Think of it as a bit of a wager, lads. The government is betting you that land, against your three years of work. This formulation was not Crofutt but Lucas, and he was all too near the truth with it. Three years of earning ownership of your homestead, of living upon it and improving it by your building and husbandry labors. Do I laugh or cry, now, at the innocence with which we set about to be homesteaders? Either is apt. Nobody new to it knows thing one about the homesteading life. Nobody can know what three years will bring.
Dear Ann--

This is belated--it takes some time for news to seep out to me from the murk of Publishers Weekly's new format--but congratulations on coming out of the chrysalis of "associate"
The summer mountains came into my mind, the rising tide of Double W cattle we sheep graziers were encountering in each grass season up there, offhand Wampus Cat Williamson's /imperial complaint You people ain't going to sheep this country to death. The awful echo of that in what this Meixell had just said. I studied coldly the face over the badge, under the campaign had he come as that: was he going to be agent of the Wampus Cat Williamson's of the world, those who had the banks and mills and fortunes in their white hands?

I clipped my next words carefully: "I hope while you're guarding against grass being sheeped out, you'll have an eye for any that's being cattled out, too."

From his saddle perch Meixell looked Meixell gave a straight look. "Yeah, I figure..."

Did he? Who knew. Ruin's wheel drove over us /in gold-spoked quietness. Maybe it wasn't yet. Maybe so. I had thought it wouldn't be like that in America. I kept my eyes locked as if many eyes on each other. Yet, with Meixell's.

This Meixell didn't look like anyone's person but his own. Even if he was coming here neutral, that eternal seep of Double W cattle to wherever Williamson's eye alit... "You
There's been some pretty sad behavior toward the country.

I did various things in life before they put one of these badges on me.

Some of those things were about like what you do for a living....

The situation ain't that bad yet.
The ranger had decorated the inside of the station with calendars from saloons and hardware stores. The calendar pictures, twenty or so, were of women, women in hats the size of dispensers, carrying a riding crop, ankling up into Ford's automobile, admiring a rose... The lone exception to this female nation on the walls was one small calendar from the Gros Ventre Mercantile, with a picture of a kitten playing with a ball of yarn. I surveyed the walls and said, "Ford of kittens, are you, Mr. Meixell?"
pass in the forest of the Two, and I suppose even yet up there some
logs and stumps announce J McC to the silent universe.

Carving initials as elaborate as mine takes some attention. The
J never was too bad to make and the M big and easy, but the curves of
the c's needed to be carefully cut. Thanks to the tardy Withrow sheep,
I had ample leisure to do so. I suppose sheep have caused more time
to be whiled away than any other creatures in the world. Even yet on
any number of Montana ridgelines there can be seen stone cairns about
the height of a man. "Shepherders' monuments" they are called, and
what they are monuments to is monotony. Just to be doing something
a herder would start piling stones, but because he hated to admit he
was out there hefting rocks for no real reason, he's stack up a shape
that he could tell himself would serve as a landmark. Fighting back
somehow against loneliness--that was a perpetual part of being a sheep
herder. In the wagons of a lot of them you would find a stack of old
magazines, creased and crumpled from being carried in a hip pocket.
An occasional prosperous herder would have a battery radio to keep him
company in the evenings.

Once in a while you came across a carver or a braider. Quite a
few though, the ones who give the herding profession a reputation for
skewed behavior, figured they couldn't be bothered with pasttimes.
They just lived in their heads, and that can get to be cramped quarters.
Those religions which feature years of solitude and silence, I have
grave doubts about. I believe you are better off doing anything rather
than nothing. Even if it is only piling stones or fashioning initials.
Squint as hard as you will, you can't see what is to come. Had I been told you told me in the wheelwright shop in Nethermuir, Angus, the day will arrive when you trace the hopes of homesteaders onto the American earth with a 00 buggy wheel...when the turns of that wheel become the clock that starts these homestead families on three years of striving...

when the wheelmarks single out the square of earth for the ripping plow...

I would have gawped and gulped out, You have the wrong Angus. Yet there I was, on the wagon seat counting the ordinations of wheelspring. Ten.

Seeing the craft of my father, the band of iron circling the (parts of the wheel, holding all together, write the future of railroads and who knew what else onto Montana. That's twenty. Conveying, in a day, lives from what they had left to where they had dreamed of being. Thirty now.
At the Erskine place, a white-faced Donald and I laid a mattress in his 00 wagon and put Davie onto it for the journey to Gros Ventre. (Or does the doctor have to be fetched?) Davie was to recover, if you can call it that. The twisted shoulder, the stiffened leg.

Oh, it is hindsight, there is no way ahead.

Adair and I could have known as we sped toward Gros Ventre to tell Doc 00 what was coming, that Davie would lead the rest of his life he had to afterward. But I still feel, we both somehow did know.
when I went to the ranger station and applied for the grazing allotment we would need to put a thousand more ewes onto the national forest, I was at once asked by Stanley Meixell: "Would they be your sheep entirely, Angus? Or is Rob Barclay gonna be in on them, too."

"Rob and I would go partners on the band, yes."

Stanley apologetically shook his head. "Nothing doing, then."

This ain't against you at all, Angus. But I know how you and him have got to trade off with the camptending and steering the herder around and so on, and I don't trust how those sheep would be handled when he's the one doing it. If it was just you, I'd go ahead and squeeze those sheep onto the forest. But a guy like him is just too goddamn hard on the country."

"Meixell isn't the ranger of the whole world," Rob met my news with a ruffle. It barely seemed to perturb him. "Give me a couple of days. I just maybe know the place for those sheep, and Meixell won't have a hoot in hell to say about them."
left Davie with his browsing band, the Reservation grass had begun
to crisp from green to tan, the pothole lakes now lay in outlining
crusts of drying mud; the broad flow of the Two Medicine River had
become orderly instead of headlong. Even the weather was under control,
a day of bright blue that positively couldn't bring a storm pouncing
onto newly naked and shelterless sheep, and with that off my mind I
could work with an eye to other horizons than the weathermaking mountains
of the western skyline. The long swoop of prairie several miles north
to Browning and the traced line of the railroad, iron thread to cities
and oceans; the chasm of the Two Medicine River seeking eastward to graft
itself into the next channel of flow, the Marias, and next after that
the joined forces of water setting forth to the
Missouri--
every view from up here was mighty.

Past noon, south got more and more of my attention as Rob did not
appear from the direction of Scotch Heaven as promised.
Even without the swimming, he and you doted on one another. The two of you made a kind of league against your girl cousins, Rob’s daughters who for all that he treasured like wealth were unmistakably four versions of Judith. Your tenet of the time, "girls are bossy," fit snugly with his customary joke about unexpectedly running a convent, and it was your Unk more often than me who enlisted you into riding the hay sled with us, even in the sharpest cold of winter, as we fed the sheep.

You never failed to ask, "Can I drive the team?" And there you were, little more than a tyke at the front of that hay boat in the snow, the reins in your small mittened hands as you tugged the workhorses into making the long looping design while Rob and I pitched the hay off.
I tried to imagine what that was going to be like.

To be a Tebbet. I knew by the map the survey designation of the Tebbet patch of land: (00...) like sums of another tongue they were being added in an endless list. It was said there were twice as many people in Montana now than five years ago. The growth, the towns, they were what Lucas dreamed of and Rob calculated on.

But this was a sort of weaving too, the homestead squares, the lives threaded in and out. The mill was America, Montana.

Adair saw that it I was concerned. "Angus, I know how you feel about this country. But things always change, don't they?"

"The question is whether they change for the better."

"Either case, what can you do about it?"
is there within the glove just the same all the time.”

And what, a growing number of Metlakahtla natives were beginning to wonder, was that hand really crafting? As the aging Duncan grew more and more inflexible in his notions of what the island colony should be and do, the Indians found themselves locked into a quandary. Nearly four decades after founding his frontier experiment in capitalism, the missionary still held total control of the colony’s financial and business matters. But Duncan’s education policy, with its emphasis on religion, failed to include training which would equip the natives to handle their own account books.

In January 1908, 111 Metlakahtlans petitioned for a government school. They carefully said that great and noble as Father Duncan’s work had been, Metlakahtla’s young people needed a better education.

Duncan continued to brush aside the Indians’ complaints about the schooling he provided, but the Metlakahtlans persisted. In August 1910, W. T. Lopp, chief of the Bureau of Education’s Alaska Division, arrived to investigate the school situation. Lopp’s report to the Department of the Interior was critical of Duncan on several points.

For one thing, the famous Metlakahtla salmon canning company was not a profit-sharing venture. Duncan ran the local canning industry and paid the Indians lower wages than other canneries in the area. (The missionary claimed, however, that deductions to support the church and school made the wages appear lower.) For another, Duncan seemed reluctant to make provision for willing the Metlakahtla enterprises—still in his name—to the village when he died. Lopp concluded his report with a recommendation that a government school definitely was needed, “at once.”

Perhaps encouraged by Lopp’s findings, the Metlakahtla town council in November 1910 wrote to Secretary of the Interior Richard A. Ballinger. Who, they wanted to know, held land rights on Annette Island: William Duncan or the Indians of Metlakahtla? This explosive question of property rights was to rock the island town for the next five years.

Other government investigators came and went. In sum, they reported that Duncan was running a company town, with the Metlakahtlans lacking real influence in the vaunted model of industrial capitalism.

Duncan defended his policies, arguing that the Indians weren’t competent to handle anything above physical labor. The stock which provided capital for the enterprises of Metlakahtla originally paid a return of 15 percent a year, he said, but the native stockholders proved unwilling to plough profits back into “the village affairs.” (Such reinvestment, Duncan added, “was the original intention” of his plan.) He pointed
physical description of Adair?
--after Dair learns to ride, another "danger" on Angus's mind: Anna
--sees her at dances (compare with Adair's tranced dancing)
--first winter of marriage: length of days, Adair's discomfiture; her mother dies
--Angus hopes she'll see it as adventure, like a visit to Siberia
--mention Rob and Judith's role
--summary of early part of their marriage; Angus's lingering affliction over Anna.
--the coming of spring; Dair brightens
--Even Christmas and Hogmanay did not soften the winter (for Adair),
for in mid-December came word that her mother had died.
--Dead and buried long before letter arrives.
--In Nethermuir people even died in pairs.
Dair's depression, and their faltering marriage, after 2nd miscarriage

their second winter together; an open winter
"And what's the word for that? Write it for me, Miss Noon Creek Schoolkeeper.

"Angus McCaskill who can read the air, are you? We shall see."

She began tracing

"An unfair advantage," I protested. "You can't expect me to read your old word backwards." I moved around behind her, peering over her right shoulder, my hands lightly on her shoulders. "Now, then. Write

Anna Ramsey."

Then Anna stood still. "Angus..."

What we suddenly were saying to each other was with lips, but words were nowhere involved.
"Angus, do you ever have any feeling at all for Scotland?"

"If I do I take a tonic and it goes away."

"I don't mean going back for good, But for a visit."

"No, Dair, it doesn't occur to me. But it must to you."

"We can get the money ahead and you could go for however long you felt like."

She shook her head. No, she truly could not. We both knew there was the question of whether she would come back to this land, once out of it.
Before school began that fall, the superintendent called us to a meeting in Valier. I stayed overnight with Lucas and Nancy, and in the small hours rode eastward.

It was dumfooring. The land I had ridden across when Rob and I first came to Gros Ventre, where I had seen only the Seven Block ranch hands building fence, was specked with homestead cabins. Built of lumber, not our logs. A hotel sat immensely above the main intersection of streets, as if lines had been drawn from the corners of the world to mark, here, this is going to be the Paris of the prairie. A stone schoolhouse was being built.

Already the Valier school had six teachers, more than Gros Ventre's school did. Four of them were young single women, none pretty enough to make a man break down a door but all unhomely enough that marriage proposals were in the offering. The morning's talk was of how a high year, a high school would be begun. The day's talk was of school wagons to bring children from the nearest farms, of country schools to be built east and south of Valier, of how to handle so many pupils.
The 00th of August, Rob came tearing into the yard. "There's smoke at Gros Ventre. A lot of it."

Enough that the whole town might be afire.
"How much better if we had never met. For you, I mean."

"We should go to the others." Meaning, people will notice, people will talk.

"We can tell them we're allergic to wind."

"Something seems to conspire. To put the two of us off into a corner by ourselves."

"That's odd. I thought"—I thought everything had conspired the other way. "Anna, do you have the life you want?"

"Yes. If a person had more than one, it would be another matter. But you know I chose when I had to." Other things would be possible.

Yet found
Chose for both of us, because I have never had choice in the matter of you. Not from the first minute in your schoolroom. Nearly fifteen years of trying and the astonishing hold goes on.

"I'm glad we could."

"For once, I'm glad of wind."
"I hope you are."

"Three of my pupils are children of first pupils."

"I have that beginning to happen, too. Do you suppose we'll sit here one day and be telling that we have these pupils' children's children in our schoolrooms?"
Montana winter has no known remedy, just whatever balms you can concoct to nurse yourself through it. Scotch Heaven's standard salve own for winter fever—the schoolhouse dances—were my next new difficulty.

I would never have believed it of myself. The first dance of that silver of winter, fresh snowfall softening the night,
When the man Meixell rode away, I looked for a while at the mountains. They did not look like a national anything, they still looked like mountains. A fence around them—it did not seem real that a fence could be put around a mountain range; but I would not bet against Meixell when he said he was going to do a thing—a fence around them was not to control them but us. Did we need it? Most, no. But some, yes. The Double W cattle were more and more. I even had my moments of being displeased with Rob as a grazing neighbor. Rob. There was one, now—what was Rob going to think of a national forest, permits to graze our sheep? He was going to know soon enough what he thought of it, for Meixell and his horse were already cresting over the valley rim and on to Breed Butte when I glanced there.
was 33 miles down the highway.

"WELCOME!" crackled a thunderblast of voice over our heads.

"To the Gros Ventre rodeo! Our fifteenth annual show! You folks are wise as hooty owls to roost with us here today. Yes sir! Some of everything is liable to happen here today and--" Tollie Zane, father of the famous Earl, held the job of announcing the Gros Ventre rodeo on the basis by which a lot of positions of authority seem to get filled: nobody else would be caught dead doing it. But before this year, all that the announcing amounted to was shouting through a megaphone the name of each bucking horse and its rider. The shiny new 'glory horns evidently had gone to Tollie's head, or at least his tonsils. "The Fourth of July is called the cowboys' Christmas and our festivities here today will get underway in just--"

"Called what?" somebody yelled from the chute society. "That's Tollie for you, sweat running down his face and he thinks it's snowflakes."

"Santy Claus must have brought him that goddamn talking contraption," guessed somebody else.

"Naw, you guys, lay off now," a third one put in. "Tollie's maybe right. It'd explain why he's as full of shit as a Christmas goose."

Everybody below us hee-heeed at that while Tollie roared on about the splendiferous tradition of rodeo and what heart-stopping excitement we were going to view in this arena today. Tollie was a kind of plodding
end that way. In this case, the worst was that my life could go on and on this way. But can't you say to life, there's been some slipup, you have the wrong man here, I only want to go along the years...

I was going to have to try, wasn't I.
Often I saw her as I waited for sleep. Her in the music, she heard the horseman's silvr'y call, 'Come braid your golden hair', of that first night of dancing. Her in the Noon Creek school, turning to me, the braid swinging over her shoulder. Her beneath me, watching as...

I opened my eyes to explode these scenes, driving sleep even farther away. As Rob was, Adair was one who slept like part of the night.

There in the dark was the one time she seemed to fit the homestead.
TO COME:

A fairly fast-paced section which gets everyone through the summer, by way of such events as:
--a shearing contest which Angus and Rob participate in;
--Adair not hitting it off with Montana and the local beaus; when Angus, down from herding in the mountains to get supplies, has a conversation with her he finds she's homesick, but will tough out the summer to keep Rob's wife Judith company. Angus had hoped Adair would make a match with the other most eligible bachelor in Scotch Heaven, Allan Frew, but Adair tells him, "Angus, you know as well as I do that Allan Frew is stupid as a toad." Angus feels sorry for her situation but sees nothing to be done about it, concluding it'll be better all around when she writes off this Montana trip of hers as one of Rob's follies and returns to Scotland.
--Which brings the story to the point where Angus, when he and Rob have trailed their sheep down from the mountains, fat lambs and big profit wherever they look, hears that Anna is back from her railroad summer with her parents. He heads at once for Noon Creek.
"Angus, you don't blame yourself." Seeing me silent and long-faced, she herself at last brought the matter into words. "We had to help Davie. That's just the way it happened. You heard the doctor say it's not even certain the wagon ride caused it--maybe so, maybe no."

I had heard. And as best I could divine, Adair meant it when she said there was no blame on me. Perhaps she blamed the rocks for jarring the wagon wheels, perhaps she blamed the wheels for finding the rocks.

If bone strike stone, too bad for bone. If stone strike bone, no harm to stone. Nevertheless if blame had to be put, the first place Adair would lay it was Scotch Heaven itself. Another case of doesn't; she did not dare see any blame in my direction. Really, Adair was taking the situation as well as you can take a thing such as that. Not so, me. To me, a double death was in that loss of our child-to-be. The child itself, the packet of life, we had taken from us; and we had lost as well. Adair as she could be, Adair with a chalice she needed to free her mind from the homestead, the isolation of Montana. As if the ill person had climbed from bed to dance and cheer up the mourning visitor, Adair was doing her
best to bolster me. "We'll have another child," she assured me.

"You're definitely a man for trying."

How many possible are in us? I had lost my own best self when Anna spurned our life together. The miscarriage had cost us a possible Adair.
George Frew, quiet ox in a sheepskin coat and a flap cap, followed me in. " Anything you'd like from town, Dair?" I asked cheerily. " George is riding in."

"Yes," she responded. " Adair would like a deck of cards."

George positively echoed with meaningful silence as he took this in. Flora Duff might want to, Jen Findlater might want to, but what did Adair McCaskill want but a -- " You heard the lady, George," I said with desperate jolliness. " We're in for some fierce whist in this white nights. K u u v u s's last household, these long evenings; a deck of cards, if you please--I'll ride down and pick it up from you tomorrow."

Thereafter, Adair would indeed play me games of whist or gin rummy when I took the care to suggest it in an evening. But her true game was solitaire. When the cards arrived, I began to notice the card columns of solitaire laid out on the sideboard; Adair would stop to turn up a card, play it where it belong, and then go about whatever she had been doing. It came to me often that winter, the oddness that it had to be George Frew to carry word of Adair to Scotch Heaven; the oddness too that I, who had not much cared what people said, was perturbed to know without even having to hear it what was being said of Adair: "She's different."
For we intended this would be our only childless winter. We both wanted children, soon and several. Adair seemed to have an indefinite but large mx number in mind—it came with being a Barclay—while I lived always with the haunt of that fact that my parents had needed to have four to have one who survived. It would be pretty to think the world is growing less harsh, but the evidence doesn’t often say so. In any case, the next McCaskill, the first American one, was our invisible visitor from the winters to come. It made sense no matter how I looked at it, that Adair would be a happier woman once she had a baby. And I was working on it, even Adair would have to admit that.
Montana winter has no known remedy, only whatever balms you can
contrive to nurse yourself through it. At first I thought Adair was
taking interest in the winter weather, pausing at any window to gaze
out into the whiteness. Only slowly--too slowly--did I realize that each of those gazes was of resentment, of challenge
to the weather for the crimped life it was forcing onto our homestead.
A number of times I tried to talk her into bundling up and coming
with Rob and me on the haysled as we fed the sheep. Nothing doing.
She was even apprehensive--not, not quite right; she was distrustful
of sleigh trips to Breed Butte to visit Rob and Judith. It was only
when we stamped the snow from our feet and entered that house, the swirl
of Rob and Judith's girls around us, that Adair seemed where she wanted
to be.

Christmas came and went, Hogmanay the same, and this wife of mine
was as much a quiet mystery to me as ever. She was there and yet she
wasn't. At times, talking to her was like speaking to a person the
real Adair had sent out to deal with you; Adair the actual was otherwise
occupied.
We had not exchanged a word. We had not been within a hundred feet of each other. Yet the sensation fell on me out of the clear sky, still in love with her unerringly as the first time I saw Anna. I was as deeply, tangledly, doomed, as ever.

"Angus, you look peaked. Are you all right?" (Adair)

"A bit under the weather, It'll pass."

My head cleared on the ride home, although the rest of me went on aching for Anna. What was I going to do with myself. Marrying Adair was supposed to cure me of Anna. Why hadn't it? I had never invited any of this. I was in some stray room of life, windows all around and only Anna to be seen in them all.

In a way, this held as much fright as my first nights aboard the emigrant ship. The unexpected power I was up against, its hold on me. The lack of logic in the situation: I could apply logic to it all day long and nothing changed.

A sick scaredness—and yes, with the tint of thrill there in it, too—such as that I had experienced in the hold of the Jenny. Except, in that case the worst that could happen was that my life would promptly
Why does such a thing happen. A fraction further out and Varick would have a cut cheek, one quick cry and healed in a week. But a fraction inward and the eyeball would have been speared. The tiny territory between, the stick struck.

Varick was to lie still for a week. Then the doctor would know gauge.

Lila Sedgwick moved herself and Sedge from their bedroom and installed Varick and Adair. It was the quietest room, with the creek flowing beneath the window....

I turned to Lila to settle up. She would take nothing.

"No, really," Adair protested. "You must take..."

Lila shook her head firmly.

Varick's eyelid drooped about half down when something amused him. My cockeyed son who squinted to laugh. What if something worse, what if the next accident of boyhood took him from us. What would Adair do.

What would I do, how could I buoy her in this Montana life without her child... I sucked in breath and sneaked my fortieth look of the day at this son of ours. He seemed so strong, so active; why the winter illnesses? When, where, would they stop.
---a quick summary section showing that the hard times following the economic crash of 1893 keep Angus at the teaching job, all the while the sheep business and homesteading in Scotch Heaven in general remaining a touch and go situation, prices are so bad. Angus, Rob, Lucas, everyone is trying to ride out the economic storm, the first they've encountered in America. In the spring of 1897, economic conditions are improving, wool and lamb prices have gone back up, Angus and Rob see that if they can scrape through the summer--doing their own herding in the mountains--they're going to be okay, indeed mildly prosperous. It's in this sunny outlook that the story resumes, early spring of 1897.
I had just put the cow in her stanchion when I heard the sound.

An auhhh, a low cry of surprise and pain. Then the awful silence in my ears told me Varick's chopping had stopped.

I knew there would be blood somewhere, but I was not ready for the scarlet fact of it on my son's face, on the edge of the hand he was holding over his left eye as he stood hunched, frozen.

"Varick, let me see, son, I've got to see"—I lifted his hand far enough away for the eye to show. "Hold still, perfectly still."

The blood was streaming from the eye, there was no telling whether the eyeball was whole.

"The stick of wood," Varick was gasping. "It flew up. I--"

"Sit, sit right here on the chopping block." I held both his hands in one of mine. "Dair! DAIIR!"

When the door flew open and she saw us, fear on her face, I yelled for her to bring water and clean rags. As she tended Varick with them I harnessed the team to the buckboard, thinking every moment of the dozen miles of ruts between us and Doc 00 in Gros Ventre.

Then it was the journey, Varick ice-still between us as he held a rag against the red seep from the eye, Dair silently crying as she hugged him to her. We passed the fenceline where she and I had found Davie
It is time this was talked out. Past time, far. I believe--I hope with all that is in me--that you grew without knowing the shadow between your mother and me. In those years your mother lived for you, and, in her way, for me. I lived for you and for her, and for a third miles to the northwest presence, a presence despite the actuality of her existence on Noon Creek.
Is it too much to say Adair lived for our son? For I feel it must be said, and the proposition looked at. There was never open war between us. Nor would have visitors noticed much, for Adair had a full helping of that Barclay style.
--thread events of 1900-1907 through Varick's growing up:

--Angus continues teaching, until Varick begins school?

--hard winter of 1906
"It's a damn shame, to have somebody looking over your shoulder all the time."

"Our choice?"

"Lucas, what's the alternative?"

"To stand together against this Meixell and his forest, is one."

"I've heard that somewhere else, just recently."

"Rob has a point, you have to admit."

"Angus, Rob is not wrong about this costing us the chance to put more sheep up on that grass."

"But how many more can you put up there?"

"Rob's notion has always been to go ahead and find out."

"Back in the years of '93, you weren't so sure."

Robbie

"Angus, Rob is not wrong about this costing us the chance to put whatever sheep we want up on that grass."

"And how many sheep is that ever going to be?"

"But how many sheep is that?"

"You've never been convinced that Robbie and I know the word enough, have you."

"I've seen you show signs of recognizing the word, Lucas. Back in the years of '93, for instance."
us; and we had also lost Adair as she could be, Adair was; as
the answer to that. In any event, coal was on its way to the South Fork and I agreed to be its welcomer.

The big wagon and its team of eight were no sooner in sight on the road from Gros Ventre than I knew. Isaac himself as teamster today. I would give a strip of skin an inch wide to know what Anna's mate in life knew... To know what he thought. But there was no sign I ever would, in what he knew that mustached face.

"An-gus," he greeted. "You wish for coal?"

"Isaac," I reciprocated. "I'll see if your shovel fits me."

Not much more was said as we began unloading the coal—it was as clean of dirt as if it had never been in the earth at all—and let our muscles talk. Coal flew from our two shovels. I suppose we were saying without words, letting our muscles talk.
My own view is what the first Roosevelt's was: I hate a man who skins the land.
His knowledge of the whale hunts, then, stops at the shoreline, and my questions are unmet. Whether the seabirds shadowed the canoes in gliding flocks as the whalemens stroked out from Cape Flattery into the ocean. Whether there came—I cannot see how else it could have been—an audible silence of held breaths before the first paddler behind the harpooner judged the distance to the whale and cried: Now throw! Whether the crew made a great cry when the harpoon blade snagged home, a chorus of conquest. And whether there was a mix of fear with whatever else they shouted, for success meant this: the canoe lashed behind the harpooned whale: a seagoing cart harnessed to a creature several times the size of a bull elephant and dying angry.

Whale hunters, art fanciers, allegorists, the Makahs also were a people who chafed more than a little under the pale regime of frontier bureaucrats who wanted to refashion the tribe's life. The colors of this theme weave through Swan's written words year upon year, but never more blazingly than in the aftermath of Swell's murder at the start of March, 1861. Swan was once more at Neah Bay—his sixth stint there—that autumn when the Makahs decided to exact their price for
"I wouldn't necessarily say I've got to like it. If I just got used to it, that's be plenty to suit me."

"Rob Barclay has a mind of his own."

"There's some others of us that way."

"Stanley, can you go this far: can you

"You're telling us there's absolutely nothing we can do about you and your goddamn grazing permits?"

"Me personally," Stanley said to Rob, "I guess you could kill. Or at least you could try." The schoolhouse filled with silence. "But

about the permit system, no, I don't really see anything for you to do. 'Course, your neighbor Williamson--fellow with quite a few has decided he's cows, as I hear it--he gonna try lawyer the situation to death. That's happening here and there, guys taking the Forest Service

can keep on being the first one to court to see if they can stay at the trough because they've always been much tougher. If any of you got deep pockets enough, that's one way to go.
I turned onto my side, to contemplate the sleeping stranger who was my wife. And not her awake, her head turned toward me.

"Angus, what—what if we can't have any children." Silence of darkness, our silence added into it. "If I can't have any children."

"You don't look like a stone field to me." I moved my hand to her. "Or feel like one either."

"I need to know. Will it matter? With us?"

Now to answer that, in the face of the fact that it already mattered.

"Dair, remember what the doctor said. 'There's not that much wrong; as young and strong as you are, there's every chance..."

"Every chance. But none has come yet, has it." She didn't add the question but it was there anyway. Will it ever?

She had done her utmost to bolster me after the wagon ride cost us the first child. My turn now. "Dair," I said with the kind of declaration that can be said only in bed, "we'll get you a baby. We"--I rose over her and kissed her lips--"will"--next kiss, for the point of her chin--"get"--down to her throat for the next kiss and the tender unbuttoning--"you"--this kiss on her breastbone--"a"--kissing back and forth on her breasts now--"baby"--as they and she rose with a quickening breath.
Irrigation was the word of the day. The waterflows from the Rockies would be harnessed as if they were mares, and made to nurture grainfields. Dam to canal to ditch to head of wheat was going to be the declension. And soon enough it was. We of Scotch Heaven were only watchers of this, because the valley of the North Fork was narrow and slanted to the extent that only a bit of hayfield irrigation could be done. But along the lower creek, from the new ranger station to Gros Ventre, many hayfields began to have regular ditches...

A project such as the one around Valier, eighty thousand acres of irrigation being achieved and homesteaders pouring off every train, made me wish I had the shovel concession.

A man who was ready to make money in these years of the ditch was Isaac Reese. His workhorses were in heavy demand for the miles of canal banks to be graded, then for the streets of Valier, for the roads... Isaac Bedamned Reese. My enemy whom I did not hate...

my rival whom I could not even contend with...
could think up a reasonable lol. Matters were not at all improved by the fact that, since I still was going to the South Fork grade school and Ray went in Gros Ventre, we only knew each other by sight.

He was a haunting kid to look at. His eyes were within long deep-set arcs, as if always squinched the way you do to thread a needle. And curved over with eyebrows which wouldn't needed to have been much thicker to make a couple of respectable blonde mustaches. And then a flattish nose which, wide as it was, barely accommodated all the freckles assigned to it. When Ray really grinned—I didn't see that this first day, although I was to see it thousands of times in the years ahead—deep slice-lines cut his cheeks, out opposite the corners of his mouth. Like a big set of parentheses around the grin. His lower lip was so full that it too had a slice-line under it.

This kid looked more as if he'd been carved out of a pumpkin than born. Also, even more so than a lot of us at that age, his front teeth were far ahead of the rest of him in size. In any school yard there always were a lot of traded jibes of "Beaver tooth!" but Ray's frontals really did seem as if they'd been made for toppling willows.

As I say, haunting. I have seen grown men, guys who ordinarily wouldn't so much as spend a glance at a boy on the street, stop and study that face of Ray's. And here he was, thank you a whole hell of a lot, my guest for this day at English Creek.

So we were afoot with one another and not knowing what to do about it, and ended up wandering the creek bank north of the ranger station, with boredom building up pretty fast in both of us. Finally, I got
I measure the next span of years by you, Varick. You who were Scotch Heaven and born into one century, one era of the Two Medicine country, and by the time you were approaching eight years of age, different time and place had been brought around you. Or so it seemed to me, watching. Ocean's ebb and ocean's flow/round and round the seasons go. Of those first years of your growing, and of your mother and myself in our off-angle marriage, there are bright pieces of hope that stay with me.
The first major talking-to I ever gave you, the afternoon I found you in the barn: down amid the workhorses' hooves, crooning happily amid the fetlocks and pasterns and those hooves that could have smashed you like an egg with a casual swipe. Had your mother seen you she would have forfeited years of her life to fright. To say the truth, my own heart pounded several months' worth before I managed to sidle among the horses and snatch you. Snatch only begins to say it, for I also gave you a shake that rattled your eyeballs, and the appropriate gospel: "If I ever catch you anywhere, anywhere, around a horse's hoof, I'll lather you black and blue. Do you understand me?" You looked shocked—at me rather than realization of your peril. But you said apologetically, "I understand," and lived up to it.

You went on, in the next few years, to your period of lassoing the chopping block, the dog, the chickens—and fortunately got over that. But horses, you did not ever get over. By the time you were five you could ride as well as I could, and by six you were twice the person I was on the back of a horse.
on horseback, but of the odd moment of fate, the unpredictable that
would not really be your fault, nobody's fault and yet the disaster
would have happened.
"Wait, wait!" Rob met us on the porch. "We have to do this thing right. Sorry, Adair, but we didn't let you be the first one of the year to cross the threshold. Am I right, Angus?"

"If the first-foot be a woman/and that woman she be fair/In all the days that follow/You will have cause to care."

"Just to be on the safe side," Rob teased, "we'd better have Varick be the first-foot."
Varick went through a period of roping the dog, the chickens... and fortunately got over that. But riding horses, he did not get over.

I knew it was a torment for Adair—it was enough of a worry to me—to see Varick heading out of sight on the back of a horse; she also was seeing Davie Erskine that terrible day of 0 years before. But all I knew was to tell Varick occasionally to be careful. I did not fear our son’s judgment; I feared the odd moment, the unpredictable that wasn't really his fault, nobody's fault and yet the disaster had happened.
(Lucas to Stanley) "You're pure serious about this permit business."

(Stanley later) "Can I get a show of hands on how many permits...?"

(Lucas, raising his:) "Will an arm do?"

"That'll do just fine, Luke." (Ninian follows
"But why can't the roads be kept up?"

"Dair, counties in Montana are the size of a dozen in Scotland."
more about Adair/Angus trying to deal with possible childlessness
I carried her over the threshold, put her down in the middle of the cabin, and kissed her fully as long as I had at the ceremony.

Before she had so much as a chance to glance around, I asked: "How do you like homestead life so far?"

"If it's all this way, Adair will like it indeed," she responded.

"Not all," I mock-warned. "The chickens need feeding once a day. Every few days we'll need a bucket of water. But otherwise"—I resumed the kissing.
A fairly fast-paced section which gets everyone through the summer, by way of such events as:

--a shearing contest which Angus and Rob participate in;
--Adair not hitting it off with Montana and the local beaus; when Angus, down from herding in the mountains to get supplies, has a conversation with her he finds she's homesick, but will tough out the summer to keep Rob's wife Judith company. Angus had hoped Adair would make a match with the other most eligible bachelor in Scotch Heaven, Allan Frew, but Adair tells him, "Angus, you know as well as I do that Allan Frew is stupid as a toad." Angus feels sorry for her situation but sees nothing to be done about it, concluding it'll be better all around when she writes off this Montana trip of hers as one of Rob's follies and returns to Scotland.
--Which brings the story to the point where Angus, when he and Rob have trailed their sheep down from the mountains, fat lambs and big profit wherever they look, hears that Anna is back from her railroad summer with her parents. He heads at once for Noon Creek.
Was our child, our son, conceived in one of those dawns? I hoped so.
"Angus! Come quick!"
"Look what's happening. (Snow)

"But"

"Angus, how can it snow? This is May!"

"In Montana it snows whenever it feels like it."

"But my wash, what'll I do about--"

"It'll freeze dry.

"But what will this do to the grass? And the lambs?"

"I'm on my way to shed up the sheep.... The country needs the moisture."

"A strange way to get it."
The beard moved back and forth across the chest. "None of us has bragging rights to this country yet."

Up to that point in life Rob's materials of work had been wood and metal, mine had been words and numbers. Now we were trying to fathom the mysterious substance known as sheep.

In its way, a band of sheep is like a garden on legs. Every spring a crop of lambs, every summer a crop of wool. Feed us and clothe us too—not even potatoes yield so beneficially. But the fleecies are a garden that wanders around looking for its own extinction. In the Two Medicine country there was much that was willing to oblige their mortal urge. I can tell you to this moment the anguish when, a week after we had trailed our yearlings home to the North Fork from their former owner in the Choteau country, Rob and I found our first dead sheep. A fine fat ewe on her back, four legs in the air like hooved branches. In her clumsy cocoon of wool she had rolled helplessly onto her back when she lay down to scratch a tick itch. Rob was shocked, I admit I was a bit unsettled myself. And as any sheep owner does, we began thinking the awful arithmetic to ourself: if we lose another ewe next week...if we lose one again tomorrow...A little of that and in your mind you not only have no sheep left, you possess less than that, cavities of potential loss that will grow to the extent of however many sheep you can possibly buy in the future.

Thus you try to think instead of the benefits of sheep. Watch them thrive on grass a cow wouldn't even put its head down for. Watch the beautiful fleeces, rich and oily to the touch, come off
Through all this, I never hated Isaac Reese. Not for lack of trying; how many thousand times easier it would have been had I been able to despise the man who was Anna's husband. With him as a target my despair would have had a place to aim. But Isaac was not a man to be despised; calm, solid, entirely himself in the way a mountain is itself. That, and nothing else. Even the rummaged lingo he talked was sheer Isaac, not a shortfall.

As far as my ear could tell, and I listened to every word I ever heard from this man as if trying to hear the mysterious tune of a far-off bell, Anna never made a dent in his language. Only gradually did it dawn on me that Isaac's musk of language was not a weakness, but a strength. So solidly was he centered in this world that he could talk to it as he pleased, not as the rest of us needed. Isaac Reese was primal speaking to primal. No, what I felt when I was around Isaac was a kind of illness, an ache that I was myself instead of him.
Gros Ventre was getting to be a youngster of a town, all elbows and shanks. By now there was a bridge across the creek ford. The Northern Hotel looked as if it had been in business since Lewis and Clark went through. Rango had moved on, though Dolph Spenger now running that saloon. A new saloon, the Pastime, was trying to provide the equivalent of Rango's "nieces" but there was general male agreement the standards had declined. An eating place had been opened beside the 00.

Post office
A barber... A stagecoach line now ran to Choteau, travelers disembarked at Dantley's stable in higher style than Rob and I had done.

"There's more to come, Angus," I was assured by Lucas. "We need a bank, don't you see it's bad business to have Choteau and Conrad have our money in their pockets. A creamery..."

"If we were to put the mint next to the bank, with a chute between for the money to flow in..."

"Angus, you'll see the day this is the county seat." Lucas ...

"And how's life treating you schoolteachers?"

Enough innocence in that that the perpetration was plain. So word had spread about my attentions to Anna. Of course it would.

The town roofed over and...
these past weeks.

"Dab it on him!" I heard loudly, and realized the yell had been by me.

Quicker than it can be told Alec made his catch. A good one, where all the significant actions erupt together: the rope straightening into a tan line in the air, the calf gargling out a bleahh as the loop choked its neck and yanked it backward, Alec evacuating from the stirrups in his dismount. Within a blink he was in front of the tall bay horse and scampering beside the stripe of rope the bay was holding taut as fishline, and now Alec was upending the calf into the arena dust and now gathering calf legs and now whipping the pigging string around them and now done.

"The time for Alec McCaskill" -- I thought I could hear remorse inside the tinny blare of Tollie's voice, and so knew the report was going to be good -- "seventeen and a half seconds."

The crowd whooped and clapped. Over at the far fence Leona was beaming as if she might ignite, and down at the end of the grandstand my parents were glumly accepting congratulations on Alec. Beside me Ray was as surprised as I was by Alec's first-rate showing, and his delight didn't have the conditions attached that mine did. "How much is up?" he wondered. I wasn't sure of the roping prize myself, so I asked the question to the booth, and Bill Reinking leaned out and informed us,"Thirty dollars, and supper for two at the Sedgwick House."

"Pretty slick," Ray admired. I had to think so myself. Performance is performance, whatever my opinion of Alec's venue of it. Later in the
Gros Ventre and the country around were visited this week by road commissioners of Conrad, of Valier, and Robert B. McCaskill of this locale. The commissioners were here to see for themselves the bogs that are called roads hereabouts, and we wish them every speed in discerning what must be done to pull this end of Pondera County from its mire.

--Gros Ventre Weekly Gleaner, March 00,
other homestead areas that played out, who had come in and found some way to start over in life. Others who had moved into town for high school for their kids, then stayed on. The store people; the ranch hands and sheep herders who hung around to live out their spans when they were beyond work.

The south-to-north exploration Mouse and I were taking through Gros Ventre, I now have to say, had more than sheep-route logic to it. It also saved for the last what to me was the best of the town. Three buildings at the far end of the east side of Main Street: last outposts before the street/highway made its second curve and zoomed from Gros Ventre over the bridge across English Creek. The trio which dealt in life's basics: food, drink, sleep.

The night during our campjacking trip when I was baptizing my interior with alcohol and Stanley Meixell was telling me the history of the Two Medicine National Forest from day one, a surprise chapter of that tale was about the hostelry that held the most prominent site first in Gros Ventre. Stanley's arrival to town when he came here to be the ranger for the Two was along the route Mouse and I had just done, from the south, and as Stanley rode around the first curve back there and could see along the length of Main Street, here at the far end a broad false-front with a verandah beneath it was proclaiming:

beer    liquors    cigars
meals at all    Northern Hotel    lunches
H ours    put up

c. e. sedgwick, prop.
I have wondered since why so much of it all had to happen in that first year of Dair and myself. Why time did not give us a chance to let to catch our breath as a married couple; Adair gradually feel the hard edge of homestead life instead of flinging her against it.

There came the May morning when she and I started to Gros Ventre for provisions. There had been no question of her coming—"Of course I am. Adair has earned an outing."

"In that case, she can practice her driving, I'll bet."

"They'll better be.""00 and 00 (horse names) are agreeable to you handling their reins."

"They'll better be."

The day was raw, despite the new green of the grass and the fact that the sun was trying its best. We were a bit late starting, because I'd decided to take a quick look at a bunch (of ewes and lambs)..."

"Now I call this high style," I said with my arm around Adair.

"A man of leisure out for a trot in his carriage, his faithful driver at the reins. Do you hear the one: Here trundle I, with love my cart/try out my reins, try out my heart?"

"I've heard it now, haven't I?" We were approaching the trail up Breed Butte..."Had we better see if Rob and Judith want anything from town?"
"Hello, Angus McCaskill with a mustache."

Of course I knew that Adair had grown from the scrap of a girl she was when Rob and I left Nethermuir. She was, what, twelve then. Even so, not until I saw her in this instant did I understand that she had reached eighteen, and considerably more than a girl in every way that I could see.

"Welcome to Montana, Adair. It's not Scotland."

"I think that's why we're here."

... "Did you mind the ocean?"

"Yes. All the time I thought it was as odd for us to be on it as for fish to be on land."

Well, here was the first Barclay yet who traveled in my frame of mind.

"This land is like your letters. The mountains are where I expected."

... "I've missed your letters."

"You'll hear me once in a while in person, now."

"I'll be listening."
"Shaving."

After a while Ed glanced up from his eating and realized that Ray and Mary Ellen and Genevieve and I were all regarding him in a stymied way.

"We had to shave every day," he elaborated. "Wherever we were. Belleau Wood, we only got a canteen of water per man per day. But we still used some of it to shave. The gas masks they gave us were a French kind. Sort of a sack that went over your face like this"--Ed ran a hand around his chinline. "If you had whiskers it didn't fit tight enough. Gas would get in. You'd be a goner."

Ed began to take another bite of his supper, but instead repeated: "Belleau Wood. About mid-day there we'd be in our foxholes--graves, we called them--all of us shaving, or holding our shirts up to read them for lice. Thousands of us, all doing one or the other."

The other four of us waited, dumbstruck, to see where this sudden hallway of Ed's memory led.

But all he said more was "Pass the stringbeans, please."
If Rob and I didn't know much about homesteading when we undertook it, we were royal wizards compared to these newcomers. Family after family, arriving with hope in the benchlands between Gros Ventre and the Reservation, and what shocked me was that these were families, down to babies at the breast, four-five-six people living in a shanty the size of a freight wagon. Or in a tent while they tried to build a shanty. And meanwhile were trying too to break the sod and plant a crop, dig a well, achieve a garden. It was said homesteading was a bet the government made to you that you couldn't put yourself through 0 years of punishment... From the failure of the 00s and OOs and what had happened to OOs mini, we of Scotch Heaven had seen that the bet was a harsh one. Here were people from straight from cities, from jobs in post offices and stores, from climates that weren't a patch on Montana's.

This was 00. Winter was a long way off. Nonetheless I said a prayer to it: be gentle with these pilgrims.
When I started high school in Gros Ventre, Ray came over to me at noonhour the first day. He planted himself just out of arm's reach from me and offered: "Horse apple."

I balled up both my fists, and my tongue got ready the words which would fan our creekside battle to life again: "Beaver tooth." Yet the direction of Ray's remark caught my notice. "Horse apple" was pretty far back down the scale from "turkey dink."

For once in my life I latched on to a possibility. I held my stance and tendered back to Ray: "Mud minnow."

It started a grin on him while he thought up: "Slough rat."

"Gumbo gopher," I provided, barely managing to get it out before we were both laughing.

Within the week I was asking my mother whether I could stay in town overnight with Ray, and after that I made many a stay-over at the Heaneys' throughout the school year. Not only did I gain the value of Ray and me being the best of friends; it was always interesting to me that the Heaneys were a family as different from ours as crochet from oil cloth. For one thing they were Catholic, although they really didn't display it all that much. Just through a grace before every meal and a saint here and there on the wall and eating fish on Friday, which eventually occurred to me as the reason Ray had looked at me suspiciously there at the creek when I asked him about fishing. For another, in almost every imaginable way the Heaney family was as tidy as spats on a rooster. (The "almost" was this: Ray and his sister Mary Ellen, three years younger, were allowed
Stanley was taller than he looked on horseback, close to six feet.
this Russian shitpile, or stay and be caught one day lifting one
snuff box too many. You've seen what these Russians can do with a
knout. That sergeant of the sentries will sign his name up and down
your back. Aye?"

"Pretty choice you paint. Rock and stony place."

"What else is the world? Come in with us, Braaf. It'll take
your fast fingers to get us out of here. But we can get,

"My fingers should ever see the day they're fast as your
tongue, Melander."

"Thank you, but we can race some other time. Are you with us?"

"You know for heaven-certain that we'll find this American fort

Astruria

at--what's the place, Astoria?"

"Astoria. It is there. I have known sailors whose ships have
called there. Perhaps we will not even need to go that far, if we
meet a merchantman or supply ship along the way. English, Spanish,
Americans or the devil, it won't matter. So long as they're not
Russians. Aye?"

"And the downcoast natives? Kolosh and whatever-the-hell-else
they might be?"

"I already said the devil."

Only for an instant now, about the duration of a held breath,
did Braaf's eyes come steady with those of Melander and Karlsson.
Just before he nodded agreement to join the escape. And that is how
back-and-forth discussion between Angus and Lucas, on the old McCaskill-Barclay question of how many sheep are enough. Neither arguer yields to the xx other. Finally Lucas breaks it off with:
protest meeting about national forest, fomented by Rob; perhaps in the South Fork schoolhouse, perhaps on basis of Rob's reasoning that if the sheepmen boycott the grazing permit system Stanley will be removed by the Forest Service as unsuccessful and an irritant. In attendance are the Scotch Heaven homesteaders, plus Lucas as a partner in Rob's sheep. After their resentment had been made known, mostly through Rob, Stanley begins his response:
brief ruminative section of Angus, Adair and Varick; status quo between Angus and Adair in these years as Varick is growing and becoming the person he will be. The homestead boom grows and grows, automobiles began to appear in the Two country, Rob is the first in Scotch Heaven to get one, which he has to back up the slope of Breed Butte in muddy weather (early Fords had, I think, greater power and traction in reverse). Main thrust of this section is to convey the change occurring in the Two country.
--Angus-Adair dialogue over land locating; she points out to him they must have something to leave Varick, that the money from land locating would help set Varick up in life when the time comes, not many years ahead now. Angus reluctantly agrees, and in the spring and summer of 1913 becomes a partner with Rob and Lucas in helping 'steaders find homestead claims--Rob delivers them by auto from Valier and Gros Ventre to Angus who takes them up into the undrivable ridge country by wagon. In the spring of 1914, as soon as the roads dry out the land locating resumes again, with Angus's first customer, named Otto Tebbet, and his wife and two children. Angus begins taking the Tebbets by wagon into the bare ridge country south of Scotch Heaven.
--Tebbet is the last straw for Angus. He talks over with Adair what they might do instead: propose to Rob that they buy another band of sheep together, which Varick could get his eventual start in life from, and run the sheep on the Reservation, as Rob has long wanted to do but has had too many other irons in the fire to manage. Rob jumps at the idea. Varick is at the independent age, looking ahead eagerly toward his first summer job of helping Stanley Meixell, so Angus and Adair do not really tell him the Reservation sheep are on his behalf, but Angus does ask him to help trail the band to the range north of the Two Medicine. With high heart, the trailing of the sheep is about to begin, with Angus seeing this new sheep venture, something he knows and is comfortable with, as a way to carry himself, Adair and Varick into the future together:
Angus and Rob leave their argument about Anna at a stand-off, for the sake of "peace in the family." Angus goes back to his distant worship of Anna, still wondering if they have any eventual future but knowing it can't be until the years sort out such matters as their children, etc. Meanwhile, after the 1910 homesteader rush to the irrigation projects such as Valier, dry-land homesteaders also begin to flock to Montana and the Two country. As more and more land is taken up, more homestead claimants begin to settle at the south edge of Scotch Heaven—the bleak ridge country (of the Jensen ranch etc. in actuality) Angus and Rob slogged through on their original journey to Gros Ventre. It is Adair who names these dry-land unfortunates "the 'steaders," remarking (in the classic words of Tom Chadwick) that their places look like more stead than home. Angus watches this with fascinated uneasiness, as on the couple of following pages:
Gros Ventre these days was a growing stripling of a town, all elbows and shanks. The main street was beginning to fill in—fresh buildings for the _Gleaner_ newspaper, for a saloon begun by a newcomer named Dolph Spenger, for the stagecoach office next to Dantley's stable, for other enterprises a true town needed; barber, lawyer, even a tailor, kept themselves honed in Gros Ventre these days. A bridge of bright new lumber now hurdled the creek ford. By weathered comparison the Northern Hotel now looked as if it had been in business since Lewis and Clark spent a night there. Across the street from the Northern an eating place had been opened beside the Medicine Lodge, pure luxury, as Lucas put it, whenever the notion of a meal occurred to a customer. Whenever a thought of another sort occurred, the saloon at the opposite end of the main street was now called the Pastime—Wingo had moved on down to First Avenue South in Great Falls and there was general male agreement that standards for "nieces" had gone down with him.

But in every other way, I was assured by Lucas in the next breath after I stepped into the Medicine Lodge, the town was advancing grandly. "A man Heaney is coming in here to start a lumber yard, and some other folks a creamery. And we're going to have to get ourselves a bank. It's bad business to let such places as Choteau and Conrad have our money in their pockets."
We were near the end of the first day of shearing, which is always the worst, the work patterns to be relearned by everyone, the sheep alarmed. I felt weary, ooed with wool grease. But this site was like being on the bald brow of the world, the vast grass ridges around on all sides, the mountains enormous to the west. Up from the trench of the Two Medicine the rutted road came, and I was watching a wagon follow it up toward us. Not a Blackfeet rig, but a democrat wagon; something about the shoulders-back erectness of the woman driving made me know, moments before I could let myself admit that it was Anna. Her children on either side of her.
The punchers came and gathered, laughing up their sleeves
counting on their zebra bronc to do just what he pleased.
And when I hit the saddle, old Dunny quit this earth
went right up to try the sky, for all that he was worth.

Susan Duff was wrinkling her nose at Davy's minstrelsy. But as
soon as I gave her a severe look, she joined in the chorus with
Davie and me, and the rest of the children followed her. Onward
"Flora Duff has asked me to read the Twenty-third Psalm, which
were the favorite Scripture of Ninian. Before I do this, let us strive
to see whence these words have come to us. The tending of sheep in
ancient Israel, do you see, was a work quite different from that we
know here in modern Montana. The flocks were small in number. Each
sheep had a name, and answered to that name when the familiar voice
of his own shepherd called forth. And the shepherd of Israel did not
herd his little flock from behind, as you do your great bands on our
mountain slopes. Rather, he went before, finding out the safer ways,
and his sheep followed him in confidence, depending upon him to lead
them to safe watering places and to good pasturage. And that shepherd
"But why is that? What is it that's so goddamn important back there that they have to keep it to themselves?"

"Lick, sometimes--"

"What?"

"Sometimes maybe you think too much."
"Now I shall read the Twenty-third Psalm, in light of that ancient time of Israel."

"The Lord is my shepherd! I shall not want! He maketh me to lie down in green pastures! He leadeth me beside the still waters!... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me, Thy rod, and Thy staff, they comfort me!"
"Right," I affirmed. "And like I say, I, uh, got to go."

What made me add to the total of my footprints already in my mouth, I can't truly account for. Maybe the blockade I had hit again in wanting to ask all the questions of Stanley. In any case, the parting I now blurted out was:

"You two in a dancing mood tonight? What I mean, see you at the dance, will I?"

Stanley simply passed that inquiry to Velma with a look. In theory, Velma then spoke her answer to me, although she didn't unlock her gaze from him at all as she said it: "Stanley and I will have to see whether we have any spare time."

So. One more topic clambering aboard my already bent-over brain. Stanley Meixell and Velma Croake Bogan Sutter Simms.

"Ray? What kind of a summer are you having?"

We were in the double-window of his bedroom, each of us propped within the sill. A nice breeze came in on us there, the leaves of the big cottonwood in the Heaneys' front yard seeming to flutter the air our way. Downstairs the radio had just been turned on by Ed Heaney, so it was 7 o'clock--the dance wouldn't get underway for an hour or so yet, and as long as Ray and I were going to be window-sitting anyway for the next while, I figured I'd broach to him some of all that was on my mind.

"Didn't I tell you? Pilot."

"No, I don't mean that. What it is--do things seem to you kind of
I thought of a pen being propelled by Lucas's stubs, proudly saying to Scotland. This place Gros Ventre is a coming town, leading Rob and me from Helena with its loops and swirls. Matters pile up in a person. They can surprise you, how they want out. They were out now, look at Lucas saying with this signature that Rob and Adair and I must reconcile, must face it, must at least agree, if only to reject it.
Two days from then, in the office up over the First National Bank of Gros Ventre Rob sat at one end of the arc of chairs in front of the lawyer's desk, I at the other with Adair and Nancy between us. The reading of Lucas's will had just ended, and its effect was beginning.

"Is this some sort of joke lawyers make?" Rob broke out. "To see if they can rile up the audience? If so, you've damn well done that."

The lawyer shook his head. "I've only read you what's on the paper. And this is Lucas's signature validating it." Even from where Adair and I and Nancy say, the loops and swirls of the coil of signature could be recognized. "Moreover, the will has been properly witnessed by"--he glanced closer at a much smaller ragged scrawl--"Stanley Meixell. It's an unusual document, I'm the first to admit. But it's plainly legal."

Unusual, he said.
Ninian paused, as if to let the wind carry the Twenty-Third Psalm where it wanted before he gave it more words to transport. Then he resumed: "Ay, it may not seem so, but those old treasured sentences had in mind the likes of us, and Lucas. In ancient Israel the tending of sheep was a work far different from that we know here in modern Montana.

The flocks were small in number and each sheep had its own name, and answered to that name when the familiar voice of his shepherd called forth. A thousand ewes little flock from behind, as we do with our bands of thousands and their thousand lambs. Rather, that shepherd of Israel went before his flock, finding out the safer ways, and his sheep followed him in confidence, depending upon him to lead them to safe watering places and to good pasturage. And too, that same shepherd of Israel
"Dair. Are you leaving me? Because if you are, let's do straight out, for once." (Let's...?)

"Leaving?" She considered the word, as if I had just invented it.

I'll live in town with Varick
"Angus, have we ever been together? during the school year. That's all." in all these years you've never really left Anna. So do you think leaving is something that can be done?"

call
"What do you this then, whatever it is you intend."

"I call it living in town with our son, so that he stays on terms with at least one of us."

My wife, the ambassadress to my son. How do people get in such kinks? I asked Adair now: "And summers?"

"Summers I'll come back here, of course." Of course? Seventeen years with this Adair and I still didn't recognize what she saw as certainty. Say this for my love for Anna: at least it had definiteness, solidness; it was always there. Adair has said something I missed...

"If you want me to."

"I want you to." (Of course.)
"I wish he hadn't bothered."

"Bothered? Dair, the damn man has set Varick against me. There's no way I'll forgive that."

"I suppose Rob thought he was doing it for my sake." She looked...

"As when he brought me over here from Scotland."

("Rob thinks he has a right to put a finger in anywhere he wants to.")

"That's as may be." I drew a breath. "In both cases, he may have had you at heart. But I've done what I could to be a husband to you—

that same husband, no less

and you know what I've had to do it around. I'm no more and no less

You and I would be we've

and no more, after seeing Anna. We've been the same ground we ever

been, except for Rob undercutting me. He and I are finished."

"That's not all that will change. Angus, I want to move to town

this to live in town. (this school year)"

"I've done what I feel for Anna (in myself)."
This site atop the lofty grass ridge above the Two Medicine River was like being on the bald brow of the world, and by rights I should have been worried sick about what a cold winter storm from the snow-thatched mountains to the west of the Two Medicine Mountains could do to newly-naked and shelterless sheep. But I warned the storm away; if it came, it simply would see how incredibly fast a man—me—could herd sheep into the stands of trees along the river. I should have been weary or snappish, the first day of shearing always greatly the worst, the work patterns to be relearned by everyone, the sheep alarmed. I should have been miffed at Rob when he did not appear at noon as promised.
Varick came home Sundays, but I wanted to tell him about the split between Rob and me.
--Angus and Rob go through the rest of shearing on short speaking terms, Angus continuing to believe his marriage is none of Rob's business and Rob had just better come around to that idea. Angus meanwhile is thinking ahead to the next phase of Adair and him, now that he's been told definitely by Anna that there's no eventual future for Anna and him; he and Adair can go on together for the sake of getting Varick started in life, maybe become more of a marriage than they ever have been, now that Angus's dream of Anna has been resolved.

In this get-on-with-life mood, covered in a page or so, Angus rides home to Scotch Heaven after shearing (Rob huffily left by car a day or two earlier) and swings past the English Creek ranger station on his way home to see Varick:
--graf or so of details of shearing and Angus amid it.
--the scene concludes with Lucas telling Angus, "I can't think it's forever, this between the two of you." And Angus responding that if it's not forever, it's as close as can be to that.

The next few pages are a historical rhythm section, carrying Angus through a sometimes-alone, sometimes-with-Adair life: he winters at the homestead, she and Varick in town, Varick joins Stanley every summer, she joins Angus. The homestead boom and prosperity are continuing, thanks to the war in Europe boosting agricultural demand and prices. This short reflective section carries the story to the point where Angus reports:

"And then it was our own war year, 1917. Wilson and America had been saying long and loud that they would not, but now they were going into Europe's bloody mud with both feet."

What is on Angus's mind now, of course, is that men 18 years old and up are beginning to be drafted; and in November of this year, Varick will turn 18. But first, at the start of summer of 1917:
--more Angus-Adair dialogue in this same scene, leading to conclusion:
--Through the summer and autumn of 1917, Angus struggles along in his enforced sheep partnership with Rob (quick acerbic exchanges of dialogue will show this, bitter echoes of their comradely dialogue chunks earlier in the book) and wondering where the hell all this is going to come out at. After the lambs have been shipped, when it is mid-October and the prospect of winter is nearing, something else is imminent in Angus's concern: Varick's 18th birthday (Nov. 11), when he'll become eligible for the WWI draft. Moved by the fact that Varick may soon vanish into the war, Angus decides to go have an unannounced look at Varick, in a public circumstance where Varick can't openly disavow Angus's presence: the final Sunday of bronc riding at the Egan corral on Noon Creek, a gathering place for the young bravos such as Varick. Angus has never gone before, largely because of his rift with Varick, but now he rides over from the North Fork, and as he arrives at the Egan corral the first person he encounters is another unexpected spectator, Toussaint Rennie:
--Rob finally drives in at suppertime, startled and perturbed to find Anna there. He and Angus have an inconclusive conversation about her, with Angus letting him know it's none of Rob's business.

The dawn meeting between Angus and Anna is something of a reprise of their Valier meeting, but this time Angus does get to ask her if she sees any chance for them in the years ahead, when their children are grown, etc. She tells him no, that as far ahead as she can see, Isaac is there in her life.

Angus perhaps comes out of this dawn scene feeling that at least he finally knows, that whatever kind of love he still has for Anna is just going to have to be a distant sort, that he now has to get on in life with Adair and Varick. Rob, though, has tumbled to the dawn meeting and begins to give Angus hell about it; Angus's response is what it's always been toward Rob in this regard, that it is none of Rob's damned business. They argue, leading to Rob saying:
--several further sentences of conversation between Angus and Anna as they move to the shearing pens to watch the goings-on, Angus all the while wondering whether this is some new chance with Anna, or just a coincidental visit, or what.
--After shearing, when Angus is tending a shepherd's camp (cut of the cards has decided it's his turn to do so), he encounters Stanley heading into the mountains on some forest ranger task or another:
The next is the possible kernel of a scene showing Lucas's dismayed reaction to the Angus-Rob split:
--Angus confronts Rob: the following page is the possible kernel of a major confrontation scene, whose basis is Angus's question to himself: "What Rob did (in telling Varick) is nothing I ever would have done; how then could Rob have done it?"

A plot question still to be resolved: is it more dramatic and effective to have Angus and Rob rage their way into a fistfight—or not?
Maybe a brief description of shipping time, and of Angus readying to go into winter with Rob; maybe nothing here, if the Ninian scene can carry to the next one:
I looked around, at a broad-bellied figure on horseback, with a short-handled shovel protruding from the rifle scabbard on his saddle.

Irrigation had enlisted even Toussaint Rennie.

"I am a ditch rider, Angus. Did you know a man can ride a ditch?"

I'd heard of the Reservation's Two Medicine canal project, which should have been the same as inferring Toussaint was someway involved in it.

"You surprise me as ever, Toussaint. You can tell me this, though," and asked him as delicately as I could how the riding job came to be his instead of a member of the Blackfeet tribe.

"Those Blackfeet," he chuckled. "They got so busy keeping each other out of the job, I got it."
A note in the bank is a great annihilator of time. When you owe, the days are crowded together in thin layers, and the nights are like a smear from a blacking brush.

By now hundreds of hundreds of such wagons were laying their wheeltracks across the Montana grass. Locating land was the religion of 1910.

The steaders were entirely like Rob and me when we came to Scotch Heaven, not noticing yet that they were working for nothing or less. Who had time to notice, the work taking so much time?

Scot and Belgian, Norwegian and German, Russian and Dane, we were trying to plaid ourselves into this American land.

An entire colony of Belgians came to the Valier land—men, women, children, grandparents, babes, likely cats and canaries too.

The national memory of Scotland is defeat, Adam Willox had said to me. What is America's going to be?

Homestead, instead of...

They say the steaders on the flats north of Conrad haul a barrel of water at a time on a stone boat; they strain the cloudy water through a gunny sack as they bucket it into the barrel.
NOON CREEK

Times are as thin in Montana as they can get, we are among the first to admit. But as surely as the moon changes, so shall the business climate. Meanwhile, Montanians' spirits are bent but unbroken. From three different persons this past week your faithful scrivener heard the joke of the Gros Ventre sheepman who shipped some of his lambs to Chicago to test the market, received a telegram from the stockyard buyer which read REGRET TO SAY SAILE OF YOUR LAMBS YESTERDAY BROUGHT ONLY HALF ENOUGH TO PAY YOUR SHIPPING COSTS, I HAD TO PAY OTHER HALF FOR YOU, and at once telegraphed back DO NOT WORRY, AM MAKING IT UP TO YOU BY sending TWICE AS MANY LAMBS TODAY.

--Choteau Quill, June 18, 1896
What the outline of this chapter shows is that Angus, at this point, isn't in control of anything and is being battered by everyone -- except Lucas and Stanley.

He may be too laconic about this? Maybe some more musing about it?

Dismay? Frustration?

To be added:

Preliminary reasons for Varick's leaving. (This could be a scene just after the one with Varick where Angus & Adair talk about it, to help w/ background)

About the Anna/Angus situation:

Anna should say something enigmatic, when she tells Angus of decision to marry Isaac, so that it's clear why Angus holds out hope. Did she?

Scenes with and about Anna may not need much more dialogue -- they'll fill out when you put in the observational details of people shifting their feet, etc.

Infact, one idea for the Anna/Angus dawn scene is not to have it in dialogue; have Angus musing over his conclusions instead.

Flashback, with a bit of remembered dialogue?

Nancy, affluent after Lucas's death, could take in Touissant's family or someone else, or help someone or say something, in later time of trouble. (Ch. 6?)
"Anna. As I was saying, four years ago in Valier--"

She had to laugh. "Is it all one conversation, everything we ever say?"

... "As far as I can see in life, Isaac is there."

"And I'm not."

"Not in the same way he is."

... "Did you make this trip to tell me?"
the second section of legalistic language leaves Lucas's stake in his sheep partnership with Rob to Rob, Adair and Angus, in a three-way partnership they can dissolve only by unanimous consent. In effect, because Rob as usual has had Lucas back him in expanding their sheep holdings (this time because of booming market brought on by WWI) the will puts nearly all the Rob-Lucas sheep in the hands of this imposed partnership. Marshall Nelson tells me this is legally feasible, and he's to provide me documentation of a similar case he knows about.
"We've both done it before." (started new lives)

"Doing a thing once doesn't make it a habit, Angus."

"At least it's a start." I tried to smile.

..."That railroad at Browning runs two directions. Or there's Canada, straight ahead of us."

"You're serious. You're still serious about--"

"I didn't ride this distance after you just to stretch the horse's legs."

..."And my children? And your son? Where do Bet and Pete and Varick fit into this notion of yours?"

"Varick is all but grown. He'll be on his own any day now. The homestead can be his, Dair will do that for him." I stopped, looked at the boy Pete and the vigilant Lisabeth at the creekside. No, they did not fit handily into what I was proposing to their mother, but it had to be tried. "I can't say to you what to do with your own children, Anna. If they come with us, I'll be all the father to them I possibly can." Silently, this: if they stay with Isaac...

"Angus, we can't tear up other people's lives the way you're wanting."
"Leave our own lives torn instead."
To stand there and look at hundreds of creatures with wool firmly attached to their backs, it seemed an impossible amount of work ahead.

Yet it had to be possible, in the calendar eyelet between the end of lambing and the start of haying.
To say that Rob and A were short with each other (the next days of shearing) doesn't begin to cover it. Fewer words never were rationed...

If he wanted to attain a new standard of being vexed with me, it was up to him. I had too much else on my mind. Now that Anna had declared herself out of my future, I felt as I had the morning of coming up from the steerage storm; whatever perils...they would be different. Adair and I would need to go on for the sake of getting Varick started in life. Rob could come around when he felt like it.
You can talk yourself into any notion with a little trying, and
I convinced myself Dair would be better off without me. She would
have the place, most of our money, any help she needed from Rob. 
Varick, too; she would have him. All that, Dair would have.
I would have Anna.
them.

"Up here you see how the country looked before they put buildings on it."
--Carol Doig, noon, July 4, 1977

At the end of one of those summers I glanced away toward college and career, and when I looked again I was twenty years older, although the mountains didn't seem to be. Someday had arrived and was already going as my wife Carol and I climbed the trail out of my remembered mountains. Our backpack trip into the Bob Marshall Wilderness had been gloriously solitary; only sun, frost, wind, wildflowers and us. We had dined on trout caught in Strawberry Creek. We had not been dined on by grizzlies. Now after four hiking days and thirty miles at the knees and laps of the mountains, we abruptly were riding on a shoulder. Behind us, below us, lay the Continental Divide. Ahead, our exit—a colossal bowl of steep rock-and-timber slopes, and beyond through a cracklike notch, the northern Montana plains patterned into the chocolate and gold of strip farming. Suddenly I recognized this exact peak we were on. Hadn't I gazed at it entire summers from those fields? A squall came, dove on us. Yes, this was the familiar behavior of my mountains.

"It's clearing. So where does the map say we are?"
--Carol Doig, 12:30 p.m., July 4, 1977

"On a place named Family Peak."
--Ivan Doig, 12:30:10 p.m., July 4, 1977
The Gleaner had reported an instance in South Dakota, among a religious clan called the Hutterian Brethren, whose men would not serve in the war; one of their objectors had been placed in Alcatraz and died there. Where was right in that situation? Why kill a man by prison just because he refuses to die in war? I thought of Varick.

Can a father wish
Thank heaven, or at least my winning cut of the cards, we had bought twice as much hay as Rob had wanted to, which still was not as much as I wanted to. By now there wasn't a spear of hay to be bought left for sale anywhere on any ranch in northern Montana. Trainloads of what was being called hay, although trash it was simply slewgrass and other wiry stuff, were being brought in to Valier and other rail points from North Dakota and sold at astounding Cost were prices. Watermain Price and distance and all else was against our Besides, resorting to a so-called Dakota hayride. Rob and I both believed calculated that

Even so, every way I could calculate it—and the worried look on Rob said his sums came out the same as mind—we were going to be scratching as the next m passed the for hay in a few months if this harsh weather kept up.

It kept up.
"Have you ever seen anything like this?"

"No, but then I've never been to the North Pole."
"Wendell Williamson had the Double W handed to him on a platter and he's been doing his best to drop it ever since."

"Not entirely, now. It takes time to learn a ranch of that size." I swept my hand around the homestead. "It takes time just to learn one of these."

"That Williamson money is buying him time, all right. We should have such an education."

MORE TO COME

Even 00, whom horses and blizzards and whiskey could not kill—even he was now frail life in a rawhide sheath of body.

People tried whatever they could think of. The 00s slept in the dirt cellar beneath their house to keep warmer. 00 was a Bernarr McFadden believer. Whenever he felt a cold or any other ailment coming on, he drank hot water and forced himself into activity. Asafoetida sacks appeared at necks. (MORE) And the flu kept on killing.

Death has different fathoms, and 00's was in the shallows, making it all the more horrible. He came down with a cough on Tuesday morning, by noon was feeling a fever; for the first time since childhood he went to bed during the day. Late in the afternoon of Thursday, he died.

MORE TO COME

"Hear we just about lost old 00." (1st person to get flu?)
Varick. He's not here. Not with us. Is he all right? I thought I saw blood, his eye... She shook her head.
"We'll look for them in the morning, Dair. No sense in us falling over a cliff up here in the dark."

Back at the sheepwagon, Adair began supper while I picketed our horses and fed Davie's dog.

So here we are, Dair. The McCaskills of Montana. After 21 years of marriage, cooped in a sheepwagon. Sheepless. All the scenery we can eat. Is this what you had in mind for us, ay, Lucas? Scouring for a herder in these hireless times, at Choteau or Conrad if none was to be had in Gros Ventre, as there likely wasn't. Everyone in the war effort, these days. It was an effort, they were right about that.

"How do you like sheepherding so far?"

"The company is the best thing about it."

"The bed's going to be a snug fit."

Adair looked at me in the lamplight. "Is that a promise?" she said.

The bachelor air, the aloneness of the Davies...Adair and I went back and forth from hunger for each other, to slow stroking. The close arch of canvas over us held us as if in a shell, concentrating us into ourselves & each other.
most open

"I threw the sheep onto the biggest patch of grass I could,"

Leaving a band of sheep to its

Rob told me, not quite looking at me. It went agai

perils went against everything in either of us, and for a savage moment

I was glad it was him and not me who'd had to ride away from the band

with Davie.

Rob had shut Davie's dog in the sheepwagon so that he wouldn't

follow. He came out inquisitive as to why I was not Davie, but ready

When I leaned down and called him from the saddle, he leaped against my

to work. I called him after me, back down the trail, and when we reached leg

and the

whooped and

the WW cattle I dogged them over the next ridge. and the

stirrup and I

boosted him the rest

of the way into my lap.

"I'll give those cows a dose

of the dog."
At least Rob and I had found a thing to agree on, the putrid taste of the war. Pulling England's chestnuts out of the fire.

At least Rob and I had found a thing to agree on, the putrid taste of the war. They're cats fighting in a sack, Europe and England, I'd heard him declare in disgust to Adair. Why're we jumping in it with them? Yet for every one of us such as Rob and I who had no least wish to fight a war on England's behalf or if you came right down to it, old Scotland's either, there was an Allan Frew impetuous to fight simply because the Frews always had fought the enemies of the crown of London.
 Victims of the Epidemic

Angutter, Hans, homesteader. Age 44. Died at his homestead east of Gros Ventre, Oct. 28.

Clark, Marie, infant daughter of John and Helen Clark. Died at the family home in Gros Ventre, Oct. 27.

Fain, Clyde, son of Arthur and Althea Fain. Age 9. Died at the family ranch on Noon Creek.

Frew,

Where was mercy.

Allan, soldier of the American Expeditionary Force. Age 43. Died in a field hospital near EXXX 00, Oct. 2.


"Not old Jen too."

"Yes. It's an awful time, Angus," Adair answered in a voice as strained as mine.

Gaines, Charles, homesteader
infant daughter of
Clark, Marie, wife of...

Erskine, Jennifer, wife of... "Not Jen. Not old Jen."

"Yes. It's awful," said Adair.

Every name I recognized, and half of them I knew as a friend...

I went as far as the bottom of the page, list continues on p. 3, and put the Gleaner away from me.

"Angus." I heard Adair draw a breath. The newspaper was back in her hand, thrust to me. "You have to."

"No. No no no. The paper shook in my hands as I opened it to the third page, as I dropped my eyes to the end of the list and forced them back up to the Rs.

Reese, Anna, wife of Isaac, mother of Lisabeth and Peter. At the family ranch on Noon Creek, during the night of 00.

"What's today?"

"The 00th."
The mountains still were thatched with snow.
I missed Lucas. By Jesus, I'm missed that man. Angus, what would you say to a glass of buttermilk? Angus, have a drop of angel's milk, you look as though you need it. Angus, there are times when it feels like I still have the hands but they're on fire. But I don't have them, do I, so where does that pain come from? Where does it. In all our cases, is pain price for feeling? Who or what ordained that?
--Angus ruminates about the problem of toughing out this one last year of running the sheep with Rob, of skimping through the winter if it's an open one. But all around is the mounting evidence of hard times in Montana, the drought and the crash of prices from war-time levels hitting everybody. Just before shipping time that fall:
More drought. Varick's is the summer's only good news, and it turns out that Beth accepts his proposal, marriage is set for the fall, after shipping time. Angus begins haying, with great misgivings:

"My hay was worth cutting only because it was better to have little than none. I could cover the width of a windrow with my hat."

In this ominous scarcity of hay, he goes into the house for supper at the end of another sultry day of haying:
He wouldn't look at me. Heart, mind, tongue, and now eyes, the last of Rob left to turn from me. Whatever his mood, we had sheep to feed.

"What's this, now?" I called to him. "Rob, wait with that packing until the ground is drier and the sheep get some green grass in them, why not."

He didn't answer, but his actions did. He was going ahead with the damn driving the sheep along his damned reservoir, just as if this was any spring. I could see he was in a silent rage against not only creatures me but against the sheep for being things that let a winter kill them, against Scorpion for being old and slow, against the earth...

"I'll bring the bastards to you in a bit," he delivered. "They at least can do this work."

There was no swerving him. Let him have his damn escapade with that damn reservoir of his. "Behave yourself with that horse or I'll come talk to you by hand." If I had the strength to make a fast...

"Go operate that pitchfork. It's what you're good for."

Winter coming out of both of us, was it. The strains that had built up, the sourness...

"Rob, I'm telling you, once. (Take the sheep across the dam a time or two if it'll make you feel better. But then let them come have their hay.)"
And Angus McCaskill, if they could have seen into him. Here was a zoo creature indeed, this person in silent love with a woman not his wife, seeing her at dances, talking with her at school meetings...
Out on the prairie west of Valier, we had our own tracks of yesterday to follow, smooth snow grooves of the sled runners and twin rough channels chopped by the horses' hooves. These Reese horses, straining steadily as they pulled our hay loads. With every step they were rescuing us a little more, drawing us nearer to Scotch Heaven and out of this width of winter. If worst came to worst, we would have to rescue ourselves another way with these horses. If the worst came, we would each need to kill a horse, gut it, and get inside the carcass for the warmth of its body. Whether Rob and I had the stamina to last through a situation like that, I did not know. But I had to believe that Varick could. My Montanan son could last.
peeking over the snowbank at me. I lurched in, the heat of the store stifling after the cold of outdoors. I briefly wished there was some way to take armloads of the heat with me where we were going. After a quick transaction at the hardware section, I went back out to my haysled with the killing and cutting implements.
First, though, the chore that had lain in my mind since yesterday, since the white vastness our sleds drew their thin channels of tracks across. As the three of us readied to climb onto the loaded haysleds, I said: "We'll stop a minute at Rieder's Merc."

Rob swung a look at me. "What the hell for?" he demanded. "Love of Christ, man, this is no goddamn time to be frittering around in a--"

"Axes and gutting knives," I answered him.

Varick took my meaning, and then Rob with a startled frown. They both sent gauging glances to the big Reese horses hitched to our haysleds.

"We've sure as hell got to hope it won't come to that," Varick said. "But Dad, you're right we'd better have the stuff just in case."

There along what in other seasons was Valier's main street, Rieder's Mercantile had a graceful white drift in front of it nearly as high as the tops of its windows, so that the store seemed to be
"I've tried to tell Varick it doesn't matter. He just looks at me in that way of his."

"He's the one who got it into his head, he'll need to be the one to get it out."

What did she feel, in all this? That I deserved the rift from Varick? ... "There was no telling.

"It's not what you or I would have done. But it's Rob's way."

"Dair, your brother has put a boot through our family."