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Light on the wing; a novel

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H. A. Jamieson College, 1938

Sten Beckman

by

A Novel

LIGHT ON THE KING

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This is in effect the soul of a novel. Having apparently written the last first, for the present status is such that of theoretical solution rather than the result of full-bodied action, I now wish to give the story more adequate body. I have attempted to evoke body for the story and for the chief character, but I may not have sufficiently used incident to illustrate such of the theoretical, nor sufficiently tagged Don and other characters to satisfy many readers.

Character here has been an attempt at evocation rather than at presentation of thick-blooded flesh. I have chosen evocation as a powerful yet subtle means of treating the pathological strongly infused with love of nature.

The development of body for the story must depend upon the changing of certain theoretical passages to illustrative incident with less author intrusion in the theory. The incidents themselves are to be managed chiefly through other characters whose action may influence Don's life, directly or indirectly.

Much in the style that has thus far contributed to the fog of Don's development may be improved by direct statement in simple sentence---interspersed---perhaps with one such sentence to the long thought passage. Many of the italicized passages may better be used as direct quotations or thoughts of the characters. The italicized passages are author intrusion, except as they may be quoted as thought or speech of the character. (None of this need detract from the fog that is an essential part of Don's mental growth.)

The style has been obtuse, or obverse, for the same reason that character is an evocation. The pathological, especially in a western setting, where the robust is the ideal, must be muted. The lyric quality of the first part, and the lyric indications throughout, plus the lyric quality at the end is an aid in the subtle presentation of the pathological.

I have tried to create a setting and its influence: first as something truly western which is ever to remain vital to Don; second as something comic which is subjected to his symbolization--as is the western influence; third, as reality more greatly perturbs him, as something of all the material influence extant. Without the setting I attempt, little evocation of character such as I wish can be--nor can the linking of incident I use form a homogeneous part of the whole narrative.

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Don meets with pre-school, school and teaching experience--the last of which includes his further schooling and indications of writing attempts. Incidents occur on a parallel plane with Don's mental growth and seem disassociated from him with few exceptions. Yet all are intended to illustrate his development. That there is little mental growth that is not part and parcel with an inherent conviction is strongly indicated in the first part.

The whole experience--throughout the stages of childhood and school days in western atmosphere, college in an aura of middle-west provincialism, teaching on the semi-western plains and in western mountains where the evocation of populace is again middle-west and

purchase--is lighted for Don by contact with his pupils, a trip to the west coast and a sea voyage, and by his association with a group of feverish young would-be writers.

In all this he has experienced an emotional drain. The cause of this emotional drain is twofold: Don's tendency to will his own conviction of rights to others--to make others accept his thought and desire as the only right, and his struggle to untangle the light strands of relationship with his fellows.

His contacts as a classroom teacher, while less a drain of emotion in that there is less crossing of lines than in his association with individuals, brings him as much sense of gratification as satisfaction in the warmth of understanding pupil reaction.

Because he is aware of the emotional ties with others that bind and tangle, he attempts to concentrate on single associations to prevent tangling.

But this effort leads him into foreordained channels.

There is always the symbol for Don by which he sublimates the harsh and the real that he may retain an ultimate fineness.

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There is the attempt to evoke reader comprehension of a sensitive soul intuitively conscious, from early contact with natural forces, of an aloneness that means eventual knowledge of oneself as one's own time, space, and god limitation--that one is all or nothing. The pathological is inherent in the theory as in the nature that creates the theory.

PRELUDE

A youth sat astride a plank based against the wall and floor at one side of a twelve-by-twelve shack and the only door at the other side of the tiny unfurnished room. A howling wind twisted the little structure while the thunder broke and rolled over the knoll crest, on which the shack stood, with a far more personal vengeance than heavy artillery fire. Lightning pierced the black wild and wrapped the scene in lurid sheets that shone in the room, an unendurable white wrath.

The boy astride the plank lay flat on his belly and gripped the rough timber. The plank seemed a part of the boy, who was unconscious of the delicate balls of white fire that occasionally rolled down the plank from the door and passed through his body--through his aching groins and tortured loins - loins that were flatted against the rough timber until wood and flesh were one by force of will and bone. The boy's cheek lay against the plank, slivery from its texture. His head was turned from the bed in a corner of the room.

A girl lay on the bed, her hair spread on pillows and tumbled with her tossing. The knees drawn up had laxed and spread. Her eyes were closed, her face taut in agony--frequent groans escaping clenched teeth through lips flaccid as if not of the tensed face and jaws. Her hands beat the air and tore at the coverlet alternately. The girl was fighting an elemental battle and was totally unaware of the raging elements about her. Enough were raging within her.

In this fire-torn blackness no trace of a milky way was visible. But--there too elemental passion was exercising. A soul tremblingly faltered its new-born way down this tumbling milky torrent. Caught like a streamer in a whirlwind, torn by lightning fire and heaving like a retching stomach, the milky way presented difficulties.

Something was happening to a tiny soul, a soul setting out on its first lap of eternity. That tiny soul was aging. Its tottering feebleness was a combination of the new born and forced maturity. Wisdom forced is perverted.

Elements mingled. Thunder, gathering its force for a grand clap on earthly region, tore lightning tendrils through the gossamer of tiny soul-- left rents never to be mended.

A tiny born babe wailed harshly as its delicate hands grasped a dampish gray fog of torn soul to its body. Soul that babe must have. Instinct sought its preservation. The hands that grasped that ripped and tangled substance of soul managed its mothering. Soul and body mingled. The tiny hands became and remained maternal.

Boy and girl--father and mother--were not prepared to rear a child wiser at birth through perversion than earth life can make one.

BOOK ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Don was three years old. He walked straight---like a soldier---down the path to the gate to the road that led to Grandma's. Don walked in a rosette glow of unreasoning happiness, walked in an impenetrable glow of unreasoning happiness---going to Grandma's---going to Grandma's sang through the light about him.

"Where are you going, Don?" broke the light waves. Don walked on. "Going to Grandma's" sang through the light.

Suddenly Don was upended and the rosette glow was shattered by palm whacks applied to Don's shapely little buttocks. He felt too that his father's other hand balanced him from the stomach. The peddling didn't really hurt. Don didn't cry, but he was tearful. Dutifully he turned back on the path to Mamma. The light glow was no longer rosette. It was harsh; it was real. It was not just. For the first time Don had realized punishment for something he hadn't done. His soul was hurt. The light that was of him, from him, and with him had been rent. Mamma said gently, "But what was it? What did you tell Papa?"

"Nothing," Don murmured, and buried his head in Mamma's apron.

Twenty years later he still resented his father's rending the light.

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Pre-school days were really one mellow flow of happiness for Don. Harshness was almost unrealized. Playing at sliding down Mamma's cellar door beneath the kitchen window from which Mamma sang hoarsely and harshly to the clack of dishes, the snap of kneading bread, or the steady soft sound of peeling potatoes, with each dropped peel plashing gently into a shallow pan of water, "You can't slide down my cellar door any more," or "You'll get a sliver in your liver" was delight ineffable. There was light.

When Papa brought Mamma the lovely new floor mats, there was light. But when Mamma made Papa take them back because the knap shed, there was woe. Not an expressed woe like the light joy that made Don prance up and down in unchecked ecstasy. When Papa brought the mats Don had jumped up and down, run in circles, and triumphantly punched the couch head from which each fist punch shot higher light rays. The intangible can be very real in childhood.

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Don's first memories of the little home where he was born were not of that storm-went shack. There were three rooms and a shed porch. The shed porch had an opening to the sky--to the sky of light. The opening was walled on three sides and roofed out from the house wall on the other. This left a porch roof over the door and a roofed hallway between the house and coal-shed, which were under the same roof.

In winter time Don had a wart on his hand. His hand was nature in line and rounding. Veins showed on the backs and at joints and knuckles. Don worried about the wart, but Mamma said, "Rub it with salt pork, and bury the pork."

Uncle Ted was two years older than Don. He lived at Grandma's. Grandma was his Mamma. Ted said, "Rub it with pork; shut your eyes; turn around three times and say 'hokus-pokus-stradivarius-wart go away and never come back again'; then open your eyes and throw the pork into the dark coal bin. And don't never, nohow, ever, dig it up". Don thought this amusing. He thought it queer that Mamma said, "Rub it with salt pork and throw away the pork." That didn't sound like Mamma. Why, Mamma said there wasn't a Santa Claus. When Don was five he was positive, and had informed Mamma, and Papa

too, that Santa was the light in each of them that made Christmas time a very special time. Childhood fights the revelation of the unbeautiful.

But Don did rub pork on his wart and throw it into the coal bin. He often went back to gaze into the darkness of the bin and wonder if the salt had yet been burned, or if Tom the cat, had found it and eaten it. He wondered, if Tom, the cat, had eaten it, if he'd have a wart in his stomach.

Don forgot about the wart.

But one day when Mama said, "Your wart is gone," he remembered. Still he didn't believe that hokus-yokus.

Tom sat under the table and growled slow, lazy growls of contentment. Don squatted to play fight with Tom, who boxed---sitting on his haunches---spitting dolefully with each punch. Tom was black and he had a white breast. He was very dignified. One day when Papa was grouchy he kicked Tom. Papa thought Tom was grouchy. Tom went away and stayed away for days in the cold of winter. One grey morning Tom was hunched on the edge of the opening between the coal shed roof and the bedroom roof. Tom growled and sat hunched. Papa tried to coax Tom to come down. Don called, "Come, Tom, come on down---come kitty, kitty." Don's shrill pleading only made Tom more dignified. He wanted this assurance. Tom never came again.

Don was seven. He couldn't remember when his brother came. He was just there and he was always fussing about getting dressed or something. He could fuss for an hour about getting his stockings on straight. But Darcy could

tell wonderful stories. Stories that brought the sandman, who also told stories. Don never knew when his brother left off telling and the sandman began. Sometimes it was fun to play with Darcy.

When Mamma said, "Don't," Darcy didn't care. Don couldn't get around Mamma's 'don't's'. They always stood like big rocks in the way and grew wider or higher whichever way Don tried to get around them. They were like Don's dreams that Mamma called "nightmares". They grew and rolled and slipped and stretched.

One time Don dreamed that Papa stood over him in the night in his shirt-tail--and held a big knife over Don--and held it closer--and closer. Don tried to scream and couldn't. Don was awake, but Papa's figure was still there--gradually the knife faded.

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The light sang out of Don less often. Marshness became more real. The growing consciousness insists upon a right right, and a wrong wrong.

Things got twisted. Like the time Mamma told stories about Indians. When Mamma was out of the house a knock came at the bedroom door. The door was seldom used, but now Don and Darcy used the shed over the door for a play room. They were in the shed playing. A knock came at the door. Don and Darcy stared wide-eyed at one another. Darcy whispered, "Indians". Don saw a picture of his Papa in his shirt-tail holding a knife over him--facing him. Don saw the knife--he felt the dream again, then sank on his knees in the middle of the room. Darcy sank before him--still gazing wide-eyed at Don. Then Mamma came into the room through the kitchen. "Why didn't you answer the door?" The boys grinned--not sheepishly. Don said quietly, "We thought it was Indians". This wasn't right. Mamma didn't do things like this.

Mamma said never to tell lies, never even to imagine lies. This was a lie. Mamma had told about Indians; then she had knocked on the shed door.

Mamma held her hands together queerly. She smiled wisely. "Guess what I have here," Mamma commanded. "I don't know", said Daroy. Don could guess only, "Gopher". He suspected further treachery. Mamma sat on the couch and spread her knees. She dropped her hands in the basket of her apron. "Guess", she commanded. The boys were dumb; then stubborn. Mamma relented. She opened her hands, and there was--a tiny bunny rabbit--a tiny quivering bit of furry fluff.

They hurt was gone. But Don didn't forget that Mamma did wrong, just as he didn't forget that Papa had spanked when he had no cause. Don was storing up realities. The light was weaker, and occurred less frequently.

But it shone again with a blinding strength when Grandma had wiped a red tomato shiny and handed it to him. He hated to eat it--the beautiful red glossy sphere-like object fascinated him. He walked straight across the room. The light was blinding. He wanted to tell Grandma about it, and followed the creak of her footsteps instinctively--to the head of the cellar stairs. The light held him and the tomato in his outstretched hand served as a beacon. Don left the light behind him precipitately, for the next he knew he was landing in Grandma's outstretched apron. She stood smiling, at the foot of the cellar stairs, and swung him in her apron her hands firmly grasped at the corners of her so readily improvised swing. Don laughed and still clutched his tomato. It was no longer a beacon. He sank his teeth into its succulence and forgot to tell Grandma how the light had held him.

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Mamma came down behind the barn in search of the boys. They were playing in the mud pond that the hogs used for a waller. Don shouted gaily, "Come have a ride, Mamma? We've got a boat." Their mother looked in dismay at the worm-eaten hog trough, scarcely more than a rotted plank with a two-inch splinter of edging. "What a boat! You'll soon be in that filthy mud," she said calmly, picking her teeth with a pin she'd taken from her waist front.

"No, we won't," Ted, Don's uncle, insisted. "I'm taking care of this boat," and he gouged into the mud with a stick. "Pole, boys!" he shouted. Don and Darcy each plied their sticks to the slipp of hog waller--as much ply as the three-foot plank footing would allow the three boys on its tipsyness.

Mamma looked on, a strange light in her eyes. "You'll soon be all muddy, and I've just changed your clothes this morning." The boys didn't answer. She went around the barn to the house, speaking over her shoulder, "Don't come to me when you're muddy. You can just stay that way--remember".

The fun was spoiled for Don. When a few minutes later he and Darcy trudged wearily to the house, and Ted went towards Grandma's, Mamma sat on the kitchen doorstep gazing at the sunset. The boys came before her. Don's eyes mirrored her prophecy. She said, "Don't come near me." The boys stood meekly. "You can't go into the house." Don and Darcy sat on the bottom step below Mamma to slowly dry in the waning sunlight. "What you looking at?" Don asked. "The sunset," she replied.

Don never forgot the most severe punishment his mother had ever administered.

CHAPTER TWO

School first made definite impression upon Don as a big bus. Not that he didn't read. He never remembered learning. He had just read, and was doing a great deal of reading before he thought of school. But the school bus came past the house. There was shouting and laughter--school must be like that.

One morning, in bright sunshine, Don walked to the road with his lunch pail swinging. Mamma said to Alma, the oldest girl on the bus, who wore nose glasses, "Keep an eye on him, Alma. He's never been before." Her eyes were solicitous as she watched the bus, her hand shading her eyes from the bright sun.

There was no sunlight in the bus. Don's bus mates were vicious. They tugged at his blouse collar, stepped on the toes of his new shoes, and asked him if he wanted to play with the girls. Alma was particularly unfriendly. "So I'm to be Mamma's boy's guardian, am I? Not me--not much! The old cat asked me to keep an eye on him," she grimaced in final explanation to the youngsters.

Bill was playing with a coiled rope as if to make a lariat of it. "Want me to string you up with this?" he asked Don.

"No, he wants to play with the girls," Alma said acidly, primly, and adjusted her nose glasses.

The teacher was a man.

Don leaned upon his knee at the desk and told teacher "always" spelled "away". The teacher said, sternly, frowning, "What does that spell?" pointing an accusing finger at the word. "Away," Don reiterated. He knew it was

wrong, but Don had been reading alone, silently. He couldn't remember "always". Teacher shook him roughly. Don hated him, dreaded school, and never forgot.

Don worked hard. He was far in advance of his grade when he started, but nobody was satisfied. Alma told the teacher, "He wants to play with the girls. We can't do nothing without him always tagging." She adjusted her nose glasses primly. He stood around at recess to avoid the rough games of ball and the bigger boys' ruthless running. They didn't mind when their heavy shoes struck him.

One day he came into the school-room at noon to get an apple from his lunch pail. The teacher was at the desk and spoke very crossly. "What do you want?" Don nervously clutched at his pail and rushed out through the lobby where Alma and other girls were playing at dancing. They grinned knowingly at one another. They had heard the teacher. Alma cried, "Wants play with the girls, Don?"

One morning when the bus stopped for Don, Alma adjusted her nose glasses with even greater attempted dignity than usual. "What's that, Don?" she asked, pointing to a white crockery pot sitting on the lid of the tall well curbing that stood, somewhat like a large post, outside the bedroom door.

"Oh, that," said Don. "That's a polar bear. I ride him to bed every night." The laughter that followed was sincere, even on Alma's part. Don felt his first ray of light since he had started to school. He was learning. This one trick evened many scores. Don felt nonchalant. He could feel the light--a little.

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Winter came and the bus rides were cold and long even though a stove warmed the canvas hood seats. The bigger boys and girls crowded next to fire. Don always sat back in a corner. Alma conceived the bright idea of utilizing the heat to make fudge. One day the necessities materialized, and amidst much strong, if erroneous, counsel, the sweetish stickiness was stirred in a pan over the stove. The bus rocked; Alma's nose glasses slipped awry; the stickiness splashed and splattered. That it should yet boil seemed probable when the driver was inspired. The team was reined out of the beaten track, and wheels lurched over stones. The pan and its sticky contents were overturned. Alma caught most of the content on her dress. Her brother Bill and the driver enjoyed the fudge making most of all. Alma wiped her hands on a hanky, adjusted her nose glasses, and with great assumed dignity declared, "The road is too rough. We can't make fudge on this bus."

One afternoon the bus drove home through a heavy snow storm. Don didn't think much of the storm. You couldn't keep and examine each marvelous design of soft wet flakes. Each too soon became a part of all that, while it stormed, was but a blurred, obscured nothing of grayness. The horses were given their heads and followed the road that led to their manger.

When the bus arrived at Don's house, his Mamma stood in the yard waiting, but Don didn't know it. All he could see was this gray-veiled obscurity that at times seemed all white---even lovely. But Don felt his mother's hands upon him as he stepped from the bus. Then he realized her figure shrouded by this vast nothingness. Mamma pushed him before her into the warm lighted room. He wondered why the bus hadn't stopped at the road. Mamma seemed to have been right outside the door. She couldn't see to go farther. She now

loosed her apron--it was one string from twisting. It hadn't been easy to wait in the storm for the bus, wondering. Now the snow fell in a wet white plop. Her apron had filled with it as she had absently twisted it--waiting.

There was to be more snow and more cold. The cold that penetrated more than the bus and made the school-room one tangled clamor at recess and noon. There was a numbed stillness at morning, though, when youngsters crowded about a big bellied stove with a pan of greyishness resting on the high top. The teacher said the pan would have chalk in it after a while. Don doubted that. It sounded like the pork nonsense--and getting rid of the wart. Don had only wary eyes for the teacher anyhow. He never got near the stove in the morning. It was the older, taller youngsters who investigated the chalk that was to be, and let the warmth waves wrap them while Don stood at the edge and felt that second-hand warmth stir--slowly, humbly, and odorously nauseating--out from the stove. Don resented this--this and many other things--but he said nothing. Yet one day he did turn in his desk, after school had called, and stand on his knees while a speculative slow smile clouded his usually bright countenance. The teacher whacked Don's buttocks with his pointer. He was kept in at recess, and many taunting eyes turned toward him as the youngsters filed out.

Teacher said severely, "Why did you do it?" Don sat dumbly. "Don't let it happen again, or I shall have to punish you. Now you may go." It was a ritual. Don walked slowly out. He was in a press of excited questions. "He didn't do nothing," Don boasted. He was more nearly one of them. He even spoke as they did. It was a mood born of resentment.

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One morning the sun shone brightly on scintillant crusted snow. Wind had banked the soft whiteness; sun crusted it; and now it all lay in huge undulating wave lengths. The bus mounted these, slid lurchingly down them. The horses trudged on with the lurching weight behind at three-quarter angles, up-down-or-sidewise. With each great lurch the youngsters, led by Alma and Bill, threw themselves against the downward slant of the bus wall screaming, "We're gonna go over. We're gonna go over. She's going. She's going." Alma sang out, "There's no school today. The bus is gonna tip over." She forgot her nose glasses. Everyone clamored for the bus to tip. Yet each lurch was righted as the horses trudged onward.

The lids had fallen from the stove top. The pipe had fallen in sections. The stove slid against one of the benches, and soot was everywhere while dead and hot ashes mingled on the narrow floor strip between the benches. A few rods from the school building the last high bank mounted at an almost unassailable angle. With an extra outpart of vigor, Alma led the push. "She's goin' over. She's goin' over." It was a steady chant. This time the weight on the lower side succeeded. With a final lurching and crunching gasp the bus lay twisted. The horses couldn't move the weight now made by the snow bank against the bus top. The bus was truly "over". But school was only a few rods ahead. The exodus led only to the school-room where routine calmed excitement-weary youngsters.

To Don this excitement had been a thing outside himself at which he looked in alternate concern and near-amusement. He saw Alma as the play actor she was, the whole incident as a make-believe game that had meaning he didn't fully grasp. He was the spectator; yet school was tame after the

exodus from the twisted bus on the snow bank.

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Nights at home in winter weather meant stories. Mama told stories. Papa read stories, and Mack, a bachelor neighbor, discussed Papa's tall yarns with lusty humor. Terror over the Andes. Andes were mountains--great high mountains. Don had never seen mountains--only plains--never ending-rolling--stretches of prairie. Prairies were even more end-of-the-world-like now that winter kept them crusted white. Not even buildings broke the whiteness. A neighbor lived in a snow-covered house that had slanting stairs tunnelled out from the doorways and windows. Don and Darcy, Greta and Lorvig played on the roof--ran up with home-made sleds to flop on their bellies and drift swiftly, in gliding daze of bright and blinding white, to the lower levels yards from the house.

But Don and Darcy were soon sledded home, sitting flat with Mama on the straw filled wagon bottom. Papa stood in heavy fur coat holding the reins while the horses trotted across the hard white snow. Once at home the horses were bedded for the night with plenty of hay in the mangers, chomping oats and steaming contentedly in warm stalls that held their warmth better because the snow banked solid to the eaves.

On nights like these the northern lights often lighted the star-glittering dome of sky in blend of shimmering sub-burst fan ray that always seemed to rise from a great hidden pot, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Particularly like the rainbow colors--muted, smothered by confusing cloud blankets that only heightened the great fan diffusion of hard pastel winter sky. And Don felt in this light a warmth that thwarted

the "hard dull bitterness" that was a thrill in itself, but that often required more than racing heart beat to keep blood and flesh warm.

Papa came into the house to saw out vigorously "Nearer My Got To Thee," on a brand new Bears Roebuck violin. The big word on the label pasted on the inside, so you twisted the instrument this way and that peering crosswise through the slits in the front until you were sure your spine would never slip back into a straight line again--the big word was "Stradivarius." Every violin, that was a violin, must have that big word in it, Don knew. It was a nice word. You had to practice saying it until it sounded even--smooth all along its amazing length. All the vowel sounds muted out to make it longer. It was a nice big luxurious word. To Don it stood for the big wide wonderful things of the world that his Papa read about in Terror over the Andes, and those things too that his Mamma told about. It was absurd to use such a word so. Childhood knows absurdity and often enjoys its assumption, knowingly.

Mamma's stories were more real than Papa's yet they always were scary before Mamma finished them. There was the goat story. Mamma always told it by lamplight and the pale yellow glow of the wick light lent itself softly to the shadows. Mamma's hoarse voice was mellowed too, and her muscles tensed when she came to parts that were scary. Don felt the tautness of her thigh as he leaned against her, his heart thumping in his stomach. A tightness came to his throat too when Mamma's legs got hard-like.

"The old black goat stood tiytoe and wobbled his horns at me. His whiskers were long and swished as they followed the wobble of his horns. Goats have queer eyes. His eyes looked like hazel nuts. No, you don't

know about hazel nuts, but Papa does.

"I was tired, awful tired. I'd just finished mopping the house---it was a big house. How big? Oh, the kitchen was as big as these two rooms," and Mamma swept her hair back and gazed at the lamp wick's yellow glow. Don thought her eyes must be like hazel nuts in that glow. "When I got done scrubbing the kitchen---I always left it until the last, except on the days when I only scrubbed the kitchen---I carried the big scrub bucket out-doors, on the big stone step in front of the kitchen door. That old wooden bucket was heavy. The step was wet because I'd scrubbed it too. The screen door was heavy too, and it caught on my heel. I fell hard." Mamma's hand pressed against her back as she remembered, and her face tightened in pain. The pupils of her eyes were pin points against the light.

"Did it hurt awful?" Don asked.

"Awful," Mamma whispered hoarsely.

"But the goat?" Darcy questioned impatiently.

"Yes, the goat. Well, I was slow about gettin' up, and the old black goat sorta nosed around me; I guess he felt sympathetic. When I did get up, I left the big wooden bucket right where it landed when I fell, and I dragged myself into the house almost bent double.

"The goat came too.

"I got down on the bed and groaned. Well, the goat just stood right over me. Goats climb all over everything. He just stood right over me with his hoofs sinkin' deep in the patch quilt on the feather bed, sinkin' down close on either side of me, and pinning me tight into the bed."

"What did you do?" Don asked.

"Nothing. Oh, I suppose I cried," again the voice was hoarse. "The

goat was trying to be kind.

"I must have slept some for the next thing I knew there was a strange sight in the dooryard. I jumped up, scared and still shakin' from my hurt.

"The goat had got off the bed, for he was gazing at the funny canvas-hooded cart that stood in front of the door. There was an old rack-o-bones horse hitched to it with some tattered old rope. The horse stood with one hip down and his eyes closed. He looked like he'd never move again. The reins ran through a hole--a round hole in the canvas hood. But there wasn't anybody around.

"Then I saw the canvas shake a little. It was that old and dirty I expected it to fade out--or crumble up. I thought I was dressin' anyhow.

"But I wasn't.

"A man came out of that cart somehow. He looked just like the horse but he had canvas on him like the cart. His clothes--if you could call 'em clothes--made him look like the bible pictures, but not pretty. Oh, he looked vile and his eyes wasn't shut like the horse's. They was awful."

"What did his eyes look like?" Don felt his mother's thigh tauten against his stomach.

"They looked like the whey that shows through sour milk when you break the mildew. His face looked like mildew, but it had a scraggle of matted whiskers hanging from it. He looked worse than any nightmare I ever had."

Don shuddered. He knew nightmares.

"The black goat didn't like his old tatters and his bleary sour milk-and-whey face. Before I knew what, he butted through the screen door in one leap and picked that old ghost up as he went. He just ousted that old thing back into the canvas-hooded cart right through the round hole in front

that the reins came out of."

"What about the horse--what did he do?" Darcy was practical.

"I don't just remember about the horse, but I do know that outfit surely hit the trail."

"Why can't we have a goat?" Darcy wanted to know.

"Tell about the time the big sow pig got you down and chewed your shoulder."

"I'm going to blow out the lamp. It's bedtime." Mamma closed the evening.

There were scary stories Don could tell, and Darcy did tell them. But one story was Don's and Darcy's own. They lived the story. Papa and Mamma had gone to a sale. A sale where you got big bun sandwiches for lunch. The buns came out of big crates like the ones chickens or pigs went to town in. All the people at the sale ate the bun sandwiches and drank coffee from heavy cups of white crockery. They dipped these in boilers, like Mamma boiled clothes in on wash days--Mondays--the days Don hated, when the house was all steamy and smelled as if the sudsy, grimy water were in your lungs, and the walls were beaded with moisture. Papa went around with shirt and underwear sleeves rolled up, with sweat or steam running off his face, and Mamma bustled and was cross. But all the people laughed at a sale--they laughed, and the men smoked big cigars and slapped one another on the back. Everyone was happy at a sale.

Papa and Mamma had gone to a sale. When Don and Darcy got home from school, the house was empty. The place was lonely--quiet. But Don and Darcy played round and waited. They had been at sales. Soon Mamma and Papa would be home.

Night came. Black night. Papa and Mama did not come. Don and Darcy would hear wheels on the gravel of the road. They waited shivering in the darkness, but the wheels crunched past. The darkness was peopled---things reached for you---things touched you---wiped your cheek---or breathed on the back of your neck.

They went into the dark house, but there too the blackness was a presence. It was worse in the house. Darcy wanted the lamplight. "You light the lamp, Don," he whispered hoarsely. Don said, "No," in a high startled whisper as if someone had grabbed him. "No," he insisted in a more level hoarse whisper. "Why?" Darcy wanted to know. "Mamma said never to light matches," Don said, as he crouched to peer blindly beneath the table. Darcy too crouched. Below the table there was somehow less of the black to fight off, although the boys had to feel one another to be positive of their presence.

There were wheels on the road. Crouching beneath the table the boys waited. These wheels too scoured past---after what had seemed interminable waiting. Would Papa and Mama never come? The nerve tension was wearing---the close acquaintance with the smaller blackness made it seem more familiar. Things didn't touch you so much---nor take so many shapes to come at you---if you kept your thoughts on the room beneath the table.

At last there came wheels that turned in and Papa's and Mama's cheery voices broke the darkness with normal sounds that weren't so treacherous as each penetrating noise had been in that many-peopled darkness---the stranger peopled black.

"Why didn't you light the lamp?" asked Mama.

"We couldn't find the matches," said Darcy with ready imagination.

"You know that I always keep them in the cupboard. The one under the chimney."

"You said never to light matches," Don said, a little tight lipped. He wanted to be stern with these vagrant parents. They had never done anything like this before. Mamma laughed. Don wondered.

Don and Darcy didn't tell this story. It was their own---to keep, but they didn't want it.

There is native wisdom in childhood's rejections.

At school Don won some well-earned respect from fellow students. An iced snowball had hit his knee when he walked the top of a crusted ridge of dirty white snow. Crusted snow that no amount of slipping feet had broken, but that now was greyed with wear. Don had walked straight on when the ice-ball hit him---walked like a soldier. The teacher had talked about playing at snow-balling. He had gone out to play at making forts with the bigger boys. They must have battles, he said. When the snow had first come the older boys had played at games of running the gamut while the smaller youngsters played fox and geese. The teacher came to watch, and the boys maneuvered positions, so that he walked the gamut. They were not then lined on either side, yet a hardy foot somehow protruded, and the teacher went down hard. Now he must walk the line in a show of possessed bravado. He explained that it had been a mistake. "Just a little mistake, boys." Down he went again in the soft blanket of light loose snow. Again he tried it. "Just a little mistake." The third time he went down.

But he took it smiling. Don had laughed, jumped up and down, and clapped in glee. The older boys remained passive, unsmiling. Nor had they said anything of the incident. Yet one of the boys had assured Don that they would get the teacher. After the incident of the gamut, this boy took Don to the toilet and held his face against the expanse of the filth stained and urine wet boards with well stacked offal below them. "Why did you do it?" asked Don, manfully controlling retching stomach muscles. "I dunno," the stupid cat mumbled, and lumbered off to more play.

Yes, Don had paid to win a measure of respect from bone and brawn and mob,

School was left behind. Don had waked one morning to his mother's cheerful hoarse singing. "Want to go to Grandpa's?" she asked. "Yes," Don cried delighted. Leave it all behind--it was too sudden to grasp fully.

The ensuing rush left little time to consider. But when miles away they boarded the train, Papa didn't get on. "Isn't Papa going?" Don asked frowningly worried. "No," Mama said quietly. Don didn't say more--his throat was too tight. He felt tight and alone. He had never left Papa before. Mama was going too, but she was not Papa. The Papa with whom he played horse, upon whose chest he jumped and pounded while his father lay stretched on the floor, and laughed, and rolled with Don and Darcy. Papa, who would come in looking funny, fall flat on the floor on his belly with a whack that nearly split the house. Mama would smile and say, "John, you ought to know better." Then Papa would get up laughing.

CHAPTER THREE

Grandpa was in bed. Grandpa was sick. But Grandpa could tease, and he would be there with his beard all grey on the bed spread and a gleam in his eyes as children played about him. A little girl cousin, Clara, was there playing. She was a great favorite with Grandpa. "Clara is Don's girl," Grandpa would say, his eyes gleaming across the grey beard. Except for the eyes, Grandpa wasn't really there. The grey beard hid him, but his voice came out of the beard, and it said what the eyes signalled, "Clara is Don's girl."

Don sternly fought that gleam. It was the worst friendliness Don had yet encountered. And you couldn't think past that beard to reconnaissance forces. Here was something Don never mastered. Here was deeply imbedded an enduring distaste for girls---"his girl"---ugh! So in a child mind are germs often carelessly planted to grow throughout life.

Don had measles. He was confined to the house where the sun or snow was reflected only at windows. Don didn't like measles. And then there were many children here always. Don was accustomed only to Darcy. There were girls---five or six---always some girls. Grandpa liked them. They were Don's cousins, but Don didn't like them. Even measles were better---at least Kamma had more time for Don when there was measles. No one else had. But when Don was allowed at last to go out, he'd had enough of being apart. He approached Clara, who was also out in the sunshine. Clara was going on nine, just as Don was. They had this ageness in common. She ran to a

stretch of uneven ice, lumpy here and there with potato peel frozen in the surface. Clara ran to this stretch of dirty gray, held her feet together and slid across it, her arms outstretched. Don ran to do the same, but found his clothes too cumbersome. He couldn't lift his arms enough. The wool muffler about his neck stifled his breathing. Clara stood at the other end of the stretch of dirty gray and said aloofly, "You go away; I won't play with you. You got measles."

Don stalked off, turning his head to say, "I have not got measles." He hated girls.

When Mamma, and Don and Darcy left Grandpa's for summer would be here and Papa would be busy and need Mamma's help. Don was glad.

CHAPTER FOUR

When summer heat wrapped the plains there was slow drowsy shimmering. Everything and everyone was slower, turgid. Don and Darcy had lives and scratched them. Oreta and Lovvig came to play more often, or Don and Darcy went to play at their houses. They had some trees. It was nice to play at making houses in the shade of trees. Trees were always a wonder to Don. Sometimes they were lonesome, but trees at Oreta's were not lonesome. They stood in rows like soldiers.

On the fourth of July Don and Darcy, Oreta and Lovvig took flags, and donning paper caps, marched between these shady tree rows yelling, "Here comes the flag." Oreta was always leader. She was a girl, but she didn't always tease and act like a girl. She played like Don, Darcy and Lovvig. There was nothing she didn't do as they did, and insist on leading in.

Oreta and Don often lagged in the games. Oreta led this lagging too. She liked Don and always maneuvered the things he did to suit her taste. Oreta, a child, voluptuous, blonde, with blue eyes, was reaching early animal maturity. There was little that was not honest in Oreta. She regretted that she was not like Don sexually. In erotic play she insisted that she too do as Don did. To Don this was wonder--not because of Oreta--not because Oreta did as he did, although he liked her wanting to be a boy. He liked her distaste for femininity. But to Don his physical relations with Oreta were wonder because they brought shivering ecstasy. This was blinding light. Light that first warmly glowed to touch of rosy young flesh of thigh and buttocks, and that heated to blasts of blinding light. But this light flashed and wavered, flashed again, then burst and was lost. It all left Don

exhausted, but Greta's young voluptuousness was always poised, staid, and reasonable. Don didn't know that her mutual part in the play was unreasonable. He liked it. She never was a teasy, nasty girl. She played part for part and insisted that she too was made like Don--that it was only that girls dress differently. Girls had ways of keeping secrets, Don knew, but if he thought this was absurd, as he had thought that pork and wart hokus-pokus nonsense, he was quiescent. Greta could ply him. She knew by instinct what the male never learns, if she did reason against nature.

Don was happy that there was light again--bigger--blinder light than had been before. Yet he and Greta sought lonely places, darkness-silence. Instinct led Greta. Light blinded Don. Where there is light there is much in accord with the allness.

Often pungent hay hid them as they lay swathed in ecstatic waves of wonder-light, whole bodies exploratory, hearts thumping, hands caressing and clinging, mutually creating this wonder something all their own--while Mamma called and searched. Once Don realized his mother's calling, the light was shattered as precipitately as it had been when he catapulted down cellar stairs into Grandma's apron. Neither he nor Greta ever revealed themselves in hiding, but calmly awaited Mamma's retirement, then later happened where logically expected. No conscience qualms touched Don on these occasions. The light had held him.

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Heat brought storm clouds, low and muttering, threatening storm clouds that penetrated human spirit and dulled human intelligence. The animal spirit was in ascendance. Work horses trudged slowly and heard urging unresponsively.

Whip lashing brought only turgid hide quiver. There may have been spirit, but it was abeyant. Only the flesh willed and it willed rest and refuge from direct sun rays that scorched through tough leather well haired. Sweat swathed the horses and ran in streaks from heavy collars on galled shoulders, in streams down the dark skin of inner leg, and under cruppers, about tails so switched as to be broken haired and too short to brush flies from tortured backs.

One day Papa drove in from the field, his team trudging listlessly.

It was mid-afternoon. Too early to leave the field work. Papa's brow was dark and furrowed. His eyes were clouded. He said nothing. The horses stood motionless—a hip dropped, a knee bent, from habit. The flies buzzed and settled. The horses made no motion. Their eyelids hung closed against the sun, the lips drooped open while froth ran from them in greenish saline slobbers. Papa went into the barn and brought out a heavy tug with an iron hook end. He belabored the big grey with this. The first stroke brought the horse taut at attention where he stood motionless, without sound, while the tug cracked, whacked, and resumed in lashes that left streaks darkening the drying sweat crush on his rump. Stood while the iron of the hook beat crunches about the ears and against frontal cranial bones. An occasional futile head toss, as if to shake off an offending fly, was the only indication of feeling. Infuriated, Papa ran to the barn, the back of his sweated shirt steaming, returning with a many-tined pitchfork. He drove this with his full weight into the flanks of the big grey. The horse trembled to its haunches; then with kicking motion gained its balance only to again accept the fork tongue at running drive. Blood broke through the

dried sweat and dust crust--stood against the sweat stains in bright relief. But not until blood fumes penetrated the sweat and dust mucked air did Papa give way to exhaustion. He turned the broken team into the barn, then approached the house where he flopped to the floor, brushed one hand through the heavy-dewed moisture on his forehead, swallowed dry-throated and relaxing. The house was thick with the horsey sweat stink, acrid ammonia, and hot blood.

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Don and Darcy evidenced the heat in their play. Then tired of stiek horses they earned dried berries from the creeping vines of the wild ground cherry or apples from the sage growth--or just wasted energy. Don chose to do this once by curling up in a hot galvanized tub. The sun's rays made the metal blister at the touch. Don was testing his scorching endurance, and, with his head turned backward over the edge, the sun beating on eyelids behind which eyeballs were dry and shot with red, he twisted away from and to the hot metal. Darcy came to inquire belligerently, "Why are you in that tub?" The answer, "Never mind," didn't satisfy. Darcy sat on Don's throat. He sat full weight, and Don's spine rested against the thin iron edge of the tub; the vertebrae twisted in its broiling hot compass--the neck bones pried wide apart across the thin edge of hot galvanized iron. No sound came from that tortured throat. Limp and inert the body lay broiling.

A thunder storm broke the heat tension. Copper clouds thickened, spread and came onward until their approach and immediate presence were one--one stilled coppery light with only occasional dark swirling, caressing breaths touching eyelids, whispering in ears and lifting single hairs. They stirred the heart to heavy rolling throbs. Breath came in stray gulps with tense

intervals in which lungs were vacuum. Thunder was suspended although its low muttering would be constant in the copper cloud approach. Lightning, like the breezes, was caressing in the lull before the storm. Only flickers of it shone before the grand crash when thunder broke and rolled from around each object--lightning enveloped all--enveloped--struck and twisted. The density of copper, broken by hail stones, lighted by lightning, whipped scornfully by wind twisters, slowly waning.

Before Don felt the hail he sensed the lightning. A great forked prong pillared his tub in one endless shaft of light. Don felt the lift as if the prongs on the stroke's sides had pierced him--pierced him and lifted him upward, buoyant. The light was tangible, piercing, fierce, and cooling. But it was broken, broken by hailstones. The hailstones were reviving. They stimulated tortured muscles, flesh, and nerves to necessary action.

Don stumbled his way toward the house, then heard his mother's cries, harsh and frantic. Mamma was screaming, a dishpan held over her head--hailstones drumming the metal until her cries split the now wind-shrieked copper clouds like shrapnel, "Don--Don--Don--"---which was Mamma's voice and which was hailstones beating the dishpan? In a sheet of light that wiped the whole coppery light clear, he saw Mamma. She stood in the cellar doorway, a pillar of wet wrapped flesh topped by the dishpan. Don headed toward her.

The storm passed. Don was stiff and sore for weeks. The twist in his spine, where the vertebrae had been sprung apart--too far apart--when Darcy had sat on his neck that rested on the narrow tub edge--never righted. His hands were the more aged by the searing heat of the metal, their muscles the more creaped by the lightning stroke that had enveloped him and the tub, and had caught its prongs in the soul of him. The veins that crossed the slender

tarsal bone fan of his hand were the more apparent. Yet the hands were not unattractive. They were purveyors of character even if still youthful.

But the light had come to him again. He sensed its greater significance. Life had been brought to him through wild and searing elemental torture. As once he had been born in searing lightning and great thunder bolt, now he had been retained--seared into continued earthly living. So is the physical spiritual in primal acceptance of the illness.

The hail had refreshed the earth that the sun had dried to powder. Hail had beaten the earth bare--beaten all sage growth and grass into fertilizer. This all steamed with evaporating moisture in the luminous sunshine. There was the glowing mist of sun on dew. Yet all small bird life had been killed. Cattle lay stiff and bloated where, driven--tails to the storm, against fences charged with lightning, they had cooked in a flash of seconds.

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CHAPTER FIVE

With the advance of autumn there was the usual evidence of hope and instinctive pre-winter kenneling. The sweep of prairies hummed, a subdued yellow tinged with the retiring sun glance. Here and there was the dust spray of machine chopped straw, made colorful by late afternoon sunshine, and contributing to the natural humming of autumn.

Don and his mother walked their way home from a neighbor's. Grasshoppers sang their dull way through the thin mild light. Dust puffed with each step and hazed ahead in the paths of the roadway. Mama's dress was muted with dust-dulled light. Her sunbonnet, too, blended into symmetrical hue of roadway dust and grasshoppers. The dried grass rustled with their whirring as Mama's skirts rustled in brushing her way along the narrow path made by wagon wheels. Occasionally grasshoppers popped against the starched dress and bonnet, their hums hardly distinguishable from the fabric. Distant humming ehauff-blurred threshing machines dotted the base of the land. Don walked through the yellow light occasionally stamping up more effective dust puffs.

"Stop it, Don," his mother broke the humming, "Do you think I have nothing to do but washing?"

"Mama, what makes everything sing so?" asked Don.

"I suppose it's the song of autumn, the feeling of having done our best to fix for winter." She spoke what the whole scene was humming.

They walked home. Don remembering not to make more puffs, but he noticed with satisfaction that they did themselves. He didn't need to stomp. He felt himself in tune with the yellowed humming of autumn. He

looked at his hands and smoothed the veins of their backs with his fingers. Somehow they fitted this dried yellow-tinged mellowness. There is in childhood a oneness with all that is nature.

School this fall was at another building and much nearer home. Darcy was to start school this term. Don and Darcy walked because there was no bus. The first day the pupils arrived before the teacher. When she entered, she flipped a soft hat from tumbled red curls to reveal a liberally freckled bridge of nose, and blue eyes with full measure of twinkle. As she flipped the soft hat, she cast a radiant smile around her at the assembled youngsters, said, "Hello. Take off your hat and make yourself at home," and plunked the hat on a nail. She had her victory. From that moment every youngster loved her.

One day, while the autumn sun still shone warmly, she left the room for a moment, murmuring some request that Don didn't notice, for he was reading aloud. Some minutes later Don heard amused chuckling and turned to smiling faces switching their gaze from him to the window. Red hair, blue eyes, and freckles beamed over the window sill. Open laughter greeted Don's bemused return glance. Teacher was always looking for amusement of all for all. The atmosphere of school room and ground as compared with Don's earlier school experience was so great in contrast as to make him very happy. Teacher was now a light center--especially her eyes. Don could feel the light rays emanating.



Alma and her brother Bill were at this school too, but strangely enough, Alma never bothered Don. She had found a model in the teacher

and was rapidly trying to become her model of lady. Alma no longer wore nose glasses. She forgot to try to speak primly and assume dignity not of her years or heritage.

Bill had bursts of pure cussedness. One day at lunch hour he was tying a rope about Darcy, making many huge knots and many coils in the process. Darcy was becoming red-faced and very much pestered in general appearance, much like the baby who is tired of fondling. Don watched the performance and chewed negligibly at his sandwich. Don glanced from the boys to the teacher. She was completely engrossed in the deliberate munching of a huge slice of cake topped by a half inch of nut-caramel frosting. Don's glance now centered on Darcy and Bill. He kept thinking he must do something. He felt the burden of a duty. He was ten. Darcy was his brother; Darcy was just beginning school. He looked again at the teacher. A smile was enhancing her working features while she dreamily munched the last of the caramel. She raised one finger to lick from it a vestige of the sweet. Something burst in Don. He rose to his feet, one doubled fist plumping his desk top, and screamed hoarsely what was meant for, "Leave him alone!" Teacher jumped so that she bit her finger. Bill was all blushes and apologies, but Don stamped his feet and writhed in a thorough-going fit of anger. He was the center of attention. Bill never bothered Darcy again.

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There came cooler days and Papa often drove Don and Darcy to school in the buggy. This was a pleasure because Jack, the pony, always held his head high and pranced before the light yellow-wheeled buggy. Don liked this

better than he did the teams and surreys of larger families.

One crisp morning they drove to the school building to find it empty. There was a warm fire, however. Papa said they would drive to the house where the teacher lived, but when they arrived at the yard there was no one about and Papa circled the yard and said they'd better drive back to the school house. The incident appealed to Don as peculiar, especially so because they saw no one at this farm home where they knew the family well. Papa should have stopped, as usual, when in anyone's yard for the bit of talk so important among neighbors, yet leading to nothing.

Don told teacher of the incident later and was surprised at her quick flush of anger. "You must never do that," she cried, and her foot almost stamped in emphasis. "The school house is always warm," she added in more composed tone and manner. It was evident that she hoped her sudden discomposure was not too apparent.

School progressed merrily now and there was much talk of a program and a "dolly" book that was to be ordered. The "dolly" book was an enigma to Don. His delight at a program, however, was complete. He jumped up and down, wriggling with ecstasy. "A dolly book; a dolly book! We want a dolly book," he cried in unalloyed glee. Teacher gave him a slow and appraising glance.

"A dolly book is a book of recitations and little plays," she said calmly.

Don's glee was abated by the glance, but the words really answered a question he knew his eyes had spoken. But he said, "I know it," a bit consciously. The slow appraising glance left Don questioning the security

of his happiness at school. He had too many memories of that first year at the other school where Alma and all the big boys had been so anxious to make his life miserable.

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It was the custom at school programs to hear recitations of the smaller youngsters, not yet at school, who learned their "pieces" at home and gave them as a surprise, to everyone except the parents, and brothers and sisters. Upon such an occasion Lovvig was called upon to recite, and in his hurry to have the moment over, he was at teacher's elbow while she was reading the title of his selection, "What you got in your pocket?" Lovvig was overly conscious of his new suit and of the handkerchief in the hip pocket, a manly accoutrement. "My hankie," he answered, as rosy-cheeked and laughing eyed he dashed into his recitation. That he said made an anti-climax to the "My hankie."

Don recalled having heard his mother tell of Lovvig's telling his father, when lifted into the wagon, "Poppa, when I got big and you got little, I'll help you into the wagon." Oreta and Lovvig and their parents were much in the home of Don and Darcy, and Don's parents, too, were frequent visitors at the home of Oreta's parents. On one such occasion Darcy had been impelled by motives only stimulated by his elders' neighborly chatter. He leaned like a big man, one hand against the door casing, another on his hip, and, having frowningly ruminated for some time, said, "Don't you folks think you'd better be going home now?" Lovvig was no longer the only star that basked in parental smiles of wonder at these prodigies.

Greta and Don were often punished for quarreling. Greta was so insistent about her privileges as a boy among boys that she caused Don many a flash of anger. Something dictated to Don superior rights. He would not be dominated by a girl. Greta sensed this and frequent differences occurred, with the result that the two youngsters often were plunked into chairs in an out-of-the-way corner, where they sat with flushed and downcast faces, now and then darting frowning, sultry stares at one another. Greta always broke the tension with her natural tendency to chatter.

Winter meant play on ice and snow again. Don and Darcy were at play one late afternoon in the bare spindling trees of the wind-break. Ice was everywhere underfoot--ice that was broken and sharp and could be felt through overshoes. The surface had melted and frozen again to a near enough smooth surface that Don tried running to slide, legs stiff, feet together, across this rough and slippery surface. Darcy hadn't tried it, but Don insisted that he should. He grabbed Darcy's hand and with a cry darted for the stretch he had slid across. Darcy was caught unawares and made a poor shift of it. He wouldn't try again. Don insisted. He pushed Darcy before him. It worked for the moment, but when, with an extra push, he shoved Darcy out toward the stretch of rough ice, he was plenty tough about it. He ran stiffly to where Darcy fell and saw--blood. With the calm that he was slowly developing, he offered Darcy his handkerchief and somehow apologized without shouldering any blame. To Don's surprise Darcy accepted the explanation. With exuberance they trotted to the house to explain this new adventure to Mamma. She too accepted Don's story, and he was left to wonder. He had been at fault--he had done wrong, yet, somehow, he'd made this a victory.

Darcy was ever after to wear a dimple, deeply cleft in his chin in a truly becoming manner. A manner that often caused Don to remember. Victory over one's own conviction of right is signal victory.

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When Don told Mamma of the day Papa had driven them to the house where the teacher lived, she was busy. Yet Don knew by the deliberate way of her movements that she was listening. He told too of what teacher had said. His mother turned him a slow long and steady gaze that was far seeing. Don felt that she saw him not at all, and that she was seeing far beyond him. But she said nothing.

One day at lunch time at the school house the teacher, with dreamy expression, was munching heavily frosted cakes. Don too sat with the other youngsters eating his cold lunch from a tin pail. The teacher crossed her legs, yawned, and stretched; her cake was eaten.

"Ladies never cross their legs," Don said with more than a sly twinkle in his eyes.

A slow lazy blush spread over her cheeks to meet the freckles across her nose. But she didn't shift her gaze from its dreamy satisfaction. "Who says so, Don?" she queried listlessly.

"Mamma," laughed Don as he turned down the aisle of desks, swinging his lunch pail. He, too, had eaten his cake.

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The winter had passed rapidly. Grandmas had left early in the fall. Their tall gaunt unpeinked house stood grisly haunting. Papa had wanted to go where Grandmas's were last fall, but Mamma had refused. Now she had

relented. They would go if they could live near her brother Will's, which was some hundreds of miles yet from Grandma's but was in the same state.

Grandma and Grandpa were pioneers and were ever seeking a new home, although there were no vast empty prairie lands to seek now.

With the thought of moving came the expression of regret at leaving friends and school. Don was sincere in this and would have said much, but when he mentioned school something in his mother's eyes and the corner of her mouth was forbidding. Don never said what he wanted to say about leaving school.

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When they drove away from their home for the last time, Mamma turned her head saying, "We'll take one last look at the place, boys." Her eyes were moist, and Don felt a pulling at his stomach as if he were dropping from a bump crossed at great speed, as he gazed at the receding buildings and bare stunted trees that framed them on two sides. He was always to have an indelible picture of that first home.

Don remembered the little chick he had accepted as dead after warming it for an hour in the oven in a futile attempt to revive a quiver of life. He had found the chick stiff and cold, in the yard. Massaging had done no good, so he had taken it to the house to warm. Mamma had pronounced it dead. Then he had taken it outdoors, still stiff, if the heat of the oven had warmed the body, and had thrown it with all his puny might. He had run toward the ash pile and had thrown the chick before he knew, and with especial force, because his toe had stubbed against a stone as

his ears hurried. From the distant side of the ash pile he had heard a piping whistle---had wondered---then turned back to the house. An hour later curiosity overcame him, and he wandered toward the ash pile. A loud shrieling reached his ears. He ran to the pile to find a lone chick screaming its loneliness. The phenomenon left an impression most outstanding. Don wondered if the chick felt as he did on gazing back at his home. He was entering a new life---would the past bury its dead?

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CHAPTER SIX

To a new land attached new ways. It was a new land to Don and Darcy. They had arrived here to step from the train into deep snow. Papa had asked, "Where do you want to go?" This was a boom town, and in spite of the snow banks and darkness calls were heard.

"There ain't no taxi," said Papa.

Don could realize his tongue in his cheek, and his grin of satisfaction. Mama was beating at the snow with her hands. Papa stood with the two heavy bags--one on each side of him--two dark blocks against the flurry of white. They trudged through the knee deep snow, and Don knew they were climbing, and that the warm murky glow that had been the depot windows was left below. It was a memorable introduction to a new life. Especially so, since they spent the night in a rooming house as stiflingly hot as outdoors had been cold. No ventilation could be had, and all the steam in the building banged the radiators in the tiny room with its big bed and a little one. Somehow they sweated the night out.

Soon they were in a log house looking over the depot. It sat at the top of a high bank; the railroad was at the foot of a drop, perhaps fifty feet below. The Missouri river was about a mile beyond the railroad. The view was now one of white, dotted and blurred by the brush that extended a half mile from the river toward town. Beyond the river rose a grey uneven line of bluffs.

This was the first log house Don and Darcy had ever seen. There were steps from one room to another. The windows broad, deep, and many paned, large square-paned. The rooms, too, were large and square. Darcy wouldn't eat in this new place, and Mama worried about him. The big red-faced woman of the house fixed inviting things especially for Darcy. Her long-nosed, thin-faced lank husband said, "All

he wants to eat is a glass of water and a tooth pick." Don was all interest-- exploratory interest. Now they were to know Indians--real Indians with feathers, shawls, and moccasins.

There was a girl at this house too. She was a tall girl, who was lanky and bulbous too. Her nose was bulbous, and her breasts; her hips had humps and rolls in them. Mamma said she had had infantile paralysis. Don knew her tongue wasn't paralyzed, because she could always talk and blubber. Then she blubbered--she always blubbered as she talked--saliva bubbled in her mouth and showed between her uneven teeth and wide loose lips. This girl talked at Don most of the time--unless as in the morning when she was dressing--one of the men boarders came to tease her and tear at her clothes while she screamed, kicked, and slobbered in what Don thought horrible glee. Don disliked this girl, so he read his Bible stories. Don wondered if she thought they were true. They were interesting stories, but Don thought they were much like fairy tales. He preferred the novels he had always read at home. At least he could try to read and not pretend to listen to Lorna.

Winter snow held them in. Don and Paroy didn't see much of the bustle that was downtown in this boom town. Don knew that boom meant feverishly busy. He wanted to see it, yet he dreaded it instinctively.

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One day Don heard about school. Lorna was to have a new dress, and she was at school, so Don was fitted, the dress pulled over his head, folds set with pins, sleeves measured, and armholes fitted. It was an adventure at first to Don, but later it became more. It was boredom, then misery.

While he was waiting for his mother and the big red-faced woman to get some shattering done, he sat in the bedroom. The shattering lowered, became more

ordered, another voice--a voice different, authoritative, calm but complaining came through the half-open door of the log partition. Don sat and wondered--he listened and learned what school was to these people--to people who knew what they wanted. It evidently wasn't much. Mrs. Leets was out to learn the will of the public. She wanted support in getting a boom school. Don often thought later of all the matters that woman intimated while he sat in the bedroom in Lora's dress. Mamma called him, though, so he didn't sit longer but went dutifully in the hope of getting out of the contraption. He had no idea of how it was to be done, now that he was so full of pins. His underwear was stuck through with them too. But they didn't release him. He stood red-faced, shamed and awkwardly silent while, with mouths full of pins, Mamma and the big woman made answer to Mrs. Leets about how, of course, a school was necessary if children were to learn. And Mamma said what Don had heard her say so often, "Children ought to know the truth about so many things--about life--you know, I mean." And because Mrs. Leets was a stranger she spoke more freely than Don had heard her speak before. "Now children ought to learn things about themselves, about life, in the house, don't you think, Mrs. Leets? Instead of picking up everything in a wrong light on the streets from older youngsters. So coarse, don't you think?"

Mrs. Leets buttoned her lip and looked redly hostile. She was thinking about school--"Life--well but they ought to learn out of books--." She'd been a teacher and had children in school. "The Indians are terrible too," she said. "But they aren't so bad until the whites make them so. But they shouldn't all be in one school."

"Isn't there an Indian school?"

"Yes," Mrs. Leets frowned. "But the half-white youngsters are the bad ones. And they go to school with the whites."

Don still stood in the dress--pinned securely. Would he never be free? Surely it would be nice to be an Indian--and--and to know about life.

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School in this boom town was something. Don and Darcy went with Lora to the school building. There were many rough-neck youngsters. Don's mother had insisted that he wear his overcoat--a long black funereal old man's coat. It made Don look prematurely senile, like something dedicated to age. Don hated it and was not surprised at the jeers and jibes of the bullying boys. That they threw icy snowballs at him did not surprise him. Lora's slobbering a bulbous fore and aft beside him did not detract from the general amusement. It all made a picture stamped for distinction. A distinction that in the eyes of puberty's most thorough-going conviction of convention was not to be missed as a target--and not to be endured.

Darcy fought these rough-necks, although more in spirit than muscle, while Don accepted the situation as a part of his role. Growing up was a job--to be taken--or rejected. He didn't know how to reject. Darcy's resistance to rough-necks only seemed a pose to Don. He took the role imposed upon him much as did a girl called Eleanor, who had a ridiculous swagger in which her abdomen was thrust forward, and a peculiar difference in direction of body took place at her high waist, from which she stooped forward. She had large features, and heavy sullen lips. Yet Eleanor had a hearty laugh that she even let off at some of those times when the boys threw snowballs at her, yelling, "Eleanor Kelley with a buckskin belly." At other times when they yelled at her, Eleanor's lips were less thick, more sullen. She would stoop her short-waisted, narrow shouldered, and flat breasted upper torso over the swagger that was chiefly called "her buckskin belly", to grab

a hunk of snow to hurl back at the boys, accompanying it with various well chosen obscenities.

Eleanor enjoyed her opportunity of external sedition. A short but excessively heavy woman used quite often to pass the school grounds, and Eleanor would lead the chorus of "Lookut the pail of guts! Lookut the pail of guts! Who lost a pail of guts!" Don knew this woman, for she was the nearest neighbor in the ash-piled gumbo flat on which Don's parents were building the new home. He thought she was nice, although he knew she was a sloven. Her children were the best playmates, but they took their baths in the creek. Just now the creek was frozen.

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And this creek was of especial interest to all the youngsters. The river was also a tragic interest. Don had watched while his uncle Will had crossed the honey-combed ice with several horses. The horses had been led from the banks across single planks until far out from the river's edge where the snapping cracks were frequent and walking was danger to a man. Yet Uncle Will had the horses all across--one at a time. His ranch was miles to the south of this mighty ice filled width that was the Missouri. But the creek had its source in Canadian mountains and was much less an awe-some amusement. Yet ice piled high in this time of increasing sun and warmth. The stream was but a hundred yards from the new home Don's parents were building. They lived, temporarily, in a flat-roofed one-roomed structure on the back of the lot. The hill that ran down the creek was but a stone's throw from this shack. Even now in the melting snow and ice youngsters came to flop their bellies onto sheets of iron, or to sit astride scoop shovels and grasp the handles between their legs, while they scooted down the perilous angle of the hill to the ice-filled creek. The ice was chopped through in

many holes made for watering horses and cattle. Now the banks were muddy and often the improvised slides would scoot across the filthy ice to strike and sink sharp edges deep into the opposite creek bank. Then this happened, the belly rider shot on past the iron sheet to sink head and shoulders and outstretched hands deep into the mud that was mucked to batter by the sucking hoofs of many cattle.

Don had a sled with thin runners that were very malleable steel. It was the ideal sled for this steep hill and the steel of those runners deadened many a bump shock, and heightened the speed of the treacherous slope. However, Don and Darcy often used the iron sheets or the shovels. Any novelty was intriguing and often the boys left the hill with their clothing soaked and clinging to skin chilled blue but warmed by exercise.

The source of the many iron sheets the youngsters used for sliding was no mystery. This ash filled gumbo flat, with its many tin cans and odd scraps, was a deserted fort site. The buildings of this site had been sheeted with iron, and it was sections of this sheeting which rusted in abundance that provided much more than sleds.

The fort had been tenanted with the aim of quelling Indian uprisings.

Now Indians were no longer uprising! they were accepted populace of the reservation which had only recently been opened to the white man. Don's father had built a ramshackle barn at the edge of this hill top from which so much sliding was done. When a good head start was wished for, the slider started from a point beyond this barn, and running past it, flopped to his belly just as the barn's north gable came in line with the beginning of the slope.

Often Don and Darcy stood in this barn-yard while the Indians from the neighboring school--these were full-blood Indians--stood about enliling them

white trash, and telling them what they would do to them if they left the barnyard. The threats were lusty enough, but they were never very scary. Don and Darcy always felt friendly toward these handsome copper skinned, black haired boys with their fascinating large dark eyes. Don always felt that they were right in insisting that this was their home to which no white man had a claim.

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Darcy liked to play with pups and kittens. Often he would walk into the house with his hat on, and when Mama commanded, "Take your hat off in the house, Don," he would not seem to notice. Then Mama, looking very grave, would watch the hat until she was certain that it was moving--squirming. "How in the world do you expect these kittens to breathe?" And Mama's stern manner would be lost in an understanding smile.

Don and Darcy had brought a collie pup with them to the boom town. Mack, the bachelor neighbor, had given it to them. The pup was playful and often wandered and so had been tied in the barn. Sometimes Don took him out to one of the fence posts before the house where Collie could be tied and still bark at a passing Indian wagon, and, with his head on his paws, his tail flagging, talk pup language to the inevitable string of mongrels accompanying the wagons.

One day Don tied Collie out and went to school. Don forgot about Collie. Two days later he went to the barn and did not see Collie; he called to him, but got no answer, so decided Papa had taken the pup with him somewhere. Don hurried on to school. That evening he again went to the barn and called Collie. There was no answer. Don went to the manger where Collie was usually tied. He was gone.

Don ran to the house to tell Mama. "Mamma! Mamma! Collie's gone."

I can't find him. Where is he?"

Mamma stood still--solemnly still--and said nothing.

Don was now pulling at her apron, with a hand tugging at each hip, crying, "Mamma, where is Collie?"

Mamma swallowed thickly. "Why I thought you knew. He's gone."

"Gone! Gone where?" Don's question had slowed on the second gone--slowed dully.

"Papa gave him to the Indian. Darcy knew. I thought you did." Mamma spoke thickly, one hand on her throat.

"Why?" Don asked through tears that were choking his throat and blinding his eyes.

Mamma's eyes too were filled with tears that seemed somewhat to relieve her tight dry throat. "Oh, a kid teased him, when he was tied out in front. Collie snapped at him. I guess he scratched him a tiny mite. Anyhow, the boy's father, a squaw man, came over here drunk and told Papa he'd have to get rid of the dog."

Don screamed, "That's no reason," and collapsed into the nearest chair. Collapsed and sobbed loudly, wildly. He sank into the chair as if into oblivion, and yet he sobbed louder and with more jerking of torso and gasping lungs.

His mother explained, "Your father said it wasn't getting rid of the dog so much as it was getting rid of the drunk squaw man. He said it was worth it." But Don was beyond consolation. A big neighbor boy heard the sobbing and suspecting trouble came in to ask in genuine sympathy, "Why, Don, what is it? What is the matter?" But Don only looked through swimming eyes above the drench that was his face and the top of his shirt front, sobbing a steady staccato.

"It's his dog," Mama explained. "The Indians got it." She too was crying, but quietly. "I didn't know he cared so much. He'd never said anything specially. He always plays with cats and dogs," she ended lamely, wiping her eyes.

"It's a dirty shame," said the big boy, and Don knew what he meant, but said nothing. The big boy left, but Don's sobs were still wracking. He hadn't come out of the crumple on the chair.

They said Indians ate dogs.

The Indian school, with its immense grounds and many brick buildings facing the road, and back of them more of the iron sheathed log buildings that had been barracks of the old fort, faced the school building used by those of white and mixed Indian blood. Often, however, the full-blooded Indian also attended this school. Don and Darcy found these boys friendly and liked them, liked them much more than the white boys of the school who insisted upon playing the bully part.

As one approached the side gate of the school yard an alley formed by the back log buildings of the Government doctor's yard, and the high pronged iron paling of the school yard fence had to be entered. Against these long buildings the school bullies always lined up to form a gauntlet through which one survived, but came out torn and battered. It was a regular ritual of taunts, jeers, and evasions. Don and Darcy were much smaller and lighter than these boys, and consequently were excellent foils. They were, of course, also new to the school and therefore to be thoroughly anatomized too, before being accepted or rejected. Don always made a game of all this, and among other devices for winning, had evolved the trick of starting early for school and walking so fast as to be near running, and so to make the school yard

before the line-up assembled. It was a trick well worth the practice for it developed muscular, straight, fast legs that were necessary to more than one skirmish.

The boys passed a log hovel built over a dugout where a member of the school board of this district lived. This man was a squaw man and had several half-Indian children. Often Don and Darcy came past the hovel-- running. The family developed the practice of watching each day. They always saw Don in the lead and sometimes far enough ahead of his tormentors to yell back to them, "You can't run--you haven't any legs--you can't catch me!" Don wondered too what these people thought who always watched. But he didn't think them altogether unfriendly, for one of the boys--a true copper-skinned Indian--came from that hut, and he was always very friendly. He was in Darcy's room at school, and he often drew pictures of cowboys and roundups for Darcy. Darcy loved to draw, but everything he drew became a cartoon. The Indian boy drew true pictures, pictures not excelled in natural line and action by any work of Russell.

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Now the river and creek were truly going out. The breakup resulted in great stacks of the honey-combed ice, piling in heaps high enough to obliterate the steel bridge girdings--and those girders reached to the height of tree tops. Some of the bare trees were uprooted from the banks, and felled into the river, were added to the heights of the groaning, erunching and trembling ice stacks. This all was a fascination to Don and Darcy, who had never known rivers, tree trees, or ice--except the slimy slippery filth of back yard slop. This they knew now too, for the ash filled gumbo was one stinking, mud-sucking humid swamp. Often two feet of water covered this gumbo for rods in any direction and the footing, once this was passed, was like that of a

swamp filled with the fresh cack of cow tracks. Don wondered if the log hut novel weren't filled with this bog each time he labored past toward the school building. Now, of course, the bullies were well armed with the mud knuck.

One girl took especial delight in defending a street corner--or so it was called. It was a slough which because of fenced yards had to be crossed. The girl, of half-Indian blood, had appropriated this corner. When anyone smaller than herself passed, she pounced in glee and gripping her subject by head, arms, or shoulders, dragged the child through the knee deep muck of mud and water. If the child yelled too much, or didn't, she went through the dip again, sometimes kicking her subject, and cursing with a chortling glee that was fascinating to behold. Don used to wonder that no one ever berated her for this conduct--even though she always had plenty of observers and many who were themselves parents. There is that in brutality of human as well as natural forces that fascinates.

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Not only was the boom town wet, but the countryside had enough of the waters choked from their natural course by the ice blocks in the river. For miles the water spread out to the rising hills that enclosed this double valley--that of the Missouri and its branch rising from Canadian mountains. Road beds were lost in the muddy lake, fence posts had disappeared and the railroad had become parallels of rails only.

One evening Don and his mother waded into their yard from a neighboring mud lot to find on their beautiful cement block door step--the only one to be seen in the section--an old couple who looked very much as if they had come out of the ark. These old folks lived in the gumbo flats near the railway, and not over a mile from the Missouri. They had stayed on the flat until the water came through the floor, then had come on a raft to the railroad--

down which they had walked the water covered ties to town. Now bedraggled and tired they stood on the cement block doorstep of the new house. That they carried mud was but what everyone did now. Of course, they were welcomed, for they were friends, although they were new ones. At least they too had just come to the place, and they too were adjusting themselves. To those who were new to the country, all this mud, muck and water seemed a promise.

CHAPTER SEVEN

And the promise was fulfilled. The plains were dotted with the blue wink of sough ponds fringed by ranging cattle soaking the more luscious grass and drink. The soil had been turned and the sowed grain had sprouted. The desert of wheat was actuality.

Don often rode with Papa through winding leafy lanes and across slow rippling creek bed to the dairy where milk was loaded, and silver dollars left Papa's pockets to clink-clank in the broad palm of the deep-hoisted, red-haired, and freckle-faced woman at the dairy. She would swipe her hands vigorously across the sulco expansiveness of her hips, and with loose-lipped lechery of smile that gave her freckles the look of just dried grasshopper tobacco juice, extend a broad flat enloured palm to the earnest of silver. Through the loose chapped lips and yellowed serrag teeth the creek of her voice rasped, "Aah! This is what I live for." The light in her eyes was as of heavily alloyed and much worn metal.

These drives were more pleasant than those on the flats that led out to rolling expanse of prairie. Prairie that claimed an unbelievable green hue when viewed from a distance where the sun glint on ponds was a blue-eyed wink of good humor. The leafy-laned creek drives were more pleasant because birds were closer, leaves reached for and touched you, snakes writhingly scuttled from the beaten sand of the road bed.

Mamma was always anxious about snakes. There were rattlers south of the river, and so snakes held an especial fascination for Don and Daroy. They had seen rattlers. Once one was sunning itself in full length on the cross-out of the wagon tracks of a road leading through the bad lands. At the very height of the climbing trail, where the width was barely enough to permit crumpling wheels to pass between the great shell holes at either side, lay

the snake. Papa had seen it and had stopped the team so he could get out of the spring wagon and look at its laxy fascinating many-colored sun glints. Somehow the snake was gone, and no one had seen it go. Don thought of the time he had played alone in the yard of their old home and had wondered at a perfect round hole in the ground no larger than a nickel. He had run his finger into this and it apparently ran straight down into dry hard earth. He sat on this hole and amused himself with the thought that anything coming from that hole would have to come clear through him--and out of his mouth. But he soon forgot the hole and sat laxyly dressing. Then he saw a black snake--Don remembered that Papa called the long heavy, yet allithery leather whip a black snake--but this snake had been laxy, so laxy it hadn't bothered to allither, but from directly between Don's legs it drew itself forward in a straight line. The sunlight had dazed Don and he too was laxy. Now he watched the snake until it had very slowly covered the distance past his feet. A new investigation of the hole was in order, but revealed nothing more than before. But Don still had seen no other black snake. This one across the road at the bad lands was certainly a creature colored to the sun, and reached with gray for the grass.

Another time Zita had sat on the great rock pile by Uncle Will's back door holding the latest baby for a picture. Don's family consisted of Mamma, and Papa, Darcy and Don himself. Uncle Will's family was always a mystery to Don. It was worse than the cousins at Grandpa's. Now there was the latest baby in Zita's arms as she sat on the rock pile. The picture was snapped. Zita still sat and talked some nonsense to the fat lump of baby. She rumbled the curls of its head. All Uncle Will's babies had an abundance of curls! that was one reason Don never knew which one had the stomach ache. But then curls weren't all; they all looked alike, talked alike, and cried alike.

Their clothes all seemed of the same uncertain colors and inclination to discover what was partially within them, and their noses were all of the same bumped snubbiness and the same fruitful snottiness. Henkies were unheared of, but the broad, heavy, pleasant-faced woman with a great scrabble of tightly curly gray hair, who was mother to all of Uncle Will's brood, was generous about swiping slimy noses with her apron.

The picture snapped at the rock pile may not have taken in all this because Zita was not one of Uncle Will's family. She was one of the many who were always in and out and about the great tall hotel-like house that Uncle Will kept on the high hill top. Zita sat for some time on the rocks with the baby in her lap, as she watched other children at play, and now and then spoke a word of warning. At last she rose languidly to meet the broad bosomed mother, who sought to relieve the weight of her breasts with the baby's feeding. As Zita rose she turned a bit toward the rocks and shook the starch of her skirts as a woman does knowing the way of insects--she screamed! Her skirt held out like a sail at one side, the baby gripped breathlessly tight against her hip at the other, she stared frozen at a coiled rattler on the rock immediately behind and a bit above the rock on which she had sat--the rock against which she had leaned was the bed of the coiled rattler. "My God, what if he'd bit the baby," and Zita was as much seared as if she had herself been bitten.

Zita came to live at Don's house in the boom town, and there she often drove Jack, the pony who had been brought from the old home, out to the place where Papa batched alone and plowed the fields and planted wheat. The place was part of the rolling plateau that rose slowly from the Missouri bottom. A vast empty dreariness pervaded this plateau--a few stringly fences served to keep cattle from scattering through broad and many-acred-wheat fields.

Besides the fences only trails that were designed as the shortest distance between two points broke the monotony of the prairies. Buildings were seldom seen, and these were found behind knolls that hid them until the trail swung around the rise. Buildings that were muted with the dreary landscape--especially because they were squat structures of log with sodded roofs, or were of sod entirely. They were simply nodules of the landscape. No one bothered to build here where the season was short, and there were no homes with milk cows, pigs, and chickens. The land yielded its wheat harvest and was left in sleepy dormance until another spring brought to life its strange promise of fruitful potence.

Zita came here from across the Missouri, where she lived on her claim near Uncle Will's and stayed. There were no rattlers this side of the Missouri. The Indians were the more acceptable of the two evils. She drove Jack out across the plains with Don at her side, inventing nonsense to fight the depression of immensity of landscape. Don cleared his throat and blew his nose--as his hands showed aged and sear, so his throat and nasal cavities seemed unable to take to life naturally. Wama often said maybe this country would help to ease Don's throat irritations, but Don coughed, hacked, and blew at this vastness as he had the more settled rural hominess of the old home. And there was a change apparent in Don's features. The right eyebrow was developing a quizzical uplift--lines showed with especial intensity on the right side of his face. A quality of nature sought manifestation. The mental is ever dependent upon the physical. And Zita would snap the reins playfully over Jack's rump and cry, "Come to my blowout--going to have a big blowout," as she made a great effort at a sonorous nose blast,

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CHAPTER NINE

Papa lived alone by one of the wheat fields and batched. He had, of course, his horses--and such horses! They were really not his, but range horses used only for the short season of plowing, planting, and harvest. They were also range horses between the planting and harvesting. Their sleek hides were an unmarred gloss, and the muscles of their flanks and sides, as they quivered at a fly, caused a flash of gloss like seal skin under strong light. As strong as the gloss of their sleek haired hides were the wills of these horses. They had been range horses, always, and for many generations their ancestry had seen no man except Indian, who never tried their strength but chose rather the much tougher and more docile pinto. Now each day's work began with struggle. Papa was miles from any man on this vastness of rolling plain, yet each morning the sunrise found him with a horse thrown on its side and tied there, while he slipped a collar over a neck now docile because the initial protest had proven a point of honor. The horse was allowed to rise for the fitting of the harness, but Papa took great care to avoid swift heavy vengeful hoof when buckling a belly band. Four horses were so harnessed and hitched to the plow, or drill. Don could see Papa with his tongue in his cheek as he fitted the collar, along the harness, or stooped to reach tentatively, for a belly band. Then too he'd heard him so often tell the way to hang a harness so that it was ready to hand--first the britchen, the hip rest, and then the hames. The collar must be held the while, and not allowed to lie on the ground, or even to rest against a studding. Better still to leave it on the horse's neck until you'd hung the harness on its peg. The collar of course was hung last, because it came first when harnessing. An adjoining smaller peg held each horse's bridle next the harness. Before unharnessing the lines must be folded to not more than five foot lengths and thrust

through a hame ring with the snap end loose to give a twist knot about the whole folded line and thus to prevent tangling. Papa never did the job before Don or Darcy without making it a lesson concluded with his loosing his tongue from his cheek to say, "You gotta have a system." Papa often grunted and laughed a twisted smiley laugh at teams in loosely fitted harnesses. "Fear 'em out in no time that way--the horses too. There's nothing harder on a horse than a poor fitted collar. Loose harness is bad too; makes him work against the harness. They have to get their distance too for each pull. They can't settle to a load in a harness that doesn't fit and stay fitted." Often Don would see horses, with collars, and hames too, crowding their ears as they braced against crowding double trees, going awkwardly, with fiery worried eyes and fretted mouths sawing line-tightened bits, down a steep incline. "You gotta have a good holdbacks," Papa would say, nodding his head in evident sympathy with ignorance, or shiftlessness abused work animals.

The words most reiterated and most remembered were, "You gotta have system."

Zita didn't have system with horses. One day she had ridden out to the dairy where the big freckled woman palmed the dollars. She rode Jack, and Jack was terribly nervous. A drop of rain between his cropped ears would send him prancing blindly into any obstruction. This day she had crossed the creek and left the leafy lane to come back to town on the open plains road where she hoped to meet Papa. Zita liked Papa.

Shiftless clouds were occasionally screening the sun's glare, and their shade was welcome. It was one of the hottest days of summer. Zita was worried lest the clouds sprinkle, and she knew Jack's wild fear of a single drop between his ears. Don wouldn't let her forget if she could. But she

saw Papa's team and urged Jack forward across the open plains--leaving the trail--that she might come upon the team, wagon, and Papa sooner.

The rain drop came. Jack reared his head and then flopped. He was blinded and fought the air with his forefeet. Zita was still quite near the creek and there were home sites about. This space she crossed had been fenced, and she had trouble with Jack because he kept no direct path but swerved at each sun bright wire end or line. He would not cross a wire lying on the ground. But now he was blinded, and other quick single drops hit between his ears. He reared directly over a barbed wire tangle and came down with both feet snared. In a wild fury he reared lashing against the wires with both front feet. Zita was thrown and thrown several feet. She was thrown clear, however.

Papa saw the accident and hurried to Zita's and Jack's aid. Jack was well out up, and Zita's arm was broken.

Don went with her each time the doctor dressed her arm. Don went with her everywhere. She always took Don along to every "blowout". She never rode Jack again, and she never went anywhere without Don. The child mind often does lead.

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CHAPTER NINE

Darcy was becoming a help now to Papa. He rode Jack out to the distant wheat land where Papa batched. He carried bread, cake, or some delicacy made in the home kitchen out to the lonely man whose companions were resentful range horses, and to whom coyote howls were no longer excitement.

Darcy drove teams too and helped Papa to mow and rake some of the prairie hay for feed for the cow and Jack. Feed had to be kept for winter too.

Once Darcy came back to town with news. Papa had gone crazy one morning. He had left the pancakes on the stove while he'd jumped on Jack to race across the rolling prairies in mad pursuit of what looked to Darcy like an extraordinarily long-legged jack-rabbit. Darcy had been busy watching him--and he never thought of food except as to be eaten at table, so the pancakes scorched until the sage wood fire burned out, while he scanned the stretch of prairie Papa and Jack had followed the jack-rabbit over. He had a long watch and was resentful and hungry when Papa returned on a lathered pony who was much too warm to be allowed to drink. Papa's trousers were soaked with Jack's sweat and his own, and he filled the cook wagon with acrid ammonia stink while he started another fire to bake pancakes. Darcy related the story of Papa's futile effort to round up an antelope, "But Jack sure gave him a merry chase," Darcy insisted--as his father had. Darcy was very accurate now in his imitation of the grownups.

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Papa told a story too of an incident that proved how real loneliness can be to a man. He kept a sow, who had now littered, and he had fed this sow fresh warm milk morning and evening. One evening after sundown Papa was milking the sow that the hog might have her supper. The bass viol song of the milk spray rhythmically cutting the foam of the rising white froth in

the bucket was broken only by the heavy soft sonorousness of sow grunt. Papa was in that heavy day dream of a man alone on vast plains after sundown. He sat hunched on the stool, pail gripped between his knees, and his head sunk in the cow's warm flank. The warmth of teats in his hands, the earnest of their fullness with each down stroke pressure of thumb and forefinger, the comforting warmth of flesh on flesh, from his head through shoulders and arms to the contact of his hands with the teats, was of nature's opiates. The sense drowned in a swathing of the music of milk flow cutting froth in the bucket, the drowse of sundown, animal warmth, and the sonorous sow grunt blending with the rhythmical drone of it all. Papa always said he could rest while milking. Man was at peace with nature.

With the pail full he turned to rise and dump the warm milk into the trough--he turned to sit squat-legged and frozen. A creature leaned against the cow's pen--a woman creature. She leaned with her back to the logs of the low structure, her elbows on the upper pole and suspended from one forearm, and resting against the upper log of the pen was a small tin bucket--a lard pail. Instinct told Papa the lard pail was to be filled with milk. Shock held him speechless. How in the world had a woman, a young woman, got there, leaning against his hog pen?

"Hello", said the creature, Papa struggled to his feet and awkwardly thrust the milk bucket toward his visitor. "Yes, I did want some milk." The tones were a part of the rhythm of evening.

Papa found himself able to ask, "How in the world did you get here?" It was explained. She was what she seemed, truly a creature unexpected. She had walked miles, having heard that one man kept a milk cow to feed his hog, because she hated canned milk, and had tasted no fresh milk for weeks. She had planned to come at milking time for then surely milk would be fresh.

"But how do you happen to be away out here, miles from nowhere?" Papa wanted to know again.

"My husband's health is not the best. He left his interests in the east and is venturing at dry land farming to cure his lungs. He's not coughing too much," she confided.

Papa clucked sympathy. Don could see his tongue working in his cheek. The woman's eyes were hungry. She said, "Do you know you're the first human being I've seen since I came out on this empty prairie?" Papa could easily realize that. He walked back with her toward the distance she indicated as the site of her dwelling. It was nearly dark and Papa was worried about this lady who would wander in the dark.

"Oh I can soon see the light. My husband will have the car lights on and turned this way."

"Who is your husband?" Papa wanted to ask why he hadn't come with her. Her answer struck him dumb. Then it was true. This country was to be farmed---and farmed in one vast sweep. Papa said nothing but, "Goodnight," as he turned back toward his own bed in the cook wagon. No wonder this woman roamed the plains alone on foot after sunset. Her husband was crazy.

And the crazy man did bring millions to the plains. In a few short weeks the country-side was teeming with long wagon trains---bright new green and red wagon trains---the bright sand burnished steel of wheel rims blinding eyes miles away that caught their glint of the sun---long wagon trains drawn by enterpillar, gas driven, engines. To Don these trains were a never ending fascination. The country trails were now many parallels. Everywhere there was life---movement. Papa, too, took the family out not to a country side that was eventful. There were desert towns built on eledges, towns that

could be moved miles in an hour, when buildings were hitched behind tractors.

In fall months, before the late rains, the roadways were an ankle deep dust that stayed to be stirred with each passing only because the wind sifted it to leave the heavier particles fall or lie. The plains were of a sandy loam--soon to be a dry sandy loam filter.

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CHAPTER TEN

With the institution of the great farming enterprise, the broad plains joined with the sun, and the wind, and the clouds in a compact. This was not competition of the forces of nature. It was alliance of nature against man's will. Don sensed this intuitively. His skin burned in red blotches. The dryness became a part of the blood. Papa's story of the rich man's lungs' needing drying was appropriate. Don's tongue was thick in his mouth, his throat was parched and dry. The skin of his hands now was no more seared and aged than that of his body seemed to be. His right eyebrow was set in a quizzical quirk.

The wind was something of a release, and Don walked against it, his thin body sear in the scorn of it--whipped sidewise so that progress meant cutting the gale force with the narrow-ribbed edge of his torso, and the thin line of his pointed shoulder, against which his head hunched as a boxer's. Cutting a straight line with torso and sharp-edged hip flank--narrowed from head to toes, Don sliced a way through a forty mile gale, happy in the release of it. Not though the wind might be, its constant sting against torpid blood-dry skin kept up a nervous stimulation that was refreshing. Walking into the gale, as it swept up a coulee, Don would rip his clothes from him, and stand, his overalls caught above his knees and ankles, one foot anchoring his whipping shirt, stand while the hot breeze tore about him, and the sun caressed a skin that seemed apart from flesh and joyed in searing fray. Don would stand and run his crisp skinned fingers and palms over loins that burned of inner and outer fever. Run his hands caressingly between the thin flanks and flat loins, down buttocks now sharpened and blue. Run his fingers through the short hairs that now fringed his organs

and lift these that the wind could tear through him--turn so the gale, split by his sharp buttocks, tore between his thin flanks and egressed the loins his dry fingers ran over. And there he would stand until the nerves of him responded--and from toe nails to hair of his head were rigid--rigid with the fray of sun and gale--blinding gale that was now one grand blinding light. Don could know himself a part of this vast prairie sweep and sun-wind gale when the blinding light wrapped each reaching, tingling nerve end and sang down its tissue mesh--sang into his brain and brought rest, languid rest and peace. Don was always happy when the light could blind him. But now it was only in wild clash of elements--wild surge of blood--that the light blinded him. Childhood's simple delights, and sensitivities were dulled--muted.

As there are in nature all things, there is a place in nature for all natures.

And the promise of the spring floods did not hold. All that was green and bright--the rolling sweep of yellow sweet pea--all that had leafed and promised was dead with the sear of autumn.

The dust of filtered sandy loam became a part of breath and food--all but a part of blood. Great dark clouds of loam advanced across the rolling sweep of prairies. The land now tilled became as packed dry floor of an Indian dance hall. Steel fences stretching listless miles in straight lines, and cutting old deep rutted trails, were filled with a season's crop of russian thistles--tumbling thistles that banked to roll, with the force of the wind, in the loam of the clouds. Roll until intercepted by the bright line of fence--there to stack until the weight of innumerable tons of sand lay flat taut barb wires and thin triangles of bright steel post. No longer the whistle of the wind against wires and posts, but the thud of cloud filled sand against already banked fence lines. These fence lines were the back

bones for endless miles of banks that formed the trenchworks of nature
against man. The warning was sounded. Nature was ready.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Future was ready, but man.... The copper bowl of the sky panned all to the sand that had blown until it had peaked and now no longer filtered.

The wind seemed to have blown itself out and now air stirred listlessly under a copper bowl. Everyone and everything waited--tense. Don moved--aimless and listless as the occasional breeze--and waited. Don sensed the revolt of nature against man's invasion and anticipated a clamor of battle.

The nights were filled with the drumming of insects, an incessant volume of sound. There was no individual character of sound. There was only one vast orchestration that drummed itself upon consciousness, and now and then a mosquito sought blood. That there could be insects, mosquitoes, where water had no place, surprised no one. Don was aware of no surprise. The constant drumming of the black night made him recall Kamma's waking him and Darcy to take them out into the night to see a ring of light around the edge of the sky, right where it met the earth. That was at their old home, and Don had wanted to know, "where is the moon?" Kamma had said, "There," as she pointed to what seemed a knot in the continuous band of light that ran around the edge of the sky where it met the earth. But there had been the band of light then. Now the nights were a drumming darkness such that a mosquito bite was welcome. It made Don feel. He knew then that he was apart, and not just another muted beat in the drumming.

Days were copper. The earth was so much a beaten sand floor that it merged with the copper bowl of sky, and Don wandered over this black sunless earth--sometimes in search of the cow or of Jack, sometimes in search of he knew not what. He could not simply wait. And at night he wandered, his heart beating heavily--drumming to the sound of night.

There was no light now for Don--neither day nor night. Now he learned that there was no light in expectance for him--ever. And light was living to Don. He might forget it--he might not realize it--but without it he was lost. There was nothing to sustain the soul of him that had been born in the strife of light--and seared into living. And now Don walked the earth as a prisoner paces his cell and waited for the light. In the deadened air all winged things hovered near the beaten floor of sand. White gulls swept low on the unsubstantial air, in rhythmic winging strokes through the drumming copper light--swept to the far away sea.

And no birds sang.

Then one afternoon when Don was alone, Papa and Mamma and Darcy had gone to town in the lumber wagon, he went to look for the cow. He had climbed a rock the better to see across the sand-packed fence lines to locate the cow that still assiduously sought occasional blades of grass. Don tarried on the rock. The air seemed light--lighter and less still. His shirt fanned against his bony chest and ribs. This was more than his own breath and heartbeat--it was a breeze.

And then it came.

A great pronged shaft of light--blinding and encompassing. Don saw the great prongs before the shaft came upon him. Then he knew only the light. And this time it came as no great exhilaration but rather as the timely comfort of a friend's hand on the shoulder. And through this great and all encompassing light, Don lifted his face to the sky, lifted his dry browned spread fingers and the crisped flesh of the backs of his hands--and felt a dampness. He stretched his arms, turning the palms upward and felt a moisture.

Again the light had claimed him as a part of the clash of the warring elements, and he knew that the battle of nature was not all against him.

But the battle under the copper bowl still went on. The promise of rain remained a promise.

When Don asked his parents if they had noticed the dampness, they said they'd seen a little lightning. "It can't rain in this country," his father had said.

But Don knew he was wrong.

Out of this copper stillness of day and the steady drumming of night had come assurance of pregnancy. Don knew that there was promise, but he grew surely to hate expectancy. He wanted fulfillment--the light of assurance that brought peace, and in this copper drum of pregnancy he unconsciously generated a conviction to fight for the light, to claim a soul-seared heir. The heritage of his birth amidst storm torn elements had been evoked in blinding light until the growing consciousness glowed with the light lines around upon it. Now he sensed that this inertia of expectancy was a pregnancy. This was no thought conclusion but an awareness--instinctive. So much is one with natural forces--with allness.

And the pregnancy became fulfillment.

The copper bowl thickened at its western rim and the darkness there showed streaks of red.

Papa was in the field to the west of the shacks and below a slight hill, with the team, plowing out the meager yield of potatoes. A stillness filled the dome of copper until it seemed a vacuum--and the dark rim at the west was advancing to close the vacuum.

At the shacks the restlessness of expectancy had reached the edge of hysteria. To Mama the hysteria formed a monotonous repetition of, "John

always runs risks"--and, "Will he never come?" Don and Darcy waited on the edge of this hysteria, unconsciously hovering near to Mamma's dusty drab of dress that was of the coppery cast of light. The stir of her starched skirt as she moved aimlessly and restlessly to pick up an object, only to let it drop again, gave promise of something more than dust-filmed air that lay so quiet Don breathed the same air again and again. On this great plain fresh air was at a premium as much as it might be in a city tenement.

Then with a suddenness lacking precipitance the advance of the western wall of copper became a roar that grew in volume. Wispes of breeze curled tenderly about the ears to snap viciously and suddenly at damp hairs. They bore electrical currents that cooled dry-hot blood pumped slowly to the dull thud of overworked heart beat.

Unable further to endure the dense clutter of the shack Don was outside the door while his mother stood in it, with Darcy sitting on the sill. When they could no longer see the trail over which Papa must come, they heard the rhythmic hoofbeats of horses galloping--even above the roar of the advancing copper wall. As the hoofbeats ceased at the doorstep in a final beat that was lost in great groaning bursts of horse breath torn through lungs barely resisting the vacuum, the wild-fire gleam in the eyes of the team was lost to Don--lost because the great guns of battle fired one blast. It was the blast of fully realized vacuum. A shack somewhere near had been broken with an immeasurably increased report, yet like that Don had made often when he had broken a paper bag, after blowing it full, by slapping it against the palm of his hand. The rim from the west had caught the air-emptied shack in the sweep of its pressure.

In the dark that was now all-encompassing Papa came into the shack and they all drew about him. He closed the door and the vacuum was complete.

The great roar was so upon this darkness that its stroke drove through the vacuum--splintering air--thrusting through dry nostrils into empty lungs--bringing restful waves of physical unconsciousness.

Unconsciousness that was light to Don--reassuring light. Again the battle of the elements brought assurance, comfort, release from expectancy.

But the sweep of the vacuum's western wall wrought its havoc and there was left no trace of the shack nor its clutter. Dropped gently to water--swept hail-bested ground, in the knot in which they'd left it, Don's father hovering over his family like a setting hen in an attempt to save them from the beat of hail and the vicious all-sweeping roar of the wind, they formed a human blot in what had become nature's battle in wind, hail and water.

The beat of hail was as nothing to Don, and he rose to his feet against the rushing, roaring wall of wind that swept the flat land barren of sand, and water from the rainfall, and would have rushed with the sweep of it all, but his father's hand drew him back as he heard his mother's thin cry--a weak lilt of engulfed voice against a great organ crescendo.

No individual physical sensation was here to vibrate separate nerve--all was as a whole being--a world in glad mutation--to Don.

And Don saw that the vast bowl of copper had pressed on; collapsed into a single wall it swept on wings of wind, and left an aura of light, not the single-barbed shafts of light that Don had known, but the fulsome light of native comprehension. This roaring wind did not whip through his thin flanks as the gale might. It seared--seared beyond any experience Don had yet known--seared rain-soaked thin cotton shirt and overalls to flesh that joyed in flaying. And spirit seared in the searing. Even in this abstraction Don felt the oldish crisp skin of his hands--hands that could grasp of the power of this roaring of loosed copper--grasp to the soul of him--now still cossemer in

part, but also fibered with the delicate fan-shaped bone tarsal of fingers-- fingers of soul that could grasp and mother the hope of potential creation.

And Don sensed that here was danger and grandeur--the nameless light of assurance. Don knew that somewhere, somehow there was the constant light of the soul of him that was an assurance of allness for all. There is in the relentless unplanned assurance of nature assurance for man's hope of renewed spirit--an eternal contract of oneness with the allness.

BOOK TWO

The abnormal possessive nature, starving for
love, vicariously satisfies its appetite through
imagination

(Substitute Fatherhood by A. Lillian Gaffney, Psy-
chology, Sept. 1937)

CHAPTER TWELVE

School claimed Don--claimed him as it had not done before. Here was a life of the combined body and brain in which the spirit used as food all that mind could contact and assimilate. Here was a game in which the player gained against a future, a future that Don never questioned.

That teachers were most often 'it' in this game in no way spoiled it for Don. He loved teachers--most teachers.

Then in annual training class the plane wouldn't work--the sensitive dry crisp skin of Don's hands, their fan tarsel of delicate bone, often balked at the tasks of skillful hand play--and he had difficulty in planing a smooth surface, his teacher grasped the plane roughly to drive in long clean sweep across the creamy grain of white pine, shavings from which curled in cream-white clusters. He rasped crossly. "The long stroke wins out."

Don never forgot--and he never learned to think too kindly of this teacher. But the lesson seared on his brain, a scar that was part of rasping voice and scowling frown, and part of the curl of white pine shaving clusters.

His first oral English theme topic was one of his own choice. He remembered the mule that used to vie with Jack when he and Darcy drove with their parents to town, behind Oreta and Lorrivig and their parents. They always drove a mule that clumped along the beaten path at the center of the road bed with a stoicism that made Jack's lathered mouth, arched neck and prancing steps most elegant in comparison. Don remembered and planned his theme as Le and Darcy loyed their ponies; Darcy still rode Jack--the eight miles to town and the morning's classes.

And the subject of the theme was "A Mule is a Mistake," the Gint of which ran, "He is neither horse nor donkey; he is just a mistake."

That there were difficulties here in a new school environment Don was soon to learn. There was now a new high school building at the boom town, which had become more or less a town--boom or otherwise. Mrs. Link's complaint and plea had been such that tax money had been spent to provide a proper school building and sufficient teachers. But the human element--the Indian and white combination--still existed.

The code of honor of the Indian is based upon his knowledge of nature. Don soon learned that Indian honesty, Indian giving is what the weather is on the great western plains. Even though the Indian in high school is his own idea of the young man or woman of affairs, well dressed, good looking, clever, he is basically a child of nature whose integrity is that of wind or rain--whose promise is exactly to be compared with the promise of the rain cloud of a drouth stricken western plain.

When Don first leaned his pencil to the dark-eyed boy across the aisle, he expected it back. Although he gave plenty of rains, for money too is like the rains, to be showered at once, the boy across the aisle never had a pencil when Don needed one. That there was a proper code of give and take made no difference, Grades were always high among the dark-skinned, handsome boys and girls for what they didn't know they read or copied. Don's puritanical training was of no use in competition with these youngsters who smiled inscrutably--and did what they wished, apparently.

The Indian youngsters were most interesting to Don. They were handsome, charming and always modishly, and well, dressed. Don wondered that they knew what was most becoming to their dark, even swarthy, skins, their straight dark hair, bright eyes and gleaming teeth. He'd heard such wild stories of Indians. The time spent in the boom town and on the plains had

taught him that such stories were as much nonsense as the story of the wart and the pork had appealed to him when he'd thrown the pork in the dark coal bin--long ago Don thought. He sought the company of these youngsters who had at first so roughly greeted him in his long black overcoat. They responded readily. They knew that he and Darcy had blown away in the big tornado. They knew that Don and Darcy rode horseback eight miles to school. These facts commanded respect. And respect to the Indian rests heavily upon outward facts.

Don knew that they knew something that made for assurance, yet they sought the new experience of being white, and sought rather wisely. But their idols were the surface appearance, the readily smart.

Next door to Don's home lived Indians. Don's home was now the new house that rose a slim gray peak at the edge of the hill down which they'd gone sliding during winter, and from its windows could be seen the now yellowing and red-splashed leaves of poplars and cottonwoods that stood raggedly about the valley of the creek. The Indians next door played wind instruments. The slim round-faced son of the home told Don that his father had played with Sousa, that he was going to play with Isham Jones. Don wondered. He asked his parents who Sousa was. Mama's childhood had been spent in eastern Canada; she knew. And Don learned that it was common knowledge that these Indians were fine musicians.

One of the big fat, sloppy Indian girls at school liked Don. She and her cousin, a girl equally as fat, had been at a convent. They knew how to act like ladies. They knew how, so they didn't, at least they didn't when Don saw them out of school. And then there had been the time at school when Tubs, as she was called by her schoolmates, had been cleaning her desk. Don was watching, staring. Tubs pulled everything imaginable from that desk:

innumerable soiled handkerchiefs, broken pencils, expensive pens and ever-sharps, oiled paper bags of raisins and peanuts, dried and crumbled stubs of candy bars, and, of course, books, notebooks, and tablets. Tubs saw Don was watching her, and she made faces at him. And Tubs could make faces. She sat squat-legged in the aisle and drew down the corners of her mouth, her whole face a horrible grimace, and her full round belly protruded to her folded knees. She held the pose, impassive, for a few moments--and Don wondered--she was imitating something, but he didn't know what. He giggled, squirmed, and stared. Tubs, of course, had the audience of the whole row now. Suddenly she broke the pose, and squatting on her haunches began a search in the front of her dress for, the popular large pancake of powderpuff. She pulled down the front of her sailor blouse and looking down her nose sought to locate what she'd lost. Then with great lays in her eyes she cupped one breast and jerking her blouse front lower pulled up at her breast until the fat pimply black of the nipple showed. She wiggled her hand so the flesh of her breast shook. Then shaking with silent laughter she sat flat on broad buttocks on the floor and again made faces at Don. The whole row had become interested, for the room was large and they were not disturbed in their diversion.

Don's interest was diverted. He sat--suddenly, in light--the light of another time when he and Oreta had lain in drowsy scent of hay.

When the bell rang, Tubs crowded against Don in the cloak room to say, "My uncle is with Isham Jones in London. He wants to be with Souer. He's the greatest tuba player in the world."

The school building was new, but it was not proof against the dust-filled air that penetrated everything. A dust storm could occur on these plains an

hour after a soaking rain--and rain was inveterate stranger now. One rain storm must last a season, often two seasons. So now the new building was dust-filled and desktops and chair arms wore a thick just mantle. The Principal said, in a Scandinavian accent, "We don't have to go out into the dust; it comes in to us." One plump and jolly teacher from Chicago, whose face had always an undiscovered quirk of interest, gathered dried Russian thistle to press and mail home. Don asked, "Do you want to start another peatr? These things cannot be killed out here. They smother out all tender grain that tries to grow." But the teacher smiled another smile with an altogether new interest quirk. And Don thought she could afford to be casual. She didn't know.

But Chicago was called the windy city in the Geography books. Wind here was something that these teachers found new. Yet they were not as restless as were the youngsters. When the steady gale struck the building a hoarse whine as of a fanning machine blowing chaff from seed was constant. The Indians slumped at their desks and with legs widespread sprawled as near the floor as chairs would permit. Don remembered that Mrs. Leats had said that the smaller Indian children always sat on the floor when the wind blew very hard, and that their eyes had a far away wild look. Normal thought was impossible. Primitive living was too near and all wild life seeks the ground, or a burrow beneath it, when the element's reign is terror. And the Indian unrest became that of the school when the wind blew hard, yet there was a most oppressive quiet about this unrest. Because of this unrest Don found himself seeking the light---expecting it---but then it did not come. No dreaded expectation.

But the wind settled to the beauty of autumn's sunset calm. The hard

earth seemed swept of all dust, and Don stubbed his toes on protruding small stones as he walked the roadways that served for streets. The family had moved into town for the school months shortly after the start of the term.

At dinner time Don and Larry stretched in from the new school building which was near their home, to rush through the meal, talking with their mouths full. When the talk didn't turn to Deroy's constipation--Deroy loved his constipation and was never happier than when talking of it, Don babbled breathlessly of school events. "Ursula fell downstairs again today. She falls downstairs every twelfth of the month." His parents always found these narrations interesting. "How's her leg?" their father asked. "Oh, she just pulled the crocheting needle out like we said. She's all right. She got over looking white in a hurry." Ursula was an Indian too and lived on the other side of the house from the Indians who played wind instruments. And she had turned a doughy grey--like his mother's dark bread dough, Don thought--when the crocheting needle in her pocket had run an inch into her thigh. The doctor had looked at the cut and snatched some iodine on it. Iodine cured everything, Don knew.

They had hospital facilities here for the Indians and the slightest scratch received major attention, which was always iodine. Don remembered the old Government doctor's prescription of the little white fever pills that always served. If the pain didn't stop the doctor prescribed some pink pills. Often Don had lain twisted with pain, growing pains his mother called them, and the doctor came, sometimes, to prescribe some white pills. Sometimes the case was diagnosed as pancreas, sometimes as summer complaint. These kindly attentions angered Tom. He knew that there must be a reason for his frequent severe neuralgia attacks; they often racked his whole body so he lay with his knees drawn to his chin, his belly muscles knotted like

a washboard. On these occasions his eyes would set--his face too was a great consuming pain--but there was never a diagnosis further than that he had a touch of cold.

But youth forgets physical pain quickly. Don was cheerful. And even pain was an object of investigation. His own body was a subject of interest even in its pain. Don observed that his hands were interesting, because they were different from the stubby growth that served many other youngsters of his acquaintance. Indians didn't all have the stubby hands like those others. The boy who played the cornet had slim fingers and long thin hands.

Darcy liked to draw and many of the Indian boys drew the cattle roundup scenes of their experience. Roundup was a very real, nevertheless a very romantic, event in the lives of the young Indians. To many of the whites it was merely another of the jobs to be done. Don knew that the Indians knew the inside stories of the rustling of cattle. The calves came into roundup wearing fresh brands burned to a raw pink-red sear neatly furred about by the soft beauty of young-haired hide. And sometimes the dark-skinned boys told of their experiences rustling, but there was much of bravado in the telling and no one knew what was true except participants.

However, Don's father told of the rumors about the squaw man and their herds. Some of them owned butcher shops and many of the whites murmured against these men of their own blood who sold them their own hard earned meat or shipped their cattle. Hides were worth something too. But the land was new.

The squaw man were the office holders--were deputy and sheriff--and nothing could be done against men who had taken for wives the Indian women that their own town mayor, state senator, and bank president had left to marry poised women from eastern schools.

Sometimes cases of difficulty over land or cattle were contested and

went to court. Don's father acted as a witness in one case which involved strangers to this west.

He had sold a horse, old Pet, to a young man with gray eyes. The young man had seemed a stranger to the west and much of its ways. He had come to the place for the horse with a heavy dark man--a man who was no stranger anywhere.

And old Pet had gone with him.

Months later Don's father had seen a little duster-coated wisp of a woman with a heavy veil asking for the young man's mail at the post office. He spoke to her, telling of the sale of the horse. She had been quietly friendly, but she too was not of this west. She had had no letters from her son and now she was worried. Her worry was so great that she spoke of four other sons, and her husband--all of whom had been murdered. This was her youngest son.

She went to the young man's claim on the recently opened reservation plains. The Indians did not need all this land the early settlers had deided when they felt the need of "cash money" boom. They had now all they could use, and the Indians wouldn't know the difference if farmers lived among them. It was true. Few of the old Indians sought to preserve the range--now that Uncle Sam provided food, and often shelter. Every Indian had his three hundred sixty acres, as much as was allowed him, forty of timber on the river, three hundred twenty of plains land.

But the little woman learned little. Her son was not on his claim. Nor was anyone. No one knew where the dark man was. She had never seen him--knew only that her son had a partner and was planning to break the sod for wheat. Now it was past seeding time.

She went home--back to middle west ways she knew.

But that had not been the end.

When she came back she was driven to the claim again. She told of her dream and when they reached the claim site had started from the door of the little shack--stepped off a hundred paces--taking wide strides on firm legs down the little knoll. There was the spot, a little crumbly to step on. She told the man who drove her out to dig. "You should find a halter rope here, but perhaps it is rotted," she said. Her lips were thin, but they had been for some time.

The halter rope was there.

So was the halter, and the bones. The halter was drawn tight about what had been the throat. She identified the clothing, especially the wool of the socks when she ran her fingers over her own fine darning. The wool had not rotted. It had not been many months, and the grave was only six inches deep.

"Just as I dressed it," the little gray-duster-coated woman sighed through the heavy veil she had lowered. "My last--my youngest son."

Don's father had been a witness at the long trial. The little woman sat beside her son's skull when she testified. She identified again her own darning in the socks.

Yes, the dark man had been sentenced, but murders were carnal in a boom country.

The old mare, Pet, had been sold to a fatener. She'd gone to a cannery by now.

To Don this was the story of old Pet whom he remembered as a small bay beauty with a short temper. He felt sorry for the little gray-duster-coated woman whose son would not have sold Pet to a cannery, Don knew. There was in this understanding of his much that is nurtured of the plains where the

measure of a man is often his understanding care for animals, and much that is cruelty and crime among men is overlooked, at least soon forgotten.

Don remembered the story of a man who had knife-lashed an opponent at cards. A group of four men--snow-bound in a prairie shack--had been drinking. Argument over the game led to blows, and having thoroughly hewed his opponent while his fellows looked on--the murderer drank more, as did they others. They slept drunkenly.

Somehow they buried the remains when they wakened, and later they told the story just as it happened.

The murderer lived among his neighbors, a welcome guest in their homes, and apparently forgiven though many were friends of the victim.

Sudden flares of temper and consequent accident were easily forgiven it seemed. But Don remembered that in the same community a man who had left his bride--although he left her provided for and, of course, without children--was never forgiven.The story had a wrong ending.

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Don became accustomed to knowing that the daughter of the mayor, who was supposed to be a somebody in school, had for half-brother the Indian-looking boy who sat across the aisle from her and who exchanged raisins and peanuts with her. These youngsters of two colors, two mothers, and one ambitious father seemed bound to one another although their parents had supposedly shielded the white youngsters from these harmful truths.

Don didn't have to relate the story, which amused and shocked his parents. The story of the youngsters, the doctor's daughter, the mayor's daughter, and another, each of whom had been found strayed from the picnic group--even these hard-bitten people sought pleasures they knew others enjoyed--and under blankets with their own half-Indian half-brothers. The irony of such wickedness was

amusement, and Don's parents spoke of the story openly before Don and Nancy. It was part of the parental theory that enlightenment which came through the home was far better than that learned from other youngsters. And Don saw his father's tongue in his cheek. He knew that his mother was of coarser, more honest grain than his father.

And Don understood the story of the youngsters under the blanket. He knew that the shy, dark-eyed boys had not been the aggressors. They would make friendly advances toward Indian girls but no others, and, especially not these girls who were their half-sisters of whom they stood in superstitious awe, as their mothers had of the white men who were the girls' fathers. Don felt compassion for these youngsters.

They were but repeating the experience of their elders of whom they knew the stories of drunken dance groups who remained drunk for days, often finding a frozen man on the manure pile when they ran short of liquor. One story told of a "squaw" found stabbed, lying in a leg-spread sprawl where she had landed atop the manure pile when thrown out by men whose knives had sought one another. No doubt she had interceded in a brawl for her favor.

These youngsters knew their parents had been parties to these killings that no one knew certainly as deliberate--at least no one would say.

As if one much his senior in years, for the light had been wisdom's ear and was his own experience, Don accepted the vagaries of these youngsters. And this experience led him to believe that women are more primitive, and less complex of nature, than men. But this was mere fact to Don for such matters touched no emotional vein in him. It was much like news of the weather.

This is the wisdom of experience that is intuitive oneness with natural forces.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Time unrolled. Don found himself in a new old setting. His interest had remained at school. He'd gone from it--had worked his sensitive dry crisp fingers at a typewriter--and all that was light to him had rebelled against it. He would say, "I cannot think through a machine."

He sought solution in a middle west college where as a student he knew his first days away from home.

Now Don shovelled snow, a hard sandstone bank of snow that broke before the shovel in great blocks which had to be broken many times before he could hoist them over the high wall of the snow that formed the sleft of the path he was making. As he worked he heard the Merry Christmas shouts of his schoolmates. His heart ached with a dry dull ache. There were those on the bus who were going to his home town. Don had never spent Christmas away from home. But he answered their shouts with a wave of the shovel and hoarse quaver of Merry Christmas, and shovelled on--on past the rolling away of the bus--dry throated and dry-eyed--a dry-hearted ache.

Then came the glowing thought of Tim. He'd be there--but would he. There was the light of Tim--yet it fostered this dry-hearted ache.

Don's Christmas box had come from home, and the doughnuts which he'd always liked very much were now strongly flavored with the perfume of toilet articles from the same box. Doughnuts weren't much use to a tight throat anyhow, and Tim favored two records for the phonograph, "That's My Weakness Now," and "Gunny Boy." The mediocrity of both wore on the boys, and their least gesture of affection became irony. Don hated insincerity, but faced himself and fought his reversed nature. Two minds, that were led by their hearts, were shaken in the Christmas tradition. One certainty suited Don in the shaking: Tim was like an Indian, he thought everything was his, and Don was a giver by nature, if selfish as the next one. And so inversion

thrust the deceitful shafts into the home and family the boys tried to create for themselves at Christmas time. They shared one room in a huge old and dreary brick building that was the boy's dorm. Their room was small and they sought seclusion there from the ghostly old building.

There are two stories of a wall---and Don hated the intrusion of any one, ghost or otherwise, to this haven. These old walls had housed too many, and too few had had Don's sensitivity for him to be at home with the ghosts. The hollow wind of their laugh broke his brightest mood.

From all this Tim sought seclusion with a twisted grin of smile on his full lips and an attempt at a normal twinkle in his eye. Don learned positively of his fear of intrusions when he had curled tightly into Tim's bed, with even his head covered against the vast draftiness, and gone to sleep while Tim was out. He was awakened by a strange cry, half of anger, half of fear. Tim yanked the pillow from the bed and flopped Don severely while his eyes were wild. Having struggled free from his smotherings, Don sat up and stared. Then Tim flopped on the bed weakly to quaver, "Never do that---never--- I found---or dreamed I found---something in my bed once."

Tim's mother had died when he was seven.

And because Tim had become Don's adoption of family, love, need---he filled the recesses of soul that sought light. There was much of the dark in Tim. His home and family had been fragile fusion of his own brothers and sisters and a step-mother's children. There had been smiles and petty jealousies, and Tim's sensitive boy soul had struggled to attain balance. Tim loved his father and felt the stepmother and her family maulers of his inalienable rights. Stout of body and true boy of instinct Tim must have been torment to a step-mother whose own children did the only right. Often Tim's father executed

dictated punishment---once with a barrel stove---and each whack was to the boy a tie of love for his father. And this Tim related to Don in the lonely drafts of empty brick dorm. He told of the neighbors' gossip over his father's beating him and of his stout championing of his father. It was the old story of youngster seeking love where he knew it should be---fabriling ties that years desensitize to care ridden grownups---grownups who no longer see clearly in paths of light but are in constant search of necessary social confirmation.

Tim sought his social champions too, and sought those of the numbers. Youth's ideal is conformity, but the heart is nearer to faith, hope, and charity. What Tim could not say he could act. What his father did not act he could say---but his saying was theory. Theory is sold to youth. It was sold to Tim.

To brighten his room in the dorm Tim had a flower basket that held paper-colored blooms in winter. When his step-mother had written that he had stolen the basket, Tim had suffered agonies of conflicting emotions. He wrote wild letters in denial of the theft to his step-mother, and gave them to Don who stood in the great draft on the stairs of the center hall of the dorm and held a match to sugar-scrwled paper. When the front hall door swung open with a great gust of cold, Don nearly fell the stair length, and the burst of flame from the match-lighted pages of Tim's letter burned his hand. Tim had come in with the gust of cold and jumped to catch Don as he stumbled down the stairs, his burned hand free of the railing. As Tim grasped his well hand, with a warm glance at the scorched dry-crisp of the other, and led Don down the hall to the room they shared, Don walked in light that had not the dim narrow glimpe of the hallway.

But Tim was the one who took what was offered. His father was minister

of the gospel, stepfather, and--last of all--father. One of his father's theories, that Tim had always understood, meant that the congregation provided for a minister and his brood. He took what was offered and gave lightly and graciously in return. He was even an Indian-giver, Don thought. But Don's heart needed filling. Life had not been in the habit of giving to him. He had never consciously, sought, as Tim did, light of social favor. He wanted something much more soul sustaining. While Tim was comfort, he was tormented; he forced the hated expectation.

Often it seemed to Don that it was all because Tim's father was a minister. The growing mind ever finds difficulty in adjusting itself to the vagaries of conventional right.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Don was a bit older than his college acquaintances and held the position of one who was active among them, yet kept a sentinel post at the chalk-line where a dry grin and slightly ravaged eye and general facial expression leave the instinctively knowing wary. The very assurance of light that was his cast him in a double cauldron. When at the end of Don's first school year here, the President supported his son in a garrulous row over a few misplaced dollars with some boys with whom he had operated a cafeteria, Don said, "Thank the powers, my parents have horse sense if they have little formal education." He grew to believe that "cultural" pursuits do not refine the emotions.

Ideas were to be borrowed and neatly caged. The light had left Don with an eye gleam that the lenses he now wore could not entirely disguise, and he was treated warily by his elders. He moved among the younger ones who were sons and daughters of friends of the President and other faculty members-- but he learned that he was not of them, even to surface observation, when entertainments given for this one or that, by their elders, quite unconsciously overlooked him.

Don fought this often in a blind wrath that shook him from a source so great as to leave him without terms of expression. He had not yet the weapons that years give to strengthen fibers finely attuned to nature with which to respond to the indifference of "refined" mental cruelty. But he held his chin high and drove his spirit to attend. Truly Don thought that only as these quiet, poised acts of indifference included Tim did they touch him. But--when Tim was part of them and Don felt forgotten....

In the especial aloneness of night, Don won light as he accepted each goad as a scolding rope he must climb that tore the skin and burned the flesh of his dry-crisp hands. He flexed his fingers and doubled them into fists

until his palms moistened; then his whole body was steaming in sweat as he saw that another grasp could be made. He had no idea of getting to the top ahead of another, and he knew it all meant fighting. He hoped not always to need to fight blindly.

When the thoughts that were in him, as he read them back from pages old and new, made him smile at their smothering of intuitive knowledge in jargon of language, he could say with a chuckle, "I was born too soon, too soon." The lift of his right eyebrow and the length and depth of line down his right cheek were deeply ingrained in this dry chuckle.

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He turned pages to index and back to page, and there echoed from the page the quest of Socrates. Don murmured, "Born too soon," and laughed, laughed until even Tim seemed in his proper place--for the moment.

As each phase of expression must have positive height, so Don's found a medium--both emotional and physical--and a definite mental expression. Here was a safety valve for burning scorn that could not be openly stated--could not, and preserve a goal of school.

So Don appeared recurrently in plays and was always a favorite when he could be on the outside, apart, yet projecting that which was his truth across lights to the group. This type of personal contact was in the stress of its moment of fervor as fine as that which shut out all others to single associations. It was as if he were a center of light from which rays shot out directly to individuals--and did not cross.

Don's lean body and flat-cheeked features with the pain-quiz lift of right eyebrow lent themselves readily to the pictures of age that his instinct for living made the interpretation of plausible. Upon his first appearance back of the footlights he had been met with applause--spontaneous,

happy, authentic reception of that which elicits in mental association with the real. No one had known who he was. Don had almost dropped the pipe he was about to place between his teeth when his knees shook him out on the up-stage floor to meet a sudden wild burst of applause, but he glowed in ready confident poise when the meaning of enthusiasm caught him.

And his hands served him well. When he stood at the moment before the last act surtain, his hands outstretched in benediction of the play's happy ending, it seemed to Don that each slender dry-crisp of finger poised its fan ray to those whom he contacted, firm and true.

But there was a let-down after the curtain.

There is realization of time and its limitations in the self-letting that is the sensitive spirit's response to applause.

And here was his safety valve. The school did not favor dramatic art. A private institution, its sponsors well imbued with the sense of right and wrong, it did not at all favor misleading young people about ideas of service. To serve people for the good of their souls one must provide them a gods by which to live--and above all--to judge the right and the wrong. Don could not readily understand that a right that was paid for was an unquestionable right. But how else could a murderer have had a memorial erected on the campus of this worthy institution?

That such a memorial did exist--as the most essential part of this institution of learning--was common knowledge. A large endowment had undoubtedly fostered such a memorial. But, Don knew murder to be more easily forgiven than the sins of omission--especially those which attacked the central unit of man's endurance, the family.

The means to the end was the ethical. Don remembered a struggle his mother had fought with herself over his and Darcy's association with the

Indians and with others of the rough boom town. But there had been balance in his mother's theory. Help those you can--and cut those you can't. It was his father who had absolutely no use for attempting to gain favor from those who are in power. Yet it was his mother who bridled when she sniffed dictatorship--and she knew how to cut once and for all. Those she bothered to cut were always the Joneses whom others struggled to outdo. It was a standard joke at home that a family across the road had inspected the slim grey peak that was the new house, and had built another almost like, but one foot longer and one foot wider and with a front window of larger pane, and an eave depth that was greater too.

Don was not attributing honor or dishonor to murder--but he knew the rigid doctrine of the right that was here--the right to judge, and he knew that someone had paid a heavy endorsement for the sanctity of a memorial on a campus dedicated to right. . . .

The end justifies the means.

But Don was not so quiescent as externals might lead one to believe. And he knew that discerning persons read his refusal to accept and cast upon him a distrustful eye.

They know my surprise that the truth they worship is as simple as the wisdom of a child, Don sometimes thought.

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From his public performances Don gained an unrest when viewing entertainments. Whether consciously or not he wished to be part of all performance in which he had an interest, and his desire partially destroyed his enjoyment. Yet he always knew dissatisfaction with any performance of his own.

As he sat in the slump of one of these moods, running his fingers over the veined crispness of the skin at the back of his hands, he knew a loathing

for the bonds of the flesh. He knew as a part of his groping, that to be as one with individuals was something beyond mere companionship. "There are planes of spiritual existence which we strive for in learning, in experience, and that we attain only as we become unselfconscious. When we are oblivious of external, petty jealousies, goadings of spirit that lead us to deliberate attempt at social attainment through open recognition of those who have power, we attain--we are recognized for our real efforts for others." Don told Tim often. Yet none of this seemed true--not to the more than casual observer.

Don sat, his right eyebrow creased in the question he lived, at open forum meetings of the Y.M.C.A. group, and listened to discussions of right and wrong. Don asked the leader, a man of years, occupant of the school's Bible chair, a recognized leader of youth, "How does one know the right?"

There was a distinct garumph, a scowling of the same across narrow edged floor boards, "The right boy always knows." And Don was greatly troubled. That answer was flat. It had no avenues that lead out.

He attended the Sunday School discussion group again and again. When they discussed the topic, "Does Popularity Pay?" and openly spoke of ways and means to win favor--for favor's sake, Don could not see the worth.

He had often said, "Personality is something one is born with and lives down." But this open brittle-hard analysis of "How am I to be a favorite" was not growth.

Don ceased to attend these discussion groups.

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The greatest strife with Tim came of this problem. Tim had the boy faith in the crowd and its cheer that Don had never become acquainted with--neither in belief nor experience. And Don sought the seclusion that the drafty old dorm had provided at Christmas time. But he sought in vain. He knew he was

wrong--was placing himself with those who judge--at least as others saw him, yet he persisted. In the casual associations of everyday he fared as well as another--unless the interests of the group were those he did not share. Then he did not know how much he drew apart: it was as if he drew back into another existence, and others felt his presence as a ghost that brought ill news--irritating troublesome notes to the bright clatter of jazz.

When Tim was in such groups, Don's spartness was a real pain to the two boys. When Don left such a group and Tim stayed behind, both knew a tearing and twisting of cords that had been crossed. The lines of Don's association must be kept straight; they must be single avenues of escape to understanding--to an appreciative sharing of mood.

And to Don this struggle became religion, family, love--all that he strove for that he might know the right to live. The very striving made him tense, as he knew, and so defeated much of his purpose. The rule of emotion made light less attainable, yet Don could not outwill it.

Tim sought to preserve the ties of their friendship, and when Don's sense of the futility once resulted in his being near to having to fend off blows from a burly fellow whose true interests were entirely out of Don's understanding, Tim stepped up to slip an arm around Don's shoulder. The trouble seemed suddenly senseless, and Don again walked down the narrow dark halls of the old dorm in a flood of light.

As time progressed Don's awareness of his associates became as of a blended scene, one in which personalities were but a blur as of landscape, each contributing yet indistinct. But the few who could accord with his mood vibrations were real--real in the sense of spirit--intuitive understanding. And because of the singleness of these realities their intensity was almost too strong. Body must hold something of spirit and the reaching tendrils are

most often tread upon heavily by those whose interests are nearest and dearest. Don's closest associates knew of the quality they could all but grasp at times, and they did not wish to tear the tender threads of spirit unnecessarily. But film was too much himself in tune with Don's radiations not to question their meaning. His puritanical, barrel-stove experience had the things of the spirit pigeonholed under neat tabulations.

And therein entered the war of these near-kindred spirits. The surging of youth's superlativity is growth toward poles, Don knew.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Roller skating became the current fad. Don had sought to learn to swim. His attempts at pool swimming, while assiduous, were a failure. Yet the water of a living stream, although surly and swift, invited. He swam upon his first immersion in living waters of a stream. Here buoyancy was natural and dimensions were not static. Depth was a matter of sense. Where there had been struggle against what seemed as nothing in substance in the water of a pool in which he could always see the tile of the bottom, there was nothing to limit the hazy loam filter of stream waters but the sense. And Don gave his body to lapping caress of water that was sense lull and spirit ease. He never fought stream water as he had fought the pool; he accepted and was accepted. Water became to him a spirit ease that the sear of wind had been--yet in a different manner. Its lap about his thin chest and through his flanks was friendly caress of a lesser significance than the sear of gale.

And now roller-skating gave him wings. Again this was an individual release in action. Don never played a game that he must play with his fellows. He did not recognize competitive winning--there was too much to conquer within. If the contest with others must be, let it depend upon the strength that comes of knowing one has won his battle with nature's own designs. Why build others?

Don swung into glides that left his body pendant while rollers elung to smooth sweep of floor whose corners must be cut by slight shifts of weight. The long glide on one foot with the other thrust behind, as he leaned out with his head held high--but from shoulders to heel one horizontal line--was like the cutting of the gale with the thin edge of his body. And electrical currents were to be felt in this. The friction of rollers on hard wood created current that made each touch of the hand of another, or the brush against wool of sweater, a glad tremble of shock. This was like the shock

attained by holding hands in a long line as the scrape of feet down the hall heralded the leader's rapping his silver pencil on the radiator under the window. Don liked to be at the extreme end of this line from the radiator for there he felt the vibrating quiver of shock from the toes of him to the base of his brain. A light shimmer was left that was for an instant about him, then quickly fading away. Much more quickly than the orange and crested discs seen when the eye is closed tight and rubbed as in early morning waking. Yet Don sought each vagons nerve tingle for its momentary grant of insight.

There was in this roller skating another medium of contact for Don and Tim. Skating was Tim's forte, for he also excelled in the individual action, truly excelled. Don stood in mute wonder at this excellence. Tim could skate with a partner whom he swung with him over planted obstacles, into and out of cartwheel maneuvers, and always concluded his act by a spin with the partner limp in his arms, her feet and head dangling below his knees. The couple, dressed in white, were one rhythmic dash, swing, and whirl of breeze-swept motion. They danced to music that was proof against the whirr-roar of their skates because of a volume control speaker. Don joyed in this rhythmic beauty of motion--especially because he felt it his own. Wasn't Tim in accord with his rhythm rays?

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But Tim--Tim seemed not to know of Don's achievement, although neither voiced his assumptions. Tim's manner of surly reserve grew with a tension that had outlets in occasional bursts of affection. So it may be with the animal in restless nerve absence. The daily requirements of routine forced this lying in wait, and Tim's acquisition of rigidity had become a part of his pattern. He had not Don's intrinsic knowledge of elemental value that had come of early soaring. Yet Tim's was the stronger nature--though he had

not the pivotal quality of oneness with the inherent.

Frustration will seek an outlet. This outlet to Tim became further fevered social activity. Don's inversion led rapidly to frequent surface dourness that in no way accorded with his inner radiance.

And there was in this dourness explosive emotion--emotion that came to the surface after hours of drama facial tautness that registered dramatic frustration. How much of this intensity is lost, Don thought. And indeed it served no purpose other than to foster deep distress for which an outlet must be. That Tim took the brunt of the outburst was a brutal satisfaction to Don. He even joyed in Tim's angered, if irrational, reaction. "Am I a sadist?" Don wondered.

But Don was active. He became further a social favorite with each foot-light appearance. Against throttled electric force he was stimulated to the thinning of any inhibitions. While his fellows liked the truth of his action, there were those among faculty members whose glance met his askenes. One there was who thought he found something in Don. He said after one of the plays of a season, "I have seen Edwin Booth and all the old-school actors, but I have not seen a better interpretation of Jaques than yours, Don." But Don did not realize tribute. He sought analysis of that statement. None was forthcoming. Again Don found that possessing a quality is not a matter to be riddled. It is--and it comes of something not to be stated, was Don's conviction.

The consciously growing mind meets with what must be accepted though it cannot be analyzed.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

There was Kitty O'Leary. Kitty liked Don, and was a compromise in that she helped to check out hours otherwise too tense for endurance. She sat in the front row in class--or she sat in the back, and Don was aware of her presence. She represented all those outward values that Don felt inconsequent. But she exercised a feminine charm to lull to the mood void of thought--and definitely of the lesser spirit.

Don realized with a sense of self-chagrin that he enjoyed going out with "his girl." Now he definitely met with much of social approval. It was an all right easy avenue of escape for the casual. But Don sought answers, and Kitty's answers were always of a brand. They fitted the average like a glove and they hung loosely on Don to slip away, or away completely when his inherent realization of a significance struck him. Here was an Eve who always had a garden--an old-fashioned garden that fitted accepted patterns--but it was not Don's garden in which grew Joshua trees and a century plant.

Yet Don clung to the surface composure that was Kitty O'Leary.

The deep searching roots of the spirit all are often comfortably covered in commonplace.

The incident of Clary Blunt's dismissal from the school shook Don. He had sought a certain external social compliance. Clary's growth must have been more a sudden thing. She came from a home of culture, and she sought expression. Her music study was some help, and her instructors were of the rarest known to the campus. Through music they encouraged a fullness of living that could not but foster thought.

Clary Blunt organized a discussion group whose aims were social, and were promptly termed socialistic. What Clary sought was thought; she hoped

it might lead to convictions.

In appearance Clary was one of the frequent contradictions. She was a mousy bit of wide-eyed innocence, and not over-attractive. Once her group was at all established, she campaigned very mildly for adherents, at least for ears. Since she knew music most, her brightest hope lay in the music students. This did not concern Don, for he worked for his living, besides doing his duties as student, and took no part in music study.

But he was concerned when he heard of Clary's misfortune. She had developed an infatuation for, and attempted to gain the attention of, one young fellow who was recognized for his ability at the piano, and whose family name had been historically significant for generations. He became conscious of Clary's interest in him, and having become conscious, objected to his consciousness of her. What Clary may have thought of all this remained enigma. But she still tried various ways to gain his attention.

At last he rebelled and reported her persistent attentions to the faculty and student council. This little matter soon became mountainous--for Clary was not concerned. When she was called upon to explain her action, no real investigation of her interests--of her intentions--was made, for she promptly referred the authorities to her attorney.

When Clary Blunt's expulsion was common knowledge, fellow students awoke from their everyday absorptions to smell out the bag that may have held the east of all colors. But they learned little, chiefly because Clary saw no reason for any fuss and said nothing.

Don was her champion, but he knowingly sought insignificance. Yet he said what he thought to Tim and to others who might carry on. They didn't. Clary had committed serious offense in the eyes of the many for she had nothing to say.

When Clary Blunt's mother came from somewhere in the East to see what was the matter--and to take Clary home with her, Don saw the evidence of inherent culture in her whole presence, in every movement, even so little as a lift of finger. She was anything but aggressive.

Don was so shaken that he quite forgot his own transcendent assurance. He severely rated Tim for his indifference, but Tim was quiescent, for he had tried to talk to Clary and had felt himself repulsed.

Tim must have social approval.

When a scandal of sex and its violence in reaction to years of varicose inhibitions broke out in one of the pioneer families that was something of moral and financial backbone to the college, house mothers granted seclusion to the offspring of these scions now at the school. The most fatted tender solicitude was offered them, and the matter was spoken of in hushed tones. In truth the sultry shadiness of this incident was impressive. The participants in the whole murky story were of mature and of decided mental age, and they were well financed scions of the church, the lodges, of all that forms the starch of the white shirt front of respectability. Indeed solicitude was paid for. This was a matter that concerned the very soul of this middle west corner and its stability, its moral integrity. The whole of its order being shaken, it settled into sultry quiet.

But Don thought of the girls and the inhibiting smother of fatted solicitude they suffered. Truth must be impressed upon them as varicolored and often unwholesome. Don had sought the preservation of the wholesome for himself. He felt it the prerogative of youth. "They are imprisoned. This isn't youth's way of acting," Don told Tim.

A better kindness had been meted Clary Blunt.

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Kitty O'Lear too had her share in scandal.

The Dean of Women of this institution of learning was of positive character and experience. Yet she met with circumstances almost beyond her control.

While dancing was prohibited there remained superfluous intimations of human nature abroad among these young people, and the more experienced--in matters called life--the elders were, the more they favored prohibition. What youth lacked was the varying outlets of physical manifestation that are rounded physical being and consequently prevent much lack of balance in concentration upon sex.

Kitty O'Lear had a way with her eyes and affected drooping hat brims that art might enhance nature. Among her girl friends was one such like Clary Blunt in mousiness: an environmental affliction of puritencial parentage had greatly contributed to this complex. A lack of capacity for mental growth made expression logically of Kitty's pattern. The stronger will led and Kitty joyed in this leading. What Mary thought or felt remained enigma, for she had little to say. But she followed Kitty assiduously.

The Dean of Women followed assiduously too.

But, one night the two girls had ventured to a local dance hall where they dared not enter, yet by hanging about in the shadows outside might share more than vicariously in the festivities. These places were so thoroughly tabooed as to be among the unmentionables--except in whispered discrepancies after "lights out" at the dorm--so the girls' only danger of being recognized came from others who might be as guilty as they. However, if they wished to avoid investigation, they must be in the dorm by ten o'clock.

Kitty was capable in such cases. Their thrill was not long in abeyance.

"Wanta ride girls?"

"Sure, but it's fifteen minutes and then the dawn," Kitty smiled in dim light with her eyes direct and fully oval.

"Aw, you're not so innocent," drawled the driver as one arm circled Kitty's plump shoulder; and Mary obediently snuggled in the rear seat with someone she'd never seen. Kitty knew what--and Mary followed.

It was dark. "Everything's rosy," Kitty tittered.

They sped.

The fifteen minutes were up.

They were not at the dawn.

"Do you want us to be campused?" Kitty wheedled.

But she didn't persist. Too late now, and Kitty knew too well what drunken driving might do. No use irritating the boys. But she'd got Mary into it too. They surely would get "solitaire" now.

Mary's scream split the night and skidded the car wildly. It righted and Kitty said, "Out it, Mary. Be a sport." The driver stepped on the gas.

There was no word from Mary. But she was trying to get away from this maulin masher whose arm circled her shoulder while his hand pinched her breast painfully. The other hand between her thighs, with fingers slowly stretching, now centered--but the suction that was slowly suffocating was of his tongue in her mouth.

Mary clamped her teeth on his tongue.

She was free.

Her leap from the door that slammed back with the rush of the car against the wind was sobering to all of them, for Mary was a limp heap when they found her torn and bloodied in the ditch.

Kitty called the Dean from the hospital. It was there that Mary's story was forced from her chilling lips and all but breathless lungs by the Dean of

women herself. The woman loved gory details and what Mary couldn't supply, Kitty's ready sense could and did.

But the news story told of Mary's brains spattered about the highway and ditch. The force of her fall had caused a concussion such as that of battering a cat's head on a rock. But that was the news story.

The Dean liked the true story better.

But she did insist upon a virtue rousing morality that justified Mary's puritan chastity and made Kitty a miniature of Florence Nightingale.

To Don the whole story was meaningful only insofar as Mary had been puritan by nature--or by environment.

"I am a puritan," he told himself with a dry laugh of denial.

Certainly there was much in this that had not been in Clary Blunt's case--and much that should have proven horror to the zealots of virtue who supported this middle-west campus, and to those whose offspring attended here. There was also much of the resourcefulness of the Dean of Women and of Kitty O'Leary in this account of virtue offended. The justice meted the boys would be stiff to satisfy the vengeful natures so generally concerned. So Don thought.

But he need not have wasted his time thinking--and as usual he'd been so much apart, so dissociated that, despite his dependence upon Kitty, he'd not truly realized this occurrence.

Don's early association with essential brutality had inured him to surprise at surface human brutality.

What did surprise him was that the boys who had been responsible--in a measure--for Mary's death had been hurriedly dismissed without any charges having been made.

Again the very shirt front of respectability had been near rumpling.

He remembered the prairie folk indifference to attack upon persons, and the righteous indignation at that which endangers the family unit. Here the sense of social security had been mollified, Don was certain, only because Mary had had little social significance.

Don knew that Tim approved of his friendship with Kitty O'Leary, yet he sensed his resentment. Yet there was nothing of disapproval of Kitty's behaviour in Tim's resentment. His was a social goal, even though he might have resented knowing it. There seemed nothing in this story of Kitty's escapade to war her socially. She'd been too much the Dean's subject of social plastic-political surgery.

The end justifies the means.

Don was his usual disassociated self and seemed to know Kitty as not other than that same source of half-shamed assurance he had known her to be before the colorful incident had been publicized.

But there was this especial resentment, a purely personal thing, that stood between Don and Tim.

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There may well be apparent indifferent aloneness in spirit association with illness.

Tim was a great favorite among fellow students of both sexes, and took keen interest in girls who were athletic--at least in individual sports such as skating and swimming. He was typical youth in the grasp of exploratory adventure. As he wanted social approval so he wanted to survey all knowledge, and with youth's unconsciousness of scope, capacity, and rejection sincerely proposed to do so.

Don knew futility and definitely limited himself to the narrow fringe of the humanities provided, with the hope of grasping something of the significance.

His dramatic efforts were deliberate---part of his attempt at assimilation---part release of emotion. But there were tangles when Don's light emanations crossed those of his fellows in action. Generally, however, these associations were casual---each participant being too intent on his own part of the story to know another's problems personally. The very fact that here there were almost no positive values and that he himself was the acid test of the truth he sought---the laboratory in which the few more nearly acceptable formulae were to be tried---had made his decision to limit his efforts definite.

And often Don wondered that his instructors could find wonder in the truths that pages recorded---truths that instinctive knowledge had been living either in accord or combat with since man had slung his first stone and sensed his first physical rhythm in action. That man's first articulation had been a part of the great orchestration of nature seemed inevitable. Yet here wise men spoke of this as wonder, and pupils were ground into mechanical reaction to code-like drill upon fact that made the matter of study, preparation of papers, a mockery.

At least in the performance Don could tabulate wise man's accordance with innate simplicity that his father had often humorously related to him as a child.

Childhood's simplicity is innate wisdom in rhythm with allness.

There was the story of the goslings upon which Don's father based his philosophy of human action. "When I was a shaver, younger and smaller than you, I used to dig post holes; and your grandma always had gese. Well those blamed yellow-fuzzy goslings would follow the leader---always trying to get their heads back farther than his---making a great fuss trying to sound like the old gander---and they'd never miss a post hole. Everyone of 'em would pile in until there was nothing but the wiggly fuzz of hind ends of goslings to fall onto. Then they'd pile up on top of the others. People are just like that---only you can't always

pull 'em out of post holes like I did the goolings. Your grandma was sure set on geese--and specially them yellow-fussy, crazy goolings." Don could see his father's tongue in his cheek.

But rarely did he sense this knowledge among the college instructors whose knowledge of human nature always seemed clothed in a lather of language that merely served to cushion their own unreliable instinct.

Don sought support of his own conviction. He voiced his beliefs casually to Kitty to determine a most native reaction--he insisted that women lived nearer to instinct than men and, equivocally, for him, that they were correspondingly less fine. Kitty O'Leary's slow gaze, beneath the artful lift of lash, which opened fully only when occasion required that something understood to be flattering attention, was provocatively amused, the more provocatively because Kitty had all males in one category. Her interest in Don lay in the quality in him that somehow did not pigeon-hole. Even a mere female perception thought this lathery language, that distressed Don so greatly, amusing--perhaps this was the attitude. Kitty truly was a balance wheel. No doubt she knew, without knowledge, the necessary balancing quality of rhythm--the fluidity of mental relations necessary to a fullness of human relationship.

It angered Don that Tim ascribed so readily to what appeared a servilely religious awe of the truth every man lives and the artist preserves. But Tim had been reared in an atmosphere of over-dressed dogma. Don was cautious of any outward expression of his own attitude except among those whose mood he thought his own; yet his elders looked askance at him. Don knew their intuitive mistrust in the something that was his intensified sense of rhythmic association. There was discord which Don attempted to dull.

But his intensity offset his good intention. Having distilled an emotion to thought, and then to words, it was not a casual acceptance of fact that he

uttered. The fierce zeal of inspiration colored his words and action. "Years may yet make me to seem casual," Don told himself wryly.

He was smothered with positive rays of light warmth when the man who had praised his show of dramatic shilly smiled wryly at his statement in class: "This book is particularly interesting because it so clearly stresses the idea that man has created God in his own image." At least not all these siders were going to criticize what they labelled a Quisora young mind seeking expression.

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Among these young people at college Don walked alone. He met them in daily contacts. He sat with them at bull sessions and contributed his views. These sessions were always to settle world problems--the position of youth set standard inviolable. They knew right, and each had a nebulous, idealistic theory for attaining right--each could judge. While Don strove to refute the right of their right to judge he always questioned his own theory of right--and knew it for judging on the basis of his own reaction for he knew no other right to judge. The favorite question was, "And when did you sit at the right hand of God?" He indulged in radicalism as superlative as he claimed the others' to be when the dancing question was under fire. Don loved to dance. But the boys here maintained dancing but an expression of the sex urge. Don said, "It's really a natural rhythmic expression that begins for most young-sterns before sex is more than a word to them. History always reserves a page for the dance." But material minds had no knowledge of a history that danced, or childishly objected that the Hessians had danced at Christmas festivities when Washington crossed the Delaware. Argument led to the sex issue again and again till Don burst into such speech as he usually avoided. "What does it matter? What if--as you say--dancing leads to the testing of forbidden fruit? Who forbade it? When is marriage marriage?" But that was not his truth; it

was his aggravation.

Don loved to dance. He had won prizes for best costume at the Washington birthday parties when his costume was so negligible as to be unimportant. If it were colonial, Don let it be--but the Virginia reel was another thing. He tripped and reeled in light ecstasy. That was better than skating. But not better than the ice skating on the creek at home. Skating round a huge blaze of pine logs dragged down the frozen sand of the banks through the break-age of undergrowth now brittle-gray with frost. The malled dark of night hiding the transparent ice that revealed the clear greenish flow over stones that shone brightly beneath. The dark that brushed about the skaters as they swept forward in long strokes--swaying, hands clasped together behind their backs--swept to the wild tunes of Pancho's harmonica that would be consistently broken as the half-Indian boy brushed a greasy sleeve across his ever sweating long nose. Pancho's nose would sweat on the coldest day in great scoured beads filmed in oil. And his harmonica tunes always were wild rollicking rhythm that was perfect accordance with the whang and whirr of skates on clear crystal hard ice. There was nothing better than such skating--duck, glide--and again. There on ice, had been the real dance of Don's soul. But this reel was not dancing--not the sweep and beat, the duck and swerve of the dance glide Don joyed in. A few short hours of dancing lifted the soul of Don to musing light wings of dream consciousness. Little things took little places before the power that he became while dancing. It was just exercising his rhythm in accord with cosmic rhythms.

But dancing here was part of aloneness to Don--the rhythmic winging aloneness of eagle flight. Yet his was not the soaring of strength; only the embryo yearning for oneness with all nature that breeds fortitude, the god in man searching, was his. Light was his promise. When light came to Don his

fight lost significance.

Dancing was forbidden on this campus.

There was the Virginia reel.

Don joyed in it freely for he knew the laxity of the moment. Eyes of suspicion could grow warm, and his body floated as his feet tripped. The costumes were colonial for the Washington birthday party--Don's but cheese-cloth flimsiness with a suggestion of the period.

Tim was elaborately dressed. He wore velvet. Velvet breeches and tight coat with cuff and collar lace had won the prize before. The moment of the evening was the awarding of prizes to the boy and girl who received the most applause.

Don had won before. He knew the hot flushed disturbance that being one with the crowd meant to him.

There came again the moment when all tripping stopped--when the balcony was draped with those who watched the parade of the few chosen by the judges to win their applause. The one who was greeted most loudly, with most cheering and stomping of feet would win.

Don was of these few boys and girls who must parade. And then each must go alone that final decision might be made.

There was dread in Don as he watched the others go before without that clear yoo-hoo of yell, the stomping of feet.

Don knew Tim wanted this prize.

He wanted it, especially, for his girl whom he had not known long. This would establish him in her favor, he knew. It would stamp them as a couple before the crowd.

The social was ever uppermost with Tim.

And Don walked--into that especial din.

This time the boys' prize was a shirt, but Don did not walk to the judge's booth to receive it. Later--they brought it to him.

Tim was angry. The girl reflected his mood.

Don was sorely hurt.

He had felt dissatisfaction with himself after each theatrical performance. He now felt more. There was a warning of spirit sickness that comes to the sensitive when winning means defeating another.

And Tim was this other. Don held him dear. But now he was on the opposite side of the fence. Tim was the one who sought social approval.

Yet Don knew a certain satisfaction. It was not, however, in any way sadistic, Don knew.

He was to hear of this incident again from Tim, who did not now refrain from growling, "That costume is surely lousy. Did you dance with all the judges?"

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Sundays became Don's catch-up days and they were days that became torment in that there was pull and tug of his desires. Some were grand days when others sought active pleasures. Don joyed in his reading when it was art of suggestion and left him other to explore on beating wings, but much of the reading was of his instructor's language lather. Even this he would not have much minded had there not been the urge to physical action heightened by the light glad cries of young people at play. "Have I never known the true exuberance of youth?" Don questioned himself as he ran his fingers over the scar-erlap skin of the backs of his hands. "Some day I will be young." But he knew that he refrained from activity with his fellows because it meant the crossing of the light lines that led those whom he wished his own--whom

he wished to conquer. There should be no crossing light lines of contact--the light that had strength as of flesh and blood cords--ever vulnerable to hurt beyond anguish of mere flesh and blood, beyond mental anguish because it was of the spirit, unreasoned.

There was Tim--and his creed of popularity. And so Don sought to conquer himself--along the route of least resistance. He knew this, but he knew the anguish of fighting this battle socially. A book must be his companion until. . . .

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Another term ended. Months swept away. Soon Don would be free of this institution of learning. But there remained a summer session. These summers were lonely, but to Don they were happy. He didn't have to fight his own desire to keep each individual segregated from the herd. There was more consented individual association. Tim and Don had the weary old dorm almost to themselves. Tim worked hard at manual labor in summer and was glad to rest in cool musty drafts from the old brick building's sighing ghosts. There was a most human kindness in this summer negligence of the old dorm's past.

Tim was cleaning his rifle, happily busy in drowsing heat of mid-afternoon. Don was reading from one of the many books that lost charm from the necessity of constant perusal. Yet this was a thing that troubled the reader, and although Don grasped little that the words said, he pleasantly drowsed in the sensuous wafting, rocking chair rhythm of Blackmore. He was startled at the rip-like report of the rifle. He looked across at Tim, who seemed busy wiping the gun with a grease cloth. Don said nothing and relapsed to the drowsing rhythm that swayed him--that really had not been broken by the rip-shot noise.

Later Don saw a bullet hole in the dusky soft pine beam of the high ceiling. There is always a warning somewhere in a peaceful moment.

Peace lulls the senses to danger. Tim became so much the Tim that Don knew was real that their old intimacies of a Christmas holiday period were natural as if never having been broken. Just as old friends meet after years of separation in time and duty, to speak of the weather. So each boy began to know the other's reactions, thoughts, and emotions as a part of himself.

As this living intimacy grew, uncollected talking was communing with one's inner nature and such that was not said was as accepted as coffee at breakfast.

And to Don this was renewal of light. He walked, read, and lived in the glowing intimacy of the light waves that had often been his as a lone youngster on the wind-swept plains. For caress of breeze and flash of light he had now a greater warmth. Yet he knew that he would lose much of it when other associations claimed Tim. He lived in the moment and learned to turn each unhappy existence to fortitude of mind, a fortitude that swelled within him while this lull of peace absorbed all living.

Don's slow awakening to a realization of the physical bond--the inevitable biological expression--in their relationship was but further learning to live happily. The maternal lines of his hands signified much that was of woman's native reaction. There was repulsion only of unkindness in any sane mind. But to Tim the doctrine of the end justifies the means held true. He was not yet strong enough to forget the crowd. To Don the crowd had never essentially existed.

The light that was in him and of him now was the more replete in itself because it was accepted unquestioned.

Unreasoned acceptance of happiness is youth's light of truth.

Don saw himself only as the son of his mother. And something of that mother warmed him that happiness was the light that preceded dark--a reversal of the deep dark that precedes the dawn.

And it was now that Don was most genially a reality among his fellows. There were not so many crossings of the light rays he felt so tangibly now to lead from him to others--and the glow of these rays centered in Tim--centered, but the roots in the soul of Don curled about a core--a core that was needed.

From this seeding Don knew must come the fortitude to sacrifice. Yet his exaltation made sacrifice seem as little, and in this sublimation of what others term realities Don looked upon spiritual experience as physical--and physical as spiritual. They were very much one to him in the blend of light-seared knowledge.

And spiritual experience depends upon symbols.

Symbols were always to be had while mind and spirit worked in unison. What others termed morals had no place in Don's sublimations.

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There is in every life the closed episode.

Don had been called home. His father was dangerously ill. Like all first impression of fact this did not affect Don at once. But the train ride home brought slow-unscent realization. He was again astride his father's chest--as, flat on his back on the floor, first by an upthrust of his stomach, then a quick rise and rolling motion of his shoulders, Papa made a great bucking broncho. He was even--as the train slowed for the hundredth time to a crunch-crash of grinding stop--at the table as his father pushed the last sweet, any tidbit, toward him or Darcy. And Don remembered his father's sweet tooth.

When Don got off at the sizeable junction where he must change trains, a casket was dumped carefully but grossly to the platform. He knew from the heavy flatulence of men's faces that the casket was loaded. There was someone there to claim it--but there was a duty-to-be-shifted manner in the dread acceptance of the fact--life's ugliest fact to the materialist.

The next train was slower and more crowded. Don sat facing a man whose pasty blue-jowled face was much like what has in nasty vulgarity been primly referred to as "privates" in appearance. The train was crowded. The heat

was a physical threat. The face fascinated while it struck creeping horror to Don's sensitive soul.

Don was not there to the man whose gaze rested in goo-eyed blear on the girls who sat across the aisle--but once saw a child in the aisle to whom he handed a well-fingered stick of gum. He read Love Story assiduously, frequently rubbing the paste of his eyes into strings that he smeared into the oily-porous paste of his face. There was a shine to the skin about the oily pores like that of flesh seldom exposed to air--let alone water. His whole body was pudgily mussed fat--the trousers' front bagged in senile limp fullness.

Suddenly Don ached with a whole compulsive dynamo of longing for the refined astringent musk of yellow prairie sweet pea.

Except for the clumsy paste movement of pudgy fingers with dark hairs lasciviously caressing their backs as he turned Love Story pages the man remained an innate pubescent mass. His eyes still rolled murkily at the girls across the aisle while his face wore a steady leprous reminiscence of desire that seemed the mildewed mask of a long lost baby smile. A mother would have divined a dead soul in the excrecence of body.

Once the man rose to enter the lavatory immediately behind his seat. When he returned there was about him so much more repulsion, the impact of a sickness renewed, that Don rose and entered the lavatory where he vomited in the close heat and stench that even his own excrecence relieved.

He tried to wash in the slimy trickle that cozed from the side of the shallow metal basin to slosh with the swing of the train. The swing that made Don's stomach his only organ--an accordian bleat of pain. As he sought to lift the drain of the slimy basin the grease-like substance smeared his fingers. Further washing did not seem to remove this penetrating

stain.

When the lavatory became too close for him, he went out to fall weakly into his seat before the now snoring bulk of the man. With his eyes closed he might have looked less repulsive had there not been the strings of paste from his eyes. They looked like the diseased-sightless eye slits of the uncared for blind person.

Don thought death much kinder than this.

Would his father fight for life?

His own misery ascendant, his father lost significance.

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A week later Don's father was much better. He accepted Don's presence at his sickbed with the unbearable shame of father-son secretiveness heightened by his being bedridden. Man greatly limits the god in himself by his inheritance of the shame of all time that he has for his sons--when they too are aware of the role man plays in his niche of time.

It is this great sense of shame that makes my father's weakness his omission rather than his commission, Don thought.

But his father was better. He would soon be doing the work of three men. Don looked at his small frame, his short length propped upon pillows, and wondered at the dynamic force called life. His father grinned, his tongue in his cheek, shame-sick and wordless.

But Don was ill now. He could no longer conceal his pain nor his worry--his right eye flinched sharply to close at the pain that snapped anger-sharp teeth in his groins when he sat. The burning fire in his groins was constant.

When his mother questioned, he answered his innocence. "I don't know." But she drew the train story from him readily enough. It lay feasting and the telling was relief. That his mother did not believe him was not his

concern now: there was enough fire in his blood.

When the doctor came Don was in bed. Doctors are a sense of security in many cases. This doctor was guaranteed in this case--to Don's mother at least. No wonder boys stand in awe of their mothers, Don thought. A man may live a sensory existence, little realizing knowledge--even of experience, but a woman knows and remembers.

"Have you been with any women?" the doctor's leer was that pasty repugnance he'd set before on the train.

"No. I thought of that?" Don said over the rising rebellion his stomach suddenly became. He'd never believe--not this doctor. Nor would anyone.

His mother had not.

"Who is there in whom one may trust when a mother does not trust? A son trusts his mother because she trusts him. In whom am I to place my trust?"

His hot gaze should have scorched his mother, but she pursued the task of the moment without perceptible hesitation. "She has never trusted my father," Don remembered.

There had been reason in Don's attempt to create home and family from his Christmas holidays in the old dorm with Tim.

Don didn't stop to think that a mother schools herself to casting off her offspring, and has the inherent hardness of all nature in her conviction. He had watched the mother bird forcing her fledglings to use their wings.

He was only the more dependent upon the assurance he sought in Tim--sought knowingly. But the death that balances life was in his knowledge though he might, now, forget it. Tim must be his all.

The doctor was security against any threat to the body.

Soon Don returned to his duties at school.

Tim had not said hello.

Don had given him no chance. He wished to wipe his absence from memory. But a gnawing desire was in him. It drove him to share his experience with Tim. This was but emotion's sense of tie in shared closure.

He did tell Tim.

Then Tim became the big brother. He was all kindness and care.

Don shuddered.

He knew it was coming.

Then Tim said it; he worshipped the beauty of body: "There is no sin but that which is unclean."

Now Don became a great anguish--one he had never dreamed.

"I am clean-- I AM CLEAN," became his living cry, and he repeated it in all tones to Tim; it became mockery--dull, hollow mockery--mockery beyond degrading.

Yet in the night Don got up to go to Tim. He sat outside Tim's closed door repeating, "I am clean" until in his weariness his head bumped against the door panel, causing the crisp loud creak that old door panels give to a sudden pressure.

Tim wakened to spring startled from his cot.

"Why Don? What's the matter?" Tim was deceitfully surprised, despite his sudden awakening, as he swung the door open sharply.

But this was not whole release.

Don tried again and again.

He lived in sensory apathy.

Finally Tim laughed, but not until much near-pompous affability had been

made about the necessity of being clean in body--affability well seasoned with unbearable brotherly kindness. But Tim had never in any way made Don to feel that he did not believe his story of the men on the train--and the horror of him that Don had had. Truly Tim did understand, but he must play his little game that Don might realize his power.

Then Tim had laughed and said it:

"You are clean, Don. You are clean."

"Say it--Keep on saying it--Spell it." And Don knew tears on his cheeks--his own tears. Tears were not easy for him. He'd seen athletes weep; he'd seen their coaches weep. Don did not weep easily.

He wiped the tears from his cheeks in bright wonder.

He saw his own world anew.

Tim's hand held his own--now alive again.

Tim had said he was clean. Don drew Tim's head against his glad-aching chest that swelled with wild heart beat.

He kissed the crisp hair in wonder--reclaiming his own, he knew. The light was of assurance of such strength as to make all probable anguish seem trifling in comparison to that just experienced.

But the episode was closed.

Don never spoke of it again.

There was such here to make oneness with allness. A contribution to the loneliness that is comprehension of one's own limitation as god, as time, as space.

BOOK THREE

SOLD?

Futility curls round me
in blighting, withering surd.
I am the subject
of the word's acidity--
sedulity that surds.
I am the soured
surreality of material
bought soul.

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Divinity within me, lift that--
which is I--let to fall from me
this fleshbound dye--'Tis the
ever-intangible surreal cry.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Failure breeds success, Don thought.

Don's sublimations were fertile ground for his breeding. His slowness had been, and must be resource of mental and spiritual growth. His knowledge of fundamentals was an inherent one. He was learning that such fundamentals permit most of growth through deviation---art is fostered by deep distress.

Don's experience and study had led him to recognize the truth of strength underfoot. Immigrants form the soul of a still shaping America as Don saw it. Individuals did that shaping. He saw that second and third generations, of a sadly deluded foreign element, seeking a land of wealth and plenty, sought small, or great, political office. The still existing faith in chimeras led these people to a profound faith in material achievement---before the days of 1929. Their faith led them to copy-turry action. The end justifies the means---the means justifies the end.

To Don the essential was inner growth which must come of pain. As he had joyed in experience that rent and racked his finer sensitivities while growing physically, he now took each stab-pain as a strength tribute. As he had been slow of confirmation then, he was now. There was much that merited of no significance. But he knew that action and fact are contributions to the theory of a pattern which is living---a pattern which accepts of a scheme of all things. He had tried to be socially acceptable to such patterns and he intended continuance. But he had found little that gave light to the spirit in a pattern narrowed to accept of only solidity. Don's patterns accepted of light---and hoped for peace.

Don amused himself with the perfect story of the Charlat whose pattern was of colors he knew no one who had caught. There seemed to Don to have been a

world well sacrificed in this parable literature of light and color, all-nixed in flame. Milton was more amusing--he was vanderbillian in his joy in the spirit and flesh affliction with which his hero conquered the author.

"The poets were made of the inverted stuff that joyed in what has been grossly termed ascetics," Don told a muddle-headed bull session group who had reached the point of "nuts to Don" slogan. They had to have something they could chew, and Don offered them fire of wine that left them shaken--but sober, and belly growning mammals as ever. "What the flesh can't tie up in bundles it labels forbidden," was Don's impression of these groups as he contemplated leaving school--for school. He would teach. He'd never considered anything else for there lay the hope of inspiring response to rhythms that meant more than language lather responses to Don--that meant light and hope of fire.

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Kitty O'Leary had dropped by the wayside. She knew conquest in the tangibly material sense. Dreams led to convention's four wall realities for her. The sky roof was quite beyond her wish. Don thought of her as a Greta Brown up. The mind had merely intensified the instinctive animal which seeks self-preservation in convention.

At least he had met the native Eve in woman.

Tim had become a part of the harsh, the fine, and the real that Don was now beginning to sublimate. The mind that is growing requires sublimation.

Don sought a job.

This was the immediate post-twenty-nine. Everyone who lived from a general tax fund lived precariously. Those who had as yet gained no footing were destined to minor or major defeat. Don's realization of fortitude through failure served him now. He was aware of the significance of friends in power,

but he had none of these, and he did have youth's desire to establish himself on the strength of his own wings. He had worked for his college expenses--he'd work his way into eventual recognition. He had no dreams of material grandeur. He did have a sense of service. "What I have done, in the material sense, I've shown youngsters--girls--much younger than I to do. What I can do, anyone can do," Don said--and knew he'd said it often.

When at last Don walked in numb thoughtlessness, not daring longer what might happen, he was offered a job. Others had gone out to supposed excellent positions. The support of friends of parents no doubt had paved a path for some of these. Don had depended only upon a good word here or there that may have been soundlessly granted. One of the instructors whose reference was most essential, repeatedly forgot to write letters. And those letters that he wrote were reported by his secretary to be of a form he used for all alike. No doubt he was a wise old man. That he was understanding Don knew, for he'd once told Don that he always enjoyed his play work. The man must have been socialistic in tendency, Don thought. One thing was certain, he knew that little, counted of great significance, really mattered.

That his work and his job were but those of millions was not Don's concern. His was youth's ever new conquest--that of a world all his own. Yet he came to it with his own unreasoned wisdom, his fortitude of light--sourced knowledge. Inexperience of the way of the world was still as much his heritage as my youth's. He had the flight common to the young--plus another becoming increasingly common. The flight of spirit growth accepts much of asceticism and perversion in the joy of growing realization of more to conquer within. Don would need his spirit assurance of light. But he was genuinely of the unheeding young.

There was good fortune in having work that could keep one physically alive and doing; which might provide avenues for spiritual growth.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The performance of classroom ritual when he was at the helm proved adventure to Don. That his adventures were for the most part his own he realized only dimly. Before his desk in a crowded room sat a thin tooth-grinned stake of a boy who was always bobbing. These youngsters of adolescent years were an almost uncontrollable mass of odorous, humid, writhing flesh and bone. Yet they were individuals, and sought each a different consideration. These children were from homes of an opposite nature as could be imagined. Foreign bred instinct without training was next door to stolid middle-west conformity. Youngsters from homes where they were beaten when they failed to bring home stolen articles each day lived across the road from families who were a golden rule right to superiority.

Don had been asked to take on additional duties--to teach foreign languages--after his arrival. It was adventure, and because he knew little of what he taught his efforts were satisfactory. Yet a member of the august body termed a school board reported that his daughter had been cheating in Don's language class. Don openly said that he'd not stressed the matter of such honesty, but that he would do so if it were required. The result was that Don received an increase in salary. He had already been advanced for doing additional work in language. But these things did not count.

He had a gnawing sense of failure as he realized that what must be taught were the fundamental needs of expression. Spelling, sentence structure, grammar were almost as foreign to the youngsters who spoke English as to those who knew these subjects only as things teacher talked about.

One night Don dreamed.

He had lain in dry-eyed wakefulness and lived again those moments that recur when sleep is tantalizing overtone that never reaches twitching nerve-end tangles. He pressed his hands to his eyes and stared up at opalescent orange

and orchid egg discs that frayed to gradual darkness. His body lay like a driftwood splinter--high, dry and motionless on sun burnt sand. The hands spread on his chest covered him, and they grew to sentient beings that held him prone, apart from all active life.

From one of the opalescent disc rings before his eyes had grown the bobbing splinter of boy before his classroom desk. But this splinter was not the thin stake of tooth-grimed boy--yet it was. The bobbing head was that of a drowning rat, its teeth a vicious promise of lustful bitterness. The seething waters upon which the rat head bobbed were the humid flesh and bone tangle of the classroom.

Don felt that as nurse said he was merely permitting his charges to drown in their own libidinous proximity.

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The lustful sentence of this class-room of humid flesh was greatly heightened by its sweat-stewed garlic odors. A cloakroom was open to the room and wafted kitchen odors of wretched homes into the crowded room in waves of breath-moist fetidness. A seam of frothed swamp, wet, stinking flesh.

Don stood swaying in nausea one afternoon and declared, "You brats must go home and take baths, and remember to take off your shoes." It was thus that his rebuke carried human sympathy and understanding. He had managed a sense of understanding with the greater part of these youngsters, and when the garlic humidity warmth was not too sentient, he felt a tugging at tendrils that bind. Here was a problem, this establishing of individual reality of oneness rhythms, when so many human vagaries packed a crowded space. The battle intrigued Don, and he termed this room the chamber of horrors with a humor that established ties of warmth--if fetid.

And here there was the over-powering freshness of wind-swept plain to offset a classroom's humidity. While the earth had long been undermined and sunk into unexpected swales, it gave in dry sponginess to each footstep, for this was a coal-mining section. It was wide sun-steeped, wind-swept space. Don gave himself to the freedom of it. He walked in a lone dry ache of the past. There was not the loss of group friends that his fellows at college might have felt, but there was the lack of kinship that he and Tim had fostered. Letters were unsatisfactory. Their insdecuacy led to harshness of ill-turned phrase. When desperation of searhing tendrils of light ray led Don at last to open his mailbox thinking "it has to be here today" it was. But this warmth was torment, and surcease was the sun and wind that flayed spirit into remembrance of searing. The swathings of man-cled body hindered contact, and imaginative wells of emotional association played a dream part that helped to exalt. If there were strong enough wind sweep, there was more of natural release. But the fortitude Don strove for became more and more mental. His long thoughts had become a part of him that he realized was making him a muddled, desensitized grown-up. Years and experience have their way of taking toll of sense harmony.

The wind whipped back some truth of this when his clothes flapped against legs, that like the trunk of him, he still thought of as flat and thin. The narrow mine tunnels under earth ran cut from circular areaways where the earth sank into hollows that formed ponds in wet weather. These held moisture long enough that this rolling sweep was long abloom with little prairie wild flowers of the delicate coloring and scent that only prairie rarities can give. Don thought the heavy scent of more luxuriant blooms of more fertile lands a bit bad taste. It was part of the philosophy that prairie breeding had ingrained within him.

Don thought of the teacher who had come to see him when he'd sprained his ankle years ago. She had sat in the slim gray peak that was the new house and had talked fluently. She had talked big words. In the wind's sweep on the potted landscape Don thought big words useless. But they had fascinated him, and he had always sought those new to him. When he had taken a vocabulary test he'd been first in class but one, and that one was a woman of some experience, the wife of the city superintendent of schools, who was taking a degree at the convenient college. Don's rank had been better than that of a boy who now was a Rhodes Scholar. Don had known this boy since his grade school days, for he too had been at the Indian school in the boom town, one of Mrs. Leets's children. Mrs. Leets had not campaigned in vain for better schools.

The knowledge and use of big words had not dimmed Don's sense of their futility in nature's symphony. Here words were only sounds to form overtones of cadence with the wind in the grass, the rustle of leaves--if there were trees. Trees took on worshipful beauty in a land that nurtured a few. Don would walk many miles to see a tree.

Youngsters brought prairie blooms to the classroom. The land that was prairie grass could be little else, for its undermining had made it useless for cultivation. Its rolling sweep would have served as excellent wheat land had it not yielded coal. How so nearly flat land had coal near the surface was wonder to Don, who thought of coal as the product of mountains whose lower strata had been forced up by excessive lava steam at great depth.

And the youngsters brought these blooms to the classroom to mingle their faint odors with the heavy fetidness that decreased little in this promise of spring--spring that renewed light assurance for Don. Groping his way to understanding was less the blind fumbling in physical and mental fog. Here was something of light transcendence.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Spring meant promise---promise of change.

Soon the classroom would be behind him--and--would he seek another school? And with spring came the fever of unrest that was indecision--and expectation. Don had learned that this was torture to him, but he had not conquered its recurrence. Classroom became dull bread, and each new effort was further vagary, a cheating the soul of light. Cheating because it was aimless and the end was indefinable. There were various means, but the post--twenty--nine was question mark with the coil and hiss of a snake. The end that satisfies the means had taken a vacation--and no one knew where.

Don's concern was not the immediate only. Here were the raw materials, and so far very material, as nearly as he could discern--but where were these materials to be sent? Where there had been prodigal waste in times of cheap money, waste of body and soul as well as of the monuments to man's achievements, now there was waste of the driftwood left upon the dry beaches of the turbulence that had been. Here were souls in a desert without a leader. These youngsters in Don's classroom might not yet be lost, but it seemed to Don that he was offering nothing that could prevent the losing. Losing the light conviction of an assured part in a cosmic scheme.

These youngsters were of a generation that succeeded the foreign immigrants entering a land of promise. To them the promise would soon be tarnish. Their stolid parents were too much driven to see or care much.

Don feared that he too might some day lose the right to care. His slight hope lay in the youth who filled his classroom with more than sweat and garlic stench. A growing mind separated from active stimulation requires feeding that it may not become lethargic, Don knew.

But nights brought a nearer fever than this to Don. His failure to his charges lost weight in the darkness of failure in himself, for he sought to hold by the ties that ran light rays from him--in trust to overpower those others whose affection he sought and needed.

The unsatisfactory letters he still exchanged brought out consolidated truths that had not been formulated when Don could make his physical presence a threat. Nights of sleepless blackness brought these truths. He read the lines seared in his mind by Tim's letters: "You not only wish to draw me to you in tender solicitude, but you wish to bind me there--helpless--made to act as you act--to think as you think--to see as you see. You wish to make all the fine you contact in those you care for your light and your right. Your individualism is a replete Donism that is vulture in its nature of absorption. You would leave me no soul of my own." And Don knew much of this was true. His was a dominant nature, growing.

He lay in the night in sensate swelling waves of counter resentment and self-abuse. For all his yearning love for discerning interlocking of mind, soul, and body comprehension he defeated his motive by confusing the end to the ones he sought. He had no way of interpreting his full intention, and fell back upon accusing himself. Don said, "I am utterly selfish." His aching dry eyes closed in racked sleep at dawn when his body no longer resisted the opiate rest that is not rest but a dream torture. Don tried to refute by a "This is a dream, and I can wake to grin at it--something I cannot remember." But he did remember the nerve torture, the spirit unrest, that made his reactions to stimuli hazy as if the nerve ends had been teased out of contact and distress signals were the response of each stimulus.

The drive of this torment Don sought to appease in new effort.

The natural effort was that of seeking new pastures. And Don wondered that people could tell what was gambling and what was not. There had been the gamble with nature's rabid forces on the windswept plain. There was this gamble of selling oneself--and the blasting of the old theory that each man had a price. Of course there was a price: that of food for the belly and clothes for the body. He looked at cars and other evidence of cash lurking somewhere and said, "And what would you do if your total asset were yourself?" He had an answer once: "Try it on the dog." And this answer came from one who knew nothing of the ways of school, the higher education. It sufficed--for the purpose.

Try it on the dog. Don did. That is what he realized he'd been trying for some time. The stakes were high, the winnings commensurately low. But Don never thought of playing another game. In the matter of worldly advancement he was stupid--rather he gave no credence to the manner of winning, but must leave all to the darting pendulum of chance. And he sincerely tried to leave matters so for he had learned that in all things he sought too much. When he could be indifferent he could win.

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Don returned to his home, the slim peak of house that was now the weathered gray of the prairies. But the hill and the stretch of tree-ragged creek were much the same. He lent his body to the lapping waters of this creek and again joyed in buoyance and the egress of warm wet loam-filtered waters that soothed tensed nerve ends to normal contact. This soothing made the gamble a mere nothingness to the winds of chance that regulated living from the sun-baked, wind-strawn loam.

When Don thought of Jack, it was with a warm pain that brought light shot red. Jack had carried him on wild rides even in winter when the treachery of

ice everywhere was so great as to deaden one's sense of the stinging wind. Don had never been able to hold Jack when he tore into the wind, and if snow flakes pelted his ears, Jack could not control himself. Then a race was on that became a blinding light streak shot into the wind. Shot until there seemed no ice-slick ground, no Jack, no Don--only the projectile split of air, that made body, clothes, and all one in a blood-chilled sear of flight.

But Jack was gone. Don's mother had written of his death on the snow-covered plain where he had been too old, too weak, to break a thaw-hardened snow crust to the stray grass blades beneath. It was with a tense dry throat that Don thought of Jack. He'd been pulled from Jack's back once by a stubborn slow-footed mare he was leading who wouldn't follow Jack into the creek water. He had stumbled on the slick rocks and fallen in the water beneath Jack, who also had trouble to keep his footing. When his hoofs had struck upon Don's thin thighs, he had jumped lightly, bearing his weight on hindlegs and never more than touching Don. Intelligence is much more than human, Don thought as he saw again the dark eyes of the pony that had been with the family since Don and Darcy could remember.

Don thought such associations had made his days simple.

Now, that the time might be more than frustration and also a relaxation, Don painted the slim peak of house its original gray. And this he did under the sun's deliberate rays which, reflected from the fresh painted, weathered pine, gave off a concentrate of heat and burned with an all-consuming intensity. Nauseated from the paint fumes, and sweating from the heat, Don felt as a plastic something at the mercy of the sun. It was a plasticity which, once the blood had warmed to heat beyond the normal body temperature, swelled the veins until flesh was as one with atmosphere. The near lack of feeling compared to that of swimming when the relaxed body was flaccid in warm water. Now the

flaccidity was both without and within. It was like the steaming mass of a vegetable stew where no vegetable longer retains its identity. Don enjoyed this over-heated condition. That sleep--or that wakefulness--jangling nerve ends which are halucination--had made Don's hands to cover his whole body with a sentience that held him prone. Now his whole physical and mental being was a plastic blend in the power of sentience that to Don became an ascendance of spirit. Only the press of his feet on the ladder rung made him feel. But, when under eaves that required the tipping back of his head so the wet brush might be slathered along pine cornice board, the tearing of muscle and tendon was of the flesh. The galvanized tub Don had lain in when Darcy sat on his neck was real again while Don painted under the eaves. It was real for long after.

As Don slathered wet paint brush to crumbly fibered pine boards, his father handed him a card. This time Don was to teach in a mountainous section.

Again, he was to attempt the mass transfusion of light--the untangling, yet meshing, of his light rays that was his chief means of contact. The symbol was necessity to his grasp of his problem.

He bathed in the creek. The water cool and sensate, as it brought normal heat to the plastic flesh. It is in recurrent contact with natural forces that one senses the why of sublimation.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Again Don's mind was to take a course of action. While bathing in the creek he had met a tourist who wished someone to share expenses with him on a trip--a ramble that might lead one way or another. Here was a gamble in which no end was as positive as the gamble for a job. A coin was flipped.

And the lead slipped past. But Don hadn't thought of its slipping so fast. The city did not appeal to him. Beneath his window a streetcar motor roared constantly. At each car's passing the clatter was deadening. The air was so humid that Don was constantly aware of it. He sought the dry of the clear sun-filled desert air his lungs had always known.

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And then Don flipped another coin. The ocean air was not humid. That he should be taking a sea trip had been far from any thought of his. But he found that this was much as he wished it. Here one met people. Don saw an Indian woman whose acquaintance he made but soon learned that she had no wish to be known for her blood. When he told others of his ship-board acquaintance that the woman was an Indian he sensed that she knew what he had said and her glance thereafter was more than forbidding.

The Indians Don knew were proud of their blood. He had no thought of their being other than proud of untarnished blood.

There were the "elite" aboard. Some of them interested Don. The woman who was in charge of the music in one of the nation's largest city's public school systems amused him. But not as "elite". She was very real, a short, solid two-hundred-pounds real. Her hair was mussily pugged. She wore very old round Venetian lace collars. Don thought of his mother's neat tailored, if worn, appearance. There had not been much chance for fat to gather round his mother's frail bones.

Don wrote his mother of these people. Of looking out the round port-hole window of his narrow stateroom to the water lapping against it. To the landlubber these ocean sights and sensations were wonder. The roll and rise of the deck was a joy to Don. He trod the deck with an easy stride that knew the rise and list as skin to the roll of windswept prairie. The wind here had no great humidity and often the sweep was as one with that of the prairie. The water was green and ruffled in great waves that seemed merely to lap against the steamer's black iron stretch.

And there were porpoises---flying fish had been seen near land; there were always birds. The small birds that were wonder to Don. How had they come here, and where did they ever rest? Then, when on the weather deck floor, Don had seen the manure sprinkled canvas. But there were never any birds about anything, night or day, when passengers were on the weather deck.

The passengers made a home of this boat. The public school music instructor had been around the world many times. She read her memoirs of her trip down the Nile, when she had lost her bag and all her clothing, for she was a practiced light traveller. "But how did you manage?" Don asked as he eyed her rotund short figure. "Well, there was another lady---about my size on the ship," she smiled. Don found her memoirs most amusing. Apparently she had not had, or had not been able to record, a thought that would lead one to believe she'd experienced an unbedesker emotion.

But the "littler" lady was not as much the helve as she wrote. Her travelling companion was a psychiatrist. A most masculine flat-shoed and lean-flanked pedestrian looking woman of great Lachrymose mental extremity, the length of which suggested character. Don was most impressed with the eagle-pierces of her gaze from beneath gray shaggy eyebrows, high narrow brow, and iron gray mop-sawtooth hair of a mannish cut. The Doctor's Lachrymose

nose was a snorter, and her chief inspiration seemed to be the music director's reading of her memoirs for when there was a reading the Doctor snorted her flat heels to a distant chair. The dumpy "little" reader lifted her chin from its Venetian lace rest: "Oh," she smiled, "the Doctor and I have lived together for years."

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Coming into port was experience--particularly through the Golden Gate, past Alcatraz--a granite red pile that showed no shade of difference of rock and building, but seemed rather to be carved out of the worn redish rock pile so centered just within the gateway to the great San Francisco Bay. Citizens of the city stood with the crowd at the foredeck to explain each checkered high or low--the shafts, and flats of roof that were character to the place. Yet there were hushed voices, or none, as the shore line approached. The impression of an impending something that would break the completeness of the home at sea.

It was Chinatown that held Don's interest--the people--particularly youngsters who jabbered in many tongues--who were so different in skin hue, with kinky dark heads of hair next fair ones, and then dark straight-haired heads. The semitic thin legs and arms, high cheek bones, flat cheeks, and haunting dark eyes. The round-faced almond-eyed, and yellow skinned youngsters of those from whom the section had its name. And it was the haunting eyes of the thin-faced that held Don.

Fat short women complacently walked these streets--flat-footed--not at all on the dainty torture-bound feet of traditional Chinese women. Dark elad women whose features were much those of Indians except for their olive-smooth texture and their easy manner of breeding. Their shining black hair was smoothed back to flatly rounded pugs which were almost hidden beneath ornate

combs in black lacquer that blanded with the hair gloss.

And Don wondered at the stories he had heard and read of Chinese opium addicts. A girl on the boat had told him she had lived among these people all her life, and had learned--once--that there was another Chinatown: one of which she had little accurate remembrance for she'd been frightened. "I tell you there is a Chinatown down under the ground, below sea level." She had said it calmly, convincingly.

And the beautiful shops were the ones Don found of interest. There young men, who were most courteous, asked your pleasure with no show of salesmanship. They drew forth articles as if it were their pleasure that you see. And Don sought the jewelry shops--the stones. He caught their glint in display windows and was lost. Slabs of almost foot length, and six inches wide, were uncut but polished living reflectors of the haunting eyes--the composure--all but the ugly hidden stories. Lapis lazuli--aquamarine--these held Don because of their imprisoned light--the stories never told. Don said of these stones, "They are the stuff from which souls are melted, that they may endure forever."

And guides who looked like salt of the dead sea rasped their wares--the hidden secret depths--the temples--the Chinatown of print repute. A San Franciscan said, "Better see it your own way. You can't go more wrong than these sculduggery rats would lead you if they could. They live by their lurid imaginations." And Don put one weather-yellow skinned old barker to route with a few simple direct questions. But Don wished to see as a child sees, honestly.

And the cheap, native shops in Chinatown showed discourtesy. It was young people who had the Oriental-American blend of nicety who gave and required respect. A perfected East meets West. No wonder these young people

loved to show the stones that told of souls. It is this crystal-liquid story of souls that I would live, Don thought.

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Bandolwood and teakwood---curved and ornate---were manscattered to Don while the great slabs of lapislazuli and aquamarine, polished as they were---seemed to him untouchable, and in their concentrate of sky and sea Don found the meeting of things he had known, of prairie sky that he thought carried the sea---on promise of the winds---to the prairie. Here it all was in concentrate.

"The stuff from which the souls of men are melted."

And the light of these stones was as the light of Don's experience.

There is solace in the substance that sublimates the symbol.

Coming out from the harbor, amidst fast settling white of ferry boats that seemed far below, was a high swinging stride against storm-tongued incoming tides. The rise was hard to bear against, but Don sought it and refused the request of a fascinating movie person in dark glasses---to come below to his stateroom. He joyed in the flame touch of a rough-sold wind that howled around the deck and billowed the canvases of the fore deck until Don must edge his way past the belly of this swell in the grip of a gale that tore his clothes tight to the skin until they were as nothing, and spirit's played in the wind---ever lifting wings against the wind in rhythm with the rise and swell of ocean that the boat strode like a great rocking horse.

That the movie person was a fraud, or wished to be, was evident. He wore dark lenses of a size that shaded his face beyond easy recognition. He kept apart, and yet he sought Don and spoke with him freely. He spoke of the ways of stage people---always of himself as less than a hit player, and now he sought a part in a picture to be made by Pola Negri, who was to attempt a comeback to screenland. He said he had known the star and was depending

upon her kindness for a part, but Don wondered that he always wore the dark glasses. He looked upon Don in sudden surprise when he learned that he had danced on deck, and it was a rolling deck. But Don knew the surprise was that he had been among these shipboard people--that he wished to be.

Yet this actor person sought Don.

And Don sought the joyance of sea air and sun for now sun was substance of such weight that Don felt its depth. Stars of phosphorescent light winked constantly upon the underlap of each wave erect until walked away in spray. There was an exuberance that gave off a light of its own--a star light that winked at the sun. A gently weaving surface of star-lit opaque green floored the blue bowl of cloudless sky in which a ball of sun was the only mark. This sun did not burn; it could burn if taken in too great doses. To Don this was realization of friendly light of which he was part. It was the symbol of prairie land and sea unity he was learning. Warmth met warmth in kindly unity.

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The sea green was left behind. But Don stayed near enough to the beach that he bathed in these waters--and found them harsh. The tangled slimy kelp of surf waters was threatening sentience. Salt on the lips and in the eyes was not decreasing as the loam filter of slow stream waters of the plains. Yet Don often bathed in the surf.

Palm trees were shabby things. Orange groves made sun-kissed landscapes in verdant and a very especial russet mix of hue. The bright oranges bobbed in waves of rolling green.

Magnolia blooms in the fresh desert-cool evening breeze carried vulgar scent of loathsome sweet. Don thought of the delicate wild rose scent: that was refinement. Here nature was garish--but man was at fault--water came to this rich land by aqueduct from mountain glaciers.

The natural growth of the dryland here was much that of the desert plains. "Left as it was this land would look like the rolling plains," Don told these people whose pride was the vulgar over-verdant. But crazy peaks alight landscapes here. From a craggy gray cliff top a dwelling would overhang. Miles of winding trail led to these mile-high homes--and the view made one of the world's largest cities but a mass on the majestic sweep of land and water.

Once as Don sat on a park bench on the cliff above a narrow strip of beach where a great hotel-like house sprawled; print rumor had it that the library alone housed over a million dollars in jade and other bric-a-brac-- a fog wall crept upon the scene. To Don it was not fog nor mist. It was a dry shade drift. Its creeping was sudden but friendly. The feel of it was dust without substance. From the ocean had come a salt dry-swept prairie something--that spoke of the kinship of desert and sea. From the desert always came the evening cool breeze. A unity seemed evident.

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Don sought the desert. He had heard of Joshua trees. When they first bared their ghost lines of scarecrow grotesque through the night Don laughed. He was always to laugh at the desert's futile shoots that thrust stray arms to a sun-filled dome of sky. That they had first come to him in the night made them the more futile in their two or three armed travesty. Somehow Don felt sympathy for the Joshua trees. They too turned against the force of gravity to the sun. Even the most blighted of growth sought light.

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Don knew that here he rubbed shoulders with wealth, but he did not care. He saw happy old people walking miles in flappy ragged bathing suits, that made them as scarecrow as Joshua trees, to bathe in the salt, help-tangled

surf. On every other street corner was the sign board of some cult that promised the essence of life and living. People seeking to live forever in the sun.

Don saw one man who stood before a church, a typical world-over church, and cursed in long-winded steady rise and drone of word flow. No one was there but the man, no one to hear, and Don knew that he too fought the force of gravity and wished to live in the sun. The man had reason to curse a world-over church, no doubt, but Don was certain that one who cursed material things sought material things.

As he smiled at all this bosh over mediums, he remembered his father's tongue in his cheek when he had told of the Gollings, or when he had seen an ill-fitting harness.

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While the city made little realistic impression on Don, he did see the cosmopolitanism of parks that held many nationalities in post-twenty-nine inertia. Or was it? He saw many nationalities--and heard them speak as they browsed among books written in their own languages in libraries that had many language sections. He sat where he might watch the Parks, in fact, while he read Sigrid Undset.

He saw that the federal buildings here were old, and many of them more shacks. Buildings here seemed but makeshift structures. The post-twenty-nine rehabilitation had not reached this utopia famed city that was daily shipping out the homeless who sought its warmth and luxury in food abundance.

The exposition grounds were a shabby haste-born shock to native sensibility. Great studio structures spread over sections of land in hideous tar and felt paper tatters. If a motion picture industry were to be different from any other that destroyed to create, it must change its means to an end--or it must cover its tracks.

Shops were everywhere open to the streets, even barber shops. These open markets were interesting, their stacks of peas and beans perfect geometric basket-weave blocks, sometimes five foot cubes, or cones of equal diameter. The Japs and Chinks who worked in these markets must work night and day, and for small wages.

A great mass of humanity struggled in units, but not in unison. The oriental sought to undermine. The fairest of the whites from the most vigorous climates sought office. Neither knew they sought other than personal aggrandizement.

They but waste their efforts because they have never known, or have forgotten, that the assurance they seek must come of winning over self. When man learns to live with himself, he knows the right to live with, and for, others, Don thought and knew he had thought it often.

Don remembered that the Indian took everything to be his own.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

One last look at the sea.

The bus rolled over mountains by devious road that led through passes and somehow made Don forget that there was more than rolling planes.

And the next job was in a mountainous section--a low rolling of foothills that suddenly became pine clad precipitance and ragged peaks. These were no great chain but out-cropping of an unrent that had not truly reached the height of concentrated rebellion.

Don was happy among his pupils here. They were all older--he was doing work for which his schooling had helped to prepare him--the work he most liked. And youngsters responded readily to an enthusiasm that was too real to observe superficiality of accepted classroom demeanor.

And for many of these pupils each reading and discussion became a nebulous something that shaped up to focal point, and often became expression of observation based upon experience--or better yet--subconscious assimilation, realization.

"What's wrong with this? The kids said it sounds crazy."

"Let's see"--and Don read pages that stumbled in spelling, construction, but revealed the soul beneath the blue shirt, over-all and heavy boots in light ecstacy of appreciation for the calves' wobbly legs, the lambs' fleecy wool--or more often the pony's warm eyes, and his fleet joy in serving boys whose hands lingered in slow caress on sleek young hides.

"It's grand. Do more of it. We'll straighten out these awkward places. The thing is to say what you mean because you feel it--and say it so often you learn to say it well." The papers would be read in class with praise for the fellow whose paper showed a glimmer beneath and beyond the appearance of

the eld. Boys were encouraged most. Girls had a way of vying with one another--with teacher. Boys who hated English were doing things that were not English to them. They could tell how to drive a tractor and more, much more. One boy wrote of a "Night on a tractor" in a manner of reality that masters might admire. But he declared, "I hate English"--and because Don's friend. His writing exposed beauty that he knew of only as the night's work.

Literature, queerly enough, was most enjoyed for the generality rather than the specific and suggestive terms. The periods of literature were a matter of correlation with other study--biography much stressed--social significance always. The youngsters saw what the mirror reflected and spoke and wrote of it. One boy said, "These classicists said something--but the romanticists--huh!" Yet he too quoted romanticists with effect. Don still wondered if there were advantage in this attempt to stimulate appreciation from without. "Let them create their own world happily, with no added weight of the Great unrest?" Don questioned. Yet he tried to spread light--thinking its warmth as he laid it thick.

His own interest lay naturally with the romantically suggestive. He most appreciated that art which implies far more than is usually observed. And because his appreciation was growing--was yet young--his tendency to diffuse all he met with the glow was the stronger.

Shakespeare was dramatized, and of what one hated another provided enjoyment for all. All the world's a Stage contributed seven acres to each ardent imagination, postures being what the individual thought a forest might best provide for.

The best in this mutuality was the give and take. Youngsters were ever ready to give, for Don gave constantly and despite frequent nerves-wracked

all humor betrayed himself always at the mercy of their wish. They sensed Don's hovering compassionate desire as a natural impulse, and they responded. There was as much beauty as Don had yet known. Individual light rays did not tangle. The old desire to conquer was segregated in this attempt to meet so many individual needs---so many personality pulls. "You know I like you much more than I should," he often told his pupils---sometimes in the midst of an ardent lecturized bawling out. At such a time he often felt a light response that rayed back to him in an inverted arc. Don had been accustomed to sensing the light as going from him to those whom he liked. Now. . . .

Don knew that a happiness must be paid for, but he had never known a positive and active enmity. "All God's chillun got wings," he said in dreamy refutation of his own fact.

And in this unconsciousness he offered philosophy in his classroom--- offered of that in which his innate knowledge led him to accord with the masters. One of the most widely used texts, established for generations as a basic high school literature text, was almost astute in its critical analysis. Its introduction offered "Myself am Hell", and in contrast:

"Come trip it as we go

On the light fantastic toe."

This apparent triviality greatly amused Don, and he had opened his first class sessions with this paradox, giving, of course, something of the author's majestic conception---its childlikeness---yet its worth-while implications. He found it easy for youngsters to appreciate this puritanical concept---this faith in a necessity to kill much that was true to the finer sensibilities. And he found that their keenly perceptive, analytic minds cut to cores much more quickly and concisely than his own dust-feathered excrement of books in which the "great minds" had attempted to tease away their own borrowed haze from musty years. The inconsistency was the delight of the young mind as it seemed

unconsciously to have been of that other who had said, "the light fantastic too." That the less awake of the youngsters dubbed this author "the great fantastic too" only added to interest.

From "Myself am Hell" grew intonations. The inevitable question of what is sin became paramount. Don welcomed it. These youngsters were, of course, aware of a recognised sin. Don asked, "And who made a sin a sin?" He wasn't averse to defeating the humorous youngster by himself adding-- "the Chinese?" But they did take this matter seriously the question too of what is God--and especially what was before God came of these discussions.

Here Don unconsciously indulged in his weakness for absorbing others in the aura of light emanation. What he knew for wisdom he led others to know also.

"The first grew of economic necessity for definite social patterns--a home unit--a family--large--so it might be an independent unit. And around this unit--for its preservation--grew the definition of sin". Illustrations were ready in the minds of these youngsters who knew the basic rote of established social creed as they knew three meals a day and bedtime.

And Don treaded with these growing minds the establishment of a dictatorship--its various evils in barter of, or upon, human flesh, blood and spirit. A dictatorship that seemed self-imposed by a people whose vote is blind: a people who forget that human beings make promises to win self-aggrandizement and keep them only insofar as they further self-interest.

"Do you mean that we do not have any honest public-spirited citizen?" was a frequent variously voiced question.

"No. But honest people are lost in the hypocrisy that serves as the voice of a people. No more undemocratic society exists than that at Washington, D. C. Very few of our representatives are not blinded by the immediate. Terms of public office are short and are entirely dependent upon the most variable of variables, public favor. Perspective is that of the few who are lost in the great blast of petty whining that is pompously emitted in the hope that it may be mistaken for assurance.

"We must have poise before we can have perspective. America has little poise. The United States is the least poised of all nations."

"And is that why we are called a hustling nation?" was another question.

"Indeed it is. Each individual grasps madly for his own assurance. When we have that assurance--know we have a measure of it as individuals--we need not be rabidly striving to beat the Joneses.

"So you see, any dictatorship we have known is a misdirection because it in itself lacks assurance. When wealth learns that it is protected because it protects, then we may have a poised wealth. Poised dictatorship must come of wealth's consciousness of its responsibility, not only to public improvement in all its aspects of civic pride as today known, but to the general dependence upon wealth for the nation's assurance of daily comfort for each individual."

"That's a lot to expect," a bright-eyed boy was firm lipped.

"A lot to expect--but we will grow up some day, and wealth must act as the older brother."

At the time of Don's eager expression the world was ready for revolution. The United States barely escaped bloody revolution because a few of the wealthy led the wayward muddleheaded men lost in petty

back-slapping and hidebound conviction of the rightness of what has been because they had no ability to plan a way out and refused to see what was the inevitable.

Wealth was the only hand whose firm grip did not slip heartily but guided--on the part of the few whose minds led their hearts.

"It is the heart that leads the mind when self-aggrandizement is the aim," Don told these youngsters.

The mirror held up to life stimulated more readings: a what's-at-the-back-of-this-mirror attitude. Don learned with these pupils whom he felt to be fellow explorers.

And the more they seemed to verify of Don's instinctive appreciation, the more Don grew to trust his knowledge in interpretation of generalization, which pupils often found tangible, more so than the romantic and suggestive detail.

Don did not realize that his own version of the general may have been a great part of this realization. Nor did he know that here was a fertile field for the quality that Tim had especially objected to in him. Don's leadership depended upon the inversions--the introspections--that lead to light. Few were to think of him as one who definitely led.

When the further development of the social periods was mirrored, much seemed inconsistent in man's having created God in his own image. Apparently man had made him a very shoddy God.

"If man were to dictate his own behavior--as he always has--he must in consequence have a God who doesn't look well under our microscopes," Don told these youngsters. Their response was a kinship: one that Don found a very bright, but tarnished, pretty girl to have no part in. She was a thinker, but she had sat from time to time, for a period of months and had, by associations

of past generations of dictated thinking, inverted the statement every time it was made. Once again Don diagrammed man's theory of a divine being from his first idolatries through pantheism to monism--the most significant of creations being man--whose mind and soul was the light of creation.

Don's theorizing was quoted--and like all quoting was as misleading as any man's words are minus his presence. But Don was unconscious of any except his own world: as man creates God in his own image so Don became absorbed in the reflection of his own light.

That there must be the reaction did not concern him now. He had long since accepted the fact that each satisfaction had a price.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Minds highly localized feed on their own carrion.

The tiny town is absorbed by its own sense of sin all those who contact it must be absorbed therein by its self-imposed law of compensation.

Next door to the house where Don lived was the home of the town's bank president. His wife found him in the basement--what was left of him. What there was of his head lolled in faceless butchered blood-dried horror. A shotgun lay in thick blood upon the cement floor while his body sat erect in a work chair, a cleaning rod across his knees. There was only this question of a man who had lost face.

His wife fled from the town in terror.

The bank depositors lost their heads when the bank president lost face.

The bank failed then.

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Don lived in a new house that looked across treeless space toward another house at the other side of the block and facing the same direction. A church stood between and faced the house where Don lived, but it was on a large lot and did not block the view of the house across. The old couple with whom Don lived never tired of telling that while their house was being built they had been in the basement and had heard shots, the whizz from which came near. They found the rifle lead in the basement where they stood. The man in the house beyond the church had shot his wife and then himself, and he had not spared shot.

And there were other such stories.

They had their interest.

The housewife where Don lived was intent upon them. Her brother

had committed suicide. She chose to sear her husband into the belief that she too must kill herself. After she had worn a bandage about her neck for days, Don learned that she had stood in the basement slowly pressing in sawing motion at her jugular vein with a razor blade--when she heard her husband's step on the stair.

These affectations were common town gossip, but Don had so much his own interest that he found such matters inconsequential, though he lived among them as closely as any besides the participants.

One night Don was awakened by a pounding on the door next his, the door to the room of the people of the house. A strange choked voice was calling, "Father just died. Father just died."

Don did not get up.

The next morning the girl who served the meals was red-eyed, but she was as impertinent as usual.

Her father had died during the night after having been at a lodge meeting with the rest of the town.

Shortly after this reminder of death the lady of the house was missed in the deep dark before dawn. A flurry and hurry disturbed Don's night. Again he did not get up.

She was found at the edge of a reservoir where she stood fingering a crucifix at her throat. She wore a heavy bathrobe against the early morning chill. The reservoir was over a mile from town. Don did not know the way there. Those who had searched for the missing woman had found her only after daylight. When Don met the man of the house, he was openly distraught. Don asked, "But why do you feel so badly now?"

"Oh the disgrace, the disgrace," the old man groaned brokenly.

"Nonsense. This is no disgrace. It is no more than I have

often wished to do--nor more than I would do if I could not realize that someone cared that I lived.

"I know you care. Others do too. It is merely that she cannot see it." And Don said all he would ever say where saying was of no use. Yet the remarks on the street were, "So the old girl snuffed it, eh?" "Yeah. Scared out." "Yellow streak, huh?" "Boy, that's good."

Don turned to his pupils.

They were open to suggestion.

Don, too must feel the scratch of lascivious tongues. There were always those who openly inquired, "Who they gonna fire this year?" Don always shrugged in answer, or said, "I suppose I'm as good candidate for that honor as another." And he was quoted.

But these were matters--like death--never realized till curfew knells. Don knew, of course, that parched minds seek refreshment from the substance most sensually at hand. Every small community depends upon its tax-kept schools for its existence: a part of that existence must be entertainment. All men are taught their right to judge as essential to entertainment--the pleasure of living. Don was just too self-absorbed at the moment to be aware of himself as entertainer--to others than the youngsters of his classroom--and had these people not enough entertainment in their deaths, suicides, and murders?

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While he had lost much of the tranquillity of the light that was his in the force of daily routine, still he had not become absorbed. This little world of little defeats did not come within the horizon of his inner experience. Don even said, "Live and let live"--yet recalled his repugnance at the voicing of "live and learn" negligence that was so constantly on the lips of bright young people whom he knew to be caught in the stream of surface circumstance.

Such philosophy meant defeat of the inner consciousness.

There is much to be rejected in learning surface facts of existence,
he knew.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

When Don learned he was without a job, his reaction was stupefaction; he didn't realize the fuller implications of this rejection. It was merely evidence to him that he had not been doing well in his work--according to these people who believed their taxes paid the servants in their schools. This belief drove him to learn why he was not giving satisfactory service.

What he learned was interesting. It was that he did his work to the exclusion of much else that concerned many. Others rebelled at their youngsters meeting with what they considered a blasting of their time-ordered ideals. But most common of all was the attitude that Don was different. This at least Don knew only as tribute. He did not seek to be different, but he knew he must not be of this herd if he were to have any self-respect. And Don knew he was judging--that he was born to judge. Here was the problem now ever with him. What was his right?

And a young minister, whom Don disliked for his attitude of superiority, said much that was true, "You are not living for others. You are merely absorbing all that comes your way." He should know Don thought, for he had certainly voiced Don's judgment of the minister himself.

Emity became a living thing that dulled this quality that was Don's--and, he believed, his pupils. He determined to learn whether or not he had a legal right to a salary for another year. Don had so long been partially oblivious of others and their lives that he did not truly see what they now had to do with him while he did his work. When he learned that he not only had been reelected, but that the clerk's records showed that he had been reelected again at an increase in salary, he knew that he had legal claim to the job. "I have a job and intend to keep it," he said.

Then Don found that enmity is virulent and breeds revenge---yet he knew that these people, such like the mob, merely wished entertainment. Why did they leave a school if it were not to supply them amusement? Factions started true embroilment. But Don half forgot this disturbance while his work went on much as usual.

Then he learned that so much had been said concerning his dismissal that the august body termed a School Board had deemed it necessary to justify a truly illegal action. They had no statement of inefficiency, or of indifference toward work, to make---but they could always appeal to lustful imaginations, vulture-like in their prey for food.

Don was charged with immoral relations with his pupils. Don became an object of distaste: and the distaste was so real that, even though he knew he had many friends, he felt a loathing. "The opinion a man's family has of him may become his own---well---it must be true," Don told his pupils.

Again nights became dry-eyed wakefulness. Torn between the justification of himself and the necessity to be honest in his self-evaluation, he chose the side of self-justification. He knew his mother's creed of pride a something not to be cast aside, an influence of generations' standing. "This cannot be happening to me," Don cried. His bewilderment was such that of one mistaken a criminal and hounded by a lynch-mad mob.

Yet he was much too stumped by the unreality of new experience to fully realize this. "If I had read this, how dramatic it would be," Don said again and again. And light came to him in gradual strength, as---turned out of his classroom---he sought out of door intimacy to replace that which his youngsters provided only in occasional meetings now.

The strength of light warmed in the spring---another spring---and Don thought that what one is and does matters only as he gains insight,

comprehension of a scheme of things that has a purpose greater than individual distress: as great as individual hope. Only humility makes one aware of strength as a contribution--an infinitesimal necessity to wholeness--a rhythmic vibration in time.

But the light had not enduring strength--not the strength that numbs one to anguish. Sleepless nights were lurid with fact--yet Don's imagination sought self-justification. When he found a pin in his washcloth, he tried to believe that it was put there deliberately. When his desk was denounced and his waste basket emptied, he did not think. He acted. His letters--those he cherished most because they were written by friends whose greetings for answers, whose love for the light, was as sincere as his own--were burned. And because he magnified his own interests in this time when tribulation multiplied without his aggravation, the letters seemed dearer to him. Don's romantic nature was ascendant, but in no constructive sense. It was the fact that ascended, though the inherent truth of his nature belied his attempt to believe any self-justification that had no roots in the beliefs he had nourished.

As one makes trouble an end, so does he make its influence ever.... Then it is a rears, spiritual growth becomes realization of new worlds to conquer--forever, Don knew. But his inherent sense of good breeding stamped him one of those to whom shock is insignificant when balanced with the bitter berry left brewing.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

And Don was branded with the coiling snake hiss of questions--"What is this people call a Christian?" He had been among those who filled the prescription for the multitude, and never one had been above creed and the preponderant way of petty materialism.

The masters in philosophy were simple enough to satisfy--and Don asked, "If you know you know, why say it?" Language rather summed over truths, which they did say; what the Orestes and Kitty O'Learys knew without saying. But Don had spent too many tedious hours wading through the dust that rolls under the bed of the minds of the masters. Let the birds sheep truth, and babies mouth it. Instinct told man what reputed wisdom did no more than verify.

"What philosophy do I hear from those who build of eternal things--the men who have made men to fly?"

Don's black nights were but the more a tribute to truth, and he felt the furz that must be teased away to be positively eluding perception. The sentence of his hands as they grew to cover his body was a symbol; a brain fogged in maze of possibilities of truth finds expression the more difficult--the more necessary. "Man cannot live without the light of simple truth--therefore he tears at these veils of fog--to be born again." The dark of night was struggle to master the torn substance of soul that was being suffocated, and the teasing struggle of body fought the sentence of symbol hands--hands that were of material existence holding soul and mind to social patterns, carved like the God created in man's image, to justify what remained tangible when basic truths became fogged in the lint dust rolls under the bed. "A child wiggles on his belly under the bed--in a dream world truth is simple--Koi Koi this is the dream. The child knows

truth and beauty. This is the nightmare," Don's struggle lived on.

"I am but conforming to their pattern when I seek to judge," Don answered. But the sneer was assumption. He knew he did not wish to judge. He sought food for a soul sick--at the point of death--he sensed, without daring to admit it. This he did admit: "Here are dead souls. One does not judge the dead. But I do--I do. Why else do I judge the masters?" And he knew it was fear of dust-fogged truth--that meant losing true beauty--that gripped him.

And he sought one ray of light for the soul of him--sought in sun-warmed spring--whose rooting and budding was simple as the beginning of time and man--sought a rebirth in sentient torture.

This--because he knew self-loathing; knew because he had become part of the enmity and the complete absorption of vindictiveness.

"And these are the regulars--the good people," Don reminded himself. "But their longing for entertainment has become a blood lust. What is a name to them when they do not respect persons?" Still Don's faith in a fineness of human nature held a balance in his faith in his youngsters. "I will always place my faith in youth despite all its vagary," he had told his classes often--and sometimes had added, "because they are without tarnish. How can they know of the ugliness that the years must bring?" But when he said this he continued, "But have you noticed the deep-seated love of life--of youth--that old people have?" To the positive response Don asked, "And isn't that proof that truth is beauty? How else could the old be gentle--and smile?"

And it was this conviction now that made the moment's unreality lose face in the wrath of time--which bathes wounds in truth. Self-Justification must be sought, if not found, when the vindictive would conquer.

Don turned to the rolling foot hills that so unexpectedly became peaks and ragged etchings of pointed teeth. Little pines spotted these rolling slopes like laughing little gnomes. Don walked here and let the wind have its try at soothing jangled nerve ends. Once he climbed high and looked across the rolling plains that were marked here and there with home sites and grain fields. These were along the banks of little streams that were spring-fed by melting snow from the worn ravine slopes of mountain side. Don sat to rest by an old gold mine shaft, a lone hand-worked diggings of a prospector and his donkey. Here was evidence of defeat. The wind lifted damp sweated hair, and cooled blood that was hard-pumped by the climb in thinning air. Defeat was here in substance--but only in substance. "The lone prospector made history in refusing defeat," Don told the scraggled pine slope.

And down he started at a bound. The slope beneath these pines was deceitful. Of necessity he had misgaged the height and now proposed to do a switchback downward. The descent of this slope lay much in its hidden dead timber. The speed of Don's bound accelerated, and the height of logs across his path seemed insurmountable, but he leapt with dice speed over obstacles of five and seven feet diameter. This falling in gravity that required nerveless pumping of legs, flagging of arms for balance, and thought-pursed sensation in soaring was new, and--it was release. That it was winging in the grip of elemental force did not, in the fall of it, make impression.

Walls of narrowing height, rock-bars in their closeness, shut out light and breeze. There was a warm strip of air to cut--and below a trickle of water made a cool sweat trickle on the rock walls.

Then Don was suddenly wedged tight in rock crevice--the slit was so narrow now his ribs were rock-vised--breathing an inner palpitation lesser

heart beat. The moss of water trickle prevented skinning from rock edge, and Don rested in this wedge--his feet locked in the crevice far above the thin bright thread of water that barely murmured.

This wedge was to hold him long enough for his thoughts to shape. "I have bounded against men's conventional precepts and I've been caught in a rock wedge." As Don squirmed his ribs loose and caught foot and hand-hold in the moss slippery rock wall, he wanted to laugh. That he had no breath to laugh with made him wish to laugh the more. A quivering heap, he lay at the crevice edge while tears suited his lips.

The sun rays hit needle points in focus upon his limp body, and Don felt their warmth stir creative light response in him. "That fools we mortals be," he cried and, jumping to his feet, stretched his arms to the sky of light. There must be elemental release--knowledge of oneness with allness in time of too great tension.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

But for months Don was distracted. Frenzy of post-twenty-nine had swept everyone, and Don sought to keep abreast of this aimless drift of current. And expectation was misery. It had never been natural to him, and forcing himself as he did now only proved the more wearing. He knew the futility of this forcing, but despite the theory that knowing an evil uproots it, he sought to remedy what time must adjust.

He lacked neither friends nor references--nor enemies--in seeking a job, but he was bucking a situation in which few could win. "I know what winning over myself means," Don said. But he didn't win until he was whipped. Then there was nothing to try for other than that quality which is within-- when ease came because nothing truly mattered--it came because Don knew that further desperate effort was useless. He had played his last card.

Then a lethargy of peace that knew the light of wind and the egress of water was his. Hope lay dormant; and this was the general attitude. Don had been swept with a tide of human emotion. "I can say--some day--that I knew the lost soul preying of the post-twenty-nine."

Appreciation may come of arrested development.

But hope is. And Don knew that this was interlude: as all mortal life is. The dominance that was his now had to be curbed ever more severely. Any influence he now had was negative, as he saw it. Truly he walked cheerfully through days that would have been happy had there been a goal in sight. The strength of one's convictions was a thought recurrent to Don, for he had heard a rather frothy ferment of sermon on the subject once and realized that it must have come of bitter defeat--in the eyes of others.

The eyes of others.

"I don't care what anyone says of me provided I do not lose my bread and butter," Don said--and knew he didn't mean it.

Sour grapes--defense mechanisms. What a useful part they play.

The negative is necessary to the active positive, Don knew.

Don fell back upon the humorous, "When I grow up," as he looked at the dry-crisp skin of his hands. This period of arrest made him to realize years.

When the man at whose house Don had lived while working at the job which had proved too much came to see him, Don did not know that he had been found hanging by a rope about his neck from the rafters in the garage--hanging but still breathing, if unconscious.

"My wife is now in the state hospital," he said with a genuine sadness of regret.

"You did what you could," Don answered, and when the man had left he remembered his own words, "It's no more than I would do if I could not realize that someone cared." And Don knew the man had come because he too remembered, and because he knew that Don too had lost in a strange game the highly localized mind plays for its entertainment.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

When Don received a letter requesting that he make personal application, from a superintendent who had written in answer to his inquiry, some time before, that the vacancy had been filled by one of better qualifications and greater experience—he blustered in simulated anger. The earlier rejection had cut deep. He knew that his own qualification was among the best in the state. A sensitive nature, meeting rejection again and again, must develop defense and Don had sworn, "I hope I never get a job." There was such truth in the statement—a dullness was desensitizing. When demands were not made upon him he could walk in dreamy indifference of mind and body. Veil upon veil clouded the live mind in restful dormance. Don would wake from a day dream of nothing to find himself at a task that must be done again and again in monotony of reflex that may be performed while the subconscious is working. And the task would then seem as nothing of worth, a mere routine conformity that is done without question because such routines have ever been done. But, while the subconscious was active, time was as little. Eyes lost in inversion lived over past experience adon—yet made that which was not of what had been, and such a state is happiness to the idealist.

But this tearing aside of veil to force a live mind that sought seclusion was torture.

Don tore the veils. He made himself to do—but not to be.

This personal application meant an effort to call forth all hidden resources. It meant leaving a cottage of the mind, beginning to be neat and quiet, for restless, meaningless turmoil or unregulated traffic junction

where nerves rasped against one another---ends striking like snakes---and no bells rang.

But Don went---on his last crumpled bill. "It's such a senseless gamble anyhow."

He was there---and he was glad of the darkness. Waves of black night light made this less an ordeal. There was another---another who sought this job---seeking---seeking in the night. And Don knew this other so well. He knew his anger, his laughter, and his washed tears. There had been a flower basket, and anger scrawled pages burned on the stair of the drafty old dorm---a part of memories that in sublimation of subconscious became present, and light glimmer of future. No past.

There was a ride in the night---and looking back at a town that was blinking parallels of light---beauty of black night light.

A kindly old man, who was a doctor as well as a board dignitary asked, "And how does it feel to be overhauled like this, when you are your own merchandiser?"

The kindly understanding was warmth and Don knew a friend here. "I feel like a horse who is having his teeth examined," Don said---but it was just something to say.

And Don was much relieved when he could be apart from this species of entertainment at which he was no artist. His audience was too far removed. There was no symbolic foot-light to release his own surcharges of emotion. "How can I be understood---out of my saddle?"

The experience was too much forced for Don to greatly question the presence of that other---for him to renew any conscious association. This was another routine of reflex.

Now defeat was accepted because it had been expected. There was no realization of restriction toward that other whose presence but blended in shadows of circumstance. Don's inertia had not truly been pierced by this episode for his emotion still was abeyant. And expectation had long been his great dread.

Don knew that Tim had this job.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

He sank back into an existence of subconsciousness. The routine that kills time insidiously, for the mind lives under a curtain—a most welcome curtain.

But the boy who had driven Don to the town at which he had made the dream application in the bleak night light stirred this restful insouciance. He was an Indian, thin and shapely, dark of skin, of hair—with dark limpid eyes that mirrored an instinctive knowledge—a fine sensitivity. This boy was schooled—yet mystic and of Indian-staunch Catholic faith. Had it not been that here was one who had something in his faith, Don would have greatly wondered that such compliance could be in so finely attuned a nature. But there was also fear in the soul mirror of his dark eyes—fear of the incomprehensible.

But the knowing of this boy disturbed Don's seeking of tranquillity, yet it also dulled his forcing himself to immediate hope of action. Here too was one who must wait. And here was one to share in a living death—but, "Can I share this—this something that cannot be named—this living nothingness that my mind makes for me?" And he knew that the slender dark-eyed youth shared his existence beyond questioning.

But the boy could resist and he objected to that quality in Don which would absorb those whom he liked. Yet his was a speechless objection.

Don knew that he had now met with new experience. Here was a boy whom no one would ever know well.

He could lie—but his lies were those of inflection. The Indian refutes analysis, and this one resented a knowledge of his own likeness to another

whom he sensed too wise to be of any known pattern.

Though he wished to know Don, his eyes alone told of this.

Don did not wish another in this near-quiet, and quiet, cottage of his mind. "But I will have him there--I've always taken in those whom I know understand," Don sighed, "whether they will or not."

If there were resistance in him, it was his sublimation of reality in the subconscious life that was his--even with the boy.

Don smoothed the dry-crisp skin of the backs of his hands--the quirk of his right eyebrow a triangle--the tug of light tendrils was active again. But this time it was poignant acceptance.

Even in the eyes of others.

These two who lived in a dream world--oblivious.

To Don and the boy the reality of light was substance. And Don became quiet as another nature. He learned acquiescence a value. It was this dream of an influence.

"He puts me to sleep--but my mind is alive--yet restless." It was Don's first experience with the power of dark soul-expressive eyes.

And these dark soul mirrors were ever to hold for him the mystic oneness that is the elusive story of innate experience--that experience beyond which there is no ascendance because all knowledge has been tapped.

"It is a gift that is the God in man--this eye mirroring of the most bitter sage, and yet sleep serenity in effect. Strong with our plains is this inherent knowledge of allness and oneness--complete in each individual who is near the primitive and alive in truth. The philosophy of the west plus the east is in this silence of knowing. If only the world and its

external ways would but leave me alone--expect none of the material conventionalities--I might live without a weapon," Don reasoned to himself in half dream thinking.

"Certainly this dark-eyed Indian knows the mystic something, yet he wishes above all else to be left alone--alone." And Don knew that it was his duty to keep this Indian quality of aloneness which nothing really perturbed. Then he could be in rhythmic sympathy with all nature.

CHAPTER THIRTY

They rounded the hills together. The boy carried a gun--Don smiled. The eyes sought to give themselves the lie. The Indian mother, who was typical tepee born in the middle west at the season of tapping for maple sap, had told of the bird he had killed. He ran in quivering horror, with the soft-feathered warm little huddle in tender hands, to his mother. His dark eyes suffered as he cried, "Mother I didn't mean it! I didn't mean it! It just happened." She had understood and remembered. "Indians kill only from need," she told her son of a white father. "It was a mistake,"--but the boy was not comforted.

Now he carried a gun. Other men carried guns--but they shot birds, pheasant, prairie chicken, sage hen--even hawks. When Don had at first, questioned about the gun, "I'll take a pot at some gophers," the boy had said; but his eyes didn't say it.

Once his dog had been stricken, such as if he had tried to swallow something that had caught in his windpipe. Don had found the little dog with its head under a pillow of a windowseat in the sun, its torso spasmodically swelling, growling lank from the groins upward as it fought. The boy had taken his dog to the Indian doctor. Everything; scratch, ache, pain, or semblance of such; went to the doctor--not always in faith--but because the Indian has a great watch dog in Uncle Sam.

A four year old Indian tot had said in answer to Don's absent murmur, when asked why he didn't buy a car, "I'm broke," "Why don't you go to Uncle Sam?"

"Uncle Sam doesn't care about me," Don smiled.

"Oh, you he does; he takes care of everybody. Why don't you sell your land? Then you could buy a car."

"I haven't any land," and Don went automatically about another small task at which his mind might wander.

"Haven't you even got a forty?"

At Don's headshake the child's brow knitted in puzzlement while his eyes showed deepening color.

Don remembered another time when equally at wonder at the world of affairs he had asked two four year old youngsters, "What makes people happy?" The little girl snapped, her bright eyes hard, and without the necessity of humor, "Money."

That was in the days of the drafty old dorm, and Don had laughed a laugh without humor--and echoing the great strain of the need for it. He had turned to the little boy, whose brow had knit much as the little Indian's, though his eyes were not such intense darkening mirrors, "Work," he said slowly.

Don let the rug he was flapping in a breezeless hot air drag on the porch rail. "Surely not only work," he said.

"Well, work--and--play."

"What kind of play?"

Now the hard-bright chatter of the little girl who knew, distracted the tot, but he hesitated again to say, "Play--play like fishing."

"Why not football?" Don asked, for the child's father coached athletic.

"Humph!" the little fellow ran after the girl's chatter, "That's not

play. It's breaking legs and arms. I'm never gonna play football."

And Don remembered that wisdom--if it were but preserved--is reminding a little child in understanding.

And when a child, Don himself had asked as he played at some forbidden attraction, "If God sees me--he's watching all the time? Why doesn't he stop me?" But Don had said this to himself.

Now there was this Indian boy who preserved childhood's wisdom, but tried to hide it while his eyes belied his lie. He carried a gun sometimes. But Don watched his dark eyes, he knew that man, the god in himself, understands. "Were there one who truly let the god of his master--if he wished to live among us--he would have to carry a gun?" But he left this a question, for Don saw childhood's truth in creating god in man's image. He saw the forcing of man's patterns in youth that carried a gun when he could not kill if he tried.

And he did try. He tried to kill his dog. Don and the boy's mother both interfered. They knew that he would be killing too much of himself.

Later, when Don approached the back porch, the boy stepped from the door. "It's done," and Don knew--before he added, "The doctor did it." But the eyes were dark pools of quiet.

Don knew the boy knew. There was such of power of light in his dark-eyed mirrors.

And Don sought the back of the mirror as he sought to reverse all living that he knew. He had once received a very low grade for an essay in which he had expressed his imp of the perverse obsession.

Here was the boy whose Indian blood told him that he knew. And Don looked at his eyes and said, "There's the fineness of truth in him because he's so near the so-called pagan. Even though his truth is not the truth of man-made social benefit--still his truth is that which is true of the beginning of things. But now we are all middle--and there is no beginning--no end. So what he says is often a lie because it has only been his convenience to think it. When his thinking does not accord with mine, I say he lies--when I do not deduct in accordance with man's adherence to age-old inductive thought grooves, I am in discord. Humanity needs to get into reverse if it is to be able to have faith in itself. We have had enough induction. We now must deduct--because there's nothing else left to do. We cannot yet fly back to the kinship with nature when and where no expression of frustration was necessary--when no god in man's image was. But we must--we must go back. It is the law--greater than man's patterns."

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Then Don knew. He knew that his subconscious world had deserted him--he would know it now, transitorily, as he always had--but he could no longer live in it alone.

It was because of the power of dark soul-expressive eyes.

Now he must again brush at the dust rolls from pages that smothered his intuitive knowledge until he could no longer feel intensity of light. The near-neat cottage of his mind had closed its doors. He must move on restless tired feet as he brushed--brushed at elusive lint rolls to make a present and future more positive .

And with this advancement into the fields of consciousness, another

step in a path vaguely tread, grow the conviction of a recognition of all things. "I must learn to face myself and others fully. I must accept of all that is—only to relegate to consciousness what I need," Don thought—and knew that he must regain and preserve his thread of light, and it must be preserved as a clear unfaded light though it might have the force of, and be as startling as lightning.

BOOK FOUR

P A T H

Born
of disillusion
I'm glad
to walk
Alone
a path
Apart,
alien
to others.
Alone,
bereft,
illusion
steps aside
and all-wise
Orient's
disguise
of true
passion
finds expression
in simple,
guileless
frustration.
Unaffected
sublimation
tears the veil
of flesh
and lust.
Spirit rests.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

When Don received the telegram, he went--crossly rubbing listless near-sleep inertia from his eyes--to the door and barely suppressed a sudden desire to slap at the impertinent face of the grubby youngster whose hand held this summons. It was the symbol of a world of action speaking a timely urge. It was a job.

But before this call to action was to lead him among the minds of the young again, he was to tease through language lather and book dust to inner conviction of allness in fundamental truths. Again the college atmosphere absorbed his energies, sapped them.

Don sought, as he always would, the significance. "The worth of books lies in a crying voice--a voice of deep distress--in the throes of humanizing. Unless there is this voice I am but conforming to the forms cut--following the wide road. . . ."

But the great restless urge to impart was, of necessity, he now knew, to be curbed. One must live.

"But I will cut a path."

Now there were many older people in all Don's classes--people well fitted to patterns that were to be graciously accepted--but the right to judge made it necessary to know which might know a path. There were the grumpily middle-aged to whom growing old meant blind acceptance. All traces of living showed only in awkwardness of body--bulging waist lines, thickened thighs and slack-hung thinning breasts of women unrealized. Hair not only grayed; it grizzled from constant frizzing--the patterns were apparent doleful acceptance. Where was a mind?

Don found one--young--but it carried a body that years had somehow disfigured. The hands large-jointed, capable, and searching. And occasionally

Don found youth in more than the eyes of this strong figure--youth of mind uncertain--but full with its urge to learn. The wistful was not, for Mrs. Carden enjoyed what each moment brought--and sought to know what was of worth. Slowly she seemed to win. She glows with inner conviction of a right--her own, Don knew.

She had classes with Don, and did the same study from a great background of knowledge and conviction. Their discussion helped greatly to form thought funnels from chaotic language lather to tease away scholarly mannerisms and conventions to the bared bones of vital truth. When success was theirs, Don was a twanging discord of torn nerve ends. The search became his only life.

The physical was disturbance. Now that he saw these elderly bundles of inhibited mental inertia, he feared his own body. His hands had always been aware of age, but the body seemed to have grown more youthful as years rounded and added weight. But Don discovered his thinning hair in anger. All that was to be sought--all that must be carried out in this laboratory that was his body--must be found in a being as shabby as the god man had created in his own image. "I suppose body tarnish becomes as acceptable as the comfort of spectacles," Don said in wistfulness, his right eyebrow a triangle.

Mrs. Carden's truths came as a balm. "It is the mind that governs. Youth is only of mind and spirit when you know. There is a wheel of fire whose central heat lights us a path that we may live in gracious welcome of the fullness that years bring." She grew in youth. To the discerning eye age brought beauty.

There was Don's joy in dancing. He learned that his physical buoyance was too much an expression for those whose minds found their patterns a comfort--a comforting corner in which they might sit--and judge. But Don

learned a kinship with them. "They have lost in the struggle to consume all that comes their way. They still try to make others theirs in all things. So do I." He had to let it go at that. But Mrs. Garden saw fruition for him in these small recognitions of the small truths.

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There were others. Those who sought life as a mystery with the flame that is inexperience. These were as bright moths seeking light and scorching heat about a light bulb. Don remembered how the tall chimney of a wick lamp would gather moths about its flame--a bed of erisped worm-like bodies--blanketed in ash dust of their own wings.

He knew this search was his own--he with a recognized burden of body--they with natural joy in their own firm flesh. "Why must we so desire to destroy ourselves? We seek greater adventure-----", and he had to let it go at that--for them. His own conviction of a light that is individual--yet cosmic--he would not forget. "There is a reason far greater than this moment," he told young enthusiasts who gaily cried, "Tomorrow we die"--and cried it with denial in tired eyes--old eyes.

They shrugged off Don's query. "What is it to die?"

One whom Don sought because he understood, when he was out of the group and saw clearly on his own, maintained, "Rest and nothingness--the richness of earth is our cosmic contribution, so we take now this richness fed by the dead souls of men." In this one's eyes Don saw the souls of those dead of whom he spoke. He tried to tell this. What he gained was a reputation for an uneasy influence. One dark-eyed boy who had a rest-inducive influence for Don really had fear of him. "He has a knowledge of something that leads him beyond us while with us. He often knows what we do when no normal person could," another told Don the dark-eyed one had said. Don laughed, "It is he

who tells me--he has told when I'd have given plenty that he might be quiet--then he puts me to sleep."

Don knew this talk of his insight into the mind of incident to be nonsense, but he did wish to know the recesses of a subconscious that was building patterns of these young lives.

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Again the light rays of him, that had dimmed with enforced falter of his advancing mental and spiritual step, were tangled. Too many were in the line of ray. It was the same twanging discord of rasped and torn nerve torture that came of the realizing a truth by teasing away the weight of over-ripe verdance to the germ of books.

This highly chaotic existence was not for thinking and acting. It must be observed from the sidelines--or taken part in--one or the other.

Yet Don sought to observe these young people and be among them too. Mrs. Carden knew this struggle. "Don't let all this confuse you. It's the same process of brushing away the inconsequential to find the significant elements that is in books. Only he succeeds who is calm," she warned.

Don could have been more nearly calm but for one--one who did understand when not of the crowd. One whom Don knew was yet to live significantly, yet who lived now as if he must tear away from earth what it yielded of the dead souls of men.

To these young people who lived in the moment--they maintained--Don said, "This is the vulgar over-American you accept--while you think you are too-too wise. Decadence is knowledge of one's living always--always having been and ever to be--and not as earth, but as something that hovers above it in spirit. This over-vulgarity of seed and growth is but socially fostered to preserve the most unnecessary of living. And were there never another

human being born the world would be rich in this hovering. That would be true decadence—a hovering of souls over an earth that—along—free from man's physical action—became an animal paradise."

"You and your sublimations," they laughed in near-sympathetic understanding.

"Yet there is this which we all may take of—were we willing to shake the substantial idea that we and our contribution to a material moment are important."

And to these minds who must sink their teeth into substance this brought a question—"And what is suicide?"

The old 'escape' answer was too easy. But Don had another; "It's just a job."

There was much of post-twenty-nine in this, to the material mind. But it did not accord with the theory that took what life offered now as the only price and reward.

And they did not believe their theory—old as time it was they knew; so was Don's, but his had been overlooked among a thoughtless people who fitted grooved patterns and chose to label all things that might awaken dormant brain cells as 'not nice.'

Don said to these young people who wished to experience a fullness of being, "Until you can take of a richness of experience all there is—all there is—and not until then—and welcome it—then you can sublimate. When all that has come to you has its beautiful aspects, then you too can be beautiful—even in old age and decay, for you can smile and look upon the young as of even for the great adventure—in kinship—because you know yours is theirs—that you are to open other doors that lead out from the rooms your minds have cluttered.

But—you will take much of what has been with you. You will take what has been your chief satisfaction from the rooms you've been filling. And you will

have a chair, a comfy nook--each of you, in one of my rooms. Why I have one in one of yours? A chair where I can sit and be myself--east aside all bonds of everyday social contacts in a world of the acceptably social and be my own perverse--yet engagingly real self?"

He had struck a chord--responsive.

For this moment Don knew that belief makes truth. For the man who believed he could walk upon water and the man who believed he could fly there was a common answer--belief--belief made them the same.

"Am I the little evangelist?" But the grins that answered were not so hearty as Don's own. They were wistful.

Don cherished this moment as a revelation of his truth--to these most sentimental of arbiters who so pathetically--seriously fought the illness that Don knew.

Of chronic association with spirit value there must be born an enduring knowledge of illness for all.

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Don had been in this atmosphere of dust excrement from books and the foul frustration of minds incapable of realization sufficiently that he qualified in training for one of the best teaching jobs in the state. As he had once sought to retain his right to a legally binding contract--broken by the school board--he now determined to win a superior job, as jobs in his line were known.

"I know I'm far more a teacher at heart than many of those who hold jobs with good salaries--considering the underpaid status of the so-called teaching profession. My appeal to my pupils has been strong. The result has been good. I've been a hard worker--although much of my work might have been better directed. So it is with anyone."

But he was to learn that a sturdy flanked front opposed him. While others of such less qualification, and experience, got jobs such as he sought, he still sought.

"This opposition is more formidable than that I met from those who would have proved me immoral," he told Sid.

Determined, Don sought to learn the why of this refusal.

"Why am I turned down again and again when girls who smile sweetly are hired?" he asked the head of the placement bureau at this factory of educational frustration.

There was evasion from this one who sought to preserve his own position of popularity--yet to satisfy those whom he considered underlings as well, since they were great in number.

But one day Don was too tired to accept further evasion.

He deliberately goaded the man: "What is wrong with this institution that it disqualifies one for a good job?" he asked. "Why must teachers from out of the state be hired in preference to your graduates?"

The answer was circuitous: "Let me tell you something about myself," he spoke as if to be deferential.

"I can endure much," Don answered for he knew there was reason for his own irritation.

Then he listened to a braggart's tale much like that of the small town bully--one that carried him back to a lane behind the old government doctor's barn next the school yard when he and Darcy had run the gamut of abuse that the newcomer among school youngsters must take until he has been thoroughly anatomized by his fellows. It isn't much difference that the years make, Don thought. He'd often been new on the job.

And here was a Doctor of Education telling him a silly braggart's tale.

Don's imp of the perverse served him too well. Having listened

impatiently, Don told another tale and increased its magnitude of valor many fold. Of course he was himself the hero of the tale, but he knew this man lost the point because subtlety--even as pointed as this--was beyond his self-absorption.

The reason for evasion was disclosed.

"At least three men have been in my office in the last ten days who have refused to consider you for a job."

"Why?" Don asked.

"May I tell you something without creating hard feelings?"

"Tell me--let it create what it will," Don was goading seriously.

"They say you are effeminate."

"Anyone who teaches school--pants or no pants--is an old maid," Don answered--as he had so often told his pupils. They had never failed to respond, not always gleefully.

But the material mind does not enjoy attack upon its smugness: the conventional male mind cannot suffer mockery when its very superiority is attacked, least of all when it is attacked by another male.

There was no understanding here. "You are what you are--I am what I am. What of it?" Don queried.

He knew that this was just an excuse that had been used in response to his ungracious insistence. Too much had been his knowledge from experience to accept a childish attempt to attack his vulnerability as a reason for a failure at placement.

"I have placed myself when I made personal application. All that any employment agency has done for me is to mail my references. I have often informed an agency of vacancy that had not yet been officially reported, asking them to mail my papers to the superintendent or board. I have applied for

jobs with the most unimaginatively smug conventionalists among board members, and have worked for them and their communities. Indeed this is a pretext used to promote failure on the part of a Doctor who has no faith in one whom he does not understand," Don told Sid who listened only half-heartedly. Sid was too much concerned with his own problems to offer positive communion. Yet he too knew the smug defeatism of a west that rejected the sensitive nature.

There was a spirit association that meant release in this harangue to Sid, who need not speak a living spirit communion.

There was no help to be expected here. Don must go on alone.

"Why do I torment myself with this? It is independence that I must have. I come from a long line of tillers of the soil--of their own soil: there is no independence stronger than that nurtured by the soil: Effeminate--effeminate as mother earth," and Don laughed wryly when articulation was commencing with himself, as it ever was to him.

The chief solace came of his scribbling. The release of formed action was very real to Don: that this was very bad verse was not his concern now.

I'll Lead Myself to Water

I will give in service
 the best that man has:
 I will serve the public
 in its schools or wars.
 But I will not say again
 "Will you please consider me?"
 though I know you need a man
 I'd rather fell life's limp tree
 Than ever go again,
 stand before another

man, jaws shut like a clam's,
 as rapine glance quavers
 Past me to the new wonder
 of a girl's sheen sheathed slender
 leg and thigh, lingers round her
 hips where her girdle holds her
 treasure (just as in Herrick's time)
 and the breast with grace of line
 quivers: making rat eyes blind--
to me.

Out from this quandary of books and of bother, of those who tore at
 the tendrils of his sorely sensitive convictions--as all growing convictions
 must be, Don walked with Sid. He could and did understand--as Don knew when
 alone with him.

Together Sid and he sought assurance, and again Don knew resistance to
 his will to dominate, to absorb, and to lead. He knew this a blind emotion
 that had no quality of true compassion. It was selfishness. To this Don sub-
 mitted. No matter if the standards of judgment were those of others' patterns
 --still he knew this driving force he wished to conquer as selfish. Yet he
 would give....

And he wished to give in no sense of condonement--his giving he knew to
 be purely the instinct to sacrifice. But he did not see his sacrifice as an
 offering--a payment.

"I must sacrifice of the powers because I am of them. When each of us
 realizes that, terminology will not be necessary." And terms had grown ugly

to Don, particularly in the harsh light of these young people's reasoning, and his too recent awakening from the neat, quiet cottage of subconsciousness from which awakening had been too casual.

It was a resentment, but it was enduring. Like all of his being Don knew it must be kept in reserve. He would learn to live among accepted patterns and yet follow his own path.

Into their own Don and Sid walked, and Don knew now that here was but fleeting assurance that could carry flesh and blood warmth, yet he knew Sid was one who could preserve mental and spiritual warmth. That was what mattered.

Sid talked the doctrine of patterns--and talked it sincerely. He had his own planned in advance of the years--with an unusually reasonable allowance for unaccountables. At least Sid would not teach long. Don was amused at this--yet reassured. Sid helped one to realize a strength reserve--both physical and spiritual--a take it and leave it strength.

Here was comfort too of no talk, of a mutual communion in nothingness, a place and a being where terms were not. Words, even, did not matter. There was the sense of being in touch of hands, and whole flood of life that swam in growing assurance of light--at the enveloping warmth of arms. A nearness to that which is beyond bodies and swine into a consciousness of past-present-futureness. Being always. But to Sid Don knew that this was not the fruition that it was to him: it was the present, and Sid wanted something of it to keep, "That someone may always understand," he said.

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Don watched for Sid among the many tall and lithe of limb--often as they stalked alone--a slight slump in shoulders, arms hanging to a long sweep-swing, and legs a flow of symphonic movement. Always he was troubled when he watched for there had been this confusion of rays that became anguish when crossed.

Now the fusion seemed to have centered everywhere--nowhere--"Persons may be losing identity," Don thought. "At any rate Sid looks like them all to me, until I have his eyes." This troubled him greatly. The longing to know each apart, and now to have found that bodies seemed so alike--there was no real differentiation. So may the allness be a oneness.

"It is another part of sublimation," Don told himself as he lay in dream-filtered night, his hands covering his body in growing sweep of sentience--the hands that spoke of dry-crisp age, body that could grasp a soul. Don had learned that bodies are not assurance--and souls must have a way. "They don't stay in boxes. They must have a path--and, I believe, they have to go alone--really untouched, for they'll still be seeking." He was stopped again by terms.

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The dark-haired girl who truly was different--dressed her dark hair and her body differently--was matter-of-fact, honest--often rather terrifying--asked, "Why isn't a spade a spade?"

There would be language lather in the answer. But surely anyone could see a spade helped build, or unbuild lives and lasting somethings.

"A spade digs a grave," Don told her.

"Don't we all?"

"Yes," Don told her, "That's why terms are so unsatisfactory. You are a spade. I am a spade. What is there in calling a spade a spade?"

"Or a soul a soul," she answered.

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Much as there was of distinction in Sid for Don, he could not tell him from another of his height--at any appreciable distance that made individual features uncertain. There was much in this Don didn't know yet.

There is much to be let alone in life. And much of this is knowing others. Don knew now that he had known others too well: Tim and--maybe-- the Indian boy of dark and soulful eyes. But Sid he would not know fully. Sid resented his knowing--in a way--yet wished also to be known as the beam light out of dark--but there was his likeness to so much and so many. He was even like Don's brother, Darcy, in a vague way that was a stoop of shoulders and lean-like lankness. He was more honest than Darcy could ever be for Darcy had sought so earnestly when a small boy to be what a man was-- what was the pattern of all men.

And Sid wished only to conform externally that there might be comfort. The soul of him was to go on its own adventures. He was so like all others in appearance and yet had such a magnet of light for Don: the incomprehensible power to draw that was not to be understood because he so very like them all. And this power of his was of the flesh too: his slim deftness in movement, lean flatness of thigh, and hard strength of lean arm that could send surging blood and nerve assurance of light through and beyond Don into that something of all and ever.

"Am I beginning to see more clearly, or is it that the difference has been--and now I'm changing?" Sid couldn't answer for he did not wish to show how much he knew. He did not wish to be too well known.

Don thought of Mrs. Gorden's belief in fruition in a recognition of the small truths.

He knew that this kinship for Sid was flesh, blood, and spirit craving-- partial satisfaction--one in which hands could cling together in assurance, but yet one in which the greater significance, as of a single hair was lost. And Sid physically seemed like all those whom he saw, and had seen, ever since he could remember.

"But there must be this difference in spirit--this individual and especial comprehension. There must be--or there couldn't be an especial right". . . .

And all this was as nothing when Don was with Sid. Then there was a very especial something. That each is all and all is each is the story of man.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

And the Puritan is us---just another long accepted form of perversion. "America", Don laughed. "It was founded on an urge for release of libido. America, whose virgin New England became a cesspool of the European strangle knots of inhibition, has established a vast of wide open spaces where people are all that they ever were. There the indecency of forbidding fruits is the greatest virtue. Here knowledge is proscribed in anti-doses. To say what you know---when you know---is suicide for the body. Not to say is suicide for the soul---to many. I'm going to save my soul. I'll save it in spite of the Puritan, the west, and virtue." But he knew he would talk his path alone. Sid talked of fear. "I'm conquering it now." But what he had feared was the very backbone of the social order.

"What you fear is what you must forget---must taboo---unless you want to take the yoke of all mankind."

Don chose to walk alone now. He knew that many believed as he did, but knew that they crept in fear. He had joyed in the fierce fight with nature at her wildest when wind and hail were the gunfire. Now he'd joy in the battle with himself---nature again---and he would find this joy in battling against the inhibited nature that was his own.

"I have learned that others must be graciously accepted---patterns and all, but I can be another. I can hew a path. And I will serve---and in the schools. I shall be in the very heart of the local-social west---but I will be one who knows."

"And what of all that you have learned?" Sid asked. "That of the knowledge that is becoming a further means of persecution in the hands of the 'God-fearing' wise men?"

"Knowledge is not to be an interference. Despite the fact that our wise men say that "every state, whatever its form, will educate its citizens in its own image." When you know that you know, why say it? It is to be my job to help others to learn--but everyone makes of what he learns what he pleases. I will not consciously interfere."

"What is your own explanation of sin?" Sid, who preached an anti-God doctrine, wanted to know. But he knew. The asking was formality of defense.

"In the light of his own nature, experience, and encumbering knowledge man must hew his own conscience--a path--from which to stray is sin."

"You believe in God." Sid made it an almost terrible accusation. He seemed very young to Don.

"I believe in the divine in all that is part of the scheme of things. Man is the nearest the power beyond all that is--he is possessed of God. God is man--vice versa. But what does it matter? Man has said these simple things since he formed a means of communication with his fellows. When you know you know, why bother?"

"And what is decency?" Sid was reviewing Don's analogy as a ceremonial--and he sought a bravado in defense of his own narrowed preference.

"To be decent, if we must suffer an abomination of terms, is to accept of the beauty in all truth--and to live in honest accordance with one's own nature."

The game had been fun and an exhilaration in that Don had had another chance to say what he maintained needn't be said. But the maintenance was evidence of his own respect, forced though it might be, for an established social doctrine--basis of an order that robust America must endure.

"When will an essence of the spiritual ever be genuine to people here?" Don asked--and knew nausea for the rolling gray of wind-swept plains--apart

from books, futile theorists, and all that was nonsense. But all that was of the elements might tear at him, and--in the wakeful dreams of night--did.

Analysing oneself brings the cry for mothering from the innermost self. Don sought rough tenderness of wind and dust. Here was a mother who would justify the defense in one. His hands grew in sentience and held his body apart, but in his half sleep of dream the soul crept out and played in the wind, and he felt a breeze lift his hair, sigh as it nestled in the lobe of his ear--and sleeping--forgot the soul of him that vagrantly played in the wind.

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With Mrs. Gorden Don agreed somewhat. At least the path one chose was destiny, both foreordained in the nature of the individual and developed by the will to be. "Man makes his fate in his first steps here, as he walks into the infinite. There must be terms if one is to speak--but the lines of definition are hazy. We do become a part of all we meet--and we progress as this has value for us. To put it briefly: the man about town is his own ideal and so he becomes in the all enduring--almost static. It is the static we must here avoid that we may progress eternally. "The God in man is without compass," Don told these young people who assumed that brittle attitude of the glass that is shattering.

"Time is always--and man becomes a part of all he meets--is one with time in spirit. What his belief is he is. The politician is ever politician, and--if he has an ideal--may ever work toward it."

"And what of the bridge expert?" asked the girl who dressed her hair differently.

"If the next most intricate play is his aim, and that is all, he will no doubt be ever working out intricacies of the game."

"And aren't we all?" she countered.

"Even as you and I," Don smiled.

There is always test for the inquesting mind.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

The job took Don back to his pupils, but this time to the high hills--to the mountains that reared snow-capped heads in a white insistence. And this insistence took food from the air. Energy must be supplied from without for the body requires oxygen. Don learned that he required it in great quantity. Palpitation was necessity to pump blood. And always there was a teased physical wistfulness. The body seemed not to be fed--to be offered promise after promise and never to realize fulfillment.

There were week-ends in the mountains, trips in exploration of canyons wild in appearance as they were in the days when known men first looked upon them. And to Don these were experiences. But always there was a negative pull. The mystery of the plains was part of him, but here he was a stranger and found himself surprisingly unmoved. Once in heights that from distant view were majestic the folded ridges were still a taunt to man's achievement--but they were closed. There was the rejection of closed doors in the silent blankness of constant columned, sometimes fluted, endless rock. There was the insistence of the not to be sought in the enduring sweep of old and weathered pine. No individual tree was.

The forces of nature in alliance are forbidding. One man may be a friend. One tree is great comfort. The universe is far too great for comprehension. The whole of pine-clad majesty is not inviting. It was not to Don.

But one experience became a dream consciousness. Don had tumbled from the party with which he had come down a canyon to get the feel of descending through clouds. He had been above them to look upon a rolling ocean that left him on top of a lost world. It was a surprise to find that he came through that cloud cover without knowing it--that the sun shone on him and on all he saw--until he reached the depth of the canyon where it was necessary to keep

to the side opposite the sun's rays if he wished to be in the warmth of light. To observe a pine cone or a fallen log seemed impossible here since all was a bed of ages of pine needles thickly reinforced with cones which formed a cobbled surface for the older rotted bed of cones surfaced with still glossy pine needles.

Here in the depths of this canyon he came upon a beaten trail, little used, but still a trail. Shortly a man appeared. This seemed a strange man, for he looked like any other---yet to Don this was a new world where all ought to be different.

The man had a fish basket and looked pleased at sight of another human being.

"Any fish?"

He opened the lid of the basket to display the silver of trout, small but the way trout fanciers like them. "Any wild game in these hills?" Don asked.

"I just stepped on a log to cross the creek back there and looked into the eyes of a black bear whose paws were on the other end of the log," he grinned.

"What did you do?"

"I lost no time getting up that bank." His laugh shook, but he evidently enjoyed this chance to talk and laugh at himself.

"You're not used to this," Don motioned to the immensity.

"Nope; I'm on my vacation."

Together they walked on. The creek soon grew upon them as an orchestral accompaniment to the greater, yet smaller, organ of wind in pines.

Signs of habitation---or at least of a homestead were in flashes of white as of clothes on a line that came and went down the vistas of tree trunks that were less like a solid stockade now.

Then Don saw the full billow of an old-fashioned night gown. There were clothes on the line. Someone did live here.

"I thought I came this way," said the stranger.

A large two-story log building stood in a very slight clearing. The creek tumbled past the gate which opened immediately onto the porch. The only door beneath this lengthy porch was barred. Yet there were the clothes on the line. The air seemed faintly to smell of burning pine, but there was no smoke.

Suddenly Don called, "Anybody there?" His tenacity surprised him--it was all so like a hook.

Then--when they thought to receive no answer--a window, upstairs, was raised. A white-haired woman leaned far out and gazed pleasantly at the man below.

"Can you tell us how to get out of this canyon without climbing into the clouds?" Don laughed.

The white-haired lady smiled. When she spoke her voice was of the cultured tones of the south--the cultured tones; and the extreme, harsh nasal notes of high altitudes--of all the west--were not at all in evidence.

She did know how they'd come, how they could reach those Ten had strayed from, and how to avoid the worst of the climb in getting back.

The white hair made her a striking picture. The setting was one in a million, and she leaned far from the window, her white head against the sun--reflecting many-paned upper arch. This called attention to her tasteful dress--out of fashion, yet perfect in tone with all that was about. Don thought of the night gown full-furled against the breeze.

If callers were unusual, there was nothing in her manner to indicate it. The face beneath that white gown was serene. The eyes bright.

Don and the stranger left without talk. They were bemused and knew no

speculation that could answer plausibly.

So this was the primer. Don knew that he was but a few hours from his classroom. Had his mind outrun him?

There were these youngsters again, these pupils who claimed so much of Don and offered their own fresh physical promise--the promise that is the most hopeful of all: youth on the great adventure.

While Don offered of the masters--and sought reactions he quietly curbed his own presumptions. "Only as we glean ideas in reaction to these here presented, from our own experience, what we feel that we have known always--do we grow toward a mental and spiritual goal," he told his classes.

There was reaction, particularly in the written word, verse bits that sang individuality, and prose that groped and exposed old truths with personal sees-ers. "Be yourself in spite of all contacts--yet make that self one others are glad to contact," he told them.

The reaction was personal. And Don found the tug and twist of emotional light tangle to be his as ever. The mood came that he expressed, "I could show an ear off." The mood was born of intensity. There is frustration in the symbol which does not permit of notion, and the consequence is a fierceness of smoldering desire--a fierceness that demands some form of action. And these youngsters knew it for a finer individual tie than they had often found. There was mutual appeal together with the accustomed stumbling atours.

They were sympathetic because Don approved their attempt at youth--a heritage they did not fully share.

But there was that other physical drug on him in these great files of mountain height that often shut out light. Never, during a whole term, did sunlight warm the glass of Don's classroom windows. The warmth that was human

was a living comfort needed.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Don made no mention of the knowledge that was growing--knowledge of a path in the west. Not in this atmosphere of no true youth. Don knew it was not the mountains that prevented a growth: it was a transplanted puritanism that held the reins. Here was another corn-fed-belt--from which one could not see out. Youngsters who sought knowledge must take what was dished out--corn on the cob--corn in the can. How was one to help these fertile minds to find even a single seed?

There was the usual horseplay of boy and girl. And this was beamed upon--a wide beam that shone red-faced above double chins--corseted bosoms of deep-bedded depths of compassion--compassion for the flesh of the bearer. "I must not judge--but if these beams don't carry the scent of lascivious leer, I don't know people," Don told his mirrored reflection--and noted that his waist line needed compassion. "It is a vicious right," he nodded as he turned for a side view, deliberately exhaling and tightening abdominal muscles.

But there was true sympathy and it flowered in the dull light of the classroom. Sunlight at a premium--too great. This is the west. "Why can't we appreciate the splendor of sunlight enough to soak in all of it we can get?" Yet Don knew he didn't seek light as he should. "All growing things should turn to the sun: I long for light and don't seek its all." And he spurred himself to make of the mind a spirit - synthetic light.

"We will have light--how many centuries hence?" The loss of those to whom he could talk was a force.

There was one whose charm led to evasions. Don soon was much in her company and there began a whole science of evasions. Yet a warmth was in this. Human companionship is essential in the gracious acceptance of what is, whether it is a west that is but a reflection of New England or whatever.

Don knew himself to be slipping into acceptance, church-mock willing to be. "I come to your young people's meeting because I wish--because I wish to be with you. It is in no way a requirement I make of myself as a duty, it's pure selfishness", Don told these over-active youngsters. And to her whose charm was evasion this was amercilage.

"One should make it a duty to these youngsters--to oneself--that one come to them as a better example," she beamed. Don looked at her cro-magnon forehead with a strong sense of repulsion. And there were times when he had to hold his own reins to get the "easy now" surface essential. He remembered his mother's sly look of bared teeth, which she gritted at once with the sly look, and said, "we all have to be hypocrites, but we don't have to preach hypocrisy." That must be remembered was that thinking about accepted patterns was sin to the weak.

And the girl of evasions was everywhere spoken of as rarely charming, sweet, and nice. She had a following of old and young. She was a force in this shut-in community that was just large enough and old enough to be positive of its righteousness in all things. "Well," Don thought, "they do have a good police system. But I shouldn't grin. Police are as essential as I-- and I'm supposed to be policing--only I don't. I'm suggesting in every thought that present thought ruts must be broken."

That he had to be careful of his attitude that he might seem ever gracious he knew. Yet there was much--too much that was galling. He sincerely wished to feel kindly toward all. But the growing conviction of the sin in ignorance that refused to accept a pattern other than generations of familiarity had made comfortable was ever with Don. He was more than between two fires for there were complications.

This one whose charm was evasion. She was of fine character. She did

think--but not as those who get beneath the root of life to learn how blood infuses being with fire.

She was a cheek to reasoning--and often a welcome one for unalloyed reasoning is the eternal merry-go-round and even makes the spirit dizzy. "Why bother about living if all has been said and done, and nothing is for the individual?" Don asked.

"Why bother at all?" she asked, and Don knew that this was what people wanted--wanted when they were corn-fed for their own slaughter: slaughter which would stop in the whetting of a knife for its own extinction to leer at the horseplay of what they considered legitimate libido release.

And to himself Don smouldered with wrath at this licentiousness that even as economic necessity these people didn't consider: merely what had always been, what always would be. "Until there is decadence there can be no spirituality," Don wanted to shout to all. He knew that the girl of evasions was his immediate cause of anger. Instinct led her in a rut. All men were male animals to be treated as such--whose physical urge, play upon play would make to respond. Then there would be another home unit, the social equivocation of a oneness, and to Don a spiritual reality--there could be children.

Don had endured much of this game which seemed to constitute ringside seats at a horseplay of youngsters whose curiosity led them--but whom he cared too much about ever to make the harsh criticism he saw in these leers, and often heard these leering ones to say. And to sweet letterers, hardly more than walking, old crones who beamed sweetly would say, "My, my, such a big girl, and have you got a beau?" The manner of social graciousness was enough to bear them. "If there must be terms, then let decency lead them all--because there is no decency."

Nights after such duration were a writhing hiss of flame that no sentence of hands could protect a burning body from. Overworked heart fought in frenzied effort to pump oxygen to blood--when no sufficient oxygen was to feed this heat. His bed became the steam wet of press, and his flesh the humid-plastic mass that it had been when the sun seared him against the fresh-painted wall while he plopped the brush along the withering clapboards of the slim peak of house at home. Even the strained vertebrae of his neck caused a near entaplexy that made thrashing about impossible. Only opiate sleep deadened nerve torture.

And Don knew he was losing his fight with himself. Light could not be his until this commonplace became the truth no one could resist. "To resist is to try to be the only God," he knew, but found no path except that of resistance.

This overrestrained resistance was much due to the girl whose charm was evasion. And while there was the battle of absorbing possessiveness, of a tired-tight flushed passion's bitterly fought defeat, there was also the whole battle of man to make against the conventions of all time: a personal battle of insatiation--one of mental and spiritual protest against the scheme of things.

There was so much of the individual protest as to make Don's protest that of all men who sought matrimonial bonds in recognition of their great part in strength. The protest of every man against woman's all absorbing ways--woman who by nature is matriarch, yet demands man's whole being, his creative gifts in every sense, his formed and unformed thought. The protest of every man against demands upon his every tenderness, the blind reading of his every action as performed with especial thought of her. There was in Don's relations with the girl whose charm was evasions a whole history of

male and female incompatibility.

"And still I wish to accord. I wish to appreciate--and want appreciation. But I do definitely desire to be allowed my own pattern--my own path. Am I not to have human companionship to know this?" Evidently not that of this girl--though she desired him--and there was another side to argument there. She had the right to desire--according to all she knew. A girl sought a man in a seemly manner, and in most cases she got him--or got something from him. Something better than compassion. And Don did offer that, and could not offer more.

Not if he were to follow his path. Then he knew that each deviation must be paid for, even though it might not be a happiness that is balanced--still a payment must be made.

"I have committed the very sin I declared against. I am not following my own path."

Don knew now that despite the fear he had known of the loss of a job that meant the means to a right to survive, he must break these ties that had been made loathsome. When he had been turned from his classroom--in that black time once before--he had learned that a teacher lost certification definitely if he were charged a moral danger to the youth of the classroom. Map's lust for the licentious had then been his enlightenment. Had he fought for his job at that time he would have been proved immoral and would have lost his certificate. That the proof would be false meant only that every man has a price. He had known before that man will fight for his pattern--when he likes it and does not wish to be more than that which is ever acceptable. "But man will fight for war," Don had told his pupils.

Now he must lose again--to win. "Success comes through failure--if it is a wholly realized success," Don had told the pupils who struggled with

badly mangled construction of papers and much worse oral language murder. There was not much promise in this statement, but Don knew that for him it was the only hope of light.

And the thought of leaving these youngsters came to him often, the nostalgic longing for them and their warmth came also. The bright interest that shines out from a motley of faces and varicolored gangliness of figure was life to Don. It was home and family---everything. He often grasped a youngster in play when one more reverent of established patterns would have been thinking of classroom decorum. His favorite pet message remained, "And I could chew your ear."

Turning from the immediate warmth and light of these inundations of communication was not a happy thing to do.

But Don sought not to think of this. And what precisely he did seek to think of he didn't know.

There was this girl whose charm was evasion---not for Don. It was those who were satisfied with themselves who found her charming. She qualified too for the work Don did. "Leave her to the closed hills," Don thought. "I'll seek the open plains. No they won't be plains---they'll just be open. And the justification to this girl will be my job. I hold it dear---let her have it, for she's entitled to it in many ways. She can give these people what they want to know. She belongs to the closed hills with frozen heights for locked lids. I'm going where the sky of light is not locked---where can warm my window pane."

There is the growth that comes of renunciation: Material renounced may mean spirit gained.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

But the light on the pane was not of human wrath.

Habit had its way.

Again Don sought the language lather that was books.

And the masters became unendurable because they were the only right. They were praised, overhauled for eriticism's sake, and praised again. "They have only said what we all know. Let them say a different thing once---even though beauty---art---may be sacrificed in the saying."

The brittle-wise young who maintained a life of the moment---and belied their maintenance with mirror eyes---eyes that were the islands of man---Islands where the soul keeps a lighthouse. They were now Don's torment and his warmth.

A midsummer madness had struck these lightning bugs of youth. They proved Don's saving grace. They chose to become artists themselves. "We'll try a hand at this game that is subjected to so much bosh by our elders. We'll be mimics too and mock at the muses," cried the girl whose hair dress was different. "I'll bet the muses will hand us something for mocking 'em. Bet they haven't been mocked---properly---oh well, who knows what a man thinketh?"

And it was war.

The muses must have been delighted. They were belabored with a maudlin mundane of ardor that had its chief asset in that---its order.

All institutions were thoroughly riddled with a religious fanaticism. The one rule was: work on what you know. The group chose to know what all mankind has known from the origin of an institution to its present. A denuded corn-fed west was much of its aim.

It was a lusty denuding.

"One thing we have in our favor: our language lather has little froth. We have too little water---or we don't use much soap. We don't leave much

ment on a dress we strip," Don said in strained humor.

Their brittle glass attitude was temporal. "The hour glass doesn't hold its sand," the crackling dry-humored girl with the dark different hair dress said.

"We attack the marriage institution and have the unadulterated crust to call ourselves modern." Don laughed in mirthless crackle that revealed the strain of need for humor.

They had substitutes. The girl spent many nights, without removing a hairpin, at a typewriter that jugged off words crazily. These words had virtue in that they carried the strong bitter-sweet of youth in revolt--and spoke of sad need for understanding among the youngsters Don so often missed. "I could chew an ear off" remained his frequent release from intensity expression. She also wrote of the old teacher whose years of service left her turned out of the classroom--too old to teach and penniless from wholehearted service. "Suicide is the common end of the social servant--Oh I know it is frequently disguised, for even in death a servant remembers his people," and so she wrote it--bent over a typewriter wall wetted with salt tears of youth's vigor in release against the enforced crime in a well known haven of the freedom of will--of speech--of plenty--for all--who are artful enough to tramp over their fellows to get it. "No haven here for the old age of service--unstinted emotional outpour of that which leaves a mark on growing minds. Without them we'd be the same deep-bedded corn-fed compassion, for ourselves only, that they fought--the indigent old of service, the school teachers who leave thousands carrying the brand from their wombs of trifling knowledge with which they strive to provoke minds into living."

Like all idealists she overdid her ideal. The dark brown taste of over-coming stereotyped pattern without stint--always crowded by the one theme--she

expressed by a drybrittle laugh. "I feel like the Russian army had tramped through my mouth in its stocking feet," or "Each of my teeth is wearing a pussy hood," she said wearily, her eyes a blur, as she made the daily class rounds after an all night vigil at her typewriter.

One of her stories was so bitter, and so interlined with hard impact of compassion, that reading it became an internal emotional hemorrhage. "It leaves one heavy with child---and seeking an abortion," Don told her.

"I've had my abortion of the moment. All I'm not drained of is nerves," she offered tartly. But her hair remained as intact as though just sleeked and coiled. Don had never seen her touch her hair.

And there were the others who wrote, who composed music, painted. Poetry had its place---but it was much more an immediate emotional outlet---like Don's dancing. One might have a cat and canary release in a verse jag. But long hours of prose drill was not only release---it was near-complete drain of emotional resource.

These young people were younger than Don---but he shared---or sought to share the more thoroughly because of that increase in years. "I am a part of all that I have met," was as much reality as he could make it.

Spiritual gain must find release.

There came a welding of this tie to those of the immediate group Don knew. It served as a consecration to a cause---the cause of the pen they had chosen. The girl whose dark-coiled braid of hair dress was different sat at her typewriter during long night hours of which she had said, "The hour glass doesn't hold its sand."

These hours were ones of burning truth recorded in type. Now she was working on a story of which she said nothing. But her eyes were the tired blur of attestation. Don knew she was giving herself in a greater consecration

than she had done, as yet.

One day the story was read in class. At its opening an elderly school teacher was directing a play---a play in which high school youngsters were sitting of themselves---honestly. But the boy who was playing the lead seemed stunned; his comedy action and lines were superior to his precise indication because of this. But the teacher was too much aware of her pupils not to realize a significance in his dazed action. She knew these pupils better than their parents did---in the many ways in which wisdom accepts and respects the burden of sudden maturity.

The play went on.

But the elderly school teacher learned the boy's story and after the last curtain hurried him into a car and to the scene of a far greater action. The girl who had presided the lead opposite him was in an unlicensed "butcher shop." These youngsters had no right to a baby. But the play had gone on. From the second cast a girl had played that lead of the play, so valued in the life of high school youngsters, while the lead herself played a role so valued in the scheme of man that he makes his God to esteem it above all virtues. Yet she was playing the role against the grain. The civilization of which she was part did not accept a baby born to child parents---and above all -- one born without the social requirement of a license.

The valiant old teacher shouldered this as a burden of love. She knew it meant the loss of her job. She knew herself far too old ever to get and hold another. She knew her savings had gone to youngsters in need of schooling---even though opportunity for work and wages were as nothing compared to the cost of the necessary schooling. Now she sought blindly to serve as her heart dictated. There was more than the life of a baby at stake. The girl-mother that should be, was in nothing better than a "butcher-shop". The old teacher

had no time to berate herself--or anyone else--that this situation had been created. She felt the additional weight of the occurrence under her play supervision. She had known there was something wrong. Was she as blindly trusting as the stupid parents? No--she was more so, but she had far greater understanding. She had fought the "suppressed old maid's" wild desire. She knew it for fact--and had made a compensation in beauty--the beauty of unstinted love in service to youngsters.

They drove over the old weed-grown trail that zigzagged down the narrow gorge.

The girl was there at the shack by the creek, in a brush hidden old home-brewer's still, in the dugout hole behind the shack with the vats, boilers, siphon pipes. She was alone and had just gained semi-consciousness when they found her.

Now the teacher knew young heart's grief in fact--also her burden. The child had not thus been deserted without good reason.

They carried the girl out to the car where the boy held her on his lap in the back seat. And with these two whom she found to have a claim on her that she could not deny--did not wish to deny--the teacher drove back toward town--up and down the crazy high trail that had seemed endless when they had driven out. Now it was short. What could be done with these youngsters now--to save them from the lasciviousness of the righteous she knew too well as her patrons?

A moan from the back seat warned her. She drove to the most ridiculous angle of the high narrow trail above the bullberry thicket tangle of the gorge below.

The girl was dead. The boy lay as lifeless--the handle of a jackknife protruded from his neck below the jaw while his blood drenched the breast of

the girl his arms still clung to.

A few days later the tangle of the car and the three dead bodies were found in the flow of water over a hundred feet below. The break in the bull berry thicket at the height of the trail had shown the way to discovery.

Details of the story were easily woven among those who knew--ready imagination filled the gaps. Both the boy and the girl had had a few fellow-pupil confidants. Loyalty to their teacher had prompted these youngsters in defending her, for she had been found with the driver's wheel driven through her chest.

But righteousness stewed on.

And so the girl with the dark-coiled hair dress had written it. Her eyes were a humid blur. When asked for class criticism, Don said, "If she writes any more like that she'll lose ten years of her life with each." He didn't know the strength of his own statement.

"I did hawl so much I had to retype many of the wet-streaked pages," she admitted to Don when they were alone.

"But now to revision", she sighed as she rubbed at her bleared eyes.

And other nights were spent at the typewriter. The revision progressed bitterly.

Then one morning Don found her at her desk in an outer office of the library--her body twisted forward and sidewise over the chair arms. The swivel chair had turned with the shift of her weight--away from the desk. The heavy old machine--of the eighteen inch bar variety--was on the floor back of her chair. One corner was, while the other tipped toward the girl's head. Her hair was as ever in perfect order, but the carriage release, left hand release, was neatly hooked through a coil of her hair--into the loop of a braid near the scalp. Evidently she had drowsed, her head drooping forward on the machine,

and the weight of her body had pushed with the left shoulder until the machine had slipped from the desk--swinging the swivel chair quickly.

Her neck was broken. She had been dead for at least four hours, the doctors said.

And here a greater tie was welded. Those of her group felt the need to preserve not only her now perfected story, "Abortion"--the last sheet of which was still on the roller when Don found her--but to preserve the unconquerable spirit that she lived.

To Don a far greater bond was building. He must go on in an unromanticized vision of love. Here he might find reason in going alone--not that he needed reason--but to be socially acceptable reason became paramount. And there was only sincerity in Don's grasp of this. The girl with the dark-braid-coiled different hair dress had held for him a fascination. They had entertained the idea of a bond--much in a mystic manner. Now Don felt the bond a sear. She was part of his light forever. One crisscross of light rays--the greatest Don believed--was now paralleled.

Don did not forget that she had told him of his coming to her in a dream. He had noted an unusual degree of turmoil in her suppressed violence of work in the days before she told him--and the dream was as old as the fever of which she had told it. She truly had thought of him seriously.

She has a chair, always, in my most cluttered, and cherished room, Don knew.

There was comfort. In his aloneness there was supporting spirit. That their frequent equivocations were part of this made the oneness the more valued to Don.

This thing called Death is but a final chisel stroke in the memory of the oneness that is allness.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

And Sid was here.

Sid and Don had among many others their own creed of crime in the light of accepted patterns. "We have a creed!" Don laughed without humor-- "A creed--the very thing we would most get away from."

But Sid did not share Don's distaste for terms. He wanted a name for his weapon. His delight was attack upon the marriage institution. Don shared this view because it fought the most deadening idolatry he knew.

"There can be no spiritual growth without decadence. Those people whom we know as frustrated, corrupted flesh entities--they--Oh if they would deny themselves alone, but their young too must be indecent bundles of inhibition--ingrained with the right to judge."

"The right we are reavenging," he had to add in the honest recognition of himself that he sought.

"This west we know: all we have ever known from actual experience--is static--decadence must come before growth, even merely cultural, can be. This satisfaction, now so common, is mental and spiritual putrefaction. These corrupted deep-headed bodies seem to be an ideal that is its own repulsion--that is when it forces the same pattern upon its young.

"It is up to someone somewhere in this west to denude this indescency. Only departure from the well known norm is ever to force recognition of a spiritual need upon these sluggish over-fed animals.

"I know this is refutation of all that is known of the rigors of a hardy people forced to force life from barren aridity--and that barren aridity is our west. But inversely this aridity has worked the puritanism--a New England of the west we are--and an Orient we must yet glimpse if we are to be stirred into spiritual growth. The very fact that these people will feel a need to

protect their mental and spiritual virginity may be their saving grace. Ugh!--terminology again. But how can we expect a people as satisfied as this to know the real thing--the biblical history must be repeated in the west that there may be youth permitted to lead out from this aridity to a land of promise--where souls can seek--seek light. A thousand years--well a beginning must be."

And Don scribbled again, as he now did frequently. He knew he had written something that was verse this time.

ARID

Even a delicate cactus bloom
holds one in a desert until life's noon
and far thereafter.
Even a dry clay loam
draws its moisture of the moon
forever after.

Even a gray sagebrush
keeps alive the slow sly blush
of youth and laughter.

But this urge to language lather, which Don had to admit was but the recurrence of age-old book stuff, was not enough release. It was not--because it was proof of the necessity to express what had not found outlet elsewhere. "The urge to create is so essential a part of nature that no man wholly escapes it," Don told Sid.

No need to tell Sid who had other phases of creative urge than mere language lather to consider.

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Sid was developing proletarian pains. These young people knew the outline of humanism. They knew its vagaries of development as they knew history in shady outline. And more than that they did not care to know. Theirs was the life of the moment they had said, and now each was building futures--and yet burning each moment for all it was worth.

"But if the proletarian is to conquer," Don told Sid, "Will that help any? America's great numbers are going to require more time than mere consumption for human want that eries from the belly takes to awaken them. They desire the winning of the down-trodden. They want a measure of socialism--they see economic surfaces. That they do not and will not see is a fineness of spirit in a far deeper cry of want. The minded people want a well-fed justy middle class; they don't want a proletarianism. America will be glad to see a self-satisfied body of people grown heavy of belly. But there is every indication that present proletarian unrest may be used to the advantage of the minded. Proletarianism is in itself an extreme romanticism. Romanticism is a spirit that must be strongly gauged--it so nearly becomes purely sentimental. Money has always favored sentimentality among the proletarianist. There is little reason among the laboring classes of foreign origin that is not largely emotional. And emotion is variable. The minded love the emotion of the proletarianist. It can be so easily directed.

"Hend our popular magazines. See our novels. Dictatorship exists too entirely to its own advantage. The emotions of the mob are so now directed toward hearts and flowers sentimentality that the minded are almost prepared to precipitate our nation into war at a woman's notice.

"The degrading fact in this knowledge is that the sentimental features rent in the holy institution of matrimony. Hearts and flowers. What news-paper Sunday magazine doesn't exhibit the bride--and on inner pages all the bibles. The glibble, voluptuous, American sentimentality is vulnerable to such suggestion--and where does it lead? Not too directly, but eventually, to exactly the frame of mind that knows patriotism only as a mad weeping on the breast of a uniform. That's the answer to this proletarian sentimentality.

"Depression has taught us little, if anything."

And Don laughed at his own turbulence over a nature so thoroughly imbued in human beings as to be unalterable. But--was his whole fight such?

"Yes, such of the satisfaction of those who seek culture is the height they see themselves to have attained when they look upon the masses.

"Yes, I know there are exceptions. Time will heal the wound of the proletariat. In fact it is healing it. Many of them can browbeat us now. I've worked for their schools, their local school district dignitaries. The rugged immigrants from vigorous climates delight in getting their heels on the necks of those who instinct tells them are their mental superiors.

"No. I'm not worrying about anything so simple--but rather that which is more simple--man's oneness with the powers that are--always."

And Don considered material advancement--science--all that was evidence of man's oneness with power.

"But will not all this that you name lead to an eventual better man?" Sid asked.

"You know that's not what I mean." and Don's eyes said the understanding that was Sid's. "The interest that is ours is the scene of our lives, our instinctive home, our west. Always, it is said, we are called west--or back to our west. Now that we have a certain character that is west we have people with all the attributes people have always had. We have aspects as a people of which one never hears. It is time for a west to speak of those, now. Someone who is centuries ahead of the herd must speak. Ahead of and behind the herd. All growth has a cycle. Our west has its beginning in the native, the Indian, and it has its end of the cycle in the appreciation of that indigenous quality which is the Indian's--

in his interpretation of the wind sighing along the sagebrush. The most significant of recent writers in America, everywhere are realizing this freedom of quality that is native to America. The greatest significance of all is to come out of the west--our west. When we have truly blind-folded puritanism as man has blinded justice, then we can see, then we may know decadence, and we will see a rounded cycle that has carried us back to the native. We will attain much of this by the steps of ~~1876--~~ the law that is so much derided by the formalist. Just take the free verseism for example. From it and other insurgencies has grown the knowledge that the first free verse in America was Indian.

"But you have America repeating the history of all nations, of all times," Sid murmured.

"So I have," Don laughed. "There were the Greeks."

And this means decadence--decadence which means the appreciation that is beauty.

"And why don't you speak for the herd?" Sid asked provocatively, yet not without consideration.

"Well I certainly desire to speak, but you know I'm not understood," Don spoke of the earnestness the young people have for themselves.

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Don remembered that Sid had reason to be at least provocative about the herd. He had once--not long ago--felt the unreasoning censure of the herd. He had not then admitted cause for censure, nor the fact that censure existed. He did not now. But Don knew him well enough to realize the deep buried scar of Sid's hurt--that did not heal.

For sometime Sid had been known as a pseudo-bithesome philanderer with women. Either to his credit--or his discredit--he liked best

married women who cling to the fringe of youth and greatly enjoyed a handsome young man's attention.

Often he had driven such a woman about in her car. The entertainment was usually but inflected word play that has that especial flattery for women, particularly the woman who knows her youth to be affectation.

But for Sid there were several women--such amusement soon dulling. Then he had found a woman who was unmarried--at that uncertain age--yet an independent business woman who played Sid's game with honest amusement. There was no question that her satisfaction was what Sid's had been in his merry-go-round of former associates.

Sid liked this woman.

She was no longer young, but Sid almost worshipped his mother.

The game became complicated.

Sid had often used a car borrowed from one of his married friends. Strangely enough, he did now, with a feeling that it somehow made him independent. Independent women either ruin men--or cause them to attempt independence. But Sid was not thinking of any influence this woman might have. He liked her. She enjoyed the novelty of the situation as a woman who has been in business, has broken the chains of housewifely convention, will.

One night Sid had the car. They drove later than he expected when darkness, the car lights, and his watch led him to seek the first available turn for home. Wives had husbands who could be nasty about who might borrow the car and when.

Sid was driving and the woman had her head on his shoulder where it still unromantically rested with her day's problems. But she was too wise to speak of these.

Sid was driving a lonely trail up a gulley, a wagon trail that seemed to have no turning in this deep rock crevice. Then suddenly they were on a

lookout point with a pine railing. Here Sid could turn. But the gully had as suddenly dropped beside them as they had climbed. Five hundred feet must have been the depth of the sharp incline at one side---perhaps as much rise was perpendicularly above them on the other side.

But Sid made the turn and in the exhilaration of the moment stepped on the gas.

When Sid knew consciousness again the sharp scream---like the yelp of a suddenly hard hit pup---still rang in his ears.

He could not move, but he knew the woman was beside him, that she seemed thrust against him as by a great weight. He felt the blood on his chest and quivered as it ran in slow drops down his belly.

Sid remained conscious throughout the long night, and how much of the day he sat in the hot glare of the sun on the metal of the car he did not know. All that time he stiffened, unable to move a finger.

When searchers found the wreck, they removed the pine rail that had gone through the windshield, through the woman's chest---piercing her ribs and her right lung---pinning her against Sid beneath the steering wheel---and protruding several feet beyond the rumble seat cover which it had torn open by the force of the car's fall.

And all the while her blood had soaked Sid's clothes and gradually covered his motionless body until it formed a dried blood cast.

Sid had remembered the scream that pierced his eardrums when he became unconscious---remembered and spoke to the rescue party of it; he jocularly asked them to take him to the morgue too since he could hardly be more dead.

No doubt he was not aware of horror, having sat for many hours east in the blood of a woman for whom he had felt affection, whose dead body lay heavily pinned against his own slow struggling heart beat while he could not move.

He had joked.

He lay for a few days in the hospital. Then he went about attempting to assure those whom he owed that he would pay all expenses of the accident and funeral. Sid felt the coldness of attitude toward him. He knew positive vindictiveness for he had been formally sued for damages on the day that he had been found. Now he knew those most concerned to be dubious of his ability to pay.

His reaction lay in action.

He had the car repaired and drove about town sitting on the very obvious blood stains of his companion of that night. That no one would ride with him while the stains were on the cushions did not prevent his swinging the door open to call to passers-by. Sid knew them all.

They decided that they did not know Sid.

Here was a school teacher in a bad way. Friends of the deceased could not look him in the eye.

This was another instance of the wrong ending for the story--the unforgiveable. Had Sid been a murderer he might have won favor, at least sympathy.

Sid knew his place, but he did not resign until the end of the school term, although everyone knew he would--must.

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As Don thought of Sid's right to be provocative in speaking of the herd--such as he might wish to accord externally--he knew reason for the understanding that was his and Sid's.

This urge to finer creation does come of deep distress--a bitterness of the berry left brewing.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Don still fought to keep individual strands of relationship apart. The more there was of fascination in personalities the more there was of torment. Pulls---tugs and twists. And the futility of their scribbles---their wranglings---their language lather. But they all had a common sense attribute. They all sought to speak of what was complex---of cause and effect---of being---simply, very simply. It was not that they wished the greater to appeal. It was that they knew themselves simple.

"We are of a once simple native west---what remains of that natural west has made us simple. We should speak of it simply. What is great truth but simplicity---humility?"

But life was not simple. The jerk-jar of thought process was as bumping grind and worn iron crunch-crash of a stalling and starting freight train. Nerve ends struck with snake coil and hiss, waving temuously in raw red vulnerability.

Sureness from this was physical action---and here too were ties, binding, tug and twist.

Sid and Don found outlet in long night-light rambles and Don listened while Sid talked on---to himself---or another self---for so he chose to think of Don---of his childhood---of fears---awakening. And it all was interest because it was Sid---a personality blending with his own.

After one of these day terms of tempestuous torment the boys rambled away---rambled in a oneness their own. And the night came with the mood.

Sid sat on a hill that overlooked the spread---of lights---and looked to the stars. "I'd like to reach a star for me and eat it," and he fell back with a light sigh---a sigh that wafted up in the night light to become a part of all Sid reached for. He had said what Don felt of this oneness

with power we seek--to be a part of all that is in winging-rhythmic beat. Fulsoneness of night caught the two, and their creed became as one with all they knew--all they sought--all that makes true comprehension. The body was there in lithe-limbed roundness-winging-rhythmic heartbeat and blood surge--and the moon and stars in inverted bowl above closed down on its truth--its understanding.

There were lights below--and it was these that beckoned. Don would have clasped that moment--have been it and nothing more--forever. But the lights below beckoned, and Sid accepted their pattern--his duality was what Don had known--before. But strength is in acceptance of all that we have met--and beauty is appreciation of each gift bestowed. Fruition is in this.

Stars above--light below

your light and my light

wrapped--wrapped

oh so tenderly

in your vulnerable soul

seemed the key for Don to this treasure-locked moment--and it was tucked away with his scribbles. Sid too chose to remember--but for each sweet a bitter--for each bright a blight--'twas part of the creed that seeks the greatest truth of all--it was cosmic right, and humility accepts of offering gladly--and walks on steadily in the path that remains.

Neither all nor illness need be lost in frustration.

Don remembered that living graciously means understanding--that impatience is a negative value. Youth builds on impatience--but wisdom grows of a search for serenity. Mrs. Garden saw Don's mellowing and spoke of it. "You're gaining ground," she commended.

There was in this a knowledge of man's dependence upon woman. There is

in a wise woman commendation for man. Without bolster for ego man fades in years. When youth goes out from him, he seeks a hearth warmth, Don knew. His path was one that required woman strength; he looked within himself for this.

And he knew what he looked for was not there. His was the dream conscious--subconscious knowing, and this otherness he sought was not to be realized within.

Deliberately Don sought to create the ideal of woman. And his seeking was of the naivete of all young men plus the discernment that has been attributed women. The mind of his creation was the romantic echo--the carbon copy of the mind he would make his own. The will was yet another thing. The will of a wise woman is stay to man--stay for substance--order for chaos. Knowing his weakness Don sought the will of direction and form.

But the physical--there was less of the nebulous here. The slim lithe-ness of figure that was but the medium for the dark eye-mirrors of soul--that must be perfect. Don wished for the gift of a sculptor and painter to create this perfect medium of the divine. The limbs that were rounded to straight thighs of fluid muscularity clothed in health-glow of fine skin-smooth reality. And there was no accentuated line from waist to hip, but the clean, straight, supple sweep of boy vigour. Flat torso rose to firm slight breasts that were not at all the cupped promise known as female fatality. They were as the smooth rippling rise of an indrawn breath--the nipples the pink firm of warm blood. Don felt actual hate for the pimpled dark of wasting blood, that spreads nauseatingly in soft breasts of inviting female voluptuousness. Yet this perfection he created knew the beauty of passion--feet free to swift rhythmic beat in a constance of cosmic orchestration--free to trip, swing, and glide in swaying unison with

his own cry for youth that now seemed so transient. And hands--there must be comradeship, of which he had known only the promise, in these slender hands--hands whose strength could also sense and mother a torn and worn substance of soul--hands whose warmth could guide without exhibiting the strength of will with which they might pull.

And there must be sentience of more enduring passion--the passion that is peace.

There was always the girl of the dark braid-coiled hairdress as a standard of judgment--much that was she, Don knew--spoke in this creation.

Don could create perfection with all dreaming youth--he could do more. He could wait--wait alone.

But there were times when he longed to run the tired crisp of his hands into long waves of dark uncoiled hair and to bury there his quizzical quirk of lifted eyebrow that revealed a still torn and twisted soul substance.

"One can judge others only by himself. That is his right to judge." Don knew that dark-eye-soul-mirrors would always hold fascination for him. His eyes might not ever be as expressive--surely not ever so dark--but always he would understand the soul distress that breeds strength.

No perfect creation could come from his mind which had not this appreciation of mystic allness without which there can be no true knowledge of beauty.

The girl of the dark braid-coiled hairdress had seemed suppressed and excited for days before she had told him that he had come to her in a dream. She came to Don, now, in many dreams of day as well as night.

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His hands still had something of the maternal in their tender dry-crisp. "I must nurture this strength that is mild," he warned his imperious youth--will

to conquer. "I must spread a simplicity of light that is the basis of spiritual growth. As a woman leads indirectly, so must I ever try to lead. My pen can spell thoughts, less of stone and steel, and more of the heat that has melted their confluence to distillate--now accepted as playthings with which to kill all that is left of the spirit-best.

"Our west must know beauty of lapis-lazuli and aquamarine as its own sky, prairie sweep of wind, and its heritage of the sea. There is the voice of all soul crying in the wind, and the promise in the green of the earth--in all the simplicity of nature is the answer for these wasted souls that overstuffed bodies disguise in sullied minds." And Mrs. Garden gave discerning attention to these limpid vagaries of romantic mind that had caught some thing of cosmos--made of the stuff man is made of--which only decadence, Don insisted, could bring him back to in true cadenced rhythm.

"The man against the sky in a plane should know--but he lets the wonder of the material he's helped to create testify alone. That is not recognition of the god in man. It is the shabby god creation man has made in his own image as compared with the rays of light that each of us is in the order of things man leaves to his unvoiced dreams. Musicians and artists cry it--children are it-- man is, generally, lost.

"Out of the west we know may come the voice."

"And which swing of the pendulum am I on now?" Don asked himself--and laughed at his own consistent inconsistency in the fight to win himself.

"There in this pendulum swing comes pause, comes poise?" There was Mrs. Garden's secret of living alive. She had an interest in all youth because she had arrested youth; somewhere the pendulum had paused.

"Can one will this pause?" Don asked.

"It comes of growth--the recognition of a likeness and a fitness of

things--all has a place in a wheel of fire.

"A wheel of fire around the rim of which is a path. But only those who know the flame find the light that carries on." Mrs. Carden could be specific--but such limitation was not for Don. From generalization came his greater realization.

And old still was like them all--he was the generalization of such that Don had met--strangely, of all that he had not realized too. His proletarianism was a symbol. Don's mellowing was yet to be realized through his rhythmic light rays winging out to all--for when they truly reached for all, then they were not the tangle-tug-twist of torture that writhed in his soul when he sought individuals in the group. A quiet was enclosing Don.

But it had a deadening effect--the cry from deep distress must continue hungering if the creative is to find fruition.

There was truth in the youth is the poem idea--and poetry is not when hungering leaves the soul at rest.

But Mrs. Carden had preserved this cry of youth, this living endensed rhythmic beat that was comic.

So Don walked alone, knowing that his harness would come again and again to possess him, but never wholly forfullness in living is in knowing all things in their place. Decadence would come in its turn of the wheel. One who walked ahead must be gentle--must know a soul-seared calm that would be caught in flames of joyance.

But joy is weak.

Not ecstasy but sentient peace--dreaming soul that has an eye open in

wisdom.

Only as man thinks is he. He doesn't see through blinding varicolored

flames ever. The mystery of things is never wholly his--else he would be wholly god. Yet by the path that is around the wheel of flames--that knows what is not prescribed--that resists the consuming sordid compromise and ascribes to the greater whole--by the path that is of all time--of all men--of all that man has known--is the light of man.

"A nest is yet to be that knows and grants a right to live. Out of the sublimation of lapis-lazuli--aquamarine--wind-swept plains--land and sea--the wholesome unity may yet prove man's right to be--apart from patterns man preserves as all life, the idol, the only, the all--will come the fire light of wheel lathed path that is cosmic assurance, "and Don shrugged the weight aside.

His eyes on the hands that were dry-crisp of maternal molding, Don walked down the path.

Echoes--echoes--of all that Don had met--echoes that went out from him in strong winging rhythmic beat--and back to him--all recurrently came. Apart with the cosmos only could he bear it all. One man in his--his time--all time--space--dimension--to carry the load down his path.

And when there came the cross of ties that bind and cut, there was an answering cry. He had written

There is in faces deeply chiselled Pain
wrought there of despair.

There is in final depth of cut
the art of passion spent--
spent but not truly vanquished.

Deeply chiselled lines
disclose the suffering there--

and much more in the same vein. Then--"There is a Cord"--

There is a cord that binds us tightly

You and I

Thigh to Thigh

Breast to Breast

Cheek to Cheek--

There is a cord that binds us tightly

binds until it cuts--

cuts and makes heart bleed

and if the cord grew tighter?

In this bleak soul-taut vein he wrote.

But now he sought to pen the answer within himself:

Round Body Beautiful and my symmetry

each with soul light discerning

still every yearning--yearning

for bodies cannot quite

stretch the cords taut enough

for one last loop about tangible.

Give me Round Body Beautiful one last loop

break this uncertainty

clothe my symmetry

in your vulnerable soul.

Here was the cry of a soul in creative urge--and alone.

Part of yours his life may be

Blood of Blood

Heart of Heart!

Yet if his is not to be

satire on the art of living

each unto himself apart
 must create his own existence.

But Don did not wholly believe this--for being alone meant more to him--
 it meant an apartness with the whole of being--with all time and space--
 a further dimension.

And in this vast he knew was the sprouting of the decadence of further
 dimension.

Success comes through failure. Don wrote--

For days we've had a fog
 friendly blanket sent of god
 in commiseration for fumbling souls
 who in protective mists
 may venture out to wonder-see
 in gallant-vagrant ships .
 Today the sun beats strong
 Upon my window pane--
 I draw the shade.

Don walked the path clothed in the substance of enduring light.

What is one man's virtue may well be what has been another man's sin.

But--in the allness is a oneness, man's own limit to his divinity.