

I slept like the dead, waking with that muzzy feeling of not knowing where I was. The arched window told me, and the absence beside me in bed told me even more forcefully.

beyond the bright lights of downtown, and even those did not seem so bright

“I came to see if I can help out. A little money, perhaps?”

“Honestly gotten?”

“Sandy had a twinge of conscience and upped his rent a bit. That’s where this comes from.”

“All right then.”

thumping overhead.

“What was that?”

“Giorgio at his exercises. Jumping jacks. dumbbell.”

I held my tongue somehow about the aptness of that word associated with the Mazzini creature.

“How is he paying his rent? There are no wages...”

“On the cuff. You would do the same. He can catch up on the rent when there are wages again.”

“Mrrrie, what’s going to happen? I don’t mean with us. The lockout and all...”

She nodded. From her expression, I could tell that there luckily was not more.

“It’s something you said.”

She sat up in alarm.

“‘The way things have always been.’ Pluvius and I may be ble to do something with that.”

“What’s this Cutlass character look like?”

“I think I spotted him in the Reading Room today. Took his hat off to read-- didn’t strike me as the Butte type who wanders in to kill time until the speakeasies open. After he left, I went down and asked Miss Runyon what he’d looked up. She didn’t pay me any mind at first, claimed he was obviously a gentleman in town on business. Silly old bat. She thinks any male who gives her the time of day is Prince Charming. Had to tell her he looked to me like he might be a sniper. That sent her flying off to what he’d asked for, which turned out to be in the bound newspapers. Chicago 00 for July, 1909. Mean anything to you?”

My life, was all.

Who would have guessed Sandison, sunk in his beard and collecting fixation, had such a keen social sense?

This tortured, boastful, inventive, grudge-ridden, wisecracking city built not upon bedrock but copper ore was impossible to banish, like some wayward family member you can’t help but keep in touch with. If Butte fairly often got under everyone’s skin, including mine, the heart is located there as well as the spleen. Not to mention, I suppose the red blood.

“For too long I couldn’t figure out why you seemed familiar. The Latin did it. You can always tell a U of Chicago man, but you can’t tell him much.”

“Was it a rough ride in Havana?”

“What’s Cuba got to do with...?”

"It's in overset, ready to go." Bailey had found former Rough Riders...The only high ground you were on during the charge up San Juan Hill was the height of deceit."

"Need I say I have left instructions, should anything happen to--"

"We've all read that, Llewellyn. What's your price?"

"You should have read a little further, Cutthroat. Silence and absence, of course. Must I spell it out? You go back to Chicago, and never mention me to the gambling mob."

"You're ruining a good newspaper war, you know."

"I fervently hope so."

"Casper was the best counterpuncher I ever saw. You must have picked it up from him.

"Never a word, Cartwright."

"That goes for you, too, Llewellyn." He stalked off, flinging back at me as he went: "Rabble-rousing cretin."

"Peddler of billingsgate," I retaliated over my shoulder while heading the other way.

"Lapdog of the bolshies."

"Unprincipled pencil-pusher."

"Arrant splitter of infinitives."

"Purveyor of puerile nonsense."

"Fancypants fabulist."

"Windy City windbag."

Our epithets fading into the night with us, we parted for good.

"Can't you tell? I'm bulletproof."

parrot
voice

Hearing me let myself in to the boarding house, Grace appeared at the top of the stairs in her rose-colored dressing gown, my favorite. "What now?" she said as if my presence might bring on a fresh outbreak of hives.

"Cutthroat is on the train going east," I reported. "That frees me to--

--hop on the midnight train going west, I imagine," she blazed. "Off to Australia or some other end of the earth. Well, out with it, then

"I was about to say, Grace, it liberates me to stay and resume married life, if the other party is willing."

She scratched an arm nervously. "Morrie, we've been through this and through this. "But how? There's still the gamblers out to get your hide."

"That has been taken care of. The mob wouldn't dare."

You want him bumped off?"

"No! That's too extreme--"

"Then I can just send a couple of boys around with crowbars to work over his legs, how about."

"I appreciate the thought, but not that either. What I really want done is--"

The Highliner cocked his head. "That's all you want? Just run a bluff on some boobs back in Chi?"

"It would be exceedingly helpful."

He stroked his beard. "That moniker I'm supposed to lay on them--how's that spelled again?"

"Double L," I recited, "E, W--

"That's easy done. I'll have a few of the boys spread the word around Chicago that any mobster who sets foot into Montana will go back out in a box six

box 6' long

You're
5'11" in
away for
mom?

feet long. Message signed, sealed, and delivered by Morgan Llewellyn, better known as the Highliner. That suit you, chum?"

"A perfect fit."

"You are my all."

I won't say how I said that, it is too wrenching even now.

"That's all well and good. How are you going to, you know. Provide."

I said humbly, "You are looking at the new city librarian of Butte."

Grace covered her mouth with her hand as if to slap down astonishment.

"Sandison has some sway with the library board. All right, he has them over a barrel, with his book collection."

She started down the stairs, her eyes shining. I advanced up the steps, we met in the middle.

"You've really turned over a new leaf?"

"Better than that, Mrs. Morgan." I moved to take her in my arms. "Book upon book of them."

###

"You. Decided to come over the wise side, did you."

"By the book."

flung at him as I turned away

“Don’t you reciprocate hospitality?”

“Sure. Come on in.”

“This isn’t the end of it, you know.”

“Actually, it is.”

“All I have to do back in Chicago is drop that name to the right people and it’s your death warrant.”

“Just so it doesn’t sound like 00 around here, maybe you had better call me Sandy.”

“Sure thing, Mr.--Sandy.”

In my mind’s eye, I was taken back to
The gatherings of miners in the 00 basement

--actually on the rising ground of the Hill--undulated with the usual
commerce of an energetic city, but

Butte was a compressed world, thick as its geology. Streets were glaciers
of people when a shift changed at the mines--the Cornishmen flowing to the 00
neighborhood, the Irish to Dublin Gulch, the Welsh and Italians and Serbian and
Finns and Norwegian to their own enclaves. The Constantinople of the Rockies,
another appellation locally favored,

covering the hillside

The tall downtown buildings: made possible by the advent of elevators;
Morrie had seen Chicago rise.

Butte was as if Chicago’s smaller skyscrapers had been crated west. (or
shrunk/

from their earlier recital of labor’s struggles that the Anaconda Company
some time back had lowered miners’ wages by a dollar a day, a sharp cut, and the
union leadership at the time had called a strike that shortly failed at the point of
bayone

My earlier adventure in Montana, cut short for reasons best not gone into here, lingered in me. I had a yearning, a yen, a positive homesickness for a place where I had spent only one short teaching year. No day since then have I not thought of Marias Coulee.

The world has put on new clothes without you even noticing the needle was threaded.

“Will miracles never decrease,” Sandison said sourly.

as if it was all the encouragement in the world.

This was an opening bid if there ever was one.

How, behind any one person, the others lingered. The past calved them, as surely as icebergs emanate from the glaciers of Greenland. Some certain skein of event changed what would come, what would be fixed into memory.

By all signs there was no hope of putting him at ease, so I put him to work.

“I was given a helping of that myself.”

I was supposedly a figure of learning. What were you left with? You teach generations of children, instill in them every facet of life you can think of, show them what stories are made of, drill the dancesteps of the language into them until they helplessly recite in their sleep, and even so, against all expectations of civilized outcome, people ride off the face of the earth without a trace.

Let them think what they think.

Without thinking, I said:

fresh as the next heartbeat.

The belief that they're silkier inside than the rest of us.

That could be a little or a lot.

You know, there's always the chance that was meant to be funny.

...as if the first pages of a book lay open.

a skein of feats like a tapestry hung through the mind

with everything in me (i.e. wholehearted)

How much can a person dare and yet remain bound to the world -- not fly
off in the mind beyond touch of all that is real?

"He, aw, you know." Russian Famine vaguely put up his dukes.

Everything was new once.

"A road runs both directions, Grace."

My life has not been saturated with schemes, like some.

"I can see so."

"It's not that unusual,"

It was too late to bell that cat.

Trying to teach an old dogma new tricks.

Forever and a day could go by, and I...

"Now that you mention it."

the proportion to touch and turn a life.

I tried to calm down into some semblance of a rational being.

It hurt all the way to the heart, to hear that the puddled settlements on the great prairie were drying up.

Tactics. Always the great question, those.

The only ammunition expended was the joking calibre.

As though he had caught a fever.

“The crannies of the cranium, yes.”

Which it is. I was born Morgan Llewellyn.

Dreams are gatherings.

and stay in a way nothing else does

Dreams, episodes, fragments of lives...they add up to years, to having lived.

The moon had the sky to itself then, and there just ahead of winter was the big harvest version. Outside the window as I tried to fend off sleep...

--a good many of them donated from his own lifelong collection, which not incidentally persuaded the city fathers to make him librarian--

Murmur mutter cuss cuss

“You’re having yourself quite a day.”

“Kiss yourself goodbye.”

The percentage of him between his ears may not have been much, but...

green as a magic forest

And found myself in a literary garden of delight.

pigeon-breasted

The holdings of the shelves

It couldn't be.

That found a seam in him. “You know Latin? How about Greek?”

gold-titled

had drawn strange glinting looks from Grace and Hooper as well, that
supper time.

She nodded. From her expression, I could tell that there luckily was not
more.

as if I was in on a conspiracy.

It was not popular with him, but...

“You are getting along with Sam Sandison?”

“Oh, you mean Sandy?” I said airily. “We're like that.” I held up my first
two fingers, crossed.

That is all another story for another time

“Don't you keep up?”

“You're awfully thick with...”

“Ah, on that. I need to speak with you.”

“I value my sanity too much.”

with a set face.

This was uncomfortable.

What precipitated this?

gave me a look that took inches off my height.

“Not until there’s a pill for shrillness.”

in pulpits from there to Cardiff every seventh day.

said as if it had been on her mind throughout

He inspected me as if noticing my existence for the first time.

rough factions ready to do the fighting.

as if made for my pores

“Mmm, ...--I’m joking, Grace, don’t look so put out.”

in my earlier venture in the open-ended part of America.

Rab

“They’re not. Can you believe it, they’re not.”

I had pledged not to go back to Marias Coulee.

Running up and down the stairstep of eight grades like a lighthouse keeper
of minds

“I must take you into my confidence.”

As a schoolgirl, Rab was always ready for conspiracy.

“Rose and I had a falling out. A family matter.”

(Rab imagines a version.)

“I could not have put it better myself.”

She was not my sister; rather, my sister-in-law.

Rose went through a convulsion of love

a matrimonial pairing

Jared was the kind who could make waves in a birdbath.

Rab had a racehorse keenness about her.

To be around Rab was to hear the patter of little ideas running through her mind.

“Just for fun, let’s say you...

“That is so typical.”

Morrie talking to her class about Australian songlines; realizes his audience of schoolkids doesn’t know Wagga Wagga from Walla Walla.

Rab was onto that like a kitten finding cream.

That put a different light on the matter.

Rab was young as springtime and equally as guileful.

Slim and supple as anyone could be, just before the topography of womanhood began curving and thrusting.

that sudden season of last childhood, spent trying to figure out how the truces of life are won or lost.

chunky boys and 00 girls.

Children as golden tan as honey.

“You were putty when you came to me, at age what?”

Jared: tall, husky through the shoulders, mild blue eyes, black hair slicked back.

onward, to call it that, into the trenches of death in France.

“There, see?” Rab nudged Jared.

in editorials in a crusading newspaper that will campaign for taxing the beastly Company until it hurts.

Rab, a jump with ideas

She poised for a moment before settling to the desk, in the attitude of a canny abbess.

It was like her,...

I thought of the Marias Coulee homesteaders. They had come from somewhere and that somewhere had not left them. (lingered in them)

I told him an Aussie survivor of Gallipoli had told him he felt the cupped hand of God around him in the war. “Putting aside for the moment the question of whether there is a Higher Intelligence--was it something like that with you?”

A heart-to-talk talk, the saying goes. But Rab’s heart and mine were quite different ages, pumping different streams of experience, racing and fluttering to different excitements. Perhaps chin-to-chin is always the best that can be managed.

Rab was going to have a cat fit, but she’d just have to.

my prize pupil Paul Milliron, bright as a new coin

“Not until there’s a pill for shrillness.”

Rab had to be handled like an opened jackknife. She sometimes jabbed just because she happened to know how.

This was Rab at her conspiratorial best.

the mood lashing in her
a chunk of a boy
the freckle epidemic
a bothering child

“I don’t know what we’d do without your jawbone.”

“You’re the one to talk.”

cinnamon eyes

Russian Famine: “Could if I had to.”

“Vixen.”

“There’s been someone, hasn’t there.”

And even after ten years, I needed no reminding, I still was bound by the terms of that farewell.

Rab switched her tail and pounced.

“That will do, Sharp Ears.”

She already was making a big bet in choosing life with this soldier on the front lines of the miners’ union, I thought to myself.

“I’ll accompany you, if I may. There’s an idea we perhaps should explore.”

“You couldn’t dream up a better candidate. Catholic, so Butte would vote for him about a hundred and ten percent. Suffrage supporter from way back, there was the women’s vote. War hero, even a limp to go with it.”

“What happened?”

“A woman.”

Jared recited the saga of Williamson... “Second-best could be a lot worse. Dixon doesn’t have any love lost for Anaconda either. He’s an old Bull Mooser, was a pal of Teddy Roosevelt. The thing is, he’s a real politician, swings like a windvane. If we can get up a 00 for a tax commission, he’ll be for it.

who looked like he could go lion-hunting with a switch.

with the zeal of a schoolgirl and the chest and legs of a circus bareback rider. Jared had made a fortunate catch with her. And she him.

“I hear what you’re thinking.”

“That is so much like you, Mr. Morgan.”

“That hoyden.”

“Petey, don’t scratch so much,” she bossed with natural authority. Eleven-year-old girls could put the word to rights if we would let them. Rabrab at that age very nearly had.

Butte was as if Chicago’s smaller skyscrapers had been crated west. (or
shrunk/

clustered on the horizon as though the earth had rumped beneath it all
Still feeling grumblesome,

pard

, I drew in a lungful of frigid air and said with
we’ll point out the house to you.”

At the oaken front door I used the brass knocker, shaped like the business end of a branding iron into the initials SSS, to announce our presence. "Coming," a familiar gruff voice called from somewhere inside, "don't wear out the knocker."

Grace flushed.

Giving me another frown,

A determined hum of "*Work, for the night is coming*" to dismiss that.

Her head gave a fierce indication toward the adjoining room

She was not surprised at the knock of tongues that had followed her since she took up with Jared Evans.

October, shapeshifting tenth month

He may have been dumb as an anvil, but...

"But they're minding the boarding house." They were not as old as the Butte hill, but close

the greater adversary we shared.

I matched her trace of smile with my own.

sized up the mansion as they might have

The white web of stars above the city

In my youth I had seen Chicago rise. The Constantinople of the Rockies had a long way to go

The lilt was back in her voice.

"I'll accompany you, if I may. There's an idea we perhaps should explore."

"I hear what you're thinking."

"That is so much like you, Mr. Morgan."

sufficiently to build up a store of admiration and exasperation,

"Becoming what, a dustmop?" Sandison

Grace flushed.

Butte itself is a storied place, as I found when I arrived in 1919. on the
rising ground

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Quinlan struck an operatic pose.

Toreadora,

Don't spit on the floor-a.

Use the cuspidora-a,

That's what it's for-a.

"You're all so musically inclined," Betty was doing her part, "what do you get when you drop a piano down a mineshaft?" Quinlan and McGlashan and the others who had spent years underground cocked their heads in anticipation. She delivered the punchline with relish. "A flat miner. I'd hope it was you, Quin."

Resounding hoots greeted that, and were washed down in tribute.

She poised for a moment before settling to the desk, in the attitude of a canny abbess.

It was like her,...

in editorials in a crusading newspaper that will campaign for taxing the beastly Company until it hurts.

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teaching chunky boys and gawky girls.

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you can't pass that up

"Say, don't I know you?" The postman

Mornings I would see the line of people at the library, Sandison counting his staff into the building as he had done with his cowboys at the corral on the ranch.

Grace doesn't know M's real name; section ending:

If she only knew.

My rightful name is Morgan Llewellynn.

Guys will have so much reading material

"Morrie," she said tragically, "you're giving me hives."

"I shall try to uphold the tradition."

It couldn't be your good looks."

It probably wasn't your cologne."

But these ain't everyday circumstances, huh?"

Options as to why Bailey has been sicced onto M:

--The Senator is about to investigate Black Sox scandal, and along with it, fixed fights. At Sandison's suggestion, he wants M. back in Montana to help finagle taxation of Anaconda.

--Sandison has sent Bailey, similar to above, because Sandison has been named head of new tax commission.

--Dora S. has left Morrie and Grace the Butte mansion--but S. along with it. (or vice versa)

with her wonderful lilt.

may be old as the hills, but he

When it comes to brains,

"...when you were Down Under."

"Under? Ah, yes. *Terra australis*. Tasmania and that."

The island continent accounted for my ten-year absence from Montana,

previous to...

(S quotes editorial) "Not bad."

"You have a suspicious nature, Morgan," he sniffed. "It's unbecoming."

"Did you just now figure that out?" "You're slowing down, Morgan."

The beat of the drums could have brought down the wall of Jericho.

Blacksmiths and helpers, their leather aprons flapping with every step.

Pressmen in the square newspaper caps they wear.

Medley of national tunes...

Bunting looped down the announcer's perch (4th of July '19)... Rough Riders

"...when you were Down Under."

"Under? Ah, yes. *Terra australis*. Tasmania and that."

The island continent accounted for my ten-year absence from Montana,
previous to...

Only in America. That shopworn

tall, husky through the shoulders, mild blue eyes, black hair slicked back.

onward, to call it that, into the trenches of death in France.

the treacherous mineshafts of Butte.

with these two as his guardians.

"You were putty when you came to me, at age what?"

How, behind any one person, the others lingered. The past calved them, as surely as icebergs emanate from the glaciers of Greenland. Some certain skein of event changed what would come, what would be fixed into memory.

She already was making a mighty bet in choosing life with this soldier on the front lines of the miners' union, I thought to myself.

some I could mention

at a loosened floorboard in the drawing room

maybe about says it, Professor."

Montana found itself shackled instead of wed. If the hill of copper was a horn of plenty, the miners had come out at the little end.

copper collar

“I grasp that Anaconda is very near almighty in this city.”

from their earlier recital of labor’s struggles that the Anaconda Company some time back had lowered miners’ wages by a dollar a day, a sharp cut, and the union leadership at the time had called a strike that shortly failed at the point of bayonet.

“What’s the other saying--‘bloody but unbowed’?”

Jared was not one to daub his life thick with philosophy. “Don’t get me started on Anaconda.”

“Might as well,” he

He smiled ever so slightly.

“Ah, those.”

“We have to keep the troops out of it,” Jared said.

The idea is to come up with fair tax rates and put it to a statewide vote.

Puzzled, I spoke the most common of knowledge.

Rab swooped on that. “Just for fun, let’s say you...

He grinned across the plates at me.

Anaconda goons on the lookout for me,

Were I a family man,

“Can we count on you?”

“Somebody has to worry about you if you won’t,” she muttered.

She scooted her chair closer to mine.

“For a minute there, I thought you’d sprung Sigmund Freud on us.”

an idealistic countenance here and a cynical one there
to hit Anaconda where it hurts.

Young, old, eager, dyspeptic, fashion plates and near bums, even a few
women.

and his union lieutenants

on the quiet--which was to say, in strict secrecy so as not to alert Anaconda
and its mouthpiece, the *Post*. The word judiciously passed in speakeasies, spread
to country weeklies where a fledgling reporter or a veteran compositor might be
ready to move on, sprinkled into even such unconventional precincts as the Butte
Public Library;

the thought lofting me as if in balloon ascension

“I don’t doubt that we can get people to read the rest of the paper,

Professor,

pleaded that my ears were burning

get away with fancy wordslinging and that’ll do the trick. People will
want”

Morrie's voice

00 puffed her cheeks. *home*

"It's only..."

"That's some 'only'."

words Morrie might use: toil, scoundrel

[That ukase... *stopped me.*

"You're a scrapper."

I resorted to...

Rose always said

, 00 elaborated.

[*after all,*
A life is a contraption, more complicated than most.

["That's all to the good." *But*

"Just getting rid of some wrinkled money."

Hic sunt dracones--Here be dragons.

as a hypocrite's Bible is said to smell of thumbs.

It was cause for reflection.

"I can imagine."

This was tricky (business).

My face went hot.

voice carried a tremor

I answered in kind

you're a pencil-pusher of some kind? (Sandison asks?)

I assisted the arithmetic. Write-offs. 00. That sort of thing.

...this recounting for history and the proper authorities, if they have the gumption to act on its facts. History's justice I have more confidence in.

I carry that in my head each time I... Not that much of a load, I suppose, but it adds up over years.

It galled me.

Fool that I have been.

In the skull vault is everything the mind has ever taken or been given. The 00 of 00 rests against 00, both compressed to dots of memory and so made intense.

Notions jittered in my mind like fancywear on a clothesline.

button-busting

Not for the first time in my life (nor probably the last), delay stood in for decision. Tonight, I told myself; that would have to be early enough. Or at least as early as I could muster the question.

"Only just barely."

"I know a little something about that. 00 years of 00."

I knew what she meant.

They had lost touch with hope.

"There's evidence of that."

yes, I know."

I stiffened.

This was dismal.

Matters kept turning themselves over in my mind.

I was not going to be a foot soldier for that idea.

"I'll do that," as soon as February has thirty days."

This was more like it.

All I could do was to try not to flinch away.

It seemed only right.

interrupted my slumber

I was not about to truckle to Anaconda's goons.

The meantime. Mean was the word for it, all right. Ever since...the time had been wicked.

I decided it was easier to stay mystified than to delve into it.

If the eye saw across time as it does distance

You can purify yourself out of existence little by little

["To the shores of the Himalayas."]

I tried to wall out such thoughts with work.

It crossed my mind--all the time--that...

Something like this makes you wonder how well you know yourself.

Skepticism still was uppermost in me.

I don't say that I find myself in 00. But neither do I lose track of myself there.

I began to wish I had worn a breastplate.

This must not seem like a brag. It is more in the nature of anecdotal evidence.

To have electricity at the twitch of a switch was such a treat I practically bathed in it.

But that vaults me ahead of my story.

I demurred as civilly as I could.

00 was the culprit.

"Not many, if any," I said.

To be sure,...

"Also," I began...

I said to myself, Morgan Llewelyn, you...

What brings that thought was...

Put me down in the book of ignorance. I had no idea...

"Where is it you hail from?"

"Across the mountains there. Been around Kalispell for a considerable time."

I was fairly sure I heard Missouri in his voice, as in so many men of Montana, but I asked anyway: "And before?"

"I've accumulated quite a bunch of before's." Meaning, he was not about to elaborate on any of them.

I might as well have told him I was the Thane of Glamis.

I could sit up in the middle of the night and recite it:

Never pick up a knife by its blade.

His voice flexed into speculation.

"Pertaining to--?"

His footfall was nearly mine.

We talked on, in the 00 parlor.

I seldom surprise myself. But I did now.

The world has put on new clothes without you even noticing the needle was threaded.

--that malady of hard swallowing, again--

It took him some seconds, Ben watching with interest, before the words would come out.

I felt as if part of me was gone, some wheel within my head had dropped off.

Neither of us will go on to sainthood from that episode.

I was of different minds about this.

Do I not know those tales.

I want to think I would do better with the moment if I had it over again.

“Spur of the moment sounds like a horse we can all bet on.”

No day since then have I not thought of Marias Coulee.

“00, there’s more vision in a blind man’s dark glasses than there is in you.”

"I am he."

"Will miracles never de cease."

I would not want to be on the receiving end of her wrath.

Prairie Nocturne leftovers:

Watching to see how she was taking this, he immediately upped the ante:
I'm like the fellow who only knew two tunes: 'One is *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*, and the other isn't, I think.'

"Grace, this tastes like chicken but not quite.

A hare out of place.

I had wondered that myself. Many times.

Ambition poked out all over him.

"Don't preen yet," she warned him.

"Do I have any say in this?"

"Are you asking for surefire death?"

Watching to see how she was taking this, he immediately upped the ante:
I'm like the fellow who only knew two tunes: 'One is *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*, and the other isn't, I think.'

With the cottonwoods that rose old and tall along English Creek, the streetside forestation produced almost a roof over the town. The businesses along Main

Street looked considerably better than they otherwise would have, somehow seemed to be trying not to disgrace the trees. The neighborhoods, with all that green over them as shelter from the sun and as a breeze-catcher whenever any air was moving, were wonderful for walking.

Besides the street columns of cottonwoods, a colossal old one with a trunk as big around as the wheel of a hay rake stood in the yard beside the front gate.

..., their gravestones matched humps of marble against the broad and lofty lines of the valley.

"It'll be a humdinger if we can get it all," OO predicted. That is, if the rain didn't resume and keep the hay too wet to stack, or if hail or a windstorm didn't knock it flat.

A determined hum of "*Work, for the Night Is Coming*" to dismiss that.

Now as then, especially sharp translation was required.

Scotch Heaven was never for the fastidious.

The homestead, the one-room school--she had come from the equivalent of a birdnest.

Scotch Heaven was never for the fastidious.

He lifted his hands in surrender.

The mountains reared to the west, a wall at the end of the high plains stretching eastward to nobody knew where. They became like a wall to the Duffs, too--like the wall of a room, a familiar solidness and design. No matter where you were in the coulee maze of the North Fork valley, scramble high enough and the mountain wall would be there, gray-blue, tilted and pillaring.

...arched like stone rainbows, and the pot of treasure at their end mostly gravel. Montana's seasons declared themselves. They regulated life. (Susan's father did not like to be regulated by much else.) A giant winter--1886, 1919--would send the livestock industry to its knees. Farming wobbled with every dry summer.

his throat made a musical excursion now, its long low exploratory hum

the household out for an innocent evening of musical culture,

Speculation of more than one kind in his voice.

The mischief life dealt him was the same hand as hers: that troublesome sense of justice.

[grin was thin enough to pass through a soup strainer.

Wes was not above shaping a line ahead of time.

as if it was all the encouragement in the world.

With critical eye and held breath, she came back to the sheets of paper there in the wash of light and read them over. There was movement of sound and aspiration on the page, and one definition of that was music.

This was an opening bid if there ever was one.

How, behind any one person, the others lingered. The past calved them, as surely as icebergs emanate from the glaciers of Greenland. Some certain skein of event changed what would come, what would be fixed into memory.

By all signs there was no hope of putting him at ease, so I put him to work.

“Now then. We’ll start easy.”

“I’m for that.”

As if anything that truly counted had a given time to it.

This, with Monty--it isn’t simply to...involve the two of us again, is it?
Tell me if it is.”

He wanted to reach for her. Which had not worked for the past four years, had it. “I wouldn’t say so.”

Susan could be seen weighing his words. The weak places in this elaborate man were where she had loved him. She told herself again once was enough.

“But it will take work.”

“Is that all?”

He stopped, seeing the resolve in her face.

He watched as she went in search of paper, and was surprised to see her come back with sheets lined for music. Was she always ready for whatever came along? She took down the words he had just sung and a couple of other recitations before curiosity got the best of her.

she could not wait to pounce

I folded my arms.

It galled him, the deadweight sitting on a song he wanted to come out of
him

Spring was the disappointing time. (OK in Prairie FIND.) Other seasons would let you down in their own way: summer might be too rainy for good haying, autumn too brief or too cold, winter might be one blizzard after another. But spring had its special disappointments. With the cold clog of winter supposedly broken, you looked forward to warm weather and dry earth. Instead, there might be weeks of mud, every step outdoors taken in overshoes heavy with mud. Spring weather would be just warm enough to make you shed a winter coat, just cool enough to chill you into taking a cold. And a spring without rain or a late, wet snow meant the grass and hay would not be good when summer ever came. The melting snow...slush... The deep banks up the coulees could be watched shrinking, crusting into dirty iciness before finally vanishing.

“I’m catching hell about...”

“I was given a helping of that myself.”

Hawk weather, that had been, another oversize Two Medicine summer, when he had ridden this country up, down, and sideways in search of homestead land for himself and Rob.

I was supposedly a figure of learning. What were you left with? You teach generations of children, instill in them every facet of life you can think of, show them what stories are made of, drill the dancesteps of the language into them until they helplessly recite in their sleep, and even so, against all expectations of civilized outcome, people ride off the face of the earth without a trace.

It put him in mind of the time the youngest of the Peterson girls had happily brought her kaleidoscope to school to show it off, and when he popped in for a drink from the waterbucket from supervising recess, there sat Samuel Duff profoundly taking it apart. “*Jesus dancing Christ, lad!*” All teacherly restraint had flown from him as he descended on the intent boy. “*Ingrid Peterson’s whopping brothers will pound the both of us to paste!*” Curiosity nowhere near slaked, Samuel plucked out another shard of color and held it up to the light where it threw a ribbon of rainbow onto the wall. “*But I’ll put it back together, Mr. McCaskill, and then we’ll know how it works.*” Which was the case. The colors of this, a ray here, a startling tint there, Angus had turned over and over, and he lacked Samuel Duff’s confident calm now that he believed he saw their pattern.

Sweat rolled off him. *The Lord’s lubricant,*

My Viennese teacher, a fraud in every other way that counted, at least had been right about preparation: “*Before ve improvise, ve must rehearse.*”

She had unreservedly said back, "*They'll wear their hearts in their ears, I promise you.*"

No three words were ever more intense

She wondered how wakeful he was, here on this ranch where he, like Susan's father and others of the North Fork, had vowed never to set foot unless it was to kick a clod into the grave of the last Williamson.

From the very start, on that most distant day when she and Angus were wed, Adair had not known what to say when all at once a great unforgettable goose of a schoolgirl with the majestic neck she had not yet grown into and those sinewy Duff shoulders stood up tall and in the finest voice gave the one gift that, even then, Adair knew would last:

They were a raccoon-eyed household in the morning, all of them haggard except for Susan and she was edgy enough to strike blue sparks.

her head gave a fierce indication toward the adjoining room

with inconsequential clouds in the way of the sun but no promise of rain

Argument was the language she seemed to know best. Monty made himself give it all he had.

started to prowl in search of how this could be put into words

“He’ll be up here in a minute. I can be the one to put it to him, see where he wants to clear out to.”

He tried a smile that didn’t quite catch hold.

Samuel was plowed under here because he was Adam’s ilk.

For the first time in my life, I was eating a pasty--fortunately pronounced like *past*, not *paste*--a mean and potatoes cooked in pie crust dish that Cornish miners introduced to Butte, and it was one hundred percent delicious.

Let them think what they think.

I banked my anger.

Without thinking, I said:

fresh as the next heartbeat.

The belief that they’re silkier inside than the rest of us.

That could be a little or a lot.

You know, there’s always the chance that was meant to be funny.

A chill went from my soles up to my soul.

...as if the first pages of a book lay open.

a skein of feats like a tapestry hung through the mind

The geography of my life.

the wares of the world

with everything in me (i.e. wholehearted)

How much can a person dare and yet remain bound to the world -- not fly off in the mind beyond touch of all that is real?

“He, aw, you know.” Russian Famine vaguely put up his dukes.

took a vow of poetry -- and no, he didn't leave the v out of that word,
although it came to the same.

Nil desperandum (Never despair) -- Horace

I felt excavated.

...like a (floor)board you know is going to give way.

...there I was pocket-deep in it.

The university turned out to be a map I went across in zigs and zags and
loops of joy.

While I was at the university by the lakefront, going across the map of
knowledge in zigs and zags and loops of joy, Casper was taking on the world, fist
by fist.

I began to see.

The granite in that was...

"Practically that."

I struck 00 in the ribcage with the brass knuckles. He would not be able to
lift that right arm above 00 for weeks.

Everything was new once.

"A road runs both directions, Grace."

My life has not been saturated with schemes, like some.

"I can see so."

"It's not that unusual,"

It was too late to bell that cat.

Trying to teach an old dogma new tricks.

Forever and a day could go by, and I...

"Now that you mention it."

the proportion to touch and turn a life.

the zigzags of life

Life plunges on.

Yet the universals were there.

I tried to calm down into some semblance of a rational being.

We drew new assessments of one another.

It was one of those thoughts that came out of nowhere.

We each tend to think the pat has happened only to ourselves. That it is our marrow only, particular and specific; filling our bones a special way.

Words have shadows, just as surely as we do.

Sleep didn't come, although the recurrent dream that was memory did.

cast a look

At no fixed hour

It hurt all the way to the hear, to hear that the puddled settlements on the great prairie were drying up.

sadly lacking in...

The story I think is too trim to be true...

The 00 repeated the 00.

a smattering of...

Words don't stain me. Behavior is another matter.

the tines of love

in the bask of

an echo back from the wall of the grave

00 looked mortally offended.

Hell itself ought to weep, looking at this.

assiduous

There wasn't a semblance of...

By what divination...

Out of my own mullings

becoming (adj.)

Woodrow Wilson, that whited man...

To find the author of my sorrows, all I had to do was to look in the mirror.

sauced with

afterthought

"There's hope, but not much."

That sort of thing.

"The thing is,..."

"Correct me if I'm wrong."

"Surely that's a bit strong."

"You mustn't."

He wasn't going to fob that off on me.

This day, though,...

That was at odds with...

Tactics. Always the great question, those.

The only ammunition expended was the joking calibre.

As though he had caught a fever.

When did the world ever work like that?

When a heart breaks, it falls into no predictable pattern.

"The crannies of the cranium, yes."

Which it is. I was born Morgan Llewellyn.

During my Australian excursion, I found occasional employment as what might be termed *chef de cuisine* of ledgers--which was to say, cook of the books--for certain imperiled mining firms. Numbers are an easy enough matter of manipulation for me, although unfortunately that facility tends to vanish around the

vicinity of my wallet. There among the would-be mining magnates Down Under, I heard a place spoken of as the 1849 argonauts must have talked of the California goldfields.

Tasmania, Montana, melancholia, absentia--the recent course of my life is compassed by locutions nominatively open at their far ends, I can't help but notice. Once a Latinist always a Latinist, I suppose.

I found employment of a sort as accountant for a mining firm. Numbers are an easy enough matter of manipulation for me, although unfortunately that facility tends to vanish around the vicinity of my wallet. There among the miners I heard a place spoken of as the 1849 argonauts must have talked of the California goldfields.

Its name was Butte.

My earlier adventure in Montana, cut short for reasons best not gone into here, lingered in me. I had a yearning, a yen, a positive homesickness for a place where I had spent only one short teaching year.

Whistling leftovers:

He went perfectly still.

"Can you go that far with me?"

"Rose will think--"

"I'll straighten it out with her. The crooked shall be made straight, Paul."

"I fear that for a woman to be married to me would be like holding a lightning rod."

"Do you know the saying about how an imminent hanging wonderfully concentrates a person's mind? Casper's fate had that effect on Rose as well as me. I dare say she will walk the straight and narrow, where your father is concerned. And you'll have a mother." He gave the wan smile again. "Although the Milliron household now may have to quit paying a housekeeper and hire a cook."

Can you go that far with me?"

"Rose will think--"

"I'll straighten it out with her. The crooked shall be made straight, Paul."

"I will be moving on, at the end of the school year."

He came and went like the comet, in our lives.

telegram. Tasmania. For the next few weeks I went down to the Westwater public library and read every newspaper. I never did find the story of a Tasmania-bound ship going down. I wondered if Father similarly was reading, with his finger.

~~S~~ Dreams are gatherings.

and stay in a way nothing else does

Dreams, episodes, fragments of lives...they add up to years, to having
lived.

October, shapeshifting tenth month

The moon had the sky to itself then, and there just ahead of winter was the
big harvest version. Outside the window as I tried to fend off sleep...

I am prepared to use all the political instincts and administrative wiles--
and, admittedly, the reverse--that have kept me in office all these terms. I don't
have any doubt that I can carry the day. Only that the burden is worth it.

--a good many of them donated from his own lifelong collection, which not
incidentally persuaded the city fathers to make him librarian--

There still were the shadows. Not every night--
was sheer tribulation.

I saw why the job of cryer was short-lived. I felt as if the interior of my
head was being razed, gray cell by gray cell.

There is nothing like watching alcohol change a person before your eyes to
learn about shades of character.

All right, I confess: money has always managed me more adroitly than I
have managed it.

Lanky and shallow chested

and according to the slant of sunlight on the linoleum floor, most of the morning.

“Yes, isn’t it.”

Truth be told,

“I’ll lend an ear.”

I put a finger to my ear to indicate I had not heard fully.

Not an attractive option.

and I was more than ready.

I needed to get my footing under me, in a hurry.

“Skinner, don’t be tiresome.”

“Any lamebrain can make Dakota jokes.

He may have been dumb as an anvil, but...

when it was ruleless country

Murmur mutter cuss cuss *noise*

“You’re having yourself quite a day.”

He stepped over to the mounds of waiting books as if they were spread with a picnic.

oo at lest knew when to keep a decent silence.

“Kiss yourself goodbye.”

The percentage of him between his ears may not have been much, but...

green as a magic forest

quickly I was as rapt as my grade-schoolers at Marias Coulee.

The Schoolchild's Big Book of Stories

The king had a voice the size of a dictionary. "Bring me my remembrancer!"..

. "If that is so, we'll soon overflow! Puddles of memory will follow us everywhere like shadows! Think of it all, rememberer! The taste of green when we thumb a summer pea from its pod. The icicle needles of winter. The whippewee of the night bird. How can our poor heads hold the least little of all there is to remember? Tell me that, whoever can."

Sighing, I patted the page and closed the big book.

No, the comfortable storybook was essential, a schoolteacher's best friend, as I had found in my prairie classroom.

Among the items in my missing sea trunk were old favorite tomes, their murmurings now at the distance of memory.

No, Caesar's classic telling in its calm recognizable grandeur--*Omnia Gallia est divisa in tres partes* --was essential, a siren call to knowledge, as I had found with my prize pupil in my prairie classroom.

And found myself in a literary garden of delight.

Like earls chumming with field hands
pigeon-breasted

The holdings of the shelves

It couldn't be.

Oeuvres Completes de Buffon The leather spine and marbled cover with blues like fireworks. Inside, the steel engravings of beasts and birds, It is a trick only the finest illustrators can pull off, a bit of eggwhite mixed into the hand-coloring to give sheen. Holding my breath, I opened the book to the peacock: the colors practically rioted off the page.

Latin saying.

That found a seam in him. "You know Latin? How about Greek?"

gold-titled

had drawn strange glinting looks from Grace and Hooper as well, that

suppertime.

She nodded. From her expression, I could tell that there luckily was not

more.

Butte never undernamed anything

Whatever trails us through life, however,

as if I was in on a conspiracy.

asked suspiciously

When we reached the high desk where Miss Runyon presided,

In little time, I was on a familiar basis

might sooner or later advance to *Morrie* and *Sam* or at least *Samuel*.

with a characteristic dip of doubt,

Thee and me, certainly, perhaps side by side.

Between us, he said not without reason, we had brains and brawn.

as if the boxing ring ropes were rungs on the ladder of wealth.

their distinctive leather pouches slung on them,

"Go chase yourselves.

It was not popular with him, but...

"The defalcation of the city treasurer last year, if you take my meaning."

It was clear enough to anyone with a nodding acquaintance of Latin: the root verb *defalcare*, to cut off, as with a sickle. Where public funds were the 00--it amounted to cut and run, with the money.

"Embezzlement, you are referring to."

"You are getting along with Sam Sandison?"

"Oh, you mean Sandy?" I said airily. "We're like that." I held up my first two fingers, crossed.

That is all another story for another time.

I did not like the particular intonation he gave it.

"Don't you keep up?"

"You're awfully thick with..."

"Ah, on that. I need to speak with you."

"I value my sanity too much."

with a set face.

This was uncomfortable.

What precipitated this?

gave me a look that took inches off my height.

"Not until there's a pill for shrillness."

in pulpits from there to Cardiff every seventh day.

said as if it had been on her mind throughout

"If we didn't know he's up to something, yeah."

"The Windy City..."

"I know no more of that than a walrus does of the Gulf of Carpentaria." *carpentaria*

He rolled that around in his head a few times, glowering at me.

I would not say he put fear into them, but they turned wary.

He inspected me as if noticing my existence for the first time.

rough factions ready to do the fighting.

Just by being reasonably fastidious, I evidently stuck out like a Venice masquer to anyone capable of suspicion.

The midpoint of a man's life--or perhaps more profoundly, a woman's--
as if made for my pores

Butte

on the rising ground

If the hill of copper was a horn of plenty, the miners had come out at the little end.

Butte was a compressed world, thick as its geology. Streets were glaciers of people when a shift changed at the mines--the Cornishmen flowing to the 00 neighborhood, the Welsh to 00...

Bunting looped down the announcer's perch (4th of July '19)

Montana found itself shackled instead of wed.

The white web of stars above the city

covering the hillside

Butte was not a place where pedigree was all, or even much.

Butte was a compressed world, thick as its geology. Streets were glaciers of people when a shift changed at the mines--the Cornishmen flowing to the 00 neighborhood, the Welsh to 00...Slavs and Italians. Finns and Norwegians.

Italian and Serbian and

--actually on the rising ground of the Hill--undulated with the usual commerce of an energetic city, but

The tall downtown buildings: made possible by the advent of elevators; Morrie had seen Chicago rise.

Bute was as if Chicago's smaller skyscrapers had been crated west. (or shrunk/

If ever there was a citywide factory turning the holdings of hard rock into human gain, this looked like it.

"I grasp that Anaconda is very near almighty in this city."

the Constantinople of the Rockies

from their earlier recital of labor's struggles that the Anaconda Company some time back had lowered miners' wages by a dollar a day, a sharp cut, and the union leadership at the time had called a strike that shortly failed at the point of bayonet.

"You're all so musically inclined," Betty was doing her part, "what do you get when you drop a piano down a mineshaft?" Quinlan and McGlashan and the others who had spent years underground cocked their heads in anticipation. She delivered the punchline with relish. "A flat miner. I'd hope it was you, Quin."

Resounding hoots greeted that, and were washed down in tribute.

Grace

Grace gave me an openmouthed look, then one at the satchel. "And you won," she said in a tone of wonder. "Arthur never won."

She reddened a bit at that emotion, although it may have been fury.

The red was back in her cheeks.

with that expression of sustained strain around her eyes, as if her braid was being tugged hard from behind.

then patted my arm comfortably

but the dimple did sly work of its own

"You'll get a hoot out of this."

"Horsefeathers!"

"House rules, Grace," Hoop chided.

"And I'm the Queen of Sheba."

"Hush, Morrie."

the dungeon of her silence.

grief drying her voice to a whisper.

I do not think of myself as weepy. Rose used to tell me I was built watertight. But when the vision of those miners trapped in flame 0000 feet beneath the ground...

pretty as a posy.

"A fact, is that?"

Rosettes of that were in her cheeks.

All vintages of the story agreed: the food was served there with more enthusiasm than skill.

Her hair was down, and the shawling effect on her shoulders was striking.

"You'd think it would be the same sky over the whole world."

the black magic of love

“Are you sure your name isn’t Howie? As in, ‘Howie you going to aggravate me next?’”

She still felt like lathering herself in it--the fluid light at least as luxurious to her as the waters of any spa. Out in the 00 gulches and across the 00 prairies, kerosene lamps glowed yellow. The cups of light she had come from. (or use w/ Morrie, thinking of Marias Coulee?)

“None of us are what we could be.”

...needing to go, wanting to stay.

“You would, too, wouldn’t you. In spite of everything, you would.”

“I’ll do what I think is right. Surely it’s my turn at that.”

Under a widow moon

Always I have loved the sky.

The curtain of light

“Halley’s Comet. Where were you?”

She would not hear of...

“Well, if the wind blows that way...”

“I don’t care a teaspoon about that.”

“...some I could mention.”

“That’s on you, then.”

“Isn’t that always the way of it?”

“Why do you say that?”

“Just to see. Whether...”

“I have heard the ridiculous in my time, but that tops anything.”

and blam, another stick of pine into the reluctant stove.

rubbed her temples with her fingertips. "It's a shame we didn't meet when the world was young."

"Ingenious," said Grace.

She gathered herself back to present surroundings.

"You're saved, Hoop. Turkey has never been known to oink."

In turn she told me about herself...

"You have been around, haven't you."

"He was old-country Welsh.

"It pays the rent."

"Being a cryer is a far cry from bookkeeping."

I smiled. "Well said."

Grace notably was saying nothing.

"You're cheerful this morning," Grace observed

Hearing that dire report, I had to restrain myself from scratching.

Griff and Hoop

“Hmm? Oh, just a joke

“In this life, it’s be on your tippytoes or flat on your backside.”

“Right straight down the line.”

Hoop objected. “That’s the dumbest thing since Little Nemo.”

Hoop: “These times are not them times.”

Hoop attested.

“Morrie, you’ve got a lot upstairs, but there are times when you don’t know your elbow from your other.”

“He has two speeds, that fellow--stand still and sit down.

“If we’d got twice as many as we did so far, we’d at least have one.”

although I was yet at the early point of acquaintanceship where I had to monitor to myself which was looking at which.

“It gets thought all to hell by the time...”

“Maybe it wasn’t such a bughouse idea.”

“Far as I’m concerned,...”

“Something like.”

“He’s awful learned.”

“Let’s give it a quit.”

“Same here.”

“Hell if I know.

Hoop described.

“One thing about you, Morrie, you have a good name.”

“So, what kind of wandering planet are you?”

“--Griff, you appear amused.”

All that gleams does not assay out as gold; copper has its own moneyed tint.

There are two other boarders, permanent as the roofbeams, scrawny old miners named Tom Griffith and Frank Hooper. with an uncertain number of teeth.

Griff and Hoop almost grinned their ears off.

Griff and Hoop were hopping busy.

...as bandy in their gait as...

“You can count those on the thumbs of one hand.”

“You just leave it to us to inkle that out.” or: “Hoop, we ought to be able to inkle that out, don’t you think?”

“That’s acey-deucey with us.”

Griff mannerism: , see,

“What in holy nelly for?”

walked me through the route--gimped me through it, more honestly, for between them they possessed barely two sound legs--to the neighborhood of that night’s wake.

They tramped me through the streets until I felt as gimpy as the two of them.

00 hooked his cane in the back of his pants so that it hung down like a straight tail.

back in the day when they were underground whizzes

the banty figures of Griif and Hoop

“He needs to see it.”

“Afraid so.”

“That’s where they done it.”

“Where what was done?”

“They hung the Wob organizer, name of Frank Little. Roused him out of his hotel room in the middle of the night and strung him up from that trestle.”

“Company goons, who else?”

like ancients who had heard it all before.

“The gallows frames are sure humming today.”

Griff’s pronunciation of it, as I was to find common in Butte, was *gallus*, like the old word for suspenders. Accordingly it took me a moment to realize the term meant suspension of quite another sort. “That’s rather a grim name for headframes, isn’t it?”

“Miner humor,” said Hoop, and to this day I cannot decide whether he deliberately meant *minor* as well.

Rab

“They’re not. Can you believe it, they’re not.”

Rab was young as springtime and equally as guileful.

I had pledged not to go back to Marias Coulee.

Running up and down the stairstep of eight grades like a lighthouse keeper
of minds

“I must take you into my confidence.”

As a schoolgirl, Rab was always ready for conspiracy.

“Rose and I had a falling out. A family matter.”

(Rab imagines a version.)

“I could not have put it better myself.”

She was not my sister; rather, my sister-in-law.

Rose went through a convulsion of love

a matrimonial pairing

Jared was the kind who could make waves in a birdbath.

Rab had a racehorse keenness about her.

“I’m betrothed. B-e-t-r-o-t-h-e-d,” she rattled off as if in one of Marias
Coulee’s spelling bees.

I grinned. “The lucky man is going to have his hands full.”

Rab swooped on that.

To be around Rab was to hear the patter of little ideas running through her
mind.

“Just for fun, let’s say you...”

“That is so typical.”

Morrie talking to her class about Australian songlines; realizes his audience of schoolkids doesn't know Wagga Wagga from Walla Walla.

Rab was onto that like a kitten finding cream.

That put a different light on the matter.

"Don't you know who Sandison is? He's the Strangler."

"String-'em-up Sam," Griff said as he passed the boiled potatoes to me.

"Figured you knew."

"She's live ammo, that girl," Hoop said in admiration.

"That hoyden."

"Petey, don't scratch so much," she bossed with natural authority. Eleven-year-old girls could put the word to rights if we would let them. Rabrab at that age very nearly had.

Slim and supple as anyone could be, just before the topography of womanhood began curving and thrusting.

that sudden season of last childhood, spent trying to figure out how the truces of life are won or lost.

chunky boys and 00 girls.

Children as golden tan as honey.

Jared: tall, husky through the shoulders, mild blue eyes, black hair slicked back.

"Jared, I am old enough to be--" I calculated--"her older brother."

Rab, ajump with ideas

"You were putty when you came to me, at age what?"

onward, to call it that, into the trenches of death in France.

She poised for a moment before settling to the desk, in the attitude of a canny abbess.

She was not surprised at the knock of tongues that had followed her since she took up with Jared Evans.

It was like her,...

I sighed. "All right, Perseverance."

I thought of the Marias Coulee homesteaders. They had come from somewhere and that somewhere had not left them. (lingered in them)

I told him an Aussie survivor of Gallipoli had told him he felt the cupped hand of God around him in the war. "Putting aside for the moment the question of whether there is a Higher Intelligence--was it something like that with you?"

A heart-to-talk talk, the saying goes. But Rab's heart and mine were quite different ages, pumping different streams of experience, racing and fluttering to different excitements. Perhaps chin-to-chin is always the best that can be managed.

Rab was going to have a cat fit, but she'd just have to.

my prize pupil Paul Milliron, bright as a new coin

"Not until there's a pill for shrillness."

"You're fudging." "Rab, I am not fudging."

"This country is being run by men who can barely operate an umbrella."

Rab had to be handled like an opened jackknife. She sometimes jabbed just because she happened to know how.

This was Rab at her conspiratorial best.

the mood lashing in her

a chunk of a boy

the freckle epidemic

"I don't know what we'd do without your jawbone."

"You're the one to talk."

cinnamon eyes

“There, doesn’t that sound rosier?”

“A pigment of the imagination, Rab.”

Jared was not one to daub his life thick with philosophy.

a bothering child

“Don’t get me started on Anaconda.”

Russian Famine: “Could if I had to.”

“Vixen.”

“There’s been someone, hasn’t there.”

And even after ten years, I needed no reminding, I still was bound by the terms of that farewell.

Rab switched her tail and pounced.

“That will do, Sharp Ears.”

She already was making a big bet in choosing life with this soldier on the front lines of the miners’ union, I thought to myself.

I have long known so... There is no getting around the fact that ...a time comes when you must examine what you are made of. Oh, it can happen more than once in the span of a life; but each time, it...

Numbers are an easy enough matter of manipulation for me, although unfortunately that facility tends to vanish around the vicinity of my wallet.

matters such as a moose of a house and

possible uses; also go through yellow sheets where tabbed

I'd have given her more of an argument on that if I didn't have a bullet in me."

Spring came to Butte...I could still see my breath, yet hints of green

as that Napoleonic winter at last left Butte

Morgie was added to my wardrobe of names

Casper had unbelievable reflexes. I had seen him toss a palmful of silver dollars in the air and catch all five or six with that same hand, almost in an eyeblink.

He also had great mischief in him.

He was left-handed, so I retrained him, the two of us sparring by the hour, to box as a righty.

Rose, as fragrantly pretty as her name

We had all risen. Casper through the West Side fight clubs while I worked my way through the University of Chicago, Rose from domestic service in Minneapolis.

an easily beaten palooka and then another, mixed in with some journeyman who would up enough of a battle for Casper to sharpen his skills.

I could tell he was feeling better. He hadn't called me an unflattering name in days and days. (use in parade ch?)

Watching him, my imagination took flight to the Senate in Rome, a young Caesar, the Rubicon and so much else in his future.

he shook/was shaking his head over a piece of filler overset in which the only recognizable word was *lutefisk*,

All right, I confess: money has always managed me more adroitly than I have managed it.

Observer as well as participant, I was in my element.

whose opinion counted most, read the piece as soon as I brought the paper home. Without a word, she came and hugged me fiercely; backed off to look at me with concern,

who would have believed it without seeing it,

Barnes, the city hall reporter

Where the four of us were looking on at the busy newsroom scene, Jared had a sudden thought.

She pursed a kiss in my direction.

“How come they threwed you in the clink?”

“For reckless resemblance.”

“Is that some kind of being drunk?”

“You constantly amaze me.” “That’s not necessarily in your favor, you know.”

A picture of worry, she asked,

“Eventually.”

Does the *Post* editorialist expect this smear tactic to pass unchallenged?

Not bad, given what you had to work with,

Luck is as mysterious as 00.

though I did think twice now about my choice of phrasing.

We three men as if cold water had been thrown on us

returned the admiration in the spirit it was given.

knocked on my brain demanding answer.

. I cleared my throat to enter the general discussion.

I watched him start to prowl in search of how this could be put into words.

A chill went from my soles up to my soul.

I did not like the particular intonation he gave it.

I banked my anger.

That found a seam in him.

We drew new assessments of one another.

If ever there was a citywide factory turning the holdings of hard rock into human gain, this looked like it.

with the flip of a hand

OOed the story of myself like an arrow.

A plural existence.

It had come to this.

In this fresh tailoring of character,

If I could rewrite myself, so to speak. Enveloped. Tempting to think about.

Tempting to contemplate

“Sandy, I swear...

Frowning, he fussed with his beard.

Sandison crossed the threshold of what was now unmitigatedly bachelor quarters and dropped into his favorite chair.

“I know no more of that than a walrus does of the Gulf of Carpentaria.”

He rolled that around in his head a few times, glowering at me.

Bundled up in overcoat and gloves as I was, I could't even reach to an inside pocket for my brass knuckles.

A glint came into his eyes.

I started to ask, uselessly.

“If you say so. What is that...”

He laughed, genuinely this time.

In my mind's eye, I was taken back to

Butte was a compressed world, thick as its geology. Streets were glaciers of people when a shift changed at the mines--the Cornishmen flowing to the 00 neighborhood, the Irish to Dublin Gulch, the Welsh and Italians and Serbian and Finns and Norwegian to their own enclaves. The Constantinople of the Rockies, another appellation locally favored,

The world has put on new clothes without you even noticing the needle was threaded.

“Will miracles never decrease,” Sandison said sourly.

How, behind any one person, the others lingered. The past calved them, as surely as icebergs emanate from the glaciers of Greenland. Some certain skein of event changed what would come, what would be fixed into memory.

“I was given a helping of that myself.”

Without thinking, I said:

fresh as the next heartbeat.

The belief that they're silkier inside than the rest of us.

That could be a little or a lot.

You know, there's always the chance that was meant to be funny.

...as if the first pages of a book lay open.

As though he had caught a fever. (Armbrister)

and stay in a way nothing else does

“You're having yourself quite a day.”

“Kiss yourself goodbye.” Cutlass in Purity?

The percentage of him between his ears may not have been much, but...

(Casper)

The holdings of the shelves

It couldn't be. But it was.

gold-titled books

What precipitated this? (hives)

She (or Mazzini) gave me a look that took inches off my height.

"Mmm, ...--I'm joking, Grace, don't look so put out."

who looked like he could go lion-hunting with a switch.

clustered on the horizon as though the earth had rumped beneath it all

Grace flushed.

Giving me another frown,

sufficiently to build up a store of admiration and exasperation,

He smiled ever so slightly.

We each tend to think the past has happened only to ourselves. That it is our marrow only, particular and specific; filling our bones a special way.

Words have shadows, just as surely as we do.

Sleep didn't come, although the recurrent dream that was memory did.

After all, a life is a contraption, more complicated than most.

It was one of those thoughts that came out of nowhere.

When a heart breaks, it falls into no predictable pattern.

When did the world ever work like that?

Whatever trails us through life, however,

The midpoint of a man's life--or perhaps more profoundly, a woman's--

I was nearing the...

I have long known so... There is no getting around the fact that ...a time comes when you must examine what you are made of. Oh, it can happen more than once in the span of a life; but each time, it...

Numbers are an easy enough matter of manipulation for me, although unfortunately that facility tends to vanish around the vicinity of my wallet.

“hang on, please, doctors do wonders these days.”

was often shaded with the odd illusion that

“Yeah, well, that puts a lot on both of us, don’t it.”

Other than the camels Grace and I had briefly tried at the Sphinx, I had not been astraddle an animal in years.

As she swallowed before saying anything

I forced a chuckle of demurral.

“There must be something in the air,” Jared Evans laughed for probably the first time in weeks. “Make it sound good, Professor.”

Thanks all to hell, up there in the Hennessy Building

Father Frost, in the nursery rhyme. How did it go--”King of the whitened clime, ever there/Leaving tokens of wintertime everywhere.” Wintry as my benefactor-cum-boarder could be,

Paula Revere, on her 00 horse sounding the alarm, one of by land, two if by sea.

The principality of Horse Thief Row, third overgrown mansion on the left; a man's home is his castle...where man's castle is his home, 00 as it may be.

Ajax, two-faced. Which Ajax was I being met by? The

hero or have?

the poetry Cheyne's *Memoir of a Versesmith*. "Ever have the urge to write?"

"I thought that was what I do for a living."

"A book, man," he said as if I were simple-minded. The real thing."

"Sometimes I'd like to get it all down. What the country was like when Dora and I came in by stagecoach, young pups that we were."

Possible titles flooded my mind. *We Hung Them High*. *The Earl of Hell Remembers*. *Finagling the Finest Book Collection West of Chicago*.

"What's the matter with you? Pebble in your hoof?"

I was facinated by the eyeshade, prominent as the visor on the helmet of a knight. "I don't mean to be impertinent, but I thought only editors like the one in *Barnaaby of Drudge Street* wore one."

That brought a laugh like a bark. "Shows how much you know. Eyestrain...You a reading man then?"

I confessed I was.

"Bravo. An editorialist needs all the ammo there is."

"Listen, in '19 anarchists or somebody tried to blow up the attorney general of the United States. That same year (strikes). And if I'm not wrong, they had some trouble like that in this burg then, too. All this while Russia is going to the dogs, the Red kind." He spread his hands like a reasonable human

being. "I'm handed readymade material like that for what I'm hired to do, and I'm not supposed to use it? Please, pull my other leg."

Oh, how I wished for Armbrister to inhabit my soul long enough to curse this interloper as the (adj) thus-and-such he was.

You're kidding me."

Blind Heinie's newsstand outside the Hennessy Building.

"I'm kinda late," Famine apologized, with a look at me.

"*Alles* forgive, *liebchen*," the news vendor's thick German accent

Armbrister was curmudgeonly, salty, uncompromising. From the first minute, the staff idolized him.

swift "Amen" or just as decisive "Nix."

"What do you know for sure, Morrie?" Griff called out heartily. Too heartily. "Isn't this weather something?" Hoop followed that with, just as full of false cheer.

My mood sank farther toward my shoetops. If rheumatic old miners were feeling sorry for me, I had to be even worse off than I'd thought. Brooding my way past the pair of them, I stopped on impulse. "You're regular readers of the *Thunder*, am I right?"

"Oh, yeah, sure. Most definitely," came the chorus.

"And you're familiar with the *Post* since the advent of Cutlass, yes?"

They cautiously admitted to looking at the Anaconda rag now and then.

"So you've no doubt been following his most recent editorials."

They looked back and forth uneasily. "Been on kind of a tear, hasn't he," Hoop finally said. "Strutting his stuff, a person would have to say," said Griff.

"And mine, lately?"

"A little falling off, maybe."

"Just a little. Got to read close to see it."

"So much for *vox populi*," I mumbled and went on up the steps. They glanced up as I passed, the last word coming from Griff:

"You asked."

"Wakf up, sleepyhead, get up, get out of bed," Grace caroling... Full of bounce

He had the sheen of a big fish among minnows. I knew I must be careful not to be swallowed.

Grace, lovesome,

Morrie, honeybun,