

The Milnes of Inverley were that way from the Reverend on down, he couldn't help but remember: preacher and preacher spawn. They wore well, though, Meg the latest evidence of that--the set character of her face, as if certified for good and all by the nock in her chin. Not to mention the lithe build below.

And the voice, streambed of voice, deep and as dancing as ever, "Darius!" She gave ~~him~~<sup>his</sup> name the particular lilt, shiny crownpoint of emphasis atop the middle syllable, knowing how he hated ~~the~~<sup>a</sup> flat-tongued saying of it as Derry-us. "Darius, welcome!"

Don't hear more than is there, he had to tell himself. Vast fool that you were those years ago, don't ever put yourself through that again.

"A while, Meggie," he spoke as if it was a discovery.

"At least that." ~~Three lives' worth, if you really care to count.~~

~~four, mine, Hugh's.~~ She still studied him in a kind of appalled thrill.

~~thinking back.~~ His eyebrows went up inquisitively, and she hurried toward manners. "Come in, come in. But what--you didn't let us know you'd be coming."

"I didn't much know, myself." That punctuating small smile <sup>from him,</sup> as quick as if it was the last letter of the sentence, ~~was the same as she~~

~~remembered~~, Hugh without the gale-warning flags, this brother of his. Which had led to confusions before, she more than remembered.

Darius stepped into the house and halted as if hit.

"What in stone cold Hell--? Blueprints?"

He let his suitcase drop and strode on into the second room, to the blue-papered wall.

"They...help keep the weather out." He heard a swallowing sound from Meg. "Housing is a bit rough and ready here, as you see."

Rough, he could definitely see. The two-room hutch, shanty, shack, whatever American shambles it was, showed damp-stained beaverboard at the kitchen wall<sup>S</sup> where the blueprints did not quite extend, and the floor of unplanned lumber was stark except where Meg had managed to knit a rag rug for beside the bed. The bed in with the living room furniture made the room as crammed as the corner of a warehouse.

He felt a fury toward Hugh, putting <sup>her</sup> ~~her~~ in this hovel, <sup>and</sup> ~~but~~ with it

a vindication. She could have done other. I made that clear enough.

But then the thought swarmed in that if <sup>Meg</sup> ~~she~~ had chosen him, she'd right now be existing out of the pasteboard suitcase at his side.

Iron.  
led?  
eyes.

ital.

"Here, let me--we're still getting squared away," <sup>she</sup>~~Meg~~ said, quite near him now, as she swept a pile of clothes off a chair. "But sit yourself down, ~~Darius~~ Please, do."

<sup>he</sup>  
Instead ~~Darius~~ waded through the clutter to the topmost roll of blueprint Owen had papered across the back wall. Fingers out as if finding Braille, he traced the white lines of the plan of the dam. Meg saw a frown come on him, his fingers pausing at the dam's midpoint and then moving professionally down to the lower right corner of the blueprint, the title block that revealed the scale of the dam.

"My God, they'll be moving dirt for an eternity!"

"That's what they intend, yes. Tons--<sup>well,</sup> tons of tons. Just how much, you'll need to ask Owen."

"I'll do that," he murmured as if to himself. "Pyramids and tall memorials, catch the dying sun."

"Darius. What's brought you?"

"It came to seem time." He kept his eyes away from Meg's, restudying the walls of the shack. After a moment, he went on: "Scotland's used up. You and Hugh long since decided so, didn't you." His smile flashed again, showing the short square tooth, bottom <sup>left,</sup>~~right,~~ that had been chipped off in a shipyard accident. Meg had thought at the time that nicked part

somehow made this smile of his even more appealing, gave him a dimple in his mouth, and she thought it again now. "You remember me, Meggie," she heard him say. "Takes some while for me to catch up with the way of things."

*ital.*  
But when you do... she recalled, too. "You're here for good?" She couldn't keep the alarm out of her face.

Darius simply appeared amused. "I'm a pair of hands that knows tools, and they must need those here. Hugh, now, he's a man of the plow if there ever was one and they've even hired him, haven't they?" He was giving <sup>her</sup> ~~her~~ more gaze than she wanted. She took it as a relenting when he nodded toward the dam blueprint and asked: "And the rest of the family—<sup>m</sup>Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are they all at this, too?"

"They are, yes. Even I am. I help the <sup>m</sup>--I'm on at the cookhouse."

"Ever an <sup>ambitious</sup> ~~industrious~~ tribe, ours," Darius bestowed, and then was

~~intently~~ watching past her to the front door.

Hugh had halted in the doorway.

"Unfair," Hugh stated ~~to the shack at large~~ <sup>J</sup> "I've just had a day

that would curdle holy water, and now here's this."

*#*  
*ital.*  
↓  
Courting Margaret Milne, he'd had his work cut out for him.

None of the situation (except the extraordinarily blue<sup>3</sup>-eyed Margaret;



1712  
 Meg as she was becoming whenever conditions seemed to permit) suited  
 Hugh Duff at all. The <sup>manse</sup> ~~parish house~~ where even the doorknocker sounded  
 basso profundo to a gawky young farm laborer coming to call. The  
 dispiriting strictures of when and where courtship of a Reverend's  
 daughter could be in session. And, vague but ever-near, the dousing  
 personality that was the Reverend Milne himself. Those were only the  
 start of the odds against Hugh, too. The Duff brothers were what was  
 left of a railwayman's family, <sup>whom</sup> ~~which~~ the Reverend Milne seemed to peg  
 even ~~over~~ lower on the social ladder than they already were. Stropky young  
 man that he was, Hugh did not take well to being looked down on.

"Were I you" <sup>D</sup><sub>m</sub>—counsel by Darius, more veteran in the ways of the  
 world by an entire year, was never in short supply <sup>D</sup><sub>m</sub>—"I'd stuff the poorbox  
 in thanks for the old spouter."

"What're you talking of? The man will barely let us graze our eyes  
 across one another," Hugh reported bitterly. "He's got his religions  
 confused, thinks he has nunnery charge."

"What better way to convince her," Darius pointed out, "that you're  
 worth breaking down all walls for?"

it's

Hugh ran in streaks, she had known that from early on. There would be all his obstinacy, such as the Gibraltar's worth it ~~had taken~~ <sup>took</sup> to withstand her father's campaign of discouraging him, then suddenly here would come a veer, so that you had to look twice to be sure this was the behavior of the same Hugh Duff. The differentiation made him a lively suitor, more so than Meg had ever quite imagined. Nothing in Hugh's life became him like the weaving of that romance. <sup>g</sup> (Meg's breath, and much of the rest of her self-possession, literally was taken away by ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~Hugh's~~ ploy of enlisting Darius, lookalike from a little distance, to dawdle around within view from the Reverend's study window while Hugh and she were at the back of the house in extensive forays of kissing.

"This is--" <sup>D</sup>  
<sub>m</sub>

"--daft, I know," <sup>D</sup>  
<sub>m</sub> Hugh kissed the tip of her nose, then her cheekbone, then her chin. "Where were we?"

"You know perfectly well where," she murmured, presenting her lips for his again.

Remon

This is daft, Darius ~~said~~ <sup>groused to</sup> himself, trying to appear ostentatiously

nonchalant for the figure watching with suspicion from the leaded-glass

window. Making a gawk of myself while Hugh is spooning her in like

dilly sauce.

"That father of yours--"

"--believes you are interested in my hand," Meg backed off a fraction

from Hugh's latest exploration. "Little does he know."

The more her father pounded away about Hugh's supposed lackings, the more she thought Hugh needn't be all of one metal. That was the way her father was, after all; pure preacher in an impure congregation, the world, and she did not want to be fastened to that kind of absolute again. If Hugh Duff came with a dent or two already in, she told herself she didn't care; and she didn't, then.

By the time of their marriage Darius was off on his own, already

the shipyards along the River Clyde were more home to him than the

farm-market town of Inverley had ever managed to be. Steel sang to him.

The longships find their harbor in the head, began the poem of the Clydeside

he loved best, and Darius filled himself from the eyes in with the constant

armada along the resounding industrial river. Great Britain was determined to

p. 262A follows

*itals*

maintain a fleet that would overshadow Germany's. The Asquith government's Chancellor of the Exchequer, the fateful Lloyd George, had contrived a tax on estates: "Every time a duke dies," he crowed, "we can build a dreadnought." Those crammed years when the shipyards were at full boom, Darius had to make his start low, as mere bucket boy, and next came the testing stint as rivet-backer, that earsplitting chore within the hulls. Then, though, to riveter, and the riveters were the princes of the river, the canny hands at crafting the <sup>seams</sup> seams that held ships together and the bargaining voices that the others of the Clyde workplaces harkened to. And so for Darius Duff and his rivet gun, those years, the Clydeside work held results close to magical: the laying of keel plates, the curving rise of the hull, the cladding of steel onto structural skeleton; make one vessel and you could make any, you could rivet together any longship that could be imagined.

*#*  
*itals*

Darius on frequent visits down from the Big Smoke, Glasgow, from his series of steel, was a Darius with even more spice to him, Hugh couldn't but note. Keener, more glinty; honed against those shipsides

of the Clyde, maybe it must be put. Not even to mention prospering.

Hugh knew he could tend oats on the MacLaren estate from now until next doomsday and never keep up with his brother's pay packet. Be that as it may. The land took a while, Hugh was always capable of telling himself, but it and he would be there when Darius was deaf and doled.

Yet would it. The day came, in the spring of 1910, when Hugh arrived home dazed with fundamental questions. He walked in to find Owen, barely past his second year, seated manfully at a tiny desk and chair, Meg laughing and Darius with a lordly grin.

"Worth a try at getting a scholar, don't you think, Hugh?" Darius knelt down to spiderwalk his hand across the desktop, Owen's gaze avidly following. Desk and chair were both exquisitely crafted; the lathes of the Clydeside shipyard were the world's finest, Hugh had no doubt. "It skipped us a bit," Darius was going on, "but you put together that lamented father of ours and the late great Reverend Milne in this lad's background and he's likely to be apt at turning pages, wouldn't you have to say?"

"We surely would," Meg gaily provided as she swept Hugh's tea-can

7 to 2  
from him and kissed the vicinity of his ear. "Hugh, did you ever know you had such a lovely brother?"

"It's been generally well disguised before," ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> said.

The only sound then was the patty cake of Owen's palms on his <sup>new</sup> resounding little desk.

"Hugh," Meg said in a voice that did not quite waver. "What?"

What, yes. The radical acceleration of these visits from Darius since Owen's birth? The embedded suspicion in Hugh that Meg's choosing of him had been a close decision in the first place, and now down from Glasgow every fortnight or less was a fresh reason for her to rethink that decision? The firm recitation in Hugh that he could not, did not dare, believe she would ever actually toss him over for Darius? The accompanying fact that he could never quite remove the chance of that from his mind, either?

Hugh shook his head, to bring himself back to the day's blow.

"The MacLaren land. It's going to tenements."

Meg came to him without a word. What was spoken was pure Darius:

"This we can fix like that, Hugh." Fingersnap. Across the crown

ital  
of Meg's hair, Hugh looked at his triumphant brother. "There's every chance waiting for you on the Clyde. I only have to put in the word for you with the right somebody, Monday at the yard."

Were you Hugh, you knew in that moment that you were going to have to put an ocean between you and the Clydeside.

# —————  
"You're as even-tempered as ever, Hugh," Darius let out with a smile and an extended hand as he crossed the floor of the shack. "Full steam all the time."

Hugh gave him a handshake, but during it <sup>demand</sup>~~asked~~: "What's behind this?"

"The times," his brother said evenly, "what else."

Hugh cocked him a look they both remembered. "You can't mean to tell me even ~~the~~ <sup>your</sup> blessed Clydeside is feeling the pinch."

"It's beyond pinch," Darius confessed.

"Darius, yes, tell us how things stand," Meg painted in, shooing the visitor toward the kitchen table and sending Hugh the Milne gaze that conveyed As a last resort you could try manners, Hugh Duff. "Sit, the both of you, and I'll--" she rapidly attacked the coffee pot and

the firebox of the cookstove.

"The times, you were saying." Hugh <sup>w</sup>ould not leave this alone,

Darius <sup>saw.</sup> ~~could see.~~ "They handed you yours?"

Darius fought back the risings at the back of his throat, the anger and the other. Do it as rehearsed, he made himself hear himself.

You knew this has to be got past.

(ital.)  
"The Clydeside and I parted company, yes. Out the gate, and so I kept going. Knew a fellow. He was able to make me a place on a ship. And then--" Darius jerked his head in the general direction of the railroad. "Old habits die hard, Hugh. Family seems to be one of the incorrigible ones. Worse than a sweet tooth." He carefully kept looking his brother in the eye. "Hugh, <sup>truth</sup> to tell, I didn't know where else..."

"You've come late to see us at our best," Hugh said tautly. "When we had the farm--"

"Yes, I've seen that. Tidy. Tucked away like a swallow's nest, though."

Something came on in Hugh's eyes, then went out. Meg and untouched cups of coffee had joined the two men at the table. Darius knew it was



time to give Hugh the high ground.

"You were far ahead of me about America, ~~Hugh~~, I'll say it now:

I couldn't see past the Big Smoke. Although—" the smile suddenly in

there "~~—~~wouldn't you know they have a Glasgow here, too." Such as it is. (ital)

Hugh took <sup>this</sup> ~~that~~ in carefully; admissions from Darius had never been

frequent. He turned toward Meg a moment. The sight of her on the same

side of the table with him seemed to give him heart. The weight of life (ital)

is what holds us to this world, eh, Meg? <sup>He</sup> ~~Hugh~~ cleared his throat. "So  
you're not here as a ~~mere~~ tourist, then."

"I haven't come as a charity case, either," Darius kept in tenor with.

"I'd put some money by, I'm not hurting on that quite yet." He made

himself go through with it. ~~This is a tactical time, and you well know what~~

~~these take.~~ Use the slow spoon, you've had to before. "A job of work is

what I have in mind, if you happen to know anything about the hiring here,

Hugh. If you could lodge a good word for me in the right somebody's ear,

say."

Hugh shook his head, but then inclined it toward Meg. "She's

your man on that, Darius."

#

"We keep on, the whole payroll's gonna be Duffs."

Medwick shuffled through his <sup>boatyard</sup> shift roster. "Owen, you know Montana residents get hiring preference."

"Sure, Cece, everybody and his uncle knows that."

Medwick glanced up at the figure standing beside Owen in brazenly brand-new Mighty Mac <sup>bib</sup> overalls. "Where is it you been living, mister?"

"Helena," stated Darius with confidence but also with an ~~un~~ Montanan long e in the middle. Seeing the wince on Owen, he tried again: "I've a cousin there, she's a <sup>music</sup> ~~school~~ teacher. Her name's Heleena. She lives in Helehna."

"Yeah, well, don't coincidences never quit." Medwick put a long look to Owen, then a longer one to Darius. "How long since you came across from the old country?"

"An age ago."

"You know how we are, Cece," Owen thrust in. "Anybody with the name Duff on him will work himself silly for you."

"Uh huh, Bruce was all the proof I needed on the silly part, at least." Medwick sighed, picked up a pencil and jotted on a roster. He

said sourly to Darius, "Welcome to the Montana navy."

#

"Cascade spillways, those're called. You can see, when we pipe

the fill up into the core pool then the waste water gets discharged

down those so we can control the level of...

"Bitumen spraying, they're doing over there. The sonofabitching

Bearpaw shale <sup>turns soft and slick</sup> ~~starts weathering~~ whenever it <sup>really</sup> gets wet, so when we uncover

an outcrop we give it a coat of...

"Trying out a three-blade butterfly valve here, see if we can

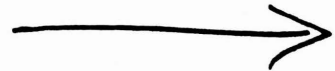
cut down on the clay plugging the dredging setup when..."

Owen's headlong, half-heard, nine-tenths baffling tour of the dam  
project for Darius before delivering him to his shift at the boatyard  
had looped through nearly all of Fort Peck by now. This and that were  
pointed out with offhand pride as the biggest in the world, but Darius  
seemed most keen on sorting out the swarms of workers. "And these be--?"  
he asked persistently as Owen drove him past site after site of vast  
construction that he seemed determined to find unastonishing.

p. 268B follows

(Ital.)

Okay, bloke from the Big Smoke, be that way, Owen thought with  
some amusement, and kept on going after they had crossed the temporary  
bridge over the river, heading the government pickup on into the hills  
beyond the east end of the dam.



not  
 Darius didn't appear taken, either, with this bouncing tour of the  
 countryside, to flatter it with that appellation. Ash heaps in the earth's  
 backyard, these gray dumpy little hills more looked like as the pickup  
 zigged and zagged along the road that threaded their maze. He rapidly  
 gave up on the dismal scenery and studied Owen. However Hugh happened to  
come by him, this is a thorough one. Owen's profile still unsettled him.  
 Darius felt as if he had fallen among some complicated tribe wearing mocking  
 masks of past history. Bruce and Neil looked so much like a younger Hugh  
 that it was truly unnerving--the aspects of Hugh in duplicate<sup>h</sup> while Owen  
 alarmingly resembled both Darius's and Hugh's father and Meg's father,  
 the memorable Reverend Milne. Wouldn't you think, Darius mused, life  
would ~~refashion~~ ~~reshape~~ us more than it does. The women at least weren't such a  
 confusion. A set of inspections might have convinced him Charlene and  
 Rosellen were sisters, but otherwise he wouldn't have known so without being  
told. And cinnamon-stick <sup>Kate</sup> Rhonda, definitely one of a kind. But then there  
 was Meg, who still looked like every expectation he'd ever had of a  
 woman, and that was most complicated of all.

He suddenly felt the sideways scrutiny Owen was giving him.

ital

Their composite Darius uncled in the dimmest back corners of the  
 Duff sons' imagination, unstirring there for years at a time, until  
 something from the direction of Scotland would trigger abrupt speculation  
 or hearsay. The Christmas when the toy steam engine arrived from over the  
 ocean, the younger two boys fingered at it with mouths open while Owen,  
 eleven-year-old sprout, studied the machinery and asked: "Dad, what's it  
 took a close look,  
 run on?" Hugh squinted, then looked sharply again. "Alcohol," he had  
 to intone, there in <sup>1918</sup>~~1920~~, the year of Prohibition. <sup>Montana voted itself dry.</sup>  
 A few years on from  
 then, Bruce had come across the engine again in a box under the bed and  
 fired it up for an incessant half-day of play, meanwhile pestering an  
 outline of Uncle Darius from his mother. When Bruce abandoned the steam  
 toy for adventure in the hayloft, that was the last time he'd given thought  
 to the uncle in Scotland. Neil, after he had taken to teenage carpentry  
 and someone remarked on his swift knack with tools, heard his father say  
 once: "He comes by it sideways in the family--I've a brother with a canny  
 hand that way." Only once; other times Hugh would say, "I don't know  
 where he gets it." In the nephew trio, then, Owen alone in grown life  
 had ever deliberately thought about the figure in the Clyde shipyard.

*italy*  
His junior year course Strength of Materials 321  
~~Principles of Engineering~~ It had practically forced him to, with its  
provocative  
questions of steel against ~~sea strength~~ <sup>seawater</sup>; he had tried to picture the  
shipwright life, another Duff life of the moment but across the flex  
of the world. And then Owen's Panama voyage, his shifts as boiler fireman  
in the cave of hull, where he could all but read his phantom uncle's trade  
in the firelit lines of rivets. Now that Darius had ~~materialized~~ <sup>sprung to life</sup> in Montana,  
in their net of attention to this family newcomer Owen's mesh was  
the finest. He had noticed Darius's slight ruffle when Bruce, lately  
in favor of universal matrimony, put the question: "We don't get an  
aunt along with you, huh? Never married?"

Darius had seemed to take Bruce's measure for a moment, then smiled.

"Not so far. Applications are still being sought."

*and itals*

"Almost there?" Owen ~~used to~~ <sup>*d*</sup> ease his eyes off his uncle and  
back to the anonymous hills. "How about a jag of jumping bean?"

full tilt  
Driving ~~one-handed~~, he groped under the pickup seat and pulled out  
a thermos bottle of coffee. Every American whom Darius had encountered  
so far was a caffeine fiend. "You get the cup first, you're the guest,"  
Owen decreed.

While Darius mastered pouring an unwanted beverage in a ~~moving~~ <sup>bouncing</sup> vehicle,

Owen glanced sideways at him and asked:

"How'd you know to find us here?"

"Process of elimination. I found where you weren't, first." Darius took one sip of the coffee and pined for tea. ~~pipped at the coffee, wishing it were tea.~~ "The farmstead looked like just the place for Hugh. Somewhere private for him to pound the ground, make the earth say--what, not oats, some sort of fluffaloofa..."

"Alfalfa," Owen supplied.

Darius folded his hands around the thermos cup and watched Owen for the effect of this next:

"Someone's scavenging the place. The boards are torn off the buildings and stacked there."

"It's the Old Man," Owen said shortly. "And Neil. They take the truck--"

"My brother is scavenging his own farmhouse?"

"He didn't want to see it burned."

Darius was given no time to digest that. "You'd better toss that coffee into yourself or out the window," Owen was advising as he shifted into lower gear. "We go mountangoat here."

He  
~~Owen~~ veered the pickup off the road and straight up the tallest



gray hill, wheels spinning as Darius bounced like a ball beside him.

At the top, the Fort Peck country spread around them in ~~billowing~~  
~~poles~~  
reaches. The rumpled land hid away even the dam project, and permitted  
the river out only in a single streak of glitter in the middle distance,  
the horizon beyond as sharp and far as the quit of a map. As Owen  
braked the pickup to a hard stop, a canyon gaped below Darius's side  
of the vehicle.

At once he took in the sawcut sides, the engineered taper ~~of~~  
the huge channel wedged between the set of hills he and Owen were on and a  
range of them  
similar lumpy ~~set~~ a considerable distance across the way. There in the  
tremendous  
trench-cut gap between, ~~an immense~~ series of forms was under installation,  
concrete being poured into them by truckloads. Cranes swung bindles of  
steel through the air, legions of workers were erecting still more of  
the giant pillar forms. Owen, absolutely unable not to look pleased  
with himself, watched Darius watch the potboil of construction below.

*bindle*  
*ok. on*  
*bundle*

"What's this, then--~~another~~ dam?" Darius at last hazarded. "Do  
you practice building them, between every two hills?"

"It's the spillway."

To Owen's satisfaction, Darius at last registered astonishment. "But

it's to hell and gone, here, from your dam!"

"Three miles, that's true. But the water'll come here in no time.

The lake will back up out into the base of those bluffs." Owen indicated toward the disheveled geography to the south, then cut an arc under it with his extended forefinger. "It's just about a perfect natural reservoir.

And when the lake level reaches where we left the road down there, the spillway goes to work."

"Not at your dam itself, though, this spillway," Darius dwelt on.

"Why's that?"

"The dam can be just what it is, this way," Owen began as if savoring music. "See, Darius, we're dealing with water here that's about as changeable as the goddamn weather." Darius ~~as audience~~ watched him turn ~~became~~ as ~~intent~~ intense ~~the~~ as a small boy drumming on his new sounding-  
#

board of a desk in an Inverley cottage. "The Missouri's big on floods," Owen was ~~at now~~ <sup>saying.</sup> "Exactly how big it can get, we don't even know because our records don't go back that far. What we do know is that there's a

whole pot of things that can pour water at us here. A heavy winter.

A late spring, thawing and freezing again all the time. Then how about,

say, a cloudburst up in the Rockies, just to get the run-off really running. That, my friend"--Owen tilted his head toward Darius a bit but kept his eyes on the immense spillway--"is what we call a hundred-year flood. The spillway, out here separate, takes care of that, and the dam doesn't have to do two things at once--hold back floodwater and let floodwater through. Integrity of the design, it's called." Owen caught himself. "But you'd know that from your own line of work, wouldn't you."

"Fancy," said Darius as if mostly to himself, and peered again down the canyonwall to where rocksaws screeched into the crumbly top layer of shale and the black fog of bitumen sealed the cutaway trench of unweathered Bearpaw bedrock beneath. "If you have all the room in the world to gouge around in, I suppose this is the sort of thing you can do." Owen was reaching to start the pickup when he heard Darius add:

"Can't say I blame you."

"Blame?"

"For not wanting water cavorting through the middle of your earthen dam, of course, Owen." Darius was giving him an understanding grin that Owen could have done without. "Concrete spillway or no, there'd still be moving water in the vicinity of your earthfill, wouldn't there. Water on the go, against even a dam such as yours--over time, I believe

water cuts almost anything."

"It does," Owen said after a few moments of regarding him. "That's why we're trying not to do this river any favors in the dam design."

#

DROP CAP

Somebody should write this down, she thought. You can't go a day around here without something new stewing up.

ital.

In the dredgelines, the earthfill gurgled and burped and sloshed. The winter-built dredges Jefferson and Madison had joined the Gallatin, the trio of them proudly towed upstream to designated borrowpit areas and, for Owen as fillmaster, 1935 began on the 15th of April. The dredging set-up was new and stiff, and its myriad equipment needed to be learned by crews of farm- and ranch-raised Montanans whose experience with electric dredges was not vast. Arguments were the Fort Peck anthem that April. Neil, of all people, locked horns with a tough High Line Swede on the pipeline trestle crew and had been lucky to come out of it with only a black eye, a cut eyebrow, scraped knuckles, and a sprained toe. After a terrible first couple of weeks, when Owen seemed to be everywhere trying to settle down men and machines, the heaves and staggers of startup seemed to be ~~were~~ cured. Each dredge's cutterhead ate into the riverbank or the bottom

ital

of the Missouri and then water was mixed in, and the slurry was pumped  
 through the <sup>twenty-eight</sup> 28-inch pipeline, and cascaded up onto the suddenly visibly  
 growing ~~pyramid~~<sup>mound</sup> of the dam.

This family is like nine radios going at once, it really pretty much  
is. Every Duff a different station.

Nobody liked dealing with the dredgeline's drain traps, where  
~~chunks of driftwood~~<sup>river trash</sup> and balls of gumbo accumulated and had to be  
 periodically mucked out, until the first buffalo skull tumbled forth.  
 The bone ~~visitants~~<sup>relics</sup> came out like clockwork from then on, horned ghosts  
 of some herd, herds, disgorged with every cleaning of the traps; the  
 upstream borrowpit where the Gallatin was dredging must have been a  
 disastrous crossing for the creatures. In no time, ~~varnished~~<sup>shellacked</sup> buffalo  
 skulls were a Fort Peck motif from one end of the shacktowns to the  
 other; each of the four Duff households sported one over the front door,  
 and Darius had his affixed as a hatrack above his bed at the barracks.

Look what it takes just to be a married couple. Then all the  
in-lawing on top of that. Family is a hard idea. Maybe we'd be better  
off just in herds.

first  
 That season the dredging operation, now the wellspring of progress  
 on the dam, sat for its photo virtually every day, ~~for documentation's~~  
~~sale.~~ Thus someone managed to click a shutter <sup>at</sup> in the exact moment  
 during  
 of the launch of the dredge Missouri when its long wall of hull displaced  
 the riverwater in a rolling shove of wave, and the Fort Peck workers  
 the five ~~men~~ named Duff  
 were posed aboard with their arms around each other like a file of sailors.

Aligned on the deck behind the hedgerow of water, left to right: Neil  
 and Bruce in paired grins, dubious Hugh, Darius bemused, Owen with an  
 anchoring grip on the structurework, riding the fourth and final dredge  
 down the ways to its namesake river.

No, though. Who would want to go it alone in life if they had any  
choice? The four of us who made ourselves Duffs by marrying Duffs--  
and now there's this extra one from Scotland into the bargain--we're as  
bad as they are for pairing off, choosing up sides, getting each other's  
nose out of joint, patching it up until the next time. This family  
seems to live on next times. That's something else that needs written.

#

The sheriff stood in wait, his Marlin .12-gauge shotgun resting

in the umbrella stand he had dragged over next to him.

Shouldn't be long now, he figured, and took another peek out front.

Keeson's gray head moved nervously, there behind the store counter.

The sheriff could see where the wire earpieces of Keeson's glasses

hooked down between cartilage of the ears and pompadoured gray hair.

He never had understood why jewelers didn't go entirely blind, squinting at all the little stuff they did.

"Hang tight, Floyd," he said softly. "This is what it takes, with these types."

"Remember, God darn it, Carl, I get to clear out of here."

"I've allowed for that, don't worry."

The owl-like shiftings of Floyd Keeson's head did not seem to signify any less worry. The sheriff pursed his lips and settled himself again against the backroom wall of the <sup>Glasgow</sup> jewelry store. Once in a great while the telephone was a wonderful thing, Carl Kinnick reflected. It had been nothing much to pay attention to, routine adjacent-counties report, when the store in Havre got knocked off during the noon hour;

fool kid of a clerk, for leaving the dressed-up guy who flashed a wad of cash and asked to see the high-priced stuff perfectly ~~alone~~ <sup>at leisure</sup> to scoop out the display case while the clerk was in back fiddling with the safe.

But then an hour and a half later, just the time it took to drive from Havre to Malta, the next sizable town east on Highway 2, the jeweler there got knocked off and knocked out as well, coldcocked when he bent down to reach something out of the display case for Mr. Jewel Bandit.

Next it was only an hour from Malta to Glasgow, and when the guy started to pull his stunt again in Keeson's Jewelry he was going to be in for a major surprise. Zipping along the High Line like he was picking berries, huh; we'll just see, the sheriff told himself. He glanced down at the Marlin shotgun waiting handy. Put Marlene to working on him, and the prospect of her load of lead would get his attention in a hurry.

"Carl, here--" <sup>h</sup><sub>m</sub> he heard Keeson let out between clenched teeth.

"Shut up, Floyd," he whispered back, then heard the store door whisk open.

The sheriff listened hard. Really not much of a spiel the guy had.

Special girl...necklace'd be nice...something with quite a stone...



It evidently didn't take a hell of a lot to be a jewel bandit.

"—appropriate item for you in the back room," Keeson was saying, and in the next instant swept through the doorway curtain and past Carl Kinnick with never a glance and kept on going, out the wide-open back door as the sheriff had instructed him to.

The guy already had the display case jimmied open and was armdeep among the wedding rings when the sheriff stepped out with the shotgun leveled.

Neither of them said word one as the sheriff moved around to the same side of the counter as the jewel heister.

The guy, though. The sheriff stared at him with growing disbelief. The guy was like a super dressed-up mannequin of the sheriff himself. Not the clothes, that wasn't it. The body structure, the bantamweight frame, the same doll-delicate bones. The guy was damn near a complete physical replica of him, Kinnick saw; small man's swift raccoon hands, ~~characteristic on both of them,~~ and their diminutive handtooled footwear would have fit one another. There in the jewelry store, two little lockets of men.

Then the jewel bandit grinned about how they matched.

The sheriff lowered the shotgun halfway. Utterly furious, he said in case Floyd Keelson or anyone else was within hearing: "That's a move you don't want to make," and simultaneously fired both barrels into the offender's legs.

#

Bruce was speculating out loud that Charlene would be the mayor of Wheeler, next. Charlene was assuring him his hours were numbered if that ever happened.

The A-1 Beauty Shop stood two doors down from the Blue Eagle Tavern. The shop name offered itself discreetly on the front window. What could be read the length of Wheeler's main street, and then some, was the resounding black block lettering across the top of the storefront:

PERMANENTS

\$3.50    \$5.00    \$6.50

The Duffs stayed grouped outside the new shop, admiring the screaming sign and Charlene's sales philosophy behind it: that the wholly outlandish top price of \$6.50 made the \$3.50 hairdo sound like a bargain, and that when a woman felt like splurging, there in the middle beckoned the \$5.00

Center

Am  
CapeLINE FOR  
LINE  
EXT

job that sounded like a relatively good deal.  
~~but which still seemed greatly cheaper than the Rockefellerian \$6.50.~~

"Ownie, I'm going to borrow her to do the arithmetic on the truck payments," Neil acclaimed.

One thing puzzled Darius. "'Permanent,' though--why's this spasmodic hairfixing called that?"

"If you think I'm going to advertise that I'm selling 'spasms,' Darius, you have another think coming," Charlene handled that and the expression of mischief plastered on ~~one of the others~~ <sup>Rosellen</sup> at the same time. Grin all you want, Rosellen, but this isn't Toston warmed over.

The eye contact sobered her kid sister at least temporarily, and Charlene announced with a ~~proprietary~~ <sup>proprietary</sup> clap of her hands that the refreshments were waiting inside.

Owen handed around the bottles of beer while Charlene showed off the A-1's fittings, from shampoo sink to cash register. Meg applied herself to Hugh's drinking arm, Neil and Bruce clicked bottles and chorused Here's looking at you, Darius kept to himself his opinion that American beer tasted as if it came straight from the horse.

#

Without letting on that she would keep watch on something of this

sort, <sup>Meg</sup>~~she~~ watched them come and go in the vicinity of <sup>Kate</sup>~~Rhonda~~. The

Duff men all, even Hugh by now, were taken with <sup>Kate</sup>~~Rhonda~~, like stags

acquiring a taste for a lick of salt.

Bruce meanwhile had not been able to resist adding to Charlene's agenda: "You get any rich widows in here, be sure and chalk them on the back for Darius."

Darius managed as loud a laugh at that as any of the rest of them and kept to his nominated role as bachelor curio, saying he'd found it the safest policy to tip his cap only to himself. Interesting it'd have been, though, wouldn't it, to tell them about Fiona and his years of connubial imitation with her. After all, wasn't matrimony but a sort of friendship recognized by the police? But his and Fiona's arrangement did have an eventual drawback, too; in the end, Fiona had pranced off with a Spanish anarchist.

No, ~~though, no~~ <sup>g</sup> news of Fiona would not help his situation with

Meg any, would it.

"Owen," <sup>Meg</sup>~~she~~ stage-whispered during Charlene's demonstration of the croquignole permanent wave machine, whose dozen metal headrods and snake<sup>#</sup>-nest of electrical cords ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> holding the Duff men in appalled

fascination. He stepped back out of the group and joined her at the front of the store.

"Owen," she said with intensity, "what times are available yet with Charlene?"

"Mother, I imagine they all are. Let's have a see." He turned the pages of Charlene's daybook for appointments. "Blank as Orphan Annie, so far. If you want, when Charlene finishes up horrifying us males, you can get together with her for sometime---"

"A regular time, is what I want. Right after work, <sup>every other</sup> Fridays.

Put me down for then, pretty please, Owen."

He picked up the appointment pencil as directed. "Paydays, yeah, those are always popular," he left the matter at, but glanced from <sup>his mother</sup> Meg <sup>Hugh stood</sup> to his father. At the edge of the clan over by the croquignole machine, like a man with something on his mind, or, worse, like a man trying

not to have that something on his mind.

# —————  
Kate and Rosellen conferred while setting out the covered dishes of potluck supper.

"At least it's a better name for the place than our mother's was,"

Rosellen said reflectively. "Toston Curly Cues." She shook her head. *Am  
cat*

Kate sampled a meatball in tomato sauce and licked her fingers.

"Talk about a family gathering. <sup>Now,</sup> ~~We're~~ bringing them in all the way from Scotland."

"Nnhnn. He's kind of like Hugh with the bark off, isn't he."

Rosellen studied across the room at Darius, who was looking rapt as

Charlene explained the principle of the marceling iron. Beyond him,

Bruce uncorked a wicked wink which Rosellen at first thought was directed at her, but realized it was for Kate, of course.

"You two," she kidded Kate in the woman-of-the-world tone they always used when the topic of mad pash came up. "In a beauty shop, yet."

Kate couldn't help herself from wearing a goofy expression. "Guess what," she murmured back to Rosellen. "The family is on the increase, in more ways than just Scotch uncles."

"Katy, really?" Rosellen instantly had her by both forearms. "Oh, good, when? Have you picked out names yet? Aren't you going to tell the rest of the--?" *T  
m*

p. 286A follows

"Rosellen, if I cut in on Charlene's party with that news, you know I'll never get a decent hairdo out of her again."

#

The sisters dealt with each other before starting on their plates of supper.

Charlene said under her breath, "It's on the tip of your tongue."

~~Rosellen.~~

Rosellen grinned recklessly. "It's all over you an inch thick."

~~Charlene.~~

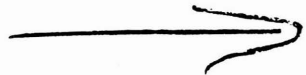
"What if I did say—"

"A million or so times."

"—you'd never catch me sliding around in—"

"Skating; you used to say, 'skating around in'."

"—skating around in hair the way they did." Charlene tartly checked ~~on~~ Rosellen for any further grinning. "There, does that satisfy you?"



"Some."

"You're certainly awfully interested in what I do, all of a sudden,"

Charlene let fall. "Are you by any chance jealous?"

Rosellen's eyes widened in a way that Charlene still did not know

how to read. "Can't I be just curious?"

#

"What happened was, the Swede called me a bunch of choice names,"

Neil was saying across the tableful of potluck to <sup>Kate</sup>~~friends~~, "all of it over

the best way to nail in a crossbrace..."

"I wouldn't want that responsibility," Meg was saying to Rosellen,

"of having to hit the right typewriter key time after..."

"Are you characters about to get my pump boat done?" Owen was saying to Bruce and Darius. "Or am I about to have to bail out the core pool with a teaspoon?"

Darius said nothing, rather than say that the forty-foot pump boat would have been about twenty minutes' work on the Clydeside. Bruce, though, let Owen have:

"If you'd quit squirting water on your dam, Ownie, you wouldn't have that big puddle of water in the middle of it."



Owen managed to laugh, although he had been at least half-serious in asking ~~and~~ with the question about the pump boat. The table talk moved on but

Owen, overseer by habit, was studying Bruce. Whatever canary Bruce had lately swallowed, he couldn't keep the feathers from flying out

tonight. Ah, well, hell. Maybe it's that peppy home cooking <sup>Kate</sup> ~~Rhonda~~

gives him. Owen himself had been hot with pride all evening, watching

Charlene, taking pleasure from her intrepid battleplans on the ~~air~~ <sup>tresses</sup>

~~needs~~ of Wheeler. Watch out now, world. Once again he ran his eyes

over her, ~~and except for the presence of so much family, would have~~

~~done so with more than eyes,~~ <sup>she</sup> Certainly ~~Charlene~~ was her own best

advertisement. Darius, he saw, evidently thought so, too. The two of them were in thoroughgoing conversation.

"Hugh and I are the type they used to try to keep out of parlors,"

was confiding to her.

Darius ~~confided~~ "Now here we find ourselves, in a beauty one."

"You're not the only one surprised at you," he heard right back

from Charlene. The woman was harder than dental enamel. "None of them

can get over it, you know, you with us this way. Fort Peck isn't an

easy jump from anywhere. You must have really wanted a change of scenery,

~~she tried on him,~~ "to come here just like that."

"I suppose sometimes we want change and sometimes change wants us," he resorted to. "What of yourself, though? Where was it you derived from before here, dear?"

Charlene gave him a look, a substitute for the real reamer she wanted to unloose down the table toward Rosellen. Had the little snip been blabbing about Toston and the footsteps in the hair-strewn shop back there? Charlene had tossed Toston out of her chosen picture once, and could again.

"Bozeman," she bit out.

"Yoze-mite, ah!" Darius exclaimed with vast feigned interest.

"Seen pictures of it! Great towering cliffs there, haven't they, and some mountain thingy split half in two? I can see why you'd miss so grand a place."

# —————  
"That uncle of yours is a strange duck," Charlene softly told

Owen after they had taken their celebration home to bed.

"What's a family without at least one cracked uncle?" he responded, nuzzling her in a couple of <sup>favorite</sup> ~~remembered~~ places. He wondered, though, how

many Duffs at Fort Peck it took to amount to too many.

## DROP CAP

"You do have to hope to Christ they don't erode a hole in it by

staring at it," Sangster said tiredly.

Owen only nodded, abstracted. By now he hardly even noticed the tides of workers from elsewhere on the dam, tunnel muckers and shovel runners and carpenters and catskinners and all the rest trooping up onto the levee edges

of the fill at lunch hour or change of shift to stare and tell one another

it beat anything they'd ever seen, a lake sitting on top of a dam.

The core pool—<sup>unruly</sup> there was no getting around it: Owen Duff's core pool—<sup>phenomenal</sup> ~~was an amazement~~ no matter how you looked at it. The dredged material <sup>that</sup> ~~which~~ was being spewed in to form the core of the dam needed time to settle, needed to have the water drained off it at a judicious pace, needed in other words this artificial basin in the top of the damfill. On a blueprint it could not have looked more clever and neat, a settlement pond <sup>that</sup> ~~which~~ gradually worked itself out of existence as more and more fill jelled in it. In reality, which was to say here under the noses of Owen and Sangster, the core pool was a wind-whipped, sloshing, leaky, fickle body of water half a mile long, up in the middle of the pile of earth which was supposed to become Fort Peck Dam.

"We have got to get--"

"--that sonofabitching pump boat up here," Sangster chorused in with Owen. "I agree, you know. This isn't any too much fun, trying to sluice out just as much water as you keep pouring in." Sangster's ~~current~~ current specialty, a sluiceway to drain off excessive water from the core pool, was busy draining all the time and still not quite doing the job; the water level kept creeping up, the three times a day a sounding was taken. ~~If you wanted to give an engineer a nightmare, this one~~

Owen hated even to think about

~~would do~~ what would happen if the water backed up enough to breach

~~one of the levees~~ of the core pool. ~~Owen~~ He had both this worry of a flood

above the river washing a goodly portion of the dam down into the river,

and one ~~of~~ <sup>all</sup> his own. His dredged material was staying soupy, taking longer it was supposed to.

to consolidate into firm fill at the bottom of the core pool than ~~planned~~ on the roof of the dam

~~He~~ They simply and utterly needed a way to regulate this mass of water

more exactly.

~~his and Sangster's~~  
The object of ~~their~~ irritation could be seen in the boatyard,

most of a mile away: the white speck of pump boat which Medwick kept

telling them was being built as fast as he could, which wasn't anywhere

near fast enough for them.

"You've tried, I've tried," Owen mused. "I think let's sic Major Santee on Medwick."

"Oh, you bet. Why don't you toss a spitwad at Medwick from up here and do about as much good," Sangster expelled.

"I figured I'd sic the Colonel on the Major first."

Sangster chewed that over. "Go in to the Colonel and piss and moan about not being able to meet your schedule the way things are, you mean?"

"That's what I had in mind, yeah."

"Only problem with that is, you don't want to get them believing you're in too much trouble on the schedule."

with strain  
"Max," Owen said tightly, "it's about half-true."

~~"If that's the case," prescribed Sangster, "you better sic away."~~

#  
Darius  
~~He~~ went up onto the east bluff to watch the pump boat be moved to

the core pool. He had asked Owen how they were going to get this famous vessel up the considerable slope of the earthfill and into the core pool.

"We're gonna walk it," Owen had replied absently. And be damned if that wasn't precisely what they were doing. Fourteen bulldozers, the big

crawlers ~~that were~~ called Caterpillars, were hitched by cables to the square bow and now the pump<sup>f</sup>boat, the size of a respectable hotel, was going up the road behind its column of clanking Cats as pretty as you please. He shook his head. Americans seemed to operate on the principle that they could solve anything if they could just get enough traction.

"Making it sail on dry land, aren't they." The unexpected voice made Darius spill a bit of the tea he was pouring from his thermos.

"Neil, sunbeam, I didn't know you were anywhere about."

"Had to come see what they're up to at Ownie's lake." The younger man helped himself to the other half of the little <sup>shale</sup> cutbank Darius was <sup>sitting</sup> on. "You too, huh?"

"The craft, there"<sup>1</sup>—Darius nodded toward the pump boat still advancing up the side of the dam fill in a cloud of dust and clatter<sup>1</sup>—"does bear my tool marks, you know." Crude a tub as it is. But there was no bringing the Clydeside and the true ships with me, was there. He glanced aside at Neil, who had not been a boatyard participant but was the one who showed odd crosscountry up to witness this ~~oldest longest driest~~ launching <sup>even</sup> "Bruce's thumbprints on the bonny boat, too, of course."

"Mmm hmm." Neil had opened his black lunchbox and was doing fast damage to a peanut butter and honey sandwich. The sandwich was fine-- product of the cookhouse of Jaraala and his mother, it was better than that--but Neil wished he was having for lunch what Bruce usually had.

Rosellen's noonhour at the Ad Building, though, and his on the dredgeline trestle gang didn't quite work out right for ~~that~~ getting together.

Taking his tea sip by sip, Darius mulled the Neils and Bruces, the young men ~~who worked~~ <sup>working</sup> here by the thousands. Empires, armies, crusades had been built on lads such as ~~all~~ these. A willing set of hands, durability, availability--these were the pegs history made use of, if Darius knew anything about it.

"What was it like," he was suddenly brought to, by the sound of ~~Neil~~ <sup>Neil's voice</sup> again, "being brothers back in Scotland?"

"In what respect do you mean, ~~Neil?~~ <sup>Neil?</sup>"

His nephew ~~had to~~ <sup>ed</sup> swallow away on the last of a second ~~peanut butter~~

~~and honey~~ sandwich before specifying:

"Fight much?"

"Mostly around the tonsils," Darius mused. "Your father likes a

good argument. And I suppose I'm not averse to one either, now and again."

It seemed to be Neil's turn to muse. "If you're kind of alike in that, how come you turned out so different? Him, over in this country, and Mother and us and all, and you staying the way you were?"

"Well, your mother hadn't a sister," Darius smoothed past that with his instantaneous smile, "and so I evidently was cut out to be bachelor uncle to the world."

Sudden <sup>quiet</sup> ~~silence~~ at the core pool made them turn their heads in that direction. The Caterpillars had been throttled down to lowest idle, a barely audible diesel throb. The pump boat was afloat in Owen's lake.

# — "How you doing?" Rosellen always felt like an awed delegate to a maharani when she visited <sup>Kate</sup> ~~Shonda~~ these days.

"Pretty pukey," <sup>Kate</sup> ~~Shonda~~ reported. "I don't see why they call it just morning sickness."

"Nhn. When you say 'pukey,' though, is that sort of an all-over feeling you have or more of a stomach thing?"

"Both. Why? You taking a census on ways to throw up?"



"Hey, I don't even need to ask if an owly mood is one of the symptoms too, do I."

"Speaks for itself, I guess," Kate relented. "So does my middle."

"You're not showing much yet."

"On me, it doesn't take much."

Rosellen mildly pooh-poohed that, her mind obviously racing for ways to find out all about ~~child-bearing~~ ~~pregnancy~~ from the resident expert, peaked-looking Kate. "When do you start being a lady of leisure?"

"End of this week." Although what the Rondola's customers were going to do without her there to joke ~~with~~ ~~about~~ being bitten by a trouser worm or finding a surprise in the oven, she didn't know.

"Oh, already?" Rosellen let out without thinking.

"Listen, I don't care how they do it in ~~China~~ ~~that book~~, I'm not." The part in The Good Earth where the woman worked in a rice field all day until it was time to pop into the house and have a baby was, according to Rosellen, certainly interesting. That was one word for it, Kate thought. from experience thus far She stated now, "Getting started on a kid is no picnic."

"At least you've managed to," Rosellen flared.

160.  
Kate drew up in surprise. Who's the owly one now? "If Bruce were here, he'd tell you it's just a matter of doing it until you get it right."

That only reddened up Rosellen even more. Quickly they changed the subject, and their squall passed. But Kate still wished she could take that back about practice making perfect, in a family way.

# —



The day already had been about a week's worth of contentious hair.

In came a naturally curly, not too bad to start on although too much curl will fight the set, and Charlene managed to push in enough wave, with ~~liberal~~ ~~enough~~ use of the marcel iron, to make the woman's head of hair stay reasonably calmed down. But then in walked ~~three~~ <sup>two</sup> women together whose hair behaved like porcupine quills. It dawned on Charlene that these had to be Cactus Flat residents, showing the effects of the sulphury wellwater in that particular shantytown; and worse, the ~~pair~~ <sup>duo</sup> inevitably wanted ~~just~~ <sup>only</sup> a wash and a wave. She forbore from informing them that the only hope for doing anything at all with the broomstraw condition of their hair was to chemical the bejesus out of it, and instead put it that they were in luck, the A-1 was offering bargain permanents today.

# Watching the ~~three~~ <sup>pair</sup> of them, happily permed, go out the door <sup>several hours later,</sup> Charlene wondered what follicles she was going to encounter next. By now it was interesting, though, what she could tell by her customers' hair. Who used rainwater to wash in at home. Who was sickly even if they otherwise didn't look it. Who had seen the latest Jean Harlow movie and who held on to the creed that Theda Bara's was the hairstyle forever.

She hadn't even started on Meg yet.

Their two faces stared at each other from the oval captivity of Charlene's wall mirror. Meg spoke up first:

"Anything short of a scalping, please, Charlene."

"Meg, as it is, you always look...nicely put together." As she was saying so, Charlene's fingers exploratorily lifted a tendril of her mother-in-law's sunned-brown hair. Plenty of life to it, if not much snazz in how it was ~~being~~ worn. "Do you want to keep it that way, with just a wash and a wave? Or <sup>l</sup>~~m~~"

"I want this," Meg stated with what seemed to be some difficulty, "to be a, a kind of treat for myself."

Charlene came around the chair. Directly in front of Meg, she put her hands on her knees and leaned down and in, looking in Meg's eyes and then around the verges of her face and the waiting frontier of hair. Halfway through her inspection, Charlene began to grow excited. "Meg," she blurted, "Let me give you the works."

"Whatever are...those?"

"This is going to sound like the dog's dinner, but it'll all fit

together on you, I just know it will." Rapidly Charlene outlined the plan of attack. First, a croquignole permanent. Building on that, a marcel wave swooping to one brow. For a finale, antoine pincurls down the side and back. "Meg, I guarantee you'll scarcely know yourself."

Meg peered past Charlene to the mirror again, as if to give her reflection a last say in this. After a bit, she announced: "Bang away, Charlene."

She confronted herself again in that mirror <sup>when</sup> ~~as~~ Charlene was fussily finishing up with the pincurls. Under Charlene's ministration her hair now looked like fine-carved teak, its scrolls of perfect wave and curl making the little nock in her chin fit right in, sculpturally. If she did say so herself, Margaret Milne Duff looked like a new woman, royal make.

Charlene couldn't hold back a giggle at the thought. "Hugh is going to be thrown for a loop when you walk in that door tonight."

"No, he won't."

"Well, whyever not? Meg, take it from me, you look absolutely--"

"It's his time of the month," Meg said caustically.

Charlene's hands halted. After a moment, she went on with fixing Meg's hair, determined not to be dragged in to Duff family matters any farther.

#

"So, business lady, how you doing?" Owen greeted her when she at last managed to close up shop and deposit herself home.

"Busy says it."

"What you wanted, right?"

"Mmmhmm." She went directly over to the easy chair where he was ~~tallying~~ ~~reading~~ daily dredging timesheets, sat on the chair arm and hugged the crown of him to her chest while telling him, "This is the head I was wishing for all day."

"Hey, you do know some pretty interesting things to apply on hair," he answered comfortably as his head inclined there between her breasts. Charlene bit her lip, and did not tell him that his father was off on a binge again.

#

"Hnnfp? What're you--don't, mmpf--"

"Shh," came a soothing whisper, at odds with the hand clamped forcefully over Darius's mouth. "Don't wanna wake up the whole menagerie."

p. 299A follows

The figure sitting on the edge of his bed seemed so dedicated to not disturbing the peace of the darkened barracks that Darius made himself lie there soundless. When the hand eased up a millimeter, he wrestled free from it and got his own heartfelt grip on the visitor. "Hugh, what to hell?" he furiously whispered. "What's this about?"

"Wanna give you a treat. Take you out on the town."

"I've already been somewhat on the town." The couple of payday beers Darius had downed after work seemed to have taken place innumerable hours ago, and the ~~black~~ blackness outside the barracks windows didn't scale down that estimate. "Entrails of Judas, ~~man~~, what time is it?"

"Friday or Saturday."

"Hugh, listen, now." Darius tried to make himself sound more patient



than gritted. "You've had one too many. What you need to do is merely go home and find your own ~~sweet~~ <sup>tender</sup> bed and--"

"No. Gonna take my brother out on the town, if I have to skid you there."

In the abrupt stillness after that, they could hear the breath<sup>ing</sup> of each other.

"That shouldn't quite be necessary," Darius answered at last.

"Remove yourself from the bedcovers, though, please, so I can at least put some clothes on."

#

Whatever the calendar said, payday always hung a full moon over Wheeler.

Traffic, afoot as well as automotive, was thick enough to be a hazard to the two men as they dodged across the main street. Evidently the clientele was beyond local. Up from chasing sturgeon in the dredge cuts, a fat fisherman in chest-high waders arrived at one of the saloons in front of them and stood, massive rubber bulge filling the doorway, for a moment. The flavor of Wheeler seemed familiar even if he had never tasted the town before, and he exultantly clopped on in.



Good grief, Darius thought to himself, does the drink run so deep here they're prepared to wade in it?

He ~~Darius~~ did not yet know his way around town thoroughly, but Hugh could have guided the blind through his accustomed route. With much regret he was avoiding the Blue Eagle these nights because Tom Harry had shown a tendency to waylay him while Owen or Neil or sometimes even Bruce was sent for. Thus Hugh's current port of call during a binge was the Wheeler Inn, which ~~now~~ met the two Duffs with a noise level that would have taken the skin off lesser men.

No sooner were they inside the door, Darius already somewhat uneasy in the press of flesh, than a hawknosed little man popped from the crowd, piping out in ~~what sounded to Darius like~~ a high squawk, "Hey, Hugh! And, uh, Hugh's brother! Need a lifesaver? I got extras." He reached down to the large sidepockets of his bib overalls, where the necks of several beer bottles protruded, and drew out two.

"Church key, too, Birdie?" Hugh inquired as if topping off the transaction.

"You betcha. Never go without." Birdie Hinch found the bottle

opener in another pocket and pried the caps off the beers for them.

"Here's mud in your eye," Hugh began to thank him with a toast, but Birdie was already veering out the door, clanking glassily as he went.

"These'll maybe hold us until we can fight our way to the bar anyway," Hugh evaluated, taking a healthy swig and starting to writhe his way through the crowd, Darius more or less in his wake. Nobody took exception to their progress, elbows evidently a part of the commerce here, and Darius managed to put some attention to the sprinkle of taxi-dancers and their partners carouseling within the general mob. He and Hugh passed within an inch of one couple so snugly together he would have sworn they were lodged in each other. Next came two women dancing together while they awaited customers; Hugh and therefore <sup>he</sup> ~~Darius~~ resolutely ignored their wisecracks about being in the market for a tall matched set, and passed on by. As to the Wheeler Inn's other item of business, Darius had seen savage drinking in his time, at least by <sup>fabled</sup> Glaswegian standards, but this was bacchanalia.

When <sup>they</sup> ~~the two Duffs~~ were finally at the bar, Hugh had forged a spot

and was finishing his beer by the time Darius ~~had~~ squeezed a place to put both feet down.

"Cozy pub, this," Darius tried to enter the common mood.

Hugh seemed intent elsewhere. He unpocketed a silver dollar and tapped it indicatively on the bar until a bartender put up two more beers in front of him. Positioning one of the bottles squarely in front of his brother, Hugh with tipsy dignity insisted: "Here, have another lift of this."

*ital.*  
Crawfurd, that fool Crawfurd, spun up unexpectedly in Darius from those words. Something like sickness filled him as he stared at the dark glass shape. ~~Whyever did he... why had he...~~

"Darius?"

He was summoned back by Hugh's swooping tone of curiosity. "Are you going to drink that," he heard the prod sharpen in Hugh's voice, "or admire it to death?"

rattled off a toast of "Confusion to our enemies,"  
"Sorry, drifted a bit, there." He grabbed up the bottle and tipped a sizable quantity of beer into himself, while Hugh blinked. Within himself Darius raced for the safety of a conversational topic.

"None the neverless," he brought out sonorously. "Hugh, do you remember and how can you not?"

Hugh laughed so helplessly beer went up his nose.

"The great pulpiteer! The unstillable Reverend Milne!" The High Street church in Inverley, not to mention the extent of the town within his vocal range, had famously resounded with the Reverend's paragraphic alternations of ~~N~~Nonetheless~~N~~ and ~~N~~Nevertheless~~N~~ until the inevitable Sunday when the phrases amalgamated.

"And the time," Darius was in fine roar now, "he caught you and Meg in the darkened room and you claimed to him 'This isn't what you think it is' and he drew himself up and said, 'It's going to continue not to be what I think it is, too.'"

They both had to set down their bottles in this quake of laughter, Darius managing to chortle out as a finale: "The man could have put in a patent on jabberwocky!"

"Eh," Hugh said after they ran out of snorts of mirth. "I miss the old goat."

"Your Owen," Darius hazarded, "resembles him. Facially."

"As long as that's all." Hugh was lurching a little, but seemed reflective. "Oh well, our Owen. I must have been reading Greek the night before." ~~#~~ Darius stood patiently to see if there would be more, and Hugh provided it. "Brains by the pound, Owen has. The ration of sense in him is another matter."

"He's on his way to being a worldbeater," Darius decided to contribute, "at this dam."

"He's always been on his way to five places at once." And that Charlene wife of his has twice as many in mind for him. Hugh, confused, stopped to sort out what he'd said <sup>aloud</sup> and hadn't.

"They're quite a set," he heard Darius offering, "your flock of sons."

"Neil, now," Hugh seemed to be counting carefully from a list, "he'd have held our name to the farm. Whereas Bruce--"

"That one bears watching, Hugh, or he'll die facing the monument."

With sharp puzzlement, Hugh stared at Darius. Then the saying came back to him, from Inverley ~~as well~~. It had to do with the instructive way public hangings, when there were such, were performed in the town

square, with the miscreant facing the ~~statue of~~ ~~state of~~ Queen Victoria, and it tripped readily off an Inverley tongue any time anyone was observed behaving like a scamp.

"He's young and full of himself, is all," Hugh claimed, although there were times when he himself wanted to read the riot act to Bruce. Determinedly he turned the matter, along with a fresh bottle of beer, toward Darius. "And when are you ever going to get yourself some posterity?"

"I'm still apprenticing at it," Darius joked smoothly, and Hugh had to laugh. As quickly as he could recover, though, he gibed:

"Palmistry, at your age?"

"Now, now. Doing the nasty by oneself isn't necessarily in the picture around here, is it," Darius amplified, making ~~obvious~~ reference to the Wheeler Inn's commercial tinctures of blond<sup>e</sup>, brunette, redhead, and jet-black, although truth be known his own gambits had been in the straightforward brothels of Happy Hollow. Next he intoned, "As the Bible says, 'Better to put your seed in the belly of a whore than to spill it on the ground.'"

Hugh took a deep thinking drink. "Where exactly does it say that?"

Darius gave a shrug. "On the flyleaf?"

Hugh roared a laugh. "That's where your mind has always been at, all right, your fly!"

*Ital.*  
Do I owe him this much of a listen? wondered Darius. Do I owe him a damned thing?

"Hugh, do you suppose we could find some other burning topic than my--"

"Serious, though," Hugh ~~now~~ plunged on to. "There's much to be said for the married state. You ought to give it some consideration sometime." ~~Darius.~~ For one thing, being married saves on all the beforehand--"

Hugh woozily searched for the word he wanted "--kitchy-coo. And it holds up well. The fucky part, if you take my meaning. Darius, you know, they say even a mouse grows tired of going in and out of the same hole. But I never have."

*Ital.*  
 In the hard moment that followed, the contempt that swelled up in Darius stoppered him from saying anything. His huge first impulse was to smash Hugh, which he fought down to an urge to hurl something viciously vulgar in return; but finally, swallowing with difficulty, he made himself confine to:

"That's maybe enough of your bedroom secrets for one night. Thanks

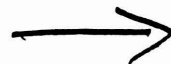
ever so much for the pond of beer and now if you don't mind, I'll  
head back—"

"Drew your attention, didn't it."

Hugh's tone made Darius swing around and take a fresh look at him.

He  
~~Hugh~~ appeared appreciably less drunk than half a minute before.

"I wondered if you couldn't stand some reminding," he was going on,  
"that we're man and woman, myself and Meg, and not the ~~young~~ spring greens  
you were nibbling at in Inverley." # As Darius eyed him, Hugh put a  
hand on the bar and pushed himself a bit straighter. # "Darius, this  
isn't then. It hasn't been some interlude you can whistle just like  
that, since I cleared out of Scotland with Meg. I've done considerable,  
and maybe failed at more. Hard to keep count, when something of this  
sort"—he gestured in a way to indicate the saloon, Wheeler, the dam project—





"comes down on you. But I made a place. I made crops. I made three sons. Meg and I, we made our life, out of not much more than a ~~steamboat~~<sup>g</sup> ticket. And I won't have you parading over here to undo that, if that's what you have in mind."

→  
Run in

ital.

Bottled courage, Darius registered, or is it more?

Tactics. Always the great question, those.

In the paynight millrace of the Wheeler Inn, the brothers faced each other closely, one putting his huff to strongest use, the other waiting for him to abate. ↑

to down

"I'm not out to, Hugh," Darius gustily refuted undo. "The same years have gone by for me as for you, there's a pile of life I've had since Inverley. My matrimony was with the Clydeside, my work there. You've never credited that in me, ~~Hugh~~ have you, how much I loved those bloody bedammed ships." He paused. "Everything I was-- involved in there went on its back like a beetle. But I still had a brother, didn't I. You're what's left." He chose to pivot the matter on that. "We both know there was a moment when I'd have gone around the world on my knees to gain Meg. No sense denying that. But she went with you, didn't she. So, you won, then and there."

ital.

"Went with?" Hugh seemed to be tasting the words. "She was my wife. She is my wife."

"I can grasp that," Darius concluded levelly. "If our parents

dim child,  
raised a ~~raftie~~ it wasn't on my side of the mirror."

#

Owen had not much more than come home from work and closed the door when there was a strenuous rapping on it.

He opened it to Bruce.

"Didn't hear you roar in," Owen said, taking a peek past Bruce toward the street. "Where's your motor=sickle?"

~~Rhonda~~ <sup>Kate</sup> made me give it up," Bruce reported sheepishly. "She says if I'm going to be a father, I can't go around with bug smushes on my incisors."

"Cramps your style, all right, I can see that." Owen made a pretense of inspecting Bruce's mouth area. "Well, now that you're afoot, better come in and rest."

Inside the house, though, Bruce stayed on the balls of his feet, rambling from one side of the living room to the other as if he was there to visit the walls.

"Bruce, not to put too fine a point on this or anything<sup>T</sup>--but what<sub>m</sub> in pluperfect hell is on your mind now?"

"Owne, I've got a shot at being the government diver."

"No fooling." Owen's tone escalated as he grew sure that his chronically fooling-around kid brother for once wasn't. "That's pretty good going, buddy. It really is. Congratu-<sup>l</sup><sub>m</sub>"

"First I need to buy Bonestiel's outfit." Bruce came up close to Owen. "See, Ownie, the diver has to have his own equipment. The government furnishes the, uh, air."

"What are we looking at here then, just a diving suit, right?"

"And the ~~air~~hose."

"Well, sure, otherwise you'd have to practice holding your breath for some long time, wouldn't you."

"And the beltweights and the diving shoes and the telephone gear and the lifelines and the underwater lamp<sup>S</sup> and the helmet."

"Bruce. Let's hear the total."

Bruce named the figure as coolly as he could, but his Adam's apple bobbed significantly afterward.

Owen also did a gulp. Then said:

"About as much as a Ford ~~Double~~<sup>Triple</sup> A truck happens to cost, you're telling me."

"Ownie, I hate like blazes to have to ask you for it. I'd--"

Bruce fidgeted but kept his eyes straight into those of Owen "--I'd  
rather take a beating. But with the kid coming and everything, I can't  
swing this myself. You'll get it all back, I guarandamntee you. You  
have my word and you can have my hide after that, if you want. See,  
though, it takes money to make money, don't they say? So if you'll back  
me on this, then the quicker I can start diving, the faster you can get  
re--"

"Don't hemorrhage yourself trying to convince me here," Owen shut  
down that spate. The strength of conviction. Hard labor or a sizable  
sum, said the judge. Owen had already visited his choices in this,  
turn this hitherto harum-scarum brother down or give him a possible leg  
up. He was not sure how it would have come out if this were a case of  
Bruce solo, but with ~~Florida~~ <sup>Kate</sup> and the impending ~~kid~~ <sup>baby</sup> in the picture too,  
that wasn't nearly the question, was it.

"All right. You win. I'll put up the do-re-mi, and we'll work out  
how you fork it back to me."

Bruce all but tattoed his thanks onto Owen, then left. In the

quiet house, Owen did a very rare thing, pulling down from the canned goods cabinet the pint of Four Roses that he and Charlene kept on hand for a hot toddy whenever one of them had a cold, and pouring himself a short swift drink.

He could already hear it with Charlene. Owen, how long can you

keep laying out money to them this way?

Nothing I intend to make a habit of, he'd say.

Then why do you keep doing it, she'd say.

And she'd be right.

#  
DROP CAP

"Something new has been added. You look like glory in its Sunday best."

Meg spun around at the sound of him. The cookhouse kitchen, empty at this time of night except for her, and now him, suddenly seemed central to everything.

"Aren't those pretty words." She caught her breath a little. "You always could embroider with your tongue."

to go with the rest of you,"

"It is pretty hair," Darius said as if sincerely explaining. "My compliments to the imaginative Charlene." By now he had <sup>covered</sup> ~~some~~ most of

the length of the kitchen and was lounging against a meatblock not far from her. "Not that my imagination has ever needed any adding to, Meggie, where you're concerned."

Now that this had come, after all the years, she found she still did not know her own mind. Or did she. At first she said nothing. Then:

"Darius, I have to scoot on home."

"On payday night? When the rest of the citizenry is on the town?"

"I only dropped back by because I'd forgotten to take these for

~~Rhonda~~ <sup>Kate</sup>." Meg showed him the Mason jar and couldn't help smiling a bit.

"She's at the stage of crazy cravings, and nothing ~~else~~ compares with Mr. Jaraala's pickled crab apples."

Darius's own smile came on instantly, and the half-laugh that was the same as Hugh's. "We'll hope her tyke isn't born puckered up."

Meg was looking steadily at him. ~~His sustained smile showed the~~

short square tooth, bottom right, that had been chipped off in an early accident at the Clydeside shipyard. <sup>She'd</sup> ~~She~~ thought at the time that nicked part somehow made this smile of his even more appealing, gave him a

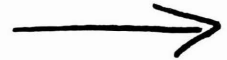
~~dimple in his mouth, and she thought it again now.~~ "And why are you

in this particular vicinity, Darius, this particular night?"

"I was hanging about, is all. And am rewarded with this wonderful coincidence."

"Really," she held to her decision, "I have to be going home."

"And what's there for you?" he asked, all reason. He had been





storing up for this since the stand-off with Hugh the previous payday.

'It holds up well,' does it. So does what I feel for her, you drifting

toss-pot. "Unless I miss my guess, Hugh beetled downtown as soon as he

was off-shift. He'll be some while yet, drinking the town dry."

"I'm surprised you're not at it with him."

"I'm surprised that you don't see Hugh's only my brother, while you're you."

"Darius, we're not those peppered-up youngsters any more."

"We're not down in our graves yet, either."

"We may be if Hugh ever finds us like this."

"He's elsewhere, though, isn't he. Meg, heart, let's look at this matter afresh. We don't have an ocean and the family you were raising and considerations of any other sort between us now."

"That's your idea of a fresh look? Going back to the bind we were in, before Hugh and I left Scotland?"

The <sup>the</sup> noise of a door in ~~the door noise from~~ the dining room made them both jump. Whoever

had come in was still out of sight around the corner from the serving window.

Meg looked wildly around. The next thing she knew, Darius's arm was around her and by ~~mutual volition~~ they were ducking into the pantry, out of the wide-open <sup>area</sup> ~~acresage~~ of the kitchen.

She had to listen over the drum of her heart for the sounds out in the kitchen. Meanwhile Darius's arm had not gone away.

There was some clumping, which came nearer and nearer, then stopped.

Then she could hear the almost soundless whistling, the blown air of the only tune ~~Tom~~ Jaraala seemed to know.

"It's the cook," she let Darius know in the barest whisper, unsure whether to feel relieved or twice as alarmed.

Darius speculatively kissed her forehead.

~~Jaraala~~ rummaged in the breadbox. Next he could be heard slicing, twice.

By now Darius had moved his hands under her arms and around onto her back and, having met resistance at her lips, was kissing through the neighborhood of her hairline along the side of her head, occasionally ranging his tongue into the delicate grooves of her ear. She tried not to think about how many other teases he could employ on her. She

could feel the most definite one at the front of him.

Pasteboard carton being opened, gummier slicing. Velveeta cheese.

Jar lid coming off, tink of knife against its mouth. Slathered with mayonnaise.

She willed Jaraala to go eat his sandwich snack somewhere else, but no. He could be heard chewing, and he was a thorough chewer. That meant they had to be utterly still in the pantry, and Meg hung there in Darius's clasp of arms, cheek to cheek and much else to much else.

At last came the sounds of Jaraala washing up his plate and breadknife, then the whump of the dining-room door as he went out. Meg put her hands flat on Darius's chest and pushed herself back far enough to see squarely into his face. She thought she felt commendably calm, considering.

"That was unfair," she said when she had the breath for it.

"I wonder if it was." He put the tip of a finger into one of the curls coiling at the corner of neck and ear.

Meg surprised him. She put her own index finger against his ~~break~~<sup>scapula</sup>bone like a small but substantial pointer and pushed herself away more effectively. "If I ever do walk off from Hugh," she said, "it

will have to be in the open." She gave him that look as if she were taking God's inventory. "Not, Darius, in the pantry."

#

She wished she knew how much the names mattered. It was a harder part than she had thought, making those up. But if she were to call the woman 'Elondina' and him...

Tells

Call them Ishmael, Heathcliff, Hester Prynne, Swamp and the Duchess de Guermantes, Huck and Tom, Antonia Shimerda, Molly Bloom, Puck, ~~Pertia~~ <sup>Hamlet</sup>, ~~Regan~~, Cordelia, Flem Snopes, Goneril, ~~Hamlet~~, ~~Temple Drake~~, Lord Jim, Anna Karenina, Eugene Gant, Mrs. Dalloway: they answer, faultlessly, each time by making us a gift of all their wordly possessions.

Flaubert sends notes tinkling from Emma Bovary's piano and at the other end of the village the bailiff's clerk, "passing along the highroad, bareheaded and in list slippers, stopped to listen, his sheet of paper in his hand" and we listen there with him ever after.

Cather prompts an anxious young Santa Fe seminarian to say, "One does not die of a cold," and the Archbishop in the winter of age responds, "I shall not die of a cold, my son, I shall die of having lived," and we accept that as true for us, too.

ital

Mayakovsky, Russia's cloud in trousers, jots to Lili Brik from his Crimean tour, "Lilik, I go off in all the directions there are!" and from London she postcards to him "Volosik, I kiss you right in the Parliament!" and we believe with them, there in those everlasting <sup>fevers</sup> ~~instants~~ of correspondence, their fevered creed that love is the heart of everything.

Writers and their written, they haunt us as we most want to be haunted, in fogs of ink.

and ital

Rosellen knew <sup>little enough</sup> next to none of this ~~anyone with high school has~~

~~received whiffs of Shakespeare~~ yet she was on an updraft of it all.

cherished  
Her writing hand agonized, and ~~liked~~ the agony. Time escaped, and she minded not at all.

It first came to her in the Ad Building, one of the times when she was turning out those reams of paychecks. The names, all these. If a person could know... She had sat up even straighter in her typing chair, posture of the thoughts suddenly pushing at her. And what the money will let them do, make them do... The idea went home with her and produced a tablet and a pencil, and she had been slaving away in stints ever since. Searching her imagination for grist. Lately she had been reading Now in November, and she thought Josephine W. Johnson had it

ital

ital

ital

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374

REVISED

ever so right: "Words and days and things seen that lie in the mind like  
stone."

This was an evening when Neil's trucking run had been only to Glasgow

run in

and back, and so when she came out of her haze of concentration over her pages and heard him cut the engine, she thought now was as good a time as any to let him in on her endeavor.

"Writing? You mean--like what, that penmanship they made us do in school?"

"No, stories. The kind in magazines."

"No kidding? You been doing that? Let's see one."

Heart knocking on her breastbone, she handed him the little set of pages.

Neil slowly read of the people named Blondina and Merritt. He wasn't sure whether he had heard the precise story before or not, but it was the type that practically stood in the air at Fort Peck: a High Line farm couple who had been grasshoppered out, the man desperately going halfway across the state the next spring to a wage job on a road project, the woman having to do the farming on her own, climbing off the tractor after each round of the field to go over to the pickup and check on their baby in a fruitbox cradle on the seat; the story ended as soon as they heard there was hiring at a place where a great dam