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Mr. Doynbee's Compensation

Walter N. King

The University of Montana

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MR. DOYMBEE’S COMPENSATION

A Novel

by

Walter K. King
B.A., Montana State University, 1947

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Approved:

Chairman of Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School
There on the table where Arthur had left it the last time he'd looked at it lay the stamp album, its frayed edges soiled with years of finger-marks, its thickly laden pages bulging slightly open, ends of letters and insert sheets protruding here and there. And of course the water splotch, an ovoid, bleary, fading pink that had never quite blended into the surrounding red.

Years before she'd been the cause of that water splotch, Maud remembered. Arthur had gone off, soon after she'd moved in to keep house for him, leaving the album on the work-table near the kitchen sink, an unusual place for him to leave it, gone off as he'd always gone without saying where he was going or when he'd be back. "Going on an errand," he'd said, his customary remark. Why she'd wanted a drink she couldn't recall now. But that day she had, and while she was drinking, she'd been tempted to have just a peep at the album. Hardly ever had she looked at it before, even as a child when her father, and Arthur's, had first begun to fill in sections of the book. Just a pile of old stamps, she'd always told herself, and why should anyone be so silly as to collect stamps? One might as well collect toothpicks. But at the sink that day she'd begun to thumb through the album and then for no reason at all she'd spilled part of the glass of water on the cover. There she'd stood, wondering what she ought to do, and then grabbed for the dishrag, which she'd rubbed hesitantly over the blob of water, enlarging it. Oh, Arthur'll be angry, she'd thought.
But Arthur hadn't been angry. Lifting the cover, he'd
assured himself that only it was damaged, said he was surprised
she couldn't have been more careful. She had been after that—
every time she'd leafed through the album—and always when Arthur
was a long ways out of the house.

There it lay on the table just as Arthur had left it the
last time he'd looked at it, the very evening in fact before he—
well, you couldn't call it died, though he'd certainly died that
night, or say he'd been killed. The inescapable fact was that he
was dead, and there was the album just where he'd left it. Oh,
she'd moved it maybe an inch or two as she'd dusted. The house
had had to be kept clean, so many people coming and going. But
there it was, the water splotch prominent under the lamp light.
Who'd get it now? Kay? or Addy—for her kids to tear to bits?
Or perhaps herself? But she didn't dare think about herself.

Kay stood up. "Thank God, they've all gone. Kill you off
with mistaken kindness. Even pop's closest friends."

He crossed by Maud, who eyed him closely, stopped in the
frame of the front door, still open, the cooling night air stream-
ing in through the screen. Inhaling deeply both night air and
cigarette smoke, he leaned against the door frame, his back toward
Maud and Addy. The cigarette smoked down to a stunted butt, he
flipped it across the porch to the lawn, grey in the moonlight,
and without turning toward them spoke what he must have been
thinking a long time.
"It would be some consolation just to know what actually happened."

"He probably just had a sudden stroke," Addy said, repeating what she'd said already time after time. "He probably had a stroke and fell down the bank. That's all."

"Stroke, hell," Ray said. "He was as healthy as a tom cat. Never been sick in his life. Except for the accident at the mill he'd never had a thing wrong with him."

"Like as not we'll never know," Maud said quietly, her thoughts still on the album.

But streaking through her mind came the same question as had come into Ray's. Just what had happened to Arthur? The bruises all over his body, the ugly gash on his left temple, his thin grey hair plastered against his head with river water, the slightly bloated look of his face when early the next morning one of the men at the mill had discovered the body, close by the mill, jammed between the bank and a log. He must have been struck by that car that went over the bank the same night, Maud told herself again. There was no other likely explanation.

"But why was he walking alone up there at night?" Ray asked.

"He went walking up the river regularly in the evening," Maud said. "It couldn't have been very late. Nannie and I were here until about half-past eight, when we stepped over to the Lockwood's, and Arthur was sitting out in the back yard waiting for you when we left. There was something on his mind. I'd
noticed it all day. Maybe that's why he went for a walk—to try to think things out."

"But didn't he say a word about where he was going?"

"Arthur? Tell anyone where he was going?" Maud asked. "If you'd lived at home with him as I have these past seven years, you'd know how much he could be. Just say he had an errand to attend to and shut the door in your face."

Ray shuffled uneasily. Was she hinting, he thought, that he might have come home more often? But how could he and hold down the job he had? Cover all Western Montana and stay in Benner? She was crazy if she thought that. He got home as often as he could. There simply wasn't the business in this part of his territory there was elsewhere. The old man had known that and hadn't resented his not being at home. That was part of growing up and getting out on your own. You had to get the hell away from home, be on your own, live your own life, have relationships of your own.

His mind reverted to the funeral that afternoon, to what he'd thought during the service. That first goodbye he'd said to his father. Just a kid then, only a little past eighteen, he'd told the old man he didn't want to go on to the University, he wanted to get out on his own, begin to earn for himself. The old man had understood, had calmed down his mother when she'd gone off to the bedroom, disappointed and hurt, had talked things over with him, told him he was a sucker, but let him go just the same. He
could see the two of them the next morning as they walked down to the highway together, pop dressed in the working clothes he wore every day on the carriage over in the mill, a sharp contrast to the dark suit he wore himself, and on his head that blue hat he'd thought was so perky in those days, and in one hand the old brown leather suitcase he'd borrowed from his mother. They'd been on their guard, he and pop, not to say much, except things that didn't matter. Down at the corner of the lumber yard pop had stopped, taken out fifteen dollars, all he could spare probably, and urged them on him. And then shaken hands with him and said goodbyes, don't forget to write your mother, and turned back toward the mill. He remembered the lump there'd been in his throat that morning, and then how busily he'd set about trying to hitch a ride, not daring to look toward home for a long while, and then when he did, finding the old man looking around at him. They'd waved to each other, and then a car had come along and picked him up and it was all over. Except that he'd written home as soon as he'd got a job, because he'd missed the old man more than he'd ever thought he would. But it had been a decisive good-bye all the same, though not so decisive as the goodbyes in the chapel this afternoon. Or the goodby with Irene. Well, at least he'd told pop about Irene, told him every rotten word, got acquainted with him in a new way all over again. The old man had understood about Irene, just as he'd understood why his son had had to leave home, why his son couldn't make it home any oftener, once he got the job he had. But did Maud understand why?
had her on his mind; and where would she go? 

would have to move me soon as they broke up the house; and where

smoothed out for him, adorning her life to hide the one

lying with the old men, keeping the grooves of his daily life

would feel the gap more than he, more than Addy. And had been

shock of the mills more terrible than it was during the day. And

not too terrible, just as much made the leap of the flame in the smoke

Grunting to keep over them, leaving the gap in their little more of them gathered in the rear-down. The finiality of it all was be-

as Addy went. Now that the sunrises were over, they were all three

hugging each other that she was simply on edge, he realized, as he was,

a cover crane over the shoulder continued with what was

what with the mother dead for almost eight years and dead she-

Irene—but she wouldn't think about Irene—had meant to him. 

home, the only one he ever really to have now, perhaps

we were afraid to think how much he'd want to come, how much

just be no place to come home to when he wanted to come.

be little chance for him in ordinary day-to-day living matters.

as a moritory place, a park somewhere as a living-roof. There'd

hope, he had for the last nine years, use the gradation back

Irene, not so much Irene—but he wouldn't, he'd go on living from hotel to

now, with the old men gone and Irene—such as Irene—think about

there would he go himself, not that it mattered especially.

would the girl

...
house the flavor his mother had, that clever way she'd had of buying a second-hand rug, like the one lying here in the living room, and being so proud of it you'd have sworn it came right out of the most expensive furniture store in Missoula. And the worn spots in the upholstery on the arms of the chair Maud was sitting in right now. His mother would have covered them with a doily of some sort, something she'd crocheted herself, brightened up the whole room with them. And Maud's mediocre job of polishing his mother's mahogany desk, the only really handsome piece of furniture in the house, which used to shine so clear you could see yourself in it. It wasn't the home it had been, but it was still home, and tonight or tomorrow they'd have to begin to break it up, dispose of things he'd relied on always having, divide and redivide and avoid quarreling, if they could, and all the time he'd have to brace himself to having no home at all. Not even with Irene—now.

"I suppose," Addy suggested hesitantly as always, "we'd better begin to decide what to do with everything."

Now it was out, Kay thought, what they'd all been thinking, what they'd all been putting off as long as they could. Count on Addy to bumble heedlessly into what was certain to be a sorry job.

"We could just as well wait until morning," Maud suggested.

"A good night's sleep will do us all good. In the morning we'll have clear heads, be rested—"

Kay turned around in the doorway.
"There's nothing much to be gained by waiting," Addy declared.

"There's so much to be done, and I can't keep running up here from Missoula, leaving the kids behind with only Rosie to look after them. She's a good girl, but she's only twelve, and we don't want all four of them under our heels up here while we're trying to make minutes count."

When had Addy ever made a minute count in her life, Maud wondered, and recognized by the lift in Ray's eyebrows that he was thinking the same thing.

"We might as well make a start tonight, Aunt Maud," Ray said.

He waited in the doorway, hoping that either Maud or Addy would bring forth a suggestion upon which they might hinge the whole chore. But neither of them spoke. Addy squirmed in her chair, the chair their mother had sat in so many evenings, darning socks, hemming tea towels, reading out loud to the old man. Maud made no motion, sat stolidly in the chair by the living-room table, which she'd pulled out of the cone of light shed by the floor lamp.

"Well," Ray said finally.

Addy squirmed more uncomfortably in her chair, at last bringing herself to say in a voice tremulous with hope, but in which she tried to force a sense of the decency of things, "Did you find the bank book, Ray?"

Maud raised her eyelids, thankful the light from the lamp left her in partial obscurity. Now it was all coming out, just
as she'd feared it might, and oh, this wasn't the time for revelations.

Ray thrust his thumb into his vest pocket, feeling surreptitiously the stiff cover of the bank book. There it was, just as he'd found it on the bottom of one of the drawers of the old man's dresser, buried beneath his shirts and the newspaper beneath them. Balance, $73.29. He hadn't been able to believe it. Only $73.29 left. What had the old man done with the rest of the $5,000? Though it was certainly his right to do with it as he pleased. It was his money, his compensation for the accident at the mill, little enough too, everything considered, and damned hard to get at the time. Addy would never recover from the shock she'd fall into when he showed her the book. Although she'd seldom mentioned the compensation money to him, he knew, knowing Addy and her downright need of what she rightfully considered her share of money they'd both believed all these years to be unspent, how much she'd counted on the financial boost this money was to have been. As for him, the money didn't matter. He earned a good salary, had no one dependent upon him—and probably never would have, if Irene—but he wouldn't think about Irene. If the old man wanted to spend the money little by little, that was all right with him, even if the old man had only dribbled it down the gutter. But Addy. He couldn't tell her this evening. Let her sleep on the hope that within a short while half of $5,000 would be hers. Tomorrow or the next day, when she was more rested,
he'd tell her, tell her sometime when Maud was out of ear-shot, when the inevitable scene that was bound to occur, would take place without eyewitnesses to rehash it all over Bonner.

"Have you found it yet, Ray?" Addy repeated.

"Not yet," he lied. "It'll turn up. I haven't had time, what with all the fuss going on around here, to give the house a thorough going-over yet. It's bound to turn up."

A wave of relief swept over Maud. At least, she thought, this hurdle wouldn't have to be worried around tonight.

"But where could he have put it?" Addy asked. "You'd think papa would have thought something like this might have happened and that he'd have had everything in order."

"He did have everything in order as well as any man can," Ray snapped back at her. "The insurance policy was in order. There's no will, sure, but what little the old man had hardly requires a will. He'd have had to go to court any way, will or no will. What more could he do—announce five minutes before he died that he was going to?"

"I don't know," Addy all but wailed. "I don't know. But I do think....." Her voice trailed off into nothing, a habit she'd always had and which seemed to grow worse with every year that passed.

A pricking silence followed, relieved only by the whir of a car speeding by the house, its headlights impersonally fingerling the night.
"Where do you suppose we ought to start, Aunt Maud?" Ray asked after a while, more to break the prolonged stillness than to set things moving.

A nagging tension spread over Maud. She mustn't let either Ray or Addy know she cared a whit one way or the other what they did with a single thing in the house.

"Really, Ray," she said in as quiet a voice as she could muster, "I don't know. You two children will have to decide. After all, they're your things...now...to do with as you think best. You mustn't consider me."

"Oh, but Aunt Maud," Addy said. "We want you to share with us, at least so far as the household things are concerned. Don't we, Ray?"

Ray winced, the heedless self-interest behind her words, so typically characteristic of Addy, grinding into him.

"Sure," he said, trying to make up by the sincerity in his own voice for the graceless unconcern in Addy's. "There's probably a lot of things around here that you've become attached to, things that would be much better off in your possession than in Addy's or mine."

Maud smiled patiently, trying to look properly grateful.

"That's right," Addy chimed in. "After all, I do have a home of my own, and it's pretty well cluttered up with things as it is, even if it is a fairly big house..." Addy always had a moronic way of magnifying what was here into an importance for
which only sentiment could have been the measuring-stick—" and after all, Ray hasn't a home of his own...yet....and won't want to be bothered with too many things. Of course, I can always store whatever he wants until he does marry, but....."

Again her voice trailed off into a shaky diminuendo as she became aware that Ray was glowering at her.

"It seems to me much better for you and Ray to decide first of all just what the two of you want for yourselves," Maud said, hoping to delay the outburst she was afraid was coming. "I'm sure that's what Arthur would have wanted. He and Hetta worked so hard to get what's in the house that it's only just that you and Ray should have what you want. I'm too old to care about acquiring much anyway. At my age you never know. For all we know it may be my turn to go next."

"For God's sake," Ray blurted out, "don't talk as if we had to bury you next week."

He fished out another cigarette, which he lit with nervous rapidity. After several deep inhalations and exhalations he turned to Addy.

"Well, Addy, what can you use? You might as well begin."

"Well, really, I don't know," Addy began. "I hadn't really thought. It's all been so sudden. I have to think more or less what will fit in best with what I've got—the furniture, I mean."

She glanced furtively at Ray, who was staring at nothing in the room so far as she could tell. Fearful that she might say the
wrong thing, she hesitated to say anything more. It would all be so easy if Ray would just take the lead, indicate what he wanted, what he didn't want.

"How about the table, this table?" Ray suggested at last between puffs at the cigarette. "You and Joe could certainly wedge it in somewhere."

Addy's face, usually so expressionless, tightened. No matter what Ray might think about Joe, he needn't hint that Joe had been unable to provide decent furniture for their house. She could use the table, of course she could, but if Ray wanted it......A sidelong look at Ray convinced her that he didn't want it, that he was simply trying to make a beginning. Perhaps he was worried about the bank book, too. He probably needed his share of the compensation money just as she needed hers, though what for she couldn't imagine. Her face softened. When she spoke, her voice was as indecisive as ever.

"Yes, I suppose we could use the table. I could rearrange the chairs in the living room, put it in front of the side window. It wouldn't crowd things too much. Don't you think it would look nice in front of the side window, Aunt Maud?"

"That would be the best place for it," Maud said, not caring a jot whether it would look nicer there or anywhere, caring only about the album and what was likely to become of it.

Ray walked over to the table, crushed out his cigarette in a brass ash tray which he picked up from it.
"There's a set of these, isn't there, Aunt Maud?" he asked.

"Yes," Maud said. "I put the other two on the top shelf in the kitchen cupboard. Netta always admired them."

"I'll take them," Hay said. "Something to remember them both by. Mother was awfully proud of them, I remember, and pop used them all the time. Nothing in the house he used so much as this ash tray. Always knocking the ashes out of his pipe into it. Just to hear it ring out, I guess."

"But where in the world will you keep it?" Addy wanted to know. "No house for anything to....." Her inveterate indecision tied her tongue again.

"It's just possible I might marry myself sometime," Hay said to her. And by God he would, if only Irene would have him.... now. "Till then I'll store them--down your basement with some other things like this I'd like."

He set the ash tray down on the table again, set it next the album, which he pushed negligently aside. Unconsciously Maud held her breath, pretending not to notice.

"There weren't many things pop was much attached to," Hay said, his innate talkativeness undammed at last. "Many things in the house, that is. Only that old car he had before the accident. He used to tinker with that a lot. Oh, he fooled around with the stamp album--" Maud grew rigid--"but it was just a pastime. He had to have something to keep him busy at after the accident. The days must have been pretty dull for him after
he couldn't work at the mill any more—and with mom gone."

He picked up the ash tray again, whirled it about in the palm of his hand, scattering some of the cigarette ash over the rug and table, part of it flaking over the album.

"I guess none of us ever really knew how much his life revolved around her. Or knew how he really felt about a lot of things. We should have known, I suppose. But he wasn't much of a one to talk. I never had any idea myself what he was really like until the night before...before he went on that walk up the river. A few things he said. A lot of things he didn't say too."

Again he set the ash tray down on the table, brushing off with his handkerchief the ash that had settled on it. With another careless swish of the handkerchief he swept clean the cover of the album, which he picked up indifferently, flipping it open at random.

"Funny how much time he spent with this damned old album," Ray said. "Before the accident he never used to pay much attention to it. Look at it now and then. Stick a stamp in it, just to keep it up a little, he'd say. And then after the accident—"

"He got a lot of pleasure out of the album," Addy chimed in. "Didn't he, Aunt Maud?"

Maud tried to sound disinterested. "Yes, he sure did. It was a blessing, he said it, too. The days can grow awful tedious when you can't work any more and when you're perfectly strong
enough in most ways to work. I don't know what Arthur would have done lots of days if he hadn't had that album to fiddle with. Not that the album amounted to anything much, but it kept him occupied. There's a certain amount of honest fun a body can have with a stamp album, I guess. I got sort of interested in it myself after a while, watching him fill in the blank spots little by little."

She knew she was talking too much. She wanted to stop, wanted to act as if she weren't especially interested in the album, wanted to appear as uninterested as she knew Addy was, as she hoped and suspected Hay might be, but in spite of herself the words spilled out of her like water out of the kitchen tap as soon as the faucet is turned on. She'd held them back too long. Now she'd begun, she couldn't stop.

"Many's the evening Arthur got out the album, looked it over, lots of times with the magnifying glass, as busy as a boy doing his arithmetic, and lots more interested. We'd sit here together, Arthur and me. I'd be darning or sewing buttons on his shirt—he used to be awful at tearing off the buttons on his shirt; I suppose because he only had that one hand after the accident—and he'd be sitting in that chair you're sitting in, Addy, with the lamp turned on full behind him. The radio'd be going, though I don't think he paid much attention to it, and he'd be going through the album like I said. I remember the last stamp he got. He was always getting them from somewhere. It was
only last Thursday. I could even show you which one it was if you wanted to see it."

"Really, Aunt Maud," Addy said, "I don't think it matters. They're only stamps."

"Sure," Ray said, "only stamps. But go on, Aunt Maud. I'd just like to hear about it....just hear about pop."

Maud studied his face closely, hoping to learn from its shadings what his thoughts might be. But in the half-light that surrounded his face she could detect no change. He flipped over another two pages, hardly glanced at the stamps attached to the open pages, turned another page. Was he becoming suspicious? No. What she'd already said had made no impression on him. She could rattle on as she liked. She didn't matter to him, she nor her thoughts nor what became of her.

"Well," she began, an almost triumphant note swelling her voice, "I remember it just as clearly as anything that's happened since....since they found the body down by the mill. Arthur was sitting on the front porch the way he always did in the summer, waiting for Mr. Simeon to drive by from the depot with the mail, waiting and rocking, and rocking and waiting..."
I

Mr. Doynebee rocked away the morning on the front porch. He shouldn't have. The roses needed to be watered, watered by hand the way Netta had shown him long years before so that the blooms wouldn't be faded by the spray from the hose. For today was going to be another scorcher. Already little heat waves were bounding off the mountains that girded the town. The yellowing stacks of lumber across the street in the lumber yard were shrinking under the steady glare of the sun. He must surely get at the roses before the crippling heat of the afternoon made watering almost useless.

With his crippled hand Mr. Doynebee pulled out his watch. The mail train should have passed through Milltown long before this. Mr. Simeon should have passed the house both going and coming. A man certainly couldn't set his watch by either the train or Mr. Simeon any more. They both took their time, were both utterly unconcerned how many people they left waiting.

Mr. Doynebee grew impatient. The stamp surely ought to be here today. Over two weeks ago he'd sent for it, and two days in a row now he'd hung around the house waiting for it. Probably the last day he'd ever wait for a stamp too, what with the balance left in the bank down to $73.29. And what decent stamp could he buy for $73.29?

But he questioned whether he ought to spend even that. Better to keep it for a rainy day. Before he was through with this world he might want that little sum badly. It would be
better to have those $75 handy than to have to go to Ray for what he might need. Of course, Ray would let him have it, would never even ask him what he needed it for, but he hated to be dependent on Ray after a lifetime of being on his own.

He sighed. $5,000 had bought so little in the long way of looking at things, even as he'd spent it, a dribble at a time. Not that he could ever have spent it all at once. The joy of looking forward to each new stamp, the whole thrill—he'd have missed it all. He'd had to make the money last as long as he could, and how well he had made it last—seven exciting, tingling years.

Momentarily he stopped rocking, canted his head to listen for the whistle of the train. No sound, nor could he have missed it either, had it come floating down the valley. He'd been listening too intently in spite of his rambling thoughts. Leaning back in the rocker, he let his mind drift off again.

Should he sell the two Confederate stamps or not? For it was foolish to think he could squeeze out of the $100 a month he got from the insurance company enough to buy any really valuable stamps. In a week or two, once he offered the Confederate stamps for sale—he knew just the market for them—the balance in the bank book would swell again. If he wanted to keep on enlarging his collection, selling them was the only sensible thing to do. But did he want to? Though if he stopped collecting, what would he do with himself? How would he fill the time that hung so
heavily on his hands, or rather the one hand that was left to him?

"Good morning, Mr. Doynebe," a sliding woman's voice called to him from the street.

Jarred out of his musings, Mr. Doynebe looked up. Carrie Jensen's wife, an over-worked, hair-always-out-of-place woman, was calling to him from the sidewalk.

"How are you?" he called back to her.

"Hot and tired. Don't I look it? Right in the middle of canning peaches."

"You'd better come up on the porch a minute and cool off," he suggested. "The peaches can wait five minutes."

"Thank you, but really I can't spare even that few."

Nevertheless, in spite of her protestations she plodded up the walk and sat down like a stone on the top step.

"You haven't seen Benjy, have you?" she asked, brushing stray hair out of her face.

"He's off again, is he?" Mr. Doynebe asked.

"Wouldn't you just know it?" Mrs. Jensen complained. "Just when I've got my hands full with three crates of peaches, there he's wandered off and I have to drop everything. I told the older boys they had to look after him, but telling a boy anything is just so much wasted breath. I don't know why we couldn't have had a girl. They're always so handy about looking after babies. I imagine Addy's found that out with Rosie. You can't expect a boy to be very motherly, I suppose."
"No, I guess not," Mr. Doynebee agreed with her, more to be conversational than sympathetic.

"If it weren't for all these lumber trucks coming and going, I wouldn't get so upset," Mrs. Jensen rattled on, "but with the mill working full blast, and all the lumber that's trucked out of here—well, you just can't be sure one of them won't hit Benjy. He hasn't got sense enough yet to stay off the streets. Darts back and forth across the road like a sparrow, too interested in whatever he's doing to pay any attention to what's coming."

"The rest of your boys managed to grow up without being hit," Mr. Doynebee said.

"Yes, and thank God for it too. I worried myself sick about all of them, and for all I know I had a right to. And now Benjy."

She stood up, straightening out her peach-stained apron, tucking in some of the loose strands of her hair.

"Well, no use sitting here talking to you when he's the Lord knows where."

"He's probably all right," Mr. Doynebee said. "Nobody's been hit by a truck around here for years."

"Yes," Mrs. Jensen said, plowing down the walk, "but I won't feel safe till I've got him back in my own yard, where I can keep an eye on him from the kitchen window."

"Goodbye," Mr. Doynebee called after her.

"Goodbye," she called back. "How are the roses?"

Without waiting for an answer she was off up the street, calling for Benjy in exasperated wails.
He'd forgotten about the roses. He'd better get at them.

But the train ought to be here any minute now, and Mr. Simeon ought to be driving by. He got up, knocked out the ashes from his pipe on the porch railing and sauntered down the walk.

Listening closely, he could perceive no sound from the direction of the railroad station in Milltown, no low moan from the train that must surely be passing down from Drummond. Well, he'd go back to the porch, sit in the rocker a few minutes more and then get at the roses.

Back on the porch he heard heavy footsteps in the living room, steps that told him Naud must be through with her morning kitchen work, that now she'd begin dusting the living-room, whether it needed dusting or not. He ought to be grateful for the care she took of him, he thought, but he wasn't. He wasn't sure that he even liked her. That she was his sister meant little to him. She was simply part of the family, one of those people a man takes for granted because he has to. Walking away on the porch, he listened to her clumping foot-falls that jarred the house whenever she took a step. Netta had never walked like that. Netta's step had been light, so light he was never conscious of it as she walked about the house, even when she was tired—and she must often have been tired.

Naud came to the door, peered out through the screen at him, her dust rag draped against her protruding midriff. Mr. Doynbee eyed her laconically, half suspecting why she was watching him,
but not caring enough to greet her.

"It seems hotter today already than it did this early yesterday, don't you think, Arthur?" she said, pushing open the door the better to see him.

"I guess so," Mr. Doynebe said. "I haven't been paying much attention to the heat. Heat's heat, you know."

"The radio said it would be over 100 today."

"The radio's always saying something."

Hand squeezed around in back of him, sat down cozily in the other chair, a large chair, but no larger than she needed. She was a heavy woman with large arms, large legs, large body. But not large hands to match. Rather peculiarly, her hands were small with stumpy fingers, pudgy in the knuckles, hands that were handy with a needle or a paring knife. Not a handsome woman, but not plain either, considering her age. As a girl she'd been rather pretty, except for her eyes, which were too wide apart, too staring. Her hair had been pretty too, Setta had always said, but now it was streaky with gray and white and was matted down on her head with a hair-net she didn't need. Sitting in her chair, she seemed as old as she was, well past sixty-five, a few years older than Mr. Doynebe, her face wrinkled, her complexion sallow, her lips drooping. Strange that they, who'd never been close to each other, Mr. Doynebe thought, should now be sharing the same house, each performing the every day duties someone else in their lives had performed previous to seven years ago.
But Maud had taken over only Netta's every day duties, the daily round of housework that had to be taken care of. Mr. Doynbee presumed that he'd done little more for Maud, substituted somehow or other for her husband, who'd died several years before Netta, and furnished the wherewithal which kept them both going. Maud was so unlike Netta, who'd never worn a hair-net; who'd never made unnecessary comments about the weather, merely to have something to say; who'd never brought a dust rag out on the front porch with her when she wanted to sit down for a bit. And Netta's eyes, unlike Maud's, were always expressionful, never brimful of blankness, as Maud's were so much of the time.

There was just such a look in her eyes now. A faded hazel, they looked straight ahead of her, looked but saw nothing. The yellowing lumber across the street meant nothing to her, as it still did to him--spelled out good times; good meals on the tables of the mill-workers, warm clothes for their families, gasoline in their automobiles, fuel in their cellars. All Maud saw was the lumber itself, not what it stood for in terms of sweat and aching muscle. The life of a mill town just wasn't hers. She'd transplanted herself into it too late in life. What roots she'd pushed down into the life of the town were shallow roots, running along the surface, not anchored deep as his were.

He knew what she was thinking. She was waiting for the train to come too. She knew what to expect when he sat rocking on the front porch in the morning. Too many times he'd sat and rocked
on the front porch for her not to know. But why she looked forward to the arrival of a new stamp as much as he, he didn't know. He'd never thought much about it, not caring particularly about any of the why's of Maud's life.

"It's late this morning, isn't it?" Maud asked.

"What's late?"

"You know what I mean. The mail, of course."

"No later than usual," Mr. Doynbee said.

"Funny thing the trains are always so late nowadays," Maud said. "They used to be always on time."

"Expecting a letter?" Mr. Doynbee said, knowing as well as he knew anything that she wasn't.

There were few people to whom Maud wrote or from whom she might reasonably be expecting a letter. What a dried-up life she must have lived, when you came to think about it, Mr. Doynbee thought. All those years she and her husband had lived in that town in Idaho and yet she didn't write to a soul in it now that she'd left it for good. Too bad she hadn't had children, someone to take a wholesome interest in now that she was old and needed someone to be close to. For she wasn't close to him, that was certain.

"Why don't you answer me?" he heard her asking him, her voice higher than usual.

"Answer what?" he asked innocently.

"I said, who'd be writing to me?"

"Oh," he said. "I was thinking, I guess. I don't know who'd
be writing. Could be anyone."

"Arthur Doynbee," Maud said, trying to hide her irritation, 
"you ought to be out watering those roses instead of sitting here 
thinking. If that's what you are doing."

"What else would a man be doing who's doing nothing?" he 
asked her blandly.

"Don't try to pull the wool over my eyes, Arthur Doynbee," 
Maud said, out of temper and trying to hide it. "You're waiting 
for the train to come in with the morning mail yourself."

Mr. Doynbee smiled. Not a broad smile. Only the suggestion 
of a smile, the kind he used to smile when Netta read his mind 
to him. She was no fool, Maud. He had to admit that.

"Aren't you?" she demanded.

"And if I am?"

"You don't have to admit it, if you don't want to," Maud 
said, giving her chair a jerk, "but train or no train, you ought 
to be watering those roses."

"I'll get at them."

"They ought to be watered before it gets too hot," she ad-
vised. "Netta always said--"

"You don't have to tell me what Netta always said," Mr. 
Doynbee interrupted her. "I know what she said about the roses. 
I remember everything she ever said about the roses. And I'll 
get at them."

A lot she knew about Netta. He'd been married to her, lived
with her, slept with her, eaten with her for twenty-seven years. When it came to something Netta had said or done or believed she could keep her mouth shut. He didn't need any reminders from her.

"Addy called up a while ago," Maud changed the subject. "Joe's started a new job, a big one this time that ought to last some time."

Mr. Deynbee was not particularly pleased at this bit of news. He was ashamed that he wasn't. Addy was his own daughter, his own flesh and blood. He'd begotten her, as willful a thing as he'd ever done. And he'd loved her as a child, when Netta had kept her neat and clean, her hair in long curls and always a ribbon tied in just the right place. But even then he'd had doubts about her. She was too unlike Netta. Her eyes, unlike Netta's, had always been dull, unresponsive most of the time, rather like Maud's, but unlike Maud's in that they never fired to anything. Even the day she was married, her eyes had remained lusterless, no glisten in them. Still Addy must have something or Joe would never have married her. It was likely she suffered in comparison with Netta, who had always come first with him. But how could Addy have been Netta's daughter? That was what always bothered him. So, he wasn't glad that Addy had called up. Addy only annoyed him with her insufficiencies, reminded him of Netta more than he wanted to be reminded any more.

"What else did she have to say?" he asked, trying to display a trace of interest.
"Nothing much," Maud had to admit. "You know Addy. She's never sure of anything. She hasn't been feeling any too well."

"The usual symptoms?" Mr. Doynebee asked.

"Well, possibly," Maud said, catching his meaning. "But it's too early to tell for sure."

It would be just like Addy to have another baby, Mr. Doynebee thought, as if four children weren't enough for a family with Joe's income. Not that it was all Addy's fault. Joe was just as responsible. Neither one of them seemed to have much sense about birth control, a technique Mr. Doynebee knew very little about himself, never having had to make much use of it. In his day contraception had been something more to wish for than to do anything positive about. But if he were a young man and in Joe's position—well, the least a man could do was find out about such things. But he couldn't be too hard on Joe. He'd been a young man once himself with strong urges and for a while without much self-control. Probably it was mere luck that Netta had been unable to have any more children after May was born.

One of those physiological facts he'd never understood. Why some women like Addy were always having children, when women like Netta, who'd have liked another baby, had had only two was one of those mysteries he never hoped to get to the bottom of. It was just one more way in which Addy was unlike Netta.

"If it's kids she wants," Mr. Doynebee said, "she'd better have them and be done with it, but you'd think four would be enough"
He stood up, stretched a little.

"Four's not too many," Maud said a little wistfully.

He felt sorry for Maud then, one of the few times he ever had. Maybe if Maud had had a child or two, she'd have been different, had more fire, haven't been less like a machine.

"Four's not too many," he said, his voice less assertive, "but five are—for people like Joe and Addy."

"Just the same," Maud said, "I don't think you ought to criticize them for something they can't help."

"Maybe I shouldn't," Mr. Doynebee said, though he felt certain having too many children could be helped, if the proper steps were taken. "Maybe you're right," He walked down to the yard. "I guess that train's never coming."

"You're going to water the roses now?"

Yes, he was going to water the roses, damn them. Why did she always have to remind him of the roses? Not just this morning, but every morning. Winter was a continual pleasure simply because Maud couldn't remind him of the roses. Once he had them hilled up in the fall, she quit harping about the roses. More than once he'd caught himself wishing they'd all freeze during the winter so that he'd never be cursed with roses again. But only momentarily, since he knew that if they all froze out, he'd buy another two dozen to replace them. For they'd been Netta's roses, one of the tiny dreams of the few tiny dreams she'd ever dreamed, that he knew anything about, which had come true.
Thinking of Netta, he forced a jovial tone into his voice when he answered. "Yes, ma'am, I'm going to water the roses. Right this minute. In half an hour those roses will be so wet they'll catch cold."

Why he spoke so foolishly he didn't know. Ordinarily he was so matter-of-fact he hardly knew when he talked at all. And then every once in a while, he said something silly like that, the way he'd used to talk to Netta, when they were first courting and he'd never been sure she'd have him or not. If she'd screwed up her face into a quizzical smile, if she'd laughed outright at him, then he'd known that she really cared for him, wanted to be with him. At least that was what he'd told himself.

But Maud didn't laugh or screw up her face into a quizzical smile.

"Don't get them too wet now," she hollered after him as he rounded the corner of the house.

Instantly the streak of silliness that had come over him vanished. Count on Maud to add one straw too many to whatever a man undertook to do, that one extra straw that tried a man's patience until he thought he could stand no more. He wondered how Earl had ever stood living with her all those years they'd been married. Poor Earl, to whom she'd always spoken as if he didn't have sense enough to button his own pants. Netta had never spoken like that. Netta had known when enough was enough.
would have done it better.

bad wherever she did he had to put up with, and that worse
how well she did anything for him, it didn't matter, that good an
home, always that would happen to them, that feeling that no matter
surrounded, and that man a struggle who spent most of the time at
year out, in the same house with a man who kept himself a total
matter how many exercises she found for him, to live year in
been so close of ketter and another, but it was maddening. No
was easy enough to understand. He could she'd ever known how
another would let nobody get past it, least of all her. Oh, if
there was always that barrier, between those, and
she'd been all those years,

another at any rate, who was still living with ketter, dear as
become bother and elder, didn't seem to matter much. Not to

things, but after all the years they'd lived away from each other,

They were bother and elder, and that should count for some-

They'd tried-well, she had at first-to find something in common.

sheat between them, no secrets to share, nothing in common.

with a dumb man, someone you can't talk to; there was no in-

ever since she'd moved in to keep house for him. Like this
nothing irritate her, but another did, he'd been irritate her
did she let him irritate her? at her age she should let no one
of open antagonism. She did the always irritate her so. and any

sighed one the ordinarily paraded in front of her brother to one

house. her Satisfied face changing from the expression of forced
wedged in her chair, had watched him round the corner of the
Well, Netta hadn't been perfect. She'd had her faults like everyone else. And even if she had been almost perfect, she'd not been able to do much for Addy, poor thing. She'd failed Addy, and nobody could help but admit that. If Netta hadn't been so certain sure of herself all the time, maybe she'd have been able to see why Addy had such a hard time of it, why she floundered and groped all her life. Maybe she'd have been able to build Addy up in some way, not let her drift along into marrying Joe, though the Lord knew nobody else ever was interested in her.

Maud twisted her nose into a sniff, a habit she indulged, when alone, to indicate her superiority to the world around her, to prove to herself her complete mastery of the situation. Nobody need think she hadn't seen through Netta, or that she didn't see through Arthur either. In spite of his secrecy about everything he did she hadn't lived with him now for over six years not to be able to figure out what went on behind that innocent face of his. It took time to figure out what went on in Arthur's mind, but if you analyzed him long enough, if you waited for him to leave a track or two behind him, you'd find out whatever you wanted to know. Like his sitting here on the front porch this morning waiting for the train to come in, yet pretending to be sitting thinking. Yell, he might have been thinking, but he wasn't thinking about anything except the mail. She'd seen him wait for the mail before this, sit on the porch, if it was summer, smoke the hours around until he heard the train
whistle up the valley. And then sit some more until Mr. Simeon drove by on his way from the station. Oh, she'd seen him, how he'd get up, knock the ashes out of his pipe, look around to see that she wasn't watching him and then sneak off to the post-office. She knew that for too. Another stamp. Arthur couldn't fool her.

She wondered what kind of stamp this new one would be, large or small, green, blue, red, violet or what color, wondered what country it might be from—and especially what Arthur had paid for it. Reckon closely as she might on the basis of what she read secretly in his stamp catalogues, she could never be certain of the selling price, since the catalogues gave only approximate valuations. But that was close enough for her to estimate how much of the compensation money was left in the bank. For the compensation money was all the money Arthur had in the world. From what other source could he have gotten the money to buy stamps that ranged in price anywhere from five to a hundred dollars? The one time she'd had a look at Arthur's bank book, that spring several years ago when she'd found it while house-cleaning his bedroom, her guesses had been confirmed. She'd taken the trouble that day—Arthur not being likely to pop in on her at any inconvenient minute—to copy out the withdrawals so that she might compare them later, sum by sum, with the figures on the little score sheet on which she'd jotted down her own idea of the values of the more important stamps. It wasn't
just coincidence that withdrawal after withdrawal had tallied
with her guess values.

Hunt as she might, she'd never been able to find the bank
book again. Arthur must keep it on him all the time, sleep
with it even. Or perhaps he suspected her. Well, what if he
did? He had no right to spend the compensation money like that,
fritter away the whole of the $5,000, when who knows, he might
need it to keep body and soul alive some day or need to help
Addy or May out of trouble or a hundred and one things. But
she doubted if Arthur suspected her. He never acted as if he
did. She never let him see—at least she hoped she hadn't—
that she'd become as absorbed as he in the filling up of those
blank squares in the album, that she felt as possessive about
it as he.

And why shouldn't she? Hadn't the album belonged in the
first place to their father, her father as well as his? It was
only an accident that the album had come into Arthur's hands
when their father had finally died. It could just as well have
come into hers, and it would have, if she'd only known as much
about stamps then as she knew now. Had she known and had she
got hold of the album then, those stamps, especially the two
Confederate stamps, would have gone on the market years ago, not
sat between the covers of that album year after year. She could
have used the money then, and she could use it now. Arthur
might be content simply to sit here in Bonner until he died, but
she wasn't. There were a lot of places she still wanted to see, and with the money those two stamps alone would bring in, she could go a long way and back.

Well, she'd get hold of the album one of these days. Provided Ray or Addy didn't want it. But she'd see to it that they didn't want it. Already she'd planted little hints. Not hints that she wanted the album. But hints that the album didn't amount to anything more than a time-killer for Arthur. After all, he had to have something to keep himself busy at, didn't he, she'd told Addy more than once, and Addy had always agreed with her. Poor Addy, who hardly knew enough to come in out of the rain, who was too stupid to imagine a square of perforated paper could be as valuable as currency or stocks and bonds. There was nothing to worry about from Addy, who'd probably give her the album without a thought as some little token of gratitude for taking care of her father for so many years. And she had taken good care of Arthur. Nobody else would have done for him as she'd done—and got so little for it.

She deserved something for all the years she'd slaved away in this house, and the little bit of spending money that Arthur could give her every month wasn't compensation enough. She could have made a lot more than that if she'd stayed on in Idaho keeping house for that grump of a lawyer and had a nest egg to fall back on whenever he passed away. What would she have when Arthur went but the clothes on her back and the little money Earl
She'd figure out what to do about key, 
and it wasn't just be that anything had told him about the strange, 
even a hasty single-thought of the album that it was valuable. 
I've just enough general information about strange to know after 
the episode sort like appetizer of the album, that it was valuable. 
She should be, she deserved to be compensated for her time and 
outstanding, the plane she got the album. It was only fair that
the show pieces of the neighborhood, another evidence of Netta's superiority.

Netta. Maud turned away from the window. Netta's presence seeped out of everything inside the house and out. She was fed up with Netta. Thoughts of Netta spoiled every decent thought she'd ever had in the house. She wished she'd never heard of Netta. The only thing Netta hadn't known intimately in the house was the stamp album. At least Netta couldn't spoil that. The stamp album was purely Arthur's—and hers.

Thinking about the stamp album again, Maud forgot about Netta. After all there was another stamp to revel in, once it came. She wondered what it could be. A wave of expectation so great she could hardly contain herself, welled up within her. What if she should go fetch the mail herself today? It wouldn't be the first time she'd gone off to the post office down by the mill to fetch it, though ordinarily she was content to let Arthur go for it. He was so busy now with the roses that he might not hear the whistle. She hadn't heard it herself, but it ought to come drifting down the valley any minute now. It might be, if she went out on the porch again, that she'd hear it, and if she did—well she'd slip off her apron and hustle off to the post office herself as soon as Mr. Simeon drove by from the train—provided Arthur didn't hear the whistle too.

Without waiting to hear the whistle or spot Mr. Simeon's car, she slipped off her apron and clumped back to the front porch,
where she sank back into her chair. Rocking back and forth, she forgot about Arthur, Netta, the house and all of Netta's things, the heat—forgot everything but the album, which already she felt belonged to her. The long, drawn-out mean of the train whistle, as it undulated down the valley, came almost as a shock to her, when finally she heard it, not once but several times. But she was out of the chair by the time the last ripple of sound had floated over the town. It was time to set off for the post office—or would be as soon as Mr. Simeon had driven by, and that she didn't need to see. All she needed to know was whether Arthur had heard the whistle or not.

Back in the kitchen, she stood by the side of the window so that Arthur, in case he should turn around, wouldn't see her spying on him. Pushing the curtain aside from the window frame just enough to have a clear view of the rose bed and Arthur, she peeped out. There he was, pulling the hose between the bushes, careful not to bruise the base of the plants. He couldn't have heard the whistle. But he might be moving the hose in order to water another part of the bed while he was on his way to the post office. Holding her breath, she watched him place the hose just where he wanted it, saw him straighten up and step carefully out of the bed. Momentarily he glanced toward the house, and she let the curtain fall back into its natural folds. For a moment she stood rigid against the wall, afraid to look out again. But only for a moment. Anxiety and greed getting the better of
her judgment, she pulled back the curtain again and peered through the open space between curtain and window frame. There he still was, oblivious to her, to the faded sound of the whistle—oblivious to everything but the roses. He hadn't heard the train. It was safe to go to the post office herself.

Putting her hair into place underneath the hair-net—no matter how quivery she might feel inside, it would never do to appear on the street as if she were in a minor panic—she hurried to the front door, shut it gently behind her, waited a few seconds on the porch to hear if Arthur's foot-steps might be rounding the house, and then, satisfied that they weren't, she lunged down the front steps, gained the street as fast as she could without seeming rushed, and set off for the post office, noticing as she went up the sultry street that just ahead of her and going in the same direction was Mr. Simeon's car.

III

A block from the post office, though she'd been walking at a normal pace ever since she'd passed the houses next to Arthur's and was sure that by no stretch of the neck could he see her, Maud told herself to slow down. She must be entirely composed when she asked Mr. Simeon for the mail. In no way must she indicate to him that this morning's mail was of more than ordinary interest to her, that she was beating Arthur to bat, that she'd
went in.

planted in her mind, she opened the oaken screen door and
she didn't have to read, those considerations finally re-
that revealing the mail was only an unpleasant chore she
stopped, under the word, she meant appear as calm and
shady the world. To her, Eileen the nurse appeared as calm and
sensed she'd already known her of woman, Mrs. Eileen was cer-
stamped all over town, that she knew of all the
e was not let to Mrs. Eileen expected any she'd come to the pool
officer, let him worry anything out of her.
ought to enter, hand hesitated. Whatever she said
up in front of her, the eavesdropped through every
the eaves, turned pulling that was the door office veered

*shamed herself*

*gaudily, she could until the opened it and she could see the
trum on her heels and go back into the house, and then went on
her thinking. She'd hand the letter to him, any other
proceed to him that she knew what was on the mind, that he was*

*excuse for getting it necessary as she handed it to him, just*

*could on the way home and then give it to him, manuvestuating some*

*protested it actually came today, look it over as well as she*

*cooperation in any other. All she did would be to get the letter*

*such right to reach the mail at any time. It meant as if she were*

*erasing one earingly unregistered eider another. She had no*

*not that she felt guilty. Had told herself secretly*

*earily they can guilty acknowledge*

eneared out of the house like a mechanical boy in order to
No one else was in the building, thank heaven. She could get her business over with in a hurry and get outdoors again. But she reckoned without Mr. Simson, who almost as soon as she shut the screen door behind her, popped his head out the parcel post window.

"That you, Maud?" he inquired, lowering his head so that he could see her clearly through the upper half of his bifocals.

Why he never called her by her married name she had no idea. She was certainly not familiar enough with him for him to call her Maud. But hardly anyone in Bonner called her by her married name. She was just Maud, old Mr. Doynbee's sister, who kept house for him. She had no more individuality than that in Bonner, and she resented it.

"It's me, all right," she answered, trying to sound as pleasant as possible.

"I suppose you came for the mail," Mr. Simson said, hurrying on before she could tell him whether she had or not. "Well, it just got in, and I ain't had more than five minutes to sort it out. I ain't found nothing for you yet. Or for your brother, either," he added rather archly.

"I'm in no hurry," Maud said.

"That's good," Mr. Simson said, "because I ain't in a hurry either. When I first got this job, I used to break my neck to get the mail all sorted out and stuffed in the right boxes, scared to death I wouldn't please the folks around here. But after a
while I got so I let them please me, not me please them. Oh, I get the work done up as fast I can. I know folks want their mail as fast as they can get it. But just the same I don't break my neck any more getting it sorted out. It ain't that important."

"No, of course not," Maud said, wondering why in the world he didn't pull his crane's neck back out of the parcel post window and start sorting the letters.

"You don't come much for the mail yourself," he commented, lethargically sorting out envelopes.

"No," Maud answered. "I'm usually too busy in the house to take the time."

Little by little she maneuvered toward the parcel post window so that she might watch Mr. Simeon, as he peered, his balding head up-tilted in order to see through the lower half of his spectacles, at one envelope after another.

"Yup," Mr. Simeon gobbled on, "Arthur usually comes himself to get the mail. Always has, even before his wife died. Always used to pick it up on his way home to lunch. She wasn't much of a one to come after the mail—only when he was sick. Wonderful woman, Mrs. Doymbee."

"Yes, she certainly was," Maud said, sharply eyeing each envelope Mr. Simeon picked up, but trying to conceal her inquisitive natures behind a mask of disinterestedness. Setta'd fooled him too, she thought, just as she'd fooled everyone in this dumpy little town.
"Arthur's already been down once this morning," Mr. Simeon said.

Maud stared at the babbling little man. This was news. She hadn't been aware that Arthur'd left the yard. But she mustn't let Mr. Simeon know that she hadn't known.

"Yes, I know," she told Mr. Simeon, somewhat too hastily, she thought. "But he's busy watering the roses now and he wants to finish before lunch, so I said I'd come after the mail for him."

"Oh?" Mr. Simeon said, as much as to say he didn't believe her. He was a shrewd little man, she had to admit that, but then most gossips she'd ever known had been shrewd. "Well, I hope I won't disappoint him."

It seemed to Maud that Mr. Simeon emphasized "him" more than he needed to, and she turned away from the window, pretending to read the airmail regulations which were thumb tacked up near at hand.

"You expecting anything in particular?" Mr. Simeon said presently.

"Expecting anything?" Maud repeated after him, glad for a cue to look back into the room behind the parcel post window.

"Anything important, I mean," Mr. Simeon plied her.

"Why, no, not that I know of," she replied blandly, somewhat nonplussed by his excessive snoopiness.

"I mean your brother," Mr. Simeon went on, stuffing envelopes into the proper boxes. "Arthur seemed sort of excited
this morning, as if something big was coming. I was just wondering.

He blinked at her so oddly that again Maud turned away from the window.

"You're just imagining things this morning, Mr. Simeon," she said. "The heat must be getting you down."

Mr. Simeon snorted, a queer, little dried-up snort that she wanted to laugh at, but didn't dare to. "Heat? Not me. It can't get too hot for me, Maud. No, sirree, it can't get too hot for me."

For pity's sake, Maud fumed, why couldn't he shut up and find the letter. It was bound to be there. Why didn't he find it, give it to her and let her get out? What if Arthur should pop in the door? It was only too likely he might. Then what would she do? And right in front of Mr. Simeon, meaning right in front of all Bonner.

"There's no mail for us?" she suggested, hoping to spur him on.

"Just you be patient. I'll get to it. It's first letter to my hand that gets first into the box. And there's plenty of letters left. You're sure there's nothing Arthur's especially looking for?"

"Well," Maud temporized, "he might be looking for a letter from Ray. We haven't heard from him for a week or two."

"Fine boy, Ray," Mr. Simeon told her. "Great boy. He's sure been a credit to your brother and Mrs. Doynbee. It's a
pity she couldn't have lived to see how well Ray's done. Well, if it's a letter from Ray Arthur wants, I just hope there's one in this batch."

Thank God for that lie, Maud told herself. It had all the earmarks of the truth and seemed to convince Mr. Simeon. But gossips like him often pretended to believe what one told them; she knew that from long experience. Whether she'd convinced him or not, there was no way of actually knowing. At any rate she'd shut him up sufficiently so that he was applying himself to the bag of letters, the contents of which he'd scattered, willy-nilly all over the long table behind the parcel post window.

Letter after letter she watched him pick up, squint at and thrust into the correct box, but she could spot nothing that looked like a letter from a stamp selling concern. Maybe the letter wasn't in this morning's mail. Maybe they'd have to wait, she and Arthur, till the afternoon mail or even until tomorrow. She hoped not. She might not be able to slip away from Arthur so easily the next time.

"Well, well, now," Mr. Simeon interrupted her reverie.

"Maybe this is the letter you were expecting."

He handed her a business envelope, one that looked disarmingly like what she expected, but whether it was or not, she couldn't tell. For as she took the letter from Mr. Simeon's wizened hand, she realized that she'd left her glasses at home and that she couldn't read the return address on the envelope, not even if life depended upon reading it.
"I can't tell," she had to say to Mr. Simeon, "without my glasses I can't see a word of print."

"Well, I got mine on," Mr. Simeon said cordially, taking the envelope from her and holding it out at arm's length. "Only an ad of some sort. From a mail-order house, I guess."

The snoopy, Maud thought, but even so she was glad he'd read the return address for her. It was maddening to be here in the post office with a letter right in her hand and not be able to see what was printed on it. But perhaps it was just as well. Her inability to read without her glasses should certainly go far to squelch any false notions Mr. Simeon might be building up.

"I suppose that's all then," she said, turning as if to go.

"Oh, my, no," Mr. Simeon reassured her. "There's quite a lot left. No need to hurry off until I've looked through them all... is there?"

"I suppose not."

And so, more gladly than she wanted him to suspect, she clumped back to the window, where she stood watching his shriveled little fingers clutch one letter after another. The waiting grew tedious. As letter after letter went into box after box and still no letter for Arthur turned up, she began to grow nervous. She wanted to get out of the post office, get back to the house, before Arthur took it into his head to stop watering those plagued roses of Netta's and come meandering into the building. And of course this snoopy little man would tell Arthur
the next time he came in that she'd been in and would inquire
about this and that in an effort to worm out of Arthur what she
might have been after. Well, one thing she could be sure of,
Arthur wouldn't tell him anything. Arthur might be angry with
her for coming after the letter, but he'd never let Mr. Simeon
or anyone else know it. That went on in his own home he kept to
himself; family disagreements weren't for the consumption of the
whole town.

"Well, now, here's another," Mr. Simeon said at last, and
as she looked at him, there he was reading the face of the en-
velope for all the world as if it were addressed to him. The
hardness of her wrinkled face must have warned him he was de-
cidedly over-stepping the bounds of conventional courtesy, for
he said, almost apologetically, as he handed the envelope to her,
"I was thinking, since you ain't got your glasses, that maybe I
could be of some assistance."

"I can put my fingers on them the minute I get in the house,"
she told him with some asperity, aware that for the moment she
had the upper hand. "Thank you just the same."

"I hope that's what you was looking for," Mr. Simeon said
hopefully.

"Since I wasn't looking for anything in particular, I can't
say as to that. Is this all, Mr. Simeon?"

"I guess so, Maude." He turned back to what few letters re-
mained on the table behind him. "Yup, I guess that's all."
"Then good morning, Mr. Simeon."

Feeling at last as if she had mastered the situation, Maud whirled about, determined to sweep out of the building as grandly as any woman in a house dress can.

"Hey, hold on," Mr. Simeon called after her. "That there letter's registered."

Her grand dame manner collapsed, registered. She should have thought of that: if only she'd brought her glasses with her, she'd have seen at once that the letter was registered. She would have prepared some likely story that would have convinced Mr. Simeon that he should let her have it, whether letting her have it was against regulations or not. Now things were gummed up for sure. Mr. Simeon would certainly not let her have the letter, which would have to remain in the post office until Arthur came for it, and when he came, Mr. Simeon would surely tell him she'd been in for the mail herself. That mightn't Arthur suspect then? Oh, why hadn't she thought things through carefully before she came barging after the letter, eager as Addy's children to rush to the corner store for some penny candy?

"Registered?" She tried to laugh at herself. "Of course it is. Without my glasses...."

Feeling as if she were returning a passport into heaven, she handed the letter back to him.

"I don't suppose you could let me take it anyway?" she asked, making a strenuous effort to conceal her chagrin behind
a supplicating manner that wouldn't seem too much like sheer beggary.

"Well," Mr. Simeon told her, lowering his head in order to stare at her through the upper half of his enigmatic bifocals, "it's not according to regulations. It's sure against the rules."

Seeing that he meant to be a stickler for red tape, Kaud decided to face up to the situation as brazenly as possible, get to the door in as queenly a manner as she could muster and get out. What she would tell Arthur she had no idea, but something would come to her, once she was in the street and out from under Mr. Simeon's beady, little blue eyes.

"Well," she said pleasantly, yet pointedly, "there's none of us can fight the government, I guess. Good morning, Mr. Simeon."

She was half way through the door before he called her back.

"Hold on, Kaud," she heard him call through the parcel post window.

Turning, she beheld him beckoning to her mysteriously with the forefinger of his right hand.

"Come on back," he whispered to her. "What the government don't know don't hurt them. Now you just sign for this letter right here," he indicated the proper dotted line on the proper form, "just sign Arthur's name, and nobody will be none the wiser. Everybody knows that Arthur ain't able to sign his name so good since the accident. Many's the time I've signed his name for him myself right here at this window. You just sign right here,
and don't tell nobody. Ordinarily I wouldn't do such a thing—and if it got around town, I'd hear about it. But I don't see no sense in not accommodating Arthur, what with all he's been through. And anyway we're all honest, the three of us."

"Just show me the line," Maud said, afraid that in spite of his anti-regulation cordiality he might suddenly be overwhelmed by public servant qualms.

"Right here," Mr. Simeon pointed to the dotted line with his thumb. "Right here."

Hastily Maud scribbled Arthur's name, feeling like a forger, but not ashamed of the feeling. The letter firmly between her fingers, she bee-lined for the door.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Simeon. Arthur will surely appreciate this little favor."

"Not at all, not at all," Mr. Simeon said as she went out the door. "Anything for an old friend. A pleasant good morning to you. Drop in again some time."

Outside in the street the heat of the high morning sun seemed cool in comparison with the stuffiness of the post office. Or was the change in atmosphere due more to her escape from Mr. Simeon? One way or another it didn't matter, for here in her hand was the letter she'd gone through so much to get. Even her fingers, worn with the housework of over forty years, could tell that within this envelope of heavy business paper was another envelope of oily transparent paper in which had been inserted a
stamp that was worth good hard money, a stamp that one of these
days, how or when she didn't know, was going to be hers, going
to be hers, going to be hers.

Her heavy footsteps along the sidewalk seemed to pick up
the words and chant them back to her as she walked along, a chant
that temporarily drowned out all thought of Arthur and what she
would tell him, once she got home. But every step that took her
nearer the house forced her to think about Arthur. What was she
going to tell him?

The right words seemed to elude her. Whatever story she
rehearsed as she walked solidly along the street seemed almost
as transparent as the oily paper envelope within the letter she
was carrying. She could tell him she'd simply felt like taking
a walk this morning, and that when she'd noticed he hadn't heard
the train whistle, busy as he was with the roses, she'd de-
cided she might as well walk round by the post office herself,
save him a trip. It was a good opportunity to pay a call on
Mr. Simeon, ask after his wife and his children, whom she hadn't
seen in a long while, pick up any stray gossip that might be
floating about. For Arthur knew what a gossip Mr. Simeon was.
And then give Arthur the letter.

But no, that wouldn't do. Arthur knew as well as she did
that she hadn't the slightest interest in Mr. Simeon or his
family, and to say that she felt like taking a walk would be
nothing but a joke. Arthur knew only too well that she never
walked anywhere if she could help it.
Well, what would she say then? That she was expecting some mail herself? Then Arthur would wonder what mail she was counting on, would look through her with those flinty gray eyes of his, say nothing, just look.

Better not to say anything, she decided, just walk up to him, give him the letter and say nothing. Let him think what he liked. Back in the house she could watch him from the kitchen window, as he opened the envelope out by the rose bed. Never so much as give him a hint that she could hardly wait to see the stamp herself.

What a shame it was she'd gone off without her glasses. If only she had them on, perhaps she'd be able to discover something about this stamp, find out at least what dealer Arthur had been dickering with. Looking up and down the street to see that no one might be watching her, she held the letter up at arm's length toward the sun, hopeful she might detect something through the heavy business paper. Yes, sure enough, her squinting eyes told her, there was another squarish envelope within the outer envelope, but beyond that she could tell nothing. Nor could she read the dealer's name and address in the upper left hand corner. The blurred letters mocked her, danced arrogantly to and fro, as much as to tell her she was a fool if she thought she could decipher them. Well, they needn't act so smart. Once she got on her glasses, they'd calm down and dance to her tune. Before she gave the letter to Arthur, she'd look those letters over long
and hard, provided Arthur wasn't on the front porch when she turned up the walk.

Suddenly her heart began to thump fast and hard. What if she shouldn't give the letter to Arthur? What if she should keep it to herself, tear it open when she had a moment completely to herself, fish out the stamp and never give it to Arthur? She could keep it a while, and then, when she had a chance, turn it in to some dealer and get the money out of it, as she was going to do with every stamp in the album whenever she got it absolutely in her own hands.

But almost as soon as the thought flew into her mind, it flew out again. Arthur would find out from Mr. Simeon that she had the letter, he'd ask her what she'd done with it, and what would she tell him? He'd brand her as a thief and demand the stamp, and what could she do? He might even turn her out of the house, and then where would she go? Out to keep house for someone else, someone like that devilish old lawyer in Idaho? Live in somebody else's house like a servant? For living with Arthur did have its compensations. She did feel as if she belonged in Arthur's house. And if Arthur turned her out, she'd lose the whole of the album, that was certain, and all for one rash act. And be the talk of the town. Not that Arthur would say anything, but Mr. Simeon would put two and two together, get five instead of four in all likelihood, but get at enough of the truth to damn her in the eyes of the whole town. How could she have had
such a stupid thought? What was coming over her? She was getting
too anxious, that was sure. If she weren't careful, even Arthur
would be suspecting her. He might even tell Ray about the album,
if he hadn't already, and then everything would be lost.

No, the thing to do was to give Arthur the letter without
saying a word and then hide her time, hide it as long as she had
to, no matter how many years, hide her time and safeguard her
position in Arthur's house, whether she liked being there or not,
whether Arthur paid any attention to her or not. One of these
days he'd be gone. Occasionally she'd seen signs in him that he
was beginning to fail. She'd outlive him. She was long lasting
as nails, had years and years left in her, far more than Arthur,
even if he was younger than she. She'd outlive him yet, and in
the meantime she'd have a roof over her head, clothes on her
back and food three times a day.

As for Arthur—well, maybe it was unkind to look forward
to his death, but why not? Arthur was nothing to her, and she
was nothing to him. He could die any time he liked, and she
wouldn't feel like shedding a tear. She'd be glad when he was
gone, just as she'd be glad when she was out of the way. She
knew he'd be glad. She knew it.

Three houses away from home she sighed with relief to see
that Arthur was not on the front porch. Pressing the letter
hard between her fingers, she turned up the front walk, clumped
up the steps and entered the house, glad to be back safe within
the coolness and freshness of the living room, through which she stalked, after a moment to catch her breath, into the kitchen.

Plainly through the narrow slit she made for her eyes between curtain and window frame she could see Arthur, no longer by the rose bed but out hoeing the beans in the vegetable garden. Dropping the curtain back into place, she stood momentarily looking at the letter, its blurred printed surface leering back at her. Should she give it to him right away or wait a while? Well, why not wait, at least until she’d examined the letter with her glasses, which she found where she ordinarily left them during the day, on the ledge above the kitchen sink.

But inexplicably she decided after a spectacled glance at the envelope, the lettering of which was now completely visible and uninformative, to give the letter to Arthur at once. What did it matter to her from whom he’d bought the stamp? Leaving her glasses on the ledge where they’d be handy in case she needed to read a recipe, she clumped out through the back porch, letter in hand, shutting the screen door softly behind her. No need to attract Arthur’s attention until she had to.

IV

Mr. Doynbee had almost finished hoeing the third row of beans when he heard Maud’s heavy tread down the back steps. Steadfastly, as if his mission in life were to do nothing else, he went on hoeing, raising and lowering the tool with a rhythmic movement he
hoped would send her back in the house. But it was no use. She
was lumbering across the yard toward him. He could hear the
swish of her shoes against the grass, close cropped as it was.

"Arthur," she said, when she reached the end of the garden,
a tinge of suppressed excitement in her voice.

Mr. Doynbee went on hoeing as if he hadn't heard her.

"Arthur," she said again, her voice somewhat louder and more
energetic.

He looked up. "Yes?"

"Here's your letter."

Her announcement exuded a restrained self-satisfaction that
irked him. She'd put one over on him this time. How'd that
damned train got in without his hearing it? Well, he'd never
let her know he was irritated.

"What letter?" he asked.

"The one you've been waiting for."

"Oh, that one."

"Don't you want it?"

"Well, since you've gone to all the trouble of getting it,
I suppose I might as well take it."

Maud handed the envelope to him, her wide eyes narrowed the
better to see his reaction.

Indifferently he glanced at the envelope, positive the
letter must be the one he'd waited so impatiently for. But
though his heart twinged palpably, he kept a straight face.
Maud was the last human being to whom he'd ever expose his feel-
ings. Casually, as if the letter were only a bill and he had the
money to pay it, he thrust the envelope into his back pocket, no
easy task for his crippled hand.

"Thanks," he said.

"You're welcome," Maud answered, her voice slippery as
cake frosting.

She strolled over to the rose bed, where she pretended to
admire the roses, stroked the petals of the Sister Theresa, its
elusive loveliness harshly etched against her housework-
hardened hands. Mr. Doynbee grasped the hoe again, worked its
point about several bean plants, wanting her to trudge back
into the house so that he could pull the letter from his hand
pocket and verify its contents. But she made no effort to leave
the rose bed, merely strolled farther down its grass-clipped
edge to the opposite end, where she stopped to stroke the petals
of the President Hoover. Though he hated to do it, he decided
to clip off a bloom for her on the stray chance that she'd
retire at once to the house. Moreover, if he gave her a bloom,
she could never accuse him of being annoyed because she'd beaten
him to the post office.

Dropping the hoe between the bean rows, he picked up the
clippers, lying on the grass beside the rose bed, and leaning
over the President Hoover, he snipped off at the base of its
stem a half-opened bud, the leaves along the stem curving up-
It took me a while, but I forced myself to continue working.

...f the screen door announced that she'd gone back in the house.

whether she intended on in the yard or not. Shortly the bang phoned up the house and set to work, not bothering to notice without looking at hand, she returned to the bench, where he

bureaucracy trying to check the generalized

"But if in anything you like, I answered her, the went

and that up about better

had belonged to him, not to her. Any did she realize that

in a meet the reason, the possessive tone in her voice. Hence

before, as to her and Verma had been me intermate at the pips

Mr. Doeplage inspected. Why did she always have to mention

will be just the thing.

That long attempted, that name and had

to guide him in any thing.

I know just the case for it. What buffeted on, determined

"Sure, it's loyalty. Mr. Doeplage said. 'Sure it is.'

beating him in the mall.

We're only doing it to pretend he's not provoked with me for

you shouldn't have pedido. The whole to harass, she thought.


'I lived together had he ever produced a case especially for hand.

immediately he felt foolish. Never in all the years they'd

"Here, he said. "I thought you might like it."

the possession.
the beans until he'd finished the last row, the letter all the while singing his pocket as well as his mind. Plenty of time to open the envelope, he told himself. All day. Maud would probably be watching anyway. Of course he'd show the stamp to her eventually, but he'd let her sweat a little first. He wouldn't open the envelope until after lunch, when he could examine it closely with the magnifying glass.

But in spite of himself, his hand at length worked its way from the hoe handle to his back pocket, where with the tips of his fingers he felt the end of the envelope jutting out. He had to laugh at himself. He was acting as if he were a grade-schooler with a dime in his pocket growing hourly larger and larger as the dreary minutes crept by until school was out and he could spend it. Never before had he behaved so childishly over the arrival of a stamp, perhaps because none of the others had been the last. He was trying to prolong his pleasure, stretch it and stretch it until, if he wasn't careful, there'd be none left. Retracting his wandering hand, he applied it manfully to the handle of the hoe, which he worked determinedly down the row.

The last row hoed, he took a long look at the kitchen windows. Was Maud spying or wasn't she? Once he saw her moving past the curtains, but only once. Well, whether she was staring out at him or not, he'd just have a look at the envelope. Turning his back to the house, he pulled out the letter, held it out a long way from his eyes, so that he could read the
return address more clearly. Why hadn't he thought to stuff his glasses into his shirt pocket this morning? He might have known some such eventuality as this would arise, that he'd need his glasses more than he needed a good lunch.

After reading the address—and why he took the trouble to read it he couldn't have said; he knew the address as well as he knew his own—he peered over his shoulder at the kitchen window. Nobody there as near as he could tell. Holding the envelope up to the sun, he squinted at it, his head tilted a little to one side, the better to see through the heavy, opaque paper. A dark square outlined by the sunlight was all he could see. But it was all he wanted to see. The stamp was there.

He wormed the envelope back into his pocket, willing to wait until after lunch to open it, even if he had to open it in front of Maud. He could see her already, perched on a chair across the dining room table from him, her fleshy arms reclining on the table, her pudgy hands clamped together, a peculiar posture for a woman her size, but one long years had accustomed her to. She'd have on her glasses, the bows tucked rakishly into the gray twists of her hair, the glint in her eyes obscured by the lenses. He wondered how it had come about that the same fever over stamps that had gradually gripped him had overcome her as well. Perhaps they filled in part the huge vacuity her life seemed to him to be, almost the same kind of vacuity that hung over his, except that his was partially filled by memories such as she could never have had.
His mind clicked back to the compensation money. He ought to tell Bay what he'd done with it. Sure, Bay would be surprised when he told him where the money had gone, but he wouldn't think the old man was showing signs of old age because he'd spent a fair-sized piece of money on a stamp album. If anyone would understand the compulsion that had driven him to spend dollar after dollar on the collection, Ray would. Though he wondered himself what had made him do it—and drove away the thought as fast as he became aware of it. He'd tell Ray about the album the next time he drove in. For if something were to happen to him, Bay was the one he wanted to have the album, which left Addy out in the cold. Perhaps in all fairness he ought to tell her too. But he was damned if he would. If Bay had to share the album with Addy, that would be the end of it. As fast as she could, she'd convert her half into cash, which God knows she could make use of, and fritter it away. Not that Addy was a spendthrift. It was just that she was incapable of spending money so that she could show something for it once it was spent.

Probably the best thing to do would be to make out a list for Bay, enumerate each stamp and beside each notation write down all the pertinent information. But when and where could he do it? Instinctively he shied away from setting about the job while Addy was around. It was none of her business. She probably suspected too much already. There was no sense putting down in black-and-white information she might give her dentures to get
her hands on. Maud didn't fool him with her suppressed curiosity. Right now she was as anxious for the mail to come as he was.

He'd make out the list when she wasn't around, hide the sheets of paper—it would take a lot of paper—under the newspapers at the bottom of one of his dresser drawers, take them out only when Maud was away. The trouble was she was away so seldom. An occasional trip into Missoula to shop or to spend the afternoon with Addy. An occasional visit with one of the neighbors. Well, he'd bide his time. Sooner or later he'd get at it.

Back on the front porch he settled down in his rocking chair, resting his hand, more fatigued than he'd realized, on his lap. Rocking back and forth, he watched the passing stream of people that drifted by the house. What impelled them to come and go as they did? Did they too have stamp albums of their own, not actual stamp albums of course, but something of the nature of stamp albums which made up for the every day monotony of their lives? And if they didn't, why didn't they? What took the place of the stamp albums in their lives?

The questions puzzled him, yet he was more puzzled that he should have thought of them at all. But puzzled or not, he refused to think what might be their answers. Hard thought was wearying, especially after a man had just hoed his beans in the forenoon sun of August. If he thought at all on those questions, he'd think about them later in the day—or until some other day. He still had his stamp album and one good stamp to insert in it.
There was still something exciting to do in the world, something with which to while away the hours.

The thought that perhaps his reliance on the stamp album might prove hollow, that perhaps he'd put all his eggs in one basket, a basket with a very insecure bottom at that, flitted across his mind, but he brushed it aside as inconsequential. He wouldn't think about such things before lunch—and certainly not while he still had this new stamp to look forward to.

Only after he heard the lunch dishes rattle in the dishpan did Mr. Doynbee put down the daily paper and sneak into his bedroom, where he kept the album. This afternoon its water-splotted cover glittered more enchantingly than it ever had before, all the romance it had held for him over the past seven years concentrated into a philatelic essence. Awkwardly he tucked the book under his right armpit, clamped it tight against his side. Awkwardly he shoved into his side pocket the magnifying glass he'd found in the pawn shop in Missoula, its metal rim refreshingly cool against the still strong muscles of his thigh. Carefully he clutched the candy box in which he kept his stamp hinges and all the rest of his philatelic paraphernalia, and fully accoutred, returned to the dining room, where he unloaded everything on to the old oak table.

Seated at the table, he listened to the clink of the dishes
as Maud scowled them from dishpan to dryer. He was perfectly willing for her to see the stamp sooner or later, but some odd touch of sentimentality he was afraid to try to analyse demanded that when he first looked at this last stamp he must look at it alone. Convinced after several seconds of intense listening that Maud would be occupied in the kitchen for some time yet, he yanked the envelope from his hind pocket, pressed it hard against the surface of the table with the stub of his right arm so that he could rip it open with the maimed fingers of his left hand. The letter torn open, he shook the contents upon the table, watching breathlessly for the small inner envelope of glossy translucent paper, which contained the stamp, to fall out, and when it did, he immediately tore it open, letting the stamp flutter down gracefully upon the hard oaken table top.

For upwards of a minute he let it lie where it fell, looking and looking and looking at it before he picked it up. Little pin-pricks of delight, completely suffusing his entire nervous system, seemed to emanate from its bluish coloring, a peculiar sensation to which by now he was well conditioned, but which never before had he felt so strongly. And yet this time, though the sensation was predominantly like what he'd expected, it was different. Singled with his usual pride of ownership and aesthetic satisfaction was an underlying sadness he'd never experienced before. A wave of regret flooded over him, not regret that he had bought the stamp, but regret that never again would a long
longed-for stamp, one the buying of which had combined so much of pro and con as this one had, be his to look forward to, his finally to acquire, his to treasure.

He held the magnifying glass up toward the window, the better to see how carefully he needed to clean it. After sighting the finger marks that spotted it, he laid it down on the table again, jerked out his handkerchief and sedulously polished both surfaces of the glass. Again he held the glass up to the light. Again he set it down and polished it some more. And then after a final check, he set it down again, placed the stamp squarely in front of him at the proper distance for steady vision and raised the glass in front of it.

Under the glass the dominant bluish coloring seemed more washed out, less scintillating than it had with the naked eye. The printed words at top and bottom and along both sides seemed less linear, more worn, but that was to be expected, since this was a cancelled stamp. He could never have afforded to buy one unccancelled. Letter by letter he went over the words that flanked the tiny square, at the top, "Postage;" at the bottom, "Two Pence;" on the left, "Post Paid;" and on the right, "Mauritius." In the corners were some kind of do-dads that matched diagonally, and in the center, covering most of the face of the stamp, was the left profile of Queen Victoria. That was all.

For a long while Mr. Doynebee sat at the table, studying the stamp under the magnifying glass. Though he told himself it was
water under the bridge, he couldn't quite make up his mind whether
the stamp was worth what he'd paid for it. He thought back over
the weeks of indecision he'd gone through before he'd finally
ordered it. How carefully he'd weighed all the arguments for
and against its purchase that had occurred to him. How many
times he'd looked at the right-hand column of his bank book,
looked not just at the balance that remained to his credit, but
at all the figures in the withdrawal column, eventually set-
tling on the stamp that lay on the table now, price having had
as much to do with his decision as anything. For the more he'd
turned over in his mind the problem of how much to spend, the
more certain he'd become that he'd better not spend the whole
$173 that remained credited to his account. He'd made up his
mind to spend no more than $100. The $73 that would be left
wouldn't be much to fall back upon, when you got right down to
it, but it was a lot better than nothing, would keep him from
begging from Ray. Once his mind was made up, he'd stopped
dilly-dallying and sent off for Mauritius. From that time on
he'd sat around waiting for the mail train to supply him with the
wherewithal for a philatelic drunk.

Now he had the wherewithal in front of him. He was excited,
but he was not drunk. He was cold sober, and he was wondering
whether the stamp was worth what he'd paid for it, not commercia-
ly, but from a personal point of view. He told himself that he
ought to put off this debate until later, perhaps forever, cer-
tainly until he'd inserted the stamp in the album. For weeks now
he'd told himself that he was going to squeeze the last drop of enjoyment from this final acquisition, said it over and over to himself with a force that should have been unnecessary. And why? Beneath all his determined anticipation had he been trying to strangle a haunting doubt? But what was he in doubt of? Why, in spite of his pleasure, which was largely real and satisfying, was there something hollow he was afraid to investigate?

A slight rustle behind him jarred him out of his reverie. Looking up, he found Maud standing beside him, her wide-spaced eyes sucked in the stamp. Ordinarily her presence would have annoyed him, but this afternoon he was glad she was there.

This afternoon he needed sympathetic appreciation for the album, even if it were only an unexpressed appreciation from someone like Maud. Knowing that someone else could be as mesmerized by a stamp as he partially did away with the doubt that was besetting him.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"It's lovely," Maud said.

The word "lovely" irritated him. Stamps might be any number of things, but they weren't lovely.

"I've been wanting to get hold of it for a long time," he said, masking his irritation.

"Could I pick it up?" Maud asked him, an almost child-like desire tincturing her voice.

"Sure," he said. "Go ahead."
One step to the right, but it hadn't taken permanence and plenty

the standard of the mystical figure. He'd attempted more than

a strategy, though hardly a deliberate operation, was all but beyond

her. He wouldn't. He wanted to do it himself. But

Would you like me to put it in the mines for you, Arthur?

"She'd expressed anything,

deserted about the collection, then she'd already expressed—" she

still, if would be better not to let her know anything more

make certain she knew nothing about it. For that he didn't know

If he ever made out that little bit of value for my, had better

knew more about the actions than he'd neglected passed through him.

knew more about the actions than he'd neglected passed through him.

probably it didn't, and yet an uneasiness that the

to her. Doubt he should, or some other shouldn't. She knew any difference

And what she meant by her last remark, he couldn't tell. Whether

putting those and weep down on the table. "I'm glad you got it."

It's a terribly addition to your collection," she told him.

"Then do you think we're needed again.

The collection?

Queen Victoria, the lettering, and the coal dust along the edge

the stamp, the occult, the collection, the portrait of

the stamp, the occult, the collection, the portrait of

handed to her in automatism. She exclaimed to the stamp, she groaned for the stamping glue, which she had never wondered from the

and reached around, him, enveloping up the stamp with her
of muttered curses. Mauritius should be carefully attended to. He'd let Maud hinge it for him in spite of his rebellion at the idea.

"If you don't mind doing it," he answered, "but you'll have to be careful."

"Oh, I'll be careful," Maud said. "There's not much of a trick to it."

She pulled one of the dining room chairs around beside his. Once overflowed on to the chair, she opened the candy box that contained his collecting equipment: tongs, transparent envelopes in which he kept duplicate stamps, hinges, perforation gauge and millimeter scale, and watermark detector.

"Better take one of the large hinges," he directed, thinking it would be well to use a hinge upon which he could ink any data that might be interesting later, though he made up his mind that whatever he wrote would be abbreviated enough to conceal anything of real interest.

Maud fingered through the contents of the candy box until she located the packet that held the large hinges, one of which she shook out. Following his directions, tediously minute, she meticulously applied the hinge to the stamp.

"There," she said. "Now where do you want it in the album?"

Spreading the album open in front of him, Mr. Doynbee thumbed through the pages until he came to the page devoted to stamps from Mauritius, where he discovered with chagrin that
no space had been allotted for the issue of 1859. Well, he could stick it in a blank space somewhere—there were plenty of blank spaces—but such a procedure aggravated the precise collector's habits he'd built up over the years. He'd attach the stamp to a separate sheet, he decided, which he'd insert between the pages of the album. This last important stamp really deserved special treatment anyway.

"I'll have to get an insert sheet," he told Maud.

From the large drawer in Netta's desk he drew forth a heavy sheet of expensive bond paper, which he used only for insert sheets. Seated at the desk, he wrote in firm, blue strokes with Netta's pen across the top of the sheet,

Mauritius
March, 1889

and at the bottom he inscribed the date of the purchase.

"You might as well center it on the page," he directed Maud.

"But what if you should get some more of the same issue?" Maud suggested.

"Not much chance," he answered, hating to say the words, they seemed so irrevocably final.

"Well, just as you say," Maud said.

Methodical as if he still worked at the mill, Mr. Doynbee found the exact center of the sheet for her with the millimeter scale, leaving a heavy inked dot where he wanted the stamp attached. With the dexterity that had always astonished him, considering the pudginess of her fingers, Maud applied the hinges
to the page. The job was done.

"Well, that's that," she said, her voice ringing with satisfaction.

"Yes, that's that," Mr. Doyneee repeated after her, regretting every word.

Both of them sat admiring the stamp, neither of them saying a word, each thinking his own thoughts. Whatever might have been Naud's, those of Mr. Doyneee were not jubilant. They should have been, and he tried to make them so, but he failed. A sense of desolation crowded out all the joy that should have been in him, a desolation as complete as that he'd felt coming back from the cemetery the day he'd buried Hetta. There'd been nothing left to say then. Only the knowledge that somehow or other he had to go on as usual had kept him superficially tranquil. Everything inside him had screamed out against that surface calm. Only after he'd gone to bed that night had he let the tears come, and then he'd managed to control with the help of the pillow. Of course, there was no such cause for tears now. He wouldn't weep tonight when he went to bed. But another bottom had dropped out, and what he was to do to renovate the cask of his life, he didn't know. Something would work out, he supposed. He tucked the insert sheet into the album and shut the book.

"Let's look at the United States stamps," Naud suggested. He'd forgotten she was sitting beside him.
"I haven't had a good look at them in a long time," she added.

Mr. Doynbee felt no urge to see them, but since he could think of nothing else to do, he opened the front of the album, turning the pages over slowly, pretending to look at them. Little by little he all but forgot Maud's presence as he turned over the pages, her quiet breathing the only reminder that she was still beside him. Eventually he came upon the rarest item of the collection, a stamped envelope of Autaugaville, Alabama, worth at least $1500. Wondering again whether he should sell it and the other Confederate stamp in his collection, he picked up the envelope, which for years had lain loose within the pages of the album, felt the texture of the paper with his fingers, congratulated himself upon owning it. He could surely sell it if he wanted to and with the proceeds of the sale continue to buy more stamps like Mauritius. But the realization that he'd only be converting one asset into another, carrying on a pretense that was beginning to seem less tolerable the more he thought about it, pressed down upon him. He wouldn't sell it, but he enjoyed toying with the notion.

"Why have you always kept that Alabama envelope loose in the album?" Maud asked.

"Ah?" Mr. Doynbee came to.

Maud repeated her question.

"Why not?" he answered.

"But you might lose it."
"I've lost a lot of things in my time," he answered enigmatically.

"But you ought to fasten it tight," Maud said. "It's pretty rare, isn't it?"

"Nothing exceptional," he lied to her. Moving his head only slightly, he studied her face. Maud was showing an unusual amount of interest today. He wondered what could be behind her question, though it sounded innocent enough. Never before had he suspected her of asking loaded questions in regard to the album. But judging by her face, which seemed vacant and empty as usual, she'd accepted his reply without reservations. Even so, it would be just as well, he decided, to make out that list for Ray as soon as he could get around to it.

"I still think you ought to attach it tight," Maud urged. "It would be a shame to lose it after all these years. You remember the story papa always told about it, how his father stole it off a Confederate soldier's body after the battle of--"

"Sure, I remember."

"It would be awfully easy to hinge it on to the top of the page."

Of course it would. He knew that as well as she. But what was the use? There was little likelihood of his losing it. The album never went out of the house, and no one ever looked at it but him--and Maud over his shoulder.

"Well, go ahead," he said finally. "if it'll make you feel any better,"
With a rapidity that was uncharacteristic of her, Haud attached three hinges to the back of the envelope, and these she stuck to the top of the page with a triumphant little gesture that betokened sparkling self-satisfaction.

"You ought to feel better about it now," she said, sitting back in her chair and admiring the trivial perfection of her work.

"Yes, I suppose so," Mr. Doynebee said, but whether he did or not, he didn't know. He didn't care.

Carefully, so as not to disarrange any of the insert sheets, he shut the album and carried it into his bedroom, where he deposited it on top of the old oak bureau, roomy but lacking in style, which had been in the family as long as the Alabama envelope. Beside the album in a handsome frame that Ray had bought for him stood a picture of Netta, taken the year before she died. Mr. Doynebee paused before the picture, trying to brush out of his mind all his every day conceptions of it, trying to see it again as he'd seen it the first time he'd looked at it.

It was a better than average photograph, much better than the kind he took, a photograph that had mysteriously caught the wistful elusiveness that had been Netta's peculiar charm, a final unfathomableness which without any obvious intention on her part had chained him to her from the minute he'd met her. This unwordable charm should have been enough today, but it
wasn’t. He wanted to get beyond it, find the reality behind it this day when a compulsion to discover the reality behind his own life was beginning little by little to seize hold of him.

As he scrutinized the photograph, he began to see Netta again as she’d actually been, the flatness of the photograph welling into a three dimensional configuration it had never had for him before. He gazed and gazed at the wry little twist to her mouth, her slightly pronounced cheek-bones, her gray hair with its natural wave, the soft twinkle in her eyes that told anyone who was observant how much she saw beneath the surface of things without condemning what she saw, the characteristic tilt of her head. For several moments she seemed so alive that Mr. Doyanbee almost expected her to move her lips in the quiet way she had when she talked, to say, "Hello, Arthur, hello."

And then almost as suddenly as the photograph had metamorphosed into a deeply remembered perspective, just as he knew Netta was going to say something to him about the album, it faded back into its usual two dimensions. It was only a photograph after all.

He placed the photograph back on the bureau as well as he could with his crippled hand, straightened the embroidered linen scarf that covered it, and went back into the dining-room. Maud had gone, had left the house he discovered, when on glancing out the window he saw her chatting with Mrs. Lockwood, their neighbor, across the picket fence that enclosed the back yard. He was glad she was outside; he hoped Mrs. Lockwood had
gossip enough to keep Maud occupied for at least an hour. He wanted to be alone in the house until his present mood wore off or until he had a better grip on himself.

The house hummed with quiet, to the vibrations of which he stood listening. All the years of his life seemed to tinkle in the silence, growing louder and louder, reminding, beckoning, tantalizing, leading him, if only he'd follow, down bypaths into crossroads past signposts across the hills, so few, and the valleys, so many, of his life. Hardly knowing which way he was going, he ambled into the living room, where he sat pensively in Netta's chair, just sat, letting his eyes roam from one familiar object to another, from the Venetian glass vase Netta had bought at a private sale one day to the walnut pipe rack Ray had given him for Christmas the first year he'd been out on his own.

It would be nice, Mr. Doyneee thought, if Ray were only home more often. Perhaps, it occurred to him, musing in Netta's chair, that was what he needed right now, Ray home for a few days. Several months had passed now since Ray had come driving up about four o'clock in the afternoon, unannounced by letter or telephone call, had honked the horn of the company car a couple of times and then bounded up the front steps. For the first time since Ray had left home for good Mr. Doyneee felt driven to go to the phone, get hold of Ray wherever he might be and ask him to come home for a day or two. But Ray'd want to know what was
wrong, and what could he tell him? Ray'd think he was crazy if all he could say was that somehow the bottom seemed to have dropped out for him, that he was trying to whip an emptiness he didn't understand, that perhaps didn't even exist. Ray'd think he was getting old, that he couldn't take care of himself, that he was losing his grip. And that wasn't the trouble at all.

What was the trouble then? He couldn't find words to express what was ailing him; in fact, he hadn't let himself try to find words expressive of what was the matter. Rather than hunt for them, he'd drifted off into memories of the past, when he hadn't been upset by things he couldn't touch, couldn't analyze. He ought to sit down and do some hard thinking, figure this emptiness out, get it settled in his mind once and for all.

But he was afraid to try. Thinking was hard work; he'd never had any practice at thinking; he hadn't needed to think much up to now. Then thinking had had to be done, there'd been Netta to turn to, and after her, Ray. That was why he had such a yen to call Ray now, let Ray do the thinking for him. But he wouldn't do it. He'd figure this thing out for himself.

Forcibly as he could, he tried to push out of his mind the possibility of reaching Ray, who might be in Helena, Butte, Bozeman, Anaconda or any of the little towns in between, but the harder he tried, the more the desire to talk to his son beat into his mind. Foolish or not, he wanted to talk to Ray, simply hear his booming voice over the wire, feel his energy.
his enthusiasm pulsing over the line. There was no harm in try-
ing, he told himself, and Ray would probably be glad to hear
from him. He could hear his voice already, confident and good-
natured. "Hello, pop?...Glad to hear from you...How are
things?" But what would he have for an answer? No, it was
better not to call. He'd make a fool of himself if he did, a
blubbery old fool. But it would certainly be good to hear
Ray's voice.

He looked about the living room for his tobacco pouch.
Not finding it, he moseyed through the house, wondering where
he'd put it down, locating it at last on the window sill by
the kitchen table. Maud was still jabbering with Mrs. Lockwood,
he noticed when he glanced through the window, her hand supped
over her eyes to shade them from the afternoon sun that was
glaring wickedly down from the cloud-free sky. Why didn't the
two of them, if they had to talk, sit down in the yard chairs
under the shade of the weeping birch tree in the back yard?
But why try to discover what made most women do the things they
do, especially when he couldn't figure out what kind of mach-
inery there was in himself that made him tick the way he did?

He took the tobacco pouch back to the living room, but
once there he knew he couldn't sit in that room any longer
this afternoon. Out on the porch he jerked the rocking chair
into the shady portion enclosed by the heavy screen of Virginia
creeper Netta had planted soon after they'd moved into the
house, sat down and loaded his pipe, which needed a good reaming, he decided. He'd have to go over to Tom's or Angelo's one of these nights and get them to do the job for him, and maybe talk this thing out with them—if he dared. But he probably wouldn't dare.

The pipe spluttering between his teeth, his body eased by the gentle rocking of the chair, he tried not to think, tried to forget the stumps, Ray, Netta, Maud, the past. But trying not to think made him think all the more, until at last he gave in and let his thoughts ramble where they will.

Netta, the mill, his children, those three had been his life during his best years, and now, one by one, they were all gone. Life had been something to live then, full of pleasant details, none of them very important, but satisfying and rich in hope. Though he'd never thought about whether life had been satisfying at the time. He'd just gone through his daily grind because he was used to it, because he didn't know anything else, because he didn't care to know anything else, he supposed. But life had been something then. What was it now?

What was it now? The question spun about in his head in a bewildering whirl. Until this afternoon the question had never occurred to him. Ever since the accident the stumps had monopolized his attention, he could see that now, broken only by Ray's occasional visits home and by occasional trips into Missoula to see his grandchildren. He'd anchored himself securely to
the roses and then the phlox that lined the fence, their odor
over the grove of trees. They were not, we pretended to examine
to staunch out whether hard and pern. Lookwood were still chafing
so that he might go to rest for help me he always had, and then he
realized that he was sunning away from the question again
of fire, one person, then another, and another of women threaded
down prepend any one when she applied into the head. Images
of activity, the more the thought became. He could not
mouth and human a process he usually found stimulation any sort
smoke, let the fumant fermentation filter through his nose and
think. He matter how deeply he intimated the soothing figure
The more he thought the more he realized how hard it was to

If it today, what could he turn to meet
never again be the perception in which he d experimented on
never again be the perception in which he d experimented on
in order to forestall and now the stream, upon which he d embarked
himself with malice. In order to kill the pleasingly
so he d drunk himself with the stream, just me I knew, I d decided
to another site too. He d said to kill in a GP somehow, and
the alife because there d been nothing left after the accident.
so enticing in the evening, only faintly discernible in the afternoon heat. Growing impatient with himself, he wandered into the front yard, where he stood watching the spotty stream of life that paraded past the house: the wives and children of neighbors and friends of his, the lumber trucks Mrs. Jensen was so afraid of and which rolled by piled high with seasoned two by fours, one by fours, one by eights, the cars of Missoula people overflowing with children, dogs and provisions for the week-end at Seeley or Placid or Salmon Lakes. By and by the men from the mill, sweaty and tired but contented, began to plod past on their way home from the day shift. Why was everyone doing what he did and why was everyone doing it without complaint, aside from minor grumbling now and then? What made life worth living for all these people? What joy did they find in continuing to do the same drab thing day after day without ever questioning seriously why?

Suddenly Mr. Doynbee realized that perhaps if he could find the answers to these questions, he might get nearer answering the questions that had been troubling him all afternoon. Quickly there followed the notion that to answer these more general questions, he would have to turn them like a floodlight upon his own life, transform them into something wholly personal. What was it that had made his life, which hadn't been easy, when all was said and done, worth the living without all the things he'd seen advertised in the MISSOULIAN and in the
magazines he'd read? For in spite of all the afternoon's questions he hadn't the slightest doubt that his life had been worth the living.

He sat down on the steps of the front porch and chewed on the stem of his pipe. Because he'd finally been able to word the questions, he thought that finding the answer might not be so difficult, but oddly enough he couldn't even begin to think of the answers. All he could think of was the limitations of the life he'd led, the same limitations that hampered the lives of everyone he knew at all well. How little he'd accumulated in comparison with all the things he might have accumulated, with the things he'd seen advertised, which, he'd vaguely surmised on the infrequent walks taken about the more attractive portions of Macon, men better situated than he had managed to accumulate: larger yards than his, finer homes, two cars quite often, more expensive clothes, more expensive furnishings.

The front steps began to feel harder, less comfortable than they'd ever felt before. Better to walk around, he decided, than just sit, sit and try to think, to think about the wrong things. Back in the house he prowled through the kitchen to the back porch, where he stood beside May's old bed and looked out into the yard. All he could see was the lawn furniture, two tacky old chairs that Netta had dragged home from a junk shop and the one decent chair that May had bought for him. Make-do. That was it. Make-do.
Their whole lives had been make-do, his and Netta's and everybody's in their circumstances. There must be millions of people just like him and Netta, people who'd had to do the best they could with the little they had. And they'd been happy, at least reasonably so. That was the funny thing, the thing that perplexed him so much. Why had they all been happy, he and Netta and all those millions of ordinary people like them? What compensated them for the ordinariness of their lives, in many cases even the less than ordinariness of their lives? Just stamps—or something akin to stamps?

No, not stamps. All the mental turmoil he'd been through this afternoon convinced him that, provided there was something—and there must be something—it wasn't stamps or anything like stamps. Then what was it?

He stood on the back porch, the question whirling around and around in his head with a grooving insistency that began to upset him. The question would not down, even if he tried to down it, he knew that he'd never be able to. The question demanded an answer before he could put his mind undividedly on anything else. Now that the stamps were all but a thing of the past, he had to find out what was the point of it all. And he didn't know where to begin.

Suddenly the realization swept over him that he was tremendously isolated, that no one could suggest an answer for him, that whatever the answer was, provided there was one, and
there had to be one, he had to find it out for himself and by himself. It might be that something in his past life could furnish a clue or perhaps something in the life, past or present, of people he knew. Perhaps there was something in a book somewhere, if only he knew what sort of book to try—and he didn't know. He had no education to fall back upon, to show him the way. Books on philosophy and religion, words he'd heard all his life, the meanings of which were vague as the bottom of the Blackfoot in spring, occurred to him as being the kind of books he was after. Some of them must be in the public library in Missoula, and he supposed he could hunt for them there, try to understand them. But he was afraid of those books, dimly aware that those books were no part of the common experience of people like him. What would they have to say that would help answer the questions he was trying to answer? Still they were something not to turn his back on too quickly.

Maybe he ought to talk the whole business over with a friend or two, someone he could trust and who wouldn't think he was crazy for asking such peculiar questions. Above all, he didn't want anyone to think he'd gone out of his head because he could no longer work and had nothing but time on his hands. Everyone in the mill trusted his common sense; he wanted everyone to go trusting it. This matter—and he thought he saw it a little more clearly now—was above and beyond every day practicality, out of which it sprang in all likelihood. Perhaps
He didn't want him to know what was going on. He gave him a hint, it was just possible that they could do with him, but could he trust to find out about these questions, where done something with him that all had never been able to understand, willed you might say, because he'd married, no, taken care of, and he, well, not exactly... Perhaps, together came days, and he's still at prayer and heart's and curved as in their those days, for still at prayer and heart's and curved as in their... "I'm not sure, they know each other all right? Together and around with the same face women, placed together, played together when they'd had any time off, go drunk together, played some score-out war for years, hadn't they carded around too... Some score-put war for years, hadn't they carded around too... Worked in the same working cause, stood at either end of the... Since he were a boy, hadn't they gone off to the hill together, He might be able to teach to him Braille. He'd known them..."...questions...

In his common sense, matters could already be touched on, And then, which could he talk it over, nothing of all the... couldn't these ever...
any more than he wanted Maud to know. Maybe he’d try Tom—but only maybe.

That left only Angelo, Angelo Aiello, thirty-five years out of Sicily, the only Italian who’d ever worked at the mill, as far as he could remember, who couldn’t speak common ordinary English decently, who never thought about anything except how to feed and clothe his huge family, who’d sired a new baby almost every year as long as his wife could bear children, and who was the merriest man he’d ever known. What could Angelo have to say that would be of help? And yet Angelo had good sense. Quite often in his broken English he said things that seemed wonderfully wise in spite of the mixed-up way he talked. One thing about Angelo. He might laugh all the time, but he never laughed at anything another man said seriously. It would be comforting to talk to Angelo about these questions. And Angelo would keep anything he said to him to himself. Maybe he’d try Angelo—just for the sake of friendship.

Maud’s ponderous entry into the back porch, a pan full of newly cut Swiss chard under her arm, roused him from the reflections into which he’d fallen.

“What in the world are you standing there for?” she wanted to know, her wide-spaced eyes wide open in wonderment.

“Oh, nothing,” was all he could think to say.

“Haven’t you anything else to do but stand there like you were dead?” she threw back at him as she went into the kitchen.
"I was just thinking," he said. "Just thinking."

"Just thinking?"

"Just thinking."

His voice was strangely proud.
The dim lights of the bar played a game of shadows with the few occupants of booths and bar stools, all of whom blended, no matter the color of their clothes, with the prevailing tans and beiges of the decor. They were restful colors, those tans and beiges, colors that invited temporary ease, temporary forgetfulness, temporary complacency; that urbanified tedious and monotonous lives, metamorphosed them for a few heedless hours into the smartness and sophistication the habitués of the bar yearned for. Along the length of one wall ran the bar, all chromium, plastics and tan upholstery blended together with just the right proportion of straight lines and curves. Behind it gleamed the inevitable mirrors, lushly reflecting the booths along the opposite wall, lushly reflecting the behind sides of invitingly blown liquor bottles, re-enhancing the golden fascinations of liqueurs, the sea green charms of creme de menthe, the deep red mellowness of a medley of brands of port, all shimmering in the dim light that worked its way in and out of the mirrors.

A couple in one of the booths stood up, the woman gathering together her cigarette case, her matches, her companion crushing out a half-smoked cigarette while he waited a little too attentively for her to adjust her coiffure, ready herself for the curious gaze of any strollers they might meet in the street.

"Thanks, folks," the bartender called to them, his voice neither too loud for the chastened atmosphere of the bar nor too soft to be heard.
...I wouldn't know any more..."

"No they say, the bartender said, he only knew what he had learned.
...The bartender said, "I never seen them before, I don't like," he said.
...May be we'd been at the bar and the door near the lobby...
...either too well-dressed, you know them, they don't look like customers and they don't belong there."
"You gave it up?"

"Ever since I went into this business I did."

"Not even when you close up for the night?"

"Not even then, no matter how pooped I am even."

"You mean you got moral just from working in here?"

"Not moral. I guess I'm no more moral than any other man, no worse, no better. But I quit drinking. I got my belly full. Things aren't what they're cracked up to be. You figure that out in a hurry when you've spent a few eight hour hitches in here. Too much goes on, if you keep your ears open. You're on the inside track too much of the time."

May smiled. "So you turned dry?"

"Hell, no. I sell it to any sucker that wants it. I'm in the business and I want it to stay good. It's a hell of a lot better than delivering milk."

"You're getting rather inconsistent, aren't you, Ted?"

"What the hell if I am? There's a lot of things going on in this town that are inconsistent. But I have a living to make, and I got three people dependent on me. We're doing all right now that I'm in here. That's the way I want it. But I see to it my wife don't come down here."

"I suppose you've psychoanalyzed me too."

"Naw," Ted said. "I didn't mean that I take the customers apart just to see what makes them tick. I just hear things, not on purpose, and I see things, I can't help that. People
come into places like this to get away from it all. If they come often, like you and Miss Evans, after a while I get to know what they're running away from."

"And what have we been running away from?"

"Damned if I know. I didn't say I figured everything out. Or made it my business to."

"You're avoiding the question."

"Maybe. But I can say—and I don't think you'll deny it—you're not drinking tonight like you usually do."

"I'm not?"

"You're too serious tonight. Usually you drink just to pass the time—and not by yourself either. And usually when you're in town, you don't come in so early. Lately too you never come in without that nurse. Though I haven't seen her for quite some time."

"You add me up pretty well, Ted."

"You aren't sore?"

"Hell, no. Why should I be?"

"I didn't think you would be. But you never can tell, not after a man has drained five or six straight ones in a row."

"It's been that many?"

"Sure thing, say."

"I'll take this one slow then."

The jangle of the telephone at the other end of the bar, reality intruding into the almost cloistered atmosphere, called
Ted away. Between sips Ray watched the street door, past the port-hole window of which glided the truncated heads of evening strollers. Watched the door, wanting and yet not wanting it to open.

Why didn't she come, he kept asking himself. Why the hell didn't she come. She'd promised she'd come, and she wasn't the kind, no matter how she felt about him now, to promise something and then back out on him. It had taken a world of argument to get her to promise. He'd offered to meet her anywhere she suggested, not necessarily here. Any place. But she'd only come here, and he knew she didn't want to come here any more than he did--now. Not that he had anything against this bar. As bars went, it was the best bar in Helena. They'd had a lot of fun in this bar, he and Irene. Which was why he didn't want to come to this bar. But here he was, and she hadn't shown up yet. Maybe she wouldn't show up. Maybe she was just making a fool of him, just playing him along, trying to get rid of him, trying to get him off the phone.

He quaffed off the remaining whiskey in the glass, glad Ted was too busy with these new people to pay any attention to him. And then the door opened. He stiffened--and then relaxed. Only two men, two salesmen like himself, judging by their over-loud conversation that drifted down to his end of the bar--the sales they'd made that day, the women they'd run into and how far they expected to get with them. Christ, he hoped they came off better than he had after years of the same old stuff.
Jesus God, the messes a man could get into. And so quickly.
And no matter how smart he thought he was or how many times he'd
got by before. And always with a girl who wasn't trash to begin
with. The trashy ones always got by. Why the hell hadn't he
stuck with the trashy ones? It was no trick to get what you
wanted off them. Except that once you got what you wanted,
there wasn't anything else to get. You got bored with them,
and you didn't want any more truck with them. And then you
met someone like Irene and you had to treat her as if she were
one of the trashy kind--except that you were more subtle. You
had to work all the angles you'd ever tried in your life. You
had to keep pulling rabbits out of the hat, run the gamut of
all the tricks you'd ever learned in your life. And then maybe
she'd give in--because she thought you really cared for her and
because she really cared for you. And so you made a slut out
of her. Or at least jimmed up her life so she'd never look at
things the same again. Or maybe you fell in love with her
yourself and didn't know it at the time, because you'd played
around so long you couldn't tell the real thing when it happened,
and then when you woke up, it was too late. You'd made a hash
out of everything, gummed up the girl's life and your own.
Created a big, hellish mess you'd never worm yourself out of
really. Something that would be a kick in the tail all your
life, no matter how things finally worked themselves out. And
then run off to a bar, where it probably all began in the first
place, and try to drink it off. Ted was right when he wouldn't let his wife come to a place like this, no matter how clean and generally decent it was. You dirtied yourself in a place like this. Why the hell come back to it then with all its pretenses, its air of being the last word in glamour, its hypocrisy? Why the hell not go to some crappy joint farther up the street, that saloon on the corner of Wood Street and South Main, for instance, where you can be the trash you are?

"Hello, Ray."

The voice beside him was toneless, feelingless, a soft voice that he remembered as being as musical a voice as he'd ever heard.

He whirled about on the stool. There she was, just as he'd pictured her, the same slim figure with the same curve to her neck, the same soft, flowing hair, combed just so and yet not over-combed, the same small mouth he'd kissed so many times, the same barely perceptible cleft in her chin, the same high cheek bones, the same deep blue eyes, the same long eyelashes. And yet she wasn't the same. Without looking older, she seemed to have aged—only a little, but enough so that all the fear he'd been suppressing welled up in him until he could hardly talk.

"Hello, Irene." He tried to force into his voice, which sounded brittle in his ears, all the feeling that had gone out of hers. "I was beginning to think you'd—"

"I told you I'd come,"
He looked at her face, paler than he remembered it, a pallor emphasized by the dark red of her lipstick, tried to piece out from her impassive features what might be in her mind. But he could ferret out nothing he hoped might be there, could discover only a hidden fatigue that came not from hard work but from illness and spiritual malaise. It was still a lovely face, but it had become immobile, inert, not so much cold as completely expressionless. The fear within him doubled in intensity.

"You're looking well," he murmured—and could have chewed off his tongue for having been so stupid, so commonplace.

"Thank you. I'm feeling fine again."

Not a flicker of pain passed across her face, nor any pleasure at seeing him.

"You'll sit down, won't you?"

"Wherever you like."

They sat opposite each other in a booth as far removed from the street door as possible, sat opposite each other and said nothing, each waiting for the other to speak first. Waited, while the juke-box drooled out "Somebody loves me" in a new arrangement that neither of them listened to. Waited and looked at each other until Ray could bear to look at her no longer and signalled to Ted, who'd been waiting hesitantly behind the bar, psychic enough to stay away until he was wanted.

"Irene?" Ray said, waiting for her to order.

"Anything you like."
"I've been drinking straight shots waiting for you. You never liked a straight shot."

The appeal in his voice failed to stir her out of her impassivity. Even so, more in an effort to settle the matter than to please him, she ordered.

"Ditch then."

"Straight shot for me again, Ted."

Again they sat looking at each other, each waiting for the other to talk first. Ray stared into her eyes, trying to find some hint as to how to begin and finding nothing but a dead stolidity that began to terrify him. There wasn't even the hurt look in her eyes he'd been afraid he'd find and which he'd cringed away from even before he saw her. Only a dullness that made him squirm so inside that finally he forced himself to talk, rationalizing that it was better to say something, no matter how insane, rather than go on sitting there looking at her, letting her look at him.

"It was good of you to come, Irene."

"I didn't want to."

"I can't say that I blame you."

Her eyes lighted up slightly. "Please, Ray. It's all over with. There's nothing to do but go on where things stopped. I'm all right."

"You mean, Irene," hope swelled into his voice, "that you still--"

Ted came with the drinks, which he set gently down in front of them, made the proper change and withdrew.
"That's not what I meant, Ray."

The hope sank out of him. Not knowing what to say, he lifted his glass, tried to sip from it, set it down again. Irene ignored her drink, never looked at it, shut her eyes tight for a moment as if she might be suppressing tears she was afraid were coming, kept her eyes, when she opened them again, on the door into the lobby, as if she were anxious to leave as soon as she could, as if she wished she had never come.

"For God's sake, Irene, look at me. Don't look as if you didn't even know I was around."

She looked straight at him. "I haven't known for a long time whether you were or not."

"I know I'm a heel, Irene. I know all that, but—"

"Please, Ray."

"All right." In one gulp he drained the glass of whiskey, which he twisted nervously in his fingers. "I saw the doctor today."

"I know. He told me."

"I can't tell you how low I feel, Irene. The way he looked at me, as if I were the cheapest thing walking the streets. I didn't feel as if I had the world by the tail when I went into his office. I haven't felt like anything but a heel since Spokane, but today, well...well, it was like...God, I don't know what it was like. I offered to pay him, Irene, for what he's done for you. He wouldn't take a nickel. Said what he'd
done was strictly in the line of professional etiquette, you
being a nurse and everything. He got pretty cold about it."

"It was foolish of you to suggest paying him."

"I suppose so, but I thought he deserved to be paid for his
services. After all—"

"There are a lot of things that money can't buy, Ray."
Her voice was kinder than it had been since they'd begun talk-
ing. "You've never found that out."

"Sure, sure."

For the moment he could think of nothing more to say. She
wouldn't give him a chance to talk. It took two people to
carry on a conversation, and she wouldn't give him a chance, not
even to say he was hellishly sorry, that there was nothing he
wouldn't do to try to make things right, that he really loved
her and that he wasn't pretending he did just because of what
had happened.

Finally, "Why didn't you let me know, Irene?"

"What could you have done?"

"Nothing, I suppose. But, God, Irene, I'm in this as much
as you."

"Not since Spokane. That happened after that happened
to me, not to both of us."

"I don't see it that way, Irene."

"It doesn't matter. It's all over with now."

"Didn't I deserve to know? I got you into this mess.
You should have let me help you see it through."
That's why I needed to see you here tonight, to tell you what I learned. I didn't care if I ever saw you again. I just wanted to tell you the truth, and when they took me to the hospital, it was too late to try. I didn't want to get hold of you, I was too shocked to think clearly. I didn't know where you were. You could have been dead, or you could have been dying. But if you're only forty holding me, dear, I cried, 'Nothing.' It was almost to cry to you, 'Why didn't you say anything? I didn't have time to give in to you. Why didn't you say anything? I didn't have time to give in to you. Why didn't you say anything to me? She'd broken down the last time, and then only became herself again and declared that she'd always be there, but it was too late. She'd wanted the attention, she'd needed him to be here. She only had what was left of her.
you I don't want to see you again, to ask you to let me go my
own way now that I'm able to go it alone again."

"Irene, please listen---"

"Let me finish, Ray."

She looked straight at him, straight
through him, all the hurt bewilderment she'd been trying to
hide reflected in her eyes, the taut line of her mouth, as she
spoke, reinforcing the decision in her words. "There's no use
pretending that we can patch things up now, and I won't pretend,
no matter how much you may want to. We made a batch of things,
and nothing we could ever do would straighten out the batch.
I don't want even to try. All I want is to break off clean
and try to forget it."

"We can't forget this thing, Irene."

"We can try."

Again they sat looking at each other, looking, looking.

"You wouldn't believe me if I said I still loved you?"

Ray finally asked.

"I don't know. I don't see how you could say it and mean
it."

"I could, Irene."

"Don't. You used to say you did, and I thought you did
once, but now I don't know. You were always clever at that kind
of talk. And I was clever at listening."

"You wouldn't marry me now?"

If she detected the pleading in his voice, her answer bid
it. "No. Not you or anyone. I couldn't bear to have you touch me now, not even my hand. I don't want anyone to touch me. I just want to be by myself until I can stand on my own feet again, until I can begin to think clearly again. Right now I can't think about anything. I'm dead inside, Ray, clean dead. There isn't a spark of anything inside me that anyone could fan into anything."

"You did love me—not so long ago."

"Maybe I did, Ray. I don't know. Maybe it was just a cheap infatuation, something I should have gone through earlier, when I was younger and more afraid to go too far. It was all cheap enough, now that I can look back on it. It wasn't glamorous, that weekend in Bozeman, those other weekends, those hotel rooms. It was cheap and shoddy as anything can be. That's all clear to me now. While I was in the hospital, I could think that far. That's all I could think of. Nobody much to come see me, nothing to think about but that."

"Your family doesn't know?"

She shook her head. "I saw to that. So did the doctor and the girls. They were good to me, dropped in when they had a few minutes off duty. But I didn't want to see them. I didn't want to see the look in their eyes, sorry, yes, but glad it hadn't happened to them. All I had to do was lie there and think—as well as I could—and all I ever came out with was that I didn't want to see you again and that I wanted to get away,
get a long way away and not even think. Just work until I'm too tired at night to do anything but go to bed and not think."

"I still want to marry you, Irene. Not because of what's happened, but because—"

"Marrying me won't set things right now, Ray."

"I don't see why not."

"No, I don't suppose you would."

"Irene, I'm only trying to tell you, and I know the words must sound unconvincing, that I still want you as much as I ever did."

"And how much was that?"

"Irene—"

She broke in, her voice rising slightly, for the first time showing some kind of emotional tension.

"If we were to marry, we should have got married in the first place—at least after that first weekend. We might have managed all right then, made a go of it, and when I got pregnant—"

"Irene—"

"It's no use, Ray, not now. Too much has happened. I know too much about you now. Not that it really matters now, except that it all adds up."

"Adds up to what?"

"You don't follow me?"

"No, I don't."

"How many women have you taken out in the last six weeks—"
up here. Nobody looked good to me after you.

Never went out with one, even the weekend when I could've. Got that first weekend. I never found another woman after that. Never felt any after you. Not after I liked you, even before.

There were a lot of girls before you, but we helped me there.

Still with people, and she had to motion to him to quiet down.

I level of conversation in the bar, which had gradually begun to support you. "If the voice began to rise above the general

"and one other thing you've got to believe, though I don't.

Her voice softened a little. "I'd like to believe it.

another. You've got to believe that"

never felt the first girl I knew around with, but I never liked

weren't the first girl. I played around with, but I never liked

not a damn one. I knew, you've got to believe that. You.

other girls did you get pregnant the same way you got me."

another girl did you get pregnant the same way you got me."

myself. I can't help thinking those questions--now. How many

a day to three, suggested, fill in what I'd already heard-Greatest

over it. And while I was in the hospital, the girl made it

when I needed the smart thing to say. When you could summarize

enough. Hey, you told me as much your ears at different times,

you've been all the way up to thirty and back, and you're on

whit don't look so horrified. I haven't seen you in six weeks.

since you brought me home from college. How many have you slept
"I was just an easy mark."

"That's not so. You don't know what an easy mark is. You've never associated with that kind of girl."

"But you have?"

"I couldn't deny it, Irene, even if I wanted to. But I'm not proud of it—if I ever was."

Another long period of silence fell between them, while the juke-box breathed into the room the muted harmonies of "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," the sentimental melody sounding crass and vapid and vulgar. Presently, fearful that she would leave unless he made another valiant effort, Ray began to talk again.

"Irene, I do love you. I've loved you—all the time. I never said it. I never especially tried to show it, I guess. Things had come so easy for me for so long, I....Irene, please marry me. Please let me show you how much I love you. Don't shake your head, Irene. I mean it. I never knew how much I wanted you until these last six weeks, when I couldn't see you. Everything else was just....."

He stopped, recognizing the futility of words, which froze on his tongue when he looked into her impassive face. Her eyes, grown insensitive again, reflecting nothing, seemed in their glaciality to chill every part of him.

"Everything else was just masculine pride, Ray," she took up where he had left off. "You'd finally begotten a child and you wanted it. That's all."
"I offered to marry you, Irene. I wanted to marry you—even before you got pregnant—and you wouldn't listen to me. Always those damned debts you wanted to pay off that I could just as well have paid for you, if you'd let me. And then after you got pregnant—God, Irene, you can't say I didn't beg you to marry me then."

"All talk. That's all we ever did was talk. Talk and talk and talk wherever we were, whatever we did."

The bitterness in her voice needled into him.

"All I could do was ask you, Irene. That's all I can do now, ask you to marry me and try to do everything I can to make you happy. Sure, I know it won't be easy for either of us. But it won't be any harder together than it will be alone."

"I'm not afraid of being alone, Ray."

"Well, I am. I'm goddamned afraid. And I'm afraid for you."

For half a second her lips moved a little, as if she wanted to smile and couldn't.

"You don't need to be. Nothing like this can ever hurt me again, Ray, no matter how I live. I'll never be able to go through this kind of ordeal again. You forget that."

"I don't get you, Irene."

She turned her face fully toward him, her eyes growing narrow and pointed as they searched his face.

"The doctor didn't tell you?"

"Tell me what?"
"He didn't tell you. I can see it in your face."

"Tell me what?"

Her voice tightened into a faint whisper. "The reason why I'll never marry you. Or anyone--now."

"For God's sake, Irene, what is it? Can't you tell me?"

When at last she spoke, her voice was so low he could only barely hear her. "You see, Ray, I won't ever have another baby. Not any more. The infection--" and her voice rose as she forced herself not to lose control--"well, I just won't have another baby, that's all."

"My God, Irene. I didn't know." He ran the fingers of his right hand through his hair and down the back of his neck. "I didn't know."

Now there was nothing left to say, and he knew it. He tried to look at her, but he couldn't keep his eyes on her face, which again had frozen into impassivity. He had to look away, and then look at her again, and then look away again.

"You see, Ray," she began again after a time, "Marrying you now wouldn't possibly improve anything. Everything would only be a reminder that neither of us could bear. We'd both want a baby sooner or later, no matter how much we tried to convince ourselves that we didn't, and after a while it would get too much for us. It wouldn't work. We'd blame each other, and then get contrite and excuse each other and then blame each other all over again and--"
But just don't make me marry you.

Because what you are, and I didn't have to announce to anyone
it was all just as much as you and you're you can't help
"Don't, Key. No matter what I've said, I have no right to
Irene. You'll never know how rotten you feel."

She met her lips together so that she wouldn't lose control.

I thought I wanted, and then the question was-

"It's too late to cry, Key. I got what I wanted--or what
"Now, God, Irene, if only I hadn't been.
"garden, and I mean, I suppose I should have been.

you're all shit to me. You were proud you were going to be a
baby the moment you. Don't deny it. I hadn't seen her

When I told you that we were going to--and when you were
learned that much about you during these school weekends
and

there's not somebody else, and you're that kind of man. I
have 4 children of this age, and I'm not buying another
Irene shook her head. "It's no use, Key. I mean nothing to

but they wouldn't come out.

thought. The words seemed gladly to the brain. They made sense.

other people's babies, and yet he couldn't see anything
filled with wonder from things they could do together, for some

people did. The home note is full of criticism that need someone

but we could adopt a baby, if we felt that way. I have an
"But, Irene--"

"I couldn't bear to have you touch me any more. It could have turned out so beautifully in spite of everything—if I hadn't been such a coward."

She looked away from him, trained her eyes on the door into the lobby so that she wouldn't cry, so that she could immobilize her face again.

"God, Irene, I'm sorry." The fatuity of the words felt like sand in his mouth.

He was fumbling about in his coat pocket for a cigarette when a heavy-set, heavily jovial man stopped at their booth, beamed forth with a stupid good fellowship that reeked with insincerity.

"Hey, hello there, Ray. God, man, but I'm glad to see you. I didn't know you were in town. And you too, Irene. I haven't seen you in a coen's age. Someone was telling me you hadn't been well. Glad to see you looking so chipper."

"Hello, Nick," Ray said without cordiality.

"Why didn't you let me know you were in town. We could have got up a party for you, me and Velma. It's been quite some time since the four of us were out together."

"That's right, Nick," Ray said because he had to say something.

"It's still early. What do you say I call up Velma, and we'll all go over to her apartment. I've got a couple of quarts
of good Scotch in the car. We could have quite a time, the four
of us, catch up on the last couple of months."

"Thanks, Nick. Not tonight."

"Why the hell not? Just for a couple of hours anyway."

"Not tonight, Nick."

Not a whit deterred and too stupid to take a hint, Nick
turned to Irene. "Jazz him up, Irene. The boy seems a little
down in the mouth. It will do you both good."

"I don't think so, Nick." Irene's emotionless voice
icicled into him.

"Well, gee, I was only--" And then he looked squarely at
Irene, whose face had turned as expressionless as the beige and
tan colors of the bar. "Sorry. I didn't mean to butt in."

After a hasty look at Ray, who stared at him imperturbably,
he turned hurriedly and skulked back to the bar, from the far
end of which he glared at them, puzzled and half insulted.

"Let's get out of here, Ray," Irene suggested, "before
anyone else drops in."

"Sure, Irene. Let's go."

Outside the evening coolness had begun to settle, drifting
down with the dark, that was swiftly flooding the streets, from
the mountains that closed in on the town from the south. The
reality that had seemed so intrusive in the bar appeared more
normal in the street, rippling with evening strollers and para-
ambulating automobiles. Surely they weren't the only ones in 
all of Helena, Ray thought, as they stood momentarily motion-
less outside the door to the bar, for whom life had taken a 
sudden unexpected and miserable turn. Surely Irene and he 
couldn't be alone in the desert that life had suddenly become 
for them. There must be others. But what if there were? 
What if everyone else in the town should feel as contemptible 
as he felt, as inwardly dead as Irene had said she felt? His 
disgust for himself, Irene's contempt for herself weren't 
lessened in any way. It was all so god-awful, so meaningless, 
and it didn't need to have been.

"The car's around the corner up by the Harlows," he said 
to Irene. "We'd better go to the car."

Without a word she turned up the street, not grasping his 
arm as she used to. He missed her touch. He wanted her to 
grasp his arm, wanted to feel protective as he used to when 
they'd sauntered along the street together, but he was afraid 
to touch her, afraid she'd shrink away from him. And so he 
walked up the street beside her, crossed over when she turned 
to cross, and walked with her silently along the side street 
past the theater until they reached the car, which he unlocked, 
holding the door open wide for her as she stooped over to edge in.

"I suppose you want to go home?" he asked, once in the car 
and seated beside her. But not seated beside her as he used to 
sit, for there was a gap between them now wider than the few
inches that separated them. He couldn't pull her toward him now, kiss her cheek or her lips as he used to before he'd stepped on the accelerator and driven off.

"If that's what you want, Ray."

No, he didn't want that. He didn't want to take her back to the nurse's home, walk her up to the door, stand there and have it shut behind her. Not for a while. Not until there was nothing else left to do.

"Not if you'd rather not, Irene."

"Not for a little."

She didn't want to go home either--if a nurse's home can be called a home. She didn't want him to take her back to that bleak dormitory, have him walk her up to the door as he used to do, have it shut behind her. He began to grow more hopeful. But then he looked sideways at her face and knew that, though she was delaying as much as he, her delay was no sign of hope. Her mind was as made up here in the car as it had been in the bar. It was simply that she wasn't as dead inside as she'd said she was, that she too was afraid to have everything end, and that she didn't want it to end a moment sooner than it had to. Except that she believed it had to and would see that it did.

"Where shall we go?" he asked.

"Anywhere. Just so we don't go home for a little. I don't want to have to look at the girls, have them look at me the way they do, feel sorry for me."
"They know—about not being able to have a baby, I mean?"

"Nothing stays a secret in a hospital."

"I suppose not."

Automatically he churned on the starter, heard the motor catch with a feeling of relief. It was good to have a mechanical contrivance like a car to get into when you didn't know what else to do, good to be able to drive anywhere until you were tired and had to turn around and come home, come home tired enough to sleep. Though he doubted if he'd sleep much tonight—or that Irene would sleep much either. Turning into Main Street, he drove down it unthinkingly, followed the cars in front of him automatically until there they were at the edge of the town, the open countryside in front of them bathed in the pastel glow that dropped over the valley this time of night.

As automatically as he'd been driving, he eased the car to the side of the road and stopped. Across the valley, fifteen miles at least, they could see the Big Belts looming up into the darkening night sky, perpendicularly it seemed, their barren slopes, pale blue, luminescent lavender, dusty pink, melting into the atmosphere. A seemingly eternal wait, hushed and languid, so different from the insistent yellows of the fields that dominated the valley floor by day, hung over the valley. How many times they'd stopped at place after place along this road earlier in the summer, waiting for this soft iridescence gradually to wisp away into the deep blues of night. How many times—
and yet they'd been so few. He'd only known Irene since April.
He supposed that was why he'd stopped in this place this even-
ing on this little crest of road—so that they could feel the
beauty of the valley together once more before they separated
for good. Perhaps. But when he turned his head to look at
Irene, he doubted if she felt tonight as she had that night.
"This hasn't changed at least," he couldn't help saying,
wanting her to turn her head to look at him as she had so
many nights.
"No," she said. "But it doesn't need to." And she didn't
turn toward him.
He started the engine again, turned the car about and drove
back into town.
"I think it would be better if we drove in another direc-
tion," he told her.
As soon as he reached it, he took the cut-off across the
gulch on either side of which the town had grown up and headed
up the highway toward Missoula, not because he especially wanted
to go that way, but simply because it was the nearest cut-off
to any highway and because he knew they had to leave the town
before Irene took it into her head to go back to the nurse's home.
He drove a long way up the valley that leads toward the pass
before he could bring himself to say anything, and then he began
only because he could no longer endure the loneliness that was
slowly sweeping over him. Never since he'd gone driving with
Irene had she ever seemed so far from him. She sat braced against the right door, her head squarely erect, her face that impassive mask behind which he couldn't penetrate. He wanted so desperately to put his arm about her shoulders, draw her back to him, press his cheek briefly against her hair. And so, because he couldn't and knew he couldn't, he began to talk.

"I understand you've quit up at St. Peter's."

"How did you know?"

"The doctor told me."

"I asked him not to."

"You were afraid I'd find out?"

"No. I just thought it would be better if you didn't know until later."

"You do want to get rid of me." He hoped she didn't notice the ache in his voice. He didn't want her to know he was feeling sorry for himself.

"Is it all right to ask what you're going to do?" he asked several minutes later.

"I suppose so." But she said nothing further.

"You're not going home?"

"Home?" He couldn't tell whether she said the word with longing or with revulsion. "What would I do at home?"

"I don't know. I was just wondering."

"I couldn't go home. Not now."

"But if they don't know?"
"They'd wonder. I can't face them yet."

"I suppose not."

He wondered if he could go home now. What would his old man say—provided he told him. But he wasn't going to tell him. This was one episode in his life, one among many, he'd never breathe a word about to the old man. The old man thought too well of him, and he wanted the old man to go on thinking well of him, even if he was mistaken about him. Oh, the old man wouldn't turn him out or say anything cruel. But he'd be hurt. He'd be crushed. That his son could ever get a woman into the jam in which he'd got Irene. Such an idea had never entered the old man's head. The old man would never think the same of him again. And thank God, his mother was gone and would never know about it. One thing sure, he'd never tell the old man. One person in the world had to go on thinking about him the way he wanted to be thought of, and that one person had to be the old man. He had to stand high with the old man.

"Where are you going then?" he asked. "You must have some place in mind."

"Portland."

"But why Portland?"

"I've always wanted to go there. Why not now?"

"But do you know anyone there?"

"No. That's another reason for going."

"Do you have a job lined up?"
"No."

"But, Irene, surely--"

"You don't need to get protective, Ray. I can get a job. Nurses are in demand everywhere. I won't have any trouble. Dr. Gilbertson is going to write for me. I'll be all right."

"Sure, I know. But why go so far?"

"Why not?"

"Irene, I don't want you to be so far away from me."

"You still can't understand that I don't want to be near you, can you?"

He ignored her question. "But, Irene, things won't be any better way off there than they are here, and among strangers, too."

"I'll make friends. I always have."

"But you never were like this before." Too late, he thought of what he'd said and ragged himself for saying it.

"No, I never was, was I? I ought to be all the safer."

They were midway up the pass now and he had to pay full attention to the curving road that wound like a gigantic tape measure along the forested ridges. A good thing he had to mind the road, he thought, if all he could say was as barbed as what he'd just said. He'd keep his mouth shut from now on, keep it shut if they drove all night. He hoped they would drive all night, for if they did, maybe she wouldn't go to Portland. Maybe something would turn up which would change her mind, convince her to
stay somewhere near so that he could keep his eye on her, could wait until perhaps he'd find her less opposed to seeing him. Perhaps—but it was a forlorn perhaps, and he knew it. In spite of his resolution not to speak again, shortly he had to ask another question, one the answer to which he knew, but which he couldn't resist asking.

"You won't write to me, Irene?"

"No, May."

"But in case you might need me."

"I won't need you."

To hear her say it hurt. He tried to tell himself that she didn't mean it, that she only said it in order to make more final her decision not to see him. But when he glanced at her, took in her determined chin silhouetted against the window, he knew that she did mean it.

"I'd drop everything, Irene, and come, if you did need me."

She said nothing for a long while. Her voice, when at last she answered, had a tinge of warmth that set his hopes soaring again.

"Thank you, May."

He reached into his coat pocket, felt around for a cigarette and matches. The cigarette lit, he braced himself against the back of the seat, wondering what to say next. He couldn't talk and get any place, and yet he couldn't sit there, so close to her and yet so far away, and not say something. It
was better to talk, no matter how insanely.

"Do you have a place to stay?"

"Dr. Gilbertson's recommended me to some friends of his. I'll be with them temporarily."

He wanted to ask her who they were, where they lived, how long she'd stay with them, but dared not, knowing she wouldn't tell him and not wanting the hurt he knew would come with a refusal. The cigarette came in handy. He filled his lungs with deep inhalations of smoke, held it as long as he could, exhaled slowly. But the cigarette was soon smoked to a singing butt, which he crushed out in the ash tray. There was nothing else to do but talk.

"Maybe I shouldn't ask, Irene, but have you enough money?"

She turned quickly about. "Always money. You think money is a way out of everything, don't you, Ray? First the doctor and now me."

"I didn't mean it that way, Irene," he tried to soothe her, "You know that. I'm not trying to buy myself off. No amount of money could make up to you what I've done to you. But all the same I don't want you wandering about in a strange city on a shoe string. I started out when I was a kid that way, and it was no joke, believe me."

She remained silent for some time, then said in a kinder voice than he'd heard from her all evening, "I'm sorry, Ray. I know you're no more money-conscious than most men I've known. And even if you were, I guess there'd be a reason for it."
"What I've got is yours, Irene—if you want it."

"Thanks, Ray. I can get along."

"You're sure?"

"I'm sure."

There was nothing further to say. He'd asked all the questions he could ask, offered her everything he had. All he could do now was keep on driving until she asked him to turn around. Though he hardly thought she would. Whenever he decided to turn back toward Helena would be satisfactory with her.

Shortly they were at the top of the pass, heavily shrouded by all the night, which enclosed the whole of their world in a soft mantle of stars whose stabbing beams jabbed through the blackness that lay over the surrounding mountains. Now that they were on the broad meadow that topped the ridge it was just as well to turn round. Further down the opposite side there would be no place to turn round for miles, miles he couldn't bear to drive, few as they were, considering the length and breadth of Montana, in complete silence.

As he turned into the road leading to the Forest Service picnic grounds, Irene spoke to him.

"Ray."

He brought the car to a halt.

"Yes?"

"Can't we get out? Just for a minute?"

"If you want to, Irene."
What in the world did she want to get out of the car for at this time of the night and in this particular place? Except for the starlight the open meadow here on top of the pass was shadow black and cold this time of the night, even in August. Surely she didn’t want to walk about up here, but if she did, he was willing. Whatever would prevent him from taking her back to that door in the nurse’s home was all right with him. Driving a few yards further down the dirt road, he turned off into the meadow and parked the car.

While he was fumbling in the glove compartment for the flashlight he always kept there, Irene got out, stood waiting silently beside the front fender. What could be on her mind, he wondered. And then suddenly he remembered. They’d come up here one Sunday early in May, shortly after they’d met, shortly after they’d spent that weekend together in Bozeman, the memory of which had turned so sour for both of them. Gay as pups out on a ramble, they’d parked the car near where he’d parked it just now and gone scrambling through the high mountain grass speckled with early spring flowers across the meadow on the other side of the highway, sent the cattle which had been pastured up here at the time bellowing away down the far slope, stood on the high ground across the meadow letting the wind tussle with their hair, ruffle their open shirts, heighten the color on their cheeks. For a long time they’d stood on the little rise of ground across the meadow, their hands locked together, stood and looked at all the timbered acres that stretched mile on mile in
every direction for what seemed immeasurable distances, stood feeling as if they were on the peak of the world. And weren’t they, standing there on the Continental Divide, the pulse of the earth passing into their own pulse, on the peak of the world? Strange, he should have forgotten that day when he’d remembered so clearly how he’d felt looking at the Big Belts with Irene on the Great Falls road.

"Where do you want to go, Irene?" he asked.

Instead of answering, she set off, picking her way carefully through the clumps of dried mountain grass, treading lightly in the open-toed shoes she was wearing, certainly not the shoes for a hike at night across MacDonald Pass. Across the highway she stopped, whether to catch her breath or to decide to plunge on, he couldn’t tell. Noticing that she was shivering—it was senseless for anyone unjacketed as she to go striding off across an open mountain meadow this time of the night—he stripped off his coat and draped it over her, the curves of her shoulders under his hands more seductive than they’d ever seemed before. Then off she started again and he behind her, trying to light her way with the feeble beam of the flashlight.

Was she going the whole way across the meadow, he wondered, admiring her grit, but telling himself at the same time that it was damned foolishness, that he ought to stop her, spin her around, pull her close to him, whether she resisted him or not,
force her to feel physically, if in no other way, that he still wanted her, not in the old way that had led them disastrously into their present position, but in a new way, a decent, God-fearing way they needn't be ashamed of. But he didn't, afraid that she still meant what she'd told him earlier in the evening, that she didn't want him to touch her again, that she couldn't bear to be touched by him or by any man, not any more.

How long they plopped on he couldn't tell, but suddenly she stopped, turned about so that she could look across the expanse of forested darkness that stretched so far into the west. He turned with her and gazed through the night, seeing nothing but the line between mountain and sky that ringed them round on every side and the perforations of the stars that flickered through the indigo blue of the sky. What did she see, he wondered, that he did not? Why had she wanted to come here at all?

"It's so clean, so cool and clean," he heard her say after a while, more to herself than to him. "So cool and clean and calm." And then a few minutes later. "And so decent."

What could he say? Or did she want him to say anything? Too bad for her, for them both, if she did, since he could say nothing, unless he were to repeat her words, and this he could not. They stuck so tightly in his throat that, even had he dared, he couldn't have said them.

"Why is it, Ray," she began again, "that so much of the world can seem so good—so good—while so much of the rest
of it is so dirty rotten? And why did we have to pick the rotten side?"

Through the dark he reached for her hand, but as if she were aware of his seeking fingers, she brushed past him, circling far enough in front of him to avoid all contact with him, and headed down the meadow in the direction of the car. Like a well-trained sheep dog, he heeled behind her.

Back in the car, its inky interior screening her completely from him, he raged at himself for letting her escape him, for not saying whatever it was she wanted him to say—he was certain there must have been something. But it was too late now, and he ground fiercely down on the starter in an effort to wear out his exasperation. As the motor caught, it seemed to him that she was holding her breath in desperation, trying forcibly not to give vent to the emotional stress she'd held in check back in the meadow. And then, as his eyes tried to pierce the gloom of the car, clearly he heard above the thrum of the engine a choked sob, then another and another. Without thinking what he was doing, he slid over toward her, placed his arm about her and pressed her body tightly against his. Sobbing unrestrainedly, she clung to him, letting him soothe her in any way he could, letting him rest his cheek against her hair, letting him stroke her shoulder and her arm, letting him whisper to her, while he dabbled at her eyes ineffectually with his handkerchief. And all the while she wept as he had never heard a woman weep in all his life.
Minutes later, the motor still running rhythmically, her sobbing gradually ceased. Minutes more she let him hold her close against him. But as her control over herself returned, so did her former mood, and eventually her body stiffened against him. There was nothing to do but release her, which he did, trying vainly to kiss her cheek as she moved away from him.

"Let's go back, Ray."

The finality of the words chilled him through. Shifting into low, he turned the car back into the highway, down which they drove as silently as if no sound existed, or ever had, except the consistent hum of the motor.

He was sitting, clad only in his shorts, on the bed in his hotel room, still sitting as he'd been sitting for almost half an hour, wondering whether he should snap off the light and lie there thinking and thinking and getting nowhere or whether he should put his clothes on again and go down to the bar for a drink and perhaps some talk, any kind of talk, with Ted, when the telephone rang. He glanced at his watch, which he'd removed and laid on the table beside the bed next the grim looking copy of the Bible that always could be found in a hotel room and which he'd never opened in all the years he'd been traveling about the state. Five minutes to twelve. Who'd be calling him at this hour? The telephone rang again. To hell with it. Another ring, long and insistent. Perhaps it might
be Irene. His hand on the receiver, he hesitated. No, it would not be Irene. Irene wouldn't be calling him, not tonight, never again for all he knew. Then why answer the damn phone? Still, he was up; even if he hadn't been, he'd have been awake. He might as well lift up the receiver, talk to somebody, temporarily get his mind off himself and Irene.

"Hello?" He wondered if his voice sounded as flat to whoever was listening to him as it sounded to himself.

"Mr. Raymond Doynbee?" a faint voice inquired?

"This is Ray Doynbee."

"Missoula calling," said the voice. "Please wait."

Missoula. His mind whirled from question to question while he waited. What was up? Could it be the old man? What would the old man want, and how did the old man know he was in Helena? He hadn't written home in almost two weeks. Or could it be Maud or Addy? Nothing had happened to the old man? He hadn't checked out? That would be the crowning blow--Irene gone from him and now the old man.

"Hello, hello," he called back to the operator.

"One moment, please," came back the faint, impersonal voice.

As patiently as he could, he held the receiver against his ear, listened to the operator in Helena talking to the operator in Missoula. If only he could reach his cigarettes, which he'd left on the bureau that stood clumsy and bulky beyond the bed. Now he wanted a smoke right now.
And then came the faint voice again. "Here is your party."

"Hello....hello," he barked into the mouthpiece.

"Hello, Ray?" Indistinctly he recognized his father's voice. "Is that you, Ray?"

"Sure thing, pop." He hoped he'd eradicated all trace of depondancy from his voice. He couldn't let the old man know how he felt. "This is Ray. How you doing? Everything all right at home?"

"Sure, boy. Tip top." He could barely hear the words.

"You're all right?"

What was the old man asking him that for? He couldn't possibly know anything that had happened.

"Sure, pop, I'm all right. Never been better. How about you?"

"Nothing to complain about."

More puzzled than ever, he kept up the ridiculous conversation.

"How are things in Bonner, pop?"

"Fine, Ray. Everything's fine. Weather mighty hot, but that's all."

What the hell?

"Did you want anything, pop?"

The old man had never called him before, except before his mother had died, when he'd called to beg him to come home as soon as he could.
"Just wanted to find out how you were," Mr. Doynbee said.  

"Haven't heard from you for a spell. I just got to wondering, so I thought I'd call. You're all right?"

"Sure, pop. I'm all right. Never been better. You don't need anything?"

"Not a thing. I was just wondering and I thought I'd call."

"Sure, pop. I'm all right."

"Business is good?"

"Sure, pop, couldn't be better."

"That's good, Ray."

"Sure you don't need anything, pop?"

"I'm all right, Ray. But I was just--" The old man sounded embarrassed. Or was he just getting old and more lonely than usual? But the old man usually had such good control of himself, "I was just wondering about you and I thought I'd call."

"Well, thanks, pop. I'm O.K."

"Things are going all right?"

"Sure, sure, pop."

"Well, I guess I'd better be hanging up, Ray. When will you be heading this way?"

"Pretty soon, pop."

"All right, boy. Good night."

"Good night, pop. I'm all right."

"Sure, Ray."

He heard the receiver click back home. Perplexed, he
slowly hung up the receiver. What was it all about? The old man didn't know a thing about the whole filthy mess. Why, he'd never even told the old man about Irene, never so much as hinted a word to him about her. Or about any other girl he'd ever been interested in. That was one thing he'd never talked to the old man about. Not to his old man. You just didn't talk about women to his father. Not that the old man wouldn't understand. He knew how the world went round. Sure, he did. But the kind of things that went on behind closed doors in hotel rooms and tourist cabins and out in the brush somewhere—those weren't things his old man talked about. Not his old man, who was as fine and straight and clean and decent as a man could be. Then why did he call? Was the old man worried about something? Did the old man want to talk something over with him, and then when they began talking, did he get embarrassed about whatever it was and couldn't tell him? Or did he just want him to come home for a bit and didn't have the heart, when the time came, to ask him? Well, what the hell? There was no way of knowing until he saw the old man. Then it would all come out, if there was anything. Until then, there was Irene to think about. Think about Irene.

Jesus God, what should he do? Just let her go away from him as she wanted to? Or keep on trying, keep working on her until she gave in, until at last she told him out of sheer weariness that she'd marry him in spite of all she'd said and
in spite of all that had happened? God, he didn't know what
he should do. Maybe if he put his clothes back on and went down
for a drink—but Christ, having a drink was no answer. Having
a drink was never any answer. Having a drink only deferred an
answer. And he'd had too many drinks. That was all he'd ever
had since he got out on his own—always a drink and another
customer and another woman. To hell with a drink. He'd better
get some sleep if he could. Whether he got things straightened
out with Irene or not, he had to work tomorrow. He had to keep
on selling that damned plumbing equipment for that concern in
Minneapolis whether he had a hole inside him or not. He'd have
a cigarette and then turn in, get some sleep.

But when he picked up the package and was sliding one out,
he knew that he didn't want a cigarette either. A cigarette
was just a substitute for a drink, and a drink was a substitute
for so many things. Well, he'd better go to bed and be done
with it.

Turning off the light, he stripped off his shorts—tonight
he couldn't look at himself naked; he wondered if he would ever
be able to again—and slid into between the sheets. Never in all
his life had a bed seemed so impersonally cool, so coldly empty,
Long after he woke up Mr. Doyubee lay in bed, not opening his eyes after one embracing glance at the side window, which confirmed an already hazy impression that daylight had poked its way down the Blackfoot and Hellgate valleys several hours earlier. In spite of his pretense that he was sleeping, little by little the insistent queries of the day before began to form themselves into a clamoring chorus that seemed to have no beginning and no end, a chain with an indeterminable number of links that was wound completely about him, and which impeded his ability to move in any direction but one.

He'd hoped when he turned out the light the night before, his futile telephonic conversation with Ray already evaporating out of his mind, that by morning the battering urgency which had rammed through him all afternoon and evening would have worn itself out, the way so many apparently urgent impulses vanish during the night, that he could get up the next morning, dress himself as lazily as he'd grown used to dressing over the seven years since the accident, go off to the kitchen for his morning coffee and scrambled eggs, prop up the morning paper in front of him and pour himself into the news. But it was not going to be so. Today would be a continuation of yesterday. He would have to think, whether he wanted to or not, and he would have no choice about what he thought.

Minutes passed. Steadfastly he refused to open his eyes. Almost desperately he pretended that clear sunlight was not
brushing the room with an illuminating swathe. But it was no use. He heard footsteps going past the front of the house, voices singing out in the morning freshness, automobiles whis- ing by. The first shift was going to work, roughly-clothed men tramping briskly by in heavy shoes whose clatter against the sidewalk rang out with energy and strength. A sharp pang such as he hadn't felt in years jabbed through him. He wished he were back with those men, slaving away again on the carriage, breathing in the shrill screams of the saws, the sweet smell of pine logs as they entered the mill on the bull-chain, the fresh odor of new-cut lumber. He wanted to be part of the mill again, feel himself a vital cog in the machinery as he used to feel every morning when he climbed onto the carriage. He wanted something important to do, something that had definite meaning, no matter how automatic, something that he understood without thinking about.

He didn't want to think. He wanted simply to live without thinking—thinking about what lay in back of the compulsions of his life. He wouldn't think, he told himself, and clenched his eyelids tightly over his eyes. He'd lie in bed a little longer, forget about all those questions of yesterday. For whether he found an answer or not, he'd still have to go on living. Finding the answer wouldn't change one minute of his life, which would go on as long as his heart went on beating. Why think then?

No reason at all.
where she hide from the mocking books. The book which he could hide from the library with ease was the better of him when he went to the library with ease. The book that he never got out of the hands of the men who only knew how to see their hands until they got to the library, he never returned her to they did him. Always when he went into the library, he never returned her to a library. She had been helpless in a library and he was. Books had she would have been able to tell him where to look for it.

that of two. They had known the right book for him, but who would do it next? He only knew her to offer a question, some kind of conclusion and had written that conclusion down.

troubled with the same questions, had thought them through to a try book at first. Someone somewhere had been there. What should be done? It occurred to him that perhaps he ought

and good them over

thinking. It was no use. He had better face the questions.

a sudden rush swept down over the house, and he kept on.

the sound of footsteps echoed away. He was already past.

breathing—expected that he didn't have to pay attention to breath—

wondered why that seemed to have become so much a part of him as

the quarters of yesterday afternoon, concerning about that de—

and yet he went on thinking. His mind kept muttering over
known just where to go in the library to find what she wanted, never been hesitant about taking down a book, running through it, front and back to see if it was what she wanted. Oh, if Netta were only here now to scoot her speedy way up and down those shelves in the library until she'd spotted just what she needed. Involuntarily he sighed, rebuked himself for his momentary dip into self-pity, and decided to get up. Right after breakfast he'd board the bus for Missoula and fight this library business through.

Out in the street Mr. Doynebo looked expectantly toward the bus stop. No bus in sight. He was early and would have to wait. Well, while he waited, he could plan his assault on the library. But hardly had he begun to think how best to attack the books when Mrs. Jensen, jerking Benjy along beside her, catapulted into him from the side street that wound around the old hotel, her hair as dishevelled as ever, but this morning her middle unaproned, her feet less slantly shod.

"Oh, Mr. Doynebo," she began as soon as she recognised him, "I all but dragged him out from under a truck just now. In another minute he'd have been nothing but a grease spot on the road."

Benjy, too young, too alive to care about either his mother's strictures or his near approach to greasy oblivion, looked unperturbed.
"It was a brand new truck," he told Mr. Doynebee. "I know the man who drives it."

"Off chasing after the other boys?" Mr. Doynebee asked Mrs. Jensen.

"No, just by himself. One way or the other it's just as bad, and with all I have to do too." Mrs. Jensen brushed back some more than usually disarrayed locks of hair. "It's just like I said to you yesterday--"

Mr. Doynebee interrupted her. "I'm off to catch the bus, Mrs. Jensen. You'll have to excuse me. Take care of yourself, Benjy."

"There was nothing to worry about," Benjy said.

Mrs. Jensen gave him a good jerk. "Nothing to worry about, my foot." And then to Mr. Doynebee. "Well, good morning. Watch out in Missoula. The cars are getting so reckless down town that I'm afraid to cross the street. It'd be no fun to be hit by some crazy galoot that hasn't got sense enough...."

Mr. Doynebee walked on toward the bus stop, wondering what being struck by a truck would be like. Would it be so sudden a man would have no sensation of pain? Could he even feel the thud of collision? Or would everything be suddenly all dark, blinding and numbing? Well, there was no likelihood he'd ever know. Except for regular walks up the Blackfoot road of a summer evening, he was never any place where a hit-and-run driver was likely to run into him. No, when he died, it
wouldn’t be on the highway. It would be safe at home in his bed, tucked between sheets as white as sand could bleach them. Nothing exciting had ever happened in his life. The chance that his death would be any more exciting than his life was pretty improbable.

When the bus drove in, he clambered in, finding a seat in the rear where he could most likely keep free of the curse of sociability while he rode the seven miles to Missoula. Once under way, his mind reverted to the library, became so immersed in indecision that the bus was already crossing the Blackfoot river before he realized it. In spite of the open windows the bus was hot, and what with the increasing heat of the day and the cross-currents of his thoughts, he had to wipe off his forehead with his handkerchief. The nearer the bus got to Missoula, the more he perspired, a disgusting perspiration he was ashamed of, provoked by his lack of boskish intrepidity. As the bus veered past the roadhouses with their flashy neon signs in East Missoula, he suddenly wondered if he’d neglected to stick his glasses in his coat pocket, and almost wished that he had, since without them a jaunt to the library was futile. But no, there they were. He would have to go through with it.

Missoula looked clean, but hot, the bus speeding past the aluminum-painted oil tanks, auto courts and service stations clustered about the entrance to the town. And then the bus slowed down to a halt at the red light on Broadway by the corner of the post office.
Mr. Doynbee got off. For a moment he stood hesitantly on the corner, looked across the street at the grocery store in and out of which a zig-zag current of shoppers drifted. Then, taking a deep breath, he turned north on Fattes Street, walked defiantly as far as the middle of the block, where he stopped, sunk in indecision. Again breathing deeply, he walked on, diagonally across the street to the library. "Open from 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. during June, July and August" proclaimed a large cardboard sign on the door, which a determined old lady in a black straw hat, a shopping bag slung over her arm, pulled open as he approached. For another hesitant moment he wavered at the bottom of the steps, then mounted them slowly and went in after the old lady, who had already disappeared within.

The public building smell, a combination of dust and cleansing compound, assailed him as he plodded up the three steps in the vestibule. A mechanically clean smell that irritated his nostrils, a smell unlike the naturally clean, sweet odor of the mill. A sepulchral silence, amplified by the placid tick, tick, tick of an invisible clock, suffused the whole building, an energetic quiet that galled upon him. Give him either the shrieking throbs of the mill or the natural quiet of a lonely house, but not this rigid silence that beat against him more than a January blizzard. Bracing his shoulders against the quiet, he strode past the loan desk, behind which a spinsterish woman about forty, her hair primped against her scalp in a neat marcel, her
lips pressed thinl together in a professional line, glared at him. At least he thought she glared at him, and in response he turned his back on her and hurried into the room on the right, where he pulled himself up in a state of asinine confusion.

All around him on the shelves that lined the walls of the room glowered the books, volume after volume seemingly marshalled against him. A long time had passed since he'd been in this room. He recalled sitting in one of the diminutive light oak chairs, four of which surrounded the circular oak table that stood at one side of the room, while Netta browbeat the books. A strong urge to sit down in one of those chairs glided over him, but glancing about the room, he saw, seated at a double reading desk by the front window, the determined old lady who had preceded him into the building, absorbed in a large volume with worn pages which she was reading with the help of a magnifying glass. Immediately he felt ashamed of his timidity. Her matriarchal face, wrinkled with age and taut with determination, infused him with a tingling spirit of bravado that marched him up to the shelves with more confidence than he'd supposed was in him.

But once he was squarely in front of the shelves, his frustration, increasing with every title he read, his head up- raised in deference to his bifocals, returned. Great Works of Art, Monuments of Christian Home, Art in Theory--his eyes ovalled from the top shelf to the first tier of books to the bottom. What imposing titles all these books had and how thick
they were. But they were quite unlikely to have anything in them calculated to answer the questions that were haunting him. Well, he'd just have to keep on looking until he found something that seemed right.

He moved down the wall a few steps, in his anxiety stumbling against the shining black fire-tongs that had never been used once in all their years in the library and which stood beside the gleaming fire-place screen which had never screened a fire. The bang of tongs against tongs reverberated through the building, embarrassing him all the more when the spinsterish woman came rushing from behind the loan desk to find out what was the matter. Which looked the more ferocious, the spinsterish woman or the enlarged photograph of Theodore Roosevelt that hung in the far corner of the room, he couldn't tell. Nervous as a child who has sneezed loudly in the middle of the pastoral prayer in church, he righted the tongs, assuming a poise he did not possess. When the room was again swaddled in tomb-like quiet, the spinsterish woman retreated to her haven behind the loan desk, but the mustached face of the strenuous president continued to glower at him, the heavy eyebrows arched in a fine contempt for such bunglers as the Mr. Doynbees of the world. Only the full length photograph of Chief Joseph, which hung over the shelves he'd just left, retained the same equanimity that had pervaded the room before he'd collided with the tongs, with the added exception of the determined old lady with the reading
glass, who went on squinting at the volume before her as if nothing had happened.

Cautiously Mr. Doynbee tiptoed toward the shelves between the fireplace and the side windows, searching the titles with barely controlled patience, careful not to entangle himself with the legs of the metal table on which lay opened a huge dictionary. *Upstage* he read and one title after another that seemed to have to do with the theater. Nothing for him here, and he went on past the windows to three more sections of shelves, where he skimmed titles such as *Readings for an Air Age*, none of which could have anything to do with him. Then on to the front windows under which had been built low shelves containing volumes of poetry. *Swear by the Night* printed along the edge, one poem of which he tried to read, but it made no sense to him, and he refused to read it again, the way Netta had always told him poetry should be read. Poetry was not for him. Nathalie Crane, whoever she was, would have to wait for someone better educated than he.

By now he had made the circuit of the room and found nothing. Standing beside the stacks at the edge of the doorway, he faltered a little, wondering what to try next. Already he had spent more than an hour going from title to title—and located nothing. The tick, tick, tick of the invisible clock jeered at him, and it seemed to him as if the spinsterish woman, who was fiddling with different colored cards at the loan desk, was
eyeing him suspiciously. Should he go into the room across from the one he was in, in which he noticed several people circulating about? But he had no more idea what kind of books were shelved in that room than he'd had concerning the books shelved in the room in which he still stood. Perhaps instead he ought to pry around the rows of shelves that stood open behind the loan desk, although to do that he would have to go into the region that seemed to be ruled over directly by the spinsterish woman, whose gaze intimidated him more than he dared admit even to himself. Oh, if Netta were only here. She had a way with women like this one. With Netta they warmed up, forgot to be as icy as the Blackfoot in the dead of winter, could even be accommodating if spoken to in the proper manner.

While he stood wavering in the doorway, trying not to look as mixed up as he felt, the spinsterish woman spoke to him.

"Could I help you?" Her voice was not nearly as glacial as her face.

Mr. Doynbee warmed up to the loan desk, put his hand on the level oak surface and then suddenly recalled that all this time his hat had been on. Crestfallen as Ray had used to look when he'd been obliged to take him down a peg, he removed his hat, which he twiddled between thumb and forefinger.

"You seem to be rather confused," the spinsterish woman went on. "I couldn't help noticing. Perhaps I can help you."

"Well, ma'am," he began, fumbling for the words that never
"I think I know what you mean," he heard her say through the phone.

"Yet there are times when we need to ask ourselves, 'How could she know that he didn't know what she meant in spite of her sophisticated look?"

"He vouched simplified or the address. It knew this woman.

"Excuse the intrusion, woman was scrutinizing."

"To him, never to be able to come across anything that would be of any use, someone did, the help him out in the very next of books, he'd tell her, she couldn't be able to help him, and he knew that it wasn't to me, but, damn it all, if he didn't before and which had made up the mind not to tell to anyone."

"Was that the question that had been all the minutes since the day he realized that he was on the verge of despairing to her."

"Well, it is the way. I don't exactly know what I mean by that, I'm looking for..."
the web of confusion in which he felt himself netted, but to him her voice sounded vague, as if she were trying harder to buck him up than to understand what was eating at him.

"It's not easy to say what I mean," he said.

"No, of course not," she said, trying to give him courage.

"But I don't wonder you didn't find anything in that room," nodding toward the room on her left. "What you're after is something in the line of philosophy or religion, or perhaps psychology or sociology."

The words, so overwhelming to him, rolled off her tongue as if she said them every day. And maybe she did. She seemed to know quite a bit; this spinsterish woman with the close-cropped marcelled hair.

"We don't have very much on those subjects," she went on, "but I'll show you what we have."

She slid off the stool on which she was perched like a well-kept parrot in a florist's shop and led him into the room on the left. Mr. Doynbee followed in her cologneu wake like a cocker spaniel trotting behind a bicycled grade-school boy, but minus the spaniel's self-importance.

"Of course, I can't find exactly what you want," the spinsterish woman said as they rounded the corner into the room. "You don't seem to know exactly what you want yourself, you know. But perhaps on these shelves there might be something. Along here"—and she pointed with crimsoned fingernails—"we keep what books we have on psychology and philosophy."
She pulled out an inch or two several volumes that seemed relevant to her.

"We really don't have very much on either subject," she rattled on. "Not enough funds, you know, and any way the demand for such books by the general public isn't great, and being a public library we have to consider what the public wants."

"Sure," Mr. Doynebee said, wondering why he said anything at all.

"Now over here," and the spinsterish woman swept around an oblong table on which lay magazines that were allowed to circulate, "are works on religion. You might find something here. We have quite a number of books on religion that are in demand, but whether you're interested in religion or not, of course I don't know."

"No, of course not," Mr. Doynebee murmured.

"And over here," the spinsterish woman was already past the front windows, bee-lining for the far corner of the room, "are a few books on sociology and related subjects. It's just possible that if you look through some of these....well, you never know, you know....And that's about all we have."

She looked brightly at Mr. Doynebee, who tried to look brightly back at her.

"Thank you, ma'am," he said. "Thank you a lot. You've been a lot of help to me."
"Oh, not at all," the spinsterish woman said affably. "After all, I'm paid to help people. Now if you want anything else, don't hesitate to ask."

"No, ma'am," Mr. Doyntsee said.

Giving a final triumphant glance at the shelves full of books on sociology and related subjects, the spinsterish woman retired to her sanctum behind the loan desk, from which she smiled helpfully toward him for several minutes. When he was sure she was no longer watching him, Mr. Doyntsee plucked from off the top shelf a hefty tome entitled *Principles of Sociology*, which he opened at random, first here, then there, trying to guess what might be of use to him in chapters dealing with marriage, family life, the rising rate of divorce, adolescent delinquency. After sampling a sentence or two on all these subjects, he placed the book back on the shelf, wondering what difference it all made, convinced that nothing in that book was of importance to people like him. A title on the next shelf attracted him. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. He skimmed through the first paragraph of the first page. Absolutely meaningless to him, he read it again and then again, his faith in his ability to comprehend the printed prose page, which had been rapidly waning, disappearing altogether.

It was no good for him to keep on reading such books, he thought. They had nothing to say to him or to millions of people like him. They were for the educated, who made reading
their means of livelihood, not for mill-hands and ex-lumber-jacks who'd never gone beyond high school, if they'd got that far. But the idea of leaving off his search irked him. Sure, he was busy in the head on a lot of things, but if he kept trying, as Netta had always told him, his native intelligence—Netta's phrase—would finally come to the rescue. Still, Netta's native intelligence had been quicker than his, and it might be that even Netta would have had hard work understanding this Veblen book.

He decided to try next the shelves that contained books on religion, since religion, he thought, was something he knew a little about. Hadn't he been sent to Sunday school when he was a little tike, he and Maud and their brothers and sisters? Hadn't they memorized the books of the Bible and learned the story of Moses and the children of Israel and all about David and Goliath and the crucifixion? What good it had done him, he couldn't say, but he still believed it had been a good thing, in spite of the years he'd paid no attention to the church.

He and Netta had seen to it that Ray and Addy had gone to Sunday school, and even Addy sent her children off to church on Sunday mornings, though to which one he didn't know, a nickel for the collection imprisoned in each child's fist or knotted in his handkerchief. Whether the nickel ever reached the collection plate or not was another matter, but at least Addy made an effort. He felt more at home among the books on religion, or so he thought, until he looked over the titles.
There was something alien about those titles, either too out of
the way or too soothingly personal. Rather gingerly he opened
*What Can a Man Believe*, which, judging by the simplicity of the
title, might turn out to be helpful. But, skimming along from
page to page, his eyes found nothing upon which he wished to
linger. The language was too oily, too patently like the pulp-
pit tone which he'd grown to detest over the years when he'd
gone to church once in a while with Nettie. *Getting Help from
Religion* was much the same, an unctuous appeal to a faith he
didn't have, a carefully concealed mass of Christian blather
about which he'd long ago ceased to think, it might be even
believe. Nothing at all, so far as he could tell after judicious
skipping, that had to do with his questions. By now he felt
disinclined to continue his peregrination along the stacks,
but it seemed cowardly to give up so easily, especially when he
recalled that if he found nothing in a book somewhere, he'd
sooner or later be obliged—for this thing inside him wouldn't
give him any rest until he'd satisfied it in some way—to go to
Tom or to Angelo and talk it over with them. Judging by the
difficulty he'd had explaining himself to the spinsterish woman
behind the loan desk, it would be no easy matter to talk it over
with them. He'd better go on examining the shelves—only those
that held books on philosophy and psychology were left—so that,
I opened the door that finally clicked with devout
over and suddenly we felt and realizing. Then the outline of the books which he passed
approached him; the little book was closed and the reading looked
off and I opened the third little door, which opened upon

on any of these.

the only child who hadn't read the novel and it had worked all right
the child was_Return. He didn't expect the road and spoil the child was
about when she read the book on complicated subjects like child
perhaps the courage to read them. Hesitantly, what she was

gone through. Every other tool, but he'd never had any intuition

He and Andy were more then one book on angle pedagogy. Hesita had

word frequently during the years when they were<br>read only a vague idea of what it meant, although Hesita had read the

that was their pedagogy, although Hesita had much about the people who read them about their pedagogies. Every other time,

such was their pedagogy, although Hesita had much about them and
about all the others. People were always saying that much and

besides, until this time. What pedagogy was a word he'd heard enough
to find something on these last shortage that would quiet the

of the meed, he found the corner of the room, the mind made
and so, pondering up into those more firmly on the bridge

wordy description. He read out of the building
and live—for what, he thought, and pulled the book off the shelf. One glance at its get-up convinced him that it held nothing for him; he doubted that even Hetta would have been interested in it. And on from shelf to shelf until at last he came on a book with a miraculous title—What Men Live By.

He hesitated before he took the book off the shelf. This surely was it. Such a title expressed almost exactly the gist of all his speculations of the day before. Here was the book he wanted. How strange that he should have had to spend almost two hours before he came across it.

Seated in one of the oak chairs that stood before the low round oak table like the one in the room in which he'd wasted so much time, he spread the book open in front of him, prepared to find almost on the first page what he was searching for. But the first page was indefinite, full of words that rolled along without saying much. So was the second. And the third. He began skimming pages, hoping to chance upon some golden saying that would throw a steady beam of light on the problem that had driven him, willy-nilly, to the library, but none of the pages he read seemed to have anything more to say than the first three. Lots of talk rippled along, talk that had to do with the intimate play of mind upon mind between married folk—which he knew already. Pages were devoted to various manifestations of love—its "allies," "its house of many mansions," its "symbolism,"—about which he no longer had any need to know, had he.
had the desire. Chapters on "the rewards of work," which offered very little to him, who'd been forced to quit working years ago; on "play, recreation, and the other arts," which seemed equally pointless, even when he read a page or two thrice over as carefully as he could. Chapters on confession and communion, reeking with beautiful words, but empty as only beautiful words can be to someone who wants more than beautiful words, who wants words to express bluntly and swiftly, even harshly, precise ideas that mean something to a seeking man, no matter who he is.

Pushing the book aside at last, he sat back in the chair, unwilling to admit his disappointment, but hardly able to conceal it from himself. How could a book whose title promised so much offer so little? Pages and pages of claptrap, gilt-edged claptrap. How many of the books in this room, in the whole library, were just the same, he had no idea, but the feeling expanded in him that most of them must be just as pointless as this one. Perhaps he'd been right all along in his fear of the library and its books. Perhaps books didn't help a man to see things as clearly as he'd always thought they did. Perhaps they were just a magnificent bluff that frightened people like him unreasonably, making them afraid into the bargain of people who read them.

And yet Netta had always seemed to get so much out of reading. The books she read had never struck her as claptrap. It might be that Netta had been fooling herself all along too, but he
Did you find anything out there? The pedestrian woman
book had to read a bit more.

He should have learned long ago, and for that the shock—and the
found what he wanted, he'd learned something about himself—
him as it had when the first entered the neighborhood. If he hadn't
the shock, shock of the shock no longer seemed to fear at
showed the patterns into the coat pocket and slapped on his hat.
need at the own determination, the ragged end on the skirt?
with a new eau de toilette for the own manhood, mingled with and

was, the didn't need to feel ashamed of.

were the, perhaps, considering the own life, but one, wherever he
the world, whether he could handle books or not, not much of a
mean't born for them. Why not ask if it a man had a place in

he to look at any more books in the library or any other. He
drew from him this thirty-second year. He decided not

be careful from him this thirty-second year. He decided not
to say to him, 'they'd have said it long years ago, not kept that

all those books so unmentionable. If books had had anything
It must be the own fault then, some lack in himself, that made
room, he was looking at while he was thinking about the corner

heated seat of whom, hung over the fire-place in the
foot had books made a foot of Abraham Lincoln, a photograph of a
or not books made a foot out of her, and they certainly hadn't.

with all those twenty-seven years without discovering where they
found this notion hard to believe. He couldn't have lived with
behind the lean desk asked him as he went by her on the way to the street door.

"No, ma'am," was all he could say. "Thank you just the same for all your trouble."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," the spinsterish woman said. "Perhaps if you keep looking--"

"That's what I'm aiming to do," he cut her off brusquely.

Turning his back on her, he trudged down the three steps to the door, twisted the door knob awkwardly as he always did now and went out into the street. He'd been obliged to make a retreat of sorts, but he shut the door behind him with no sense of defeat, doubtful though he was that he would ever open that particular door again. All he could do now was look elsewhere, and that he proposed to do as soon as he could figure out where next to look.

II

The saloon was quiet when he went in and empty except for the bartender, a glum man with a face scarred by acne. In spite of his surliness he was inclined to talk, after Mr. Doyntee ordered a bottle of beer, talk about anything just for the sake of talking, a habit to which Mr. Doyntee was not addicted. And so he was grateful when a delivery-man called in from the alley entrance, asking for directions from the bartender, and he could escape with his beer to one of the booths across the room.
The beer tasted good and so did the tobacco smoke that filled his mouth and lungs between sips. Years had passed since he'd patronized a bar this early in the day. More years than that, doubled and tripled, had gone by since he'd been in this bar—or in what this bar used to be thirty to forty years before when he and Tom had made it their headquarters on their regular expeditions into Missoula from whatever logging camp they'd been working in at the time. Railroad Street had changed since then, along with everything else in Missoula. Those had been rugged days when he and Tom had bounded into this bar as soon as they'd arrived in town, ordered one whiskey after another until they'd both got half drunk, staggered off to dinner somewhere and then come back to drink some more until they'd gone bawling off to find some women in one or another of the houses along Front Street. And then back the next morning to do it all over again, telling each other they were wetting their whistle merely to sober up.

He wondered, as the beer trickled a cool line down to his stomach, if such escapades still took place in this bar. Probably, since as far as he knew, young men—and not only young men—were still as much damn fools as they'd been when he was young. And yet he wondered if his kind of man still frequented this kind of bar, the kind that Ray wouldn't be seen in, not because he was snobbish, but because it didn't have what Ray and his friends called class.
He preferred this kind of bar, where the proprietors sold whiskey without dolling up the atmosphere. In here there were no soft lights hidden in the walls--instead plain chandeliers that sprayed out a pale, strained light; no chromium bar with leather-covered stools in front of it--instead a good old-fashioned hard wood bar with a brass rail upon which to rest a tired foot; no fancy doors with French words painted on them; no girl waitresses with pampered hair-dos; no bartenders with social pretensions. The only similarity between this bar and the kind Ray took him to was the juke-box, which seemed to have crept into every public place in the country, but which in this bar belched out a different sort of music from that of the juke-boxes in the slicked-up bars, music with a strong beat and a simple tune a man could whistle after only a few hearings.

He felt more at home in this kind of bar, where a man could swear in a loud voice if he wanted to--not that he wanted to any more--and raise his particular brand of hell if he wanted to--not that he was inclined to raise hell any more.

Why had he come to this saloon today? Was he getting so old that he was turning to the past, as he'd always heard old people did? And why was he so full of questions all the time? Every thought he had turned out eventually to be a question.

Well, before he considered whether he'd grown old without realizing it, he'd first of all better find the answers to yesterday's questions. He certainly wasn't having much luck with them.
"Always be the end of the week." She lowered her voice.

"Plenty of questions the bartender joined with her.

"Good, I'm told," the bartender spoke.

"He looked up. In the middle of the bar stood a woman, the heel
of one shoe hooked over the bar's edge, the other resting on
the floor. The figures of the two women rivaled one another's
myriads, each new face came in without the notice.

"I loved you. Someone must have come in without the notice.
These little words that described, "It never seems to come the way
I've always wanted," mumbled out a single and unattributed.

"He was about about.

The thought was the least bit like him what later he my
he had someone to talk to. Right now he didn't want anyone
and figured out where to go next, but where to go? He went
follow was likely to have. It was there he sat down to business
of an antenna, he was a little too old for the kind of information the
he went back to the booth, anywhere to avoid useless contact.

"Mr. Donald's said.

"I didn't think you lived around here, " the bartender said.

"Up in Denver."

"You live around here, the bartender wanted to know.

"No, that's right," Mr. Donald's said lifecycle.

When we went up to the bar for another bottle,

"I never seen you in here before," the bartender told him.
so that Mr. Doynebee could only guess what she said, but from
the way she tipped her head in his direction, he knew she
wanted to know who he was, and from the shrug of the bartender's
shoulders he could deduce the bartender was telling her he
didn't know. It was no surprise to him when the woman picked
up her drink and ambled over to his booth.

"Mind if I sit down?" she asked.

"There's plenty of room," he told her.

Years had passed since this kind of woman had approached
him.

"I never seen you in here before," the woman said, trying
to force a gay look into her jaded blue eyes.

"No, I haven't been in here for years," Mr. Doynebee said.

"I didn't think so," she went on, friendly with a manufact-
ured friendliness. "I come in here every day for a pick-me-up,
and I never seen you in here before."

She sipped her whiskey appreciatively, sizing him up over
the top of the glass. Slowly spinning his glass of beer be-
tween thumb and forefinger, Mr. Doynebee watched her. What if
he should tell this woman what was on his mind? What would her
answer be? What made life worth living for her? For a moment
he was on the verge of asking, but some spark of caution, per-
haps some recollection of his former dealings with women like
her, warned him not to. Women like her nine times out of ten
merely drifted along without questioning where they were going
or why. There was hardly a chance that anything this woman
might say would have a bearing on the questions that were push-
ing him around. He'd known too many women like her to believe
that her kind had hearts of gold or minds capable of dealing
with the more complicated problems of life.

"You been without that hook a long time?" the woman asked.

"Quite a while," Mr. Doynebee said.

"It's pretty tough to be minus a right hand, I guess."

"I'm used to it now."

"I knew a fellow once," she continued between contemplative
sips of her whiskey, "not so long ago either, who'd lost his
hand on the railroad. He was pretty bitter about it. Used to
come up to me for consolation--"

"I know," Mr. Doynebee said, trying to hide the smile he
was afraid was spreading over his lips.

"He was a nice fellow too," the woman said, "used to buy
me lots of drinks. I've often wondered what became of him."

She assumed a far away look that was distinctly unbecoming.
Mr. Doynebee drained his glass of what beer was left in it. The
woman looked appealingly at him.

"You wouldn't want to buy me a drink, would you?"

"No," he said pleasantly but decisively.

"I was only asking," the woman said with strident petulance.

"Sure, I know," Mr. Doynebee told her. "But I imagine your
income is bigger than mine."
day after day, I thought—"Well, not from hand to mouth, but just a

"I mean to keep on doing the same thing.

out of the Part, He'll, what else do a man work for?

"Well, the union see to that." the bartender said.

"That's pretty good, I suppose.

"Yes, what do you get out of it? I mean, what else be-

The bartender looked surprised. "Get out of it?

The question. "What do you get out of it?

Before he knew what he was saying, Mr. Dohyee asked him

tailed part up in "three for a friend of mine."

About five years," the bartender said. "Before that I

"You're worked here for some time, Mr. Dohyee said.

who fall for her line. And, I've been-

she can pick up. You'd be surprised how many sooner there is

where in here every day, just looking around, seeing what

"Pretty stupid, I guess," Mr. Dohyee said.

to come over to Mr. Dohyee.

"Come out, ain't she?" the bartender said. "What the hell,

Dohyee, as she passed the booth, a look of astonishment with a
she realted out of the bar, not neglecting to wink at Mr.

to the bar, where she ordered another drink. The drink down,

dinner he detained for men like Mr. Dohyee and found her

she got up, jerked her skirt deliberately around her hips as

hooker, but I'm no cheapskate."

"Oh, no. Yes." she purred back at him. "I may be only a
little beyond that, like all the rest of us, only getting so far and never any further? You see what I mean?"

The bartender screwed up his face into a questioning stare. "Well, I'm beginning to catch on. But I don't see what good wondering about that sort of thing does. I'll have to go on tending bar here or somewhere else or get a pick and shovel job somewhere. A man has to have a little change in his pocket."

"You've never thought about it?" Mr. Doynebee asked helpfully.

"It don't do no good to think about things like that," the bartender declared rather truculently. "I'd go nuts if I thought about things like that. So would most of the people who come in here. They come in here to get away from it all. Get away from their wives or their families or their mother-in-laws or just from themselves. Like that chippie that was just in here. She comes in to get away from the joint she works in—if you can call it work. Of course she ain't above drumming up a little trade while she's here. Her kind has to live too. But she don't think about it. She just goes on living as best she can."

Mr. Doynebee had nothing more to say. The bartender's harangue had dried up all his desire to talk things over with the man. He was afraid to think, the bartender. Everything he said was a defense against thinking; the more he talked, the stouter his defense would become. It would be better to stop talking to him, quit exploring what was obviously a blind alley that would produce nothing but harsh argument. Moreover, the
bartender’s words had become so critical that Mr. Doynebee began to feel self-conscious, almost as if he’d been prying into the intimate corners of another man’s life. He should have known better than to reveal what was on his mind to just anybody. All but a few of the just anybodies, the few whom he was not likely to meet, were too busy trying to provide themselves with the bare necessities to have time or inclination to think about what lay behind their busy-ness.

“I’ve just been wondering about things like that lately,” he excused himself to the bartender.

“I don’t see why anyone like you should worry about stuff like that,” the bartender said. “You’ve lived your life—”

Mr. Doynebee stared at him, astonished at the implication that death was the only experience in life left for him—“you’ve got decent clothes on your back and money in your pocket, a decent place to live probably. There’s some nice homes up in Benner. I got a friend who lives up there. You ought to sit back and enjoy life at your age, not worry about it.”

“Oh, I’m not worrying about it,” Mr. Doynebee said, anxious to vindicate himself. “But sometimes a man begins to wonder—”

“You just take my advice, dad,” the bartender said, “and quit wondering. The way things are going these days, it don’t pay to do any wondering. As long as a man gets by, he ought to feel lucky and let it go at that.”

The entrance of three men, laborers, judging by their
After exploring the bar, I decided to ask the bartender whatever he had in.

I actually have my own drink, so I went to the bar, and the Grand,

As I went through the restaurant, I decided to go back to the bar.

careful about what he said to strangers,

The bartender apparently had the same answer, and whoever he asked, he'd think him as

the pure question he'd asked the bartender and more than likely

ever met before him and before he knew if he'd be aking him

down at a corner in some restaurant, fall into each with one

and a cup of coffee. But he shied away from these. He'd sit

get nowhere. He'd better stop in somewhere for a sandwich

beastly, he didn't want to go home. He'd think too much at home—
hand would have given him up by this time and eaten by midnight.

latter bit hungry in the bar. Tog late now to be home for lunch,

toward one o'clock. Time for lunch. Hungry he hadn't felt the

one in the street he pulled out the watch, getting out

I'm not on the street.

over life tell told anything up for him; his bar would cater to

but he knew that he'd never come to this bar again. What

"money, ks? Don't waste and fraternize with the waiters, hand;"

"see you again, the bartender called after him."

ground, stood up, put the coat and needed for the door.

be rid of him. He'd probably gathered up the pipe and tobacco

another, put me and to the bartender's recommendations. And to
lunchroom with enough candy to satisfy the children without making them sick, he boarded the Daly bus, already waiting by the fountain in front of the station. In a few minutes the bus was crossing the bridge, was turning into Third Street.

III

Clarice was squatting on her haunches beside a bed of lackadaisical dwarf zinnias that were having all they could do to weather the summer heat without sufficient water—Addy never seemed to find the time to keep what flowers she got around to planting watered, and Joe was always too tired when he got home from work to take up the gardening slack—when Mr. Doynebee turned up the walk. At the sound of footsteps she raised her tousled head, from which a forlorn ribbon drooped, spied her grandfather, and dropping the old tin lard pail which she’d been beating with a serving spoon rifled from the kitchen, trotted toward him as fast as her four year old legs could carry her. Mr. Doynebee stooped down to catch her in his one whole arm.

"Where’s your mama?" he asked.

"In the house—I guess," Clarice lisped as well as she could.

At the front door Mr. Doynebee set her down, opened the screen door, which he noticed needed some minor repairs, and let her scamper in ahead of him. The living room welcomed him with its usual disarray. None of the chairs were where they ought to have been, newspapers and magazines were littered about, a pair of
children's shoes left there the night before, cluttered a corner, a blob of fading nasturtiums hung over the side of a bowl set unappealingly close to the edge of an unattractive hexagonal table. The air of muddling through that permeated the house began immediately to oppress him.

"Grandpa's here," Clarice went singing through the dis-order. "Grandpa's here."

Unmindful of her sloppy, damp housedress, about which she'd wrapped what seemed to be a clean apron, Addy came to the kitchen door.

"You came just in time for lunch, papa," she said without bothering to kiss him, for which he was grateful. To shake hands with Ray whenever he rolled into dinner gave him a tremer of pleasure, but to be kissed by Addy rather repelled him.

"I'm way behind today. Just finished hanging out the wash and came right in to fix lunch. Rosie," she turned back into the kitchen, Mr. Deynbee following her, "set another place at the table for your grandpa and lay out another cup and saucer. I was just about to make the coffee when you came in, papa. And, Rosie, hunt up a clean napkin."

Obediently Rosie set out knife, fork and spoon, and cup and saucer, laying the napkin, which she dug out of a drawer in one side of the kitchen cupboard, beside the knife and spoon instead of the fork. She was tall for her age, just turning twelve, and would have been rather pretty, if someone with an
eye for undeveloped beauty had been handy to teach her how to
make the most of the fine features she'd certainly not inherited
from Addy.

"How've you been, Rosie?" Mr. Doyнsee asked, squeezing her
arm in a slight display of affection as he sat down at his
accustomed place at the kitchen table.

"Oh, just fine, gramps," she told him, pleased that he'd
noticed her. "But I'll be glad when school starts, and there's
something to do."

"Land knows there's enough to do around here to keep her
busy," Addy complained, while she flipperty-gibbetted about the
stove, on which something like Spanish rice smelled in dire
danger of burning. "That with four kids"—she hesitated omin-
ously—"to wash and iron and cook for and all the mending that
piles up every week, there's plenty she could do to help me.
But no. She's off running with the neighbor kids as soon as
my back's turned, and then she wonders why I have to jaw her
all the time."

Mr. Doyнsee winked at Rosie behind Addy's back, a bad habit
he knew he ought to rid himself of, but the only way he knew
to keep Rosie from bursting into tears whenever Addy began to
scold, a lingual reflex Addy never failed to commit whenever Mr.
Doyнsee dropped in. Rosie winked back, and winking, managed
not to cry.

"Well," he said, placing Clarice on his lap and trying to
straighten out some of her snarled curls, "you and May weren't always hanging about the house when you were Rosie's age, seeing how much you could do for your mother."

"No, but we had our chores to do and we did them first. Mama saw to that. But she only had two to look after. Four--" again Addy hesitated--"makes a lot of difference. Rosie, you forgot the bread."

Rosie fished the bread out of the bread-box, put it on a plate, one that didn't match the rest of the dishes--but how few of Addy's dishes did match--and brought it to the table, where she stood by Mr. Doynebee and helped him unravel Clarice's hair.

"Did you bring some candy?" Clarice wanted to know.

"Maybe a little," Mr. Doynebee said. "We'll see after we have lunch."

"I'd like some now," Clarice declared.

"You can't have any before lunch," Rosie told her. "It ain't good for you."

"It's not good for you, Rosie," Addy corrected her. "How many times do I have to tell you not to say 'ain't'? If there's one word I can't stand, it's 'ain't'."

"Yes, mom."

"Honestly, I don't know where they pick up the things they do," Addy rattled on. "Only the other day Joe had to wash out the boy's mouths with soap because they swore at the dinner table."
Sometimes I think we ought to move out of this neighborhood, but I guess the neighbors' kids aren't any worse than ours, when you get right down to it. Rosie, go call the boys."

Rosie sighed, meandered to the back door, where she called in a high, quavering treble. "Cleaaaaaaaaarance. Presaaaaaasank. Come on home for lunch. Gramps is here."

No boys appearing at this summons, after several minutes' wait she sauntered out into the yard, her intermittent yells shrilling out above Addy's gabble from the stove.

"We haven't got anything out of the ordinary, papa," Addy apologized, wiping her hands on her apron. "If I'd known you were coming down, I could have fixed something special, though what with the huge washings I have all the time, it probably wouldn't have turned out very good."

This garbled hint was more than even Mr. Doyneboe could pass by unnoticed. Feeling compelled to explain his presence, he fell back upon his usual excuse.

"I had an errand to do."

"You're certainly dressed up for just an errand," Addy commented.

"I suppose so," Mr. Doyneboe said, "but the suit looked as if it needed wearing, so I put it on."

A stampede of feet up the back walk and into the kitchen rescued him from any further hints from Addy and any further evasions of his own. Barefooted and dressed only in bib-overalls,
Frank and Clarence javeled into the room, dirty-faced and out of breath, Rosie behind them.

"Gee, gramps," Clarence, a fresh little boy of ten, began between deep gulps of air, "we didn't know you were coming today." He jostled Frank, only seven, away from Mr. Doynbee.

"I just got the notion on the spur of the moment," Mr. Doynbee said, separating the two boys as well as he could with Clarice on his lap.

"You're staying for lunch?" Frank inquired.

"If you'll have me."

"Sure, we'll have you. Did you bring any candy, gramps?"

Frank's filthy little fingers began prying into Mr. Doynbee's coat pockets.

"That's all they think about is candy," Addy spouted.

"Candy and the movies. Thank God, Joe's working, or we wouldn't be able to have peace in the house. Now you two boys just leave your grandpa alone and go to the bathroom and wash your hands and face. You look like niggers."

"Why can't we wash up here at the sink?" Clarence asked.

"We usually do."

"Because I told you to go to the bathroom, that's why. Now you just mind me, or you won't get any lunch."

Undismayed, Clarence turned on the faucet of the kitchen sink and began to douse water over his face. With a quick movement that denoted constant practice Addy dealt him a whack
on the head that sent him spinning down the rim of the sink.

"Now you mind what I say, Clarence Stacy, or you can go hungry."

"Ah, gee, mom," Clarence whimpered.

"Come along, boys," Mr. Doyanbee said, feeling like a mother hen rounding up her brood. "I need to wash up myself. We'll all go to the bathroom."

Always when he came to Addy's, he had to interpose between her and the boys, whom she seemed unable to handle except by complaints and a smack on the face, blissfully unaware of what a few cajoling words spoken at the right time and in the right manner might accomplish.

Back in the kitchen with the boys, whom he'd joked into putting on a shirt for lunch—try as he might, he could never reconcile himself to eating with half naked children—Mr. Doyanbee found Addy and the two girls already at the table. Clarice swathed in a plain bib much too large for her and barricaded within the old high chair that had been in constant use in Addy's house for a dozen years. Her lips spattered with Spanish rice, she lifted her spoon to her mouth in a wobbly fashion that bespoke more eagerness in its use than aptitude. Mosie sat silently at one corner of the table, affecting a daintiness she'd picked up by herself, since Addy never took the time to enforce more than a modicum of good manners at the table.
Hardly were the boys seated before Clarence grabbed for the bread and Frank for the peanut butter, which, after an enlivening argument they traded, quarreling next over who should first attack the butter. This debate settled by Addy, who reached across the table and served both of them an equal amount, they laid their respective slices of bread on the table cloth and proceeded to transform them into sandwiches. Nibbling at his serving of the rice, Mr. Boynton sat silently by, ashamed of the boys and more ashamed of Addy. He would like to have disciplined the boys on the spot, put into practice the table rules laid down in his own home when Addy and Kay were growing up, but having already mixed himself up in the family routine over Clarence's misadventure at the kitchen sink, he knew it was wiser to keep his peace, consoling himself with the thought that when the boys ate with him and Maud, though only seldom, they invariably behaved better.

If only Netta were still alive. What wonders she could do with them, and especially with Rosie, who wasn't without an innate sense of order, who had dim realizations that something was wrong, but who was too young and too shy to try to set matters right. But where was she to learn how to go about things in the best way? He felt sorry for Addy's children, felt ashamed that he did no more for them than he did. It was unfair to take out on the children his disappointment over Addy. But every time he meditated what he might do for them, he felt
blocked, both by Addy's listlessness and Joe's compressed determination to raise his own kids to suit himself. Perhaps Netta might have manoeuvred Joe around to taking remedial measures, but without Netta he knew better than to make a beginning by himself.

Their mouths stuffed with bread, the boys chattered away, each vying with the other in a recital of everything that had happened to them since last they'd seen him. Most of what they said was unintelligible, but this fact failed to diminish their volubility. Nobody seemed to mind except Mr. Doynebe, who concealed his displeasure as well as he could, wondering how Addy could stand the din. But Addy seemed totally unconcerned, devoting herself to Clarice, who, independent as only a four year old can be, resisted her attentions with all the verve of a convinced anarchist. Only Rosie, inconspicuous in the general confusion, conducted herself with any politeness. Conversation with Addy impossible, Mr. Doynebe contented himself with occasional nods to the boys whenever they seemed to expect an answer from him, pretended to relish the rice and wished with every bite that he were back in his own kitchen with Maud, who possessed the virtue of silence, when silence was a virtue, if no other.

The meal over at last, Mr. Doynebe distributed the candy he'd brought with him, saving a piece to give to Rosie before he left, thankful for her unconscious modesty. The candy dis-
pensed, all four children disappeared, Rosie being cautioned by Addy to stay within easy call so that she might help with the dishes whenever Addy got around to washing them. The quiet that followed the rush outdoors was gratifying. Sighing with relief, Addy leaned back in her chair.

"I can hardly wait to get them outdoors in the morning," she told Mr. Doynee. "Always under foot. I suppose I ought to hold them in till they get their chores done, but right now, feeling the way I do...."

Her voice trailed off into a vocal vacuum which Mr. Doynee made no effort to fill. Ordinarily he tried to complete Addy's run-down sentences, not only to help Addy, but to satisfy his own prompting for some sort of resolution to spoken words. But today he sensed that there was nothing he could say. That had to be said only Addy could say, and she seemed embarrassed beyond any normal need. Though why she, a grown woman supposedly mature enough to face the ordinary ups and downs of life, should find it difficult to tell him that she was pregnant again, was beyond him. He wouldn't bite her head off, warn her that it mustn't happen again, though very likely it shouldn't.

Addy squirmed uneasily in her chair, smoothed out the front of her apron, looked foolish. While he waited for her announce-
ment, he clutched his tobacco pouch between his knees, unsipped it and filled his pipe. Not until he was striking a match on the sole of his shoe did Addy speak.
"I'm going to have another baby, papa."

"I had a hunch you were," he said, trying to sound enthusiastic.

"You did?" Addy was surprised. "How did you know?"

Mr. Deynbee exhaled a glorious cloud of tobacco smoke.

"Your mother had two children, and you've had four. I ought to know enough by this time to be able to put two and two together."

"I suppose so," Addy said, trying to understand him.

"Joe was surprised."

"Doesn't he want another child?" Mr. Deynbee asked, astonished that Joe should have been unprepared for what was certainly a natural expectation.

"Oh, Joe's always glad when we're going to have another baby," Addy said rather defensively. Whatever were her faults, Addy was loyal to Joe. "He didn't fall all over himself with joy, of course," Addy went on, "but I guess no man does after he's had a couple of kids. After all, it is another mouth to feed. And there's the doctor to pay and the hospital and everything."

"Joe's working steady now," Mr. Deynbee said. "There's a lot of building going on."

"Sure," Addy said.

Mr. Deynbee wished he could find some words that might make her feel there was something wonderfully important about
bringing another human life into the world, but he couldn't. Not today, when he was concerned, not with human conception as a fundamental fact in human life, but with the whys behind human conception. Here was another life coming into the world. Why would life be satisfying to this child—if it's life should turn out to be satisfying? But before he could ever again mouth words of consolation for Addy or Joe or Ray or anyone he knew, he'd have to find the answer to that question. Suddenly he felt more uncomfortable in Addy's presence than he'd ever felt before. If only Netta were here to say the easy things that needed to be said, cheerful words that would pep Addy up enough to see this fifth nine month stretch through as hopefully as possible. And then with the thought of Netta the words--some of them--came.

"There's many folks who'd like to have another child, you know, Addy. They just aren't lucky enough to be built so that they can have one. Baud, for instance. And even your mother and me. We always wanted another baby, but for some reason your mother could never have one. I never did understand why. Your mother didn't, either."

He hardly knew what he was saying, but in spite of this handicap, he was glad he was saying something. There had been warmth in his voice, a paternal anxiety of a sort that Addy needed, and which he so seldom could force through the invisible barricade that usually separated them.
Addy brightened a little. "You sound just like mama. That was the way she used to talk to me, calm and ordinary, but somehow...well...it's hard to say what I mean, but you know what I mean, I guess."

He knew what she meant, and inside he swelled with a pride he managed to conceal. To be like Netta. He wished he really were. And to think that Addy still missed her too. Always the idea, uniform and unspoken, as most of his ideas were, that Addy had felt only a normal kind of grief over Netta's death, a grief that had died out with the years, had oppressed him. Maybe his regard for Addy would increase a little as he remembered these words.

"When do you expect the baby?" he asked.

"About the first of March." Pinned down to reality again, her voice relapsed into hardly veiled self-pity.

"Boy or girl?" Mr. Doynebee asked, trying rather flatly to sound jovial.

"It won't make much difference," Addy said. "Two up already."

"I suppose not," Mr. Doynebee said. Already the upsurge of affection he'd felt momentarily for Addy was melting away. This fifth child would be as unwanted as ever a child could be, merely a trial to be lived through. Any further conversation between them on the subject of this baby was bound to be futile, unconsoling to Addy and worthless to him.
A clammy silence sprang up between them, glossed over by his periodic breathings—out of tobacco smoke. After several all but intolerable minutes, during which Addy traced about the flowered pattern of one corner of the table cloth with the point of a knife, she got up, tired and listless, and began to clear the table. Mr. Deynbee sat quietly by, squirming inwardly, wondering why the words that had come to him once this afternoon when words had been badly needed, refused to come again when they were needed more. If it were Ray who'd just told him he was going to become a father, no matter what the circumstances, he'd have bubbled over with talk and not even had to try.

Unable to endure the silence any longer, he stood up, stretched himself a little, murmured something about how good the lunch had been. She was glad he enjoyed it, Addy said, it hadn't been much, if he'd only told her when he was coming into Missoula she could have something really—and her voice faded into nothing. In desperation he went to the sink and knocked out the ashes from his pipe into the paper sack full of garbage that filled one corner. The pipe was only half smoked; he didn't want to knock out the ashes; but he had to do something, anything rather than sit in Addy's kitchen and be unable to talk at a time like this.

Midway in a trip from table to workbench Addy pivoted on one run-down heel, both her hands clutching piled up dishes, and headed for the back door, which she forced precariously open with one foot.
"Rosie," she shouted across the back yard and alley. "Rosie."
Rosie's voice floated back in a moment. "I'm coming."
Several minutes later the screen door opened slowly and
Rosie slipped in. Without a word, she reached for a dish towel
and began to dry the dishes, smiling hesitantly at Mr. Deynbee,
who tried to smile happily back at her. She had a look rather
like Netta's, he thought, something in the arch of her eyebrows,
the quizzical twist to the corners of her mouth. He hoped
she'd be much like Netta, that all the Joe in her, all the Addy,
would somehow be drained out of her as she matured.

"You going to stay long, gramps?" Rosie asked him.

"Not very."

"You never stay long, gramps."

"Oh, I have a house to look after myself," he excused
himself.

"Aunt Maud's there to look after the house."

"I know, but it's not her house. It's mine. And that
makes a difference."

"I suppose so," Rosie said, "but it would be nice if you'd
stay longer than just for a short call."

"It would be nice if you'd come up to stay with me," Mr.
Deynbee said. And then wondered why he'd said it. Never before
had he ever suggested that any of his grandchildren should come
stay with him in Bonner.

"She'd just be in the way," Addy said.
"Oh, I don't know," Mr. Deynbee said. "She could use Hay's old bed on the back porch. And there's plenty of kids in the neighborhood for her to play with."

Rosie looked appealingly at Addy, who looked adamantly at the dish water. "Do you suppose I could go?"

"We'll see," Addy said. "After a while. Right now your grandpa has business to attend to in town, so he couldn't take you. And what with all this wash, I haven't got time to get you ready. We'll see in a day or two."

All the eagerness dying out of her face, Rosie shook her head slightly toward Mr. Deynbee as much as to say she'd never get to Bonner the way things stood now. Mr. Deynbee regretted he'd ever spoken. He did want the girl, now that he thought about it, but not right away, not while all these questions were buzzing about in his head. After he got them settled, then'd be time enough to entertain Rosie. But the childish hurt that suffused her face cut him deeply. He couldn't back out now.

"I could just as well take her back with me," he offered. "My business uptown is all settled."

His business uptown. As if his business could be confined to one locality. Wherever he went, his business would go with him. Even if he stayed home from now on, his business—that nagging insistency that had brought him to Missoula today, that might send him God knows where tomorrow—would stay at home.
with him. It had become as much a part of him as his shadow, and try to get rid of that.

"Why not let her come?" he asked Addy.

"I don't mind her going," Addy said, "but I do mind her going without a set of fresh, ironed dresses to wear, and everything decent she's got is in the wash. She just can't go today, and that's that. Joe would have a fit if I let her go without plenty of clean clothes."

That settled it. Rosie would not go to Bonner today. And who knew when she might? But come she would, he made up his mind to it. It was time he did something for the girl besides pay her a visit now and then; it was time he—a hodgepodge of things he might do for Rosie circled through his mind. But he was glad she wouldn't be coming today. Or for several days. Not until he got more settled in his own mind.

"Well," he said to Addy, but looked at Rosie as he said it, "as soon as you get her ready, bring her up. School will be starting before long, and there's no use crowding things up the last of the month."

"Gee, gramps," Rosie thrilled, her eyes round with expectation. "Gee, I never been on a real visit anywhere before."

"You haven't been on this one yet," Addy told her. "And look out you don't break that cup. Your father can't afford to buy any new ones right now."

Too happy to mind Addy's expectartions, Rosie polished
away at the cup, already chipped along the rim, with more diligence than she'd applied to any of the other dishes.

"Now that that's settled," Mr. Deynbee said, "I guess I'd better be heading for home. Come up when you can, Addy, you and Joe."

As if she hadn't heard him, Addy went on washing the dishes. Finding his hat where he'd left it in the clutter of the living room, Mr. Deynbee picked his way toward the front door, Rosie following him, the dish cloth trailing behind her. He slipped the last piece of candy remaining in his coat pocket into her eager hand.

"Goodbye, Addy," he called back into the kitchen.

Drying her hands on her apron, Addy left the sink, followed him out on the porch, which needed a good hosing.

"Come back, papa, when you can," she told him, little cordiality in her voice. Standing in the doorway, her hands rolled up in her apron, she watched him trudge down the walk to the street. Though he didn't want to, Mr. Deynbee looked back before he set off for the bus stop, waved his crippled hand at her and Rosie, who was waving after him.

Once he was walking down the street, he began to feel better, feel actually glad that he was alive and able to navigate on his own. How horrible, he thought, it would be to be tied down to a woman like Addy, to have one child after another, and never be able to get out from under. How could a man like
Joe find any compensation at all in life when all he had to come home to was a house like the one Addy kept, children as grimy as Addy's, and nowhere in the house a cheerful sight? What possible answer to the queries that had compelled him to come to Missoula today could Joe have? What made life tick for him, gave it a drive sufficiently strong to overcome all the hurdles that must make up his daily round? Lucky thing for Joe that the questions that were pummelling his father-in-law weren't dancing inside him. For whatever answer might eventually result from his questions, one thing Mr. Deyabed was certain of after the two hours he'd just spent with Addy. The answer would not be edged in black like an old-fashioned death notice. Edged in gray perhaps with quite possibly a little color dashed in, not bleak as the dullest day in winter, as Joe's would be. But what was he worrying about Joe for? He knew nothing about Joe, except that Joe had married his daughter and had had five children by her. Why was he thinking he knew anything about the core of anyone's life, when he didn't know anything about the core of his own?

An irate auto horn, the squealing of braked truck tires on hot oiled road jangled into his thoughts. Involuntarily he whirled backwards to the safety of the sidewalk, a lumbering two-ton truck careening past him and grinding to a stop. From the cab a burly, dirt-stained face framed in a two day's growth of beard leered at him.
and he didn’t know where he was going. To the bus stop, you!
but purchased and started to him. It was true. He was an old Joe

game, but their meaning a meaning all unknown to the dyer-
crver had said to him. The words fit into him—not short
it was over, be fell relatively unperceived—except at what the
with more sympathy. It had been a choice call, and yet now that
expression through him, perhaps he should have listened to her

him in the morning before he backed the two for the station

edged motionlessly on the curb. The Wartime Iris, Jemana had given

the eight following the truck down the street, "I hope

of the garden

into low and took off. Spencer a wind of mules out the window

The dyer pulled in his little face, showed the green
down an old Joe that don’t know where he’s gone.”

does the face sink. "I got troubles enough without running,

"Well, you better think about where you’re going next time.

The words sounded murmur even to himself.

"Your thinking.

I was just thinking, "Mr. Dyenne answered tamely.

face demanded. "You’re special!

"Well, why don’t you open your mouth? I’m damned bored.

Dyenne could think of nothing profound enough to say.

the heat mentioned within him like a mechanism top.

enough to look where you’re going."

Jesse chirped, "the face said at him, "but you got some..."
she had time to make a little over the childern, joke with them

home knew the lovely girl, and more could she do. It only
but she were forced to say she was sorry. she loved the child.
why did she always answer nrs like that? and wonder.
place, on which she all but wore out the young woman.
her small hands with the broken fingers, the hands of another.
her face turned into a half look, no one said nothing more.
"well, you ought to. he's a good enough to you."
"see. i like Exercise, mom."
also pumped her sternum.

leaves in the house, and the ride under foot all day long
and drove, and the yard to look after and do never fixing the
to make with make every pleased day, and the house to pick up
dry them, and all the washing and ironing and mending, and pede
then with the chance to do, and home to be young to do more than
and in between all the work there make a day to prepare, and
to do, the thought, and hardly a spare moment to do any of it."
ripped down over her eyes, she was tired. always so much work
drawn water; add pumped back the eternal hat that constant
break in the kitchen, her hands and forearms sleepy with

in
the way her own mother had joked with her and Ray. But her mother had always had so much more time. Everything had gone like clock work in her mother's house. But that was because her father had always had a steady job and an income regular enough to plan on. But with Joe--

"Why doesn't gramps come down more often, mom?" she heard Rosie ask.

"I don't know, Rosie," Addy said evasively. "He comes pretty often."

"It's been weeks and weeks since he was here last."

And it might be weeks and weeks before he'll come again, Addy thought. But loud she said, "Oh, I don't think it's been that long."

"Yes, it has," Rosie insisted. "Doesn't he like us very much?"

"Of course he does," Addy snapped at her. "He's your own grandpa, the only one you've got. Of course he likes us. How could he help but like us?"

"I don't know," Rosie said, "but sometimes I start wondering--"

"Well, don't start wondering that kind of thoughts," Addy told her harshly. "Didn't he just ask you to come stay with him a few days?"

"Yes, but he never did before."

"He may never ask you again, if you don't behave when you're up in Bonner with him."
"I'll behave good."

"And when you go, I want you to mind your manners and not get your clothes all dirty as fast as you can and not go bare-footed, and help your Aunt Maud just as much as you can. She's an old lady, and she doesn't have as much energy as she used to have."

"I don't much like Aunt Maud," Rosie confided.

"Well, you be nice to her just the same. She's had her troubles the same as the rest of us."

"Just so gramp wants me, that's all that matters."

"He wouldn't have asked you, if he hadn't wanted you."

But why had he asked Rosie, Addy wondered, starting to work on the pots and pans. He'd never shown any particular interest in any of her children before. And there was no good reason why he shouldn't have, Addy told herself, staring wonderingly at Rosie, who, unasked, had gotten the broom from the back porch and was sweeping the kitchen floor. They were the only grandchildren he had, maybe the only grandchildren he'd ever have, at least while he lived, May showing no signs of ever getting married. If he didn't care for her children, she knew why. It was because he didn't like her, because he didn't like Joe.

She'd never thought the thought so boldly before, and for a second or two she was ashamed of herself for thinking it. Though it was true, she knew it was. He didn't like her and he never had. He was ashamed of her. He always had been.
Faster than she could examine them, memory after memory of all the times he'd been ashamed of her flew into her mind. All those times she'd come home from school with a "D" in arithmetic, even if she had done well in spelling. And the time she'd failed algebra in high school and nearly failed in Latin. And all the times when there'd been dances at the high school and everyone else was going and nobody had asked her. He was ashamed of her then. Just given her money to go to the movies, but never offered to take her himself or patted her on the back a little bit to make her feel better. Even after Joe'd started going with her, the first boy who'd ever looked at her, he hadn't been proud of her. He hadn't liked Joe very much, she'd known it at once, and so all his pleasure at her going out at last had come to nothing. He didn't like Joe to this very day, she knew he didn't. He only put up with Joe because Joe was his son-in-law and the father of his grandchildren.

And so--Addy rationalized around to her initial hypothesis—if he didn't care for her children, it was because he was ashamed of her, because he was sorry she'd ever been born. If he weren't, wouldn't he have helped her more with the children, especially after her mother died? There were a hundred and one things he could have done for Rosie and Frank and Clarence and Clarice, well, he hadn't done one of them. He hardly came even to see them, and only now after all these years had he asked one of them to come spend a few days with him at Bonner,
"Do you want I should sweep off the front porch too?"

Rosie asked.

"It probably needs it," Addy snapped.

What's come over the child, she wondered, and then concluded Rosie was trying to make an impression so that she would surely be allowed to go to Bonner when the time came. Well, it would be good to get the porch cleared out, no matter what moved Rosie to offer to sweep it. Then why had she spoken to her so sharply? Why hadn't she turned to her appreciatively and told her, "That would be nice," as her own mother would have? But she wasn't like her own mother. She never had been and she never would be.

That was another reason why he was ashamed of her, because she wasn't like her mother, not like her at all. Well, what if she wasn't? Was it her fault? At least her mother had never criticized her for being what she was. Her mother had loved her in spite of all her faults and had tried to help her get her house organized, even if she never seemed able to keep it that way. Oh, if her mother had only lived a little longer, just long enough to get her through this next baby, that neither she nor Joe wanted, but which was coming all the same. If her mother were only here to help her plan, help her put away a little money to pay all the bills that were coming so soon.

Money. It seemed as if her mind ran to nothing but money, money for this and money for that, and what with Joe always
insisting they have a bottle of something in the house, no matter how little he earned a week or how long a building job lasted, they never had anything to show for it. Not that Joe was a drunkard—at least he hadn't got drunk since they'd had Rosie—but he always had to have his nip. It was a man's privilege, he said, and what's more, he wasn't going to be a piker when it came to liquor. Whenever they went out to see anyone of an evening, they always got served a drink or two, and it was only right that when the same folks came to visit them they serve a couple drinks around too. Or else they'd have to stay home. And what's more, Joe would say, he wasn't going to take a back seat to her brother either when it came to whiskey. He was sure not going to have Ray, whom he liked like hell, think he was old stick-in-the-mud from way back, because he didn't have the wherewithal to mix him up a drink whenever Ray came to town on business and dropped in for dinner. They could afford booze as much as Ray—oh, could they?—and you know how much Ray drinks, always bending the elbow here, there and everywhere he goes.

Long since she'd drained the water out of the dish pan, scoured it out with Dutch Cleanser, as her mother had taught her to do, and hung it under the sink. Now after standing idly for some minutes, she roused herself sufficiently to go into the living room, aware and yet unaware, she'd grown so used to it, of the clutter that deranged the room. Through the screen door
may have come down to money she detected, feeling more

east, and the cook, the dairymaid, and the

and the dairymaid. Getting meat, sending the kids off to

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having something extra special to put on the table when company
came, and going to as many movies as you liked or into any store,
not just the chain establishments. Oh, she could go on and on.
But not many people, she consoled herself, had enough money.
Almost everyone had to do without this and that all the time,
but almost everyone had enough of what was absolutely necessary,
almost everyone. Still there weren't many families as near
the ragged edge as hers was all the time. Most people managed
to put by something, build up a nest egg for a rainy day. But
somehow she and Joe hadn't managed to put by anything, no matter
how hard she tried. And most people nowadays didn't have as
many children as she and Joe. Well, they'd tried. It wasn't
their fault if something always went wrong. But not even having
babies was too bad if you had a nest egg of some sort to fall
back upon and your husband was sure of working steady all the
time.

Imperceptibly she began to wonder about the compensation
money her father had tucked away in the bank. It must all be
there in the bank to this day, she thought, every penny of it.
Just think, $5,000 in the bank, just sitting there and collect-
ing interest. No wonder her father always seemed so independ-
ent, so sure of himself, when he had all that money to fall back
on. Oh, if she and Joe had even a fifth as much, how much easier
life would be.

Well, half of that $5,000 would be here some day.
What was she thinking, she asked herself, more alive to the nature of her thoughts than she'd been all day. Was she sitting here in the only decent chair in the house, wishing her own father, who, outside of her immediate family and leaving out her brother, was practically the only relation she had, would die off so she could inherit her share of what he left behind in the world? Of course not, she rationalized, she was merely thinking that whenever he did die, half of the $5,000 would belong to her. That was hardly the same as wishing her father would die so she could get her share as soon as possible. It wasn't the same thing at all. It was a perfectly natural thought and one she didn't need to be ashamed of.

But for some reason she refused to grapple with, she was ashamed. In one of those bright flashes that came to her once in a while she remembered what her mother had always said, that you can sin in your thoughts just as much as in your deeds. But she wasn't wishing for her father's death, she repeated to herself. She was merely looking forward to it in the sense that it was bound to occur some day and then what? Anybody whose father was as old as hers had to face the fact that before long that father would die and that when he did, what he left behind would have to be taken care of—she refused to admit to herself that it had to be repossessed by someone else—and that it was well to look ahead and prepare for the worst. It was no disgrace to realize that some day you'd inherit a size-
able sum of money. Plenty of people in the world had such ideas, and most of them could expect far more than she'd ever inherit from her father. Very likely Ray had the same thoughts about the compensation money that she had. The way Ray spent money, as if it grew on gooseberry bushes and could be had for the picking, he probably needed money twice as much as she and Joe.

Besides, her father would want her to have her share of the money. It was the decent thing for him to want, and whether he liked her and Joe or not, she knew—she told herself over and over again—that her father would always do the decent thing by them, especially when it came to basic things like dying and leaving what little he had in the world to his children.

Not that she wanted him to die right away, though if he should—she winced a little at the thought, but winced less the more she considered it—the compensation money would be a godsend, set so many things right. Still, there were so many things he could do for her and the children while he was still alive, if he only would, like taking Rosie up to Bonner with him for a few days, that she really didn't want him to die right away. Of course she didn't.

Really it was a good thing for Rosie that he was taking an interest in her at last. If Rosie behaved herself while she was up in Bonner, showed some promise, why he might even come to think as much of his daughter as he thought of Ray, and then he'd be better minded to make certain that after he was gone,
she'd get her fair share of the compensation money. Rosie would simply have to make a good impression. And Rosie could. When Rosie was dressed up nice in her Sunday clothes, when her hair was curled just right, she was really rather pretty. There was something about Rosie then that reminded her of her own mother, a sort of look to her eyes, the lift of her chin. It was funny she'd never thought of things in this way before. It was only possible that Rosie might just take a little of her mother's place in her father's heart, take just a little at first and then a little bit more until finally her father forgot to remember her mother so much, and then maybe he'd like his own daughter more than he ever had up till now.

Addy roused herself thoroughly. If she was going to send Rosie up to Bonner, it was a good idea to start getting her ready. All her good dresses out on the line ought to be dry by now. She'd go out and get them, sprinkle them up good and get them ironed and mended, if they needed a stitch anywhere. Maybe she could squeeze out of the grocery money a new pair of shoes for the child too, though what excuse she'd make to Joe about new shoes she couldn't guess. She couldn't tell Joe how important it was for Rosie to have shiny new shoes right now. But somehow she'd manage, maybe just buy them and not tell Joe till it was all over and too late for him to object. After all, Joe would share in the compensation money too.

She hurried to the front door.
"Rosie," she called.

"Yes," Rosie answered from around the corner of the house.

"Rosie," she ordered, when the child came into sight, "go get all your dresses off the line and bring them in."

"Right now?" Rosie asked.

"Now don't talk back, Rosie Stacy. You just mind what I say. If you're going to visit your grandpa, you've got to get ready so you'll look your best. Your father would have a fit if you were to go up to Bonner looking all out at elbows as if you came from poor white trash."

Her mouth agape, Rosie stared at her mother, startled by the unusual note of determination in her usually sluggish voice.

"Now just do what I tell you to once in your life," Addy barked, "and don't just stand there like a bump on a log. Now step."

The broom dragging behind her over the parched grass, Rosie meandered out of sight around the house. With more energy than she'd been able to muster all day, Addy hurried back into the kitchen. It would take only a jiffy to sprinkle the dresses. If she let them sit in the clothes basket for an hour or two they'd be perfectly damp all over for ironing after dinner. By tomorrow evening or the next day she'd have Rosie well settled in Bonner, and who knew what might work out after that?
Long before Mr. Deynbee returned home, Maud placed the album back on top of the dresser in his bedroom, placed it exactly in the same spot from which she'd removed it, so exactly, she complimented herself, that anyone watching her would have said she'd drawn an imaginary line around it on the dresser scarf before she'd picked it up. Back in place too were the catalogues, through which she'd thumbed until she'd found the listings for Mauritius, all of which she'd studied, line by line, until she believed she could have said them back by rote. And down in her secret reckoning pad had gone the price she estimated Arthur had paid for the new stamp, a goodly sum for a bit of paper, she admitted.

Sedged now into her chair on the front porch and thankful for the shade of the Virginia creepers, she reveled in the loneliness of the house. It was pleasant to sit by herself when Arthur wasn't home. The air seemed so much fresher, the heat so much less tiring. She wondered where Arthur could have gone and immediately concluded it was useless to wonder. If he felt like telling her, he would. If not, she'd have to content herself as well as she could, put two and two together from whatever he might say casually during the next few days.

Still, Arthur had had something important on his mind when he left. Old as she was getting, she wasn't so old but what she could tell when a man had a worry in his head. Why had Arthur called May last night after she'd gone to bed? It had certainly
been an unenlightening conversation. "Hello, how are you, I
was just wondering how you were, that's fine." The simple words
skipped through her head, utterly meaningless. Whatever was
troubling Arthur couldn't concern Ray, and Arthur hadn't called
just because Ray hadn't written for a couple of weeks.

It could be that Arthur was disturbed about the stamps.
Now that she thought back over yesterday, it seemed to her that
Arthur had got less joy out of Mauritius--she said the name over
to herself as if it were an old friend--once she'd binged it
safely in the album for him, then he'd got out of any of the
other stamps he'd sent away for. Perhaps he was worried about
the money he'd spent on it. Though he'd spent almost as much on
other stamps through the years she'd lived with him and never
so much as batted an eyelash. Well, she was glad he'd spent so
much, she could say that. She could hardly wait until he bought
another.

Another. Maybe there might never be another. Perhaps
Arthur had spent all that remained of the compensation money on
Mauritius. Maybe that was what was giving him the fidgets.

Well, what if he had? If all the compensation money was gone,
the album was worth all the more, both to Arthur and to her.

From her vantage point on the porch she glimpsed far down
the street the bus from Missoula dawdling toward the bus stop.
For all she knew Arthur might be on it. Just as well then she
had the album and everything connected with it back in place.
I suppose not," I said "Then, would there be much difference in heat over bored, might? I think there'd be much difference in heat over bored.

"Not at all! It's not in consideration.

"It's a headache if I think of it," he said, getting up.

"Put me in the seat down in the other chair and begin to cook," he said, "It's cemetary and it's not." He then, live with a breath, so to speak, her and not always a happy memory at that, any good about her yet another all these years. And nothing but a memory to hear.

"And if we're honest by first, didn't he take after year or two, I'll be here for any, and anything after the things, and if we're still in mourning. For Newton, after all I want to wear something couter, hard thought on a hot day like, and an undertaker in that and dark world of this. You'd think no, and there came another toward the house, looking as if she were, year or two more or less meant nothing to her."

In no tremendous hurry to get here together on the afternoon, she told herself, luxuriously in her own comprehension. She was except the weather, and really that was all she cared for.

"That was important to him and hadn't a care in the world, for all the world we'll be doing, it's not them, she didn't know a thing about any."

"Then, May, how do you do to answer, when he came straggling up the house, could go oneating here in her chair and played as a sort of


Worried and exasperated.

"And you know, Aunt Bertha,"

mean little meaning what it is too.

having a baby, if you stop to think about it, the world—a

mean by his request, he spoke up. "If, for a prettyоварную вещь,

more than he knew one would have an idea what he

out to understand, Mr. Devereux went tococktail and smoke.

"Yes, Madam.

Ikeda, all she could think to reply was, "Well, then, what was

told me you thought you needed too many.

he couldn't rest, need not stay her. "And why, you

look, your children would be family enough for her and Joe."

before the woman be much as steel to notice the cutting

decrease or expression and the household demands. This

have another baby; please what they are those days, and the

been toaddy, "You'd wonder they'd have the courage to

"Just me I thought, "I don't need dedication at once that he'd,

which was the total here after a

knew to have another baby. "he total her after a

and, seconded with the foreword-prorogued movement of the opera,

one could look a grade, unconscious for the inspiration

watch the street and not her, looked back and forth in sentil

the glass filled, he inhaled the other around so that he couldn't

not now while he was filling the glass importantly at all.

to tell her, he'd tell her in his own good time, and certainly

He filled her with no more questions. Whatever he wanted

...
and it was a torture.

sitting into your life and have the up and down, but whatever

aand a merry Artur, she said at last, "whatever,"

read her mind.

on torturing into a sort of pain. He was glad he couldn't

He could feel her eyes boring into him like an angry

nothing but a torture when all it's said and done.

nothing there to be brought into the world. It's life might be

a man can't help thinking what's to become of yourself that

pointing her a hint.

itself in spite of his better judgment, he couldn't resist

and maybe he was

knew she'd think him a mercy, tell her what he was in the business.

be forever sorry he'd exceeded himself to her kindness. For he

thought of his own, and once he'd brought the subject up, he'd

ought or nothing would cut deep enough to force him into any

wouldn't be worth mentioning to. Nothing she had to offer, it

neatly larded with anything she'd heard all her life that it

feet enough to ask her, what she'd have to say would be as

what her answer to the question might be. But even if she were

the way he'd talked with nature. He knew deep thought, and out

It would be nice just this once to be able to talk to her

I suppose so," she said.

or other," she said.

a man who's working can always meet the expense somehow

she had no idea what he was doing at
could, and barking uncorrementedamente, she threw out of her
went you had to take time as it came, do what planning
exact words, but what was the good of worrining about it if it
there being a possible forecast, she'd already forgotten the
but it was externste, the forecast he'd made—something about
not me, me, not for one hour.
day now and she'd not go much as a tear, the certainty
it was nothing to how many she was of him. He could go any
that the complimented about the heat. Well, if he was weary of her,
been too much for him. Too hot. It was to get away from her
time one need not on the very front porch, and the heat hadn't
her seat. Too hot on the porch. Many an afternoons mother then
her would she go if he did ask her to head Eorward to
didn't suggest that she come round the pool with him
Whtich be cooler round the pool, he told her, but he
stepped and moved toward the deck yard
that sheered particularly all about him, he travelled down the
that we'd it were the only geography he had in a child's world
never bothered to look at her and until joining at his
"Too long.
her, "a man would search himself purtly if he eat out here
in the porch and I thought, "he told
her sentence when he stood up
"Then any in the world, she began, but stopped halfway in
"Nobody"
your plans had a good chance of coming out as you'd hoped for.
Like her and the album. Nine chances out of ten she'd get it yet.

VI

When he knocked on the door, as he did about seven-thirty
that evening, Mr. Deynbee smiled at his own temerity in coming
over to pay more than a social call on Tom Briggs, "old Tom the
rounder," as the men at the mill called him. While he waited
for Tom or his wife to answer his knock, he wondered if after
all he'd be much as mention to Tom what was uppermost in his
mind, if he wouldn't pretend, once he was inside, that he'd
walked over simply to see how they were, to compare his tomato
plants with theirs, to hash over recent events at the mill. And
as he heard the tramp of footsteps coming toward the door, he
knew he'd do nothing else.

"By God, it's good to see you," Tom bellowed at him, his
voice as usual louder than the occasion warranted, his face
cracked into a smeared grin that for the moment almost concealed
the jagged white scar that zigzagged down his left cheek, a
memento of a slashing fight he slugged his drunken way into one
bitter fall night when he and Mr. Deynbee had come in from the
lumber camp to raise a little hell. "It's Art Deynbee, Ella!"
he burred back into the nether regions of the house, "come to
pay us a visit. By God, man, I've been wondering about you.
You don't come over half often enough."
"You come so damned often to see me," Mr. Doynbee said, glad now, whether he talked to Tom as he wanted to or not, that he'd come. It gave him a pleasant feeling to walk into a house and know he was really wanted, a feeling so different from the one he got whenever he entered Addy's.

"Well, I'm a married man, you know," Tom joshed him, still unable to understand how, in spite of his hell-roaring youth, his red-lighted young manhood, about which he took rather a mordant pride, he'd eventually married, settled down, become a home-owner. "A married man's got to set at home and keep the little woman happy. He can't leave her set home by herself in the evening after the old man's been gone all day."

"You could bring her along with you," Mr. Doynbee said in an excess of friendliness that temporarily made him forget the well-known social fact, widely discussed even yet in Bonner and Hilltown, that Tom's wife had enjoyed a mysterious past out of which appeared from time to time a grown son, whose fatherhood was in considerable doubt.

"Sure," Tom said, not at all offended, too used to the situation to worry about it, "but you know how it is over in your place, Art, now that Netta's gone. It ain't quite the same going over there as it used to be."

Mr. Doynbee knew how it was, knew that Naud held herself as aloof from him as the majority of the women in the community.

"Well, we won't talk about it, Tom."
"Hell, no. It ain't never mattered between us before, and we're getting too old to worry about it now. Ella," he hollered into the kitchen, "aren't you coming out to say hello to Art?"

"In a minute," Ella's overly cheery voice rang out.

"She's probably taking off her apron and prettily up," Tom confided to Mr. Doynbee. "We was still setting at the table, talking the day over the way married folks do. You know how it is with married folks, Art."

Yes, he knew how it was with married folks, and a pang sped through him at the remembrance. Talking the day over, he and Netta had sat long at the dinner table many a time.

"Find a chair, Art, and make yourself comfortable," Tom said. "I'll fix you a drink before long. Here you are, man, give me your pipe, and I'll fill it with some good tobacco."

That was Tom all over. Good tobacco in a jar on the living-room table, good liquor in the kitchen, and a simplicity in giving him a hand that didn't irritate him.

"How's everything at the mill?" Mr. Doynbee asked, his usual first question whenever he came to see Tom.

"Oh, hell, the mill," Tom said. "The same old grind. You know me, the best goddam trimmer the company ever had. I could pull them levers in the dark if I had to. But I have to admit I'm glad when five o'clock rolls around. It's hell to get old, but I'm a-gettin' there, though for a man my age I can still put in a damn good shift."
"Hello, Art," Ella's throaty voice boomed out at them.
"Long time no see. Couple of months, I guess."

"That long?" Mr. Doynebee inquired, guilty that he'd neglected them so long.

"Sure, that long," Ella said. "We thought you'd deserted us."

She would never admit it, Mr. Doynebee thought, but she was lonely in this house except when Tom was home. And she was showing her age more. The excessive rouge she wore no longer hid the inroads of the years. She seemed stouter, less energetic than the last time he'd seen her, though she still retained her almost unnatural heartiness, a joviality, he'd decided years ago, that concealed an uneasiness she'd never shipped out of herself.

"It's not likely I'd desert the two of you after all these years," he reassured her.

"Sure, I was only teasing you," Ella said, pleased at his remark and not ashamed to show her pleasure. "But it would be nice if you could drop over more often."

"A lot of things would be nice at our age," Mr. Doynebee said.

"Your roses as pretty as ever, Art?" Ella asked.

Of course they were, and he regretted he hadn't cut a few blooms to bring over to her, as Setta would have done, but he always felt foolish carrying flowers down the street. It seemed so unmasculine.
And how were his vegetables coming along, Tom wanted to know. Tom, who'd never put a seed into the ground before he was fifty-three, but who took such interest in the growth of each carrot, each green pepper plant, each cabbage in his garden that anyone who hadn't known him a long time would have thought he'd been reared on a truck farm. Well, the Doyne bee garden was sailing along through the August heat as well as anyone's in Bonner, Mr. Doyne bee could assert without a twinge of conceit, but with little interest. He grew impatient with the conversation, so trivial he wondered that he could ever have spent whole evenings of his life murmuring just such commonplace as they were spouting tonight. A garden was a garden and nothing more, a means to an end, that end of life a little fuller than it would have been without a garden, certainly not an end in itself. He wanted to ask them why they didn't see what now seemed so clear to him, that there had to be a meaning somewhere and that everyone ought to set about finding it.

But when he glanced at Tom's complacent face, listened to his complacent voice; when he traced the lines in Ella's over-rouged cheeks, caught the determined good fellowship she exuded with every word she spoke, he could see that it was useless to expound what he was thinking, poorly as he would no doubt express it. Even so, he was still tempted to talk it out with Tom, if only Ella would get out of the room, get out of earshot.

And then mercifully, when he was becoming so conversa-
That depends on how you look at it. The mower was not for the lawn, but for the garden. The mower I bought was for the garage. It's a hard life we've had to lead, you and me, aren't we?

The mower was to be continued to move the mower, until finally, to

and go on as continued to move the mower, until finally, to

which would trip him up, sure as fate, if he didn't warn out,

from which reason, but more arried, or he can understand, more,

yet, but again in the final wa, the rate of the rate, etc, by which

as they were likely to get, and this won't be out for a while

thought. They'd drunk their share of drink, they'd drunk it all down in a

couple of nonstop drinks, where they'd been down in a

year as if it were a regular party, they setted down in a

eat again in the interest of friendship to admire each green

after a turn around Tom's Garden, where he'd promised to

Alphonse

would consideration with hope and pena standing around in the
time of the year, and that they'd go out in the dark yard to

thereupon they decreed that he'd mix up a good after drink for

on thanking and leaving her to the choice, if not would excuse her.

the dinner dished on tomorrow, that they were just to go things

good estating and go home. When announced that she could put all

famously frustrated that he began to think he'd better bid them
man's got the strength to keep bumping along, it's not so bad.
And you've still got the strength."

"Hell, yes," Tom said, "and I've still got the guts to take
it. But every once in a while I get so I can feel the sand run-
ing a little low. I ain't got the poop I used to have. I
notice it with Ella--" he gestured with his head toward the
house--"every now and then. You know what I mean."

Mr. Deynbee nodded.

"Makes me sort of wonder about things, think back mostly.
Sign of old age creeping up on me, I guess."

Mr. Deynbee snorted. "Old age. Why, hell, Tom, if you
and I were together at either end of a cross-cut saw, we'd still
make the sawdust fly. And if I had two good hands on me."

"Sure, sure," Tom agreed. "I'm still strong as a good horse
so far as a day's work is concerned. But it's like what I said
a minute ago. Sometimes I begin to feel like I'm petering out.
Makes me kind of look back on the life I've lived, makes me
remember things I'd damn near forgot. Good times too, lots
of them."

"Sort of wonder if they were worthwhile, you mean?" Mr.
Deynbee asked hopefully. If Tom would only go on in this vein
he wouldn't have to ask him any questions. He could sit back
in his chair, keep the pump primed every now and then, and soak
up everything Tom had to say about life, his life, the life of
all the men like him.
"Wonders if it was worthwhile?" Tom rared up. "My God, Art, don't talk like a Sunday School teacher. Sure, it was worthwhile. Why the hell not? I wouldn't have missed any of it. When I think of all the drunks I been on—not many lately, since I got married, that is—and all the women I've been acquainted with, not just to say how do you do to either, you know me, why of course it's been worthwhile. And then all the men I've known, the confab I've had with them, all the places I been—that was one advantage of getting married late; I sure was able to knock around the country a lot. Sure, it's been worthwhile. Only that's a helluva word to use. What in hell put that word in your mouth? Sounds like the kind of word Netta would have used."

"Maybe that's why I used it," Mr. Doynbee said.

"Well, looking at my life the way Netta would probably have looked at it, I don't suppose it has amounted to much," Tom admitted.

"Netta never thought your life was anything to be ashamed of."

Tom grinned. "No, I don't suppose she ever did. And you wouldn't have put her wise, either. But there was plenty about me, plenty about yourself. I'll bet a godd dollar you never told her. Like that time we came in to Missoula from that one-horse saw outfit up in Deer Creek, you remember, a month's wages busting out of our britches, just aching to be spent. And didn't we spend it, man? I'll never forget how drunk you got, so
drunk I had to practically carry you up the stairs to that joint we were going to. Christ, man, don't look so sheepish. She'll never know now."

"No, I suppose not."

"And then there was that time, God, how many years ago was it now?—" And Tom began the recital of another anecdote similar to the one he'd just yanked out of the past, went on frankly and crudely, but honestly as one man confiding to another man whom he trusts and respects, went on from reminiscence to reminiscence, almost as if he were glad of the opportunity to pour out of himself memories that had been fermenting inside him for years on end.

Soon after he commenced, Mr. Doynhoe closed his ears, not because he was shocked, but because at the present crossroads of his life this kind of talk seemed so unimportant, seemed only a backwash to the main stream of human existence as he was now trying to view it. Sure, sex coupled with liquor impelled him and Tom and every man he knew to do a lot of things. But to how many of them had it been the be-all and end-all of existence? And even for Tom, in spite of all he was slobbering out in a voice sunk almost to a whisper, hadn't there been something more to life than mere lying with women and one drunk after another? Of course there'd been. Tom came home to Ella in the evening with something more driving him than the fact that they slept together. But what it might be was useless to
pry into. Well, he couldn't be hard on Tom. He wouldn't be
angling, himself, for answers to questions that were probably
beyond his capacity to understand if it hadn't been for the
accident, the stamp album and now nothing but blank years ahead
unless he got hold of himself. And not having Netta—except as
she lived in his memory.

"I guess I've been dribbling off a helluva lot of garbage
to you, Art," Tom concluded after a while, "and I don't suppose
you've cared much whether I dragged out the past in front of you
or not. But somehow—and the scar on his cheek got lost in
another grin—"you know, it's done me a lot of good talking to
you like this, the way we used to talk when we were first out
working, pulling that goddam cross-cut saw together day in and
day out. We done a lot of pretty raw talking in those days.
You got over it somehow, married yourself a fine woman, and so—
well, I ain't ashamed of Ella, we have the kind of life together
I like, and I guess I love her as much as I'd ever love any
woman, but she ain't the kind that would get a man off the wrong
side of the street. She's a long way from trash, like most of
the women in this town think, but she ain't solid gold like
Netta."

"You're talking too much, Tom," Mr. Deynbee said, em-
barrassed now that Tom was becoming too confidential. "You're
getting old all right. Can't hold even one drink down any more
without its hanging your tongue in the middle."
"I'm getting old all right," Tom admitted, "but not that old. No older than you at any rate. And it ain't the drink. It's just that—well, damn it—I was just thinking as I was talking to you that it was funny, we both went different ways after we got married, sort of, but we've stayed sort of in the same trail, too. And we've stayed good friends, and our wives was friends. We can still talk to each other like we used to fifty years ago. It sort of gives me a glow I never got from good whiskey or most of the women I've known. Maybe that's why I don't mind the life I've led, Art. Maybe all that other crap I been pouring out was just a side-show to this. But it was a damn good side-show just the same."

Without their noticing, the evening had deepened into twilight and the twilight had deepened into the absorbing dark of night. Mr. Doynbee thanked God it was dark, that his face was barely distinguishable to Tom, that Tom's face was barely distinguishable to him. It was better to talk to each other in the dark, as they had many a night years ago, the two of them stretched out together on a bed in a cheap hotel room, exchanging confidences they'd never have told each other in broad daylight.

"I guess you've said all any man could say," Mr. Doynbee said presently. "And I guess I'd better be high-tailing it home."

"Hell, come on in, man, and I'll mix you another drink. It's early yet," Tom urged.
"Not tonight, Tom. There's times when a man ought to know when to call things quit."

They both stood up.

"I wish you'd come oftener, Art," Tom said as they walked around the little frame house, one of his huge laboring hands on Mr. Doynebee's shoulder. "We get sort of lonesome down here, Ella and me. She don't complain none, but you know how it is."

"I'll make more of a stab at coming," Mr. Doynebee promised.

"Say goodnight to Ella for me."

"Goodnight, Art."

"Goodnight, Tom."

And he was on his way home, carrying back with him the same load he'd carried over to Milltown. Though somehow it felt a little lighter. Or maybe he was just getting used to it. For it didn't chafe him quite so much as it had the last two days. Surprisingly, although he was no nearer an answer than he'd been all day, he felt less like an old joe who didn't know where he was going than he'd felt two hours earlier.

VII

When the wheezy old Ford belonging to Joe and Addy pulled up in front of the house, Maud, who for upwards of half-an-hour had been rocking herself into some vestige of true tranquillity, was not surprised. But when Rosie, starched and shined and
scrubbed to the point of disinfection, scooted out of the front seat, flung open the rear door and pulled out a suitcase obviously stuffed with clothes enough for at least a week's visit, Maud effervesced with astonishment.

"That's not a suitcase you've got there, is it, Rosie?" she called out from the porch. "And plumb full too."

Rosie stopped midway up the walk, looked hesitantly from Addy, who was trudging along behind her, to Maud.

"Didn't papa tell you he'd invited her up to spend a few days?" Addy inquired, prodding Rosie in the back to get her moving again.

"So that's it," Maud said, more to herself than to Addy. "Well, Rosie, just cart your suitcase into the living-room and set it down. We'll put your clothes away by and by after I clean out a drawer some place to put them in. If your grandpa had only told me you were coming, I'd have had a place ready for you."

"He said I could sleep on the back porch," Rosie said defensively, darting past Maud into the house.

"Well," Addy explained rather apologetically, "we didn't set any exact date. I didn't know I could get her ready so soon, but she's been so wild to come I've sat up nights getting her things in order."

Probably sat up nights, because she couldn't move faster than a snail all day, Maud thought. Aloud she said. "Well,
it's nice she could come. I've often wondered why your father
never had her or the boys up before, but you know him, Addy. I
wouldn't think of suggesting anything to him, no matter how nice
it would be. But his heart's in the right place, you can see
that."

Addy murmured the proper commonplaces. She liked Maud, to
whom she felt more related than to her father. With Maud she
could prattle on unself-consciously, a conversational satis-
faction she enjoyed with few other people.

"Where's papa?" she asked, settling herself lazily into
Mr. Doynbee's chair.

"Only the Lord knows," Maud said. "He goes off like this
evening after evening, usually up the river, but if I was to
ask him, all he'd say more than likely would be that he'd been
on an errand. I've got out of the habit of asking. Arthur's
a pretty silent man, you know."

"He always talked a lot to mama," Addy said.

"I'm not your mother," Maud reminded her with acid suc-
cinctness.

"He never did talk much to anyone but her, I guess."

"Oh, he can talk enough when he wants to to someone like
that Tom Briggs and his wife—and you know what kind of woman
she is—or to that Angelo Aiello. What in the world he sees in
them is beyond me. But that's Arthur's way, and who are we to
change him?"
It essentially the better to see Addy
house out of the way. And jerked her shirt around con-

pick and quite impatient till then.

different when Graham arrived. She could wait out in the
two of them always talked about and went shopping. They could
foot either of them, having found out a long time ago what the
like Aunt Maud and her mother. But recalling she had no mind to
looked at a good angle and listened. It was so easy to teach people
just go around the corner and then sit quietly wherever you
command. It was always easy to listen in, she d discovered

everyone, that children ought to get out of the way when their
would have been from accustomed to the suggestion from

seen each other, please.

and I have a good leaders. I’ve been quite some time since we’ve
now why don’t you take a turn about the yard, whistle your mother
wheel. be back before long, wherever he is. I said, then.

then, it’s Graham here, aunt hands.

porch roof.

her arm about the laden best that supported one corner of the
kneeled and peeped out to the porch, where she good temperament.

sewing they’d tacked another after between them.

telling Addy what Addy knew nothing. Many a time before then.

full, moreover, she meant manifesting aversion. She was a mercy.
when she could talk to Addy, with whom she never had to be care-

And answered the tolerant sound of her own voice, especially.
"I don't know whether you've noticed it or not, Addy," she began, "but your father's been turning something over in his mind lately."

She paused significantly to give Addy ample opportunity to digest this conversational appetizer.

"You have?" was all Addy could reply.

"I thought you might have noticed when he was in Missoula the other day."

"He seemed the same as ever to me," Addy said, "but then I wasn't paying much attention to him. I've got my own problems, you know--"

"Of course," Maud interrupted blandly, "I know just how you feel. And, Addy, I think it's just lovely you're expecting again. Earl and I used to wish--but then that's all past history and there's no need to go into it. But I do think you ought to pay more attention to your father, especially at his age. A body never knows, you know."

She pressed herself back in her rocker, her shrewd, wide-spaced eyes watchful for any change in Addy's face.

"He seemed perfectly all right to me," Addy said.

"Oh, I don't mean anything like that," Maud soothed her.

"He's probably fit as a fiddle. But after all he's been through--and the accident took more out of him than you and May think--well, you never know. I remember how Earl looked as chipper as a sparrow right up to the day he died. He went to the shop in
the morning without a worry in his head, and then there they 
were at the house at ten in the morning telling me he'd dropped 
dead. Just got up to get a drink and dropped over. And he 
was a lot younger man at the time than Arthur and hadn't led 
such a hard life either."

"You don't think papa's likely to go like that?" Addy 
asked, her usually monotonous voice more alive than ordinarily.

"Land, no, I don't suspect anything. But I remembered 
after Earl went, how the last few weeks before, he was sort of 
turning things over in his mind, but never said anything to me 
about it, though I tried to worm out of him what it was. And 
then he was gone, and there was everything in order, as if he'd 
had a hunch the end wasn't far off. I've noticed the same thing 
in other men and heard their wives say the same thing. I told 
Netta about Earl at the time and she agreed with me. She'd 
noticed the same thing too."

"She had?" Addy asked.

"Your mother was a shrewd woman, Addy, whether you knew it 
or not. She kept her eyes and ears open."

"I liked her," Addy said.

And why shouldn't you, you big goose, Naud thought. She 
worked herself to the bone for you, tried to make something of 
you, and all the good it did you or her either.

"I've just been wondering, Addy, that's all, about your 
father, if maybe he isn't getting things in order. He called 
Kay the other night, you know."
"He did?"

"He didn't tell you that, either?"

Addy shook her head.

"Well, he didn't say anything much. I couldn't help but hear it, Addy," Maud pretended to be apologetic. "I was in bed and hadn't dropped off yet. Once he got hold of Ray, he didn't have anything to say, just 'How are you, how's business,' and things like that. And then his trip into town in his dark suit the other morning--well, it's wise to keep your weather eye open, and really, Addy, I do think you ought to know--in case something should happen."

Again she paused, willing to wait while Addy soaked into her torpid mind this added accumulation of evidence.

"I don't suppose there'd be much for papa to get in order, really," Addy eventually said. "The house belongs to the company. There's only the furniture to worry about--and the compensation money."

She barely breathed the last three words. Involuntarily Maud grasped tightly the wooden arms of her rocker. So Addy believed the money was still intact, just as she'd thought all along. Well, that was a blessing, since if Addy never discovered till the very end that the money was gone, she'd be too stunned ever to imagine where it might have gone. And since she hadn't mentioned the stamp album, apparently she didn't suspect how much it was worth. There was no one to worry about
then but Ray. What a shame he wasn't as big a ninny as Addy.

"It's funny he's never spent a nickel of all that money all these years," Addy murmured hesitantly. "What would he spend it on?" Maud asked.

"He always used to talk, when Ray and I were still at home, of taking a trip to California. But mama was still living then." "He probably figured he'd better save the money for a rainy day," Maud said sententiously.

"Well," Addy said, a little bolder now, but still hesitantly, "the only thing papa'd have to get in order would be the money. I don't suppose you know anything about it, Aunt Maud?"

Maud forced a laugh. "Me? Don't be a fool, Addy. What would Arthur consult with me for? If he'd talk to anyone, he'd talk to Ray or you."

Talk to Addy, Maud thought derisively, Arthur talk to Addy about his own affairs? He might the day he died, but not a day sooner.

"I don't think he's ever talked to Ray about the money," Addy said after some reflection. "But then he might have, too. I suppose I could mention it to Ray the next time he comes to Missoula."

"My land, no, Addy," Maud soothed her. "I wouldn't, not if I was you."

Now that she had Addy thoroughly aroused—and in the process discovered where her main interest lay in regard to what
Arthur would leave behind whenever he died—it was just as well
to cool down any ideas Addy might have got riveted into her
cloudy mind. It wouldn't pay to have her go scooping around,
asking the wrong questions of Ray or making some stupid remark
in front of Arthur that would arouse his suspicion.

Addy looked questioningly at her. "Why not?"

"Well, really, Addy. You don't want Ray to go thinking
the wrong things, do you?"

A puzzled expression flattened over Addy's irresolute face.

"You don't want him to think all you're interested in is
the compensation money, do you?" Maud hammered at her.

"But Ray wouldn't think that."

"Addy, you've been married long enough so you ought to have
got acquainted with how men's minds work by this time. A man
would get suspicious right away. What would Joe think if you
were to suggest he write out a will and so on?"

Addy thought for a moment. "He probably wouldn't like it."

"And neither would Ray," Maud picked up at once. "And it's
not as if the money was all you're thinking about. It would be
better to have Arthur with you another ten years than to get
what he'll leave behind, if he should die tomorrow."

"Of course, Aunt Maud."

"But a man never looks at things from every angle," Maud
said. "They've had to work so hard for money all their lives
that they just naturally think about it first off. They can't
help it. They're different from women that way. That's why I think you'd be a fool to talk to Ray about the compensation money."

"I suppose you're right," Addy said. "And right now, with another baby coming, and you know what an expense that is, and how much a little extra money comes in handy......well, Ray just might think that all I was worried about was......" Her voice diminished into nothing.

"What's a little money more or less?" Maud asked grandly. "As long as Joe's working steady, you'll get your bills paid, and if you get in a pinch, Arthur has the compensation money in the bank to help you back on your feet. And there's always a way to turn to. There isn't really a thing to worry about Addy."

"I suppose not, Aunt Maud." But Addy seemed unconvinced.

No need to worry now that she'll blab to anyone, Maud thought, rocking comfortably back and forth. Poor thing, it was as easy to read her mind as it was to read the daily paper. She'd go home now and think over what she'd heard, believe every word of it and never tell a soul.

"I'm really glad you told me, Aunt Maud," Addy said some minutes later. "Maybe I shouldn't leave Rosie with you after all. Maybe she'll be too much trouble and--"

"My gracious," Maud said. "The worst thing you could do would be to take the girl home, now that she's here. She won't bother Arthur a bit, might do him good, and any way what would you tell Rosie?"
"I don't know," Addy said. "I do wish papa would come. You haven't any idea where he is?"

"It would be hard to tell, Addy. He'll be back when it suits him."

"I can't stay much longer," Addy said, "and I would like to see how he is before I go."

"Well, set a while then. There's nothing calling you home. Joe can put the kids to bed."

"Yes, but I told him I wouldn't stay long."

"Well, you know best, Addy. I won't urge you."

Not much, Maud thought. It would be far better if she left before Arthur got back. A night's sleep was what she needed to get her mind back in low gear again, after which the danger that she might talk out of turn would be almost negligible.

A few minutes later Addy stood up. "I'll just find Rosie, Aunt Maud, tell her a few things, and then go. Joe will be fit to be tied, if I don't get home before long."

"All right, Addy. I'm sure Arthur will understand. While you're around the back, I'll clean out a drawer or two in the bathroom so she can put her clothes away."

Her hands folded demurely in her lap, her ankles crossed neatly, Rosie was sitting, prim as a poppy, in one of the lawn chairs by the rose bed when Addy found her.

"What in the world have you been doing?" Addy asked.
"Just sitting, waiting for gramps," Rosie said. "And watching a humming-bird. But it's gone now. It was real pretty."

"Well, Rosie, I can't wait for papa any longer."

"That's all right," Rosie said cheerfully. "Gramps will understand."

Addy sat down beside her in the other lawn chair. "Now see to it, Rosie, that you don't wear out your grandpa. He's an old man, you know, and not used to children any more. You don't want to tire him out with foolish questions and the like."

"No, mam."

"And don't get too noisy around the house."

"No."

"And help your Aunt Maud with the dishes, and dust up for her and help her make the beds in the morning."

"Yes."

"And I'll be up for you in a few days. If you get lonesome, just call me up, and I can come sooner."

"I won't get lonesome with gramps."

"Well, let's go in the house so I can say goodbyes to Aunt Maud."

"All right."

Together they went in the back way, Rosie treading the steps as daintily as she could, Addy, smirking a little at her reserve and yet proud of it. She'll please papa, Addy thought, and that's all that counts.
Maud rounded up, the three of them went out to the car, Rosie shutting the squeaking door of the car decisively behind her mother.

"Goodbye," she said simply, making no effort to kiss her mother or be kissed in return. "Don't worry about me."

"Come again, Addy," Maud said. "And don't you worry about anything."

In another minute Addy was driving off, the rattles of the car clinking back through the still evening air. Rosie waved her hand briefly, turned back up the walk.

"I'll put my clothes away now, Aunt Maud," she announced.

The bathroom drawer filled, her dresses hung in Maud's closet, where she'd been directed to put them, the suitcase tucked neatly under Ray's bed on the back porch, she marched through the living room, past Maud, to the front door.

"I'll just sit on the porch and wait for gramps, Aunt Maud."

"All right, Rosie," Maud agreed, none too pleased the child was staying, but anxious not to show it. "But don't you think you ought to go to bed before long in case he's late?"

"I'll wait up, if you don't mind."

"Well, maybe he'll come soon," Maud said, willing to placate her this first evening.

Spreading her cotton print skirt studiously about her, as she'd seen girls do in the movies, Rosie sat down on the top
step, leaned wistfully against the corner post. It was so restful up here at grampa’s, she thought, everything in place and no smart-alecky boys to quarrel with, no Clarice to put to bed. She hoped her mother wouldn’t come after her for a long while, not for days and days. She’d wash all her own clothes and iron all her dresses, even the one with the pleats, if only she could stay here and be nice to grampa and have him be nice to her. She’d even be extra nice to Aunt Maud and dust the whole house every day and not mind it a bit.

She was still leaning, half asleep, against the corner post when she heard footsteps plodding up the walk. There he was, her grampa. She ran down the walk to meet him.

“I’m here, grampa,” she sang out, “just like you invited me.”

Mr. Doynbee, surprised to find her in Bonner, shamefully aware that he’d forgotten all about her, but determined never to let her know it, put his good arm around her shoulders, and in the moonlight that sifted down over the front yard, she looked so attractive, all combed and scrubbed and starched, that he realized suddenly he was very glad she’d come.

“I hope you won’t get lonesome up here with a couple of old folks that go to bed early every night and have no boys to fight with.”

“Oh, no, grampa, I won’t get lonesome. I already feel like I’d been here forever.”

She pulled him down beside her on the steps, nestled close
against him, her head lifted up the better to see his face, mottled by the shadows that ranged over the porch. For a moment it seemed to him as if Netta were there beside him again, sitting with him as they used to sit when they were first married, close together in the dark, her head upturned toward his.

VIII

Mr. Doyneee hesitated a long time before he decided to enter the church. Standing on the corner across the street, Rosie's hand hooked into the crooked fingers of his remaining hand, he examined almost brick by brick the unpretentious, steeply-pointed facade pierced by three, long, pointed, amber-colored windows, stared at the pointed stone arch that framed the double doors through which groups of Sunday worshippers dribbled into the interior. They seemed to be his kind of people, common as the church itself, hard working people most of them, whose Sunday clothes seemed as unused to daily wear as his own. He could probably feel at home in this church—if he could feel at home in any church after all the years he'd stayed away from a Sunday service—feel more at home here than he would have felt in the larger church he and Rosie had passed by only a few minutes before. Well, should they try it?

A tug from Rosie brought his eyes away from the double doors of the church, centered them on her scrubbed, pink cheeks, her serious dark eyes.
"Are we going to this church, grampa?"

"I suppose it doesn't really matter, does it, Rosie?"

"Old Mrs. Lawrence, who lives down the block from us, says it doesn't matter what church you go to, just so you go."

"And you believe Mrs. Lawrence?"

"I don't know, grampa. Daddy sends us to the church down where we live. He says he doesn't want us growing up to be heathen."

"You think this church would do, Rosie?"

Rosie looked puzzled. "What difference does it make, grampa? Old Mrs. Lawrence says we're all Christians. But we'd better go in, grampa, if we're going. It's getting late."

"All right, Rosie. I don't suppose it does make much difference when you get right down to it."

It was strange to be entering a church after so many years of staying away, as strange as entering the public library. But here there was no spinsterish-looking woman sitting behind a desk to frighten a man away, only a smiling, dark-suited man as old as he was, who looked at the two of them as if he were genuinely glad to see them, and with the utmost politeness, smiling all the time, ushered them into the vacant corner of a pew midway down a side aisle.

"This is a nice church, grampa. Lots nicer than the church we go to down where we live," Rosie whispered rather too loud, Mr. Doynebee thought, in spite of the reverberations of the organ music, which throbbed from wall to wall.
"Sh," he whispered back to her and squeezed her hand by way of remonstrance. And then he noticed for the first time that Rosie wasn't wearing a hat, as were all the other little girls who were sprinkled throughout the congregation, and he fidgetted self-consciously. That was the trouble with him, he thought, never thinking about little matters like hats in church, another emptiness in his life brought about by seven year's immersion in the stamp album. But, he recollected, Rosie had brought no hat to Bonner with her, probably she didn't have one fit for summer wear. If only Netta were still alive to see that the child was properly dressed for every ordinary occasion. He had visions of Rosie properly batted, something in straw with a turned-up brim, a couple of wide blue ribbons dangling behind it. But the visions faded away when he glanced again at the hat worn by the other little girls, none of which fitted his old-fashioned picture of what a little girl's hat ought to be. All the while Rosie sat, sedate as a candlestick, superbly unaware that anything was lacking from her Sunday costume. Well, batted or unhatted, Mr. Deynbee thought, she's as fit in the sight of God as any of the other little girls—and wondered at himself for using the phrase, until he remembered that it was one of Netta's.

Sitting in the cedar pew in this church, he felt rather like a hypocrite, as if he were taking up space that belonged to someone with more faith than he, but when he looked again at Rosie he began to feel less ill at ease. Her trusting spirit
gave him a confidence he'd lacked when he'd gone poking into the public library. Still, he couldn't decide exactly why, even with Rosie under his wing, he'd felt obliged to come to a church, any church, this morning, or why he'd chosen this church, which he'd never entered before in his life. Or why he'd chosen to attend a church in Missoula and not the church in Bonner Netta had belonged to, or why he'd told Rosie to change her clothes while Maud was out in the back yard, or why the two of them had sneaked out of the house like a couple of culprits and he hadn't felt safe until the bus was beyond Milltown and thrumming down the road to Missoula. Why hadn't he acted like a good Christian, told Maud where they were going and asked her to come with them?

Because he wasn't a good Christian—if he was one at all. He was nothing but a hypocrite—and to him a hypocrite was worse any day than a coward—sitting in a hard, cedar pew in a strange church, shielding his hypocrisy behind the simplicity of his granddaughter, hoping he might find something in the Christian religion he'd neglected all his adult years that would keep those yipping questions at bay. It could be, he'd thought, that the church might have an answer of some sort, that it wouldn't hurt to investigate it any more than it had hurt to go poking into the public library. At the very least he could put a good round dollar in the collection plate and pay for the space he and Rosie took up. Besides, whether he found anything in the service or not, he was doing the right thing by Rosie, whom Joe
didn't want to grow up a heathen—and neither did he—and who still had faith on which to prop up her life, if it should go haywire, as his had.

Rosie seemed thoroughly accustomed to the atmosphere of a church, he noticed. Her back straight against the back of the pew, not slumped down against it, as were the backs of some of the other little girls in the church, she sat beside him, solemn and detached. Her face, reflecting the amber light from the side windows, glowed half young, half old, and he realized with a shocking sense of reality that she was on the verge of growing out of childhood, that soon, perhaps already, her mind would begin to struggle with questioning that comes with puberty. He hoped she might develop a little like Netta, hang on to whatever faith she had as long as she could, perhaps all her life, as Netta had. It was a good thing to have faith; no one knew it any better than he, who had none. Well, not none perhaps, but certainly very little.

The minister, combed and brushed and robed in a black gown, had taken his place in the excessively carved, high-backed chair behind the pulpit, the choir had trooped in, and now the congregation was rising, was singing with the choir the Doxology, which Mr. Doynebee only vaguely remembered, but which Rosie knew perfectly. The words had a pleasing effect upon him, he didn't know why, because as words they meant little to him. He wondered if they meant anything to Rosie, and then
the own father.

from the day when he ' d attended church Sunday after

into a new wrinkle to the situation, one he did not remember
rose and some kind of answer, the question, house was perplexed
when he was home, the age of the problem, and then the doctor
later, one of the patients, but not one he recalled over reading
and concentration, and read the response, reading with the note-

 took the book up for him, and then they sat down again, shorter
following the words the by time, all your spoken, as house
chirped, the descent, he proceeded to sit, from the window,
numbered 26, of ages, which he remembered from the

untier to get down, who could recall only such tour-

concentration, and although they sang, he got the hymn
and then the doctor rose almost immediately, followed by the

extent after of sorcery, feet and awakening existence.

as he could, the machine over, the concentration and down with a
with the server with which house repeated them, but an honesty

Jared, suspecting the phrase in union with the numberer, not
remembered the words and honored them in spite of the expectation

remembered the words and honored them in spite of the expectation

the minister the Lord ' s prayer, in which he, whispered, she still
but meaningful, and then the concentration was resting with

voice earnest with persistence and quality once, the words familiar
and then the minister was determining the information, the

are they bewildered.

realized that they didn't need to mean anything to her as long
And then came the reading from the Scriptures. Mr. Doynebee listened attentively, hopeful that something in the lines would click with him, satisfy the hunger for definite knowledge that had brought him to the service.

"Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," the minister intoned. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets."

And what did "Righteousness of God without the law" mean, Mr. Doynebee wondered; but his speculations were cut short as the minister continued,

"Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

The minister went on for several verses more, which dealt
with "Faith without the deeds of the law," and with "Circumcision by faith and uncircumcision through faith," but Mr. Deynbee had quit listening. All he had heard was words, words, words, words, which perhaps meant something to the initiated, but nothing to him. It was always so when he came to church. Nothing but words whose meaning he couldn't dig out, or words he'd heard so many times when he was a boy that they no longer meant anything to him.

But he refused to be licked immediately by these words, as he'd refused at first to be licked by the books in the library. He'd wait for the minister to explain the words, point up their meaning as they applied to everyone in church and everyone without. St. Paul had written these words, the minister had said, and surely St. Paul, whom Netta had always held high in respect, knew what he was writing about. And anyhow the minister had been to school to find out what the words meant. He, Arthur Deynbee, would sit back and wait for those who knew more than he did to clarify those words.

And then some grey-haired woman in the choir rose and to the accompaniment of the organ began to sing in a querulous voice that missed the pitch on all the high notes and struggled for breath on all the long ones. "Be still my soul," she warbled and warbled, "be still my soul, be still my soul," and went on unmercifully for all of three stanzas.

And then the minister was praying long-windedly, declaim-
ing such hackneyed phrases as "grace in Thine eyes," "to enter into the kingdom," "the love and faith which are in Christ Jesus." He prayed on and on about the glories of eternal salvation, entreated the congregation to put on with him the shield of faith that they might one day enter together into eternal rest, and wound up praying for the President, the Vice-President and those in high positions throughout the land, that they might through the week to come see fit to act in all things according to Christian doctrine. Nor did the minister neglect to pray for the nation's representatives in Congress, that they might see fit to act according to the same high-minded light. He prayed for those on beds of affliction and for those who asked especially "to be remembered in our prayers, and may their prayers with ours mount to heaven on wings of petition," whatever wings of petition might be.

And then followed the choral response, which was followed in turn by the presentation of tithes and offerings, during which the organist drummed out a mournful number. Reaching carefully into his pocket with his twisted fingers, Mr. Doynebee pulled out the long pocket purse he'd carried for years, opened it and fished out a silver dollar, which he gave to Rosie to put into the plate for him.

Rosie's eyes grew wide? "So much, gramps?" she whispered. Mr. Doynebee tried to look severe. "Just put it in."

And Rosie did, when the plate passed by them, dropping the
coin daintily on the plush bottom of the plate so that it would make no noise.

And then the minister approached the pulpit. Great with dignity, he shut the oversize Bible that lay open before him, looked patriarchally over the congregation, and commenced his exegesis with explanatory remarks as to how and why and when St. Paul had written the words he had read but a few moments before, a heady encomium to St. Paul lavishly interwoven through every word he mouthed. His introductory remarks concluded, he launched forthwith into a diatribe concerning why these lines of St. Paul had as much point today, nineteen centuries since they were penned, as they had had in the opening century of the Christian era, after which he pounced on the principal words of the text, stripped them from their context, and fell into an examination of each in turn, laboring on for upwards of half an hour in a grandiloquent endeavor to convince the congregation of the divine sagacity of St. Paul, about which no one in the church, including Mr. Doynbee, had ever had any doubt, but failing in the grand manner of pulpit oratory to elucidate any of the problems involved in the comprehension of the verses in question. And then, after another determined attempt to drive home the applicability of the message of St. Paul to the community of Missoula, the state of Montana and the nation at large, he called upon the congregation again to unite in prayer with him, which the congregation was very glad to do, inasmuch as the
words of the prayer, redundant as most of them were, were relatively familiar to everyone and required no exegetical flavoring.

Congregation and choir now joined in another hymn, the words of which repeated with the same lack of sense the words of the hymn already sung. Came next the pastoral benediction, proclaimed by the minister with outstretched right hand, followed by a choral response, and the service was over.

Rosie took hold of Mr. Doynbee's hand, smiled up at him. He smiled back, hopeful she wouldn't see the doubt in his face. For what had it all come to, this service they had just taken part in? What answer did it have for him, this mumbo-jumbo which seemed to have met with the entire satisfaction of the bulk of the congregation, who were filing out of the pews, nodding to one another, declaring what an inspiring sermon Rev. Tucker had just given, proclaiming how they always went away from one of his services buoyed up sufficiently to withstand another grinding week, announcing what a spiritual man he was. Looking about, Mr. Doynbee spotted a side door through which he and Rosie could escape from the church without parading past his reverence, who was greeting his parishioners at the principal entrance to the church.

"This way, Rosie," he said, leading her toward the side door.

"But it's proper to say how-do-you-do to the minister," Rosie remonstrated. "Old Mrs. Lawrence says you should always greet the minister after the service."
"Never mind old Mrs. Lawrence today," Mr. Doynbee said. Whatever he did this Sunday and all the remaining Sundays of his life, he did not want to greet Rev. Tucker, who probably was a fine man in his way and did a world of good in Missoula. He did not want to be invited to return to this church again, did not want to say, yes, he would, and know all the time he would not.

"Didn't you like the service, gramps?" Rosie asked, when they were out in the street and walking along toward the bus stop under the maple trees that shaded the parkings.

"I guess it was a good service, as services go, Rosie. Did you like it?"

"Oh, I like to go to church," Rosie said. "It's nice to sit there and listen to the organ and the singing and to what the minister has to say."

"Do you understand what the minister is saying, Rosie?"

Serious as a robin, its head cocked toward the ground, listening for a worm, Rosie thought hard for a few moments, during which Mr. Doynbee was afraid she might say she did. How stupid he'd feel if Rosie understood what it was all about when he didn't.

"Not always," Rosie finally said. "But I know the minister always means well, and maybe some day I'll understand everything."

Hand in hand, they walked on toward the bus stop. It must
be comforting, Mr. Doynbee thought, scrutinizing her serious little face, to have the faith in the pulpit that Rosie had, to assume without question that it would all come out right in the end, if one were only patient enough and had faith enough. But as for him, well, it was as Rosie had said. The minister meant well, and if he had nothing really spiritual to give the congregation, well, the congregation must take it on faith that he was trying, that his heart was in the right place. But that was the trouble, so far as he could see, with the church and with the people who went to it regularly. The minister meant well; he talked a good twenty minutes to half an hour, once in a while saying something, but most of the time, not. What answer did most ministers have to the simple questions that gnawed at an ordinary man, who craved to know, not the answers to obscure questions, but to discover some guide by means of which he could keep his own day to day life channeled safely and meaningfully in whatever current of life he'd been set into? What did this minister today, or any other minister, have to say to convince the ordinary man that mere everyday life has a reason behind it that makes it worth the living, a pinch of something that makes raw-boned thrift and hard work worth the sweat that goes into them? Nothing, except that, if a man hasn't sinned, he'll one day be gathered into the arms of Christ Jesus on the day of doom, that when he comes to be judged, he'll find himself washed clean in the blood of the Lamb, freed from the sins
of eating flesh, made heir to eternal bliss. It was all a
hollow mockery, so far as he could see, a glorious hoax that
people ate up, because they were afraid to hunt for the real
answers, answers to questions such as those that had been eat-
ing into him the last few days. It was easier to pretend that
one would get his reward in the beyond, whatever that was. But
why in the beyond? There were rewards, if a man wanted to call
them that, in this world. At least there were reasons why a
man put up with the crosses he had to bear—there, Mr. Deyne-
bee began to laugh at himself; he'd begun to think already in
the phrases of the pulpit, and he'd only gone to church this
once in over a half dozen years. But all the same, why shouldn't
the church seek out those reasons and preach them instead of
wallowing in sermons on sanctification and salvation and eternal
bliss and circumcision by faith?

"Rosie," he said, pulling out his tobacco pouch and pipe,
"fill up your gramps's pipe, will you, while we walk along?
I'm in bad need of a smoke."

He'd grown too hot under the collar, he decided. Why
should he belabor the church for not being of any assistance to
him? The church stood out as a haven for some folk in the world,
who found in it the peace it had never held for him. Netta had
never come home from a service, as he was going home from this
one, whining like a dull band-saw. The church had had something
to offer her, and she'd been no fool, easily duped by big words.
"Let's walk across the bridge, gramps," Rosie suggested, "instead of taking the bus and transferring. We've got lots of time."

"All right," he agreed, "if you don't mind walking."

It was a comfort to have Rosie with him today, so untroubled, so contentedly serene. And she was right. He had lots of time, all the time that was left him in this life. And that was time enough, no doubt, in which to find out all he wanted to know.

IX

"Where are we going, gramps?"

Trotting silently beside him along the board sidewalk, observing the company houses, shrouded behind the weeping birches growing in front of each, as if she'd never seen them before; rejoicing, when they passed the frame schoolhouse, that she didn't attend school there; and conjecturing why, as they passed the white clapboard churches beyond the school, gramps hadn't gone to one of them this morning instead of the one in Missoula, Rosie had kept telling herself she wasn't going to worry gramps with questions. When they got to wherever they were going, she'd find out everything she wanted to know. But after they crossed the railroad tracks and turned down along the lumber yard toward Milltown, she could no longer keep from asking.

"You weren't listening to me, gramps."
Mr. Doyneee jerked himself back into the workaday world
that was Rosie. "I'm sorry, Rosie. What was it you asked?"
"I just wanted to know where we were going."
"Over to Angelo's."
"Angelo who?"
"Angelo Aiello. He's a friend of mine, lives over here in
Milltown, has a big family of kids."
"Does he have a baby?"
"Not any more. But it hasn't been so long since he did.
There always used to be a baby in Angelo's house."
"Oh."
"I think you'll like Angelo. And his kids."
"Will he like me?"
"Why not?"
"Oh, I don't know." Grownups could ask such unanswerable
questions, Rosie thought. Even gramps.

"Gramps," Rosie asked, after they'd walked almost as far
as the general store in Milltown, "what do you have to do to
have babies?"

Amazed, Mr. Doyneee stared at her. Was the child serious?
But obviously she was. She didn't know, and here she was twelve
years old, and it was high time she found out. But what could
he tell her? If she were a boy, he'd set her down on a boulder
somewhere, as he had Ray about the time Ray turned inquisitive
about such matters, and tell her the simple truth as he under-
stood it. But how could a man tell a girl, even his own grand-
daughter, such things? And yet he couldn't silence her with the
idea that she should forget the whole business, especially with
another baby coming into the family, about which she probably
had overheard Joe and Addy talking.

"What are you looking at me like that for, gramps?" Rosie
asked, her eyes full of doubt and self-consciousness. "Isn't
it something children should know about?"

"There's nothing wrong about knowing," Mr. Doynebee said,
"but it's a little hard to explain right off the bat, and any-
way I think your mother ought to tell you. Why don't you ask
her?"

He was ashamed of himself for sloughing off the problem on
Addy, but caught short as he was, he could think of nothing
close to say.

"It's hard to ask her anything," Rosie said.

"I think you could ask her without any harm," Mr. Doynebee
said. "It's much better to have your mother tell you such
things."

"Isn't it nice?" Rosie asked, now that she'd broached the
subject determined to see it through.

"There's nothing bad about it at all," Mr. Doynebee said.
"Except that we haven't enough time right now. We're almost at
Angelo's. We can talk about it later, if you want to. On the
way home, if you like."
It was indecent, he thought, to put off answering Rosie, but he needed time to think out what he could tell her without embarrassing her—and especially without embarrassing himself. If he had to tell her, he was going to tell her in the right way, the way he’d told Ray so long ago—and so successfully too, he prided himself—so that sex would sound clean and decent, not dirty and repulsive. He could certainly see that it was time he took Rosie in hand, did for her what Addy and Joe neglected to do. It was a duty he’d deferred too long already.

"All right, gramps," Rosie said, pretending to be satisfied.

"Here we are at Angelo’s now," he said, relieved to see the house, much too small for Angelo and his brood, three of whom were swarming about the porch and front yard as they turned in.

"Where’s your father, Tony?" he asked the oldest of the three, a swarthy, beetled-browed boy with an ingratiating Italian smile, who, the moment he saw Mr. Doynbee and Rosie, turned himself into a welcoming committee of one.

"In the garden, Mr. Doynbee," Tony squinted long and hard at Rosie, who squinted as long and as hard at him. "You want I should go get him?"

"Never mind. We’ll go around and find him. Tony, this is my granddaughter Rosie. And Rosie, this is Tony, and the other two are Ferruccio and Anna Maria. If you want, you can stay here and play with them."

"I think I’ll go meet Mr. Angelo with you, gramps," Rosie suggested, abashed by the curious stares of the three children.
potatoes.

always, working in the garden. Always plan to hoe, run, de

Rose in your, runested, child to see you. Here I am. Just there

around in the row, partly hidden into a picturesque outline.

Preston's, excellent exercise. His study face, when he entered

interested in the exercise, which needed down over his head this

angero, self-restrained, and speed the mean off the vegetable.

"It's me. Don't be, rubber. Don't wear a coop.

a thing, gentleman at the same time.

the supply, rings over the farms of your parent and yet feel

you were meeting with a enemy. Be prepared. If I

time sensation to make haste with anywhere, a gentleman,

at the backhouse under the dark skin of the back, and it was a

how almost tenderly from plan to plant, to admire the ripple

watch the play of moisture up and down the trees as we fitted the

eight, Mr. Doctor's thought, to see angero sending the garden.

to the world and scrutinizing with means. If it were a true

angero's bent over the pose, the agile, steady, clump aristocratic;

sure enough, as Tony had said, there in the garden was

* "We'll go to sea. Amma never died up, nor did Emsdale look

hair bobbing efantine her back. We can play out in beach, house,"

"we'll go to sea. Amma never died up, nor did Emsdale look

Angelo looked down the scale again. "Remember why?

If you have to get something tonight.

Don't let me keep you from warming out that hose, Angelo.

Angelo.

The chafion out of the way, Mr. Depueye turned toward your nose off.

"He's gone, housekeeper. Mr. Depueye said. "They can't be.

"Come alone, housekeeper. Anna Maria urged.

Arturo and me, we gotta leave to talk business.

Take deep and slow, Arturo. "Tony, don't hustle anymore.

"One of the girls, Arturo. he told Mr. Depueye. You

perfunctorily who had altered up to him, firmly averting the sneaky leg.

He gathered house on the head, at the same time pronouncing me and luncheon.

"I cannae always tell. I've had too many yams.

The scale. "I cannae always tell. I've had too many yams.

And when house needed attrocatiously, he laughed down year out."

"You're going to need it now, you're going to need it now, Arturo.

Thers' a good. You needs a catch in your house, Arturo.

For a while.

My grandmother house, Arturo. She's staying with me.

"You, who's a deers, Anthony, your address, Anthony.

hand, which he folded gently about his friend's matted fur.

The row, where he held out to his, depended his mild-abbreviated

whiching up his eyebrows again, he proceeded to the end of
Don' meeka me leff, Arturo. Man weeth hungra kids see never feenish. I hoe evra night da potate, but I can afford to see sometime. You comes weeth me, Arturo. We see on da back steps, you an' me. Luisa, shes got us some vino. I'ma dry. He'ems sometime you don' come see me. What'sa mat'?

At the back stoop Angelo called in a babble of Sicilian to his wife, a tubbishly round Sicilian woman who spoke only enough English to go marketing, to bring out some wine, and presently she did, handing each of them a large water glass full to the brim.

"This is a heap of wine, Angelo," Mr. Doynbee remarked.

"Wan glass? He'ems not much." Angelo gestured magnificently with his free hand. "Just drinks slow like me. You'll no getta drunk on dees vino. I meck set myself, me an' Luisa." He held up his glass toward the setting sun in order to see through the dark red of the wine. "He'ems 'bout gone, dees vino. But before long de grep willa be ripe. I meck some more, me an' Luisa."

"Your garden's looking nice, Angelo."

Why was he blabbing about Angelo's garden, Mr. Doynbee re-buked himself. He hadn't come over to Angelo's to pass the evening chit-chatting about his garden. He'd come over to ask Angelo the same questions he'd been unable to ask Tom two nights before. But how was he going to begin. He couldn't ask Angelo outright what he wanted to ask him, any more than he could Tom. He had to lead into the subject easy-like, and then ask what he
on, I don't know what anything's wrong, what's, you know, what, do it.

Try, you tell me, attention on your mind, I don't tell. Don't tell, don't tell, don't tell, don't tell, you are upset, I can't tell. Then you are happy, there something don't need to keep constant, I can know you too long time, attention. "Sure, you are, whatever said, evidently a medium. Oh, you could be interested on another

"We're in," you breathe said, whatever that the state of mind.

Attention.

Attention broke into the perplexity. Listening on your mind.

the brain as he smiled.

greater words wracked enough for anything to understand; torment
such weakness matters, but he was damn'd if he could please it to-
for too ordinarily men to sit on a seat of each sleep and dreams
had to say as if it were the most natural thing in the world.
"Sit?"

"Well, I've been thinking about things, Angelo. About why we go on having a pretty good time of it, people like you and me, who've never had anything but hard work and not much pay for it. We just get along, make ends meet year after year. Well, what I've been thinking is, why don't we mind it?"

Angelo looked as reflective as a statue. "I don't get what'sa in your min', Arturo."

"What I mean is," Mr. Doynbee began to feel more articulate, "well, look at your own life. All you've ever done is work, and work damned hard, work all day at the mill, and then come home in the evening and work just as hard around the place the way you do. Well, what do you get out of it, except that you keep your kids fed and clothed and with a roof over their heads?"

"What more should I get, Arturo?" Angelo asked, the personification of patience.

"But haven't you ever wondered why you never got anything more, why your wife hasn't had the new clothes she'd like, the same with your kids, and get new furniture, and well, you know, all the things you've had to do without all your life? You see what I mean?"

"I see now. But, Arturo," and Angelo shifted his position on the steps so that he could look more squarely at Mr. Doynbee, "I'm not discontent. I've got no gripe."
"That's just the point I'm trying to get at. Why haven't you?"

"Should I, Arturo?" Angelo's face assumed a deceptive expression, his black eyebrows arched together, his lips twisted ironically.

"Not necessarily. That's just the point. You're not full of gripes. You are contented. Well, why? Why has living the way you do been worth it, when you've got so little out of it?"

"Arturo," Angelo demanded, "why you aska me dees question? Wat's et mat' to you?"

"I've just been wondering these past few days, just thinking. I never had any gripes either, not any big ones at least. But lately I can't help wondering. I'm about finished, and---"

"You? Fessish?" Angelo's comforting laugh slithered down the scale. "You gotta lotsa year yet to see a weth me an' drinks vine."

"Just the same, I'm getting on toward seventy. I've lived my life, and I'm no use to anybody much. Why hang on—unless there's something to hang on for? I suppose there used to be. But what was it? That's what I'm trying to find out. Don't you see?"

"Net'sa mebbas I see, mebbas not. But dere'sa no mat'. You gotta hang on long as--"

"Sure, and I'm willing to, but...."

What else could be say, Mr. Deynbee thought. Unless Angelo
could offer him something, he'd better shut up, sip away at
the wine and let Angelo do the talking.

Angelo, strangely enough, became contemplative, his mobile
face shading off into a philosophic calm which seemed impenetra-
ble. His eyes, usually so beady, lost a little of their brilliance
changed to a soft opalescence. He seemed to relax into nothing
but gestating protoplasm, in which condition he remained for
minute on minute, each of which grew more irksome to Mr. Doyne-
bee. And then, his eyes became almost transparent with in-
spiration, Angelo shifted about on the steps.

"You eska me wy I'ma content weeth notheeng but harda work,
Arturo, weeth only 'nough to get by on. I tella you wy. Est'sa
like dees. Est'sa hava da keeds, lotsa keeds to raise, an'
hava da good wife to hava keeds weeth. An' den da keeds hava
keeds, an' I gotta gran'childra, me an' Luisa. An' some day,
Tony an' Ferrucio an' Anna Maria an' Luigi an' Guisapp, day
hava da more gran'childra for me an' Luisa. Always we hava da
keeds to watch out for. I works hard? Sure. But est'sa for da
keeds, always for da keeds. I'm content just to works for da
keeds. You see wat I mean?"

"Sure, I see what you mean, but...." Mr. Doynebee was uncon-
vinced.

"Est'sa like dees, Arturo," Angelo went on persuasively.
"Wen a man'sa got somebody to works for, he'sa can be content.
Seex o'clock I getta up, me an' Luisa. Alla day I works at da
mill. Five o'clock I come home. I'ma glad to see Luisa an' da
keeds. Luisa an' da keeds see justa glad to see me. We hava,
wat you call eat, love in da heart. Alla day I work for Luisa
an' da keeds. Alla day day work for me. We work tugheth' all
da time, an' so we are content. We don' have too much clothes,
but wat da hell? We hava plenta to eat. Our bella ass not
empta. Dat' sa no mat' we hava lotsa keeds. That' sa mora fun
to raise a bambino. Only Luisa, she' sa now too old to hava da
bambino. But Ruggiero, he' sa gotta wife now, he' sa gotta bamba
bino, he' sa got good job. I'ma content to see Ruggiero raise
kees bambino. An' Teresa. It' sa go on like dat, an' I'ma norra for
myself, me an' Luisa. Always somebod' to works hard
for—dat' sa wat eat ees to leave in dees world, to be content.
Kepa bus'. Wat else for should I works so hard, me an' Luisa?
You see wat I mean, Arturo?"

"I suppose so. I suppose that' sa what we've all worked for.
sure it is, Angelo. But a man can't help wondering sometimes
if there mighthn't be something else too."

"Arturo," Angelo sat up straight, "now you leastna to me,
Angelo Aiello. Sat' sa mat' weeth you? You gotta nobod' to
works for emma more. Your wife, she' sa go. But you gotta da
keeds—"

"But they don't need me any more. They've been looking
after themselves for years now."

"How you know dey don' needa you? Ruggierro, he' sa go to
Missoul' longa time now. But he'sa come eke me wat I think lotsa time, me an' Luisa."

"But your children are Italian. You've got home ties that are lots stronger than those of regular Americans."

"Arturo," Angelo's voice was sharp. "My keeds are American, just like your keeds. I shoulda be mad wen you say dat, but we've bin good friens too long."

"I'm sorry, Angelo. What I meant was that--"

"I know wat you mean, Arturo, but set'sa no mat'. Your keeds, day still gotta need for you. Don' you forget dat, Arturo."

"Maybe you're right, Angelo."

"Sure, I'm right. Dat'sa wrong weeth you, Arturo, see you don' hava 'ough keeds to beginna weeth. Dat'sa two?" Angelo shrugged his shoulders in spid contempt. "Dat'sa just a start. Oh, you don' hava to lef at me, Arturo. I say true. I coulda stop at two, three, me an' Luisa. I'm not so dumb. But set'sa bet' to hava plenta. Evra wan at da meill, dey lef at me an' Luisa, we hava too beeg famila. But dey'lla see. Me and my keeds, we'ra not feenish yet."

"They're fine kids, Angelo," Mr. Doynbee admitted.

"Sure," Angelo said, "an' ase for you, Arturo Doynbee, you've gotta da gran'childra too. An' seef Ray, he'sa get marry, you gotta some more. Dey needa you, your gran'childra, like Rosina you breeng weeth you tonight. She'sa gooda girl."
"She's all right," Mr. Doynbee said. "I like her."

"Don' you say, 'I like her,' Arturo. Say, 'I love her.' Don' you be afraid to say set. That's a wy I'ma content. I'm no afraid to say I have somebody to love. I love all my kids, Ruggiero, Teresa, Giovanna, Luigi, Tony, Anna Maria, Ferruccio, Paulina, Susanna, Tomaso. Wat you themk dat?"

Angelo sauntered down the steps as much as to say, "You're a fool, my good friend, if you don't believe me. You're a damn fool." On the thick grass beyond the steps he wheeled about.

"An' we have lotsa fun too."

Mr. Doynbee laughed at him, "I didn't come here to accuse you of anything, Angelo."

"Sure, sure." Angelo's eyes beamed with felicity. "But I'ma right, Arturo. You'lla see some day. You themk 'bout set."

He shrugged a magnificent Italian shrug. "An' now we talk 'bout sometheen dif'. We've bin too much serious, you an' me."

Lying in bed that night, Mr. Doynbee did think it over, thought it over till long after the clock in the dining room had chimed twelve. And came to nothing.

The answer he was after couldn't be as simple as Angelo in his broken English made it out to be. Just get married, have a family, a whale of a family, if a man were to follow Angelo's example, raise them up, marry them off and watch them go through
the same performance. The answer had to be more than that. Any man who was healthy and had normal appetites could do as much. Most of the men he'd known had done just that, not as whole-hoggedly as Angelo of course, but they'd been fruitful and multiplied, as the Bible directed. Most of them had loved and cherished and worked hard for their children and the wife they'd got them by. But what of it? Even pigs bred and looked after their young, at least the sow did, until they were able to fend for themselves.

Angelo might be right as far as he went. But he didn't go far enough. He didn't dig down into things. He simply accepted what came along, made the best of it and told himself he liked it. Any man could do as much if like Angelo, he'd come off some poverty-ridden farm in Sicily where he hadn't been able half the time to make enough to feed his children, much less clothe them.

But, Mr. Doynebee argued with himself, he wasn't like Angelo, and there must be plenty of men just like him who couldn't accept without reservations what Angelo had said. What if you didn't love your wife, never had, but didn't believe in divorce and went on living with her till either you or she were dead? What if the children you had didn't turn out so well, what if they didn't amount to a damn thing? What if a boy of yours turned out to be a thief or a swindler or a bum or a pimp? What if a girl of yours went on the line or took to liquor or turned out like Addy, respectable enough but, well, just plain slazy. How
could you satisfy yourself then that merely having children, raising them up, marrying them off, watching their children grow up was all there was behind the daily grind that everyday living was for men like him?

Still, Angelo had been so sure. Maybe there was more behind what he'd said than he realized himself. Of course Angelo, now that he thought about it, had said more than just get married, have children, raise them up, marry them off, watch them have children and go the whole circle themselves. Angelo had said something about having love in your heart. But an honest man took that for granted. Sure, a man loved his own children, his own wife—most men did. He'd loved his wife—God, how he'd loved Betta—and he loved his children. No man ever loved his own boy any more than he loved Addy—and not in any sticky way either, but the way a decent man loved a son he could be proud of. And he loved Addy too—of course he did. You're damned right he did. But he couldn't help wondering if he wasn't telling himself that he loved Addy only in order to combat what Angelo had said.

It was all so damned confusing to think that Angelo was half right and half wrong, or maybe all right and not wrong at all. And it was damn silly for a man his age to worry himself about the whole business when, even if he found out what he wanted to know, it was too late to do anything about it. He wished to God he'd never begun to think about those questions, that he'd
just gone on living the way other men like him did, gone on
doing whatever had to be done, because there was nothing else
to do but hang on and have a little fun while he was at it, if
he could. Whether a man knew all the answers or not, he had to
do that.

He pulled the sheet and blanket close over his shoulders. He'd forget all about the questions, put them out of his mind
the way he'd used to put out of his mind the money he owed when
times were hard and he couldn't pay his bills. If a man could
forget his bills, he could forget those infernal questions.

But all the time he knew perfectly well, even as he told
himself just the opposite, that he wouldn't forget those in-
fernal questions, that he'd be plagued by them for a long time
yet. Because the compensation money was all gone. Because the
stamp album meant nothing to him any more. Because there
wouldn't be anything else to put his mind on from now on.
Little ripples of heat sizzled up from the heavy plank station and dispersed into the dry breeze. Far off in the direction of Deer Lodge a thunderhead was rising, dark and ominous in the clear sky, bringing promise of a few drops of rain, probably no more, to appease the desiccated atmosphere drooping over the station and the few buildings nearby, their paint blistered and cracked from summer after summer of the same parched heat.

No other clouds blemished the intolerable blue of the sky, casting moving shadows over the barren hills surrounding the town, strung out over several hundred yards along the highway. No birds darted in and out of the overgrown cottonwood trees shading the station. Not even a solitary dog roamed about, nor, except for Ray and Irene, walking slowly from one end of the station to the other on the shaded side, was anyone stirring.

For almost half an hour they'd slowly patrolled the length of the platform, walking abreast of each other, saying little, paying no attention to either the heat or outwardly, to each other. From time to time Ray looked at his watch, stopped abruptly to listen for the whistle of the train which certainly was on its way from Deer Lodge by now, then took long strides to catch up with Irene, who'd walked on ahead. And so back and forth, up and down, neither of them stepping out of the deceptive shade.

What should he say, what should he do, Ray battled with himself. How should he repeat again the same words he'd told her
that night driving up the pass? If only she'd relent a little. If she'd even break down and cry for a few moments as she had that night, when tears had given her away, if only temporarily.

It had been hard enough to persuade her to let him drive her here to the Garrison junction rather than take the Northern Pacific bus, hot and muggy in this heat, from Helena. It had been harder still to convince her that he only wanted to drive her over as a last bit of kindness, to show her that he cared enough for her to be anxious for her general well-being, if nothing else. For she still stubbornly believed—or pretended to believe—that she was only one more girl in his life, that once out of his sight, in no time she'd be out of his mind. She'd given in to his repeated urgings that he drive her over to Garrison only to shut him up. And he knew just as surely as he knew he was walking with her now that there was nothing he might say, no matter how gifted with words he might suddenly become, that would prevent her flying off to Portland. To break clean seemed to her the only possible way out, and break clean she would, no matter what more he said.

But, oh God, she was mistaken, so miserably mistaken. Why couldn't she see it? If they were to do penance the rest of their lives, why shouldn't they do penance together? Why did she have to run off to Portland, and why did he have to go back to his old routine—except that it would never be the same routine again—both of them pretending before God and everyone
that all was right with the world and that they wouldn't want a thing to change. It was inhuman of her. Yet he could see her side too. And seeing her side made it all the harder to find the right words to say to her now, words he wanted her to remember the rest of her life, if he were never to see her again.

But, God, he had to see her again.

Again he looked at his watch. Time was running out. He had to begin.

"Irene?"

"Yes?"

"There's a few things I've got to say to you before...." He couldn't go on for a moment. So much revolved about that "before."

"Yes?"

She wouldn't help, yet neither would she hinder him.

"Before the train gets here," he finished lamely.

They walked on a few steps more.

"What I want to say, I've said already. I know it won't do any good--right now at least--to say it all over again, but maybe some day, after you've been off by yourself for a while--damn it, Irene, I don't want you to go off like this."

"What you want makes no difference to me."

"Irene, I still want to marry you. That's all I've thought of these last four days. Not because of what's happened--nothing I could do could change that now--but because....because I want to marry you. I love you and I want to marry you and I'm not likely to change."
There. He'd said what he had to say, said it inadequately, said it stupidly, but at least he'd said it. Judging by the immobility that still starched her face, he'd made no impression on her, but at least he felt better for having said what he had. And he'd say it again the next time he got the chance, though when that would be he was afraid to guess. He only knew that there'd be a chance, because he'd see to it that there would be. Though how, or when, or where.....

Again they had reached the end of the little block of shade and were turning about to walk back the monotonous distance again.

"At least you might answer me, Irene."
"What should I say?"
"Even if you only told me again what you told me Thursday night."
"What would be the use?"
"Something might be—if only you'd talk to me."
"We've talked too much."
"Irene, I'm pleading with you."
"It's no use, Ray. I still feel the same. And I won't burst into sobs today. I've had my cry, Ray. Now I've had it, I won't cry again."
"You did care for me—that night up on the pass."
"I was crying for a memory, Ray. That's all. Not for you."
"I'd hoped, Irene—"
"Don't hope, Hay. Let me get out of your life. Let me get you out of mine. Just let me go off where I can work and work and work, maybe be of some use to somebody. After a while, maybe I'll feel whole again. Then maybe I can think about you--or about someone else, if anyone else would have me now."

"That's something to hope for."

"Don't count on it."

"If something goes wrong with you, you'll let me know?"

Standing quietly at the opposite end of the shaded area of the platform, she looked far off toward the mountains across the valley, waltzing in a golden haze that obscured the outline of every ridge.

"Where would I write?" Her voice was so low he barely heard her, but in her question he thought he detected the crack in her resolve he'd been praying for. "You're hardly ever in the same place more than two days in a row."

"You can always write my dad. Just Bonner."

"Just Bonner?"

"You will write, Irene, if you need me?"

She made no answer, merely turned back into the shade and began to walk down the platform toward the other end. They'd taken only a few steps when the low, undulating mean of the train whistle came eddying through the heat down the valley. Only a few minutes more and she'd be gone.

"I'll get your bags out of the car."
She waited, standing alone at the end of the station, her white leather bag clutched tightly against her as if it were the only handhold on the world she had left. From the car he sucked in the night of her, almost the last he would have for who knew how long, sucked it in until his body fairly ached. The soft ringlets of hair hanging down the back of her neck, billowing out just sufficiently from under the wide brim of her hat. The flowing curve of her shoulders, the soft curves of her body, the trim lines of her ankles. How could he have been such a fool as not to see that she wasn’t just another woman with whom to go as far as he could? Why hadn’t he seen her like this before it was too late? But there was no use standing here by the car cursing himself, and the train sweeping around the bend already.

As the train braked into the station, he reached into his coat pocket for an envelope, which he handed to her.

"Please, don’t get angry, Irene. I couldn’t let you go off with only a berth, so I exchanged reservations for you, got you a compartment of your own. I don’t want you out there in a car all by yourself with all those people."

Grudgingly she accepted the envelope. "I wish you hadn’t Ray."

"And Irene," he thrust another envelope into her hand, "take this, too. I know you haven’t much money of your own. Don’t hand it back. It isn’t much."

"It’s more than I need," She shoved the envelope back into
his coat pocket. "I can manage on my own. I told you so Thursday night."

"But, Irene,"

"No, Ray. I can't accept it. Don't argue with me. Just find my car and help me on."

The train had stopped. Swiftly they walked down the oiled walk toward the pullmans at the end of the train, gestured on by the first porter they passed. Too swiftly they reached the car. Too swiftly the porter had taken the bags, preceded Irene up the steps.

"Irene," Ray said.

Briefly she turned toward him, studied his face, alive with a desperate hope.

"Irene," He bent down to kiss her, but she turned her head, turned her whole body away from him, pressed his hand slightly and scrampered up the steps after the porter.

"Goodbye," he called after her.

But she'd disappeared. Hoping she might wave to him as the train moved out of the station, he stood where she'd left him, his eyes searching each window as the car rolled by. But no hand waved, no face appeared at any window. In another minute the train was beyond the station, was seeming toward the tunnel through the ridge that half encircled the town.

Now she was gone, there was nothing to do but go. Mechanically he drove the car over the pock-marked road from the
station to the highway, where he dawdled, sure there was a saloon somewhere along the road—he'd traveled through the town time and again, but never stopped in it before—and finding one at last, pulled over toward it.

Inside, he ordered a straight shot.

"Right with you, bub," the bartender, a paunchy middle-aged man with watery blue eyes, said.

Ray stared at the whiskey a long time before he drank it, stared into it, stared through it, stared around it. He was a sucker to have come into this cruddy bar for a drink. He hadn't any business ordering a drink here or anywhere. Why didn't he wait until he got home this afternoon, get that case of beer he always brought home to the old man, and have whatever alcohol he needed with him. A man was an ass to sit in a filthy bar like this one and drink by himself. Drink just because he'd made a hash of things and didn't have guts enough to face up to the fact. But he'd been a sucker a long time before this. Why quit being one now, just because the best thing that had ever been in his life had gone out of it and gone out because he'd been too big a sucker to realize until too late that it was the best thing in his life.

Looking up, he noticed the bartender watching him suspiciously. He wanted to shout at the man, tell him to go to hell, tell the whole goddam world to go to hell, scream it out, get it out of his system. Glaring at the bartender, he swallowed the whiskey in one draught.
"Give me another, will you, Mac?" he ordered.

But just as the bartender was tipping the bottle to refill the glass, Ray covered it with his palm. What the hell use was it sitting here in this rotten hole feeling sorry for himself? Irene wasn't feeling sorry for herself. She had guts enough to go on—even by herself. Why couldn't he? He still had a job to do in the world, people to look out for, even if one of them was running five hundred miles away from him and the other one didn't really need him. He'd better brace up, get a grip on himself.

"I guess not, Mac," he told the bartender. "Thanks anyway."

Back in the car, he nosed out into the road, shimmering un-invitingly under the August sun. With all the determination that was in him, he shifted from one gear to another until he was steaming up the ridge over which the road wound, was surviving over the top, was coasting down the other side toward Bonner.

II

Rosie thought it the most interesting book she'd ever seen. All those many-colored little bits of paper, each one different, and yet all so much alike. That funny curled line so cleverly cut around each of them. The different heads that appeared within squares, circles, ovals, or just by themselves. The numbers in the lower corners and the strange words: pesos, lira,
marks—dollars in other languages, she decided. And the funny names of countries she’d never heard about in school, Boshuanaland, New Caledonia, Liechtenstein, Mauritius. And all the stamps pasted so carefully into the book, each just where it belonged—with her fingernail she’d lifted one delicately on its hinge in order to make sure—and not pasted down flat either, but stuck on little tabs of transparent paper that seemed to be made for the job. Oh, it was fun to look at this book. She knew she could look and look and look at it all day long and never get tired, go clear through the book and then start all over again.

Her forearms resting along the edge of Mr. Deynbee’s dresser, the open stamp album above her arms, she grew oblivious to the ordinary noises of the house. Just think, the thoughts buzzed through her head, gramps must have had this book for years and years and never told anybody, at least not her or Clarence or Frank. Gramps must have been pasting stamps into this book since he was a child as small as she was in order to have got so many. Where had he found them all? Had he had to write to people all over the world to get them? For where in a little place like Bonner would anyone locate stamps from Boshuanaland, wherever that was? Gramps must know simply hundreds of people all over the world. It must be wonderful to go out to the mailbox and find letters from all these far away places. The letters must even smell different from ordinary letters,
I'm afraid, whom she was struck off, and that was why she couldn't

in her mouth, and all the time she knew what it was. It was
neatly, but her tongue wouldn't say them, even dining and after
\textit{and} hungry-, 


down her back and down her arms to the tips of her fingers,

more, no matter how hard she tried. The shivers ran up and
down her back and her neck seemed paralyzed. It wouldn't
come home; but her neck was never in danger. She wanted to turn her head,

body, a standing feeling, she'd experienced more than once in her

feeling that someone was watching her begin to invent her whole

Hungary, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Morocco, New Guinea, and

where she'd been looking a few minutes before. 

where they'd been standing in front of the window over the paper to

prepare a drink and give the maid the mix. The maid didn't want any of the

paper empty she'd grown used to at school. It was disappointing-

deeter, but there were no unwashed empty at all, just the plain

swamped ceremoniously, half arrested of what her maid's mother.

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They were bound to see if they came from a place like Hungary, part
to see if they came from a place like Hungary, part
to see if they came from a place like Hungary, part

to see if they came from a place like Hungary, part
to see if they came from a place like Hungary, part
to see if they came from a place like Hungary, part
to see if they came from a place like Hungary, part
look toward the door. It was Aunt Maud, and Aunt Maud didn't like her, and she didn't know why.

"Rosie." The voice was low, but insistent.

"Yes, Aunt Maud." She could turn her head now, her tongue could move in her mouth again, the shivers disappeared from her arms and back.

"What are you doing?"

She was angry, Aunt Maud was, but she was trying not to show how angry she was, and that was worse. It was better to have a grownup speak out harshly to you than to speak quietly and determinedly as Aunt Maud was speaking.

"Just looking at gramps's stamp album. Gramps won't mind. I'm sure he won't."

"Did Arthur say you could look at it?"

"My hands are clean, Aunt Maud," Rosie evaded the question, employing a strategy that often worked with her mother. "See? They're not dirty."

"Who said they were?" Maud lumbered out of the doorway, in which she'd been standing, into the bedroom. "Now answer me. Did Arthur say you could look at the book?"

Rosie shrunk back along the edge of the dresser, not so much afraid any longer--gramps wouldn't let Aunt Maud hurt her; she knew he wouldn't--as confused. Why should Aunt Maud care if she looked at the album?

"Did Arthur say you could look at it?"
Rosie shook her head, her eyes large with wonder. "No," she all but whispered, "but I don't see why--"

"So far as the album's concerned," Maud told her in crisp tones, "it doesn't matter whether any of us see why." She shut the book firmly, laid it as nearly as she could precisely where Mr. Doynbee always left it. "Now don't ever look at it again, Rosie. Never," and her voice softened a little, "unless of course your grandpa says you can."

"All right, Aunt Maud," Rosie promised, realising, as she noticed the gradual lessening of tension in Maud's voice, that it would be wise to be politic. "I won't look at it again, if I'm not supposed to." And then, curiosity getting the better of her judgment, "But I don't see why. If I was a little old rowdy like Clarence, why--"

"Now, Rosie," Maud began, forcing herself to be patient, "you might just as well learn a few things about your grandpa that all the rest of us found out years ago. When he makes up his mind about a thing, it's made up. There's no use saying a word more to him about it. Why he doesn't want anybody snooping about the album--"

"But I wasn't snooping, Aunt Maud. I was just looking at it."

"Well, looking at it, then. Why he doesn't want anybody looking at it, I don't know. I just know Arthur, that's all. Anyway, it really doesn't matter, Rosie."

Rosie tried to appear indifferent, but the minute she
thought again of all the wonderful pictures on the stamps, she
knew she couldn't be. The album did matter to her, and in a
hazy fashion she knew that it mattered to Maud too.

"You see, Rosie," Maud went on, quick to understand from
one glance at Rosie's puzzled face that the child was uncon-
vinced, "when you get as old as your grandpa and I, you like to
have a few things that are all your own, things that nobody
else bothers. That's how Arthur feels about the stamp album.
He simply wants it for his own, and he doesn't want anyone else
disturbing it, mixing up the papers and envelopes and things in
it. That's why you mustn't touch it—unless you ask him if you
can, and I don't think I would if I were you."

"Well, if you say so, Aunt Maud," Rosie hoped she sounded
more willing than she really was. It was just as well to agree
with Aunt Maud until she could ask gramps—and she knew gramps
wouldn't say no to her—because Aunt Maud might suggest to him
that she'd stayed quite long enough, though she'd only been in
Bonner two days now, and she didn't want to go back to Missoula
yet.

"Your grandpa's an understanding man and all that," Maud
continued, "but he's like all the rest of us. He's got his
peculiarities, and you have to humor him a little. Besides,
Rosie, he's an old man, and he's lonely in this house since your
grandma died. I don't suppose you remember your grandma?"

"Just a little, Aunt Maud."
"He misses her a great deal. And then the accident, you know. He's never been quite the same since. That's why the album's become more important to him than it might have been otherwise. It's a nice way for him to spend his time, especially when it's winter and he can't get out much."

"Yes, Aunt Maud."

"I'm telling you things, Rosie, that your mother and daddy probably never mentioned to you, but you're getting old enough to know what's going on in the family--you're twelve now, aren't you?--and I don't see any harm in telling you things like this. There's nothing wrong in all these things, you know."

"Can't Uncle Hay look at the album either?" Why she asked this question Rosie didn't know, perhaps simply because she suspected something was wrong, in spite of what Aunt Maud said, though what it might be she had no idea. But from the tone in which Maud answered her she knew she'd gone as far as she dared.

"That Ray knows or cares about the album is more than I can say. Ray's a law unto himself, so far as Arthur's concerned, Rosie. You might as well realize that, too."

"Yes, Aunt Maud." Something inside her warned her to be careful, to agree with whatever Aunt Maud said, to wait until she could talk to gramps, find out from him why he was so fussy about the album, why Uncle Ray could look at it when nobody else could.

"We just have to be understanding, Rosie, about other
people—at least as long as their peculiarities do nobody any harm. And Arthur's don't hurt a soul. You know that as well as I do. There isn't a kinder man living than Arthur."

"No, Aunt Maud." Of course gramps was kind and wouldn't hurt a soul, but why did Aunt Maud have to harp on that? What did that have to do with not looking at the album?

"Now you won't look at the album again?"

"No, Aunt Maud." There was nothing to do but promise, but why was Aunt Maud pounding away at her so?

"All right, Rosie. We won't say another word about it."

"All right, Aunt Maud." But she made up her mind she'd surely ask gramps if she could look at the album, and if gramps said she could, she'd look at it all day long, if she wanted to, and right in front of Aunt Maud too.

"Now, Rosie," Maud bumbled about the room, "we'll just make the beds and air the house out good while Arthur's out, down at the postoffice, I suppose, talking with Mr. Simeon."

"All right, Aunt Maud."

Thankful Maud had nothing more to say. Rosie slithered between the wall and the far side of the bed. Just to be on the safe side, she pulled the sheets tighter than usual this morning, tucked them under the mattress more carefully, smoothed out the blankets with a housewifely bustle she hoped would impress Aunt Maud. Whatever she did, she mustn't make Aunt Maud angry and so have to go home to Missoula a day sooner than she had to.
It was too much fun being at gramps's house, where everything was so quiet and orderly all the time.

The bedspread folded neatly around the pillows, she sidled out from her side of the bed, marched with pretended indifference past the stamp album on the dresser into the living room.

"Your bed next, Aunt Maud?" she called back into the bedroom.

Maud plodded to the bedroom door. "Never mind my bed, Rosie. I want to give it a good airing. Just make your own bed out on the back porch and then run along. The Lockwood children were out in back a few minutes ago. Go out and play with them."

"You don't want me to dust up or anything?" There was no harm in asking, Rosie thought, since she knew, again without knowing why, that Maud wanted to be rid of her, get her out of the house. Gramps might have his peculiarities, as Aunt Maud called them, but so had Aunt Maud, and she was as old as gramps.

"Not this morning," Maud told her. "Just run along and have a good time. There'll be plenty of work waiting for you when you get back to Missoula."

"You're sure, Aunt Maud?" Rosie asked, anxious to make a thoroughly good impression.

"Just run along, Rosie," Maud waved her out of the room.

Maud stood listening in the doorway to Mr. Doynbee's bedroom, her ear turned in the direction of the kitchen. Before many minutes had passed, the screen door on the back porch slammed to. But no sound of children in the back yard. Were
down on the sofa, pleased. Her thumb was pressed just right on

break in the bedroom she took the album off the dresser, and

bothering her for the rest of the morning,

return to the office, her mind at ease. Rose wouldn't be

right, hoarse in the head. That was settled then, she could

to go off to much as a ruined career when the children read into

the garden, even if he'd expressly forbidden her time and again

and whose caller meant about, she could pretend to be working.

would look better if she came out armed for work, the thought,

she was opening the back door, grunting silently in hand--to

Rose.

the back yard, where she could pretend to be looking after the

office, and there was no place else for him to go except to the

Arthur wouldn't spend the rest of the morning at the post-

there was nothing to do but find out and find out authority

even of a child. Where could they be? And wondered. Well,

a glance out the kitchen window revealed nothing. Not a

heretofore.

to give the album a quick once-over, take another good look at

By her slant of nose so imprinted in the stamp-papered pages,
his with the album. For she had an irresistible desire, whereas
be likely to come rummaging in the house. And old time and surmise

intently that house was played with them and that she wouldn't

those lockwood plates still there as not. She had to know for-
the bridge of her nose, she opened the book immediately to Mauritius. There it was, just as she'd placed it on the insert sheet four days before. The same bluish color, the same portrait of Queen Victoria, the same design about the portrait, the same faded lettering. To think that something so small and insignificant could have cost so much.

Footsteps from the street tautened her whole body. Arthur's? Involuntarily she shut the album, listened closely. No, not Arthur's. She could tell by the sound of the footsteps, too quick, too elastic. Arthur's walk was deliberate, an old man's gait. Relucting, she opened the album again, gazed lovingly at Mauritius. It was a lovely stamp, and to think that one day it would be hers—if only she played her cards wisely, took no absurd risks.

She ought to put the album back on the dresser, she told herself, be satisfied with this hurried inspection, but now that she was at it, why not get the magnifying glass from Arthur's dresser, examine the stamp thoroughly again? It was really unlikely that Arthur would return for half an hour yet and Rene was well out of the way.

Opening the top dresser drawer, she drew out the magnifying glass, which she removed from its felt covering. Leaving the dresser drawer pulled out, she lumbered back to the bed, spread the album over her ample lap, laid the glass over Mauritius. Now she could see the stamp as clearly as Arthur had seen it the day it came, large and full and faded. It had
its flaws, she could see that, but why shouldn't it, a stamp almost a hundred years old and cancelled too? Her eyes, old and faded themselves, traveled along the edge of the stamp, worked their way through the do-dada of the design, wormed their way across the profile of Queen Victoria. This minute observation was fascinating. She could understand why Arthur had been contented to sit hunched over the album evening after evening, his eyes staring through the magnifying glass just as hers were staring this morning.

She wondered if Rosie had taken any particular notice of Mauritius. Probably not. One stamp would appear as glamorous as another to Rosie, to whom stamps were no doubt a new experience. But had Rosie been looking at the album before, looking at it secretly? Impossible. The child had only been in the house a day and half, hardly even that. The album was nothing more than a new diversion for her. Still, she'd been wonderfully absorbed in it, absolutely lost. Could Arthur have mentioned the album to her? Not likely, but he seemed more attached to her than might have been expected. Why, only this morning after breakfast he'd said how much more he was pleased with her than he'd supposed he'd be, compared her to Netta even, with whom the child hadn't a feature in common.

She'd have to tread lightly where Rosie was concerned, Maud reasoned, take pains not to speak sharply to her. For it was plain already that Arthur would take sides with Rosie, not with
her, in case matters reached a point where discipline was necessary. And Rosie knew it too, that was sure. She'd had promised not to look at the album again, but that was just talk, nothing but talk. As soon as she got the chance, she'd ask Arthur if she could look at the album, and if he said yes—and ten to one he would—Rosie'd flaunt the album right in front of her.

Suddenly her body grew taut again. She was being watched by someone in the bedroom doorway just as she'd watched Rosie hardly three-quarters of an hour before, and without moving her head to discover who it was, she knew it was Rosie. She could feel the child's little girl eyes burrowing into her like screws being twisted tighter and tighter into a cupboard door. What should she do? What should she say? For a deadly moment her mind went blank. She could think of nothing to offer in the way of an explanation. Her customary glibness had vanished.

"Aunt Maud?" Rosie's voice was soft as a clean sheet.

"Yes?" There was nothing to do but answer, though she couldn't look around.

"Aunt Maud," Rosie said, "the Lockwood kids are going on a picnic up the mountain in back of the house, and Mrs. Lockwood said I could go with them if you'd give me permission."

"Well?" Maud could still think of nothing resembling a reasonable excuse. She could still not look around.

"Can I go, Aunt Maud?"

Maud turned her head at last, looked squarely at Rosie,
bread already, detaching the butter out of the refrigerator.

door being opened and shut, noise must be heard away at the
from the kitchen came the sound of drawers and cupboards
are to treat a treat like mother
her inner portion told her too. How could she have been so stupid
everything, and all because she hadn't put the album away when
in to suggest otherwise, as he never had up till now. She, too,
rate noise would tell another what she'd seen. Anything would be
sound, but she had, and now the damage was done, as sure as
world could the child have entered the house without making a
jump and立足 just sink back on the bed. He in the
on the album, and then she was gone.
her eye was refrareding the musician, seated at the desk, her eye
formerly a once restating from a door which temporarily
the album. "I'll write home, I'll write home, I'll write home, I'll write.
I don't see why not. Hand written.
one up to.

thought to share at the album. "You don't suppose I could fix
and they're all taking a lunch. Aunt Hinda. Hinda, come.
child persistence.

she was too weak to stand up. to do more than give the
"I suppose so. Hand made. If you really want to."
starting courierly are only a child's eyes can stare
whose eyes were staring not at her, but at the album on her lap,
hunting for the jam. What a mess she'd leave behind. Well, there was nothing to do but go out and help her, go out and face her, get it over with. Maud stood up, leaving the album open on the bed. What was the use of putting it away now? Arthur might as well learn the worst and be done with it.

In the kitchen Rosie sawed away unhappily at the bread, the slice which she was trying to cut increasing in size as she wedged the knife into the home-made loaf. If only Aunt Maud would come out to the kitchen and slice it for her. But that was unlikely now that she'd caught Aunt Maud looking at the album. Poor Aunt Maud. It wasn't nice to be caught as Aunt Maud was, especially after you'd talked as much as Aunt Maud had. She ought to be angry with Aunt Maud, Rosie told herself, good and angry, because after all, Aunt Maud had no more right to look at the album than she had, if gramps didn't want anyone to look at it. She had been angry at first. She'd been angry all the way into the kitchen, and then she'd remembered the time she'd told Clarence he wasn't supposed to sample the bottle of whiskey daddy always kept in the cupboard for company and for Uncle Ray when he came to dinner, that it was nasty of him to sample it, that he'd grown up to be a drunkard, just like mom said, if he drank whiskey before he was grown up, that he ought to be ashamed even so much as to think about sampling the old bottle. She'd made Clarence feel real cheap, she recalled, made him promise never again to touch that whiskey bottle, and
then, after he'd gone out of the kitchen, gone all the way out of
the house and down the block—or so she'd imagined—she'd thought
and thought about that whiskey bottle, wondered and wondered
just what it did taste like, until finally she'd simply had to
climb on a chair, take the bottle off the shelf and taste what
it was. Lucky for her too she'd only sipped a little, because
the whiskey was nasty tasting stuff, hot and burning, and had
nearly scalded her tongue. If she'd swallowed a whole mouthful,
the insides of her mouth and throat would have been full of
scabs for months, she knew it. But worse than swallowing a
whole mouthful had happened to her. Just as she was taking the
bottle from her lips, even before she'd begun to spit the whiskey
out, there'd come Clarence back into the kitchen, and oh, hadn't
she caught it then! He'd been nastier to her than the whiskey,
declared he was going to tell daddy as soon as daddy got home,
and she'd had a hard time of it trying to make him promise not
to. That was why she couldn't be angry with Aunt Maud for very
long, why she felt sorry for her. Now Aunt Maud thought she'd
tell Gramps and get her into trouble, but she wouldn't tell on
Aunt Maud. Daddy always said it was bad enough to do wrong
yourself, but it was far and away worse to tell on somebody else
who did wrong. The truth always came out in the end, daddy said,
and there wasn't any use in your helping it along. People who
did wrong always got punished, daddy said, and it was true. The
people in the movies who did wrong always got caught and had to
pay, go to jail or be hung, and so did the people on the radio who did wrong. If Aunt Maud was snooping in the album all the time and Gramps didn't want her to, Gramps would find out sooner or later. She, Rosie Stacy, didn't have to be a tattle-tale. Aunt Maud would get caught in the end. And besides, she wanted Aunt Maud to be nice to her so that she could stay with Gramps a long time yet and come back again soon. If she told on Aunt Maud, she'd probably never be able to stay with Gramps in Bonner again, especially if Daddy found out, because if there was one kind of person he didn't like, he always said, it was an old squealer.

She was beginning to hack off another slice of bread when Maud entered the kitchen.

"Here, Rosie," she said, "let me cut it for you. The piece you've cut looks like a block of wood."

She spoke quietly and without any nastiness in her voice, Rosie noticed, so quietly that Rosie felt sorrier for her than ever. Taking the loaf, Maud cut off another slice.

"How many sandwiches do you think you'll want, Rosie?"

"Oh, two or three, Aunt Maud."

It was a marvel how easily Aunt Maud could cut the bread, how nice and even the slices were.

"Peanut butter or jam?" Maud asked.

"Jam, I think," Rosie deliberated. "There's some in the cupboard."

"Yes, there is," Maud said.
"That's getting pretty old," Maud said. "Why don't you go down the basement and get some of that new strawberry jam I put up not so long ago? I wasn't going to open any of it for a while yet, but as long as you're going on a picnic--"

Rosie already had the basement door open, was down the steps, had found the jam and was back in the kitchen. She and Aunt Maud were going to make up and be friends, she thought, and that was just what she wanted. She didn't like Aunt Maud too much, but just the same she wanted Aunt Maud to like her, and maybe now she would.

"You'd better take a couple of oranges from the refrigerator, Rosie," Maud directed. "And get some cookies out of the jar. They aren't as fresh as they could be, but they're all I've got this morning. If we'd only known you were going on a picnic, I could have made some fresh or baked a cake. And get some oiled paper out of the top drawer and a paper sack out of the bottom. And if you want to, you can hunt around in the shed out back for a canteen that used to be there. You'll want some water with you if you stay out all afternoon."

It was some relief to be busy, Maud thought, to keep her fingers going as fast as she could. The sandwiches made, she wrapped them in the oiled paper, stuffed them into the grocery sack Rosie had found, wedged in the oranges and cookies. Spying some bananas in a bowl on the kitchen table, she fitted three of them into the sack against the oranges. There, that was done. But what was she going to say to Rosie, when she returned with the canteen?
She was standing helplessly at the work table, waiting and wondering how to begin, when Rosie trotted back into the kitchen, and as if nothing untoward had occurred, skipped to the sink, where she began to wash out the canteen.

Against the drip of water from the faucet, Maud began to speak. "Rosie...about the stamp album..."

Rosie looked around. "Oh, don't worry about the stamp album, Aunt Maud. I won't tattle on you. I'm no squealer."

On the instant Maud took heart. She hadn't reckoned on this display of childish honor. So many years had passed since she'd been a child herself she'd forgotten how a child was likely to react.

"That isn't what I meant, Rosie," she began again, her customary glibness rushing back.

"There's no need to talk about it," Rosie said grandly. "When you do wrong," she checked herself, "I mean, when you don't do as you're supposed to, you always get caught sooner or later. That's what daddy says. And he's right, too. I know."

This added exhibition of childish ethics left Maud too nonplussed to speak, had she been minded to. And she was not minded to. If Rosie wanted to protect her, there was no reason why she shouldn't let her. One good look at Rosie's face was enough to convince her the child was speaking from the depths of personal experience and tried conviction. Still, it would be wise to pretend to some sort of contrition.
"I don't feel right about it, Rosie. I want you to know that."

"Oh, that's all right, Aunt Maud. Nobody ever does. I know. Clarence caught me once--" She stopped. There was no need to go into that. She didn't want Aunt Maud to think she might grow up to be a drunkard some day.

"I hope you understand, Rosie, that--"

A boy's war-whoop from the back yard interrupted her.

"Rosie."

"I'm coming." Rosie hollered back. She screwed the cap on the canteen, picked up the lunch bag. "Goodbye, Aunt Maud. We'll be back some time this afternoon."

"Goodbye, Rosie," Maud called after her. "Have a good time."

The bang of the screen door, the sound of running steps across the yard was all the answer she got.

More rapidly than she'd moved through the house in years, Maud sped back to Mr. Doynebee's bedroom. Quickly she slipped the magnifying glass into its wrapper, put it back in the dresser drawer as nearly in the same position as she'd found it. Quickly she shut the album, set it back on top of the dresser, smoothing the dresser scarf with hasty, yet proficient motions of her pudgy hands. Quickly she left the bedroom, lumbered to the front door to see if Arthur could be on his way home. As Arthur. Sitting down on the davenport, she blessed her good fortune, thanked whatever guardian angel was watching over her for guiding Rosie as he had. And then in a panic, as she
glanced into the bedroom, she got up, walked hurriedly to the
bed, along the side of which showed all too visibly the imprint
of her broad behind. The bedspread smoothed till it was wrinkle-
free, she stood in the doorway, her eyes alive for any further
tracks she might have left in the room. Satisfied eventually
that the room was devoid of any further betraying signs, she
clumped back to the davenport, where she sat down, sighing with
thanksgiving.

It had been a narrow escape. Such foolhardiness must
never occur again, never, never, never.

III

Mr. Deynnes was rocking back and forth, back and forth on
the front porch when the company car drove up. It seemed to
him, as he came alive to the sleek lines of the Chevrolet, that
he'd been rocking for hours, and yet, when he looked at his
watch, it was only four-thirty. And what had he been thinking
about all this while? He couldn't have said, had Ray asked him--
for it was Ray who'd driven up--that he'd been thinking at all.
For the first time in over four days he'd stopped thinking, at
least about himself and the questions that had become so much a
part of him, grown numb from thinking and getting nowhere. But
Ray, who was already jouncing out of the car, wouldn't ask him
whether he was thinking or not. So long as the two of them
"Hopeing that they might have stepped over to the car."

"And he was down the steps two at a time and he asked me, "

"Don't you remember that we came upon and fell in there, and aqueate out the milk before the bread to be home without someone noticing that there have been a man shown..."

"I'm with me?" my asked, almost as if he were on the floor, "I guess."

"I'm sure I don't."

"There's nothing wrong with you as long as you remember for supper."

"It's not for me, dog! and I'll rest in the bear so I'll eat the food..."
Mr. Doynbee went into the house, not wanting her around to spoil the first few minutes of Ray's homecoming for him. But she was in the kitchen, stirring up something they could just as well do without, some bit of pastry he'd never have missed and which would only make her all the fatter.

"Ray's home," he told her as indifferently as he could, not anxious for her to see the excitement that always tingled out of him whenever Ray came home.

"I heard him out on the porch," Maud said dryly. "He needn't worry about the milk. Most of it went into this cake. It's a good thing I decided to whip it up. Ray always eats like a horse when he's home."

She was glad Ray was home herself, Mr. Doynbee thought, but she'd never admit it, put on that all Ray ever brought home with him was more work for her. And beer, which she pretended to resent.

"Now don't go fussing in the refrigerator," she said testily. "I'll find a place for the beer." She clumped over to the refrigerator and began to rearrange jars and sauce dishes and bowls. "If I don't do it myself, the two of you'll manage to lose everything for me. How much room do you need?"

"Enough for the whole case," Ray's voice boomed at her. "We'll drink her all up tonight. You know us, a couple of old town-pots."

"There's only room for a dozen at the most," Maud said, not looking around. "This isn't a restaurant."
Ray ruffled up her hair. "If you'd stand up for half a minute, I'd kiss you hello, Aunt Maud. But you'd probably go right to the sink and wash it off."

"Get along with you," Maud said, trying not to appear pleased. "You'd plague a saint. I don't know how your mother put up with you."

"She was fond of me," Ray said slowly, almost to himself, the customary brashness gone from his voice and in its place a seriousness that startled Mr. Doynbee.

Something's gone wrong with the boy, he thought. Everything was clicking off just the way it always clicked when Ray came home, but there was a difference this time, a lurking something he couldn't lay his finger on. And then he brushed aside his perplexity, assuming the difference was all on his side, not on Ray's. Since Thursday he'd become so eternally questioning that he was becoming suspicious of everything that went on around him, becoming suspicious even of Ray.

Ray, as he looked at him, was just the same. Just as tall as ever, his weight about the same. A well-built man, Ray was, good muscles where good muscles ought to be, no signs of a double chin, a sagging paunch, a receding hair-line. And as full of wisecracks as usual. Why, look at the way he'd talked to Maud just now. It wouldn't have been at all surprising to see him haul off and smash her right on the behind as she leaned over in front of the refrigerator, though thank God, he hadn't.
And he was as carefully dressed as ever. A good-looking gabardine suit in a light tan, a flashy tie and shoes that shone like a polished floor. There was nothing the matter with Ray. The world was still going all right for him. So long as business was good and he could jazz around in the evening, there'd never be anything wrong with Ray.

"Come on, pop," Ray said, the beer stowed away. "We've got to get out of here before Aunt Maud throws us out. We'd jostle the stove so much her cake would fall. Wouldn't it, Aunt Maud?"

"If you don't get out, both of you, I'll never get it in shape to fall, that's certain," Maud declared. "You're too full of palaver for me."

"We'll try the back yard first, pop," Ray said. "Or sit under the hose. It's goddam hot out."

"You had a hard drive over?" Mr. Doynbee asked, once they were ensconced in the shade of the weeping birch.

"Pretty rocky," Ray said.

Mr. Doynbee waited for him to elaborate, but Ray seemed disinclined to add to what he'd said, and Mr. Doynbee thought he spied a somber shadow tighten over his face, then speed away.

"Sales still good?" he asked next.

"Sure. Lots of building going on. It doesn't take much work to sell these days. A little chint-music now and then, that's all."
Again Mr. Doynebe waited for him to elaborate, but again Ray seemed unwilling to go into details. Mr. Doynebe was disappointed. He always enjoyed listening to Ray recount his sales experiences, which had a tangy glamour his life in the mill had lacked. Ray got around, saw what was going on and understood the meaning behind what he saw. Mr. Doynebe wanted him to burst forth into some long business narrative today, but he knew better than to beg for one. He didn’t want Ray to think he was butting in to what was none of his business, didn’t want Ray to become irritated with him as he became irritated with Raul whenever he thought she was prying into his personal affairs. Instead, he dragged out his pipe and tobacco pouch, which Ray automatically took from him.

"You need a new pipe, pop," he said, tamping the tobacco into the bowl of the pipe with his thumb. "I’ll look around for one."

"Don’t go wasting your money on me," Mr. Doynebe said. "I’ve got three more in the house besides this."

He leaned forward while Ray struck a match for him.

"There’s nobody else for me to spend a dime on," Ray said, and this time Mr. Doynebe knew he hadn’t been mistaken when he began to suspect in the kitchen that something was out of kilter. But he kept silent, looking at his son between clouds of tobacco smoke, pretending he’d noticed nothing amiss. He’d simply have to bide his time, wait for Ray to open up on his own.
"There'll be a rainy day for you as well as for the rest of us," he said, hoping he sounded only mildly paternal. "Hang on to what you've got laid away. You never know when you'll really need it."

"Sure, sure," Ray said.

He plucked out a cigarette from his shirt pocket and lit it. They both sat back in the lawn chairs and stared at the roses, which neither of them saw.

"I was sure surprised to have you call me the other night," Ray said.

It was Mr. Doyanbee's turn to practice evasion. "Oh, that," he said. "I don't know what got into me."

"Things are all right?" Ray questioned.

"Sure," Mr. Doyanbee reassured him. "I don't know what got into me. Getting old maybe. At my age I guess a man begins to act queer."

"Oh, for Christ's sake," Ray said. "You're as well as you ever were, aren't you?"

"There's nothing wrong with me. I just got lonesome, I guess. Hadn't heard from you for a while. Got to wondering what you were doing." Mr. Doyanbee wished Ray weren't so persistent. There was nothing he could tell him that would make sense. And there was really nothing wrong.

"It was just a funny thing, that's all," Ray said, "you should call me right then—that night, I mean. How did you know I was in Helena?"
"Good guess. You sounded all right."

"Did I, pop?"

An odd note of relief pulsed through the words, Mr. Deynbee thought, as if Ray had been afraid that he hadn't sounded all right, afraid that his father might have detected over the telephone that night something he didn't want his father to suspect.

"I was pretty tired that night," Ray said. "Working over time on a big deal."

Mr. Deynbee didn't believe him. Ray wasn't the kind that tired easily. All his life he'd bragged about how long he could keep going, do without enough sleep night after night and still be fresh and eager to go during the day. And Ray wasn't too keen on working overtime. Any man with gumption, Ray'd always said, could handle during the day all the work that needed to be done. Something important had gone crooked for the boy, something he was trying to cover up.

"You're sure everything's all right, pop?" Ray asked again.

"Sure, Ray."

"I got quite a scare when I heard Missoula calling. The last time I got that kind of call mother was going. I couldn't help but think, well, you know...."

"There's nothing wrong with me, Ray, nothing to worry about."

"You're sure?"

"Wouldn't I tell you, if there was?"
"I don't know whether you would or not. You can always keep your mouth shut when you want to."

"A little too much to suit Maud, I guess," Mr. Doyneke said trying to force out a pleasantr

"You're all I got, pop, you know," Ray said, more serious than Mr. Doyneke had seen him since Netta's death. "I'd hate like hell to lose you too."

Mr. Doyneke became embarrassed. This wasn't the way a man and his son ought to talk, not he and Ray anyway. A man and his son should assume that they'd be around to help each other out till kingdom come. They shouldn't talk as if one of them were going to check out any time. Life wasn't built on looking forward to death, not nowadays at least. He didn't want Ray to talk like that. Sure, he'd die sooner or later, but there was no sense getting wrought up over it. Ray was a man now; he could take care of himself. He'd get along whether his old man was alive or not.

But that "too." The way Ray had said the word. Who was he referring to with that "too"? Netta? But Ray had never talked much about Netta after she was gone. Not because he'd forgotten her in a hurry, but because, well, because what was the use of talking about her, reviving the past all the time? Could there be some other woman then? Had Ray found a girl at last he wanted to stick to, and had it turned out to be the wrong girl? Something was out of joint. He'd change the subject, give the boy a break.
"I didn't tell you Rosie was staying with me."

"Rosie?"

"Why not?" Mr. Doynebee asked. "It's high time I began to do something for the girl. I've neglected Addy's kids long enough."

"But I thought they always got in your hair, pop?"

"Well, they do, but..." Mr. Doynebee knocked the ashes out of his pipe. "Well, they're not bad kids, even if they are Addy's, and...well, you know what I mean, Ray."

"Sure, pop."

"I've never talked to you about Addy, but maybe you know how I...well......" He couldn't find the right words, words that would say exactly what he wanted to say and wouldn't at the same time criticize Addy too severely.

"Sure, I know, pop. The house is always a mess. The kids behave like Indians, eat like pigs. And Addy never seems to have much fire. You don't need to tell me. But how come Rosie's up here?"

"It's hard to say, but there I was asking her, and she was so damned eager to come. She's got good stuff in her, Ray, and she needs a change. She looks a little like your mother, behaves a little like her too." Mr. Doynebee grew embarrassed again. Never before had he so much as hinted to Ray how he'd felt about Netta. He couldn't be that intimate with Ray or with anyone. "She's different up here," he went on, "quiet and thoughtful..."
and... even Maud notices the difference. She's growing up, Ray. It sort of gets me. Like the other day. We were going over to Angelo's, and out of a blue sky she wanted to know what you have to do to have babies."

"Jesus Christ," Ray breathed, but there was something more to the words than wonderment, Mr. Doynebee thought, a suppressed anxiety that shouldn't have been in them.

"I sort of figure I've got to do something for the girl, and yet, damn it all, I don't know what to do."

"Put a bug in Addy's ear," Ray said. "You can't go butting into something like that."

"The way Addy is right now?" Mr. Doynebee shook his head. "If it was your mother, that would be fine. But not Addy. She's going to have another baby in March."

"My God," Ray said, and this time there was an unmistakable bitterness in his voice. "Some people can have kids all the time, and others--" With his closed fist he pounded on the arm of the lawn chair. Then, seeing the puzzled look on Mr. Doynebee's face, he tried to grin. "Don't mind me, pop. I'm all right. But sometimes the world seems a little back-ward. I get a little hat up."

"I suppose they can't help it, Joe and Addy, I mean," Mr. Doynebee said, feeling he had to say something. It was painful to watch Ray fighting himself inside, and he couldn't ask what was wrong.
"I suppose not," Ray said, "but you'd think they'd be more careful. There are ways, pop...." Something shook him up inside. Mr. Doynbee was grateful that he stopped. They'd never talked about birth control to each other, not even when he'd told Ray about sex and babies and such matters. At the age both of them had reached now such a discussion seemed pointless.

"I guess they don't always work," Mr. Doynbee said in spite of himself.

"No, they don't," Ray said, said it too deliberately, Mr. Doynbee thought.

It couldn't be, he wondered, that Ray had had some kind of trouble that way. But if he had, he'd have married the girl. And anyway Ray wasn't that kind of man. Sure, he was probably no virgin, but he wasn't a smutty man in spite of all the girls he'd taken out. Ray's unmarried life hadn't been as wild and as uncontrolled as his own. He was positive of that. And yet--he couldn't avoid the thought--how could he be so sure of what Ray's sexual experiences had been? But he refused to carry on any such conjectures.

"Where is she?" Ray wanted to know. "Rosie, I mean?"

"Around the neighborhood somewhere, if she got back from that hike she went on with the Lockwood kids. She'll turn up by dinner time, I suppose."

"Well, you hunt her up, pop," Ray was rousing himself. "I'll write up the damn daily report--it won't take long for
today, what with driving over here and all that—and I'll take her in to Missoula with me, so I can mail the report. I could stuff it in the mail here, but I want it to get off airmail. I guess I can godfather the girl as well as you."

"All right, say. That'll tickle her all over."

Ray strode into the house, strode quickly, as if he didn't want to talk any more, as if he were afraid to talk. He'd never been like this before, Mr. Doynbee thought, all bottled up like a jug of vinegar. Even when he was wising off, it seemed to Mr. Doynbee, now that he was alone and could reflect upon what Ray'd said, that Ray'd been forcing himself to be what he thought his father wanted him to be, that his heart hadn't been in his wise-cracks. This business of getting off the daily report, as if it were the most urgent piece of business since the Declaration of Independence—there was something fishy about it. Too many times, Mr. Doynbee remembered, Ray had come in at midnight after an evening with friends in Missoula, sat on the edge of his bed, had chatted for an hour or longer in the dark and then got to work on the report. And been up at seven ready for the next day's business. Today's report was an excuse, nothing more, to get away, to avoid talk. Something was eating at the boy, had him knotted up like a twisted mass of grocery twine, something that he couldn't grab hold of and lick. And it was all so unlike Ray, who ordinarily had the world lined up just the way he wanted it, as if the world were a succession of bowling pins,
any one of which he could knock down whenever he had a mind to. Well, maybe it would all come out, Mr. Doynbee thought, when the two of them became thoroughly used to each other again. Until then he'd hide his time and hope he was overestimating the situation. And right at the moment locate Rosie.

IV

"She's going to be a real pretty girl, pop," Ray said, when finally Maud bundled Rosie off to bed. "I'm glad she's staying with you. It brightens up the place."

All evening Ray'd outdone himself playing with the child, played too hard with her, Mr. Doynbee thought, played with her so that he wouldn't have to talk with Maud or him. Now as they sat on the porch, Mr. Doynbee in his rocker, Ray on the top step, each with a bottle of beer in his hand, it seemed to Mr. Doynbee that, although they were within six feet of each other, they were actually very far apart.

"I'm glad you like her," Mr. Doynbee said. "I told you she had good stuff in her." And then after a long pause, "You've got to go out to Addy's tomorrow, Ray."


"Not too early," Mr. Doynbee warned. "You know how touchy Joe is if you eat and run."
"Sure, sure."

"I don't think either of them want this new baby much."

"Some people never want their own babies," Ray said, almost to himself.

"You never know whether you will or not until you've had one of your own."

Ray didn't answer, spun the beer bottle between the palms of his hands. By now it had grown so dark that Mr. Doynebee could no longer see his face clearly except when the headlights of a passing car, as it rounded the corner by the old hotel, flashed over the porch.

"I'd take another bottle if you'd go fetch it, Ray."

"Sure thing, pop."

Ray took the empty bottle into the house with him, returned with another, foaming over a little, which he thrust gently into Mr. Doynebee's crooked fingers.

"Got it, pop?"

"Thanks, Ray. You didn't get yourself one?"

"No." Ray tried to laugh. "I guess I'm not in a drinking mood tonight."

"Well, I...." Mr. Doynebee tried to laugh too. "I sort of hate to drink by myself, but I suppose I can."

He sipped the beer tentatively, but it had lost its taste.

"You don't have to sit here talking to me, Ray, if there's something you'd rather do."
"I'm just as content to sit here with you, pop."

"I thought maybe there was somebody you might want to see. Some of the boys you used to see a lot of are around right now. Only the other day I ran into...."

"Sometimes a man gets tired of just going around seeing people, pop. I guess I'm getting that way lately."

What it was that impelled him to move, Mr. Doynbee didn't know, but he left the rocker and sat down beside Ray on the top step.

"Ray," he said, almost before he realized he was talking, "why don't you get married? Quit this jazzing around and settle down. A man like you can't live single all his life."

In the dark Mr. Doynbee could feel Ray's eyes scraping his face, feel them hot and scratching against his cheek.

"Sure, sure," Ray said. "Maybe I ought to."

Now he was in this deep, he had to go on, Mr. Doynbee thought.

"Sure, Ray. You're thirty now, more than old enough. You've got a good job and everything that goes with it. Why don't you find some girl you like, settle down, get yourself a home of your own. Butte, Helena, have some kids? Getting married settles a lot of things."

"Yah," Ray said, "it sure does."

"There's plenty of girls you could get, Ray, if you'd really try."
"Sure," Ray said. "Sure there are."

Mr. Doynebee sat down the bottle of beer, tried to knife through the darkness with his eyes. In spite of the shadows that shrouded the porch he could see the strained, set expression that had stiffened over Ray's face.

"What's wrong, Ray?"

Ray slid away from him. "Christ, pop, don't ask me. It's nothing I won't get over. But just don't harp on me to get married, that's all."

"I'm sorry if I rubbed you on a sore spot. I didn't mean to."

"You couldn't have known, pop."

"There's nothing I can do about it, Ray?"

"There's nothing anybody can do about it, pop. It's all taken care of, all done with." He rested his chin on his folded hands, his elbows propped against his knees. "I'm just....well, I'm just in a jam, that's all. Nothing that will get me into any trouble....God, I wish I could talk to you about it."

"Sometimes it's better to talk things out. I don't mean to be prying, but...."

Ray stood up. "You wouldn't think much of me, pop, if I said you."

"You're still my boy, Ray, whatever it is."

Something in the way Mr. Doynebee said the words galvanized Ray, prompted him into some decision. He sat down on the top step again, then got up and shut the street door, which wondered
had left open when she ushered Rosie off to bed. Sitting down again, he leaned against the corner post.

"It's not a very pretty story, pop."

"I've been around the corner a few times myself, Ray. I don't shock easy."

"You never heard anything like what I've got to tell you."

"Maybe not."

And then it all spilled out like an over-filled ewepool.

"I fixed a girl, pop—a little while ago."

"My God, Ray," Mr. Doynbee whispered into the dark.

"I told you you wouldn't think much of me, pop."

"I haven't run you down yet, have I?"

"I don't guess you're very proud of me."

"Why didn't you marry her, Ray?"

"God, pop, I don't know. I wanted to, but she—well, she wouldn't. It's a long story, pop. Maybe you don't want to hear it."

"You better tell me, Ray, as long as you've started."

"Her name's Irene, Irene Evans. She's a nurse over in Helena. Only she's not there now. She's gone away, and.... Christ, pop, it's a rotten mess. Everything went wrong, and--"

"Pull yourself together, Ray. We can't get anywhere if you go to pieces."

Ray reached for a cigarette, which he lit exasperatedly.

"It's not only this girl, pop. It's my whole damn life. I
haven't been what you thought I was, pop. Oh, I've been suc-
cessful enough at my job. But on the other side....well, Irene
wasn't the first girl, pop. I don't mean I got any of the others
into trouble. But there were a lot of others before her. Irene
was just the last one. I guess I've been like all the sales-
men in all the stories. Everywhere I've gone I've been on the
make, always thinking about my pants and about how far I could
get. Even in high school. At first it all seemed like a big
joke, take a girl out and see how far I could get with her.
And then it got so damned easy. I could size the girl up, know
what approach to try, and usually get what I was after if I
kept on trying. It was like selling plumbing fixtures. The
right kind of sales talk, and then go to bed. And then Irene
came along."

He snapped the cigarette, which he'd hardly smoked, into
the grass. "I really liked her, pop. A lot more than I did the
others, only I didn't realize it at first. I was so in the habit
I had to see how far I could get with her too. She wouldn't
give in at first, but she'd never say no exactly. She'd let me
kiss her and, well, you know, and I kept on getting all the more
eager, and then finally she said all right, except we'd have
to get out of town somewhere. So we went off to Bozeman for the
weekend, pretended we were married. I should have asked her to
get married to me then, but I didn't. We kept playing around.
Every weekend I could get away I hightailed it over to Helena,
and finally I did ask her to marry me, but she said no, we had
to wait a while until she got the debts she'd incurred when she was going through training paid off, she didn't want me to pay them. I couldn't talk her out of it. Maybe I didn't try very hard. Anyway we kept on the way we'd been going, and then I was done about three weeks, couldn't get back over the weekends, and when I did, she told me she was pregnant. She was pretty sick about it, and so was I. I wanted her to marry me then and there, but she wouldn't. I tried to talk her around, but it seemed like the more I said, the more upset she got. She said she didn't want to get married that way, that she couldn't stand up to the shame of it and everything. Well, Christ, I didn't know what to do. I couldn't go off and leave her, and then I realized that I'd loved her all the time and that there wasn't anything I wouldn't have done, if I'd only realized it so strong before, just to have had her decently."

He pulled out another cigarette, which he stuck in his mouth, but didn't light. "She finally told me she wanted to have an abortion."

"Christ," Mr. Deynbee breathed.

"I tried to talk her out of it, but it didn't do any good. She said if I wouldn't help her, she'd manage it on her own, and then she began to cry, not hard, just the tears streaming down over her cheeks, and—well, what could I do? I gave in. I got a few days off, told the boss you were pretty sick and I thought I'd better come home. Irene got off duty, and we went to
Spokane and had it done. I don't know why we went to Spokane, but I'd heard of a fellow over there who was supposed to be all right--the kind of thing you pick up when you travel around like I do and talk to all the kinds of people I talk with--and so we went there. God, it was awful sitting there in that cruddy hole while the guy worked her over in the next room. But when Irene came out--God, pop, it was the awfulest sight I ever saw. She's pretty, pop, wonderfully pretty, not all shellacked, that kind of prettiness, but the kind that's more than skin-deep. But she wasn't pretty when she came out. She was just as white as paper and shaky all over and--God, I'll never forget it. We stayed in Spokane for a few days until Irene said she was all right, and then I brought her back to Helena. She seemed O.K. by then, only weak and not very happy. And then the boss sent me up to Libby, some big job coming up, and I was the man for the job, and the company had to get the order. And then I had to spend time in Kalispell and then over to Great Falls for a big conference. Well, it was almost six weeks before I got back to Helena, and then--Christ, everything had gone wrong. I'd promised Irene I wouldn't see her for a couple of months, I don't know why, but when a woman is like Irene was you'd promise her anything, and I thought she really loved me in spite of everything and that it might be better for both of us if we didn't see each other for a little while. But when I got back to Helena, I couldn't stand not seeing her any longer. I went
of to the nurses' home, and Irene wouldn't see me. The girls
looked so funny at me I knew something god-awful had happened.
Finally I got hold of one of the girls on the floor who was a
good friend of Irene's, and she told me."

Ray sat silent for a while, trying to retain what grip
he had on himself.

"Told you what?" Mr. Doyneee finally asked.

"I don't know all the medical ins and outs of it," Ray
began again, "but something had gone haywire. I guess the
fellow over in Spokane wasn't very clean about it. Anyway, an
infection had set in, a pretty bad one. Irene hadn't told
anyone, tried to treat it herself, being a nurse and everything.
But finally she had to go to the hospital. Whatever in hell
happened I don't know, but...well, she just won't have any
more babies. I've gassed her up for the rest of her life, that's
all."

Mr. Doyneee sat stunned, not simply by the final state-
ments, so starkly final, but by the whole story. This couldn't
be Ray telling him such a story, he kept repeating to himself.
Not Ray. But it was Ray, and it had happened, every miserable
word of it. Sure, he'd always known without thinking anything
about it that Ray was no virgin. He couldn't have been, not if
he took after his old man. And Ray had always been attractive
to girls. He'd noticed that as soon as Ray was old enough to
start taking girls out. But that Ray was the kind of man he
claimed he was, that all he'd ever had in his mind was woman, the
way Tom Briggs had women in his mind—it had never occurred to
him. Now what? What could Ray do now with this mess on his
hands? And what could he do to help? For the first time since
she'd died he was glad Netta wasn't alive to hear what Ray had
just told him.

"You didn't think I was such a rotter, did you, pop?"
Ray said out of the darkness.

Dr. Doynbee said nothing, put his crippled hand on Ray's
leg and rubbed it a little with his fingers.

"You're still my boy, Ray," he said quietly, "no matter
what."

"Thanks, pop. I guess I always knew you wouldn't run me
down."

"Have you seen the girl since you found out, Ray?"

"I finally got hold of her, after calling her and calling
her all day. I still wanted her to marry me, but she wouldn't.
I don't know what she thought, that I just felt rotten maybe,
that I was asking her just because that was what I thought I
ought to do. She wouldn't believe me when I told her I still
loved her. She'd heard too much about me, I guess, while she
was in the hospital. And she had other reasons, a whole lot
of them, about how I ought to have kids of my own by somebody
else, and a lot of things that didn't make sense to me."

"You couldn't talk any sense into her?"
"It seemed like all the sense was on her side. All she said she wanted to do was get away from me and just work and work until she was too tired to think. That's why she wants to Portland."

"When did she go there?"

"Just today. I drove her over to Garrison and put her on the train on my way over here. That's all I've been able to see ever since, that train pulling out of Garrison with her on it. It seemed like everything I'd really wanted all my life was on that train and that it was never coming back my way again."

"You don't think she's got a spark of feeling left for you?" Mr. Doynbee asked.

Ray stood up. "Jesus Christ, pop, what do you keep on asking me questions for? What the hell good are questions?"

Mr. Doynbee spoke louder than before, almost peremptorily.

"Honest questions never hurt anybody yet, Ray."

Ray sat down again. "I'm sorry, pop."

"Now answer my question, Ray."

Ray sat silently beside him for a long while before he finally spoke. "I don't know, pop. I thought once or twice maybe she had. Once I thought she was waiting for me to say something, just the right thing, and then she'd soften a little. But, God almighty, pop, I couldn't think of what to say. It's funny, a man can always think of the right words for the rotten side of his life, and yet he can't think of the right words for
the decent side when he needs them more than he'll ever need words his whole damn life."

Mr. Doynebee tried to swallow some of the beer that was still in the bottle beside him, but it had gone stale, and he poured the contents of the bottle over the clump of phlox that was growing beside the steps.

"What are you going to do?"
"Christ, I don't know, pop."
"You can't just sit and do nothing."
"I know it, but damn it all, what can I do?"
"I don't know either, Ray, not just this minute."
"What would you do, pop?"
"I don't know, Ray. I never got myself into this kind of tangle."

"No, I guess not," Ray said. "Not you."

"The kind of women I fooled around with before I met your mother," Mr. Doynebee told him, "never had to worry about this kind of thing."
He could feel Ray's astonished eyes drilling into him. "I wasn't any saint myself when I was your age. Me and Tom Briggs, well, we got around too. Only we weren't flashy enough to do what you did. We had to stick to what we could buy. You never knew about any of that, did you, Ray?"

"No, pop, I never figured you ever...."

"You never figured, did you," Mr. Doynebee finished the sentence for him, "and I never told you, that I ever did anything wrong my whole life?"
"I guess not, pop."

"I guess neither of us ever did much real thinking about each other," Mr. Doyndee said, his voice ringing with regret. "Maybe that's what's been the matter with us. I should have figured more than I did that you'd take after me, at least till you got married. I guess I sort of let you down, Ray."

"Not you, pop. You did all you could do. I never had any fault to find with you."

Mr. Doyndee spoke sadly. "Those are kind words, Ray. But I guess what you did to that girl is just as much my fault as yours, looking at it the long way. Maybe if I'd raised you better, told you a few more things, not told you just how babies are come by and let it go at that, maybe all this wouldn't have happened. Maybe you'd still have this girl. Though you maybe haven't lost her yet, either, not unless you quit on her."

"You still think she might come around, pop?"

"I don't know, Ray. I can't think right tonight. We can talk about it tomorrow. There'll be plenty of time then."

"Yah," Ray said, "but tomorrow seems like a long way off."

"It always does, but it always gets here just the same." Ray stood up again. "Want another beer, pop?"

Mr. Doyndee shook his head. "I guess not. I've sort of lost my mouth for it too. It'll last till tomorrow night."

There was nothing else to say. What could he say, what could he do, Mr. Doyndee asked himself. He was caught so short.
If he'd ever imagined—but he hadn't. He'd gone on thinking for years that Ray was old enough to take care of himself, that no matter what kind of tight spot he got into, he could ease his way out of it and come out on top. Now here he was, snaked up in a situation of his own making, and blocked, absolutely blocked, at least for the moment, whichever way he turned. It was incomprehensible. It seemed to Mr. Doynebee that one of the central pillars of his own life had collapsed, dropped pretty and clean as he and Tom Briggs used to drop Douglas fire in the days when they were Ray's age and had felled trees for a living. With the difference that in this case the pillar had to be set upright again, propped up somehow. But how could it be done? If he never did anything more in his life, he had to reset this pillar, not for himself, but for Ray. Get Ray back on his feet again, get him married to this girl. But what could he do?

"How about riding around a little, pop?" Ray asked. "I don't feel like going to bed yet."

Mr. Doynebee jerked himself free from the constricting spiral of self-reproach which he felt coiled about him. "Ride? Sure, Ray, sure. That would be a good idea. It's early yet."

"Where'll we go?" Ray asked. "Just down the road?"

"Might as well go up the Blackfoot a ways," Mr. Doynebee said. "That's as good as any."

Shortly they were beyond the town, circling along the curves in the road, seeping through the sporadic little timbered tracts
between the two springs, floating past the narrow fields of the
Finnish farmer who'd so laboriously cleared and stumped them acre
by acre over the past fifteen years, swishing over the first
bridge. And then gliding over the long arc of road that led
along the river for the next mile or two, and then sailing over
the bridge at McHamara's Landing, always driving faster and
faster, as if they couldn't go fast enough.

Mr. Doynebee finally had to speak up. "Slow down, Ray.
The world isn't coming to an end. We can't get this thing
settled by crashing into the ditch on some curve."

Gradually Ray applied the brake, slowed down. "I guess
you're right, pop. But it seems like when I'm doing something
fast I don't think so much. I don't feel so rotten inside."

"There's nothing you can do will stop you thinking," Mr.
Doynebee said. "That's something else I could have told you, I
guess. Only I only found it out a little while ago myself."

They drove on through the foothills about Potomac, drove
into the Potomac valley, lying hummocked in moonlight as far as
they could see. The odor of alfalfa, newly mowed and drying in
thick heaps in the fields along the road, wafted through the car,
snagling incongruously with the scent of gasoline and oil drift-
ing faintly back from the engine. And then they'd passed
through the valley and reached the end of the oiled road.

"Better turn around, Ray," Mr. Doynebee said. "No point in
kicking up dust this time of the night."
"I suppose not," Ray said. "But I hate to go back. I wish we could just go on driving like this. Just go on driving."

But he turned off into the first lane that perpendicular to the highway, turned around and drove back into the valley, bathed in quiet and rectitude.

"It's good country at any rate," Ray said.

"Yes," Mr. Doynbee agreed, "but you can't live off just country."

"I guess not," Ray said.

He was driving more slowly now, as if he'd exhausted his yen for speed, as if he were tired of flight.

"Maybe if I went off to Portland to see her," he said after they'd crossed the bridge at McNamara's Landing again, "maybe if I talked to her some more....do you think she'd listen to me, pop?"

"I don't know, Ray."

"I could get some more time off maybe. Or wait till my vacation in September. The boss probably wouldn't let me off till then."

He waited for Mr. Doynbee to agree or disagree with him. But what could he advise, Mr. Doynbee thought. All he knew was what Ray had told him. He didn't know the girl, didn't know how she felt. Maybe she was right not to want to see Ray again. Maybe the two of them ought never to see each other again. But he didn't know. There was so much he didn't know—about Ray,
a chance to think some more.

I find her. You're not coping now. But before long, after she's had

''If you're not sure, ask. Don't speak what you'd better go

sure we can educate about this road.

I know she's still in love with me. I know it's going to
told. I know she only wanted to say something, and that's all.

I just can't believe she doesn't want me any more. Any more.

man easy at a time like this, of all, you knew a time like this, of all, you knew.

that could be something about the family that brought these words and etcetera, and afterwards, I was just like shame, and here

voice was so soft—and afterwords, I was just like shame, and here

and she wouldn't let me and she wouldn't let me

don't much to go by, and she went away and

I wanted to

think, that I have her back, as I'm job

would, God, God, he needs help so badly that's what I could

would, why that's what I could

why that's what I could

and now what would he ever

about that. I think it's about time we talked, and now what would he ever

brought these words from someone you loved,
"But she said she didn't want to think. She said all she wanted was to work and work until she was too tired to think."

"You never get that tired, Ray. I don't care who you are, whether you're you or me—or that girl."

"If I could only be sure—"

"Let's talk about it tomorrow, Ray. Sometimes a man can talk too much."

"All right, pop."

They drove on in silence, each watching the road as it ribboned along the river, sliced through the timbered stretches, connected with the first bridge, bordered the Finlander's farm, passed the two springs. And so home.

"You'll have to sleep with me," Mr. Doynebee said as they drove up in front of the house. Rosie's in your bed, I hope you don't mind."

"I guess we can make it, pop," Ray answered, "though I'll be a helluva man to sleep with tonight."

In the bedroom Ray helped Mr. Doynebee off with his shoes, then undressed himself. It was all understandable, Mr. Doynebee thought, looking at Ray, naked except for his shorts. He was the kind of man most girls would give in to if they were wheedled just right, a man with the right kind of biceps, the right kind of chest, the right kind of thighs. But he wished—and he'd never wished for anything so much in all his life—that Ray weren't built so well, that he had a flaw in him somewhere, a physical
flaw which a lot of girls wouldn't have liked, but which the
right kind of girl wouldn't have minded. If he'd had that kind
of flaw, maybe this whole business would never have happened.

The light off, the two of them lay quietly, heedful not
to touch each other. After so many years of sleeping alone, it
was strange to have someone else in the bed with him, Mr. Doyne-
bee thought. Strange to feel someone else breathing beside him,
someone that belonged as close to him as his own son, but someone
he couldn't put his arm around, draw close to him, as he used
to draw Netta. But that was the tragedy of having a son. No
matter how much you loved or admired him, you could never show
it in any physical way. You always had to keep your distance
and keep your mouth shut. But maybe it was just as well. Maybe
if you didn't keep your distance and keep your mouth shut,
you'd make a fool of yourself, do and say something you'd be
ashamed of all your life.

"The rottenest thing about it all," Ray said after a while,
his voice only a whisper, "is that you'll never think the same
about me again. No matter how hard you try, you'll never be
able to. I'll always seem a little dirty to you."

Mr. Doynebee wanted to cry out, let his tongue say what was
in his heart to say, cry out to Ray that he was wrong, that he'd
never loved him so much as he loved him right now, that there was
no ditch between them across which they could never reach each
other, that they were closer to each other now, each in his own
pool of trouble, than they'd ever been in their lives before. But he couldn't say it. All he could do was turn gently over on his side, place his aging arm about Ray's chest and press the boy's shoulder with his mangled fingers.

"Don't say that, Ray. If you're dirty, I'm dirty with you. And I don't think we're either of us dirty, not deep inside where it counts."

It was a long time before Mr. Doynbee fell asleep, before he lost consciousness of the rhythmic up and down of Ray's chest under his arm.

V

Dinner with Addy and Joe and the three children was as trying as usual. The table was set as haphazardly as ever, the boy's manners showed no improvement, Clarice still dribbled defiantly over her chin. But wonder of wonders, Joe had actually shaved, and Addy had put on a decent looking housedress. Joe had, of course insisted on mixing a couple of drinks beforehand, which the two of them had swallowed with a show of fellowship, feigned on Ray's part, but much admired by the two boys, neither of whom had been given so much as a glass of ginger ale with ice in it—different from Mr. Doynbee's treatment of Ray when he was a boy. Whatever liquor had been served in his father's house Ray had received his share of, a better system than Joe's, Ray
thought, one he'd practice whenever he had boys of his own. And
then had come a sickening remembrance of Irene, a rasping re-
collection that neither of them would likely have any boys of
their own now. The liquor had gaggled him a little, enough for
Joe, who had sharp eyes, to notice and wisecrack about. "What's
the matter, Ray?" he'd wanted to know. "Liquor getting too much
for you?"

He was glad it was almost over, the meal, the drinks, the
raucous voices of the two boys. He wished he were on his way
back to Bonner, that he'd had dinner with the old man and Maud
and Rosie. It hurt him to sit in this house, not because it
was the kind of house he'd wanted for himself, but because it
was a home, because there were people in it who, no matter how
slazy and mismanaging they might be, had affection for each
other, a strange kind of affection perhaps, not the kind he
wanted but nevertheless affection. Deficient as Addy was, she
had something he'd never had, maybe never would have now—child-
ren that loved her, even if she'd stumbled into them.

The children had long since left the table, and long since
Addy should have suggested they go into the living room where
they could have sat comfortable, enjoyed a cigarette, got the
smell of the dirty dessert dishes out of their nostrils. But
that wasn't Addy's way, at least with him. So there they sat,
still at the dinner table, and before they knew it, none of
them had another word to say. Not even Joe, who usually kept
up a noisy line of patter, inconsequential but air-filling, had opened his mouth in minutes. But eventually he came to, crunched out on the edge of his saucer the cigarette he'd smoked down to the edge of his yellowed fingers.

"I suppose you know by this time we're expecting again," he announced.

Ray tried to look enthusiastic. "Pop told me. In March, isn't it?"

Joe grinned undecipherably. "That's what Ad says. She ought to know more about it than I do."

Addy viewed him coldly. "It's just as much yours as mine, Joe."

"Not bad, don't you think, Ray," Joe said, as if he had accomplished some hitherto unimaginable feat of procreation, "five kids at our age? There aren't many men just turned thirty-two that have got five kids these days."

"And not enough money to raise them on either," Addy commented, not acidly--she had too little energy to be acid--but petulantly, like a child that has just been told it can't go to the movies because daddy says he isn't made of money and that they'll all go to the poor house if they're not careful and save what little money they have.

"Oh, come on now, Ad," Joe tried to josh her. "We've managed with the others somehow or other, and we'll get by with this one. Soon as it's over, you'll be damn glad we've had this one."
"I'll be glad when it's over," Addy said, "that's for sure."

Ray wriggled constrainedly. Domestic scenes always occurred whenever he had dinner with Joe and Addy, scenes compounded of Addy's listlessness jarring against Joe's assumed easy-come, easy-go attitude. For it was all a false front on Joe's part, put on a little thicker year after year in order to compensate for Addy's shortcomings, put on because for some undiscoverable reason he loved her and wanted to dress up their marriage so that it could meet whatever scrutiny Ray might give it. Too many times Joe'd borrowed money from him for Ray not to know what went on behind the false front. And in its way it was an admirable false front—when the days hummed along easily enough so that Joe could disguise the seams that stood out so glaringly this evening.

"It's a great thing to have kids," Joe barged on, "You'll never know, Ray, until you've had some of your own. Ain't that right, Addy?"

Addy said nothing. Neither did Ray.

"You ought to get married and try it, Ray, old man. It's a great life, being married and having kids and raising them up. I wouldn't have missed it, not for anything. I feel sorry for a man that ain't married, no matter who he is. Even you, Ray."

"I'm making it all right," Ray said, but only because he'd said nothing for a long while and felt sorry for Joe, who was only trying to be companionable and didn't quite know how, at least with him.
"Sure," Joe said, sparring around the conversational dead-end he was trying to avoid. "Sure you are. But, Christ, man, you can't go on being an eligible bachelor all your life. You've got to give some poor girl a chance. And you're not getting any younger. Of course, it ain't any of my business, but I've often wondered—and I've mentioned it to Addie too, haven't I?—why you never got married yet. My God, man, you got all you need—a good job, money in the bank, a car furnished to you, a future. What more do you want?"

"Damned if I know," May said, trying to laugh at himself, play the rueful bachelor. "No guts maybe."

"Oh, hell," Joe blurted out. "It don't take any more than a normal amount of guts to ask a girl to marry you. Look at Addy and me. All we did was go around for a while together, and then I popped the question, and she said yes, just like that. Now look at us. Five kids, a home of our own, even if it ain't much. And they're pretty good kids too, even if they are my own, all five of them."

"Only four--yet," Addy said sourly.

"Well," Joe admitted, "right now only four, but well, a bird in the hand, don't you know, May?"

"It's not funny, Joe." Addy's voice rose above its usual monotone. "It's all right for the man to talk, when he doesn't have to carry the child for months on end and keep up with the day-in, day-out round of housework, do all the cleaning and
scrubbing and washing and ironing and look after the kids you've already got and look ahead to the time when you go to the hospital and plan on having enough in the house so that everyone will be all right when you're gone, and wonder how all the bills are going to be paid when it's all over." She sniffed hard.

"That's not so funny. It's not funny at all."

She began to cry, not loud, not soft, just cry. Ray, uncomfortable on his side of the table, pretended not to notice either her tears or Joe's pathetic face, which registered a mixture of bewilderment and understanding, the kind of look that seemed to burst out, gee, can't you take a joke, I was only kidding.

"Jolly, Ad," he began, and then he slipped around the table, put his arm around her awkwardly. "I didn't mean to upset you. Hell, I know it's no trick to have a baby, but you'll come through it all right, we'll come through it. Come on now, buck up. I'll shut my big face, clear out for a while, so you and Ray can have a good talk. I've got to check up on the boys any way, see if they cleaned out the garage the way I told them to this morning." He winked at Ray. "See you after a bit, Ray."

The screen door on the back porch slammed after him.

"That's always the way with him," Addy complained. "Gets you all riled up over some silly thing, and then pats you on the back and thinks everything's all right."

"He didn't mean anything, Addy," Ray took up where Joe had
left off. "You know Joe. He thinks the world and all of you and the kids. He wouldn't hurt you for anything. He's a good family man, Joe is."

"If he was a good family man, he'd have seen to it we didn't have this baby." Had she been less torpid, Addy would almost have seemed bitter. "It's not right, Ray, us having another baby. It's all we can do to make ends meet as it is, whether Joe's working steady or not. Everybody complains about union wages, but no matter what they are, they're never enough for all the expenses—and not for another baby. It's not fair for the baby either."

"There's a lot of people would be damn glad to have another baby." The words were out before he realized it.

"It's all right for you to talk," Addy declared. "You've never had any."

Getting up, she went over to the sink, where she stood looking out into the back yard. Ray was thankful she did, not knowing whether he could clamp his jaws together tight enough to hide even from Addy's sluggish eyes how he rasped inside.

"Life is easy enough for you," Addy went on, not turning around. "All you have to look out for is just yourself. Not a chick nor a child to think of but yourself."

"I didn't mean it the way it sounded," Ray excused himself.

"Well, you might think, just once, how a thing's likely to sound before you say it." Addy blew her nose stoutly.
"I'm not trying to criticize you," Ray said patiently. "I was only--"

"You're just like all men," Addy cut him short, having reached the point where hazy generalizations absorbed what mind she had. "You try to make a joke out of everything—even having babies."

"By God, Addy, be a little reasonable."

"Reasonable?" Addy whirled around. "I just wish you and Joe could go through having a baby. You wouldn't talk so much then, either of you. You'd see it was no joke."

More astonished than angry—never before had he seen Addy so distraught—Ray hung on to his tongue, tempering it with reflections about the inexplicable reactions of a pregnant woman. Though Irene hadn't behaved as Addy was behaving now. If anyone should have lost control, Irene should have, he thought. But that was the difference between Irene and Addy.

"Well?" Addy breathed presently, almost defiantly for her.

"I'm not going to quarrel with you," Ray said.

"Who's quarreling?"

"It sounded like we were."

Ray smiled, effectively, for Addy softened, came back to her chair, where she sat down again, resting her forearms along the cottoned edge of the table.

"I guess I sort of lost control," she said. "There's so much to do all the time, and I'm so tired by the end of the day,
and the kids don't seem to understand, except Rosie, and Joe, he's always so full of pop all the time. And March seems so far off, and...."

She relapsed into her usual incoherent self.

"You'll pull through all right," Gay said. "You always have before. Rosie will be a big help, if you just explain to her how things are." He recalled what his father had told him about Rosie's awakening curiosity. "Now's the time to put her wise to a lot of things. She's a fine girl, Rosie is. Pop was telling me only yesterday--"

Addy brightened up. "He really likes her?"

"Why not?" Addy's question seemed peculiar.

"I've never thought papa cared much about my kids," Addy said. "Neither has Joe. We've always sort of thought.....I suppose it's a shame to say it.....well, that he just put up with them. Oh, he's nice to them when he comes down here or when we go up to Bonner, but, well, you know, he's never made a fuss over them, or....."

She hesitated, watching to see what effect her words, their meaning only half explicit, might have on Gay.

"You've got pop all wrong, Ad. Pop's not the man to do much talking or show his affection, but he wouldn't neglect you or the kids. You know that."

"Sure," Addy replied, but almost as if she didn't believe him.
"And after all," Ray continued—"it was easy to talk now, to express what he thought about the old man, who understood so much and was so slow to condemn even what he couldn't be proud of—"he's not a young man any more, Addy. He can take only so much noise and racket, even from his own grandchildren. The accident left him worse off than we think, it must have, and mom's death right before it, well, it's easy to see why he sticks by himself."

"But you'd think—well, it doesn't matter."

"If you needed him bad, he'd be here. You can count on that."

"I suppose so," Addy said, "but sometimes he doesn't seem awfully interested. Not in this baby, at least."

"You can't expect him to seem interested in a baby you aren't interested in yourself."

"It's not just having the baby," Addy explained in her doleful manner. "I can manage to have the baby. But it's all the expense, and prices what they are, and no matter what Joe makes, there never seems to be enough, and Joe never seems to worry much."

"If it's money you're worried about, I can help out."

"That isn't what I mean—exactly. What I mean is, if something should happen to Joe, if he should have an accident like papa, not be able to work, or if the kids should get awfully sick for a long time, what would we fall back on? We're not fixed like you or papa. You've got money in the bank, at least
you should with nobody to support but yourself. And papa's still got the compensation money......I suppose," She glanced questioningly at Ray, whose face, as she hoped, confirmed her supposition. "And, well, everything seems so much easier when there's a little money to fall back on."

"Joe's working steady now," Ray said, puzzled at her concentration upon money, a concern he'd never noticed in her before. "As long as he's working, and he's likely to be for a long time, since building isn't going to fall off very soon from the looks of things--and you've got pop and me to turn to if you have to-- Why was he so generous with his own and the old man's money?-- why, what the hell?"

"You just don't understand," Addy told him, glad in her heart he didn't. "If you were a woman, maybe you would. But you're just like Joe, easy-come, easy-go."

He was not like Joe, Ray wanted to shout at her. He might have been easy-come, easy-go two months ago, but he certainly wasn't now, and he doubted if he would ever be again, not even if things ironed out between him and Irene.

"There are lots worse men than Joe," he said, and then, noticing Addy's face darkening again, he added hastily, "or me."

Her face clearing, Addy said, "Everything comes easy for you, Ray. You just don't understand."

She began to clear the table. Ray stood up, wondering what he ought to do. Go out in the yard with Joe, tumble about with
the boys, if they were anywhere near? Or go home? He wanted to
go home, go sit on the porch with the old man, not talk much
perhaps, but just sit with him. There was a silent comfort in
the old man he knew he could find nowhere else. But, damn it
all, he couldn’t go home yet, couldn’t eat and run, and besides,
nomatter how weary he was, he had to stand on his own feet. He
couldn’t let the old man do his worrying, his thinking for him.

"I’ll be Rosie for you tonight, Ad," he suggested, sorry
for her, even if she was too sorry for herself. She was tired,
no doubt about it. "I’ll dry the dishes for you. Where’s your
towel?"

The monotonous movement of hand against cup, against glass,
against knives and forks afforded some relaxation—until again he
began to think about Irene. They might have been washing the
dishes, he and Irene, this very evening, if he hadn’t tried to
be such a smooth operator. And not washing them in silence,
but planning together what to get next for the house, their house,
what kind of drapes to shop for, what kind of dishes to buy.
And after they’d finished the dishes, they’d have sat down to-
gether and looked forward to their own baby—Christ, he couldn’t
go on thinking about babies, their baby, Joe and Addy’s baby,
anybody’s baby. Everywhere he went, no matter what he did, he
kept remembering the baby. Why had he given in to Irene? Why,
why, why? The word dinned into his head, throbbed through him
like a deep cut in his hand.
"Go on out and talk to Joe," Addy told him, when finally he hung up the towel, folding it carefully as he would have done in his own house, his and Irene's. "I'm so tired I'm going to lie down for a bit."

He found Joe in the garage, overseeing Clarence and Frank, who were slaving away at the chores they'd blissfully neglected to do during the day.

"Good, kids," Joe commented. "They pay about as much attention to you as a wild hound dog. Unless you stand over them like a slave driver, they skedaddle off without lifting a finger as soon as your back is turned."

"We'd have got at it," Clarence complained, "if you'd just left us alone."

"Next summer maybe," Joe said. "Come on, Ray, we'll get out of this dust. No use dirtying up your suit. Good looking number, too. I'd like one like it, but with another addition to the family coming on, well, you know. A man has to pay for his fun, I guess." He laughed rather mirthlessly. "Take that chair, Ray." He pointed toward a rickety lawn chair near the garage. "That one won't cave in under you. The other one will. I've been meaning to fix it up, but goddam it, after I've worked with a hammer all day, I never seem in the mood to drag one out after I get home, and the boys aren't old enough yet for me to teach them how to use tools." He sat down on the grass, hunching up his legs, on which he rested his elbows. "How's Ad? All right now?"
Ray nodded.

"She gets over her spells in a hurry, if I just get out and let her cool off. When a woman's pregnant, a man never knows how she'll act. O. K., one minute, hot under the collar the next. Just part of having a baby, I guess. After a man's had one or two, he gets used to it. You'll find out soon as you've been through it yourself."

"Sure," Ray said, obliged to say something.

Joe plucked a blade of grass, a long blade, for the lawn needed mowing, which he ran through the gap between his front teeth.

"It's quite a thing to be a father," Joe philosophised.

"Especially the first time."

"Yah," Ray said.

"You're all het up as much as the woman. You'll find out soon as you've been through the mill yourself. But after that," Joe shrugged, "you just have to take it in your stride. Your wife gets fed up with you? You just walk out for a bit. Then everything's O. K. Like tonight. Though I have to admit it, Addy's taking it harder this time. Maybe she's right. We probably shouldn't have had this baby. But Christ almighty, you can't always be sure you won't. Some men seem to get by, but me, something always seems to go haywire, no matter how careful I am. I just ain't got the knack, I guess." He stared quizzically at Ray. "You never seem to get hooked."
"Hooked?" Ray repeated, as if he didn't understand.

Joe rolled luxuriously over on his back. "Hell, Ray, don't give me that old stuff. You know damn well what I mean. You been around. All the girls you take out. There's bound to be some truth in all the tales out of school I've heard about you."

"Oh?" Ray tried to appear amused.

"Sure," Joe bumbled on. "You're no different from anybody else. You can get it if you want it. And you've never been hooked. You always get by."

"You're mighty damn sure about a lot of things, Joe," Ray said, a sharp edge to his words.

Joe sat up again. "Hell, Ray, I'm not trying to butt into your private life. Don't get me wrong. I'm not sucking around for a confession. I don't give a good goddam what you do. That's your business. But damn it all, Ray, I'd just like to know how you do it, how you keep from knocking up--well, you know. Jesus Christ, man, I must be dumb or something, but here I am, four kids and another one coming, and I'm only thirty-two. I've got a lot of life left in me yet. You know. And we can't go on having more kids. Ad's right. You see what I mean? I just sort of thought, on the spur of the moment, that maybe you could give me a tip, steer me clear. You know."

Some other evening Joe might have seemed funny instead of pathetic, Ray thought, some other evening earlier in the summer, the first part of June, or late May, when he still thought he
knew all there was to know about contraception.

"I should think your doctor could put you straight, Joe, if you'd ask him. I'm no authority on birth control."

"Yah," Joe said, "but I hate to ask him. He'll think I'm a goddam fool to of waited so long. A man hates to think, when he's as old as I am, that he's such a numbskull."

"I'm afraid there's nothing I know that you don't," Ray said.

"Maybe," Joe said, still hopeful.

Ray shook his head. "There's some things I know enough to keep my mouth shut about, Joe. That's one of them."

"Well, C. K.," Joe said, "I just thought I'd sort of feel around. I can sort of open up to you, Ray, sometimes. You're not sore at me?" He spoke almost like a child.

"Hell, no," Ray said. "We're old enough to speak out, I guess."

"Yah, sure," Joe said, all man again. "I guess maybe I better talk to the doc, like you said."

Ray stood up. He had to get out of here. Temporarily he had Joe shut up, but there was no telling when Joe would sound off again. Everything Joe said was like knife thrusts into an open sore, knife thrusts that made him dance and squirm inside until he knew he couldn't bear much more. "Talk to the doc. It would embarrass him, Joe said. What if Joe'd had to talk to Irene's doctor, heard what that doctor had had to say, his lips compressed and cold, his eyes like little spears digging into a
man's insides, and always polite, that frozen politeness a man can't hit back at. Joe might have had something to worry about then, something more to fear than feeling like a dumbbell. But there was no use taking out his disgust with himself on Joe, who meant well, who simply didn't have insight enough to realize what he was doing or saying. Why should he criticize Joe? No, Ray Deynbee, the great man with the women, had had no insight either until too late.

"Hello, man, you're not going?" Joe asked. "Jesus, it's early yet."

"I think I'd better, Joe. I've still got the report to get out tonight. I'm not on an eight-hour day like you labor guys. And the old man's waiting for me. He has a pretty lonesome time of it, you know." Every reasonable excuse he could think of he piled on.

"Ah, relax," Joe urged. "Wait till I fix up another drink. You got all night to make out that damn report."

"Not tonight, Joe. Thanks."

"You off the booze?" Joe asked, his plain face registering solid surprise. "I never thought I'd live to see the day you'd turn down a drink."

"It may happen to you some day, Joe."

"Me? No sirree, that's one bad habit I got I ain't never going to give up. Though if I keep on fathering kids every two years or so, I may have to. Either that or get the knack like you. Going in to see Addy before you go?"
He ought to go in, he knew it, but he didn't want to. "She may be asleep, Joe. I'll just run on. You tell her so long for me. I'll be in again before I leave town."

"O.K., Ray. That drink'll be waiting for you."

"I may take it next time, Joe. Fool you."

"I'll bet you do too. You ain't lost your taste yet, not you. You're a good man, Ray."

Envy mixed with admiration tinged Joe's voice, a wonderment expressive of why the hell should I be what I am and Ray be what he is, what's he got that got left out of me? And yet no malice, no suppressed hatred toward a man who'd done better in the world than he. Rather the kind of pride that plumes itself on reflected glory.

Together they walked around the house, on the way Joe picking up Clarice, whom they found on the sidewalk at the side of the house, making curls out of the evergrown dandelions growing in the flower beds.

"Time you went beddy-by, dumpling," Joe cooed to her, patting her plump and dusty bare legs. "Daddy'll pop you into the tub just as soon as Uncle Ray goes."

"Sith my dash?" Clarice asked.

"Sure thing." Joe kissed her tousled hair. "Nice jalopy that outfit keeps you in, Ray," he said, as Ray got in the company car. "I guess I should have been a salesman instead of a lather."
"You're a good lather, Joe."

"So they say, so they say."

Ray switched on the ignition, then turned it off.

"Joe."

"Yah?"

"I was just thinking---I don't want to butt in or anything---but if you need any cash, along about March I mean---"

Joe grinned apathetically. "Forget it, Ray. We'll make her. We always have before. Haven't we, dumpling?"

"Haven't we what?" Clarice burred.

"You know what I mean, Joe," Ray urged.

"Sure. Thanks for offering, Ray."

"Just in case, you know."

"Sure, sure," Joe waved him off. "Don't you worry about us. We'll get along. Don't let Addy get you down."

"Well...."

"So long, Ray. See you before you leave."

"So long, Joe."

"Have to your old uno, dumpling."

Clarice beat her hand through the air.

Ray drove off, lifting his hand for Clarice.

Thank God, he was gone. Even if there was nothing to do but think, think, think about Irene, thinking about Irene was preferable to talking with Joe, good old Joe, who stood up so stupidly well to the life he had to lead. But why be critical
of Joe? No matter how he'd got it, Joe had something his well-
dressed, money-in-the-bank brother-in-law didn't have, a wife
he loved, children he loved, a home he didn't mind coming home
to. Nobody was likely to see Ray Doynebee standing with his own
child in his arms, a child he could alternately man-handle,
care, bathe, put to bed, love. Why the hell should Joe envy
him? If Joe only knew how much his admired brother-in-law en-
vied him right now, he wouldn't need to put on that false front
he wore so falteringingly. But Joe didn't know, and by God, he'd
never know either. Only the old man would ever know, the old
man and himself--and Irene.

Automatically he headed the car toward Bonner, toward home.
But did he really want to go home right away? Not five minutes
ago he'd thought he did, but now, as he listened to the purr of
the motor, he knew he didn't want to go home at all. Where did
he want to go then? The question kept hammering at him as he
turned into Catlin Street. Where did he want to go?

After Irene. That's where he wanted to go. But he couldn't
 go after Irene. He had to stay on in Missoula, work the town
clean, drum up business for the company, go on as if nothing had
happened that didn't happen to any man any day of the week. And
Irene didn't want him to come after her. She'd said so. She'd
made it perfectly plain that she didn't want him hounding her.
But had she meant it? Last night, driving back from Potomac
with the old man, he'd convinced himself that he was going after
her. But now he wasn't so convinced, not after a day tramping around Missoula, hunting for sales he didn't give a damn whether he found or not. And even if he lit out for Portland this very night, he hadn't the remotest idea where she might be, in what hotel, in whose house, in what restaurant, in what street.

Driving down Fifth Street, he could see her sitting alone in a room somewhere, trying to read maybe, sitting in her dressing gown, maybe the one she'd worn that weekend in Butte--no, not that one, she wouldn't be wearing that one, not now--sitting in some dressing gown, her hair soft and loose against her shoulders, her hands in her lap, her ankles only half covered by the folds of the garment. Just sitting. Maybe waiting for him to come. Maybe crying, not hard as she had up on the pass, just crying softly to herself, hardly knowing she was crying. Though she'd said she'd had her cry out, she wouldn't cry any more. But, God in heaven, if she felt only a particle the way he felt, she'd have to cry. Why, man alive, if tears would bring her back, he'd cry plenty and not be ashamed of it either.

He couldn't go home, not with his mind full of such pictures, pictures he'd been afraid to look at all day and which he couldn't avoid looking at any longer. He'd drive around then, drive for an hour or so, and then go home. He ought to go back after the old man, take him along, get him out of the house and Bonner, where he was cooped up all the time. Take Saul along too. But he couldn't. He wouldn't be decent company for either of them.
He had to fight this thing out on his own, and he might as well begin tonight.

Reaching the intersection at Orange Street, he turned right, away from the direction of home, swerved into Stephens Avenue, on whose wide surface he picked up speed. Within a few minutes he was out of the city, somnolent in the gathering dusk, and was racing along the highway toward the Bitter Root, the steering wheel consolingly hard against the palms of his hand.

Decision began to flow into him. As soon as he could get off, as soon as his vacation rolled around he'd steam out to Portland, fly out. And then comb the town for Irene. Go to every hospital in Portland and ask for Irene. Call on every doctor in Portland, in case she was working, not in a hospital, but for a private doctor, and ask for Irene. And once he found her, talk to her and talk to her and talk to her until she gave in to him. This time say whatever it was she wanted him to say, say it so that she knew once and for all he meant it. And then bring her back to Montana, bring her back as his wife to meet the old man--and Maud and Addy and Joe and everyone he knew. Find a house of their own and fill that house with all the love and affection and decency they could fill it with, he and Irene.

The speedometer had crept over sixty, but he didn't notice. The road was zooming out from under him, he was rounding the curves too fast, but it didn't matter. He had control of the car, he knew the road, and he was beginning to know what he was
going to do. The evening air, colliding into the car, felt good against his face, caught at his breath, wrapped his necktie over
his shoulder. His foot still far down on the accelerator, he
plummeted through Lolo, sped on up the valley. He'd drive like
this for another half hour and then go home, have some beer with
the old man and tell him how things were shaping up.

VI

It had been a long day, Ray gone, but never out of his mind,
a longer day than any he'd lived through since immediately after
Netta's death. Nor was it over yet, this day in which he'd had
to pretend so feverishly that all was well, try to piece out
what to suggest to Ray when he got back from Addy's--and not yet
know for sure what to suggest. It was tedious to sit on the
davenport, now that dinner was over, and explain one stamp after
another to Rosie, to whom he'd promised in the morning to show
the album, pretend there was nothing in the world more enthrall-
ing than stamps, make them come alive for her as, not so long
ago, they had come alive for him. Any other night--Rosie was
such a captivated audience--he might have been able to re-inject
into himself his former philatelic enthusiasm, but tonight only
a carry-on attitude enabled him to answer intelligently her
successive questions, simple as they were, not the weaseling,
worming personal kind that had pricked at him since Mauritius
had arrived.
"But where's Senegal?" Rosie asked. And St. Helena and Bermuda and the Falkland Islands. And on and on. More than by the questions themselves he was astonished at Rosie's eagerness when she asked them, the almost passionate yearning after information, a characteristic in her he'd never suspected, considering the almost total lack of curiosity in either Joe or Addy. More and more the child reminded him of Netta. Strange, he kept telling himself, that he'd never noticed it before. But then he'd never taken the trouble to find out before.

Rosie flipped over another page. At last they were on the R's, almost through the book.

"Oh, Roumania," Rosie said. "I know about that, gramps. We read all about it in school once. They grow oil there."

Mr. Deynbee groaned inwardly. "Rosie," he said, as soon as he'd mastered his indignation at her muddled information, "don't you think you could go through the rest of the album by yourself? Your old gramps is getting stiff as a poker sitting here so long."

Rosie looked inquiringly at him. "You mean you'd let me look at it by myself?"

"Why not? Your hands are clean enough, and you won't tear any of the pages or lose the insert sheets."

"Aunt Maud said I was never to look at the album unless you were with me. She said you were awfully fussy about it." She watched Mr. Deynbee sideways. Should she tell him about Aunt Maud or not?
"She did?" Mr. Doynbee asked. "When did she tell you that?"

A crispness in his voice frightened Rosie. Maybe she'd gone too far already. And she'd promised Aunt Maud she wouldn't tell. It would be a terrible thing to be a squealer now after she'd promised she wouldn't. Aunt Maud would never forgive her and neither would daddy. And it might upset gramps to know about Aunt Maud, and mom had told her not to do anything that might upset gramps, who was an old man and not used to anything but quiet in the house. She'd better say something quick to calm gramps down and keep peace in the family, like daddy did when mom got provoked at something he said.

"Oh, yesterday," she answered airily. "I asked her if I could look at it and she said not till I asked you, because you were awfully proud of the album and you'd be angry if I spoiled any of it."

Mr. Doynbee's face softened. Then why didn't you ask me yesterday?"

"Well, I went up the mountain with the Lookwood kids and after that there was Uncle Ray and then before I knew it Aunt Maud said I had to go to bed. There just wasn't any time. And you are fussy about it. You made me wait till tonight when you could look at it with me."

Mr. Doynbee smiled. "Well, ordinarily I guess I am fussy with it," he admitted. "And if it were Clarence or Frank who wanted to look at it, I don't think I'd let them. You know how wild boys are."
Rosie nodded, relieved at the calmness in Mr. Doynebee's voice and proud that she hadn't tattled. Nobody could ever accuse her of being a squealer.

"But I can trust you, Rosie?"

"Oh, yes, gramps. You can trust me. I'm not like Clarence and Frank, wild as hornets."

"Then, if you don't mind, I'll just go out in the yard and have a smoke while we wait for Ray to come home. Maybe he'll take us for a ride if we ask him nicely."

"All right, gramps." Rosie pulled the album completely over on her lap. "When I get done, I'll put the album back in your room."

"Never mind that, Rosie," Mr. Doynebee instructed her as he stood up. "Just leave it on the table here. I may want to show Ray a few things in it before I put it away."

If he were ever going to tell Ray about the album, now was a good time, he thought, especially if the plan that had begun to form in his mind should shape itself into something definite. So telling what might happen to him if he should leave Bonner for a while. The papers were always full of fatalities concerning people who'd gone off on a simple pleasure trip only to meet with an accident somewhere along the way.

Since he was going on no pleasure trip, provided he went at all, it would be wise to put his house in order before he left, tell Ray where his insurance policy was, where he kept the papers
having to do with the cemetery plot—just in case—and of course
tell him about the album. Rosie's remarks, innocent as they
seemed, filled him with a slight apprehension. Just how much
did Naud know about the album? More than he'd ever suspected?
It couldn't be that—but of course it couldn't. Why should Naud
have any secret ambitions in regard to the album? But he'd
better rid himself of any suspicions right now, suspicions that
were bound to be unjust, suspicions that would play hell with life
in the same house with Naud if he once let them get rooted in
his mind. The best thing to do was to tell Ray the truth about
the album, put that much of his house in order for sure. For,
if he should go off to Portland and meet with an accident on the
way, Ray would wonder, once he found the bank book, where the
compensation money had gone.

Sitting out in the back yard, a bottle of beer in his hand—
tonight he didn't mind drinking alone, now that he had a plan in
mind—he began to wish he hadn't warned Ray not to eat and run.
Ray wouldn't want to linger at Addy's this evening. He'd want
peace and quiet talk, not confusion and blather. And he and Ray
needed to talk this business over, decide whether his plan was
workable or not.

For it seemed to Mr. Doyne to that he had to have Ray's con-
sent before he hightailed off for Portland. Ray could at least
set him right as to the girl, describe her to him in detail, tell
him about all her little quirks of character—before the abortion of course—that he would need to know in order to convince her that her behavior was foolhardy; that she was ruining two lives, not just her own; that what was done was done; that she and Ray had better be married and live out their lives together, suffer together if they had to, be glad together if they could. From what little Ray had told him about this girl, Mr. Doymbee assumed it would take a deal of talk to convince her of anything, but if he knew ahead of time what he was walking into, he had a feeling, a queer, unreasonable feeling he couldn't define, that he'd be able to talk her around. There were so many phrases of Netta's that would apply, little sayings he'd heard her repeat so many times he knew he could say them as well as she, and mean them to. They wouldn't sound strange and outlandish on his tongue any more than they had on Netta's. By the time he got to Portland he'd have them all rehearsed just right, know which ones to use first, and be able, along with them, to use anything else that came to his mind, once he got started, until the girl gave in. He knew he could do it, and he knew that it would be better for him to go to Portland than for Ray to go—especially since Ray couldn't possibly go any sooner than three weeks.

Three weeks was a long time to wait. He wouldn't venture to think what might happen to Ray during those weeks, not when he recalled what Ray had said driving home from Potomac the night before—that his job didn't seem to count for anything or his
future with the company. He might get so unstung he'd make no
sales, get in bad with the company, wind up with no job, and then
what would happen to him and that girl?

Mr. Doynbee swallowed a long draught of beer. What in
God's name was he thinking of, imagining that Ray would go to
pieces, lose everything he'd worked so hard to get. Ray might
be down, but he wasn't out, not Ray, and he was a doddering old
fool to think such thoughts. All the same it would be well to
get to Portland as soon as he could get away. Get away? What
was keeping him? Only Ray's consent. There was nothing else to
hold him in Bonner. Haud? Addy? What would he tell them?
He'd tell them nothing. Just pack up and go. He was his own
master still. He didn't have to knuckle under to them, get
their permission to come and go. He still had money enough to
pay for the trip to Portland and back and to keep himself while
he was there. And he could always wire Ray for more if it
took him longer than he expected. Lucky for him he'd had brains
enough to hang on to that $73.29, not squander it on a piece of
paper not even an inch square. This much of the compensation
money he'd spend in a way that would count, that would really
bring dividends, and not the kind a man puts in the bank either.
For he had no doubt whatsoever but what he could bring the girl
around to see things his way once he began talking to her—pro-
vided Ray would let him go.

His conversation with Angelo flashed into Mr. Doynbee's
mind. Here in his own family was an example of what Angelo had meant when he'd said a man's children always needed him. Here was his son coming home to him when he was in trouble just as Angelo'd said his older children still came home to him. What was he to do then, simply listen to Ray, pat him a few times on the back, tell him he couldn't condemn him wholly, and let it go at that? Shouldn't he take an active hand in whatever was wrong, as Angelo would do, set matters right again, if he could?

He glanced at his watch. Eight-thirty. Funny Ray wasn't home by this time. He'd certainly been more than polite if he was staying as late as this. Maybe he was lending Joe a hand with some job around the house. Or maybe he was playing his heart out with Addy's boys as he'd played his heart out with Rosie last night. Mr. Deynbee wished he'd come soon. There was so much to talk about, his trip to Portland, the stamp album. And he was tired of sitting here by the roses, drinking beer by himself. The bottle was empty, he noticed, and now that he was geared for action, the yen for another bottle was strong within him. While he waited, he might just as well have another. He seemed to think so much straighter when there was a cool drop of alcohol in him.

Then he entered the kitchen, the house seemed oddly empty. Peeping into the living room, he noticed that Rosie was gone, that she'd deposited the album on the living room table as he'd directed. Nor was Maud anywhere about. The two of them must
have stepped out to one of the neighbors while he was turning
things over in the back yard. Well, that was good. It would be
fine to have the house to himself and Ray when Ray got home.
The desire for beer having gone out of him, he didn't know
why, he went into the living room, where he stopped by the table,
opened the album diffidently. After turning only a few pages,
he shut the book again. Strange, he thought, how indifferent a
man could become almost over night concerning what had been one
of the major interests of his life. He no longer cared a rap
about the album, just as he'd no longer cared about prowling
through the bars after he'd married Netta. He wondered if he'd
ever want to open the album again or even relive in his memory
those seven years when the album had been the be-all and end-
all of his life. He'd grown out of the album just as Rosie was
growing out of her childish preoccupations. And yet how long
it had taken him to realise how childish his passion for the
album had been.

He glanced at his watch again. Almost a quarter to nine and
Ray still not here. Maybe he wouldn't come home early this even-
ing. Maybe he'd run into some of his old cronies in Missoula,
was having beer with them in one of those slicked-up bars he
always patronised. Or maybe he was tracking down a good lead,
trying to smother his trouble in work, as he'd said that girl
said she wanted to do. It would be a good thing if he could--
for the next few weeks at least.
The silence of the house began to grow oppressive. Why not walk up the river a ways? Only for an hour. Whether he talked to Ray at nine o'clock or ten o'clock or even later really didn't matter, just so long as they talked. Why not go for a walk? He found his hat, plumped it down on his head and set out, trudging slowly up the street toward the edge of the town.

Several houses beyond the old hotel, he met Mrs. Jensen, less wind-blown this evening than ordinarily and unhurried, perhaps because she was unencumbered with Benjy and seemed not to be looking for him.

"Nice evening, Mr. Doynbee," she greeted him, buttonholing him at once.

"Very nice, Mrs. Jensen."

"I see Ray's home," she began, gulping enough air into her lungs to carry her through a long conversation. "My, it must be nice for you. You must get so lonesome, you and Maud, with no one in the house but yourselves all the time. Though someone told me that Addy's oldest girl was staying with you, though I haven't seen her."

Mr. Doynbee nodded. "You seem to have Benjy corralled for the night," he said, hoping to side track her if he could.

"Yes, Mr. Jensen's looking after him while I'm out, and it's a mercy too, what with all the traffic driving through town tonight. Have you noticed it?"

Mr. Doynbee shook his head.
"It's been something awful, let me tell you. They say that some outfit down in Missoula is having a big picnic up the river a ways. Lots of beer and all that. They'll be drunk as lords before the evening's up, if they aren't already. Thank God, Mr. Jensen's home with the boys tonight, especially Benjy. He'd be struck sure."

"You're the worst pessimist in Benner, Mrs. Jensen."

"Well, maybe I am, Mr. Deynbee, but land alive, when you've got children you have to be. Especially when people drink and drive the way they do these days. If it isn't the lumber trucks driving like mad, it's some drunken driver. We never should have got rid of prohibition. I said at the time--"

"A man has to have his liquor," Mr. Deynbee interrupted her, pretending, just to tease her, to a love of the saloon he'd long since outgrown.

"Oh, my stars, Mr. Deynbee. A man like you to say such a thing, I'm surprised at you."

Whether she was or not Mr. Deynbee didn't care, anxious as he was to be rid of her. His remark seemed to have been effective, Mrs. Jensen poising herself for flight like a turkey hen about to flop off a fence rail.

"Well, good night," she said. "I told Mrs. Boyer I'd be down to see her half an hour ago, but what with all the folks I've bumped into, I'm not there yet."

"Good night, Mrs. Jensen. Mind you aren't run over on your way home."
"Mind yourself, Mr. Doynebee. If you're off for one of your evening strolls along the river, look sharp as you round the curve."

 Automatically, because she had become so accustomed to brushing her hand across her forehead, she swished back into place stray wisps of hair that this evening were not astray, smiled benignly at Mr. Doynebee and plodded off.

Within a few minutes he was rounding the first curve in the road. Below him, the river, a murky green, deep and swift, even this late in the summer, glowed opaquely in the last rays of twilight, an occasional fir log, jammed against the bank or against the square pilings thrust down into the middle of the current, shining a wet copper-orange. Distributed along the top of one of the pilings, half a dozen boys, naked except for scanty swimming trunks, were diving one after the other into the green depths below them, clambering back up the corner logs of the pilings, and diving again. Cupping his fingers against his forehead the better to see them, Mr. Doynebee stood a while on the graveled edge of the road opposite the piling. Not so long ago, a bare fifteen years at the most, Ray had trekked up the river with such a gang of boys to swim in that very place. How many of these boys, Mr. Doynebee mused, would wind up as Ray had, outwardly as successful, inwardly as broken in spirit? How many of them would shatter what could be the finest relationship of a man's life, and then, like Ray, be unable, once the damage was done, to piece together the remnants into some working whole?
The question rankled within him, answered into him reso-
ingly as the questions of the last few days, which had seemed
at the time so obsessive, had not. Somewhere along the years
he must have failed Ray utterly, and now here was the result,
Ray home, whipped and bewildered, carrying on simply because he
knew nothing else to do, because he was afraid to quit. Why,
after Ray was sixteen or seventeen, after he was old enough to
have digested thoroughly the essential facts about the differ-
ences between men and women, hadn't he taken him aside, talked
to him man to man about the urges that drive a man on to one
excess after another, once a certain pattern is set up, pointed
out to him what was likely to happen to him if he didn't regu-
late himself with some wisdom? Remembering himself at sixteen
or seventeen, remembering himself a few years later, those wild
years with Tom Briggs, remembering that Ray was his son and
would undoubtedly inherit some of his own inclinations, why
hadn't he told him so many things? But what could he have said
that would have mattered? The life he'd led during his early
manhood had been so different from Ray's. What actually had been
common in their two lives? To live by means of one's hands was
so different from living by means of one's brains. He'd never
really understood the kind of life Ray had grown up to live, un-
anchored, centered in a suitcase and a changing hotel room. But
he was only excusing himself, and the excuses he had to offer
amounted to very little. He was Ray's father, and that alone
was what counted most. Somewhere along the years he'd forgotten that fact, and so he'd failed Ray. That was why he had to go to Portland, see that girl, bring her around.

Paying little attention to the cars that whirred by him in either direction or to the river below him, he continued along the road, his feet carrying him along automatically. It was a good thing, he thought, at a time like this to walk along in the cool of the evening and not to have to look where he was going, just walk and let his mind ramble wherever it wanted to.

Unhampered by any need to watch the road, he wound around the next few curves, walking slowly and deliberately until he was half way down a long incline that brought the road to within a few feet of the level of the river. The moon, always late this time of the year, had not yet risen. Except for the light flashed along the oiled surface of the road by the occasional automobiles that raced past him, darkness lay everywhere around him. He ought to turn round, he thought. Ray would surely be home by now. But, tired and unwilling to start back at once, he decided to sit on the guard-rail and have a smoke before he headed back toward Bonner.

As he gazed down the river, the lurid glare of the brick-orange flames shot up into the night by the smoke stack of the mill caught his eye. Plastered against the dark, the inhuman coloring mesmerised him. That harshly vivid light, hot with human sweat and aching muscle, seemed representative of his life.
There was a vitality and compulsion about it that was neither distasteful nor repulsive. And neither had been his life, whatever had been its meaning.

All the questions that had been stabbing through his mind the last few days—only five swift days, he reckoned quickly—surged back to him, but where thirty-six hours ago they'd seemed urgent enough, now they seemed utterly undemanding. Over and over again he'd told himself that he'd never rest content until he found satisfactory answers to them. Now, sitting silently on the guard-rail, he became aware that whether he found answers or not seemed unimportant, not at all engrossing. Not till he found an answer for Ray at any rate. After that—well, after that, maybe he could become as wrapped up in those questions again. Maybe.....

And yet, as he stared down the river toward the reddish-orange flames spewed up by the smoke stack, he wondered if he might not already have found an answer, part of one at least. It could just be that in the effort to find an answer for Ray he was finding an answer for himself. Every back ache he'd ever endured in his life, every ache in his heart, would be worthwhile if only he could get Ray back on the right road again. Life would be well worth the living, living as simply as he'd been obliged to live. That could be the answer—to feel that he was needed and wanted, desperately wanted. To have love in his heart.
Angelo's phrase returned with a whirling emphasis that lifted up his imagination. To have love in your heart. Well, didn't he have love in his heart? Hadn't he had it all along? Weren't there still directions in which to exert it, directions that Netta would have known instinctively? Love in his heart for Ray, and after him for Rosie, who day by day seemed more and more to be taking over Netta's place in his heart, and after her for Clarence and Frank and Clarice and the new baby that was coming, and after them for Addy even and for Maud? The answer began to seem so amazingly clear, so shingly simple, so appalling just what Angelo had said it was. And yet it was not simple. It was complex, full of knots and wrinkles, when a man was living, actually living, actually trying to demonstrate the answer in his own life.

That was what had been the trouble with him. He hadn't been living. He'd been vegetating like the roses out in the back yard, living tightly inside himself, moving about in the world without actually being a vital part of it, living in a world he'd made up for himself, a world hemmed in by little squares of paper with perforated edges. Like Ray he'd gotten off on the wrong track, but he was luckier than Ray. Before he'd gotten into a jam, he'd begun to question the life he was leading, had begun to see through it, even if only blindly.

In a sudden flash of insight he realised that he'd been asking his questions the wrong way all the time. It hadn't
night, but couldn't they, do able to talk to each other

Together on the front porch, he and they'd just as they'd met that
they'd always been waiting for him. By this time, they'd the

way, who'd secretly been waiting for him. By this time, they'd the
to think about him, and the plan had com on order to help

arrived at some definitive conclusions. How much easier it was

of the road. How much easier the walking became now that he'd

set off down the road toward home, walking on the lower side
to speed up with him. He'd passed the guarded posts, and

He knocked out the numbers of the plate, scrunched out each

house to have him every time he made a move.

didn't want a reminder of those past seven years around the

dashes were better. But get the book out of sight at least. He

anything valuable enough to store in one. If he thought that

second book, he'd never need to rent, since he'd never had

and were, or put the album away in the bank, or on a shelf,

covered the stamp back into cold each year. If he thought he

room table. He'd go home. Tell Kay about the album, perhaps

done with them and that evening without expecting at home on the A

still, no matter now. He was done with those years now,

hastened, meant it he who'd played those years for him

those years, but was it he who'd played those years

not really questioning. Condemnation. They'd played him false,

the last seven years of his life had been questioned, and

he'd been unaware of the fact during all of the last five days.

been the whole life had been questionable. It had been—
they'd never been able to talk before, talk and drink beer and talk and drink beer, he helping Ray with his problem and Ray helping him with his. They'd be working together, as Angela said he and his family worked together, with love in their hearts.

But first of all, Mr. Doymbee told himself as he strolled around the first curve that swung out along the river on the way homeward, he had to get clearly in his mind what he'd tell Ray and what Ray must tell him, so that when he met Ray's girl, this Irene Evans, he'd know--

The screaming cry of automobile brakes ground into his ear. The full beams of the headlights of a flashy convertible that was careening badly out of control around the curve blinded him. For a few tense seconds Mr. Doymbee hesitated, a dizzying, paralytic fear clutching every nerve and muscle fiber in his body. He had to get off the road, his mind told him, get far off the road, yet when he jumped off the oiled surface his right leg thumped against the guard-rail, against which he stood pinioned, unable to move further, unable to think what to do, his mind as well as his eyes blinded by the oncoming headlights.

And then the car had hit him, shoving him and part of the guard-rail over the brink. Almost completely numb from the force of the collision, he hurtled down the bank. Then a sharp, axe-like blow against the side of his head as it struck the slashing edge of a boulder partially submerged at the water-
line.....The geyser-like splash of the car plummeting into the muddy grey water.....The soft tug of the current as his body settled into it, sank below the surface eddies.

And then, as the moon peered over the rim of the mountain bordering the river, a silence broken only by the echo of the yapping of a disconsolate dog in Bonner, a few curves, a few hundred yards down the road.
Get the

as to how much she wanted the truth, how desperately she was to

into hard lines, that mother of them had a queer of something
tell from their faces, Ady, won and hapless, any's stillnessed

they'd never be able to suspect her own feelings. She could

than that, because she'd turned the story on expectationally.

and what was false they'd never be able to discover, and more

thing or long as anything appeared in a good light. What was true

wanted things to be seen, both of them ready to believe any

described* hand convulsed* hurriedly, seen shadows the way she'd

茸m that measure* around she'd been unable to obtain her tongue

long past assumption—that she'd been unable to obtain her tongue

how thought he'd been all throughout lunch and all throughout

seem over! how she'd inferred the truth into the author for him

the stamp in it, came into the house bright away to look the

he'd dropped everything; once she'd given him the letter with

always been to do any torture enough for him when he'd let harry know

when constantly they'd heard the train whistle! how glad she'd

the reason how he'd asked her to walk over to the good office

morning! how he'd listened and to leave off waiting and go water

for Keeler* how the train had been later than usual that

happened that Thursday morning—how silently had sat so long waiting

and Ady had seemed so enfeebled in her account of what had

should have what up a long time ago, Kend Keetled. But now

The check in the dining room disposed seventeen-thirty.
"I could show you the very stamp, I think," Maud murmured, her hands itching to clutch the album, to turn over the pages lovingly the way Arthur had always turned them.

"It doesn't matter, Aunt Maud," Addy said, "It's only a piece of paper."

"Looking at the stamp won't bring him back," Ray said. "If he got a kick out of the album, I'm glad, of course, and I'm glad you helped him with it when he'd let you, but--well, damn it, Addy's right. The stamp's only a piece of paper, and we might as well forget it. There are too many other things we can't forget."

The remoteness which had enveloped him over the last few days swept over him again, a thick shell of isolation behind which he'd retired as if to brace himself against any further shocks. He went back to the open doorway, where, his back turned to Maud and Addy, he leaned once more against the door frame.

"There were lots of things he thought more of than that goddam album," he said presently. "It's funny we never realized it until too late. At least, I didn't. I never knew him at all until four nights ago, when--" His voice choked up.

He's not going to break down, Maud wondered, not now, after he's held up this long. Why, he hadn't even cried at the funeral, as she and Addy and Rosie, who had wept heart-brokenly, had. Even Joe had brushed away a few tears. Maybe it would do him good to break down, she thought, be good for her too, because
if he once lost control, she could manage without any difficulty
to get the album. Just exactly what she'd say, she didn't know
off-hand, but the right words would materialize. She'd try to
comfort him, and in his appreciation he'd be more than willing
to give her anything she might hint she wanted.

Maud got up, clumped over to Ray, put one pudgy hand on
his shoulder.

"Ray, Ray," she began soothingly, "there's no good going
to come from endless regrets. Remember what the Bible says.
What the Lord has given the Lord can take away. We all have to
go sooner or later, and--"

Ray shook off her hand. "Leave me alone, will you?"

"But, Ray, I only meant--"

"Who the hell cares what you meant? Just leave me alone,
can't you?"

He stalked out on the porch, where he sat down on the top
step, his face huddled against the palms of his hands. For a
moment Maud glared after him, her eyes canvassing the length
and breadth of his back, enased in the vest of the light gab-
erdine suit he'd worn every day, except the afternoon of the
funeral, since he'd been home. Just like Arthur, she thought
bitterly. You can't reach him, get close to him, no matter how
hard you try. No matter what you do, he always makes you feel
like an intruder. Her face hardened against him, but within a
few seconds she forced back into it an expression of injured
she'd come to know him better. He was something more then the
handicapped. If only he had been home more often so that
way to handle him was to handle him exactly as she'd learned to
way it been anticipated but now we to know that the only
hope, had it been anticipated. Why hadn't the let me stand there in the doorway?
unpredictable. Why hadn't she let me have my hand on
one cursed heart. How could she have succeeded here hand so
she could. She'd more than likely have everything now,
seeing again the updated pack, her hands on her lap, her
head and back again, her back, her head

[...],
mere back-slapping salesman she'd always assumed he was. Inside he was as hard to get at as Arthur, she could see that now. His outward appearance was a blind, a mask he put on to hide what went on inside himself. And she'd found it out too late. She'd never got the album now that she'd irritated him as no one else in all likelihood ever had. And such a time to rub him the wrong way. Oh, how could she have been so stupid, so utterly, utterly stupid?

The door opened quietly, and Ray came in. Opening her eyes, Maud saw him standing in the doorway, his face still drawn but a softer look in his eyes than she'd seen all evening.

"I'm sorry, Aunt Maud," he said. "I shouldn't have spoken the way I did, sworn at you like that. It was pretty uncalled-for. But I suppose you can understand why. There's so much that's gone, and a man never knows until after it's gone how much it meant. I'm sorry."

Hope rising high within her once again, Maud spoke gently, "There's nothing to apologize for, Ray." Her voice was silken as cat's fur. "When you've been through this kind of thing as many times as I have, you'll understand more what I mean."

"Yah," Ray said.

Perhaps, Maud reasoned, she hadn't been so stupid as she'd thought. Perhaps what had seemed the most asinine move of her whole life would turn out to be the smartest move she'd ever made. For now she knew exactly how far she might go with Ray, knew as
she'd never known before what she might say to him and how he would react to what she said. But she mustn't overwork this new knowledge while he was still over-wrought. She'd better wait until tomorrow, when they'd all feel more inclined to settle matters less nervously and when she could be less likely to commit another blunder, before she pressed her new advantage. The strain was beginning to tell on her too, and why shouldn't it? She was old, older than Arthur had been. She couldn't sit up half the night any more. She needed some rest, and so did Ray, and as for Addy—in her condition she ought to have been in bed hours ago.

"Don't you think," she suggested, "that we'd all be the better for a good night's rest? We're all so jumpy, so worn out. Tomorrow when we all feel better..."

"I guess you're right, Aunt Maud," Ray agreed with her. "What do you say, Ad? Shall I drive you home? Or would you rather stay the night here?"

"Well," Addy began uncertainly, "I suppose I could stay here. Call Joe and tell him I'm staying. But I don't know, maybe I'd better go home, look after the children in the morning, get Rosie started for the day—poor girl, she's heart-broken over papa's going—and then come back tomorrow sometime. And maybe by that time," she glanced hopefully at Ray, "maybe by that time you'll have found the bank book, and we can..."

She stopped, frightened by the look she saw flood over Ray's face.
Ady looked at him again, too confused to speak.

"What?" Ady demanded.

In the book, where her eyes lingered on its memorized

Opening the book, her hands trembled. Ady exhaled

"do on' open it."

"Tell me, don't you open it?" Ady asked.

Time then spoke good.

The first chance she got. Well, maybe she'd choke on it then.

Ady's face was drawn and pale. She kept her eyes closed, tears streamed down her cheeks. The book, the book unopened in her hands. Had she read from one of them?

Her eyes were open with an almost obscene excitement. Ady asked the book to open one of them. And she read, she read the book opened in her hands. Had she read from one of them? Yes. Yes, she asked.

"Well, you don't need to wonder any more."

He tossed the

A wad of money was gingerly handed over in a bank.
And then she began to cry, a foolish child's crying that aggraved Ray more than anything she might have said.

"How should I know where it's gone?" he asked her. "Anyway, what difference does it make?"

"But what could he have done with it all?" Addy wailed. "Just frittered it away?"

"It was his money, wasn't it? He could do with it what he damn well pleased, couldn't he?"

"Yes," Addy sobbed, "but I always thought--"

"What the hell does it matter what you thought, what anybody thought about the damn money?"

Addy pulled her handkerchief out of her sleeve, blew her nose hard, wiped at her eyes. "I always thought it was still all there—in the bank, I mean—and...oh, it might be horrible to say, but why not, since there isn't any of it left to amount to anything anyway. I had counted on it. I didn't want Sam to die any more than either of you, but as long as he has, and I'd always thought the money was still all in the bank, it only seemed fair...."

She blew her nose again. Her tears had gradually subsided.

"Why the hell should anything seem fair?" Ray asked. "Personally, I don't give a damn about the money, not a penny of it."

"You don't have to," Addy said, beginning to cry again.

"You've got plenty of your own, more than enough for just you. And you always have a steady salary, not like Joe, who's--"
"Oh, to hell with Joe," Ray cut in. "You should have known when you married him that you'd always live from hand to mouth, that you'd never have more than just enough to get by on. Do you have to take it all out on pop, just because you find out after he's gone that he hasn't left a chunk of money behind to pull you and Joe out of a hole?"

Addy began to sob violently. Ray grew ashamed of himself. This was no way for the two of them to behave hardly ten hours after they'd put the old man away. But he couldn't contain himself no longer. He'd been bottled up too long, and there was no one else to unburden himself to, now that the old man was gone and Irene would have nothing more to do with him. And then to cry over the fact that the old man had spent money that was rightfully his, instead of leaving it behind as a legacy for an incompetent daughter and her husband. And for a son that had disappointed him. It was too much to listen to without barking back at.

"What if he did spend the money?" he went on. "Wasn't it his to spend like he wanted to? He lost enough coming by it, didn't he? It wasn't much fun for him to lose one hand, cripple up the other, never be able to work again. Just sit around the last seven years of his life doing nothing. I hope he had a good time spending the money, however he spent it. I wish he'd spent every penny of it, even if all he did was throw it down the drain. I hope he bought something with it that he wanted, something he'd never have been able to buy without it."
Addy was crying softly now. May wished he could cry himself. Being able to cry was a good thing, gave you a release you couldn't get any other way. Look at Addy now. She'd cry her eyes out once and for all, and then she'd pull herself together little by little and be all right. Look what crying had done for Irene that evening up on the pass. Maybe he ought to cry himself, wallow in tears for a while. But he couldn't. He was too stoppered up inside to cry. He'd just have to go on somehow, cry inside, gradually get so he wouldn't want to cry any more.

Maud stirred uneasily in her chair. "He did love the stamps."

May strode over to the table. There it was, the album, just where the old man had left it before he went out on that last walk up the river. One thing he had loved, Maud had just said, the stamps. What a consolation they must have been for him those long idle days he'd had to live through. Now what to do with them? What would the old man want done with them? Have them go to Addy, who hadn't an iota of interest in them? Oh, no. The old man wouldn't have wanted that. Keep them himself? But what would he do with them? Drag them around with him from one hotel room to another, fill up valuable space in his suitcase? That wouldn't do, either. And he didn't want them any more than Addy did. The old man had already given him all he wanted, that arm around his chest as they lay in bed together
She read her eyes with her handkerchief waving.

"But Andy might want it, then. Kind enough." don't mean a damn thing to me."

"I don't see why not. May interested. Returned Andy or I.

"I don't see it. I couldn't take the strain."

It's been in the family so long, and another thought or much is sure anything would want it to be either to you or to Andy."

"Oh, no, not. She said, 'You shouldn't give it to me.'"

Let her be coaxed into taking it.

She thought it ought to belong to him or Andy. She meant that she didn't pretend for just a few minutes

must understand she wanted it. Of course, she'd like it, but she

self. Here was any offering her the album, and she hadn't got

hand much back in her work. It couldn't be, she told her.

would you like it?"

ething the trouble just because it was the least amount of paper some-

e about it, 'ain't kind,' he whispered.

ever happened to hear still, the right ear,

had said, 'that would hand do with it, wherever she went, when-

nere was nothing in it just little papers of paper, or Andy

the album to hand,' she said, but would she want it?

et about him in spite of what he'd done.

those few nights ago. The memory of how the old man had really
What would I want with it? Just one more thing to clutter up the house."

"You see, Aunt Maud," Ray kept at her. "Addy and I are out. It might as well go to you, then."

"Oh, no, Ray," Maud answered, softly, but with only a faint show of resistance. "I really think you ought to take it."

"Well, if you won't have it," Ray said, "I suppose you won't. But I can't see why. After all, you stuck by him when the rest of us were gone. You worked hard for him, were good to him. It seems only fair--"

"Well, if you really want me to have it, Ray..." Thank the good Lord, Maud thought, she was sitting away from the direct light of the lamp. She couldn't trust her eyes, which would surely give her away if the light shone on them enough for Ray to see them clearly.

"That's settled then," Ray said. "The ash trays to me, the table to Addy, the album to you. We haven't accomplished much in two hours, have we?"

He picked up the album, looked half-heartedly at the water splotch on the cover, took it over to Maud, who accepted it with resignation.

"I know pop would be glad you're taking the album, Aunt Maud. He wouldn't have wanted it to go to just anyone."

"Maybe you're right, Ray," Maud said, shutting her eyes tight. "I wonder if he really cared who got it. But of course
we'll never know."

Addy stood up. "I think you'd better take me home, Ray. I can rest a lot better in my own house."

"That's a good idea, Addy," Maud said, getting up too. "And then after you come up tomorrow, we can really get to work—when we all feel more rested. We hardly made a beginning tonight."

"I'll get my coat, Ad," Ray said. He went into Mr. Doynbee's bedroom.

"Now, Addy," Maud said, "get a good night's rest. Take a sleeping pill if you have one in the house. You'll feel ever so much better in the morning."

"I suppose so," Addy said. "I'm glad you took the album, Aunt Maud. It'll be a source of pleasure for you, something to remember papa by. Though I don't suppose you'll forget him any sooner than Ray or me."

"You ready, Addy?" Ray came out of the bedroom.

"I guess so," Addy said. She looked bewilderedly about the room. "Yes, I guess I am."

"Forget everything I said," Ray said, shepherding her to the door. "I'm still pretty raw inside, that's all. I really didn't mean what I said, especially about Joe. Joe's all right."

The album still in one hand, Maud watched them out the door, which she shut carefully behind them. Her other hand still on the knob, she stood silently where she was, waiting for the
sound of the car driving off. The motor was starting. At last she had the house to herself. The house and the album.

Without moving from the door, she pressed the worn red book tightly against her waist, triumph in her eyes. It was finally hers. Never again would she have to open it in secret. From now on she could flaunt it in front of anybody.

And then the motor stopped and suddenly she heard someone hurrying up the walk, hurtling up the steps. She moved back from the door just as Ray opened it.

"That's the matter?" she asked, stepping out of his way.

Ray stopped abruptly, stared at the album, clutched against her middle. And then strode past her to the chair Addy had been squirming in.

"The bank book," he explained. "Addy left it around here somewhere. You haven't seen it?"

Maud shook her head.

"What little's left in the bank she might just as well have," Ray said, scoping about the chair. "It'll help pay for the confinement. She can have every scrap in the house for that matter, hang on to it, sell it. It's all the same to me."

"Poor Addy," Maud said. "I'm afraid the shock was too much for her."

"She'll get over it." Ray tipped back the chair to look under it. "People like Addy shock easy, but hardly ever very deep. In a few days she'll go bumbling along just like always."
I don't suppose she'll ever be much different." He slid his fingers between the cushion and the arms of the chair. "Here it is, thank God." He shoved the bank book into his coat pocket. "Some of us don't change, some of us do—if the shock bites deep enough, just once maybe." His face softening somewhat, he locked past Maud, past the album. "And then we know what we have to do."

At the door he turned half around.

"Good night, Aunt Maud. Don't wait up for me."