

with enough patience could have picked the tribe of them out of even
this crowd, family resemblance in the way they stood akimbo but attentive,
like soldiers picketed, one here, another over across, pair there, the
Duffs as ever unmistakably in evidence; all but two.

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No one would notice, today. That much they knew about this. The
rest was the treacherous part.

Where they were, the sound of Roosevelt and the crowd's roars
of applause were a distant surf. Slipping off to meet like this was
more than they had bargained for at first. Only slowly, across the
past months--maybe she would say a ^{five or six} year, maybe he would say half that
or twice that--did they catch on to each other, like sharing a sense
sharper than anyone else's around them. Not the first pair ever to
catch catnip on the breeze at the same time, they both knew; plural
of spouse is spice, but that oldest of jokes on humans is always freshly
played. The time was in sight, next year, when Fort Peck would be over.
Wheeler would be given back to the gophers, dam jobs would be no more.
Each of the five Duff couples, paired like ark animals that didn't quite

match, would launch off to elsewhere, somewhere. So if he and she were ever going to take this other route, the mapless one from married beds to some place like this, now was the time they could start.

They kissed hard, as if to get past any doubts.

Holding to each other, they clung so close their heartbeats registered on each other's skin. When they broke apart for breath, her fingers walked up the cleft in the middle of his chest. She asked, "Are you thinking about suppertime?"

"No." Last thing on his mind; the way they were touching each other crowded out all else. "Why would I be?"

"That's when we have to start pretending." He knew what she meant.

From here on, careful at home, careful at family get-togethers, to not say each other's name too often. Or too seldom. "I'm not going to like that," she whispered, although there was no need for whispering. "It just came to me, the feeling of dreading supper tonight. And I wondered if maybe I was picking it up from you."

His hand cupped the back of her head as if weighing its contents.

"Am I getting myself in with a mind reader here?"

Her fingers went back down the dale there on his chest. Not whispering now, but softly enough, she offered: "I suppose we'll see."

"Then we had better hope it doesn't run in the family," he provided back to her.

Slowly their hands moved down on each other to where things begin.

Itals

in history. So, neither of them meant anything lasting by their fling, their handful of times together. Rosellen pretty much knew what she was having with Owen wasn't love, although there were things about him she wished she could take home and put under the bed. She didn't even think she was out of love with Neil, although as Proxy said they did seem to need a fresh shot of each other. What Rosellen, pressed to it, would have said she loved was the fling itself. The story, secret, which would just be there, put away in herself--and of course Owen--when they all left Fort Peck. Except that Darius had pushed himself into the picture.

After the slide, the first time they'd managed a minute to be alone to talk, in the back hallway of the Ad Building, she had taken a look at Owen's peaked expression and said, "Don't blame yourself to death. You went out there and saved Neil's skin."

"It's nothing as simple as a few million yards of mud," he answered. Darius had been at him about the two of them, he told her rapidly. Like a beak into a wound.

"Mad as hell about something, everything--I can't get him simmered down." Owen shook his head as if finally having met the impossible.

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"Maybe having it to hold over us will be enough for ~~us~~^{him}. Maybe he'll

never say anything." Rosellen watched him, feeling it begin to burn at

her, as Owen finished: "Except to me."

end ital
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"What's this 'Tell us, Jealous'?" Darius's mimicking voice rose in the truck cab. "Is there more where that's from? Because--"

"Because nothing. Forget I said anything." Rosellen gazed steadily across at him as if convincing herself of something. Then said: "I told you I'd make you a deal." She reached down and took her shoes and socks off. She began to unbutton her dress, turning toward him enough to make sure he could watch her at it. But before scooting over to the middle of the seat to finish undressing, she dropped her hand to the gearstick. "Better get this out of our way first." Stepping hard on the brake to keep the truck from moving at all, Rosellen pumped the clutch in with her other foot and moved the gearstick up into reverse, farthest away from the truck seat.

"Barefoot driving," Darius said of her quick exploit. "I am all admiration."

"Barefoot all over, next," Rosellen said, that saying borrowed from Proxy making him blink in the darkness. Then he felt the drift of her fingers onto the buttonline of his shirt. "You, too," Rosellen stipulated.

Darius complied, he would have taken his clothes off at high noon in Picadilly for this.

All garments at last tucked up onto the back of the seat with his cap, the two of them made what position they could on the long narrow truck seat, and it began. Never pass it up, ran in Darius's mind, not that he ever had or intended to, especially now. The world was a goner, since the festering cowards' peace at Munich, and a man may as well lose himself in his favorite hiding place of pleasure while he could. These otter-smooth maneuvers of woman, white magic of their thighs and their moon-touched breasts, the hidden delta where the loins meet, this and then this and yes this--

"Wait." She wriggled, out from under and up onto her side. "Let's... trade places."

Bare and bright-eyed, Rosellen moved partway over him, hands kneading the strategic hollows between his collarbones and the root of his throat.

He couldn't help but wonder whether she was taking tips from Proxy, where else did she learn spice such as this? Rosellen was surprisingly instructive, coaxing him to lay his head back, wait, she said again, and he did, letting her shift around to where she wanted, murmuring something tersely to him about not wanting to bump into the steering wheel, until he could feel her finding a position over his lower thighs. His head turned a little, he could see up at the windshield which had grayed over, steamed up from their breath and body heat. Darius would have chuckled at that if his throat hadn't been too tight with wanting. He shut his eyes a moment, all the desires humming in his head, Olivia, Jessie, Fiona, temporary Proxy, missed-chance Meg, as he waited for this next.

Rosellen paused in mid-motion there low on him. She had to slip behind the steering wheel, a bit sideways, for this. There was just room. She kept as much of herself applied to him as she could while her left leg angled down and her left foot just touched the clutch. This ending she had found in herself. Employ the eraser. On him, on the mess she had made of her own story and three others', on the way life was ambushing

all hopes. Over with. Rosellen pushed her foot down on the clutch and palmed the gearstick knob to her, out of reverse, out of gear.

"Wh--? We're going!" he said, struggling to rise in the darkness.

Rosellen answered for everything with herself, flinging for all she was worth onto his neck, shoulders, any of him she could fight at as he tried to get out from under, adding her weight and determination as the truck tipping forward on the ramp started him sliding off the seat, Darius borne under her as the truck kept picking up momentum, coasting faithfully until it glided from the dam, into the gather of the water.

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stared at the shaftwall. The hopper as it plummeted had scraped down the wall, breaking like matchsticks every step of the two-by-four ladder Darius had just shimmied down.

"God Almighty had his hand on your shoulder that time, Duff,"

Rosocki said shakily.

Darius said absolutely nothing. Even after an extension ladder was brought and he and Cates and Rosocki climbed out to the scared apologies of the truckdriver and the grudging commendation of the foreman for not getting themselves killed, Darius still did not have a word to say. ~~This was not like him, everybody knew, but figured it was the~~
~~shock of the close call.~~

he
That night, ~~Darius~~ returned to the damsite and carefully lodged a wrench where it would strip the gearteeth of the project's biggest hoisting crane.

#

By the tens of tons, rock was flowing onto the dam now. Trainloads of quarry stone were being brought in from two hours away, at Snake Butte--as the name promised, rattlesnakes accompanied the cargoes of boulders, and caused everybody at Fort Peck to think more carefully

provided, ^{Already} glued them on little wooden bases and sold them. The tails of rattlesnakes ~~now~~ were showing up all over Wheeler beneath the mounted skulls of buffalo.

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The first time, the wrench into the gear teeth, was mad fury. Even Darius could not have called it anything other. Tactics, however, were fury pounded cold and snipped into actions.

The machine-breakers. Why did I never read up on them more? The bullgang these days, with all work aimed toward closure of the channel gap in the dam, was shunted wherever anything needed doing in a hurry, and Darius visited parts of the dam like ^{an ill-tempered} a tourist storing up grudges. Not a man of them here--well, Owen perhaps--would know the name "Ned Ludd" if it floated in their breakfast bowl. The bogeyman set loose by English laborers when they burned hay-ricks and clothiers' mills, broke up knitting looms and wrecked ^{winding} ~~winder~~ gears at the mine pits; before the Luddites were done making their point by riot, London had to put them down with an army the size of those it was sending against Napoleon. Yet here we're all at making this one great machine, this dam, are we not. And why? To take everyone's mind off any cause except perfecting

the gadget, a thing that turns running water into standing water.

Cleverest sink plug in the world, this Fort Peck machine.

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DROP CAP

Four days before the river was to be closed off, in the middle of an already complicated enough afternoon of jigsawing the dredgelines back together downstream from the dam, Owen was called to the field telephone.

"Sangster. Sounds like he's got a hair crosswise," the pipehaul foreman warned before handing him the phone.

"Owen," said the thin voice on the other end, "you better come see something."

"What, at the trestle again? I'll be right--"

"Huh uh," the field-phone voice now sounded as if it was ^{having trouble} ~~hard to~~ believe ^{ing} itself. "This is at the truss bridge again."

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His first look at the slumped earth, within spitting distance of the ~~truss~~ ^{truss} bridge, sent Owen white-faced. Sangster ^{'s} ~~whose bridge this~~ ^{was,} was whiter.

The slipped section of fill resembled a muddy scallop shell perhaps

figure overseeing an extension of the dredgeline strutwork, turned and waved. "Cover until I get back, okay?" Owen called to him through cupped hands. "And ring up Jepperson, would you, and tell him I'm detaching this one"--he jerked a quick thumb at Darius--"for a little while."

Then he spun around to his uncle, frowning intently at him and then down the abutment slope to the motor pool vehicles. "Get in the pickup."

Darius cocked his head warily. "What would be the reason for that?"

"There's something I want to show you at the spillway."

Darius's heart skipped some beats. "I've had the ha'penny tour of the spillway once already, you know, Owen."

"Get in the goddamn pickup before I stuff you in it!"

Darius closeted his anger in the face of Owen's, and followed down and climbed in the government pickup. Owen veered over to the nearest ransack shack where tools and supplies were kept, grabbed a sizable empty box and flung it in the back of the pickup. Then, mystifying Darius, he drove without a word across the dam, the opposite direction from the spillway, and up into the Fort Peck townsite. At the bowling alley, he jammed to a halt. Darius could not resist asking:

"Are we going to settle this with a duel of skittles?"

Still wordless, Owen slammed out of the pickup and into the bowling alley and soon came back with the box full, heaving it with a grunt into the back of the pickup. He glowered at Darius for a moment through the back window of the cab, then ~~got~~^{jumped} in again and drove across the dam, this time unmistakably into the maze of humpy little hills that would bring them out beside the spillway, and its rail spur.

Sabot, Owen. A wooden shoe--French, as it happens. The word is from that, sabotage is. But I suppose you know so, educated fool that you are.

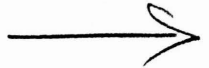
Darius appraised Owen, stonily driving, and felt a sense of arguer's stimulation along with his apprehension. He had missed Jaarala something fierce; someone who grasped by habit, almost by bloodright, the need to chew at the heels of the powers-that-be. He even pined a bit for Mott, bent trumpet though he had turned out to be.

The movement, you see, Owen. You think you know by book what it is about, what I am about. And you can't, poor learned mealmate. 'In the mind of every man, hidden under the ashes, a quickening fire'--as

end
itals

order of things can be turned upside down.

Darius tensed as the pickup barreled down a hill to where acetylene
flickers threw light and shadow over an iron valley of wreckage, the
cutting torches at work on railcars crumpled and tangled like a kicked



set of toys.

Owen swept a tallying look along the wreck and the repair work on the railroad spur as they pulled even with it. And drove on by.

Before Darius quite caught his breath, they were alongside the huge concrete trench of the spillway, Owen jouncing them down through the hills next to the gape of it, Darius ~~now~~ having to keep watch back and forth between his possessed nephew and the mile-long fan of spillway floor below his side of the pickup.

The pickup roared to the service ramp which angled down onto the spillway. The watchman there, ~~looking more than startled,~~ appalled to have ~~any~~ ^{this} traffic, waved them on in a hurry when Owen flashed his particular job button.

Now, by God, Darius. Push the political wool away from your eyes for once. Now you're about to see some solving. Owen drove up the spillway, no longer the dirt canyon where Proxy taught Darius how to herd the truck but a huge inclined floor of concrete sections ~~as~~

as neat and new as fresh linoleum. Halfway along, Owen abruptly pulled to a halt. "Sit," he said to Darius as he would to a dog. He himself bailed out of the pickup cab, hefted the box from the back and over

through here without them getting dizzy. Now take a look. Go ahead.

Look!" [#]Darius with obvious reluctance moved his eyes from Owen to the ~~immense~~ ^{straight} gout of the spillway, half a mile of concrete ahead of them to

where it met the river below the dam and even more of it behind them

where the colossal spillgates stood. [#]"A mile of concrete in here,"

Owen resumed intensely, "laid two feet thick, down a five percent grade,

and all of it so goddamn exact and smooth that ball rolled along it

without ever bouncing, didn't it. Blueprints and specs and hard-ass engineers

and crews who want to go about it right, this is the kind of thing we

can give the world. It's what the dam is going to be, something that

works like it's supposed to. We know how on this, you bet we do. Those

pie-in-the-sky politics of yours, though, ~~Darius~~, they can't ever take

the world in hand ~~that~~ ^{this same} way. You can work on how to run people until

you turn blue, be my guest, but I'm going to keep doing what I can see

a real result on. Dams, jobs. The actual factual, Darius."

"If I ever see the light, ~~Owen~~, I'm sure it'll be because you

brained me with it," Darius said with surprising surrender. "Does

this conclude the sermon for today?"

He watched as Sangster jolted down the bluff, heels first, to the
core-drilling crew ^{nearest} ~~closest~~ to them to check on something. Apart from
weak eyes that had him already wearing bifocals, Max Sangster was made
like a wrestler, bulk built on a low center of gravity that looked even
lower because of the way the seat of his pants perpetually drooped down. ✓
Gesticulating, Sangster pointed out over the valley to the middle of
the line of test pits being drilled along the axis of the dam-to-be;
plainly he wanted to make good and sure that he was going to get core
samples from absolutely as close as possible to the river, where his railroad
bridge had to have firm footing to vault high and long. Broad gestures
always seemed called for in the geology of Fort Peck. According to those
rock docs taking the core samples, the Bearpaw shale bedrock under here went
down a thousand feet, and ran the same for a hundred miles--a ~~marine~~ ^g sea of
ancient ~~gray~~ ^{blue} clay under this river newly come fifteen thousand years ago.
But thanks to the Ice Age and the Missouri as conveyors of soil, that
bedrock lay under about a hundred →

feet of alluvium everywhere there on the valley flat. These engineers were going to have to muck out that alluvium for their pretty dam site and any of its appurtenances, such as a railroad bridge. Sangster was climbing back up the bluff looking no happier.

Welcome to the ditchdiggers' chapter of civil engineering, Max,
buddy, Owen couldn't resist thinking. The uncivil part. He himself already felt at home here in the Fort Peck country's sweeps of plateau and valley and channel and riverplain. Everything seemed to run on the horizontal in this particular part of the world: the Great Northern Railway that gave this maptopping stretch of Montana its nickname of the High Line; the arrowline of the boundary with Canada beyond; long horizons in all directions out from Fort Peck. For this job, it suited Owen Duff perfectly fine to have land without any interruptions loftier than the pulpits of gophers. Gimcracks of nature bothered him. He could not help but remember--how many times had he vanished out to play among them whenever he could sneak time to himself, as a boy--the formations of rock in fantastic shapes where Go-Devil Creek flowed into the Missouri at the upper end of the Duff homestead. Rocks

~~that were mimicking~~ ^{mimicked} toadstools and beehives and icicles were all that ~~were~~
~~had been~~ available to him as his private place, but somehow even then it
~~had~~ seemed to him that the life of the planet ought to be more serious than that.

The Fort Peck wind was serious enough. Owen stomped his feet a
a little to encourage some circulation into them, and heard Sangster
doing the same.
~~similarly trying to warm up.~~ The two of them hung a bit apart from
the others on the bluff, seemed to gravitate together even though they
had not known each other very well on the Bozeman campus, different as
their engineering aims were. Owen ~~knew~~ ^{figured} Sangster was seeing his own
pet project down there on the valley flat, etched by eye onto the spring-
green bottomland: the railroad bridge that had to be high enough
for the dam to come up and meet it, two hundred and fifty feet in the
air, and yet withstand the next ~~four~~ ^{five} years of the Missouri's floods and
ice jams and other tricks.

(Owen's mouth had quirked appreciatively at Sangster's doleful crack
that since the bridge was going to have to be highballed anyway--railroader's
term for top speed--a little ice might as well be thrown in.)

end cut
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"Knowing me, I'm going to need to watch out it doesn't get to be a letdown," Owen was conceding to himself in a tone unexpected enough that she turned around to look at him. He was staring over the top of her head at the dam^site, and nodded toward there as he finished his thought: "The actual dam instead of the one I could draw for you blindfolded, ^{eg}Charlalene."

He paused. Then in his slide-rule manner:

"It won't, though. After the first of the year there'll be so blazing much going on, where you're looking at, that I won't have time to be let down or let up or any other direction."

that were not to be confused with housing started mushrooming ~~next~~.

Happy Hollow, snugly in a little dip at the ^{back} ~~far~~ end of Wheeler, was

the distinct area where the houses of prostitution proliferated, under

such nicknames as the Riding Academy and the League of Nations. Some

of that particular trade, ~~however~~, was also freelance ^d in the dancehalls

that kept springing up until downtown Wheeler was rife with them.

no # As to housing, in a more domestic sense, everything was built on the principle that temporary was good enough. When the dam was done,

Wheeler's whole population would pick up and move anyway. So, tumbleweed

structures built up and built up along the lot lines staked onto the

prairie--as a Wheeler homeowner of ^{your} ~~a~~ shack, shanty, lean-to, or dugout,

you owned from the floor up but paid by the month for the ground it stood

on. Into your hasty set of walls you could barely fit such basics as

bedsprings and kitchen table--all over Wheeler, family trunks sat outside

the front door under a drape of canvas tarp--and for decoration, a framed

famous picture like that wolf gazing down at a ranch house on a midwinter

night, his breath smoking, would suffice.

Squalid, flirty, hopeless, hopeful, nocturnal and red-eyed, Wheeler

*along it
that draw
channels
into*

"Meg, I want a cup of coffee, whether or not you want one, so I'm
fixing coffee, and that's that!"

Meg said nothing, because if she had it would have been to the
effect that Charlene was quite the touchy missy, wasn't she. Both women
concentrated on the coffee pot for a while, until it began to chug.

doggedly, hypnotically. Tawny country, so far, flat beside the road and yet not in sum; the bumpy edges of benchlands protruded all around like knees of reclining Gullivers. Darius caught himself drowsing, snapped awake and checked on Jaarala; the pouch-faced man was peering ahead over the steering wheel the same as ever, owl in a yellow speedboat.

"Hateful weather," Jaarala eventually half-shouted above the motor noise. Darius entirely agreed. ^{This} ~~The~~ sun was ruthless. The hot eye of God/O'er this mortal sod. If there were a Heaven and it had a plan, it ought to be able to do better than this in climate and country. The afternoon had turned sultry, hot air blasting in through the car windows. In more than two hours they ~~had~~ met virtually no traffic, Great Northern trains barreling past them the only other moving things in the blaze of afternoon.

The vaguely Dutch gable-top of a grain elevator appeared on the horizon ahead, Darius fervently hoping this was the place.

"This's only Culbertson," Jaarala said, and at the town's main intersection turned onto a road arrowing straight north. "Another 45

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As these things forever are, ^{his}~~Darius's~~ particular journey to the left
of pushes and pulls.
was an accumulation. The lasting resentment he took from the Clydeside
workers' losing battle for a two-penny-an-hour raise, which nakedly showed
the shipyard owners' dominance by their control of the gate keys. The
revelation, after Meg and Hugh picked up ^{to}~~for~~ America in that year of 1910
and he had no call for weekend trips to Inverley, that the workers' movement
its share of
drew ~~some~~ enthusiastic female adherents. Contrary to reputation, free love
~~maybe~~ was never quite that, but Darius found it could be at least relatively
socialism
unencumbered. (Olivia, the pale Fabian ~~lecturer~~ from London. Plucky Jessie,

the delegate from the Nethermuir flax spinners. Ultimately, the passionate but prancy Fiona.) Bolts of excitement of another sort, as the unions periodically tried to roil Great Britain at its docks, mines, and railways, until the guns of August, 1914. Then the example of October, 1917: the Russian masses toppling the Czar and the entire wormy old edifice of royal rule. Throughout those years Darius was in attendance at a hundred meetings, a dozen committees, a thousand arguments over Georges Sorel's doctrine of the general strike ^u(~~to render the maintenance of~~ socialism compatible with the minimum of brutality, ^uDarius could reel off by heart) versus parliamentary gradualism ^u(~~Having been preyed on does not~~ entitle one to prey back, ^uRamsay MacDonald kept scolding them from Westminster). Clydesiders spooned politics into themselves along with their oatmeal, and Darius ^u~~gladly enough~~ ^{hungrily} sat up to that table.

end
itals

334A

watched. Exactly as Sorel, in the densest of the arguing Bibles of the left, had prophesied: mass belief, passion, mania, whatever you cared to term it, the ingredient that forged the early Christians against the Romans and that turned Paris upside-down street by street in the French Revolution was working in this epic strike. Chapter and verse, the workers triumphing with the weight of their numbers.

ital

Government warships stood gray but distinct out there on the Clyde, the Hood, the Warspite, the Halo and others sent to ^{spike}~~perk~~ the unrest occurring ashore, but Darius's immediate concern was the phalanx of police at the dock. Dispatched by his strike committee to make sure the shutdown at the Cumbrae Dock was holding, he felt great relief in seeing, beyond

Italo

the police ranks, the mass picket of dockworkers in place. Then he spotted the activity on the dock itself, the lanky young men handling cargo awkwardly but handling it.

"Who to hell are those?" Darius asked.

"Sain' Annies," someone in the group of dockers ^{spoke up} ~~said~~ bitterly.

"English ones, at that."

Darius and the others watched as the young men from the University of St. Andrews unloaded the cargo. They sang, back and forth, the same refrain over and over:

Oh, to be in...

Samarkand.

Eating a...

tamarind.

Gentlemen scholars out on a lark, the blackleg bastards in Darius's

Roman

steaming mind. Hard which to hate worse, the university students strike-breaking or that languid song, its tango beat or whatever the mocking fart of a thing it was.

"Stand your lines, boys," Darius at last rasped out to the dockmen, swallowing his fury one more time, in the General Strike that never nearly lived up to its name.

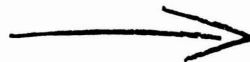
end
Italo

With the police and their hardwood batons in such numbers, he knew nothing else to say or do.

The General Strike never nearly lived up to its name. The Trades Union Council wavered (there were those, Darius included, who ended up believing the TUC couldn't find its guts with both hands) and the government and sailors and soldiers and police and blacklegs wrested back the tram lines and power stations as well as the docks, and May of 1926 did not prove to be the time either.

While the motorcycle sat out its sentence, Red Lodge Red cut rides to work with Neil and the truck, and Meg kept whatever cookhouse tasks Jaraala shyly left for her, and for furnishings for the new house she and Owen at last were going to have on Kansas Street, and Hugh had to adapt to putting up trestle instead of smacking down willows, and Owen poked along the riverbank mapping out where his dredges would dredge; while July of 1934 simmered into August and August into Labor Day, Fort Peck became the biggest bunkhouse on the planet. In the official townsite 144 barracks were either up or about to be, and the single-dwellers, young men for the dam's various construction jobs and young women for the hospital and office work, began cascading in. Fort Peck could brag now that it had more people at work than any of the other big dam projects, Boulder or Grand Coulee or Bonneville, the employment total reached, by one sunset that summer, 6,999.

Red-haired but otherwise green as grass, a seventeen-year-old kid left from the town of Red Lodge in southern Montana that day on his way to Fort Peck, not knowing he was to be its seven-thousandth hire. He had a layover of several hours between trains in Great Falls, where he did the one thing



his father had instructed him to: he headed for the Mint Bar. The first time in he bought a bottle of grape pop but he couldn't afford to do that repeatedly, so the rest of his journeys in and out of the Mint, he simply braved the grins of the geezers drinking there and the bartender's ribbing and did what he had come to do: stare at the paintings by Charlie Russell.

He went over and over ~~them~~ ^{the pictures} with his eyes, held by the colors and action, skies and buttes in wondrous tones and horses and horsemen caught just right, and then he would go out and walk around the block a time or two, until Russell's art drew him back for more looking. His father had been right about the paintings; there's something about them, they just get you.

The final time the kid came out of the bar, in front of the drugstore catercorner across the street a blind man was selling newspapers. # Leader!

Leader! Whadup whadup whadup whadAY! the blind man chanted again and again, the kid finally figuring out the words must be What's up, what's up, what's up today!

The kid bit his lip and fingered the few coins in his pocket, then crossed the street and bought a newspaper. It was orange, a color he had never known a newspaper could be, either.

That night he swung off the train in Glasgow and made his way

to the Great Northern Hotel.

"Oh gosh, son, we just don't have anything," the hotel clerk told him, the kid's fingers freezing around the fifty cents a bed would have cost if there had been a vacant bed.

The clerk gave another glance at the stock-still kid, then said:

"Okay, tell you what. Lay down on the couch over there and I'll wake you up when the bus comes."

The kid was barely asleep when something thwacked the soles of his shoes, hard and stinging. He came up off the couch fighting, groggy with sleep and scared half to death; worse so when he saw the tin star on the shirt of the fine-boned little man confronting him with a billy in his hand.

"No, no, Carl, he's okay," the hotel clerk called over when the commotion drew him out of his cubbyhole.

"Then why the dickens didn't you say so," the sheriff pronounced in a way that seemed both ordinary and snappish. "You want me to keep drunks out of your lobby, Grady, I don't have time to sort out the ones who aren't." The sheriff spun on his handtooled boots, the smallest the

wide-eyed kid had ever seen, and strode out of the hotel.

Just after dawn the bus let the kid off at Fort Peck. He walked up to the Administration building, where no one was around yet except the janitor. Go get yourself some breakfast, the janitor told him, he'd watch his suitcase for him. When the kid came back, someone was there to send him off for a physical, then to sign him on as a dam worker. From there to the ^{two-story} barracks, where another clerk gave him a set of sheets and blankets and assigned him to bed number 48 in one of the bullpen rooms with forty-seven other single men. The kid found the bed with the brass 48 medallion on it, but stood looking down at the letters stamped on the bare mattress. Damn, this would have to happen, he thought tiredly, and trooped back to the clerk.

"Need a different bunk, I guess."

"What's the matter with the one I just assigned you?"

"Taken."

The clerk checked his chart and peered up at him in puzzlement.

"No, it's not."

"Says so. Says 'USED' on the mattress."

The clerk had to laugh, but cut it as short as he could. "No,
all that stands for is United States Engineering Department."

Red-eared, the kid went back and claimed the bunk for good.

—————

Aug back early on calendar
Some certain morning, around the middle of August, you step out
Jan
into the morning and the air carries the first astringent trace of
autumn. Only a hint, cool and brief, and then the summer sun asserts

He did not want to deal with the suspicion that had been building in him as he went to work on the dredgeline traps day after day. It changed everything, if true. It shook his foundations, overturned his life thus far. Hugh was beginning to suspect that the damwork was growing

sinfully more comfortable to him than farming.

Carlyle

Was he, Hugh McKinnon Duff, a fraud to his life? The furrowed path all the way from Inverley to the Missouri River bottomland homestead-- had he been an impostor, those determinedly farming years? Worse: a dabbler? Merely awaiting the chance to have a wage handed to him, an idleheaded job of only so many hours a day where someone else told him do this, lift that, put the next shovelful over there? (Might as well be damned Darius, worker bee in a shipyard hive.) A doubt such as this cut to a man's core, that's what it did. No reason it should, he kept insisting to himself. One drop of sweat, produced on hourly rate of pay, ought to be the same as any other drop of sweat, seasonally induced on a farm; but the sun-warm sweating done in a greening field somehow-- Christ on a slick raft, man, Hugh told himself, you'd better not start trying to sort out sweat.

His

Yet he found himself doing exactly that. ~~The~~ notion of catching ^{new} farmlife on the upswing, of taking himself and Meg to ~~next~~ fields along the Yellowstone River, had dwindled this past summer. There had been no swing upward in crop conditions that he could see, and the grasshopper

blizzards hadn't abated, either. The, what, general nature of all he had been set on as his work in life had fallen into ques--

next sentence across the field. Haven't we,

words practically spat from him. "But one's

re, the

eer."

re-did
in
Oct. '95
revise

#

The sheriff later dug up the fact that, back there in '33 when the alfalfa farmers were being cleared out of the Missouri River bottomland and in turn hired to clear the damsite of brush and cottonwoods, the name Duff was already part of the Fort Peck vocabulary. It gave Sheriff Kinnick something more to think about, that this dogfight bunch amounted to, what would you have to say, the first family of the dam? As well as being the authors of that truck in the river. Where the Duff record was concerned, the sheriff spent immense time trying to get his mind around the size of all the contradiction. But then, he would remind himself bitterly, that was always the thing about the cockeyed dam. From day one, everything about Fort Peck was going to set a record.

#

"So what do you think of her, Duff? You ready to make mudp

Miz Missouri?"

Day one at Fort Peck for Owen Duff had come in early May

company with a handful of other first hires specked across a bald knob

re-do ? -
O's Swampy
pencil, n. br.
listing kinds
of soil,
working up
core samples

on the bluff overlooking one particular crimp of the river. [#] The wind was up, naturally, and Owen could have kicked himself for not wearing his wool-collared short mackinaw instead of trying to appear climateproof for the Army Corps of Engineers big shots. The other civilian engineers looked equally chilblained, but Owen alone had grown up in this northern Montana wind, was so habited to it that even indoors in the Glasgow hotel he would catch himself slanting ahead into a braced position when he felt the start of a breeze through an opened window. [#] Never mind with the weather, he instructed himself. This is the damndest chance anybody ever dreamed of. Charlene will see. This is something we'll be able to hang our hats on for the rest of our lives. Aloud, he answered Sangster:

"I'm ready for about anything that constitutes construction."

"Uh huh," the shorter man agreed. "If the railroad cut back any more, I'd have had to figure out how to teach trains to jump creeks."

From Owen's own line of engineering there was a similar ^{stock} ~~gang~~ of standard wisecracks he could have chosen from, about trying to underbid gophers on tunnelwork, ^{or} ~~and~~ the difficulty Montana dogs were having in burying their bones with so many unemployed dirt engineers eager to

do it for them, and so on; but he didn't trouble to. Not now, not here, not worth interrupting this chance at absolutely kicking aside the Depression and its lame jokes. Instead, arms crossed and hands tucked in his armpits for warmth's sake, he walked the same few strides back and forth as he kept studying the course of the Missouri below.

Don't be a dud, Duff, the extra part of his mind toyed with its echo of Sangster's using his last name in that bluff fashion. That's the way to get to be a dud, Duff. Self-spurring came as a habit, almost one of the easier ones any more, but he tried not to let it show much of the time.

Owen was an even six feet tall, and thin except in the head. There, a strong forehead and dark Brunette eyebrows and ice-blue *sea-blue* a surprisingly widecut mouth where the usual expression was partly quizzical, partly provocative. When that mouth was set now, he looked a lot like a bothered Will Rogers.


"See it yet?" Owen abstractedly asked Sangster.

The Missouri River was enough to bother any earthfill dam-builder.

"Starting to." Sangster knew Owen meant the dam-to-be, the theoretical, ghosted onto Fort Peck's river site by their engineering imaginations.

(While they watch, as men have always watched moving roads of water, the river gathers into story, the written and told tributary, out of passages cut by large desires. Beginning with the first cleaving of its water, by downstream Indian adventurers whose tribal word for canoe was 'missouri', never bettered.) They had the general map of this Valley County stretch of the river handy in their minds, the Missouri regularly coiling back and forth--'river miles', engineers categorized such distances which looped back on themselves--between far-apart benchlands as if dutifully depositing topsoil into every corner of the giant trough of valley. (Then, as a next chapter of the desiring, Lewis and Clark's long stare of expedition, the day-by-day eyes and inks that caught onto paper the 2,300-mile arch of the river from St. Louis to the Three Forks headwaters; quest clerked into architecture as insistently as their President's Monticello. Then fort and fort and fort, America coming west by military and trading-post handholds along the Missouri's immense chain of drainage. From that, the axe-quick renunciation of the river's forest silence as woodhawks chopped trees into boiler-lengths to feed steamboats.) And site-specific, Owen Duff and Max Sangster had already

studied up that there was no longer any fort to Fort Peck. (Onward, then, to the imprints of homesteaders and townplanters on the floodplain. Until, by a third of the way through this century, the pattern was as set as cry and echo, each annal desiring a next: the human tide and the Missouri River, hungrily flowing together into word.) A stockaded trading post, briefly propped up by sternwheel steamboat traffic, the last of Fort Peck had been swept off its ledge at the base of this bluff by one of the Missouri's high waters, somewhere in the 1890's--but the name keeping some surprising life, attached to the nearby Indian reservation and now to the notion which had these engineers by the eyes. They had scanned the preliminary sketches of the dam itself and digested the construction estimates; Colonel Parmenter, the big wheel among the Corps officers, had gone over and over those ~~with them~~ in the briefing at the hotel this morning.

Surveyors  soon would give them the necessary exactitudes, soil samples would be analyzed and a test tunnel driven into the basic shale of these bluffs, blueprints would be drafted in blinding quantity. Yet a good long stare at what you thought you were

p. 29B follows

going to build could tell you things, too. The first of which was, on this river that scrawled from west to east for hundreds of miles across upper Montana, the axis of the dam was not going to be crosswise to that, north-south as every fiber of logic said it had to be.

The river hadn't heard the logic, and as if bored with the oxbow bends it had been scrolling all the way across Valley County, here it shot out of its ~~series of writhes~~ ^{writhings} with an abrupt notion to go north. It was the midpoint of this northward veer, the Fort Peck speck of geography, that presented the dam site, a narrower and higher set of benchlands than where the wandering curves were. [#] A west-east dam on a west-east river; you just had to adjust. Owen Duff thought ahead to more than a thousand days of sunrise at one end of the dam, sunset at the other, sun in the eyes of the dredgeline crews; it would make a difference in where he laid those lines.

Tricks of direction aside, Owen already felt at home here in the Fort Peck country's sweeps of valley and plateau and channel and riverplain. Everything seemed to run on the horizontal in this particular part of the world--the Great Northern Railway ~~which~~ ^{that} gave this map-topping stretch of

Montana its nickname of the High Line; the arrowline of the boundary with Canada beyond; these basic geography lines of long horizons in all directions out from Fort Peck. For this job, it suited Owen Duff perfectly fine to have land without any interruptions loftier than the pulpits of gophers. Gimcracks of nature bothered Owen. He could not help but vanished out to play among them whenever he could sneak time as a boy--the formations of rock in fantastic shapes where flowed into the Missouri at the upper end of the Duff home ~~mimicked~~ that ~~were mimicking~~ toadstools and beehives and icicles were all that had been available to him as his private place, but ~~somehow~~ even then it ~~had~~ seemed to him that the life of the planet ought to be more serious than that.

cut to
flung
factories
here?
Bozeman
max

The Fort Peck wind was serious enough. Owen stomped his feet a little to encourage some circulation into them, and heard Sangster similarly trying to warm up. The two of them hung a bit apart from the others on the bluff, seemed to gravitate together even though they had not known each other very well on the Bozeman campus, different as their engineering aims were. Max Sangster was a bridge, and Owen supposed Sangster was seeing his own pet project down there, etched by eye onto the bottomland, the railroad bridge that had to be high enough

for the dam to come up and meet it, two hundred and fifty feet in the air, and yet withstand the next four years of the Missouri's floods and ice jams and other tricks.

(Owen's mouth had quirked appreciatively at Sangster's doleful crack that since the bridge was going to have to be highballed anyway--railroader's term for top speed--a little ice might as well be thrown in.)

Nice. Sangster was going to have some nice solving to do. Owen, though, was in love with his own tall order of engineering, so big that it needed imagining in segments.

Think of a mile, and pile its entire length with a pyramid of earth as high as a twenty-five-story building.

Think of another mile, do the fill again.

Think of a third such distance, same.

A fourth and final mile, equally level.

The mountainous amount of gravel needed for the downstream toe of a dam this size? Bring it in from the big pit at Cole, 80 miles. That wasn't so good. The glacier-size quantity of rock for the upstream face? Bring it in from the Snake Butte quarry, 52 miles. That wasn't so good

either. But the so-what of the situation kicked in now in Owen; the Murgatroyd factor, they had learned to call it in engineering school.

The back-belief that said ways would be found, that other brains would be bent toward such finding; that out there beyond your own scope of

thought some guy named Murgatroyd was going to have to pitch in, too,

and you couldn't do a hell of a lot about the Murgatroyd factor except

allow for it. In Washington, D.C., this springtime was being c

Hundred Days as the Roosevelt administration wheeled laws, money,

projects into being, and the senior senator from Montana--named

Murgatroyd but even more fortuitously Wheeler--had brought about

for the dreamed-of big dam at Fort Peck, and you had better bet that

engineering brainpower was going to be applied far and wide here. So,

hauling the staggering tonnages of gravel and stone was not Owen Duff's

particular concern. Heaping those materials correctly, along with more

than a hundred million cubic yards of material dredged from these river

banks down there, into a firm gentle berm across those four miles, pervious

edges married onto impervious core: handling the Fort Peck earthfill,

the biggest earthen dam ever tried: that was going to be his.

Dimension seemed foremost on Sangster's mind, too. "Bastardish big

improvising
a Murg
factor
Bunker K. W.
was responsible
for the dam

open country out here, isn't it. Anything between here and the North Pole, come winter?"

"What," Owen now grinned fully and joined the formula of weather complaint, "you want the wind cut with something besides a barbwire fence?"

"Any more of a breeze than this," Sangster squinted against the persistent wind, "and this is one sissybritches engineer you'll find hunkered down ~~there~~ behind those ~~big~~ cottonwoods."

"That's all going to go, first thing."

"The whole works?" Sangster glanced at Owen, then back to the winding thicket ~~miles and miles~~ of cottonwood trees and diamond willows ~~which~~ ^{that} hedged ~~west~~ the riverbank, ~~a winding thicket accompanying this west shore~~ of the Missouri as far as could be seen.

"Mnhmm. Clearing out the bottomland will help with the dredging, the idea is." Owen was thinking out loud now. "If I was you, I'd make sure that cottonwood doesn't get consigned toward your bridging. These Corps guys--they know how to push a project until it squeals, but we don't want them doing it through shortcuts in procurement."

p. 33A follows →

"Jesus no," said Sangster, realizing that Owen was seeing around bends besides the river's. "I'll goose up my specifications on all bridge timbering."

"Wouldn't hurt," Owen approved, but was already back ^{to gazing} ~~into his gaze~~ at the bluff across the river, the distant shoulder that his dam would rest against.

Soon came a shout from the top of the knob, that it was time to gather for a briefing. The Corps seemed to be big on briefing. "Guess we better get used to it," Sangster said, "or marry money."

He stopped, embarrassed. He had let that out before remembering that Owen Duff was a married man.

Owen threw him a look, all right, but with it a fleeting expression that ~~which~~ Sangster didn't know how to construe.

"Sometimes ~~it's almost~~ ^{it can be} worth it," Owen told him, "even if only small change is involved."

—————
Charlene Duff wondered how it had come to this, that she all of a sudden was jealous of a mound of dirt.

p. 33B follows →

give this to Bruce?

had taught him that trick. The hunting. That week in the spring of '33
when the banks closed and no one knew what was happening with the country,
the Old Man sent him out for deer. Bruce fumed, but Neil had always been
the better shot. Still was. Thunder of rifles in this valley, marking
that 'bank holiday', the bottomland families from here to, where, Fort
Peck doing what the Duffs were. His mother getting out all the frying
pans she had, three or four of those black iron ones of different sizes.
The Old Man and sulking Bruce and himself coming into the kitchen each
with a quarter of venison on his shoulder, thudding the meat onto the
table and reducing those haunches with meat saw and butcher knives.
As quickly as his father cut, his mother set to frying, just searing
each piece of meat a little, then layering it into a crock and covering
it with lard. Those venison crocks stowed in the root cellar were still
carrying them through, that summer. Summer of grasshoppers again. The
view from the running-board during the poisoning, the tires of the pickup
leaving behind twin slicks of crushed grasshoppers. Then that feeb in
the government Chevy. Then the dam. And the truck. And this...

CP
p. 625
Darius and sabotage: 1st time, wrench into gear teeth, don't outright say it's him?

p. 635
p. 647
--or even the second time? If so, move D's "machine-breakers" musing to just before the gravel cars incident?

after p. 720 - combine p. 647 material w/ this?
- if it is done, move it all to p. 722-3 after they approach wreckage?

D: Have you read up on machine-breakers, Char?

*What we said...
He is not predisposed
in favor of some man
ladder to who accords
to get going
along, Clyde had a
plentiful
figure*

Crawford cast a disturbed stare at him, damned ladder of a man. *(anyway.)*

*along
Clyde...*

...history of bedmates among ^{his} the female Red mates. Led by his front
member, ~~the word~~ *some petticoat case* ~~it~~ had long been out about Darius Duff. George Crawford,
a bit of a trimmer in everything but family matters, (wasn't going to
~~deterred~~
be thwarted by a specimen like this.

*chided
by
a
sleepabout*

Crawford cast a disturbed stare at the figure before him, damned ladder
of a man. He was not predisposed in favor of Darius Duff, who according
to gossip along the Clyde had a plentiful history of bedmates among his
female Red mates. George Crawford, a bit of a trimmer in everything
but family matters, wasn't going to be chided by a sleepabout.

possible chapters:

* (1933) The Sheriff

(1933) The Missouri

(1934-5) Peckerstroy

(1991) The Sheriff

(1936) Winter

(1937) The Dam

(1937) The Sheriff

(1938) Slippage

(1991) The Sheriff

(1935) The Pickup

--essentially done, as of Feb. '93.

possible chapters:

(1938) The Sheriff

* (1933) The Missouri

(1934-5) Peckerstroy

(1991) The Sheriff

(1936) Winter

(1937) The Dam

(1937) The Sheriff

(1938) Slippage

(1991) The Sheriff

(1938) The Pickup

--bring the Duffs alive in dialogue pronto after Siderius scene

possible chapters:

(1933) The Sheriff	scenes: Crail
(1933) The Missouri	Glasgow shipyards
* (1934-5) Peckerstroy	--Darius in doorway during strike?
(1991) The Sheriff	1926 General Strike
(1935) Winter	Darius at damwork
(1937) The Dam	Plentywood
(1937) The Sheriff	
(1938) Slippage	
(1991) The Sheriff	
(1938) The Pickup	

--ch. can begin w/ Darius's background, maybe framed between the Crail minister's despairs about him. But then it'll need to pick up speed in action narrative: Darius getting work at the dam, becoming involved w/ the Plentywood radicals, meeting (& marrying?) Easter. This could make it one of the longest chs., though it has to be done with fast fluid narrative.

--possible technique: intersperse Darius's bgnd in the shipyards and the General Strike w/ the other Duffs' reactions to him, mostly in dialogue.

possible chapters:

(1933) The Sheriff

(1933) The Missouri

(1934-5) Peckerstroy

* (1991) The Sheriff

(1936) Winter

(1937) The Dam

(1937) The Sheriff

(1938) Slippage

(1991) The Sheriff

(1938) The Pickup

scenes: Milk River Senior Care Center

Easter Shannon in flashback here,
or in Peckerstroy ch?

--this and the other scene of the sheriff in old age should read fast,
funny and furious.

--use them, too, to focus back into the question of the Duffs: who had it
in for whom, among them.

possible chapters:

(1938) The Sheriff
(1933) The Missouri
(1934-5) Peckerstroy
(1991) The Sheriff
* (1936) Winter
(1937) The Dam
(1937) The Sheriff
(1938) Slippage
(1991) The Sheriff
(1935) The Pickup

scenes: 60 below
100 above?
LIFE camera

--Feb. '36 was the time of extreme cold. Check whether that summer also had extreme heat at Fort Peck. This also was election year (for both FDR and the sheriff), and the LIFE photo essay.

--Along w/ the damwork, which possibly can be mentioned only in small details until the LIFE photos give an overall view, the interior moods of the Duffs can come out in winter compression.

possible chapters:

(1933) The Sheriff

(1933) The Missouri

(1934-5) Peckerstroy

(1991) The Sheriff

(1936) Winter

* (1937) The Dam

(1937) The Sheriff

(1938) Slippage

(1991) The Sheriff

(1935) The Pickup

--main event of damwork is the closure; feeling of what's been achieved in the 4 years since the project started.

--the small but telling Hutterite scene (i.e., the cap will be the first indication in the final ~~scene~~ ch. that the man in the pickup is Darius) probably shd go in this ch. Also the Red funeral scene, or shd it be in the Slippage ch.?

--FDR makes his second visit to the dam after the closure.

possible chapters:

(1932) The Sheriff

(1933) The Missouri

(1934-5) Peckerstroy

(1991) The Sheriff

(1936) Winter

(1937) The Dam

* (1937) The Sheriff

(1938) Slippage

(1991) The Sheriff

(1935) The Pickup

--This cd be a short change-of-pace chapter, another syncopation of viewpoint(s). A fairly short scene focusing on the sheriff, and again using him to gather focus onto the Duffs, but keeping it in actual time, FDR's '37 visit, instead of reflecting from the Senior Care Center.

possible chapters:

(1933) The Sheriff

(1933) The Missouri

(1934-5) Peckerstroy

(1991) The Sheriff

(1936) Winter

(1937) The Dam

(1937) The Sheriff

* (1938) Slippage

(1991) The Sheriff

(1935) The Pickup

--This has to be a big ch., culmination of cross-currents among the Duffs and the drama of the damwork. Owen-Kate-Neil, Darius-Owen, Hugh-Easter all have to be in arc.

Rosellen

--The slide can be the occasion for another camera-eye view of everybody, what they're doing when it happens or the news comes. (Have one Duff--perhaps Rhonda, off on a rendezvous?--show up afterward, oblivious to what's happened and therefore caught in what she's been up to?)

possible chapters:

(1933) The Sheriff

(1933) The Missouri

(1934-5) Peckerstroy

(1991) The Sheriff

(1936) Winter

(1937) The Dam

(1937) The Sheriff

(1938) Slippage

* (1991) The Sheriff

(1938) The Pickup

--This will be tricky to do: in essence, the sheriff has to reflect back on his steps of investigation into the pickup incident--flashbacks can maybe be used, although the Duffs individually can't be named--and only in the final graf or so it's shown that he never was able to solve it.

possible chapters:

- (1932) The Sheriff
- (1933) The Missouri
- (1934-5) Peckerstroy
- (1991) The Sheriff
- (1936) Winter
- (1937) The Dam
- (1937) The Sheriff
- (1938) Slippage
- (1991) The Sheriff
- * (1935) The Pickup

--Again, tricky to do, but worth it. This ch. circles the book back to the opening scene, bringing the pickup to the brink of the river and gradually revealing who's in it. As I have it now, Darius (1st indicated when he takes off the Hutterite "Lenin" cap and hangs it on the gearshift knob or something) and Kate are the two; it's Kate who slips the pickup out of gear and holds Darius down under the dashboard, killing him for his blackmail of Owen (Darius knows about her and Owen) and freeing Owen of herself.

At the almost monthly ritual of the family shivaree..

N asks Meg to give them a song. She sings (from Scotch lingo file) "7 yrs etc."

--Rn is wowed by the exotic words, "Clamb, wrang"; intersperse her reaction with the song lines?

Hugh says with a cough, "The Milne side of the family is a bit fierce in its (matrimonial views)."

N is pleased as a pumpkin (w/ Meg's song for them). B's nose is out of joint, as he hadn't thought of it for his and Kate's shivaree. Their mother might (be pressed into service), but damn seldom would she (offer herself?)

Rn at her shivaree:

This was like Weir of Hermiston, her favorite Robert Louis Stevenson book.

The part where...(OO is in church, everyone gathered...)

--elsewhere, she can remember Now in Nov. line

--have D give her some Mayakovsky? Cloud in Trousers...

--"Isn't he kind of a Communist?"

--"I hadn't thought of that. He could be. Russia has some, doesn't it."

One reader always recognized another.

"You're a bit of a reader."

Neil & Rosellen date:

--N. mentally compares something about her w/ Charlene

--move p. 230 descptn of Rn to here or shivaree? (move K descptn to her shivaree?)

--same satin-black hair; w/ their (white skin) and glossy hair, they reminded

Neil of the glossy confidence of magpie

- Satin-black. Same as Ch'ne's, only not ~~fixed~~ ^{so fixed w/} an "it's life"

possibly we dream as we go for Rhonda?
"What can I do that would be vaguely helpful?" Proxy offered. *more help - can handle*

"Mmm"--Rhonda glanced around from putting shoes on Jackie--"my uniform still needs pressing. That fancy iron of Bruce's ran out of gas on me. Better let it--Jackie, honey, quit squirming. Don't you want to go see Mum Mum?" *hold still you are such a wriggle worm.*

Must be the only thing about Bruce that ever runs out of gas.

that she ought...
Out loud Proxy stated "I ought to be capable of a swipe or two of ironing," and unscrewed the spout cap on the gallon can of white gas.

"Jackie, you're going to squirm us both to death," Rhonda scolded. *Then remember!*

"Proxy, that iron maybe needs another minute to cool before you--"

The WHOOSH of flame came then, over where Proxy had poured the first trickle of gas into the iron's teacup-sized tank. Fire flashed up the streamlet of gas into the can, then rivered across the floor as Proxy had to drop the can. "Wouldn't you frigging know," she said almost conversationally. Then over her shoulder to Rhonda, sternly: "Get help! Take Jackie out!" She scanned around for something to beat at the fire with.

bright-eyed
"Fi'e," Jackie said, *sitting up and* pointing at the flames. *exuberant flames*

Proxy whapped at the fire with the rag rug from beside the bed, but the dry wood of the shanty was burning like crazy. Rhonda had scooped Jackie into her arms, but hesitated at the spread of flames near the door.

Proxy saw that she and the rug were in a losing battle against the fire. She grabbed the water bucket again, and this time sloshed Rhonda and Jackie, bringing a shriek from the boy. "Now! Go, along that wall!"

Rhonda hunched over Jackie, keeping herself between him and the flames, and plunged toward the door. Proxy could hear her gasp at the heat, but then the door was open and the woman and child were outside.

Proxy backed to the window, got it unlatched and yanked it up with all her strength. It rose six inches in the windowframe and then the catchpins zinged into the casement holes. Another foot above those holding holes was another set and if she could get the window open that wide, she could climb out: but she needed three hands to simultaneously pull up the window and hold out the catchpins on either side of the window.

shoved down
She let the on the window to close it and grabbed the water bucket one more time. Scars are better than burning to death, she told herself,

clamped her eyes shut, and with both hands swung the empty bucket to

She had no time to knock out the shards that shatter the windowglass. Then she had time to knock

stayed in the frame, and felt one get her in the shoulder and another

slash across her shin, but then she was out, onto the snowy ground.

*piece of
licking
fire,*

It was all over but the embers by the time Bruce arrived. The
volunteer fire department was hosing down...
Wheeler fire truck and volunteer firemen

Wheeler's

The machine-breakers. Why did I never read up on them more. Ned

Ludd and his mad band, *hay-mills & clothiers' mills; winding-gins*
Robin Hood of destruction @ *mine pits*
... *millers' looms*

The first time was fury. (He knew that) But tactics were fury pounded
cold, and snipped into actions.

- all of it their machine, really. *no damn...*

A machine for the sake of a machine.

To take every's mind off any cause except
perfects, gadget, a thing that turns running
water into stand' water. Cleverest sink
plug in world, ^{74P} *no machine (for sake of a
machine.)*

5 bde ch. 7

Hugh drinking pop:

He was a connoisseur of soda pop by now...Sweetly vile, he considered his latest, Orange Crush.

"I can never touch it again, that's all."

"Not ever, huh? That's a long dry while, Duff."

Hugh looked at him with a little start of panic, as if Tom Harry somehow knew what they'd all ~~xxxx~~ ended up saying at the Carteret ^{they} Institute, after the Amen Corner; that, yes, if they knew there were on their deathbed; say they had only a month to live...then, yes, wouldn't they all go on ~~one~~ one last blissful bender... "There I stood at the gate of God, drunk but unafraid." But that was wish, the never-neverland called If. Here and now...

"You heard me, you smirky bastard. Give me another of those putrid things."

...

"You can't tell me you don't miss it."

"I miss the privacy," Hugh said after thought. "You're atop your own back, hidden away up there, when you're drunk."

use in sketch ch. 7

Tom Harry had seen enough drunks to last him a lifetime, and Hugh Duff had been one of the ^{prime} champion blue-meanies of the herd.

Ngil's receipt.

Dam work, summer of '36:

--June 4, lining of tunnels started

--July 21, shaft excavation completed

July 15, peak of employment, 10,546

Sept. 10, work started on Harlem-Snake Butte rr

Nov. 5, dredging season ended: 50,000,000+ cu. yds in place

Damwork, winter-spring '37 (Nov-June 9)

--Nov. 5, dredging season ended, 50,000,000+ cu. yds in place

--Nov. 17, completion of enlargement of tunnels

Dec. 1--shaft lining completed

Jan. 22--tunnel lining completed

*run trestle
for closure* → Apr. 4--dredging season started (April-June, dredges moved from upstream to
downstream)

May 17--Harlem-Snake Butte rr completed (riprap begins)

June 1--nearly 3 million cu. yds of gravel in place (virtually all?)

June 9--record day of dredging, 239,540 cub. yds in place

And, bright-eyed, she moved partway over him, hands kneading the *strategic*
hollows between his collarbones and the root of his throat. He couldn't

help but wonder whether she was taking tips from Proxy, where else did

she learn spice ^{such as} ~~like~~ this? Rosellen was surprisingly instructive, coaxing

him to lay his head back, angling slightly toward the windshield, which

had grayed over, Steamed up from their breath and body heat. Darius

would have chuckled at that if his throat hadn't been too tight, the

old familiar ^{flavor} taste of the doing of this ^a to the top of his mouth. He

let her shift around to where she ^{wanted,} ~~wanted~~ murmuring something tersely

to him about bumping ^{not wanting to} the steering wheel, until he could feel her ^{finding} ~~poised~~

a position

over his lower thighs, and he waited ^{all desire} in the humming in his head, [years

of accumulated echoes of not having Meg,] the seashell chant of whispers

in him as he waited ^{at least} to have this ^{bonus} woman, this night.

paused in mid-motion She had to slip behind the
Rosellen ~~poised herself~~ there low on him, her left leg angled down

, a bit sideways, for this. There was just room.
under the steering wheel and her left foot just touching the clutch.

as much of herself ^{applied to} touching him as she could while her left leg
She kept her right knee warmly

angled down and her left foot just touched the clutch. [She knew the ending.]

This ending she had worked out.

*[Woman]
"Wh-? We're going in" She wordlessly*

typed up, danced with and more; that they had cleared brush off, built
dredges for, walked beneath in diving uniform, fashioned an earthfill onto,
carpentered and dug and labored for in a dozen different ways. A searching
eye with enough patience could have picked them out of even this crowd,
family resemblance in the way they stood akimbo but attentive, one here,
another over across, pair there, the Duffs ^{unmistakably} ~~very much~~ in evidence; all
but two.

_____, today.
No one would notice. That much they knew about this. The rest was
the treacherous part.

Slipping ^{off} ~~away~~ to meet like this was more than they had bargained for
at first. Only slowly, across the past months, did they notice a fresh
affinity between them. Like sharing a sense sharper than anyone else's
around them. Nosing toward each other, they both had caught catnip on
the breeze. The time was in sight ^{in x 4 yr} now when Fort Peck would be over.

Wheeler would be given back to the gophers, ^{dam} jobs would be no more. The

^{pair} Duff couples, paired like ark animals that didn't ^{quite} ~~quick~~ match, would each
go elsewhere, somewhere. ^{launch of / to}

They kissed hard, as if to get past any doubts.

tribe?

like a
waking up
that the a while
not less to
same way.

They
remembered it
+ then
(planned
it)

spoor

So if 1/2 of them are ever going to take
now in their time

some
other
noble,
oldest human
one, none
had to be
+ white,

are you at
anonymous source?
(during 7/22 visit)

"Are you thinking about a OO?"

why I do?

"Hmm? No, why should I be thinking about a OO?"

"I just was. And I wondered if maybe I was picking it up from you."

am I getting myself involved
have I got myself mixed up w

He rolled ^{onto} ~~on~~ his side to look at her. "What, a mind reader?"

"Well...I wonder sometimes." Her fingers walked up the ^{chute} (groove) in ^{dale} ~~dale~~

of dm.
dale
again,
that
divided

nachis
goes thru
air

cleft

the middle of his chest. "I don't know what would cause it. but...

weren't we both...

Maybe
the is
nothing
to this.

Owen clasped her. "Then we better hope it doesn't run in the family."

had

They both
have to
accept clivoyance
did I run a
family

Slowly their hands moved down on each other to where things begin.

Where can Neil logically be on Sat. night when truck goes in river?

--Gt. Falls w/ Owen at commission of inquiry

--laid up, in bed early at home

--or do I have to specify?

- 3 couples - R & N, C & O, B & R - were on . town,
trying to behave back to normal. N's 1st night out,
healed from slide injury
- @ . midnight show; she'd begged off

possible archie & mehitabel use:

The 3 couples go to a movie, & a&m are the cartoon. Rosellen giggles herself silly, whispers along the row to the others that she could use a crew of those flinging himself key to key on (archie bouncing the typewriter for paydays). Rhonda, though, takes to heart mehitabel's "what have I done~~xx~~ to deserve all these kittens"; she knows she loves the baby, but...

*when it was spitting up he was making @. other end,
it seemed like.*

You could love that kind of a little messer, Ra w weariness had come to believe, but you couldn't always like one.

After the grave rat triumphed and succumbed, archy batted out, we...

Resolutely Ra looked forward to going dancing.

It ended up not that funny a cartoon anyway, because it was the one

where freddy the rat, full of poisoned cheese, took on the banana-boat tarantula who had got loose in the newspaper office.

that night
At the early show, gathering their strength to go dancing afterward,
the three couples nudged and laughed among themselves as the cartoon came
on with a typewriter keyboard going splick splick splick as a cockroach
wearing a porkpie hat ^{hopped} ~~bounced~~ from key to key to introduce himself as
archy and his friend, ^{cat from the alley outside} the newspaper office cat, as mehitabel. Rosellen
giggled most of any of them and whispered along ^{onto} the bottom of the screen,
boys like that
that she could use a crew of ~~those~~ for paydays. Neil and Bruce sat back
grinning; every movie they'd ever seen was their favorite the minute it
came on. *as eagerly as he did seeing her*
Even Owen relaxed, some, *get-together* even
considerably on these nights ~~out~~, and Charlene
loosened up considerably, in Rhonda's considered opinion. More than any
all but purred in the dark
of them, Rhonda was ready for a nightout, after ~~life~~ the past half year
tooth-and-nail motherhood ~~there~~ with
of mothering Jackie. She felt fine, free for an evening at last, ~~cozily~~
Bruce's arm cozily around her and the funny stuff going on with mehitabel,
who was convinced she had been Cleopatra in an earlier life (Cleopatra was
of course the best archy could render), and the big brute of a rat named
freddy. Then, though came mehitabel's lament of her life--what have I
done to deserve all of these d--d kittens--and Rhonda shrank a little
as if singled out.
lower in her seat, *adored her* She knew she loved the baby, there was noway she
would trade Jackie for--well, not having him. But she ^{up there, she was} mehitabel's yowl hit home in
her, *if a person was go'g to be honest 'bout a baby, it was* she had to be honest about that.
it

around her and the funny stuff going on with mehitabel, who was convinced
she had been Cleopatra in an earlier life (cleopatra was of course the
best archy could render), and the big brute of a rat named freddy. Then,
though, came mehitabel's lament of her current life--what have I done to
deserve all these kittens--and Rhonda shrank a little lower in her seat
as if singled out. She knew she adored her baby, there was no way she
would trade Jackie for--well, not having him. But mehitabel's yowl up
there on the screen hit home in her, if a person was going to be honest
about it and Rhonda habitually was. When Jackie wasn't spitting up he
was producing at the other end, it seemed like, You could love that kind
of a little messer, Rhonda with weariness had come to believe, but you
couldn't always like one. So, she shrank into that seat, a little wary
of mehitabel and herself. It ended up not that funny a cartoon anyway,
because it was the one where freddy the rat, full of poisoned cheese,
took on the banana-boat trantula who had got loose in the newspaper office
and was making everyone miserable. After the brave rat triumphed and
succumbed, archy batted out, we dropped freddy off the fire escape into
the alley with military honors. Resolutely Rhonda looked forward to
going dancing.

47 yrs.
after
most part
w, well,
3 yrs. or
ten odd
years he,
w, well,
feelings
to care
of children,
no
compens.

all @ some time the w, well,
as if taking cover
as if taking cover

mother

every min
of an day
pulled on

not
sank

a

in life

Rhonda could not have told you that Janus is the two-faced god,
but she knew all about his namesake month's duplicitious habits. Gray
innocence at morning, then the bleakest ^{bleak} icicle ^s grin (imaginable) from
every eave in early dusk, that was January @ Ft. Peck. Every start of
every year of her life...

January I could do without...

To the Rondola and from the Rondola, and up and down w/ Jackie's moods
and for that matter Bruce.

--winter harbor/ferry

--chronic dream (the river, someone tied)

All the harbors in the head.

Rondola busy & then not. Coffee mug in her hand,
she'd be out @ winter harbor.

G'mere - Meg not likely to tell "tie me to
wagon," & chronic dream...

B's talk of L.A. ^{in winter,} Cal, anywhere w/ a sunshine coast
& water to be dried, here she still was. Jackie, too,

THE MISSOURI

1933-1934

The river

itals →

gathers into story, the written and told tributary, out of passages
cut by large desires. The first cleaving of its water, by downstream
Indian adventurers whose tribal word for canoe was missouri, never bettered.
Lewis and Clark's long stare of expedition, the day-by-day eyes and inks
that caught onto paper the 2,300-mile arch of the river from St. Louis
to the Three Forks headwaters; quest clerked into architecture as insis'tently
as their President's Monticello. Then fort and fort and fort, America

coming west by military and trading-post handholds along the Missouri's
immense chain of drainage. From that, the axe-quick renunciation of the
river's forest silence as woodhawks chopped trees into boiler-lengths to
feed steamboats. Next, the imprints of homesteaders and townplanters on the
floodplain. By a third of the way through this century, the pattern
was as set as cry and echo, each annal desiring a next: the human tide
and the Missouri River, hungrily flowing together into word.

#

Siderius always kept to the same spiel, had it down slick by now:

"Here on official business...kind of a hard thing, I know, but there's no getting around it...at least make you a fair offer." Saying it the same helped him with this, whether or not it did any good for these bottomland honyockers. But he hadn't come up against one like this before. The skinny man in worst work clothes was traipsing out of his riverside field of alfalfa toward Siderius's car in a zigzag route, taking his sweet time about it. With each step he put his foot down in firm aim, the way a kid playing hopscotch does. Then plotch down the other foot some other direction. As he crazy-gaited closer, it dawned on Siderius that the man was being sure to step on a grasshopper with every stride. The

unmitigated gall of the guy in figuring that he could stomp on enough grasshoppers to make any difference made Siderius mad as hell, and when the skin-and-bones hay farmer didn't so much as offer a handshake, just stood off at the fenceline to his precious field and looked him up and down, that did it: caused Siderius to jab the nasty part right out.

"Don't know if you'd've heard yet, but they're going to be putting up a big dam over by Glasgow."

"What's that to you and me and this fencepost?"

"This, this'll be under the lake."

"That's daft," the man by the fence dismissed Siderius's assertion.

"The Glasgow country," Hugh Duff said it a way Siderius had never heard, Glazgeh, "is a full hundred miles from here."

"More like a hundred and fifty," Siderius let him know. "I just drove it."

"There you are, then." Still wearing his stand-off expression, thin-faced, thin in every part of him, Hugh draped an arm on the fencepost, glanced back at his field of alfalfa and said as if in private amusement, "The blessed damn nature of farming is that we can

always do with a dab more moisture than what we have. But we don't need it over our heads."

Siderius imitated Hugh Duff's measuring gaze across the field, pulled to the sight in spite of himself. June was proving the hardest in this job, the early green height of summer and the work that went into these farms, the river-rich fields at their most promising: this time of year's habitual feel of crop and reward impended all along the valley of the Missouri. Add on that this section of the river, so far upstream here where the Missouri forgot its wandering and fed through timbered bluffs in a brisk straightforward ~~channel~~^{course}, this tucked-away cleft stretch of the river was an undeniable beauty. Cliffs here and there for accent, the foundations of rock and time showing through, while the river trailed fertile sleeves along its steady channel. And put on top of the natural basis here that although this farmer was a lank specimen, his farm was not skinny. You could practically count like tree rings the year-by-year progress since this piece of land was homesteaded by these Duffs. That fence was taut as piano wire, the house and outbuildings which Siderius had driven down past to reach this

bottomslope field showed every sign of decent care, and the field itself, a quarter-mile-long porch of luscious soil cupped right up against the sunny side of the river, was contour-sown in a way that ought to yield a junior fortune in seed alfalfa. Ought to. By now Siderius was staring with dread, past the fenceline figure, on across the green baize field to the rattletrap Ford pickup there and the trio of people at it, the--

Siderius made himself not think any further in that direction and go back to work on the snippy farmer instead.

"Mister, I'm here to tell you, the dam is going to back up water this goddamn far. And it's my job to make you a price for your land."

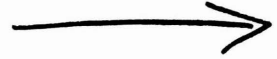
Hugh went up and down Siderius with his eyes again, his expression saying he didn't care for any of what he saw. He cocked his head ever so slightly to the left. "That's a refrain we haven't heard, recent years. What, now that the banks have been on holiday, they can sneak you the backing to buy us out?"

"If you'd had your ears on, you'd know I already told you--" Siderius halfway into his hot retort remembered he hadn't started this off as usual:

Backtrack, Chick, he warned himself. Sometimes to get ahead in this

you need to. Resorting to the recitation, he started in: "First off, I'm here on offici--" The dreaded smell was coming up strong from the field now on a shift of the wind: Siderius had to stop and gulp. The gulp was not a good idea. He had wondered how long his stomach could hold out, and the banana-oil odor, sweetly rotten, of what the people at the pickup were doing was finally too much. As he went sick he saw that the farmer was regarding him with more of that private amusement. Siderius put up the palm of his right hand toward the man, as if in a halt motion or the taking of an oath, and marched behind his car and threw up. When he was thoroughly done retching and then spitting out as much of the taste as he could, Siderius stayed hunched there with his hands on his knees, the only sound now the hail-like ping of grasshoppers hitting against all sides of the car. This is your last one, Chick, he had to rally himself. The farthest up on their damn map of everything they're going to drown. Finish this one and you're done with these poor eaten-out bastards. He straightened, mopped his mouth with his handkerchief, then went back to the waiting business at the fenceline.

"I'm not out here landhawking," Siderius this time told Hugh Duff as if deathly tired of it all. "The government, the U.S. of A. government hired me on to do this."



do it for them, and so on; but he didn't trouble to. Not now, not here, not worth interrupting this chance at absolutely kicking aside the Depression and its lame jokes. Instead, arms crossed and hands tucked in his armpits for warmth's sake, he walked the same few strides back and forth as he kept studying the course of the Missouri below. Don't be a dud, Duff, the extra part of his mind toyed with its echo of Sangster's using his last name in that bluff fashion. That's the way to get to be a dud, Duff. Self-spurring came as a habit, almost one of the easier ones any more, but he tried not to let it show much of the time. Owen was an even six feet tall, and thin except in the head. There, a strong forehead and dark brunette eyebrows and ice-blue eyes oversaw a surprisingly widecut mouth where the usual expression was partly quizzical, partly provocative. When that mouth was set seriously, as now, he looked a lot like a bothered Will Rogers.

"See it yet?" Owen abstractedly asked Sangster.

The Missouri River was enough to bother any earthfill dam-builder.

"Starting to." Sangster knew Owen meant the dam-to-be, the theoretical,


ghosted onto ^{Fort Peck's} ~~the~~ river site by their engineering imaginations. They

had the general map of this Valley County stretch of river handy in their minds, the Missouri regularly coiling back and forth--river miles, engineers categorized such distances which looped back on themselves--between far-apart benchlands as if dutifully depositing topsoil into every corner of the giant trough of valley. And site-specific, they had already studied up that there was no ^{longer any} fort to Fort Peck; a stockaded trading post, briefly propped up by sternwheel steamboat traffic, the last of it had been ^{swept} ~~taken~~ off its ledge at the base of this bluff by one of the Missouri's high waters, somewhere in the 1890's--but the name keeping some surprising life, attached to the nearby Indian reservation and now to the notion which had these engineers by the eyes. They had scanned the preliminary sketches of the dam itself and digested the construction estimates; Colonel Parmenter, the big wheel among the Corps officers, had gone over and over those with them in the briefing at the hotel this morning. Surveyors soon would give them the necessary exactitudes, soil samples would be analyzed and a test tunnel driven into the basic shale of these bluffs, blueprints would be drafted in blinding quantity. Yet a good long stare at what you thought you were

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going to build could tell you things, too. The first of which was, on this river that scrawled from west to east for hundreds of miles across upper Montana, the axis of the dam was not going to be crosswise to that, north-south as every fiber of logic said it had to be.

The river hadn't heard the logic, and as if bored with the oxbow bends it had been scrolling all the way across Valley County, here it shot out of its series of writhes with an abrupt notion to go north. It was the midpoint of this northward veer, the Fort Peck speck of geography, that presented the dam site, a narrower and higher set of benchlands than where the wandering curves were. A west-east dam on a west-east river; you just had to adjust. Owen Duff thought ahead to more than a thousand days of sunrise at one end of the dam, sunset at the other, sun in the eyes of the dredgeline crews; it would make a difference in where he laid those lines.



p. 30 follows

Tricks of direction aside, Owen already felt at home here in the Fort Peck country's sweeps of valley and plateau and channel and riverplain. For this job, it suited him perfectly fine to have land without any interruptions loftier than the pulpits of gophers. Gimcracks of nature bothered Owen. He could not help but remember--hell, he'd vanished out to play among them whenever he could ~~take~~^{sneak} time to himself, as a boy--the formations of rock in fantastic shapes where Go-Devil Creek flowed into the Missouri, at the upper end of the Duff homestead. Rocks that were mimicking toadstools and beehives and icicles were all that had been available to him as his private place, but somehow even then it seemed to him that the life of the planet ought to be more serious than that.

The Fort Peck wind was serious enough. Owen stomped his feet a little to encourage some circulation into them, and heard Sangster similarly trying to warm up. The two of them hung a bit apart from the others on the bluff, seemed to gravitate together even though they had not known each other very well on the Bozeman campus, different as their engineering aims were. Max Sangster was a bridger, and Owen supposed Sangster was seeing his own pet project down there, etched by eye onto the bottomland, the railroad bridge that had to be high enough

"Jesus no," said Sangster, realizing that Owen was seeing around bends besides the river's. "I'll goose up my specifications on all bridge timbering."

"Wouldn't hurt," Owen approved, but was already back into his gaze at the bluff across the river, the distant shoulder that his dam would rest against.

Soon came a shout from the top of the knob, that it was time to gather for a briefing. The Corps seemed to be big on briefing. "Guess we better get used to it," Sangster said, "or marry money."

He stopped, embarrassed. He had let that out before remembering that Owen Duff was a married man.

Owen threw him a look, all right, but with it a fleeting expression which Sangster didn't know how to construe.

"Sometimes ~~it's almost~~ ^{it can be} worth it," Owen told him, "even if only small change is involved."

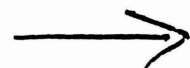
II —————
The sheriff didn't know squat about married life, and so it never did dawn on him that Charlene Duff could have been jealous of a mound of dirt.

to produce trouble, whenever they had half a chance. At least he, Carl Kinnick, did not have to put with that kind of Red ruckus in his county, nor would he, not even if it took--

"Ready to get skinned, Carl?" Shorty the barber asked as he always did while he stropped his straight razor into shaving readiness. Sheriff Carl Kinnick didn't strictly need a haircut every Monday and even less a barber shave, but somehow it got the week off to a decent start for him, marked a change from his heavy weekend duties. Besides, how often did a person get a chance to put his feet up and contemplate the state of things?

As Shorty's steel scraped away at the sheriff's cheeks and neck, and Shorty jabbered about the haircut heaven ahead when all the Fort Peck hirees were going to need a trimming up at once, some soon Saturday night, the sheriff only ^{barely} ~~half~~ listened, his mind still stuck on the question of this Fort Peck Dam. Depression, drought, grasshoppers, you name it, the past several years had dumped them all on northern Montana. So the sheriff had to admit that this part of the country could stand something done for it. But to it?

—



that were not to be confused with housing started mushrooming next.

Happy Hollow, snugly in a little dip at the far end of Wheeler, was the distinct area where the houses of prostitution proliferated, under such nicknames as the Riding Academy and the League of Nations. Some of that particular trade, however, was also freelance in the dancehalls that kept springing up until downtown Wheeler was rife with them.

As to housing, in a more domestic sense, everything was built on the principle that temporary was good enough. When the dam was done, Wheeler's whole population would pick up and move anyway. So, tumbleweed structures built up and built up along the lot lines staked onto the prairie--as a Wheeler homeowner of a shack, shanty, lean-to, or dugout, you owned from the floor up but paid by the month for the ground it stood on. Into your hasty set of walls you could barely fit such basics as bedsprings and kitchen table--all over Wheeler, family trunks sat outside the front door under a drape of canvas tarp--and for decoration, a framed famous picture like that wolf gazing down at a ranch house on a midwinter night, his breath smoking, would suffice.

Squalid, flirty, hopeless, hopeful, nocturnal and red-eyed, Wheeler

A weekend in the middle of the week; what could be better if you were Bruce and on the loose? Fresh off the graveyard shift with the rest of July 3 ahead of him and then the Fourth as a holiday, all he had to do was to figure out where to point the motorcycle. The city of Great Falls was not out of the question, the city of Billings was not out of the question. The city of Calgary, Canada, was not out of the question, even. # Trying to decide, one delicious distance over another, breezing along on the motorcycle minding his own business at about fifty miles an hour in a twenty-five-mile-an-hour zone, Bruce all at once heard the Wheeler undersheriff's siren start up.

He had what he considered an inspiration. He veered the motorcycle onto ~~up~~ the road into the Fort Peck townsite, arrowing along Milk River Drive there toward Owen and Charlene's trailer house.

Just his current luck, though: Captain Bailey, the Fort Peck adjutant officer, was right there at the new Administration Building when Bruce brapp-brapp-brapped by.

Bruce screeched to a halt in front of Owen and Charlene's, and had barely unstraddled the motorcycle when Bailey's government car was there, with the undersheriff's car pulling up behind that.

The traffic pileup brought Charlene out of the trailer house.

"Bruce, what?!" Even at this time of day, in a keepcool frock that showed her bare arms and more than a suggestion of shoulder and throat, she looked dressed-up. "What's happened now?"

"Hi, Charlene, how you doing?" he started brassing it out. "I just came over to do some borrowing from Owen."

"Owen's never around at this time of day, you know that."

In the big silence that followed, she heard how that sounded. She crossed those bare arms over her breasts and gave Bruce a lethal glare.

"His...tire pump," Bruce fumbled onward. "Got a real soft, uh, tire. Needs a little..."

The Corps captain and the undersheriff were keeping their faces straight, too straight.

"We just seem to have a speeding case here, Mrs. Duff," Captain Bailey imparted. "If you'd like to get on with your day while we handle it--"

"Gladly," Charlene flung in the direction of Bruce and spun into the trailer house.

Bruce flinched at Charlene's slam of the door, then put his mind

back to that inspiration of his. "Wait a minute, here. How can you arrest me if I'm not one of your Corps guys?"

"Oh good," the captain said wearily, "a barracks lawyer." He turned to the undersheriff. "Norm, you want him instead?"

Bruce could scarcely wait to triumphantly trump that, too. "But this is government whatchamacallit, jurisdiction, in here, isn't it? Got 'US of A property' on everything in sight."

The undersheriff and the captain both eyed Bruce.

"Nail him with 'pursuit'?" Bailey suggested to the undersheriff.

"Could, although that always complicates things up. I think I know something swifter." The big undersheriff leaned down toward Bailey's ear and murmured a few words' worth.

Bailey nodded, took a parade-ground step forward toward Bruce and intoned: "You're free to go."

As Bruce climbed back on the motorcycle and delightedly lifted his foot to give the starter-kick, the captain continued:

"But I'm placing this motorcycle under arrest. It's going to serve thirty days' detention."

#

upstream trestle were supposed to both be in place by then. When all this supposed-to-be had definitely happened, then and only then the dredge Gallatin could start placing the fill; Fort Peck Dam could actually start rising from the much worked over site. If the deadlines--October--weren't met, winter could catch the project before the first of the earthfill was underway; same as last year, they'd be in snowdrifts up to their hind ends, having to plow and shovel and cuss to get the least little thing done, and meanwhile the sonofabitching river could freeze tight at any time, leaving Owen's dredges to sit useless in the winter harbor until spring break-up.

Owen rapped his pencil on the desk, wincing down at his dredge fleet-to-be. He sometimes wished he could trade places with Bruce, whistle through a shift of hammering on something instead of sitting in here Octobering his guts out.

#

Meals 50¢

Big Feed 75¢

Hell of a gorge \$1

The eatery nearest the boatyard, the Rondola Cafe, was medium-busy

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washed in from almost the most distant tributary of the Missouri, English Creek. The only farther branch of water, Nan had grown up knowing, was the North Fork, once the country of the Duffs.

#

He was going to burst if he couldn't put his excitement where he wanted to. He tossed his hat in the direction of the nearest chair and went straight over to the ironing board and kissed Rhonda to the utmost, keeping the kiss going until she caught the idea.

"Br-r-r--" she gradually managed to clear her lips from his, "--uce!"

"Me, all right, doing this," he kissed her in further example and stroked down from her waist. "It better be me."

#

Like an intermittent show of comets across ^{Nan Hill's} ~~Nan's~~ field of vision, these Duffs were. To this day she could close her eyes and see not only patriarchal old Ninian but his bright and bold son, Samuel. Samuel had been only a few years older than Nan, and when he came to high school in Gros Ventre she developed a crush on him which lasted until Samuel Duff went off to the Great War and was killed in a trench in France.

#

Outside the window, glimpsed past everything Bruce was doing, Nan Hill still was hanging laundry, the flapping sounds of shirts flocked in

would. Yet she knew from Rosellen that Charlene had worked, clerked, and so maybe it ^{really} wasn't a matter of job, it was more a matter of Charlene.

Along that same front, there was Fortress Owen for the two of them to puzzle out. Owen they were still doing some deciding about, whether it was just intrinsically fascinating to have a brother-in-law wrestling an entire dam into place or whether his brain was too big for its boots, so to speak.

itals --Assuming spring ever came, Owen had vowed, he was going to be goddamn good and ready, the dredging operation was going to be doubly goddamn good and ready, to move an average of three million cubic yards of earthfill a month. Nineteen thirty-five was going to have to be the year this dam took shape, big unmistakable shape.--

And then Bruce.

"Something's on his mind, besides the part in his hair," Rhonda reported. "Can you always spot that, with Neil?"

"You better bet," Rosellen testified. "When he's hauling, I can ~~about~~ tell how his trip went by how the truck pulls into the yard."

"Mm hmm. Whoops, I'm about on." Rhonda gathered their dishes in

a professional pile and went behind the counter to start her shift.

Rosellen assembled herself into heavy coat and overshoes and mitts and scarf and went home. They put away tonight and set course for tomorrow's talkative supper together, these happy two, who were holding back from each other nothing under the sun

(ital)

but the river.

High water everywhere when the original Dabneys, Rhonda's grandparents, came to Fort Peck, every creek tearing at its banks as their wagon and wiry team of horses struggled across fording places on the journey from Miles City. Where the route was not flooded or muddy, it was dusty and acrawl with rattlesnakes emerging from winter. Henriette Dabney was white-eyed by the time they reached the Missouri River. She also had come down with a ripping cough. Philip Dabney could see across, not far downstream from the ferry crossing, to the stockaded trading post. He was to be the assistant agent at the Indian Agency there, a step up in the world from the Land Office clerkship in Miles City, but also a heartstopping traverse across such water.

The ferryman winced as he eyed the wretched pair, and then the

p. 234B follows →

high-running river. "I ordinarily wouldn't, until this water lets up
some," he let Philip know. "But that's a sick woman there."

"Come, Henriette, we have to."

"No," wildly. "The water is too--"

"We must get you across."

"No." The cough tore out of her. She shook her head incessantly,



refusing to look at the river.

Philip went to the back of the wagon for one of the ropes he picketed
the horses with at night. Then he climbed back up to the wagon seat.
"Give me your hands, Henriette." She watched listlessly as those were
tied, then began to scream as he wrapped the rope around and around her
waist, lashing her to the iron support of the wagon seat. After he had
knotted the rope, Philip put a hand over her mouth. Henriette stopped
her screaming and simply stared at him. Swallowing hard, he said: "So
you won't...fall out."

Rhonda's grandmother told that on herself, when at last the distances
of age lay between her and that crossing of terror. All families have
stories, sometimes in what is not said in the outright telling. Rhonda
knew as if by birthright that her grandmother had been brought hogtied
into the Missouri River country not past falling but past jumping.

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Unlike that, Rosellen had no quarrel with the Missouri River.
After Charlene big-sistered herself off to commerce and romance in Bozeman,
the river in an odd way took her place with Rosellen. In the drabness
of Toston, the loneliness of that scissor-simple Tebbet household,

Rosellen often turned to the river for company, sometimes following it
all the way south to where it wound out of the Horse Heaven Hills. They
were the ugliest hills in Montana, Rosellen was pretty sure (Charlene
had been totally sure), but the river pranced out of them high, wide and
handsome, its waters freshly braided together from the Gallatin, Madison,
 and Jefferson Rivers at the Three Forks headwaters. The steady-stepping
 river sought into the valley around Toston as if just released, and that
 was Rosellen, too. If she wasn't tracing the riverbank one more time to
 the swallowing hills, she was across the Toston highway bridge, on the
 west bank where the ospreys nested high in the cottonwoods and fished
 the river with their talons; around town, they would be shot at as fish
 thieves. Coming back from one of her osprey outings, Rosellen met a
 cattle drive, cowboys from the Sixteenmile country. She hurried the
 rest of the way across the bridge and darted over to a telephone pole
 she could stand half behind to watch without spooking the herd of cattle.

The highway

bridge was a trio of trusses with dark steel girders up its sides and
 overhead, and the cattle did not like the look of it. The bawling herd

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wadded itself up at the approach to the bridge. A short cowboy wearing spectacles guided his horse into the cows, and with the end of a lariat fought a little bunch of cattle out onto the bridge. Instead of pushing the bunch into a trot, though, the cowboy reined back to the foot of the bridge. He did this three times, nudging a bunch of cows out a little way, but then retreating, which seemed to Rosellen a dumb way to go about it. He wasn't very far from her when he backed his horse around for a next handful of cows, so she spoke up:

"Why do you fool around with a few at a time, if you want them all to go across?"

The cowboy winked at her. "Easier to show you than tell you, sis. Hop up behind." He slipped his boot out of the stirrup, the empty U of it now an open invitation for her to climb on behind his saddle.

For an instant Rosellen wished Charlene was there to nix this. The cowboy was old enough to be her father. But not as old as her father.

In the next instant, she was up onto the horse and riding double behind the cowboy as he worked a considerable number of cattle out onto

the bridge and this time hazed them into a dead run. But midway across the bridge, centrally atop the Missouri, the cowboy reined the horse to a standstill and glanced half over his shoulder toward Rosellen as if to say, You wanted to know. She could feel it, all right, even up there on the horse: the mass vibration set up by the cows' running hooves; the sensation that the bridge would shiver itself to pieces. Quickly the cowboy spurred the horse around toward the approach to the bridge and shut down on the next cattle who tried to run, deliberately breaking the rhythm so that the vibration could not build and build until it was dangerous to the bridge. Push some, hold some. Rosellen swung down off the horse onto the bank pleased that, thanks to the river as usual, she knew something new, one small thing more about the invisible gearwork of existence.

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Bruce had been thinking about this all week, a span of concentration that had his head buzzing. ⁴ A kind of tingle built up behind his ears as he at last reached the point of telling himself ask, go ask, they can't any more than tell you no.

The minute his shift ended, he tromped up the gangplank onto the workbarge.

"Ownie, I'll make every try. But you're letting yourself in for
some real refereeing."

—————

The dam:

Its first principle was to build not from the bottom up, but from the bottom down. The riverbed at Fort Peck consisted of clay on top of shale, and seepage was the ultimate nightmare: water eating its way beneath, undercutting the mass of earthfill. (Owen had worked the topic to death in his thesis at Bozeman, tabulating the performance of earthen dams. Rode the rails to the West Coast, his last college summer, and signed on as a coal stoker on a freighter in order to reach Panama and explore the Gatun Dam there, which made use of the material moved in cutting the Panama Canal--Gatun was the biggest earthfill dam ever tried, before Fort Peck. Then the rest of his freighter voyage, on around to an East Coast port, and Pennsylvania to be hitchhiked across, for Owen to look back on the one that spooked everybody--the South Fork Dam, which had been above Johnstown.) Fort Peck's shield against seepage had to be steel, thirty-four million pounds of it in girder form, driven side by side straight down through the clay and shale into bedrock. Amid all the other fever spots of site preparation here in 1934, piledrivers were beginning to monotonously peg the girders into the earth, to a depth of one hundred ~~and sixty~~ feet. Day by week by

month the cut-off wall, as this was called, would rise and extend as a metal palisade across the Fort Peck valley.

On top of this cut-off wall would come the pyramid core, and on either side of the core the more gradual slopes of fill, all designed with Fort Peck's singularities in mind. ("Any earth dam, to be built to permanance, must be tailor-made to fit its individual location," Owen phrased it in the thesis that had brought him Fort Peck.) Together, the watertight cut-off wall and the impervious core and the vast pervious buttresses of fill would form the heavy lid to hold back the river water, permanently. (Two thousand two hundred and eighty people died at Johnstown, when that less than permanent earthen dam went out in 1889.) Most of the river water. A percentage of it would emit through four huge tunnels near the eastern end of the Fort Peck Dam. The tamed Missouri, fauceting out of this one-of-a-kind dam.

#

It was not even Saturday night yet, mere Thursday, when Hugh dragged himself home from fighting brush and found himself invited right back out. By Meg, who was telling him:

"I thought we might both go downtown tonight."

ICE AND MERCURY

1936

It was the middle of February and the wind had been shoving at the north side of the house all of 1936 so far. This morning, the stillness woke Meg up. She burrowed out from under the six blankets heaped over her and Hugh, just far enough to raise her head and listen into the crystalline silence. The cold of the air pinched inside her nose.

"Hugh!" She turtled her head back under the load of covers and desperately nestled herself spoon-fashion against the length of him in his longhandle underwear. "Hugh-it's-freezing!"

Groggily he rumbled: "Margaret, it'd be news if it wasn't. We've

had freezing weather since ~~about~~^{around} October, for God's sake."

"I mean, in here! The fire's gone out!"

Hugh absorbed this. Then said in the tone of a man wronged:

"Goddamn that soft coal."

He lurched from under the mound of bedding toward the stove and could tell at once this was not merely the feel of a fireless house, this was deep cold. He rattled open the firebox of the stove and swore in at the dead ash of the coal he had banked the fire with at bedtime. Crumpling yesterday's entire Glasgow Courier, he stuffed it in the stove, grabbed up a double handful of kindling and chucked that on top of the paper, and, shivering hard now, made himself position dry sticks of wood atop it all so the flame would draw. He struck a match and lit the paper and hovered miserably until the kindling at last caught fire too. Then he lunged back to bed. Meg rewarded him with a clasp of warm arms. At that moment, the Weather Service thermometer outside the Fort Peck Administration Building read 61 degrees below zero.

———
Bruce was goddamned if he was going to walk anywhere in this kind of weather. Before getting the stove going, he dumped the cold ashes

in a lardpail, then used the kerosene can to sop them. In his cap and mackinaw, he ran out to the ^{car}~~pickup~~, knelt in the snow, shoved the pail under the oilpan, leaned back as far as he could and tossed in a match.

When he was reasonably sure the flaming kerosene was settling down enough

not to burn up the ^{car}~~pickup~~, he jumped back in the house to wait for the

^{crankcase} oil to thaw enough so he could start the engine and drive down to the

winter harbor.

#

Owen was goddamned if he was going to fool around with a car in this kind of weather. He put on dress socks, then work socks, then wool socks; piled on two pair of pants over long underwear, and a flannel shirt over his work one. He molded some newspaper into his overshoes for insulation, put them on, wrestled into his big coat, clapped his cap on with the earflaps down, bandannaed a scarf across his nose and mouth, stuck one of his office shoes in each side pocket of the coat, put on mittens and walked to work at the ^{winter harbor.}~~Ad Building~~.

##

"This is Siberian," Darius marveled.

"Don't you wish," Proxy tossed his way. "This is Fort Peck."

##

The glacier of cold air slid down from the north until it covered Montana from corner to corner, then stood there for a solid week. Temperature readings were its cutting edges, red stubs of mercury in the bottoms of thermometers across six hundred miles, saying implacably 35 degrees below zero at noon, 38 degrees below zero at dusk, 45 degrees below zero in the night.

On the dam project, the engines of the bulldozers were never shut down in weather this cold, throttled onto idling all night long. Their diesel monotony broke the silence of the frigid spell, and down on the river there was the periodic buzzsaw-sound of ice being cut, but the Fort Peck project mainly was groggy with this weather. In the Wheeler saloons and dancehalls the air went stale with cigarette smoke and the accumulated pack of not recently bathed bodies, but then the instant you stepped outside the fresh keenness would all but take the lungs out of you.

The record winter of '36, the year they had all been looking for.

#

more to come

he sketched a wet arc. "But the original river went like this. Rivers are always changing, that's the history of it that we have to put up with.

What a river does, any river, is geologically temporary." Tutor to his parents, Owen glanced up earnestly to make sure they, particularly the male one, were seeing ^{this} ~~Prof. Zuz's~~ revelation of the river's courses.

"Until glacial times changed things around, the Missouri River didn't flow anywhere near our place."

"These are not glacier times!" Hugh all but shouted.

———
"Jee Zuz," Bruce said, as he and Neil halted at that voice and made the sighting at the bar of the Blue Eagle. "It's the Old Man and Mother and the Reverend Ownie."

Uncomfortably joining them, Neil brightly proffered "How you doing, Ownie?" while Bruce said to nowhere, "Thought we'd get out of the house for a change."

"A dire need of fresh air, no doubt," said Meg.

Neil cleared his throat, then looked at Bruce. "Bruce owes me a beer for letting him beat me by a million pins tonight, don't you."

on higher ground?"

"You can't undo that much of things, that's why," Owen answered in ready

~~in~~ exasperation. Meg apprehensively glanced around to see if the

entire Blue Eagle by now was watching her husband and her son argue,

but realized that even their raised voices didn't make a dent in the

~~general~~ commotion level. "People are established there," Owen was going

on, "they're determined to live where they want and--"

"And those of us who chose best higher up the river get drowned out because we're fewer," Hugh put in.

"Now that's malarkey, and you know it."

"I don't know that. I don't know that at all."

"Then maybe it's time you knew it. What is it you think, that Fort Peck Dam looked around for the person to inconvenience the most and chose exactly you? Dad, for crying out loud, there are dams being built right now on the Colorado, the Columbia, the Snake, the Dnieper, the Po, the St.

Lawrence, the Snowy, the you-name-it anywhere in the world. ~~Unfortunately,~~ It's too damn bad

you can't build any of those ~~dams~~ without putting water over somebody.

People have to contend with that, a little. But there's no--"