

"How many voyages do you suppose this tea has made?"

"Definitely enough for retirement."

"Mahogany horse at dinner, Aberdeen cutlet at supper." Which was to say, dried beef and dried haddock. "You wouldn't get such food just any old where. The potatoes aren't so bad, though."

"Man, potatoes are never so bad. That's the principle of potatoes."

"Suppose we're Papists yet?" Sunday, and the priest's words were carrying to us from the Irish congregation thick as bees on the deck's promenade.

"I maybe am. There's no hope whatsoever for you."

"This Continental Divide that old Crofutt goes on about, Angus. What is that exactly?"

"It's like, say, the roof peak of America. The rivers on this side of it flow here to the Atlantic, on the other they go to the Pacific."

"Are you telling me we're already on water from Montana, out here?"

"So to say."

"Angus, Angus. Learning teaches a man some impossible things, is what I say."

"These ocean nights are dark as the inside of a cow, aren't

✓
*Rae - Ellen:
 please move
 this to
 (X) on
 next page*

moving

they."

"At least, man, at least."

"We can navigate by the sparks." The Jemmy's funnel threw constant specks of fire against the night. "A few more times around will do us good. Are we both for it?"

"All right, all right, both. Angus, you're getting your wish, back there on the Clyde."

"What's that, now."

"You're walking us to America."

(X) →

old Crockett here
 "Listen to ~~this~~, will you. We find, from our experience, that the midpoint of the journey is its lowest mark, mentally speaking. If doubt should afflict you thereabout, remonstrate with yourself that of the halves of your great voyage, the emigration part has been passed through, the immigration portion has now begun. Somewhere there on the Atlantic rests a line, invisible but valid, like Greenwich's meridian or the Equator. East of there, you were a leaver of a place, on your way from a life. West across that division, older by maybe a minute, know yourself to be heading to a life. What about that, do you see our line anywhere out there?" *yet =*

"Not unless it's the color of water."

~~See now, Angus, I almost wish we'd been in America as long as Lucas. Think of all he must've seen and done, these years."~~

~~"You'd have toddled off there when you were the age of Adair,~~

moved

would you?"

"Now there's another thing to wish: I still think she ought've come with us. This ship is thick with children no older than Adair, she'd positively be thriving here."

"As your mother pointed out, the pair of us would be strange parents for a twelve-year-old girl."

"All parents are a strange commodity, haven't you ever noticed--Angus, forgive that. My tongue got ahead of itself."

"It went right past my ears. What about a walk of deck, shall we?"

"Too bad they're not bumboats. I could eat ^{up one side of} a leg of mutton ^{and down the other} about now." September it may have been back in Scotland, but there off Newfoundland the wind was hinting winter, and Rob and I put on most of the clothes we ^{possessed} had to stay up and watch the fishing fleet of the Newfoundland ^{coastal} bank.

"And an Irish smile, Rob, what about. Those sisters you were eyeing at Queenstown, they'd be one apiece for us if my arithmetic is near right."

"Angus, I don't know what I'm going to do with you. I only hope for your sake that they have women in America, too."

"There's a chance, do you think?"

———
"Shore can't be all so far, now."

"No, ^{but} you'll see a change in the color of the ocean, first. New

~~another
this?~~

moved

--As they make slow progress, Varick following the fenceline and Angus and Rob following him, Varick stops once to come back and check on

Angus:

--On some wall of the house, perhaps in a bedroom that he glimpses
in passing, Angus sees and is drawn to a photo Beth has put up here
in her "new" household: the wedding photo of Anna and Isaac, as
described in ENGLISH CREEK: "(Anna) was the one standing and looking
in charge, while Isaac sat beside her with his mustache drooping
whimsically." He is staring at it, thinking of the past that put
Isaac in the picture instead of himself, when he feels a presence
behind him. It is Beth. Angus says:

scene concludes:
how he can talk her out of it. As he tries and fails, the
tries to ignore the fact that she is the one who is
--Later that day, perhaps on the way home to Scotch Heaven, Angus

--One feature of the big winter that they've never seen before, on such a scale, is big frozen ~~the~~ snowdrifts, which pile and harden so much that the team of horses and the hay sleds go right over the top of them without breaking through. Rob says something to the effect that these are "big as the goddamn Firth bridge," famous high bridge across the Firth of Forth at Dundee; these ~~big~~ snow domes, some of them ~~six~~ eight or ten feet deep, will have to be carefully described, as they play a part later.

--in the following scene, Angus and Rob are in Angus's barn, getting ready to harness the team and go feed the sheep. First, Angus begins to feed Scorpion in his stall:

*Dakota
hay*

*winter
not older*

--onset of the great winter of 1919, which has begun with that too-early snowfall during Varick and Beth's wedding. Possibly two or three descriptive pages here, of how staggering the brunt of the winter is to Angus and Rob and their prospect of getting by on undersupply of hay.

--transition to the flu epidemic hitting the Two country with its full
impact; the next page may be a kernel of a couple of ~~pages~~ pages on this--
enough to be dramatic, not so much as to be morbid.

--A scene showing that Angus and Adair are on relatively good terms with each other; she's taken an interest in running the sheep etc. since Lucas's will, they have in common their fret about Varick and the war, neither of them can make a move out of the marriage until the war is over (so Adair could go back to Scotland; so Anna would be free of children). The next page maybe is a kernel of this scene, with dialogue to come:

--transition graf, maybe a general crowd scene, to the beginning of

the end of the wedding, the dance. Angus has joined Adair. Then:

less than a month autumn School was open only two weeks that fall before we ~~had~~ ^{had} to close

had said to come

because of the influenza. It seemed the last piece of my life that I could count on to be normal was gone now. At the homestead, I went from chore to chore, fixing fence that had needed it. I was restless...

*Angus
aching
&
stiff*

~~There's~~ There's just one item on the place you haven't repaired yet," Adair told me, "and that's you. Let me give you a haircut."

*white
light
is
best*

I took my place by the south window. The mountains were gray in the thin October light. The edge of my eye, I could see the barn, and told myself I'd better go repair harness after Adair had trimmed me up.

The dish towel around me

Amended

"You're a touchy one today."

"It's not your barbering. I've got a bit of a headache, is all."

The scissors stopped on the back of my neck, ^{so} cold against my skin

I felt a chill ^{travel} go all through me. "~~you~~ ^{Angus, you} never get headaches."

blades

"I'm here to tell you, I've got ^{a major} one now," I said with irritation

an amt

that surprised me. It did feel as if a clamp was at the corners of my halves eyes, the center of my head pressing against each other. "Let's finish,

*making
me
beautiful*

Dair," I ^{managed to say i'what} ~~said~~ more civilly, "I need to get on with the afternoon."
work

*No, I
badly
need
a haircut*

✓

"This's a funny dang deal you're pulling on us here. Leading us to this land and then giving us the poormouth about it. ~~That's~~ This's dang funny exchange for twenty-five dollars, is what I say."

"I thought you might want to know what you're in for. It's up to you, whether to ~~ask~~ claim this land or not. If you decide against I'll return your money and ~~take~~ you can find someone else in town to do your locating for you."

Tebbet did not look toward his wife and children, did not look around at the land again; he fixed his gaze onto my face as if ~~his~~ defying

~~decisions~~ me to say him nay. ~~That's~~ "This's what we're going to claim."

"You want me to mark off the land?"

"That's what we came all the way out here for."

I ~~took the~~ wrote TEDDER on the corner stakes, got into the buggy and counted the 00 wheel revolutions north, east, south and finally to the section stone again.

Tebbet scrutinized the benchland, the shanties of the Anderson
^{Bingaman} and ~~Plympton~~ homesteads. "You're dead-sure this is the best piece of
land?"

Anyone with an eye could see the benchland was equally stark, stony,
unwelcoming, wherever a look was sent. "None of it is fair Canaan, is
it," I said. "But if here is where you want to homestead, right where
we're standing is as good as any."

"How deep is it to water?"

The question I had been dreading. "I can only tell you this much:
the ^{Sopers - the Fayettes about} Plymptons and Andersons dug 35 feet to get their well. There's no
real way of knowing, though, that yours will be the same."

"You don't sound all so enthusiastic about this land."

^{Tebbet}
"Mr. Tedder, listen--"

^{Otto}
"Sam," the man insisted.

^{Otto}
"Sam, then. Listen a minute. None of this is going to be easy,

for you and your family. A dry-land homestead is ~~what~~ just what it says
it is, dry."

"I didn't notice that you left us any room ^{back down there} along the creek," he
said, trying to smile ^{around the resentment.} ~~around the~~

in 300
and
of
- T we
cut my
Not much
pat/ctn
for him to
find in
me.

You ~~should~~
ought to
have brought
me will & you.

making a
small
attempt

or certain

We were in a wagon, at the edge of cliffs. The horses didn't answer
began
to the reins. They were trotting, running now. I fell through life...

The woman beside me clung to my arm. Dark bodies below, bigger than ^{sheep.}
no, bigger. cows, Buffalo. The river was so far, so far down. Harness rattling. ^{... have never seen.}

She clung to me. The cliffs, I could see down over the edge, the
buffalo were broken, heaped. She clung to me, crying something. ^{... didn't hear}

The horses were running forever. The wagon wheels were inches from
the cliff, I could count the nearest one going around, ~~white spoke~~ ^{white spoke}

seven making ~~its~~ ^{its} revolutions eight as the ground flew nine... She was
crying something. Hooves of the horses, wagon bumping. Hang on,
lost count

I tell the woman, we've got to... Counting the wheel, start over. ^{... Mrs. Blue today.}

Tell the woman, you count. I'll...what. Helpless. Quiet now, horses
run silently. But so close to the cliffs. Two Medicine. Those Blackfeet. ^{one no two}

They ~~made~~ made their medicine lodge here. Two times. Count, I tell her. ^{one.}

While I...what. The spoke is coming loose, Can't, I tell her. A spoke
can't just... Wheel coming apart now, nearest the cliffs. Hold on, tell ^{Can't happen, rim is off, falls}

the woman. Tipping, falling. I shout into her staring face Anna! Anna!
Anna! ^{near will run over fallen - or rim of rim or rim over}

You do know how to make a commitment

rim went rim + spoke rim + rim make her undulate

going to run

recollected run identify

South Fork

In our family there are six of us, Father, Mother, Gramma, Rebecca that is just little yet, Rachel and I. I and Rachel go to the South Fork school. I ride Roanie and Rachel holds on behind. Excepting for horses like Roanie and milk cows the animal everybody raises is sheep. Everybody has chores including children. Rachels' chore is to gather the eggs. Mine is to get in wood and empty the slop bucket. The food we eat is mostly deer, elk, fish, and fowl.

Fri

~~p. 6, better transition~~

~~p. 10~~, transition to next section -
some reflection of Angus

p. 12 - more Rob dialog

~~p. 13~~ - transition, of simplify a songtime

~~p. 14~~ transition to Isaac

p. 15 - more a school to Angus, covering 2nd yr.

- like having sample of Sr Hum? (from p. 19)

p. 19-20 unprove "time to come" section before / after

said Eckle-~~FECK~~'n, but I had to learn along with them the map names of Ekalaka, Wibaux,

Thank heaven arithmetic is a neutral country. I put addition and subtraction and multiplication and division into them like nails into a shingle roof, pound pound pound pound. It greatly helped that when I had been pupil teacher for Adam Willox, he left that topic to me: They can become literate from me, Angus, and learn to be numerate from you.

*Here was
once when
Scotland
came back
to help
me out,*

Yet a lad such as OO knew alphabets all his own. He perpetually brought tadpoles in a jar into the schoolroom. He had not yet figured out how to jug up skunks, coyotes and bears.

I suppose it was the mysterious process of patterning the minds, that interested me. How do we get to be the specimens we are?

It was like having a taste, a sample, of all of Scotch Heaven,
daylong in the room with you. The 00s were left-handed, in the

20

manner of 00, so their elbows stuck over the aisle the way his did
(when he cut his meat?). The Findlaters were marvels at
arithmetic. The 00 had voices like cherubim, you would never know
one of them had just been in a fistfight during recess.

When all was said and done, and of course more of the former
than the latter, the learning drew down to the pupil and me. And I
see now, more to the pupil than me. Did I install 00 in 00? No,
just carpentered around its edges a bit. Was it my doing that 00
could never learn 00? Dear St. Peter at the Gate, I hope not.
I could bring the lessons to the eyeballs and the earholes. Where
it went after that I could never know.

*alterate
+ numerals
replaces ?*

pleasantly or at least a pleasure

Twice

4.
~~is~~ all being division

At us too much

2 acts

no perfect rainbow

Did you ever see. w/d temporary
in a die

It wd take centuries, who knew how
many, to fill some land.

land new & old

I had made a mental note to share my lunch & David & Rachel,
& perhaps give him ^{it} all

extra, ch. 4, p. 22

Teaching, like water, can rise no higher than its source; and, like water, it has a lazy aptitude for running downhill unless a constant impulse be applied in the other direction.

One heroic tale every soul carries, and that is childhood. The grown versions of us like to believe that dreams were the currency back then. But lesser matters were.... Children are a special species from us. The young of the earth begin as pure existence--breath and hair and hide, nothing any more complicated. Lamb, calf, kitten, pup, chick, child, all arrive alien to the creatures that parented them. But at once there begins a kind of trade...

Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesey, and the rest of these gentlemen having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island, from the beginning to the end, keeping nothing back but the bearings of the island, and that only because there is still treasure not yet lifted, I take up my pen...

Oh, there was the provision in the land system that in each township of surveyed land, one of the 36 square miles was for the benefit of education; the school section, that one. Pattern paying for pattern; I liked the thought of that. Ninian and Willy Hahn and 00, who had taken my place on the school board, strove to... And the state of Montana did what it could to 00 a system of schools as scattered as if fistfulls of dice had been thrown across the state. Yet, yet.

There were those who although not openly against me were not thoroughly for me.

Ninian brought word of that. "Angus, this business about the universe being too big to understand and so on. I'm hearing from a few folks that they would like a bit more orthodox view of things told to their children."

"Ninian, I can't get into that. You can say you just want a bit of orthodoxy, but there's my-doxy, your-doxy, this-doxy, that-doxy. They're all somebody's orthodoxy. I don't notice Willy with you. Has he been saying I don't trot Martin Luther into the classroom often enough? Then there are the Roziers. I can invite the Pope over from Rome to please them, too, of course?"

"Angus, I'm troubled myself with this. The matter was simpler when we were over across in Scotland."

"Oh, was it? Then you don't hold with the fellow who said the history of Scotland is one long riot of righteous against righteous."

"Now, don't start."

"You can fill your children with funnels of it at home, as far as I'm concerned. But I won't do it for you here at school. If you want a kirk school, then you'd better sack me and find yourself a preacher."

"Angus, we'll leave this where it was. I'll go and tell them I told you." Ninian ood at me. "They don't need to know how hard of hearing you can be."

When I had first gone to Breed Butte to work it out with ~~Bob~~ ^{him} that I would do the feeding of our sheep if he would... He looked the matter over from every angle--he was getting surprisingly like Ninian in that--and at last said he guessed he could go along with the arrangement. "But you know you're demented to do this," he troubled to inform me. "Of course, that comes more or less natural with you, you're redheaded." He was smiling, but I could tell he thought I wasn't following the best route in schoolteaching.

I knew I was skimping my homestead for the sake of the school. But I saw no other way. Sew a flounce of four more hours onto each day, and perhaps I'd have had almost time enough for both.

"And here I thought you'd be grateful to know there'll be a solid mind waiting at the school for all the Barclays that are on the way." (Judith pregnant)

"Solid is a word for it, right enough. Cobblestone is another. Angus, you're missing a golden chance by not coming in with Lucas and me on..."

1
P. 12
*as well
as any*

Games sometimes were season for weeks. The girls would be at (peevers) and the boys incessantly playing freight wagon with boxes along the cut bank of the creek, then abruptly tag and ante-I-over would be all the fashion. Never calm but forever interesting.

"A coyote can too run faster than a dog, Petey Hahn."

"Can't either. Our dog Buster runs after coyotes all the time..."

"That's a fat lie. Your dog can't catch coyotes! Liar, liar, pants on fire!"

"Didn't say he catches them."

"See then."

"He'd have to run faster to catch them. He keeps up with them. So a dog and coyote run the same, see."

"They don't either. After recess we'll ask McAsker."

"All right then. McAsker will know."

McAsker, was I. It could have been worse.

me one of his long perusals and instructed, "You'll remember, ^{lad,} I only said maybe. But you might do well to stay away from the man's cows."

Lucas paused, then added: "Don't particularly tell Ninian you're working here in the saloon with me. He and I are not each other's favorite, in that regard."

I thought that over. "If I'm to meet the man, I could stand to know something more about that, Lucas."

"Angus, you're one who'd want to know which way the rain falls from. I've nothing major against Ninian Duff. It's just that he and his are more churchly folk."

Orthodox, orthodox/ who believe in John Knox./ Their sighing canting grace-proud faces/ their three-mile prayers and half-mile graces. I knew the breed. Maybe I would pay a visit to some old holy howler and maybe I wouldn't, too.

*Start here
on Gros II*

Wind was my guide west, early the next morning. It met me facefirst as soon as I rode around the creek bend where the big cottonwoods sheltered Gros Ventre. The stiff breeze required me to clamp my hat down tight and crinkle my eyes, but no cloud showed itself anywhere there in the Rockies where the wind was flowing from, and the first sunshine made a promise of comfort on my back. Who knew, maybe this was simply how a Two Medicine day whistled.

The road today wasn't honestly one, just twin prints of wheelmarks such as those Herbert's freight wagon had tracked to Gros Ventre. Yet this was peopled land along ~~this~~ ^{the} main creek, homesteads inserted into each of the best four or five meadows of wild hay. Here was handsome, with the steady line of grassed benchland backing the creek and the convenient hedge of willows and ^{sturdy} trees giving shelter all along the water. The long-sloped promontory butte with its timber top poked companionably just into sight over the far end of this valley of homesteaders, but beyond that butte where the tiers of mountains and forest began to show, it looked like tangled country. Any one of these established homesteads down here, I would gladly own. Were Rob and I already latecomers?

The mare Patch of course decided to drink when we came to a crossing of the creek, and as usual in those first days of my horsemanship I of course forgot to climb off and have myself one before she waded in. Today, though, the streambed was thoroughly gravel, several-colored and bright under the swift clean flow as a spill of marbles, so Patch didn't roil the drinking site. I rode her on across before getting down and drinking the fresh brisk water from my hands. Now that I was on that side of the crossing I could see past the willows to another creekline, coiling its way as if climbing leisurely, between the benchland I had followed all the distance from town and a knobby little pine ridge directly in front of me. Here I was, wherever I was: by Lucas's description that other water had to be the North Fork, this the South.

To me the natural thing was to point Patch toward the top of the knob, for a scan around. Patch did not necessarily agree, but plodded us up the slope anyway.

You would imagine, as I did, that this climb to see the new country would bring anticipation, curiosity. And there you'd be as wrong as I was. For what I began to feel was a growing sense of familiarity. Of something known, making itself recognized. The cause of the feeling, though, I kept trying to place but couldn't. The wind, yes, that. Smell of new grass, which I had been among for several days of riding by now.

A glimpse of a few grazing cattle ^{below} near that north creek branch, like stray red specks from the Double W's cow hundreds.

Cold whiff from where a snowbank lay hidden in some north-facing coulee. All those but something more.

At the knob top, I saw. The earth's restless alteration of itself here. The quickening swells of plains into foothills and then the abrupt upward spill of the mountains.

While Rob and I were aboard the stagecoach between Craig and Augusta we had watched this, the entire interior of America soaring through its change of mood. That same ~~ambitious~~ ^{radical} mood of terrain I was feeling here--

The climb of the continent to its divide, higher, greater, more sudden than seemed possible; like a running leap of the land.

to me the natural thing was to point Patch toward the top of
 the knob, for a scan around. Patch did not necessarily agree, but
 plodded as up the slope anyway.
 You would imagine, as I did, that this climb to see the new
 country would bring anticipation, curiosity. And there you'd be as
 wrong as I was. For what I began to feel was a growing sense of
 familiarity. Of something known, making itself recognized. The

I told myself

Nowhere for the touch of eyes to come from then, was there.

the notion

As much as I tried to dismiss it, though, the touch of eyes would not leave me.
 feeling

107A

Here was ~~majestic~~ magnificent.

I had been feeling this

all happen in the same way that I watched it delineate itself while Rob and I were aboard the stagecoach between Craig and Augusta.

The interior of America soared through its change of mood here as well. And here, just below me, one single calm green wrinkle amid the surrounding rumpus of surging buttes and tall timbered ridges and stonecliff skyline, lay the valley of the North Fork.

Once seen never forgotten, that new mood of land.

107B

To say the truth, it was the water winding its way through that still valley--its heartstream, so to speak--that captured me then and there. ~~It~~ when the summitline up along these mountains, the Continental Divide, halved ~~the~~ the moisture of America's sky, the share beyond went west to the Pacific Ocean while that of this slope was destined ~~for~~^{to} the Atlantic. Are you telling me, Rob shipboard, we're already on water from Montana, out here? Aye, yes and yea, Rob. This supple little creek below me, this North Fork, was the start of ^{that} water that eventually touched into the Atlantic. This was the first flowing root of that profound pattern of waves I watched and watched from the deck of the emigrant ship. But greatly more than that too, this quiet creek. Here at last was water in its proper dose for me. Plentiful fluid fuel for grass and hay, according to the browsing cows and the green pockets of meadow between the creek's twists. Shelter from the wind and whatever rode it in winter stood in ~~its~~ thick evidence, creekbank growth of big willows and frequent groves of quaking ash. The occasional ponds ~~of~~^{behind} beaver dams meant trout, a gospel according to Lucas. And by its thin glitter down there and the glassy shallowness of the main creek back where the mare and I crossed, not any of this North Fork ran deep enough to drown more of me than my knees.

I sat

transfixed in the saddle and slowly tutored myself about the join of ^{tramendous} this western attic to the rest of the Two Medicine Country. No

human sign was anywhere around, except for the tiny pair of homesteads just above the mouth of the North Fork, one of them undoubtedly that of the old Bible-banger, Whoojamadinger whom Lucas mentioned to me. Other than those, wherever I looked was pure planet. There from the knob I could see eastward down the creek to where Gros Ventre was tucked away; for that matter, I could see all the way to the Sweetgrass Hills, what, more than eighty miles distant, that Herbert had pointed out to Rob and me. By the holy, this was as if stepping up onto the hill above the Greenock dock and being magically able to look across all of Scotland to Edinburgh. My eyes reluctant to leave one direction for the next, nonetheless I twisted to scan each of them over and over: north, the broad patient benchland and the landmark butte that lifted itself to meet it; southward, the throng of big drygrass ridges shouldering between this creek branch and the South Fork....

West. West, the mountains as steady as a sea wall.

The most eminent of them in fact was one of the grayrock palisades that lay like reefed ^{s in} the surge of the Rockies, a straight up-and-down cliff perhaps the majority of a mile high and, what, three or more miles long. A stone partition between ground and sky, even-rimmed as though it had been built by hand, countless weathers ago. That rimming mountain stood nearest over the valley of the North Fork. A loftier darkly timbered peak loomed behind the northernmost end of the cliff rim, and between the pair a smaller mountain topped with an odd cockscomb ~~rock~~ rock formation fit^{ted} itself in. Close as I was now to these promontories, which was still far, for the first time since Rob and I came to Gros Ventre these seemed to me local mountains.

520
9#

They were

my guide now, even the wind fell from mind in their favor. Seeing them carving their canyons of stone into the sky edge, scarps and peaks deep up into the blue, a person could have no doubt where he was. The poor old rest of the earth could hold to whatever habit of axis it wished, but this Two Medicine country answered to a West Pole, its own magnetic worldtop here along its wildest horizon.

Someway, in the midst of all my gawking I began to feel watched myself. Maybe by someone at either of the homesteads along the creek, but no one was in view.)

By the cows then? No, they seemed all to have their noses down in their daydream ^{fashion} ~~style~~ of eating. Nothing else, nobody, anywhere that I could find.

As much as I tried to dismiss the feeling, though, the touch of eyes would not leave me.

(mod)

Who knew, probably these

seven-league mountains were capable of gazing back at me.

Nonetheless I cast a glance behind me for surety's sake.

On a blood bay horse not much farther away than a strong spit, sat a colossally bearded figure.

He was loose-made--tall, thin, mostly legs and elbows, a stick man. And that beard; a dark-brown feedbag of whiskers halfway down his chest. He also had one of those ^{alarming} foreheads you sometimes see on the most Scottish of Scots, a kind of sheer stark cliff from the eyes up. As if the skull was making itself known under there.

All of this was regarding me in a blinkless way. I gaped back at the whiskers and forehead, only gradually noticing that the horseman's hands were either side of his saddle horn, holding another lengthy stick of some sort across there and pointing it mostly towards me. Then I realized that stick was a rifle.

"You have business here, do you?" this apparition asked.

"I hope to," I answered, more carefully than I had ever said anything before.

From the looks of him, the lightest wrong word and I was a gone geezer. "I'm,

^{homestead}
"I'm looking for land to take up."

"Every man who can walk, crawl or ride is looking for that.

But not many of them find here."

"That's their loss, I would say. This country"--I nodded my ^{cautiously} head to the North Fork and the butte--"is the picture of what I'd hoped for."

"Pictures are hard to eat," he gave me for that. Maybe I was hoping too much, but I thought his stare had softened a bit as he heard more of my voice. At least the rifle hadn't turned any farther in my direction.)

Any mercy there was to this situation, I would devoutly accept. He levied his next words: "You are new to here?" he now inquired.

A figure compact but liberally curvaceous.

Handwritten note: "A figure compact but liberally curvaceous."

"As the dew," I admitted, and told him in general but quick about Rob and myself and our homesteading intention, and that if we needed any vouching it could be obtained in ^{full} at the Medicine Lodge saloon from none other than Lucas Barc--

By the time I caught up with what my tongue was saying, His Whiskerness made up his mind about me. "Lucas Barclay has had a misfortunate life," he announced. "He can answer to God for it. Or until the cows come home to Canaan. knowing Lucas, more likely argue with Him about it. But so far as I can see, you are not Lucas." He slid the rifle into its scabbard. "My name is Duff."

So. I could well believe that this ^{personage} geezer and Lucas came keen against each other, as iron sharpens iron.

I introduced myself and we had a handshake, more or less. Ninian Duff immediately ^{turned to} ~~made~~ inquisition:

"You are from?"

"Nethermuir, in Forfar."

"Ay, I know of your town. Flora and I are East Neuk of Fife folk. As are Donald and Jennie Erskine, next along the creek here. We made the journey together, three years since." People were even leaving the fat farms of Fife, were they. Old Scotland was becoming a bare cupboard.

As if he had run through his ~~words~~ ^{words} for this hour, ^{now} Ninian Duff was gazing the length of the valley to where the far shoulder of the butte angled down to the North Fork.

I kept a sideways eye on him as much as I dared. Ninian Biblical Rifleman Duff, scarecrow on a glorious horse. Was there no one in this Two Medicine country as normal as me? He sat ^{silently} studying the calm swale of green beneath us as if making certain every blade of grass was in place, as if tallying the logs in the two ~~rooms~~ lonely homestead houses. **Abruptly:**

← "You are not afraid of work?"

"None that I've met yet."

The whiskers of Ninian Duff twitched a bit at that.

"Homesteading has brands of it the rest of the world never heard of. But that is a thing you will need to learn for yourself. Were I you"--a hypothesis I wasn't particularly comfortable with--"I'd have a look ^{at the patch of land} there aneath Breed Butte, along the top of the creek. Ay, then you can dinner with us and we will talk." Ninian Duff ^{powerful red-brown} started his horse down off the knob. "We eat at noon," he declared over his shoulder in a way that told me he did not mean the first minute beyond 12 o'clock.

When I rode back into Gros Ventre it was nearly suppertime. I was vastly saddle-tired--cowboys must have a spare pair of legs they put on for riding, I was learning--but could feel the North Fork, the future, like music under my skin. Could bring back into my eyes ^{that} again and again ~~the~~ valley I rode up after encountering Ninian Duff, the long green pocket of creekside meadow, the immense ridges that were timber where they weren't grass and grass where they weren't timber, the Montana earth's giant sawline of mountains against the sky beyond, the nearer gentler soar of the timber-topped prominence called Breed Butte. Could hear echo and echo all of what Ninian told me at dinner: I have found that cattle do well enough, but the better animal ^{hereabout} here may be sheep.

A person can graze five or six of them on the same ground it takes for one cow. Ay,

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→ These ridges and foothills, the
mountains themselves, there is room up here for thousands and
thousands of sheep.

The Lord was the shepherd of us, so we have His example of patience to
go by, too. But nothing born with wool on its back can be as troublesome
as we who weave it before wearing, I believe you will agree.

...Don't come thinking a homestead is free land.

Its price is serious sweat, and year after year of it....But were I you, the one place I'd want to homestead is here along the North Fork while there is still the pick of the land....

Too thrilled yet to settle into a chair, I decided instead I'd relieve Lucas in the saloon, let him have a long supper in preparation for a Medicine Lodge Saturday night. Then Rob and I could go together for our own meal and talk of our homesteads. By the holy ~~damn~~, the two of us would be owners of Montana yet.

Stopping by the house to tell Nancy this calendar, I swung off the pinto horse like a boy who has been to the top of the world. The kitchen door was closest for my moment's errand. With my mind full of the day's discovery, in I sailed.

In on Rob and Nancy.

She was at the stove. He was half-perched, arms leisurely crossed, at the woodbox beside the stove. True, there was distance between them. But not quite enough. And they were too still. Too alike in the ^{swift} caught look each cast me.

All this might have been mistakable.

It is no long jump to the nearest conclusion, ever.

There was something more, though. The air in the room seemed to have been broken by me. I had crashed into the mood here as if it was a door of glass.

Rob recovered first. ^{Mc} "Angus, is there a fire?" ^{he called out swift and smooth.} "You're traveling like there's one in your hip pocket."

"The prospect of supper will do that to me." I almost added You're in here amply early yourself, but held it. "Nancy, I just came to say I'll go to the saloon for Lucas, then eat after he does,

if you please." Her dark eyes gave away nothing. "Yes," she acknowledged.

I turned to Rob again. "Get your eyes ready for tomorrow, so I can show you heaven."

"The homesteads? You've found a place?"

"I have, if you like the land there an inch as much as I do. Lord of Mercy, Rob, I ^{just} wish you'd been with me today to see it all.

It's up the North Fork, good grass and water with ~~fish~~ ^{trout} in it and timber to build with and the mountains standing over it and--"

"I'll hope it doesn't blind me, all that glory," Rob broke in.

"So tomorrow I need to hoist myself onto a horse, do I?"

"You do. Rob, you'll fall head over heels for this land as quick as you see it."

"I'd bet that I will." He came across the kitchen with a smile and clapped me on the shoulder. "Angus, you've done a rare job of work, finding us land already."

My riding muscles did not feel like already, but I let that pass. "Right now I'd better find Lucas for supper. Come along, can't you? I'll even serve you the first drink and ^{the majority} keep ~~most~~ of my my thumb out of it."

"This North Fork must be a place, it's sending you that giddy," Rob said back, still smiling in his radiating way. "But I'll stay on here to keep Lucas company for supper. You'll owe me that drink later."

—

Well, I thought as I crossed the space to the saloon, it's time to stir the blood around in our man Rob, and soonest best.

That evening in the Medicine Lodge I managed to put a few extra drinks into myself and Rob followed without really noticing. As matters progressed, Lucas sent us a couple of looks but evidently decided we deserved to celebrate my discovery of our homesteads-to-be. He moved us down to the quiet end of the bar he called the weaning corner, set a bottle in front of us and went to tend some parched ~~thirsty~~ Double W riders who had just stormed in. After a bit, I proposed:

"Let's go see about the calico situation, why don't we. Those calico nieces of Wingo's down the street."

Rob looked surprised, and when he hesitated with an answer, I pressed:

"Man, haven't you noticed, the bedcovers on my side look like a tepee these mornings?"

He laughed loud and long over that. I was sober enough to notice, though, that he didn't make the logical joke in return about our bedding resembling a two-pole tent.

But he went with me, and the bottle came along too.

On our way back from Wingo's belles, I was feeling exceptionally clever about having invented this mind-clearing evening for Rob, and we were both feeling improved for the other reason, so we halted ourselves in front of the hotel framework for nocturnal contemplation and a further drink or so. Not that we could hold many more without tamping them in.

A quarter moon lent its slight light into the Montana darkness. I quoted dreamily, "It is the moon, I know her horn."

"This Montana even has its own moon," declared Rob in wonder, lurching against me as he peered upward. "You don't find a place like this Montana just any old where."

I chortled at how wise Rob was. Right then I couldn't see how life could be any better.

Rob tugged at my sleeve and directed my attention down the lonely single street of Gros Ventre. "See now, Angus. This is what a coming town looks like by night."

"Dark," I observed.

"But its day will dawn, am I right?" He made his voice so much like Lucas's it startled me. Now Rob straightened himself with extreme care and peered like a prophet along the dim street.

"You'll see the day soon, lad, when the Caledonian Railway"—the line of our journey from Nethermuir to Greenock—"will run through the middle of this town Gros Ventre.

By Jesus, I think I can hear it now! Whoot-toot-toot! Whoot-toot-toot!"

"The train will stop exactly here"--I made a somewhat crooked X in the dirt with my foot--"and Queen Victoria and the Pope of Rome

will climb off and step into the Medicine Lodge for a drink with us."

"And I'll own all the land that way"—Rob pointed dramatically north—"and you'll own all the other"—now pointing south—"and we'll have rivers of red cattle we'll ship to Chicago on our train."

"And we'll have Texas cowboys," I threw in. "Thirteen dozen of ^{apiece} them."

Rob was laughing so hard I thought he would topple both of us into the dirt of the street. "Angus, Angus, Angus. I tell you, man, it'll be a life."

"It will," I seconded. And we lurched home to the house of Lucas and Nancy.

As clear as today, I remember how ~~the~~ ^{that} next morning went. The weather was finer than ever and even had the wind tethered

somewhere, the mountains stood great and near, and as Rob and I rode past my knob of yesterday heart of the onto Breed Butte to see straight down into the valley, I thought the North Fork looked even more resplendent than I had seen it the day before. A curlew made deft evasive flight across the slope below as if revealing curlicues in the air. We sat unspeaking for a while, in that supreme silence that makes the ears ring.

Where the bevels of the valley met, the creek ran in ripples and rested in beaver ponds. Everything fit everything else this day.

Rob too said how picture-pretty a patch of the earth this truly was. Then he started in with it:

"I don't just know, though. Maybe we ought to wait, Angus."

"Wait? Isn't that the thing that breaks wagons?" I tossed off,

although I was stung. Wait for what, Eden to reopen?

"Man, I've seen this country from here to there, these past

days, and there's none better than this valley. It decides itself, as far as I'm concerned. This North Fork is head and shoulders over anything else we could choose. But if you want to ride around with me to where I've been and see for yourself, tomorrow we can--"

"Angus, I mean wait with this whole idea of homesteading."

I thought my ears were wrong. Then I hoped they were. But the careful look on Rob told me I'd heard what I'd heard.

"Rob, what's this about? We came half across the world to find this land."

"Homesteading would be a hard go," he maintained. "We'd better do some thinking on it before we rush in. See now, we're too late in the year to buy cattle and have calves to sell this fall. As to sheep, we'd need to bring sheep from Christ knows where and we don't have the money for that. Two houses to build, fences, everything to be done from the ground up--it'd be main sweat, all the way." As if our lives so far have been made of silk, do you mean, Rob? But I was so dumbstruck that the words didn't find their way out of me. Rob gazed down at the North Fork and shook his head once as if telling it, sorry, but no.

And then he had a matter to tell me. "Angus, I'm thinking strong of going in with Fain. There's plenty of work for two in his shop. Everything in Montana with a wheel on it can stand repair. Fain's offered to me already, and it'd be a steady earn. And a chance to stay on in Gros Ventre, for a time at least." He glanced

off at the North Fork again, this time not even bothering to dismiss it with a headshake. "I'd be nearer to Lucas that way."

"Lucas? Man, Lucas is managing in this ^{life} world at least as well as either of us. He has--" It hit me before her name fell off my tongue. "Nancy." The mood I broke when I walked in on the two of them the evening before. The way Rob outshined himself at every meal. The change from his first night's distaste for Lucas's domestic arrangement. I almost somersaulted off my horse just

^{thinking of} thinking about how much more there was to this than I'd noticed. This was no ^{routine} casual rise of the male ward, this was a genuine case of

Rob ^{what would be greatly worse, of} and Nancy, and maybe Nancy and Rob. Whoever the saint of sanity is, where are you when we need you?

"Angus, think it over," Rob was going on. "There's always a job for a schooled man like yourself in a growing town. When we see how things stand after we get some true money together there in Gros Ventre, well, then can be the time to decide about homesteading. Am I right?"

I answered only, "I'll need to think ^{you're that far} ~~on it,~~ ^{that much is right."} Then I touched the pinto into motion, down off the butte toward the North Fork and Gros Ventre, and Rob came after.

I thought of nothing else but Rob and Lucas and Nancy the rest of that day and most of the next. I hadn't been so low in mood since those first Atlantic nights in the pit of the Jemmy's stomach. Within my mind I looked again and again and again from one ^{of these alarming people} to the other to the third, as you would scan at the corners of a room you were afraid in.

Nancy seeing Rob as a younger Lucas. A Lucas fresh and two-handed. Nancy whose life had been to accept what came.

Lucas in his infatuation with townbuilding not seeing at all that under his own roof, trouble was about to grow a new meaning.

Rob—Rob unseeing too, not letting himself see.

the catastrophe he was tipping himself and Lucas and Nancy toward. Rob who could make himself believe water wasn't wet.)

Simply putting

himself where it all could not help but happen. That helmeted mood

of his, that trance into triumph. Of his ^{sudden} catalogue of excuses

against the North Fork, not a one came anywhere close to the deep reason of why he wanted to stay in Gros Ventre. But if I knew that,

I also knew better than to try to bend Robert Burns Barclay from something he had newly talked himself into.)

Take and shake Rob until his teeth rattled and they'd still be castanets of his same tune.

Here the next of life was, then. A situation not only unforeseen from the stone streets of Nethermuir or the steerage berth in the Jemmy or the fire tower hill of Helena or the freight wagon seat from which Rob and I first saw Gros Ventre, it couldn't have been dreamed of by me in thousands of nights. Rob coveting—^{another's} not a wife in this case, but close enough. There was an entire Commandment on that and you didn't have to be John Knox to figure out why. Particularly if the one coveted from was not mere neighbor but of one's own blood.

Who among us is not sin-stained? Every Scot is born knowing that, too. But knowing it and standing in the exact middle while it floods up around you are two different things.

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Dampness in my eyes, the conclusion to the flood^{tid} of all this. Normally
I am not one to bathe in tears. But

It ought to make the sea weep itself dry, what people can do to
people. I had undergone family storm in Nethermuir and that was

enough. I had not come to Montana to watch the next persons closest to me, Rob and Lucas, tear each other apart; in the pitting of a Barclay against a Barclay no one could ever win unripped. Even the North Fork, grandeur though it was, wasn't worth ~~witnessing~~ ^{taking sides in} this. Nothing was. Search myself and the situation in every way, this I could see nothing to do but leave from.

I said as much--just the leaving; I didn't want to be the one to utter more than that--to Lucas as soon as he ~~came~~ ^{strode humming} into the saloon near the end of that second afternoon.

"Up to the North Fork already? Aren't you getting ahead of yourself? You and Robbie will need to file homestead claims at the land office in Fort Benton first, you know."

"No, leaving is what I mean. Away from here."

Lucas broke a frown and studied me, puzzled. "Not away from this Two Medicine country, you don't mean."

"Lucas, I do mean that. Away."

"Away where?" he erupted. "Angus, are you demented? You know there's no better country in all of Montana. And that's damn close to meaning all of the world. So where does leaving come in, sudden as this? Here, let's have some buttermilk and talk this over."

"Lucas, it's just that I've had--second thoughts."

"Your first ones were damn far better." Lucas had plunked down a glass of buttermilk apiece for us, instantly forgot them and now

was violently polishing the bar I had just polished. "Leaving! By lad, Jesus, I don't know what can have gotten into you and Robbie. I have heard strange in my time, but you two take the prize. Now if the pair of you can just get enough of a brain together to think this through, you'll--"

"It's only me leaving. Rob intends to stay on with Fain."

"Robbie says that, after coming all the way from Nethermuir to get away from the wheel shop?" Lucas polished even more furiously. "Put a hammer in a Barclay's--" he stopped, then managed to ^{go} on--" a Barclay's hand and he doesn't know when to put it down, ay?"

I let silence answer that, and Lucas was immediately back at me: "Tell me this, now. If you're so set on leaving, what wonderful damn place is it you're going to?"

"I'll maybe go have another look at that Teton River country we came through on the freight wagon. Or around Choteau--"

"The Teton? Choteau?" I might as well have said the Styx and Hades to this man. "Angus, are you entirely sober?"

I assured him I was never more so. Lucas shook his head and tried: "Well, at least you can stay on for a bit, can't you?"

My turn to shake a head.

"Lad, What's your damned headlong hurry?" ← Lucas demanded, as peeved as one person could be. "Weary of my hospitality, are you?"

"Lucas--" I sought how to say enough without saying too much--"a welcome ought not be worn out, is all."

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Lucas stopped wiping the bar and gazed at me. Abruptly his face had the same look of thunder as when Rob first stepped up to him asking for a handshake. What a thorough fool I was. Why had I said words with my real meaning behind them?

Lucas moved not at all, staring at me. Then with great care to say it soft, he said:

"I don't consider it's been worn out. Do you?"

"No, no, nothing of the sort. I just think I'd better be on my way before--it might."

At last Lucas unlocked his gaze from me. "I ought to have seen. I ought to have, ay." He stared down at his stubs on the bar towel, grimacing to the roots of his teeth as he did, and I knew I was seeing as much pain as I ever wanted to.

Hell itself would try to douse such agony. I reached across the bar and gripped Lucas halfway up each forearm, holding him solid while he strained against the invisible fire inside his sleeves.

Gradually → Lucas's breath

expelled in a slow half-grunt. At last he swallowed deep and managed: "Any sense I ever had must've gone with my hands."

I let go my grasp of the stubbed arms.
Lucas, listen to me. There's nothing happened yet, I swear it. I--"

(swallowed trouble one more time,)

He shook his head and began randomly swiping the bar with the relentless towel again.

even though each motion made him wince. →

no 4

"Not with you, no. You I can believe, Angus. You're in here telling me, and that's a truth in itself."

So I had said all, and he had heard all, without the names of Rob and Nancy ever being spoken. More than ever, now, I felt the need to be gone from Gros Ventre. I wished I already was, and far.

Lucas swabbed like a man possessed until he reached the two glasses of buttermilk, glowered at them and tossed their contents into the swill pail. In an instant he had replaced them with

glasses of whisky and shunted mine along the bar to me with his forearm.

"Here's to a better time than this," he snapped out, and we drank needfully. Still abrupt, he queried: "Have you told our Robbie you're leaving?"

"Not yet, but I'm about to, when he comes off work."

"Hold back until tonight, why not." Lucas gazed out across the empty Medicine Lodge as if daring it to tell him why not. "I'll ^{get} have Sedge ^{to} take the saloon for a while and the three of us at least can have a final supper together. We may as well hold peace in the family until then, ^{don't} do you think?"

I thought, peace is nowhere in the outlook I see among the Barclays, but aloud I agreed.

When Lucas and Rob and I went ^{around} across to the house that evening, supper already waited on the table, covered with dish towels. Three places were set, with the plates turned down.

"We're on our own for a bit," Lucas announced. "Nancy has gone home with Toussaint, up to the Reservation to visit her ^{aunt} sister. So tonight ^{, lads,} it's a cold bite but plenty of it." He sat ^{regally} down, reached his right stub to the far edge of his plate and nudged the dish toward him until it lipped over the edge of the table; that lip he grasped with both stubs and flipped the plate over exactly in place. "Turn up your plates and let's begin/ Eat the meat and spit the skin," he recited tunefully. "Most likely not old Burns, ^{ay} eh, Angus?"

Dismay and concern and suspicion had flashed across Rob's face rapidly as a shuffle of cards and now he was back to ~~usual~~ ^{customary} confidence again. I could see him wanting to ask how long an absence "a bit" amounted to, but he held that in and said instead, "Angus and I can be bachelors with the best of them.

We've been practicing at it all our lives. —————> Here, I can do the carving," and he reached over to cut Lucas's cold beef for him.

My meal might as well have been still on the cow, I had so little enthusiasm for it. Rob jabbed and chewed with remarkable concentration.

Lucas fed himself some bites in his bearlike way. Then he began out of nowhere: "I've been thinking ^{how to keep} ~~what you two might do.~~ ^{out of mischief}"

My heart climbed up my throat, for I thought he meant what the two on my mind, Rob and Nancy, were heading ^{headlong into} ~~toward.~~ This would teach me to keep my long tongue at home.

But Lucas sailed on: "When you lads take up your land, I mean." I gave him an idiot's stare. Had he forgotten every word I said in the Medicine Lodge this afternoon? "It can be a hard go at first, homesteading," Lucas imparted as if from God's mountaintop. I caught a didn't-I-say-so glance from Rob, but we both stayed quiet, to find out whatever this was on Lucas's mind. "Hard," repeated Lucas as if teaching us the notion. "Nobody ever has enough money to start with, and there's work to be done in all directions at once, and then there's the deciding of what to raise. The North Fork there, that's sinfully fine country but it'd be too high to grow much of anything but hay, do you think?"

I recited yes, that was what I thought. Rob offered nothing.

"So the ticket up there will ^{need} ~~have~~ to be livestock, ay?" Ay and amen, Lucas. "Cattle, though, you're late to start with this year,

with calving already done. You'd be paying for both the cows and their calves and that's a ^{pure} dear price. And horses, this country is swimming in horses, the Indians have them and Dantley deals in them and there's this new man Reese with them on Noon Creek. No sense in horses. But I'll tell you lads what may be the thing, and that's sheep.

This Two Medicine country maybe was made for sheep. As sure as the pair of you are sitting here with your faces hanging out, sheep are worth some thinking about. Say you ~~had~~ had some

With yearling ewes ^{right now;} you'd have the wool money this summer, and both lambs and wool next year. Two revenues are better than one," he declared, as if this was news to the world. "It's more than interesting, Angus, Ninian Duff saying to you that ^{he's thinking of selling} he'll sell his cattle for sheep. Ninian is a man with an eye for a dollar." Tell us too, Lucas, does a fish swim and will a rock sink and can a bird fly? Why be trotting out this parade of homestead wisdom, when Rob wants none and I've already told you I'm leaving?

Sermon done, we finished eating, or in my case gave up on the task. Lucas swung his head to me and requested: "Angus, would you mind? My chimney."

I fetched his clay pipe, tobaccoed it and held it to him as he took it with his mouth. After I lit it and he puffed sufficiently, he used a forearm to push it to the accustomed corner of his mouth, then quizzed: "What do you lads think of the sheep notion?"

Rob looked at me but I determinedly kept my mouth clamped. He was the one bending the future to awkward angles, let him be the one to describe its design to Lucas.

Instead, Rob bought himself another minute by jesting, "Sheep sound like the exact thing to have. Now if we only had sheep."

My meal might as well have been still on the cow, I had so little enthusiasm for it. Rob unconcernedly

Lucas deployed a pipe cloud at us, and with it said: "I'll go with you on them."

Neither Rob nor I took his meaning.

"The sheep!" Lucas spelled out impatiently. "I'll partner you in getting sheep. A small band apiece, to start you off with." 7 ← The two of you

Rob sat straight up. Probably I rose some myself. Lucas puffed some more and went right on: "I can back you a bit on the homestead expenses, too. Not endlessly, mind you; don't get the wild idea I'm made of money. But to help you get underway. You're going to need to dive right to work, Montana winters come before you know it. I'd say tomorrow isn't too soon for starting. But spend the rest of spring and the summer up there at it, and the North Fork will have to make room for you two." ← you pair

"Lucas, man," Rob burst out, "that's beyond generous."

Hesitation was gone from him. This again was the Rob I had come from Nethermuir and Helena with.

"You're for it, Robbie, are you?" Lucas made sure.

"Who wouldn't be? A chance like that?" Somewhere in his mind Rob had to adjust about Nancy, ~~that there'd need to be some delay in that matter now; but with her absent to Toussaint's household, there already was a delay and in the meantime Lucas's offer lay like money to be picked up,~~ You could all but hear Rob click with adjustment. 7

I knew Lucas had one more piece to put into place, and it came, it came. 7

"There's still one country here to be heard from," he ~~said~~ ^{dispatched} benignly around his pipe to me. "What do you say to the idea, Angus? Can I count on you both?"

Lucas Barclay, rascal that you knew how to be even without hands. Your bearded face and Rob's bare bright one waited across that supper table. Waited while my mind buzzed like a hive. This isn't old Scotland, lads. Waited for the one answer yet to come, the last answer of that evening and of the time that has ensued from it. Life goes differently here. The answer, Lucas, that you and I knew I could not now avoid saying, didn't we?

And say it I did.

"Both."

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