re-read, 15 June '00

1 - custom install routine?

3 - gramophone; wind-up phonograph

7 - soldiers pie etc. dolefully passes eyes over

8 - stock up on her; similar used in "Nunian's Land"

- letter opener: Marian bare-breast - For maiden of virtue, one breast bare,

- diary in front of S

37 - old bread used in "Nunian's Land"?

11 - add "Quite a pupil"?

Aug. 11

3 - Burn a hole in 'bursary (?)

7 - cut "during the bon. mtg... (?)

12 - Doge of Rome OK

21 - chamber need explain?

C's final read of ms. Oct '02

~~2~~ e

~~22~~ e

58 — why ~~[redacted]~~ is this dialogue in Italics'
Because he's recalling it?

81 — Not italicized where he's thinking of Sherman's

~~8~~ 4 years OK? ~~of [illegible]~~ 1919 1924

120 e

~~17~~ - have stet had

~~[redacted]~~

~~17~~ 9 - the

~~17~~ 5 - ^

~~17~~ 8 - italic?

~~19~~ 3 - e

~~2~~ 0 e

~~28~~ 0 C

~~28~~ 9 ⊗

~~30~~ 1 Susan

~~3~~ 20 e

~~3~~ 41 Now

~~3~~ 74 Creek

~~3~~ 22 "

~~3~~ 83. Mansard roof... hers' or his'

He's a newspaper reader & so knows background + context of Harlem.

391 apartment - room rather than storefront?

391 a nickel for a newspaper? Sounds high for 1925

393. ⊗

394. As in rabble.

395 ... say ...

395 afterward.

C's ms comments, Dec. '01

bot 34 ~~extra~~ space before last line?

" 46 scene space

~~104~~ storey?

~~170~~ came?

~~203~~ Lying

~~244~~ now down to ... ?

256 reference clear?

~~[illegible]~~

bot 276 omit?

287 omit?

292 e

294 whiskey?

297 e

298 e

367 Very?

371 e

372 New grf. Change of voice

main plot lack: why would Susan ~~be~~ leave Montana?

C's Sept '02 reading

11 ellipsis: 4 dots of p. 402
123 scene break
128 what means pōilus?
160 OMIT phrase
175 St. Bernards - duly noted
190 e

Day 2 - start p. 223
Motivations are clear.
226 minis OK?
233 scene break - OK

223-276 Terrific pace there
309 e and requisite sentences.
342 to
387 "L station" - ok? Not subway?
404 typo

Day 3 - start p. 409
410 e 412 414 416
top 429 will readers understand this?
463 move
469 e 470
bot 471 pp break
472 e
473 ⊗
e
490
502 sp?

512 repeats previous

536 the

top 539 Add sentence about the Over Theres.

553 omit phrase

"

555 e

586 e

577 e

589 e
^

top 592 Context?

595 add phrase to explain?

~~what he had been up to on Susan Duffy's behalf~~

- suspiciously suspicious of his motives toward Susan

44 town sted "there" ?

45 move "the Costafsons"

→ 57 - Why couldn't Susan have stayed in Helena + trained Monty? Is this clear?

61 I was the

65 ↑

84 if sted it

94 the

~~[illegible]~~

~~bdrm + sense Brad?~~

100 second war in one lifetime? Ahh... p. 148 - Cuba

103 each

134 White

148 combine sentences

162 Can parade ground be seen? Walls?

163 if

Also a question when they go to Ft. Assiniboine

→ 225 A bit more background on the Klan - maybe when Monty asks Angus what it's all about?

Strivers' Row

weather lead: Funny how it was left out of deal on Manhattan I.

--Monty out into street (give address), 3rd time by that hour of morn

--radio & other gigs that have skyrocketed him (NY spiritual series, culmination)

--his manager (ital flashback to Phil Sherman and Wes intro'ng Monty to him)

--JJ: "Philip, this is not up your alley."

--Monty writes to Susan (regularly?), and this time sends the clipping calling him "latest rival to Paul Robeson." (& Helena gig forthcoming?) ?

--Susan's diary response to this?
--she & Wes continuing to see each other?
--she is trying to work out ending to Prairie Tide?
--Wes: NY house he went to WWI from (Sen. Clark's old house?)

? (--Helena concert; Monty & entourage stay @ Broadwater Hotel? Earthquake.)

finale: Over There benefit concert @ Carnegie Hall, Armistice Day 1925

--Susan the accompanist for the event; Monty opens w/ song she's written based on Samuel

Monty's manager-to-be handles Butterbeans and Susie.

"Who and which?" Monty thinks of says.

Strivers' Row 1925

--Monty has made it to NY; taken in tow by black manager, JJ, arranged by Harward buddy of Wes's who dabbles in theatrical productions.

--his Helena situation has been reversed; now women are trying to get their hooks into him

--"We have ourselves an authentic here." Monty gets rave review as latest rival to paul Robeson.

--Manager's advice: scoop in rewards fast, there'll be a next something. "Jass" he pronounces it mockingly. "You have to nail it in every perfmce."

"Then we're going to put you in Europe." Over there? "Why's that?"

--Monty wangles production of S's operetta?

"It was good, I tell you."

- M's accompanist is Mitchell; uses only one name; Garvey or Father Divine follower?

Merrinell, in conversation w/ (her sister?), gave a little whisk to

where he would sit...

--Wes's Montana (side of things, says Merrinell)

--the magnetism of their music. (final line?)

--a consort of like instruments

He looked down at the marbled crowd, rows of colored faces and other rows of pale ones.

--He knew he was responsible for some of it. (I'll be responsible.)

--Governor Smith

--Harlem and the upper East Side; it was all a matter of discernment, of being recorded by a Dante...circles of heaven and hell, his own as usual custom-made.

Systole/diastole Inferno/Paradiso

It would take a Dante to know, wouldn't it. (Their future)

--Susan's fingers assembling the music, Monty's voice

--do this from Susan's viewpoint onstage

--She had seen him sitting at the angle needed to favor his knee

"A present, Wes.

→ "You'll know the right best cubbyhole for this, number

(**To come:** scene opens on a Harlem street, a boy following and probably imitating the distinctive cowboy walk of Monty, who has reached New York by way of successive radio triumphs--Medicine Hat to Minneapolis, then Chicago--that have led to concert-hall gigs and his recent anointment by a NY music critic as "the latest rival to Paul Robeson.")

(Susan and Wes are also in NY, although probably on separate tracks of life. He's there per usual, in his Park Avenue-like existence. She's now tarnished in Montana, from gossip about her and Monty, and has taken a job with the national office of Over There Memorial, working on the archival project--diaries, letters such as Samuel's etc.)

and took along all trustworthy signs of rain or clear blue with them to wherever.

It's going to be the death of us all."

take a Dante to know, wouldn't it. Inferno or Paradiso. The tiers of Carnegie Hall as everlasting as circles of heaven or hell, Wes's as usual custom-made.

now motionless
the soar of the song holding them into their spots in the

tier upon tier as unmoving and eternal
out across the great dark hall timeless
as circles of heaven or hell, Wess at usual custom-made

Overture

A story wants to be told a certain way, or it is merely the alphabet badly recited. The words borrow us, so to speak. This is the story of the three of us, which I am more fit to tell now than when I was alive.

--on the flyleaf of the diary of Susan Duff,

discovered among the papers of the WW Cattle and Land Company

at the Widener Library, Harvard University, in the year 2025

Overture

A story wants to be told a certain way, or it is merely the alphabet badly recited. At the right time the words borrow us, so to speak. Unseen sides of things then can become as clear as the force of music. This is the story of the three of us, which I am more fit to tell now than when I was alive.

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Evening Star

1924

"The evening, the eve-ning,

"The evening brings all home."

The last ringleted girl had finished off the ballad on a hopeful note--she would have given her ears for a praising word from Miss Duff--and night and quiet came again to the house on Highland Street. Regular as the curtain of nightfall was Susan Duff's routine in closing away her teaching day. Shoulders back, her tall frame straightening expectantly even though there was no one in the house to meet for the evening but herself, she shuffled sheet music into its rightful order, tallied the hours of lessons in the secondhand mercantile ledger she kept handy atop the piano and cast an eye over the schedule of impending pupils, then the balky old doors of the music parlor

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freshen her face with a rinse of cold water; one adjusting glance into the mirror, never two; hairpins taken out, and her chestnut hair shaken down. Onward to her stovetop supper, which she raced through as though still making up for her father's interminable graces over expiring food. Now, with a pat to the kitchen and a cursory locking of doors and windows, she was ready to ascend.

As fixed as a star, the telltale glow of her gable window appeared over Helena at the last of dusk and burned on past respectable bedtime. You might think a woman of her early climb in life, singled out by her father's God for a soaring voice to lift His hymns and then casting away choirsong for the anthems of a harsh young century, would find it a hard comedown to be faced with a nightly audience of only herself. You'd be as wrong as you could be, Susan would have you know in a fingersnap. The hours beyond dark she counted as her own, free and clear of beginner lessons and quavery approximations of high C.

This night, however, no sooner was she upstairs than she whipped to a halt in front of the alcove of window, her gaze drawn down the hillside to the state capitol dome, resting as it did on the center of the government of Montana like a giant's copper helmet. The dome still was alight with the festoon of bulbs that had greeted 1924 three months ago, which seemed to her uncalled for.

"Blaze," Susan addressed the civic constellation in the coarse-ground Fifeshire burr she was born to, "see if I care."

She gave a throaty chuckle at herself and wended her way toward her desk. The attic-like room extended the full length of the house--loft quarters for a married pair of servants, this must have originally been--and Susan used the expanse like a rambler cottage perched above the formal quarters of downstairs. The rolltop desk, a divan, a phonograph, what had been her father's Morris chair and footstool, onyx-topped sidetables, a blue-and-black knitted comforter on the sill seat of the strategically aimed gable window, sets of bookshelves, a spinet piano, a highly unreliable new thing called a radio set, the whopping Duff family Bible on a reading stand of its own, all populated what was in actual fact her bedroom.

This mob of comforts drew her up out of public day as if lifting her into a lifeboat, and Susan tallied the necessity of this each time, too. Liberal with the night, resourceful as she probably ever was going to be in her fortieth year under heaven, she held to the belief that she was most her new self in these upstairs hours, at this elevation where the minute hand did not count. The time of footlights and the song-led marches for the right of women to vote were tucked

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living chess piece. Time did not lag here in her industrious garret; it was not permitted to.

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"Susan? You might have changed the lock."

He arrived on the wings of that commanding smile. *The very model of a modern genteel Major,* a line of hers teased somewhere back in that diary. Behind Wes, men would have charged Hell; in fact, men had.

Surprised no end to be confronting him again after all this time, Susan still could not help but marvel at the presence with which Wes did most anything, as though the shadow under him were the thrust of a stage. Poised there at the top of her stairs, wearing a fortune on his back--or more aptly, on the swath of chest where General Pershing himself had pinned a medal--he looked ready to do a white-glove inspection; civilian life, now that he was tailored to it again, was a continuation of duty by other means. Even his way of standing, the weight taken on his left leg to spare the right knee peppered by shrapnel at St. Mihiel,

proclaimed the reliance that the world had wanted to place on him. Brave and wounded at the same time: the story of Wesley Williamson's life, as she was plentifully aware, on more than one kind of battlefield.

Voice training had unforeseen benefits. She thought she managed to sound in possession of herself--or at least within her own custody--as she spoke back to the immaculate invader:

"Evidently I saved you some shinnying, by not."

"Oh oh," Wes said, his smile dented but still there, "I guess I've been told."

He picked his way through the long room, interested as a museum-goer, to the perch nearest her, which happened to be the edge of her bed. "May I?"

You and your Williamson manners. Walk uninvited into a woman's bedroom, then be solicitous about seating yourself too near. This time Susan's words would have cut through bone:

"Sit yourself down, Wes, please do. I haven't had a good look at a family man in a while."

Wes ducked his head slightly in acknowledgment. At least she had not put the run on him, quite yet. He settled to the bed and wordlessly looked over at her

before trying to make his case. The woman there just beyond reach had an enlarged sense of justice, which had been one of the first passions that drew them together. The snip and snap of talk with Susan, their political mustard plasters for the world if they could have had their way; Lord, how he missed that, and her laugh which started somewhere down in the Scotch gravel of her family footing, and the abandon with which she performed the comical burning of her corset in the fireplace of that ~~Edinburgh hotel~~ above Edinburgh room to prove to him she could be modern in that way too, and her cinnamon eyes that put you in your place and made you like it--in the midst of their love-making those eyes had stayed open, reflective even then--and the always intriguing extent of Susan, down to her industrious fingers which, it amazed him to find during some early clasp of love, were appreciably longer than his. The right length, by rare luck of nature, to caress music from piano keys or to coax it from the air when she sang. The heaven-given lilt of her voice he missed most of all, even when she was maximally provoked with him, as now. Everything was there to be missed, as he contemplated Susan across the frozen distance between bed and desk.

"Lost, are you?" she inquired. "I thought this was still your New York time of year."

"You make me sound like a migratory bird."

"Wes?" She put down her pen as if pinning something beneath it. "Do I get to know why you're here?"

"I'm working on that." Reluctantly giving up his inspection of her, he let his eyes slide over the motley keepsakes in attendance around her, the brass paperweight shaped like a treble clef, the tiny mock strongbox which held pen nibs, the soldier photograph with its tint going drab, the silver letter-opener with the French maiden of liberty, one breast bare and glinting, in bas relief on its handle. His gaze lit on the open pages in front of Susan. The voices of paper were one of his specialties. Thinking out loud, not a usual habit, he said: "A woman armed with a diary. Not the best company for me to be keeping, I suppose."

Susan simply looked at him across the small white field of pages. Just looked at him. When you have cost a man a governorship, what further scandal does he think you are apt to inflict on him?

The silence stretched. At last Wes brought out:

"You know I couldn't."

"I know you wouldn't," she said as if correcting his spelling. They had been through this and through this. A proven hero who could not or would not undergo a tug-of-war with his church. *"Wes, the Pope has no need of the divorce law. But you do."* Who had broken his vows six ways from Sunday in half the countries of Europe and in this very room and then would not break his misbegotten marriage. *"She's not a well woman, Susan. That on top of the faith--I can't face leaving her when she's like this, it's against everything in me."*

Susan, from a family that had the stamina of wolfhounds, held no patience for the delicate constitution and strategic indispositions of Wes's wife. She couldn't resist asking:

"How is the tender Merrinell?"

For a start, his wife was under the impression he was in Minneapolis at this moment, buying grain consignments. Wes shifted a bit on the bed and reeled off that she was holding her own, at the place up the Hudson now for Easter break with the gold-dust twins, although they weren't especially twins any more, only grudgingly even sisters... Susan half-listened, fascinated as of old with the change of atmosphere Wes brought into a room with him. In the period before

him one of her beaus at musical evenings, a tippler, smelled of cloves. She could swear Wes always smelled of silk.

He broke off what he was saying and again regarded Susan as though taking the opportunity to stock up on her. "How is the Lord's gift to the musically inclined?"

"Enough how's, the two of us are starting to sound like a powwow, for heaven's sake. This isn't like you, Wes. At least your word was always good. When we stopped throwing ourselves at each other--"

"--When you dropped me like a bushel of hot peppers--"

"--When we were this close to being the flavor on every gossip's tongue and I said I'd have no more of it if I couldn't have you, we agreed that was that."

Actually, he recalled, she had handed him his walking papers with words more stinging than those. *"If I'm going to be alone in life, Wes, it might as well be with myself."*

"You're not doing either of us any good by barging in here in the middle of the night, are you," Susan was at now. "If I know anything about it, you were always quite concerned with 'appearances.'"

Wes waved that off. "No one much is up at this hour. I had Monty leave me off at the capitol grounds and came up around the back blocks. Here, come see the new Doozy." With the aimed quickness which had always reminded her of a catapult going off, he launched up on his good leg and was over to the gable.

In spite of herself, curiosity drew her over to the window by him. In the diffused glow of the strings of bulbs on the capitol dome, the butter-yellow Dusenburg could be seen parked down the hill from dozing Highland Street. Wes's Negro chauffeur, Monty, was caressing the hood of the automobile with a polishing rag. The lanky form leaned into the already burnished surface as if magnetized to the machine. "Monty would sleep in it if I'd let him," Wes was saying.

bundled up? (it is March)

Susan stood there transfixed. The Williamsons. Their wealth and their fortunes, which were two different things. She closed her eyes for an instant, overcome by the fresh weight of memory. But when she opened them again it was all still there: the penny-colored dome that should have been Wes's by civic right, her reflected outline on the pane of night beside his, the chauffeur stroking the flanks of the costly plaything.

Wes turned from the window, a smile of a different sort lingering on him. Like all heroes, he had a side to him that didn't always come into daylight. Susan could have told you that he liked to fool people by going around as if he were the pluperfect example of a stuffed shirt; until the shirt came off him. Wondering why she hadn't changed that door lock, she scrupulously created more distance now between herself and him.

He surveyed the room's furnishings again. "I'm glad I wasn't the one to heft all this up those stairs. Know what I think?"

"Not without a Ouija board."

"You're treed, up here. No, let me finish. You've treed yourself. Chased the Susan Duff that was, right up into this upholstered perch." He walked back the length of the room to seat himself on the edge of the bed again, letting drop a phrase at a time as he came. "I see makework. I see pastimes. I believe I see the unfinished musical masterpiece. I see the man-eating diary. What I don't see is you taking the world on as you always did." When she made no answer, he shifted to the affectionate mock burr he had never been able to master: "Tis a waste of a bonny woman."

"It's late, is what it is," she left it at, making a show of checking the clock. "Wes, please. Have your say and take yourself home."

"I have the pupil of a lifetime for you."

"I don't lack for pupils, they're coming out my ears." Which was not as true as it once would have been.

"This one, I want you to put all your time to, for however long it takes. I'll pay double for everything--your hours, whatever you need to arrange in the way of accompaniment, all the sheet music you can stand, name it." Watching to see how she was taking this, he immediately upped the ante: "All right then, triple."

"Where does this come from all of a sudden? I have never wanted your--"

"There's no charity to this. You'll earn your keep with this pupil, Susan, don't ever worry about that. It's a voice I'd say is--different. Unformed, maybe you'll say rough as a cob, but hard to resist somehow. It stays on in the ear, is that any kind of musical term? You'd take this on, if it fell on you from a clear blue sky, I'm sure you would."

His cadences of persuasion tested the walls of the room, as if this familiar floor were a speaking platform over the night-held capital city. Wes himself had a

voice the size of a dictionary. Susan knew by heart every gruff note and passionate coax he was capable of, and how effectively the mixture worked. *"The copper companies that have looted this state for thirty years think they are immune to fair taxation,"* she had heard him send crowds into a rising roar as he uncoiled his campaign tagline, *"I promise them an epidemic of it!"* No other politician in the state had stung back as fiercely at the KKK as it crept west and its flaming crosses began to flare on the bald hills above Catholic towns and railheads bringing immigrants to Montana land: *"This cuckoo Klan, they seem to be scared the Pope will descend on them in their beds, else why do they go around wearing their nighties over their heads?"* The cause in her own bones, women's right to vote, he had furthered at every chance. *"Comets attend the death of kings,"* his famous words to the 1910 suffrage convention as Halley's fireball swept across the Britain of the newly deceased Edward VII, *"perhaps to see whether they truly fit their filigreed caskets. Across the water, there is a government, with complicit silence from its throne on down, that has fought its suffragists with detention, forced feedings, and truncheons. But this country, this state, with its every voice must greet the women who are pointing out true democracy to us."* There never had been a hairbreadth of difference between him and her on politics, only every

other field of life, and Susan had been all for his gubernatorial bid and the passions he gave such voice to. In his other great campaign, in the bloody mud of France, the words of Wes were known to have made the difference between life and death. She carefully chose her way around his entreaty now:

"For a singing teacher, hearing is believing. All I ever ask is to be amazed."

So I remember, his expression let her know. "Opera, vaudeville," he went right on, "I don't know what we're talking, with this. I honestly don't. I'm like the fellow who only knew two tunes: 'One is *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*, and the other isn't, I think.' But you, New York and Europe and all, you've heard the best and you'll know where this voice can be made to fit. Oh, and we'll need to do this at the ranch, not here. It's a shame, but we can't--well, you'll see..." He frowned. "I'll work the idea into Whit's skull, but we may need to make arrangements around him."

Susan shook her head no and then some.

"Your old place, then," he regrouped. Not for nothing, he reminded himself, was this prideful woman the daughter of Ninian Duff. Ninian the Calvinian. "You could set up shop there, why not? I'll see that it's outfitted for

you, furniture, groceries, bedding, cat and canary if you want." He paused in that spotlit manner of his, as if to make sure each of his words was registering. "This isn't some notion that just walked up to me in the street, Susan. I'm asking you to do everything you know how for this pupil. The works."

"Wes?" Honest bewilderment broke through in her voice. "Wes, who in this world means that much to you?"

He appeared stunned at hearing it put that way. Sitting there glazed, pale as porcelain.

When Wes at last rose from the bed edge, was it her imagination or did he lurch more than a misbehaving knee would account for? She watched him stiffly navigate the length of the room, biting her tongue against calling out to him. Let him march down her stairs and out of her carefully compartmented existence (*Treed!*), let him leave that key in the door, let that be the natural end of it.

But he paused at the gable window and stood there facing out into the night. Over his shoulder he told her: "Monty."

"Blaze," Susan addressed the civic constellation in the coarse-ground Fifeshire burr she was born to, "see if I care."

She gave a throaty chuckle at herself and wended her way toward her desk. Pausing there to choose a lozenge from the cut-glass jar there, she tasted it thoughtfully with the tip of her tongue, then decisively swirled it in as if it would clear away beginner lessons and quavery approximations of high C; poor Janey, last pupil of the day and the absolute farthest from a worthwhile voice.

Still in thought, Susan took a look around the sum of the space to judge the state of her housekeeping up here and as usual decided she needed the availability of these hours beyond dark more than it needed housecleaning. The attic-like room extended the full length of the house--loft quarters for a married pair of servants, this must have originally been--and she used the expanse like a rambler cottage perched above the formal quarters of downstairs. The rolltop desk, a divan, a phonograph, what had been her father's Morris chair and footstool, onyx-topped sidetables, a blue-and-black knitted comforter on the sill seat of the strategically aimed gable window, sets of bookshelves, a spinet piano, a highly unreliable new thing called a radio set, the whopping Duff family Bible

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This mob of comforts drew her up out of public day as if lifting her into a lifeboat, and Susan tallied the necessity of this each time, too. Liberal with the night, resourceful as she probably ever was going to be in what that Bible would have called her fortieth year under heaven, she held to the belief that she was most her new self in these upstairs hours, at this elevation where the minute hand did not count. The time of footlights and the song-led marches for the right of women to vote were tucked into the past as firmly as could be, and as to the tongues of the town down there beyond the base of the stairs, she could do nothing about those. But up here, what she could do was to get busy at life's amended version of Susan Duff. There were encouraging letters to be written to favorite former pupils. (Tonight's, which took lip-biting concentration, to the breathy young soprano whose recent *lieder* recital in Milwaukee had not found favor there.) This political city's newspapers to be devoured, the *Herald* for spite and the *Independent* for sustenance. Books in plenitude; currently she was trying to make her way through E.M. Forster and the murky doings in the Malabar Caves. Music, of course: her half-finished operetta *Prairie Tide* always awaited, always

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"Susan? You might have changed the lock."

He arrived on the wings of that commanding smile. *The very model of a modern genteel Major,* a line of hers teased somewhere back in that diary. Behind Wes, men would have charged Hell; in fact, men had.

Surprised no end to be confronting him again after all this time, Susan still could not help but marvel at the presence with which Wes did most anything, as though the shadow under him were the thrust of a stage. Poised there at the top of her stairs, wearing a fortune on his back--or more aptly, on the swath of chest where General Pershing himself had pinned a medal--he looked ready to do a white-glove inspection; civilian life, now that he was tailored to it again, was a continuation of duty by other means. Even his way of standing, the weight taken on his left leg to spare the right knee peppered by shrapnel at St. Mihiel, proclaimed the reliance that the world had wanted to place on him. Brave and wounded at the same time: the story of Wesley Williamson's life, as she was plentifully aware, on more than one kind of battlefield.

Voice training had unforeseen benefits. She thought she managed to sound in possession of herself--or at least within her own custody--as she spoke back to the immaculate invader:

"Evidently I saved you some shinnying, by not."

"Oh oh," Wes said, his smile dented but still there, "I guess I've been told."

He picked his way through the long room, interested as a museum-goer, to the perch nearest her, which happened to be the edge of her bed. "May I?"

You and your Williamson manners. Walk uninvited into a woman's bedroom, then be solicitous about seating yourself too near. This time Susan's words would have cut through bone:

"Sit yourself down, Wes, please do. I haven't had a good look at a family man in a while."

Wes ducked his head slightly in acknowledgment. At least she had not put the run on him, quite yet. He settled to the bed and wordlessly looked over at her before trying to make his case. The woman there just beyond reach had an enlarged sense of justice, which had been one of the first passions that drew them together. The snip and snap of talk with Susan, their political mustard plasters for the world if they could have had their way; Lord, how he missed that, and her laugh which started somewhere down in the Scotch gravel of her family footing, and the abandon with which she performed the comical burning of her corset in the fireplace of that room above Edinburgh to prove to him she could be modern in that way too, and her cinnamon eyes that put you in your place and made you like it--in the midst of their love-making those eyes had stayed open, reflective

more detail - Wes's interior - He was a man for (q?) fine points, t...

even then--and the always intriguing extent of Susan, down to her industrious fingers which, it amazed him to find during some early clasp of love, were appreciably longer than his. The right length, by rare luck of nature, to caress music from piano keys or to coax it from the air when she sang. The heaven-given lilt of her voice he missed most of all, even when she was maximally provoked with him, as now. Everything was there to be missed, as he contemplated Susan across the frozen distance between bed and desk.

"Lost, are you?" she inquired. "I thought this was still your New York time of year."

"You make me sound like a migratory bird."

"Wes?" She put down her pen as if pinning something beneath it. "Do I get to know why you're here?"

"I'm working on that." Reluctantly giving up his inspection of her, he let his eyes slide over the motley keepsakes in attendance around her, the brass paperweight shaped like a treble clef, the tiny mock strongbox which held pen nibs, the soldier photograph with its tint going drab, the silver letter-opener with the French maiden of liberty, one breast bare and glinting, in bas relief on its handle. His gaze lit on the open pages in front of Susan. The voices of paper

were one of his specialties. Thinking out loud, not a usual habit, he said: "A woman armed with a diary. Not the best company for me to be keeping, I suppose."

Susan simply looked at him across the small white field of pages. Just looked at him. When you have cost a man a governorship, what further scandal does he think you are apt to inflict on him?

The silence stretched. At last Wes brought out:

"You know I couldn't."

"I know you wouldn't," she said as if correcting his spelling. They had been through this and through this. A proven hero who could not or would not undergo a tug-of-war with his church. *"Wes, the Pope has no need of the divorce law. But you do."* Who had broken his vows six ways from Sunday in half the countries of Europe and in this very room and then would not break his misbegotten marriage. *"She's not a well woman, Susan. That on top of the faith--I can't face leaving her when she's like this, it's against everything in me."*

Susan, from a family that had the stamina of wolfhounds, held no patience for the delicate constitution and strategic indispositions of Wes's wife. She couldn't resist asking:

"How is the tender Merrinell?"

For a start, his wife was under the impression Wes was in Minneapolis at this moment, buying grain consignments. He shifted a bit on the bed and reeled off that she was holding her own, at the place up the Hudson now for Easter break with the gold-dust twins, although they weren't especially twins any more, only grudgingly even sisters... Susan half-listened, fascinated as of old with the change of atmosphere Wes brought into a room with him. In the period before him one of her beaus at musical evenings, a tippler, smelled of cloves. She could swear Wes always smelled of silk.

He broke off what he was saying and again regarded Susan as though taking the opportunity to stock up on her. "We both know you don't care a hoot in hell about any of that. Let's try you. How is the Lord's gift to the musically inclined?"

"Oho, this from the man who always told me he couldn't tell Paganini from page nine. This isn't like you, Wes. At least your word was always good. When we stopped throwing ourselves at each other--"

"--When you dropped me like a bushel of hot peppers--"

"--When we were this close to being the flavor on every gossip's tongue and I said I'd have no more of it if I couldn't have you, we agreed that was that."

Actually, he recalled, she had handed him his walking papers with words more stinging than those. *"If I'm going to be alone in life, Wes, it might as well be with myself."*

"You're not doing either of us any good by barging in here in the middle of the night, are you," Susan was at now. "If I know anything about it, you were always quite concerned with 'appearances.'"

Wes waved that off. "No one much is up at this hour. I had Monty leave me off at the capitol grounds and came up around the back blocks. Here, come see the new Doozy." With the aimed quickness which had always reminded her of a catapult going off, he launched up on his good leg and was over to the gable.

In spite of herself, curiosity drew her over to the window by him. In the diffused glow of the strings of bulbs on the capitol dome, the butter-yellow Dusenburg could be seen parked down the hill from dozing Highland Street. Wes's nicely outfitted Negro chauffeur, Monty, was caressing the hood of the automobile with a polishing rag. The lanky form leaned into the already

burnished surface as if magnetized to the machine. "Monty would sleep in it if I'd let him," Wes was saying.

Susan stood there transfixed. The Williamsons. Their wealth and their fortunes, which were two different things. She closed her eyes for an instant, overcome by the fresh weight of memory. But when she opened them again it was all still there: the penny-colored dome that should have been Wes's by civic right, her reflected outline on the pane of night beside his, the chauffeur stroking the flanks of the costly plaything.

Wes turned from the window, a smile of a different sort lingering on him. Like all heroes, he had a side to him that didn't always come into daylight. Susan could have told you that he liked to fool people by going around as if he were the pluperfect example of a stuffed shirt; until the shirt came off him. Wondering why she hadn't changed that door lock, she scrupulously created more distance now between herself and him.

He surveyed the room's furnishings again. "I'm glad I wasn't the one to heft all this up those stairs. Know what I think?"

"Not without a Ouija board."

"You're treed, up here. No, let me finish. You've treed yourself. Chased the Susan Duff that was, right up into this upholstered perch." He walked back the length of the room to seat himself on the edge of the bed again, letting drop a phrase at a time as he came. "I see makework. I see pastimes. I believe I see the unfinished musical masterpiece. I see the man-eating diary. What I don't see is you taking the world on as you always did." When she made no answer, he shifted to the affectionate mock burr he had never been able to master: "Tis a waste of a bonny woman."

"It's late, is what it is," she left it at, making a show of checking the clock. "Wes, please. Have your say and take yourself home."

"I have the pupil of a lifetime for you."

"I don't lack for pupils, they're coming out my ears." Which was not as true as it once would have been.

"This one, I want you to put all your time to, for however long it takes. I'll pay double for everything--your hours, whatever you need to arrange in the way of accompaniment, all the sheet music you can stand, name it. All right then, triple," he said after of a moment of gauging how she was taking this.

"Where does this come from all of a sudden? I have never wanted your--"

"There's no charity to this. You'll earn your keep with this pupil, Susan, don't ever worry about that. It's a voice I'd say is--different. Unformed, maybe you'll say rough as a cob, but hard to resist somehow. It stays on in the ear, is that any kind of musical term? You'd take this on, if it fell on you from a clear blue sky, I'm sure you would."

His cadences of persuasion tested the walls of the room, as if this familiar floor were a speaking platform over the night-held capital city. Wes himself had a voice the size of a dictionary. Susan knew by heart every gruff note and passionate coax he was capable of, and how effectively the mixture worked. *"The copper companies that have looted this state for thirty years think they are immune to fair taxation,"* she had heard him send crowds into a rising roar as he uncoiled his campaign tagline, *"I promise them an epidemic of it!"* No other politician in the state had stung back as fiercely at the KKK as it crept west and its flaming crosses began to flare on the bald hills above Catholic towns and railheads bringing immigrants to Montana land: *"This cuckoo Klan, they seem to be scared the Pope will descend on them in their beds, else why do they go around wearing their nighties over their heads?"* The cause in her own bones, women's right to vote, he had furthered at every chance. *"Comets attend the death of kings,"* his

famous words to the 1910 suffrage convention as Halley's fireball swept across the Britain of the newly deceased Edward VII, *"perhaps to see whether they truly fit their filigreed caskets. Across the water, there is a government, with complicit silence from its throne on down, that has fought its suffragists with detention, forced feedings, and truncheons. But this country, this state, with its every voice must greet the women who are pointing out true democracy to us."* There never had been a hairbreadth of difference between him and her on politics, only every other field of life, and Susan had been all for his gubernatorial bid and the passions he gave such voice to. In his other great campaign, in the bloody mud of France, the words of Wes were known to have made the difference between life and death. She carefully chose her way around his entreaty now:

"For a singing teacher, hearing is believing. All I ever ask is to be amazed."

So I remember, his expression let her know. "Opera, vaudeville," he went right on, "I don't know what we're talking, with this. I honestly don't. I'm like the fellow who only knew two tunes: 'One is *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*, and the other isn't, I think.' But you, New York and Europe and all, you've heard the best and you'll know where this voice can be made to fit. Oh, and we'll

need to do this at the ranch, not here. It's a shame, but we can't--well, you'll see..." He frowned. "I'll work the idea into Whit's skull, but we may need to make arrangements around him."

Susan shook her head no and then some.

"Your old place, then," he regrouped. Not for nothing, he reminded himself, was this prideful woman the daughter of Ninian Duff. Ninian the Calvinian. "You could set up shop there, why not? I'll see that it's outfitted for you, furniture, groceries, bedding, cat and canary if you want." He paused in that spotlit manner of his, as if to make sure each of his words was registering. "This isn't some notion that just walked up to me in the street, Susan. I'm asking you to do everything you know how for this pupil. The works."

"Wes?" Honest bewilderment broke through in her voice. "Wes, who in this world means that much to you?"

He appeared stunned at hearing it put that way. Sitting there glazed, pale as porcelain.

When Wes at last rose from the bed edge, was it her imagination or did he lurch more than a misbehaving knee would account for? She watched him stiffly navigate the length of the room, biting her tongue against calling out to him. Let

him march down her stairs and out of her carefully compartmented existence (*Treed!*), let him leave that key in the door, let that be the natural end of it.

But he paused at the gable window and stood there facing out into the night. Over his shoulder he told her: "Monty."

Over There

1919

"Wilkommen, Yankee Doodles! Bist sie Montanischers?" The not unfriendly how-do-you-do had wafted across the few hundred yards of battered ground between the opposite trench and his men as they were digging in.

"Ja, Fritz," a buck private fresh off a potato farm in the Gallatin Valley cupped his hands and shouted back. *"Wir bin Rocky Mountain buckaroos."*

"Haben sie sachs-shooters (like) Alte Shatterhand und Winitou?"

'Sachs? Nein, nein! (For you) wir (needing only) ein (bullet)."

At the time Wes laughed helplessly. If only the conduct of war did match up with Karl May's dashing pages of prairie shoot-em-ups as imagined from

Unter den Linden. But the enemy's attentiveness to newcomers in the stale flat-footed killing match that was the Western Front was understandable: Montanans were the mould for reinvented soldiers, American Expeditionary Force-style--hunters from the time they were boys on ranches and homesteads, well acquainted with shovel calluses and dirty chores and rough quarters. Most of all, not worn down as the Europeans and British were by the routine of trench life, mud and boredom interspersed by the warning whizzes of every calibre of weapon known to man. Wes remembered thinking that Company C handled better that day, their first in the frontlines, than they ever did on the grumblesome troopship or in the poker-wild disembarkation camp, and that sort of thought had told him he was thoroughly an officer again. At the time, of course, only newly commissioned as an old captain, not yet a young major; but back in command comfortably enough. *"Sergeant, instruct Private Imhoff to limit his conversations with the other side,"* he had issued the order just to keep matters rolling his way, before jauntily setting off to inspect the remainder of the position. Not twenty minutes later, a salvo screamed in on the Montana battalion. He and Lieutenant Olsen had to make themselves thin together behind a shared snag of a tree, shrapnel whining sharp as a singing saw.