original version

Still bleakly turned toward Susan, he said to Bailey: "Ready or not, now we have to."

You have the day for it at least, Angus.

Scrubbed by yesterday's local rain, a piece of weather the rest of the Two Medicine country would have paid hard cash for, the valley of English Creek and the beveled benchlands around it showed a surprise hint of green. Beyond and more than a mile up, the reefs of the Rockies were standing bright in the sun, blue and purple in their cliffs. Susan felt lit by memories. *Ay, you could eat the air here,* her father liked to proclaim on such rare fine mornings. *We'll need to,* her mother would have ready, *if you don't butcher one of your darling creatures.*

& other earlycomers

Absorbed, Susan glided off from Bailey and his crew and the other earlycomers towards the rows of markers. The graveyard here on the hill overlooking Gros Ventre held them all now. She visited for some minutes among the stones and their epitaphs. The names, the names. They filled the years of her younger self. Now, with Angus, every family of the Scotch Heaven homesteads was incised, a member or two or all, in this knoll. She stepped last to the graves

of her parents; stood there held by the thought of how much the world had turned over in the five years since their deaths.

At her back she heard the slick whisk of gabardine pantlegs approaching. Bailey was gray-sheened as a dove from head to toe, his dandy new Stetson and boots matching the cut of everything but his eyes. "The family's arriving," he said as if introducing himself. "So's half the country, it looks like. It would help if you would get over there"--he was gazing around at the Two Medicine country's sculpted perimeter of buttes and peaks and benchlands but only, she knew, as far as a rifle could carry--"in with the others. What do you say?"

"I'll be where Adair wants me," she told him. "Give them a minute to sort themselves out and then I'll come."

Bailey trudged off to blend with the crowd, one of his men now drifting toward her in the rotation of protection. The air was still, the canopy of cottonwood leaves motionless as a pale-green roof of domes over the town, down at the base of the knoll. Somewhere there, Wes at his business. He had dodged like a Nijinsky when she wanted him to attend Angus's funeral. Dealings to be done, he intimated; it would do no good for him to be on hand, he protested,

instantly

Bailey had set everything possible into place. Under her unquitting stare, he put it at its simplest:

"I'm not wanted there."

Susan levied that back at him. *"You know, don't you, I'm not either, with the exception of the McCaskills."*

Wes had digested that in silence. The past couple of days of tension between them--held off from one another by the forcefield of unsayable motives but in the pull of what each still needed the other for--showed on him as if a mask had slipped. She knew it was all he had in him to tell her when he said at last: *"Some dealings won't wait."*

Speaking of. Susan bolstered herself and crossed the cemetery to the graveside. People were pouring in; maybe it was just as well for Wes's vanity that he hadn't come, this was a crowd befitting a governor. This entire end of the county had passed through Angus's classroom, and she catalogued faces by family resemblance. Some gave her a nod of recognition, a good many carefully gave her nothing.

When she reached the McCaskills, Varick as the new head of the family shook her hand and thanked her for coming. Beside him, Beth was resoundingly

pregnant. The boy Alec was too old to cry but too young to stand still in the family grouping. Then Adair, eyes glistening, turned from the Bible-holding minister--*Oh, Angus, surely they'll balance that off with a helping of Burns*--and clasped her. After a bit she braced back from Susan, dabbed away the tears which had joined the freckles beneath each eye, and looked off as if for the missing. "Fickle old wind. Angus would laugh, this is the one day it didn't come by to pay him its respects."

The town of Gros Ventre looked as if it could use a customer, any kind of customer, this morning. Wes checked his watch. Patting his pocket to make sure of the day's documents, he climbed out of his backseat workspace in the Duesenberg, parked as discreetly as something like it could be behind the Sedgwick House hotel, and walked on up the empty main street. Still making his calculations but careful of the off-angle set of steps into the Valley Stockmen's Bank, he went in. He could see Potter riffling papers of his own, and he headed on back.

"Well, Major," the banker said cordially, looking up over his desk. "Business first thing in the morning?"

"That's why daylight was invented, George."

"With me, the only crack of dawn is my sacroiliac as I roll over in bed." Wes was sure his father had heard the same ritual joke from Potter in one financial go-round or another in this same room. "But that's how the Double W gets the jump on the rest of us, hmm? Have a seat, and what can I do you for?"

Through the open door of the banker's office Wes glanced out to where the tellers were going about business as usual. He asked idly, "Will you be closing for the funeral?"

"This mother of mine," Varick was saying to Susan at his first chance to do so without being overheard, "has her own idea of how to say goodbye to Dad. But she needs you in it with her."

"Anything," said Susan.

"Whose? McCaskill's?" Potter had the air of genial sharing that he employed on everything from foreclosure notices to remarks about the weather. "We can't shut down every time there's one less homesteader."

Wes stepped over and closed the office door. He said as though it had only now occurred to him: "Do you realize there's only one letter's difference between *skulk* and *skunk*?"

"You lost me there, Major." The banker rocked forward in his chair, staying attentively tilted.

"I'll bet." Wes reached into the breast pocket of his suit and brought out the documentation. *Realm of Pondera County, Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,* each of the membership-and-dues cards in the packet was headed. Each was about the size of a schoolchild's report card and was thorough down to height, weight, color of eyes and hair, and date of oath. They were alphabetical, and he riffled rapidly to the *P*s. He flipped a card across the desk.

Potter's glance rebounded instantly from the card with his name on it to Wes's confronting eyes. "Where did you get those?"

"Don't make me tired. At your house, where else." Wes watched at him as he would something that crawled. "Not me personally, of course, but someone who knows how to deal with firebugs and cow killers and would-be assassins."

"You Williamsons always think you're good at running a bluff." Potter's mettle as a hater was fully in his voice by now, but so was last-ditch cunning. "I

would imagine you're a clubman yourself, Major--you must know there's no law against belonging to a fraternal organization."

"Maybe not, but then there's trespass at our place, breaking and entering at Susan Duff's, malicious destruction of property, reckless endangerment--"

"You want to get giddy citing laws, try the one against miscegenation. That woman and that horse cock you keep around."

Wes in that instant wished bayoneting was legal without a congressional declaration of war. He looked at Potter as he would a gob of spit on a dinner plate. "Even if there was anything to it, you yellowbelly," the words snapped out of him in pellets of cold rage, "there's no witness." Dolph by now would be halfway to Chicago on the cattle train, done with his turnabout job of coughing up those who were wooing him and a couple of months of bonus wages in his wallet and his provisional Klan card folded away somewhere as a souvenir. "And don't count on any others of that skulking bunch you head up. They're busy being reasoned with." Whit and his men right now were going name to name from those cards through this town. The remainder of Bailey's force was doing the same in Valier, the rejuvenated sheriff and muscular deputies were spreading the gospel of persuasion in the town of Conrad. Across the state at this hour, his old

political allies were hitting the Klan with what Wes knew would be varying effectiveness, but some of it was sounding effective enough; the sheriff at Butte had put out a public declaration that any Klan members caught lingering would be shot like wolves.

The specimen across the desk from Wed made another try at dodging. "I have standing in this town, you're dreaming if you think you can turn people--"

"Potter," Wes said as if instructing the clumsiest member of the awkward squad, "half the banks in this state have gone under in the past couple of years. I'd only need to lift a finger to push yours over that edge. And the bank examiners would pretty quickly find out if any depositors' funds went to pay for white sheets and rednecks and Klan rifles and ammunition, wouldn't they."

The man sat very still, trying to see beyond the corner Wes had him in. He moistened his lips enough to speak. "Maybe I got swept up in this more than I should have."

"Fine. You get to tell that to whatever hooded fools are above you. Now I suggest you close this bank for that funeral. Then go home and pack a bag, and get out of the state. I'm sure you can find a rock to live under, somewhere else."

Monty watched the clock.

He stood still as could be. They hadn't wanted to put him in, this early. But this was the point of day when funerals were held in the Two Medicine country, late enough after morning chores to dress up and make the trip to town, time left for work in the afternoon. He squared himself up, attentive now on the figure almost shoulder to shoulder with him. Somebody else made a pointing motion, which after the workings-over Susan had given him in the auditorium he did not have to think twice to recognize as a cue.

"Now for your listening pleasure again here on station CINE, our latest troubador of the Medicine Line, Montgomery Rathbun." The announcer cocked his eyes around to him but kept his mouth aimed at the almighty microphone on its spear of stand between them. "For those of you not fortunate enough to have been introduced to him through his music last evening, Mister Rathbun's background is an unusual strand in our prairie background. Your father was a member of the American colored cavalry--the 'buffalo soldiers,' as they were called, I believe?"

"He was," Monty said easily into his hemisphere of the mike. The first time, he had worried he would need this written out, along with the music, but

talking on the radio was proving to be a snap; an invisible audience was just right. "Sergeant in the Tenth Cavalry, right down at Fort Assinniboine. He was in charge of troopers, my mother was in charge of laundry, and I seem to be the result."

"And a lucky outcome it was for music-lovers," the announcer orated from inches away. "For those of you who do not know the Fort Assinniboine story and the part it played in our Medicine Line past"--here he resorted to a script of what these radio people called canned history, for what Monty knew would be the next two minutes.

Making sure of his music sheets, in that noiseless way they'd shown him so the rustle of paper wouldn't make ten thousand listeners think their radio sets were on fire, Monty drew everything of the past half week into him for the effort to come. That feverish conference with her as soon as they were by themselves in the auditorium, in absolute agreement they had to get the Major and Bailey into gear somehow. He had left her in loud conversation with herself and the Victrola version of a night's singing, thrown her a wave from the balcony, and gone down the chute. Led the saddlehorse out of the fort with the blanket over it. Reins in one hand, the 30.06 in his other; take some of the bastards with him, he would, if

he met up with any Klan hoodoos out there in the dark. The long ride north, to here, all night and the next day and on into that night; it had been like riding in the roundup again, except he couldn't remember ever being so saddle-weary during even the longest loops out after cattle. By the time he was across the border--the section-line roads he had been following ran out at Canada, the only way he could tell--and sorted out the town of Medicine Hat to find the radio station, he was feeling hard-used. A hot meal and a scrub-up at the hotel, then presenting himself in full singing rig to the station manager just the way she had said to do. The man had been intrigued enough to try him out on a few songs in the back room, and then excited enough to sign him on, a full week to start.

All that was lacking was her. He wished like everything she was over there governing the keys for this. Wherever the station had dragged up this accompanist, the woman plowed around on the piano like she was doing Sunday school. But he would make up for it. *Oho! The first perfect singer there ever was?* As perfect as he could make it, this time. The announcer was finishing his scripted patter. "And now, out of that historical heritage, here is Montgomery Rathbun to sing one of the most beautiful of traditional spirituals." Monty took the cue, and out into the air, out over the Medicine Line and the weedy parade

ground of the old fort and the time-browned washhouse of the Double W and the silent homesteads of Scotch Heaven, his voice began to travel.

"There's a man going around taking names.

He has taken my mother's name...

Susan held her head high, waiting there at the brow of ground in front of them all. What bits and pieces we are made of, Adair was causing her to know anew. *"You sang in his schoolyard, you sang at our wedding,"* she had said as tranced as if telling a fortune. *"Susan, you can't stop short now. And it's my one time to do a bit of rhyme for Angus."* The two of them and the stiffly-dressed crowd were watching somberly now as Varick sprinkled a handful earth slow as salt into the grave. When he stepped back, Susan and Adair blended their voices, one pure and one striving.

"World enough, world enough

Did I search till there was thee.

And at last, oh at last,

The orbit of your charms

Is world enough for me."

His voice finding stairs to new places it could go, Monty put forth the words as he never had before.

"There's a man

going

around

taking

names.

He has taken my father's name..."

Across the miles, the other two in this trio of tribute lifted their song of Scottish counterpoint as if it could reach over horizons.

"Long enough, long enough

Were my heart and I at sea.

Now at last, oh at last,

The circle of your arms

Is world enough for me."

On oldest maps, a cloud maestro blows tribute to those who sail the edges of the world. Monty similarly gathered breath and all else into the last of song:

"There's a man

going around

taking names.

He has taken my dear friend's name,

Angus McCaskill was his name.

And Death is the name of that man."

(To come: scene that returns Susan and Wes to Helena, their future together or not still unsettled. It somehow leads full-circle to book's opening scene where they are in her garret room together. When Wes and the Gustafsons deliver her to the house on Highland Street, it's about the time of evening when Monty is on the Medicine Hat radio station and she says something like this to Wes:

"Come in, come up." He swung his head to her. "You don't need to get ideas. I just thought you'd better hear what you've wrought."

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use Helena in lead

"Come in, come up." He swung his head to her. "You don't need to get ideas. I just thought you'd better hear what you've wrought."

"Gus, you and the Mrs. go open up the house. Come back for me in a couple of hours."

, oh, an hour.

Susan fiddled with the radio set until it quit crackling.

He stepped in, just in time to hear:

...old pig-iron world

won't you bend to my knee?

Needing to get some circulation in his bad leg, Wes walked to the other end of the bedroom.

"That's odd."

"You could put it that way. Whit says it's the damnedest miracle since the loaves and fishes, his choreboy on the radio."

"No, come listen. I thought I knew all his songs."

"The cavalry life is mighty fine,

Makes you toe the mark on the Medicine Line.

Forty miles a day on beans and hay.

Sergeant Mose and old Black Jack,

They'll run you to the Pole

But double-time you back.

Forty miles a day on beans and hay."

When I was young & in my prime, I dabbed my X on. M Line I used to oo oo all time, toeing. mark

(**To come:** Scene of Monty at the radio studio, relating how he reconstituted the "Medicine Line" song about the black cavalry, with line about his father:

It had taken him most of the night, with a stub of pencil always within reach, to bring all the verses back. His mother had sung it only as a lament, when a laundry line broke...)

"That's a rouser," Susan appraised. "A bit off the spiritual side, but he can make good use of it in his program as--Wes, do you feel all right?"

"Just my knee taking a fit."

The song had set it all off again, like a Very flare over the ground of memory. The medal from Pershing. Small talk from Black Jack himself. Did Major Williamson know the Medicine Line country there in Montana? *"I know it quite well, sir. Some of our range runs nearly to Canada."* Coincidence, said the general. Had an interesting piece of service at a Medicine Line fort himself in cavalry days; there was nothing like the Montana prairie as horse country, was there, except of course in the instance of that vapid gloryhound Custer. Anyway, Fort Assiniboine: called the Presidio of the north then, but was that before your time, Major? Wes, startled: *"I was not aware you had served there, sir."* Most

?

Wes: what all this was built on.
Susan watches him, trying to figure out his reaction

decidedly; escorting Crees back into Canada along the Two Medicine trail, over west of the fort. Queer sort of chore, the great man went on now as Wes had listened with everything in him. Like trying to carry water in a basket; the Crees would leak away into the brush of every creek the Tenth Cavalry forded with them.