DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections

p. 76 line 5, delete "And".

89 line 8 from bottom, correct misprint "looked" to "look".

90 line 10, add "and gave her" after "here", making the changed version read: "So he brought Nancy in here and gave her to the DeSalises."

94 line 8 from bottom, insert "new" before "flag".

96 lines 7-8 from top, delete comma after "So" and delete "like the wise cow of Ecclefechan", making the changed version read: "So we'll take a standing one, ay?"

102 line 2, delete "pure".

105 line 12 from bottom, change "eventually" to "ultimately".

106 line 3 from top, change "Ned" to "Pat".

120 line 8 from top, change "quoted" to "commemorated" and delete the italics, making the changed version read: I commemorated dreamily, "It is the moon, I know her horn."

125 line 11 from top, insert "your" before homestead.

" line 12 from top, change "Fort Benton" to "Lewistown".

130 line 8 from bottom, change "declared, as if this was news to the world." to "informed us."

134 line 3 from bottom, change "three years" to "five years".

135 line 2 from bottom, change "ancient" to "earliest".

136 line 12 from top, change "Fort Benton" to "Lewistown".

" line 13 from top, delete "of Montana".

" line 5 from bottom, change "three years" to "five years".

139 line 6 from top, delete "the" before "foothills".

" line 4 from bottom, change "quarter of a mile" to "half mile".

p. 143 lines 18-20 from top, delete the sentences that begin "But think" and "The government" and substitute: "At least Montana is the prettiest place in the world to work yourself to death, ay?"

149 line 6 from bottom, delete "pure".

150 line 4 from top, change "'85" to "'86".

153 line 9 from top, change "April and May" to "spring".

154 line 9 from bottom, change "at Duffs" to "at the Duffs'".

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DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections

p. 155 line 6 from top, change "Mary Findlater" to "Grace Findlater".

162 line 3 from bottom, change "as if it was fairy gold" to "as if it were fairy gold".

168-168A-169 substitute attached REVISED pages 168 and 169.

177 line 5 from top, change "Wibaux" to "Ubet".

186 line 8 from top, change "neck" to "shoulder".

186 lines 14-16 from top, change "and now had horse crews of his own at work on the railroad that was being built" to "and soon had horse crews of his own at work on the railroad as it was being built".

192 line 12 from top, insert "hard" before "time"; delete entire next sentence, "The years of '93 had their own..." picking up at next graf, "In truth,".

193 line 14 from top, correct misprint "from".

195 substitute REVISED pp. 195-196-197-198-199-199A-199B for original pp. of same numbers.

200 line 2 from top, change "A Montana spring day" to "A spring day in the Two Medicine country".

204 line 5 from bottom, delete "Tendoy" and insert in its place "Flathead and Swan".

204 lines 4-5 from bottom, delete "Bearpaws and", making the changed version read:"until the Little Rockies and Big Snowys"

208 lines 7-8, move "Mr. McCaskill" from end of sentence to beginning, making the changed version read: "Mr. McCaskill, before you go".

213 line 12 from bottom, change "Strathspay" to "Strath Spey".

220 line 5 from top, delete italicized verse beginning "No drums".

" line 11 from bottom, change italicized verse to: "Moon and star, fire and air,/choose your mate and make a pair,/dancing at the rascal fair".

224 last line, change "Mary Findlater" to "Grace Findlater".

226 line 13 from bottom, insert "in" after "gripped".

" line 3 from bottom, change "Forfar" to "Forfarshire".

233 line 13 from top, delete italicized verse.

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections:

p. 246 line 12 from bottom, change "Kremlin" to "Havre".

245 line 13 from top, change "gray cliff" to gray cliffs".

251 line 5 from top, change "Montana" to "this country".

253 line 5 from top, change "chance at Montana" to "chance at life here".

254 line 7 from bottom, change "across Montana" to "across this part of the country".

256 line 15 from top, delete "Papoose. Next:" making the changed version read: Then: "Coyote."

257 line 8 from top, delete "in Montana".

" line 11 from top, delete "Montana".

262 line 2 from top, correct misprint "set" to "sent".

263 lines 1-2, delete "we called"

" line 6 from bottom, correct misprint to read "pups."

265 line 10 from top, delete "Montana", and correct typo "trees".

p. 265 line 9 from bottom, correct misprints to "between her".

267 line 13 from bottom, correct misprint to "ultimately".

268 line 3 from top, change "Housatonic" to "Chicopee".

" line 1, delete "Montana" from "Montana sheep".

" line 9 from bottom, change "our Montana" to "our Two country".

273 last line, change "do it all" to "do all this".

280 line 13 from top, delete comma after "testimonial".

284 last line, delete "Kremlin".

284A line 1, change "Montana version" to "prairie version".

284A line 10 from top, change "went" to "had gone".

" line 8 from bottom, correct misprint "Miniatures tower" to "miniature towers".

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR Ms changes and corrections

p. 284B line 2 from top, change "atop us" to "atop our shoulders".

284B line 12 from top, delete "Montana".

" line 2 from bottom, change "The Ecclefechan choir and all its geese" to "A choir of geese".

284D correct page number from 248D to 284D

284D line 1, change "Montana" to "this country of ours".

296 line 8 from top, delete "now".

297 line 8 from top, change "Montana" to "the Two Medicine country".

298 line 9 from bottom, insert comma after "around". Change "people" to "wellwishers".

298 line 3 from bottom, change "People were" to "Our public was".

p. 302 line 7 from bottom, change "think" to "be thinking".

303 line 4 from bottom, delete "at Conrad".

309 line 4 from bottom, make the third "Angus!" small caps, so the line will read: "Angus! AnGUS! Angus!"

311 lines 19-20 from top, delete "the mountains stood up as white majesties in the blue and the sun,".

312 last line, change "whist" to "cribbage".

313 lines 3-4, change "whist or gin rummy" to "cribbage".

318 line 10 from bottom, insert ", Adair" after "that", making the line read: "In a situation like that, Adair,".

324 lines 10-11 from top, delete italicized verse.

325 line 8, correct misprint to read "of our marriage as".

326 line 2 from bottom, delete comma.

327 line 2 from bottom, change "in Montana" to "in this country".

329 line 10 from top, italicize "Angus, are we both for it?".

332 line 4 from bottom, change "brought us to Montana" to "brought us here".



DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections:

P. 335 line 8 from bottom, insert "A" before "Sunday", making the line read: "A Sunday, though."

335 line 2 from bottom, change "eight" to "horses".

337 line 8 from bottom, insert ", nodded skyward" after "mustache", making the changed line read: "Isaac Reese gave me a probable smile under that mustache, nodded skyward and gabbled out:".

337 line 6 from bottom, change "crane" to "heron".

341 line 3 from top, change "never wasn't there" to "was ever there".

342 line 2 from top, after "daughters" insert "Ellen and Dorothy and Margery and Mary".

343 line 6 from bottom, insert "finally" before "was fenced" and delete "in 1904".

346 line 6 from bottom, change "top" to "roof".

347 line 13 from top, delete "in Montana".

357 line 6 from top, change "still-dark" to "kingly".

359 line 2, delete "of Ecclefechan".

362 line 11 from bottom, correct misprint to "living on the front porch".

369 line 5 from bottom, delete "of Montana".

370 line 6 from bottom, change "eighty thousand" to "seventy-five thousand".

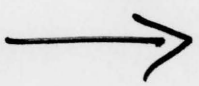
371 paragraph at bottom of page, delete sentences that begin "Not that" and "I was"; also delete "But" from the next sentence, making the changed version read: "I knew I was. Season by season, those nearest around me were altering."

P. 376 line 6 from bottom, change "nightly" to "daily".

" last line, change "Montana" to "this country".

383 lines 7-12 from top, delete everything, making the changed version read: "There went one. ¶As Anna and I".

390 line 10 from top, change "Close." to "Close it now."



DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections:

P. 391 substitute REVISED pp. 391-391A for original p. 391.

397 line 5 from top, delete "to Montana".

397 lines 14-16 from top, delete sentence that begins "Lads, think of".

398 line 5 from top, change ~~[illegible]~~ "Montana" to "proffered".

398 line 3 from bottom, change "as the deacon of Ecclefechan." to "as one deacon is of the other."

399 line 12 from top, delete "to Montana".

403 line 4 from top, delete "to Montana".

405 line 4 from top, delete "three" from "three years".

" line 9 from top, correct misprint "handkerchief".

405 line 13 from top, change "onto Montana" to "onto prairie acres."

406 line 5 from bottom, change "Montana's" to "the".

408 lines 15-16 from top, delete sentences that begin "Oblong is" and "Is it".

412 line 8 from top, make "Forty!" small caps.

p. 417 line 1, change "'Borrow'" to "'Borrowing'" and "'borrow'" to "'borrowing'" with the double quote mark deleted after the question mark, making it read: "'Borrowing', who said anything about 'borrowing'? We'll be".

421 line 11 from top, delete "Papoose..." making it read: "Cayuse...Coyote."

" line 8 from bottom, delete "weren't they" making the previous ~~[illegible]~~ line end with a period after "me".

437 line 12 from top, delete ", McAngus".

" line 15 from top, change "Angus" to "McAngus".

440 line 1, change "Angus" to "goddamn it".

450 line 10 from bottom, delete question mark after "Rob" and insert: "--sonless yourself, you were wishing on me the worst spite you could by tearing my son out of my life?"

450 line 7 from bottom, insert "a" before "jelously" before "ripped".

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DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections

p. 459 line 9 from bottom, delete "now" after "again".

460 lines 12-13 from top, delete "Life turns on many hinges in a classroom, and" making the changed version read: "Day after day I was mentally thankful".

461 line 16 from top, delete "Montana and".

" line 17 from top, change "were rollicking" to "was rollicking".

461 line 10 from bottom, change "stump" to "sump", making the saying read: "sunk as a sump".

462 line 7 from bottom, change "of Montana" to "of the state".

464 lines 10-11 from top, delete sentence that begins "Less than".

465 line 2 from bottom, change "America and Montana" to "another life".

" last line, correct typo "children".

467 line 5 from top, change "people and people and people" to "everyone", making the sentence read: "Lucas's funeral brought everyone."

467 lines 6-7 from top, delete sentence that begins "His graveside."

" line 10 from top, after "me" insert "at his graveside", making the changed sentence read: "Around me at his graveside, the years' worth of faces."

468 lines 14-15 from top, change "from that we know here in Montana" to "from the sort we know."

470 lines 1 and 6 from top, delete single quote marks.

" line 6 from bottom, change "came back" to "issued back".

p. 476 last line, [redacted] put "sound mind" in single quotes instead of italics.

477 first line, put "disposing memory" in single quotes instead of italics.

484 lines 11-14, change to:
He produced the five of diamonds.
Grabbing the deck as if he wanted it out of sight of him, he shuffled it roughly, thrust it out to me.
I turned up the ten of clubs.



DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections

p.489 line 8 from top, italicize "Skorp Yun, lad, what about that?

" line 11 from top, italicize "I am called Anna Ramsay."

495 line 8 from bottom, delete "several".

" line 6 from bottom, after "make them" insert "and all bets were laid".

497 line 7 from top, change "Go, McCoy!" from italics to small caps.

p. 504 line 10 from top, delete "'s" from "Ninian's", making it read: "Ninian and Flora's son Samuel."

505 line 10 from top, change "2nd Battalion" to "361st Regiment, 181st Brigade", making the complete military designation read: "of Company C, 361st Regiment, 181st Brigade, 91st Division".

505 line 8 from bottom, delete comma after "Camp Lewis" and insert "in the", making it read "Camp Lewis in the state of Washington."

511 substitute REVISED p. 511 for original p. 511.

513 line 5 from top, change "fought in the Battle of the Marne" to "fought in the Battle of Belleau Wood".

515 line 7 from top, delete "me this" and insert "it", making the changed line read: "He told it without quite managing to look at me."

516 line 6 from bottom, change the rest of this graf, beginning with "The sheep" to: "The sheep are a hell of a way up onto the mountain, Dair." I jerked my head to indicate Roman Reef standing bright in the sun, its cliffs the color of weathered bone. "It's a considerable ride."

519 line 5 from bottom, change "Adair and I" to "We".

523 line 2 from top, begin new paragraph at "Dair,".

525 lines 2-3 from top, delete "demanded dispelling when woman was here to pair her passion with man's" and substitute "fed our yearning", making the changed sentence read: "Maybe the bachelor air, the sheepwagon's accumulated loneliness of herders spending their hermit lives, fed our yearning."

529 line 2 from bottom, change "a couple of thousand" to "hundreds of".

532 line 2 from top, change "them" to "the rest of the sheep".



DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections:

P. 533 substitute REVISED pp. 533-534-534A-535-536-536A-536B for original pp. 533-534-535-536.

537 line 3 from top, change "danger" to "peril".

544 line 2 from bottom, change "Age 43" to "Age 45".

548 line 7 from top in Gleaner excerpt, change "Montana's weather" to "the weather".

" line 8 " " " " " , change "its" to "the".

p. 556 line 5 from bottom, change "never had to have" to "did not even have to have".

557 substitute REVISED pp. 557-557A for original p. 557

559 lines 6-7, change "But it was wherever I looked." to "But the dry proof was everywhere around."

561 line 2 from top, delete "right".

570 substitute REVISED p. 570.

573 last line, insert "under the same roof" after "one", making it read: "I even got through one under the same roof with you, somehow."

574 substitute REVISED pp. 574-575-576 for original pp. 574-575-576.

578 lines 3-6, delete the sentences that begin "She sure" and "That was maybe", making the changed version read: "today didn't seem willing to be an exception. Below Adair and".

578 line 6 from top, change "I" to "me", making it read: "Below Adair and me".

581 line 5 from bottom, delete "Yeah,".

" line 2 from bottom, change "said to me" to "drawled"

584 line 5 from bottom, change "get in this much" to "get this in."

585 line 6 from top, change "And Varick too, he was there" to: "Varick's partnered with her there,".

587 line 8 from top, begin new paragraph after "lull."

589 lines 7-10 from the top, delete sentence that begins "Truly" and begin a new paragraph at "Thank heaven".

594 substitute REVISED pp. 594-595 for original pp. 594-5.



DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections

P. 596 line 3 from top, delete "broad".

" line 7 from bottom, change "just ten miles" to "just a dozen miles".

596 line 4 from bottom, delete "That winter. That winter, we ate with the axe."

597 line 8 from top, change "Montana's" to "that".

598 substitute REVISED pp. 598-598A for original p. 598.

601 lines 10-11 from top, cut sentences that begin "The jolly clouds" and "Are they", making the changed version read: "the white roof of the sheep shed. Another week of this".

605 lines 12-16, delete the three sentences that begin at "But we", making this graf conclude with "in front of me."

606 line 3 from top, delete "snow-held".

" line 8 from top, change "snow" to "flurry".

" line 4 from bottom, delete both uses of "now".

607 line 2 from top, delete "now".

" line 5 from top, delete "now".

608 line 1, change "snow horizon" to "chalky horizon".

609 line 3 from top, change "snow" to "winter".

" line 8 from top, change "dike of snow" to "white dike".

610 lines 6-7 from top, change "now that the hay was out of them" to "without their cargo".

610 line 6 from bottom, delete "of hay".

611 line 6 from top, delete "now".

612 line 4 from top, delete "snow".

" line 10 from top, change "harness against muscle" to "muscle against harness". Also delete "Now" and begin new sentence with Existence.

613 line 10 from top, delete "Now" and begin new sentence and new paragraph with "We had to hope that the weather".



DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections

P. 614 line 1, change semicolon after "so far" to period and capitalize "a".

615 line 2 from bottom, delete "Now", and begin new sentence with "he".

617 line 4 from top, delete "now".

617 line 3 from bottom, begin new paragraph at "I blinked".

" line 2 from bottom, begin new paragraph at "The stillness".

618 substitute REVISED pp. 618-~~619~~ 619 for original p. 618-619.

622 line 1, insert before "Every so often" the sentences: "The wind blowing, the snow flowing. Try to pound another arm's worth of warmth into myself and keep trudging."

622 line 3 from bottom, change "collar" to "collars".

623 line 2 from top, after "reported" insert "in a half shout".

623 line 3 from top, change "out" to "down".

" line 4 from top, change "angle back in" to "angle back up".

" line 9 from top, change "that" to "the detour".

" line 7 from bottom, after "The slope" insert "on the other side of the coulee".

" line 2 from bottom, after "on them." insert "It hurt even to watch such raw effort."

624 line 6 from top, change "What now?" to "What this time?"

P. 625 substitute REVISED p. 625 for original p. 625.

626 line 9 from top, delete both uses of "again".

627 line 3 from top, change "a hundred feet" to "a few dozen strides' worth."

" line 7 from bottom, change "Now" to "Next,".

" line 6 from bottom, before "chore" insert "untying".

628 line 2 from bottom, change "minute" to "moment".



DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections

p. 628 last line, delete "now".

629 line 4 from top, change "ounce" to "morsel".

" line 6 from top, delete "now" and begin new paragraph at "It stayed".

630 line 5 from top, delete "now".

631 substitute REVISED pp. 631-632 for original pp. 631-2.

633 line 3 from top, delete "now".

633 line 5 from top, change "said" to "uttered".

" line 2 from the bottom, after "for that?" add the sentence, "I had to force my cold claw of a hand to keep making a fist around the moving line of rope."

634 line 6 from top, change "his anchor" to "Varick's anchor".

" line 9 from top, before "What if" insert the sentence: "Lord of Mercy, why hadn't I done them myself?"

634 line 6 from bottom, begin new paragraph at "Only".

" line 4 from bottom, after "echo." insert the sentence:"A quiver of chill went through me each time the wind clasped around my body."

" line 3 from bottom, after "hay," insert "try to wait out the blizzard." Capitalize "but" to begin the next sentence.

635 line 8 from top, change period after "Rob" to a comma and insert "to see whether he still was there as our guidemark."

635 line 3 from bottom, delete "now".

636 line 8 from top, change ""Fixing ourselves on the waving figure" to "Fixing ourselves on the figure whose waves and shouts".

637 line 2 from top, change "snow." to "white depth."

" line 3 from top, change the semicolon after "though" to a period; capitalize "that" to begin new sentence.

DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections

p. 637 line 6 from top, delete sentence "It did not matter, really."

" line 4 from bottom, delete "Time did matter, but", making the changed sentence begin: "There was no knowing".

638 line 3 from top, begin new paragraph at "Trees".

638 lines 4-5 from top, change "But guidance enough, as if" to "But as much guidance as if".

638 line 5 from top, delete "and".

" line 7 from top, before "Varick" insert the sentence and phrase: "A person is never too weary to feel victory. Blearily exultant, I stood and watched while", picking up with "Varick halted his sled".

638 line 2 from bottom, change "cattle" to "cows".

639 line 9 from top, delete "now".

639 lines 2-4 from bottom, cut sentences that begin "Even when" and "None of", making the changed version read: "the country sat plump and calm. As we passed".

639 last line, insert "North Fork" before "valley".

640 line 2 from bottom, insert "it" after "held".

641-642 substitute REVISED pp. 641-641A-642 for original pp. 641-42.

643 line 2 from top, change "snow" to "deep-drifted country".

645 line 8 from top, delete "now".

646 line 6 from bottom, insert "there" after "color".

647 line 10 from the top, delete "Montana's".

" line 11 from top, delete "Warm Springs".

652 line 5 from bottom, before "We" insert "Christ, man,".

654 line 3 from top, insert "the bell wether" before "Percy".

655 lines 10-11 from top, change "flight" to "path" and delete "as we tossed it off," making the changed version read: "was turned loose out of the path of the hay, and so I climbed swiftly down".



DANCING AT THE RASCAL FAIR ms changes and corrections

p. 657 line 11 from top, before "His tone" insert new sentence: "His face was tight as a drumhide, and I suppose my own was taut enough."

659 line 7 from bottom, begin new paragraph at "This horse".

663 line 7 from top, begin new paragraph at "Rob did".

" line 2 from bottom, delete "it" making changed version read "as horse and man tumbled through".

664 line 1, make "DAIR!" small caps.

666 substitute REVISED pp. 666-672 for original pp. 666-672.

(#)

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might take it between its paws, and he could spoon sugar into his coffee without a spill and stir it efficiently. We learned by Lucas's telling of it that he could dress himself except for the buttoning; "I'd like to have my knee on the throat of the man who invented buttons." That he could wind his pocket watch by holding it against his thigh with one stub and rolling the stem with the other. That, what I had wondered most about, he had taught himself to write again by sitting down night after night, a pen between his stubs, and copying out of an old book of epitaphs. "Stone Stories, the title of it was. It fit my mood. I made myself work at a line a night, until I could do it first try. Then two lines a night, and four, on up to a page of them at a time. Not only did I learn writing again, lads, the epitaphs were a bit of entertainment for me. The Lillisleaf steeplejack's one: Stop, traveler, as you go by/I too once had life and breath/but I fell through life from steeple high/and quickly passed by death. Angus, what would your man Burns think of that one, ay? Or the favorite of mine. In the green bed 'tis a long sleep/Alone with your past, mounded deep. By Jesus, that's entirely what I was, alone, after the accident to my hands. At least"--he indicated Nancy, buttering bread for him--"I'm over that now." We learned by Lucas's ironic telling that he had earned good money from the Fanalulu mine before the accident--"the great secret to silver mining, lads, is to quit in time; otherwise, the saying is that you need a gold mine to keep your silver mine going"-- and we inferred from this house and its costly furnishings

p. 88A follows →

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those were not the last dollars to find their way to Lucas. Where did this man get the sheer strength to wrestle the earth for its silver and then, when that struggle had done its worst to him, to wrestle a pen for the months of learning to write again?

We learned as much as he could bring himself to tell us about that



finished the wool work just in time to join with Ninian and Donald in putting up hay for the winter. Any moment free from haying, we were devoting to building fencelines. And someway amid it all we were hewing and laying the logs of my house, to abide by the spirit of the homestead law even though I was going to share the first winter under Rob's roof; we were reasonably sure President Harrison wouldn't come riding over the ridge to check on my residency.

Full dark was not far from being on us but we wanted to finish my fenceline. Between bouts with shovel and crowbar and barbed wire, we began to hear horses' hooves, more than one set.

"Traffic this time of day?" Rob remarked as we listened. "Angus, what are you running here, an owl farm?"

We recognized the beanpole figure of Ninian Duff first among the four who rode out of the deep dusk, long before he called out: "Robert and Angus, good evening there. You're a pair who chases work into the night."

"It's always waiting to be chased," Rob said back. I ran a finger around the inside leather of my hat, wiping the sweat out. Besides Ninian the squadron proved to be Donald Erskine and the new man Archie Findlater and a settler from the South Fork, Willy Hahn. Every kind of calamity that could put men on saddle leather at the start of night was crossing my thoughts. Say for Ninian, you did not have to stand on one foot and then the other to learn what was on his mind.

"Angus, we've come to elect you."

I blinked at that for a bit, and saw Rob was doing the same. What was I, or my generation,/that I should get such exaltation?

"Elected, is it," I managed at last. "Do I get to know to what?"

"The school board, of course," Ninian stated. "There are enough families herearound that we need a proper school now, and we're going to build one."

"But, but I'm not a family man."

"Ay, but you were a teacher once, over across, and that will do. We want you for the third member of our school board."

"Together with--?"

"Myself," Ninian pronounced unabashedly, "and Willy here." Willy Hahn nodded and confirmed, "You are chust the man, Anguss."

"The old lad of parts!" Rob exclaimed and gave my shoulder a congratulatory shove. "He'll see to it that your youngsters recite the rhyming stuff before breakfast, this one."

"The fact of the matter is," Ninian announced further, "what we need done first, Angus, is to advertise for a teacher. Can you do us a letter of that? Do it, say, tomorrow?"

I said I could, yes, and in the gathering dark there at my west fenceline the school was talked into shape. Because of their few years' headstart in settlement, the South Fork families had a margin more children of schoolable age than did Scotch Heaven, and so it was agreed to build the schoolhouse on their branch of the creek.

"You here in Scotch Heafen will haff to try hard to catch up with uss," Willy Hahn joked.

p. 148A follows

"Some of us already are," came back Ninian Duff, aiming that at the bachelorhood of Rob and me.

"The rest of us are just saving up for when our turn comes," Rob contributed. That drew a long look from Ninian, before he and the other three rode away into the night.

It was morning of the third week of August, still a month of



glimpse, 1892, shows you newborn Ellen, the first of Rob and Judith's girls. You see slow-grazing scatters of gray which are the sheep of one or another of us, maybe mine and Rob's working the grassy foothills west of my homestead, maybe the new band belonging to Rob and Lucas there on the slope of Breed Butte. (Were not stones famously deaf, you would have heard Rob try to the end to persuade me to come in with him and Lucas on that second thousand of sheep, Angus, you're thinking small instead of tall, I'm disappointed in you, man; and from me, to whom deeper debt did not look like the kind of prosperity I wanted, Rob, if this is the first time or the last I disappoint you, you're lucky indeed.) You see rain booming on the roofs in the rare two-day May downpour that brought the North Fork twice the crop of hay any of us had expected or imagined. You behold Ninian Duff coming home from town with a bucket of calcimine, and you watch as every Scotch Heaven household, mine included, quickly whitens a wall here or there. And now in your third blink, 1893, you notice an occasional frown as we lords of sheep hear how the prices are beginning to drop in the distant wool and lamb markets. You see my life as it was for the rest of that year, achieveful yet hectic as all homestead years seemed to be, tasks hurrying at each other's heels: turn out the last bunch of ewes and their fresh lambs onto new pasture and the garden needs to be put in; do that, and fence needs mending; mend that, and it is shearing time; shear the beloved woollies, and it is haying time. You see me look up, somewhere amid it all, to a buckboard arriving, drawn by Ninian Duff's team of matched bay horses.

On the seat beside Ninian perched Willy Hahn. School board business, this could only be.

Ninian pulled his bays to a halt and announced down to me: "News, Angus. We've lost our teacher. George Frew is marrying her." With the school year so close on us, Ninian was saying what was in our three minds in the last of his pronouncement: "Maybe she can teach him to speak up sooner."

"So we've a fast advertisement to write, have we?" I responded. "Come down and come in, I'll--"

Ninian interrupted, "In point of fact, Willy and I already have located a replacement teacher. Haven't we now, Willy?" Willy dipped his head yes. "More than that even," Ninian swept on, "we've voted to hire." Willy dipped again.

I was peeved to hear this. By damn, I was more than that. These two old puffed-up whiskerheads. "Well, then. Since the pair of you are running the school board so aptly without me, we haven't anything more to talk about, now have we. Don't let me keep you here, busy persons like yourselves."

Ninian winked solemnly to Willy. "The man doesn't see it."

"What's to see?" I blazed. "You two parade in here and--"

"Anguss," Willy put in mildly. "It iss you we voted to hire."



seen to in a household not their own. Being seen to. Not much of a prospect in life, not much at all. I had sheep waiting and school preparation waiting, but I stood and watched the erect American back of Rob as he took the news of his father's death into the house on Breed Butte. And watched again not half a year later, when word came that his mother too had passed away, dwindled away really. The strangest news there is, death across a distance; the person as alive as ever in your mind the intervening time until you hear, and then the other and final death, the one a funeral is only preliminary to, confusedly begins.

"By Jesus, the woollies do make a lovely sight," intoned Lucas. "If we could just sell them as scenery, ay?"

The time was September of 1896, a week before shipping the lambs, and Lucas and Rob and I were holding a Saturday war council on the west ridgeline of Breed Butte where we could meanwhile keep an eye on our grazing bands. By now Rob and Lucas's sheep had accumulated into two oversize bands, nearly twenty-five hundred altogether, as Rob kept back the ewe lambs each year since '93 rather than send them to market at pitiful prices. The band he and I owned in partnership I always insisted keeping at a regular thousand, as many as my hay would carry through a winter. So here they were in splendid gray scatter below us, six years of striving and effort, three and a half thousand prime ewes and a fat lamb beside each of them, and currently worth about as much as that many weeds.

"Next year is going to be a bit tight," Rob affirmed, which was getting to be an annual echo out of him.

"These tight years are starting to pinch harder than I'm comfortable with," he was informed by Lucas. Lucas's Jerusalem, Gros Ventre, was not prospering these days. Nowhere was prospering these days. I noticed how much older Lucas was looking, his beard gray now with patches of black. The years of '93 had put extra age on a lot of people in Montana. "So, Robbie lad, we have sheep galore. Now what in the pure holy hell are we going to do with them?"

"Prices can't stay down in the well forever," Rob maintained. "People still have to wear clothes, they still have to eat meat."

Lucas squinted at the neutral September sun. "But how soon can we count on them getting cold and hungry enough?"

"All right, all right, you've said the big question. But Lucas, we've got to hang onto as many sheep as we can until prices turn around. If we don't, we're throwing away these bands we've built up."

"Robbie," said Lucas levelly, "this year we've got to sell the ewe lambs along with the wether lambs. Even if we have to all but give the little buggers away with red bows on them, we've just got to--"

"I'll meet you halfway on that, how about," Rob put in with a smile.

"Halfway to what, bankruptcy?" retorted Lucas in as sharp a tone as I had ever heard from him.

I saw Rob swallow, the only sign of how tense a moment this was for him. Then he brought it out: "Halfway on selling the lambs, Lucas. I'm all for selling the ewe lambs, just as you say. But this year let's keep the wether lambs."

"Keep the wethers?" Lucas stared astounded at Rob. "What in the name of Christ for? Are you going to make history by teaching the wethers"--which was to say, the castrated male sheep whose sole role was mutton--"how to sprout tits and have lambs?"

"We'd keep them for their wool," Rob uttered as rapidly as he could say it. "Their wool crop next summer. Lucas, man, if we keep the wethers until they're yearlings they'll shear almost ten pounds of wool apiece. And if wool prices come back up to what they were--"

Lucas shook his head to halt Rob and brought up a stub to run vigorously along his beard. "I never listen to a proposition beyond its second <u>if</u>."

"Lucas, it's worth a try. It's got to be." If conviction counted, Rob right then would have the three of us in bullion up to our elbows. "See now, the man McKinley is sure to be President, and that'll be like money in the bank for the sheep business." True, there was talk that McKinley could bring with him a tariff on Australian wool. If he did, prices for our fleeces then could climb right up. Pigs could fly if they had wings, too.

"Angus, what do you say to this new passion of Robbie's for wethers?"

"Maybe it's not entirely far-fetched," I conceded, earning myself a mingled look from Rob.

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Lucas still looked skeptical. "Here's the next thing you can enlighten me about, Robbie--how in holy hell do you handle that many sheep next summer? Tell me that, ay?" I knew it already was costing dear on them to hire herders for their two bands while Rob and I shared the herding of our one, and for them to add a third herder--

He was ready, our Rob. "I'll herd the wether band myself. Judith will have kittens about my doing it." And well she might, because with Rob herding in the mountains all summer she would need to manage everything else of the homestead. "But she'll just have to have them, she married Breed Butte when she married me."

I regarded Rob for a waitful moment, Lucas glancing uncomfortably back and forth between us. Finally I said what was on my mind and Lucas's, even if it didn't seem to be within a hundred miles of Rob's:

"That leaves just one band of sheep unaccounted for."

"Yours and mine, of course," Rob spoke up brightly. "And there's where I have a proposition for you, Angus. If you'll take our band by yourself next summer, I'll give you half of my half."

I made sure: "On the wool and the lambs both?"

"Both."

Translated, half of Rob's half meant that I would receive three-fourths of any profit--wool and lambs both, the man had said it--on our band of sheep next year. And if wool went up as Rob was betting on...if lamb prices followed...Never listen to a proposition beyond the second <u>if</u>, ay, Lucas?

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"Done," I snapped up Rob's offer which would make me money while he made money for himself and Lucas on the wethers. "That is, if Lucas agrees to your end of it."

Lucas studied the two of us, and then the three-about-to-be-four bands of sheep below.

"There are so goddamn many ways to be a fool a man can't expect to avoid them all," he at last said, as much to the sheep as to us. "All right, all right, Robbie, keep the wethers. We'll see now if '97 is the year of years, ay?"

Let me give the very day of this. The twentieth of April, 1897. Here in the fourth springtime that I had watched arrive outside the windows of the South Fork school, I perched myself on the waterbucket stand at the rear of the classroom while Karen Peterson, small but great with the occasion, sat at my big desk reading to us from the book of stories.

"One more sun," sighed the king at evening, "and now another darkness. This has to stop. The days fly past us as if they were racing pigeons. We may as well be pebbles, for all the notice life takes of us or we of it. No one holds in mind the blind harper when he is gone. No one commemorates the girl who grains the geese. None of the deeds of our people leave the least tiny mark upon time. Where's the sense in running a kingdom if it all just piffles off into air? Tell me that, whoever can."

"If you will recall, sire--"

In the trance of Karen's reading, even Daniel Rozier squirmed

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only ritually, and I took quiet pleasure in seeing those still rows of oh so familiar heads in front of me. I swear to heaven Susan Duff could have ruled France with the crown of her head. How such chestnut lustre and precise flow of tress had derived from old dustmop Ninian was far beyond me. But Davie Erskine's crownhair flopped in various directions and no definite one, and that seemed distinctly Erskinian. But then there was the bold round crown of Eddie Van Bebber, so that you'd have thought half the brains of the human race were packed under there, and Eddie Van Bebber was only barely bright enough to sneeze.

"Why is it that the moon keeps better track of itself than we manage to? And the seasons put us to shame, they always know which they are, who's been, whose turn now, who comes next, all that sort of thing. Why can't we have memories as nimble as those? Tell me that, whoever can."

"Sire, you will recall---"

Each of those South Fork and Scotch Heaven heads in front of me, a mind that I as teacher was to make literate and numerate. The impossibly mysterious process of patterning minds, though. How do we come to be the specimens we are? Tell me that, whoever can.

p. 199B follows

"Oblivion has been the rule too long. What this kingdom needs in the time to come is some, umm, some blivion. There, that's it, we need to become a more blivious people. Enough of this forgettery. But how to do it, it will take some doing. What's to be done? Tell me that, whoever can."

"If you will recall, sire, this morning you named a remembrancer."

"Eh? I did? I mean, I did. And what a good idea it was, too. For a change things are going to be fixed into mind around here. Send me this remembering fellow."

"Bring forth the king's remembrancer!"

In time to come, when Susan Duff had grown and herself become a teacher in Helena--I've always been sure that Helena is the better for it--I could wonder if I truly affected that in any meaningful way.

In time to come, during what the fable king would call blivion, I always remembered Daniel Rozier more vividly than Karen Peterson, and in no way under heaven was that fair.

In time to come, when Davie Erskine--

But that was waiting some hundreds of days to come, Davie's time. Memory still had everything to make between here and there.

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This was a full-fledged spring day in the Two Medicine country, breezy along with sunny, melt and mud along with greening grass and first flowers. The afternoon was better than my afterschool chore, which was to call on the replacement teacher newly arrived at Noon Creek. Old Miss Threlkeld, who held forth there since Cain and Abel, toward the end of winter had suffered palpitation of the heart, and about this sudden successor of hers I more than half knew what to expect and fully dreaded it.

"Ramsay is her name," Ninian Duff reported, "they are a new family to here, down from Canada. Man and wife and daughter. The Mrs. seems to be something of an old battle-axe, I do have to say." Coming from Ninian, that was credential for her indeed. "They bought the relinquishment up there to the west of Isaac Reese," he went on, "with a bit of help from Isaac's pocket from what I hear."

Given the basis that Isaac Reese headed the Noon Creek board as Ninian did ours, I couldn't let pass the opportunity to declare: "Now there's the way for a school board to operate."

Ninian broadly ignored that and stated, "When you find a spare moment, Angus, you would do well to stop by the schoolhouse over across there and offer hello. Our schools are neighbors and it would not hurt us to be."

"Maybe not severely," I had to agree, and now Scorpion and I were descending from the divide between our valleys to Noon Creek, a prairie stream twice as twisty as the North Fork ever thought of being. Scorpion was pointed to the country where I bought him--the

"You know that Nancy," said Toussaint in making the introduction of his Blackfeet wife Mary Rides Proud to us the next night. "This is another one."

I am sure as anything I saw a flick of curiosity as Mary looked at Rob. About a heartbeat's worth. Then she moved to the stove and the fixing of supper, as if she were a drawing done of her niece at that moment in the kitchen of Lucas's house, but with blunter pencil.

The household's indeterminate number of leather-dark children eyed Rob and me with wariness, but Toussaint himself seemed entirely unsurprised at the sight of us, as if people were a constant traffic through this remote small Reservation ranch. I see now that in Toussaint's way of thinking, they were. In his mind, time was not a calendar bundle of days but a steady unbroken procession, so that a visitor counted equally whether he was appearing to Toussaint at the very moment or long past.

"Toussaint, this Reservation opened my eyes for me today," Rob said as we sat to supper. "There's a world of grass up here."

"The buffalo thought so," agreed Toussaint. "When there were buffalo."

"Now there's a thing you can tell us, Toussaint," Rob the grazier speaking now. "Where did those buffalo like to be? What part of this country up here was it that they grazed on?"

"They were here. There. About. Everywhere." Another Toussaint chuckle. "All in through here, this Two Medicine country."

The knit of Rob's brow told me he was having some trouble with a definition of here that took in everywhere. I tried another angle for him. "What, Toussaint, were they like the cattle herds are now?" I too was trying to imagine the sight the buffalo in their black thousands made. "Some here and there, wherever you looked?"

"The buffalo were more. As many as you can see at one time, Angus."

Supper was presented on the table to us the men, but Toussaint's wife Mary ate standing at the stove and some of the children took their meals to a corner and others wandered outside with theirs and maybe still others went up into the treetops to dine, for all that Rob or I could keep track of the batch. Domestic



but people were dying of it in those camps. We had heard that the oldest son of the Florians, a 'steader family south of Gros Ventre, was already buried at a camp in Iowa before his parents even had word that he was ill. And now there in the midst of it at Camp Lewis was going to be our son who came down with something in even the mildest of winters; Varick would be a waiting candidate for influenza as the months of this year advanced. But to wish him into the shrapnel hell of the fighting in France, no, I never could. Twin hells, then, and our son the soldier being gambled at their portals.

#

By that September day when we shipped the lambs and turned toward the short weeks before winter, Davie had recuperated. His malady stayed on among us, however. Doc Murdoch could not account for how the illness had found Davie, as remote and alone on his mountainside as a person could ever be, but he was definite in his dire diagnosis: this was the influenza which had first bred in the Army camps. Here in its earliest appearance in Scotch Heaven, it let Davie live, barely, while it killed his father.

From all we heard and read, the influenza was the strangest of epidemics, with different fathoms of death--sudden and selective in one instance, slow and widespread in another. Donald Erskine's fatality was in the shallows, making it all the more casual and awful ~~terrible~~. One morning while he and Jen were tending Davie he came down with what he thought was the start of a cold, by noon was feeling a raging fever. For the first time since childhood he went to bed during the day. Two days after that, the uneasy crowd of us at the Gros Ventre cemetery were burying that vague and generous man.

...Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.

but people were dying of it in those camps. The oldest

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Donald Erskine and Ninian Duff were the first who homesteaded in Scotch Heaven, and now there was just Ninian.

I only half heard Ninian's Bible words, there at graveside. I was remembering Adair and myself, our night together in Davie's sheepwagon, our slow wonderful writhe onto and into each other, there on his bedding. Davie had not been in that wagon, that bed, for some days before his illness, tepeeing behind the sheep as he grazed them on the northern reach of the mountain. Had he been, would one or both of us now be down with the influenza? Or be going into final earth as Donald was?

mod

Ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken...

My thoughts went all the way into the past, to my family's house of storm in Nethermuir. To Frank and Jack and Christie, my brothers and sister I never really knew, killed by the cholera when I was barely at a remembering age. To the husk that the McCaskill family was after that epidemic; my embittered and embattled parents, and the afterthought child who was me. Thin as spiderspin, the line of a family's fate can be.

or

the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern...

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And now another time of abrupt random deaths? What kind of a damn disease was this influenza, a cholera on modern wings? With everything medicine can do, how could all of life be at hazard in such a way? Maybe Ninian had an answer, somewhere in the growlings of John Knox that a fingersnap in heaven decided our doom as quick as we were born. I knew I didn't have one. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was...

#

Adair and I were silent on our wagon ride home from Donald's funeral. I supposed her thoughts were where my own were, at Camp Lewis. Winter was ~~coming,~~ not far now, Varick's frail season. What chance did he have, there in one of the cesspools of this epidemic?

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What chance did anyone have, the question suddenly began to be. You couldn't turn around without hearing of someone having lost an uncle in Chicago, a cousin in Butte, a sister on a homestead east of Conrad. Distant deaths were one thing. News of catastrophe almost

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next door was quite another: at a homestead on the prairie between Gros Ventre and Valier a Belgian family of six was found, the mother and four children dead in their beds, the father dead on the floor of the barn where he had tried to saddle a horse and go for help.

People were resorting to whatever they could think of against the epidemic. Out on the bare windy benchlands, 'steader families were sleeping in their dirt cellars, if they were lucky enough to have one, in hope of keeping warmer than they could in their drafty shacks. Mavis and George Frew became Bernarr McFadden believers, drinking hot water and forcing themselves into activity whenever they felt the least chill coming on.

Others said onion syrup was the only influenza remedy. Mustard plasters, said others. Whiskey, said others. Asafoetida sacks appeared at the necks of my schoolchildren that fall. When a newspaper story said masks must be worn to keep from breathing 'flu germs, the Gros Ventre mercantile sold out of gauze by noon of that day. The next newspaper story said masks were useless because a microbe could pass through gauze like a mouse going through a barn door.

During all the precautions and debates, the 'flu kept on killing. Or if it didn't manage to do the job, the pneumonia that so often followed it did. Not more than ten days after our burial of Donald Erskine, it was being said that more were dying of the 'flu than of combat on the battlefields in Europe.

#

Odd, what a person will miss most. As the 'flu made people stay away from each other, Adair and I had our end of the North Fork valley to ourselves. Except for my daily ride to the schoolhouse, we were as isolated as if the homestead had become an island. An evening when Adair had fallen silent, but in what seemed a speculating way, I waited to see whether she would offer what was on her mind. Credit

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"You can hope all you want to." He looked both riled and contemptuous now. "Just don't bother to do it around me."

#

us this far; not knowing where we were headed in this adrift marriage of ours, we somehow took care not to jostle one another. When Adair became aware I was watching her, she smiled a bit and asked: "Worth a halfpenny to you, is it?"

"At least," I answered, and waited again.

"Angus, I was thinking about our dances. And wondering when there will ever be one again."

Adair in the spell of the music, light and deft as she glided into a tune. Yes. A sharp absence to her, that the epidemic had made a casualty of the schoolroom dances. I missed them too, for they meant Anna to me. Seeing her across the floor, gathering her anew each time in the quickest of looks between us, remembering, anticipating.

I looked across the room at Adair. If our senses of loss were different, at least they were shared. I got to my feet.

"We'd better not forget how, had we," I said to my wife. My best way to carry a tune is in a tub, but I hummed the approximate

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melody of Dancing at the Rascal Fair and [redacted] put out my hands to Adair.

"Angus, are you serious?"

"I'm downright solemn," I said and hummed another batch.

She gave me a gaze, the Adair gray-eyed [redacted] glint that I had encountered in the depot at Browning all the years ago. Then she came up into my arms, her head lightly against my shoulder, the soft sound of her humming matching itself to mine, and we began the first of our transits around the room, quiet with each other except for the tune from our throats.

#

At first I figured it was simply a case of seasonal bachelorhood. Now that their girls were grown and gone Rob had installed Judith and himself in a house in Gros Ventre--or quite possibly Judith in her quiet way had done the installing--and so during the feeding time of winter and the start of lambing, Rob had been staying by himself at the Breed Butte place. With just one more year ahead of us to the fulfillment of Lucas's will and the sale of the sheep, you'd have thought he would have been gritting hard and putting all his energy into enduring the next dozen months. [redacted] you'd have been as wrong in that expectation as I was.

(no4) A day soon after lambing began in mid-March, when I asked him something he at first didn't answer all, simply kept on casting glances out the shed door to the valley and the ridges around. Eventually he rounded on me and [redacted] declared as if lodging a complaint:

"There isn't enough green in this whole goddamn valley this spring to cover a billiard table."

Despite his tone I forbore from answering him that the wan spring wasn't my fault, that I knew of. "It's early yet," I said instead. "There's still time for the moisture to catch up with the season."

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But when the rest of March and all of April brought no moisture, I became as uneasy as he was.

It ought to have been no bad thing, to have us joined in concern about the scantiness of the grass and the grazing future of the sheep; the air around us could stand a rest from our winter of silent antagonism.

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"The lambs, you mean. But we always--"

"I mean them all. The ewes too, the whole band."

She regarded me patiently. "You know I don't want to."

"This isn't that this time I don't mean because of Rob and me being like cats tied together by the tails. I can go on with it for as long as he can and a minute longer, you know that. No, it's the sheep themselves. There's not enough hay to carry them through the winter--we won't get half enough off our meadows. We can buy whatever we can find, but there just isn't any hay to speak of, anywhere, this summer." She still looked at me that same patient way. "Dair, we dasn't go into winter this way. That band of sheep can't make it through on what little feed we're going to have, unless we teach them to eat air."

"Not even if it's an open winter?"

"If it's the most open winter there ever was and we only had to

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hay, all right, then we'll trot out and buy it. You'd worry us into the invalids' home if you had your way."

I shook my head and took us back around the circle to where this had begun. "Adair and I want to sell now."

"Want all you please. I'm telling you, I'm not selling. Which means you're not."

I had pummeled him down to gruel once, why not pound him again now? And again every day until he agreed to sell the sheep? I was more than half ready to. But the fist didn't exist that could bring an answer out of Rob that he didn't want to give. I drew a steadying breath and said:

"Rob, you're not right about this. I hope to Christ you'll think it over before winter gets here."

"Try holding your breath until I do, why don't you." He looked both riled and contemptuous now. "In the meantime, I'm not hearing any more mewling from you about selling the sheep."

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What walloped me ~~worst~~ next was Ninian Duff's decision to leave the North Fork.

"Ay, Angus, I would rather take a beating with a thick stick." For the first time in all the years I had known this man he seemed embarrassed, as if he was going against a belief. "But I know nothing else to do." Ninian stared past me at the puddled creek, the scant grass. "Had Samuel not been called by the Lord, I would go on with the sheep and say damn to this summer and the prices and all else. But I am not the man I was." Age. It is the ill of us all. "So, Flora and I will go to Helena, to be near Susan."

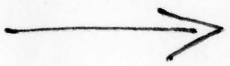
That early September day when I rode home from the Duffs' and the news of their leaving, the weather ahead of me was as heavy as

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my mood. Clouds lay in a long gray front, woolly, caught atop the peaks, while behind the mountains the sky was turning inky. All the way from the South Fork to Jericho Reef, a forming storm that was half a year overdue.

Despite the homestead houses and outbuildings I was passing as I rode, the valley of the North Fork seemed emptier to me just then than on the day I first looked down into it from the knob hill. Tom Mortensen and the Speddersons, gone those years ago. The Erskines taken by the epidemic. The year before last the Findlaters had bought a place on the main creek and moved down there. Allan Frew, gone in the war. And now the Duffs. Except for George Frew, Rob and I now suddenly were the last of Scotch Heaven's homesteaders--and George too was talking of buying on the main creek whenever a chance came.



He didn't move. "I have to remind you, do I. He's the horse of us both."

Then I remembered, out of all the years ago. The two of us pointing ourselves down from Breed Butte toward Noon Creek on my horse-buying mission; that generous side of Rob suddenly declaring itself, clear and broad as the air.

Angus, you'll be using him on the band of sheep we own together, so it's only logical I put up half the price of him, am I right?

And now the damn man demanded: "Get out the cards."

Those cold words of his sickened me. How could he live with himself, as sour as he had become? None of us are what we could be. But for Rob to invoke this, to ask the sacrifice of Scorpion and all the years this tall horse had given me, when it was his own blind gamble that delivered us into this hay-starved winter--Right then I loathed this person I was yoked to, this brother of Adair's whom I had vowed to persist with because she wanted it so. Enduring him was like trying to carry fire in a basket.

I choked back the disgust that filled me to my throat. I turned so that Scorpion was not in my vision,

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so that I was seeing only this creature Rob Barclay. I slowly got out the deck of cards.

Rob studied the small packet they made in the palm of my hand. As if this was some teatime game of children, he proclaimed, "Cut them thin and win," and turned up the top card. The four of diamonds.

I handed the deck to him. He shuffled it twice, the rapid whir of the cards the only sound in the bar. Now the deck lay waiting for me in his hand.

I reached and took the entire deck between my thumb and first finger. Then I flipped it upside down, bringing the bottom card face-up to be my choice.

The two of us stood a moment, looking down at it. The deuce of hearts.

Rob only shook his head bitterly, as if my luck, Scorpion's luck, was an unfair triumph. As we turned from the old brown horse and began harnessing the workhorses, he stayed dangerously silent.

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"That Blackfeet niece of Mary's." Nancy. And those words from Lucas, echoing across three decades: Toussaint didn't know whether he was going to keep his own family alive up there on the Two Medicine River, let alone an extra. So he brought Nancy in here and gave her to the DeSalises. "She has a lot of house now," Toussaint was saying. "That Blackfeet of mine"--Mary--"and kids and me, Nancy asked us to be her house guests this winter." He chuckled. "It beats eating with the axe."

Before leaving town I swung by Judith's house for any mail she wanted to send out to Rob. She handed me the packet and we had a bit of standard conversation until I said I'd better get started on my ride home before the afternoon grew any colder. The question came out of Judith now as quietly as all her utterances, but it managed to ask everything:

"How are you and Rob getting by together?"

To say the truth, the incident over Scorpion still burned like a coal in me. But I saw no reason to be more frank than necessary in answering her. "It's not good between us. But that's nothing new."

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Judith had known Rob and me since our first winter in Scotch Heaven, when I still thought the world of him, so it was not unexpected when she said in an understanding voice, "Angus, I know this winter with him is hard for you." What did surprise me was when this loyalest of wives added: "It's even harder for Rob with himself."

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hit and sent them spinning.

Quickly ~~now~~ it was snowing so hard there seemed to be more white in the air than there was space between the flakes. In front of me Varick's sled was a squarish smudge.

The wind drove into us. No longer was it lazing along the ground. From the howl of it ~~now~~, this blizzard was blowing as high as the stars.

The Reese horses labored. Varick and I and Rob got off and walked on the lee side of our hay sleds, to lessen the load for the teams and to be down out of the wind and churning whatever warmth we could into ourselves. I had on socks and socks and socks, and even so my feet felt the cold.

This was severe travel, and before long the ghostly sled in front of me halted and Varick was emerging from the volleys of wind and snow to see how we were faring. Rob promptly materialized from behind. A gather seemed needed by all three of us.

The wind quibbled around our boots even in the shelter of my haysled. There we huddled, with our flap caps tied down tight over our ears and scarves across our faces up to our eyes. Bedouins of the blizzard. One by one we pulled down our scarves and scrutinized each

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other for frostbite.

"We're doing about as good as we can, seems to me," Varick assessed after our inspection of each other. In the howl of the wind, each word had to be a sentence. "I can only see a fencepost or two at a time in this," Varick told us, "but that'll do. Unk, how's it going with you, back there?"

"Winterish," was all Rob replied.

"How about you, Dad--are you all right?"



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three of us was morally certain we had come the right way after veering around the coulee. Hop with that first leg of logic and the second was inevitable: we ought to have come to the fence again ~~by now~~. But no fence, logical or any other kind, was in evidence.

For a long moment we peered into the windblown snow, our breath smoking in front of our faces like separate small storms. Without that fence we were travelers with nowhere to go. Nowhere in life, that is. Bewilderment fought with reasoning, and I tried to clear my numb mind of everything except fence thoughts. Not even a blizzard could blow away a line of stoutly-set posts and four lines of wire. Could it?

"There's just one other place I can think of for that fence to be," Varick suggested as if he hated to bring up the idea. "The sonofabitch might be under us."

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Varick and I set out, the wind sending scythes of snow at us. The cold sawed at us through every seam in our clothing. Quickly we were up to our knees in a fresh drift. Varick broke the way and I thrashed after him.

A drift atop a drift, this latest dune of snow would be. And other layers beneath that as we slogged. October snow. November on top of that. And December atop that, and January, and February.... How many tiers of this winter could there be. This wasn't a winter, it was geologic ages of snow. It was a storm planet building itself layer by layer. It was--

Abruptly I stopped, and reaching a hand ahead to Varick's shoulder brought him to a ~~stop~~ halt too. When he turned, the apprehension in my manner made words unnecessary.

We looked back. Nothingness. The white void of snow, the blizzard erasing all difference between earth and sky. No glimpse of Rob. No sound in the air but the wind.

We stood like listening statues, our tracks already gone into the ~~whirling~~ swirling snow we had come out of. Again, yet, ~~nothing~~ no voice

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from the safety of there.

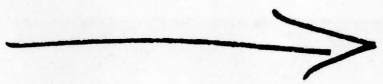
The bastard.

The utter betraying triple-slippery unforgiving bastard Rob had let us come too far. I ought to have killed him with my own hands, the day we fought there on Breed Butte, the day it all began. He was letting the blizzard eat us. Letting Varick and me vanish like two sparks into the whirl of this snow. Letting us--

Then sounds that were not quite the wind's.

...arrr...

...ough...



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We had hay now, but we still had the winter too.

Each day was one more link in the chain of cold. For the first week after our Valier journey, Rob and I were men with smoke for breath as we fed the sheep in the frozen glistening weather.

Memory takes a fix from landmarks as any other traveler will. That week of bright silver winter after our hay journey was a time when [redacted] Scotch Heaven never looked better. The mountains stood up as white majesties in the blue and the sun. The long ridgelines wore scarves of fresh snow that made them seem gentle, content. Every tree of the timbered top of Breed Butte stood out like a proud black sprig. Sunshaft and shadow wove bold wild patterns amid the willows along the North Fork. Only an eyeblink of time ago Montana was at its worst, and here it was at its best.

I would like to say that the clear weather and the Dakota hay and our survival of the blizzard made a poultice for the tension between Rob and me. That we put aside the winterlong wrangling--the yearslong enmity--and simply

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shouldered together toward spring. I would like to say that, but it would be farthest from the truth.

Maybe Rob would have been able to hold himself in if sheep had not continued to die. We found a few every day, in stiffened collapse; weak from the long winter and the short ration of hay, they no longer could withstand the cold and simply laid down into it and died. You could look on the hay journey as having saved the great majority of the sheep, as I did. Or you could look on the fact that in spite of that journey and its expensive hay some of the sheep still insisted on dying, as Rob did.

It was about the third time he muttered something about "this Dakota hay of yours" that I rapped back, "What, you think we ought to have let the whole damn band just starve to death?"

"God damn it, you didn't hear me say that."

"If it wasn't that, it was the next thing to it."

"Up a rope, ~~will~~ why don't you," he snapped back. It occurred to me we really ought not be arguing while we had pitchforks in our hands.

vanish like two sparks into the whirl of this snow. Letting us--

Then a sound that was not quite the wind's.

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Wordlessly we shoveled the rest of the day's hay, and wordlessly I headed home to Adair and he to Breed Butte. By now I was not in my best mood. The clear weather had faded and gone, today's was a milky indecisive overcast, neither one thing nor another.

The feedground wasn't far behind me when I heard the KAPOW of Rob's rifle when he blazed away, as he lately had begun doing, at some coyote attempting to dine on one of our dead sheep. The Winchester thunder rolled and rolled through the cold air, echoing around in the white day that had no horizon between earth and sky for it to escape through. Myself, I was not giving the coyotes any aggravation this winter. As long as they were eating the dead ones maybe they weren't eating the live ones, was my wishful theory. But apparently Rob had to take his frustration out on something, and as a second KAPOW billowed through the winter air, the coyotes were the ones getting it at the moment.

The star-jagged circle of broken ice. Brown roily water. Scorpion's head and neck and side, ~~xxx~~ crazily ~~tilted~~ tilted as if he was trying to roll in a meadow and dark water had opened under him instead.

The water, waiting, welling in steady arcs toward me from the struggling pair. I had to force myself not to back away, up the bank away from the ~~deep~~ awful water of the reservoir. If Varick were here. If anyone who could swim, could face water without my blood-deep fear of it, were here. It all returned into me--the black steerage gut of the Jemmy where I lay in sick scared sweat, the ceaseless waiting sea, the trembling dread of having water over me. You ask was I afraid, the McCaskill family voice ever since the treacherous work on the Bell Rock lighthouse. Every hour and most of the minutes, drowning was on my mind. I was afraid enough, yes. Out in the water Scorpion floundered in fresh frenzy, Rob's arms clenching his wet-maned neck.

I swallowed as much fear as I could and made myself start ~~the~~ to wade ~~into the reservoir~~. # The reservoir embankment was ungodly steep. my first step and a half, I abruptly was in the cold filthy water up to my waist. Eight feet out from me, no, ten, the splashing fight raged on, Scorpion

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for all his effort unable to right himself with Rob's weight slung all on one side of him, Rob not able to pull free from the thrashing bulk of the horse angled above him.

"Rob! Try pull him this way! I can't reach--"

I was in the shocking cold of the water to my breastbone now. Down in the hole in the water. Chips of ice big as platters bumped my shoulders. Frantically I pushed them away. The horse and man still were six feet ~~away~~ from me. If I could manage another step toward the struggle, if Rob would let go his death grip around Scorpion's neck and reach~~ed~~ toward me--"Rob! This way! Reach toward--"

More sudden than it can be said, they went over, Scorpion atop Rob.

The water-darkened brown of the horse's hip as it vanished. The ~~m~~ brand glistening wet there.

Now only the agitated water, the splintered ice.

The reservoir's surface burst again, Scorpion's head emerging, eyes white and wild, nostrils streaming muddy water, ears laid back.

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I could not see Rob, the horse was between us, I was reaching as far as I could but the water was at my collarbone.

I struggled to keep my feet planted on the reservoir bottom. If I slid, out there under them, the water-- Scorpion's splashes filled my eyes and mouth. I managed to splutter, "Reach around him to me, Rob, you've got to!" Scorpion still could not find footing, could not get upright to swim, could not--abruptly the horse went under again.

The hammering in my chest filled me as I waited desperately for Scorpion to come up ~~again~~.

The water was not so agitated now. The ice shards bobbed gently.

For as long as I could I refused the realization that Scorpion



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was not coming up. Then I made myself suck in breath, and thrust my head under the water.

Murk. Nothing but murk, the mud and roil of the struggle between trapped Rob and ~~trapped~~ burdened Scorpion.

My head broke the surface of the reservoir again and I spewed the awful water. Adair's voice from the embankment was there in the air: "Angus! You can't! They're gone, you can't--"

I lurched myself backward toward the sound of her, fighting the clawing panic of the water pulling down on me, the skid of my footing on the slant of the reservoir bottom.

Then somehow I was on my side, mud of the reservoir bank under me, the water only at my knees. Adair was holding me with her body, clutching me there to the safety of the embankment. Gasping, I still stared out at the broken place in the ice, the silent pool it made. I was shuddering with cold. Knowing that the hole in the water had Rob and the horse of us both.

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Seven days now, since Rob's drowning.

More thaw has come. I saw in my ride up to Breed Butte yesterday to check on the sheep that the reservoir has only a pale edge of ice here and there. Today will shrink those, too. From here in the kitchen I have been watching the first of morning arrive to the white-patterned mountains, young sunlight of spring that will be honestly warm by noon.

A week. Yet it seems not much more than moments ago. Stanley Meixell galloping off to summon men from the main creek and the South Fork and Noon Creek, while Adair and I headed on from the ranger station to town with the ugly news for Judith. Then while Adair stayed with her, I returned to the reservoir and the men gathering there. It was Varick who plunged and plunged until he managed, just before dusk, to secure the hook-and-cable around Scorpion's hind leg. Isaac Reese's biggest team of horses, struggling on the muddy footing of the dam to draw their hidden load out of the reservoir. At last the burden broke up through the water and onto the bank, Scorpion's body bringing the other with it. Rob's overshoed foot was jammed through the stirrup

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so tightly we had to cut the stirrup from the saddle. I was the one who put my hat over Rob's face, after closing his eyes forever, while we worked at freeing him.

A person has to sit perfectly still to hear it, but the sound of the North Fork's water rattling softly over stones is in the air these mornings. The creek's lid of ice has fallen through in sufficient places to let the sound out. After so much winter, the constant evidence of spring is a surprise. Grass creeps its green into the slopes and valley bottom of Scotch Heaven noticeably more each day. And the first lambs were born

the night before last. The sheep we have left I can handle by myself this lambing time, with a bit of help now and then from Varick. Judith made her decision while still in widow black there at Rob's funeral, asking me to run the sheep until they have lambed and then sell them all for whatever we can get. It was there at the graveside, too, that Judith asked me to write the Gleaner remembrance about Rob.

So, here at dawn, the shining mountains up there are the high windows

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of memory. My night thoughts were a stopless procession, thirty years returning across their bridge of time, to here and now.

I was told once I am a great one for yesterdays, and I said back that they have brought us to where we are. In a blue Irish harbor the bumboat women leap away like cats over the side of the steamship, and the rest of us bring our hopes to America. At a nowhere town with the name of Gros Ventre a saloonkeeper with a remembered face and voice puts on the bar his arms with no hands. Below a stonecliff skyline, a rider with feedbag whiskers looms as the sentry of a calm green valley. A wedding band goes onto an unintended finger. On the trail to the Two Medicine River a thousand lambs go down on their knees to suckle from their thousand mothers, the prayerful noon of the sheep kingdom. A son stands baffled and resentful in a blazing day. Out of all the hiding places in the head, they return.

And so I have thought through the past and words ought to come now, oughtn't they. But

which ones. The word is never quite the deed./How can I write what you can read? ~~Whatever~~ Whichever words will make all the truth, of course. But there is so much of that, starting so far back. The dock at Greenock,

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where one far figure turns to another with the words Are we both for it? and that other makes himself say, Both. What began there has not ended yet. This autumn, luck willing, there will be Varick's and Beth's child. Luck willing, maybe other McCaskills in other autumns. And there will be Adair and me, here where we are. This morning as I began to get up in the dim start of dawn, she reached across the bed and stopped me. I had not been the only one with night thoughts processioning through. Adair's grief for Rob was deep but quick; after all, she is a Barclay and life hasn't yet found how to make them buckle. Now she has put this winter away. As Adair held me she told me she will stay in Scotch Heaven as long as I do--which I suppose is the same as saying as long as I have breath in me. It makes everything ahead less hard,

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hearing that decision from her. How long before the sheep business and the Two Medicine country and for that matter Montana recuperate from the drought and winter of 1919, there is just no telling. what is certain is that I will be buying another band of the woollies at the earliest chance. And the teaching job at the South Fork school this autumn is mine for the asking, Fritz Hahn of the school board has informed me; I will ask. It seems that the McCaskills will get by. We start at the next of life in another minute: "Adair will come right out and cook you her famous sidepork for breakfast, old Angus McCaskill," she has just advised me from the bedroom. I am glad she will find this crystal day, the mountains now glistening and near, when she comes.

Lad, at least Montana is the prettiest place in the world to work yourself to death, ay? You were right more often than not, Lucas, handless Lucas who touched my life time upon time.

Angus, you are one who wants to see how many ways life can rhyme.

Anna. The divide between our lives, twenty years of divide. It is permanent at last, our being apart, but you were the rhythm in my

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life I could do nothing about. You still are.

See now, McAngus, it's time you had a talking to. Rob. My friend who was my enemy. Equally ardent at both, weren't you, bless you, damn you. You I knew longest of any, Rob, and I barely fathomed you at all, did I.

Hard ever to know, whether time is truly letting us see from the pattern of ourselves into those next to us. Rob's is my remembrance that will appear in the clear ink of the Gleaner ~~next~~ this coming week. But where are the boundaries, the exact threadlines in the weave, between his life and ours? Tell me, tell me that, whoever can.

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