the table.

"It isn't your fault Ellen," she said simply.

"Oh, it's all the same," Ellen said.

"There's not much use living, everything's gone now."

"I want to get out. I want to do anything, I don't mind dying," Ellen said eagerly.

Lottie stood by the table, miserably grim. "We'll go out together and we'll not come back," she said.

"Let's go now. Come on now," Ellen said.

Lottie stood by the table, her head swaying slightly, her eyes closed. "I'm going to leave a note for Joe," she said finally.

Ellen watched her fumble with the knob of the table drawer and pull it out, looking for a pencil. Then she walked deliberately across the kitchen to get a piece of paper from the newspaper rack under the mirror. She sat down at the table and wrote a few lines. "I'm leaving this note," she explained, and read it very practically. "Dear Joe, we won't be back. There is no use looking for us." She put the pencil back in the drawer and leaned the paper against the lamp handle.

Ellen thought Aunt Lottie seemed to have become almost a stranger to her. She was too deliberate, too firm of purpose.

"Come on Ellen, we don't want to stay here."

"I'll go wherever you say. I don't want to come back. I'll get my hat."

Ellen went down the hall to the rack, but Lottie said, "we don't need any hats."

"I guess we don't," Ellen said.

8.

Lottie and Ellen walked down the path under the haw tree to the road. The road was dark in the shadows from the houses and hills, but a moon was shining clearly in the sky. A good land breeze was blowing to the lake.

"It's almost like daylight out," Ellen said.

"Don't talk. Please don't talk, Ellen."

Ellen looked sideways at Aunt Lottie staring straight down the road. Down the road was the barn and lights were in the windows. Ellen hoped they would not hear singing because she knew instinctively Lottie was thinking of the barn.

They passed by the big, old, dilapidated barn with the yellow light in the small window and Lottie did not look at it. There was no sound of singing. "They must be praying," Ellen thought. Lottie was walking with her coat flowing open, the breeze curving it in a wide arc behind her, the short strands of hair usually hanging over her forehead tossed back by the breeze. Ellen, taking shorter steps than Lottie, stared straight ahead.

"Which way'll we go Aunt Lottie?"

"What'd you say?"

"Where'll we go?"

"We'll just keep on."

"All right, I don't care."

"We don't want to live, we don't care, we'll go down by the river."

"I want to Aunt Lottie, but I'm scared."

"Walk beside me, Ellen."

They came to the small cement bridge over the river and Lottie stopped, leaning over the rail, looking down the river to the massive highlevel bridge and its huge shadow over the valley.

"We'll go down there," she said.

Lottie looked hard at Ellen and her eyes burned brightly, but her lips remained in the firm line of her mouth.

She walked over to the corner of the bridge to go down the path to the river. She tried walking straight down without leaning back and her weight carried her forward much quicker than she had expected, her open coat ballooning behind her like a sail in the wind. At the bottom of the short path she stood buttoning her coat. "I should have buttoned this coat before," she said vaguely. Ellen came down the path and stood beside her. Linking arms they walked down the path by the river. Lottie never looked back. Ellen turned once, looking over at the hotel and the lights in the window.

Ellen, looking behind, knew Uncle Joe was in the hotel. Lottie and she walking down by the river and Joe over there drinking, and maybe having a good time. Ellen, no longer feeling lifeless, began to walk slowly, wanting to go back to the hotel after Uncle Joe. Ellen felt suddenly like killing her uncle. She

wondered why Lottie didn't want to do anything to Joe. Ellen walking slowly, stopped. They were on the path, a few feet from the river, wide and shallow at this spot. The breeze had become stronger. It was getting windy.

"What's the matter?" Lottie said quickly.

"I'd like to go back."

Lottie hesitating, sat down on the ground and put her head on her knees. One of her knees sank down, the leg stretched out and her foot slipped into the water. Ellen stood beside her, hardly looking at her. "Your foot's in the water," she said.

"I don't care," Lottie said.

Lottie was beginning to feel so lonely it hurt her inside. She felt she could not lift up her knee and her head was heavy. Everything worth while seemed to have gone out of her, her whole body felt too heavy, and she could hardly look at Ellen. The water seeped through the shoe leather and her toes got wet.

"Get up, Aunt Lottie."

"Why do you want to go back, Ellen? There's no use going back."

Ellen felt suddenly bewildered and could not make up her mind about anything. "I want to go back and do something," she said. "I didn't want to stay back. I want to go with you. Please get up Aunt Lottie, please, please." Ellen was trembling, the wind chilled her.

Lottie got up slowly, heavily, and took Ellen's arm. They stood hesitating, holding on to each other, the wind blowing Ellen's thin dress against her legs. The wind was blowing through Lottie's hair that straggled down her back, ends sticking out awkwardly. She did not have much hair.

Going down the river they walked slowly without talking. The river became wider and the current slower. They were walking in the big shadow of the bridge. The water in Lottie's shoe swished as she walked and the persistent noise irritated Ellen. She could think of nothing else but the water in Lottie's shoe, and the squeaking noise drifted with lazy dull monotony through her thoughts. And then she could not hear the squeaking and hardly knew she was walking, though Lottie was beside her, holding her arm.

The path forked out about fifty paces from the bridge, one path climbing up the hill to the bridge, the other narrowing, going on under the steel girders arched like a giant web over

the river. Lottie looked up at the lights on the bridge. "I'd like to be 'way up there," she said. A light was near the rail in the middle of the bridge.

"We'll go under the bridge," Lottie said.

"All right."

They walked under the bridge, on the path close to the river. The river was wide and deep under the bridge, the path was very close to the heavy cement foundations, the bed for the steel girders.

Lottie hesitated and turned back to climb the hill until even with the top of the cement foundations. Ellen followed her, anxious to do whatever Lottie did. To get on the cement foundations from the slope of the hill Lottie had to jump and Ellen did not think she could make it. Lottie had always been too nervous a woman to do such a thing, but now she gathered her skirts above her thin knees and jumped, sprawling on the foundation. Ellen, playing in the valley, had often jumped to the foundation and made it easily. She knelt down beside Lottie who was not hurt, simply staring down at the dark water.

"The water's deep here," Lottie said.

"Yes, it's pretty deep here, Aunt Lottie."

Ellen's imagination became very lively looking down at the water. She became uncomfortable and aware that her hands were cold and clammy. Lottie's lips were moving but Ellen could not hear what she was saying. It was very dark under the bridge and the cement foundation was cold.

Lottie was kneeling, still looking down, listening carefully to the water, running smoothly and quietly till it seemed a black liquid running through her mind. She straightened up, looking hard at Ellen and clutched her hand tightly.

"We got to do it, Ellen," she said.

Looking down at the dark water under the bridge drove all the thoughts from Ellen's head, but when Aunt Lottie stood up, jerking her up, too, she no longer wanted to think of the water. She was afraid.

"We got to, Ellen," Lottie was muttering. "You know we got to, we really got to." Her nails were digging into Ellen's wrist. She stood up straight on the cement foundation, looking down at the water until her head tilted down slowly. Ellen stood beside her, trembling, trying to close her eyes and forget about the water. Then she instinctively drew back from the edge and Lottie

looked at her fiercely and jerked her forward. Ellen was too scared to say anything, but Lottie, holding on grimly, fell forward and downward, pulling Ellen with her. Ellen did not cry out. The deep water was not cold. The two heads bobbed up over the smooth surface. One of Lottie's arms hooked around Ellen's neck, the head bent back, the chin sticking up out of the water dipped down again. Lottie's mouth yawned wide in her pale wet face, the jaw stiff, and they sank down in the deep water. They did not come up again.

9.

The three women got into Dan's car for the drive into the city. Miss Shipman didn't bother saying good night to Joe and didn't answer when he spoke to her. At the last moment Jerry decided to go with Dan and the women and take the consequences from his wife when he got home. Joe cranked the car and waved his arm in a friendly fashion but no one paid any attention to him. He was left standing alone in front of the hotel. The wind was blowing strongly against Dan's canvas beer and ale sign.

Sitting in the hotel Joe had wanted to hurry home but now with his hands in his pockets he walked slowly, the wind cooling his head. He had been thinking too much about Lottie and Ellen and feeling tired, his thoughts now drifted away from them, walking along, looking down at the ground. An automobile headlight appeared on the hill and before turning across the highlevel bridge shone on the telegraph wires along the road in the valley. Joe could look up and count the wires glistening in the light. The big deserted barn loomed up in the shadows like a big hulk. Joe stood still for a moment, trying to come to some conclusion about it, but could not concentrate, so he moved on. He was quite sober. Walking along the road he assured himself he was sober but wondered why he could see a light in the house. Surely Lottie had gone to bed at eleven o'clock. After a service she was tired usually and went to bed early. Ellen might be sitting up reading. Joe was glad she liked reading so much. . . . Quite a wind was blowing, humming through the telegraph wires. In the fall the wind would blow strongly with a droning noise through the wires, he thought.

Going along the walk to the house he looked up at the sky. It looked as if it might rain, though there had been no clouds earlier in the evening. He opened the front door and went along

the hall to the kitchen, expecting to see Lottie or Ellen sitting at the table reading. No one was there. "They forgot to turn out the light," he thought, going over to the table where he saw the note leaning against the handle of the lamp.

Joe read the note and read it again and looked vaguely at the light. The lamp must have been smoking, there's a dark ring at the top of the globe, he thought, but his heart began to beat loudly. Joe walked slowly across the kitchen to the woodshed and opened the door, closing it immediately, wondering why he had done it. "Lottie," he called. "Lottie." He started along the hall but turned and went into the kitchen, took the light from the table and hurried upstairs, the lamp tilting, the dark ring at the top of the globe deepening.

Lottie was not in the bedroom. Ellen was not in her room. Joe put the lamp on the dresser in Ellen's room and sat down on the bed, rubbing his head slowly with his hand and looking stupidly at the pattern on the rug. Lottie had wanted the rug on the floor beside the bed so Ellen's bare feet would not be on the cold floor, getting up in the morning. The lamp was still smoking. He jumped up suddenly, blew it out and ran downstairs out the front door. He stood in the center of the deserted road but didn't know which way to turn.

He knew Ellen had told Lottie what had happened down by the lake. He was bewildered, afraid of what Lottie might do and looked helplessly down the road, wishing his heart would stop thumping. He wiped his mouth with his hand and felt sure he would be able to act effectively if his heart would stop thumping. He started to run along the road and up the hill to the radial terminal, running so fast he could not get his breath opposite the Anglican church on the hill. After walking a few paces he ran again, all the way to the radial terminal. There would be no car for fifteen minutes. If Lottie had gone to the city she would have caught a car earlier in the evening.

Joe went in the lighted terminal waiting room and sat down to try and think clearly, but his glance shifted from one wall to another, unconsciously reading the jokes written in chalk on the walls. He would have to act quickly. Lottie could not be far away and if he could only keep cool he could find her. He could think only of Lottie, but he wanted to find Ellen, too.

Getting up slowly, he stood at the door, looking along the tracks. His knees were weak and he wanted to sit down but he

walked back along the road as far as Kremer's place. It was late but he pounded at the door. He pounded three times before he heard some one coming downstairs.

Ike opened the door and saw Joe on the veranda. "What's up, for chrisake, Joe," he said.

"You didn't see the Missus and Ellen?" Joe said, deliberately casual.

Ike came out on the veranda, an overcoat was over his nightgown and his hair was standing up at the back of his head. He leaned over close to Joe. "You been drinking, Joe," he said.

"Yeah, I been drinking Ike, but the Missus aint home and Ellen aint home."

Joe did not show Ike the note in his hand. He would not show anybody the note. It would do no good. It would not help anybody to find Lottie.

"Where could she get to?" Ike said, still sleepy, but getting interested.

"I don't know, Ike. Her hat's on the table."

"That's funny."

"I got to do something, Ike. I got to look for them."

Ike said, "Just a minute," and went upstairs. Joe waited so long he felt like going away, but Mrs. Kremer came down and stuck her head out the door, holding a coat collar high on her throat.

"Where do you think she is, Mr. Harding?" she asked.

"I don't know. I don't know at all. I got no idea. Didn't you see her at church?"

"No, she wasn't at church."

"No, that's right, Ellen wasn't feeling well," Joe said.

The three of them stood on the small veranda and no one knew what to say. "I'll go in and get my pants on," Ike said suddenly.

Mrs. Kremer watched Joe shifting uneasily, swaying from side to side, too agitated to do much talking.

"It's strange," Mrs. Kremer said.

"It's strange," Joe repeated. "I can't make it out."

Ike came downstairs tucking his shirt in his pants. "Let's take a look around and if we can't find them, we'll tell Hen Milburn, though he won't do much good," he said.

Ike and Joe walked over home and Joe went upstairs to get the lamp. He was a long while and Ike went upstairs. Joe was

trying to light the wick but his fingers were shaking and he could not strike a match properly. Ike lit the lamp. "It's been smoking," he said.

"I did it bringing it upstairs," Joe said.

They looked all over the house. Joe looked again in the bedrooms and in the woodshed, then sat down at the kitchen table. He showed Ike that Lottie's coat was gone and there on the table was her black hat with the blue ribbon.

The hat had looked good on Lottie. Many thoughts came into his head and he began to feel sick at his stomach. He wished he had not drunk so much beer on top of the whiskey. Ike was talking but Joe could not make out what he was saying, he could not adjust the words in his head.

"I guess there's no use looking around," he said.

Ike sat down at the table. "Why would they go off like that?"

"I haven't any idea, Ike. That's all I can say."

They sat looking at each other until Joe's chin dropped to his chest. Ike took out his knife and began to clean his nails. Joe straightened up suddenly. "I don't think they'd go in the city," he said. "I'm going to look all around. I got an idea they're not far away."

He stood up and buttoned his coat carefully. He wanted to look at everything deliberately. No longer tired, he could think clearly, consecutively.

"Go down and see Hen Milburn, will you Ike?"

"What'll you do?"

"I'll look around outside."

"There aint many places to look, Joe."

"They may have gone for a walk. It was warm. They may have gone for a walk down by the river. It won't do no harm to look," he said stubbornly.

"All right. Come on."

At the road they separated. Joe went along to the river, walking slowly at first, trying to think of nothing and look all around. He found himself walking faster, soon he was running down the path. He was glad there was a strong wind because it cooled his head.

At times when the moon was bright and it was quite light on the path he could see across the river and along the banks, but when thick clouds hid the moon he had to look straight ahead. The clouds got thicker, then one inky rift became a big blotch

and he could see the stars. He did not see the moon again. He slowed down going along the narrow path under the highlevel bridge.

Joe stopped running and walked fast. He had a lonely, tired feeling inside. He would not find Lottie but felt better to be looking for her. He was getting down to the lake. He would walk along the beach. He would climb up on the hills and look out over the lake.

He could see better on the beach but the sound of the lapping water of the lake disturbed him and he wanted to get away from it He walked until the low hills back away from the shore line grew steep. The bluffs were not so far away. He could climb up the face of the steep hills and look out over the lake. He hesitated but felt that he had to be on the hill top and looking out over the lake.

It was a hard climb. In places the grass was long and he could hang on, pulling himself up, but there were layers of soft sand and a slippery belt of wet clay. Joe's foot slipped on the wet clay and he slid into a narrow gulley, his feet moving rapidly, his body wheeling to make his feet strike firmly the opposite bank of the gulley. He managed to keep on his feet until his hands caught a stump sticking out over the edge of the narrow defile. Falling had scared him. His heart was fluttering wildly. He tried to get his breath, but his arms seemed to be getting weaker so he pulled himself up to the ledge and scrambled on up the face of the hill. He got to the top and lay flat on his belly in the thick grass, breathing hard.

He had intended to sit down calmly on the hill, looking out over the lake but flat on his belly he lay there and began to cry. The night noises from the hills worried him and he wanted to get back to the house. His heart bounded eagerly. Lottie might be at home. She was always there when he went home in the evenings She would be in bed when he went home tonight. It wouldn't take so long to get home. Instead of going down to the beach and up the valley, he would walk straight across the height of land till he came to the Kingston Road and go east. An hour's walk.

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning when Joe got home. A light was still in the house. He saw the light and started to run. The front door was open. Looking down the hall to the kitchen he saw Jerry Hammond and Dan Higgins and could

hear Ike Kremer and Hen Milburn talking. Lottie had not been found.

"Here's Joe now," Jerry said.

"Sit down, Joe."

"God, man, you're all in."

"I'm all right," Joe said wearily.

Joe sat down weakly in Dan's chair and scrutinized everybody in turn. "I guess it's no use," he said.

Hen Milburn asked Joe where he had been, but before Joe could answer Dan insisted he should go upstairs and sleep.

"We're all going out to look," Hen explained.

"There's no use looking," Joe said.

He slumped in his chair, listening until voices getting mixed up with his thoughts, droned in his ear. If Lottie was within miles of the village she would be found sooner or later, he said to himself. Everybody knew about it. Everybody would talk about it. He simply had to sit there and wait. If he could only lean back and wait with his feet stretched. If only Lottie would call him. Joe was dozing, but Ike Kremer reached over and shook him. "Better go to bed, Joe," he said.

"I don't want to go to bed."

"Go now and get up early."

Joe stood up and said it was very good of them all to help him. Dan listened uneasily, because Joe had been over at the hotel. Milburn was saying he had phoned the city and now the four of them would search systematically. Hen Milburn was excited and talked authoritatively. He had taken charge of the search and would see it was done thoroughly.

Joe went upstairs and lay down on the bed, intending to lie down for just a few minutes but was soon sound asleep.

10.

At half past ten next morning Joe was told Herb MacIntosh, the religious man living down near the beach, had pulled Lottie and Ellen out of the lake near the river mouth. Hen Milburn told Joe about it. Joe lay back in the bed, closed his eyes, and said nothing.

The bodies were carried up to the house by Ike Kremer, Jerry Hammond, Dan Higgins and Herb MacIntosh. Joe did not go down to the beach, but waited on the veranda. He saw the pro-

cession coming up the path by the river, hesitate at the climb near the cement bridge, Jerry backing up slowly, further behind, Dan backing up slowly. They came down the road and up the path under the haw tree to the front door. Joe did not move off the veranda.

Hen Milburn who had stayed with Joe came downstairs with two sheets and told the men to carry the bodies into the parlor. Jerry, holding Lottie Harding by the shoulder tried to back up the steps.

"Will you move Joe, please?" Jerry said.

"Yes, I'll move, I'll go in the house."

Joe went into the parlor and sat down, watching Hen Milburn lay the bodies out on the floor. He looked once at Lottie's face, the puffed and darkened lips, the matted hair, and did not want to look at Ellen. Hen drew the sheets over the bodies and straightened up. All the men took off their hats. "That's done," Dan said.

"I guess we'd better get an undertaker," Hen said.

Joe stood up, "Would you mind doing it, Hen?"

"Sure I'll do it, Joe."

Hen went down the road to phone and Herb MacIntosh, Jerry and Dan looked awkwardly at each other. Joe wanted to say something appropriate. The neighbors had been very kind and now it was time to thank them appropriately but thoughts did not come easily and he did not say the intended words, just, "Thanks very much." They all went out to the kitchen and sat down around the table.

Dan said gravely, "It won't do no harm to smoke, I guess."

"There's no reason why you shouldn't smoke," Joe said mildly.

"It's got to be found out why they did it," Ike said. "No one seems to know. No one may ever know."

"I guess we'll never find out," Joe said.

Sitting in the kitchen they talked the matter over slowly from all angles. Joe was curiously interested in everybody's opinion. He began to talk rapidly advancing a number of theories, but stopped talking suddenly and was silent, melancholy and dejected, refusing to answer any question, staring stupidly at the oilcloth on the floor. Joe felt responsible for all the trouble. It was hard to believe no one thought him the cause of the suicide but everybody hesitated to use such an unpleasant

word. He was getting lots of sympathy, but if he would just stand up there in the kitchen and start talking, they would change their opinions. One or two words would do it. He would start talking quite casually, then come to the point quickly before they were aware of what he was saying and they would look hard at him, Dan maybe would let his chin drop. Joe got excited thinking about it. If he hadn't thrown that note away he could pull it out of his pocket and say, "Here, I'll tell you a thing or two," but it was no good thinking about it. He felt very much like talking but it was no use. Over and over he repeated to himself it was no good to start talking.

The smoke was getting thick in the room. Jerry got up and opened a window, a shaft of sunlight came slanting through the thick smoke in the room. The sunlight shone on Dan's red and shiny bald head. Dan blinked and waved his hand in front of his eyes. It was noon time.

Dan said he would be going but if wanted, everybody knew where to find him. Ike asked Joe to have dinner with him and Joe accepted. Everybody felt better to be moving. Herb MacIntosh, the religious man, had hardly opened his mouth, smoking his pipe calmly. Joe staring at him, remembered he was said to have killed his wife.

Going out the door, Ike said, "Don't worry about the undertaker, Joe. Hen'll look after him. Hen'll be glad to do it. It'll make him feel important. He ain't had anything to do for a long while."

Joe smiled and Jerry laughed loudly, mirthlessly. Joe and Ike walked across the road to Kremer's house to have dinner.

An hour later Joe looking out Kremer's front window saw a small crowd gathered around his house. People had come from miles away, morbidly curious to get close to the house and inside if possible, but Hen Milburn stood grimly at the door. The undertaker's black automobile was in front of the house.

After a time Hen came over and explained fussily the bodies had been taken into the city. It was necessary to take them into the city because they had been found in the river. The matter was now out of his hands, though there was still work for him to do exercising his intelligence. That was all there was to it for him, though he would appreciate a quiet talk with Joe.

Ike and Mrs. Kremer left Joe and Hen alone in the parlor

and Hen picked his nose and couldn't make head nor tail of the business. "She was a very religious woman," he said.

"She was very religious," Joe said.

"And this here Ellen was all right, too."

That was as far as he could go. Hesitating to suggest Ellen might have been carrying on with fellows, he talked vaguely about it being a different matter if Ellen had been a gadabout. Finally he said, "There's no knowing when a woman gets too religious, but everybody said Mrs. Harding was such a good woman," he added in a matter of fact tone, "I never took much stock in the goings on in the barn."

Joe was not interested. The simple questions as to where he had been last night, he answered easily and willingly, and told of coming home, finding the light lit, and running up and down the road. Hen made a few careful notes, then shook hands heartily with Joe.

All day Joe could not straighten the matter out in his head. He knew definitely he did not want to sleep alone in the house. He was lonely. Alone for any length of time he muttered to himself and got excited.

At night he did not sleep well, imagining himself talking to Lottie about trifling matters, and shuddering when he thought of Ellen. The long imaginary talks with Lottie pleased him. There she was sitting at the table and he was reading the paper to her. And then Joe found himself awake in bed, hating Hodgins. The house was quiet and from the bed he could look out the window down the road to the Harvey Simpsons' place. Hodgins was living there. Joe was glad he was able to think so much about Hodgins and went to sleep.

Many people next morning came to see Joe in the Harding house. The Rev. John Adams called just before dinner and talked about a proper Christian burial, insinuating Lottie had been unduly excited by the mistaken zeal of a few misguided fanatics who did not correctly understand the principles of religious practice. Joe listened respectfully and then was eager to explain the circumstances, but had not the faintest idea why Lottie and Ellen had done such a thing.

In the afternoon Hodgins called but did not talk much, having lost confidence. He did not try to conceal his feelings and seemed to have more real sympathy for Joe than many people who had known him a long time. Hodgins tried to say a few

appropriate words about never knowing when a dear one will be taken away, but mumbled and said miserably, "Oh gee, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry I feel like going back to the city and staying there and giving up everything here."

Joe felt he did not hate Hodgins because he seemed a good natured young fellow, not used to being close to death. At the door he stood for a minute and asked Joe if he objected to him calling again. Joe walked out on the veranda with him and said hastily, "Won't you bury them, Mr. Hodgins? Lottie would want you to bury them." Joe thought of the Rev. John Adams' nasty opinions but had made up his mind to let Hodgins officiate at the burial.

Hodgins said quietly, "I'll do it Mr. Harding," and walked quickly down the path to the road, without looking back.

For the rest of the day Joe did not see any one. All afternoon he walked idly up the river between the hills. Not for anything would he have gone downstream or along the beach. Climbing a low hill to sit on a rock his imagination took a lively turn and closing his eyes he could almost see Lottie and Ellen sitting in the kitchen and hear Lottie talking. Sitting on the big round stone his head dropped forward to his hands, elbows on his knees and he cried. He was feeling old, broken up inside, and did not ever again want to move quickly. He could not feel sure of himself and longed for some one consoling thought.

He walked slowly downstream, some of the leaves on the trees were turning yellow and he thought of the fall coming on and the days in October that had always been lonesome for him. Ellen would have been starting back to school shortly. He sat on the end of a log jutting out into the river and cried again, muttering, "I'm sick, oh, so sick," and his head started to sweat and he remembered how he had knelt down with Lottie that night in the bedroom, Lottie had prayed and he had thought of Hodgins. He got up quickly and walked rapidly down the river to the hotel.

It was getting dark. He had something to eat with Dan. Afterwards they sat in the spare pantry looking solemnly at each other, and drinking great quantities of poor beer.

And then Joe said, "I might as well go home."

"How would you like to sleep here?"

"No, I'm going home. I got to get used to it, so I'm going home."

The following night there was an inquest in the City and Joe was forced to attend it. There was some doubt at the inquest as to whether Ellen was pregnant. They concluded she was pregnant because it gave a motive to the suicide. Joe could not tell them very much.

The account of the inquest in the papers satisfied everybody in the village. They were sorry for Joe but evidently it hadn't done Ellen any good to go off to High School in the city and get in with older boys and they remembered Ellen had been too lively at her age; her ultimate end seemed to be a vindication of established opinion in the village. They could not understand what had got into Mrs. Lottie Harding, who had been such a respectable woman, though a little silly about religion the last few months.

Lottie and Ellen had a good funeral. Rev. John Adams felt obliged not to attend, though the burial was in the Harding plot in the little Anglican Cemetery on the hill. The Anglican Minister, Rev. Peter Hayes, who came into the village only on Sundays and did not know anybody very well, assisted Hodgins at the funeral service which was simple. This thin grey man with a warm smile said it did not matter very much where they were buried so long as it was in Christian ground.

A crowd came to the funeral and tried to get into the parlor close to the two coffins. Mrs. Harvey Simpson bustled around, worrying Joe. She explained a number of people would return to the house after the funeral and he should have something to eat in the house.

"Do you know where Mrs. Harding kept her silver knives and forks?" she said, determined to set a good table.

"No I don't."

"It won't look right without them."

"This ain't no wedding," Joe said. "I don't care."

Joe left her in the kitchen and went into the parlor to take a last look at the faces in the coffins. Three young girls were standing solemnly beside the coffins. One of the girls giggled and the other two started to giggle, and blushing, they hurried from the room, the girl who had giggled first starting to cry going along the hall.

Joe felt sorry for the three girls because they could not help giggling. "They're just a little younger than Ellen was," he said to himself. Ellen had not liked funerals.

From the Harding house to the Anglican cemetery was a short walk. The hearse went on before and the procession walked slowly up the hill and Hodgins prayed by the open grave. Joe was one of the first to leave the cemetery.

Mrs. Harvey Simpson was disappointed when Joe explained he did not want people in the house after the funeral. Joe insisted he wanted to be left alone, and though unwilling, she submitted, but pointed out he hadn't made any arrangements and she hadn't found Lottie's silver forks.

Everybody went home at supper time. Mrs. Kremer asked Joe over for tea but he had promised to eat at the hotel with Dan Higgins. Mrs. Kremer's manner suggested it was not quite right to eat with Dan so soon after such a solemn occasion.

11.

A few days after the funeral Joe talked of moving away from Eastmount. Sympathy for him had gradually changed to doubtful suspicion of his good intentions. People were talking of wide differences of opinion between Lottie and him. Lottie was a religious woman and he had always tried to discourage her, they said. It might have got on her nerves and caused her to despair of his salvation, though he had been a good enough husband, no one doubted that. His godless opinions must have been revolting to a highly strung woman like Mrs. Harding, so conscious of the spiritual values in life. The Rev. John Adams had said he could have little real sympathy for Joe under the circumstances.

The Kremers, the Hammonds and Dan Higgins were more friendly than ever with Joe. Mrs. Moore, calling to express sympathy, had indignantly advised him not to pay any attention to anything the hottentots in the barn had to say. Mrs. Moore had made up her mind to let everybody know she preferred Joe to his detractors.

Joe did not like people to be talking, whispering behind his back, little kids pointing at him when he walked down the road. He was accustomed to being friendly with everybody.

It was lonely in the house. The kitchen seemed very big. He devoted a lot of time to the hens, cleaned out the henhouse thoroughly. He attended to the potato plants and hoped they would turn out as well as Henry's. Old Mrs. Henry came over one afternoon to talk about the potato plants and was quite friendly. In a

rude way she gave him to understand she had never had anything against him. Joe said he was glad the Henrys had decided to stay in Eastmount until the end of September, old neighbors were worth while to a man.

In the evenings, after getting his own supper he read the paper and then went over to the hotel. After the reading of the paper he missed Lottie and Ellen. No story seemed good now he could not read it out loud to them. After an evening at the hotel he returned to the house as late as possible and went straight to bed to try and go to sleep at once, but he was not comfortable in the bed.

He would have moved from Eastmount but had an idea he would be more lonesome in the city, having lived all his life in the village. Lottie had always lived in Eastmount. Everybody knew him and he was at home there. Now he was uncomfortable, but he had at times been uncomfortable in his own house, even when Lottie was living.

Hodgins wanted to be very friendly and got into the habit of coming over after supper to sit on Joe's veranda and talk until nearly dark. He talked about college football, fraternities at the University and initiations, all of which very much interested Joe. Hodgins could tell a good story and Joe could tell a good story so they got along nicely together. Joe eagerly looked forward to these visits for people could not be nasty when Hodgins was friendly with him. Hodgins did not smoke but confessed he liked the smell of tobacco, so they sat on the veranda, Joe reading stories from the paper to Hodgins. They talked about God occasionally but in a big-hearted, broadminded way that appealed to Joe.

At dusk one evening they sat on the veranda, Hodgins rocking back and forth lazily, while Joe smoked his pipe and talked.

"The Fall is coming on now," Joe said.

"There's something about the Fall I like," Hodgins said thoughtfully.

"The Fall's a lonely time. The leaves blowing along the roads and over the field make me feel restless."

"Well, there's a month yet before October."

"That's right, but it gets dark early now."

"Everything's ripening."

"I'll tell you somethin'. I don't like hearing the wind rustling in dead leaves."

"That's funny, Mr. Harding."

"That's why I don't want the Fall to come on."

Hodgins began to quote some lines about "season of mellow fruitfulness," but got twisted and then laughed heartily. Joe did not laugh.

"Lottie was funny that way."

"What way? Quoting poetry?"

"No, about the Fall." Joe was smoking his pipe carefully.

"Did she like it?"

"Yes."

"Most people like the Spring. Gee, there's going to be a swell moon on the lake tonight. Look."

They looked down the valley at the big gold moon low on the lake behind the broken line of birch trees on the valley slope.

"Lottie used to like feeling blue in the Fall."

"Really blue?"

"No, but lonesome and half like crying because she liked it."

"Women are funny," Hodgins said.

"Lottie wasn't really funny. She just took fancies."

"Her mind was set on being baptized next week." Hodgins cleared his throat and was sorry he had mentioned it. Joe didn't even turn his head.

"It's kind of worth while to have some idea to lean against," Hodgins added.

"You never feel so lonesome, then," Joe said.

"That's it, Mr. Harding, that's exactly it. That's why there will always be religion."

"I suppose so."

"The whistle of that radial car sounds like a night hawk screeching," Hodgins said reflectively.

"Like a screech, when it gets dark."

"I guess I had better be going," Hodgins said, stretching his legs.

He smiled genially and walked down the path, his hat brushing against the leaves on the low branches of the haw tree. Joe watched his tall figure turn down the road. By rights the haw tree should be trimmed so it wouldn't brush against people's hats.

Joe sat on the veranda until dark, then got up to go down to the hotel. Hodgins was all right, he thought, and Dan was all right too. He was glad to be able to like them both.

That evening, thinking of Hodgins and Lottie, he did not

talk much to Dan and went home earlier than usual. He felt something had to be done to satisfy Lottie, if she could know about it. In the house he took off his coat, vest and shoes, and sat at the kitchen table. An idea was growing stronger in his thoughts. It was necessary to do something to atone for everything that had happened so he could sleep in the night. That was it. He owed something to himself and something to Lottie. He had to do something to take the uneasiness out of his mind.

Lying awake in bed he thought about the world and death and life, but no matter how he tried he found he could go back only so far. That was why he had stopped thinking about it when a young man. He couldn't get anywhere.

In the dark, lying alone in the big bed, he tried to go back to the beginning of things until his head ached. There he was lying in bed, there was the bed, outside was the moon and the stars and the lake. Well, what about it, where did it all come from? He remembered learning in school about masses swimming in space and now he thought about it eagerly but got tired wondering where the mass came from. Lottie was dead. She had believed in certain answers to a riddle he could not fathom. That was it. If he had an answer his head would not get tired trying to go back beyond life. There was the moon and the stars to start with. The moon was a worn-out off-shoot from the earth, the earth was a planet. Stars in the sky were often planets. Life might conceivably be on all the planets. Canals were on Mars. Mars was the red planet shining over the lake. The school geography. Ellen had liked talking about Mars. What if people were up there. Where did they come from? God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Where did God come from? No one knew, no one would ever know. The Bible did not know, but maybe it did for he didn't know the Bible very well. He was lying alone on the bed, that was all he knew. His thoughts were getting mixed up and he was tired. He went to sleep.

In the morning the sun was shining through the window and he forgot his thoughts of the night before and was glad he had work to do.

In the evening Joe had supper with the Kremers. When Mrs. Kremer was clearing off the table Joe and Ike had a talk, and Ike was saying "You got to take things as they are."

"There's no use saying one thing and thinking another," Joe said.

"No, but it don't get you nowhere bucking against people."

"I don't want to go against people."

"That's what you're doing, Joe."

"No. I know you can go so far back and no farther. As you said, there's some things you can't get away from."

Joe didn't want to tell Ike of the strong feeling urging him to do something distasteful to him. "I got to do it for Lottie," he said to himself, and was restless, wishing it was over, eager for the peace that would follow. All day he deliberated until he boldly dallied with the idea and then made up his mind to have a talk with Hodgins. In the evening he tried to pray, but there in the room where he had knelt down with Lottie beside the bed he could mutter only, "Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus," his mind excited and the thought becoming a wish, and soon he imagined he had a duty to perform for Lottie. He tried to regard the whole matter practically, but his head was feeling feverish and he imagined he saw a release from the long watches in the night and the uneasy restlessness in the morning. One way to do it. One thing Lottie would have wanted him to do.

Next evening Hodgins came down the road to sit on Joe's veranda. Joe saw him coming and was glad. Sitting there on the veranda talking was easy because Joe did not go straight to the point but preferred to lead up to it in a roundabout way.

"Well, what's the good word tonight, Mr. Harding?" Hodgins said.

"Nothing much. Things go pretty easy."

"Same here."

"How is the flock doing?"

"Oh pretty well established now," Hodgins said blandly.

"Everybody satisfied, too."

"Just a few not."

"Looks like rain," Joe said thoughtfully.

"It rained this day last week," Hodgins said.

"It rained pitch forks and saw logs for handles," Joe said.

"Anything worth while in the paper tonight, Mr. Harding?"

"Nothing much. Nothing worth reading."

Joe looked at Hodgins out of the corner of his eye, wondering how to go about it.

"How's that baptism of yours coming along?" Joe said.

"Oh, first rate. It's going to be the finest thing that's happened here in years. Dr. Morrow is coming down from the city to

preach and help with the baptism. A big thing Mr. Harding, a big thing. I must say I'm pleased. We had a rough time for a while but now I'm very pleased."

"You done well, all right."

"We might have done better," Hodgins said, smiling at Joe.

Joe laughed unnaturally and said, "Do you think I'd be a good candidate for the dipping?"

"I do. I really do. You're of a serious turn of mind."

"Then I may fool you."

"You won't fool us. We'll be glad to have you."

"I sometimes think there's something in it," Joe said uneasily, tentatively.

"It's food and drink to me," Hodgins said seriously.

It was dark and Hodgins should have gone down the road, but he rocked back and forth on the veranda. There was a moment of silence. Joe fumbling in his pocket for his pipe, was unhappy. He was getting excited, the silence disturbed him, but he didn't know what to say.

"Do you hear those darn bull frogs?" he said.

"Yes, up the river a little."

"Such a croaking."

"Get on your nerves in the dark if you were alone up there."

"You get used to it."

Joe began to talk again about the barn and the baptism, then unexpectedly told Hodgins he had been thinking of being baptized. Hodgins stopped rocking, drawing his chair up closer to Joe, and began to talk so eagerly he twisted his words. He remembered the old argument about original sin and plunged into it, but Joe waved his hand impatiently, trying to make him understand original sin had nothing to do with it. "It's something I want to do. It's something I got to do," he said, trying childishly to make Hodgins understand the thoughts in his head. "It will be all right with me when I do that," he said. He did not want to mention Lottie or Ellen but thought Hodgins should understand how much he had been thinking of them.

Hodgins was very much moved. Again he rocked back and forth, hardly knowing what to say, glad of the darkness. "Let's think it all over," he said.

"I've thought it over," Joe said.

"Well I'll think about it and we'll talk it over," he said getting up.

Joe stood up and there was a long uncomfortable pause.
"That looks like a star out over there," Joe said.
One star was shining through a rift in the clouds.
"Then it won't rain, I guess."
"No, I guess not. Good night."

12.

Joe told Dan Higgins he was going to be baptized. Dan laughed so hard Joe left the hotel in disgust. Dan followed him out on the veranda to apologize. Joe tried to make him understand why he had decided to do such a thing. Dan listened doubtfully, not quite knowing whether to take Joe seriously but said finally, "I guess we can still be friends, Joe."

"Sure, Dan, it's different with me. It's something I just got to do. I mean I'll feel better when I do it," Joe said, slightly embarrassed.

"Ike's going to be baptized, too."

"Well, Ike's all right, aint he? You couldn't want a better man than Ike," Joe said eagerly.

"Ike's good company all right but you're different, Joe. It goes against your grain."

"It does and it don't, Dan. It's a thing I want to do now."

"It won't help your dead wife to do it," Dan said pointedly.

"I don't know. I'd like to do something."

Dan suggested Joe do nothing for a few months till the natural sorrow had passed away, but Joe shook his head stubbornly and said he knew what he wanted. Dan was sorry for Joe, so sorry he put one arm around his shoulder and asked him to stay at the hotel for the night. "That house must be lonesome," he said. "It must get on a man's nerves." Joe was angry and left him. Dan would not take him too seriously.

The people who heard Joe Harding was going to be baptized nodded their heads appreciatively. It was only proper, they said; it was the best way to honor the memory of his dead wife and niece, and they recalled he had never been a scoffer like Jerry Hammond and always had had a good deal of the Christian spirit. The neighbors agreed a man had to be brought face to face with death to see the value of submitting to the dictates of his conscience, and these same people called on Joe, shook hands

with him and praised his depth of vision. Joe did not like it and didn't want to talk to them.

Every night for a week before the baptism Hodgins in the evenings talked to Joe on the veranda, trying in no way to hide his enthusiasm for Joe's conversion. He said frankly he would get more joy from Joe's baptism than from the baptism of twenty-four good souls whose faith had made possible the evangelical work in the village. Joe avoided talking very much about it. It was something that simply had to be done to make him feel good, that was all there was to it.

The days before Sunday went slowly but Joe was happier, having made up his mind to be definite. Twice he went to service in the barn, and though he did not listen very attentively, he had the pleasure that comes from the earnest performance of a duty, the satisfaction that comes to people who sacrifice themselves for an ideal, and singing the hymns and praying, he thought of the night Lottie had gone up on the platform. There he was in the barn doing what Lottie had done, trying to think her thoughts. After the service he went over to Kremer's house. Mr. and Mrs. Kremer had decided to be baptized together and she was very proud of it. That night in Kremer's parlor they agreed that Hodgins was a fine young man, a real credit to the community, if induced to be the first pastor of a new Baptist church.

It rained all Sunday morning but cleared up at noon time. Joe was up early and the time passed slowly. Now the day of the baptism had come he was restless, wishing it was time to go down to the lake and he was at times inert, indifferent, but for the most part conscious of doing the right thing.

In the afternoon at twenty minutes to three he walked over to Kremer's place. He had on an old pair of pants and a khaki shirt and did not wear a hat. Under his arm he carried a change of clothing. Hodgins had advised all who were to be baptized to wear old clothes.

They went down the road together, hardly talking, for Joe was thoughtful and Mrs. Kremer was getting nervous. Over and over Ike assured her everything would come out all right. Not in years had so many automobiles come down the old road, and many were crossing the highlevel bridge to park near the road house or on the grass alongside the valley road. People from the cars walked down the river. Joe and the Kremers went down the path by the bridge. The cement bridge over the river had three

inches of water on it. It was in the hollow and small streams flowed down the road to the bridge.

"I guess Mr. Hodgins was right," Ike said.

"What do you mean?" Joe asked.

"He said an awful lot of people would come from all over to see it."

They walked down the river. The path was wet and slippery.

On the beach near the river mouth many people were assembled. More were coming down the path to see the baptism in the lake. Here and there in the crowd was a man or woman in old clothes and bared head, waiting to be baptized. The people who had come from the city to see the baptism were perched in favorable spots on the sparsely wooded hill sloping back from the shore line and the river. The sun was shining but the grass on the hill was still wet.

By the time Hodgins and Mr. Harvey Simpson and his wife came down the path fully five hundred people were assembled on the beach and the slope of the hill. Hodgins was wearing a long black robe, hanging loosely on his tall frame. He carried rubber boots under his arm. Walking with him was a tall white haired man with a high, round, shiny forehead and strong aquiline nose, wearing a similar black robe and carrying rubber boots. Mrs. Kremer told Joe he was Rev. Dr. Morrow from the city.

The twenty-four penitents in old clothes surged toward Hodgins, but were embarrassed by the presence of the stranger from the city whom Hodgins treated so respectfully. Joe was aware of people staring at him, by his old clothes, one of the penitents.

Hodgins and Dr. Morrow strode over to the rude pulpit of rough boards erected back from the water line, close to the slope of the hill. After a short consultation with Hodgins, Dr. Morrow climbed up to the pulpit and raised his arm on high, praying in a loud resonant voice. The crowd on the beach listened with bowed heads and the men and women on the hills were silent. Joe could hear only the passionate prayer of the minister and the steady lapping of the water on the beach. The sun went behind thick clouds gathering in the sky.

After praying, a hymn was sung, many people on the hill singing with those on the beach. Then Dr. Morrow in a short address praising Hodgins' zeal, thanked God for giving a strong

Christian spirit to Eastmount. He descended from the pulpit and Hodgins helped him put on the waist-high rubber boots. And then Harvey Simpson helped Hodgins with his rubber boots.

Hodgins called upon all who were to be baptized to gather around him. Joe and Ike and Mrs. Kremer edged close and soon he was hemmed in by the band of twenty-four in old clothes, bundles of clothing under their arms. Hodgins quietly explained that Mr. Herbert MacIntosh had kindly consented to let them change their clothing after the submerging, in his cottage, a short way along the beach.

A small procession was formed and the solemn little band, woebegone in their old clothes and uncovered heads, followed Hodgins and Dr. Morrow down to the edge of the water. Joe was walking opposite Katie MacIntyre, who was so nervous she could hardly keep from crying. The procession, close to the water, was hemmed in by the crowd.

Hodgins and Dr. Morrow, taking big awkward steps in the clumsy rubber boots, strode out in the water until it was waist high.

Hodgins, raising his hand, took a few steps toward the shore, beckoning Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Simpson to come toward him. Mrs. Simpson had on a long black robe similar to Hodgins', but Harvey wore a good Sunday suit for the solemn occasion. They walked slowly, hands linked, until a few paces from Hodgins. Dr. Morrow, bowing and smiling encouragingly, reached out his hand to take hold of Mrs. Harvey Simpson whose face was ashen pale. He put his left arm across her back and took her right hand in his.

He said in a loud voice that all on the beach might hear, "My dear sister Simpson, do you believe in the Lord Jesus, the Savior, who died for you and rose again?"

She nodded her head, "I do."

"Then in the name of Christ and at his command I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost," he said, lowering her gently till submerged completely.

Harvey Simpson stood by inconsequentially while his wife was lifted up, the water streaming from her head. Hodgins helped Mrs. Simpson to the shore and she was taken along the beach to Herb MacIntosh's shack.

Joe stood on the shore, watching intently the dipping of

Simpson, who stuck his head out of the water, coughing and sneezing.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Kremer walked out in the water and Joe was left standing apart from the others on the beach, his heart beating unevenly. He felt as if he had been working hard, exhausting himself, but getting somewhere.

Six married couples were baptized in the lake. A young boy went with his father and mother out in the water. Dr. Morrow saw the boy coming and raising his hands high over his head cried, "What a great joy it is to see young people in general but boys and girls in particular saved by grace. Maybe the Lord will make of this boy a preacher to carry his word into far off countries." And the trembling boy was dipped and carried to the shore by his father.

A few girls in black robes and colored bathing caps were baptized.

Then Joe walked in the water that soaked through his boots and crept up coldly around his loins, chilling him until his teeth chattered. Hodgins clasped his hand, squeezing it, and Joe didn't want to look back at the people on the beach. The preacher from the city was talking but the words droned in Joe's ears for he was chilled and trembling. The water was icy, his legs were numb but the upper part of his body tingled with a strange exhilaration. Then his thoughts got twisted and staring at the water line on the minister's black robe he was eager for humiliation. An arm was around his neck and he was looking at the broad pink cheekbones of the minister, then his head sank beneath the surface of the water and he came up spluttering, the water streaming from his nearly bald head along matted strands of hair down to his forehead and into his eyes. He rubbed his eyes. He had done it. It was over. Something inside him was hurt but he had been eager to suffer and now felt the joy of release from a fixed purpose.

Joe waded quickly to the beach and all the people on the hill watched him, wet and bedraggled, hurrying along to Herb MacIntosh's shack. Herb was sitting in front of the shack smoking his pipe. Herb nodded to Joe and said Mr. and Mrs. Kremer hadn't changed yet so he would have to wait. Joe, shivering, looked back but could see only the fringe of the crowd curiously interested in the behavior of all who were submerged in the lake. The ceremony would soon be over.

Ike came out of the shack and Mrs. Kremer followed him.

Mrs. Kremer was blue around the lips but Ike was in good humor.

"They should have a man in there with a towel to give a fellow a rub down," he said to Joe.

Mrs. Kremer, still shivering, said, "You better change at once, Mr. Harding. You'll get your death of cold standing there like that."

In the old shack Joe changed his clothes rapidly, eager to get outside. He hurried back to the crowd around the pulpit.

After the ceremony in the water Hodgins and Dr. Morrow took off their rubber boots. Hodgins ascended the rough pulpit. The small congregation was gathered around him but Hodgins spoke to the big crowd on the hill and along the beach. The presence of so many people stirred his imagination and he talked with fiery eloquence. Joe was glad he was one of the band who had been baptized.

Hodgins came down from the pulpit and it was Dr. Morrow's turn to say a few appropriate words, assuring the congregation Hodgins would surely be the first pastor of the new Baptist church in the village if they all joined in a call.

And then everybody sang, "Yes we shall gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river." Dr. Morrow began to pray with turbulent eloquence. Many people on the hill knew the ceremony would soon be over and turned to go home.

It was nearly five o'clock. The surface of the lake was unbroken and the sun now shining brilliantly polished the smooth water. Away along the beach to the west the grey bluffs towered up clearly. Men and women came down the hill to walk up the valley to the road. Dan Higgins, smoking a cigar, came over to Joe, who was looking around for Ike.

"How'd it go, Joe?" he said, hilarious about something.

"All right. I'm satisfied."

"Me, too."

"Why?"

"See the young fellow over there talking?"

"Yeah."

"He's a reporter from the city."

"Well?"

"He asked me if I got baptized and I told him yes. I said it was the happiest day of my life and he took it all down."

"I don't know as that was quite right," Joe said slowly.

"Shucks, Joe, you're all right. Let's go up the path together," Dan said, and laughing, took Joe's arm.

They walked rapidly up the river because Dan wanted to be at the hotel when the crowd passed along the road. The beer and ale sign could be seen from the valley and the road.

In the hotel Joe talked idly with a few customers while Dan served drinks and sandwiches to a great many people.

At six o'clock they were alone in the bar room. Joe knew Hodgins had gone into the city and would not return to the village for a few days, and having nowhere to go, he ate a sandwich and drank a bottle of beer. He was in good humor. Dan was in good humor, too, because business had not been so good in a long time. He talked gaily about the baptism and wasn't a bit concerned about offending Joe, who listened good naturedly, saying occasionally, "You're right and you're wrong, Dan."

And Dan said finally, "You don't think things are really going to be any different from now on, do you?"

"Of course not, I don't want things to be different. I want things to be the same as they've always been," Joe said.

Sitting at the small square table, his glance alternating between the half empty beer bottle and the red rims of Dan's bleary eyes, Joe did not feel like admitting he had been trying for days to live on in the old way and his acceptance of Hodgins' faith and the baptism had been a gesture toward established opinion in the village.

Late at night he left the hotel and walked down the old road to the house. The nights were cool near the lake in the early fall. In the kitchen he hung his coat on the back of a chair. He made some strong tea. Lottie had always liked weak tea. He drank the tea methodically and then took off his collar and tie, twisting the tie carefully around the collar. And he thought of Dan Higgins and Hodgins and Jerry Hammond and Harvey Simpson and wanted to be friendly with everybody, though he would always like Dan better than anybody in the congregation. He was glad to be one of the congregation. It didn't do a man any good to stand alone. He could be quite comfortable in the village. Taking off his boots to put them under the stove damper, Joe felt that he was growing old and valued most a feeling of security.

RAYMOND HOLDEN

TWO POEMS

WHAT HAVE WE TO DO WITH SLEEP

Rare One! Ripe One! Beautiful!
Do you remember, do you,
Do you remember
How love's wind in a lull
Let the dropped flame fall through you
Back to its ember?
How, in the cold night's hand
Closed buds of breast and thigh
That no sun's beating fanned
Could lightly, coldly lie?
And how you said:
The body too long granted
The cover coveted
Should be new plowed, new planted?
Breath, that said that, says now:
What have we to do with sleep
That from knee to dew-cool brow
Feel love's wakeful shouting sweep?
O Sweet! O wedded Sweet!
Better for bodies than the smooth-sealed lid
That body and burning body meet,—
Mouth coral under sea mouth hid,
Breast-bud's crushed flowery under breast,
Hands under flanks till morning come
And its throat-colored, waving crest
Break upon eyes that do not feel its foam!

RAYMOND HOLDEN

WINTER

Fold, o pitied and unaided
Gifts that make rapture flash
Among the tunnels of this head,
Your slow leaves, for the ash
Of earth ransacked and burned is flying,
Falling from wind to wind
And all good green is marked for dying,
Stripped, blackened, broken, thinned.

O let us go like the ash bud
That can endure the cold
Of all a winter, keeping blood
And its sheaved lights in fold.
Not so to counterfeit a season
The cold grain of the snow
Forswears, but for a proud bright reason
Only ourselves need know.

Who, other than a fool, would ask
Audience for that flower
The locks of bridal night should mask
In the pod of its hour?
Let us stand as on the cold gray
Branch the ash buds, in pride;
Aloof, and ignorant as they
Whether the ash tree or the world has died.

MARTIN FEINSTEIN

TWO POEMS

BALAAM'S ASS'S EPISTLE TO HER MISTRESS

To mistress Balaam, my lord's lesser light,
Garnishing her lonely bed with sorrow,
Crying because her grief grows with the morrow,
This letter I most faithfully indite.

O, but your lord is wanton, he's abroad
On every back of evil. He is one
That crowds and treads apace the very sun.
He is my master, and your spreading lord.

Are all men but the mould of one event,
Lined with a livid, base calligraphy?
Then of all men most callous this is he
That stampedes with the night's predicament.

Balak the king has trespassed with design,
Balak the king has choice and puffed appraisal,
O, but the criers of his court are nasal,
And there are harlots fine and superfine.

And Balaam my lord has spread his tent to grace
The foulness of his new menagerie,
And out of the portion of your misery
Has broken bread with treason to my face.

Aye, thus, and this is your well-spoken lord,
Whose love for you runs over to his eyes,

But midmost of the season of his lies
His kiss is harlotry, his hand a sword.

Aye, and he drove to tread me to my shame,
And there was something flamed upon us there,
Out of the waste, a shape with burning hair,
And eyes that broke upon us with dark blame.

So, Mistress Balaam, so is your night begun,
So is the day to rue that I was born,
For bounding asses with a unicorn,
For dragging tether with the evil one.

Deeper than carols of the dead, and wider
Than drum outcrying drum is my sad lay,
For I have had Beelzebub for rider,
And I must draw the dragon now alway.

BALAAM'S EPISTLE TO NANTUCKET NAN

Dear Nanny Nan, darling most spatulate,
Fond product of a cod-conversant shore,
My love to all the boarderesses, for
I'm out of love with my contingent fate.

Don't press me with your mournful posturing,
You know me for a man of mickle might.
I march with many banners; some are bright,
And some are dark with bloody harvesting.

I'd send my wife's regards, Nan, but you kno
How little she regards you, and so I send
Whatever portent hate and love pretend,
And something like a battered cameo.

The hills are atrabilious, or is it I
So crammed and broken out of all perspective?
Love, or if death be dearer, should be elective
And hug the broken heights of prophecy.

A god can march his caravans in state,
A fool can make his witless wit elastic,
An ass can sneeze, and posture Hudibrastic,
And manna in the desert anticipate.

And I am but a rider, one who prods,
And I am death, dear Nan, and death has sense;
And I am fire, and fire is rank offense
To fools, to asses and to phallic gods.

And, Nan, I know there's scurvy talk abroad,
And my old Ass has copyright thereto,
That I am but a harlot's didle-de-do,
And something else about a handy sword.

Well, that's to be expected, don't you think?
For love crowds upward to god's regency,
And love, Nan, is high minister in me,
But there's the scurvy Ass, and there's the stink.

Am I a hound to run into the west?
Am I a man, or branded and afraid?
To hell with all your golden barricade,
I want no portals and no common rest.

EVELYN SCOTT

CREATURES IN GENERAL

The litter of squirrels
Would arouse the compassion of the Virgin Mary.
The hyenas,
With shuffling slope of back,
With foreheads lunging,
In over-cerebral development,
Lombrosianly,
As their stale eyes,
Dusty and prominent,
Meet your own,
Are really beyond the values of cruelty.
An old monkey,
With her baby,
Displays,
On the moth-eaten fur of her breast,
The glossy circles of teats wrung slack.
Her pink face,
Nude in its shock of yellow hair.
Elongates.
With a snout of derision,
She fulfills her obligations,
Baring her yellowed canines:
Then returns to her carrot,
Quarreling for it with her infant.
The panther,
A baby in gloves,
Springs,
Loose-hipped,
On sponge-soft paws,

To one end of her closet of confinement,
And returns.
Her jellied eyeballs clear with her secret,
Her blank pupils deride the ghosts
That are spectators.
Too calm for illusion,
She scrubs,
With her meaty feet,
The stiff glass whiskers
That prick her jaw.
In her chaste orgy,
Lumberingly voluptuous,
She abandons her length
To our observation;
Rolls, wallows,
Tries vainly to exhaust herself.
When the man with the basket of mutton
Can be smelled,
Distantly,
Ardour,
Like a glacial fire,
Wells in a gaze
Bold enough to place cats
Over all in Egypt.
Her snarl rends her joyously.
Her weighty tail shudders.

But the little painted duck is diving in the pond,
And the dapper bantam cock
Conducts himself with all the resolution of a general,
Though more tastefully.
The dun snake,
Flat, under the fine wire grating,
Is a coil of poisonous dust,
Its fat head sleeping,
A firm lozenge on the ground it loves,
Its distrustful spirit closed
In the torpor men have fed it.

Oh, God, would God I were a Presbyterian,
And could feel these creatures
Less real than I!

KATHLEEN MILLAY

SACCO AND VANZETTI

2 A. M. AUGUST 23, 1927.

Now is our justice done with them at last,
Our laws have left your weary ones alone;
Now are the seven years of dying past,
The seven years of waiting and of fast—
Now you can have your dear ones for your own.

FROM THE CROSS

"I must forgive some people for what they are doing to me now."
Bartolomeo Vanzetti, August 23, 1927.

"Forgive them, Lord, they know not what they do!"
And they will praise Thee, Lord,
And they will live.
Forgive them, Lord, forget the murdered two,
Who, being killed,
Remembered to forgive.

"OUTSIDE THE PALE"

Now let us bury hope beneath the ground,
Deep down where never light of any day
Can reach it with the deadly ray of living;
Deep down where not again can sight or sound
Bewilder it with what it never found,
Nor blind it with the gift they'll not be giving,
The promise of a debt they'll never pay.

Now let us bury life and go our way—
And watch the people sing their hymns
And hear the people pray.

JUSTICE

Gone.
Gone beyond all hoping and regret.
Gone beyond life and death
And love and hating.
And we are left
Alive and weeping yet;
And we are left—
Who never can forget
Your certain death and seven years of waiting.

CIVILIZATION

What have we done?
A hush upon the world
Holds up its hands in horror on its face!
Holds up its frightened hands in awful dread
Where three white slabs await the not yet dead—
And dares no more to look upon the place.
And shields its bloody hands against the sun
And counts forever one and one and one—
And sees three men walk bravely to their bed,
Where they will rest at last
When they are dead.

MYRON MAGE

TWO POEMS

1.

Bong! , Bong! , the brazen bell. Dumb! ,
Dumb! , Dead! , Dead! , the hollow drum.
Keen , Keen , the night wind's whine. Cold ,
Cold , pallid and old, all his gold
Is lead. Dead! , The sobbing violins
Wail long a strain of muted pain, again,
Dumb! , Dumb!—. A flute is piercing clear
The sun will rise, the clouds will disappear,
The birds in all the leafy woods will sing,
Winds will whisper and a healing rain
Will patter in the bran—again begins
Bong! , Dumb! , Dumb! , Dead! . They bring
Hammers and wood. Tap , Tap , Wail!
Into my heart is driven every nail!

2.

He is so pitch black certain in his blindness
That always his cold cruelty must be,
He draws away in fright at touch of kindness
As if a snake had fanged him mortally.

So cowardly his dread of war and death
He grinds his children to heap powder more
And panic stricken at suspicion's breath
He madly rushes into death and war.

So sure is he the world's his bloody cave
Of howling discord and chaotic night,
He calls them mad who would have him be brave
Who try to lead him out into the light.
And on derisive cross does agonize
His holy madmen, Don Quixote and Christ.

HERMAN SPECTOR

A POEM

blow moaning in the dark foggy morning,
horn or something.
somebody's boat passes in water, swish-cut,
and blows moaningly.
blows blows fainter, fades. 2 or 3. lets hope
there's no collision, let's pity the poor
sailorboys out at sea a night like this,
or morning.
foggy continues horn. the waterfront is a
place for dreams. silence interpolates
ejaculation between moaned horns, and the
earth sweats.
there is no peace on earth, nor goodwill
among men, christ was a helluva liar,
and water-rats may thrive or die in their
homes among wharves.
the world is in a nervous sweat, awaits,
expectant of some fearsome fate . . .
rolling darkly, and the depths of turbid
seas are aware of earth's unrest, and
scathe, and wetly swell and swell . . .

blow moaning in the dark foggy morning,
horn or something.

NATHAN ASCH

IN THE CITY

MRS. MATTHEWS grumbled to herself when she climbed the four flights up to the flat. Mrs. Matthews hated the four flights. She was fat, and going up the stairs tired her. But then everything else tired her in the city: the hard pavements she walked on, and the new shoes she wore, and having to go to the corner every time she needed anything.

Mrs. Matthews hated the city. She hated it because until Fred had died, she had always lived in the country, and because she had not wanted to leave. She had wanted to stay in a house in the village, among the old people she had grown with. But John had said he wanted to go to the city. He was a good carpenter, and he never liked to do chores. He always looked sick when he had to go out with a team. He hated milking and getting up at five in the winter to drive the milk down to the state road. She knew the farm would go to pieces now that Fred was dead. It was much better letting it out on shares to the Pole. Everybody was doing it. The farms were run by Swedes and Poles and here and there by an Italian, and the natives stayed in the village and lived off their shares.

Mrs. Matthews and Ethel came to the city with John. Ethel went to school and always came home dirtier than she had ever been on the farm. Then Mrs. Matthews would hate the city so much, that she would give Ethel a rap over the cheek with her knuckles, and Ethel would start yelling, and Mrs. Matthews would wash her face and grumble.

The walls of the flat were very thin, and she could hear what everybody said and did. Mrs. Matthews did not have much housework to do, not after having lived a lifetime on the farm,

so she sat on a straight chair and rocked herself on its legs and listened. Her neighbors were foreigners, she met them often on the stairs, and was either afraid of them or despised them, for she never spoke to them. On the other side of the wall they were always quarreling. There was an argument, and then somebody started talking for a long time, and then there was heard a smack, and somebody began to shriek, and then there was argument again. Mrs. Matthews rocked herself in that straight chair and listened.

After six John came in and she got supper. They ate. Ethel never spoke when John came home. She was afraid of him. After supper Mrs. Matthews did the dishes. Ethel read the funny paper. John sat in a corner and said nothing. After a few weeks in the city he began to go out in the evening.

At first Mrs. Matthews thought nothing of it. He probably went for a walk. She didn't see why any one should go out in the evening, but John never drank, and he always came home quietly, and went to bed. She couldn't imagine what he did, but she didn't worry about it. Herself she went to bed early, soon after Ethel, although she couldn't fall alseep till late. Through the window came light from the shops open below, and people on the street talked, and automobiles went by, and from time to time the Elevated rushed on with great noise in the next block. Mrs. Matthews lay in bed and thought she wanted to be in the village. She knew that if she went back she wouldn't have anything to do; it would be worse than in the city; but she wanted to go just the same.

She heard John enter, and undress himself; and the bed creaked as he got into it; and the lights below began to go out; people did not talk any more, not so many automobiles went by; until the night got quiet, and she fell asleep, and from time to time stirred as the Elevated went by.

One day Mrs. Matthews was sewing a button on John's store coat, when she smelled scent. She made sure that it came from his coat, by putting her nose right to the fabric. She didn't say anything, but she smacked Ethel harder when the child came home from school with her dress soiled, and was more than usually quiet when serving supper. John, too, said not a word, but as soon as he had finished eating, he changed into the store suit and went out.

Mrs. Matthews did the dishes, ordered Ethel to go to bed

earlier than usually, and sat down on a chair. She sat there all evening, and she didn't rock, and she didn't hear the foreigners quarreling on the other side of the wall. John did not get home until very late, so when the street below became quiet, she went to bed, and lay awake. Then she heard John come in, undress himself; and his bed creaked.

In the morning serving breakfast Mrs. Matthews asked John if he would put his store suit on again that evening. John said: "I guess so," and went to work. Ethel went to school.

Mrs. Matthews was very angry. If Fred were alive she would have told him, and John would have stayed home evenings. John had been afraid of his father. But Fred was lying in the village cemetery, and John worked and kept the flat going, so Mrs. Matthews said nothing.

John went out every evening and came home very late, and said nothing to his mother. After he left for work in the morning, Mrs. Matthews went into his room, smelled his clothes, then stood with the coat in her hand, without moving.

For a while Mrs. Matthews didn't clean the flat. John came home and found his bed not made. The dishes were left dirty until the evening, when just before John left Mrs. Matthews washed them with great noise. If he left before she had finished, she stopped doing them, sat down, and did not finish until just before going to bed. She smacked Ethel so often now, that the girl brought a note from her teacher, that said: "Ethel seems not to be able to give attention in class. She looks stunned." Ethel looked particularly dirty that day as she stood shaking and weeping while her mother read the note, and Mrs. Matthews after finishing, wanted to smack her, but didn't, instead quietly took her by the arm and led her to the kitchen sink to wash her. Ethel went to sleep early, and Mrs. Matthews lay awake all night.

Mrs. Matthews rose at dawn, heated water, poured it into a pail and very carefully scrubbed the kitchen floor. When John came in for breakfast the floor shone, the oilcloth on the kitchen table looked new, the dishes were polished, and Mrs. Matthews herself was dressed in her Sunday dress. Ethel was cleaned very carefully, and sent to school with a loving pat to her cheek. Whether John paid any attention to the cleaned kitchen Mrs. Matthews did not know. He ate and took his hat and went out. Mrs. Matthews changed the dress for a wrapper, and all that

day she cleaned the house. The sheets were changed, new bed covers were put on the beds, even the brass on the bed posts was polished, even the windows were cleaned. It took Mrs. Matthews all day to clean the flat, what with having to go to the butcher and to the grocery on the corner. She ordered a cut of meat, and placed a table-cloth on the kitchen table.

When John came in he did notice the changed look of the flat, and stood in the kitchen door inquiringly. But his mother said nothing, and this evening instead of putting his good clothes on after dinner, he changed before eating, and went into the kitchen. There Ethel was sitting, her face shining, and Mrs. Matthews was busy at the oven basting a roast, a roast in the middle of the week.

Mrs. Matthews' heart was beating loudly as they were finishing the meal. She did not dare to look at John, but with her eyes on the plate she watched his movements. John did not seem very comfortable. When he had finished, he rose, placed his chair near the window, and was going to sit down, while Mrs. Matthews was triumphant, when at the last moment he changed his mind, said: "I guess I'll go out for a while," stood a moment in the doorway, looking at the clean kitchen, and then left.

The minute he left, Ethel started weeping, as if she knew she would get smacked, but her mother did nothing. She just sat in her chair, not saying a word; and the dishes were not washed that night, and Ethel was not told to go to bed, but fell asleep in the chair that was too big for her, her head on the clean tablecloth. She awoke when it was late, and her mother was still sitting, so she went to bed.

For the next few days things were done by fits. Sometimes there was no dinner ready for John until just before he came home, when Ethel was sent down for sausage and cold slaw. Mrs. Matthews herself hardly went from the flat. She got into the habit of leaning out of the window and watching the street below, following the movements of people from the time they came into view at one end of the street, until they disappeared on the other side or went up the Elevated stairs. Ethel was sent home from school once because "her appearance was not fit for class," but the girl did not care. Her mother never touched her any more, and Ethel enjoyed being dirty. John was seen no more except at meals. Even on Sunday he stayed in his room all day, reading the Sunday papers, and after supper going out as usual.

One Friday morning, at breakfast, John said to his mother:

"Ma, I've got a friend coming up Sunday for dinner. Her name's Miss Willett."

Mrs. Matthews went right on serving breakfast. She had been handing a plate with eggs to John when he had said that, and if John had not caught the plate, it would have smashed on the table. But her face was unchanged, and she went back to the stove to get Ethel's plate with a single egg on it. Ethel evidently knew what was happening, for she looked too frightened to eat her egg. Her mother did not notice that Ethel was not eating her egg, but got her own plate and sat down at the table. Not another word was said at breakfast.

All day Friday and Saturday Mrs. Matthews made attempts to clean the flat. She began heating water and moving furniture from one room to another so the floors could be scrubbed, and when the floors were clear and the water hot, she stood and wondered what it was for. And she remembered the flat was to be clean for Miss Willett on Sunday; she got angry, poured the hot water down the kitchen sink, dragged the furniture back to its original place, with determination sat down and tried to listen to what was happening next door. Later she again filled the large pot, set it on the stove, lit the gas, and cleared the furniture. And she grumbled to herself. She was angry when she grumbled to herself.

On Sunday John rose early and asked his mother to press his pants, which she did, too angry even to grumble. John polished his shoes, and wet his hair so it should stay down. There seemed to be excitement in the flat, for no one thought of eating breakfast, not even Ethel, who dutifully allowed herself to be washed and combed, and a great green ribbon was attached to her hair. The ribbon had been pressed by Mrs. Matthews at the same time she had pressed the pants. Then John went out to get Miss Willett and Mrs. Matthews set the table.

Mrs. Matthews was trying not to be excited, but she was. She told Ethel to sit quietly and not to touch the ribbon, or to soil her dress, and to read her funny paper, or she would get smacked. At the last moment, she thought of showing her independence by not putting on the very best dress she had, even smiled to herself at the thought, but she did put on the dress; and she couldn't sit still waiting for John and Miss Willett, but ran from the oven where the chicken was roasting, to the table

where the knives and forks lay polished, again looked at the chicken, again polished knives and forks; and she heard all the steps on the stairs.

Mrs. Matthews was prepared not to like Miss Willett, and she did not like her. John was red in the face, and Miss Willett said: "How do you do" to Mrs. Matthews, which Mrs. Matthews tried not to answer, but did, and her tone tried to be very cold. Then Miss Willett kissed Ethel whose ribbon had managed to fall, and Mrs. Matthews was angry, she didn't know whether at the ribbon or at Miss Willett. They sat down at the table, and John did not know where to sit, his face was so red.

Miss Willett called John by his first name, he called her Helen, and they seemed to know one another very well. Miss Willett even straightened John's tie that had gotten out of place in the excitement, and Miss Willett smiled at Mrs. Matthews, at Ethel, at the table, and Miss Willett said: "How nice," and Mrs. Matthews wanted to scratch Miss Willett's eyes out.

Mrs. Matthews told Miss Willett how many acres they had on their farm, and how many cows they had, and how much tobacco they had planted when Mr. Matthews was alive, and how tobacco did not pay any more, people didn't smoke cheap cigars any more; about the Pole, and what a good workman he was; how Mrs. Matthews liked the city with all its conveniences. And Ethel thought it was all right, so she told Miss Willett how many kittens the calico cat had had, and what they had done to the kittens: drowned so many . . . and . . . until Mrs. Matthews gave Ethel a look, and Ethel did not say another word.

Miss Willett told Mrs. Matthews how rich her father had been, with a grocery store in a small town, how he had lost his money, how he had died, how her mother had died, how she was working in a shipping office, how she hated the city, and how she loved the country.

John did not know what to do with his hands, or his tie. He tried to say something, and he had nothing to say.

Mrs. Matthews talked some more then Helen Willett said things, and then Miss Willett folded her napkin, as if she were eating at that table every day, and when rising Miss Willett kissed Ethel again, and Ethel did not know whether to like it or not, and looked at Mrs. Matthews, and Mrs. Matthews wanted to tell Ethel not to like it, but did not know how; and then John said: "How about a walk, Helen?" and Miss Willett said: "Won't

that be fine," and Miss Willett said: "You want to go for a walk, Ethel?" and Ethel looked at her mother, and it seemed as if Ethel were going to cry, and Mrs. Matthews said silently to Ethel: "If you dare to cry, I'll whip you," and Ethel said: "I guess not, Miss Willett."

So Miss Willett kissed Ethel once again and smiled at Mrs. Matthews and said: "Thank you for the nice dinner, Mrs. Matthews," and Mrs. Matthews said: "Not at all," and she wouldn't say: "Come again"; she just wouldn't. But she knew that Miss Willett would come again. And John and Miss Willett left.

The minute they left Ethel disappeared somewhere, and Mrs. Matthews sat down hard on the chair, and placed her hands on her lap, and clutched her hands on her lap, and hated Miss Willett.

For a moment she thought: "Helen Willett is a nice girl, and seems to like John a lot." For just one moment Mrs. Matthews felt that maybe she wasn't being fair to her. Wasn't it natural that John should want to take a girl out? John was grown up; he couldn't stay home all his life; he had to look out for himself. Mrs. Matthews thought: "I'll be nice to her; maybe she'll like me and we'll get on together."

But that was for just one moment. Immediately after, she dropped the thought and said: "No, I don't like how she acts. I don't like it when she kisses Ethel. I don't want to hear about her grocery father losing his money. If John gets a nice girl, I'll like her. But I don't want this one."

And Mrs. Matthews tried to find why this girl didn't please her, and she couldn't, and she hated her more. She knew that John liked her, and she didn't want him to. She said to herself: "Why did she have to come? We were getting on so well, and she had to come." Mrs. Matthews forgot that she really hated the city, that she had wanted to live in a small house in the village, that it had taken John a long time to persuade her to come. She thought she had been perfectly happy here. She really felt as if all of her life she had been living in the city, and suddenly she were being forced to leave it.

Mrs. Matthews was unhappy. Her hands were clutching one another on her lap, and she stared before her, and she heard not a thing of what was going on about her, next door, or outside on the stairs, or below in the street.

Next Saturday afternoon, Helen Willett called, and John was out then, and Miss Willett said: "I came around to see if I could help with anything. It must be awful to be new to the city." Mrs. Matthews had been rocking on the straight chair, listening to the foreigners, and the morning dishes had not been done. Miss Willett said: "Oh, let me do the dishes. I love to work in the house." Mrs. Matthews said it was all right, she would do the dishes herself. But Miss Willett insisted, took an apron off the hook, put it on, and did them.

Mrs. Matthews was told to call Miss Willett, Helen; she was told Helen had always done the housework at her father's, her mother having been ailing; she was told John was awfully nice, but he needed some one to take care of him; she was told not to move while Helen swept the floor, floors needed to be swept often, Helen said; Mrs. Matthews was told Ethel was a sweet child—Ethel had just come in from the street—but needed to be washed a little. Ethel was washed and kissed and given a nickel to buy her an ice cream cone.

Mrs. Matthews only hoped that John wouldn't come in then, and he didn't, but the next morning at breakfast, John said Helen had told him she had seen his mother, and had helped her. And John added, looking red in the face:

"She'd be a great help to you, Ma, in the house."

"She wouldn't, and she won't," said Mrs. Matthews.

Helen came often to the house after that. At odd moments, when she could get away from the shipping office, she dropped in, and said: "Oh, hello, Mrs. Matthews, I thought I'd look in." Or "I just came in, Mrs. Matthews, to tell you John don't look very well." She sat down and she told things to Mrs. Matthews. And one day after dinner, when John was there, Helen had the impudence to say: "Let me dry the dishes, Ma." And she looked sideways to see the effect. Mrs. Matthews was raging. She stopped in the midst of what she was doing, and she stared at Helen, and with her face said: "I'm not your Ma, and I don't want to be. And what's more, if I can help it, I'll never be your Ma."

Every night that Helen wasn't at the flat, John changed his clothes and went to see her. Mrs. Matthews was curious to know what happened when he called at Helen's house, and although in a way she thought she would like it better if these two saw each other only in the flat, where at least she would know what was hap-

pening, still she preferred that he did his courting away from home. She really hated Helen's face. The girl's actions sickened her. Everything she did seemed wrong. Sometimes Mrs. Matthews said to herself that she was only imagining, that Helen was not as bad as all that; but quickly she put away that thought, killed it, and kept on hating her. When Helen was in the flat Mrs. Matthews always had the ugliest thoughts, always felt irritated, nervous, thought that rather than live with this girl she would die.

Whenever she heard John say, Helen said this, Helen always does it that way, she wanted to cry out: "I'm fifty years old. I have always done it that way. You never complained. You seemed to like it all right. Your father liked it all right."

She wanted to say: "You are mine and not hers. I took care of you all the years of your life. I know exactly what you want. I even know what you feel. I know everything there is to know about you. Why did you bring her here? We were so happy; Ethel and me and you."

She wanted to remind him: "I didn't want to come. I wanted to stay in the village. You asked me to come. You said: 'Ma, I don't know how I'll get on without you.' You said: 'Ma, come on. We can't break up the house this way.' You always begged me to come."

And Helen was *so* sweet when John was there, and Helen was sweet even when John was away. There was nothing that Helen ever said or did that gave Mrs. Matthews the right to say: "She is stealing the flat from me, she is stealing John from me." Helen began calling Mrs. Matthews Ma regularly. At first she looked coy when she said this Ma, but then she got used to it, and even Mrs. Matthews began to get used to it, and hated herself. Helen began talking of the sort of flat she would have, and then she began telling of the flat she was going to have, and one day Helen said something about the flat *we* were going to have.

John *was* ashamed of himself. He hardly ever dared to look at his Ma. He never spoke at home except when Helen was there, and she was there often. And then one day Ethel said: "Oh, John and Helen and me, we went to look for furniture to-day." And John did not know what to say. He rose, and not looking at his mother, went into his room. Mrs. Matthews knew he was ashamed of himself. But Mrs. Matthews also knew the end had come. And then she didn't care what she did. She rose, too, and she gave

Ethel the biggest smack the child ever got and she marched into John's room, and she said:

"So you're going to get married."

And John said:

"Oh, Ma, I don't know. I really don't know. I guess so, Ma."

In the other room Ethel was weeping, and here John was sitting on the bed helpless, and Mrs. Matthews thought everything had suddenly died. She walked out of John's room; she said to Ethel: "You shut your mouth, and go down to play;" she sat on the chair. She tried to stop thinking.

That evening Helen ran into the flat and kissed Mrs. Matthews and cried: "Oh, Ma . . ." John must have told her. Helen immediately began to talk of her wedding dress, and what they would do with the flat: they would change the furniture around, and get some new pieces . . .

Mrs. Matthews became strange to her own flat. Helen quit her job and began fixing the place. She put colored curtains on the windows; she got some printed pictures for the walls; she was going to make Mrs. Matthews' room into a dining room. She didn't like to eat in the kitchen, she said . . . Mrs. Matthews was feeling very tired and very old, and she wasn't so angry at Helen any more. She began to think of Fred very often now. She saw him stretched out in bed in his store clothes, looking yellow and shrunken. She remembered his funeral. She missed him more and more. She thought of the village, and of her friends there. The city once more became foreign to her, and every time she climbed the stairs she hated it. She wanted to leave. She wouldn't even stay for the wedding.

On the night before she left for the village, she lay in bed in the room that was not dark for the light that came in from the street below. On the chair near the bed were Ethel's traveling clothes. The trunk was standing in the corner. John was out. Ethel was restless in her sleep. She turned, and sometimes in her dream she moaned. Mrs. Matthews lay very straight in her bed. She wished she were dead. She lay a long time, and finally she dozed off; and she stirred as the Elevated went by in the next block.

JOSEPH VOGEL

SECOND AVENUE

THERE is Second Avenue, that part south of Fourteenth Street, the little Broadway, and there are Jewish girls, buxom, thick and thin painted lips and there are chattering and broad laughter beneath lights that twinkle and roll away from your eyes and then suddenly roll back, and the crowd saunters along, hands behind backs, hands in pockets, curving around topcoats revealing golden chains, Second Avenue.

"Look look that man he's he's . . ."

Little lights on long signs roll away in fright.

"Stop stop dammit stop there's a man a man under your wheels . . ."

There is Second Avenue and there are cries that pierce the tumult, groans from thick and thin painted lips, wild hysteric curses, stop him, men paralyzed unable to stop him.

"A new littley littley tooth eh darling baby? David is getting a littley tooth. Bite mama's finger oh! what a biter."

"There's a man under your car you damn fool stop him he'll kill him . . ."

"David will get a littley rubber ball little man David. Morris heavens! Morris . . ." a mother's shriek. . . . "Stop your car God stop your car!"

A surge, a sudden billow of Second Avenue, a surge toward the man under the automobile's wheels.

A man rolled in mud, rolling and rolling backward as wheels back toward him; he picks himself up.

"Jacob, a dead man right under our eyes. A crushed man I can't look. Let's not go to the restaurant now."

A man with clothes of mud picks himself up, lowers his face

of mud, white spots of terror sparkling through the mud. A man pokes his chest, his stomach, his legs with numb fingers covered with mud and one diamond ring. A man pokes himself and then a smile draws his lips up slightly.

"Man you're hurt call the ambulance where's that damn driver?"

A billow of Second Avenue surges to the driver's automobile. Littley David bites his finger and looks at the dent. The mud man is carried along in the surge.

A leader! There is a leader now on Second Avenue, a short thin stout-lipped woman in mink furs. There is a leader to pierce the tumult with cries, a leader of the pack. Her fingers are thin and firm, her fingers are above the crowd, clutched, fighting to grasp the driver's white face and to pierce his wide-open eyes. "Run over a man! Kill kill murderer murderer let me show him! Forty miles an hour! Crush the guts out of a father with three children don't hold me you skunk let me ah ah let me get at him . . ." clutched fingers clawing the air.

"Where is the man who got crushed? Come here you nut there is the driver show him."

Littley David nibbles his littley finger.

A billow of Second Avenue and more waves dash against the automobile and remain there static. Open mouths and open eyes and surging bosoms.

"Here is the man you ran over him . . . didn't hear our warning, eh? You almost killed him what? Say that again you louse come out of your car and I'll knock hell out of you!"

"Oh Morris," littley David is clutched by mother's fingers. Littley David's mother does not hear his screams of pain.

Two fingers in the air. A calm. Second Avenue around the automobile becomes silent. The crushed man has raised two fingers. "It's all right. I'm not hurt." The mud man's lips draw up into a . . .

"You idiot idiot you were under the wheels I saw you under the wheels, you are hurt you idiot!" the leader, she has spoken and the pack speaks assent.

"Let the policeman through now the driver'll get his look out for the policeman he wants to get through."

The leader in mink furs reaches the driver and claws at his rocking head . . . "Kill a father of three children I saw you forty miles an hour . . ."

"Come on there get out of my way."

The leader twists around . . . "Get out of my way? I saw him father of three children little babies at their mother's breast . . ."

"I said get out of my way." The policeman pushes the leader out of his way.

He pushed the leader, he pushed the leader . . . "You murderer murderer butcher slaughterer push me you pushed me I saw him under the wheels father of . . ."

"If you don't shut up I'll lock you up."

Leader she screeches she cries, tears stream down her cheeks, her lips rattle, "Lock me up oh oh a father of three babies at his mother's breast . . ."

Second Avenue and the little lights run away from you and run over you and run around you and waves of Second Avenue dash against the automobile and remain there static.

"That's all right, officer." The people, the people of Second Avenue become silent. The crushed man has started to speak. "I'll let it go. I'm not hurt. Guess I'm some to blame for getting in his way. Aw, nothing to make a fuss over."

The screams of littley David drop. His mother's clutch has relaxed from his littley belly.

"You're hurt you're hurt I saw you under the wheels you're going to the police-station with the driver you're going to a hospital . . ." the pack surges in restlessness.

The pack surges in restlessness . . . "You look where you're pushing."

The pack surges in . . . "Dammit you look where you're pushing. If you do it again I'll show you!"

"You will hey?"

"Yes I will and if you say another word I'll poke this cigar in your eye."

Leader she is screeching, pack surges . . . "Hey you're burning right through my overcoat with your cigar."

"Christ man I can't watch two things at the same time!"

There is Second Avenue and there is Second Avenue around the automobile, but the "there is Second Avenue" that part south of Fourteenth Street, the little Broadway, the Jewish girls, buxom, thick and thin painted lips, chattering and broad laughter beneath lights that twinkle and roll away from your eyes and then suddenly roll back, the crowd sauntering along, hands

behind backs, hands in pockets, curving around topcoats revealing golden chains, the "there is Second Avenue" saunters along—but Second Avenue around the automobile surges in restlessness.

"All right, if you say so, we'll let it go."

"The policeman says he'll let it go haha hoho heehee the policeman oh says haha he'll let ohoh it go. A crushed man father of three babies nursing at his breast, a poor man out of work with broken bones . . ."

Second Avenue has a leader and Second Avenue has a philosopher, a man with Christ's beard looking up through a telescope for only five cents. Second Avenue has a lunatic with Christ's beard dripping, "I saw civilization drop from men's shoulders as quickly as a jacket . . ."

"Call another policeman."

"No he's got to arrest the driver he's got to."

"I'm not hurt, I'll let it go." The mud man starts to swim over the waves.

"No no you *are* hurt I saw you, you won't you won't." The leader scratches at the mud on the mud man's sleeve. "Forty miles an hour you're going to the police-station you're going to a doctor I saw it all."

The policeman puts the mud man in the back seat of the automobile and littley David wants to bite the mud man's numb finger. The policeman sits near the driver and bangs the door of the automobile . . . the surging the billowing! . . . the leader, the leader, oh, oh, what about the leader . . . the leader in mink furs cries tears down her cheeks . . . oh, oh, what about the leader . . . pains and solicitations for nothing . . . cries tears down her cheeks . . . oh, oh, father of three children nursing at their crushed mother's breasts . . . the leader squeezes into the automobile and sits with one leg over the policeman's lap . . .

And away they speed.

The driver got away without "even the good beating he deserved" and there is Second Avenue now, sauntering along under little lights that run away from you and run over you and run around you, there is Second Avenue now bursting into broad laughter heaving golden chains on bellies rocking like little waves, there is Second Avenue now and there is Second Avenue.

JOHN KEMMERER

ON A BYROAD

MARIAN WHITE was thirteen years old and she lived on a byroad northwest of Baghill. She had gray eyes and long reddish-gold hair. Other girls liked to touch her hair, to braid it and wind the braid around the crown of her pretty head. She would sit with them in a hammock beside the low farmhouse and let them play with her hair. Sometimes she looked like a princess. She was beginning to be tall. That was in the summer of nineteen twelve.

She had grown quieter, shy, silent. In the mornings she helped her mother in the house. After dinner she often went across the road to the timber and walked a while until she came to a secret place. It was like a perfect yard shut in by fragrant hazel brush. Here she sat on a log in the shade and looked at the grass, the trees, the birds, the river behind the trees, and the dense green foliage on the opposite bluff. She liked being alone and she loved all these things. Yet even here she was usually a little sad.

But on some days she was a regular tomboy. She rode her brother's pony up and down the road at a gallop. Dust flew high and settled on the bushes along the road. Her mother scolded. Her father sighed. No one could get her to stop. Then sometimes she took a shotgun and went hunting, though there was nothing to shoot but rabbits and pigeons. Or she made the hired man let her drive the mules in the field. If her father was away when she drove them, she used all the cusswords she had ever heard the hired man use.

The hired man was an old bachelor with long moustaches badly stained by his pipe. When things did not go right he swore furiously. But he was always kind to Marian. They had lots of

good talks together. In the evening he would sit smoking and tell her about the land he had lost in Arkansas. For last Christmas he had given her a fine saddle. She liked him.

One evening in June, however, after she had come in from riding up and down the road, he looked at her soberly and said, "You wasn't made to be good, was you?"

The question puzzled and troubled her considerably. For several days she was very quiet and spent all the afternoons sitting on her log and trying to think what was wrong with her. She wanted to ask him what he meant, but she was afraid. She was afraid to ask her mother and father, too. At last she gave it up. But even after that she had a dream in which the hired man looked at her and said the same thing about her.

By and by she forgot it, because she had to think of so many other things. Her cousins, having come to visit her, wanted to be entertained. She was learning to sew and make dresses. She read a sad sweet novel about a little boy named David Copperfield. It was an awfully long book. And every day she helped her mother; sat in the quiet place in the timber; and went to get the mail.

The box stood at the corner where the byroad joined the main road. The mailman passed there in the afternoon. In the evening, when the air was cool and the byroad shady, Marian would ride or walk down to the mailbox. She had to go almost a mile.

Now and then she walked with Lloyd Mitchell, a young man who had to get to Baghill by eight o'clock. He worked in the telegraph office in the depot there at night. He was a mild, obliging young man. Once he had begun to teach her the code of dots and dashes. But they had soon let it go. And once he had admired her reddish-gold hair. That was all she knew about him. She could not understand him. If he came along, she went with him, quite indifferently. They were like two sleepy men going to work.

One evening late in June she started to walk down to get the mail. It was warm and in the track the gray dust was velvety. Looking down she saw that her little slippers were scuffed and worn. She needed new shoes. She wanted a pair of little white slippers for summer.

The road led up a small hill and down into a hollow, where there was nothing but the darkening road. The timber on the west shaded it heavily. Behind the treetops, which were black, the sunset glowed orange and yellow. The colors were so pure

and beautiful, so fleeting, that tears came to Marian's eyes. She wanted to keep the sunset.

She climbed the next hill and hurried along a level stretch of road. On the west there was still the dark timber and on the east there was Pemberton's cornfield, with weeds and corn as high as the fence.

When she passed Pemberton's dingy house Fred Pemberton came out and said, "Can I walk with you? I'm going to town." He was a skinny boy a year older than she. He loafed in town in the evening.

She answered, "Yes, you can."

They walked on, she in one wheeltrack, he in the other.

"Going after the mail, ain't you?" he asked.

"Yes. I go past your place every night."

"Why don't you stop some time?"

"Oh, I don't know." Her mother would not let her play with Fred, because the Pembertons were such shiftless people.

"You stop and see me," he said, "and I'll come and see you."

"All right."

Once they had gone to the same country school and played games together. They played black man, and fox-and-geese in the snow, and horse races with willow whips. But now they were almost strangers again.

At school Fred used to carry a silvery pistol in his pocket. He said he had a lot of cartridges but they were at home. He was always whipping out the pistol to show that he was quick on the draw. If the girls screamed or if they laughed at him, he was pleased, because he liked to be noticed.

Going down the road Fred swaggered a little and whistled *Casey Jones.* Part of the time he sang the words. "Casey Jones mounted to the cabin. . . . Casey said just before he died. . . ." The whistling ended in fancy trills.

Marian was tired of that song. She looked at the ground and the sky. Above the trees the yellow light was faint.

Suddenly the boy whistled like a catbird. Mew. Mew. Mew. It sounded as if a tiny kitten were lost and crying plaintively. It was just like a catbird crying in the orchard in the evening.

"I love that," said Marian.

He imitated other birds for her, staring at her while he whistled. He imitated a robin chirruping. A robin came and lit in a wild plum tree and looked at them inquiringly. Then Fred

stopped and, what was very hard to do, warbled like an oriole.

This was enchanting. She felt as though she had found an old friend. They smiled at each other.

"I can decoy quail," he told her. "Come here, I'll show you."

They scrambled up a bank into the scattered bushes and sat down on the grass. They could see quite a bit of the road. Fred whistled softly. Bob, bob, bobwhite. Bob, bob, bobwhite. They watched the road for a quail to appear. Fred whistled again. Bob, bob, bobwhite. He whistled and whistled. They waited a long time. It was getting dark.

He said, "It's too late. You can't call quail so late in the evening."

They were sitting together on the grass. Marian was thinking about Fred and wondering if he liked her. He turned and looked at her slowly and putting an arm around her, kissed her mouth.

She sat still, but she began to be afraid. She wasn't afraid of the boy. She was terrified at herself. Her heart beat madly. She had never felt so strange. She did not know what she might do. She said, "I guess I'd better go now."

He held her tightly. He whispered, "I want you to stay." He tried to persuade her to stay.

She wanted to see what would happen. They were alone. The warm night air was sweet with the scent of the timber. There were a lot of things that she wanted to know. She could not decide whether to stay or not.

They heard the sound of faint quick footsteps. A man was coming down the road. It was Lloyd Mitchell. He walked fast because he was late.

"Be still," said Fred.

Marian pulled away and ran down the bank to the young man. She jumped at him, kissed him, and clung to him with her arms around his neck.

As soon as they saw what she had done, they were both astonished.

He laughed. "What do you know about that!" he exclaimed. "Are you afraid in the dark?"

"No," said Marian shortly. She started on down the road toward the mailbox. She was furious with herself. And she had never in all her life been so bewildered.

Lloyd Mitchell came along with her and talked about the Fourth of July celebration that was going to be held in Baghill. There was going to be a merry-go-round on the highschool campus. He was very polite. He waited for her to get the mail out of the box.

While they were standing there, Fred passed them. He said, "Hello." He went by in a hurry.

Lloyd Mitchell cried, "Wait a minute, I'll walk down with you," and trotted after him. They disappeared into the dark together.

She knew they would talk about her. She hated them.

Rolling the mail into a tight little roll, Marian started to run up the byroad. The tears slipped down her cheeks, but only a few tears. She ran on and on. She followed the dim track easily, for she knew the road by heart, day or night. She ran all the way home.

The hired man was sitting in the hammock in the dark. She threw the mail in his lap and lay down on the grass beside him. She was hot and tired. She tried to think about what had happened, but her head ached. The tears were all gone, but her head ached and ached. She cuddled up alone on the grass near the man, and went to sleep.

PAUL STRAND

LACHAISE

THE recent works of Gaston Lachaise are additional evidence, that we have living and working in America one of the few distinguished sculptors of our time, and the first whose marbles and bronzes bear, in their active, surging forms a distinct expressive imprint of the force called America. This is sculpture which has nothing in common with that homogeneous mass of empty, static modeling, competent and incompetent, that passes for sculpture generally, filling museums and other public places. For his stone and metal volumes are projections of an elemental vision; and in this vision the vitality which seethes, however barbarously in this American world, has not decayed into dead husks of nymph and faunographic prettiness nor into those obverse forms, grandiose and doughy, of vitality gone impotent. On the contrary, the veritable but uncontrolled force alive here remains intact, undiminished; but it is reintegrated to become both a challenge and a song.

Just what Lachaise would have become had he remained in France twenty years ago it is useless to conjecture. The fact remains that when he came to America, unknown and unformed, he did not escape here what has driven so many Americans to shores they seem to find friendlier. He found himself involved in a struggle which even for the isolate American in America, who cannot accept mechanized industrialism as the supreme focus of human activity, is a struggle against odds. The impact of hostility toward research and growth which does not lead to such a focus must have been doubly severe upon this sensitive, poetic young European suddenly finding himself in the hurly-burly of a new world, unused to its customs, its language and its

tremendous tempo. Yet he remained, instinctively perhaps, because that very hostility was a denial of growth which his own will to grow could not accept. And possibly he sensed that the friendlier quietude of the Old World was only a crust beneath which energies once healthy were sick, ready for the fratricide that came later in 1914. Here war of a different kind was already being fought; war stemming from a dislocation of relatively healthy vitality whose channeling, however externally impressive, more and more distorts and stunts the growth of human mind and spirit. By remaining Lachaise did not choose the path of least resistance; for the fight for an opportunity to work in America as a creator, in a field other than that of business or science, and to grow through that work, has been and still is a path of bitter struggle for him and many others.

His path led through fifteen years of working by day as practicien to fashionable sculptors, working at night in cheap lofts with clay that was his own, in a desperate effort merely to exist and at the same time to maintain the integrity of his feeling so that his vision could clarify and take form. In this period Lachaise must have been introduced to many of the seamier aspects of American life in general and the art game in particular, but he learned his craft, every phase of it, from casting the plaster to direct cutting of the stone. And from within the never-ending struggle for existence and inner growth has come a consummate craftsmanship, but what is more significant, one which is an instrument of a sensitive, powerful affirmation of human growth, purged of personal resentments.

In this sculptural statement there is a continued recognition of the immense inhuman energy at work in America, without a single cheap or dishonest concession to its deathly but seductive insistence upon standardized herd forms of action, feeling and thinking, grooved towards acquisitiveness as an end; an end to which science even is largely servant; an end which demands that the "arts," in the form of infantile, sentimental phantasy, be but crude compensations for boredom and inner frustration. Lachaise sees how this narrow channeling of all energy without regard for the infinite complexity of human need and impulse is constantly reinforcing the internal disorder of American life, despite its external semblances of substantial well-being. Yet within the chaos he sees the naked vitality itself and affirms its power to channel otherwise into a synthesis in

which human growth approximates the rich variety and growth in nature. In such a sense the vital force rampant here has fascinated and challenged the will of this European, has thus become an element in his vision inevitably absent in the work of Lehmbruck or Brancusi, Maillol or Despiau.

The central column of intense being and seeing into which his affirmation solidifies, is focussed, as was Lehmbruck's, through the forms of woman body and spirit. Yet nothing could be more antithetical in the basis of its cosmic vision and response than is the work of these two men. For Lehmbruck is the great affirmer of death, intensely aware of its pure immanence adumbrating life as it actually did overshadow the decayed fabric of European culture. Prophetic perhaps of the war, these slender women of his, with their almost unbearable sensitiveness, attenuated and neurasthenic, ghastly beautiful, are harbingers of death into whose living reality he finally was compelled to merge himself. Lachaise, becoming part of the barbarous but healthier American fabric, is aware of the death which may be its destiny. But his will visions the possibility of another integration in which elemental force has become an instrument of conscious, creative power before the final merging of death.

This it is which he affirms through woman as a central symbol, whose amplitude is a flowering. Again and again this symbol appears in figurines and imaginary heads, in the "Montagne" and the statuette of a striding woman figure. The large bronze known as "Woman" and the later monumental "Floating Figure" are polyphonies. These abundant flowering forms indeed affirm that fullness of growth in which mind and sense are a unity, where both ruthlessness and tenderness are tempered into strength by sensibility, and elegance is a mark of the breeding and distinction of spiritual maturity. Upon this epic symbol Lachaise has projected an immense inclusiveness and love wherein healthy primitive force has been subjected to the complicated leavening of civilized mental and sensory development. It is not the peasant health of Maillol whose torsos, so often arbitrarily truncated, seem relatively stolid; as though the body for all its frequent soil-like richness was mindless, not complete even in its basic connection with life. The complex growth in the figures of Lachaise is rooted in earth but has moved into more intricate forms compelled by culturally individualized mind and consciousness; forms however, whose power still derives from its original source.

Brancusi, on the other hand, lives in a world where the living essences are individual but non-human except as they reflect his extraordinary consciousness of them; where every piece of wood or stone or metal has its own particular quality of life which he isolates and caresses so marvelously into intense being. It is a world almost primordial in which people scarcely exist except as a reminder of the aboriginal emanations that flow from the life in stone and metal and wood. In his sculptures autochthonous life has become a symbol of primeval births and rebirths from within the ovoid of the world. Is this a sharp cut-back through all the strata of human civilization to a morning of the world or does it foreshadow some distant future in the cycle of eternal recurrence? Atavism or prophecy, the old mystical really religious connection (virtually severed by the machine) between man and the materials of earth, that deepest connotation of the concept of craftsmanship, is alive in the perfection of Brancusi's stripped forms and surfaces. The peasant, isolate, (in Paris even, he is a hermit) is here a poet whose essential being lives among "great blocks of building stone, beams, trunks of trees, boulders and rocks" and "collaborates with Time." [1] Far from his solitude is the rush and struggle of human beings bricked up in city hives, caught within the confines of a machine world, increasingly divided and insensitized by it.

But it is of this very struggle that Lachaise has become a part, a tumult in which human force however distorted and fragmented, nevertheless compels recognition. There can be little question that Brancusi, more than any other contemporary, has been an important influence in Lachaise's growth, one which he has absorbed creatively. For through Brancusi he has perhaps been made more intensely aware of the primal life in materials and the inviolate treatment which that life demands. And if under the extreme pressure of living in the American hive this awareness cannot always achieve the pure form the older man gives it, it is however, a resonant instrument in a varied and profoundly human orchestration.

This humanity branches out from the affirmation centered in and sensitized through the woman body and spirit to a penetration of men and women—the portraits. These are singularly objective, singularly free of any imposition of Lachaise's or other

[1] "Brancusi"—Paul Morand, Foreword, Brancusi Exhibition—November-December, 1926. Brummer Gallery, N. Y.

alien personality. There is no overlaying of the sculptor's self upon the subject of the portrait, like the almost tortured protest so frequently present in Epstein's work. Whatever the sum of the sitter may be, it remains intact, felt and seen as the resultant of the forces active in the individual that have made for growth or destruction. Lachaise confronting himself is conscious of this dual polarity that controls a given personality, its activity and its direction. And it is this perception of his which vitalizes the portraits, makes them infinitely varied not only in relation to each other, but also within themselves. His sensibility, so finely attuned to the complex nuance and flow of an individual's life, demands variation of plastic materials and of their treatment. For him, bronze—native or nickeled—white or colored marble, granite or alabaster, are not mere matters of whim nor of choice seeking to be superficially effective. They are used with a respect and understanding for what is alive in them in its equivalential relationship to the quality of life in the human subject. So too, textures smooth, polished or filed, or bearing the imprint of thumb and fingers upon the original clay are qualified by and are vitally relative to the personalized form. Lachaise uses these plastic instruments in such a way as to emphasize the elements in a personality which can move or have moved towards fineness and distinction. But this is an emphasis never made untruthful, sentimental, by failure to recognize internal and external blocks.

For a Lachaise portrait is a sculptural totality which is true to the personal essence and is at the same time an impersonal abstract unity reflecting his will to dynamic growth. Both as a human document and as an abstract object it is a formulation of human wholeness as a stem for vital force to flow through and bring forth a mature flowering. The perceptive will is at bottom unromantic, for the tender lovely flow of vital current that shapes the body of a sleeping baby gull can become savage and predacious in the swooping body of a gull about to alight. But the recognition of a similar energic flow in people combines with the faith that human mind and sensibility can be as pure a thing as a gull and yet have the added power of a conscious, creative force. This it is which has taken form in the portraits of these Americans living in America, in contact with its aura of chaos, many of them in some way creatively distinguished products of it.

And if sometimes their struggle and adjustment has divided and broken them into conflicts which the integrity of Lachaise's

perception cannot wholly deny, neither can he accept the division and fragmentation as a final development. Because his own will to fullness of growth refuses to accept any other goal for himself, he must emphasize that plenitude as it is actual or potential in others. This emphasis is thus in reality double: it insists upon the creative elements of the individual personality itself; and it is implicit in the abstract wholeness living in the complete sculptural form.

To-day there appears to be but one other related embodiment of this objective conception of a portrait whose essential expressiveness sums to a similar affirmation—the photographs of Alfred Stieglitz. Significantly these too are the result of a faith born of America and a will whose trajectory also cuts through the pretentious outer crust of mechanized life to the undeniable vitality underneath and has made incredible records of its course. In them as well, men and women come within a vision which has passed beyond the narrow limits of science and art conceived as separate and disparate forms of human action, to a revelation that includes them both.

Much more than space divides this revelation, which Stieglitz and Lachaise, each in his own way has fought to integrate, from the sensitive quietude revealed in the sculptures of Despiau. Their serenity is as remote from the turbulent sea of human thought and action focussed to-day in America—a sea which Mr. Waldo Frank [1] has called the Atlantic, as a symbol—as is the primordial world of Brancusi. For the deep pools of contemplative being which quiver so delicately in the works of Despiau are rather spiritual accretions of the old European cultural stream whose source Mr. Frank posits in a dying Mediterranean. But in these pools the water is still pure and pellucid. Life moves subtly in them, the fragile internal fabric unbroken by the violence of to-day. In the portraits the human sense and spirit whose world experience perhaps is bounded by the limits of the pool lives nevertheless within those limits—clear and subtle, unfragmented, more like crystal clear memories of experience than immediate experience itself. They are emanations of Despiau's own deep secluded being rather than people—subjective realities which his own internal wholeness and purity have been able to distil from a fading European world. The differentiation

[1] This and subsequent quotations from Waldo Frank's "Rediscovery of America" appearing in recent issues of the *New Republic*.

of personalized forms and the variation of plastic method is sensitive but slight. The objective reality so sharply individualized in the Lachaise portraits derives from another cosmos, one no longer a part of the cultural whole that was Europe. It is the reality of people caught in and marked by combat with the vast tidal forces of mid-Atlantic.

Despiau's "Eve" too, is innocent of the contemporary struggle. She is still within the Eden of non-conscious peasant singleness, integral with the soil in which she was so purely rooted. She is symbol of the health that made possible the growth of a world which was "Europe's spiritual and intellectual body"; a world whose dying Lehmbruck visioned so intensely; a world born of the primordial soil to which Brancusi has consciously returned seeking essences at the source. Thus the innocent loveliness of Despiau's "Eve," like the undisturbed serenity in his portraits, is memorial. It is untouched by any sense of the complex forces set so violently into motion by scientific thought; currents which have compelled the evolution of the more complicated but disrupted psyche of the city whose vitality creates and dominates the modern machine world.

Of the physical body of this macrocosm America has become the heart; and within the body vitality "sums to a chaos." The human being disconnected by modern science from the old oneness with the soil and from craftsmanship as a vital connection with life has been unable to find an equivalent through the machine by which it could grow fully and harmoniously. In spite of the immense areas of empirical knowledge to which unrestricted scientific research has given it access, people have not yet found the mystical connection they must somehow find with the machine. This is the threshold of a crisis. Is the force called America a Frankenstein or can it achieve a new synthesis of human wholeness through "knowledge as an action of mature, harmonious growth"? This is the question which Stieglitz has faced and answered doubly: by demonstrating that a spiritual oneness with a machine, the camera, can make it an instrument of vision and growth: by giving nurture to the fertile seed in the work of others, no matter what form that work may take.

Lachaise through the ancient craft of the sculptor confronts America and makes answer through bronze and stone. And his response, like that of Stieglitz, is an affirmation of faith based

upon the reality of native vital force and its actual, if isolated manifestations of power to take full-grown, humanized forms.

As it is projected through the central symbol of a woman this statement is impersonal and polyphonic. Vitality surges through the volumes and surfaces of the figurines and larger bodies whether they are in postures of action or quiescence. In the life-sized "Woman" the back and abdomen and head are a tremendous multiform flowering from the slender living stems of the legs. It is human body and spirit arrived at an ecstatic consciousness of power over the external and internal forces for which it has been a channel. Here sensibility fused with mind has compelled impulses savage and ruthless into a coalescence with tenderness and fragility and all that painfully struggles towards birth. The resultant will, edged with the distinction of maturity, has become conscious of itself as a creative force, is ready to destroy in order that it may recreate; perhaps it is the very moment of that consciousness: in the later "Floating Figure" it has become a monumental column of self-contained power moving ineluctably through space. Force, in which both primitive relentlessness and civilized sensibility meet in pure flux, becomes equilibrated in these sculptures, is florescent and splendid in their assertive or subtly contained volumes. They are product of a vision able to relate seemingly disparate elements of life and to transmute that relativity into formulations of human power, full-grown and creatively aware.

Every form this vision has taken is evidence that when Lachaise came to America twenty years ago his was a voyage into the Atlantic in the symbolic sense Mr. Frank has given it. And for the bitter, unending struggle that such a voyage is, his sole resources were inner ones. A rare Gallic mind and sensuous love welded by the intense flame of an almost savage will to growth, became a chisel whose fine edge has been tempered by the cold surge of mid-Atlantic forces. With this as a tool he has cut out of chaos, stone and metal songs, integrations of realistic faith insisting upon human maturity. They reconstruct other values in a world which tends to deny the worth of all action that does not lead to standardized mechanization—a denial of life itself—which dwarfs and blights. Lachaise has never retreated from this bruising maelstrom nor from the devastating indifference with which it rewards every visional challenge to its destructive flow. That is why his marbles and bronzes are never

precious nor remote. On the contrary they have a consciously controlled forward momentum and something immediate which sings through the craftsmanship, generates the forms.

This is the immediacy of having grown in our own soil, close to our own experience. Here is the first sculpture in which the vitality in this violent Atlantic vortex called America has been revalued and liberated in a stone and metal synthesis of human wholeness. That is its living significance for us.

MARYA ZATURENSKA

PILGRIMAGE

The wind came up from the black streets my childhood knew
And talked to me although I closed my ears,
Although I wept and turned away my head,
The terrible streets spoke to me of the dead:

They come on the wings of the wind; they have not fled,
They bring the lost child back, they torture her,
Their hands are red with her sharp blood, their feet
Thunder in dread, irrevocable beat.

What do you wish to say to me, Oh, Lost?
(And the trees darken and the houses dwindle . . .
Stagnation entered my brain and the leaves are twisted with death)
I have been blighted by an early frost.

This Pilgrimage, strange God, you marked for me:
My life is your cruel map, my goal you trace
In what dark beat of my blood and in what ring
Of some unanswered, unfamiliar thing?

KEENE WALLIS

UP AND DOWN AND OUT

WHEN Clarence slipped and fell I came on back.
I could not tramp without my colored friend
to cheer the nights of walking down a track
that stretched for miles and miles without a bend,
or nights of riding cramped in space for one,
and lazy days of drowsing in the sun.
For us as tramps all life was risk and fun,
but there, in bloody fragments, was the end.

I cleaned him off the rail and watched all night,
then went into the nearby town next day
and got the poor lad buried, buried right.
The undertaker gave me time to pay,
so I was in that town for quite a while
charming the town girls with my city smile.
I liked the burg, but made my little pile
and paid a railroad fare to get away.

The two of us are sailing through the gloom
in space enough for one; there comes a moan
and I am traveling with too much room,
and stumbling sideways with a choking groan
am almost following the poor mashed lad.
I jump far out, but as my aim is bad
I nearly kill myself. I wish I had,
when scrambling up, crippled and all alone.

The coaches pass me and the air is full
of nervous quivers as I crawl and creep
dragging my body in a long hard pull
out of the weeds—and is that rock bank steep!

One rail is shining bare and smooth and bright,
a line of nickel stretching through the night,
the other is a mauled and bloody sight.
I cough and rake the mess into a heap.
I lie beside the huddle near the track.
A cottonwood is grieving overhead
mournfully, warningly, and bringing back
nights when the dead spoke to the lad now dead.
I begin thinking of the sane, bright days
through which we loafed together, blithe as jays,
of shaded culverts, silent wooded ways,
and the free life the two of us have led.
I think of soaking mornings when the skies
have turned to water and the world to fog:
Clarence with sorrow in his earnest eyes
is looking mournful like a little dog;
my very flesh is wet inside my skin,
my shirt hangs to me and a chill strikes in,
whole trains of raindrops travel down my chin;
I steer my squirting shoes through squashing bog;
I want to shout a curse, but try instead
to think of something funny. And I do.
Clarence looks up at me, throws back his head,
and here his laugh comes, resonant and true,
that gifted laughter which the nigger owns,
magical as his incantation moans,
with something tragic in the undertones
to warn, alarm, and thrill you through and through.
Another time we two are in a town.
I "introduce the entertainer," who
gets up and gives the crowd a wild hoe-down,
a din of lusty voice and slapping shoe.
The farmers stand there stiffly for a while,
then every face takes on a languid smile,
the bodies sway and let the sounds beguile
their senses into pleasures wholly new.
The frisking caper of the foolish words
is running through the town, through all outdoors.
The measure caught from fiddles and from birds
has brought the farmers from the banks and stores.
He stops. You feel a wave of wonder, doubt,

and then his magic nigger laugh breaks out.
He throws his head back with a joyous shout.
The crowd look up and everybody roars.
While they are feeling good I pass the hat,
clearing enough to keep us for a week.
We loaf along, discussing this and that
and hearing many lines that he can speak.
"Remember that one, Clarence," I will say,
and he will be improving it all day.
A farm wife rails. We file her curse away
with notes on the details of her technique.
. . . I lie back looking at the restless tree
that shimmers ghostly white against the sky.
It strikes me disagreeably that he
was always serving me, was always shy,
and that I never answered him a word
but Clarence most respectfully deferred.
It hurts my feelings. It was too absurd,
for he was right much oftener than I.
The breeze moans through the tree and whines and
grieves—
I tell myself, "You liked it once, all right!"—
rippling the spangles of the dangling leaves—
"You knew that he was black and you were white,
"that he was small and so he had to raise
"his eyes to you, and that he lived on praise."
A cottonwood can think of cruel ways
to make you wretched on a summer night.
Then all at once the life that we have led
seems a fool business. What else can it be?
How can I stand it now that he is dead?
I wonder what is to become of me. . . .
Hills, roads, and towns flare up before my eyes.
The pictures whirl together as they rise.
My chin is quivering, to my surprise,
and lying there I damn that mournful tree.
For three months past we two have tramped along.
Neither has ever left the other's sight.
And he has heartened us with song on song,
songs which he never would consent to write,
and now the head which held them all is crushed,

the eager voice that chanted them is hushed,
the overland which killed the boy has rushed,
unconscious of its work, into the night.

For three months we have been together thus
and shared the hardships and the luck and cheer,
and yet back in the city both of us
had worked in the same building for a year
and never passed a word except, "Hello,"
and "Mawnin, boss," for how could either know
the other was a lad with whom to go
around the world in one long mad career?

He ran his elevator up and down,
and on the sixteenth floor I earned my pay!
And in the mornings when I got downtown
I could not think of anything to say,
for I was never more than half awake
out of the street-car nap I used to take
from daily habit which I could not break—
and if I had I might have stayed away!—

Clarence was small and had a serious face.
The office men had somehow come to hear
that Clarence had been honored by his race,
at colored high school in his senior year,
as orator and poet.

"Give him time.
"He's got it, boys! Now reel us off a rhyme."
"Oh lawdy, Clarence, ain't de moon sublime?"
and "I'm a poet; did you know it, dear?"

One Monday morning I had come down late.
I had not slept, for I had had a seat
and started thinking in my restless state
while counting off the corners, street by street.
Why should I go to work? I had my pay.
But when my corner came I took my way
out into the already busy day,
already lively in the growing heat.

Men were already crowding out and in.
The girl was busy at the counter, too.
So I was later than I'd ever been.
I pushed and did my best to hurry through.
The elevator waited at the floor,

standing there empty and with open door.
When I get in it waits a little more.
I did not mind, though; I was late, I knew.
Nobody came, so Clarence slammed the doors
with such a clash that little sparkles showed.
We sailed up smoothly past the numbered floors,
and as nobody added to our load
I made a speech in which I tried to show
how base it was to work, how downright low,
and quoted bitterly a line or so
of poetry about the open road.
He whirled around and waved his free left hand
impressively and started chanting through
the poem, which, he made me understand,
I had misquoted, as of course was true.
He emphasized the words that I had missed,
wriggled his coat sleeve down to bare his wrist,
and with a gesture nothing could resist
recited all the poetry he knew.
His solemn gestures, his impassioned voice,
his thrilling tones and his enraptured face
amused me painfully, as did his choice
which was too classical for such a place.
I had not noticed when we reached the top.
He did not notice either, did not stop
the elevator, simply let it drop
dizzily downward through ascending space.
As we came rushing through the rising air
I was knocked out as if I had been hit.
Clarence moaned out the message of despair
of some poor minor poet doomed to sit
beside us others on the ground, and who
had been borne upward, singing as he flew,
had searched the heavens, finding nothing new,
and then had fallen back into the pit.
Clarence came to before we fell to death.
We settled slowly to the basement floor.
We paused an instant for a steady breath
and Clarence leaned against the grated door
to look at me with triumph in his eyes.
Then he began, this time to improvise,

and, as he paused to perfect and revise,
the elevator started up once more.

He got to be the subject of his lines,
a nigger pappy praying to the dice,
addressing them beseechingly with whines
of flattery and fatherly advice.

As we went up the gambler's prayers arose.
As we went higher he was on his toes.
And as we reached the top his fervor froze.
"Bones, turnin on yo daddy—is zat nice?"

He moaned of his misfortune as we fell.
As we went rushing down the mimic laughed
hysterically, then he raised a yell
which trembled with the motion of our craft.

This time our hideous descent was brief,
and still re-echoing that burst of grief
the elevator slowed, to my relief,
and stopped about the middle of the shaft.

He took us slowly to the top once more
and once again he started to intone,
with one foot tapping on the matted floor,
and now and then he hushed and gave a groan,
but tapping on the matting all the time,
using his free left hand to pantomime
a dancing motion and enforce the rhyme,
he droned a measure in a monotone.

When I had got to swaying on my feet
the elevator dipped and steadied, dipped
and steadied, regulated by the beat,
the steady beat, beat, beat which never skipped;
the elevator dipped and steadied, made
a swift descent, then dipped and steadied, swayed
and dipped and steadied, dipped and steadied, played
and lilted as the cadence hopped and tripped.

Faster, faster, and faster came the beat.
Faster, faster, the elevator fell.

My head was whirling. I was off my feet
but was sustained by some unholy spell.
My feet were dancing, dancing in the air.
I felt as if I were not anywhere.
Perhaps I was not, and I did not care

while we rushed down that sixteen-story well.
We settled slowly to the basement floor.
I had been conscious of a band of white
stretching along the shaft outside the door,
a ribbon formed of faces blenched with fright.
And I could hear a tramping on the stairs.
The business men were leaving their affairs.
I was not sure but thought I heard their prayers
or curses as they shuddered at the sight.
Clarence did not accompany our flight
with cakewalk measures as we mounted high
and all those faces and those suits of white
passed like a single line before my eye.
Faster we rose and faster, faster still,
faster we rose and deeper sank the chill
into my fingers and my cheeks until
we reached the sixteenth story or the sky.
He did not keep us there. We simply dropped.
And this time we were traveling indeed!
My breathing and my pulse abruptly stopped.
My lungs were crammed with wind they did not need.
My veins were choked with blood and thick and tight.
I could not see that wavy line of white.
I could not think of anything but night
and death and blackness and ferocious speed.
Then we were standing at the entrance floor.
The door was open and a crowd was there.
I caught my breath and was myself once more,
encircled by a vague, composite stare,
a gaze of horror which was many-eyed.
Clarence was trembling and his jaw hung wide.
He came a little closer to my side
and looked at me with a beseeching air.
"Clarence," I said, "I see our jobs are gone."
I pointed to the scared and angry crowd.
"Let's us go too."
"Yuh right," said he, "come on!"
The crowd divided for us and allowed
the two of us to swagger down a lane
between two rows of horror and disdain,
and the cigar girl wore a look of pain

as we went past the counter and I bowed.
The world was there before us, not a world
of torrid sidewalks and of baking streets,
for through the traffic as it rushed and whirled
we looked at country roads and cool retreats,
we looked at gleaming tracks and speeding trains,
we saw the loosening of all our chains,
the end of all our toils and city pains,
of great ambitions and grotesque defeats.
The road life was before us, not a life
of swindling people as poetic clowns,
of begging dinner from some country wife
and flattering away indignant frowns.
We did not figure how exposure feels.
We did not know how we should miss our meals.
We did not think about the crushing wheels
nor calabooses in the country towns.
Chance was outside there, risk was just outside,
daring within us, youth which knew no doubt,
and danger was appealing to our pride,
and novelty awaited us without.
I waved back at the counter solemnly
and Clarence bowed with comic courtesy.
I looked at him, he looked up eagerly,
and brave in ignorance we sauntered out.

WILLIAM SHEPARD

A DARK NIGHT

AUNT RUSHIE struck a light to her clay pipe and shook the white knob of the door.

"I doan like it," Aunt Abbie grumbled, turning over in bed, slowly, accompanying her movements with a senile pattering of the hands. She fumbled with the buttons of her red calico dress while she stared unhappily at her sister. "Yer stumbled when yer got outn bed, n yer broke de mirror over de wash-stan. Dem dar's nuff warnin. What more de Lawd gwine do, thoutn he show yer his white han?"

Rushie's face lost its serene air. She put her cudgel down and looked with anger and fear about the room papered with old fashion sheets.

"What yer want mine me ov dat fer? Yer knows Ise got to go to see Morris dis day n de pore ole creeter aint got long fer dis worl—ol Marster done summon him—er somebody."

"G'long den, g'long. Taint no uthly usen talkin to yer, I see de mark in yer forrud." Abbie closed her eyes. "G'long n shet de do—gittin cole now."

Rushie took her cudgel and empty white flour sack under her arm and strode out, irresolutely. She was the younger of the two widowed sisters whom John Martin allowed to settle in this two-room cabin on the edge of the farm. They had been slaves of his father and when they came hobbling up the hill to his house with talk of the past, and narratives of his grandfather and father, he felt the rent they paid was greater than that rendered by the stout field laborers who occupied his other cabins.

Though her step was slow Rushie looked strong; she stepped firmly down the stairs of the cabin after turning the key in

the brass padlock which secured the outer door. Her black skin glistened with good living and as she walked the large goiter swung from her neck like a displaced udder.

She stopped at the gate of her little yard to look off across the hill to the Martin house, a long colonial dwelling between which and the cabin a mixed forest stretched. She saw the twisted smoke rising from the chimneys to mingle with the blue haze that covered everything, causing the sun to seem withdrawn or visibly retreating.

Beginning her journey she met two terrapins crossing the path, going in opposite directions. Already upset by the ill omens of the morning she was inclined to go back, to abandon her visit until the next day.

"Well suh," she exclaimed, "seem like I jes got to go. Ole Morris, he can't wait."

November, not yet past, had been remarkably mild for middle Virginia, so much so that many green leaves still hung on the trees. The floor of the woods was a tangle of harmonious color like a great Eastern carpet. The old woman threw back her head to smell the mingled odors of decaying leaves, hearing in the silence of the instant the gobble of a wild turkey in the valley beneath.

She walked on steadily and in half an hour came to the four-room cabin of Morris Brown, the old negro who had sent her an urgent summons by a passing neighbor.

Rushie glanced about the dooryard and entered the cabin.

"Well, Morris, I had many warnins to keep off, but here I is. Phew. Ise dat tired. Can't clamb dese hills like I used to. Naw-suh."

The smoke- and time-darkened walls of the room were ornamented with two religious chromos and old woolen coats hung on nails. A pine root burnt on the hearth with much noise. The oak bed was half covered with a rat-eaten quilt, under which lay a man of short stature. A little white beard straggled across his short heavy chin, and his light brown face was relieved with little patches of hair of a cottony color. The large stiff hands lying motionless on the cover seemed powerful even in their emaciation.

He moved his head and a voice of vast strength, immense, frightful, swelled through the room. It was the voice that had held many a gathering of his race as he expounded the Bible in

an original manner,—a voice like an element, awesome and superior.

"Rushie done come," it said. The eyes seemingly fixed on her were so veiled with age that she could not see any expression in them. "I sent fer yer," the voice resumed, easily, overwhelming the woman who sat back in her chair, caressing her oak cudgel with nervous hands. "I been preachin all my life. You know it. I built two chuches in tween whiles I was farmin an grubbin up de white folkes' lan." The voice became angry. "What is dese white folks, anyhow? . . . We is out dar . . . mongst de animals, niggers. . . . Dey is folks." He seemed to forget his wrath very quickly for when he spoke again his voice was soft and meditative. "I done a lot fer de Lawd and de Lawd done been my comfort. Dey's one thing dat sets hard on my mine." The hands, thin and unwashed, clutched griplessly at the quilt. "I done made my peace wit de Lawd. But . . . I got to tell yer . . . when yer husban, ole Dick, died, it was me dat killed him. I put jimson weed in his drink when he come by my house, n . . ."

The discolored eyes closed and the hands lay still. Sitting by the door old Rushie heard the stirring of Morris's granddaughters in the adjoining room. A mouse floated across the grimy floor and disappeared in a crack beside the hearth.

She put a corner of her apron to her eyes without dampening the starched cloth. "Long time go," she said aloud. "I didn't know twas nothing but cramp colic. . . . Why yer do it, Morris?" she asked, louder. "What he do to yer?" She put her stick against the wall and came to the bedside.

The man appeared not to have heard in his apparent slumber for his lips did not stir, nor did his face show animation. It was certainly curious to hear that this old caricature of a preacher had actually sent her husbad out of the world—that husband whose loss in her prime had changed her from a prosperous tenant to a poor washwoman and day laborer, whose short temper made her employment short wherever she worked.

"Well, if it isn't Miss Rushie! This is indeed pleasant!"

A bright faced young woman shook her hand fervently, laughing a great deal to show the gold crownings on her strong white teeth.

"I know grandfather is charmed."

"I didn know yer had come fum de city, gal," Rushie grum-

bled. She hated these negroes who came back talking "proper," forgetting the loose, beautiful tongue of the southern black. "Come to see yer grandpa?"

"Oh yes." She quivered and shook. "I came from New Rochelle yesterday. I had a very depleting ride."

"Humph."

Morris's granddaughter left the room with a polite bow. The voice in the corner began to stir again. Aunt Rushie stood upright waiting for the words to rumble forth from that immense chest. For an instant she could understand nothing, but he gave a wheeze and then spoke clearly.

"I kilt him cause I wanted yer," the voice declared, and sunk as if to be silent forever after this breach of silence.

She retreated to her seat by the door; in a meditative attitude she seemed to drowse. What was done need not be thought about. With the philosophy of her race she accepted the past without regret. The room was hot, the air close. An old dismal clock counted the hours out of time. The "smart northern niggers" stuck their heads in several times without venturing in sight of the old slave who sat resolutely with old Morris. The silence of the aged persons rather appalled the young ones, and they took their gossip and careless laughter out under the trees, and the sunlight.

"They make my flesh creep, these two. I have overcome much of the superstition of my race, but I find I ain't yet free of the sensations of my ancestors." It was the light-colored negro woman who spoke, powdering her nose, and casting enticing glances at the astonished young man who had come from a neighboring cabin to see this transformed playmate of his youth.

"Yes, dey am very queer," he said after a time and with great effort at fine grammar. "I think dey am mo quliar dan our own generlation."

"Decidedly," the woman agreed. She walked on ahead under the trees lighted by the passing sun. "Come," she invited, "let's walk down to the old spring."

"Yay," he agreed. "My house is nearby, nobody but me." He gave her a forlorn glance and sighed.

"Really? You must marry. . . . The city," she added wearily, "has tired me very much. I think I could return to the country again." He took her arm to help her over the rocks and

the sophisticated maid from New Rochelle walked off in the evening peace with her man.

"Dark, putny dark!" Rushie started up with her cudgel in her hand. "I clar, I done sleep. I won't hab no time to go by de house to git Miss Sallie to gimme some visions." She looked at the silent man on the bed and rubbed her eyes. "Yassir, blessed Lawd, ef I ain't been sleepin. Shos yer foot high," she addressed her staff, "I been sleepin. . . . Well, g'bye, Morris." The figure did not stir. "Breathin easy," she murmured. "G'bye," she repeated, taking his right hand. Then with an expression of disgust at the filthy state of the old man, she dropped it and walked out of the room and entered the narrow path that began at the step and led past the Martin house to her own cabin on the opposite hill.

"It's bad I forgot," she said aloud as she stepped along. "Miss Sallie will be in bed fore I gits dar. I got nuff to eat fum las week, but I did want sum un dem beef cracklins. Um. Lawd, I does want some un um."

Her method of getting over ground was more of a roll than a walk and consequently her progress was deliberate and slow. When the white columned Martin house stood in view night, cold and dark, had swung down over the hills without a star in its round. She could no longer see the path in which her accustomed feet went without faltering.

The chill air caused her to step more briskly. Nearer every minute she could see the lighted windows of the house, and the shadows as some one passed between the panes and the lamps. By the side of the path a harness shed loomed out of the dark, next which stood the poultry house, within which a stirring sound warned her that the feathered inmates had heard her approach.

"Dey knows my step," she laughed slyly. "Locked," she whispered, shaking the door quietly. "Missis is keerful."

"Dat's Miss Sallie!" she exclaimed as a tall bulky figure passed a window in the house. "Bless her heart! She allus did walk cam like dat, een when she was er chile. . . . But what," she wondered, "is dey doin up now? Deyse a whole passel er folks in dar!"

A succession of figures both short and long crossed the principal light of the dining room. Presently a high shriek, a chorus,

and then a burst of music flowed straight out to the old woman's ear.

"De Arkansaw Trabeller! I knows dat music."

"I clar to de Lawd! I done forgot all bout dat dance what Missis tole me she was gwine hab to-night! Sho, an I ain't got on my yaller silk, like she tole me to war!" In dismay her hands felt her black calico and white starched apron. "Umhuh. Dese will do, tho. Umm. How I does like to see de white folkes dance! None ob yer hoppin an skippin, but real correc an proper, like dey was wukin."

She stepped from the path into the lane that passed under the ancient oaks to the house. The music poured out steadily, commanding the sliding sound of feet. The rhythm seemed to raise a great burden from her shoulders, for she walked lightly, her mouth expectant of the feast that would be served to the servants in the kitchen.

"Turkey," she said, "an cramberries, n them vegetable salad trash, celry, n all." A movement in the woodpile she was then passing stopped her again. "Who dat? Answer me!" she called and getting no response she stepped forward to see the origin of the disturbance.

It was six roasting size chickens huddled together on a pine log.

"Missis done forgot dese an shut em out."

The temptation to take them in from the cold was very great. She would just run them in her bag after throttling them and go straight home.

She noticed the intense blackness of the night which seemed like an iron lid over earth. Then, blessed land, she had left no one with Sister Abbie, the hundred year old invalid. Yessir, the woman would be skeered half to death in the cabin by her lone. She hadn't even thought of the poor creature's loneliness until this moment.

"Plague on it!" she ejaculated, not too disappointedly. "Evthin is wrong . . . I can bile two er dese chickens at home, an den we kin feas in peace." How pleasant after all was one's own home and independence! And, as if put there by kind fate, the chickens sat quiet, waiting for her to lift them off their cold perch.

"Taint to be sputed," she declared, though with a regretful turn of her head to the source of the pleasant music.

She opened her flour sack and put her hand to the chickens. After rubbing them on their smooth backs she took them off, clucking contentedly, and placed them in the sack. If one had made a noise she knew how to silence it with a throttling crook of her finger. The smooth working of her scheme was a genuine pleasure, an artistic outcome that gave her joy.

"Now, my biddies," she said to the fowls, "I'll take you where you'll be comfortable."

She put her hand out to find the walls of the poultry house past which her path ran, down a declivity, across a level plain, and last over a hill to her cabin. No visible object could keep her to her course on a night black as this. A life of tramping about these hills had trained her feet to greater knowledge than many a pedestrian had with his eyes open: she felt the bare ground beneath her tread and when she strayed from it a rustle of leaves warned her. She went boldly on, therefore, unhalting, at an even pace, thridding the inky forest with a savage chant on her tongue:

"Black ar moolah,
kidna concha,
blackar moola
kidna come."

The strange words that had no meaning for her but a mysterious suggestion of magic and ancient marvels, were those her old grandmother used to sing, and to her also they made little sense, but her father knew what they meant. The old man had come straight from Africa, that happy land of gold, of flowers, of long hot days, where no superior race spiced the joy of nature with bitterness, and he bore on his breast a large tattooed bird, the mark of his royal blood.

Shrewd winds rose in the fields to howl themselves out among the close-set trees. A drizzle of fine rain began to come down. Driven by the cold wind it penetrated the thin garments of the woman moving through the blackness with a song as dark as the time quivering on her lips.

"Cole nuff fer snow," she muttered after she walked for what she thought a long time, and caught the corner of her gray shawl in her teeth to keep the cold from her neck. As she spoke she ran her free hand along her sleeve and felt pellets of ice clinging to the cloth.

"Sleet!" She adjusted her live bundle cautiously. "An growin coler evy minute. . . . Lawd, I been walkin er long time, now. Pears I aint never goin reach dat hill. Ole Sis will be skeered to death, pore soul."

The hard ground became unsafe with frozen water but she kept her course, humming, or speaking comfortingly to the chickens on her back. But the hill that meant home seemed to be far away still. With overwhelming dread she felt herself going down another hill.

"Hi, doan understan dis. I done come down one hill." She got on her knees and felt the ground. It was a hard path, alright, running between two banks of leaves. "It must be right. I suttinly . . . thought I come down one hill, tho. Well," she concluded uneasily, "I hope n pray I aint los my way. Well, de Lawd knows."

She had been on the path now for more than an hour and the cold penetrating her she walked ever more slowly. The hill appeared interminably long, to have no end, to dip down and down when at every step she expected to reach the ascent.

She halted again to consider the strange occurrence. The sleet-armored trees creaked in their stiff gear and the wind passing through them sounded muffled.

"Dar aint but one hill long as dis," she said despairingly. "Tis de Ridge path waht leads to de mountain!" On her face she felt a strong breeze blowing, coming up powerfully from a distance. "Dat win comin fum de valley at de foot uv de Ridge! Lawd, hab mussy on er pore creeter. Lawd . . ." She stomped her chilled feet desperately and turned back on the way she had come. "I muster took er cowpath stid ov de path home. De path home. . . . Well, tun roun go back, ole Rushie got footsis yet."

The return up the hill proved not to be so easy, for it was steep and slick and she was tired. Her steps became ever more slow, her halts to catch her breath more prolonged. After what appeared to be hours she reached the top and sat down to catch breath.

"It mus be mos day, now." She looked around. "Tho, I doan see no light round bout. Doan see how I gwine git back to de path now, Ise tired, tired." The bag on the ground moved. She put her hand under it. "Warm. Feels good to my hans. Um. Got git fum here. Freeze fore I know it."

She stood up and a score of gloomy thoughts made her giddy,

beginning with the evil omens of the morning and fear of the cold that seemed to have driven all warmth from her body.

The descent was slow and seemed to have no termination. She lost her balance several times to roll several feet before catching hold on a shrub or tree. On these occasions she had to grope around for her shawl and the bag, now grown very heavy to her. At last when she was very much spent she felt the ground grow level.

"Now, ef I aint all set!" she exclaimed.

"Suthin done happen to my feet, tho." They were immovable, and when she tried to get on her way she fell ponderously into a bed of leaves and lay for some minutes, panting. She could not get her lips together or breathe through her nose, and the freezing air was drawn in great gasps into her struggling lungs.

"I believe I done got to de en uv my row. Dar aint no mo to be done. Jesus, put my feet in de road home." Her mind became blank and when she waked she felt easy, not cold, but weak.

Rain had ceased falling. The clouds that hung ever the sky had been withered away by the cold winds and all the stars were out, hanging about the sinuous limbs of the trees in a decorative fashion. The wind was dying down to a murmur so that when a fox barked and a dog answered she heard them distinctly.

"Dar, dat dog soun near. Maybe I git dar yit. Somebody's dog, sho."

She forced herself to her feet with the weighty bag in her right hand. By catching hold of the trees she got forward a few feet at a time, until her strength gave out again.

When she came to herself the wind had gone out utterly, like a lamp extinguished by a strong puff. It reminded her of the night in August when her old husband had carried her home in the sulky and she could smell the clematis on the porch of the tight little cabin where she was to live with him. They sat up late that night eating peppermint candy, because it seemed the company, two old fiddlers, would never leave them alone.

She thought next of the day she joined the church, how scared she was when the preacher put his hand under his coattails and looked down into her soul and said, "Sister, does you believe in Gawd?" Sho she did. God was the man who made all that noise and light in the sky in summer and blowed strong through the trees in winter: God was the man who stood outside the door when night came on and kept the hants away, if the sleeper was

a Christian: God was the man who drove the sun and moon about and put fire and love in hearts. Yessir, that was God.

"Black ar moolah," she chanted. "I speakin to yer, Lawd. Yer knows what I says." She settled herself for a minute's rest on the leaves. "Dem chickens!" she cried suddenly. "Dey gwine be foun by me. What will Missis say, an she allus said if dar was one warnt no thief twas Rushie. I allus had de run uv de house." She felt about in the leaves for her staff. "Umph. Dat ar white woman doan know how tis, she doan know what tis to be hongry an pore. Lawd, to be lyin here with de chickens by me." She could hear the laughter of her race at the comic end, the ludicrous end. "De young niggers will holler, specially dat hussy Morris's granddaughter. . . . Pore ole Morris, he done drag me wit him, he done lay he han on me . . ." She reverted to the first idea. "Miss Sallie woan know wat I been thu, an dem niggers woan know."

She recovered a spark of energy and crawled off a few feet with the bag, intending to hide it away from the path.

"Taint no use. It got to be." She lay on the ice coated leaves gripping the bag with her left hand. "One mo laugh for de white folks bout how niggers love chicken. One mo laugh for de niggers at hones old Rushie." She thought again of the events of the afternoon, of Morris's secret. "What Jim an me an Morris gwine say to each other when we gits up dar . . ."

A strain of lively music poured out into the dark and died off, as if cut by the closing of a door.

"What was dat? Music? Dar tis ergin, angels playin . . . Tis dancin music—de Arkansaw Trabeller. How come. . . ." The sounds passed as they did before and she saw a broad beam of light not far off, coming it appeared from an open door. It lingered an instant until the door was shut and the darkness resumed its sway.

In the Martin house three hundred feet away the last set of the country ball was coming to an end. The fiddles were wailing exhaustedly and doors were opening and shutting as couples left.

Two young men walking in the yard to cool their hot faces commented on the girls they had danced with, and on the character of the night.

"Stars out," one said in a heavy voice.

"Yes," agreed the other. "Gimme a light, will you. . . . But it has been a stormy night."

LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL

DESERT ISLAND

STANDING by the front windows of the living-room watching Mark flounder with his air of great consideration down the road to the barns, Anne suddenly felt the way the house had been before it was made over. For her who had never seen it before to-day, its "restoration" was in this moment made complete; so that it was not the new house but the old in which she stood even while she saw Mark, whose country house it was supposed to be, turning in at his red, uneven pile of barns in snow. He would go down and hear Schnitzler, his farmer, tell about the cows, he said, and then come back to take their walk. And would the snow be old snow, too, she wondered, half-dolefully—and were the cows some other cows? Poor Mark!

It was the way the afternoon sun lay on the narrow porch which did it—and something about the spaces before the two front windows and the side window, something bare in those spaces which had defied the interior decorator and stayed as it had been. Or had the decorator been a demoniac genius and restored too perfectly? It was no longer (or rather *not yet*) Mark's country house, to which they had come out from town this morning for a day in the snow, not the quaint and perfect little place of a cultured, sensitive, and difficult financier, but a lonely, drab farmhouse on all bright, hard, winter afternoons, somebody's accustomed and unchangeable home, with the glare of snow outside and the sun lying mercilessly, almost indecently, on the narrow, warped, and too-familiar porch. Anne herself had known just such a porch before she came to New York to try to make her living. But at any time except three o'clock of a bright winter afternoon the thing might have been hidden more.

Here was all the awful starkness of life which shows up best in lonely, silent places. The terrible pathos of country parlors. The refusal of life to be turned smart or decorative or new, like an old mother who looks just the same even with the new hat on because of a look in her eyes, a look of remembering, of knowing, a plain look. The eyes of this house were still the same: they still remembered: their expression had not changed.

Anne turned back to the fireplace, the soft chairs and davenport, the niched bookshelves, for escape from that porch where sunlight had lain so long, Winters and Springs and on Fall noons. Times of day are noticeable and tragic only when let into a house, only when a wall or threshold is made a shore for their waves, she thought: houses break the heart. Light, going around and round the day, around and round the year, with infinitely small and endless changes and repetitions, might go unnoticed but for the dials which old houses are, ruthless dials portioning light off to check with life—so that light clangs on porches at a certain hour like clocks in every house all striking three. Light is so much more sadly beautiful when reflected back from brick and wood, its recurrence so much more obvious.

On the low bench in front of the fire she remembered, out of the stillness of the house and the stir of her quickened perceptions, Esther's saying "You'll *have* to marry him when you see his house!" . . . Esther, Mark's old friend, trying to make a match out of what was now only a baffled attraction, a persistent possibility, because she knew that Anne's great need was money and believed that Mark's was marriage. "You'll love it, Anne," she had said. "An old American farmhouse, *very* perfectly restored."

Too perfectly restored, that was the trouble. How strange, if instead of "marrying him for a home," as it would seem, she should marry him *in spite* of it, because she wanted to stand between his irreparable helplessness and the beating without mercy on his correct new country house of old-fashioned times of day. Poor Mark, with something holding him from going on to make a new life of his own and compelled instead to have old life restored for him; almost unconscious of all this, of course, but feeling restlessness, she knew, a sense of not belonging, some old nostalgia even when at home. The most pathetic person of all that had ever lived in this house, and the most unhelpable.

So arrogant, so obstinate, so brusque sometimes to hide the

loneliness, under the usually smooth outer mask of courtesy and consideration. His way of leaning his head a little on one side as he listened, until it had become almost a permanent posture, was really just his arrogance, too great to allow anything but gentle courtesy with life, and nothing else revealed. Oh, if only he *could* reveal, to her—perhaps that would be sweetness undreamed-of for them both; perhaps then it would not be marrying him "for a home" or in spite of it, or for any reason except—

At the window again she saw him coming back—courteous with snow-drifts, politely absent with the insistent afternoon! Perhaps he was right—that arrogance and courtliness were man's best rejoinders. She watched him come. . . . Something brave about him, truly courageous though dumbly so, walking gently as if about to be ushered into a royal audience, his head a little to the side, his glasses on his nose. And courage was what Anne cared most about. "Fibre" she called it, and was afraid she didn't have it. Earning a living was not enough—there must be something more. Always she had longed for some great test, which took the form for her of a desert island. There she could find the truth about the stuff in her, the fibre, whether she had resources to keep herself alive and sane. The only ultimate test . . . the thing most longed for and most dreaded.

The strangeness still persisted by the window—the moment was not done with her. For suddenly and certainly she knew that *this* was desert island, this old house too perfectly restored; exposed, alone, like human life, an island set in unremitting seas of light and dark. The desert island of a house, lapped on by times of day.

Then, if she married him, it *would* be for his house, but not because, as Esther would believe, it meant easiness but rather hardness, a chance to face life utterly. A desert island test, to keep herself and some one else alive and sane in a house restored and petrified, to make new life inside so that old life should be quieted and Outside not stare so loudly in at windows. . . . For Anne must always know not only what she'd do but why she'd do it, in whatever unlikely situation might arise.

Still held in her discovery, when he came in she said,

"Your house is haunted, Mark."

"By what?"

"By morning and by afternoon."

. . . and knew that she had failed again, betrayed by a tenacious

instinct to tell him what she felt. She said too much and not enough—but there was no encouragement to make the thing more plain. He laughed briefly as he walked to the fireplace, indulgently but scornfully, that brusqueness, rudeness, breaking through as whenever he feared a contact not understood. He could always make her feel gauche and repressed. He could dislodge the woven stuff of her thought as a sudden icy wind brings down a nest. She shouldn't have come, tried again to be friends. He couldn't listen and so she couldn't talk.

He took a small anachronistic thermometer off the wall, a thing he cherished, she could see, and bent over the fire with it, trying to bring the quicksilver up by heat to fill some bubbled gaps. In his high boots and with his soft black hair rumpled by the old hat he had pulled off carelessly, he had never looked so much like a little-known drawing which Anne had once seen of Napoleon when he was younger.

It was not youth he had in common with the young Napoleon —Mark was forty—but strain and latent wildness. The black-and-white look of the drawing was in the pigment of his skin and eyes. The roundish head with its close beautiful ears carried on the resemblance. His sturdiness of body was surprising with the fineness of his features, which could be exquisitely sweet but could also, when he stayed exiled in the St. Helena of his spirit, be bitter and restrained and harsh. In repose, with his gentle, absently attentive manner, they were tantalizing in their uncertain promise.

As she went to get her coat and boots he was moodily intent over his white, muscular hands, obstinately determined to break the will of quicksilver with heat, and force its delicate, arrested life again into perfection.

2.

Mark tramped over the crust of the ten-acre lot as if he resented not breaking through. Anne, although so much lighter than he, walked as lightly as she could. She didn't want to go crashing down into deep snow, not before he did, anyway, but she had a vague desire to see him do it, to hear the crunching thud it would make. Hardly a heel-dent showed on the crackly glaze. They might as well not be there, walking in the cold, for all the sign of it there would be left, or was. Old Snow, Anne had

wondered if it was, on this restored farm; it might as well be, for any impression of new life it took into itself. Why *couldn't* Mark break through?

They had started out so hopefully across the road, under trees hung with small wooden houses, architecture more ornate than birds were used to, now untenanted. Restoration even in the trees! But Anne minded nothing now they were outdoors in the freezing air with a chance to move and run. Now perhaps they could really talk. But, after all, they couldn't.

He had hoped, Anne knew, that the country, the snow, the house, would automatically make things right with them. He thought that if he brought her to his house which represented him (he could not know how clearly, how exactly!), some miracle would be effected and she would naturally come close to him and know him well. But if the thing *had* happened so, could he accept it simply? Without suspicion or resentment? And now that things had not developed as he thought, he was not surprised—nothing ever did, his bitter face proclaimed.

"Life flattens out," he said at last, shooting the sentence out like one of those inflatable green paper snakes which children use to scare each other with.

They had climbed the slippery hill and were watching the green and orange West and the long valley with its few farms lighting up for night.

"It stands still or runs back into the past instead of on." He muttered this as if he were the only listener and she already an unsatisfactory memory. In the same brooding retrospect he glanced accusingly at her. What could she say? She knew so well the uselessness . . .

And so she laughed and said, "Oh, come!"

Then, being maddened by pity and futility, she wheeled around from the bright sunset they had come to see. And there, down in the other valley which the sun had left entirely, was the house. It looked as if it were some one's familiar home, but no light showed in it. That was the first thing they did on desert islands—found some way to light a fire. She gazed steadily at the house but she was thinking of the man beside her, and of how an isolated soul is harder to reach than isolated land. Some way to light a fire—that was the old, old test. But who could even reach an island through such ice-bound seas?

"Do you want to go down to the cow-barns a minute?" he

asked as they started home, and it did not sound so casual as he intended.

In the barnyard they skirted glimmering gray ice and trod thick-shredded snow and hay. It was almost dusk. The near look of the barns assailed them, the cluster of bulks set at odd angles to each other. The ridge-poles were significant and awful in some way she could not understand, holding up dark, unquestioned dignity against the whitening sky.

Mark slid a door open in an unexpected corner, and the bright breath of the smallest calf, the first in a long line-up, came out into the cold. His startled large eyes looked at Anne, astonishingly close. From large, chill outdoors it was a strange shock to open a door and come face to face with the mysterious consciousness of a calf, to look into ruminating eyes which the second before had ruminated unobserved. The place was lantern-lit and dimly alive with the constant slight movements of large animals. The interior life of the barn, going on so intensely all the time, was in an instant discovered.

Here was life—neither restored, nor old, nor new, just *life*, flowing on unconsciously. After the day with Mark, always either formal or rude, this place was sanctuary and source. This intact vigor and powerfulness was the only life compatible and congruous with farms, with times of day. Animals were as dependable and absolute as light. Something was solved here in the cow barn, some riddle of existence. Even three o'clock in the afternoon would not be disturbing here: the sun would come in as today's sun, not the sad sun of the past as well. For here the restoration had been *for* something, so that life could go on. The cow barn was no museum for life under glass.

Anne looked with wondering homage at the smallest calf to which she had returned. She would have liked to take him back to the house with her. She would tether him inside the living-room windows and let him browse on braided rug. A terrific emotion welled in her to put the day's discoveries to use, to claim the desert island for her own and start her test at once. She stood staring at the little calf, with all these things in mind.

"We're going to be late, I'm afraid," she heard a courteously modulated voice at her side. Out of the daze in which her thoughts, themselves like living things, moved slowly in a dimly lighted place, she turned. For the moment she had almost forgotten Mark.

3.

Constraint closed in on them again at supper. The shades of the dining-room windows, which also looked out on the narrow porch, were drawn, the candles lit. Through the colored glass of large sconces, parts of the wall shone an unnatural color, dark but wan. Was the whole house strained through something slightly alien, given a precious and peculiar hue just off the natural? Not only restored too perfectly, but over-restored, to the point of fine falseness. Like the bird-houses. This had been a plainer, poorer farmhouse than Mark's decorator, or his own imagination, had allowed. The period was right but not the place. In some places the evidences of period are always slight.

Anne thought of the pineapple-post bed in the room which had been hers for the day, directly over this; no woman in that room had slept in a bed like that. It was a room much lived in, she could tell. They had sewed there; sometimes rested. Children had stood at the windows looking up into flurries of large-flaked snow which came down past the panes; discovering for the first time the habits of sun and storm. On summer mornings it had not been desolate. But that frail dressing-table, that swell-front chest, had not been there then. Like Mark himself, his furniture was too fine, too sensitive,—both bruised, though unaware of it, by the breaking over them of old life not their own.

Only a whole new life could counteract this dangerous, stultifying restoration; only, perhaps, a rediscovery for the first time of snow-flakes and sun. But Anne, sitting at the supper table, was suddenly sure that this new life would never come through her. Well, there need never be another day like this, then! This relationship of bafflement and possibility could snap off now. The tight golden hush of this dining-room which they could do nothing to dispel, would never *be* dispelled, and need no longer be endured.

They were painfully conscious even of Mrs. Schnitzler, the farmer's wife, who served them bustlingly. Few enough meals she had to serve, her eagerness said.

" 'Sour-and-sweet,' we call it, Miss," she said, holding a glass dish of pickle for Anne. Mark refused it with a drawn-down mouth. He was not taking any chances on unknown mixtures.

They started for the station as soon as they had eaten. There was only one evening train.

"I hope you'll come again, Miss," said Mrs. Schnitzler, timidly, in the hall, with Mark not there. "And bring his other friends. More life is what we need out here."

"Yes—yes, I know," said Anne, but knew the other friends would have to bring the life, not she. She had reached the end. And felt, oddly and with that sudden dull pang of departure, as if this were her home of which she was taking leave—at night and in the dead of winter, and with some one who was less than a friend. No more her friend than this house was her home! Why did both things seem so possible when really they were not? Making a situation out of nothing but a mock home-leaving! Even the situation was only a possibility, the uninhabited house of a situation.

The night was brilliant with snow and stars. Mark tucked her in the car with that absent gentleness of his which made her want to scream. They did not talk. The car went sure-footedly over the high-tracked snow of the narrow, winding roads. Mark's woolen gloves looked unwieldy on the wheel but they moved it with stubborn precision. His hat was pulled low, his collar up. He was the older Napoleon now, entirely sunk.

Only the framework of a situation—his inhibitions did not even uncover the possible encounter between his persistent, resentful feeling that she could bring the life he needed, and her urge to prove herself. These two blind, fixed impulses going on together, parallel, deterred from crossing; and neither of them had anything to do with love although the thought of marriage was in both their minds as the best means of attainment . . . were marriages often made like this? Nothing to do with love . . . and yet if love were there, the needs would both be satisfied. Was it just love they really wanted, after all?

At a rising turn of road she looked back at the house; again it looked like some one's home, with lights now lit; a haven in the middle of the wide, glittering night. It was not a desert island now—and yet wasn't that *exactly* what it was? A desert island must be first of all a haven before it is a test. No desert island is going to let you on it just because you choose to come, to see if you can make the fire it lacks. Before you reach it, there must be a wreck, a struggle, awful need.

So that was it! For the first time that day or in all the days she had known him, happiness came up through the dark, thwarted sweetness of their relation. She understood at last what

was the trouble, where the solution would lie. It was necessary only to need him, to need Mark. But oh how dangerous it would be—sickeningly dangerous, with the ship of her assurance going down behind her and no certainty of reaching land. For would he ever understand that any one could need him? Could he believe it? He was so proud and cold, so alternately courteous and rude, because he thought that no one did.

Far off but shrilly clear through the cold air came the whistle of the train. Mark put his chin up and quickened the car, and gave her suddenly and unselfconsciously a full look of sweetness, a look which lingered and changed to thoughtfulness as he saw in her eyes what she could then feel was there—something surprised and wondering, between relief and fear. For she was conscious again of the braveness in him, that lonely courage, almost sullen, but durable forever. Fibre, that thing she was unsure of in herself, was in him; dark, unadaptable, but unraveled, tough. And in that moment she was realizing that this quality, in some one else as well as in herself, would be the only haven where she could ever rest.

Just in time Mark veered for the last curve to the station. A downhill curve, icy and treacherous. But they did not skid. For to-night, at least, there were to be no wrecks.

HENRY GOODMAN

WAITING

THE last years of his life he spent in the home of his only son. They were good, restful, serene years. Even he could tell the change they were making in him—those leisurely days and dreamless nights—bringing out of subterranean sources a hitherto unknown dignity that filled him like new waters a dried-up well.

And all the time he knew that he was waiting upon the coming of death. His business about the house, his watering the garden, his turning up the earth with a feeble willingness, his weeding—all acts and motions that stirred and carried about his meager body were blended in a long ritual before the inevitable god.

When he had come to the short street of his son's house, beginning at the avenue and ending on a shoulder of wooded land, restlessness still bubbled in him and sent his feet pacing up and down the paved stretch. In those early days he would look about him, unfriendly and suspicious, at the sedate houses on the street, at the bit of woods that haunched slyly up the slope at the end of his walk, at the avenue that ran in dust and dozing forgetfulness past him.

The affront of his confinement had boiled resentfully in him, the more so since he knew himself helpless to overcome it. His had been many changing horizons—St. Petersburg, Peking, London, Calcutta. And now: sixty paces of side street that ran from the dust of a semi-rural avenue into the green and hushed oblivion of a suburban wood. And yet it was this piece of woodland that helped him to a mellow acceptance of his narrowed confines. It was a strip of woodland that had never known wildness. Here were no dense tangles of brush, no soaring individual

trees. Mottled gray trunks rising to a moderate height, as if they had had foreknowledge of the mild, temperate race that would find shelter beside them. They were stocky with a substantial growth that would countenance no erratic challenges of flight into the sky. There was no ecstasy in this woodland, yet so peaceful it was, so drenched in sunny quietude, he came to feel in its serenity, despite the morose stamping of his stick, a reproach to his futile fretfulness.

Once the old urge for questing carried him into the woods. It was a wearying venture and made him rely on his cane. He looked about him, breathing heavily after the climb up a short hill. Shadow gashed by a splinter of sun on brown earth and silence scratched by a scurry of sound when his foot snapped a black twig. Squirrels. Curves of pleasure bounded up in him. A gray dash up a tree trunk and a dropping close by: acorns, green, hard. He lowered himself to the grass, his cane tremulous and bending. He knew himself old. He felt a quivering in his legs and said, "um, um," in acceptance of its meaning. The golden brown flutter of a pair of butterflies—their flight a soundless scherzo, playful and gracious. His eyes were happy to follow the waving rhythm of golden brown against green. The blue sky made them black.

He brushed the grasses with his stick, flattening them, seeing them spring up. In St. Petersburg he had first felt the desire to roam. Two ants met midway on his stick. They locked feelers, respectfully made way for one another and went on about their business. Each to his duty. The swarms of Chinamen in and about Peking. Yet they move without retarding one another, each bent on his duties, work, needs. They die but their numbers are a swarm, a thick squirming mass, no fewer for the dead.

There are no dead here. I am sure not a squirrel dead, not a bird, not an ant, not a fly. They die. What is death? A sinking back into the earth. His thin, long fingers scratched thoughtfully the under side of his extended leg.—An ant, most likely.—But then they grow into death. Life a growing into death without interruption. The swing of life is into death—maybe a new rhythm. Music, he hummed under his thought, continues into silence,—a new world.

It's restful here, at any rate.

But he didn't go into the woods again. He had no need to. There was a patch of ground beside his son's house. He asked

his son for implements with which to work this bit of soil. An unexpected request which was granted with pleased alacrity. His son's wife in the window looked on him in satisfied wonder. A silent, curious man with those all-watching, quiet eyes. Watching, —watching himself as well as his surroundings.

He did not care any longer to pace the short street. Now the patch of soil held him wholly. In the morning, long before his son and daughter-in-law were astir, he was downstairs and out in the small garden he had laid out. To curry the grass with his rake, to feel the clutch of the earth and then to have it yield to the sharp intrusion of his spade, flank laid bare—here was an unusual, deep fascination.

The earth was no longer a stranger to him. From stooping over to watch the upthrust of a pansy stem, eyes seeing meanwhile the scurrying life of insect and worm in tangled grass, was no far distance to spreading out on the ground, knees pressing close into the soft, receptive earth, elbows settling into hollows.

He found himself growing observant of small, intimate things immediately about him. All things had developed toward him a new relationship of intimacy; all things were grown close and meaningful. A fly buzzing unhappily in a trap of window-pane; a leaf dipping and halting in its descent; a sunbeam burdened with particles of intangible matter awoke little, unaccustomed stirrings in his heart.

But his son and daughter-in-law drew farther into remoteness—swaying out on a tide of talk about the remote things reported in the newspapers. These conversations went on at night, after the evening meal. Their wedges of words tried to pry him open. He smoked his pipe throwing out curl on curl of wool that padded him from them. Through these white billows he sent his eyes out upon them, their faces showing their desire to keep him entertained. He caught the play of their eyes upon him, searchlights probing his face.

"Do you know, father, the Soviet Government is beginning the electrification of Russia?" His son pointed to an article in the paper.

"Electrification of Russia? eh—hum," he said condescendingly, spreading a cloud of smoke before his eyes. He saw blades of grass curling vigorously about the trunk of a rose bush he had been trimming that day. He saw, also, the question that shot across the table from his son to his daughter-in-law.

How could he tell them the meaninglessness of these things they spoke about, the exciting futility of their concern? The new plans for world peace; some one had invented a device for recording and conserving radio communications—indeed! Back of the house in a crook of the old elm he had found a cocoon that was just breaking open, making terms with life; a bush seemingly dead, which he had transplanted from beside the house to an open space in the garden, had that very day slit open a budcase and was thrusting out the delicate yellow tongue of a petal.

He listened to them, amused by their surreptitious glances, warmed by their curiosity which they would not put into questions. He took refuge in the swathing silence that drew closer about him. In its folding softness he could hear the talk of his new life:—talk that fell in his thoughts with the plop of seed-pod on moist ground. Earth in sun knew such life, he thought, aware of the spreading new growth that pushed in his pores. A superior life; at last a life of waiting, of service. The knowledge of his superiority was disturbing at first. After all they were not strangers to him; should he not share with them the secret that had come to him there, in their home?

He hesitated. They would not understand. How should they, who tore themselves daily into harassed shreds, who knew time as clicked off to them by alarm clock and wheel, by hasty going and restless homecoming?

Their solicitude was becoming offensive; their efforts at conversation—did he imagine he sensed a feeling of antagonism in their trying to divert his mind,—were an intrusion against which he might not speak. Pityingly he knew the goodness of their intentions. He was an old man and they—he could see this in their eyes that weighed on his every gesture,—did not want him to go unaccompanied down the last way.

Once he saw his daughter-in-law looking at him from a window. She withdrew instantly. He laughed at the thought of the deception he was practicing . . . a deception of thought . . . no, no, of life. He knew what she was watching for. He had known of the ageing of other men, of their querulousness, of their pains and irritations. She, no less than his son, was awaiting that. She was good to him, no doubt, but how should she know of his life, this new life of which he had not spoken?

In the open he was free. The open air with the golden pressure of sun close upon his thinning body. Here was another tri-

umph about which he would say nothing to them. That thinning body—he was stripping off the surplusage of flesh so that now his hand offered almost no barrier to the light. Did he imagine he could see a shadow—the cane-handle—through his hand?

"Father, shall I call Dr. Brooks in? How thin you are getting!"

What need had he of flesh? Should he tell them how much closer to the earth he felt, with his body resting full length, rocked to the rumble and dull push of the earth's imperceptible motion?

Silence was best.

He had no room now for memories such as at first had come to him. He had set them all aside with their disturbing movement back and forth in time. He wanted nothing now that would drag him from the deep peace of the soil he was tending so lovingly. He could brook nothing that would break the growing, full rhythms that were bringing him, gradually and with gentle rotations, into the earth. His legs, his body even, did not like him to move them from the soft solidity of ground.

In time his son and his daughter-in-law left him to his silence. She had agreed to go about as she had done before his coming. She had come to see that, at best, his wordless contentment was a circle that ringed him from her.

He was aware, that day, of a peculiarly restful sensation. In the morning, sun cutting its way into his room with its keen edge of light, his body on the bed was without weight. Its contours, its limbs, its mass had melted into a feeling which was delightful to his mind. He looked upon his hands. They were. Directing them, he felt his covered body. With quiet, unhurried hands he uncovered.

He lay under the inquisitive, deliberate research of the sun and, as if he were a pool giving up vapors, he felt the warm rising of peacefulness in himself. He felt a going out from himself along the rays of the sun: a traffic from the sun to his body and from his body outward. In the enjoyment of his relaxed feebleness he closed his eyes. Not to sleep, however, for when the band of light, traveling, slipped above his eyes, he drew feebly together, and, dressing, arose.

His feet wanted the soft ground. He knew from their trembling as he halted in the honey-light of the hallway to rest against the balustrade. He looked up at the square of sky-light and thought he heard the drizzle of sun on the patch of yellow glass.

With a guarded, unconscious touch he guided himself into the open. There was an empty box beside the elm. He made his way to this low seat and, resting, looked about him until it became hard to keep his eyelids up.

Never had such peace and restfulness possessed him. The flowing sun encircled him in wide-swinging rhythms which drew the humming and diminishing sense of his gathered self. The fluid earth at his feet seemed to be taking him in.

A thought fluttered lightly across his mind. Its slow movement stirred a sudden comprehension. He knew! It was what he was waiting for. It was here, at last! He must let his son know. He could not keep this to himself. He clasped his stick firmly and with dignity as he sought to rise from the box. He smiled as he tried to resist the playful swaying that seized him. His body folded slowly and the head fell forward to the earth.

LEON SRABIAN HERALD

WANTON MOOD

Time again—
The green-challenging wind
comes with her necklace of perfume,
her jingling earrings
of peeper and bird songs.
Time again to think
that Marjorie is filed
in the last year's archives,
Ann crumpled in the folds of winter.
Time again to know that Jean
has already become
new-flesh on the bare bone—
flesh that is quick as wings!

EUGENE JOLAS

BOULEVARDS

1.

NIGHT opens its windows to an agony and every prayer is for the bankruptcy of our blood. These ears hear gutter-songs, and the rain outside is a blues ravishing words forgotten in dying brains. O white women, when your smile crumbles and the convulsions have finally echoed in a dawn, there will be a sorrow of accordeons, and mothers will bleed like bells at eventide. I was drunken all night long, and now the lava crackles in my spirit. I will not be repentent now. Through these hallucinations I shall walk cruelly like an executioner. I am in rags and I revolt. Summer goes out in a meditation over shadows, and I found the last asylum from the leprosy of my visions.

2.

In this room there is no more singing of nightingales, but the odor of your body is a stranger no longer. There is a sea here, and a jungle, and your knees are imprisoned in a smoke of opium. I am tired of words slinking through cafes. I am a seraphim watching over you, and I ward from you the browning that is more lovely than the vespers of a sleep. The city crumbles into a stubble-field, and through the night there cries a requiem over our youth.

3.

When this midnight dies, I will be tired and carry my torn heart into heresies. O girls breaking into blossoms of cherubim

and wings fluttering into agonies of longing! Soon winter will come with cocaine and shadows, and Niniveh will be a chimney along a yellow river. Feet stumble tired with solitude. Demons furrow acres of stars and trickle a sparrow's lazy sadness into my eyes. My heart is a crushed dynamo. Always this fever is in far-off eyes, and the hidden beatitudes wait in a St. Vitus dance. There is nothing in me save a hope for explosions of sleep.

4.

When I am with you, my comrades, I lose the terror of the sleepless night. Your pale faces are the portraits of baroque smiles, and the crowds melt into smoke on the horizon. Your voices flutter against the movements of my nerves. All the taxis die down in a silence that sobs in the limits of the strange eyes. The dusk is a broken heart shuddering in a sneer. There is an agony that sank into marble, when the hour struck the last despair. A song screams with vitriolic rhythms, and the young girls hide behind the fumes of their desires. There is in me only an occult debris, in which crouch prisons and hospitals and loneliness more terrible than the walk to a dawn.

5.

I carried my hermit heart through the grottoes of the day and hungered for corn-fields bending in the wind. Metallic profiles vanished behind wireless shadows, and girls greyed into smoke. There was a forest in me of stone, and my hours stumbled against echoes that had been left by tired birds and lions crawling fiery into the mouth of a vanity. Hymns wailed through accidents. The gold of the city was a prayer for an island washed by blue waves. The violin-string of a woman's laughter rang through my decay. O vespers of my ego! I wrapped myself in the slime of the ages. But the houses fell over me, and when the night swelled hugely to a cavern of disease, I never saw the street that led to gardens in suburbs, to walls of silence, to hands in rooms luminous with a tenderness of tears.

JEAN TOOMER

WINTER ON EARTH

1.

THE physical seasons are still recurring. Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn,—they still recur. The physical seasons recur. The eyes of men who inhabit America have seen these seasons. Ages ago perhaps they started. Ages hence perhaps they will stop. They seemingly start and stop within a period of eighty years for one man. Eighty times a man sees the seasons. But eighty times are not enough for a man to learn that either he has never seen them or else he will see them eternally.

Day and night recur. 29,200 times a man sees day and night. But 29,200 times are not enough for him to learn that either he has never seen them or else he will see them eternally.

Inhalation and exhalation recur. A man breathes 840,960,000 times. But eight hundred forty million, nine hundred sixty thousand times are not enough for a man to learn that either he has never breathed or else he breathes endlessly.

Neither are there enough times or enough man for a multitude of greater or lesser truths to be learned.

What significance does a man derive from his existence?

2.

Reckoning by the Earth's time, that is, according to the way men see this planet's calendar, the body of land called North America, or simply, America, is of recent formation. Perhaps great convulsions and slidings caused its rise. Whatever was the manner of its birth, whether it was merely physical, or organic and accompanied by the great mystery of all organic births, and

physical births, America is still a young continent, perhaps not for the first or last time. But for the men who now exist upon it, so short is their time, the continent America is ancient. To be old as the continent is to be very old. Its career extends forward unto disappearance sometime in far off future years. It exists now. It is the geographical base of a great nation. No more. No less.

Ah, yes, much more, much less.

The America which dies and is about to live salutes the world!

The big light.
Let the big light in.

There was a time, we may assume, when there were no seasons such as we have now. There was a time when there was no America. And even to-day it is unknown to millions of people who exist elsewhere on the earth. People near the North and South Poles, people in the Andes, in Peru, in Africa, in Asia Minor, in India Tibet and China, in Siberia, even in Europe, yes, even in America there are people who have never even heard of it. Nor will it matter if they never do. Beyond the Earth to hosts of beings who exist on other planets of the Universe, America is of course unknown.

Men move across its surface and act strangely.

These men have seen the recurrence of recently established seasons. They have seen the somewhat longer established recurrent phases of the moon. Within these recurrent changes many things have happened. Even for the short time from the days of the Pilgrims and Indians, through Emerson and Whitman, to the days of Rockefeller, Edison, and Ford, this is a long history rich with natural and material conquests, wars, finance, politics, science, art, and the joys and sufferings of millions of struggling and bored souls.

To what purpose? Why are there seasons? Why is the moon? Why is there time for things to happen in? Why are there men? Why are there eyes? Why do they see? Why do they not see?

For three hundred years the generations of America have witnessed no irregularities in Nature to cause their sight profound disturbance. Nature, save for a tornado here, a flood or an earthquake there, is peaceful now. Does the sun not rise and set regularly, causing regular alternations of night and day? What

should the sun not rise, not set? Pity the wild startled eyes of helpless Americans.

They have experienced nothing to cause profound transformations in their souls. Yes, there was the Great War. Well? Do they not regularly wake and sleep? What should they wake up, never again to sleep in the Universe? Suppose men awoke to behold the terror and the glory of what some men mock and most men dream of, and call God? Pity the cowering, shivering souls. What burden and terror there would be while these strangely acting beings who could become souls were acquiring the intelligence, conscience, and ability to exist in God's time in an eternally awake Universe.

What should they fail to acquire intelligence and conscience? No. Suppose intelligence and conscience were not called forth from them?

Suppose they lacked the ability to sustain and transcend the foretastes of this consciousness.

Then would strong fears besiege them and force them to pray for a miracle to cast them from the Cosmos back into the confines of their isolate home called Earth where they habitually exist snug away as if outside the Universe.

They would become devout, devotion of this kind meaning whatever aimed to close their eyes to vast radiance and narrow down to comfort the perceptions of their minds.

They would pray and be religious obversely.

"Deliver us from the living God!"

The Americans are now a devout people. They have a lukewarm infidelity which they are not ashamed to call religion. But they lack the fervor caused by a great necessity. It is easy for them without intensity to dope themselves and to be doped to sleep.

What purpose do they find in sleep? Neither force nor effort nor intelligence nor conscience is needed to sleep endlessly.

We sleep. Who profits by our dreams?

3.

It was Winter.

Intense cold contracted the earth and almost froze the vegetation throughout the entire middle area of America. Nature looked as if she had been turned into a rusty trash-heap and frozen stiff.

Fields were colored a dark purplish brown. Foot-paths worn across them were so hard and lumpy that the men who stumbled along them had their spines jolted with each step. A shock rang through anyone who stubbed his toe. Ears and noses knew that the cold was bitter. Blasts of wind swept over the bleak hills and whistled and moaned where anything resisted them. The cold whipped men before it without mercy.

"It is damn cold," said one lean man to another as both stood rocking back and forth and stamping their feet, waiting for the approach of something. Already one foot pained too much to put weight on it. Their threadbare overcoats flapped like gauze and were no protection against zero weather.

"It is cold, hellish cold," said the other as he tried to squeeze into his bones. His jaw was stiff. His head was pulled down into his coat, and he was reluctant to move it. But his long red nose was dripping and freezing; he had to wipe it. It was painful when he tried to remove a wornout woolen mitten from his right hand, the fingers of which were crooked and stiffened. He did so with difficulty, reached into his hip pocket and could hardly grasp the soiled crusted handkerchief to draw it forth.

"Some poor devil will freeze to death to-night," the first man muttered, as the cold stung his face and nearly took his breath away.

"Yeah. The bastards," the second man cursed against the world.

Their own scrub beards were stiff and brittle.

Their own breaths became watery and froze.

The first man said:

"Old Ormstead always was a cruel bastard, but now he's gone and lost his sense."

"How so?" asked the second lean man. His teeth chattered.

"Leaving them horses out," the first man complained.

Neither of them looked or turned around, but both of them knew that down in the hollow two shaggy old horses were trying to nip grass by an ice-coated pond.

"Ain't they got coats?" the second grumbled.

"Ain't we got coats? What the hell good are coats against this cold?"

"Who the hell fixed this earth?" the second cursed.

"Go south," the first recommended.

"Yeah, and roast to death."

"No, you don't. I've been there," the first reassured.

"Why didn't you stay there?" asked the second.

The cold made men everywhere begrudge their energies. Everyone was tight, closed-fisted, curt, and surly until he got indoors, where, if it was warm, he thawed out, expanded, and felt jovial and large-hearted.

The newspapers headlined only a fraction of the number who froze to death. But these figures, accompanied by short descriptions of where and in what conditions the bodies had been found, were enough to make sympathetic people wince, and a few of them even went so far as to condemn the civilization that permitted such things to happen. For to meet death by freezing in a dismal hallway or in some off-street gutter was, they said, a shame and degradation worse than anything that could befall an animal.

Then came the snow.

High above the Earth it formed and flurried in wild adventures downward towards the planet's barren surface. The snowflakes were reckless and courageous. Born in space without protection and without support it was their destiny to ride the winds but always fall towards a nameless planetary form.

The white snow was heedless of the terror men would feel where they crystallized in space far above the Earth and made to whirl and fall upon an unknown surface.

The moon glowed in a black sky like a disc of silver.

Where is the planet Earth?

Where do men think they are?

The Young Man Who Tripped On. The Young Man Who Tripped On.

A young man wearing a tailored suit and smart top coat which draped with style over his slender somewhat effeminate body,—this young man was tripping down the wintry street swinging his cane jauntily and clicking his heels against the sidewalk. His multicolored muffler, showing above his coat, was more of an ornament than a protection against cold. His face, still youthful looking, was the kind that girls go crazy about,

though already it had lost the apple look that made it irresistible two years ago. It was not so ruddy pink and full. It was a trifle sallow now, with lips still cupid-like but slightly drooping, and under the eyes were the beginnings of bags and dark circles. But his eyes still told the world that there was nothing to do but love the girls. They all fell for him as he tripped down the street swinging his cane jauntily and clicking his heels against the sidewalk.

He had just emerged from an all-night party and breakfast dance. The place, a studio apartment, had been overheated and stuffy, with clouds of smoke and cigarette butts everywhere. Drinks,—gin, scotch, and cocktails galore. There were young married couples, and plenty of single members of both sexes. They were as thick and curling as the smoke. Every one got drunk enough to cut loose and do just what he or she damned well felt like. Their mouths smelt and tasted of alcohol and tobacco. But they could stand a lot, these young people. The laughter was riotous, somewhat forced. There had been a few scraps and ugly sluggish words, but not enough to cramp things. Petting was going on in all the corners and on all the lounges in the swank apartment. Whoever wished to dance, got up, and two others slid into their places on the couches. The music was supplied by a high-priced, studio jazz orchestra. And, when this stopped to rest, the radio was turned on.

Our young man had his eye on the pretty girl-wife of a friend of his. The friend from time to time kept his eyes on his wife, because he was still not so dulled and loose as not to care, now and again, what she did, and to see who kissed and petted her. This feeble watchfulness of his friend put a little spice into the affair for our young man. So he watched his chance, his mind made up to put one over on all of them. He did. Unknown to anyone, he cleverly snuck off with the girl-wife of his dear friend and led her to a back room. He closed the door and locked it. And there, with the noise of the party beating in on them, he had an affair with her. Moreover, he kept her there until almost breakfast time. And when they finally did ease into the party again, and his dear friend, vaguely remembering now that he saw her that he had not seen her for some time, asked his girl-wife where she had been, it gave our young man quite a kick to hear her reply to her husband and his friend: "None of your damned business."

This is why our young man, having had scrambled eggs and coffee and having left his own girl behind, emerged from the party feeling much set up. Striking the cold air outside further braced him. Owing to these causes, he felt like walking,—something he hardly ever did. So, just about the time when women who don't know what else to do flock downtown for unnecessary shopping, and long after the people who like machine run things had gone to work, our young man sallied forth, snuffed the air, felt tingle in his cheeks, and began tripping down the street, an attractive youth, swinging his cane jauntily and clicking his heels against the sidewalk. And even now his eyes told the world that there was nothing to do but love the girls. Many whom he passed wished they had him on their lists.

He walked and he walked and he walked,—quite unusual, even strange for our young man. And then all of a sudden he forgot who he was. His name, his occupation, his place of residence, the make of his car, what kind of clothes he wore, the number of his bank book, the number of his insurance policy, even his telephone number, in fact all phone numbers and everything just suddenly passed away from him as if they had never been. He was suddenly blank, aware of nothing,—but his body kept moving on.

He tripped on and on.

On and on.

He walked on.

His body walked on.

He tripped on and on until finally he stepped clear off the Earth and went on and on swinging his cane with a hollow jauntiness, clicking his heels in cold space.

The moon glowed in a black sky like a disc of silver.

Near what men call the Earth huge snow clouds massed. Their upper surface was cold and brilliant. Beneath, in the direction of America, all was dark. In this dark space the snow flakes formed and began their journey towards nothing.

Some few men were still upon the streets, a few stragglers, a few night-hawks whose presence made the streets seem particularly silent and deserted. Street lights were large and bright enough to show these people the way home. But their luminosity did not carry far. From the height of a tall building, a sky-

scraper, if one looked down, feeling dizzy, their feeble glow like pinpoints could still be seen. But a mile from the Earth the lights were lost.

Some few men were still upon the streets,—people going home from night clubs and all-night cafés, taxi drivers, stray policemen, waiters, bakers, milkmen, two prostitutes, one, an old timer, the other quite new to the game, she having been broken in only the night before after liquor and dope had had effect on her. These people saw the pure snow falling and felt relief from the intense sterile cold.

One man, hilarious, saluted it and cried, "Hail to you, white snow!"

A few people who remained awake late into the night saw it drifting past their windows and before street lights. If they looked up, the snow seemed to come from nowhere.

One such person, alone, high up in the office of a skyscraper, his the only light to be seen in the high rows of ghost windows, this man cursed the snow because if it fell heavy enough it might spoil the scheme he had been working on all night. Next day he hoped to close a deal with a man who was now sleeping in a little cottage far out in the country. This skyscraper man owned a portion of the Earth which, could he show it off to good advantage, could be sold with large profit to himself. No one wished to see or to buy land in a blizzard. So he cursed the snow.

Another man was reading by the window of his room in a modern apartment hotel. When he looked out and saw snow falling, a swift jet of emotion compelled him to put his book down. Forced to feel what he habitually kept hidden, he began dreaming of a girl whom he had first kissed one snowy night several winters ago, and who had ever since consistently refused to marry him.

One old woman who could not sleep, tired of tossing about, and finally threw back the covers, feebly felt her way from bed, covered herself with a warm kimona, turned on a light, and, bible in hand, let herself down into a large chair drawn close to a cold radiator. When the snow came she was looking out, out somewhere, not seeing the rows of houses across the street. Her mind and feelings were roused now and again by memories of quarrels she had had with the families of her married children. These came to mind quickly, and as suddenly passed away. In the intervals between their coming and going, she pictured and felt

that she was still a young girl; and she also felt that death was imminent. She had opened the bible to the page where it tells of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem.

Two others who saw the snow were sitting in a front parlor near the bay-windows with lights out.

"It is tough to be all alone in the world," the boy said.

The girl did not answer. Her cheek was pressed against his heart. She listened to its beats as it thudded regularly against her. There seemed no cause to stir or speak.

"But now I've got you. We've got each other," he continued in a low voice which revealed love mingled with unformed suffering. He pressed her closer to him, kissed her, and as tenderly as he could stroked her hair. His fingers were rather thick and stubby. His face, regularly formed, youthful, but somewhat heavy, gave evidence of having had its share of hard knocks. Against his will, his eyes grew moist.

"It's nothing to get sentimental about. But you're the first one . . . Gee, it just comes out. When a feller has been alone since he was a kid . . . I've told you that my old man and mother died on me. Well . . . This world ain't no joke when it comes right down to it. I've seen the toughest of 'em knuckle under when they thought no one was looking, and blubber like kids. Gee, kid, it'll take time for me to get used to it."

He pulled himself together, and felt reassured by the sense of his muscles and the picture of his trim square build.

"Look, Harry," she said softly, snuggling still closer to him, "look, it's snowing."

"How can you see?" he asked, looking down to see her almost enfolded by him.

"With one eye," she answered. They both laughed.

There was a period of silence while they both looked out and saw snow flakes, like tiny white kittens, alight upon the window-sill.

Then, rousing himself, he said:

"Sorry, sweet,—I hate to do it, but it's half way across town before I get home. Motormen only run cars between crap games at night. Say, look," he exclaimed, pointing to the snow which was now coming down thick and fast, "if it keeps up this way, they'll have to get the snow plows out. Now, gorgeous . . . Up a little bit. Now! There ain't no censor to cut this kiss."

Before daylight, in different places, a number of men-children were born upon the Earth. And there were those who made swift transits, which men call death, into either nothing or into an unimaginable world.

But millions of people did not see the snow until they awoke at various hours the next morning. Already, a white blanket covered everything, and the snow, now in large flakes and faster was still falling.

After a few days, Chicago, which is midway America, was almost snow-bound.

Chicago is a depression between New York and San Francisco.

Chicago is the greatest city in the world.

The snow fell upon Chicago irrespective of these phrases.

It brought a pure white beauty to the city parks and streets and boulevards. No skyscraper glistened white like it. No drab shanty but what underwent a snow-white transformation.

Shovels had been put to work, and high embankments lined the streets and sidewalks. At first, these piles were almost white, but they soon became soiled and dirty looking. There was too much soot and dirt for pure white snow. During the first phases of the blizzard, the people of Chicago displayed towards each other a good-will and almost joyous friendliness uncommon in the routine life of city dwellers.

Usually these city folk, and, for that matter, most Americans, go down the streets each one shut up behind his own mask as if confined in solitary cells, as if cursed and forbidden to share existence with their fellow-men.

Strange beings! Where do they think they are? Where do they think they are going? What can they possibly tell themselves they are about? What purpose do they think they serve?

Count all of them. Not only Americans, but human beings everywhere: they are all more or less the same. Take the measure of the planet Earth. See it somewhere in a vast universe. Why do its inhabitants act the way they do? Who poisoned them?

See this tiny creature wearing high heels, a skirt, and a fur coat. Where has she come from, where is she going,—no one knows. But she is walking down the street rapidly and with some

style, going two blocks, and soon to duck into some doorway which will hide her from view. Two blocks is a short distance even when compared to distances which can be known on Earth. It is infinitesimal when compared with transmigration through worlds.

Her face is set, expressionless. She holds herself aloof, body held in and almost rigid. Several people just like her pass by within arm's reach. All are mute. All seem mutually repellent. All are doubtless preserving something from each other. Are they aiming at some great objective? With lips held tight or loose, they look, not at each other, but straight ahead or down—at what?

Where are they going? What are they doing?

Should some one speak to another, the person who spoke would be fearful lest he be rebuffed; and the person spoken to would not like it, and might be offended.

One can be put in prison for speaking to another.

Should one of them be asked the reason, then, if he did not suspect you of being crooked or crazy, he would quickly tell you that his fellowmen are not to be trusted, that they are tricky and treacherous, and that if one of them approaches or speaks to you, it is likely to be for his gain and your loss. This information comes from first hand experience; doubtless the man who gives it knows what he is talking about. But what would be gained? What would be lost? What is gained? What is lost?

Each one feels that he must preserve something worth while in the universe from the attacks of other people who live just where he does and who act just as he does.

Men call such behavior human society in a state of civilization.

Where this lack of ability to be social is most marked,—this is indeed a very high state of civilization.

There is much civilization in the great cities of America, including Chicago.

Are human beings born this way? Or do they secretly conspire to make themselves so? Perhaps they are under the illusion that this is the way to become dignified and noble. Perhaps they believe that by acting so they will each gather within eighty years a rich harvest from the Earth experience, and present a radiant face and a great soul when they pass away from their small globe to God.

But while it snowed, some force of Nature thawed men out and allowed them to feel just a little bit that after all they were

all in the world together. Doubtless some men took advantage of this good feeling. But there was enough of it to survive these shocks, so that even conductors had a few good words for the crowds that jammed and jostled in street cars. Automobiles got stuck in ruts of snow. Other cars, instead of honking their heads off with irritation and impatience, honked and sounded for the fun of it, gave the stuck cars boosts, and helped them get started. Men gave their arms to women over crossings. And there was occasional comraderie, gayety, and laughter, as men and women, all bundled up, trudged and crunched back and forth along the snow-packed sidewalks.

4.

An island rose up out of the sea.

From the north it looked formidable and uninhabited. Waves rolled and dashed against a band of rocks, some rounded by the action of the waters, some still jagged and looking as if they had recently broken off and fallen from the towering bleak cliff. Way up, projecting over a wall of solid rock, a huge boulder-stone appeared to be imperfectly balanced and ready to topple over and hurl down to join the ranks of rocks below it. But this huge stone had been perched in this reckless position as far back as the inhabitants of this island knew of. In their language they called it "Lover's Leap."

Mixed in with their legends was the story of how a beautiful island girl had rescued from shipwreck a great prince of the mainland. They had fallen in love. When the prince departed, this girl, left with a broken heart, had lept off this rock. And ever since it had been called Lover's Leap. And though few of them ever used it, it did sometimes happen that a young man or young girl dashed away from the town and sought the friendliness of this bleak spot. It was never melancholy which drove them; it was always a deep agony which their stoicism compelled them to face alone with God.

But for the most part, the men and women of this island were too occupied in the struggle and adventure of existence to visit the rock. It was the occasional resting place of screaming white sea birds.

From the south the island stood forth in different aspects. If it were seen against the horizon as the sun-rise illumined and

detached it from the sea, it rose up like a legendary castle, and stood isolate and dominant, the sole thing between sky and sea. If it were revealed close at hand as a mist scattered and the sun shone through, it glittered like a gem, its verdant curved hills set in a gold sand beach. But the best time to see it was near noon-time, with the blue sky brilliant and the sea a bottle-green. Then let there be a bracing wind, waves choppy, eager, and a few white clouds moving swiftly overhead. It was then indeed White Island, a miracle of nature, a form so beautiful and wild and free that many on first beholding it doubted that their eyes had seen the real, and suspected it to be the work of instant magic.

On the summit of White Island, high above all else, and where solid rock had once again emerged from under upward sloping green mounds and fields, there was a stone structure. It rested there as if always on the look-out, commanding as it did a full view of the island, the town beneath, and the open sea in all directions. It was nature-worn and ancient. Save for its shape, it might easily have been taken for a sentinel or light-house,—in the ordinary sense. It was, in fact, a house of God.

It had been built, so the legends told, by the holy men of this island over a thousand, yea, many thousands of years ago. Its construction showed a workmanship of crude simplicity combined with the art and knowledge of a strangely perfect architecture.

For generations this place, save on rare occasions, had been unused. But there were men in each succeeding generation who learned from their fathers how to replace some worn or weakened part with new and strong materials. It received such watchfulness from year to year that it was now practically the same structure and as solid as when first completed. So it stood, high above all else, a symbol to those people of devotion and of the long chain of their ancestors.

Some distance below it, and towards the north, there was a wood, almost a forest. Here and there clearings had been made, and two roads cut at right angles through it. One clearing had been made into a rough farm, but the others were used for cutting wood. And the roads were mostly used for hauling wood from the forest to the town. But they also served of evenings to reach the footpaths which wound around this wild part of the island. Young lovers from the town liked to stroll along these paths,

sing their folk and love songs, sometimes dance about the forest, and now and again pretend to be engaged in some especially dangerous adventure. The smell of wood was mingled with salt air. And often the wind made weird and fascinating whispers, cries, wailings. One foot-path led to Lover's Leap. Another, to a rocky slope from which the sunset could be seen in all its splendor. All paths abruptly terminated at some surprising spot and there disclosed a stark or lovely vista.

Towards the south, there were rolling green hills and fields, places where cattle grazed, and long strips and squares of cultivated farmland. There were springs and brooks, cool and quiet and shaded by green leaves. There were gorgeous flowers, aromatic herbs, and fruit trees. Way down the slope one could see the town, a cluster of red roofs, nestling against a protecting hill. And below and spreading out before the town there was the glittering gold sand beach. And where the beach shelved down, the green sea came. Sometimes it came in gentle laps and ripples. Sometimes it came in great waves and white foam. Then its roar and pounding could be heard and even felt, it seemed, everywhere on White Island.

Behind a high curved arm of land which formed a cove, there was a place where sails and spars were made and where ships were built. In the cove the fishing fleet lay at anchor. Bright colored sails were furled. But everywhere in the harbor there was activity. Men in light swift boats passed to and fro. Sometimes their deep voices carried for miles around. A few men worked on riggings. Some were getting their lines in order. Others mended nets. Some few lolled about and smoked and talked, their bronzed sea-faces shining rivals of the sun.

These were a fishing, sea-faring, farming, religious people.

Some men on the island had, in their day, touched almost every spot on the habitable globe. They had gone to the mainland and shipped as mates and captains. They returned invariably to White Island, having seen the main ports of America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

It was a long and honored tradition among them that no son must die and be buried on any mainland. Either die at sea and be given a sea burial, or else return and die at home.

There was a tale told of how one of them, having been stricken with fever in a foreign port, and near to die, got up in the quiet night when there was no one to restrain him, and, stumbling

down to the water's edge, found a skiff, pushed off in it, rowed with the last strength of a dying man until the harbor lights were dim behind him, and there, just as he failed for the last time, slid his body over the side of the skiff and let it sink into the clean cool water, saying with his last breath as he sank down, "Thy son I am, White Island."

Most often those who had a taste for adventuring in far off seas and countries left home quite young. They saw and experienced all in the world they wished to, and then, just at the age of ripe maturity, they returned to the island, told of what they had seen and learned, and with great joy resumed their places among their people.

Now and again one of them would marry a daughter of the mainland. All of them had the world for love and marriage. As a race they were handsome, tall, and strong, possessed of a natural dignity which carried everything before it. Their fearlessness and stoicism were proverbial. Girls and women everywhere were known to love them madly at first sight. To be from White Island was to have a universal passport.

Nonetheless, and though there was no hard and fast tradition against doing so, they seldom married away from home. Now and again, however, one of them did, and brought his wife to live with him on White Island. They never settled permanently on the mainland. And also, now and again, a son of the mainland married a girl of White Island. In both cases, the mainlanders always came to dwell on the island. Indeed, having once seen and lived on it even for a short while, one could not wish to permanently dwell elsewhere, so beautiful and free and noble was it and its people.

In the language of White Islanders, the same word which meant "stranger" also meant "guest." Strangers were received as guests: it was their natural privilege to partake of the best to be had. They were welcomed to the food and drink, shelter, work, song, dance, festivals and ceremonies of these people. The island life caught them up in its joyous stream. What was their surprise to see the beauty of the island women! What was their strange joy and sense of liberation to hear the whole island burst forth in soft or robust singing! For this was a custom on White Island: they had songs for all their ways of life, craft-songs, songs of the fields and crops and seasons, songs for the sea and fishing, dance, festival, and songs that were sacred. All on the island,

from the very youngest to the oldest, knew these songs. There were times for singing: often at dawn and sunset, always during meals, for marriages, harvests, and events of significance to the whole community. But it was no unusual thing for some man in the fields, or some woman in her home, or some child upon the beach, to start singing because they felt like it, and then to have this song taken up and sung by people all over the island. At such times it was as if the whole place was one human organ. Then the song would die away and once again there would be silence save for the sounds of wind and waves.

What was the surprise of visitors to learn how these islanders were governed, and how they shared communal life! All adults on the island worked: it was their joy to be skilled craftsmen, potters, weavers, makers of sails, artists in wood, stone, and with lasting colors which they from ancient times had known how to make. It was said that in one part of the island there was a rich vein of gold; but the islanders kept this knowledge strictly to themselves, and thus it was that nations which had great warships and armies never bothered them. The foreign powers thought the island too small and valueless to be worth even an easy conquest. The islanders themselves never touched the gold. They had no need for it at home; and gold could not buy elsewhere what they had by natural merit on White Island.

The people of White Island governed themselves by a system which seemed very simple, and yet which was in fact quite exacting. When for some reason a new governor was to step forth, the people gathered in and around the house of God upon the summit of their island. Whoever felt compelled by some deep urge within his soul to assume this office, which was at once a privilege and a sacrifice, stepped forth of his own accord and gave his life to guide them. Such a one became at once responsible in his own eyes to God and to his people to be both law-giver and chief instructor in their ancient learning. As he stepped forth, his own conscience had to face the eyes and hearts of those he loved. No one became governor without the ordeal of an inward struggle. No two men had ever been known to step forth at once. Having elected to be governor, and conveyed this fact to the assembled people by fulfilling an ancient ceremony, this man, whoever he was, immediately received the blood and soul allegiance of his people. And so he governed until death or accident or his own inward sense of right and justice caused his removal.

This form of government seemed at first impossible to visitors from the mainland, but they soon became a part of it, and a part of all life on the island. This was their right as guests. They were sternly dealt with if they abused this privilege. Few visitors ever did. The islanders could count on the fingers of one hand the number of people during the past hundreds of years who had violated their kindness. These transgressors became so out of place that they were asked to leave the island; conveyance to the mainland was offered them. When they refused to leave, they were then forced to enter the sea and swim in the direction of the mainland. Two of these were said to have perished in the attempt. A third was supposed to have been picked up by a fishing ship and carried to some distant port.

This severe manner of dealing with whoever violated their hospitality was, of course, well known to people on the mainland. But it was not fear of this eventuality which caused visitors to behave as they should. Indeed, if they knew of it, soon after landing they forgot it because of the joy and warmth with which they were received. It was the islanders themselves, their way of living, the largeness, the simplicity, the wisdom of it,—it was this which made it almost impossible for any one to violate their hospitality. To do so was to violate oneself.

Not all of the men of White Island who went away to foreign places followed the sea. And even those who did, carried an unwritten commission to experience all they could, and to understand the lives of all whom they came in contact with. In this way, White Island kept informed by first-hand experience of conditions everywhere the world over.

Certain of the White Islanders deliberately went abroad to study and acquaint themselves with the types and conditions of existence of different peoples: their governments, customs, commerce, arts, religions, sciences, and philosophies.

One such White Islander, having chosen America as his place of residence and study, grew to like this nation, formed deep friendships there, and came to be a figure of great significance in its culture. He lived at different times and for varying durations in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. And then, having received life and given completely back to life until the age of forty-three, he left America and departed on a long voyage. The people of America never heard of him thereafter. It was assumed that he met with accident. In fact, he returned to White

Island, lived long afterwards, and finally, when almost two hundred years of age, peacefully died in the place he loved as he loved no other place on earth.

Another White Islander, in pursuit of the same purpose, went to live and study in the Orient.

And, from among a number, there was a third,—even now his return was expected. The whole island was preparing dance and festival to rejoice and welcome him, by one acclaim, the greatest of White Islanders.

His name was Jend.

He was remembered, twenty years ago, as a youth whose strength and gift of wisdom amazed even them, they themselves a strong wise people. At an early age he had mastered all the crafts on the island. All that could be done with wood and stone he learned, from the felling of trees to the making of simple articles of use, the shaping of spars, the building of ships and houses. He came to understand the soil, the earth: his hand was perfect sowing seed. And to handle a sail and ride the sea were cut for him by nature. He was a striking figure at the helm in a wild high sea: his face, in profile, eagle-like, and, in front view, marvelously cast for man; his body, a muscled symmetry, braced as if it were engaged in victorious contest with wind and waves.

But most extraordinary was the rapidity with which he learned and mastered the knowledge and traditions of his people.

White Island, the legends ran, was so called because the Angels, long ago, had descended and dwelt there. They had been sent down to Earth by God, commissioned to teach and aid the men of Earth to improve their way of living. Everywhere over the broad lands men had departed from universal harmony. And as a result of this their bodies grew sick, and their souls became diseased. The Angels chose this spot from which to direct their ministrations because it was isolate from the mainland and the way between was washed with clean waters.

One day as an Angel strolled along the gold sand beach, absorbed in divine contemplation, he was suddenly surprised to see a man-child brought in by the waves and deposited as if by hands before his feet. He took this for a sign that this child's destiny was to be ruled by him. So he gave the child unto the group of Angels who nursed and reared him. When this child had grown to be a marvelous flower of earth-manhood, he and a young Angel were joined in love; and thus arose the race of White

Islanders who sometimes called themselves Children of the Sun.

The Angels remained on Earth long enough to see this race well started, to teach them to till the earth, command the sea; to teach them to know themselves and great cosmic mysteries. Here was the source from which sprang the knowledge and the traditions of the White Islanders.

Jend mastered these. From men returned to White Island from far off places he learned diverse languages and customs.

In a time of emergency, young as he was, he even became governor of White Island for a short period.

And then came the compelling urge to see and understand the world. So he set off.

Now, after twenty years, he was expected to return.

The whole island expected him. One of their ships had already been sent to convey him home from the nearest mainland port. And on the island itself every one was preparing for a three day continuous day and night ceremony of rejoicing.

Very gay and active in this preparation was Naril, she whom every one acknowledged to merit Jend's love. Naril, like most of the women of White Island, was a pagan in the gaiety of her body and a priestess in her spirit. Even now she had climbed high to the summit of White Island and stood there, lithe and beautiful in the free winds and bright sun, near the house of God, alternately praying and dancing with joy for the first sight of the great Jend, her Jend, as he came sailing home.

* * *

The snow drove in blinding sheets across a prairie. Nowhere could anything be seen save swirls and drives of blinding snow. The glassy road lay across an endless flat-land, a cold white wilderness in which nothing grew or could ever grow. Two people drove a car across a prairie in a blizzard. Four large eyes, straining on the look-out, peered out from behind a frosted wind-shield. A fog-horn should have shrieked for them, for they, driving at great speed, peered out and could see not farther in front of them than where the head-light shot against the whirling blanket of white snow and reflected backwards. The car stood still, rushed on and set the snow a wild dance all around it. The car was metal. On and on the man and woman drove. Four large eyes peered out from behind a frosted wind-shield. On and on they drove

across a flat civilization. They were in a car. The car was in snow. The snow was in a closed cold world.

* * *

Upward is this Actual.
Octaves beyond the idols
Aspired to in biped picturing.
Not Jacob pillowed on the rock
Could *dream* this prospect:

I walk through the Universe

5.

Two men walked in the shadow of a great cathedral.

Its sheer majestic form was as if it had been hewn from a mountain and then carved in a complex harmony of forms exquisitely. Upon blended angles of pure rock a spire rested and pointed upwards.

One of the two men was a thousand years old. His body had the strength of a bull and the litheness of a tiger. It appeared more supple than powerful.

Wide-spaced beneath a broad high brow his eyes shown forth as from a god.

He could look in his brain and see all stars.

Knowledge, love, and power,—these in him were perfectly formed and blended in supreme synthesis.

The other man was thirty years old. He wished to know how to be able. His steps were sensitive, as if he felt that he did not merit walking in company with the older man. His steps were human.

The older man, using a simple pictorial language, spoke to the understanding of the younger man.

He said:

"Provided that you make effort you will gradually learn what and why you and all men are. But now you must acquire an essential sense of where you and all men are. Men are in the Universe. Without the world-view which arises from this sense of actual location, which is the sense of actual existence, you will not be able to go far.

"Man cannot transcend the Universe and its great laws.

"But man can master all that he need master by first becoming master in power, love, and knowledge of himself.

"Remember."

The Universe above, the Universe below;
The stars above, stars below;
God above, men below.

They had come to the place where they would part company for an unknown duration. They stopped walking.

The elder man then turned to the younger, and, permitting himself to be what he was, he radiated a love so deep and great that the young man, with a sharp pang of instant liberation felt himself surge with force, felt his heart overflowing; instinctively he knelt before the older man with inexpressible veneration.

The Maker blessed the young man, bid him rise, and embraced him. Then, without words, each went his way.

The young man strode away rapidly, half in the ecstasy of great devotion, half feeling that his heart had been torn from him.

The old man entered the great cathedral. His vast work on Earth was finished, and the time had come for his return to the Unknown Father, the Prime Source, the great darkness, immovable, more luminous than light.

The young man walked on. The narrow street, quite deserted, up-hill, was half in moonlight, half in shadow. Good people slept peaceably in the low rows of two and three storied houses.

He finally came to the door of his own house. He opened it, stepped in, and ascended to his room which was on the top floor. There, seating himself by an open window, he remained active and sleepless.

6.

"Wherever men go, whatever they do, they are in the Universe.

"Are men sleeping, waking, breeding, killing, loving, thinking? They are in the Universe.

"Even if we die we must die in the Universe.

"Are men on land, in the air, under the sea, within the earth, on the sea, in deserts, on mountains, at the poles, on ships, in

churches, in prisons, in skyscrapers, in huts, in houses, in dentist chairs, on operating tables, in rooms, in beds? Men are in the Universe.

"Are you in a room? Do you think that your room is outside the Universe? Do you think that the room's ceiling is the upper boundary of the great world? Push back the ceiling and you will see above you and including you a vast space and millions of giant stars. Do you think the room's floor is the lower boundary of the Universe? Push away the floor and below you and including you you will find the great world. Push back your walls. Above, below, and on all sides there is an infinite Universe which inexorably contains you.

"Where are you? What is above, below, on all sides, all around you?

"What reality have your artificial blinds and shutters? One instant of time can expose you to the boundless world.

"You, they, people, I, all of us are in the Universe.

"Be in your grave and you are still in it.

"Be with God and you will find Him in it.

"You cannot escape from the Universe."

7.

"Have you ever been solitary and exposed in a wilderness of unbroken desert?

"Have you ever been solitary and exposed in a wilderness of unbroken ocean?

"Have you ever been solitary and exposed in the wilderness of Earth?

"Are you solitary and exposed in the wilderness of the physical Universe?

"You shrink into your bones.

"No, dear. As I have wished done to me, so I now offer you the open friendliness of one human heart.

"The gift, almost the grace, is over.

"Now step back and for years learn to be powerfully alone."

BURTON RASCOE

WHAT IS LOVE?

WHAT is love? Gustibus asked himself as he entered the elevator and removed his hat for there was a lady present and the custom is hats off to ladies in the lifts of hotels, apartment houses, department stores, theaters, municipal monuments but not in office buildings where business women are not ladies and the rule is equal rights for all. "Good morning, Joe." "Morning, Mr. Hudibras." "Have a good night's sleep, Joe?" "Yes, sir, thank you Mr. Hudibras. Looks like a fine morning, sir, yes sir, a mighty fine morning." What is love, Gustibus asked himself as Joe compressed the accordion-pleated steel front of the cage and slid back the door of the ground floor entrance to the shaft. Ladies first. Pink charmeuse over a nice curving torso and sheer silk hose seen to the knees. Styles are aphrodisiacal this season. What is love, Gustibus asked himself in the sun-drenched street fresh and clean as a steamer deck at morning mess call. What is love, Gustibus asked himself as he strode, shoulders squared and waistline taut up the street to hail a bus. Let's take the cases of two friends first. Now there was old Del in college, Delbert Huggins, starting off to see his widow, starting off with his little black bag. Little black bag like a surgeon's case. Like the one they bring the babies in. Stocked like a first aid kit. Did he pack pajamas? Del always wore a nightshirt with two sheaths in its sides. But did he pack it? Or a toothbrush, clean shirt, clean sox, and a comb? What did the lady do as he bent before a dresser and spread out his paraphernalia as though he were going to operate on her? Methodical and premeditative man, Del, and had read the encyclopedia from beginning to end; his was precautionary love. Do you love her? I asked. "Sure I love

her. Asked her to marry me but she won't do it. Says I'm too young and in two years I'd probably beat her. Got a match and do you think we might run out and get a sandwich?" Then there was Mark, Mark the geologist. Mark was chaste, married now, made a pile of money, made a pile of money oil prospecting, knew how to find oil and found some for a company and then found some for himself; sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Mark coming into my room crazy drunk and bawling like a baby half past two in the morning, waking me up and bawling like a baby, great big hulking man, six feet one, shoulders like an ox, bawling like a baby. Been up to New York to see that girl again. Soon as he got his check from his dad he'd go see that girl again, dance hall girl, who danced with the customers as long as they bought drinks, and slept with the last one; but not with Mark; no, he wouldn't sleep with her; all he wanted to do was hold her hand and slip five dollar bills to her under the table to keep her with him till his money was gone and then he'd beg her to sleep alone that night, just as a favor, just as a favor to him. "Nice boy, your friend there," she'd say to me, "but he's nuts." Mark would fall to his knees at the foot of my cot and clench his hands and bend his head as in prayer. "Christ, God! Christ, God! God, Christ! I can't stand it! I can't stand it! I can't stand it! God, Christ! Christ, God! God, God, God, God!" And he would get up and grab something, anything, book, chair, bedsheet anything. Had to break or tear something; and his lips drew tight as a drumhead over his teeth, veins stood out on his forehead, and he tore like the flaying of Marsyas. Then he'd fall on his knees again and pound his head with his fists and sob and cry "Christ, God! Christ, Jesus! God, Christ! Jesus! Jeeeeesus. Ohhhhhhh!" He'd get to sleep after a while and next morning he'd be all right again and would work like a son of a gun until the next allowance check came in and he would go see that girl again and go through the same thing all over again. What is love? Gustibus asked himself and hailed a bus. Ding, ding. Ladies first. Short skirts as an aid to chivalry. No impolite young man would jump on a bus these days in front of a girl and grab her seat. A skirt billows out at the top of the steps. Bare knees flash and garterettes. The girls are giving the boys a treat this year. London busman and the prim old lady, go ahead ma'm, legs ain't no treat to me. What is love? Gustibus asked himself swaying down the aisle of the bus top seats and sliding into a slot with a slump.

Love is dead, old Huneker said when she notices the ceiling needs redecorating. The rooty drop of manly blood the surging sea outweighs; the world uncertain comes and goes, the lover rooty stays. Beware the pretty face my son and shun the scrumptious chatter-box. What is love? Gustibus asked himself and surveyed the morning scene, men hurrying whereto and why and why? Why, love, my droll Aunt Ada says, is the one sphere of human activity where the adage holds true that those who can, do and those who can't, criticize. Did Hector Macdonald ever die? Did he shoot himself in Paris? Is that his body or a bag of cement under the sod at Père Lachaise? Was he Karoki the Japanese general and did he win the war? Lord what a man! No cantharides, benedictine or electric belts for him. But let's get back to the question. What is love? Gustibus asked himself and the bus swung into Fifty-seventh Street, the smartest street in the world. *Prima et Tellus et pronuba Juno dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius aether conubiis, summoque ululurunt vertice nymphae.* Wasn't it *good!* she said; and that man in the Maupassant story was a cur to write a letter bawling her out like that because she asked that question. Hadn't the man any honor? Let's be decent human beings, kind and gentle, like good common folk, like my tobacconist, Mr. Grossman. Gentlemen are almost never gentle; they never learn manners; not that they can help it; they don't have to learn good manners, whereas good common folk do to get along with one another. Jesus was gentle and that's his greatest claim to worship. With servants waiting on you all the time, kow-towing, scraping, bending, acceding, complying, yessiring, nosirring, no soul, no honor of their own, how can you with such service, such subservience, learn good manners? But I like it, love; and when a woman says she likes it, man, the man must hear her, though he love her or not. The Maupassant man's a cad, sir, a double-dyed damned stinking cad, sir, to break off with a woman who had made him happy, with a letter like that. Ought to be a rule of give and take in this world, fifty-fifty between men and women. Now it's eighty-twenty with the woman drawing the short end. That is why light ladies are right in grabbing all they can get. Why is the world down on them, especially women? You'd think women would stand up for their sex but they never, almost never do. Women hate women, most of them, and how they hate the light ones, how the light ones hate the light ones. Funny. No, pathetic. Or is it? Down in their

hearts, do they? Maybe a game they play with men. But what sort of justice is it that looks down on a woman because she takes money from a rich old man? What good is his money going to do him and if he has plenty of it what better way could he spend it? Ladies must live and girls must eat. What does it matter if a hard shrewd girl hooks a rich roué for fifty grand; he's probably hooked others for it or his people had and it is quite all jerry with me even if he goes and shoots himself. If he had had any fun he had lived long enough any way. Come on you sons-o'-bitches do you want to live forever! That nifty cropped up in the war again and was thought very noble and very naughty when used in that connection. When used in that connection you can say sons-o'-bitches right out in print. War's so noble, so goddamned noble, and so are all your paternal ancestors. There's a nifty that's about worn out; Polybius states with authority that it was pulled by Gesco the Cathaginian in the year two hundred and forty B. C. I am wandering away from the question. The human consciousness is so fluid that exclusive concentration on any one thing has a duration of less than one twentieth of a second. And the area of Thibet is so many square miles or versts and das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan. What is love? Gustibus asked himself anew. "My sweet boy. Darling boy. You precious boy. My honey bunch. My love. I'd just die without you. I just wouldn't want to live." "Don't you touch me!" "Don't come near me!" "Don't you love me any more?" "No, I don't love you; I just want you. If you stood in my way I'd push you off the cliff; let's get that straight. Now kiss me." "I like the way you look, the way you act, the way you talk, the way you think, the way you smell." Easy man quick at tumescence gives off an odor so they say that's detectable and delectable to women. The sadness and gladness when I lost youhoo! A fat bald-headed little Jew sitting at an office desk. That's an idea for a fantasy. God as a fat, bald-headed little Jew, sitting at his desk and listening to complaints coming in from his customers. What is love, Gustibus asked himself and green lights go and red lights stop. Nothing could equal Aunt Jane's surprise, when uncle won the swordman's prize; she never thought great shakes of him, nor of his brother, uncle Jim. Now there was the case of Golem Gears and Lizzie Leaf. Golem going to be the modern Flaubert and "Just mark my words in ten years time I'll be called the American Flaubert" and writing pieces for Zippy Stories, scared to death

of his five foot wife. "I'm good" he-who-was-going-to-be-the-American-Flaubert boasted and the grotesque Polyphemus with the flatfoot Golem tread would give me all the bawdy details. "She wants to have a child by me. She writes me poems and wants to have a child by me." Fine, go ahead, I tell him, if Barnum & Bailey won't take it, Bellevue will. "Whaddaya mean?" he asks and thinks I'm trying to kid him. No; I'm serious; and later on you can have it stuffed sell it to the natural history museum. "Now keep up this under your hat" he warns and a week or two later his wife who had found one of Lizzie's poems cracks him over the head with an umbrella and he yowls with pain. Cyclone over with him back on the husband job again he comes to me this moral Golem and says "Lizzie was just playing me for a sucker. I gave her the gate." God! May be tragedy for some folks but it's comedy for me. Oh! Stevens' wish, I wish I were a thinking stone. "Kepler, we learn, made his living by astrology, as people would not pay for astronomy. It is interesting to reflect that if he had lived in the present age the police would have forbidden him to make a living compatible with his studies." What is love Gustibus asked himself and lifted his eyes from the quadrangular sheet. *Io Hymen Hymenaee io!* "If he gets out of this we will call him Houdini." How did this start? In loveliness and joy and ecstacy and in loveliness it remains. But can it last? In all this time not one sharp pride-wounding word. "No quarrels?" No; well, hardly any. Strange. No misery? Yes. But then you thought an hour ago you'd had no sorrow in love. No despair. One forgets. Still, was that sorrow, was that despair in love? Was it not the desolating sense of losing love? Was it not pride? And did it not afford relief and restore me to myself? They were sitting close on the piano bench; she rose flushed and flurried; he wore a sheepish, futile look. I felt like laughing and singing a grating song, but said, "Meredith the modernist has the right of it. Can that be quicksilver in the moon? *Trop naïf, étant trop cynique. Ne croyant à rien croyant tout.* . . . So good of you to ask me here (mockingly) and, sir, it's nice to see you again (as if to say: I could wish you better luck). . . . And now, good night (with the deepest bow)." At the door she said, "Don't, don't, don't, please," and I patted her hand gently, smiled, and fled, drinking in deep gulps of exhilarating air. So free that night! And for two days more, will working against the claims of flesh. Then her note, "Anything, anything, but this." No reply. My play was getting under way.

Then she haggard, appealing, apprehensive in the doorway, determined, radiantly beautiful. Held out as long as I could. Weak, weak, damned weak. For then it was my turn to be abject. Had to right the matter in my mind, wish it away, accuse, believe, reject, recriminate. We walking rapidly through a downpour of rain, her hat bedraggled, my shoes soaking, oblivious crowds with dripping umbrellas, we jostling them, they jostling us, me petulant, silly. "I can't stand this wrangling, these scenes," she said. "Nor can I. Good-night." Free again. Then she ran after me, crying "Wait!" and when she had caught up, said, "Anything, forgive me. I love you." Was that love then I felt? What is love but mutual dominance—the strong by the weak, the weak by the strong, rôles which are interchangeable on a moment's whim and ebb and flow of selfishness and selflessness? How easily all that misery is forgot and remembrance fixed on kindnesses, delights, affection, happiness and hope, when mind is fresh and body well. What is love? Gustibus asked himself anew, intent upon keeping to and resolving this most pressing problem, but with mind straying to the associated whys of the universe. Love was to me that winter night on Brooklyn Bridge, a glowing whisper, the snow a mobile net of silken gauze softening the angles of Manhattan's awful tyranny of steel and stone, and warmth against my cheek and peaceful wonder in my heart. The Gorgon sleeps, my sweet, prone so that none can see her face at night and men gain respite from her stare. Faces that to-morrow will be stone are softened now over family tables in cubicles called home, in cabarets and movie shows, in secret barrooms and in nuptial beds. Is that tower there a spear and has she, the Gorgon, has she been slain, and look at that tooting tug so like a duckling that's lost its Ma. Wouldn't Monet exult in that, those graceful lines of that span, those yellow, green and red lights there, and that, and that, oh, look, and that! And now *da mi basia mille, deinde centum, dein mille altera,* and twenty trillion more and that will not be enough. Are you hungry? I am. To *Farrish's* then and we'll have turtle soup and venison and candied sweet potatoes, cheese cake and coffee. Does that strike you right? Give my arm a squeeze. Ooooh, I love you so! Waiter, will you bring a large spoon please? Did I ever tell you the story about Big Bob and Georgette? She was about to be introduced and she'd been told Bob's famous. You know how she coquettes with her eyes and swoons forward instead of walking? Well, she swooned toward Bob. He threw up both hands and shook them in negation, bellow-

ing, "Nothing doing! Noth-ing do-ing, you can't sleep with me!" Bob's a card, unique. Is your steak good? Good-night, Cap! Taxi! Your head against my shoulder, there! Sorry, that's a pencil; did it stick you? So sorry! Should keep my pencil in my waistcoat pocket. I'm so happy. Aren't you? 'Now all good folks inclined to roam, take my advice and stay at home, or else just like these three little flies, you too will die of luxuries!' Isn't that the most pathetic little ballad? '*Quand je dévise assis aupres de vous, Tout le coeur ne tréssaut; Je tremble tout de nerfs et de génous, Et le pouls me défaut.*' Ronsard, my sweet, the perfect poet, sensuality with sentiment, brave, clean, and earthy, with his head in the stars, no less. How black and dismal those loft buildings look. It was right about here that Chapman pulled that million dollar mail robbery; they transport the registered mail now in armoured tanks. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could always be as happy as this? Do you remember that I warned you not to fall in love with me—when I was head over heels in love with you—and told you if you were such a sweet fool it was your misfortune since I was unstable as the wind? Well, I was; I spoke the truth; my reason ruled my will and I told you the truth. But now I don't know what's got into me; you absorb my world; you're enough and you're adorable. Here we are! What did the meter read? All right; good-night! Stand before the fire and let me look at you. 'Not to unveil before the gaze Of an imperfect sympathy In aught we are, is the sweet praise And the main sum of modesty'; and my sympathy, sweet, is without a flaw in its perfection. Always, always, always! What impotent poet was it that said *post coitum omnia animalia triste est? Omnia?* The pathetic liar. That reminds me, did I tell you about Chubby and his psychic catastrophe? He had wooed a lady for nearly a year without success and she finally gave in and came to him. He had the décor all set, lights low, Coty sprayed about, and then at the crucial moment his reflexes failed him. He was humiliated. 'Good God,' he cried, 'has the axe fallen?' and as soon as she was gone, he went to the phone, and an hour or so later he was able to reassure himself. He was fortunate enough to get the lady's consent to a second rendezvous. Then he consulted a doctor. The doctor gave him some strychnine with extraordinary results. He sat alone in his room for three hours, fortified, prepared, and impatient. The lady never showed up. Chubby called twelve telephone numbers without success. There he was, like Catullus, all night *supinus pertundo tunicam.* Poor Chubby. I'll call you

to-morrow, dear! Another kiss. That's sweet. Yes, so much! Good night, dear! The snow was so white; the morning so fresh; my heart so merry. Pleasure, ah! I believe that the only time the word "laugh" occurs in the King James version of the Bible is "Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" What is love Gustibus asked himself as he arose to alight from the bus at Forty-second street, paid his homage to beauty with an intake of breath at a glimpse of the impalpable fairy ark of the Bush Terminal, awaited the double trill of the policeman's whistle and moved with the multicolored wave across the street. What is that psychic feel of love, that strange annunciatory telepathy, like the sizz of two charged wires that meet and the current hurtles from one pole to the other? One may enter a room full of people engaged in noisy conversation, one has glanced but once and not been challenged by a glance, then there is this tugging, drawing; one deliberately shuts it off, becomes nonchalant, indifferent; then one finds oneself playing peacock, that tugging, there's a glance; something clicks like the shutters of a pocket kodak; there's an unspoken understanding; if she brushes against you the charge is there; it's in your nerves' ends; no word need be spoken; she need not look your way; you need not see her again for twenty months but the pact is sealed, the obligation drawn, you are no longer yourself nor is she any longer herself; you are a part of each until the fuse is blown, the charge is dead; and then the memory haunts, there are speculations and deductions, slow sweeps of alternate breaths of tenderness and distaste, humor and pathos, objective and subjective views. If it clicks and the pact is scouted as inexpedient, dangerous, or unfair, treasures are laid up to corrupt and to corrode or to be treasurers in heaven according to the temperament. And if it clicks not, words, tears, brutality, entreaties will avail you nothing unless she is merely kind and that's no satisfaction. Some do and some do not and if she does she will find the way; nor will gossip, the looks of things, counsel, threats, or whatever else suffice to change her. Men are cautious; they withhold, count the cost, measure the degree of safety, seek not to jeopardize what they have gained. In love it is woman's whole existence; or is it? Gustibus smiled at the inordinately priapic Mercury whose groin scarf does not conceal but makes evident on the Grand Central's parthenonic frieze and descended into the burrow mouth, dropped his nickle into the turnstyle slot, gazed over the color attractions of demo-

cratic literature on the newsstand, "$1,600 a Week for Lucky Bucks!" "Wife Traps Pair in Love Nest," "Ex-Pastor Klan Leader Self and Girl in Mann Act," "Gorilla Lairs Infest Brooklyn," "She Charges Male Was Bigamist at 19," "Wife Stabs Husband," "Six Night Clubs Take Padlock," "Hammer Murder Suspect Released." The most moral nation in the world. America excels in chewing gum, modern architecture, automobiles, canned goods, money, and morality. The subway train roars alongside; doors slide and reslide; sweaty, bull-necked, pimply, cadaverous, Shylock-bearded, dumpling-faced, side-mouth-speaking, derby-hatted, pinch-back-coated, rubyringed, corpulent, opulent, indigent, shabby, tacky, gaudy, sleek, sap-headed, sour-faced, kindly-eyed, timid, brutal, sly, suspicious, craven, brazen, bullying, jew, gentile, wop, nordic, eye and ogle, stare and smirk, jostle and offer seats to a pretty, child-like, blonde, young girl in a starched gingham frock and a silk-sheathed sheba with marcelled lips. What is love, asked Gustibus. "This is dangerous stuff." "You don't know what loving is," "My love was born that day you hurt me, without meaning to," "The love I feel for you is kind and gentle, for you are kind and gentle too and with you my heart's at peace, and there's no trouble in the world," "Ours is love that is linked with friendship, intelligence and sympathy." Each of these I loved and loved and never could stop loving, though I am no longer in love with them, nor they with me. What is love, asked Gustibus of himself. Is it true that men are always in love with their first love? It is not with me; for I don't even remember who was my first love; I was in love with two at six simultaneously, Alice and Dulcie, one blonde, one brunette; Alice is dead now, died long ago of typhoid, that lovely girl who smiled so sweetly on me, and Dulcie's married, and she had grown, not lost, in beauty when last I saw her; "Buster come here and shake hands with a beau of your mother's when she was just a little tike no bigger than you. Doesn't it seem funny? Isn't life most ridiculous? Just imagine! At six years of age! Remember when I used to get you to shin up the red-haw tree and shake down red-haws for me? You were a neat little monkey; I think it was the starched Eton collar that fetched my heart. Yes, I'm sure of it; you couldn't have been much to look at. Can you stay for dinner to-night? We'd love to have you." I had rather talk or be with women any time than with men. That is if it is a conversation *á deux. Je vous dis et déclare qui n'ayme point l'animal de société, qui ne fait cas des femmes est sot et*

méchant ou sodomite. Twain's mot on seeing the beauteous Lillian Russell; and so would we all; a grotesque conceit, General Grant in bed in his full uniform. White painted steel girders flicker by. Fourteenth Street. "Watch Your Step! Lettumoutpleeze! Step Lively!" Ding! Ding! What is love, Gustibus asked himself anew. All else but love is surely vanity. If love is an illusion, a caprice of the imagination, no less is friendship, and for me love has been infinitely more rich in satisfaction. In love, in sex, I can say with honesty, that it matters not with me with what methods others obtain their pleasures; for a little pleasure is a precious thing in this world where there is so much grief and misery; and if a homo of either dowry is intelligent or amusing and homoes usually are I had liefer hear them than hear a canting bishop. What is love, Gustibus asked himself. Oh, when the Athenians socked old Socrates; when the Athenians socked old Socrates! The time will come Professor Haldane says when babies will be produced by ectogenesis and the race will subsist on synthetic foods; and then mating will be for pleasure only and generation will be a matter for state regulation. But in these matters, neither for better nor for worse has the human race changed one perceptible degree within the written memory of mankind. To speak coarsely, obscenely, jestingly of your love is to betray and denigrate the most sacred emotion of the human soul. But who does not laugh at the love pangs of others? Who does not laugh when another's love comes a cropper? Who respects the sacredness of the passion? 'When our love dies, dear, if it ever does, and I hope to God it never does, let's not pretend, let's not lie. You'll tell me, won't you? And I'll tell you. But how's one to know that love is dead? It is quiescent and of a sudden flames out more vehement, more poignant, than before, the ache begins, acute, intolerable. What's this I've said, I've thought? Am I in love? Am I still in love? "Out, please!" Ascending to the sunlight, Gustibus tossed three pennies at a soiled cigar box and folded a Times under his arm, and walked with a long and rapid stride within the throng in Fulton Street. He was formulating phrases of his part again: "Listen, dear, I want to talk to you. No, you sit there and I'll sit here. That's better. You have probably been wanting for some time to say the same thing that I want to say to you. You have spared my feelings, because you didn't want to hurt me? Something has happened. You are not the same. When and how and who? . . . WHO?"

EVA GOLDBECK

ARC

THE little boy sat on the step of the broken-down farmhouse and looked at the cat. The cat gazed at him with vigilant eyes, but it took no account when he smiled, and that delighted him: the cat let him alone. He tried to make his own eyes just as secret, for he wanted to learn to watch without being seen.

The house trembled. The door crashed shut and his father stumbled over him. He was jerked up. The cat, all fours stretched, was flying around the corner of the house. He found himself on the ground, sore and shocked. His father was going down the road, rolling a little from side to side. He filled the road; the trees seemed smaller than he.

The boy stared after his father, and back of his face he felt something tight and gritty that could not get hold of itself, like a handful of earth trying to become a fist. He stayed tensely ducked, in fear that his father would turn around; but his eyes spanned the road, lying in wait for the figure to go out of sight. His greedy, unattainable hope rose on the horizon like the sky looming to swallow his father: if only he would go away and never come back!

He had gone! The little boy jumped up and blinked, and the trees and fields that had been crouching and choked a moment before rose with him. He stood in a surprised awakening, and looked, and listened. A little white cloud leaned against his cheek and his face felt warm and contented. Everything was so still, and lovely. He felt a sort of murmurous trembling all about him, and as he looked the trees and grass and sky seemed to grow toward him and he saw that their shapes were the song he heard

NOTE: A fragment from a novel now in progress.

and their colors like high notes in the singing out of sight. They wafted toward him, but nothing came close to him or touched him. It was like being invisible. Only when he wanted them to, they seemed to sway right into him. He felt as though all he saw was inside him; the chirping of a bird was his own smile. He was alone!

Suddenly he became very busy. He found a stick and, wriggling, drew a circle about himself where he sat down in the dirt. Then he closed his eyes tightly; an expression of secret treasure nestled into his face. He opened his eyes and smiled with confident radiance at the ring he had drawn. That was his magic circle, which no one could cross. Now he was all by himself in the whole world. The magic circle was his world, and there was nothing in it that was not himself.

Now he could think, for inside the circle he was more than himself. It was different from being merely alone. He could be left alone just by someone's going out of a room, but then he only lost himself in the fear and helplessness of waiting and felt like a forgotten part of the person who had gone, as unreal as a hole that could not exist by itself. But no one else could bring the magic circle about. That was all his own doing, and when he made it he knew that he was coming to himself. For someone was always waiting for him inside the circle, and that, he felt without quite knowing why, was himself, though it was greater than he. There were almost two of him in the circle, and he could question and answer himself. He saved up questions about what he saw outside to bring into the circle; and when he had asked them, he melted into something else. That was his other self: himself, yet not himself. It had no shape. It even took away his shape. His head, which had felt small and hard to his hands, became as big—as big and misty as the world. He was in another world then, like the one he had heard the minister speak of to his mother, where people saw God. Wonderful things appeared in it: landscapes he had never seen, and great distances; colors that waved like wind and had a ringing sound; tones that were as endless and as cool and smooth to feel as fire looked. In all these things, he believed, were answers to his questions, though mostly he could not understand them and felt only that he was being bathed and carried in strange running waters. But at times these pictures bent aside, like many flowers in a meadow blown one way, and he saw something he had looked

at often as he had never seen it before; and that was a clear answer to his wondering about it.

Sometimes words he had learned started his dreaming; but it also happened that strange words arose out of the magic circle like stones out of the ground. Though it was the first time he saw them, he felt that they had always been there and always would be, and there was something severe and grand in their appearing before him. He could not take his eyes from them, and everything, his hands and ears and breath, was in his eyes. For these words like stones were the source and harbor of all secrets; he knew that. They held the meaning of the pictures he had seen, and of other pictures still to come. He felt that God was in these stones. He wanted to hold his ears close to them forever and learn all the words and meanings behind the word they had first showed him. God, the Bible said, came in visions, and visions were dreams; he wanted to go to sleep on the stones. And sometimes, when he almost did this and had forgotten even that he was in the magic circle, phrases came to him, words holding hands, that were more wonderful than anything else. For then, in breathless jubilation, he knew that the stones had opened to him: the words had come to life! He knew what they did—he saw their meaning! They were like groups of stars shot down from heaven, down to him. He felt them inside him, golden stars radiating fire through night-blue heaven and flame-red blood. Sometimes it seemed his heart must burst.

He thought of all this, and his eyes filled with tears. He turned his head, and his neck grew stiff with fear: he was not alone. The old woman who did the cooking was shuffling toward him from the house. He looked down quickly, trying not to show that he was trembling, and prayed: don't let her touch my circle! The old woman chuckled, and as she came up to him raised her leg and gave his head an easy knock with the flapping sole of her slipper. It caught him unexpectedly—for somehow, although it had happened so often before, he had not thought she could cross the magic circle. He lost his balance and toppled over. The old woman giggled, and for a moment her body churned with pleasure; then suddenly her expression turned sour. "Sit all day in the dirt if someone don't push you, and if someone does, sit again where you fall, you do," she muttered and went to the pump, shaking her head angrily.

The tears of exaltation that had come to the boy's eyes a

moment before dropped now. But he rubbed them away and told himself stubbornly that it didn't matter: people couldn't destroy his magic circle, however often they stamped on it. He knelt and drew again, with his finger, the parts of the circle that had been blotted out. The first time someone had crossed his circle, he remembered, he thought it had been broken forever, and for a long while he had not dared to make another one. But the old broken circle had followed him wherever he went, and finally he had made it over: it wasn't a new one, it was the old one come back, with that other himself waiting inside and the same dreams. That was how he had first known the circle was really magic.

And still, each time people broke through the circle, his breath seemed to stop; the horror of it did not grow less. He never believed it possible: and then it happened. Pain and incredulity petrified him—always too late he wanted to scream and ward the people off, and then he was left with the knowledge that he and his magic circle could not protect each other. Afterwards he recalled, painstakingly, that the people didn't know what they were doing: they saw only a ring on the ground—it wasn't magic to them, or they couldn't have passed it. When he thought of this, he was almost glad that they had come at him without stopping, for then he knew again that his circle was safe, and his secret. It didn't matter if the line in the dirt got rubbed out—he could always bring his magic circle back about him! He didn't even have to draw it! The magic was invisible. He could pretend the circle was there . . . only it was nice to see. But at night, before he went to sleep, he always pretended. There was light under the door: it curved, and his circle became golden. Then he would lift his eyes, and in the window the night rose like a great stone the color of running water, heavy and deep; and he would fall asleep dreaming of a word he had never heard spoken.

In the daytime it was not so easy to pretend. Sometimes he had just imagined the circle, beautiful and round, about him—and then someone hit him or spoke to him or looked at him with a glance that seemed to scrape him, and the circle would be broken. Then everything he was afraid of came close to him, and he could not flee because he was already caught. But sometimes when he was most afraid—when his father was striking him—he suddenly saw the circle afar off and shining, and himself

waiting inside it so real and happy that the trouble of the little boy, though he knew it was himself, scarcely hurt him at all. Then inside his fear he felt like laughing, for his father was whipping him but couldn't break the magic circle; he didn't even know about it! He felt dizzy and ablaze, and started to laugh—until his father's eyes flashed into him again, and he wanted to make himself as small and dark as the farthest corner of the room.

Some day he would be strong enough to keep everybody away, and to have the magic circle about him always! That was what all his thinking came back to; and he sat quite still and thought of that now. But as he looked at the circle he had restored about him, he noticed something dark lying across it. Almost at once he saw that it was only his own shadow; yet a strange fear, as of something unknown, crept up in him. His shadow became like a rustle at night that made him suspect something hidden and monstrous which would not show itself, but might get him while he was asleep. A moment before he had dreamed proudly of the time when he would be grown-up and let nothing ever break his circle—and now his own shadow lay outside it, in the world. Why did his shadow want to get outside? He moved a little, and tried to bring it back within the ring. But the circle was too small, and he could not rub it out and draw another one, for he had made this to fit him; he couldn't leave it. Then, as he moved again, he saw that his shadow moved with him, and that underneath it the line of the circle was unbroken. His shadow didn't hurt the circle! He remembered something suddenly, and looked about: the shadow of a bush, standing in line with him, fell in the same direction as his own; and the shadows of the row of trees all went one way. He understood then that his shadow couldn't help falling outside the circle. It couldn't obey him because it wasn't his alone—it belonged to the world, too. He sighed. Why did the world take his shadow from him?

The world! That phrase haunted the boy like a black and gold dragon. It was shot with streaks of gold like lightning, that revealed the invisible too briefly for him to see it, but long enough to give it presence and to have a thought like the growl of thunder stay with him forever as its voice. Somehow he knew that he would never as long as he lived be able to get away from that landscape like a dragon—the world. Everything around him was part of the world: so he knew too that the world was

his enemy. But there were things in it he did not know. Would it always knock against his magic circle and try to break in, as people did now? What did the world mean? His father; and then his mother, and the farm, and the minister and the village—but much more, too, that he could not yet make out. Was the hidden part different or just bigger? He had a fear that as he grew up the farm and the village would grow also, and would always surround him, more and more threatening and sinister, as a cat's eyes grew out of themselves in the dark. He was terribly afraid of the world, so afraid that even now, when he sat in his magic circle, alone in the sun, he had to set his teeth when he thought of it. Would he ever be big enough to keep it away? How could he make it leave him alone?

He thought awhile, and then slowly drew a penny out of his pocket. He would gladly have given it to the world to go away from him! But he knew that would be no use: the world was too big, there were too many people who would have to turn their backs, and he had only one penny. And his father had given it to him; so it wouldn't be like making the world a present to give it back. He studied his coin regretfully. He liked it because it was round and secretive; it had a magic circle of its own, which showed his eyes no beginning or end, so that he couldn't get in and find out its meaning. And he was sorry for the penny, for all pennies, because people tried to lump them all together in one meaning, money. That was why his penny needed its tight circle: it was afraid of the world. It wanted to be left alone, just as he did.

He would not try to break the penny's circle, but perhaps he could find out its meaning just by watching it. For everything had a meaning: everything did something, or made something, and that was what it meant. It angered him when people said that they made money, and at the same time that pennies meant money: why did they try to give the pennies a meaning they themselves made, or, if the pennies made the money, why did people try to take this meaning away from them? You couldn't take the meaning of a thing away from it, anyhow, for its meaning was what it did, and what it did was the way it lived, and why it was. You could always find out what things meant by watching how they lived; he had seen that hens laid eggs, and the ground made wheat and grass, and ants carried dirt and built homes. But with many things you had to watch a long time,

for they were very secret: only last spring had he caught the trees, which he had always watched, at putting out leaves. Now he was waiting to see what the leaves would do—and he was seven, and going to school.

He hated school. Fall and winter and spring passed in the pressure of the crowded room, and in hot weather bodies steamed as coats and breaths had in cold. And always there was the mass of shuffling, restless, solid, noisy children that never watched anything, and that never went away. The little girls sniffed at him and discarded him. The boys shoved him and threw him down, jeered at him and poked fingers through the holes in his pants: boys who trod on ants, pulled flies apart—drowned kittens!—and tormented dogs. When he saw them do these things they became real to him, enemies alive, whom he hated so much that once he overcame his fear and tried to fight them; but they were too strong for him.

And there was a teacher who prodded his slow recitations. But because of a certain discovery he tried to learn from her; for she showed him his letters, and when he had mastered them he found what books were. He found a new world! He could go into this world and still be alone, for suddenly it became part of the world inside his circle. With books even more easily than with animals or things outdoors he could become an unregarded yet belonging part of their life. He didn't know whether they absorbed him, or he them. But the world he dreamed of living in was like the one the books gave him: a world that left him alone and undisturbed, and yet came into him, so that he could find out its meaning. He didn't know how the books did it, for all the people he had ever known, even when they were friendly, as his teacher grew to be, trampled on his circle when they tried to come close to him—and that somehow kept them out. The books got into the circle, yet they did not throw the tiniest shadow on it. They belonged inside, he concluded; for when he read them he felt as though at last the stones that had appeared before him long ago were speaking to him.

He kept hoping that the teacher would show him how to find more worlds like the book one; she never did. And in the next year going to school became even more of an ordeal, for people, recognizing him, began to stop him to ask how his mother was. He never knew what to answer, for his mother had been just the same ever since he could remember: she lay on the couch or

sat at the window and was quiet. Yet there was something in these questions, a pity and scorn, against which he felt he should defend his mother; and because he did not know how, he resented and feared the persons who spoke to him. In this way the new people he met became merely repetitions of people he had always known, among whom only his father stood out. He did not differentiate one from another because he only feared them all, all alike, and wanted to be away from them.

Sometimes two people, walking together, stopped him, and after they had questioned him they would talk about him while he stood there waiting miserably to be sent away. Once in the post office a whole group, men and women, were about him before he knew it. Some one asked him, again, about his mother, and he answered awkwardly, "She's all right—" They plied him with questions about the farm, which he did not understand; he stood helpless and mute, hardly conscious of the people because he was looking so hard for a place to get through them and away. Then some one laughed, and he heard a woman say,

"Backward, ain't he? Eight years old and hasn't found his tongue yet."

"Poor thing," another one returned. The boy looked at her—it was a broad, carrot-colored woman who often spoke to him. "Don't hardly seem fair for him to have been born by a invalid mother. What can you expect?"

The boy turned hot all over; he wanted to run, but a lean, shawled woman spoke. "It's the sins of the fathers. His father is a drunkard and vile man. Sin don't never fail to breed woe."

"Nonsense!" the second woman replied, like a slap. "It's no wonder the boy can't talk—no one ever talks to him, that's all."

"That's right," one of the men laughed. "Speech don't come ready-made. 'In the beginning was the Word—,' maybe, but a child has to be taught same as a parrot or any animal."

The boy puzzled about this conversation for a long time; it was clear to him at last that something which made her different from other people was the matter with his mother. She might be sick, but when an animal was sick it always either got well or died, and his mother did neither. That alarmed him. He wondered if she could be dead, without anyone's having found it out; for all other living things he had ever seen did something. They had to, they couldn't live otherwise—that was their meaning. His mother did nothing. Could she live without a meaning? At the

thought repugnance took possession of him. He was not afraid of dead things, for the farm had accustomed him to them; but his mother was dead and pretended to be alive, or she was alive—and hollow inside.

Finally one day when she had sat at the window for hours without moving, and the boy's dread of his own wondering had grown stronger than his fear of her, he asked her, "Mother—what do you do?" She only shook her head, as though she had not wanted to hear his question. He was afraid of his own voice, but he had to find out. "Haven't you ever—done anything?" She looked out of the window and answered in an angry, but strangely lifted voice, "I brought you into the world."

For a moment he stared at her aghast, and backed out of the room with small, sharp steps as quickly as he could. He had never thought of her as being connected with himself—he had just not thought about it. Now, slowly, he understood that since he was the thing she had made he was her meaning; he was *her* meaning, and so he could not be himself, standing all alone and independent in his circle of privacy. She was in the circle—she was in him. He came to realize that without her he would not have been! That was terrible. If she had made him, some one else might destroy him. (His father took the wheat from the ground.) And if he was her meaning, he belonged to her—not to himself.

He could not bear these thoughts, and tried to push them away like nightmares; and he had only to make himself quiet a moment to find she didn't come into him, the way books did. But a grave voice inside told him that he was lying to himself, and he had to go on thinking: if he was her meaning, then who was his? Everything, everyone, had some meaning; he must have one, too. Where was it—where was he? If he was his mother's meaning, his own must be in something else. He had a sensation, dim, and too great for him to hold long, that he had no beginning or end in himself: that he was one of a chain he couldn't measure, only one link in that chain, connected to other things on either side so that he could never be alone. He felt that he was tied up with everything to everything else, stretched in both directions of endlessness, and at the same time unalterably fixed because he was tied, rigid in one spot. But then maybe that spot is mine! he thought joyfully, for it seemed to him, in a flash which ended his thinking, that he had found his circle again. He would keep it his!

He was afraid now to come near his mother, for if he lived only because she let him, she might at any moment take him from himself. But as time passed and she made no motion to touch him or get into him, and he grew real and secure in himself once more, he began to feel, warmly, that he ought to say thank you to his mother and be as nice as he possibly could to her: for he did not like the thought of not being alive. He remembered, too, that it was she who once, long ago, had told him the story of Sleeping Beauty; and the day after that was the first time he had ever drawn his magic circle. So he tried to do things his mother would like, and when people asked him about her he answered proudly, to hide the fact that she was different from them. Although he took for granted his own difference, he wanted her to be like other people, for he surmised from watching the children at school that she could have a better time that way. He pretended, even to himself, that there was nothing the matter with her.

He did not fully understand that she had been sick until she died. To see her dead did not affect him: a shape a little greyer than before. He knew she would not move again, and that she would be buried. He had tried to be kind to her, but that was because he thought he should, not because he wanted to get nearer her, so he did not miss her. There was immense relief in the thought that since now she wasn't alive, she couldn't possibly get into him; she had died without taking him from himself. Until the funeral he believed, too, that all the connection she had with him was gone: that he was no longer her meaning, since dead things were still and didn't do or mean anything. He belonged to himself, he was all his own now! He seemed to stand more firmly in his circle at once, and exulted in himself.

It was the funeral which added hate to his fear of all the world and made him see that, however apart he kept himself, he could never be all by himself, entirely his own. He had wanted his mother to be like other people, but now, when he saw her placed exposed and stiff in a coffin, in the midst of the people who had come to the funeral, he wanted her to be left alone. For of a sudden he saw himself quite distinctly in her place, saw himself not standing in the center of a private space, but lying there, not able to move. And all the sounds and the words and touches and jars that he had always fought away from himself came trampling over the edge of this space, which was the coffin, destroying it as they had so often broken the magic circle, rush-

ing in on him—taking him, until he couldn't feel himself any more. It was so awful he almost screamed. But he remembered: he was alive. It was his mother who was lying there, and couldn't defend herself. He would have to do it for her.

He was grateful to his mother and wanted to protect her from what would have been frightful to himself; so instead of holding himself tightly from the people or running away, he tried deliberately to meet them and keep them from her. For the first time in his life he faced them, utterly resentful and not at all afraid. Singly or in small, huddled groups they came and stood over her, staring at her, pricking her with their eyes like needles. They talked: the women in whispers, whines, that crept all over him, trailing away and then beginning again somewhere else, so that he never knew where to expect them and they seemed always just back of his head. And the men gave rumbling and harsh sounds, that fell like bumping stones or grated like knives sharpened on a whetstone, right against her. . . .

Desperately he pulled at the women's skirts, took their hands and tried to drag them away; he beat with his fists against the men's stomachs. He tried to push them off; he shoved as hard as he could, careful all the time to keep himself between them and the open coffin, yet knowing he could not hide her. Finally he tried to tell them: "You must not talk! You must be quiet! She wants to be left alone! Leave her *alone!*" He looked at her, and a likeness came to him: "She wants to sleep!" That surely, he thought, would make them go away; for when he was supposed to sleep he was always left alone.

But they did not go. They stared at the little boy, shocked and frightened, and some of them wondered if he was going to have a fit. One or two of the men snickered; but for the most part they felt sorry for him. Any child without a mother was to be pitied, the women said proudly, and especially a poorly thing like this—he would have a hard time. They crowded close around him, trying to restrain and soothe him. The carrot-colored woman who had talked so much in the post office got down on her knees, took firm hold of his arms, and said, "Listen to me, my little man—" And fury broke loose in him. He wrenched his arms free: he slapped her face, again, again, again, and then he kicked her; she would have fallen if someone had not caught her. Good! something in him said—but a moment later he realized that he was failing: he couldn't keep them away. . . . He hit out indis-

criminately, kicking his arms and legs, tearing things when he could, trying to bite, but he couldn't get close enough to them. There was a hubbub. He did not know it at first. His frenzy was too great to see or hear; his ears were stopped by his rage, his eyes, crying, blinded. The hubbub grew; it became stronger than his frenzy: he heard and saw it at last. Inside of himself he stopped short, but his body went on throwing itself about and crying out loud. With a horror that seemed to be killing him, he saw himself still kicking, heard his own screams, and knew himself adding to the furor. He stopped altogether. He had wanted his mother to be left in quiet—and *he* had made that hubbub.

He turned his back on all of them and walked somehow past them until he was in the corner behind the coffin. He stretched out flat on the floor between the wall and the coffin. That was as near as he could get to being dead. He wanted to die, because then he wouldn't ever feel himself again. For a while he didn't know anything about himself; he just sank, deeper, deeper. But out of those depths questions came at him. He had known what he wanted to do—to make her be left alone, he repeated—and he had done just the opposite—*he* had broken her circle. Why—how—how could he have? People had told him to be ashamed; now he felt what that was, and he thought: they can't mean that when they say it, they don't know what it feels like! He had wanted to help his mother and he had only hurt her. . . . Of a sudden he wanted her, he didn't know why—yes, to make him believe that she wasn't hurt, so that he could feel the way he used to again, well and free. He felt sick. He had never before needed anything outside himself. . . .

He knew she would not come back, for she was dead and could not. But even if she hadn't been dead, it wouldn't be fair to want her to come back. When you hurt people, his thoughts groped, you took something from them (flies' wings!) and you should make it up to them, not they to you. But he was hurt too—something was taken from him. He puzzled over that. Then: I hurt myself. I hurt myself when—because—I hurt her. So I have to make it up to myself. No, not make it up—because I did it—but I have to settle it with myself.

He got up then and went with the procession to the cemetery. It was a grey, windy fall day. There was too much room everywhere. Not even the wind could fill it, not even the sky, though the wind tore around, hurrying things from where they were to fill

other places, and the clouds flew like mad trying to cover the sky. The huddled people, in a corner of the boy's mind, were almost lost. He kept apart from them as much as he could, but he didn't think now either about facing them or running away. All his anxiety was for his mother: to have her put under the earth. They could do what he couldn't; they could put her in a space of her own, lay her in quiet. She would be left alone then. He tried to help by thinking hard: I want it. Please do it! They lowered the coffin into the ground; they covered it with handfuls of earth. Now she was safe; the people would go away—she would be by herself. For a moment he felt almost bliss. His relief was so great he started to cry.

The minister spoke. The words were not intended for him; they only buzzed in the distance. Then without warning he heard: "A beloved wife and mother—a beloved sister to us all has gone from us. Yet we know that she lives. Our bodies die, but we live on in the deeds we have done. Good deeds are immortal. The meaning of our life lives after us. . . ."

She lives— He means up in heaven—no, here too—in the meaning—in *me!* Complete terror: seeing himself without feeling himself—knowing that he was not himself—seeing himself as someone who did not exist—seeing himself as a hole. Someone not free, not apart, not ever, possibly, belonging to himself again. . . . Nobody could belong to himself; everybody was made by someone else—nobody was his own meaning. She was dead, but she lived in him: he didn't live, except as her meaning. He wasn't his own, he shared himself with her, he was hers—for always. The circle was broken—no matter how much he tried, how much he wanted— He had been fooling himself!

Then, after an interval he didn't know, because it was unbearable to him, he brightened. He thought: she has been in me all the time, and I didn't know it! I was all by myself—and I kept people away, even her—the magic circle was all my own. I wouldn't ever have known if he hadn't said so. I didn't feel it. Now I know—but nothing's really *changed.* If I can forget I know. . . . His heart leaped: maybe I can pretend!

ALFRED KREYMBORG

MIDSUMMER MOON

or THE DEATH OF JOHN MASON

CHARACTERS IN THE NARRATIVE:

John Mason
June Mason
Nancy James
Mother James
Edwin Wainwright

1. DAWN OF DOOM

Since I am the only one who knew all three,
John and June Mason, and Nancy James, the girl,
And mine was the only eye to behold the scene
Where John lay dead in the moonmad arms of her
He loved like a moonmad boy, let me tell all,
Tell the whole tale and show the whole Commonwealth
That Love, not Nancy James, should be held for the death
Of my lifelong friend—Love shaped their destiny.

Let me unlock the home and the long gray years
John clung to his love for June and hers for him,
Till the loyal, barren nights were slain by a kiss,
And a wilder, an insane hour destroyed all three,
Shattered John first, then June, and now the lost soul
Of the guiltless girl the Law condemns for the crime—
Her wayward mind wandering round the cell
Where Love alone should dwell for destroying him.

Call the dim figure, luring him down to death,
By any name but hers. She was the finger

Of the ghostly fate that beckoned him to his doom
And forced the ghastly rôle on her dear frame.
Lonely John fell in love with her bodily bloom.
The more he stifled his heart the swifter it grew.
The girl fell into a tender, motherly groove—
Till the night his stormy hunger roused her youth.

He was nearly twice her age, but any boy
Knew more than he knew. Wise in all things but one,
His mind resisted the body through and through.
Had he but lived before he married June,
Had he but loved completely before she came,
John might have learned enough to save three lives
From a tragic destiny. But the youthful John
And the younger June rushed into their lifelong ties.

They were married at twenty-two and twenty-one—
Quite old enough had they been born abroad.
Under a tropical sun, a Latin moon,
They would have sewn the oats Americans hoard.
They would have known enough in our land too,
In virginal forests or some frontier town;
But in gray New England, twenty years ago,
People were faithful to the Puritan tune.

In the present hurlyburly generation,
Nudity would have solved their groping love.
Our moral minds and timorous tradition
Drop into dust where these new youngsters live.
Among them Nancy grew, a vivid girl,
Athletic, fullblown, tuned to her Pagan world.
Not waiting for bells to sanctify the deed,
She gave herself to the thing we used to dread.

But what of fear, if lovers have each other?
Whatever the age, the clime or family,
Passion pierces them all—pruderies totter—
Even the toughest, hidebound homily.
Once they shut out our world behind their door,
And Church and State allowed their bodily kiss,
Husband and wife unshackled squeamish care—
The room was their Grecian earth and sea and sky.

But somehow something went wrong soon after the start—
A wound they've hidden away these twenty years.
I've often felt their courageous silence hurt
The very home that held them so tenderly.
I was always welcome; they urged me to come
More and more frequently as time wore on.
I'll never forget the glance in each gray eye
Whenever I gripped the hand of June or John.

Many the days I revelled with my old friends
In their oldfashioned house on Hickory Hill.
A stranger would have envied them the bands,
Winding chromatic seasons round the knoll
And tinting their garden a slow rainbow hue—
Pallid April, shimmering summer, on through
The bloodred autumn, down the diminuendo
Fall and then, the dreamily soft December snow.

Under June's hands, their home was an instrument—
Never did rooms give out more golden tones.
Except where John eyed everlasting books—
The holy den she seldom disturbed with brooms—
The place wore a magic sheen, an immortal crown.
The stranger might have said, Nirvana's here—
Here let me lie and dream till the day of doom. . . .
The dawn of doom had long since entered the door. . . .

When we three rambled about, none could have said,
Tragedy stalked behind on stealthy feet.
Tenderness such as theirs had a deathless air—
How touchingly they connived against their fate!
Though John was growing thinner, slower and pale,
And June seemed somewhat thinner and older too,
One might have fancied, watching their color fade,
That age, not love, had begun to cool their blood.

Whenever John and I were alone again,
Any malignant sign soon vanished away
Among the shadowy walls of his high den:
We lost our hearts in scholarly revelry.
An utterly unremitting galley slave

To the books he read and slow prose books he wrote,
He bent his back to these, madly in love
With cold, pure thought along the classical route.

I'm champion of the world's procrastinators.
Deeds I ought to begin, I'd rather postpone.
The earth enriched my parents and their natures
Were equally kind to me. Lavishing love
Showered the pampered prince of our small realm:
I soon declined to an accomplished idler;
A nosy dilettante; wastrel and chum
To nonchalance, the good-for-nothing fiddler.

Nevertheless, I've formed a patient talent
For friendship—let it be said in my behalf.
The fame of my friends is fame enough for me.
Applauding their art, I'm the gossipy tale
Of their genius; a glib confessor to chat to;
A fellow to worship their undying strength,
Coddle their weaknesses and parry blows
Intended for them: I rise and defend their song.

John, high John, I adored above all men—
Chiefly because he scorned idolatry.
Even at Harvard, where we shared one den,
He loathed toadies and derided snobbery.
An aristocratic democrat in this,
He had the most detached severity
Regarding his limitations. Thus it was,
Creator and critic looked through one clear eye.

We two were friends—and I'm the one friend he has
Now. He must have loved and tolerated me,
Not as a mirror, but the antithesis
Of his austerity. He rarely wearied
Of my laziness. It soothed his lettered brain
And revived his drooping body with the boon
Nonsense brings to philosophy. Hand in hand,
Folly and wisdom, intimate kinship grew.

Down the gathering years, mine was the ear
The slowly growing man opened his heart to.

He sealed or hid it again as dark days neared,
Drawing deep circles round his thought of June.
In our lone walks, she was less and less the theme.
Thus I began to feel the march of doom.
Masks went on if even I breathed her name.
He turned to themes where he was more at home.

In the days long gone, he talked of naught but June,
When his whole life lay with the fairhaired girl
Who breathed one word that gave him the whole wide world.
Too soon, the world dissolved in disillusion;
All too soon, the cloud of evasion emerged.
I'll never forget how my light soul was wrung
When first I heard him forget to mention her!
Then I heard dirges bury his wedding song.

He mentioned her again when Nancy came—
Just before Nancy entered his consciousness.
Down on the Cape, where we two men had gone,
Down by the sea, he dreamed of the faroff June.
Conscience-laden shadows distorted his face.
Spectres tuned his voice to a gloomy tone.
He turned a stern, unyielding eye on himself.
No fault of his escaped the probing soul.

We lay along an isolated dune.
The kindred sky and sea were dark and still.
The truth he chose to tell had an age-old drone,
Sounding an ashen tread through a lonely hell.
As tone after tone recalled the bygone years,
Past and present united, phrase by phrase.
Hints I now heard revealed some earlier scene,
Fitting into the lifelong tapestry. . . .

His heart a battlefield where demons fought,
His den a brooding cell where youth lay dead,
John was faithless to June in fleshly thought—
Satanic nightmares tortured his lonely bed.
Succubae entwined his amorous need;
Monstrous houris roused his anaemic lust;
Mockeries roared at the youth he had failed to lead,
The wasted years now blowing the manly dust.

Night after night, in quest of an endless peace,
He yearned for revengeful self-annihilation
To smother the flame and scatter the burning seed
Corrupting the soul that held his faith on high.
Fidelity scorned so cowardly a grave;
Loyalty fought the demons single-handed;
Love for June drove the sword of June's old love
Into his breast till the faithless blood had fled.

Had he been able to tell the tale to her,
Had he been able to say a single word—
But his magnificent pride, silent so long,
Buried the scarlet dream beneath the stone
Where it had lain for years. And what if a hint
Destroyed their world and shattered her trembling heart?
Rather than stop her breathing spirit short,
Better the hurtful silence than the word.

And why confide what poor June must have known—
All that her lonely body felt and fathomed?
Had she but spoken first he might have begun
A helpless phrase her gentle hand could mother.
But June maintained an even sturdier part,
Her faith in him too deep for her to question.
Alone in her pale room, she never hurt
Their secret with a single doubtful gesture.

They made love to each other in every way
But one. They loved each other the more the night
Receded, and the dawn of another day
Motioned to them to turn to the hopeful light
And mend a home as best two humans may
Who live as one and one in the solitude.
They came together again in every way
But the one they had lost so long ago for good.

Bravely, bravely, John would have moved to the end,
Pursuing the same old proud and loyal course.
He was too thoroughly staunch and pure a friend
Ever to court his freedom through divorce.
Tenacious little June, fully as true,

Would have uprooted her life to free the man
From the girl she no longer was. At forty-two,
She'd give her life to give him his youth again.

Unhappily for her, they had a talk—
After some probing doctor ordered John
To drop his inhuman, overwhelming books—
His heart and pulse were bad, his nerves unstrung.
A month or two of idleness by the sea
Would soothe and bring his body safely back.
Absolute isolation was decreed.
Furtive and white, they went for their final walk.

John stole forth like a ghost. She led him down
To a bench in the garden. He couldn't see June.
But somewhere in a trance he heard her croon
A childish lullaby, a delicate tune
Of tender words. How cheerfully they sped!
His joy reborn, he seized her adorable head
And kissed and kissed the mouth so small and brave. . . .
Their last embrace, their last this side the grave. . . .

2. GRAY AFTERNOON

I wonder what there is about Cape Cod
That drives a lonely man eternally yearning.
Whether it's the sea or the graygreen sod
Or a touch of the two limning a misty morning,
His heart's a rover tracing the Neverland
Or a broken sailor fleeing the homeless sea.
If you've ever been down here, you'll understand
Why I begin with this ancient mystery.

What is true of the soil is true of the native soul.
Pent in the same gray house through each gray year,
Many a wandering eye peers through a hole,
Searching the road for another hemisphere.
John felt at home among the hermits here—
They were strange enough to be kin to this strange man.
Most of all their reticence made them dear.
He loved the pace of the old American.

We dwelt beyond the hills of Sandwich town,
The oldest of all the towns along the Cape.
Instead of blowing the graceful glass of yore,
Descendants sell antiques in the summer shops.
The houses round our hill had a bygone bloom.
No sharp modernity deranged the street.
Archaic lanterns lit the night; and tall ghosts
Lowered the wicks of lamps and fell asleep.

Our stony little inn was a mellow haven—
Storm after storm had failed to alter its shape.
The rooms were dark; no broiling August oven
Could pierce the elms and poplars guarding the slope.
Our studies nestled beneath protecting eaves.
John's loomed over the sea; mine looked landward.
The door between stood ajar—my thoughts were thieves,
Dreading what he might do in a midnight mood.

"Moby Dick," our diminutive domicile,
Catered to four or five guests at a time.
Fortunately for us, wild rainy spells
Had scattered other summerfolk elsewhere.
As for our tiny hostess, Mother James,
Inured to gales that brought inhuman storms,
She welcomed us like her own prodigal sons—
And said to the girl—"Nancy, show them their rooms."

She let us take our meals at the family table;
Sitting discreetly there, she pampered our needs.
I thought the lovely girl must be her daughter—
As soon as she served us three, she sat near me.
But my inquisitive friendliness discovered,
Nancy James was a favorite orphan niece
Who spent her vacations here and earned her board
By helping the lady wait on company.

Like many a college girl who earns her way,
Nancy had charge of most of the chores as well.
Her aunt cooked all the meals and then, I thought,
Tended our rooms the moment she was through.
One morning, after coffee, I stole upstairs.

Formerly, budding girls were safe from his charm,
But now? No fullblown rose could evade pursuit
Once the faintest desire began to burn
In the lonely eyes inside that noble head.
And once his voice, the most melodious organ
On earth, intoned its haunting cadences,
Who could but turn about and long for more?
Who could resist the rich unconscious song?

All very well for me to fall in love
With Nancy for him and then with him for her,
But if ever John should awake and storm
Of his own accord, deep in his glorious heart,
No girl, not even Nancy, could fail to follow
The helpless tides that sway to the passionate moon.
If I should happen to lead those two too far,
All would be swept away, beginning with June. . . .

Love didn't start with Nancy or with John.
He was too shattered for the insane bee
To enter his brain and set him whirling on.
I saw her first, you see, and she saw me.
Trying a word at table now and then,
I amused the girl; she smiled in repartee
And went on serving these peculiar men,
Barely aware of John—it seemed to me.

He said little at meals or anywhere else.
Most of the time I left him to himself.
Whenever he looked well, I proposed a stroll.
"Don't let him walk too far," the doctor had said.
John was busy with long gray reveries.
He loved to watch the sea turn to blues and greens,
Loved to lie down and moodily watch the surf
Laven and smoothen the beach below the dunes.

One long gray afternoon, a sudden glow
Shone for a moment in his cloudy eye.
Delighted to find that life might once more grow,
I waited for him to speak out quietly.
But he shook his head and stared to where the land

Pointed a tapering finger at the sea.
He started to lift a slightly trembling hand
And then relapsed, breathing with difficulty.

We were stretched along a hummock in the sand.
Two seagulls flew away with frightened cries.
He brushed my knee with a strange abstracted hand—
There were tears I'd never beheld in his brave eyes.
Oh, how I wanted to seize him, hold him fast,
Mumbling some gentle nonsense in his ear!
I thought he'd faint, his face was so aghast—
But luckily soon the cloud began to clear.

I knew him far too well for tenderness
To play the part of pity on such a day.
The merest careless hint or quick caress
Would have driven him to his feet, his pride at bay.
John was a man who rarely dealt in words,
And yet his feelings were eternal things
Hovering round his friends like watchful birds—
His friendship made us fellows feel like kings.

He had a divining instinct with us all—
Mostly with me who'd known and loved him longest.
A slow ironic smile removed the pall—
In olden days, that mood was ever strongest.
I knew he had read my mind; I heard him say—
"Thanks, old man—" and then he relapsed once more.
I can hear the grateful phrase down to this day—
I'll hear his haunting-voice on every shore.

I waited for him to add another word,
Though I knew he'd never say the word to me.
He shook his head again and then another
Strange smile appeared. It silenced me utterly.
Slowly, his gaze returned to the brooding sea
And narrowed to a poignantly longing groove.
With a wide wild look, his eye returned to me—
"Ned!" "What is it, John?" "I've fallen in love!"

Amazement smote me dumb. Incredulity
Loosened my tongue. But naught I tried to say

Seemed to touch him at all—he eyed the sea.
Slowly he spoke, slowly his face turned gray—
"It's true, too true, I'm in love with her, old friend."
"And she with you?" He nodded—I laughed, "Why not?"
Where had I been? I waited for the end.
"At my age?" he sighed—and I, "What tommyrot!"

"It isn't my age so much as hers," he said.
I felt the whole deep story come storming through.
That morning I saw him smile and she smiled too.
Was that how it began? He nodded his head.
I grabbed him by the arm, shook him with joy.
He broke down in my arms and wept like a boy.
"You lucky old devil!" I cried—"John—John!"
But all I could hear him moan was—"June—June. . . ."

3. MIDSUMMER STORM

They wandered through woods where dark green pines abound,
And many a silver view of the sand and sea.
They haunted the paths where never a human sound
Disturbed their kindred faith and idolatry.
Free to the full, there was naught they had to face
Or avoid. They moved solely as they chose.
Versed of yore in many a secret place,
Nancy led the way—John followed the rose.

She had tucked one in her hair unconsciously—
Without the latest flippant feminine pose.
Equally tall, she studied his eyes to see
Where the bloom looked best, watching his heart unclose.
John smiled into her own indulgently
And playfully kissed the smaller, redder rose.
Discretion bent my head, I tried to find
Flowers at my feet, but my eyes were blind.

Whenever I went along I loved to see
How they took turns usurping the adult rôle,
Lording it over the childish boy or girl.
If I tried some pretext so they'd go alone,
She said, "You'll stay behind with some dull book,"

And when I vowed I never read a line,
John retorted, "Then here's the thing to read—"
Tapping an ancient volume bound in wine.

Swayed by a mood of blissful makebelieve,
John had decided, wearing a somber mien,
Poor Nancy had to intone the Iliad,
The while we grownups lolled along the green,
His head in her lap; mine tactfully turned.
She'd shake her raven head, but he'd declare,
No girl, however lovely, escaped the stern
Professor he used to be, and none would here.

Considering her timidity with us two,
She read the Homeric line heroically.
Now Nancy was the child, John wore the halo
Of Jove, waiting for faults to come stumbling through.
Since Venus had outwitted the god before,
How much simpler to fool the human John!
The moment he shut his eyes to frown more freely,
She played some feminine prank, and the book was gone.

And so was I—on some new expedition
Among the plants I'd never beheld till now.
Aping a botanist's erudite precision,
I brought rare specimens and showed the girl how
To gird her mind for the senior Beverly term.
I launched the most amazing abracadabra,
Sailing full sail till Nancy asked me a name
I'd never known—and told me, Pipsissewa.

How could a salon lion know such a word?
John laughed aloud at my feeble masquerade
And watched the triple crown of ivory buds
Replace the rose in her hair. Ecstatic pride
Possessed his eye as Nancy took me in hand
And chided him for deriding my ignorance.
His face shone forth in sheer idolatry
Over the little the girl had taught to me.

We returned to the house by still another path.
I confess my hatred for these labyrinths.

Nancy strode on ahead and again I saw
How beautifully her magic body swayed.
I heard a tortured sigh and looked at John.
The darkest frenzied conflict met my glance.
I could feel the warring armies in his soul.
We followed her at a stonily silent pace. . . .

There were many times henceforth I stayed at home;
More and more afternoons, they went out alone,
John forgetting to leave a note for me.
I'd learned to accept their sudden truancies—
For the more I was left behind the more I heard
When they returned and John rushed to my room,
Paler than a lovesick youth. One poignant look
Destroyed his mask and then came the gushing song.

The stubborn walls he had borne so patiently
Burst and crumbled before his frenzied speech.
All the wild passion, stored through the hard cold years,
Stormed like a cataract and spread like the sea.
Things that had reared his New England character
Went down in the flood of the dynamic stream
This girl had opened—this girl? He called her
Woman, goddess, queen, in a crescendo dream.

He didn't seem to see me there at all.
I was merely the stage or the swift occasion
For him to thunder his mad improvisation.
When I could bear to look at him I saw
A longing luminous glance—it blinded me.
Groping for my old pipe, I lit it again
And again. What else could I do but smoke
And put in a word to ease him now and then?

It set him off again, though I doubted he heard it.
Whenever he grew breathless, he breathed awhile,
And then mounted a higher, wilder harangue.
Nudities pierced the room, as full and white
As Grecian bodies breasting the tides of blue.
How pale and thin he seemed in his fierce joy,
How much the mortal man, the beautiful boy
And the green pagan god embracing the two!

Knowing the doctor's warning about his heart,
I dreaded lest he'd drop trembling to the floor.
He never sat down, but moodily paced the room—
Stood still in thought and then strode on once more.
Nor did I approve of the long, long rides he took
With her—though I loved to see them astride
Their horses—he on the gray, she on the black—
And loved to watch them cantering into space.

She leapt to her saddle; John stepped up to his.
She smiled over her shoulder; he nodded to her.
In her fawn riding breeches and ebony boots,
Her boyish shirtwaist open at the throat
And boyish hair blown about by the wind,
Nancy looked manly—frail John feminine.
They waved to me, waiting for them to start.
I waved back faintly, faintly, and off they'd fly.

Once in a while, Mother James stood at my side,
Stood in the doorway smiling affectionately.
As soon as they left, the smile would also leave—
Shaking her head, she'd return to the kitchen stove.
I followed her there, wondering if she'd say
What troubled her. With lots of time for gossip,
We talked a good deal. It was easy to see
How Nancy ruled her—how she worshipped the girl!

We refrained from referring to him and her
In their now clearly intimate connection.
True to Nancy, she'd fallen in love with John,
Tenderly serving him like her only son.
She treated me as a friend of the family
Who'd known him in youth and helped the growing man.
If trouble arose, she'd have to rely on me.
Thus it was she broached her concern for him.

Solicitous little questions that I answered
As well as I could. Since they concerned his health
Primarily, I wondered whether her dread
For John was relative; whether she felt
That one day all too soon, the romantic pair,

Despite their different years, would come to her,
Run to her with the word she expected to hear—
And doubtless hoped to hear with all her heart.

Painfully puzzled when she shook her head,
I followed her. What did that movement mean?
Perhaps she feared he was hardly the physical man
To cope with the glorious girl? Always his health
Clouded our talk. And now I heard a hint
That startled me. Preparing the special dish
He enjoyed above all, she turned to me, turned
Away and sighed—"Nancy's a headstrong girl!"

What did that mean? Wasn't Nancy in earnest?
Was this but a mere flirtatious summer fancy?
Hoping my ominous mood ran far too fast,
I tried to think of the most discreet question
That I could ask. But before I could find it,
She volunteered—"Haven't you seen how it is—
How spoiled she is? That's what I'm thinking, sir—
'Twould never do for your friend." She said no more.

'Twould never do? I felt how she worshipped John.
Her complete concern for him unloosened mine,
And mine for Nancy. I rambled on and on,
Demanding what she meant by that thrust at her.
She eyed me mournfully—the tears were there.
"God help me for saying so—" she stumbled along—
"But it's been that way down here each summertime."
I tried to speak, but misery froze my tongue. . . .

But wasn't this after all the ideal affair
For John—the one I'd carefully bargained for?
A midsummer episode—new life—and then,
Home to June—whom he so rarely mentioned now.
Whenever I brought the mail straight up from town
And laid a delicate letter on his desk,
He didn't look at me nor I at him—
I quietly left the room and closed the door.

He never mentioned her—and when he came home
From another ride, I beheld more and more

What this episode was. Did I say, new life?
All life, old and new and forever all
He had ever lived on earth or would ever live!
Whenever I saw them part, how silently
Nancy went away, and how the whole wide world
Gleamed in the lordly eye that followed her!

Then he would long for her all over again—
Impatiently pace and watch the hallway door,
Listening for the silver bell to announce
The dinner hour. And she, the girl, the woman,
Nancy, whom I studied when they came home,
As I had a right to play the spy who knew
All that I knew and guarded my friend from her—
Nancy longed for him too—how she looked at him!

Had I not found the whole of life in her eyes,
Searching his face for the whole of life in his?
The whole of love—and no man's love is half
So profound as a woman's—quivered and hovered
On her parted lips as she breathed a warm word
And left him with me. There was nothing she hid
From him, from me or any one else on earth.
How could I doubt this truly wonderful girl?

And yet, I'd known some women too well to throw
All caution away. The more I saw those two,
The more I realized his love would grow;
And if the time came her aunt had hinted at,
The kind of cooling off I've known in me,
How would desertion strike wholehearted John?
My friend would fall as dead as a shattered tree.
The more her love grew, the more I guarded him.

Fool that I am, what do I know about love?
What have I ever felt of immortal things?
The glance that passed between them had deathless tones,
The shortest phrase an everlasting ring.
I slunk like a dog with my imagining,
Shamefully crept to my room and shut the door.
And yet, no sooner had I blown out the light,
Spectres renewed their persistent questioning. . . .

Here they were again—or rather John alone.
She had gone to her room; he came up to mine.
I'd been reading a trivial summer novel
By the light of the moon. The moon was fairly dim
When he came in; I lit the lamp for him.
He quickly urged me to blow it out—I did.
But I had glimpsed the pallor of his face,
And worse than this, his damp and tousled hair.

Those demons must have been in swimming again.
They'd taken it into their silly heads to swim
The moonlit sea—and even at starless times.
John could swim so little, he took a few strokes
And then swam back and climbed to their favorite dune,
Where he could watch her body loom up once more,
Arm over arm—the famous Australian crawl
That had won her many medals at Beverly School.

He began to speak at a rather moody pace.
The dark must have helped him picture scenes more clearly.
His emotion quieted down and I could hear
The measured movement of his former voice.
What was wrong—could it have happened—were they through?
No—the tone assumed a broad tranquillity.
The moody part had begun with the silent sea
And his dread lest Nancy fail to return to shore.

I'd never heard that note in him—what did it mean?
Did some deadly premonition taunt his heart?
No, it was something else—they'd had a talk,
And when she swam as usual out to sea,
And stayed, as it seemed to him on his lonely dune,
Longer than ever before, he began to fear
That what he had said had hurt her mortally.
"What did you say?" "I told her all about June."

"Madness!" I cried—but he interrupted me
With a deep and bluntly positive "no."
"But what you told her sent her off to sea——"
Anxiety drove me on. "Yes," he laughed proudly,
"And when she failed to return, then I went down."

"You followed her out? You're crazy—John—John!"
"Don't get excited——" I heard him laugh again—
"I swam quite far—lost my strength—might have drowned—

But there she was—I felt her arm about me—
Together we kicked our way straight back to shore!"
"I ought to get up and kick you too, you fool!"
"Thanks, old man, I no longer need it now."
"Then go to bed—you must be chilled to the bone."
"I'm all right now, don't worry," he said so firmly,
I sat down again and heard him breathe her name.
One might have said a flame lit up the room.

And now he divulged the most astounding news—
"Then she told me all about other men."
"Not lovers?" "Yes." I nearly jumped up again.
Here's where his strange serenity entered in—
One might have known he'd take the tale that way.
First she had talked it over with herself,
Far out at sea. She was a girl, after all.
Knowing John had suffered for her when he told

His tragic tale, she had simply decided
To bear him company and share with him all
She had ever borne—dead as that was as well.
It made him unhappy at first, made him feel
How old he was—oh, so much older than she!
Jealousy troubled him not—he was proud of her—
And proud to lie where other men had lain.
But anguish seized his frail body, smote his brain —

Unmanned him so he couldn't answer her.
She had to coddle him like a brooding boy
And mumble the little wisdom that she knew.
The little? There was naught she didn't know.
The woman bent over, raised his timid body
And brought him back—back to herself and him—
Back to her knee, her motherly breast, her mouth.
And there the full grown man revived once more.

He seized her, embraced her, lifted her body high
And held her where her head and the moon were one—

Then lowered her gently, laid her down like a child
And lay full length beside the full length woman.
Under the moonlit, starlit, round blue heaven,
Down in the sand beside the mysterious sea,
Body to body, the lovers moved as one—
The only one that they can ever be. . . .

The longest silence followed; the very room
Sat still; no sound came in from the outer world.
There was nothing I could think or say or do.
A superhuman glow enveloped me
And I gave in to that unearthly mood.
There was nothing further now I cared to hear.
This was Nirvana, these the Elysian Fields.
I was replete, complete. But not so my friend.

I suddenly heard the queerest breathing sound—
A sigh that might have been mine for all I knew.
"What's the matter?" he called, "where are you, Ned?"
"Right here." He laughed a little. "I thought you were dead.
I spoke to you just now—you didn't answer."
"What was it?" "Nothing much—I've had a flair
For writing again—I'll leave it on the table."
"Leave what?" "The poem I've just written her."

"You've taken to poetry?" "The doggerel
Of a moonmad youth! But the wretched thing
Will tell you more than I can ever tell."
"You needn't tell me!" I said, but I heard him rise,
And in the droll tone I used to know of old,
He asked my professional eye to read the poem
And scan the limping lines of a prosaic ear.
"But you wrote verses?"—"Years and years ago."

What made me think of June at such a time?
How I deplored my idiotic blunder!
I heard him come toward me; I could barely rise.
Through his light voice I could feel the mask return.
He said a genial good-night—I mumbled the same.
"Don't let that worry you now," he said, "just skim
This childish thing—enjoy it or destroy it—
It's all one to me. Good-night, old man." "Good-night."

He left the room; I heard him close the door—
He had never closed that friendly oak before.
He wished to leave me an unbiased will,
To let me feel, in case I questioned him,
I had a right to that—he gave it freely—
And the right to learn why he had acted so.
I lit the lamp. The paper lay on the floor.
It must have blown there when he shut the door.

I felt like a skulking, desecrating thief,
For what was I to him or I to her?
This love was theirs, their own immortal life.
Not even the gods had a right to interfere.
But he had asked me, asked me ever so lightly—
Spoken as he had never spoken of yore.
Which of the two was the Puritan now, not he,
But I. I stooped and read the Pagan scroll.

At night, when I follow my love to that vast sea
We swim and worship in kindred ecstacy,
She floats along ahead like a human flower,
Unfurled to the sky, dark hour after hour.
Her breasts are water lilies with coral eyes;
Her body whiter than the first moonrise;
The only white on the widely slumbering wave;
The ivory of my soul, my life and grave.

Between her limbs that move so silently—
The spreading gateways to eternity—
There let me lie and live and dream and die—
These are my earth and sea and these my sky.
I love this breathing woman with every breath.
She loves but me, loves me beyond all death.
I am the child, the boy, the man for whom
No other tomb can be the final tomb.

Where other men have lain, I'll bring my fire;
Where other souls were slain, let mine expire.
Here is the mouth that brought her heart to me,
And here the breast no human heart can flee.
Up from the dawning child in the bodily bloom

Down to the night of the man who returns to the womb,
Nothing comes out of chaos and nobody lives
Except through the love she gives and takes and gives.

Year after year I've dwelt on this old earth,
Moaning with loneliness. I had no birth
Till this girl came, her full white body aflame
With mine and mine with hers. Glory to the name
Of her womanhood and glory to me as well
Whom she adores! Here is my Heaven and Hell;
I have found my mortal immortality.
Here I shall lie, breathe on, breathe out and die.

4. NOCTURNAL CALM

I saw less and less of John and Nancy now;
More and more seldom he stole up to my room.
They rode straight into the dark and often stayed
After the midnight hour had chimed away.
Easier to calm the sea in a northeast storm
Than reason with two whom passion drove along.
Weariness claimed my watchful eye and ear.
I lowered the drowsy light and went to bed.

Some one sat up after I fell asleep—
A grim little figure, old and feminine.
Another face in another window-pane
Searched the long silent road for their return.
Less and less, she discussed the pair with me,
But I discovered the whole of womankind
In her helpless eyes—the terror they feel when men
Bow down to them. She feared for Nancy now.

But rarely a troubled word did she begin
When they came back. John once muttered to me,
A Trojan woman! Behind the highest window,
She sat by her lamp. Whenever I came home
From a brooding walk, or a run in the runabout
I hired now, the light in the head of the house
Flickered all any human tongue could tell
To me: They're not home yet—they're not home yet.

I heard the mournful, twicetold melody
In my own ear. With no one to talk to now,
I talked to myself—a queer companion I!
Never had I been ever so long alone.
I didn't resent my groaning solitude,
Nor blame them for it. I was strangely grateful
For the chance to grow at last and chatter less.
One felt more like a man with a living soul.

A slowly gathering premonition rose
Down in the unsuspected depth of me.
Perhaps it would make me act, not only glow
Like a manly friend, and act precipitately.
A letter I brought from town heightened my dread.
Somehow I thought it better to wait a while—
Hand it to John when a calmer interlude
Gave him time to consider his former life.

June would wait for an answer—doubtless she
Had gone to the tardy post again and again.
I had no notion whether he wrote or not.
There were no more letters from him for me to mail—
He must have mailed them himself. And here I held
A small white envelope with little in it.
Through the lighter weight of each short note, I felt
The small dark home and June in the lonely night.

Unhappily for me, most unhappily
For her, John was so jovial down at dinner,
I decided to give the letter to him
After we four were through. He went to his room
And I to mine. He greeted me quite gaily
As I came in and stopped at the open door.
"Come in, come in," he addressed me in the glass,
Smiling at my reflection from where he stood,

Combing and brushing his hair for their next ride.
He faced about with an athletic step,
His eye radiant, his cheek an earthy red.
That doctor must have been a bungling quack—
Love was all John needed—love brought the cure.

He shone like a boy, an enchanted stripling
Ready for one more lark—some thoughtless adventure
Youth never paid for. Relieved to see him so well,

I held out the note. He gave it a glance and paled.
The man revived, motioned a bit, waved
A vague hand toward the desk. I laid it there—
Started to leave the room, but I heard my name—
A short, imploring sound. I didn't turn back.
Knowing what I'd see, I didn't dare to look—
I'd heard it in that one despairing tone,
Calling to me, calling through me to June.

I felt a wonderfully tender blow for her.
A wonderfully tender tone broke and ran
Half breathlessly—choked and began again.
"Ned—Ned—you write her—tell her for me—
Say that I loved her—love her more than ever—
Just tell her that—you can tell her best, old friend!"
What was he saying—I must write to her?
What was he dreaming of—some frightful end?

He must have read the terror my eye betrayed.
He came to me slowly—came to me quietly—
And laid his hand on my shoulder—a warm hand
I'd never felt there before. I looked at him,
Tried to look into his eyes. He stared past me—
Gazed straight ahead at the sea—the waiting sea.
Of a sudden he gripped my hand—shook it strangely—
And brushed impulsively by. John was gone—

Gone from the room, from me, from June and all!
Had I but understood—had I but known!
Had I not gone to my room to brood again!
Had I but followed—gone for the runabout
And shadowed them to the dune I knew so well!
Where was the fullgrown man I proposed to be?
Where had my famous resolution fled?
I was less than nothing where my friend lay dead. . . .

I'll never know how many darkening hours
I lounged in my chair, nor when I fell asleep.

I can never clearly recall the thing I dreamed
While lying there. It was cold enough to confound
Irrational men who dream habitually.
A gaunt white figure knocked and knocked at my door,
Pointing at a gaunt white body meant for me
To carry home—but I was tied to my chair.

I struggled with the thongs that bound me here.
The blood flowed freely from my helpless arms.
The blood flowed freely from the body there.
I bit the thongs; they tightened round my heart.
The thinner I grew, the paler the body grew.
I cried aloud—the blows grew louder too.
A voice called out to me—I jumped to my feet.
In the gaping door, a woman stared at me.

"Quick, sir—they haven't come back—something's gone wrong—
Hurry, for the love of God, and go for them!"
I looked about—started to hunt for my clothes—
I had them on. "How long have they been gone?"
She wrung her hands—"Hours and hours—it's after three!"
I grabbed my hat and bounded past Mother James,
Tore downstairs through the dark, through the house, down
The steps to the garden, on through the gate to the road.

Too late to go to town for the car, I ran
Headlong into the night, looming like a beast,
A monstrous enemy I'd have to cleave
With blinded eyes. I attacked the dark road,
Instinctively clear of my destination,
Could I but find the path leading through the wood
On to the dune the lovers had made their own.
Insanely I ran, stumbled and fell and ran—

And then——thanks to the moon that heard my cry
And clove the night for me—I spied the path,
Sped into the wood, into the huddled pines,
Blinding the moon, but no longer blinding me
Who knew them well. In and out I groped my way
Until I saw the dark grow slowly brighter
And at last, at last, the light I was looking for —
The tall white lighthouse guarding the sandy shore.

It peered along the sea and then at me—
The sinister finger pointing to the sky!
Chilled with terror, I rushed along the shore,
Stopped and stared out to sea. No one was there—
The tides were calm. I hurried to the dune, the dune—
God, what was that! A kneeling naked figure
Slowly scraping the sand with either hand.
"Nancy!" I called. She went on heaping sand.

I climbed to her side—"Nancy!"—she didn't hear.
I would have torn her out of her stony trance,
But she was chanting, swaying, gazing ahead.
What was that long gray pile—a mound of sand?—
And what underneath? "John—John!" I pushed her off—
She fought with me—I dragged the mad girl to her feet.
She seized my arm and suddenly sobbed my name.
I freed her gently and knelt beside the grave.

Nancy dropped beside me and laid her head
On the mound. "Ned—Ned—" she moaned imploringly—
And then in some new delirium—"Jack—John—
My boy—my man—my love—I've killed him—killed him!—"
Swaying, chanting, madly caressing the grave.
I tried to scrape the sand away, but she screamed
And overwhelmed my will with demonic strength.
But soon she knew me again—nodded and smiled.

Then she gave in to what possessed my mind—
Knelt at my side and helped me remove the mound—
Helped me dress the eternally tranquil body
And carry it down to where the horses stood,
Tethered to trees. Both of them whinnied at her.
We laid the body down—she nodded again.
"Now hurry," I commanded, "and dress yourself!"
She shook her head. What lunacy was this?

Whatever it was, I knew she'd never give in.
I held out my coat, slipped it over her shoulders.
She thanked me with another childish smile.
I bent over John and would have carried him
Home on his horse—the gray that eyed him so—

But she clutched my arm, babbling, pleading with me.
Even in this I had to give in to her.
I rode alone. The lovers rode together.

We moved gently, slowly homeward through the woods,
Profoundly dark in the denser parts and ashen,
Mysteriously ashen where the full moon
Found a clearing. The two grave horses moved
Methodically. At first I rode a half
A length ahead—to take the rein of the black
And lead the way. But when I dropped the rein
And stopped the gray, in order to help Nancy,

The calm, erect Nancy, straighten her burden,
The black went on just the same. Head to head,
The horses walked along, the while we three,
John and Nancy there, I over here, swayed
Side by side. I watched the body steadily.
Once, when I gave her a sidelong glance, Nancy
Greeted me with a moonish queenly smile
Of gratitude. Or wasn't it meant for me?

Under her fullblown majesty, I could feel
That John would have no further need of me
Until we were home. Home. What a haunting sound!
I seemed to hear it beneath each plodding hoof
Clopping the ground in a slow, slow progression.
I seemed to behold it afar—yes, I could see
The light at the end of this long tunnel of trees—
The needlepoint in the lamp under that roof—

The proud gray house, two centuries old and now
Great aeons old. We passed the burial ground—
I knew it was there—on their side—the green,
Peaceful memory of the colonial dead.
We passed along the first green village street—
Houses under trees—people full length asleep.
And now the growing light—the one eye open—
Peering at three cold ghosts returning home. . . .

My friend, my lifelong friend, John Mason, died
The most glorious death of all a man can die.

He found new birth in a woman's heart, new life
In her body and the deep eternity
He craved. Nancy James was the earth and sea
And Nancy the grave. Have you a name for these?
Murder—yes indeed—I've heard many declare.
One or two subtle folk sigh, suicide—
He sought the death she brought him when he died.

Words, mere words, are beyond the lovers now,
They had no definition for their one life.
And since their silence is broken by the law
You humans hold is yours to judge them by,
Holding the girl in durance for the crime,
Say what you will, pronounce full sentence on her,
Abide by your ancient foursquare walls and your
Lawyers and documents, judges and jury.

They're all very well for you, but not for me—
Such as I am in what I've written here.
Gentlemen—for such I take you to be—
You've sought my version of the tragic story—
That's what you call it—it isn't that to me.
But a truce to definitions—I call it love,
But even this word won't do, not now, not here.
Though I was closer to the final scene

Than any living man, I have no word
For it all—let silence rule. It rules me too,
Except for an added plea, a simple appeal
For Nancy James. Now the wise alienists
Have had their way with her—some with their science
Claiming she's insane—others kindly saying
No—she has intervals of lucidity—
Let the mere man I am add his small plea:

You have the girl in your possession now.
Not even the coroner, who showed how John
Died of a heart attack, is enough for you.
You'll hold her a little longer in her cell—
Jail or asylum—I don't care which it is.
But insofar as you thwart her liberty,

She isn't free to attempt what you claim she'll do—
Hearing her scream for death to take her life.

You have no right to rise between the woman
And the man. No one prevented June Mason
From killing herself. Let Nancy do the same.
Let her unite her body and soul to the name
June and John Mason shared. Or forget names here
And let them live as they will, lying out there.
Loving them equally well, I'm free to say,
These three should lie together forever and aye.

EDNA BRYNER

THE LITTLE FLY

MADAME, may I sit here with you on this bench, near the fountain? I have seen you here often. I come here often myself. The place brings things together a little for me: the fountain playing, the way *his* words gush out; the flowers in their patterns about the gravel walks, with lavender very prominent, the way *her* father's gardens were; and over there, the great winged building with its thousands of paintings, the way *he* is filled up inside with paintings.

Yes, I speak English perfectly. Why shouldn't I? With a father who knew something of the language; a music master who was English; and an American man of letters, a philosopher, if you will, for a friend. And then the Little Fly! That bothersome little blonde creature, buzzing away at me. She put the finishing touches on. That's why I paid attention to her in the first place. "If she wants to teach me English so badly,"—bad I said then—"why not?" It became a passion with me to speak it roundly, with a ringing to every word; to *think* English I couldn't tell you this in French. It wouldn't go. Because there's a peculiar complication about it.

You understand. When I saw you sitting that evening at the *Café de la Paix* with *him* and with another man, I thought, "I could tell THAT WOMAN about the Little Fly." Only a woman could tell it to another woman. I saw the way you looked at him: you did not talk much, only once you challenged him and he took quick notice of it; he showed respect. You saw what sort of man he was. It came to me that you might even have known the Little Fly! I was there at another table. That was why he waited after you left, with his brandy untouched. I asked him

who you were. Seldom I asked him a question and he was surprised. He said you knew the painter's wife whom he had known many years ago.

Then I saw you here in the Gardens with your friend, reading, talking, watching the fountain, the flowers, the women sewing and gossiping, the little ones playing. I thought, "I'll speak to her some day when she is alone." For you looked at me knowingly, as much as to say, "You are Adrienne." Well, why shouldn't you know me? I'm very well known, it seems, too well known to get into your precious country. No, not even if I married a respectable eminent man, such as *he* is, could I get in. No. Adrienne would be held up at the little island and sent back again with hardly a look at your shores for her pains. Adrienne is a great woman, in her way, dangerous to a great country!

That was what the Little Fly found out, most disagreeably, when she tried to get me over there. I hadn't the least intention of going, I assure you. I was amused at all the fuss, at pulling this and that long rope, getting this one and that to swear so and so, even prevailing on *him* to say that he would marry me! Ridiculous! She could go anywhere, the Little Fly: nothing was closed to her. What good did it do her? Here I am shut out forever from the greatest country in the world. Do I care! Not a sou's worth! It's all the same to me.

Pardon me, Madame, if I can't seem to get started. I think that I'm trying to tell you about the Little Fly and then it's all about myself. That's what I learn from *him*. He is forever walking around himself, like walking around the fountain there; and the fountain is himself, too, spouting out words, spraying them about moistily. You'll think that he is speaking about the paintings in that building—he knows more about them than any one—and then you'll find out that it is himself he means. Every one may be like that. I never thought about it until the Little Fly came into things.

Madame, it was here, on this very bench, that I first told the Little Fly about myself. I keep coming back and back to that. Why did I try to knock her down with what was in my life? *That began everything.* Is that why I come here to the beginning of the thing? Do I hope to see the end of it here?

I have been coming here ever since I sent her the letter. How long ago was that? There were no flowers then, I know. I couldn't get it off fast enough. It took me too long to get

him to say yes to it. I was bothered, by a feeling. . . . And then the answer came: the letter back again was answer to it. With it, the drawings, of her and me, and him, and the other one, all done into her life. When I opened them, a faint buzzing stirred in me, as once long ago. "You were the only one," the painter's wife who sent them said. The only one what?

That evening I went to the Café! I felt heavy, heavy. Only, in my head was the faint buzzing. I drank a great deal. Usually I hardly drink at all. I laughed, enormously. I told all the stories I ever knew. I became light. Nothing seemed to matter. The buzzing was still there. It grew louder and louder; huge wings slapped against my head, strong like the wings of an eagle from the high skies. I couldn't bear it. I shouted up to her: "Here's to you, Little Fly, in heaven or hell!" They became silent, embarrassed. They looked at me strangely.

I have seen the palest green become dark since then.

I burnt her letters. The drawings I could not burn. Why they sent them to me, I can't make out. They did send them and wrote everything, the way she always wrote, as if she belonged to me, as if she were mine to do something with. I can't make it out.

That's why I want to tell you. *I want to discover what I shall finally say.* Because everything changes as I talk. My head swarms with images, clues, determinations. Will it go on changing forever, that creeping thing that came out of some mysterious place known only to itself; that struck the spark of its life the day I came in contact with the Little Fly; that got into each of us, took what it wanted. What? That is what I am trying to find out. That will be the end of it, if I find out. I am determined that there shall be an end.

Madame, talking is hard for me. I am a singer. I care for that more than for anything. Men? Yes, I care for them. But underneath, there is something else: as there is in him, underneath, something else that he cares for. It is with the *underneath* that the Little Fly has to do.

It was with my singing that he had to do. He gave me my chance to sing. More than that, he wanted to give me the chance to make an honest woman of myself, like these women here, sewing, gossiping, watching their children play. Could I be like them? Look at me! I could pick up two of them and carry them away on my back. I am of true peasant stock, the students, the artists, tell me. How they stare at me, the honest women! They

know there's something wrong about me. They hate me. They paid their price for being honest. They want to make me pay mine for not being like them. And that's really how I came to know the Little Fly.

2.

She had an apartment across the Court from me. *I noticed her simply because she wasn't like those honest countrywomen of mine!* She was a pink and white little thing with yellow hair, big blue eyes, small, most carefully made like a fine doll for a lady's refined child. I wondered how she got in there, just for a moment—I wouldn't have thought of her again if she hadn't positively poked herself at me—because it is only those who know the lay of the land very well indeed that would get into a respectable house in that square.

I was living for the first time in my life in a respectable house, in the Quarter, of course. He took a place there for me so that I could work hard without being bothered. I had been a model, you see; I was known in all the studios, for the heroic figure; and for my life, too. Honest women do not understand such things. They think it is all one thing. If they could but know the foolish men, the poor students—others! His friends, of good society, they have their pranks. But me! They could never stomach me! I was all too much for them. They were polite, certainly; handed me tea, asked about my singing. I could see what they were thinking: "How did He come to marry a creature like that!" If it had been a lady who had lived that way!—But no. Ladies are not so generous. I, others like me, it is simply the way of our life.

I have a big body, as you can see, the kind of limbs especially that they like to draw and paint and model, God knows why. I used to sit for them and think how ridiculous it was that they kept doing my limbs over and over again. That's where I met *him.* He came to the studio to see paintings and he saw me. We were together immediately because with me always that was the way it was. He found out that I had a voice and arranged with the English music master. The Englishman was a big man, too, but slender, very fair, cold looking and delicate. He did not talk much, whereas the other one was always talking, not foolishly, it was always about something. The Englishman and I

were also together immediately. It was almost as if it were part of the work.

Only those two though. All the rest of the life I gave up entirely to work at singing. One cannot keep up the life and work, too. I never went to the studios at all. I avoided every one I had known. I had my small apartment and I worked all the time. They didn't believe it, honest women that they were! They set themselves to make it as bad as possible for me, spilling my bottles of milk, strewing the vegetables before my door.

Right away, the Little Fly got into it. I was coming home one day from my singing lesson and I heard a great hubbub in the Court. All the women talked at once. Then her voice, alone, spoke: I knew it was her voice because it was made carefully, the way she was, a speaking voice that sings, mezzo, finely modulated. I went in as far as I could without being seen, to listen to her voice. She was saying to them, in good French, too, that it wasn't fair to treat any one that way. "*Ce n'est pas juste!*" she said over and over, looking from one to another of them as if she expected them to say it after her, like a lesson.

They told her that she didn't understand: how could she understand, she was a lady, she must not have anything to do with me. It made no difference what I was, she argued; what they were doing was not what she called fair play. They told her what I was then. They did not save words. She looked at them out of those big eyes of hers and said, "That signifies nothing when it comes to spilling any one's milk."

The women thought her a fool and she was. I ask you, Madame, if she wasn't a fool for taking my part against them! Certainly she was a fool. I walked about a bit thinking more and more of what a fool she was. When I got back to my place, I saw milk splattered over the doorway, a bunch of flowers tied to the handle of the door and a note stuck underneath from that blonde little creature! She was sorry that the women had acted so badly. Wouldn't I come over and have tea with her?

Look at me, Madame! I could have eaten that Little Fly in one bite! I could have twisted those little wrists of hers until she screamed. I could have shaken her until her teeth would have clattered. As if I couldn't fight my own battles! I laughed and laughed. I threw the flowers and the note into a basket with the vegetable trash. I sat down and laughed, loud, as if I were doing scales, until I was hoarse. I have never been so angry. I could

not sleep that night, I who sleep like a horse. I could see the little yellow thing in her pale dress all embroidered in flowers with her pretty shoes—a doll, exquisite, such delicate features!—and her kitten eyes devouring, daintily, all those women! "*Ce n'est pas juste!*"

So, the Little Fly began buzzing and she never stopped. Every time those honest women thought of some new meanness, there was a bunch of flowers on my door and a note, polite, sympathetic. Why did she keep on? Like a ceremonial. It got on my nerves. I threw the flowers and the note with the vegetable trash. I thought, "Adrienne, my girl, you've got to do something about it!"

You can see then, Madame, can't you, how I was dragged into it?

I decided, "I can write too, and you shall have a note stuck under your door; but no flowers, oh no! Maybe I'll stick a few little dead flies on the end of long sharp pins and that could be a bouquet for you." I didn't, of course. I wrote her: "You are wasting your time. Those women are perfectly right. If they did not act the way they do towards me, they would not be honest women. I am everything they say and I am a great deal more. Only, now I am not living the life because I am working hard at singing. But I think it is the only life to lead unless you are interested in something else, with passion, so that it takes up all your time working on it."

La voilà! I stuck the note under her door.

I had peace then. I worked and came back and forth; there were no notes or flowers. Also, the women were not so mean. They were tired, I think, of doing small things and of my not paying attention. They were waiting to think of something very mean.

That came. I got home one day in the rain, soaked, and the Little Fly—she had been watching for me—came running out, all pink, and said, "I have telephoned for the carpenter. Come and have tea with me until he gets here. I have it all ready." I saw then that those women had nailed up my door, with boards, solid. It must have taken them a long time. She had tried to keep them from it. They laughed at her and told her that she would never understand: they wanted me out of there for her sake, too. This she told me much later.

I looked at the little dry wingy thing buzzing, buzzing there,

trying to find a place to alight on the great big animal that I was, and soaking wet, too, tired—Oh, how I had worked that day! I had accomplished something that day, Madame, a new tone, pure, round. "A pearl of the first water!" the music master said. It had come up out of the depths of me from a place I had not known about. Do you understand that, Madame? To have something occur out of you surprisingly? I was entirely fatigued. I looked at the fluttering little thing and thought. "Why not? Some tea will be hot, anyway."

She waited there as if her life depended on it. I didn't care. I didn't care at all. I was filled up with my new note. It rang in me. I was light-headed. It was a silver bell that kept ringing in my very bowels. I went into her place and sat down. I didn't say a word while she flew around in her pretty little shoes, brewing delicate tea and giving it to me in a delicate cup as if I had been a person of great importance instead of a big soggy woman. I felt too big for the place, ungainly. There were faded old pieces of silk with patterns of clouds and birds on the wall, and Chinese stuff, old red lacquer, prints in dull colors of bridges and mountains. There were flowers everywhere. "So she is like that inside!" I thought. I could see it all flowing from her right from the middle of her over her stomach and spreading out over the walls and floor. "Adrienne, my girl," I said to myself, "you're getting flighty!"

I wished that I had stood out in the rain until the carpenter came. I wanted to sit hard so that I would sit through the chair. I wanted my wet clothes to make the chair wet so that it would fall to pieces. I wanted everything to fall to pieces. But the tea was hot, there were fresh cakes; and after a bit, I didn't mind. I thought that it was probably an ordinary room that any lady might have. I said to myself, "Adrienne, you don't know much how ladies live, so look at this and see!"

What did she want of me? Why couldn't she let me alone? She wanted me for something, that was certain. I determined that I simply wouldn't talk to her. She didn't seem to notice anything. She entertained me as if I were a special guest, never asked me a question. I couldn't make her out.

She was working, too, if you could call it work. She did. Maybe it was work as much as my singing was. Some one thought her of enough value to get that apartment for her, pay for it, and give her enough besides to have tea and cakes. They were

wealthy Americans who lived here, they said, because they could live more beautifully in France. They were what you call "nice Americans." I did not get all of what she told me because I kept thinking all the time of what it could be that she wanted of me.

The wealthy Americans collected old sculpture, jars, prints. They had a gallery made on purpose for them. They had a great deal of money and no children. They thought that the world was too wicked to bring children into it. Are there many persons in America like that, Madame? Or do the queer ones all come here to live? Why did she come? Why did He? "Because it is cheaper to live here," he tells me. "But America is a rich country," I say. "You don't understand," he says. "Not artists. It is those who either have been left a great deal of money or else those who spend all their time making money. The artists have a hard time." "But," I ask him, "why do not the wealthy people stay at home and help artists there instead of helping them over here?" "I cannot control the destinies of people," he answers. "Well, I never want to go to America," I say. "You are French," he says. "French people always stay at home."

Well, these rich Americans wanted to help others to live better, especially poor young English and American students who were trying to make their way here. Whenever they found one who needed something, they helped him. It was very difficult to find out these young persons, they said, though God knows I could have brought them a whole village. I thought once what fun it would be to go through the Quarter and gather up all the ones I know, march the whole lot of them to Mama and Papa Whitefield for money, shoes, bread, underwear, for new lungs and new teeth.

They had a notion, you see, that many poor students could not work well because of trouble with their noses or eyes or teeth. They established a sort of clinic, and called it a name like Bureau for Students. When a student came to find out what was the matter with his health, they sent him to a doctor who cured him and they paid for it. Through the ones who came for sickness, they got to know the other ones who needed food or clothes.

That was what the Little Fly did. She talked to every student who came about himself, his friends; and she found out those who wanted to study painting or architecture but had no money.

Then Papa and Mama Whitefield talked with the student and helped him do the best thing.

She worked hard at it, the Little Fly—I saw that later—just as if she were sewing or painting or singing. But imagine, Madame! With all the persons I knew, I never sent any of them to the Little Fly's Bureau. No. I let her do what she called her work herself.

I hadn't told her a thing about myself except that I was studying singing with an English music master.

Couldn't she help me with English then, she asked me, quickly, breathlessly, because the carpenter had come.

I felt suddenly hard towards her. "All right, Little Fly," I said to myself, "you can make yourself useful to me, if you're so fixed on it." I determined to tell her everything from the beginning. Just see if she wanted to have anything to do with Adrienne after she heard about that woman!

3.

Madame, I can scarcely believe that we sat here on that day! It was Sunday, early, hardly any one was here. I was in fine feather. "Here's where I eat you up, you little thing," I thought with the greatest satisfaction. I really wanted to get her out of the way. She was too bothersome. I told her everything, as ugly as I could make it.

I couldn't remember the time when I hadn't lived with men. I didn't know, for ever so long, that there was any other relation than that between men and women, between father and daughter, brother and sister. I thought that every one lived that way. My step-father first—he said that he was my step-father but I think that he really was my father. My mother I never knew about. For all I know, I was born out of an egg that was laid somewhere and this man picked the egg up because he thought that there was money in it. He was a teacher of history. I lived with him like a little wife from the time I was six or seven or eight. I do not remember any other way of living. He taught me my lessons. He had a few students privately in English. I listened to them and learned something of the language.

He brought home with him one day a man who was a music master. I didn't hear them come and I was singing. I always sang when my father was away. The music teacher told my father

that I had a voice, it was worth something, it should be trained. My father took me to the Conservatory, I was received, I was to become a singer of the first class. I worked hard, I liked it. In the evenings sometimes my father took me to a café to sing and I got money which I gave to him.

I was at the café one night and stood on the table to sing and I looked at my father. I do not think that I had ever looked my father exactly in the face before. I must always have tried not to look at him. There, I looked at him and it was as if I had been asleep a long, very long time, in a thick sleep and now I was waking, coming out of a dream. "That is my father," is what I said, as if I were not sure of whose face it was, as if I were trying to convince myself that it was my father. The face seemed very evil, shocking, the face of an animal, a queer dog that you might meet if you were walking in the Bois alone and the light would be greenish and gray as it is sometimes which would make the animal's face half human, half beast. Of course, he did not really look like that. He was a professor, dressed neatly, with beard and moustache and goatee. Any one would know that he was a professor.

He pulled his forehead down at me—I suppose I did not begin promptly—and I opened my mouth to sing. Not a sound came out. I could not make a single sound. The company sat there at little tables waiting. There were several old men who kept their eyes on me. They liked my singing. My father had me dressed in a little red dress with very full skirt and a black velvet jacket. I stood there choking, trying to make my voice come. I felt that I had on the red skirt and the black jacket. I felt that I was a big girl, twelve years old. Many things went through my mind. But I could not sing. I had lost my voice. It vanished, completely.

My father took me down off the table and shook me a little. He apologized to the company, something silly, his little girl got frightened sometimes that way. When he got me home, he beat me. That did not bring back my voice. A black strong hand held me inside very hard; hands outside I did not feel. He took me to the conservatory, left me with my teachers; but nothing happened. They talked to me nicely. They were perplexed. They talked together, looking at me. When he came to get me, they told him that sometimes a voice became lost suddenly and then suddenly it came back again. "Let her alone a couple of years,

and take good care of her, but don't bother her about singing!"

My father pulled me along home. He did not say anything, just looked at me with a frightful look. He did not take me to dinner with him to the little café at the corner where we had food cheaply. I had only some bread and cheese. I did not dare touch anything else. He came back late, ordered me to get ready as if we were going to the café, took me a long way from home and turned me loose. "*Voilà ta place, ma fille,*" he said. "*Tu ne peux pas chanter, tu peux siffler pour gagner la vie.*"

I wandered about the streets—I did not know my way because I had never been out alone before. Some young men came along. They looked at me and went on without saying anything. I walked slowly. After a while, I saw the young men again. They looked at me sharply. I wasn't afraid of them. One of them spoke to me. "What are you doing here at this time of night, Little Sister?" I told him my father had turned me out because I could not sing any longer.

"Well, come along with us," he said. The rest said, "Right-O!" They had learned it from the English boy who was one of them and laughed when they said it. They were very jolly. They took me home with them, gave me something to eat, and asked me about my father, who he was, what he had done to me. They asked queer questions that I did not know how to answer. They were horrified at the way I had lived with him. They asked me if I didn't know that it was wicked. They explained everything. That was the first time that I had any idea that there was another way to live with men. I thought, of course, that I was going to live with them that way; but I saw that they thought it was the worst thing in the world. So it was all right that I did not live with them that way.

They gave me a little room all to myself. There were several of them, all men, young. There was no woman with them. In the morning they bought me a basket of flowers and made a flower girl out of me. They called me Little Sister and I called them my brothers. They bought me a new dress and burned the red skirt and the black jacket. They told me how to take care of myself.

The world was turned completely over. I felt that I was living on the other side of something round. The scene in the café with my father came back to me like a bad taste in the mouth. I lived with the men, my brothers, and they were good to me. I

went out in the morning when they went out and sold flowers and brought the money home to them. They gave me food and bought me dresses and taught me many things.

One day, when I was standing with my basket of flowers at a corner of the street, one of my brothers came running past me, stuck something quick in my basket under the flowers, whispered, "Be silent, Little Sister!" I saw two others of my brothers running, then, and the gendarmes after them. Some one took me by the arm and there were two gendarmes standing over me, tumbling my flowers out on the street and taking out a roll of something that my brother had put there. I saw that it was money.

I knew something must be very wrong. I wanted to save the money for my brothers because they had been good to me. I said to the gendarmes that if the gentleman had put the money in my basket, shouldn't I have it? He must have wanted to give it to me. The gendarmes laughed. "You couldn't buy anything with that. That is bad money." Then they became severe. Did I know the gentleman who had put the money in the basket. Oh no, I did not know him. How could I, a poor flower girl, know a rich gentleman? Had I ever seen him before, even once? No, I had never seen him but he looked like a nice gentleman, I said. Maybe he was a rich gentleman who wanted to give away a great deal of money. My brothers had told me of a rich man who had gone about the streets giving his money to poor people because he did not like his relatives.

"Oh, she doesn't know anything," one of the gendarmes said. "We are wasting time." Some people came up, too, who lived around there. "That's Adrienne, the flower girl," they said. "She comes here every day."

I asked the gendarmes, "Am I not to have the money?" for they were still holding the roll and looking at it. "Haven't I told you that it's bad money," the gendarme said. "Those men who made it are counterfeiters. If ever we catch them, they'll go to prison, so you better be careful about the money any rich gentleman puts in your basket."

They picked up my flowers and put them back nicely. I walked along selling them because I did not know what else to do. I couldn't believe that my brothers were bad! If they were bad—everything was bad. I would never trust any one again. I would do everything for myself. I felt terrible, as if I had

lost my voice all over again, only I found that I could cry out my flowers just the same.

I was afraid to go back where I had been living. A gendarme might follow me and find my brothers and put them in prison. I took my flower money and found a little room. After a week or so I wandered down the street to the place where I had lived with my brothers. It was empty. Had the gendarmes got them? I saw one of them again, in the war, when I was singing to the soldiers and nursing them. He died before I could tell him how it had been with me.

I could not make enough money selling flowers to pay for the room and have enough to eat, too. I was a big girl, hungry all the time. I decided to do what my brothers had told me never to do: pose for the painters in the studios. I had sold flowers to the artists and often they asked me to sit for them. "Let us make your limbs immortal, Little Sister," they would say. "You shall pose as the Virgin of the Sous. We'll give you more money than you can make with your flowers."

My brothers told me that it was a bad life, it would be worse than with my father, I must never do it! Maybe they were right; but I had to live. The gendarmes had said that *they* were bad, that they would go to prison. I felt reckless; and that was the first time that I had felt that way.

I became a model and I had a sweetheart, too, very soon. My brothers had lied to me. It was not at all like being with my father. No, it was another life entirely. I forgot everything of how bad my life had been with my father, of how bad it was to think of my brothers in prison. I told my story to the artists; in all the studios my story was known. I did not feel that it had been my life, that I had really been the one to live it. No, it was something that to tell made me out a certain person to them, the only one of that person there was; and I felt proud. I was a tall girl, then, strong. The artists were jolly. I earned plenty of money. They gave me food with them, I had to buy hardly any. And I had sweethearts. I was noted for having sweethearts.

I was posing one day for a study, like one of those Picassos—God knows I have big strong limbs; but how big those artists did make them on their canvases! I was almost frightened. I thought, "Can I possibly be as big as that?" One of the artists, a boy I liked very much—he had been a sweetheart of mine for a

long time, he was a merry, shy boy—had drawn a good thing, he had made me almost beautiful. He looked up at me and smiled. Then he drew a little bird way up in the corner of the canvas and smiled at me again. I was sorry that it could not have kept on forever between him and me. I felt light and soft. I began to hum and then suddenly I was singing. Yes, my voice came back like that! The fellows threw down their brushes and cried, "Hurrah! She can sing!" They made a celebration that evening and joked me very much. "I suppose now that you have your voice, you will go back and make money for papa!"

I began singing in cafés again. I did not sell flowers, but posed and sang and had many sweethearts. That was the way my life was for a long time. I thought that it was always to be that way and I was content.

Then *he* came to the studio. He said that with the voice I had, I should study and become a singer. "You would be doing something for me," he said, "if you would let me do that for you."

I was glad to do it; because he was something to me, right away, that no one else ever was. All the rest vanished like smoke when he came. The music master was something, too. I couldn't work with him or he with me, unless we were together. You understand that, Madame?

Well, there were only those two, as I told the Little Fly. She was pale at first. The part about my father seemed worst to her, at least, that's what I thought after I heard about her father. She sat with her big eyes taking me in, never asking a question. I kept wanting to do something to her. She was a lady, you see, and I was everything that a lady couldn't be. I felt that. When I had finished, what do you think she said! *Figurez-vous, Madame!* She said, "Everything's all right, then, isn't it? I'll teach you how to speak English perfectly."

Something happened to me, Madame, as if a big brick wall had fallen, crumbled into powder, only no one was hurt. I looked at her and saw that I hadn't eaten her up at all. Oh no! She sat there perfectly whole, neat, with her fine shoes, her delicate lace round the slender neck. I said to her, quite without any idea at all, "You are the first decent woman I have ever really talked to."

She hadn't winked at anything I had said before. Now, she became all red, trembled, took out her lacey handkerchief and put it to her face. I thought that she was going to cry. But no, she

got all right again and we talked of students and Paris and many other things.

4.

I began speaking English with her.

I felt that I was doing her an enormous favor and that besides letting her teach me, she should give me a jewel, something costly, with each lesson, to show me actually what an enormous favor I was doing her.

Madame, why was she with me as she was? Why did she want me to wear a pale silk dress with many folds? You can see how I am, with all straight-cut things for my large body, and big comfortable shoes. I am a big woman. I can't wear dinky things. I had never worn a piece of lace in my life. That was for the silly little women, decking themselves out. Adrienne didn't have to wear those things. She kept after me to wear them. I took them because she was so polite, as if I were doing her a favor, and then I laid them away.

I used to laugh about her with the others at the Café. I told them about her wanting me to wear lace. I could imitate her deliciously. He laughed about her, too. He loved it that I called her the Little Fly.

Those two, Madame! How they did not get on with each other! He simply could not see her! She has a drawing that shows that. He is done to the life, walking with his tome of philosophy, and looking back at her with such a look! She, for him an empty garment waving foolishly on the beach, with the little animal that really was her nibbling plants at his feet and he not seeing that at all.

What a drawing she made of me, too! A fat songbird standing on a little island that was made of the two of them together, both him and the music master, as if together they formed some kind of prickly animal! Oh, she was clever, the Little Fly!

I became so that I liked what she did for me. I wore some of the things she wanted me to. I even liked her dinky room that was too full of things. Mine is a big bare room without even curtains. I would not let her put silk on the wall nor an old print. I picked up things in her room to look at them to see what it was that made her have them there. She made me have one of

those greenish white Chinese vases. She would keep flowers in it and it would stand where the light fell on it in a certain way. He laughed about that, too. "The Little Fly's been buzzing in here, I see."

I got so that I could sit in her place without feeling huge. She had a great big chair placed so that I could sit in it easily. She was clever. I see that now. She didn't know it. She never knew how clever she was in her dainty, dinky place, the high-born lady, princess, brought up on milk and roses.

Yes, Madame, a princess; a sort of lost princess. Her father certainly was bewitched; her mother must have had a demon in her. I thought of old fairy tales when she told me about herself. She actually had a life. Will you believe it? She was not an empty garment waving along the seashore, as my philosopher friend would have it. If he carried his great book, she also carried something rolled up, maybe, on a piece of old parchment.

She didn't blurt it out all at once the way I did, try to knock me down with it. No, she told it bit by bit, in a ladylike manner, as it came up, God knows how, while we drank tea together and spoke English. For a long time, I didn't even know that it was about her! Perhaps she only taught me English to tell me about her life.

She asked me, "Adrienne, have you ever had a perfect day?"

I thought it was to learn English and I said, "A perfect day? What is the name for that in French?"

"A perfect day," she said, "when everything is as it should be, completely right; but there is also something inside of you than doesn't quite belong with it, and yet it shows you, that other feeling, how right everything is."

I hadn't the least idea what she was talking about. She said, "I remember a day when I was quite small, in the south, with my father."

Her father and she wandered about the country every year from fall to spring, wherever the sun shone. The sun and her father were together in her mind. Their home was in the north where the mother stayed. She did not count much, that mother; it was the father who had done everything for the little one. He was an artist. He painted miniatures, carved wood, made blocks for wood engravings. He had money enough to take care of the two of them and send home to the mother. In the south he found subjects for his engraving, big night moths, moss hanging from

trees, cardinal birds, pomegranates. But you would know better than I, Madame, what he would find there for his art.

The soil in the south was a kind of sandy earth with shining particles in it. She had a feeling of it as she had later, she said, when she read her history of the early days of America where it tells of the colonists writing back to Europe that they could pick treasure from the ground. The places where they stayed were amazing with flowers, with birds of many colors, and extraordinary butterflies.

On that perfect day that she spoke about, the ground glittered under the great live oaks. There were masses of azaleas with sticky pinkish flowers. Butterflies were blowing about. Her father sat working on a block of wood. She watched him push the little knife against the wood, looking about her, too, and suddenly she felt a great desire for the flowers. She ran towards them, stretched out her hands. She could not take hold of them, close her hands on them. She was afraid. She made great emphasis on telling me this. She stood there in the warm sunshine, paralyzed. Then she turned back. She saw her father working. She had forgotten him for a moment. She ran back to him, crouched between his knees. He put his hand on her head and went on working. She remembered how comforting his hand was on her head. She went to sleep. When she awoke, she was curled up in a heap against him and he was still working.

Perhaps she was a little wife to him, Madame, in her way, I mean in her father's way, as I was in my father's way. Oh, I never thought of it until this moment. I would never have thought of it, had I not heard so much talk from *him* about these things. With her, she never got over it; whereas, with me, it was done with the day when I went to pose in the studios and had my first sweetheart.

Father, father, father. That was her tune. The first thing she remembered was his face bending over her in the cradle. His forehead and eyes, strong lights that made her blink, were powerful; and then everything disappeared down his nose into the brown beard that covered the whole lower part of his face. *Her* father's face she saw right away; whereas, with *my* father, I was quite old before I ever really looked at him. Strange, isn't it, Madame?

He taught her, too, not the way my father taught me, natural history, other history, languages. He taught her French

so that she could speak it as well as English. She did some of her lessons in French, read the French books for children.

When she told me things about herself, she seemed to be trying to get at something that troubled her way back in her earliest life. I was used to that because he also did it. He got the way of it through reading modern psychology. Many persons do that. They think that they can find one little place where everything begins that bothers them. What do they do, Madame, when they find the little place? They cannot go back and live it over again. They can only look at it, as she looked at that perfect day of hers, just as if it were a picture that pleased her, hanging on a wall. In that, there was a queer beginning for her.

You can see in the drawing how she was with her father. Morning greeting, she called it: herself a little bird in furry boots—How she always did like to have pretty boots on her beautiful feet!—putting up its bill towards the face of the handsome man; only, here his face is clean shaven like that of a very young man. Up above, far off, on the edge of the sky, like a witch on a broom stick, I suppose her mother.

I could never make the mother out: a kind of angry woman, proud and angry, very beautiful. She was angry, the Little Fly said, at the way she had been brought up, like all the nice women of her generation, dabbling with music and water colors and small accomplishments. She was strong-minded, wanted to be an Hypatia. She had a passion for books.

She was always upset when in the spring the two came back up north so that the father could plant his gardens. Their home was an old family mansion up along the Hudson River. He and the mother were the last ones in America of two very old English families. They lived in the old home of the ancestors of one of them who had gone early to America. The gardens were famous. People came from all over the country to see them. The father worked all through the summer with gardeners. The friends of the mother filled the house all summer long, running out to see the gardens. Some of them, the father was glad to be with, took them about, showed them everything. Others he was rude to, tried not to let them see anything. The gardens were thus a great nuisance to the mother.

The daughter, too, was a nuisance to her. A week or so after the two returned, the mother would send the Little Fly out to a farm which, I think, some of their ancestors had given over to a

farmer's family and there were peculiar claims between them on that account. The farmer was English and had a daughter named Maggie. She was four years older than the Little Fly, played with her, took care of her, and was very fond of her.

Sometimes, Madame, when she spoke of this girl, Maggie, she would look at me in a strange way. I wanted to say to her, "Well, I am *not* Maggie, so you needn't look at me like that!" How could I be like a farm girl in America who taught music to farmers' children and married a farmer boy with a place of his own?

After she had been a week or so with Maggie, the father would come and take her home. In another week the mother would send her out again. That's the way it kept up the whole summer. The moment the flowers began to fade, the father packed up their things and they wandered south again.

That was the way it was until the Little Fly was twelve years old. Then, in the middle of the time down south where there was sunshine and flowers, she knew that there was something very much the matter with her father. He packed up and they went north as fast as possible. There he was sick a few days and died. She knew winter then, for the first time. She knew snow and ice. You can see it in the drawings, Winter and Snow and Ice.

5.

She showed me a miniature that her father had made of her when they were wandering together. She had pale gold hair, fine, that fell in waves, golden water. Her eyes were blue and dazzling, what the English call *starry*. I have never seen stars look like that. They were not cold but eager; and when she laughed—she laughed a great deal, she was a merry person—they had lights in them like old illuminated letters. She had the most delicate features, a quaint nose, perky, that was held in such a way as if she smelled flowers at the very moment.

She was like that still, I saw, when I really looked at her. Madame, I was simply a horse of a woman beside her. She seemed of no account at all. She made you take account. That irritated me, irritated him, too. He pretended to ignore her but he was irritated just the same.

You can see what she makes of herself in the drawing where she sits on the roof after she went back to her country, a sharp-

featured, spinster thing. She wasn't. Keen, not sharp. Delicate, like a flower. I hated flowers. I sold them on a tray for a long time, two sous the bunch. She seemed like that, something you put on a tray for a couple of sous. Only she wasn't. That was always it. She made you think of a trifling thing and then she wasn't.

I used to think of what a good model she would make with her delicate hands and feet. You could roll an egg under the arch of her foot, as the Russians say. She had shoes made especially, of fine leather with queer buckles that she bought at old shops. Her body was perfect. She would have made a model exactly right for some kind of work. I could not think of her as being so useful as that. She must have been useful or those wealthy Americans would never have paid her so much money.

She must have made a sensation traveling about the country, that little princess with her handsome father. Perhaps, when they came home in the spring, the mother was jealous of the little beauty. Perhaps that was why she sent her out to the farm. Perhaps that was why she sent her, immediately that the father was dead, out to the farm. She would not want the beauty around. There was money which the father had left, invested separately for each of them, so that they could be independent wholly of each other. Maggie—she was a big girl then, sixteen—took the young one over as if she had been her own. They went together to what the Little Fly called the Little Red Schoolhouse.

Madame, I still do not know whether there is such a thing in America because I have heard so much joking about it. The Little Fly said that there was, that it used always to be red but now it is white. "Yes, I suppose I am a real American," she would say, "I was educated in the Little Red Schoolhouse. One learns to spell there." Oh, she was gay, after we began to know each other. "That's fundamental, spelling. You learn to spell the hardest words in the language, p-h-t-h-i-s-i-c; you do the hardest examples in arithmetic, about rowing up and down a stream with the current pulling at you. Fundamental." She had such a funny way of saying fundamental. "But you do not learn French there. That would not do at all!"

"And who bought your clothes then?" I would ask, in order to speak English.

"Why, Maggie, I suppose. Yes, Maggie *must* have bought them."

That little creature did not know, half the time, who did things for her!

She had a good time with the children in school. She would draw animals for them, turtles, frogs, insects, and also flowers and trees. She had a good enough time; but it was not like being in sunshine with her father. She was cold all through, although her clothes were warm. There was snow, snow, snow. The wind blew fearfully. She used to lie in bed and imagine that she was in the south with her father by a slow river where there were flowers and birds of all the colors in the world and clouds of pale green butterflies.

She was there with the farm girl like that, Madame, until she was seventeen! When I think of how many sweethearts I had by the time I was seventeen! Maggie was twenty-one then, she could do what she wanted to, go down to New York and take music lessons. She had always wanted to be a music teacher, like many of your country girls, the Little Fly said; and she wanted to go to the place that would make her into one as fast as possible.

The Little Fly went with her. They lived together. The farm girl did everything, cooked, even washed the clothes for both of them, and studied music, too. The Little Fly got in with a kind of art school that was being made just then, a league of artists. There are many students here now who have studied there; but at that time it was just beginning.

Your country, Madame, must have been astonishing about art. Such things as the Little Fly told me! That was long ago, certainly, in the nineties: you have seen different things, taken more of life into you. You are more like our people here.

Art, Madame, must have had a hard time in your country. Here, an artist is like any working person, a baker, a cab driver. In your country, he is special. People think him born not like others, queer; not so much now, I think, but when she was first with the new league, artists must have been held very queer indeed. No one, the Little Fly said, was permitted to take a sketch book into your museum! No one could copy the paintings there! A museum was not a place to work in, they said; it was a place to keep pictures safe in!

The Little Fly said of herself that she *drifted* into the league of artists. Drifted . . . yes, she was on a big slow stream that took her this way and that. She never walked on dry land from

one place to another, the way people walk, went up to a counter and said, "Some cheese, if you please." She drifted. Wherever the stream took her, there was someone to give her cheese, and bread, and a piece of silk to hang on the wall, the way her father did for her when she was small.

I used to think about her and myself. When she was putting out her hands towards the flowers, not able to pick them, what was I doing? I was making the soup for my father. I stood on chairs to reach the things I needed. I swept the floor and lived with him as his little wife. Sometimes I thought when I looked at her, "You don't exist. You can't exist!" But there she was. She was a small girl when I was small. She was with her father, I was with my father. *She had a life.* She was doing something at every moment that I was doing something. That made me angry, I don't know why. I was rude to her. I thought, "Yes, when I was selling flowers on the street, you were with Maggie making pictures to play with. That's what you were doing, you little nothing!"

And when I was posing for artists, hours and hours a day, and having many sweethearts, she was with her league of artists, wanting to do things the way no one else understood. She had something in her about color, the way the orientals see it, and she wanted to carry it through. No one saw what she wanted. Just as she had some idea towards me. *She wanted to do something about me,* and I still don't see what it was.

She knew many artists then whose names are known in your country to-day. She told me a great deal about the men she knew. They must have wanted her badly, some of them. Oh, she did not say that. She was too much of a lady. But the way she told me of some of them, I thought, "Adrienne, my girl, you would have been there in a minute!" She made friends of them; but they became too much for her and then she got away from them. She was always getting away from some one or other. She was not happy that she got away. She would have been much better off if she had been with them a little the way they wanted deep down in them, though perhaps they, themselves, would never have done that. She wanted, they wanted; nothing came of it.

She was afraid of them the way she was afraid to pick flowers when she was small. Am I silly to be speaking of that? She made a great deal of it, herself. It worked in her when she told me things, like the root of some queer strong plant, boring

deeper and deeper into her, spreading out. He was like that, too, making emphasis on something that happened to him long ago, mixing up with analytical doctors that take everything to pieces for a person. Sometimes they do not put things together again.

She was there among her artists like that when the farm girl went home to teach music and to a young man who was waiting for her. A young woman artist of the league who had an invalid mother—the mother was French and she liked to speak the language—took the Little Fly in with them.

Can you see, Madame? She stepped so daintily from one boat straight into another. She was never, really, on the dry land, not until the very end was she on the dry land.

Those two, she said, were wonderful to her. Every one was wonderful to the Little Fly at that time. She must have been a beauty, a treasure, the sort that some old man would give a fortune for, with her shining hair, her dazzling eyes, her delicate body, and such hands and feet!

The young woman worked very hard, painting and teaching, to earn money for the mother besides taking work at the league that would let her become a teacher in a school out in your middle west. They were wonderful together, mother and daughter, the Little Fly said. Did she wish that she and her mother could have been that way? Well, her mother, Maggie wrote, had somehow lost her money; but that did not make much difference because she had work in a large *bibliothèque*, she was given plenty of money, she could be with books as much as she wanted. What do you think the Little Fly did? She sent Maggie every month half of her own money for the mother. Then she, herself, had money from her friend!

Imagine, Madame! She let her friend work, took money that might have been for the invalid mother to send to her own mother who did not need it, whom she never saw, who had done nothing for her even when she was a baby!

Those two took the Little Fly with them out to your middle west. In a new school that was being started, a settlement you call it, where poor persons come to learn to draw and weave and make pottery, there was need of some one to teach the very things that the Little Fly knew how to do well. She would work, too, the Little Fly said. She would earn money, like her friend, since she had given over part of her money to her mother.

I learned a great deal of English about that middle west.

Great dreary grain plains, not like our small bright fields; an enormously wide muddy river; very stupid people that have to be taught, taught, taught—they are never able to learn things of themselves—and very smoky cities because of a kind of coal which makes heavy draperies over everything. Am I right, Madame?

There in a smoky city, the Little Fly taught how to print on cloth with blocks. She worked, it seemed to me, like the Russians, the princesses, trying to earn money. They don't do it quite like other people. They are lost out of highborn families and try to be like others and cannot. She was like that, she could do things beautifully; but it was as if she were away from where she should be.

I never knew how she left those two. I think that they went away to another place, for the mother's health, perhaps. They had it all arranged that she should live with those who had started the school, a young man and his wife who believed in giving their lives for the service of others, like these rich Whitefields, only those two were very poor.

She was very miserable with them because the woman was having her first baby. The Little Fly could never see why babies had to be born. She was like the rich people that way. Things that happen because the world is made so, like men and women being together and babies coming, she took as if they were unusual, wrong almost, not nice. When she told me about her living there, I could see her all covered with dark smoke, her yellow hair soiled, her eyes not shining, and herself not laughing very much.

They told her at last—they must have felt sorry for her but also did not want her with them—that she was much too clever a person to be teaching poor foolish people. They had a friend who could do for her what they could never do, they had written to him, he was interested, he wanted her to come to him. That was in a city further east, where it was cleaner, she said, but the people were much harder.

My mind has roamed over your country, Madame! Such pictures! Perhaps they seem absurd to you who know your country well. I felt from them, at times, that I had lived there, I had seen your people; I understood him better.

She was in a big boat now, Madame, and it brought her over here. Yes, that was how she came to Europe. The man she went

to had a great *fabrique* for women's clothes and a shop where he sold pretty things. He wanted her to say whether or not certain colors could be used in the embroidering. She knew a great deal about designs, just the ones that he wanted to try to make; she could speak French. He asked her if she would come to Europe to buy for his shop. She was surprised, because it was exactly what she wanted to do. She never knew what was inside of her until some one told her what was there!

She loved it here, she said. She met all kinds of persons and they liked her. She was a *type*, you know, all of her own. She suited the man, her employer, exactly in her buying. She could have worked for him forever. What do you think she did! She gave the work over to some one else. I still can scarcely believe it. She had met one of her countrywomen who was clever at buying laces and embroideries, she had watched her, decided that that was the one who could suit the man better than herself, gave over the work immediately! She wrote to the man that she had a person who could do his work better than she, often she did not buy things because they did not suit her, but they would be all right for his shop. The other woman would buy the lesser things that were also good-looking. That would be better for the shop, more *democratic*, the Little Fly said. That was one of her beliefs, that everything should be *democratic*. I did not understand what she meant by that.

She gave over the work and she had no other. She had no money, only what remained from her last buying. She had made over all of her small income to the mother by this time because, Maggie wrote, the mother had had an accident, broke her leg or ankle, and could no longer be in the *bibliothèque*. She sat in the old house with heaps of books with uncut pages piled up around her and stacks of newspapers folded precisely. She leafed them over, looked at them a little the whole day long.

The Little Fly had also been sending her part of the money that she earned every month. Why did she waste money on that mother? What a fool she was, really! Sending nice messages, through Maggie, and money that she earned, to a mother who had never done a thing for her except to bring her forth! It would be as if I sent money every month to my father: "*Respecteuses félicitations, cher papa, argent de votre petite et loyale fille!*"

There she was, without work, without money. She was just the way she was when she was little and afraid to pick flowers. She would want to walk out in the moonlight, she said, and she could not. She would go to the window, look out, she would think how lovely it would be to be out in the moonlight. She would start to go, walk to the door, and then she could not. She would tell me this and look at me as if she wanted me to say something special to her. "But why didn't you go?" I would ask her. "I couldn't. I don't know why."

The man, her employer, knew how strange she was. When he found out positively that she would not do his work, he wrote to friends of his who were living here, the rich Americans. I think he must have written that she was a strange creature, she might even starve; perhaps they had something that a lady fine and delicate as she could do. Then it was that they made the Bureau for Students, took for her the apartment, gave her the piece of silk with clouds and dragons on it and the old greenish white vase. There she was, all settled in, as if waiting to take up my affairs with those honest neighbors of mine!

6.

Oh yes, she got well into my affairs, teaching me English! It was droll to watch her with the men, with him and with the music master, Croft. I could see how she must have been with the artists in her own country. She would run forward to them and then she would be sorry and run back. She was in love with Croft in a short time. That was perfectly plain. He was tall and fair and gentle, cool, with a way of looking straight out. He had a slow smile that ate her up. He seemed to comprehend her entirely, all at once, without the least hesitation. He would watch her fluttering about with the tea things. He was English, he liked his tea. It seemed to give him something special, her fluttering there, making tea, being in the room.

Could she have melted his coldness? Yes, Madame, there was a spot in him that never became warm. He never quite gave way. I felt the cold in him, Madame, as I felt the hollow in the other. Is it not strange to be so close to one, to have a life together with him, and still to have a strangeness, a secret place, that never becomes known? In some, everything is soft; it all takes place like the sun shining. In others, there is a stone that nothing ever

makes into earth. In him, there was a lump of ice. Could she have melted it?

If he had once opened his arms! He would not. He was an artist. He loved what he was doing. He loved me, too, in a way. We were something to each other, we were not lost in it; we worked out things in songs. He liked being with me. Still, I think those two might have done very well together. She was deep in it towards him.

With the other, she was impossible. She was always trying to make him take notice of her. He would look over her head as if she were not there. He was big and full of things. She was little, delicate; strong, too. She irritated him. He had a great deal in him that was trying to come out. That was why he talked so much, to get everything falling out of him so that he would be clear, like the fountain spouting up all those streams; they fall down into the basin underneath and come spouting up again.

She did not like him, really. She said, "Perhaps he is even a genius but he has made nothing from it." Every one who knew him expected from him when he was younger that he would paint wonderful pictures, write great books about art and thought. He never did these things.

Many came to him, begged him to do something for their sakes. He would never do it. Or could not. They wanted him to be something hard and fast and they would cling to it; it would be a sign pointing out things. He did not want that. He did not want to feel that he was anything for them. He wanted to be let alone to live his own way. I can understand that.

No one looked at pictures more than he—the oldest, the most modern. He knew what all the modern thing was about, Matisse, Cezanne. He first had examples of them. They would do what had to be done, he said. He made his small gallery then. You know perhaps, Madame, how that became a quarreling place for every one. No one knew what a value was, he would say. At that, they growled and grumbled. He showed pictures that he liked, that he believed in. He would not take any one's pictures who wanted the thing done for him. He took those who believed in themselves. Many spoke against him because of that. They brought their pictures and believed that he had power to make great artists of them. He would not. They went away saying that he had ruined them. They wanted him to be a magician, he said: so he gave it up at last.

I understand about him many things that I cannot say, even in the English that the Little Fly taught me. She could not teach me *his* English, *his* American: for what he has is something I have never heard of anywhere but in America, Madame. It has come in him out of a big country where his father made a fortune; out of an enormous country with great scenery, great ambitions, with great playing like that of children and also a great lack and wanting for something. There is a hollowness in him; but he does not know it because of so much above it in thick layers churning about, coming out and going in again.

The Little Fly could not know him at all, although she was his countrywoman. She could not know how full he was of things coming up inside of him. She would say that he was made of great material, as if he were a piece of cloth, but that the material was not used for the right purpose. Still, she tried to be something to him because of me, because she knew that I cared for him more than for any one. Through her, I came to understand him more, I don't know why.

She said that he was bad for me, because he was a great thing *manqué*. Croft, she said, was finer, he had higher ideals. Oh, how she talked of how splendid that man was! One could see that she was in an ocean of love for him. She wanted me to marry him! Yes, she was as queer with that as with her work that she gave over to another. She wanted to give him over to me. She said, "You know that I am fonder of you than of any one in the world. Won't you marry him because he will be the best thing that could ever be for you!"

She knew that I loved the other, that I would have married him had he wished it. He did not want to marry. He wanted to be with me, to help me, to make it that I should be of my own dependence. But he did not want to marry me; as he did not want to paint pictures or write books. That was nothing to me, marriage or not marriage. He was for me what he could be and that was more than any one had ever been.

"Do you really want me to marry Croft?" I asked her. She was pouring tea and it was as if she did not see me at all. "What for?"

"You will be happy together," she said. "You will have a beautiful life. You will be happy."

I pretended for a while that I might marry him, simply to tease her. She really meant it. Madame, if I had married him,

only to please her, I believe that she would have been contented; she would have been glad to see the other one go away from me. I liked Croft very much. I loved him a little. I let him be with me as he wanted. He did not want much. He would have done very well for the Little Fly in the matter of loving.

7.

The war came suddenly, Madame, as you know. The Little Fly was outside of Paris visiting a friend of hers, the wife of a physician. The last thing she said to me was to tell her please when she came back that I would marry Croft. When she came back, she was full of how she felt when she heard the guns rattling; how every one ran to the posting place, how the men and women read the posters and simply melted away. She had great amazement at seeing the men melt away into their war places, the women into the fields and shops. We are accustomed to that. We have the old knowledge. We know our places in war.

The doctor—he was also a sculptor—had been working on a fountain for his garden. He left the wet clay and came back to his doctoring. The Little Fly came with him. Her Students' Bureau was over, of course. Already, when she got here, people were killing and being killed. They did not have to have new lungs and teeth just to be killed.

They passed about slips of paper to have written there what each person could live on in case of siege, the very least that could keep life going, enough so that the person could work. The Little Fly talked with me, with the other women, about what we could get along on. She had to have what none of us even thought of to keep the life going inside that small body of hers, bread, white bread and milk, like a baby! She had not a sou. She had sent everything to her mother, before she went on vacation to her friends. She would not take any work that a Frenchwoman would do, that would not be right. She went to the rich people who had her Bureau and asked them what to do. She must do something, she said, that would be more than what she ate. They gave her good advice, to go back to her own country; and money for six months to live on so that she would be sure to find work.

She wanted to help France, the Little Fly. She left her place just as it was with all her things in it for any one who needed it. She had one little bag—she could not take much with her because

the boat would be full of people going home—and she filled the bag with newspapers, proclamations about the war. She would work for France when she got home, she said. She would make sympathy in America for France.

Madame, when she said good-bye to me, I felt very bad for her. I could not feel too badly because of France. She seemed useless, silly, with her bag of papers. I could see her being tramped on everywhere, sleeping on deck—they could not get her a cabin, only the promise of being on the boat—she would be pushed around, she was delicate.

That's just as she wrote of it, how she slept on deck and how nice the sailors were to her and how she landed in New York on Sunday morning. She was upset at how dirty the streets were with newspapers blowing about. She felt how quiet it was, no one thinking about Europe and how all the people were killing and being killed. She suffered very much because the people could not be made to be excited. She went to every one she knew, showed them proclamations, told them how bad it was for France. She could do nothing. They were far away from Europe. They were comfortable. Why should they become excited?

I had letters from her all the time, in English, and I wrote in English to show her how well I made use of her teaching. I could not always read her letters carefully because I was nursing the soldiers and singing to them. Some of her letters I did not read until long after. Oh, I was glad that I could sing! I worked, Madame. Like all the French women, I worked for France. I began to cough then. That was the first time I did not feel quite strong. I coughed and it bothered my singing and even the nursing. I felt weak at times. When I felt weak, I thought of the Little Fly.

Croft, the music master, went straight into the war. He was a brave man. The Little Fly knew of his going. She followed him, almost as if she were with him, everywhere he went; and wrote me each time where he had been transferred to, as if I had married him and wanted to know everything about him. I had not the time, she said; so she traced him from place to place and let me know.

She used up all the money the rich people had given her trying to get sympathy for France. Then she went to work, making drawings for magazines of fashion, decorations for children's rooms. She wrote that she was putting money together:

for my coming over there because of my cough. She found that she could not get me in. I was too well known.

She sent some one to *him* to speak of it. He had gone back to America, too, because there was nothing for him to do here in war time. He said that he would marry me, and then I would be sure to come in. That made the Little Fly feel better towards him. She wrote that for the first time she felt good in her heart about him with me. Would I please say that I would marry him and come over and have my cough cured? It seems, Madame, that they cure coughs easily in your country. They found out, then, that even if he married me, still I could not get in. They went to this one and that, to high officials, to low officials. Adrienne was too dangerous a woman for that great country! She might destroy it.

He wrote me that I was to go down into a certain place on the coast that would be good for my cough. I went. There I taught English to the soldiers the way the Little Fly taught me.

She wrote many letters to me there about herself, what she was doing, the friends she made, especially of the painter's wife who helped her with money and with finding work. She was making gas masks then for the soldiers, in a *fabrique*, because by that time your country had come into the war. Yes, that small thing worked all day, all week, making gas masks. I had to laugh at that. I was sad, too. That made me angry, so that I had many feelings all at once, as I had the very first time I sat in her place and drank tea with her.

She kept writing to me about Croft. She had to write at last that he was killed. The writing was weak, the ink seemed to fade away, as if the yellow was going out of her hair, the blue out of her eyes. The laugh was gone, too, and she seemed slow, as if she had lost her dainty, quick movements.

She began then to make the drawings. She was living at that time in a little room from which she could see many roofs and a tall chimney. It was on the chimney that she saw the pictures. She was very much excited about them. She had been drawing all her life; but this time it was different, she wrote. *She had only to look at the chimney, she saw there a picture, she copied it.* That sounded queer, but she had always been queer and I did not pay much attention. She sent me a sketch of the roofs, the sky at night, the stars and moon, and the tall chimney; her world, she called it. She gave up her work and stayed where she could copy

the pictures as they came to her on the chimney. She made stories about them and tried to sell them. From the painter's wife she had a sum of money each month so that she could work at nothing but the drawings.

She had hope again of bringing me to America. She must sell enough of the drawings to make the money to bring me over. She and I would live together. I would not marry *him*, but live with her and win my way to the very top of your great musical world.

At this time, Maggie wrote her that her mother had become very queer. She went up then to the old house where the beautiful gardens had been. Now they were in ruins, with weeds and shaggy bushes. Her mother did not know her, a poor witless creature who sat with books and papers heaped about her, leafing them over without looking at them.

The Little Fly wanted to do more than ever for her mother. She worked hard, borrowed money, and drew pictures from the chimney as fast as she could. Some she sold for children's rooms. Some very nice people offered her to come and live with them, all for nothing; but she would not leave the room for fear she might miss the pictures when they came to the chimney.

She went one day to hear one of those mind persons who tell how people become mixed up in their lives from things which happen to them when they are very young. She wrote me, that evening when she came home from the speaking. *She had wasted her whole life because of the close feeling she had for her father which had kept her ever from marrying! It was winter now inside of her, as it had been outside when her father died!* She was too old ever to make up for it. She would never make any more drawings.

8.

Madame, do you believe that her life was the way it was because of her father? Had she wasted her life?

Certainly, she changed a great deal after that. She was like a bird that had been fluttering for a long time and now was quiet. She took a position unlike any she had ever had, in a commercial house where she earned plenty of money. She did not seem to think any longer of the oriental feeling in art and democratic ways of living. She forgot all about herself and did everything for other people. Oh, she never bragged about it but I got it all

from her letters. She went at night where men slept in a park of yours and slipped pieces of money into their pockets; quarters, she said, because just that much would buy a breakfast. The young girls in the great office where she worked would bring lace, silk, feathers, flowers, whatever they had, and she would make hats for them. She went often, too, to see her mother who by this time had to be put into a large hospital of the government.

She began writing to me about a boy that she had discovered working in the big office where she was, a French boy who carried about the soap and towels that the rich company provided for those who worked for them. He was thin, in shabby clothes, he could not speak English. She spoke French with him and found that he had a good education, he had been studying to be an artist. Madame, she took the boy herself, as if he had been her son, to the painter to see if there was any way in which he could give him work. The painter took him into his work shop to do a certain kind of decoration. The Little Fly became his godmother. She taught him English every evening and helped him with his clothes and in many ways.

She was buzzing again, then, a very little. The boy did that. I liked her letters, Madame. In a way, letters I liked from her better than I liked it when she was with me. She bothered me when she was with me. She wanted something of me and I was unwilling. Now she was away from me, *he* was away, Croft was dead. She was peaceful, yes; but she was still wanting something of me, and that was to come to America and live with her. The war was over, she was sure that I could get in.

I do not know exactly how it happened but when he came back from America, he wanted to marry me. He was sure of it. Something had taken place in him. He wanted it and we were married. We talked about the Little Fly. She had been so good trying to get me to America, I said. Now Croft was dead, there was nothing for her. She liked France, she liked being here. Should it not be that she should come and live with us?

He was angry. For a long time, he was really angry. After a while, he said that it could be. I wrote a letter to her then, telling her that for a long time I had wanted her to come and live with us, with him and me, and now that could be. Would she not come?

I had a good feeling at writing that, Madame. I think it is the best feeling I have ever had, except, of course, my feeling for *him*. I wrote it in the most beautiful English that I could make.

A long time I waited. I came here to the Tuileries where we had been together. . . . Then came the letter from the painter's wife; with it, my own letter, unopened. She had been ill, something about the head that makes a bad operation. She went to the hospital suddenly. No one knew about it. She was unconscious. On her was only the name of the painter's wife. They telephoned to her but she was ill in bed. The painter himself went quickly to the hospital and sat there hour after hour, by the bedside of the Little Fly. He did not know whether or not she knew that he was there. He took her hand so that if she could know at all, she would feel some one was there. He never knew whether she felt it. That way she died.

They knew that she was a lady, they said at the hospital. They had treated her as a lady, in a room by herself, with good doctors and nurses. They did everything beautifully for her.

The painter's wife wrote me of it faithfully, just as the Little Fly had written everything, and sent me all her things. She wrote that many friends called over the telephone, not knowing that the Little Fly was dead: it was as if a message had gone out to them. That same woman who was the young artist with the invalid mother—the mother now was dead—called to know where the Little Fly could be found. "She is dead," the painter's wife told her, "and her ashes are here in the little Chinese cabinet that she gave me."

The friend said that she had a place out in the country where hills such as the Little Fly loved would be in bloom with spring flowers. "Send me the ashes," the woman said, "and I will scatter them on a hill where dogwood will be blooming." The Little Fly had loved that strong bush—she had made me a sketch of it—with its queer fragile flowers smudged a bit with color, very pure and white in spring woods.

The painter's wife called for the boy who was in her husband's work shop and gave to him the packet that had in it the ashes of the Little Fly. She did not tell him what he had there, only that it was very precious and that he should carry it out into the country to a lady there. He did that. And she scattered the ashes on a little hill where white dogwood would soon be blooming.

Her ashes they scattered. The drawings they sent to me. When I opened the package, I felt it like a needle through me. "The Little Fly buzzing again!" The buzzing was faint. I felt dreary, dreary. I could not smile. I looked at the strange beasts

and people there. She had seen them on the chimney, she had copied them to sell so that she could bring me over to her. I looked at them, one by one. I put them away. I went to the Café.

9.

When a person is living, you don't think much about him. You take him as he is. That's the way to live, isn't it? The person's there. It's all right. You'll see him some time. But when the person dies? When something is ended?

Is anything ever ended?

Her ashes are back to the earth over there. She, the little thing that buzzed, Madame, she *did* come to me, after all; not as I expected. She came washed in with colors by herself in the circles of India ink on the beautiful paper. All of her is there, from the first morning greeting to her father to the time when she listened to the lecturing woman. The Languishing Princess, she called the last drawing. That bothered me more than all the others.

He says, "You haven't a brain, really, in the strictest sense of the word. You don't think, really, in the exact sense of think." But don't I? Have I done anything else but think since that day? It has been coming to me very hard, slowly, very painful, Madame.

What was I to her? What was she to me? Was I something for her that she could never have of herself? Was she something for me in that way? Is there a third thing, without a body, that takes what it wants from this one and from that one for its life? I was a big woman who had lived all sorts of life. She was one who had been delicately cared for from the beginning. We came together. He is the best thing for me but he is not everything; I am not everything for him. And the music master? Would he have been everything for her? If I had been able to marry him, would then the thing have been whole?

I looked at the drawings many, many times. I changed them about on my walls—yes, at last she covered my walls, she would be pleased at that! Always I saw something else there. The Little Fly kept buzzing, you see. Oh, it was all so different from the way I saw her the first time when I sat in her room and felt that she was like the silk on the wall, the old prints, the vases, the lacquer box, the flowers. That was on top, Madame; it flowed

away easily and got put on the walls. Underneath, there was another thing; a whole other thing was going on deep underneath. I looked at the drawings and saw that; they flowed away and there were my own walls again, bare, the way I like to have them; but the pictures had been there . . . you understand, Madame?

I put the drawings together, then, and when he came, I said, "Take them. You will know what to do with them."

"Why should I take them?" he asked. "They belong to you."

"I want it that you should take them," I answered him. "You are the one who knows about pictures."

He leafed them over, feeling of the beautiful paper on which they were made, frowning; thinking. "Well . . . perhaps . . . well . . . maybe you will want to look at them again some day."

Why should I look at them again, Madame? Do I not know what was there? A Princess was there, Madame, truly inside of her, as I always thought, not the one that I thought. The Languishing Princess. She named it thus herself in the last drawing and it was so.

There was in her a Princess with a kingdom set high on a cliff above the ocean where no wave could wash against it, and a great strong wall to guard it. The Princess sat alone on the strong wall, looking at her kingdom, looking at the sea, at the sky. She sat turning over and over in her round birdlike head with the feathery topknot what it was all about, this business of her sitting on the wall; just the way she used to ask me questions, Madame: "And why couldn't I go out into the moonlight? Why couldn't I? And why?" Only now she was asking: "How did I come to be sitting here, an old-maid birdlike creature that was once a downy little bird putting up its beak to greet the face of the One who made my small round world perfect?"

Yes, Madame, she started way back that way, when she was by magic the little bird Princess greeting the handsome sungod; basking in the sun of his face, as they say in the English stories. Only he was not the Prince but the Old King himself, and perhaps that was why it all started wrong. There was no one else at all in her world, except that queer tiny figure that I have told you must be her mother. A decoration she made of that mother, in queer shape, the way she often made decoration of objects, something that must be there if something else is there—a mother must be if one is to have a father, *n'est-ce pas?*—and breaking

into an edge that would otherwise be too round. Do you understand, Madame?

"That's the way I lived, with the sun shining all the time," thought the old-maid Princess. "And now here I am, grown up, in possession of a kingdom, way off by itself with great mountains behind it and the great ocean in front." A kingdom! Alas, Madame, all the houses in her kingdom were empty. Her people would not live in them. No, they stayed out along the mountain tops looking down on her where she sat with her back to them, asking, "Now, why will they stay out there and not come into the houses that I have made so cleverly with red sloping roofs and a fine watch tower with a white flag on it?" Day after day, she sat there with a little shawl round her narrow shoulders, thinking, thinking, until her lower part wasted all away.

Who were her people, Madame? Why, all of us, the same ones that lived in her life, the sungod and the witch woman; the Singer, the Philosopher, the Prince. We were all there; not real, more like clouds over the mountains. But there was a very real figure, an evil creature, mocking, like one of those gargoyles on the Notre Dame, sitting near her, at ease, like a person who sits rudely in your room, who puts his feet on everything, who has no respect. I think that he must have asked her many times, "What are you going to do with me! I belong here, you know." A pet? She knew him well. She had got used to him. She managed to keep him a little away from her, while she sat on the wall, asking "Why, why, won't they go in?"

"Well, I'll go into one of the houses myself and maybe I can find out what is the matter," she said to her old grand-aunts—she had two lumpy old grand-aunts who sat always on a hump of ground, never saying anything, with some lumpy pets that never moved. "Maybe there isn't the right kind of paper on the wall. Maybe the dishes don't please them." The grand-aunts wouldn't answer. The Princess tried to open the door, but it wouldn't open. "I'll go down the chimney," she said, "and unlock the door. The door is shut, that's what's the matter. That's why they don't go in." She let herself down inside of the chimney. There must have been a great fire inside, it blazed up and sent her fluttering away with her long skirts scorched.

Well, they wouldn't go into the houses or they couldn't go in. That's how it was. Still they came often to the foot of the cliff on which her kingdom was and she could look at them. The Singer

came and perched on a shaggy little island—prickly like a piggy porcupine it was—out there in the water. What a stout fat bird she was! She opened her beak, her tongue flew up and down, the songs came out into the air and by magic turned into storks, knights on horseback, all sorts of things. Oh, how she could sing, that Singer! Madame, I had to laugh when I saw how she had made me! I felt that it was really *me*. With the Philosopher huddled up at the foot of the cliffs, listening carefully. "Is it worth something, this singing?" That was how he used to listen to me, all crouched down, small. How she must have studied him!

He was big enough when the Princess was around. He would go to the meadows by the sea with his book of learning, to meditate, where she would be walking at the very edge of the sand. He would not recognize her as the Princess. He would look at her with scorn, not her, Madame, but the little child's garment that had slipped off her and was walking by itself on the beach, waving back at him a little sleeve to make him think that she was there. That was only to trick him, Madame. She herself was right at his feet, a turtle-like creature, most homely, with a red spot on its head, nipping off delicate leaves from the bush at his very feet, meek; and he not seeing her at all.

Would she have liked to learn from him, perhaps? Well, he would not let her learn. No, he walked along with his book. And then he sat down, learnedly, in the sun on the sands, leaning on his cane, with his pet beast beside him. The Princess made believe that she was a cow and came towards him, as much as to say, "You are in my pasture, Sir!" That didn't disturb him. He simply looked away, as if it really was a cow. Then she changed herself into a potentate with great earrings and a long furred garment with a train, and walked straight up into his face. That frightened him. His hair stood up long and white from his head. "Why, I thought there was nothing but a cow and here you are a rich ambassador from foreign parts!"

Madame, you would be amazed at what she made of the Philosopher and the Princess!

She could not sit forever on the wall asking herself questions even if her lower part was all wasted away, the Princess. She had to go about a bit and see what there was in the world. She had an ugly servant who carried her wherever she wanted to go, a beastly creature with a huge flat head, bad eyes, a crooked strong mouth, a big belly, and strong crooked legs. "All right,

Madame! Where do you want to go? Ah, ha! You want to see the Stranger that comes to the island next to where the Singer is! Maybe he is a Prince! All right. Sit on my shoulders, pull your thin old skirts down and fasten them to this little band around my ankle so that you can't blow away."

He took her out to a little island where she could sit on his back and look over at the Stranger on the other island. *Quel désappointment*, Madame! It was only a one-eyed froggy creature that she saw, most evil-looking.

"I guess it's not the one out here on the sea you want," said her ugly servant. "You want the one on top of the mountain back of your kingdom, where you saw that handsome face looking over. All right. Come along. Tuck your feet up under you and sit on top of my head or you may fall off going up that steep mountain." Strong and determined he was, that ugly servant, angry at the way the Princess went round looking at strangers. "If you go up the mountain," he told her, "that little thing has to come, too." He showed her a queer lumpy animal, piglike, dressed in a neat little coat and bonnet, a horrid thing. "Yes, whenever you climb a mountain, that little thing is always at your heels!"

It wasn't so pleasant, was it, Madame, with a lumpy thing tagging along behind and up ahead on the edge of the sky the witch figure watching? But the mountain was lovely and green with plants growing and flowers. And go the Princess would. She balanced herself on the head of her ugly servant and they started up the mountain. "Oh, wouldn't it be lovely if I could go on and on until I came clear to the rainbow!" she thought. "Wouldn't it be lovely if I could be changed into a mild soft animal with a blunt meek nose and the Prince could be changed into a mild soft animal with a long meek nose and we would sit in flowing silken robes on white clouds on top of the rainbow stretched across the ocean in front of my kingdom and be happy forever afterwards!"

While she was thinking that, the mountain that had been all green was changed into snow and ice, slippery. The top where she had hoped to find the Prince was frozen, solid, into ice, a frozen head with a crown of ice and feather of ice sticking out like the head of an American Indian. Some one whizzed down by her on a winged horse, down, down, down. And that was the Prince.

Madame, that was terrible for the Princess. Her old servant got her down the mountain as fast as he could to her kingdom where she could look over the edge of the wall. There on the sands was the Prince, dressed in white furs, sitting down very flat, holding a white flag between his toes and looking up at the old sungod on his throne with his wise beasts on either side. Up against the cliff was that little turtle creature looking at the Prince.

The Princess' ugly servant did a bad thing then. He bumped her off his ugly head right over the cliffs toward the Prince, as much as to say, "Take her! Here she is! She ran up the mountain after you and here you are at the foot. Take her!" Her funny little shrivelled legs hopped out while she was in the air, she was ridiculous. Her little turtle stuck out its long neck and made a dreadful squawking noise at seeing her tumbling into the water.

Madame, when she came up out of the sea, she did not go to sit on the rainbow with her beloved. When she came up, there was no rainbow, no beloved, no kingdom. There was the One with the Tusk. He it was that rescued her. She found herself lying on his bosom in a narrow boat curved up at one end into a turkey head with a very red comb. She had become the meek animal with the blunt nose; but there was no animal with the long nose. There was only that fierce creature, like the eunuchs in the old fairy tales, with turbaned head and long tusk sticking out from his lower jaw, with his back hard against the end of the boat. She lay all languid on his breast, as if she had forever given over life, under a garland of three great leaves from which a golden-petaled flower with red center pushed up, looking out at a place in the sea from which rose up the long neck of a sea-serpent. Evilly, its slitted eye looked upon her. Three curved stems rose out of its head and on the end of each was a red-centered golden petal, as if, Madame, it belonged in some way to her, this dragon of the sea. White frothy foam was about it and about the boat. Was not that, Madame, perhaps the Prince waiting for her to change him with her touch from beast into man again? She could never do it. The old eunuch guarded her. Always the Princess languished. Always the dragon regarded her.

That was the last drawing. She had wasted her life, she said, because of the close feeling she had for her father, which kept her ever from marrying.

What is it to waste one's life? Was she that way because of

her father? What am I because of my father? Was it that I might have been a respectable woman, that I might have married, borne children, lived with one man all my life? Would I have wanted that? Might I not have been like her, never marrying?

I have thought about my father, Madame. Who was my mother? Was he afraid of her? May she not have been as strange as the Little Fly's mother? I have thought of that, too. Her mother was nothing to her, only she was somewhere in the world. Mine was nothing to me; she was dead. Was she not there as much, perhaps, as the Little Fly's mother? I mean, Madame, was not my father to me a certain way because of my mother, as hers was to her a way because of her mother? If one can say that something is because of any one except only himself. All that goes to something else and something else again. It isn't really fathers and mothers, is it, Madame, not really? It lies in one's self, doesn't it?

Then what is different, Madame? We began the same, *n'est-ce pas?* That is, *perhaps* we began the same. We are like queer sisters. We have something together; we have many differences. I will say to you what I wrote to the painter's wife: "She was the only decent woman who was kind to me." I feel good towards her. I feel *willing* that she should have been, that I should have known her, that all should have happened as it did happen. That makes it all very well, doesn't it, Madame, between the Little Fly and me?

WALDO FRANK

NEW YEAR'S EVE

A Play in Seven Scenes

To Leo Ornstein

PERSONS:

SAMSON MACSHANE	LAURENCE MACSHANE
ALBERT BENISON	ALAN MACSHANE
CALVIN LACLEDE	CLEO BENISON
LAURA MORRIS MACSHANE	LUCY LACLEDE
HOLT TRUBODY LACLEDE	TRUBODY LACLEDE
NANCY BOWE	MARTIN JAMES, *husband of Grace*
GRACE MACSHANE	ISIDOR HOCKSTER, *husband of Lucy.*

CHORUS OF SEVEN REVELLERS:

The gray-haired man	*The married woman*
The middle-aged man	*The prostitute*
The young man	*The girl.*
The boy	

PLACE AND TIME: *A great American city in the first part of the Twentieth Century.*

SCENES: I. *Sitting room of the* MACSHANES (*inner set*).
II. *The full divided stage.*
III. *Study of* SAMSON MACSHANE (*inner set*).
IV. *Same as Scene II.*
V. *Same as Scene III.*

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VI. *Same as Scenes III and V.*

(Intermission with dark house)

VII. *Same as Scene I.*

COSTUMES FOR SCENES ONE AND SEVEN: *It is essential that these be simple, salient, and easy for the audience to identify with the characters and to remember.*

HOLT: *A dark loose gown of the sort which suggests pregnancy.*

LAURA: *A sober but handsome housegown, suggesting the hostess of an informal evening, the young matron, a woman of natural good taste and simple means.*

NANCY: *A bright-colored, brilliant evening dress, suggesting gaiety and wealth.*

MACSHANE: *Stiff shirt, dark tie, gray trousers and a dark braided housecoat.*

LACLEDE: *A street suit of elegance and a bright tie.*

BENISON: *Dinner coat.*

In Scene I, the three men are about thirty years of age. HOLT *and* LAURA *are in the late middle twenties.* NANCY *is eighteen.*

SCENE I

SCENE: *An inner, central set, denoting the sitting room of* SAMSON *and* LAURA MACSHANE. *On either side, darkness. Above, rising from the extremes of the stage in an irregular pyramid, is a free design denoting the façade of the Great City: dull blocks of houses, brilliant skyscrapers over the room like a crown. On this highest level, there is a narrow runway (on which the* REVELLERS *appear). Behind the Great City, and on both sides, is the dark night-blue sky. It is a sky deep and starless, embracing the city as the city embraces the sitting room. The sky is dark, a few of the skyscrapers are illumined but not obtrusively or obsessively. The sitting-room of the* MACSHANES *is well lighted, however. There is an old fashioned chandelier of brass, with imitation candle gas jets and hanging crystals. Every detail in the room is saliently realistic, in contrast to the looming city scene above it. The wall is papered in some conspicuous late-Victorian design. The furniture is heavy, giving an air of solidity, permanence, conventionality, negative "good taste" and moderate means. No bright colors. To left of center door hang two "wooden" portraits,*

the parents of LAURA MACSHANE. *Left are two windows, left center is a little table, right is a long old-fashioned sofa. A second door right.*

AT RISE: *As the curtain rises,* HOLT, MACSHANE, LAURA, LACLEDE, NANCY, BENISON, *in this order from left to right, are seated in a vague semi-circle in the room.* HOLT, *in wide loose gown is in an armchair, sewing. She is pregnant.* LAURA *sits near the little table.* NANCY *and* BENISON *share the sofa,* NANCY *seated and* BENISON *reclining beside her and facing her and the others.* MACSHANE *smokes a pipe* LACLEDE *a cigar,* BENISON *a cigarette.*

A faint sound of horns and whistles: the early signs of the accolade of New Year's Eve.

HOLT (*sewing*). They're beginning already?

LACLEDE (*consulting his watch*). They're beginning early.

MACSHANE (*puffing hard at his pipe*). Well, it's not to be an ordinary New Year!

NANCY. A new Century. Think of it!

BENISON (*looking up toward the ceiling and blowing his smoke ceremonially*). You can't think of it.

LAURA. Why can't we think of it, Albert?

MACSHANE. Yes. Why can't we think of it?

BENISON. Why? Because it's not real.

MACSHANE. The new Century's not real?

BENISON. It's a mere phrase, of course. We'd have to have lived a hundred years, for it to be a new Century for us.

NANCY. Albert, darling, you've no imagination.

(BENISON *grunts.*)

LAURA. You're wrong, Nancy. Perhaps it's we who lack imagination calling it a new Century just because the year is 1900.

HOLT. Well, we can make it whatever we choose to call it.

NANCY. What times they're having on Broadway!

LAURA (*to* NANCY). I'm afraid, dear, you are finding this dull.

BENISON. Not at all. *This* is the new experience for Nan.

MACSHANE (*to* BENISON *and* NANCY). We are surely glad you two came in.

BENISON. When a gal celebrates every evening of the year, it should be a celebration for a change to be quiet.

NANCY (*to* BENISON). I wish you'd stop talking about this, as if it were medicine. I'd enjoy it all right, then. (*To* LAURA) Of course, dear, I'm glad to be here.

(*A little flurry of horns and whistles*).

BENISON. Are the people glad, because there's to be a new Century—or because the old one is over?

HOLT (*to* LACLEDE). There's a problem, dear, for the magazine to discuss.

LACLEDE (*elated*). Gad, yes! (*Glum*) But it's too late now. (*Turning to* HOLT) Why didn't you think of it in time for the January issue?

NANCY (*to* LAURA). I wish I'd come in time to see your two babies.

LAURA (*laughing*). Samson thought they ought to be allowed to stay up, too, to celebrate.

NANCY. How old are they?

LAURA. Grace is five. And Laurence is three.

NANCY (*laughs*). That's a little early, even for *this* age.

HOLT (*to* MACSHANE). You ceremonial old fellow!

MACSHANE (*puffing judiciously*). I suppose they *have* no conception of a Century.

BENISON. I suppose you think *you* have?

HOLT. I might have brought Lucy, then.

NANCY. How old is Lucy?

HOLT. Two years and four months.

LACLEDE. The kids could have philosophized for us upstairs. Sam would have been satisfied.

MACSHANE. Say what you like. It does make one pause all the same. A new Century—a new Era. Pause and meditate.

BENISON (*half rising from the sofa*). Sam MacShane, how did I ever come to be the friend of an old woman like you? Pause and meditate, because to-morrow's paper will be dated with a new set of figures! 1900 in place of 1899. What a marvel. To begin with, you can't pause. You'd have to get off the earth to pause. And meditate—about what?

LAURA. About what is coming?

LACLEDE. What we're catching up to, since as you say we can't pause.

HOLT. If only we knew.

LAURA. What would it mean, if we knew?

BENISON. If we knew the future? That would mean the future already was.

NANCY (*as if relieved*). And that's impossible.

MACSHANE. It's too bad you didn't stay at College, Albert,

instead of quitting after Sophomore year—and being bored by it —and visiting India and China and other crazy countries. You'd have your feet more on the ground to-day; eh, Calvin?

LACLEDE. Oh, don't worry about him. He's canny enough. He spins his fairy tales, after Wall Street closes. No woolgathering for Albert at the ticker.

BENISON. You don't get the point of my career at all. None of you. (*Sits up straight on sofa*) Nan, if you really are going to marry me—

NANCY. I am! And don't you forget it. And in fourteen more days—

BENISON. Then, my dear, before it is too late, you should be told—

LAURA (*nervously but making a joke of it*). Albert. Don't frighten her, please.

BENISON (*ignoring the interruption*). You should be told, I am a deeply misunderstood man. (MACSHANE *and* LACLEDE *laugh.*) Here are Samson MacShane and Calvin LaClede, with whom I went to college. They are my friends. They ought to know me. They don't. (*Turns to them*) You're a couple of plodders. Worms. You move and see and think—only in straight short lines. All of my life—

HOLT. All your life, Albert! You're still a boy.

BENISON (*turning back to* NANCY). That fits in, too. I was going to remark, my dear Holt LaClede, that all of my life I have been moving in *curves*. When I saw a point, I went round it. That means I never got to the point. That means the point—the point of life—life itself, perhaps, was always just beyond me.

LACLEDE. And always will be?

BENISON. I don't know. But if so, I shall always be young. . . .

NANCY. When you find yourself steering straight for something, you swerve?

BENISON. Always.

NANCY. Well, you shan't swerve around marrying me, my dear.

BENISON. Who can say?

MACSHANE. Don't be frightened, Nan.

HOLT. If Albert didn't frighten her a little, I don't think she'd like him.

MACSHANE. That's part of his method, eh?

LaClede. Won't you put this philosophy of yours on paper? I'll print it in "The Torch."

Benison. No, thank you. Your readers would listen to me. But not because my philosophy is good. Merely because I happen to have made money. The next month, they'd listen with the same obscene gusto to some skinflint's philosophy—because he had made money, too.

LaClede (*injured*). When you went on the street, you traded in ways that would bring you in a profit? Well, I run a Magazine—

Holt. Not just to make money, Calvin! Don't give that impression.

LaClede. I trade in ideas. Most periodicals don't. They deal in penny thrills and dollar facts. I cater to the new America's new hunger for thought. But any trade must make a return.

Benison. You protest too much. I suspect you know that there's one wonder, even the twentieth century will not bring: a paper dealing honestly with ideas and making a profit.

MacShane. I'm not so sure. I have more faith in America than that.

Holt. You have faith in yourself, Sam.

(Laura *passes her hands over her head as if it ached.*)

MacShane. Of course, we're not perfect. But we're clean and above board.

Holt. You will always judge every one by yourself, Sam.

MacShane. Dear Holt, are you trying to insinuate that I'm a bit better than the rest of us here?

Laura. Perhaps she's right, dear.

MacShane. Not a bit of it. (*There is a louder flurry of horns and whistles.*) Even Albert is not the bad man he puts on to be. I used to think you were pretty dreadful, Al. I admit it. At college—fresh from the Dakotas.

Laura. Are you sure, Sam, you see him at all.

MacShane. A lawyer sees a good lot. I have yet to meet a really bad man, I tell you.

Benison. What is a bad man?

MacShane. One who does harm.

Benison. Your definition makes me tremble for God.

MacShane (*getting up and pacing*). Words—words—words.

Benison. I resent your defense of me. I don't want it. I'm

not as easy to grow noble about—to grow magnanimous about—as you imagine.

MACSHANE (*stops in front of* BENISON). Let the new Century tell. (*There is a pause.*)

LAURA (*with a feverish pass, again, of her hands over her brow*). It seems real! With its secrets, with its veiled promises and threats!

BENISON (*searchingly*). Does it seem good to you, Laura?

LAURA. It seems real.

HOLT. Laura, dear, you have a head-ache.

LAURA (*deliberately*). Yes. It seems good.

BENISON. It seems good to us, because it has not yet failed us. It seems fair to us, because it has not yet cheated our challenge.

LAURA. It *is* real. We can make it real!

BENISON. We make it real? How wrong and foolish you are. We shall make it unreal. The past—is that real? Our bungling fingers have destroyed the present—until it melted into the unreal past. Wait till we get at the future—we, with our bungling hands. We will turn it, too, into mist.

HOLT. If we can only hold on to our Dream. Then it will be real.

NANCY. I hope my good times are going to be real.

BENISON. We're a lot of children. That's all that is real. Not your dream to be a great editor, Calvin. (*To* NANCY) Not your endless celebration of your nothingness, my future mate. (*To* MACSHANE) Not your plans, my friend, for dispensing justice—for creating virtue—by means of the Law. But we're children. That's real. (*Horns and whistles*) With our building-blocks of the to-morrows.

LACLEDE. The whistles are thicker.

NANCY. You can hear the steamers. The Sea comes nearer.

LAURA (*rising*). I'm going down to get a bite for us.

HOLT (*rising*). Dear, is that ache still there?

LAURA. Oh, it's nothing.

HOLT (*passing her hand over* LAURA'S *brow*). Which means, it is torture . . . Let me do it, Laura. Come, Nancy. You'll help? (*To* LAURA) I know your kitchen as well as my own.

LAURA. Everything is ready.

LACLEDE. Let's make it a general raid on the ice-box.

NANCY. Will you come too, Albert?

BENISON. No.

MACSHANE (*to* LAURA). Could I steal a look at Laurence and Grace?

LAURA. Why did you come home so late, dear?

MACSHANE. An important conference. The Consolidated are going to sue.

LAURA. And you—

MACSHANE. Yes. I'm in it.

LAURA. And you tell me *now.*

MACSHANE. I was looking for the proper moment. Everything was so rushed when I came in. And dinner was waiting.

LAURA. You strange, strange fellow!

MACSHANE. Nothing of the sort. There must be the right setting for great news. You wait till *you* have something to tell *me.*

(BENISON *has returned to his sofa, reclining. The others are grouped toward center door.*)

MACSHANE (*to* LAURA). Let's have a peek at Laurence and Grace.

(*Exeunt* HOLT, LACLEDE, NANCY, *center door.*)

MACSHANE. Al, you'll excuse us a moment? I came in too late to see the boy and girl. I want one last look at them, in the nineteenth century.

BENISON. Look as long as you like. I'm comfortable.

MACSHANE (*laughing*). Come, Laura. (*Exeunt* LAURA *and* MACSHANE, *center door.*)

(BENISON, *alone, lights a fresh cigarette. His head is propped high on the sofa. He displays great and growing restlessness. Crushes cigarette in the ash-tray. Rises half way. Lights another and again reclines. Gets up. Faces about. Sees nothing. Faces toward center door at last, steadfastly. Enter* LAURA, *center door.*)

(BENISON *makes a few steps toward her.* LAURA *goes to left, facing right.* BENISON *is at right, facing left.*)

LAURA. Samson went down to help the others.

BENISON. Did you want him—

LAURA. I sent him.

BENISON. You wish to speak to me, Laura?

LAURA. I wanted to see you alone.

BENISON. You have something to tell me?

LAURA. No, Albert. I wanted to see you alone, in order to

know that seeing you alone made, now, no difference to me.

BENISON. You are cruel. Cruel to us both. I have been waiting for more than two months.

LAURA. You had no reason to wait.

BENISON. No reason, Laura?

LAURA. I never gave you any reason to believe that I had changed my mind.

BENISON. What are men to do, when women turn reasonable? You are monstrous.

LAURA. No Albert. Only certain.

BENISON. You are monstrous! And you think you are acting the dutiful wife and mother.

LAURA. Call it that, if you wish.

BENISON. And what lives between us—has no right at all?

LAURA. Whatever right it has, let it live on that! I can give it nothing.

BENISON. Then at least you have not forgotten.

LAURA. Albert, Albert—

BENISON. Say, at least, that you will never forget.

LAURA (*clasping her breast*). I may never forget.

(LAURA *and* BENISON *have not changed their position. Now, at center door, appears a boy, pale, in a black suit which almost merges in shadow. It is* ALAN. *He stands motionless.*)

BENISON. Admit it was no accident for you, no momentary magic of our love. Admit it was the sudden flower of what was long sown in you.

LAURA. Do we not know—?

BENISON. You are suffering. You are not well.

LAURA. I shall be well in time.

BENISON. You are thinking of yourself. Yes. That is the horror I see in your eyes: the horror when a woman's passion turns to reasonableness. You are thinking only of yourself, and of what lives through you. The Race. Can you not think of me?

LAURA. I will not, Albert.

BENISON. You stand there rigid, like a woman possessed. You have your plan. I do not figure in it. But you shall see me clear, at least, before you go your reasonable way. I insist you shall see me.

LAURA. I am certain. I am not afraid.

BENISON. You will not let me marry Nancy Bowe!

LAURA. Yes. You will marry her.

BENISON. You love me. If you will only let yourself know that you love me. And you allow this? You can refuse to save me?

LAURA. It is no use, Albert. You can tire me. You cannot wear me away.

BENISON. Laura, I am a man of strong blood and no ideals. Only you. I have always loved you. I turned against you first, because I loved you. Because you alone stood between me and my idolatries. I could not give in to you then. I should have been conquered by you. I should have become, in my acceptance of love, a man. A man who gave up all the pleasant rotten arts of his life—all those subtle offerings to desire and indolence which I called the art of my life. So I turned against you, Laura. Oh, I could have won you—if only I had won myself. And Samson got you.

LAURA. And when I was safe away, in another man's hands, in another man's life, then you were safe to tell yourself you loved me.

BENISON. That's true. I was a coward. I dared not face my caring for you, while the way was clear to make you care for me. You would have changed me.

LAURA. You are not changed.

BENISON. Give me the chance to show you. Give me hope.

LAURA. I am a wife and a mother.

(*At word "Mother,"* ALAN *stirs and moves a step forward.*)

BENISON. Is there nothing else in the world? I ask nothing impossible. I ask only that you say: "Do not marry Nancy."

LAURA. I want you to marry her.

BENISON (*pause*). You want me to rot from your sight.

LAURA. I did not choose her for you.

BENISON. I am not sure even of that. I thought I chose her, as a threat to you. A last appeal. Why not? What do I ask of you? Only that you should say: "I care." Only that. "I care what happens to the soul of the man in whose arms I have lain once—whom I have always loved." And you refuse. You are an enemy. Very well. Let me rot. Nan will help that. She is the flower of decay. If I am to make a bonfire of myself, Nan is a good match.

LAURA. You don't know Nan. She will love you.

BENISON. Do you love me?

LAURA. I shall never see you again alone. I shall never talk with you again alone.

BENISON. God may forgive you. For you do not know what you are doing.

LAURA. Do I not know what is in my heart? . . . What is under my heart?

BENISON. Laura! (*He draws closer to her.* ALAN *steps forward too, toward left, so as to be a bit closer to* LAURA.) Laura, what do you mean?

LAURA. There is no reason why I should not tell you. I am not afraid. I am going to have a child.

BENISON. My child? (*She is silent.*) Tell me.

LAURA. I will not tell you.

BENISON. You dare refuse me?

LAURA. I refuse to tell you.

BENISON. And if it is mine—

LAURA. I have considered that. It makes no difference.

BENISON. No difference?

LAURA. And if you were the father of this child—? That you might say "I am his father," my two other children should lose theirs? or lose their mother? I am the mother. I choose.

(BENISON *gives a silent gesture of abandonment and helplessness.*)

LAURA. You want to use the words "I am his father." They will hoist you to haven. They will give you the courage and the strength you lack. To win repose for yourself from the storm of your senses. You shall not use my child!

BENISON. My child—my child—?

LAURA. You will not know. You will not say. I am so sure of that that I have told you.

BENISON. What am I?

LAURA. This is my house. It goes under the name of my husband. It is his. I am his. And all this is mine. This child is here already. In this home. Here he will be born. Here he will belong.

(*Her words have appeared to draw* ALAN *farther into the room. In his motions, he is a visible register of what is passing between them. The man and woman face each other. Now are heard the voices of the returning laughing guests.*)

BENISON. You hate me, Laura, because of the most wondrous hour in your life.

LAURA (*melting*). Oh, if you knew—

BENISON (*beaten by her appeal*). Then, I can not understand.

LAURA. We will see each other, Albert. Only not alone. You must be Samson's friend. Perhaps you will understand.

(*At center door appear with loud laughter* NANCY, HOLT, LACLEDE, SAMSON *last.* ALAN *passes them going directly before* SAMSON, *who stops short—not seeing but feeling something.* ALAN *exits through center door. They carry platters, bottles, etc., which they dispose on the little table.* SAMSON MACSHANE *lingers in the rear, near door, as if troubled.* BENISON *holds aloof to right.* NAN *goes up to him.*)

LAURA (*forcing herself back into the spirit of hostess*). Oh, how dreadful of me to let you do all this!

LACLEDE. Is there anything we left downstairs? I don't think so.

LAURA. And my headache is all gone.

HOLT. Good. (*To* LACLEDE) Here you. Don't tip that plate. I made sandwiches, dear, of the ham. That's why we were so long.

(*The horns and whistles make henceforth a steady undertone.*)

NANCY (*turning round from her scrutiny of* BENISON). Calvin ate two, downstairs.

LACLEDE. S-sh! Didn't I offer you one for hushmoney?

NANCY. I'm incorruptible.

LACLEDE. You mean, you're not hungry.

(*Nan turns closer to* BENISON, *again.*)

LACLEDE (*laughing*). That reminds me of a good one. They tell it of a Judge in the South——

(*There is a silence; sudden after the jollity of their return, as if at last they felt something, they all turn toward* SAMSON.)

LAURA (*aware of her husband's strange lingering in the rear, near the door*). What are you looking for, Samson?

MACSHANE (*as if aroused from a dream*). Eh? What is that?

BENISON. What is it, Samson?

NANCY. Well what is it? Are you two men haunted?

MACSHANE (*bewildered*). Are we all—yes. Of course, we're all here.

BENISON (*earnest*). Why do you ask?

LACLEDE. And not a drop yet has he had!

HOLT (*frightened*). Samson!

MACSHANE (*recovering*). How absurd of me. We're all here. I suppose I'm a bit tired.

LAURA. Dear!

BENISON. What did you think?

MACSHANE. I thought—as I came in—some one else was here.

LACLEDE. Count noses! Come. Every lady and gent, present, will kindly consent to be searched for the missing guest.

NANCY. What did you see, Albert?

BENISON. I?

NANCY. Your face was queer enough, too.

(BENISON *sits, striving to be casual.*)

MACSHANE. Oh, come. Let's forget the nonsense. (*They move to their old seats*—HOLT *and* LAURA *busied at the table.*) I guess I need a drink.

BENISON (*suddenly jumping up*). Traitor! Traitor! You are a traitor, MacShane.

MACSHANE. What?

BENISON. A traitor to your senses. (*They all smile in relief.*) Why do you deny your senses? Just because your damned reason—

NANCY. This is a queer New Year's Eve.

HOLT. Come, Albert.

LAURA. A new Century's Eve.

MACSHANE (*laughing and fully recovered*). A new life in us all . . . Perhaps that's what slipped into the house.

LACLEDE (*raising his champagne glass*). I give you the old Century. It has put us here. It has made us what we are.

BENISON. Yes. What we are. . . .

MACSHANE. I feel . . . I admit it without shame . . . solemn to-night. I feel . . . right. I can not see the future. I feel it. It is good. I say Yes to it. (LAURA *who is seated close to him takes* SAMSON'S *hand and holds it against her mouth as he continues.*) Let the future come! We after all are it. How can we deny it, without denying ourselves . . . our loves, our dreams, our faith? We are not faultless: we are not without fear. Yet we go on. There is something deeper than all fear, else we should die. I do not forget that we are ordinary folk. So much the better. So much the clearer that *we* and the New Century are one. I am a lawyer. I shall have an ordinary bread-and-butter career. I shall be the father of ordinary, happy, decent children. I shall try honestly to do my duty. The same is true of LaClede,

although he is cleverer than I and will go farther. True of Albert, who is the cleverest of us all. He too is settling down. He too, like Cal and me, will be the father of children. And as a sign of our welcome of the unborn future, I propose a toast. To the children unborn. (*Bowing to* HOLT *and* NAN) God bless them!

(*They all drink. The light in the room begins to grow gradually dim as the whistles and horns increase in volume.*)

HOLT (*half to herself*). God bless us.

LACLEDE (*rising with glass in hand*). I too feel particularly good, this particular New Year's Eve. But not so modest as you Sam. Granted we are ordinary people. And yet . . . does every farmer's boy in South Dakota beat his way East like you, take highest honors at College and make himself at thirty a lawyer with a practice? Do many boys from the western wheatfields win a wife like Laura Morris of Worcester, Massachusetts? Is she ordinary? I ask you. As little as my wife, who was Holt Trubody, editor in her own name, before she condescended with a weakness worthy of her glorious sex, to become mere Mrs. LaClede. I pass over myself. I have not only my dream, but my plan. But I pass over myself. I am going to assemble for the first time in our land the Great Intelligent Minority. That will be my distinction, my power. But I pass over myself. I come to Albert and his lively lady. Are they ordinary? Look at her. Who could resist her? Who indeed would dare speak for her? Let her speak for herself.

NANCY (*rises as* LACLEDE *takes his seat*). Thanks. What do you want me to say? If I thought you were ordinary, I'd cut you dead. Honest I would. But I like you. I promise you one thing. The new Century'll be doing very well, if it makes our class.

(*She makes a tiny pirouette and as she faces to rear of stage,* ALAN *reappears at center door. Laughing, she resumes her place on the sofa.*)

LACLEDE. Bravo!

MACSHANE. Amen.

BENISON. Leave the new Century alone.

LAURA. We cannot.

LACLEDE. We go before to meet it. We challenge it.

(*It is much dimmer. The din is greater, outside.* ALAN *approaches through center, behind* MACSHANE.)

BENISON. That's enough, LaClede. It evidently accepts your challenge. It is coming.

MACSHANE. —it is upon us.

(*The skyscrapers have grown brighter in a glow, and the sitting room is so dim that the six are almost invisible*—ALAN *who stands alone is clearer.*)

(NANCY *suddenly screams.*)

ALAN (*in a voice sharp with command and yet warm with sympathy*). Be quiet, Mrs. Benison.

(*The sitting room is blotted out, as the off stage merry making rises to pandemonium. The façade of the city is suddenly brilliant. Appear, on the upper level, the* SEVEN REVELLERS.)

(*They are all dressed in evening clothes. They have horns, whistles, streamers, noise-machines, rattles. They shout, scream, laugh, sing. They dance about on their runway—back and forth. The gray-haired man is the gayest and the leader of the revels.*)

(*Suddenly, they disappear and the noise goes too. The entire stage is dark.*)

(*After a pause, there succeeds to the momentary silence, a heavy, steady, muted Pulse, far off, like the beat of a distant sea. This keeps up until the second scene is well under way.*)

SCENE II

SCENE: *The Full Stage is divided left and right. The left is the low level* (*called Left Stage*). *It represents in the simplest forms an interior of a room with left window, center door, right wall. The right* (*Right Stage*) *is reached by a gradual passage from center, and is raised like the flat level of a hill, ending like a precipice to extreme right. Behind it and abruptly to right is the limitless blue sky of the cyclorama. All of the background of the City, as visible in Scene I, is gone, except the uppermost central skyscraper peaks with the third, the highest platform on which will appear the* REVELLERS. *The passage from Right Stage to Left Stage is arranged so that the character who enters the "interior" for a moment disappears ere he passes through the door. The Right Stage is arranged so that characters can either reach it from Center Stage up the passage, or can suddenly appear on it or disappear from it, to extreme right.*

AT RISE: *It is bright blue day. The City heights are dim and*

unilluminated. Left Stage is empty. On Right Stage are ALAN *and* LAURENCE.

ALAN, *clad exactly as in Scene I, but no longer pale—rather a robust clear lad—lies at extreme right, his head on his palms, peering into the distance right.* LAURENCE *stands and faces directly down stage.* LAURENCE *who is 21 is clad in a tight-fitting suit of light green.* ALAN *is 17.*

On Right Stage.

ALAN (*lifts himself on his arm, turns toward* LAURENCE). What are you looking for, Laurence?

LAURENCE (*without budging*). You know. You seem to know. What do *you* find?

ALAN. The night and the sea. The sea is dark blue like a great agate. There is thunder in it. Above it is the moon, a single eye peering from heaven. But the sea gives nothing; it does not shine back to the moon. It does not move. Opaque. Before the eye of the moon are shapes of mist. They dance and flee, some upward and some downward. They are changing ever. They are always there. Under the moon I can not see them. Over the moon they are lost. They have their moment of visibility between the moon and the sea. The mists remind me of men.

LAURENCE (*who has been watching, not listening*). She is coming.

ALAN. You see Cleo always.

LAURENCE. She is a miracle. How could Cleo come from such a mother? Aunt Nan Benison—a brittle, hard thing. Uncle Albert Benison—cleverness sunk in fat. To think of Cleo springing from such parents.

ALAN. What are you going to do with her, brother Laurence?

LAURENCE. You tell me. What can one do with beauty? When one encounters loveliness alone, so alone in the world, what can one do? (*Pause while he goes on gazing*) I wish she would hurry. I tire quickly without her.

ALAN. And with her, dear brother Laurence?

LAURENCE. I burn.

ALAN (*still looking to right as his brother moves forward*). Something is wrong with us. What has sickened the world? It retches and it vomits. The World War was but a spasm. Father who has worked with such good will is bewildered. He looks with empty eyes at his crowded hands. And mother sorrows. What do

we children mean to them? We are not their will, we are not their desire. Are we their way?

(CLEO *appears suddenly to right before* ALAN. *She is a slim girl of 16, slender, lovely, dark, vivid. She, too, is clad thinly in shrill green, her dress a sheath that reveals all her body. Her hair is short.* LAURENCE *takes her in his arms; while* ALAN *not looking at them goes on talking, the pair stand in quiet embrace.*)

ALAN. Perhaps I shall find the answer. But what must I look to? How strange that I should seem to know more than my father. He is a great lawyer, a strong man, a stern and solid Judge. The people admire him. "Honest Judge MacShane" they call my father. And I know nothing. Why is that more than he knows? (*Pause while* ALAN *turns and looks at them; then turns back.* CLEO *and* LAURENCE *silently caress each other.*) Mother will worry when she knows of Cleo Benison and Laurence. There is darkness in this. And mother loves Cleo as well as her own boys, as well as her daughter, Grace. Mother seems very close to all that belongs to Albert Benison.

CLEO. Are you free to-morrow?

LAURENCE. I make no further pretense at studying. There is nothing to study, now that I have known you.

CLEO. But I know nothing, Laurence.

LAURENCE. We can not know this hot anguish sealing our lives from every other knowledge. Then let us know, dear, that other knowledge must be sacrilege. Let us accept this ignorance, bearing us like a mother. I have lain with you; and holding you close so that your blood and mine pulsed in one jet together, I have been far from knowing anything. This is my God, then; this loved ignorance.

CLEO. But dear! You must pass your examinations. You must earn your living as a lawyer. We must be married.

LAURENCE. None of this. I will kiss you, and then I shall die.

CLEO. Laurence!

LAURENCE. Why must we trudge through fifty years, when we have found the goal? (*They kiss.*)

ALAN. Mother will be unhappy when she knows of Laurence and Cleo.

(*Left Stage appears* GRACE, *the daughter of the* MACSHANES. *She is a woman of 23, tired, drab, dressed in poor gray. She comes in center door, dragging to center a plain wooden table*

which she proceeds to set with coarse dishes as the talk goes on, on Right Stage.)

CLEO. My mother suspects.

LAURENCE. Let her.

CLEO. My father would understand.

LAURENCE. I think your father has always loved my mother.

CLEO. My mother is hard.

LAURENCE. We will ride to-morrow.

CLEO. To our mountain lake.

LAURENCE. We will strip off our clothes.

CLEO. We will swim together.

LAURENCE. We will float together in the deep waters and look at the sun standing upon the crest of pointed trees. We will be tempted to die, within each other's arms.

CLEO (*smiling*). We will return to the glade, stroking fast. We won't die.

LAURENCE. Not yet.

CLEO. We will lie in the shade.

LAURENCE. Naked, drinking our milk.

CLEO. The horses will doze.

LAURENCE. They will gallop us home.

CLEO. Your breast will smell of their sweat.

LAURENCE. Your mouth will taste of milk.

(*Left Stage,* MARTIN JAMES, *husband of* GRACE, *has entered —drably dressed in brown. He is a man of 30: intellectual, nervous, ineffective. As the talk shifts to Left,* CLEO *and* LAURENCE *sit, facing forward, hands clasped.* ALAN *still faces extreme right.*)

On Left Stage.

MARTIN (*hangs his slouch hat on a hook and sits down at table*). Good evening, Grace.

GRACE (*eagerly, wearily, anxiously*). Martin, dear! (*She runs and kisses him.*)

MARTIN. Supper ready? I'm hungry.

GRACE. If you want—(*Hesitating*)

MARTIN. What is there to eat?

GRACE. Mother said—

MARTIN (*irritated suddenly*). What is there to eat?

GRACE (*reluctantly*). There's some cold pork—and potatoes.

MARTIN. Well? Bring it on.

GRACE. Mother said, Dear, we should come to them to dinner.

MARTIN. No.

GRACE. She's calling for us, in the car. Father, too. She's getting him first at Court.

MARTIN. We go there too often.

GRACE. You know they love to have us.

MARTIN. It's sweet for Judge MacShane to give me charity.

GRACE. Martin!

MARTIN. It's harder to receive it.

GRACE. You call it charity—when mother and father—

MARTIN. Bring on the cold pork.

GRACE. If you would only let father really help you! All you need is a chance. And he so longs to help you.

MARTIN (*standing up and pounding on table*). Bring on the cold pork!

GRACE. It is you who are cruel. You punish us, mother and father and me. You would rather be poor, so long as we suffer, than succeed, if that would make us happy.

MARTIN. Will you serve our supper?

GRACE. What will I say to them, when they come?

MARTIN. Leave that to me.

(*Exit* GRACE, *left;* MARTIN *slumps on table; Right Stage* ALAN *suddenly rises, uneasy.*)

On Right Stage.

ALAN (*to* CLEO *and* LAURENCE). Will you be coming down?

CLEO (*laughs*).

LAURENCE. Never.

(*Exit* ALAN *right. Left Stage re-enter* GRACE *with dish. She puts it on table, seats herself and the pair begin gloomily to eat.*)

On Left Stage.

GRACE. It's because you hate me. You are ruining your life to punish me. Because you no longer love me.

MARTIN. Why don't you change your work-clothes when you sit down at our festive board?

GRACE. I have one good dress. If I stained that in the kitchen—

MARTIN. Why wear a dress at all? Can't you sit naked with your husband? No dress at all is better than a drab one.

GRACE (*she is cheered by his spurt of energy and laughs*). Martin!

MARTIN (*giving up*). I'm tired.

(GRACE *jumps up to comfort him. There is a knock Left Stage. Enter* LAURA *and* JUSTICE SAMSON MACSHANE. LAURA *is gray and a little less erect.* MACSHANE *is gray but still in full vigor. He is dressed in a cutaway, she in a deep purple suit.* GRACE *kisses her parents.* MARTIN *ungraciously rises.*)

LAURA. Why, my dears! We were going to take you home to dinner!

GRACE. Martin was so tired, and so hungry.

MACSHANE. I'll set you up, old man—as soon as we get home.

LAURA. It's not too late. You've just begun. (*A painful pause*) After, we did so want you to go with us to the LaCledes. Trubody is back from France. Holt would have been so happy.

GRACE. And is it true?

LAURA. Her boy is blind.

MACSHANE. Gassed and blind. (*Pause.*)

MARTIN. We'll go with you if you want. If you think they'll care to have us.

(GRACE *replaces table to side, where she found it; removes dishes, leaving room as it was when she first entered.*)

MACSHANE (*brightening*). Home first. I'll give you a good cocktail, Martin. Two if you want.

MARTIN. Legal ones, your Honor?

MACSHANE. Well—not more than twenty percent illegal.

(*Exeunt Left Stage omnes; Right Stage,* CLEO *and* LAURENCE *have been sitting as if in a reverie, looking ahead.*)

On Right Stage.

CLEO. It is time for you to go home, Dear.

LAURENCE. It is never time to go home.

CLEO. Good-by to you.

(*She turns off.* LAURENCE *goes down left and disappears.*)

(*Enter Right Stage* ALAN *and* NANCY BOWE BENISON. NAN *is dressed in bright red. She is harder of face, faded—but still firm and slight in figure. They come up alongside of* CLEO *whom they do not see.* CLEO *does not see them, but at once she moves to extreme right, and stands on the edge of the precipice, looking over where* ALAN *lay.*)

NANCY. What are you doing with me, here? I don't like it.

ALAN. You don't like me.

NANCY. That is true.

ALAN. I'm sorry, Mrs. Benison. But you will soon see why I brought you.

NANCY. You're a strange one, Alan. But so is your father.

ALAN. Father—strange?

NANCY. Perhaps you don't know your father, my sweet boy.

ALAN. Why should you sneer at me, even if I did not?

NANCY. Do you think you resemble your father?

ALAN. In no way! He is calm. He is very reasonable, except in his love. He loves me, greatly.

NANCY. Perhaps he's no judge—

ALAN. What?

NANCY. —of boys. (*She laughs harshly.*) I'm going away from here.

ALAN. First, look to your daughter.

NANCY (*turning round—excitedly*). Will she fall?

ALAN. Why do you love pain in others, Mrs. Benison?

NANCY. Does she hear us?

ALAN. She will not see you.

NANCY. What do you mean?

ALAN. You are not really at her side.

NANCY. She is frightfully close to the edge.

ALAN. You sneer at me. You make some wordplay about my father I do not understand, except that it is unkind. And when your daughter leans on a precipice, you rejoice in your heart.

NANCY. Don't talk so loud! You'll disturb her. She might fall.

ALAN. Why do you love agony in others?

(*Left Stage, enter* HOLT *clad in black, holding a letter which she dares not open. She is worn with misery and the years have broken her. At last with effort, she reads it. It contains bad news. She acts the pantomime of her dismay. While* NAN *says*)

NANCY. Why I love agony in others? You want me to tell you? (*She turns almost fiercely on* ALAN.) Because I have felt nothing. Nothing! Not even agony. Do you understand? Always and always numbness. Beating numbness. Nothing. My husband cheated me. He caught me. He did not love me. He did not make me feel. Nothing. All my life he has held me so. Dangling. Do you know whom he loved? You bastard? Ask your mother. . . . Nothing. Ask her about your father. Nothing I tell you. And then, out of nothing I was made a mother. A slave. Old, without having felt. Old, without love. Nothing. Do you under-

stand? A woman who has felt nothing is a slave, when she is made a mother.

ALAN. But you are suffering now. Let your tears come.

NANCY (*turning to* CLEO). She is feeling. What if it is only pain? She is *feeling*. I hate her.

(CLEO *suddenly sways on the edge as if she were invisibly pushed over.* NAN *gives a cry and rushes to her, drags her back and covers her face with kisses. Suddenly she lets her go.* ALAN *disappears.*)

(*Left Stage* HOLT *has sunk in a chair and stares fixedly, desperately before her.*)

CLEO (*hard*). What does this mean?

NANCY. You almost went over. Child! You almost fell over.

CLEO. I was dreaming and seeing. Now, you have spoiled it all. You have taken it away.

NANCY. Cleo! Don't say that. I was afraid for you. I love you. Do you not love me?

CLEO. Of course not.

NANCY. Won't you let me come in your heart—just a little, Cleo? Perhaps I can help you.

CLEO. You are in the way, mother. This is no place for you. You don't want to help me. You want to be helped.

(*Exit* HOLT *Left Stage.*)

NANCY. Oh!

CLEO. Go away.

NANCY. Perhaps it is true. Perhaps I want to be helped.

(*Enter* ALBERT BENISON, *Right Stage.* CLEO'S *face lights, she runs to greet him, while* NAN *watches.* BENISON *has aged in the sense that he has not grown, and the discrepancy between immaturity of spirit and maturity of body gives him an unpleasant age.*)

CLEO. Father!

BENISON. Hello, Cleo.

CLEO. Please take mama away.

BENISON. She's not here, child. What are you saying?

CLEO. Well, she was here. And she made a scene, too.

(BENISON *fondles her and kisses her hair. She breaks away, shy, and Exit.*)

BENISON. Life is livable, up here. Too bad I can't stay here, can't make my home here. (*He looks around him.*)

(*Left Stage enter* HOLT *and a* MAID. *They bring in and set*

a long table festively with candles, as for a celebration. HOLT *in stern sorrow, her face like her clothes. She lights the candles.*)

BENISON. How strange it is. Strange because unreal, or because it alone is real? Why is our world a building of regrets—a seeking and a missing? What failure is this that leaves us men outside from everything we need—from everything we know? Gasping—gaping. Pah! (*He laughs.*) Fish out of water.

NANCY (*who has come up to him*). Albert.

BENISON (*spinning around*). You here? What are you doing here?

NANCY. I was brought here.

BENISON (*still with perfunctory interest*). Yes.

NANCY. By your son—Alan.

BENISON (*in a swift cold rage*). That's enough. You have your freedom. You know this is one subject . . . Hands off that!

NANCY. Have I ever spoken so before?

BENISON. Well, keep it up.

NANCY. Perhaps there is a reason, Albert. I did not know why he brought me here. Perhaps now, I know. Can't we speak together?

BENISON. My God! Nan, what is there to say? (*Silence*) If there's anything you want—anything I can give—

NANCY. There is.

BENISON. It is yours.

NANCY. It is this. I want you to look at me, Albert. (*He turns away.*) You have never looked at me. You have never known me. You never gave me a chance.

BENISON. I'm sorry, Nan. The old, old story. The marriage was a mistake.

NANCY. Won't you look at me, Albert?

BENISON. There is no seeing, without love.

NANCY (*aroused gradually*). You thought I was a doll . . . or a prostitute . . . You thought when you had had your taste and paid for it, you could turn away. You thought I was some one you need not worry about. I have waited for you eighteen years . . .

BENISON. You should not have waited.

NANCY. I loved you—and waited.

BENISON. It was a pitiful mistake. You know—

NANCY. Yes. Laura.

BENISON (*musing aloud, unconscious of* NAN). How strange it is! Twenty-five years of women. How many women! How many deep dark intimacies. And with her, one hour. And it is only Laura. It is always Laura!

NANCY (*half shrieking*). You were a coward to marry me!

BENISON (*still half to himself*). It was worse than that. I thought the threat would move her.

NANCY (*outraged and bitter*). Oh! Oh! Oh! The *good* woman!

BENISON. It was not her doing.

NANCY. If I could break her. God—God break her!

BENISON. She did her best by you. She told me you were not as I thought.

NANCY. I am free. After eighteen years of waiting—to be free.

BENISON. My heart is imprisoned. Forgive me. I can feel nothing for you. I know that I should. My head tells me that I have wronged you. My heart tells me nothing. Nothing. It is a stone.

NANCY. I am young with this hate, I am young . . .

(*Left Stage enter* CALVIN LACLEDE. *He has grown puffy, shabby. He joins* HOLT. *They stand apart, waiting the arrival of their blinded son. Their utter apartness from each other is written clearly in their pantomime.*)

BENISON. Nan, what is it makes you young? Take care!

NANCY. Thanks, Alan. You have freed me.

BENISON. Freed you? For what?

NANCY (*in a new eagerness she looks round and then faces left toward the Left Stage where the* LACLEDES *await their son. She never turns again throughout the Scene*). I have something still to give. I shall find some one to take it.

(*Left Stage door opens. Enter* TRUBODY, *guided by his sister* LUCY. *He is in khaki and his eyes are bandaged. He moves forward and his mother takes him and leads him to a chair. Meanwhile,* LUCY'S *husband,* ISIDOR HOCKSTER, *flashily attired in check, enters, too.* LUCY *is clad in a steel-hard shimmering dress. They all stand, uncomfortable about* HOLT *and* TRUBODY. *Then, on mutual signal, they turn around and Exeunt, leaving* TRUBODY *and* HOLT *alone. During this pantomime Left, the talk between* BENISON *and* NAN *continues and concludes, right.*)

BENISON (*after scrutinizing her*). Yes. You have something still to give. Your pent-up suffering. Your poison. You'll find

some one always to take that. There's a constant market for poisons.

NANCY (*beginning to move, as if enchanted, down to Left*). You lie. I am beautiful.

BENISON. You lie. You are ugly.

NANCY. I am beautiful.

(BENISON *with a gesture of disgust exits. During the concluding scene between* HOLT *and* TRUBODY, NANCY *gradually, as if somnambulant, moves down toward Left Stage. So that at curtain she is just outside the room.*)

On Left Stage.

HOLT. They have all gone and left us alone. I am your mother.

TRUBODY. Did you think I had forgotten your voice?

HOLT (*she takes his face in her arms, kneeling down beside him*). Oh, my boy. My darling boy. Why did you go?

TRUBODY. I wanted to leave you, mother.

HOLT. Your mother . . . ?

TRUBODY. All of you. Not all of you for one reason.

HOLT (*half wildly*). War—as an opportunity! That Hell—as an escape! What was my home, then?

TRUBODY. Don't you know, mother, what it was? Have you not often wanted to go away?

HOLT. Oh, my son. My one true child. Why did you not tell me? Why did we not dare? You knew. Although I lied and hid myself—for your sake. That is why I stayed. For your sake . . . And the result . . .

TRUBODY. The situation is not without its humor, mother dear. (*He smiles wanly.*) To protect me, you stayed. Your mother sense it was drove me away into that shambles.

HOLT. I am the one who blinded you.

TRUBODY. Trying to blind me—

HOLT. Don't!

TRUBODY. To your own misery, married to a fool. A vain and sounding fool. Married to the caricature of your dreams. Yes, mother.

HOLT. I do not ask to be forgiven. I shall serve you—

TRUBODY. Sweet mother. There is nothing to be forgiven. Should I love you less, because you are not God?

HOLT. But I created you.

TRUBODY. You suffered. That is all you had to do with my

birth. I should have stayed with you. I knew how my enlisting would hurt you. I was glad I was not of draft age, so that I could enlist—so I could hurt you. I wanted to blind myself to so much. To how I loved you; to the humiliation of my father with his hideous gestures; to the irony of Lucy—flashy Lucy being the child of you. Well, I succeeded. Blind—

HOLT. You were only a boy. You are only a boy, now.

TRUBODY. What of it? You were only a woman.

HOLT. May a woman say to her son: I love you? I do not ask forgiveness. I brought you into the world. I can not say, Forgive me. Not "Forgive me." Not "Love me." Only, "I love you."

TRUBODY. If I could see you mother, now.

HOLT (*instinctively passes her hand over her tear stained* face). Not now!

(*Nancy is close to Right Stage.*)

TRUBODY. But I can tell you now, how I have come to see you. You do not know how well I see you.

HOLT. My boy!

TRUBODY. I even understand, now, why you married father. You believed his words. You were so hungry to believe. You thought that he was going to serve an Ideal.

HOLT. Must you speak of that? It is so long ago.

TRUBODY. Not long ago. You wanted always to serve beauty. You want to still. I see you, my mother. Long ago, perhaps, your eyes were open to the truth of father. Still, they dream . . .

HOLT. For you. When you were born, already I knew how wrong I had been in him. Only your life made me dare face that death.

TRUBODY. That is why you sheltered me? That is why you left me alone, to find out ugly truths?

(HOLT *sobs and nods.*)

TRUBODY. You were a fool, were you not, dear mother? It is terrible to leave a child alone in a household of waste and falsity.

HOLT. I was there!

TRUBODY. I could not find you there, till I had left. I could not see you, till my eyes were blind.

HOLT. You have come back.

TRUBODY. Say, rather, mother, I have come.

HOLT. I shall serve you. You will dictate your thoughts; you

will form and build them. You are a poet, son! Don't I know! Oh! Trubody! Is there hope? Can I serve you? (*She stands beside him now.*)

TRUBODY (*standing*). I was lying beyond the trench, after they hit me. It was dark, the racket was in the dark. It deafened me. I did not hear it. I knew my eyes were gone. Thought came: "Your eyes looked into the dark. They are gone." I said "But the eyes that look into the light no shell can touch. A thing of darkness has blotted out your sight of darkness. Nothing remains now except Light to see."

HOLT. Oh, is it possible I should be happy?

(NAN *stands outside.*)

TRUBODY (*suddenly as in fright clutching his mother's hands*). But mother! Help me. I am weak. It is hard. What if I fail? If I can't stay up? Everything else is gone for me. I am lost, then.

HOLT (*lifting him up*). Abide with me, son.

(*They stand close. Immediately outside stands* NANCY. *She does not see them, nor hear them. Her arms are outstretched.*)

Blackness

(*After a pause, the upper platform of the* REVELLERS *is thrown into light, and the skyscrapers illumined above it.* THE SEVEN REVELLERS *are revealed, silently absorbed and looking down, as if what took place in the now dark stage had moved them. Now, the Gray Haired Man begins violently to swing his rattle and to dance about.*)

FIRST REVELLER (*the Gray Haired Man*). Friends. Brothers. Sisters. This will never do! We're supposed to be having a good time. We're supposed to be revellers. What is the matter with us? Here we are silent. Here we are, actually thinking. Cheer up and get on the job. The glad hand and the jolly voice. That's our duty. Cheer up—every one of you. Cheer up, or get out!

(*There is a pause. Then, one by one, with the Girl and the Boy last, they begin to toot and rattle and cavort. A growing rhythm—half jazz, half plaint, becoming wholly a dance.*)

FIRST REVELLER. That's the ticket. That's the spirit. Never say die. If Hard Luck knocks you down, get up. Run or fight or think, if you must. But get up. Get up! (*Jollification and noise*

gains.) The Voice with the Smile wins ten percent. The Voice with the Shout wins fifty. (*Climax of the forced Revelry which swiftly stops to absolute silence and darkness.*)

SCENE III

SCENE: *Inner central set, representing the study of* JUDGE MACSHANE *in his home. Windows to left, with morning sun upon them. Right door. High shelves of books and large table-desk right. Homely, comfortable furniture. Overhead, in upper plan, as in Scene I, the City. It is dim and lightless.*

AT RISE: MACSHANE *in a dressing gown sits in an easy chair, smoking a pipe. At his feet are piles of Sunday papers. He throws one aside in a gesture of disgust. Meditatively, he puffs at his pipe. Gets up and paces a bit. Pauses. Goes to a book-case and picks out a small leather Bible. Returns to his chair, fingers it, and throws it with a like gesture of futility on the pile of Sunday papers. This act worries him. He looks about him, as if he had sinned. He picks up the Bible and places it on a little table, left center. On it is a vase, containing some early summer flowers. He pulls out a daisy and holds it fondly and meditatively in his hand. Returns to his chair with it.*

Enter LAURENCE *and* ALAN, *center.* ALAN *is dressed as before.* LAURENCE *wears riding breeches, with a green blouse. In the ensuing talk,* MACSHANE *keeps hold of the daisy, eventually crushes it in his hand, and as* LAURENCE *leaves, he tosses it aside onto the pile of papers.*

LAURENCE and ALAN. Good morning, father.

MACSHANE. Good morning, sons. Sit down. (ALAN *sits at once, left, and at ease.* LAURENCE *keeps standing.*) Well. What are you up to?

LAURENCE. Alan said you wanted to speak to me.

MACSHANE. That is true. That is true. But nothing formal, Laurence. This is not a court of Justice. Do sit down. (LAURENCE *sits as if reluctantly after a pause.*) I'm glad to see you. One doesn't see too much of one's family does one? We're all so busy. But at least Sunday morning, there ought to be no hurry. Or have you something on?

LAURENCE. Yes. I am going out.

MACSHANE. For a ride, I see.

LAURENCE. Yes, for a ride.

MACSHANE. Alan not going with you? Or are you going alone?

LAURENCE. I'm not going alone.

MACSHANE. I suppose your work's done for the examinations?

LAURENCE. Good enough.

MACSHANE. They're not as strict, seems to me, as they used to be when I went to College. At least, that is how it strikes an old-timer. You don't kill yourself, Laurence, with work. Nor you either, Alan. It is too bad. Form the habit of hard study now and like any habit it will give you pleasure later. It will become almost a self-indulgence to think and to read. . . . If you must have habits, they might as well be habits that pay. (*There is a long pause.*) Don't you agree, Laurence?

LAURENCE. I'm not interested in habits. I'm not interested in things that pay.

MACSHANE. What does interest you, Larry?

LAURENCE. Is this what you wanted to talk to me about?

MACSHANE. No . . . Yes . . . What's the matter, son?

LAURENCE. I'm not long on general conversations, father.

MACSHANE. You are long on rudeness.

LAURENCE. I do not mean to be rude. I'm in a hurry.

MACSHANE. I suppose you're riding with Cleo Benison?

LAURENCE. Yes, sir.

MACSHANE. I have no objection to your riding with her, Larry. It's not that. Don't misunderstand me. (*Pause*) But what am I to think? You're neglecting your work. After your brilliant college record! Just now, when the serious work begins—the work of your career. You've changed so, son. You worry us. You seem to have lost interest. She's only a child, Larry. She's not more than sixteen, is she? Too young to know her own mind. Too young for it to be fair for you to influence her too much.

LAURENCE. Is this what you wanted to say to me?

MACSHANE. Have you nothing to say to me?

LAURENCE. Nothing.

MACSHANE. I'm sorry, Laurence. If something is wrong—I should like to help.

LAURENCE. You cannot.

MACSHANE (*getting up*). Look here, lad! (*He pauses and resumes his seat.*) Laurence, you should not talk to me like this.

LAURENCE. Why not, if it's the truth?

MACSHANE. I'm worth more than this, to you.

LAURENCE. I don't agree with you, sir. My life is my own.

MACSHANE. I've been in love, too. I'm not such an old dead 'un as you think.

LAURENCE. In love? What has love to do with it?

MACSHANE. You love Cleo.

LAURENCE. Do you think loving Cleo makes me suffer?

MACSHANE. Then you are suffering, Laurence?

LAURENCE. Yes, I am suffering. But not because I love a girl. Because I can love nothing else.

MACSHANE. I am sorry.

LAURENCE (*getting up and defiant over his own lapse into confidence*). Well. Are you satisfied now? Can I go now? Who knows? Perhaps I love her, just because there is nothing else in all the world to love. Nothing . . . nothing. And one must love something. May I go?

MACSHANE. Of course, you may go. But I wish you would stay a little with me. I want to understand.

LAURENCE. What would you have me love? God and country, I suppose? The Law, I suppose? Life . . .

MACSHANE. We cannot hate Life?

LAURENCE. Where is it? They should take the children of the schools to the City stock yards. And the cowpens they should label France; the pigpens, England; the sheepfolds, America. The butchers and the drovers they should call by the names of the Great. They should say: "Children, this is history." Next day, they should take them once more to the stock yards. The cowpens, they should label the professions; the pigpens they should label industry and commerce; the sheepfolds, they should call the arts. They should say: "Children, this is honor, success, glory . . ."

MACSHANE. There are truer, nearer values, than those of history and success.

LAURENCE. Yes. There are you and mother.

MACSHANE. Mother suffers, when you suffer, Larry?

LAURENCE. Don't make that appeal to me. Why is she incompetent as a mother? What right has she to beg from me what should be natural or not at all? Is she responsible for what I am? or not? If not, let her clear her mind of me. If so, then whatever I am, she has her deserts. . . .

MACSHANE (*rising*). What has hurt you, son?

LAURENCE. Look out of your window. Look in at your window. (*Exit* LAURENCE.)

(MACSHANE *stands a moment as if dazed, fully forgetful of* ALAN *who has sat unmoving.* MACSHANE *looks beyond him to the windows. His eyes fall at last to the crushed flower in his hand. He tosses it aside. He comes to regard* ALAN *and stands over his chair.*)

MACSHANE. What does it all mean, Alan?

ALAN. He told you a great deal.

MACSHANE (*repeats mechanically*). A great deal . . . He told me . . . what did he tell me?

ALAN. You do not hear. None of the old people hear.

MACSHANE. So that is it? The world is full of words of explanation. And we who try to rule the world are deaf to what it tells us. . . . (*From his meditation, he turns again full on* ALAN.) What do *you* know about it?

ALAN (*quietly*). You ask me, father?

MACSHANE. My boy! I count on you. (*He draws* ALAN *up to him in a warm embrace and then lets him sink again in his chair.*) You don't know how I count on you? Is this unfair to you? (MACSHANE *takes his seat.*)

ALAN. Why unfair to me?

MACSHANE. Why should I seem to lean on you? Why should I want to? You too are hard for an old chap like me to understand. I somehow accept you—your understanding, Alan. Even if I do not understand. Not I alone. Mother. But I, most of all.

ALAN. Perhaps you are mistaken in me, father.

MACSHANE. Do not say it. It's not true, to begin with. And I could not bear it. You're real, son, you're strong. You're mine.

ALAN. Oh, father—

MACSHANE. And you, at least, are not unhappy.

ALAN. I don't think I am unhappy.

MACSHANE. No. You are not unhappy.

ALAN. It is important, father, not to be unhappy?

MACSHANE. That's a strange question.

ALAN. All these words you use so much: are they all important?

MACSHANE. What words, Alan?

ALAN. Happiness. Unhappiness. Justice. Fairness. Yours. Mine. . . .

MACSHANE. What else is there in life?

ALAN. I do not know. Yet it seems to me, father, life must be greater than these words. . . . And different from them. Beyond them, perhaps. Beyond happiness and justice and the Yours and the Mine.

MACSHANE. My boy! My boy!

ALAN. Aren't we all in life, father? We're sure of that at least. All—parts of life. Good and bad. Happy and unhappy. That helps me. When I look at Larry or at poor Mrs. Benison or at blind Trubody. Then, I must know that this is neither good nor bad. This is life. And at once, father, there comes a feeling which has a word too; but you do not use it often.

MACSHANE (*hoarsely*). What is it, Alan?

ALAN. Beauty.

MACSHANE. When I am with you, I feel that. When I am away from you—more and more—I lose it. I had it. If in nothing else, in this you are my son. I had that feeling. But I lose it, Alan. When you are here, it is here. And I am not afraid—not of pain, not of silence. That is the best I have left. This sometimes. This being with you. This knowing you there and my son.

ALAN. It is good in your study on our Sunday mornings. The sun out there is watching us. It's like a song.

MACSHANE. How strange it is . . . everything . . . when you touch it. Changed and real at last. I prove myself by you.

ALAN. Only your words trouble me, father.

MACSHANE. But some of them are real and bitter. Even in our good silence, I hear them.

ALAN. What words . . . ?

MACSHANE. Failure. Failure. Failure.

ALAN. There, is another word I do not understand.

MACSHANE. Mother is not happy. I have given her what I had. She is not happy. That is the meaning of failure. Grace is unhappy. My daughter. That is the meaning of failure. Larry is morbid, morbid in love of a morbid girl, morbid in hatred of us. That is failure.

ALAN. What did you expect?

MACSHANE. I believed in many things, Alan. For instance, I believed in the sanctity of my profession. I believed it was good to be a lawyer. I am a Judge and I no longer believe this. I believed in love: in love's power to serve the loved ones and to bring them peace. And my loved ones are growing old, without peace.

ALAN. Now I know. You have never believed in life. You have believed only in your words. Peace. Love. Joy. Words they are. And they have cheated you.

MACSHANE. All so much less than I looked for. Except you. And you—so much more!

ALAN. You frighten me, father. The way you love me.

MACSHANE. I have no right, I know, to speak to you as I do. It is an unnatural burden.

ALAN. Not that! You will turn me also into a word.

MACSHANE. Son!

ALAN. And you will love the word. And then I will cheat you, too.

MACSHANE (*smiling*). I have frightened you.

ALAN. You say always I am yours. That frightens me. Yours and mine! What do they mean? Perhaps it is not true.

MACSHANE. Alan!

ALAN. You frighten me with your hands holding me close. Holding me as if I needed holding. I love you, father. That is why your hands hurt me.

(*Enter* LAURA. *Seeing the two so tensely close, a great shock goes through her. She masters herself.*)

LAURA (*coming forward*). What is it, now?

MACSHANE. Nothing, dear.

LAURA. Surely no misunderstanding between you?

MACSHANE. We have been talking . . . of Laurence.

LAURA. I am sorry to interrupt you. I know . . . your Sunday mornings . . . they are sacred. (*A tinge of bitterness in this*).

MACSHANE. You are not excluded, Laura. Sit down.

LAURA. I came to . . . only to ask a question. Alan, did you see Laurence?

ALAN. He has gone riding.

LAURA. He did not say good morning or good-by to me . . . Did he . . . ? When will he be back?

ALAN. I do not know, mother.

LAURA. He might have told me good-by. I am worried. Was he all right?

ALAN. No, mother.

MACSHANE. Do not worry, Laura. He will get over this. It's a passing phase.

LAURA. A passing phase! Oh, if I only knew there was such a

thing. A passing phase. It is worse. Cleo is in it. She has poisoned Larry. Cleo's mother, Nan, *she* is in it. She has poisoned Cleo. What do you think, Alan?

ALAN. There is something the matter with Laurence. It is not passing. And it is not Cleo.

LAURA. Oh, to treat his mother as he does. The cruelty.

ALAN. He does not know that he is making you suffer. For he is suffering.

MACSHANE. This must stop! Is our whole house to be thrown out of balance, because of a child's moods?

ALAN. The house! That is what has sickened Larry! The words of this house. There is something wrong in this house.

LAURA. There is something wrong in every house.

ALAN (*turning to his mother*). But won't *you* tell me at least —(*He stops, exalted, and searches the eyes of the two.* MACSHANE *meets him,* LAURA *bows her head, more quiet.*) What is it, mother?

LAURA. Alan, the sun is shining. It is a beautiful day. Go for a walk.

ALAN (*sternly*). *You know!* Father is in darkness. He is suffering in darkness. But you know! There is something wrong in this house.

LAURA. Whom have you been seeing?

ALAN. Mother, why is Laurence sick with life? and Cleo? and her parents? Mother, why does father turn so helplessly to me? His youngest boy? Mother, why do your eyes always flinch when my eyes meet them? Tell me.

LAURA. Tell you?

ALAN. Mother, who am I?

LAURA (*half shrieking*). What? (*She rushes up and takes his arm.*) Whom has he been with? Whom has he talked to?

MACSHANE. What difference does it make, Laura?

LAURA (*half hysterical and misunderstanding*). What difference!!

MACSHANE (*repeating firmly*). What difference—whom he has seen?

LAURA. He has mad ideas, I suppose? Well, some one must have put them in his head.

MACSHANE (*mastering her*). You don't understand. Alan's question asking who he is—refers to general problems: problems of life . . .

LAURA (*released in hysterical laughter and relieved*). Oh, oh . . .

ALAN (*quietly*). Then they are not the same? the problems of life and the problems of our house?

LAURA. If only Larry were back! I am worried. Go out, Alan. The sun . . . the sun is good for us all. (*Exit* LAURA. MACSHANE *and* ALAN *stand in silence, looking at each other.*)

(*The upper scene, denoting the central skyscrapers, is suddenly illumined, revealing the* SEVEN REVELLERS *quietly intent, looking down at the man and the boy. They are dressed as before, in evening clothes. Now each of them draws forth a black gown with a hood, and puts it on, so that they are transformed from Revellers to Mourners.*)

MACSHANE. What do you say? Should we take your mother's advice and have a turn in the Park?

ALAN. Yes.

(MACSHANE *flings off his gown and puts on his coat.*)

MACSHANE. That'll wipe away cobwebs. (*He puts his arm around* ALAN.) I wish it were the summer recess. You and I would be off at once. We'd fish. We'd camp. Just you and I.

ALAN. I'd love it.

MACSHANE. Just . . . you and I.

ALAN (*as* MACSHANE *has moved toward the door*). Father, you are strong, are you not?

MACSHANE (*turns and approaches* ALAN *again*). Is a man strong, who can be frightened by a boy?

SCENE IV

SCENE: *The full divided stage, as in Scene II. The over scene, denoting the City, is dim.*

AT RISE: *Right Stage reveals* HOLT, *standing alone and looking forward. Left Stage* (*the low interior*) *denotes now a room in the home of the* LACLEDES.

A phonograph is playing dance jazz. LUCY *dressed still in steel-bright gray is dancing with her check-suited husband,* ISIDOR HOCKSTER. *To one side, reclines lazily* CALVIN LACLEDE *in a chair, watching them. As they dance, they banter.*

On Left Stage.

ISIDOR. Sorry, kid, you're my wife. If you wasn't, I'd take you out to-night.

LUCY. Oh. Is zat so?

ISIDOR. Sure. Wouldn't you come?

LUCY. How do I know? You're my husband.

ISIDOR. Just s'posin' I wasn't?

LUCY. Gee, man. You won't let me forget it.

ISIDOR (*laughs*). Would you like me, kid? Would you let me pick you up?

LUCY. I ain't tellin'.

ISIDOR. Why, sweet butter?

LUCY. Well, for one thing: my husband might get wise. (*They laugh and stop the dance, though the phonograph goes on.*)

LACLEDE. Oh, you babies! Lucy, dear, though you are the daughter of an old man like me, you never grew up. And you're making me young again, too. (HOCKSTER *offers a cigar to* LACLEDE *and lights his own.*) Well, son. I hate to interfere with such serious matters as you've doubtless got in your head. But could we not briefly, succinctly conclude that conference of ours?

ISIDOR. You may be surprised, but I think I understand you. I got the point, anyhow. (LACLEDE *laughs.*) You want some of that stock.

LACLEDE. Here is the crux of the matter, son-in-law. I am as you know the publisher of a periodical known from one end of the country to the other: known wherever America has learned it cannot live by bread alone. Nay! nor by cake. My purposes are clear and evident, with the luminosity of light. (LUCY *as if reminded lights a cigarette and lazily settles in a chair to smoke.*) But what is any End, however exalted, if we lack the Means, the Means to reach it? . . . That is the point, my dear fellow. I have always known my End. And you will excuse me, my dear son-in-law, if I say, if I say that thirty years of devotion to it . . . of studying it with passion . . . have made me willing to admit . . . openly to you . . . that as an End, it *is* exalted. But far too often I have turned . . . nay, I have shrunk, from the practical problem of the Means. I avow it. I have been perhaps a coward. Unpractical I have been surely. And an unpractical Idealist is only a bad idealist. You see, in the privacy and warmth of our hearthfire, I must admit my failure.

ISIDOR (*looking to* LUCY *who nods as if in corroboration of what he is to say*). You can have some of the stock, LaClede. I'll fix that for Lucy's sake. You're her Dad, after all. We're good pals, in our kind of game.

LaClede. The Magazine has lacked the drive. The public heretofore has not perhaps been ready. It is ready now, if we can only reach it. Forcefully. Shall I give up, because the work is hard? Shall I give up, and turn from my people, and abandon them, because at my first advance, they did not understand?

Isidor. I'm not talking magazines. I'm talking Bridgeport Munition Plant. It's not as good as the Schenectady. Not more'n 98 per cent, about, on the investment. Last year, that. But the Schenectady is absolutely shut.

LaClede. Thus does Spirit work in inscrutable ways. Shells, fashioned to bring death, will nourish me to bring life. I am content. I accept. Nor do I insist on understanding. You who are helping literature, my dear fellow possibly . . . just possibly there may be points in literature . . . fine details . . . you would admit you did not altogether understand. Does that stop you? No. Even so, do I admit I do not understand . . . not quite understand, how with the War over, with the Armistice declared —and the last War, too—the War for Peace—

Isidor (*laughing and interrupting*). We have the contracts with the Government. See? We'll get paid. We simply won't have to deliver the goods.

Lucy (*laughing*). Clean profit—

LaClede (*waving* Hockster *to silence*). Ah. No more bloodshed. . . . Thank God, no more bloodshed. No more maimed youth. (*Right Stage, enter* Trubody, *extreme right. But* Holt *does not speak to him.*) Come in, my dear fellow. To my study. I want to talk to you about the Spirit . . . let us never forget that the Spirit is the End. Now, we have made sure of the Means.

(*Exeunt* LaClede *and* Hockster *who winks grossly at* Lucy. *Enter* Nan *Left Stage.*)

(*The phonograph has murmured very low, with* Nan's *entrance, it picks up again.* Nan *and* Lucy *embrace, at the same time critically examining each other's clothes.*)

Nancy. Well, Lucy dear. What's up this afternoon?

Lucy (*yawning*). There's always tea-dance at The Spa.

Nancy (*skipping as if with her own thoughts*). Don't count me in.

Lucy. Why were you asking me, then, if you already had a date?

Nancy. Who said I had a date? I'm just glad, that's all, you'll be stepping out.

LUCY. Considerate old Nan. (*Laughs*) Why the mystery? I know what's happened to you. I know whom you'll be seeing.

NANCY. Do you mind, Lucy?

LUCY. Mind? Why should I? Poor Trubody. God knows the kid needs cheering up. I tell you, I'm glad. That is, if you make him happy. Or no. That's asking too much of a mere woman, isn't it, Nan? I'm glad—if you give him just a good time. You're rescuing him from mother.

NANCY (*suddenly anxious*). What do you mean?

LUCY. God, that woman! She wants her boy to be a Poet. As if he hadn't suffered enough—

NANCY. I don't see—

LUCY. Just because he's had his eyes blown out with a shell, mother thinks he ought to be an angel and live in the clouds. You'll rescue him from that, Nan, at least.

NANCY (*half to herself*). What will I give him?

LUCY. Good God! he ran away to the War, in order to get rid of his mother.

NANCY. Are you sure?

LUCY. I ought to know my own mother, I suppose.

NANCY (*seriously*). What will I give him, Lucy.

LUCY (*a silent moment, then she laughs*). Guess I can leave that to you, old girl. So long. (*She stops at the door.*) You know, Nan, if you get bored, you might come over to The Spa with Trubody. You could lead him, all right. Floor *is* kind of crowded, though. (*Exit* LUCY.)

(*Left Stage,* NANCY *turns to right, silent, waiting. Right Stage,* TRUBODY, *on edge of precipice right turns left.* HOLT *sees him, but is unable to intervene. The phonograph Left Stage grinds on, dully.*)

On Right Stage.

TRUBODY. I want you, Nan. Why don't you come? Come up here. . . . Why must I come down?

(*As if vanquished and accepting defeat wholly after the single last protest,* TRUBODY *begins to move left down the slope, his hands before his bandaged eyes. He is still dressed in khaki.* HOLT *stands transfixed, but cannot reach him. As he approaches,* NAN *grows radiant, facing right toward him, with arms outstretched.* TRUBODY *disappears a moment,* NAN *facing over toward him, and then enters Left Stage. They embrace.*)

On Left Stage.

NANCY. I am glad you came.

TRUBODY. But I was calling you. Why did *you* not come?

NANCY. I will make you happy. (*She leads him to a couch right of Left Stage.*)

TRUBODY. Happy? I don't ask that—

NANCY. Why not. Can't I make you happy?

TRUBODY. I only ask, make me forget.

NANCY. I understand.

TRUBODY. Do you—?

NANCY. The horrors—

TRUBODY (*crying as if hurt*). You mean the war? God, no! Not forget the war. How can you be such a fool? I want to forget —not the war—but everything else. Forget that there is anything in life, lovelier than war. Then I can come to you.

NANCY (*not understanding*). Boy!

TRUBODY. I want to forget—loveliness, beauty. Then I can come to you. I want to forget—Mother. Then I can come to you.

NANCY. I don't understand you. Your words hurt. But I need you.

TRUBODY. That is right. I will blind you, too. We will blind each other. (*He feels for her and kisses her. They seat themselves on the couch.*)

(*Enter Right Stage* CLEO *and* LAURENCE. HOLT, *turned left toward her son, does not see them. Hand in hand, they quietly go to extreme right and gaze down the precipice. In the pause, there is heard only the dim jazz of the phonograph, left.*)

(*On Left Stage,* NANCY, *aroused, responds passionately to* TRUBODY. *She flings the bandage off his eyes. Her face alone is visible to audience. Horror and passion mingle in her mouth. She draws* TRUBODY *down over her on the couch, so as not to see his maimed face.*)

On Right Stage.

LAURENCE (*still holding* CLEO's *hand*). It was a good last ride.

CLEO. The lake was full of wonder.

LAURENCE. This is more full of wonder . . . this looking into Nothing.

CLEO. But I have your hand. I have you. That is not nothing. That is all I see.

LAURENCE. If that is all, soon all will be no more. We will be gone even from each other.

CLEO. Nothing but both of us, looking out on Nothing?

LAURENCE. No, dear. Not even we. Even nothing will be gone.

CLEO. I am not afraid. For I do not believe it.

LAURENCE. You must know now, that we will become nothing. For if not now, you will never know.

CLEO. You are cruel to say that! Why, Laurence, even in our love do you try to be cruel?

LAURENCE. If I were conquered by my tenderness for you, our love would fade. The world would win us—the world would trap our love. What you call cruelty is only Reason.

CLEO. I do not believe there will be nothing. I am not afraid to die, because you want our death. You could not want it, if what you said were true.

LAURENCE. What is true?

CLEO. We . . . and this moment. It will last forever. That is why we must die.

LAURENCE. There are too many things on earth.

CLEO. That is why we must die.

LAURENCE. Cleo, if you were right!

CLEO. I am right. Only the lies will be gone.

(*Enter* LAURA, *she stands at the side of* HOLT, *who, facing left, does not see her.* LAURA *faces right and sees only the two children.*)

LAURENCE. Poor father and mother, I am not sorry to leave them.

CLEO. My father and mother are lies. But I am fond of my father.

LAURENCE. I love my father and mother. We must not think about them. We must not feel. Our feeling would break into thoughts. Thoughts are many things—and are lies.

CLEO. I am happy!

LAURENCE. If we could always, always stay here, we should not need to die.

CLEO. Only by dying, can we stay here forever.

LAURENCE. Come, beloved.

CLEO. Why does not death take us here? I do not want to move. There is time.

LAURENCE (*takes* CLEO *into his arms, but not too close*). It will not hurt in my arms. Lay your lips on mine.

(*They stand over the edge, their faces close. Left Stage* NANCY *rises from the couch and draws* TRUBODY *out of the room. Exeunt. As soon as they are gone,* HOLT *on Right Stage turns from them, to right and side by side* HOLT *and* LAURA *stand, transfixed, watching the end of the scene between* CLEO *and* LAURENCE. *The phonograph left goes on playing, on Left Stage, but unobtrusively.*)

CLEO. I am cold! (CLEO *nestles closer to* LAURENCE: *her mouth also closer to his. Suddenly, the pair, embraced, turn to left and face straight at* HOLT *and* LAURA. *They do not see the women who see them, but are helpless to move or call. Then* CLEO *and* LAURENCE *turn to right again. He clasps her, lifts her off the ground, into his arms, and in a full embrace, he leaps with her. They disappear. The bright light of the stage grows dim. The phonograph comes to the end of its tune but goes on grinding, producing no melody.* HOLT *and* LAURA *stand facing each other, in frozen despair.*)

SCENE V

SCENE: MACSHANE'S *Study. The same as Scene III. Again, the sun shines brightly through the windows, left.* MACSHANE *stands close to them, so that the sun is on him. Right, sunk low in a chair sits* LAURA, *in black. Her face is old and gray and cold. She stares straight ahead of her, down-stage, her profile to her husband.*

MACSHANE (*from across the room*). If you could cry, Laura. If you could let go. This would be more bearable. . . . Three days you have not spoken, you have not eaten nor slept. It will drive us mad, both of us mad. . . . We are still in the world, Laura. We must carry on. Larry is dead. He was sick. As sick as if he had died of typhoid fever. There are gangrenes of the mind. He is a victim of the dying world, as much as any soldier who stayed in the trenches. But Grace is living. Our daughter Grace. She needs you. And Alan.

(LAURA *stirs, as with fresh agony.* MACSHANE *encouraged by this little sign of life comes closer to her.*)

MACSHANE. You must not act this way, Laura. (*He paces—stops with a fresh idea.*) Perhaps it will help, if you think of the others. Albert and Nan—Cleo was their only child. Poor Albert! We have not been bereaved so wholly. And Holt—think of Holt.

With her boy whom she adores blinded for life; while her daughter, whom she regards as an offense to her flesh, flourishes like the bay tree. (*In the pause, he passes his hands over his eyes.*) If only Alan were here! Where is Alan! What have you done to him that he keeps away? He would melt this stone in your heart. We have other children. Are they dead, too? Do you want them dead, because the one is dead? Oh, Laura! Alan could help you. He has helped me. A boy—and such white strength! What have we done to deserve him? That is what I keep on thinking. That is the best thought. But he is only a boy. He needs you, too. He must be suffering.

(*He studies her; comes close, and lifts her up from her chair. Now* LAURA *meets his eyes.*)

MACSHANE. You *shall* look close. I will make you face this straight!

(*Enter* HOLT.)

HOLT. Laura.

LAURA. Yes, Holt?

HOLT. Look at me, dear.

LAURA. I see you, Holt.

HOLT. I felt that I must see you both.

MACSHANE. Has anything happened?

LAURA (*sharply*). . . . I know, Holt.

HOLT. Let me say it. I, too, have lost my son. (MACSHANE *moves toward her.*) He is not dead. You can see him move about. I am losing him before my eyes.

MACSHANE. I do not understand—

HOLT. When he came back mangled from the war, there was a chance for him still. He was a little child, again—his spirit. It struggled upward. It needed to be nursed.

MACSHANE. And now—

HOLT. I cannot touch her! I cannot put out her eyes! I cannot make her flesh rot, as her soul is rotten!

MACSHANE. Nan Benison?

HOLT. Oh, there must be some reason why this has happened to me. Could she not have found some less pitiful life to feed on?

MACSHANE. We can put a stop to it.

HOLT (*shaking her head slowly*). It is over. You have seen a newborn babe who has died. The spark of spirit is gone. It has given in. . . .

MACSHANE. Dear, dear Holt!

HOLT (*smiles, with an effort*). I came to see you, Laura—

LAURA. You have something more to say.

HOLT. Nothing, dear. Life is—this. One faces it. Then, one is crushed out.

MACSHANE. Not crushed, dears! We are not crushed!

HOLT. And no one to blame.

LAURA (*again with sudden eagerness*). Would it be easier—(*She stops. Then in a cold, clear voice.*) Would it be easier to bear, if there were some one to blame?

HOLT. There is no one to blame.

LAURA. You are wrong. There is some one to blame.

MACSHANE. That is madness.

LAURA. You are wrong. That way lies health. There is some one to blame!

MACSHANE. We have been smitten, dear. All of us.

LAURA. You ask me to face this. Do you still ask it? Will you face it with me?

MACSHANE. Am I not facing it?

LAURA. Yes. With words—words.

MACSHANE. Help Holt to save her boy. Think of our children. I have not asked for words.

LAURA. I am thinking of you all. You, my husband, more than all the others. Will you face this with me?

HOLT. Laura, what is it?

LAURA. Stay here—both of you. (*She moves toward the door.*)

MACSHANE. Where are you going?

LAURA. I'll be back.

MACSHANE. What are you going to do?

LAURA. Do you want to know? (*To* HOLT) I am going to show you there is some one to blame.

HOLT (*moving toward her*). My dear—

LAURA (*stopping her*). Wait! Wait till the others are here.

MACSHANE. The others?

LAURA. Albert Benison and Nan.

HOLT (*crying out, as if hurt*). Not Nan!

LAURA. It must be, Holt.

(LAURA *kisses* HOLT'S *hands; and as the two gaze at her, she exits center door.* HOLT *starts, as if to hold her back.*)

MACSHANE. Let her go.

HOLT. You are so calm, Samson. So strong.

MACSHANE. Let us help each other to our calm and our strength.

HOLT. I have loved you, Samson.

MACSHANE. I have known that.

HOLT. I have lived my life with one man—a man who bought me away from my work with his good words, with his good gestures, and who poisoned for me every good word, every good gesture. And I have loved *you.* I have done this for my children. I dreamed they would reclaim for me the good words of the world. Look at my children, Samson.

MACSHANE. My friend!

HOLT. At least give me the right to this word now when I am old—when it is only a word: to tell you I have loved you.

MACSHANE. We are old.

HOLT. Not you! I am old, for I have lost my children. We are young in our children. We are young, I think, the oldest of us, if the world is young. Do you not think so, dear? You have not lost your children. You have not lost the hope of your career.

MACSHANE. Don't look too close.

HOLT. I must. Do I not love you, for what I do not have?

MACSHANE. So be it, then. At least—I have not lost my children.

(*Re-enter* LAURA.)

LAURA. They are coming at once. They were just starting to come. My calling them to come was not needed. Wait, Holt, with your anger against Nan. It may disappear. It may turn—

HOLT. I cannot understand you. Against whom else should it turn? Against God?

(LAURA *moves toward window, while* HOLT *and* MACSHANE *are grouped to right.*)

LAURA. They are here, now. They know where to come.

(*Enter* ALBERT BENISON *and* NAN, *center.* LAURA *at left.* HOLT *and* MACSHANE *to final right. There are no conventional greetings.* NAN *looks at* HOLT, *half-defiant, half-afraid.* HOLT *looks principally to* MACSHANE *and* BENISON *toward* LAURA.)

LAURA. Samson, I am ready now to do as you bade me.

MACSHANE. You did not understand. I bade you nothing, but to give in to your sorrow.

LAURA. I dare not do that! It would consume me. That would be too joyous. I must stay here and face it. I must stay outside of it, so I can face it.

MACSHANE. Face the living, Laura!

LAURA. Yes. (*Slowly she goes and kneels before* BENISON *and* NANCY.)

BENISON. Laura! Laura!

LAURA. I must answer you, Albert. The question you asked me eighteen years ago in this same house. (HOLT *crosses and lifts* LAURA.) I must answer you, Holt. There is no one to blame, you said, for this anguish which binds us. No one but Life. It is not true. There is a cause. One cause for it all. I.

HOLT. Get up.

LAURA. Now I can get up.

MACSHANE. My poor child—

BENISON. I begin to see—

LAURA. I am glad that you see, Albert. (*She is back, left, in the sun.*) You alone could see. Do you remember, dear, the time eighteen years ago when we were alone in this house? (*Pause*) But we were not alone. (*Pause*) Alan was here.

MACSHANE. You must stop! You must come with me. (*To the others*) Do you need more to convince you, Laura is insane? Eighteen years ago, she says—and Alan is seventeen.

LAURA. Alan was here. Wait, Samson. Alan was not born, but he was here. You asked me a question, Albert, which I refused to answer.

MACSHANE (*appealing*). Holt!

HOLT. Quiet.

LAURA (*still to* BENISON). It was a question about Alan.

BENISON. Hush, Laura.

LAURA. I will answer you, now.

MACSHANE. What is happening here? You listen to this madness?

LAURA (*to* MACSHANE *now*). It was New Year's Eve. Surely you remember. We were all together. The Eve of the New Century. (*She pauses after each sentence to gather strength for the next.*) Holt had taken Calvin and Nan downstairs to bring up the platters of food that were waiting in the pantry. Albert remained behind. And I. I was ailing. Holt would not let me come. But I went up with Samson to see Grace—and our baby, Laurence. I was ailing because I was pregnant. Alan was here. I came down to where Albert was alone. Albert and I were alone —together—with Alan. I told Albert I was pregnant. You, my husband, did not know it yet. I told Albert. I needed to tell Albert

first. It was then he asked his question, which I refused to answer.

MACSHANE. I want you to go, my friends. Nan, will you take Albert?

LAURA (*turns pitifully to her husband, as if she were aware of what she must inflict upon him*). He asked me, Samson, who was the father of this unborn child. Was it you, Albert asked, or was it Albert?

(MACSHANE *makes a step, sways, as if to fall.* HOLT *steps to him and holds him.*)

HOLT (*instinctively cries out*). Beloved!

LAURA. She called him her beloved. She, too, has been noble, murdering life. The noble one! Noble, like me. This is the first time she has dared—

MACSHANE (*to* BENISON). Why do you stand there?

LAURA. There is no sinning in this sun. She has declared aloud, she loves him.

MACSHANE (*to* BENISON). Well? Will you speak? Tell us Laura is insane.

(BENISON *continues silent and unmoved.*)

LAURA. "Is it my child?" he asked, and I refused to answer him. I could not say No. And in my heart, I could not say Yes. I had shut him out. Greater things had shut him out and denied him. I was so sure! For an hour's madness, an hour's so sweet, so undreamed madness? Oh, undreamed. If I had dreamed it, I could have killed it ere it came to be. It came to be because neither of us dreamed it. If I had only been in my thoughts less dutiful a wife, I never could have gone to him, unarmed; I could never have weakened. And Alan, then! For an undreamed hour, should I wreck my life and the life of my husband? And the life of my children? I was strong. I put him away. I made my choice, forever. I let in—this.

MACSHANE (*to* BENISON). Will you speak, now?

(BENISON *is silent.* HOLT *holds* MACSHANE, *who has begun to tremble throughout his entire body.*)

LAURA. From that ruthless act, behold the issue. Albert married Nan in desperation. Albert hurt Nan. And the hurt of Nan has passed to Trubody—to Holt. And the hurt of Nan and Albert turned poison in Cleo, and married with the poisoned soul of Laurence. Laurence, poisoned in our home. And Laurence and Cleo are dead. And Trubody is blinded. And we are here, again, alone. . . . What will you do with me?

MACSHANE (*a pause. He trembles. Suddenly, his trembling turns into a break from* HOLT, *who has held him. He approaches* BENISON. HOLT *screams, and this scream stops* MACSHANE. *To* BENISON). Will you speak, now?

BENISON. You want me to speak? Laura is not mad.

MACSHANE (*crumpling to his knees Center Stage*). Alan!

(*They all form a ring around* MACSHANE. *He masters himself, and rises slowly.* HOLT *goes up to* NANCY, *who has hidden her face, sobbing.* HOLT *catches her in her arms. Exeunt* ALBERT, NANCY, HOLT, *looking back at* MACSHANE. *Last exit* LAURA. MACSHANE *alone sinks to his knees again, facing audience. So he remains, eyes open, dazed.*)

(*The upper scene, denoting the* GREAT CITY, *is illumined.* THE SEVEN REVELLERS *appear. They are clad in the black hoods and gowns which they previously placed over their gala dress. In their hands are no instruments of noise or music. As the words come, they sway. They intone—but do not sing.*)

2ND MAN. Life is this discord?

THE 3 WOMEN. Life is this misery?

THE BOY. *Life is holy.*

(*Pause.*)

1ST MAN. Behold the wanton pain of the flesh.

THE 3 WOMEN. The senseless heart-break.

THE BOY. *Life is holy.*

2ND MAN. O God, thou hast turned away thy face from man.

THE 3 WOMEN. We are alone.

THE BOY. *Life is holy.*

(*Longer pause.*)

1ST WOMAN. We have watched the agony of Laura.

2ND WOMAN. One hour, she gave way to the hunger upon her flesh.

3RD WOMAN. To the woman's hunger for the man who hungers.

2ND WOMAN. What ceaseless toils you have wound round her, life!

THE THREE WOMEN. Oh, cruel! Cruel!

(*Pause.*)

1ST WOMAN. We have watched Holt, trapped in the dream of a man.

2ND WOMAN. Trapped in the dream of a son.

3RD WOMAN. Trapped in the dream of a lover unpossessed.

THE 3 WOMEN. Oh! cruel! Cruel!

(*Pause.*)

1ST MAN. We behold you, Samson.

2ND MAN. Lost.

THE 3 WOMEN. There is no hope in your eyes.

1ST MAN. How can man sing to thee, Lord?

THE 3 WOMEN. How can the winds make merry in the trees?

2ND MAN. When thou hast made of life this crushing unto death of all life's dream?

(*Pause.*)

THE 3 WOMEN. O! my sisters and my brothers.

1ST MAN. You are caught.

THE 3 WOMEN. O! my sisters and my brothers.

2ND MAN. You are doomed.

THE 3 WOMEN. O! my sisters and my brothers.

THE BOY. *Life is holy.*

(*Pause.*)

1ST MAN. Alone.

2ND MAN. Alone.

THE 3 WOMEN. Each heart alone.

THE BOY. *Life is holy.*

1ST MAN. There is no Reason.

2ND MAN. There is no Rime.

THE 3 WOMEN. Alone—alone—alone.

THE BOY. *Life is holy.*

(*The upper scene light fades, leaving* MACSHANE *once more alone. Now, he rises, down stage, full on audience. He thrusts both his arms out horizontally, with his head up.*)

MACSHANE. I will soon die. The nails have riven my hands and my feet.

This will not endure. I will die. I am mortal, Jesus Christ. Pain must be mortal.

Even you cried out upon the Cross. This will pass. Farewell, Alan. I have loved you too well.

All my soul I breathed into my love of you. My boy. My son. No longer.

My life. . . . No longer. That has passed. Then let Pain pass, too. Since life has passed.

(*He stands rigid in silence.*)

Go from me, pitiful last flails of my strength. Go from me, iron bolts of my strength, nailing me still upright. Let

me fall. Let me crumble down! Christ, do you hear me? Do you let no one fall?

Do you hold us forever on the Cross? You stayed there but three days. This is Eternity, O Christ. Do you ask more of me than you put upon yourself?

(*He stands still rigid.*)

(*Enter* ALAN. *He comes in silently, so* MACSHANE *does not hear him. He goes up to the crucified man; puts his hands on* MACSHANE'S *arms and brings them close together. Turns him.*)

ALAN. Father! Father! I am afraid. What has happened, father?

(MACSHANE *gazes at the boy, again his arms go out, but this time they reach for* ALAN'S *shoulders, which they clasp, in a strange gentleness. So, profiled to the audience, the two stand, deep in each other's eyes.*)

Blackness.

SCENE VI

SCENE: *The same as the preceding. The stage is empty. The sun is gone from the left windows. A gray light like a mist suffuses the entire Scene—inner set and the overscene also. It is a grayness as of the streets come into the room—the impersonal weary grayness of sidewalks.*

AT RISE: *Enter right* MACSHANE. *He lays a small grip on a chair and looks about him, as at a strange room. There is no regret in his eyes. Briskly he seats himself at the table, right, and begins to write a note. Enter, center,* LAURA. *She stands at door watching her husband. At last, with pen in hand suspended, he looks up to her.*

LAURA. What are you doing?

MACSHANE (*hesitates, looks at his paper, lays aside the pen*). I am writing you a letter.

LAURA. What are you saying to me?

MACSHANE. I have not been able to change my mind.

LAURA. You are going away?

MACSHANE. The night has confirmed me.

LAURA. Where are you going?

MACSHANE. Nowhere—to a hotel. That is not all. I am going

to resign from the Bench. That will need time. I cannot run away from that, as I want to. Not yet.

LAURA. You dare to run away from your home; you dare not run away from your office.

MACSHANE. This is the world which has disappeared. My world. I am not running away from it. It is gone.

LAURA. Is it gone, Samson?

MACSHANE. How dare you ask? How dare you tell me how to act?

LAURA. That is true. I have no right. Whatever you do, I accept. Only—make sure!

MACSHANE. You have made me a stranger to all I had—to all I was.

LAURA. Is it *all* so unbearable to you? Is nothing real any more, except the revelation? Is there no love—

MACSHANE. Love? Love? If there were no love, would I be suffering?

LAURA. But if love is there—is there no hope?

MACSHANE. What have you done? What monster were you, you my wife, all these years, to make a monster of our world?

LAURA. Do I know? Do I understand?

MACSHANE. I could have come to feel, as a man should feel, toward Alan. But to love him as mine through the years: to make him, more and more, as the years wore down my dreams, all my dream: to bring him more of myself, my boy! And feed him that, and make him that, till at last all of myself was he—my dreams, my faith, my courage—

LAURA. You are right. You must go.

MACSHANE (*takes his unfinished letter and tears it. Rises and approaches* LAURA). You have loved me, I know. I am sure of that. You have not respected me, as I feel I deserved. . . . Respect enough to have given me the truth.

LAURA. The truth! The truth! Was I God, to have the truth? to give it you?

MACSHANE. You are quibbling. You know what I mean.

LAURA. I swear to you: it was the truth I sought. It was the truth I strove to make. It was the truth I lied for!

MACSHANE (*shaking his head*). We have not understood each other, Laura.

LAURA. Alan is the seed of Albert Benison. If I had told you that, what of the truth of our love, of our home and children?

Would you have preserved it, Samson, if I had told you that? Should I have turned those truths to lies, because of another truth that was so far away? Oh, God, how many truths have you, in your world? Is there a time for truths? Is there not Truth, holding them all together? (*Pause*) Alan is your son. That is true also.

MACSHANE. There lay your presumption. To have dared to judge the truth. You knew facts. A humble word and a better. You owed me facts.

LAURA. You have them.

MACSHANE. Now! Now!

LAURA. At any time, would you not have cried: Now!—Now! At least, Alan has lived these seventeen years in the truth of your love—in the love of you, his father, who has resolved to die. You too choose to die—although a different death from the death of Laurence. At least, Alan has lived in the truth of our murdered home. Has a lie given him this truth? Look at him, Samson? Could a lie make one like Alan?

MACSHANE. I do not know you.

LAURA. Have you thought of us?

MACSHANE. When I am away there'll be time for that. When this hideous strangeness you have made my life is away.

LAURA (*in anger*). Hideous now? Alan—he too is hideous? (*Enter* ALAN, *center.*)

ALAN. Father, may I come in?

MACSHANE. Why should you ask if you may come in?

ALAN (*comes up to* MACSHANE, *ignoring* LAURA). I must talk with you, father . . . You must tell me. What have I done?

MACSHANE. You? You have done nothing . . .

ALAN. Yet I feel—you have made me feel I have done something. After the death of Laurence and Cleo, your eyes, father, told me one thing. "We are close," they said. "Closer than ever." Now, this change. Changed eyes that looked at me so silent, yesterday—that look at me now.

MACSHANE. You have done nothing, Alan.

ALAN. Are you going away?

MACSHANE. You know that?

ALAN. Father, you are going away because of me.

MACSHANE. Yes, Alan. That is true.

ALAN. Then you must tell me what I have done.

MACSHANE (*tortured more and more*). You have done nothing, I say.

ALAN. You can't explain to me, father?

MACSHANE. It is hard . . . Impossible!

ALAN. I will try to understand. I will not think of myself.

MACSHANE (*as if touched to the quick*). Why do you say that?

ALAN. I have found out . . . when I think of myself, it is hard to understand.

MACSHANE. My boy!

ALAN. Tell me now, father. . . .

MACSHANE (*pause*). I cannot . . . There seems nothing to say.

LAURA (*crying out in joy*). Samson!

ALAN (*turning to his mother*). Will you help father tell me?

LAURA. I will tell you myself. It is for me to tell you. . . . All these years, I have lived a lie with your father. A lie about you. You are not your father's son.

(*In pause,* MACSHANE *turns away to master his grief and pain.* ALAN *considers quietly.*)

ALAN. I have guessed that long ago. From hurt and lovely secrets in the eyes of Albert Benison. From ugly words in the mouth of his poor wife. I felt sorry for them.

MACSHANE. For them!

ALAN. Oh, father—you too have been thinking of yourself. And so you have not understood. You are my father. . . .

MACSHANE. I cannot bear this.

ALAN. And will you tell me now what I have done? Why you are going away?

MACSHANE. You knew this? It makes no difference to you?

ALAN. I try to understand. Why are we changed for each other?

MACSHANE. You disarm me, Alan.

ALAN. Why are you armed against me?

MACSHANE. I must have time, you see? You must give me time to think!

ALAN. But you have thought. You have packed your grip. (*Pause*) I have rights, father! I demand to know—what have I done? Why you are leaving us? (*He speaks these words with a new sternness.*)

(*Enter, center,* BENISON.)

MACSHANE (*to* BENISON). You could have spared me this.

BENISON (*coming in*). No, my friend. I could not.

MACSHANE. What do you want?

BENISON. Do not ask me. I have not come here to ask you anything.

MACSHANE. Then why have you come?

BENISON. We shall both learn.

MACSHANE. I do not blame or hate you. I have no wish to injure you. I want you out of my sight! You and Laura and Alan. This house. This strangeness which is my life.

BENISON. You have the right to ask me to leave.

MACSHANE. I ask it.

(BENISON *turns to go.*)

ALAN. Father! Do you not see why he came? Look at him, father?

(*As if commanded,* BENISON *turns again, and the two men face each other.*)

ALAN. He has nothing. And you who have so much refuse to see him? You dare not drive him away!

(LAURA *sobs silently, right.*)

BENISON. I'll go, MacShane. But first I'll tell you why I came. I know now. I feel now you will listen. The woman I have loved . . . the child, my child whom I have never dared to greet, whom I have never won: they are in your hands. They have always been in your hands. All my life—in your hands. I have earned this. And I know why I came. To take them— Oh, to take them, if they would only come with me. They are not coming. I see that. They are yours.

LAURA. Samson, what will you do with this man who has nothing?

BENISON. We must go on, friend. (*He puts out both his hands toward* MACSHANE.)

MACSHANE. I do not understand! I seem to have lost nothing! I have won— (*He goes forward.*) You put forth your hands to me? To me, who loved only my own images? (*Clasps both* BENISON'S *hands. He turns, and looking at his wife and the boy, he calls their names aloud as if recognizing them for the first time.*) Laura, my wife. Alan . . . my boy!

(BENISON *turns again to leave, as if afraid of succumbing to his emotion.* LAURA *makes a motion toward him. He stops her with a shake of his head.*)

BENISON. It is long ago, Laura, that I denied myself. Before you were married to this man. I denied you and myself. In order to be free in what I called my life. It was life, I denied; and life has done by me as I deserved. Do not feel sorry for me. Life has done better by me than I deserved. Immeasurably better. (*As he says this, he looks at* ALAN—*showing what he means.*) Good-bye, Alan. (*Exit, center,* BENISON.)

(LAURA *moves to the side of her son. They are both, now, to left of* MACSHANE, *who stands and looks at them.*)

MACSHANE. It will be hard. Can I do it? Can I rise free of myself in order to dwell with my love? It is the only way . . . I know: the only way for me to have what God gives me.

(*During this last speech the scene has grown swiftly dimmer, and now the three figures are blotted out.*)

(*The upper scene, denoting the City, is illumined and* THE SEVEN REVELLERS *are revealed, leaning over in contemplation of the lower scene. They are still in their black gowns and hoods. Now, they bestir themselves; and cast off these regalia of mourning. Once more they are in brilliant evening dress.*)

1ST MAN. Life is a wound.

2ND MAN. There are no sons.

3RD MAN. No daughters.

THE 3 WOMEN. This is the healing of life.

BOY. *Life is holy.*

(*Pause.*)

1ST MAN. To take life whole—

2ND MAN. Possessing naught—

3RD MAN. Loving all.

THE 3 WOMEN. This is the healing of life.

BOY. *Life is holy.*

(*Pause.*)

1ST MAN. Let no one say: "This is mine, and not that."

2ND MAN. Let no one say: "Mine is the joy—not the sorrow."

3RD MAN. Let no one say: "This I will—this I refuse."

THE 3 WOMEN. This is the healing of life.

BOY. *Life is holy.*

(*Pause.*)

1ST WOMAN. We can sing again.

2ND WOMAN. We can make merry.

3RD WOMAN. Our hearts are whole for rejoicing.

BOY. *Life is holy.*

(*Pause.*)

1ST MAN. We have beheld the way to laughter.

2ND MAN. We have seen blessedness.

3RD MAN. We have received beauty.

BOY. *Life is holy.*

(*Pause.*)

THE THREE WOMEN. O my sisters and my brothers.

1ST MAN. Life is this dread wound.

THE THREE MEN. O my brothers and my sisters.

1ST WOMAN. Life is a bleeding—

2ND WOMAN. and a bleeding.

3RD WOMAN. And only life will heal it.

BOY. *Life is holy.*

DARKNESS AND CURTAIN

SCENE VII

SCENE: *Rising curtain reveals stage absolutely identical with Scene I. The six characters,* MACSHANE, LAURA, BENISON, NANCY BOWE, CALVIN LACLEDE, HOLT LACLEDE *are identically placed and dressed as in Scene I. In fact, in every detail, it is the exact same scene. Now, as before, a faint sound of horns and whistles is heard; the early signs of the accolade of New Year's Eve.*

HOLT (*sewing*). They're beginning already?

LACLEDE (*consulting his watch*). They're beginning early.

MACSHANE (*puffing hard at his pipe*). Well, it's not to be an ordinary New Year.

NANCY. A new Century. Think of it!

(*Curtain begins to fall.*)

BENISON (*looking up to ceiling and blowing his smoke ceremonially*). You can't think of it.

LAURA. Why can't we think of it, Albert?

MACSHANE. Yes. Why can't we think of it?

BENISON. Why? Because it's not real . . .

CURTAIN BLOTS OUT THE REST.

AND THE PLAY—THE BEGINNINGLESS AND ENDLESS PLAY—FOR THE NIGHT IS OVER.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

The Editors regret the absence of Mr. Van Wyck Brooks from the editorial board of The Second American Caravan.

CONRAD AIKEN was born in Savannah, Georgia, on August 5, 1889. He was educated at Middlesex School, and Harvard College. He is the author of many books of verse, including Priapus and the Pool, the Pilgrimage of Festus, Punch: The Immortal Liar, the Jig of Forslin; a novel, Blue Voyage; a book of critical essays, Scepticisms; a book of short stories, Bring! Bring!, and has contributed to magazines both here and abroad.

SHERWOOD ANDERSON was born in Camden, Ohio, on September 13, 1876. He has written, among other books, Windy McPherson's Son, Winesburg Ohio, Poor White, Many Marriages, A Story Teller's Story, Tar; and has contributed widely to magazines. He is at present editor of the Smyth County News and the Marion Democrat.

NATHAN ASCH * was born in 1902 in Warsaw, Poland; he was educated abroad, and at Columbia and Syracuse Universities. He is the author of The Office and Love in Chartres, and has contributed to various reviews.

HOWARD BAKER was born on April 5, 1905, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He has lived most of his life in California, and is a graduate of Whittier College and Stanford University. Off and on he has farmed and has reported for newspapers.

LOUISE BOGAN * was born in 1897 at Livermore Falls, Maine. She has lived in New York City since 1919; and has published one volume of verse, Body of This Death.

KAY BOYLE was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1903. She has studied at the Ohio Mechanics Institute, Columbia University and the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. Her work has appeared in Broom, This Quarter, The London Calendar, Poetry, the Forum, and Transition.

EDNA BRYNER * was born in Tylersburg, Pennsylvania, and edu-

* Contributed to the First American Caravan.

cated in the public schools of that state, and at Vassar College. She has published stories in the Dial, Bookman, and the Century, two of which were republished in O'Brien's Best Short Stories of the Year. She is the author of Andy Brandt's Ark, and has another novel in preparation.

MORLEY CALLAGHAN * was born in Toronto, Ontario, 1903. B.A. St. Michael's College, University of Toronto. He did newspaper work and is now studying law. He has published two stories Girl with Ambition and A Wedding Dress, in This Quarter; and has a novel forthcoming.

SAVILLE TRICE CLARK was born Feb. 28, 1904, in Verona, Mississippi. He was graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1925, and is at present a Corporal in the U. S. Marine Corps.

HART CRANE * was born in Garrettsville, Ohio, in 1899. His formal education was not continued beyond high school. Since then he has been employed as a mechanic, a clerk, a copywriter, etc. His first book of verse is called White Buildings.

BABETTE DEUTSCH * was born in 1895 in New York City. She began to publish while a sophomore at Barnard. She is the author of two books of poetry, Banners and Honey Out of the Rock, and of two novels, A Brittle Heaven and In Such a Night. In 1926, she won the Nation Poetry Prize. With her husband, Avrahm Yarmolinsky, she has assembled and translated three books of foreign verse: Modern Russian Poetry, Contemporary German Poetry and An Anthology of Russian Verse.

GERTRUDE DIAMANT * was born in New York in 1901. She has contributed short stories and articles to several magazines; and will shortly publish her first novel.

JACQUELINE EMBRY is a Kentuckian: Frankfort born, Louisville resident. She is a graduate of Miss Howe and Miss Marot's School at Thompson, Connecticut, and has contributed verse to The Century, Harper's, The Nation, Life, Vanity Fair and The New Yorker.

MARTIN FEINSTEIN was born in New York City in 1892. He attended the College of William and Mary, and the University of Michigan, where he taught rhetoric for three years. During the war he served a year in France with the 306th Infantry (77th Division). He is the author of In Memoriam and Other Poems, and The Drums of Panic, a novel; and has contributed to many magazines and anthologies. He won the Nation's Poetry Prize in 1922.

LINCOLN FITZELL was born in San Francisco, California. He was graduated from the University of California, and is at present studying at the University of Montpellier, France.

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JOHN GOULD FLETCHER * was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, January 3, 1886. He was educated at Phillips Academy and Harvard College. He is the author of Fire and Wine, Irradiations, Sand and Spray, Goblins and Pagodas, Japanese Prints, The Tree of Life, Breakers and Granite, Paul Gauguin: His Life and Art, Preludes and Symphonies, and Parables.

WALDO DAVID FRANK was born in Long Branch, New Jersey, in 1889. He attended the New York Public Schools, and Yale University (Honorary Fellow of the College). He is the author of various novels and books of criticism, among which are The Unwelcome Man, The Dark Mother, Rahab, City Block, Our America, Salvos, Virgin Spain, The Re-Discovery of America. He has contributed widely to magazines both here and abroad.

ROBERT FROST was born in San Francisco, California, in 1875. He is the author of A Boy's Will, North of Boston, Mountain Interval, and New Hampshire. Another volume of his poems will shortly be published.

EVA GOLDBECK was born in Berlin, Germany, on August 26, 1901, and came to America in childhood. She is a graduate of Northwestern University. She has contributed to The Guardian, and to various magazines and newspapers.

HENRY GOODMAN was born on May 30, 1893. He was graduated from Columbia University. His short stories have appeared in The Bookman, Pictorial Review, The Midland, Clay, and have been reprinted in O'Brien's collections. He teaches the short story in the extension division of Hunter College, New York City.

WALLACE GOULD * was born in 1882 of Yankee stock. His poems have been published by Others, The Dial, Broom, and The Little Review. A volume of his poems, Aphrodite, will shortly be published.

C. HARTLEY GRATTAN was born in 1902, in Wakefield, Massachusetts. He was educated in the schools of Framingham, Mansfield, and New Bedford, Massachusetts, and was graduated from Clark College in 1923. He has contributed articles and book reviews to the magazines and newspapers; and essays by him have been included in Current Reviews and in American History as Told by Contemporaries, edited by Albert Bushnell Hart.

FRANCIS GREGG was born on April 28, 1884, in Hartford, Connecticut. She studied at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts. She has contributed to The Forum, The Dial, Poetry, The Smart Set, The Adelphi, The Monthly Criterion, and The London Mercury.

HORACE GREGORY was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1898. He was educated by private tutors until he was seventeen, and

* Contributed to the First American Caravan.

thereafter studied at the German-English Academy of Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin, and the School of Fine Arts, Milwaukee. He has contributed to Transition, Poetry, The Nation, The Bookman, Folio, Vanity Fair, The New Masses, etc. He is married to Marya Zaturenska.

H. D. was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. She attended the Friends Central School of that City, and was graduated from Bryn Mawr College. She is the author of Hymen, Heliodora, Palimpsest, Hippolytus Temporises, etc., and has contributed to Poetry, The Dial, The Egoist, The Saturday Review, The Little Review, and other magazines. She is married to Richard Aldington.

GWENDOLEN HASTE was born in Illinois and studied at the University of Chicago. She has contributed to The Nation, Scribners, The Century, Poetry, The American Mercury, and other magazines.

LEON SRABIAN HERALD was born in Armenia. He has contributed to The Dial, This Quarter, The Nation, The World Tomorrow, Poetry, American Review, The Commonweal. He is the author of This Waking Hour, a group of poems, published in 1926, by Thomas Seltzer.

JOSEPHINE HERBST was born in Sioux City, Iowa, on March 5, 1897. She has studied at the University of Iowa and the University of California. She is the author of a novel, Nothing is Sacred, and has contributed to the following magazines: Transition, The American Mercury, and The New Masses. She is married to John Herrmann.

JOHN HERRMANN was born in Lansing, Michigan, on November 9, 1900. He studied at the University of Michigan and at the University of Munich. His book What Happens was published in a Contact edition in Paris. He has contributed to This Quarter, Transition, The Little Review, and The New Masses. He is married to Josephine Herbst.

RAYMOND HOLDEN * was born in New York City in 1894. He was educated at Princeton University and is the author of two volumes of verse: Granite and Alabaster, and Linen to Flax.

EUGENE JOLAS was born in Union Hill, New Jersey. He was educated in the High School of Metz, Lorraine and learned English at the age of eighteen in De Witt Clinton High School in New York City. He is the author of Cinema, and has contributed to The New Masses, This Quarter, Transition, Revue Europeenne, Cahiers du Sud, Revue Nouvelle, and the Neue Schweitzer Rundschau.

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