attitudes in the car--Hugh has roused himself a bit because Neil's idea at least isn't relief work?
was about to increase by another thousand wallets.

Second Friday of the month. Rosellen's day was rat-a-tat-tat at the oversize Blickendorfer typewriter, turning out paychecks. Every lesson of the Lewis & Clark Business School applied: back straight, head up, fingers downpoised into "tiger claws," steady rate of typing rather than fitful bursts. (The names, all these. If a person could know...) Kersplickety splick. Typewriter keyboard deliberately qwertyed and yuioped by its inventor to slow down matters and prevent jamming, but Rosellen's fingers fly nontheless. (And what the money will let them do, make them do...) Keynes crooning in the keys. The quick green wage jumps over the lazy Wall Street claque. Out the checks roll, deft translation by Rosellen's fingers of the the Fort Peck Dam project into alphabet and dollars and cents, to be cashed at the New Deal Grocery or the Rondola Cafe or the Blue Eagle Tavern.

J.L. Hill, wages for his percussive tunnel work...

The red-haired kid from Red Lodge, whose name so far means nothing
Second Friday of the month. Rosellen's day was rat-a-tat-tat at the huge Blickendorfer typewriter, turning out paychecks. Every lesson of the Lewis & Clark Business School applied: back straight, head up, fingers downpoised into "tiger claws," steady rate of typing rather than uneven bursts. (The names, all these. If a person could know...)

Kersplickety splick. Typewriter keys deliberately handicapped, made q w e r t to prevent jamming... Wage$. The quick green wage jumps over the crazy Wall Street claque. The idea on high was from John Maynard Keynes, compensatory-spending-by-the-government-to-set-the-economy-in-motion, by way of the Roosevelt administration, but down here at the far end it was the deft translation by Rosellen's fingers that marshaled the Fort Peck Dam project into alphabet and dollars and cents.

Out the checks rolled, payday industry of Rosellen and her typewriter, to be cashed at the New Deal Grocery or the Rondola Cafe or the Blue Eagle Tavern...

J.L. Hill, wages for his percussive tunnel work...

The red-haired kid from Red Lodge, whose name meant nothing to Rosellen nor any of the other Duffs, wages for cutting down brush...

John B. Hinch, wages for trestle carpentry...
and earliest morning had the crystal quality that brings on vows to practice more poetry or astronomy. (Best of all, though, Owen still thought, for what he and Charlene had been doing. He had already made up his mind to ask Charlene, whenever he got home from this, if she had saved his place.) The new skeleton frames of buildings by the dozens were visible as he hightailed it through the Fort Peck townsite, walking as fast as he could. From the cut-off wall in the bottomland came the _buh-THUD buh-THUD_ of piledrivers, incessant mating-call that would go on until carpenters' hammers started again here in the morning. Immediately below Owen, along the river, the boatyard was lit up. The hull of the dredge **Gallatin** had been launched, first vessel on this stretch of the Missouri since God knew when, and now finishing-work was going on within the long white dredge, like a big bungalow stretched out like taffy. Bruce and the other boatrats, perfecting the first of Owen's earthfill fleet. Get it done! Finish your goddamn finishing-work! The dumb fury of that--the dredge couldn't be put to use anyway until the cut-off wall was completed, weeks from now--told Owen he had better simmer down, tend to his task of truant officer.
He crossed into Wheeler, and commotion. In the wide center strip of Wheeler's main street a softball game was in full roar, enough light from the moon and the downtown joints to play by, more or less. "Slaughter it, Slaughter!" the team at bat was howling. The heavy-shouldered batter was said to be the brother of Enos Slaughter of the St. Louis Cardinals, and while who the hell knew whether that was true, he was a wicked hitter. Owen veered very wide around the third-base side while the guy ripped a grounder whose last bounce was off the third baseman's chest. Skirting the spectacle, Owen thought of also telling Charlene the two of them were going to have to take up softball, it was something you could play at night.

Then he was utterly, coldly furious again.

Jesus Dudley Christ. This is all I need—any of us need. The Old Man out here somewhere on the warpath. What gets into him? Can't he stand prosperity? Try and try to pull this family one step ahead and there he goes, right back. I just don't savvy it. I do not savvy it, how he can—

Directly ahead of the figure of Owen, the main street of Wheeler pulsated in the prairie night, ogling back at the moon, winking suggestively
"Charlene, really, you needn't."

Besides, if manners were the issue, what was her mother-in-law doing interloping here in the dead of night, strayed-off husband or no strayed-off husband? This can't have been the first time Meg ever had to face an empty side of the bed.

"This is putting you out more than I ever intended, fixing coffee and all."

Payday, though, did add something a little more serious; Charlene could grant that. She'd gathered from one of Owen's steamings about his father that Hugh threw money into the wind when he went off on one of these toots.

"I'm not even sure I should stay for a cup. I probably should just take myself---"

"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.
Charlene poured, then delivered a cup in front of Meg along with what she had worked herself up to asking:

"You had to have thought about leaving him, haven't you?—Meg,

I don't see one thing funny about it."

To Charlene's surprise, her question had set Meg off into laughter. That wasn't bad enough, she shot an expression to Charlene as if Charlene was complicit in tolerating these hopeless ways of men. Charlene did not see herself so at all.

Her next tone proved it.

"I can't loan you Owenie every payday night, you know."

"No, no, now." Meg rubbed a finger along the rim of her coffee cup as if testing it for sharpness. "It's not a matter of that." She glanced up and at Charlene's hair, which Charlene all at once realized still had the runnels of fondling and other muss made by Owen's fingers.

"I know Owen and you have yourselves to do with."

"Maybe you'd be doing everyone a favor"—Charlene paused, then determinedly put it in—"Owen too, if you ditched Hugh."

Quickly Meg shook her head. "I'm one who fights it through, I
suppose." She stopped and thought. "It's a bad Scottish habit. Culloden and these places, it tends to leave us in shreds."

"Listen though, Meg. You've been married forever, compared to me. And it's not that I have anything against Hugh." (Except for him dragging his son, my husband, into the middle of the night like a puppy with a piece of twine around its neck.) "But don't you have to ask yourself where the limit to all this is?"

"Draw a line, ought I, in the soil of Fort Peck. Declare, 'Hugh Duff, if you stray across that, you're a gone geezer.'" Meg had drawn herself up dramatically, flummoxing Charlene with how much more commanding she looked. "It has its appeal," Meg bobbed her head in agreement and smiled slightly at Charlene. "But Charlene--when we have our say, that way, it still only works if they give a listen, doesn't it." Meg eyed her until Charlene gave a blush, legacy of their earlier argument about the steering of Owen's career.

Practically swimming through the tight-packed throng along the bar of the Wheeler Inn, Owen saw man after man he knew from the dam crews, Stetsoned-up or suited-up or still in muddied workclothes, and drunk
and sober and midway between. The squad of Great Northern gandy dancers, Montenegrins or some such, who had set a track-laying record on the final mile of Sangster's railroad spur line to the damsite. The flinty newcomer from the rim of the Rockies, powder monkey turned rancher turned powder monkey again courtesy of the Depression and its sunken livestock prices, who had a reputation as a magical handler of dynamite in the diversion tunnel excavations. Other tunnel muckers, the Butte gang and the ex-coalminers from Roundup, drinking separately. Montana Power linemen here to string the web for the dam project's insatiable draw of electricity. A few Ad Building staffers who daily crossed paths with Owen. Construction foremen who knew him and his name from blueprints. Shoulder-deep in all these, staying on the move, Owen kept asking \textit{Seen my old man?} and the answers continually came \textit{No, Naw, Nope, Sure haven't} or \textit{Yeah, but it was some time ago, with a stinger generally in the tail of that last: He had quite a load on. Working his way clockwise (What the hell, any method of this is better than none) through the Wheeler Inn through Owen finally found and checked with the beefy young football player from the University of Texas who served as Ruby Smith's bouncer, but who produced no news of
Hugh. Then Owen discovered Birdie Hinch perched in a back corner watching the activity at a poker table with his chickenhawk gaze, and Birdie yielded even less. Peering down at the clamping grasp Owen had on his arm as Hugh was asked about, Birdie piped out: "If I do run across him, I'll tell him to steer clear of you."

Outside again, Owen took the relief of fresh air into his lungs and against his eyes. He stood a minute in the street, under the sky frosted with stars, clear ice-glints. He saw that the moon had moved significantly, while he had been winnowing the Wheeler Inn crowd.

Down the street there still was the Buck Horn Club and the Dewdrop Inn and Ed's Place and the Bar X and doubtless some others since Owen had last paid any attention. He plunged on down the street, into the first of them.

The story was the same in all such places: men ached at women, and the women considered the men and tried to single out those worth aching at in return. Owen, no prude, nonetheless was a little alarmed at how he could almost taste this wanting at the back of his mouth. So many of the damworkers and taxi-dancers were young, or rejuvenated by a
job here at Fort Peck, and wages had brought possibilities; a Saturday payday and a night when the wallet could at last back up the longings, you did not have to be a major philosopher to define possibilities out of those. As Owen sifted the town of Wheeler saloon by saloon and dancehall by dancehall there were a number of moments, situations, where he was just as glad not to find his father then. But he kept at it and at it.

The dam's workforce now was five thousand, and Owen would have sworn he already had sorted that many by hand tonight.

Wheeler was taking note of Owen Duff this night, too.

Max Sangster and the nurse he was going to marry emerged from the late show at the moviehouse as Owen cut across the street, half a block away, striding like a pair of scissors going. By now Sangster had seen many sides of Owen but not this nightflying one. When his date asked what was the matter, who it was that had him stopped and staring, he mused: "The guy I work with. He looked kind of wound up."

In the saloons, the dime-a-dance joints, his marches in and out of them, early as his brush against the midnight softball game, others too had noticed Owen Duff, his searching presence passing into their
eyes, up the brainstairs to memory. In wraiths and wisps that are the moments remembered, such existence as we have to others, Owen's course through Wheeler became part of all the recalling about the Duffs in the time ahead, ferreted and unfolded by a fierce small sheriff. The seeds of memory this night were glimpses of Owen intently quizzing the town and murmurs that tagged after him. That's the fillmaster...He's the guy they say is going to pour the dirt for this dam...One of the engineers.

They say he's bright enough to read by at night...Duff, one of the Duffs...

More women than men looked at Owen, some of them frankly commercial as the taxi-dancer had been, others simply to be looking, wondering what he had so different on his mind on a Saturday night. All the way back at the Wheeler Inn a married woman named Nan Hill, long married to the flinty rancher/dynamiter, had turned from beside her husband and watched Owen pass through the crowd, a ruffle of recognition in her but not quite able to put a name to it, as when we try to identify the most elusive flavor in a stew.

Owen meanwhile was dreading the conclusion apparent as he walked into Ed's Place, the final and most rinkydink bar along the street. No Hugh,
blouse, pulled untucked from her slacks by the wind of the ride as she hugged the back of the motorcyclist, the fabric tenting up and out from her shoulders like a cotton cape in a hurricane. Below, Rhonda's long bare back; and the blazing white brassiere strap across it.

The sheriff stared as long as he dared at a speed like this, then he slacked off sharply on the gas pedal; jammed a hand to the siren switch and killed the wail. At the brow of the hill above Wheeler, he let the patrol car coast to a complete stop while he watched the taillight of the motorcycle ember away into one of the streets of shacks.

The sheriff shook his head. But instead of turning around on the highway, he revved the patrol car again and sped ahead. The sheriff slammed the patrol car through Wheeler like a rock through chickenhouse sheeting, past the street where the motorcyclist and passenger had turned in, past the bars and dance joints and brothels, speed accelerating and accelerating as he floored the gas pedal. Then, at the far end of Wheeler, he braked, turned around, and drove decorously back to Glasgow.
on which they were dancing, and whether it was that or intrinsic chemistry, the two of them seemed to click.
later in the book, have somebody on a crew call out to "Red from Red Lodge."
And in final ch., the kid is the last one to see the pair in the pickup alive.
Second Friday of the month. Rosellen's day was rat-a-tat-tat at the huge Bickendorfer typewriter, turning out paychecks. Every lesson of the 00 Business School applied: back straight, fingers downpoised into "tiger claws," steady rate rather than uneven bursts... Fort Peck marshaled into alphabet and dollars and cents: J.L. Hill, $00 for his tunnel work, Luther Hinch for his carpenter work,...

Out the checks rolled, to be cashed at the 00 Grocery or the Rondora Cafe or the Blue Eagle Saloon... The idea was by way of John Maynard Keynes by way of the Roosevelt Administration, down into alphabet agencies, and in several seconds of deft translation by Rosellen's fingers...
Bruce and Neil by daylight, though, were another matter. In unspoken pact, they kept apart at their work. That way, at least side-by-side comparison could be avoided, in the world's damnable tendency to look at them as a set. And it alleviated, although could never completely cure, the name mix-ups; Neil and Bruce accepted that they shared a resemblance, but for the life of them they could not see how anybody could think one of them was the other.
Neither Bruce nor Neil was ever pass up a mirror

These years later, Meg still could not have sworn with certainty

Not by accident did Neil Duff and Bruce Duff mimic a looking-glass comparison, for Birdie Hinch's benefit. Neither of them could ever pass up a mirror, and neither was ever sure other reflected anything appro any twin exactness reflected back.

To this day, Meg could not have sworn that she and Hugh

Naturally they'd had all the pacts that twins start out with—as toddlers, their private language for everything from a spoon in their mush to petting the dog; as growing boys and unfolding adolescents, the spooky each one knack of always knowing what the other was up to, even when out of sight—

but by something like mutual decision, at about thirteen they'd had enough matched set of being a pair. Their father, they knew, was always going to see them workhorse of the one thing—his twins. Their mother, they equally that way, as two halves of a work machine sensed, had seen the differences in them before they themselves started to.

Here at Fort Peck, they were content to tag around with each other after-
tag around with each other as they after-hours as they still hours were habitually doing, Neil and Bruce were keeping very much apart in their work.
insert after p. 57, Neil's point-of-it-all scene, the sheriff & the Red Corner:

And if they don't, the sheriff was thinking (during his weekly Mon. noon haircut and shave), if they don't (put people on relief, what do they do?

--feel of lather

--Mon. haircut because Saturdays are too busy; gets a shave because he's in the chair anyway (shaves himself w/ straight razor the rest of the wk anyway)

--(Sheridan County) elected a Bolshevik, of all things. Out of office now, in the FDR sweep, but the damned guy Mott still was kicking up a ruckus...

--more some of Owen's FDR material to have.
When there was enough rain, the soil of the northeastern corner
of Montana grew hard red wheat. When drought came, politics of that
same coloration sprouted instead.

Mott had been elected sheriff twice in the 1920's, and lost by
a whisker in 1932. Lost by overconfidence, for he and his allies hadn't
been able to believe that the voters of the county would choose a
namby-pamby Roosevelt instead. The capitalist world was plainly toppling--
you could see it sagging pretty hard even in the streets of Plentywood--
and how could people pass up the chance to take power for themselves?

The answer, for many of Sheridan County, was that such power came
only with Lawrence Mott wrapped around it.

... Darius and Jamaala were both sizable men, but Mott was immense.

Outsize feet and hands, like stallion's hooves... The one weakness on
this human frame was his eyes. To read anything, Mott would bring it up
to within six inches of his glasses, lensed thick as goggles. The world
was an unedged blur to him, and as a boy he had spent time in a school
for the blind until it was discovered that he was hardskulled enough to
get by in life, blurred or not.
And the wages flowed. The American eagle laid dollars into hands that had forgotten the feel of a nickel. Wives looked keenly ahead on the calendar to the months with thirty-one days, an extra day's $8 on those paydays.
When the dredging begins, all the Duffs turn out.
--The women all have fresh permanents administered by Charlene.
--Hugh-Owen tension?
The way the Duffs would tear into each other, then a minute or a
day or a week later make up with one another again, amazed Rosellen and
Kate. In Toston the boundaries of life simply were there, unargued,
interminable.
Enterprise now was the fever, the mental epidemic of Fort Peck, Wheeler, New Deal, Square Deal, Free Deal, Delano Heights, McCone City, Park Grove, the prairie around and all roads in. Now that people had a little money, ideas on how to get more bubbled up overnight. The Duff households on Second Street awoke one morning to the fact that Tarpley, the neighbor across the alley, had gone into the pet sideline with a frantic dozen chihuahua dogs. At suppertime, Hugh and Meg and Neil and Kate conferred about whether to buy the whole Mexican hairless yipping pack, sack them up and drop them in the river; but concluded that the first any day now would snowfall ought to take care of the chihuahua situation. It did. Not as short-lived were the ones at the mercy of the season of salve, franchisees of sewing machines, gas irons (Bruce bought Rhonda one almost before the peddler had knocked on the door) ... The New Deal was working.

People who didn't have a dime to flip, coming into fearful 1933, were going into 1934 with jobs and new visions of themselves.
J.L. was the kind who simply pushed back from supper one night and said:

"There're wages at Fort Peck. We better throw our tails in the air and go over there." She knew as well as he did that the only skill he had was to work until he dropped, but maybe he was right, maybe it was time he at least got paid for that. After his first months as a roustabout, they thought they had it made when J.L. advanced to 00 as a tunnel mucker. Instead it nearly killed him. "Tunnel pneumonia," as the rampant illness was called, put him in the hospital for 4 months.
Susan Duff, bright and bold, already was embarked on her famed career as a teacher in Helena. But Samuel Duff was just a few years older than Nan, and when he came to high school in Gros Ventre, Nan developed a crush on him which lasted until Samuel went to the war and was killed in a trench in France.

But Samuel Duff did keep coming to mind for Nan when, most days now, Bruce arrived home next door for lunch and a minute later the lovemaking then as now, the Duffs were forever hither and thither across Nan's field of vision, like an everlasting show of comets. Ninian and Flora's eldest, Susan Duff, bright and bold, soon was embarked on her famed career as a teacher in Helena. But the first-born son, Samuel Duff, was 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 enlisted into the Great War and was killed in a trench in France.
further interior of this scene:

--Hugh and Meg stay some days, probably not many, with the Scotch Heaven Duffs. It does not go well between Meg and them; Ninian's wife Flora finds her standoffish, something always on her mind; thinks she dotes too much on the boy Owen, will spoil him rotten if she keeps on; Flora Duff is going to be glad to have Meg out from under her roof.

Ninian

The roof that Ninian has in mind for Hugh and Meg, though, is the Spedderson homestead, the one abandoned in the middle of the night in Rascal Fair by the lackadaisical Speddersons. When Ninian presents the idea, shows them the Spedderson place, Meg balks:
Scotch Heaven:

Wild, whistling country, and Dora could not imagine ever getting used to it.

...that takes a lot of getting used to.
To Dora, the homestead families of Scotch Heaven seemed to face almost combat conditions. In winter, Ninian and the others casually told her, the wind slammed through there like you wouldn't believe, and snow drifted until it covered the fenceposts and left them guessing its depth beyond that.
Perhaps complicate Hugh and Meg's initial try at Scotch Heaven:

—Meg hates it, the forest fire smoke, the gray wall of mountains, and most of all, patriarchal Ninian. (remindful of her own growing up as a preacher's kid?)

—Ninian tells Hugh to straighten up his marriage, i.e. bring Meg into line.

—When Hugh can't or won't do this, Ninian is both scornful and helpful: he lends money for the Roy homestead, but along with it sends the telegram Matthew 36—"A man's foes shall be they of his own household." (check this)
those
Only the family farthest up the valley, the Mc-somethings, did they miss, a recent injury to the son in that family having taken them into town due to an injury to the son in that family. trying to save the eye of their injured son.

Nightly, Darius whisked them away to meet the other homesteading families. it seemed to Meg
He treated the homes of these neighbors, Meg noted, as if they were annexes of the Duff household.

"I can see that she may take a bit of suction."

The smoke persisted, day on day as ashy and eye-burning, as Ninian the wagon carried them

and then its fork toward where Ninian through the town of Gros Ventre and up English Creek and at last to

assured them Credit of noblest mtn

Ninian and Flora's homestead. Tired, flustered, apprehensive, the Duffs newly from Scotland went through the motions of meeting and greeting

and then went to their bed as if ready to hide under it. Hugh
"You're here and in one piece," Ninian Duff boomed. "Good for you, Hugh lad. And this will be Margaret." He noted the cool blue eyes, lucky, that the face like any pretty girl's except for the slip of the chisel there provided a pert mark there at a preacher's daughter; no better stock than that in the center of her chin. He looked on down, to the child with a hand in each of theirs. "Ay, and the future, whose name I've forgot."

"Owen," Meg stated.

... The girl was standoffish, something always on her mind. She spent her time on the boy Owen. Flora Duff

"I've been holding land for you. The Spedderson place... I stepped in and bought the relinquishment. They pulled up stakes, some years since... We can fix it up in no time, I'll put out a community call, everyone will pitch in. House, some sheep, a community, or cattle if you this country--" he indicated off into the hazy mountains "--to run them and on, and you're in set.

Would Hugh harden into Ninian? And she

is First impression worst impression, she always had to remind herself of that. But Scotch Heaven's impression was going to be seasons long, perhaps years.

Ninian and Flora's children were formidable. Evidently Duff men all had the stamina of wolfhounds. Samuel...

Ninian treated them like a next-door annex.
Out of all the tortuous routes that were depositing thousands of people willy-nilly at Fort Peck, Rhonia's story was the least expected: local. Her family had run the Fort Peck ferry, upstream only a little way from the damsite activity.

"Down the bluff from Happy Hollow, if you know where that is," she slipped in on (Bruce? or the assembled Duffs?) with a straight face.

Owen: "Dabney. Dahnay." Remembers the name from early Fort Peck records. Peck's first notion of damming the Missouri? Asks how the family got into the ferry business.

(gives him a very long look)

Rhonia: "My grandmother used to say, over her almost dead body."

short graf of reaction by each Duff:

--Meg taps fingernail on edge of cup, thinking (correcting) over her expectation that Bruce would have had umpteen girlfriends before settling down at about age 34.

--Hugh's (already written)

--Charlene glad to have an ally?

--Neil: readies to find "new digs"? (dialogue w/ Bruce)
Coax. Just give her a try, Bruce encouraged himself, not that he needed much more. See if she'll put out. Even if it is broad daylight.

Rhonda was ironing her Rondola uniform when he walked in. "Sweetie! You're off early—something happen?"

"No. Lunchbreak, is all. And I figured I'd have it at home." Bruce was going to burst if he couldn't put his excitement where he wanted to.

He tossed his hat off and went directly over to the ironing board and kissed Rhonda, keeping the kiss going until she caught the idea.

"Br—" she 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."

Outside the window, the next-door neighbor Nan Hill was hanging laundry, the flapping sounds of shirts flapped in the wind audible through the thin beaverboard wall. "Nan is right out there," Rhonda whispered into Bruce's neck.

One of his hands went free from her long enough to pull down the windowshade. "We'll make it dark so she can't hear us."
laying the saloon floor:
Bruce thinks his head will split (from noise of hammering)

"he'll end up crippled, grotesque, and deaf in the bargain.

Hugh and Tom Harry converse in a half-shout over the hammering racket?

Where the hammersounds are heard:

--counterpoint to piledriver at trestlework
--during band breaks at Wheeler Inn?

Neil can only half-hear conversation between Hugh and Tom Harry (do this in snatches, but aligned down the page like real conversation)

the scrimmage of noise
next scene:

--a panorama scene of some sort, perhaps overview of the dam work and each Duff at it, to carry the chronology across July-August 1934. The main thrust is that Fort Peck keeps on growing by leaps and bounds, the workforce reaching 7,000 by mid-July, the barracks of the townsite beginning to fill with workmen without families. In some link of simultaneity, perhaps keyed to something one of the Duft's does at work, the next scene is to be set in motion at the same time:

--something about the trestle-gang work triggers a Scotland memory for Hugh, involving his here-unnamed brother?

--after the trestle is done, Hugh, Birdie (and Neil?) continue as carpenters on the pipeline supports.
Give me your hands, Harriet. No, your left. She watched as he lashed a piece of rope around and around their forearms, the sash. He undid... and wrapped it around her waist, tying it to the support of the wagon seat. So you won't... fall out.
For years to come, Fort Peck was a circus of noise. The bass thumps of piledrivers, the opera shrieks of shale saws, the comings and goings of locomotives and bulldozers and trucks, the attacks of jackhammers, the castrato falsetto of steam whistles. Agitation waited in the future above Fort Peck, a river of sound waiting to drown down on the site.

Tonight the Duffs began their accompaniment of that clamor of work. Tonight the first pinions of the Fort Peck project were being driven: the supports of the spur railroad trestle, the nails of a dance floor.

Neil tried to take the task in little seasons. He would fit his end of a board snugly into place, immediately drive the nails to snug it,
Neil, courting Kate:

--takes her to Ft. Peck movie

--hates to lay down all chicken feed, so trades it to (Owen?) for silver dollar.

-- awareness of each other in the moviehouse; N's awareness that this is nothing like going to a show w/ Bruce.

-- they go to Wheeler, to dance and drink, after the movie? (They should talk considerably, dialogue to portray them.)
in being wed to this woman. Back there in Crail, he had won her, then
was afraid he might lose her, and that brought the turn to America. An
ocean and most of the American continent sounded like about the right
distance between them and the Crail situation.

Ninian had advised them to arrive in June, green advent of summer,
but there were the common delays that happen with emigration, and it was
August when they reached Montana, and the town of Gros Ventry, and the
valley called Scotch Heaven.

The Rocky Mountains they only had glimpses of, palisades of gray
rock and dagger valleys of timber in the smoke...

Owen was not yet four years old, an exotic twig among his American
cousins...
Here in the field, the grasshoppers amounted to an insect blizzard.

... People fell back on basic numbers. At Malta the cloud of 'hoppers filled the air for four hours. At Havre, it was six hours. They came as insect blizzards.

You could actually hear the things making a meal of everything that grew. Commotion would have been less ominous than that undersound of millions of tiny mouths each biting through a stem, a stalk, a leaf.

And then there was the sound worse yet to Hugh, the crackling as he and Neil and the others stepped on grasshoppers on the road pavement.

It resembled walking on peanut shells—but as if the shells were alive and in motion and endless in their total.
Snood: is that a word that is ever used any more? Whether or not,
to me Malvina had her hair in a snood, a caplike arrangement sewn
flour-sack
from [illegible] fabric, instead of just tied up in a handkerchief.
Luck finally came their way in 1933. Owen had gone east to Billings on what still wasn't much more than a glorified odd-job, maintenance man on a natural gas pipeline, when news of the Fort Peck dam project was announced.

"It's nothing much," McIntire said. "Just a survey crew." He knew Owen was looking the real question to him. McIntire hesitated, then said:

"$00 a month."

"That'll do," Owen said. "It'll have ya."
earthfill dam:

Like the stock dams, reservoirs? (Charlene asked Owen)

Gatun was the great example. (Owen has been to Panama to see it, one summer?)
Owen spoke with excitement. "This is transfer, really that's all it is. Using the river's own water and riverbed to regulate it. See, you don't need to pile concrete a mile high to have a dam. The soil, the fill will do it itself—hold the water in place where you want it. You just have to do the fill right. And that's the beauty of the hydraulic—the fill material sorts itself..."
here in Bozeman with her instead of on
That seemed long ago, Owen at the college instead of
the Fort Peck job, although they were
their second wedding anniversary was coming up.
the •••

To Owen, Fort Peck Dam was a godsend. As if his thesis, "00", had
fallen open and Fort Peck Dam fell out at his feet. To Charlene, although
she may not have known the exact arithmetic of it, Fort Peck was 000 river
miles from Bozeman.

Projects were being launched as fast as the New Deal bureaucrats
could point people in those directions•••
"Funny way to run a railroad," Hugh growled, and Meg twitched a smile into hiding.
Owen was their bright one, not that anything wrong with Neil and Bruce. And loaded with determination, even as a boy. A solver. Hugh had been ready to give up on a contentious new milk cow; when they hobbled her to contain her kicking, she took to whapping her tail around as a person sat to milk her. Being hit across the ear with a cow's tail with fresh manure on it is not a preferred way to start or end the day. But in his methodical way Owen handled the tail situation. He ran a line of clothes wire across the back of the milking stall, took a clothespin, and pinned the end of her tail to that.
The Corps of Engineers had the Panama Canal behind them, and World War I, and now there were the rivers, the canals, the ocean shores ahead. They knew how to put together a project.

Owen and the other civilian engineers regarded them with a mixture of envy and derision. The Corps officers were West Pointers, with all that implied of rank, career, command. But they were also bureaucrats, and the blindest kind, military bureaucrats, besides. There were days when the civilians honestly thought that the paperwork of Fort Peck Dam was going to ultimately outweigh the dam.

It didn't help that somewhere along the way, a decision was made to lay out a planned town for the Corps personnel and to let the damworkers cobble together whatever living quarters they could. Some of the Corps honchos were uneasy with this, as they just as gladly would build worker housing for the sake of building, but the focus of the Corps was supposed to be the dam.
The thesis did it. (established Owen as a hotshot earthfill engineer.)

He'd looked back at (the Pa. dam failure); gone to Panama to see Gatun...
Charlene wonders about Meg:

--why moody, sad, drifty?

--the alliance between her and Owen: well, Charlene was his ally now, and was she resented for it by Meg?

--merely in-law stuff.
insert into this ch:

...hard red wheat/hard red politics of NE Montana; mention Plentywood and Producers News (knew how to produce trouble, up there)

-pot this in sheriff's viewpoint?
-comparing Wheeler to P'wood?
"What's this they're saying about a boatyard?"

"You're standing on it."

Right here, through the winter the dredges were going to be built.

Four of them...

And 200 wooden pontoons... And 000... Shipwrights, caulkers, local guys

They weren't told much, simply that this was going to be a boatyard, and to have at the undergrowth everywhere there was any. In Owen's head, though, this part of the project...

Each crew had a walking foreman...
can I insert the angle that Owen is determined to make the earthfill his particular project, though the Corps honchos don't yet know so?

--use language play? Doesn't want to be a dub (quick explanation), sure as hell doesn't want to be a dud. Fall between, be a duc, French upper crust, and that wasn't engineering either.

--Owen uses an eversharp pencil? notepad of reminders, phrases?
In Washington, DC, a man (FDR: with a OO voice?) was telling the country...

The senior Senator from Montana... Others, in the Midwest, saw the chance (for their barge-navigation purposes)...

Owen did not pretend to savvy all the ins and outs of the Fort Peck dam decision

also insert wordplay: dub-dub-dud
"You're here."

Charlene gave him a smile. "Do you mind?"

"I can stand a lot worse than that," he told her and went and hugged living meanwhile kissing her. what the daylights out of her, when she caught her breath, she wondered how grounds she'd ever had she had ever been dumb enough to think...

"Where we going to put you?"

"Someplace around you, I hope."

"Uh huh. Walt can move in with Cody for the night." "It's kind of rough and ready."

"One part of that sounds nice."
They wintered through with new spasms of the Fort Peck project breaking out all around them. Snow immediately did away with the charked outline of the lake, but from the 00 bluff you now could look down onto the work on the railroad spur, the work in the boatyard where the dredges were under construction, the work on the first pilings of the trestle...

Those for whom this was the first Montana winter thought it was cold when the temperature went to zero or so, and the Montanans laughed at them and said that this was an open winter, next thing to shirtsleeve weather.

Maybe so, but (winter's work was keeping road open)

Even winter meant fresh work, crews trying to keep the road open; it was a wonder the snow simply didn't melt from the flaming cussing.
This is transfer, Owen had spoken with excitement when Charlene asked him what was so special about the Fort Peck project, really that's all in hell it is—using the river's own water and riverbed to regulate it. See, you don't need to pile concrete a mile high to have a dam. The soil, the fill will do it itself—hold the water in place where you want it. You just have to do the fill right. And that's the beauty of the hydraulic process, the fill material sorts itself as you sluice the stuff.
"Jee Zuz, Mother!"

"Don't!" Meg was giving him a look that peeled him back to boy, the scold that seemed to hurt her as much as him.... Then she seemed to come to herself, and smiled the apology. "I'm never going to like hearing that, especially from my own."

"You're maybe not far wrong," Owen resorted to. "Cussing isn't nearly enough to help this place any." He figured he knew just the thing that would, though, and being Meg's son, he would go about it his own way.

The Blue Room, it came to be called, after Owen snuck back in the days later with a armful of discarded blueprints and a pot of wallpaper. Paper-hanging was not his strong point and the room's corners were everything but square, but the heavy plan-paper covered the cracks and knotholes.

When Hugh came home and saw it, he stood for a minute looking at the lines of OW, the elevations and OOs of Owen's engineering world. Then he said, "I call that ritzy," and went to the washbasin.
dam site must be. But there was nothing to head off toward.

Upstream and down, the valley of the Missouri here boomed away,
wide-open country which made the remembered vee where the Duff homestead was located
sat seem a mere squeak of canyon by comparison. Below the bluff where
sat a ranch the trucks had topped into this view, some family place with an oblong
corral and a stepped-roof barn; this substantial-enough place looked
as if it was being seen through the wrong end of a telescope, shrunken
microscopic in the breadth of bottomland
on vast valley floor. Across the river, another farm
    another even tinier farm, with stubble
    fields of stubble
whose color told Hugh, forlornly, that they were alfalfa.
    that Hugh morosely identified as alfalfa,
    lay across
the river. Across two rivers, at first glance; the Missouri here flowed
doubly, divided into channels around a 00 called Cow Island. No, actually
three flows: the third a river of wood, in and of itself tremendous,
miles of brush and stands of cottonwoods along the near bank.
Since Owen had looked on them 0 months before, the leaves had turned
and fallen and the cottonwoods...
Darius cd arrive in spring of '35.

--The arc of action, to carry across the end of this chapter into the next, could be Charlene's decision to open hairdresser shop. To set this up, earlier scenes will be needed showing her failure to crack the toney Corps of Engineers crowd of wives.

--The dam work of this end of the chapter can be the quickening pace from Oct. '34 to perhaps the first pour of concrete in the tunnels in Feb. '35, w/ spillway construction to begin in May.

--Should Hugh, and his bottle behavior, be on Owen's mind, not too far from end of ch?
Neil made 000-mile round-trips to Coram, across the Continental Divide, for lumber. He would get it loaded before dark, sleep on the seat of the truck, then before daybreak begin driving east. On the plains out from Browning, on Highway 2, he would meet the sun, the molten sear of it **midnight** ahead on the road impossible to look straight into, so he would duck his head to one side, squint at the road edge and the barrow pit, slowing the truck. But he never stopped. Morning after morning, sun and man coinciding in trajectories...
He went back and forth over the question. The homestead had been—well, home. He was one who liked living by seasons, and the changing complexion of the year within the canyon had suited him fine, the abrupt green when spring came and then the gradual tanning of summer; Neil could take almost a chameleon comfort in those surroundings. It required no leap of his imagination to see himself staying on there, working the place, watching for a chance to marry a schoolteacher. And the Old Man was not wrong about the crop; alfalfa seed was a kind of annual gold. If you could last out the bad years, farming that riverbank bar, the good ones would be heavenly.

But Fort Peck was a jillion times more interesting. Hectic, yes, scruffy, you bet, and somewhat dangerous into the bargain. Nor could he yet see the point of workshifts done by the clock, all the regulation and supervision that smothered natural labor—it was one more reason for the truck, a chance to be on his own. The chance to be in on Fort Peck outweighed any of that, though. It still boggled him, how Fort Peck's scatteration of projects was going to add up into one gigantic functioning dam, and the only envy he had of Owen was that capacity to see how it
was all going to fit together, presto, by some exact day in 1938.
spring-leaves in the damsite supply building. Neil and Bruce were vying
with each other about how high to make the new boxboards. Owen, looking
bemused, wrote out the check for the down payment on the truck.

Six-wheeled now, Neil took on work after his trestle shift, mostly
loads of firewood that he would deliver out of the bottomland, and on
any weekend when he could line up a longer haul, some need-it consignment
of lumber or spare parts that a contractor wanted in a hurry from Glasgow
or Havre or even Great Falls. On the local stuff, evenings, Owen or
Hugh if he could drag enough energy out of himself after a day of bashing
brush or Meg or sometimes even Charlene would help him out at tossing
stovewood off the truck; and naturally Bruce was a windmill at that,
able to empty a load while most people would still be standing around
looking at it.

But Neil was off in one of his figurings about the Duff trucking
enterprise. Bruce unexpectedly showed no interest at all in driving any
of the hauls. "Your set of wheels, Neilie, you get to use them. I'll
pitch in on the loading and unloading."

It took precisely a week for Bruce's abstinence from the truck to
be explained. That next Saturday, he bought a motorcycle.
There were people, exceptions to the time, who managed to make money in those Depression years. Adam Kerz was a young sheep shearer, going to Nevada each March to follow the season of clip north to the Two country by late June, when he hit on work for his autumns: a strong back heard of a vacation. He scraped and borrowed enough money for a secondhand truck, then began hauling coal from the mine on the heights. As a mining operation it never amounted to much—those between Pendroy and Valier. It never was much of a coal seam—those miners hunkered in there on their hands and knees to dig an eight-inch seam—but Adam could garner four or five tons a day and head off to deliver in Gros Ventre or Browning or to one of the rural schoolhouses deliveries in between. On one of the Browning runs it occurred to him he was running the truck empty on his returns, and so began to haul timber from across the mountains at Coram, where there was a tremendous stand of white cedar killed by the 0000 fire. Some of that cedar he traded to the coal owners in mine supports, the rest he sold for fence posts.

Mid-August to Christmas, I all but lived in that truck. Did my sleeping while the coal was being loaded. If I got too drowsy at night, pull over onto some rancher's approach road and doze awhile. Wake up cold and stiff, climb out and walk around the truck a dozen times to get myself awake, then head on down the road again. Adam by now had
multiplied that elderly truck into three with E TRUCKING painted on the doors, and was beginning to haul livestock as well as coal and posts.
A few days into March of that year, a scene repeated itself at a majority of the homesteads and ranches in the Missouri River bottomland. The man of the place would leave the breakfast table for the barn, while the woman in her kitchen would be getting out all the frying pans she had, three or four black iron ones of different sizes. Presently he came back in with a quarter of venison over his shoulder, thudded the meat onto the kitchen table and with a meat saw and butcher knife began reducing that haunch. As quickly as he cut, his wife set to frying.

The older children knew enough about what was going on to keep their mouths buttoned, but the littler ones were puzzled. Are a lot of people coming for dinner? they asked. No, the mothers said without looking around from the stove. This is--like canning, except it's with meat. Now why don't you scat off outside somewhere. The woman cooked each piece of meat just enough to sear it a little, then layered it into a crock and covered it with lard. Outside, the older children told the smaller ones that all this was on account of the bank holiday. Which only puzzled them the more. Who ever heard of banks celebrating something? In any event, the father brought in more and more deer quarters from the barn and he and the mother
filled the big crocks and stowed them in the root cellar. The family ate from those, each meal's meat taken out and finished frying, throughout that spring of 1933. It staggered the imagination to think how many fathers shot how many out-of-season deer, and more so to contemplate all those mothers as accomplices. Yet neither can they be imagined letting their households face catastrophe, without doing whatever they could against it.
Owen & Charlene conversation or argument over Fort Peck as lead-in to this, and explanation of earthfill dam?

--Owen's load in trying to figure out how to house Charlene if she comes... she didn't know when she was well off. He made it to Bozeman about every 6 weeks, length of train ride...

--Owen didn't like the being apart, but kicking around Glasgow was no life for Charlene, he figured... He had it sectioned in his mind, the calendar pieces, until the Ft. Peck housing was ready in the summer. This was like waiting to get married...
next scene:

The focus now probably ought to go back to Owen, perhaps to the completion of the dredges and the beginning of his role as fillmaster of the dam; in mid-October, just short of one year since the Fort Peck project began, the first dredge began pumping fill from the river bottom to the dam.

In whatever way this is told, it gives no indication of the next scene, which is a jumpcut:
next scene:

--A flurry of Bruce and Rhonda, with the reactions of the other Duffs thrown in, which promptly produces their getting married and, for what's joked about as their "honeymoon," taking a 20-minute airplane flight over the dam and the Missouri. (Mary Bissel's aunt Sylvia has told me about hers; you could simply go up, for a fee, from a homegrown airport right there at Fort Peck.) During this flight the focus tightens and tightens onto Rhonda's view of the river, a descriptive and allusive passage.

--Next, probably a couple of scenes I'm not yet sure of; one will likely look in on Charlene and her effort to social-climb/find company among the Corps officers' wives who are moving into the cookie-cutter townsites as its completed. Perhaps Meg needs looking in on again here, too.

The principal action in this part, however, is Bruce and Rhonda setting up housekeeping in Wheeler, in a shanty next door to Nan Hill. Nan is the Two Medicine woman interviewed by Riley and photographed by Mariah in Ride with Me... about her washerwoman days at Fort Peck: here those days are. There are two pivots here, to Nan's role as next-door observer: she watches as Bruce develops the habit of coming home for lunch to make love to Rhonda ("quite the luncher, that Bruce," Nan thinks), and she has watched Duffs all her life, having grown up along English Creek and seen Ninian riding back and forth to town, always greeting her gravely, even when she was just a child. It is Nan, as an earlier witness to the Duffs and Scotch Heaven, who provides a way for the story to turn backward briefly (as it did in the birth of Neil and Bruce, and Owen and Hugh's face-off about college, etc.) all the way to Meg and Hugh arriving to America, out of as-yet-unnamed troubles back in Crail, intending to settle in Ninian's homestead domain at Scotch Heaven:
possible Charlene scene:

--she goes across the townsite to look at "the king's house," Corps' commandant's living quarters being constructed; the officer's wife comes upon her there, snubs her or somehow causes discontent.

--Southern accent for officer's wife?

--maybe Charlene just doesn't get anywhere with her; realizes afterward that no real invitation has come out of vague pleasantries.
Next scene:

--Probably a museful view of Fort Peck, Wheeler, and maybe the Duffs, through Rosellen's eyes. In any event, it should somehow lead into the following few pp. of her background:

- Rosellen & Rhonda, convvin in Rondota? (Neil is away trucking; Bruce in under. river)
- Rosellen recognizes Rhonda's waitressing skills; gets a triple nostalgia - offers to take a shift for Rhonda when needed.
- Rhonda likes Rosellen, finds her very different from Charlene (Rhonda's view of Owen)
- Rhonda tells Rosellen, "twit-up" story.

Rogin w/ Dialogue

Rosellen was having the chicken and noodles, Rhonda the 00, and

winter was having Fort Peck for supper.

"Jeez, though." (Bruce had needed warming up)  
"So you're over yours?"

"Irrigated myself enough, I ought to be. Bruce said he'd never even

heard of (cystitis)...

..."If they drive in this, they'll drive in anything, kiddo."

They were thick as thieves
next scene:

--A mood piece, carrying the various Duffs, their jobs, and the dam work across the winter of 1934, fairly rapidly. Some parsing of the family relationships has to be done—almost certainly Hugh-Meg-Owen, and possibly Charlene-Rosellen—but whatever way it is done, it has to get them all through the winter into the next series of scenes of each of the Duff women at the onset of the spring of 1935, beginning something like this:

    Something approximating spring, at last, and as work at the damsite stirred, so did the towns. For a place barely past its first birthday, Wheeler showed atrocious age-spots where ashes and dishwater had been thrown all winter, wrinkles of ruts in every street and alley, and the general dishevelment of a veteran tramp.

    --The first of the women's scenes will be Rosellen's, typing up paychecks which will have the names of the incidental characters--Birdie Hinch, Nan Hill's husband J.L., the kid from Red Lodge (although he isn't explicitly named).

    --The second is Charlene's, a culmination of developments threaded through the last third or so of the chapter, that she feels she's snubbed, or at least looked down on, by the Corps' wives from Kansas City; comes home from a kaffeklatsch with them mad as hell, broods back over her history at Glasgow and Fort Peck thus far, and when Owen comes home, meets him with a tongue-in-the-mouth kiss which gets his immediate attention, and tells him she's decided something she had better do: open a hairdresser shop in Wheeler.

    --Then, jumpcut to Rhonda:
One of them said, one of the Duffs, when he was interrogating:

"We can't account for it any more than you can, sheriff. The two of them, out there like that--none of us knew anything like that was going on. We're a family who've always had our differences. But you can never expect something of this sort. It takes a lot now, for us to hold our heads up."

The big undersheriff wordlessly in tow, Kinnick had traipsed from one shabby domicile to another--good God, he remembered, one set of Duffs had been living in a houseboat way up on dry land; what kind of people were these?--as he tried to figure it out. Backtracking to question them all over again, trying to weave a case that would catch one or another or, for all he cared, six or eight or all ten of the damned surviving Duffs.

--Home, or working my shift, or we went to the show that night, both of us.

--I had no idea he was up to anything like that, the wife said.

--Of course I didn't have any idea she was up to that, the husband said.

The relatives were even less help than that.
The sheriff sat in his room in the Milk River Senior Care Center
and, with the ardor of hate that was the only thing left to him, clung
across the decades to the night of that truck in the river, to those
Duffs. To that case he had not yet managed to solve. Then and now,
the furious little sheriff could not put his finger on who did what to
whom, there in that truck.

Searing w/ emotion, or maybe it was wind,

He was there, hunched... hating. Dufs for... everlasting
of loving them for giving him some one kept hard stone (petite)
of sheriffing to grow on, some case he had not yet...
The retirement home chauffeur is the grandson of somebody passingly mentioned earlier—the car dealer in Glasgow that the sheriff borrows the truck from—and the sheriff recognizes the family lineage:

In this county he knew them all, clear back to God.
He questioned the remaining Duffs until the questions wore out. And naturally the goddamn Great Falls Tribune stuck its nose in. What happened in that truck? the reporter wanted to know. That's what the most sheriff wanted to know, too, didn't he.

How hard that case had been, at the time. On top of everything else that there was to sheriffing that you saw come up out of the river, water sheening down from it like... but that you didn't see happen... Essence of justice... He thought he could still remember how his heart stopped a little, when he realized...

Carl Kinnick checked the calendar again, and circled there under the central bigger cross the blacker number 1991. stop. center.
big shots
There were those Army Engineer guys who went on into the war,

were those Army Engineer guys who went on into the war, "00 and 00 and—00, no, 00. Dead, dead and dead. 00, the story they

been assigned as one of those secret diplomatic
told on him was that he'd gotten to be a courier, one of those who got

sent

of secret stuff
flown places with a briefcase handcuffed to his wrist, and that he'd

somehow lost one of those courier cases. Killed himself, over it.

Huh. Those dressed-up boys gone and here he still was. The next thing

was to outlive the century.
Suddenly the dam. You were on the thing before you could ever recognize it as such.

...

This the sheriff had never gotten used to, the everyday sight here of fishermen and boaters. Hell, tourists even, a few anyway.

Couple of powerhouses that had been added after the dam was done; twin skyscrapers amidst the gopher holes. That whopping spillway, which had to be used only once, in the 0000 floods. The lake outdid the intentions of the engineers, backing up 000 miles...
To offset the dodo of a county coroner,
The sheriff had needed to become somewhat forensic, and he knew that under (the woman's hair, the man's long head) was the brain's canopy of cortex... the stem like, what, family tree, leading back and back...
How people could let (themselves be pruned out of life this way), he thought (as he always did at an accident), was beyond him.
--all the connections made that ever would be.

→ the brain is a weapon, too.

Intact-looking people, yet the spark gone from beneath the woman's span of crown of hair, from behind the man's strong forehead. The sheriff had needed to become somewhat forensic--the oldest fool of a doctor always got appointed to be county coroner--and so he knew that under the bonecap the brain there was the brain's canopy of cortex... low leafy tree in each of them looked something like a leafy canopy of a tree, a canopy
He moved wrong on the hip, and gasped with the pain. He considered buzzing for the nurse, ask her to bring him a pain pill. But he detested pills, at least as much as he despised asking for help.

... Ludlum. That guy could write.

...

The hell of it was, this was a perfectly fine day. The Milk River valley never looked better than right now, green grass tickling blue sky.

...
1991, no matter how you looked at it. Coming or going, same combination of numbers. Kind of a cage of numbers, years. He would never admit out loud that he had anything in common with the other residents--inmates, he called them--but he did share this, the astonishment of the total of years lived by him personally.
Maybe people were like cats: had nine lives in them, the first
industriously
eight of which they misspent in whatever sins they could find, big
or little. Then finally, number-ninety, wham. No more pussyying, no
out, the fast driving ended in a heap of metal, the drinking ended in
a petrified liver... The sheriff would have given plenty to know what
skating out the eight
each of the pair in the truck had been up to, before their number nine
came up: their first and last death.

(He could think of some who stretched the eight not-quite-lethal episodes
pretty far. A few were here in the Care Center with him.)
he'd lost office and everything else but age, the sheriff still thought his way back and forth through it, staring out the window of his room at the Milk River Senior Care Center. He would take moments of fifty years ago—the sight of the pair of bodies naked as Creation; or that clodhopper undersheriff, what was his name, saying "Married, you bet; only not to each other"—and pull them apart in his mind. Try again to find his way into that time, retrace himself as he was when he investigated into what had happened in the cab of that pickup, started on the process of figuring out what Duffs had done to Duffs.
After what had happened in Sept., 1938...

or: the scare of Sept., 1938...

By the time of the twin deaths in the pickup in October, 1938, the
great dam looked like willed geography, not construction. Fort Peck

from the start was a project of paradox:
Self-made men always do a lopsided job of it, and the sheriff had come out conspicuously short on the capacity to sympathize with anyone but himself. Driving now, toward dawn, on the new highway which cut through the prairie to the dam, he more than ever resented the sleepbreaking telephone call and the hesitant undersheriff at the Fort Peck end of the connection and the whole riverbeast crowd down there who had to cut loose on Saturday nights. He'd had to tell that overgrown sap of an undersheriff he didn't care what the night foreman said about dangerous, get the thing fished out of the river if it took every last piece of
equipment at the damsite. This was what he was up against all the time.

People never behaving one bit better than they could get away with.

Die of eyelids on this stretch of road, you could, the sheriff reminded himself and cranked down the car window for cold air to help keep himself awake. He still almost couldn't believe how quickly sheriffing had turned into a day and night job and then some. Glasgow itself was a tough enough proposition any more, nice manageable county seat in the middle of nowhere when he assumed office, but swollen now with places like the around-the-clock Palace nightclub and a dozen beer joints constantly susceptible to fistfights or worse and the flourishing house of prostitution that everybody called the Bedding Factory. But nothing like the menagerie that had been inflicted on him at this lower end of the county. A dozen towns, raw as the bare boards of their shanties, flung along the river as if Montana had become the hobo Riviera. Wheeler, worst of the batch, was coming up now, its boardfront lineup of saloons and dancehalls lit up insolently in the last of dark. Flooring the accelerator, the sheriff slammed his Hudson Terraplane through Wheeler like a rock through chickenhouse sheeting, and aimed onto the approach
to the dam.

Huge shapes of bulldozers parked for the night sprang into color as the Terraplane's headlights hit them. Huger yet, on the rail spur stood an entire train of flatcars loaded with two-ton boulders to be lodged into place on the dam face. Then, in spite of himself, the sheriff apprehensively tightened his grip on the steering wheel, realizing he had been driving on the crest of the dam for a minute or so without even knowing it, so big was the earthen fill.

Fort Peck Dam was a dike as told by a massive lie. Fifty feet wide at its crest and thirty-five hundred feet broad at its base, the thing amounted to a mammoth benchland, mile upon mile of smoothly angled hill of soil on the downstream side while the riprap slope of boulders held back the deepening new lake on the upstream incline. It had taken a five-year siege of earthwork—ten thousand common laborers, riggers, catskinners, tunnelers and dredgers working in shifts around the clock, and about that same number of boomtowners to help out with the disposition of their wages—to capture the Missouri River, and they still weren't sure they had it for good. The sheriff hated the sight of the machinery and
and the ungodly pyramid of dirt that the dam builders were piling across the throat of the Missouri. He hated Franklin Delano Roosevelt for this project and these construction towns, if you wanted to put that word to such conglomerations of shacks, and the whole shovelhead bunch of workers down here. [Damn the damn dam] Damn the New Deal gravy train. Wasn't there any better way to run a country than to make jobs out of thin air, handing out wage money like it was cigarette papers? The sheriff hated having to call himself a Democrat, though he knew a person couldn't even get elected to town idiot these days without that tag.

By now the sheriff's car was nearing the floodlights and he could see the derrick arm of the barge and the cluster of men where it must have happened. He parked the Terraplane, making it a point to set the emergency brake. But before heading down to the group at the water's edge, the sheriff stopped in his tracks and gazed east across the river to the bankside bluffs emerging in the peach light of dawn.

One thing Sheriff Carl Kinnick loved was his jurisdiction, his piece of the earth to tend justice on. The Missouri River country, or anyway the seventy-five-mile section of the river which Valley County extended
north from, like a kingdom footed into a seacoast. Kinnick's own climb up through life began beside this river when he was no more than a boy, mucking out barns and calcimining chickenhouses, working up to the haying jobs, the alfalfa-seed harvest jobs, up and up through the farms and ranches along this fatland stretch of the Missouri, squirreling away every loose cent for the future, until he had enough to get his start in Glasgow. After that there was no stopping him, but he still felt that his first lift into career, into politics—or as he preferred to think of it, law enforcement—came somehow from the river. He could not define this, would not bother to even try. But something about the river's strength of flow and the time it took to bend itself into oxbow turns and then run straight again, and the way he had liked the luxuriant shade of the cottonwood groves along its banks and the deep bottomland soil that gave the best farming in eastern Montana—as far as Carl Kinnick was concerned, the Missouri had been next thing to perfect the way it was. Until this Fort Peck project started in 1933. Four miles of gigantic federal dike across the Missouri to put people to work with the excuse—benefit, the Roosevelters were always calling it—of stopping floods in
the states downriver all the way to St. Louis. The sheriff believed it would be fitting justice if everything and everybody downriver dried up and blew away.

Duty. He left the car and picked his way down the boulder riprap to the group by the water. He nodded only to the night foreman. The owl shift workers had all turned to watch him arrive, the bibs of their overalls fencing him in. The sheriff was the shortest by half a head in any group, and how he felt about that can be guessed.

Singling out the big undersheriff, without preamble he asked him what was holding up matters.

"We've about got it up, Carl, honest. The diver had a hell of a time with it in the dark down there."

The sheriff bit back an impulse to tell the big scissorbill that excuses are like buttholes, everybody's got one. Instead he folded his arms and rocked back and forth on the small heels of his boots while watching the derrick at work. Its cable into the river was being reeled in by the operator on the barge, the steel strand making a steady low hum through the intricate pulleys of the derrick arm, until suddenly—a lot
sooner than the sheriff expected, actually—a wallowing sound came
and then the splash of water falling away as the surface of the river
was broken upward by the Ford pickup.

I’ve seen some lulus since I got myself elected to this badge,
Kinnick tallied to himself as the vehicle dangled from the cable hooked
around its front axle, water pouring from it like a metal trough yanked
straight up by one end. But I never had to put up with them killing
themselves on the bottom of the river before.

For a moment he hoped the pickup would be empty, then canceled that
at the prospect of having to drag this river for a body. True, maybe
there hadn't even been anybody in it when the pickup rolled into the
Missouri a couple of hours after midnight. The watchman swore he hadn't
heard a motor running, only the splash; then when he raced over to see,
what looked to him in the lack of light like the cab and boxboards of a
pickup going under. Maybe this was only a case of a parked vehicle jumping
out of gear and coasting down a slope. But if so, if there wasn't some
kind of human misbehavior involved in this on a Saturday night at Fort Peck,
Sheriff Kinnick was going to be surprised.
The pickup twisted slowly in the air like cargo coming ashore. The men clambered to it when the derrick operator lowered the load as far up the face of the dam as the boom arm would reach, and the undersheriff, at Kinnick's impatient nod, wrenched the driver's-side door open.

The body question was settled instantly. Plural.

The woman was behind the steering wheel but turned sideways, facing down toward where the man had slid lengthwise off the seat, headfirst under the dashboard. Both were naked.

Without taking his eyes off the dead pair, the sheriff put out an arm and waved back the gawking damworkers behind him, even though he knew the gesture was useless. This was the moment he always searched for in a case. The instant of discovery. Any witness's first view of what had happened, that was where you wanted to start. Yet now that he himself was essentially the first onto the scene of whatever this was but not nearly alone in the seeing of it, the sheriff was perturbed by the lack of exactitude here. As if the bunch behind him with their necks out like cranes were diluting what ought to be clearer to him than it was proving to be.
Kinnick got brusque with himself and tried to fix in mind every detail of how the couple lay in the pickup cab, although the woman's bare white hip right there, the whole line of her body, kept dominating his attention. No blood, no wounds, at least. He forced himself to balance on the runningboard, put his head and shoulders all the way into the cab for an even closer look. A cloud of colors at the corner of his right eye startled him. The wet wads of their clothing, plastered to the pickup's rear window. The lighter wads must be their underwear.

"You know them or don't you?" the sheriff demanded over his shoulder, annoyed that he had to drag it out of the undersheriff.

Even then the undersheriff didn't pronounce the names of the drowned pair until Kinnick backed out of the cab and wheeled on him with a hot look. The last name, Duff, the sheriff recognized from some trouble report or another—quite a family of them on the dam crew, a tribe of brothers and their wives, a father and some other relative into the bargain?—but the first names meant nothing to him. That was what an undersheriff was for.

Thankful really shouldn't be the word in circumstances like this,
but Kinnick at least let himself feel relieved that the undersheriff named them off as a couple and that these river deaths shaped up as an accident, pure and plain. Hard luck, the pickup jumping out of gear while they were so occupied with each other, but people were asking for it with behavior of that kind out here in the middle of the--

The undersheriff still stood staring into the pickup, rubbing a corner of his mouth with a fist the size of a sledgehammer head as if trying to make up his mind about something. The damworkers were overly quiet, too.

"What's the matter now?" Kinnick burst out. The little sheriff prided himself on always staying a few steps ahead in the mental department, but somehow he wasn't up with the expressions on all the rest of the men around the pickup. What's got them spooked? Funny for a husband and wife to be out here going at it in a pickup when they had a home of any kind, that was true. But Saturday night and all, who knew what these Fort Peckers were apt to get up to? So what could be out of kilter, if this couple was-- "They're married people, right? You said their names are both Duff."
The undersheriff hesitated. He hated dealing with this fierce doll of a man his job depended on.

"That's the thing about this, Carl," the undersheriff at last said.

" Married, you bet. Only not to each other."
Self-made men always do a lopsided job of it, and the sheriff came out particularly short on the capacity to sympathize with anyone but himself. Driving from Glasgow now, toward dawn, he more than ever resented the phone call when he'd been just ready to turn in after law enforcement's hardest night of the week. It was enough to make a saint mad. He'd had to tell that overgrown sap of an undersheriff at the Fort Peck end of the connection that he didn't care what the night foreman said about dangerous, get the thing fished out of the river
if it meant using every last piece of equipment at the dam site. This was what he was up against all the time, the sheriff commiserated with himself as he turned off onto the approach to the dam. People never behaving one bit better than they could get away with, if you let them.

The headlights of the sheriff's Hudson Terraplane hit the huge shapes of bulldozers parked for the night. Higher, on the rail spur, stood a waiting line of even bulkier shapes, flatcars loaded with boulders to be tumbled into place on the dam face. Then, like a canal bank but fifty times bigger, the start of the dam itself loomed in the carlights. The
in Montana without that tag.

By now the sheriff could see the floodlights, the derrick arm of the barge, the cluster of men where it must have happened, [the kind of thing all this led to]. He crept the Terraplane along the top of the dam and when he parked made it a point not only to leave the car in gear but set the emergency brake. Before going over to the men, though, the sheriff paused and looked upstream at the bankside land emerging in the dawn light.

One thing Sheriff Carl Manning loved was his jurisdiction, his piece
in a case, the instant of discovery; any witness's first view of what had happened, that was where you wanted to start. Manning was a bit uncomfortable at the lack of exactitude here, now that he himself was essentially the first onto this scene of whatever this was but not nearly alone in the seeing of it; as if the bunch behind him with their necks out like cranes were somehow diluting what ought to be clearer to him than it was proving to be. He got a grip of himself and tried to fix in mind every detail of how the couple lay in the pickup cab, although although the woman's bare white hip right there, the whole line of her body and the side of her face kept pulling at his attention. No blood,
half a head in any group, and how he felt about that can be guessed.

He singled out the big undersheriff and without preamble asked him what was delaying matters.

"We've about got it up, Carl. The diver had a hell of a time with it in the dark down there."

The sheriff bit back his impulse to say excuses are like assholes, everybody's got one. Instead he folded his arms and impatiently watched the derrick at work. Its cable into the river was slowly being reeled in by the operator on the barge, the steel strand making a steady low hum through the intricate pulleys of the derrick arm, until suddenly, quicker than the sheriff actually expected, a wallowing sound came and then the splash of water falling away as the surface of the river was broken upward by the pickup.

I've seen some luluses since I got myself elected to this badge,

Manning thought as the vehicle—water pouring from it like a metal trough suddenly yanked straight up by one end—dangled from the cable hooked around its front axle, but I never had to put up with them killing themselves on the bottom of the river before. For a moment he hoped the pickup would
brake. But before going over to the men, the sheriff paused and looked upstream at the bankside land emerging in the dawn light.

One thing Sheriff Carl Manning loved was his jurisdiction, his piece of the earth that he was lucky enough to be sheriff over. The Missouri River country, or anyway the 75-mile hook of the river that Valley County extended north from like a castle with its feetings. As far as Carl Manning was concerned, the Missouri with its broad fast flow and its stands of cottonwood and the bottomland that was the best farming in eastern Montana, the Missouri had been perfect the way it was. Until this dam at Fort Peck, four miles of federal dike to put people to work with the excuse—benefit, the Roosevelters called it—of stopping floods in the states downriver all the way to St. Louis. The sheriff believed it would be fitting justice if everything and everybody downriver dried up and blew away.

Duty. He picked his way through muddy ruts to the cluster of men waiting for him. He nodded to the night foreman, but didn't waste attention on the other dam workers. The tops of their overalls were like the top of a fence around him. The sheriff was the shortest by
to the dam. People not behaving one bit better than they could get away with, if you let them.

The headlights of the sheriff's Hudson Terraplane hit the huge shapes of bulldozers parked for the night, of railcars loaded with boulders for to be tumbled into place on the dam face, then the start of the 250-foot-high bank of the dam itself. The sheriff hated the sight of the machinery and the ungodly pyramid of raw dirt that the shovelheads were piling across the throat of the Missouri. He hated Roosevelt for this dam and these thousands of dam workers and their five thrown-together towns, if you wanted to call collections of shacks that. Damn the New Deal gravy train; wasn't there any better way to run a country than to make jobs out of thin air, handing out money like it was cigarette papers?

He hated having to call himself a Democrat, though he knew a person couldn't even get elected to town idiot in Montana without that tag. By now the sheriff could see the floodlights, the derrick arm of the barge, the cluster of men where it must have happened, the kind of thing all this led to. In just minutes he was there and parked the Terraplane, making it a point not only to leave the car in gear but set the emergency
Self-made men always do a lopsided job of it, and the sheriff was particularly short of the capacity to sympathize with anyone but himself. Driving now, toward dawn, he more than ever resented the sleepbreaking phone call, the hesitant undersheriff at the Fort Peck end of the connection, the whole shovelhead bunch down there who had to cut loose like rangutangs every Saturday night. He'd told the overgrown sap of an undersheriff he didn't care what the night foreman said about dangerous, get the thing out of the river if it meant using every piece of equipment at the damsite. That was what he was up against all the time, the sheriff bitterly commiserated with himself as he turned onto the approach road.
The undersheriff still didn't say the word in such circles as this, but Carl Manning was pleased. He recognized quite a bit of the family among the damworkers behind the sheriff, as if the damworkers too were coming unfrozen from the sight of the bodies. The damworkers were quiet, too.

The undersheriff still was staring into the pickup, rubbing a corner of his mouth with a fist the size of a sledgehammer head, as if trying to make up his mind about something. Whispers and mutters were starting to rise in the middle of the half-circle of damworkers behind the undersheriff, as if they were coming at least, was relieved that this shaped up as an accident, pure and plain. Carl Manning was pleased.

People asking for it, behavior of the kind these two were up to out here behind the sheriff, as if the damworkers too were coming unfrozen from the sight of the bodies. The damworkers were quiet, too.
"Well, what's the matter now?" The little sheriff prided himself on always staying a few steps ahead in the mental department, but somehow he wasn't up with the looks on all the rest of the men around the pickup. Funny for a couple to be out here going at it in a pickup when they had a home of any kind, that was true, but Saturday night and all, who knew what these Fort Peck shamensties were apt to think up? So, what was out of kilter, if this Duff couple were... "They're married people, right?"

The undersheriff hesitated. He hated dealing with this fierce doll of a man his job depended on.

"That's the thing about this, Carl," the undersheriff finally said. "Married, you bet. Only not to each other."
Self-made men always do a lopsided job of it, and the sheriff had come out conspicuously short on the capacity to sympathize with anyone but himself. Driving now, toward dawn, the road a gray slither between a hundred miles of prairie on either side, he more than ever resented the sleepbreaking telephone call, the hesitant undersheriff at the Fort Peck end of the connection, the whole riverbeast crowd down there who had to cut loose every Saturday night. He'd had to tell that overgrown sap of an undersheriff he didn't care what the night foreman said about dangerous, get the thing fished out of the river if it took
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Self-made men always do a lopsided job of it, and the sheriff had come out conspicuously short on the capacity to sympathize with anyone but himself. No doubt ears still were burning at the Fort Peck end of the telephone connection; he'd had to tell that overgrown sap of an undersheriff that he didn't care what the night foreman said about dangerous, get the thing fished out of the river if it meant using every last piece of equipment at the damsite. This was what he was up against all the time, the sheriff commiserated with himself during the drive from Glasgow now, toward dawn. People never behaving one bit better
Huge shapes of bulldozers parked for the night sprang into color in the headlights of the sheriff's Hudson Terraplane as he turned onto the approach to the dam. Higher, on the rail spur, stood a waiting line of even bulkier shapes, flatcars loaded with boulders to be tumbled into place on the dam face. Then, like a canal bank but fifty times bigger, the start of the dam itself loomed in the carlights. The sheriff hated the sight of the machinery and the ungodly pyramid of raw dirt that the dam builders were piling across the throat of the Missouri River. He hated Franklin Delano Roosevelt for this project and its five thrown-together towns, if you wanted to call collections of shacks that, and the whole shovelhead bunch down here who had to cut loose like 'rangutangs every Saturday night. Damn the New Deal gravy train wasn't there any better way to run a country than to make jobs out of thin air, handing out money like it was cigarette papers? He hated having to call himself a Democrat, though he knew a person couldn't even get elected to town idiot
in Montana these days without that tag.

By now the sheriff was nearing the floodlights, could see the derrick arm of the barge and the cluster of men where it must have happened. He crept the Terraplane along the top of the dam and when he parked made it a point not only to leave the car in gear but, set the emergency brake. Before going over to the men, though, the sheriff paused and looked upstream at the bankside land emerging in the dawn light.

One thing Sheriff Carl Kinnick loved was his jurisdiction, his piece of the earth to tend justice on. The upper Missouri River country, or anyway the seventy-five-mile hook of the river that Valley County extended north from like a castle footed into a seacoast. His climb up through life had begun beside the river when he was no more than a boy, mucking out barns and calcimining chickenhouses, working up to the haying jobs, the harvest jobs, up and up, squirreling every loose cent away for the future, until he had enough to get his start in Glasgow, the county seat. After that there was no stopping him, of course, but he'd always felt--still did feel--somehow that first lift into career, into politics
(or as he preferred to think of it, law) had come from the river.

As far as Carl was concerned, the Missouri with its broad fast
flow and its cottonwood groves and the bottomland that was the best
farming in eastern Montana, the Missouri had been next thing to perfect
the way it was. Until this Fort Peck project. Until they started this
dam in 1933. Four miles of giant federal dike to put people to work
with the excuse--benefit, the Roosevelters called it--of stopping floods
in the states downriver all the way to St. Louis. The sheriff believed
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Duty. He picked his way through muddy ruts to the cluster of men
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Self-made men always do a lopsided job of it, and the sheriff had come out conspicuously short on the capacity to sympathize with anyone but himself. No doubt ears still were burning at the Fort Peck end of the telephone connection; he'd had to tell that overgrown sap of an undersheriff he didn't care what the night foreman said about dangerous, get the thing fished out of the river if it meant using every last piece of equipment at the damsite. This was what he was up against all the time, the sheriff commiserated with himself during the drive from Glasgow now, toward dawn. People never behaving one bit better
than they could get away with.

Shapes of bulldozers parked for the night sprang huge into the headlights of the sheriff's Terraplane as he turned onto the approach to the dam. Higher, on the rail spur, stood a waiting line of even bulkier silhouettes, flatcars loaded with boulders to be tumbled into place on the dam face. Then, like a canal bank but fifty times bigger, the start of the dam itself loomed in the carlights. The sheriff hated the sight of the machinery and the ungodly pyramid of raw dirt that the dam builders were piling across the throat of the Missouri River. He hated Franklin Delano Roosevelt for this project and its five thrown-together towns, if you wanted to call collections of shacks that, and the whole shovelhead bunch down here who had to cut loose like 'rangutangs every Saturday night. Damn the New Deal gravy train; wasn't there any better way to run a country than to make jobs out of thin air, handing out money like it was cigarette papers? The sheriff hated having to call himself a Democrat, though he knew that a person couldn't even get elected to town idiot in Montana these days without that tag.

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eastern Montana, the Missouri had been next thing to perfect the way it was. Until this Fort Peck project. Until they started this dam in 1933. Four miles of giant federal dike to put people to work with the excuse--benefit, the Roosevelters were always calling it--of stopping floods in the states downriver all the way to St. Louis. The sheriff believed it would be fitting justice if everything and everybody downriver dried up and blew away.

Duty. He picked his way through muddy ruts to the cluster of men waiting for him. He nodded only to the night foreman. The owl shift workers had all turned to watch him arrive, the bibs of their overalls fencing him in. The sheriff was the shortest by half a head in any group, and how he felt about that can be guessed.

Singling out the big undersheriff, without preamble he asked him what was delaying matters.

"We've about got it up, Carl, honest. The diver had a hell of a time with it in the dark down there."

The sheriff bit back an impulse to tell the big scissorbill that excuses are like buttholes, everybody's got one. Instead he folded his
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*I've seen some lulus since I got myself elected to this badge,* Kinnick thought as the vehicle dangled from the cable hooked around its front axle, water pouring from the pickup's cab and box as if a metal trough had been yanked straight up by one end, but I never had to put up with them killing themselves on the bottom of the river before.

For a moment he hoped the pickup would be empty, then canceled that at the prospect of having to drag this river for a body. True, maybe there hadn't even been anybody in the pickup when the thing rolled into the Missouri a couple of hours after midnight. The watchman swore he hadn't heard a motor running, just the splash, then he raced over to see, what looked to him in the lack of light like the cab and boxboards of a
pickup going under. Maybe this was only a case of a parked vehicle
jumping out of gear and coasting down a slope. But if so, if there wasn't
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Fort Peck, Sheriff Kinnick was going to be plentifully surprised.

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The body question was settled instantly. Plural. The woman was
behind the steering wheel but turned sideways, facing down toward where
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Without taking his eyes off the dead pair, the sheriff put out an
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"Well, you know them or don't you?" the sheriff demanded, annoyed that he had to drag it out of the undersheriff.

Even then the undersheriff didn't say the names of the drowned pair until Kinnick turned to him with a hot look. The last name, Duff, the sheriff recognized—quite a family of them on the dam crew, a tribe of brothers and their wives, a father and some other relative into the bargain—but the first names meant nothing to him; that was what an undersheriff was for.
Thankful isn't the word in circumstances such as this, but Kinnick at least was feeling relieved that the undersheriff had named them off as a couple and that these river deaths now shaped up as an accident, pure and plain. Terrible thing, but people were asking for it with behavior of the kind these two were up to out here in the middle of the--

The undersheriff still was staring into the pickup, rubbing a corner of his mouth with a fist the size of a sledgehammer head, as if trying to make up his mind about something. The damworkers were overly quiet, too.

"Well, what's the matter now?" The little sheriff prided himself on always staying a few steps ahead in the mental department, but somehow he wasn't up with the expressions on all the rest of the men around this pickup. What's got them spooked? Funny for a husband and wife to be out here going at it in a pickup when they had a home of any kind, that was true. But Saturday night all, who knew what these Fort Peckers were apt to get up to? So what could be out of kilter, if this couple was. . . "They're married people, right? You said their names are both Duff."

The undersheriff hesitated. He hated dealing with this fierce
doll of a man his job depended on.

"That's the thing about this, Carl," the undersheriff finally said.

"Married, you bet. Only not to each other."
Die of eyelids on this stretch of road, you could, the sheriff cranked reminded himself and rolled down the car window for cold air to help keep himself awake. He still almost couldn't believe how quickly sheriffing had turned into a day and night job and then some. Glasgow itself was a tough enough proposition any more, nice manageable county seat in the middle of nowhere when he assumed office not all that long ago, swollen now with places like the around-the-clock Palace nightclub and a dozen beer joints constantly susceptible to fistfights and worse and the flourishing brothel that everybody called the Bedding Factory. But nothing like the menagerie that had been inflicted on the sheriff at this lower end of the county. A dozen towns, raw as the bare boards of their shanties, flung along the river as if Montana had become the hobo Riviera. Wheeler, the worst of the batch, was coming up now, its boardfront lineup of saloons and dancehalls lit up in the last of dark. The sheriff slammed his Hudson Teraplane through Wheeler like a rock through chickenhouse sheeting, and aimed onto the approach to the dam.

The sheriff had to ease Top speed ended in a hurry here, he found.

In spite of himself,
the river if it took every last piece of equipment at the damsite.

This was what he was up against all the time. People never behaving one bit better than they could get away with.

He still almost couldn't believe how quickly sheriffing had turned into a day and night job and then some. Glasgow itself was a tough enough proposition any more, nice manageable county seat in the middle of nowhere when he assumed office not all that long ago, swollen now with places like the all-night Palace nightclub and a dozen beer joints filled with fistfighters or worse and the thriving brothel that everybody called the Bedding Factory. But nothing like the menagerie that had been inflicted on the sheriff at this lower end of the county. A dozen towns, raw as their bareboard shanties, flung along the river as if Montana had become the hobo Riviera.
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Glasgow itself was a tough enough proposition any more, nice
manageable county seat in the middle of nowhere when he assumed office
in '32, swollen now with places like the block-long Palace nightclub
and a dozen new beer joints and the booming brothel that everybody called
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overnight on the sheriff at this end of the county: a dozen towns flung along the
river as if Montana had become the hobo Riviera. By now he was speeding
through Wheeler, the worst of the batch, watching for
out money like it was cigarette papers? The sheriff hated having to call himself a Democrat, though he knew that a person couldn't even get elected to town idiot these days without that tag.

By now the sheriff was nearing the floodlights, could see the derrick arm of the barge and the cluster of men where it must have happened. He crept the Terraplane along the top of the dam and when he parked made it a point not only to leave the car in gear but to set the emergency brake as he never otherwise did. Before going over to the men, though, the sheriff paused and looked upstream at the bankside land emerging in the peach light of dawn.

One thing Sheriff Carl Kinnick loved was his jurisdiction, his piece of the earth to tend justice on. The upper Missouri River country, or anyway the seventy-five-mile section of the river that Valley County extended north from, like a castle footed into a seacoast. Kinnick's own climb up through life had begun beside the river when he was no more than a boy, mucking out barns and calcimining chickenhouses, working up to the haying jobs, the harvest jobs, up and up from ranch to ranch along this fertile stretch of the Missouri, squirreling away every
loose cent for the future, until he had enough to get his start in Glasgow, the county seat. After that there was no stopping him, but he'd always felt—still did feel—that his first lift into career, into politics (or as he preferred to think of it, law enforcement), came somehow from the river. He couldn't define this, wouldn't want to, but something about its constant strength of flow then and its luxuriant cottonwood groves and the deep bottomland that was the best farming in eastern Montana—as far as Carl Kinnick was concerned, the Missouri had been next thing to perfect the way it was. Until this Fort Peck project. Until they started this dam in 1934. Four miles of gigantic federal dike across the Missouri to put people to work with the excuse—benefit, the Roosevelters were always calling it—of stopping floods in the states downriver all the way to St. Louis. The sheriff believed it would be fitting justice if everything and everybody downriver dried up and blew away.

Duty. He left the car and picked his way through muddy ruts to the cluster of men waiting for him. He nodded only to the night foreman.

The owl shift workers had all turned to watch him arrive, the bibs of
time with it in the dark down there."

The sheriff bit back an impulse to tell the big scissorbill that excuses are like a hole in everybody's got one. Instead he folded his arms and impatiently rocked back and forth on the small heels of his boots while watching the derrick at work. Its cable into the river was being reeled in by the operator on the barge, the steel strand making a steady low hum through the intricate pulleys of the derrick arm, until suddenly—a lot quicker than the sheriff expected, actually—quicker than the sheriff expected—a wallowing sound came and then the splash of water falling away as the surface of the river was broken upward by the pickup.

I've seen some lulus since I got myself elected to this badge, Manning thought as the vehicle dangled from the cable hooked around its front axle, water pouring from it like a metal trough yanked straight up by one end, but I never had to put up with them killing themselves on the bottom of the river before.

For a moment he hoped the pickup would be empty, then canceled that at the prospect of having to drag this river for a body. True, maybe even there hadn't been anybody in the pickup when the thing rolled into the
Missouri a couple of hours after midnight. The watchman swore he hadn't heard a motor running, just the splash, then when he raced over to see, what looked to him in the lack of light like the cab and boxboards of a pickup going under. Maybe this was only a case of a parked vehicle jumping out of gear and coasting down a slope, but if so, if there wasn't some kind of human misbehavior involved in this on a Saturday night at Fort Peck, Sheriff Manning was going to be pleasantly surprised. Kinnick was going to be pleasantly surprised.

The pickup twisted slowly in the air like cargo coming ashore. When the derrick operator lowered the load as far up the face of the dam as the boom arm would reach, the men clambered down and the undersheriff, at Manning's impatient nod, wrenched the driver's-side door open.

The body question was settled instantly. Plural. The woman was behind the steering wheel but turned sideways, facing down toward where the man had slid lengthwise off the seat, headfirst under the dashboard. Both were naked.

Without taking his own eyes off the dead pair, the sheriff put out an arm and waved back the gawking damworkers behind him, even though he knew the gesture was useless. This was a moment he always searched for
in a case, the instant of discovery, any witness's first view of what had happened, that was where you wanted to start. Yet now that he himself was essentially the first onto the scene of whatever this was but not nearly alone in the seeing of it, the sheriff was more than a bit uncomfortable at the lack of exactitude here; as if the bunch behind him with their necks out like cranes were somehow diluting what ought to be clearer to him than it was proving to be. Kinnick got a grip of himself and tried to fix in mind every detail of how the couple lay in the pickup cab, although the woman's bare white hip right there, the whole line of her body and the side of her face kept dominating his attention. No blood, no wounds, at least. He forced his eyes elsewhere inside the pickup, onto the wet wads of clothing plastered to the seat and the floor. The lighter wads must be their underwear.

"Well, you know them or don't you?" the sheriff demanded, annoyed that he had to drag it out of the undersheriff.

Even then the undersheriff didn't say the names of the drowned pair until Kinnick turned to him with a hot look. The last name, Duff, the sheriff recognized—quite a family of them on the dam crew, a tribe of
brothers and their wives, a father and some other relative into the bargain?--but the first names meant nothing to him; that was what an undersheriff was for.

'That isn't the word in circumstances such as this, but Kinnick

at least was feeling relieved that the undersheriff had named them off as a couple and that these river deaths shaped up as an accident, pure and plain. Terrible thing, but people asked for it, behavior of the kind these two were up to out here in the middle of the--

The undersheriff still was staring into the pickup, rubbing a corner of his mouth with a fist the size of a sledgehammer head as if trying to make up his mind about something. The damworkers were overly quiet, too.

"Well, what's the matter now?" The little sheriff prided himself on always staying a few steps ahead in the mental department, but somehow he wasn't up with the expressions on all the rest of the men around the pickup. What's got them spooked? Funny for a husband and wife to be out here going at it in a pickup when they had a home of any kind, that was true. But Saturday night and all, who knew what these Fort Peckers
were apt to get up to? So what could be out of kilter, if this couple was... "They're married people, right? You said their names are both Duff."

The undersheriff hesitated. He hated dealing with this fierce doll of a man his job depended on.

"That's the thing about this, Carl," the undersheriff finally said. "Married, you bet. Only not to each other."
Self-made men always do a lopsided job of it, and the sheriff had come out conspicuously short on the capacity to sympathize with anyone but himself. Driving now, toward dawn, the road a gray slither between a hundred miles of prairie on either side, he more than ever resented the sleepbreaking telephone call and the hesitant undersheriff at the Fort Peck end of the connection and the whole riverbeast crowd down there who had to cut loose on Saturday nights. He'd had to tell that overgrown sap of an undersheriff he didn't care what the night foreman said about dangerous, get the thing fished out of the river if it took
Self-made men always do a lopsided job of it, and the sheriff had come out conspicuously short on the capacity to sympathize with anyone but himself. Driving now, toward dawn, the new highway a dim gray slither between eternities of prairie on either side of him, he more than ever resented the sleepbreaking telephone call and the hesitant undersheriff at the Fort Peck end of the connection and the whole riverbeast crowd down there who had to cut loose on Saturday nights. He'd had to tell that overgrown sap of an undersheriff he didn't care what the night foreman said about dangerous, get the thing fished out of
the river if it took every last piece of equipment at the damsite.
This was what he was up against all the time. People never behaving
one bit better than they could get away with.

Die of eyelids on this stretch of road, you could, the sheriff
reminded himself and cranked down the car window for cold air to help
keep himself awake. He still almost couldn't believe how suddenly
sheriffing had turned into a day and night job and then some. Glasgow
itself was a tough enough proposition any more, nice manageable county
seat in the middle of nowhere when he assumed office [not all that long
ago], swolled now with places like the around-the-clock Palace nightclub
and a dozen beer joints constantly susceptible to fistfights or worse
and the flourishing brothel that everybody called the Bedding Factory.
But nothing like the menagerie that had been inflicted on him at this
lower end of the county. A dozen towns, raw as the bare boards of their
shanties, flung along the river as if Montana had become the hobo Riviera.
Wheeler, the [biggest and] worst of the batch, was coming up now, its
boardfront lineup of saloons lit up in the last of dark. Flooring the
accelerator, the sheriff slammed his Hudson Terraplane through Wheeler
like a rock through chickenhouse sheeting, and aimed onto the approach to the dam.

Top speed ended in a hurry here. Huge shapes of bulldozers parked for the night sprang into color as the Terraplane's headlights hit them.

More immense yet, on the rail spur stood flatcar after flatcar loaded with boulders to be set into place on the dam face.
every last piece of equipment at the dams site. This was what he was up against all the time. People never behaving one bit better than they could get away with.

Huge shapes of bulldozers parked for the night sprang into color, hit by the headlights of the sheriff's Hudson Terraplane as he turned onto the approach to the dam. Higher, on the rail spur, stood a waiting line of more immense shapes yet, flatcars loaded with boulders to be tumbled into place on the dam face. Then the start of the dam itself loomed in the headlights, like a canal bank but a thousand times bigger.

The thing was a manmade benchland, smoothly angled hillside of soil on the downstream side and the rock slope holding back the enormous water on the upstream incline. The sheriff hated the sight of the machinery and the ungodly pyramid of raw dirt that the dam builders were piling across the throat of the Missouri River. He hated Franklin Delano Roosevelt for this project and its five thrown-together towns, if you wanted to call such collections of shacks towns, and the whole shovelhead bunch of workers down here. Damn the New Deal gravy train. Wasn't there any better way to run a country than to make jobs out of thin air, handing
to the dam.

Huge shapes of bulldozers parked for the night sprang into color as the Terraplane's headlights hit them. Huger yet, on the rail spur stood an entire train of flatcars loaded with two-ton boulders to be lodged into place on the dam face. Then, in spite of himself, the sheriff apprehensively tightened his grip on the steering wheel, realizing he had been driving on the crest of the dam for a minute or so without even knowing it, so big was the earthen fill.

Fort Peck Dam was a dike as told by a massive liar. Fifty feet wide at its crest and thirty-five hundred feet broad at its base, the thing amounted to a manmade benchland, smoothly angled two hundred and fifty-foot hill of soil on the downstream side while the riprap slope of boulders held back the deepening new lake on the upstream incline. The sheriff hated the sight of the machinery and the ungodly pyramid of dirt that the dam builders were piling across the throat of the Missouri River. He hated Franklin Delano Roosevelt for this project and these construction towns, if you wanted to put that word to such conglomerations of shacks, and the whole shovelhead bunch of workers down here. Damn the damn dam.
than they could get away with.

Shapes of bulldozers parked for the night sprang huge into the headlights of the sheriff's Hudson Terraplane as he aimed onto the approach to the dam. Higher, on the rail spur, stood a waiting line of even bulkier silhouettes, flatcars loaded with boulders to be tumbled into place on the dam face. Then, like a dike as told by a massive liar, Fort Peck Dam itself. The sheriff hated the sight of the machinery and the ungodly pyramid of raw dirt that the dam builders were piling across the throat of the Missouri River. He hated Franklin Delano Roosevelt for this project and its dozen thrown-together towns, if you wanted to put that word to such collections of shacks, and the whole shovelhead bunch down here who had to cut loose like rangutangs every Saturday night. Damn the damn dam. Damn the New Deal gravy train. Wasn't there any better way to run a country than to make jobs out of thin air, handing out wage money like it was cigarette papers? The sheriff hated having to call himself a Democrat, though he knew that a person couldn't even get elected to town idiot in Montana these days without that tag.

By now the sheriff was nearing the floodlights, could see the