direction. Hmpf. House in a hollow makes the weather follow, she recited, slammed away into the back of the house, and wouldn't be spoken to for the rest of the day.

Dad and I walked around the outbuildings. The sheepshed was big beyond belief, bunkered along the base of a slope for a full forty yards, then ellign off into the coulee for another forty, then closed around with a high board fence like a stockade. The one thing such expanse insured was endless walking for the day man—Dad—during lambing time. Moose of a damn place, he said now as if trying to shrink it.
his shoulders and down his arms; work alongside him for an
hour, and you found out he was as strong as men half again his
size--more than strong enough to be wicked in a fight. And
along with muscle, Dad had a knack for handing tasks around in
a crew mildly, almost gently: Monte, if you'd ride up to
the school section and salt those cows there. Jeff, if you'd
work over that fence along the creek. Tony, if you'd . . .
That soft if of his seemed to deal each man into the deciding,
and it was a mark of Dad's crews that they generally went out
of the bunkhouse to the school section and the creek fence and
a dozen other jobs just as if the work had been their own
idea all along.

These years when my father began ramrodding crews were
the era when the homesteaders' valley was dimming away, and
the lustrous wealth of big new ranch owners had begun to show
itself. President Woodrow Wildon's son-in-law toyed with a
ranch on Battle Creek for a while. A family named Manger began
to quilt together vast sprawls of grassland for its sheep.
John Ringling put some of his circus fortune into buying 75,000
acres of range, erected a mammoth dairy barn near the White
Sulphur stockyards, and financed the twenty-mile railroad which
squibbed down the valley to connect with the main track of
the Milwaukee line. John's railroad may be only twenty miles
long, but it's just as wide as any man's railroad, the other
Ringling brothers joshed, but John Ringling was serious as any
squire about his sagebrush empire. He held to his investments
Weathered and dour as a fortress, the sheepshed looked to have crouched on its site eternally. Every other building in the ranch yard, however, reared from open ground to open sky as though spilled into place, hard, only an eyblink before. Nothing greater than a spear of grass backed the buildings—no brushy windbreak, no board fence, not even a pitying fluff of sage as the valley would have provided. As for trees, the entire sum of them on the 2500-acre ranch—two—hunched low at the front of the house, evidently trying to cower in out of the wind.

McGrath had told us that this leasehold—it was called the Jensen ranch—began as a homestead, which meant that people had lived here from at least forty years earlier. How had they never managed to make the place look less stark? From where we stood, a machine shed yawned with disuse on one side of us, a granary shed answered on the other. Between the pair bulked a barn built of notched logs, and its brown mass only made the sheds look all the more cadaverous. Everything in sight—ground, barn, sheds, a rusting windmill—was aslant, as if the impact of the giant sheepshed at the bottom of the yard had teetered the entire ranch toward it.

It was when Dad noticed that he hadn't yet found a place on the ranch where he could stand without one foot lower than the other that he pronounced the Irish fellow's lament on our new home. Then: Aw the hell, Skavinsky, we might as well go see what the grass looks like, and the two of us—neither willing to risk a peace gesture in Grandma's direction yet—
on Good Night, Irene. The record would slide out of hiding and flip into place, I would press my nose against the jukebox glass to see the needle jab down, and then I would feel the sound strum out: Sometimes I live in the countreeee, sometimes I live in townnnn ... A lot of times, men would turn sideways along the bar to listen as the sad chorus went on. Sometimes I take a great notionnnn, to jump into the
drove back up the long snout of benchland in front of the house.

We came up over the crest and were walled to a stop. The western skyline before us was filled high with a steel-blue army of mountains, drawn in battalions of peaks and reefs and gorges and crags as far along the entire rim of the earth as could be seen. Summit after summit bladed up thousands of feet as if charging into the air to strike first at storm and lightning, valleys and clefts expanded wide as if split and hollowed by thunderblast upon thunderblast. Across the clear gaps of distance, we could read black-quilled where black forest wove in beneath cliffs and back among the plummet crumbled of canyons, we could make out the beds of scree tumbled and scattered beneath the marching sheets of rimrock. The Smith River Valley had had mountain ranges all around. This high-set horizon twenty miles to our west thrust itself as if all those past ranges and twice their number more had been tumbled together and then armored with rimrock and icefield. Off this carom-line of summits, we knew, the Continental Divide tipped rivers away to both the Pacific and the Atlantic. The shouldering might of what we were looking at seemed as if it could send those entire oceans too sloshing along routes of flow if the notion struck. Then as we stared and cleared our throats to one another, we began to see a thing more. Along these mastering mountains, all the hundred miles of gashing skyline in our sight, fresh snow was draping down.
comic books which came for me with the mail. Minutes later the
conductor would be resaddled and riding from sight. For the next
seven mornings again, until his hat and shoulders began to show
over the trail crest another time, only the three of us perched
there in the clean blue weather of the summer mountain.

Three of us, and the sheep scattered down a meadow slope
like a slow, slow avalanche of fleeces. Before I was born, my
mother and father had lived other herding summers, shadowing
after the sheep through the long pure days until the lambs had
fattened for shipping. You wouldn't believe the grouse that
were on those slopes then, my father's story-spinning would begin.
That Grass Mountain was just alive with grouse then. I'd shoot

knew how to visit with his customers.

He didn't do it for the business. In White Sulphur
Springs there was plenty of thirsty commerce no matter how
a bartender behaved. Pete simply had made it a hobby to
size up people, and to work out a routine of friendship with
anybody deserving. He had a tribute for the few best men
he knew. Glancing off into the glass hodgepodge behind the
bar, Pete would say slowly: He's a nice fellow. Slow nod,
and slower again: A real nice fellow. And you knew the fellow
must be a prince of the world.

When the two of us straddled onto stools across the
Here was a thought. Dad and I had lived our lifetimes beneath weather-making mountains, none of which tusked up into storm clouds as mightily as this Sawtooth Range of the Rockies would. In front of us now loomed the reefline of the entire continent, where the surf of weather broke and came flooding across, and both of us knew what could be ahead when winter poured down off these north mountains. Yet for the instant, to have come upon grandness anywhere near this spavined ranch, neither of us had the heart to care.

Out from the mountains as well, it turned out, this north country stretched as a land of steady expanse, of crisp-margined distances set long and straight on the earth. All the obliques of our valley life seemed to have been erased and redrawn here as ruler-edged plateaus of grassland, furrowed panels of
that holiday's snapshots show up in a happy flurry; every
scene has been braided to its moment by her looping writing.

Ready for the Big Day: Dad and his brother Angus have doffed
their black ten-gallon hats for the camera, grins in place under
their slicked hair, and bandannas fluttering at their necks
like flags of a new country. The Wildest Bunch in W.S.S.--
seven of them from Ringling and the Basin are ganged along the
side of a car, handrolled cigarettes angling out of the men's
mouths, my mother and her cousin small prim fluffs in the dark
cloudbank of cowboy hats. Angus, in showy riveted chaps,
slips an arm around the cousin. Dad looks squarely as ever
into the camera from where he has tucked down on the running
board; the bridle dangling over his crossed arms must mean
he is about to bronc-ride. My mother stands as close beside
him as she can, tiny and very girlish in a flapper's dress.
She is a few months past her fifteenth birthday.

Then one pose which didn't need her words: the two Doig
brothers in the rodeo corral, the pair of them straddled onto
Angus's star-faced roping horse. Angus sits the saddle deep
and solid, the loose ready loops of his lariat held by a pommel
strap. Dad straddles snug behind him, and as they both turn
toward my mother's camera, all the lines of their bodies repeat
one another in such closeness--down the two of them, the same
crimped curves of hat, nip of sleeve garter, sweep of chaps,
pointed lines of boot.
grainfield, arrowing roads, creeks nosing quick and bright from the Rockies. The clean lines of this fresh landscape everywhere declared purpose and capacity, seemed to trumpet: *Here are the far bounds, all the extent anyone could need. Now live up to them.* Dad stepped from the pickup, slid his hands into his hip pockets and studied the bold-edged distances north and south and east. *Dandy country,* he said, and turned to grin at me. As the fellow says, just dandy fine. *Let's go tackle that Lady situation.*

Dad by now had learned a considerable trove about how to handling Grandma—the remainder of his problem being that there seemed to be some dozens of troves yet to be figured out about her—and he had hit on what was needed to get her mind off the alarming ranch. *We got to figure some place for Ivan to stay for school, Lady. These roads are going to be too much to drive every day when winter sets in this country.* What do ye think we ought to do? The perpetual problem of basing me somewhere roused her. Well, we ought to go into what’s-its-name, Dupuyer, and see what’s what, oughtn’t we? Criminentlies, that seem to me how to do...Now she looked acknowledging him with challenge, Dad full in the face, *Don’t it to you?*

It did, and we drove the nine dirt miles north to Dupuyer, luckily a briefer route than the bramble of roads we had come in by from the south. We noticed, with no surprise, that the Jensen ranch looked like an elderly addled cousin of the ranches along the way. Then our dirt road sneaked itself to the highway, and down from a ridge—this south seemed to be all flat ridgeline where it wasn’t iceberg mountains—Dupuyer lay tucked along a broad band of brush which marked its namesake creek. Off from either side of the
A mixture of uses, if it is to be sufficiently complex to sustain city safety, public contact and cross-use, needs an enormous diversity of ingredients. So the first question—and I think by far the most important question—about planning cities is this: How can cities generate enough mixture among uses—enough diversity throughout enough of their territories, to sustain their own civilization?

It is all very well to castigate the Great Blight of Dullness and to understand why it is destructive to city life, but in itself this does not get us far. Consider the problem posed by the street with the pretty sidewalk park in Baltimore, which I mentioned back in Chapter Three. My friend from the street, Mrs. Kostrisky is
highway, which doubled briefly as the main street, a few dozen houses and buildings lined away, like a Ringling which had been ordered to close in its ranks and spruce up its looks. The first business we came to had one sign advertising it as a gas station, and another calling it a cafe, as if the enterprise hadn't entirely been able to make up its mind and decided to tackle both jobs. While Dad and I searched out someone to put gas in the pickup, Grandma marched into the cafe side of the building and asked the woman behind the counter if she knew anyone who would board a high school boy. The woman at once plunged into thought, her lips set barely open as if in a soundless whistle. This question from a stranger seemed to have taken over her whole life, until finally she had to shake her head and say, No, just nobody comes to mind. I guess most people aren't willing to take in someone they don't know like that. Grandma locked the stranger with her steadfast look: Well, how about you then?

That clamping look and those words began my stay with the Chadwick family. Gertie, the woman of the cafe, said afterward that her answer came as an out-of-the-clouds hunch which startled her as she said it; after all, she had not laid eyes on even seen me yet. But your grandma just had a way about her. I liked her right then, and figured I might like you. We would learn in turn that Grandma had landed me with three people it was impossible not to cherish. Gertie herself was Dupuyer's touchstone. Short and square-set, almost boxy—her parents had been stocky immigrants from Belgium, and the
...of Athens were riot in their more opposition to constructing a "separate fortune". Mobility in one area signifies the exotic people with exotic ideas which would shake their society. Violent opposition to the building of railways was voiced by the lords of the English establishment in the early nineteenth century, not just because railways were seen as a threat to aristocracy, but because even lowly villagers would now travel to other towns. There they could not be kept from coming up.

On the other hand...
family line had gone even broader and more short-necked with her—she barely stubbed up above the top of the counter. But somehow there was the energy packed in her to run the place busily and fondly as if it were a boardinghouse table and the customers were the most interesting crew in the world. She kept her business 36½ days of the year; at Christmas, she would come downtown in the forenoon to feed the pensioned herders and widowers and others who took their every meal with her, then resolutely go home for the holiday afternoon. In day-by-day trade, travelers pulled in plentifully enough, as was guaranteed by Dupuyer's spot as the lone Kinking and Canada. Glacier National Park. But Gertie's main service was to provide the community itself, with brimming coffee cups and the daily victual of counter-stool chat to go with the brew.

Ranchers and farmers spilled in as they passed through town: You fellows who've got winter wheat in will be able to be called Mister this fall . . . It'll be a beaner if I can get 'er harvested in this christly weather . . . They hauled out up across the Marias. Pounded the damned wheat flat to the ground . . . Looks like eighty-five pound lambs up on the Reservation. Just a world of grass for 'em up there this year.

Other hours, their wives would make their call, on their way to buy groceries for a ranch crew or to fetch a machinery part needed in the grain harvest or just to trade news with one another. But the most precise and valued of Gertie's customers were the regulars, the lone men who bought meals from her by the month and arrived for them three times a day like the figures marching across the face of an elaborate tower-clock as certain hours are struck. Since I took my meals side by side with them, the regulars eyed me briefly, learned that I was from a farming family and could see that I
we migrate between cities to find more convenient or congenial surroundings. Communication now represents a small daily migration. We migrate not only to work but also to play, to shop, to socialize. Everybody is going places but what is happening to us as people along the way?

Many view the high mobility of modern life as the negative possible light. A whole literature of protest has grown up much of it religious in nature seeking to explain the alleged shallowness and loneliness of modern urban man. The question is: is it possible to be too powerful? Can we move without inconvenience? Have we moved without getting lost? Can we move without the sense of being mobile? Can we travel without getting lost? Can we move without making a choice? These questions--at least among those of us who have chosen to be mobile--are among those that have concerned us most. The modern man of leisure has taken such a cheer.

The Shape of the Secular City

The Man in the Cloverleaf

Technologically, the man on the go in addition to the giant escalator system is the city including the airport. In the city, elevators and perpetually moving escalators in department stores and offices. The modern man's way of life is a system of non-stop movement always changing its pattern.

The Clerical City

The Man in the Cloverleaf

Technologically, the man on the go in addition to the giant escalator system is the city including the airport. In the city, elevators and perpetually moving escalators in department stores and offices. The modern man's way of life is a system of non-stop movement always changing its pattern.
already was doing some of it for myself, and dealt me into their corps.

A tiny ancient

homesteader named Fred Groh at once told me of arriving in Dupuyer when he was as young as I, and at the break of spring hearing the thaw wind begin its roar down across the crags of the Rockies: They told me it was the chinook, and I wondered what kind of animal that could be, to make a noise like that. The gentle postmaster John Wall eased across the street, lunchtime puffing his pipe and sparring jokes with Gertie. She upped the odds once by snipping a circle of cardboard and sliding it beneath the meat plate in his daily hamburger. As she turned back to the kitchen, he spotted the disc and slipped it out. Wordlessly he ate away as Gertie gnawed at her lip. At last the blurt from her: Don't you notice anything about that hamburger at all? He dabbed napkin to lips. No sir, Gertie, it tastes just like your hamburgers always do.

A gnome-faced man named Joe Smith mocked himself with little stories about his livelihood as a fur trapper, having Gertie's cafe for his meals, laughed with a haw-haw which shook him all over, disappeared between times to the trap-lines he had set along the creeks beneath the mountains. Harold noticed my interest; there was little he did not notice--and began mumbling information. That Joe, by the god, he can catch any beaver he wants to. How the hell he does it, I dunno. He'll go out there to a beaver dam and catch all the big ones, leave the little ones. These ranchers'll ask him to catch all them beaver, but huh-uh: he leaves them little ones for seed, by the god, for next year.
that we treat most of the people we meet as persons—not as things, but not as intimates either. This in turn produces the kind of “immunization” against personal encounters which Louis Wirth explains this way:

Characteristically, urbanites meet one another in highly segmental roles. They are, to be sure, dependent upon more people for the satisfactions of their life-needs than are rural people and thus are associated with a greater number of unorganized groups, but they are less dependent upon particular persons, and their dependence upon others is confined to a highly fractionalized aspect of the other’s round of activity. This is essentially what is meant by saying that the city is characterized by secondary rather than primary contacts. The contacts of the city may indeed be face to face, but they are nevertheless impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental. The reserve, the indifference, and the biased outlook which urbanites manifest in their relationships may thus be regarded as devices for immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others.

This immunization results in a way of life which often appears cold and even heartless to those unfamiliar with the dynamics of urban living. Here both writers and sociologists have missed the point. Cultural romanticism such as Rilke and Ortega recoiled in distaste at what they took to be the cruelty of the city. In sociology a similar criticism was also voiced. Relationships in the city, it was complained, tended to be divorced of their truly human substance and made mechanical and lifeless.

One of the most influential sociological critics of the shape of urban life was a German scholar named Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936), whose work has continued to exert a considerable influence on modern sociology and cultural analysis. In 1887 Tönnies published a book in which he contrasted the coherent, organic togetherness of Gemeinschaft (community) with the more rational, planned, and partial nexus of the Gesellschaft (society). Kaspar Naegle summarizes Tönnies’ distinction:

Relations of the Gemeinschaft type are more inclusive; persons confront each other as ends, they cohere more durably. . . . In Gesellschaft their mutual regard is circumscribed by a sense of specific, if not formal obligation. . . . A transaction can occur without any other encounters, leaving both parties virtually anonymous.

Tönnies is talking about what some sociologists describe as “primary” versus “secondary” relationships, or “organic” versus “functional” relationships. Having lived both as a villager and as an urbanite I know just what these terms mean. During my boyhood, my parents never referred to “the milkman,” “the insurance agent,” “the junk collector.” These people were, respectively, Paul Weaver, Joe Villanova, and Roxy Barzango. All of our family’s market transactions took place within a web of wider and more inclusive friendship and kinship ties with the same people. They were never anonymous. In fact, the occasional salesman or repairman whom we did not know was always viewed with dark suspicion until we could make sure where he came from, who his parents were, and whether his family was “any good.” Trips to the grocery store, gas station, or post office were inevitably social visits, never merely functional contacts.

Now, as an urbanite, my transactions are of a very different sort. If I need to have the transmission on my car repaired, buy a television antenna, or cash a check, I find myself in functional relationships with mechanics, salesmen, and bank clerks whom I never see in any other capacity. These “contacts” are in no sense “mean, nasty, or brutish,” though they tend to be short, at least not any longer than the time required to make the transaction and exchange a brief pleasantries. Some of these human contacts occur with considerable frequency, so that I come to know the mannerisms and maybe even the names of some of the people. But the relationships are unfaceted and “segmental.” I meet these people in no other context. To me they remain essentially just as anonymous as I do to them. Indeed, in the case of the transmission repairman, I hope I never see him again—not because he is in any way unpleasant, but because my only possible reason for seeing him again would be a new and costly breakdown in my car’s gear box. The important point here is that my relationships with bank clerks and garagemen are no less human or authentic merely because we both pre-
Gertie herself must have heard twenty dozen times everything that was ever said around that counter, yet I noticed that she listened as readily as if every word was new to her and encouraged the talk with a glee-open-mouthed laugh which seemed to take her over entirely, the way Grandma's question had done. This cafe of hers and its place in the life of Dupuyer, I quickly came to see, reflected exactly this new landlady of mine: plain to look at, hearty the day long, and years-deep in polished affections.

The polish swiped away at once when you stepped over the door from the cafe to Harold Chadwick's service station. The place was a conglomerate of workshops, massed with mechanical gear and tools which seemed to lay about catching their breath before seizing onto the next project. Harold himself was a tall black-handed wizard with machinery. The rear of the station at any given time might house, amid the gasping hoods of cars, a de-motored tractor or an axleless truck or a grain combine towering like a freighter in dry dock.

Somewhere in the midst of it would be Harold himself, a tall black-handed wizard cobbling away at the machinery with deep thoughtful sighs. Luckily Harold's hands spoke for him, because listening to him otherwise you caught only those profound sighs, or a thin mutter which seemed to come mostly via his nose, or sheer silence. Soon after I began to board with the Chadwicks, a stint came when Gertie hired someone to run the cafe
to discover that the reports spread were not accurate. Apart from the developer's initial resistance to the new urban area, the residents were also resistant to the project. The developer had planned to build high-rise apartments, but the residents preferred low-rise buildings. The developer had to compromise and build a mix of low-rise and high-rise apartments.

In the end, the project was successful. The developer had to make some adjustments, but the final product was a balanced mix of low-rise and high-rise apartments. The residents were happy with the outcome, and the developer gained a lot of respect from the community. The project was a success, and the developer was proud of the work they had done.
in the evenings, and so would feed us supper catch-as-catch-
could at home, with Harold arriving whenever he found space
between waiting repairs. Once after he made his wordless come
and go, I went to the kitchen and joked to Gertie: Harold
must've been here for his supper, hmm? I heard the kitchen
door slam twice. She whooped with laughter, and to my alarm
retold the lines to Harold when he came home after closing.

He looked across at me and gave me a great
surprise as I waited warily, and then gave me a dark silent grin.

The Chadwicks had a son a few years older than I was—Tommy Chad, as
the townspeople sometimes lilted about this boy-man. Tommy worked with
his father, and had inherited the magic with machines. His mother's
thick-set look had rebuilt itself on Tommy’s
—anvil shoulders and solid beams
of arms, his neck a collar of haft, blocky power anywhere you looked
under repair from
—until he seemed almost a brother to the machinery beneath his
blunt, deft fingers. His mulling effort to make his head speak as well
as his hands must gave him a quiet watchfulness much like my own.

Since each of us had been raised alone as best our families had been
able to find time for us, and each had come out of it with a knack the
other didn’t—my diet of books, Tommy's touch for machinery—we appreciated
each other by a kind of instinct, like a Brazilian and a Laplander somehow
falling into step in the same forest. Someone beside the pair of us as
we forked down a meal at the cafe counter in comfortable silence turned
and said: You two don’t have much to say for yourselves, do you? Tommy
gave it an instant, then: No. Just enough.
The three Chadwicks had a steadiness about them which seemed to carry out into their town. Dupuyer, unlike Ringling or White Sulphur Springs, seemed never to have had the least hesitation about its livelihood since the first wagonmaster wearily overnighted on the site sometime in the 1870s. In a dollar-counting meander between the horizon of mountains and the horizon of plains, the freighters' trail marked itself northwestward through Montana from the steamboat landing at Fort Benton to the early Royal Canadian Mounted Police posts in Alberta. Even after the railroad came cross-continent to the north, the trail stayed busy as a capillary for mail and stage shipments out into the remote country. And all the while, the special site of plentiful grass and a constant creek was making itself into a merchandising settlement. The country rimming it to the west was found to be fine for sheep, and a local rancher named Oliver Goldsmith Cooper became president of the potent Montana Wool Growers Association. Before the turn of the century, a quarter million pounds of fleece were being shipped from the Dupuyer Creek ranches each year.

From then on, Dupuyer added little population, lost less: it somehow had found a spot of balance between the range hills and the farming plains, and the equilibrium set the town's mood. Once a year, for about a week toward the end of winter, everybody gets at everybody else's throats, Gertie explained to me. Then the chinook comes and we all get along together for another year.

One store, three gas stations, three saloons, the cafe, some few hundred feet of sidewalk, a few dozen houses, a couple of barns, several overtopping groves of cottonwoods, 'long winters, pushing winds, a hundred people, and a highway trenching it into halves. That was Dupuyer, entire and uncomplaining, and it enchanted me with its tidy life and the caress of its past.
is compared to the heavy investment Ferdinand and Isabella put into the original voyage of Columbus. But the analogy will not stand hard scrutiny. Their Catholic Majesties were not a group who would never want to see the St. Louis window at it. Dad and I steered clear, as did anybody who had standards about saloons.

Close by, but a mile farther up in likeableness, stood the Pioneer. Oldfangled but not coming-apart-at-the-heels like the Grand Central, earnest enough but not as hard-drinking as the Stockman or the Maverick, the Pioneer felt and looked window at it. Dad and I steered clear, as did anybody who

had standards about saloons.
For the first time I could remember, I was living in a town which had a
at ease and civil pace of life, and some deserved contentment with itself
over that fact. With the Chadwicks, I was enfolded in a family which
held warmth steadier than I was accustomed to, even in the sunnier parts
of the blizzard-and-thaw cycles of Dad, Grandma, myself. Even the Jensen
was proving ranch proved less woebegone than expected in my weekends
with there with Dad and Grandmas, the place was so stark, after the pinwheel life of a
big ranch such as the Camas, that there was little way to apply great
effort to it and Dad and Grandma had slacked their fierce work habits

Beyond that, they too seemed to take pleasure from Dupuyer and the Chadwicks,
to feel more comfortable than any of us had for a long time. Told ye this
north country was worth a try, Dad crowed. I agreed entirely for the first
few weeks—and then fell into a time when I wished I were anywhere else
in the world.

The tripwire was in my new high school. Because Dupuyer never had grown
large enough to have its own high school, its handful of students jounced
by bus to the larger town
of Valier, twenty miles east across the farm plains. Unlike Dupuyer,
which simply had sprigged up by a trailside, Valier had been grandly
planted, as the headquarters town for an 80,000-acre irrigation project
which had been ditched onto the prairie early in the century. Now the
town had the somewhat alarmed air of having built too much of itself
for the size of its caretaking job; empty blocks yawned away and sometimes
through, its neighborhoods, and what had been allotted as a sizable
single
downtown held only a thin street of businesses.

The high school too seemed to spread more than was called for, crouching
broadly and determinedly across most of a block as if putting roots into
the earth. Inside, the building flung itself open in the wide gaunt logic
of a frontier fort—a
came out at Main Street about the height of a man's shoulder, a ramp was angled up through them from the doorway.

It made a fine effect, the customers all at a purposeful tilt as they came climbing toward the long span of bar.

Then, sitting up on one of the Stockman's three-foot stools, you could glance out and down through the street window at passers-by going along below your shoe tops. In early evening, it was a chance to look out at the world as unseen as if you were hidden away on a roof, and Dad and I would settle in to watch the town's night begin to take shape.

The Stockman had other likable lines besides its lofty floor. From end to end, the wall behind the bar was almost all mirror and whiskey bottles. Glass and liquor and liquor and glass reflected each other until my eyes couldn't take in the bounce of patterns. The label print and emblems would
vast central room like a parade ground, with students' desks soldiered into file, class by class, all across the center, and classrooms sentried regularly around the side walls. All in all, there seemed to be a grayish factory-like feeling to the place, and I stepped in on my first morning with doubt riding high in my throat.

By a coincidence more lucky than I could have prayed for, four of us arrived new to this school of a hundred students on the same mid-November day. Another of these newcomers rode the bus from Dupuyer with me—Carlton, who was a year or two older than I was, and boasted a gold tooth, black hair slicked back like an ebony skullcap, and girl-stories he began reciting as soon as he slipped into the seat beside me. Your folks run sheep, huh? So'd the folks of my girlfriend last summer. She had to herd the goddamn things in this field, see, so they give her this Jeep and I'd mottle out there, see, and get in with her and we'd do it right there in that goddamn Jeep, see. Then we'd roar out after those goddamn sheep and round 'em in. Run right over the woolly bastards if they didn't move fast enough, see...

I listened with interest—anything about girls and the new white worlds of their breasts and the unknown gulch at the top of their legs was an item to know—but Carlton's tale was boggling: I didn't know whether to be more astonished at the vision of a girl naked in a Jeep or at daring to run over a sheep. Disappointed in me as an audience, Carlton sidled off toward the back of the bus; in a minute, his murmurs were going again...do it right there...run right over the woolly bastards...

With the lighthouse wink of that tooth and his insistent exploit, Carlton drew off attention in our first few days at Valier. But my camouflage of quiet faded quickly. Too many times each schoolday, I would look up and meet a set of cool gray eyes which could have outdrilled even Grandma's. The face around them was dark-browed, unadorned, and somehow both musing and ominous. Frances Carson Tidyman, who through a full generation had been scanning the students of her English classes as if they were muddy pebbles in a sluice box, had me under special focus.

What I already had begun to know about Mrs. Tidyman was as unsettling as her stare. She was the least likely presence to be found in a small farmtown school, a
These samples would disgust us all for a while, but eventually I would forget just what the tastes had been, and would start staring at the packets all over again and wondering what the snow-colored nuts or the blades of meat must be like. Untasty as it was, the cellophane food was the harmless choice I could focus on back of the bar. What I would look at with a peeper's stealth a hundred times an evening was the nakedness of the calendar lady. You could depend on it year after year: some passing.

Doig/48

RISE AND FALL OF METROPOLIS

A single element is perhaps sufficient to breakdown the metropolitan region. This is true in many respects, but it seems to be a combination of the economic and social changes that are taking place. The community is no longer able to support itself and the result is an economic crisis. This is due to the growing population and the increasing demands for resources.

The collapse of the economy is also exacerbated by the breakdown of the social order. The old certainties have disappeared, and there is a sense of insecurity and uncertainty in the air. People are no longer sure of their place in the world, and this can lead to outbreaks of violence and chaos.

The message is clear: we must find a way to adapt to the changing circumstances. This may involve radical changes in the way we live, but it is essential if we are to survive. The future is uncertain, but we must not give up hope.

Doig/48

THE CULTURE

in 1930 to between twenty and forty million dollars for New York holds with an estimated 300,000 sex offenders or sub-metropolises. The burden of this problem is not yet fully understood, but the economic impact is significant.

But there is one final limitation of this process: in almost all cases, the movement toward stabilization has been met with resistance from large families, and a call for more stringent control of births. Despite attempts to control the movement of population, the metropolitan area is still growing, and the problem of overcrowding remains.

The movement toward the stabilization of population has been directed toward the reorganization of society. It is hoped that by controlling the population, society will be able to address the problems of overpopulation and resource depletion, and that a new era of prosperity will follow.

This adjustment is difficult, and the process is long and complex. But it is necessary if we are to have a future. We must learn to live with the changes, and to adapt to the new circumstances. The future is uncertain, but we must not give up hope.
mysteriously spiced waft of booklore and speculative notions and astonishing languages and--oddnesses. It was circulated that she cared almost nothing for money--that she habitually turned down the salary raises due her to forestall a day when the school could not afford her, and that she paid in stores by asking what amount was needed, scrawling the sum into whatever counter checkbook the clerk happened to hand her, and forgetting the matter forever. In Valier, this system worked well enough, but in the county's main shopping town of Conrad, it left a patter of misbanked checks bouncing behind her. Her husband had at last to fund a bank account in Conrad solely to cover her offhand signatures.

As with finance, so with time and costume. They meant no more to her than that she eventually had to appear somewhere, with something on. This brought about her summer fame for occasionally gardening with her nightgown on, hair maned free and spilling to the waist--and of course, her flowers and vegetables encouraged to ally into whatever clumps and jumbles they would.

At school, she would arrive in dark plain dresses so alike that it could hardly be traced when she changed one for another; bunned her hair into a great black burl at the back of her neck; clopped from class to class in much shoes. She was buxom like Grandma with a half more plumped
on all around; her mounding in front and behind was very nearly more than the lackadaisical dresses wanted to contain. Leaning forward from the waist as she hurried about, she flew among us like a schooner's figurehead prowling over a lazy sea.

The mind of Mrs. Tidyman was somewhat like that jostling garden of hers—sprigged here with the Greek mythology she knew so entirely that she recited it to her children for bedtime stories, sprouting somewhere else with blood-red bouquets from Shakespeare, twining now into a tale such as having seen the cowboy artist Charlie Russell when she attended the university in Missoula: In the midst of a sorority tea someone deposited him with us—dozens of fluffy girls, you understand, and he had been drinking for the ordeal—and then the utmost indignity, they took his hat from him and he had nothing to do with his hands, and sat helpless, imprisoned ... The foliage of her learning laced everywhere through the school, she taught all the English courses, first- and second-year Latin, occasionally a course in Spanish, directed the plays, advised for the yearbook and newspaper, and oversaw the library. It could not be imagined where she might exist except in the midst of all this. She had taken leave for enough years to have four sons, and afterward decided the absence had been a mistake. Chinese peasant women did it properly, she reasoned,
giving birth to their babies in the fields and going right on with their toil.  

That earliest watching from this unprecedent woman, it turned out, was to see whether I was a thief. A few times a year, a school-wide set of vocabulary tests was given, every student then ranked against national statistics.

The first test-time fell in the second week after I enrolled at Valier, and I attacked with joy; if there was one knack in me, it was to hold in mind any word I had ever seen, much the way Dad could identify any sheep from all others. When this first of the set of tests was scored, no one among the seniors, juniors of sophomores achieved better than a respectable 50. One of my classmates soared to a 60, well up in the national percentiles. My paper lofted off to an unscorable 75. Hello from me, new school.

Before I had time to get the grin off my face, Mrs. Tidyman had asked me into the library, locked the door, and with as much tact as she could muster--somewhere close to none--wondered abruptly how I accounted for my painless case with her English assignments to date and, more particularly, whether I had come across the answer sheet before the national test. Whatever denial I stammered to her--what nightmare was this, did I have to prove myself again before I would be trusted here?--she had a better one in the making. All right. There are three more tests in the next three days, and I have the answer sheets secure. We'll just see how you score on them.

Three times more I gapped everyone else in the school and shot out the top of all percentiles. I didn't know whether to be overjoyed or apprehensive, but before I had much time for either, Mrs. Tidyman again was hauling me into the library, clicking the lock, eyeing me relentlessly. You know, you really ought to take my Latin class next
"...To depressurize the city—to moderate tensions between Hard Hat and student, black and white—we must avoid future shock..."

As the squeeze gets tighter. We are not going to solve our other problems or moderate the tensions between Hard Hat and student, black militant and scared liberal, Staten Islander and Manhattanite, until we find ways to depressurize the city.

To do this, we are going to need a whole new political vocabulary, attention to all sorts of aches and pains, psychological and otherwise, that have until now been ignored by politics. No one has any blueprint for how to proceed, but there are many different things that a city, especially one as creative and venturesome as New York, might do to protect its psycho-social environment, to make life a little less pointlessly hectic, a little less aggravating, a little more livable.

We might create "social future assemblies"—neighborhood groups devoted to the acceleration of daily life.

The truth is that New York and other cities have more power to influence technology than they suspect. In recent years a loud but ineffectual drive have created a kind of panic. The panic is real, but the response to it is not. We need to find ways to slow down the pace of change, to give people time to adapt to new conditions, to give them a sense of control over their lives.

One would have to be stupid and immoral to want to stop the advance of technology in a world in which hundreds of millions still suffer from malnutrition and disease. But one has to be either selfish or irresponsible to want the technological juggernaut to roll on unmanaged, unguided, in a willless, short-sighted and life-imperiling fashion. We do not need a Luddite attack on that favorite scapegoat of today, The Machine. But we similarly do not need a blind acceptance of every technical innovation that comes along simply because it is possible and profitable, especially when technology is one of the hidden driving forces behind the acceleration of daily life.

The truth is that New York and other cities have more power to influence technology than they suspect. In recent years a loud but ineffectual drive have created a kind of panic. The panic is real, but the response to it is not. We need to find ways to slow down the pace of change, to give people time to adapt to new conditions, to give them a sense of control over their lives.

The Shape of the Secular City

The World War I song "How Ya Gonna" Keep 'Em Down on the Farm Now that They've Seen Paree?" illustrates the relationship between mobility, urbanization, and social change. Those who have been drawn into the tradition-demolishing orbit of urban life are never quite the same again. They will always know that things could be different; they will never again accept the farm as given; and this is the seedbed of revolution.
year. It will be an advantage for you in the use of English. And you should write for the school paper, there's good practice. And I want to know what you read. I have a houseful of books if you can't find enough here . . . 

I gulped the relief of being out from under Mrs. Tidyman's suspicion, and sat back to see what the gale of her approval would bring. In the classroom, each hour with her began like a conjuring, or a parody of one. She would clomp in and back herself up onto a high stool behind a thin-legged lectern, secure, revolve toward the class, in mid-air she would the entire billow of her far up over us, the lectern-top before her as if commanded to hover there. Then her hand deep into her dress front and out of that vault of bosom would come eyeglasses, tethered on a neck chain which still did not entirely stop her from losing them a few times each day; a balled handkerchief; a fountain pen, likely leaking; perhaps a fat ring of keys, or a shredding blizzard of notes to herself. A mild glare or a stern look of fondness—her shadings of expression could be baffling—fastened onto the last of the class to go quiet: with it might fall the entire total of her irony, the line Do you mind if I begin now? 

At last supplied and delivered, she set at us. The day's assigned reading might be thumped open and launched into sheerly for the entrancement of hearing herself aloud: It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness
--oh, people, can you hear those phrases ring against one another? . . . If there was agony and tragedy, so much the richer fancy: As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport. When I read the headline of an airplane crash, people, first I wish that no one I know was killed. Then that no one from Montana was killed. Then that no one from this country. Then that no one at all would have been killed—oh, people, the casual lightning bolts which come down on us... She would escort Richard Cory and Miniver Cheevy to their poetic dooms one instant, bring Front de Boeuf bulling in amid the scarlet pennants of Ivanhoe the next. Now Lady Macbeth in gore, now Portia pleading against blood. In Latin class, Mrs. Tidyman never could have us read in Caesar's Commentaries without declaiming on Caesar the man; could not declaim on Caesar without sketching Roman society; could not sketch the Romans without embracing all the Mediterranean, on and on in a widening spiral of lore and enthusiasm, glasses flying in her hand and bosom wheeling above the lectern like turrets searching for new fields of gunnery.

But it was the grammar of English that exalted her most. Day after day we would troop to the blackboard to take apart sentences for her, phrases chalked to one another like scaffolding, being shown how a clause dovetailed here, an infinitive did the splicing there, the whole of it planted and beamed together as her pointer shapped through a reading of the revealed sentence. For her the language held holy force, and she shuddered
same mood of sober cussedness. I had been given a bow and a few arrows, likely an early gift for my birthday. Time after time, my arrows whacked far from the paper target my father had tacked to the back of the cabin. I see myself pouting it out, kicking at the tan bunchgrass as I thought. Then I edged close until the round sharp tip of the arrow hung inches from the paper. I let go the bowstring, and the bulls-eye ripped open with a hard snapping sound.

That, with every speck of remembering clear as the noon air. Yet of my mother's death, whatever I try, just a single instant, dim and baffling, ever is called back: my father touching me awake in lantern glow, his shadow thrown far up onto the wall.
at any squander of it. In what must have been her fullest
spate of forgiveness, she apologized about one of the townswomen:
Once you get used to her split
infinitives, you'll find she's a very nice person. And
so Mrs. Tidyman hovered at me from her heights of language,
declaiming, diagramming, rhapsodizing, unabashedly giving
favor to any of us who seemed rapt. I was more than rapt, held by her
whirligig mix of language and learning as if I were a ball swung on a
tether. I bet she thinks she glanced onto something when you came to
that school, Grandma assessed after one of my reports about Mrs. Tidyman.
Maybe, I said, as if I hadn't had the answer drilled into me by gray eyes.
Mrs. Tidyman, exhausting and exasperating and exhilarating, was one
education new to hand in our northern move. Another
introduced itself at the Jensen ranch on a weekend soon
after we had moved in. Two plump men presented themselves
at the door and asked plees; to see the chementeon of
the ranch. Both were bearded, both wore black outer
clothing over brilliant red shirts, and both stared as
blinklessly as a pair of holidaying parsons who had
lucked upon naked natives. Grandma shooed them off toward the
sheepshed to find Dad, rammed the door shut and snicked
a table knife into the jamb. Who in Christmas do you suppose them two are?
I had no supposing to offer; they were as much apparition to me as to her.
But when Dad came in for coffee,
the pair clomped at his heels. These fellows are Hoots,
he grinned. They're our neighbors.
Beyond the second ridgeline to the south of us,
we discovered, lay a ranch colony of a hundred such
Hutterites, a shy tranced people who gabbled among
themselves in a German dialect and lived barrack-style
according to their signals from God. Heaven told them
in the valley was to be able to handle men. Ranch crews were a hard commodity, a gravel mix of drifters, drinkers, gripers, not a few mental cripples, and an occasional good worker. No two crews were ever much alike, except in one thing: somebody was going to resent the work and any foreman who put him to it, and sooner or later trouble would be made. Anyone who had spent time on a ranch crew knew the stories--of a herder who sneaked the stovepipe off his own sheepwagon while camp was being moved so he would have something to be mad about and could quit, or of a tireless hay stacker who packed up and left on the first rainy day because he couldn't stand the hours of being idle. Darker stories, too, of a herding dog bashed to
cation with people outside the firm--including people from small firms.

The benefits that cities offer to smallness are just as marked in retail trade, cultural facilities and entertainment. This is because city populations are large enough to support wide ranges of variety and choice in these things. And again we find that bigness has all the advantages in smaller settlements. Towns and suburbs, for instance, are natural homes for huge supermarkets and for little else in the way of groceries, for standard movie houses or drive-ins and for little else in the way of theater. There are simply not enough people to support further variety, although there may be people (too few of them) who would draw upon it were it there. Cities, however, are the natural homes of supermarkets and standard movie houses plus delicatessens, Viennese bakeries, foreign groceries, art movies, and so on, all of which can be found co-
an endless amount that we had never heard of, such as that when one of their men married he had to grow whiskers along his jawline to make the face-circle which represented a wedding ring, or that their women were proper only when swathed in long skirts, aprons and kerchiefs, like walking mounds of fresh laundry. When we visited the colony to buy eggs or vegetables—the parsonly pair had come by to invite us to do so—we also found that the Hoots ran their ranch with a brisk orderliness which made the Jensen ranch seem even more woebegone. Each family was allotted a set of rooms with gleaming board floors and stern furniture. The small children waddled about like fat dolls in museum costumes, but the young men were hived off by themselves, four to a room, from their early teens until they married. The young women, rose-cheeked mysteries inside their hoods and curtains of ginghamware, stayed within the family until that marrying somehow managed to happen.

All the colony ate in a single great dining hall, the men and boys first, then the women and children after their superiors strode back to work. The Hoots doled work responsibility as if they were the line officers of some formerly regiment: one man was appointed the Cow Boss, another the Sheep Boss, a third the Vegetable Boss, on and on until every task was divvied out with
its handle of responsibility and its claim on the colony's work force as needed. Perhaps having eyed other communal brethren toiling to stay with the old ways, the Hoots also had made their decision about modern machinery: they would use every roaring horsepower of it they could get their hands on. The colony clattered with tractors, throbbed with helpful engines. A constant sight was a Hoot truckload of eggs speeding off to one town or another, a gaggle of black-clad young men in the back like crows hitching a ride.

All in all, the Hutterite system clicked out work like an assembly line. The Dupuyer people said the Hoots could thrive a hundred at a time on land where an ordinary family had starved out. They did not mean it as a compliment.

For the Hoots, we learned, had dark stains. The first scandal always recited about them was that they did not believe in serving in the army. Next, that Hoot colonies didn't pay taxes like the rest of us because they were church organizations. And beyond that, in muskier tones, their marrying habits. The Hoots, it seemed, intermarried cousin to cousin until an entire colony might have only two or three surnames in it, with the sinful clans further strung throughout colonies elsewhere in Montana and western Canada. War, money and sex: whatever else you said of them, the Hutterites did not skirt the big topics of life.
Dad, with his penchant for hard clean-edged work, liked the Hoots at once. As often as he could arrange it, some chore would take him to the Hutterite colony, and the Sheep Boss would hail him—"Vell, Chollie! Vot's your business?"—and escort him into the dining hall, where one of the kerchieved women brought him slices of bread or cake flat on the palm of her hand. There also might be a snifter of the fine sweet rhubarb wine produced by the colony, and manly grumbles with the Sheep Boss about the price of lambs and the prospects of grass. Grandma was less enchanted—the men ran the colony too high-handedly, They parade around over there like they was somebody—but eventually she too decided they were satisfactory neighbors. Certainly they were hard-working, and with her that nearly canceled out their quips about soldiering and family line.

On the other hand, she made a perplexity for the Hoot men when they came to visit Dad, with her refusal to withdraw and leave the conversation to the males. Her verdicts on the world were beyond their ken—"Ach, vell, perhaps, Mizzus Ringer, perhaps, but yet—and our rankly household must have been as mysterious to the Hutterites as their ordered family regiments were to us. Yet Dad evidently was a sensible enough soul on any topic except women, and their nearest neighbor besides,
so the Sheep Boss and a crony or two continued to come by and confide to him their worries about the younger Hoots, tender rabbits for the snares strewn by the modern world. Television was the newest and seemed the most treacherous. Harold Chadwick had sent off for a mail order course, scratched his chin briefly over the ream of diagrams, then wired up a picture tube which now flickered and snapped in the Dupuyer service station day and night. The elders recognized how spellbinding the fuzzed universe in the tube could be—Hoot youngsters were flocking in to gawk by the hour—but were stymied about how to battle it. Still, one thing to be done was to stay unsurprised about the outside world’s gray magic, and the Sheep Boss, showing how aweless he could be, began to tell Dad about his wife’s fright when she glimpsed Dupuyer’s startling television set. No, she t’ot the world was going straight to—here he noticed Grandma as usual listening sharply, and could not bring himself to say to hell in her presence. Vas... vas going down! he finished desperately, pushing his palms toward the brimfire below. Grandma eyed him with new suspicion of Hoot backwardness: She took a look at a television and thought she was FALLING? Hmpf.

The Hutterites gave Grandma something to mutter about, and she shortly solved some of the ranch’s yawning
emptiness for himself. McGrath had left us with a bonus of a few of his everlasting dog pack. Behind the bunkhouse door one evening, a small several-colored bitch apologetically gave birth. The pups were only two, but their mother's haphazard colors were passed on in fullest style. One came out with a coat of sheening black, ice-tipped at the tail and ruffled whiter yet at his chest; the other was a snowfield with thaws of tan, the brockled markings romping up his sides and under his ears. Grandma at once claimed them both, pointing out to Dad that we'd had enough of McGrath's thuggish hounds and ought to train good sheep dogs of our own. It was an argument he could not answer. I suggested we call the newcomers McGrath and Jensen. Grandma rapped out that she had never heard of such names for dogs—there was no answer to that either—and dubbed them Spot and Tip. From then on, they were to be the fourth and fifth members of our family, and to bring us rewards and woes about as major as those we brought on each other.

Both, to Dad's discomfort, began to grow up with a stubbornness they seemed to imbibe straight from Grandma's presence. Spot, winsome as his brockled coat, proved to be tirelessly happy and helpful. By every instinct in him, he was a superb sheep dog, eager, far-ranging, steady; he had a sense of what he was about to
be commanded to do, and seemed to start his policing arc around a strayed ewe before your arm had quite come up to direct him. Tip was as tireless, but for him, that same straying sheep clicked in his mind as a target of opportunity: he was, brain and fang, a born biter. Since Tip also was the fleetest dog any of us had ever seen--his black body sleek and whetted as a racehorse's, the white peak of his tail streaking flat behind him like the flare of a rocket--he constituted a lethal weapon.

Dad and Grandma at last harangued and cuffed him into a rough civility, which put him in a mood of hurt astonishment that he should be veered from anything so natural as savaging a ewe. But for all efforts, sending Tip far around the sheep always remained chancy, like practicing near an ammunition dump, and the sheep learned to shy and stampede into retreat at the sight of the black fury. Spot watched his brother with curiosity--he knew just as deeply in his instincts that the sheep were never to be bitten--and loped his routes around the band like a guiding angel. But Spot too had insistence in him: a lust for appreciation. From Grandma, he had reward in plenty, endless petting and talkings-to and the freedom of the house. From Dad, quickly ablaze with having been jumped on fondly by Spot for the twentieth time in a day or having tripped across his doorway sprawl
for the fortieth, he could not count on such affection, and it would seem to puzzle him briefly, his tongue out a corner of his mouth as he watched Dad's thwarting back. Then with thankful look around the room, he would plop in the doorway again and wait for his next shift with the beloved sheep.

Dad and I thought we had become used to a life full of dogs when Grandma suddenly filled it more from another direction. From somewhere she now came up with a cat, a self-sufficient gray young tiger which she named—no advice asked or offered this time—Kitten. All right, Lady, Dad said, watching Kitten purr across his shins, that'll be just about enough.

In this first half-year of our new northern life, some surprises began to be shown by the Jensen ranch itself, basic and stark and drowsing as it seemed. The first was that the place had clay bogholes hidden like elephant traps in its grass.

After a few plunges into those walls and his cursing walks to the Hoots for a tow, Dad traded the pickup in favor of a metal-cabbed Jeep. The next startlement came at lambing time, when snow clung and clung to the benchland slopes and the grass refused to green. Without the fresh grass, the ewes' milk was weak and their lambs came down with diarrhea. The pile of tiny carcasses outside the great shed began to grow by the hour.

Damn-it-all-to-hell, these lambs are all gonna drizzle themselves to death if we don't do something. Dad hurried a call to a veterinarian, and what we were to do was to
In several ways, his boyhood would go along opposite routes from the one I would live at his side thirty years later. Five brothers and a sister crowding all his home hours; the one of me, alone and treasuring it that way.

His school years which, shying from those Basin winters,

began with spring thaw and then hurried hit-and-miss through summer; all my summers ending in earliest September quick as the heat at the end of a race; school creeping on then.

In our mouth as if our tongues were gradually catching fire.

Meat I'd loose a season long which made us work each piece around

the white nuts tasted as chalky as they looked and the smoked

match buy a packet and share it along the bar. Every time,

nuts or smoked meat strips. Once every few weeks' someone

at long and often—the tiny cellophone packs of white salted

white towels, were the curtisisters I would pick out to look
for its vitamin D content, spoon cod liver oil into every lamb. Across a nightmare set of days--I stayed home from school for the crisis--we penned and caught and spoonfed each of the two thousand lambs. They survived, but we nearly didn't, thumbs aching from having forced two thousand stubborn mouths open for the medicine, backs bowed from two thousand reachings and lifting. As we grayly ate supper after the last handling of the last lamb, Grandma murmured: A sideways outfit this is, not even the grass wants to grow like it should...

But there was pasture grass to come, months spilling with grass, as if a fifth season had been tamely matted into the middle of the year. Dad's decision to come north with McGrath had been keyed to this grass--the summer pasture for the sheep on the prairie of the Blackfeet Indian reservation north of Dupuyer. They say that reservation is a bunchgrass country you can hardly believe. If I can't bring fat lambs eff in from grass like that, I've had my head off my shoulders for forty years. The Jensen ranch was leased for only eight months of the year; from June through October, the grass months which would fatten the lambs for shipping, Dad and Grandma and I would graze the sheep on a pasture allotment on the reservation. We were about to see the prairie face of our northern life.

When the sheep's hooves hit the road at the edge of the ranch on the last morning of May, we flung into three desperate days of trudging, yelling, dogging, cursing, fretting. Our reservation range lay miles north from Dupuyer, and every step of it threatened to jog a loose dim panic at the center of each sheep's brain. Pushing the skittery thousands of animals up the strange dike of pavement became a guerrilla struggle against every yapping farmyard dog, any blowing bit of paper--and worse, each and every auto
the city with overlawn checks. He took the young cowboys in tow, and the three of them sashayed through Chicago.

One morning after several days of high living, they were sprawled in barber chairs for the daily shave which would start them on a new round of carousing. The policeman on the beat—a helluva big old harness bull—paused outside the window at the sight of three pairs of cowboy boots poking out from under the barber cloths. He sauntered in, lifted the hot towel off the rancher's face, and said: Hello, White Sulphur Springs.

When you got that shaves, I want 'em to last s-seven days.
that came along like a hippopotamus among penguins.

Grandma would be seething against the motorists within the first half-mile: God damn them, don't they have enough brains to even take themselves through a band of sheep? Tourists stopping innocently in the middle of the band to ask why the lead sheep had a bell on and all the others didn't would find themselves fiercely invited to git on through the sheep here, how would you like it if I laid down in your front yard and started asking you questions? We were to live for the summer in a much-traveled small trailer house which McGrath had flimflammed from somewhere; Dad had it in tow behind the Jeep--Kitten an indignant yowling passenger inside--and roved nervously with this, worn-looking convoy in the wake of the sheep, jumping out to whoop stragglers down the highway and hustling around to catch any exhausted lambs which needed to be ferried in the Jeep for a time. I did whatever he couldn't get to, and as well panted off in endless arcing jogs around the sheep to flag down cars in blind spots on the road. I had made, each for Grandma and for myself, a noisemaker called a tin dog--a ring of baling wire with half a dozen empty evaporated milk cans threaded on so that it could be shaken, tambourine-like, into a clattering din. Mile upon mile, with our ruckus behind them, the dubious ewes and their panicky lambs edged north.

Water decreed each day's push of the sheep. From the ranch, we had to make the 16 miles north to Birch Creek the first night to bed the tired band where they could graze and drink. It meant funneling the sheep through Dupuyer at mid-morning, the Chadwicks and other townfolk
footprints in the snow on that hunting trip. Why death for one, and not the other? No answer comes, except that even starts don't seem to count. If that was what saved Charlie Doig then, he was going to need several such bylaws of fate before he was done.

That first siege on his health behind him, Dad went back to the hired work which each of the young Doig brothers started at just as soon as he was old enough. For years, their wages had had to be the prop under the family homestead, which at last was beginning to pull itself up into a ranch. By the autumn of 1919, all their cowboysing and shepherding and scrimping together had financed a herd of 200 fat cattle and 40 head of horses. Livestock prices were firm, Annie Doig inherited a few thousand dollars from a relative in Scotland, the world war had not clawed into her family. Luck could hardly wait to follow on luck. Then, weeks ahead of the calendar, winter set in.

It became the winter which the Basin people afterward would measure all other winters against. The dark timbered mountains around them went white as icebergs. The tops of
stepping out to give us a hand as the woolly sea of backs shied from
gas pumps and parked cars and the thin neck of bridge across Dupuyer
Creek; pushing on across a broad chocolate-and-gold bench of farmland;
and then into the long tight trench of fenced lane, a
full afternoon of battling traffic and time.

The only ones happy with the Spring trail were Tip,
who saw it as a feast of sly nips among the sheep, and
Spot, who adoringly began to herd half the band up the
highway by himself and to loll tonguey grins at us for
appreciation, and the pair of them had their grandest moment of the
year here where the sheep had to be shoved like a vast ball of wool
into the neck of a bottle. Time after time an exasperated ewe would prance out
and, like a knight's charger for a single haughty moment,
stamp a front hoof at the dogs in challenge. Then, it
dawning on her that she was entirely helpless against
the welshish pair, she would whirl and waddle in panicked
retreat. One of my chores was to try to keep Tip from
slashing these bold ninnies, and he regarded me with his
puzzled hurt whenever I shouted him back in time.

At last, after hours of working the dogs and ourselves--by
sunset if we had been lucky, the sheep spilled off the
highway to the banks of Birch Creek.

The second day, the same straining push to water, this time a dozen
highway miles to Badger Creek. In places the road whipped into sudden
curves, and I would spend most of the day flagging the coming cars in
front of the sheep. We were on the Blackfeet reservation now, and I
passed my time between baffled tourists by wondering what our life here
would be like. All I knew of Indians was that carloads of them
farewell dance at the Sixteen schoolhouse. Women were bawling and carrying on, Dad remembered, you'd thought the world was coming to an end. It was starting to. The Basin could never be the same when its youngsters began to go.

Dad was put on a ship to France, and now every day Dad was sent off on the mile and a half trudge down the railroad track to the Sixteen post office, to fetch a newspaper so the fretful parents could read through the list of battle casualties. One footsore trip after another, Dad cussed to the crossties that he hoped to hell the so-and-so would be on the casualty list today so this everlasting walking could stop.

But the soldier son survived, and it was Dad who nearly died in that last year of World War One. It was like him to call down bad luck on somebody else, then go through worse himself. In the early winter of 1918, he had set out on a day of deer hunting with a cousin, one of D.L.'s strapping sons. Both came down with pneumonia. For weeks they lay delirious in the ranch houses their fathers had built a mile apart. On the first night of December, Dad's fever broke, and the cousin died.

Those two had started out even when they put their first been the first time he touched against death. And touched ahead, too, somewhere in his scaredness, to the life he was going to have first then set in that large family, on that birth homestead.

more generous than that; maybe because I held in all my temper and dreams, I filled out like a prize calf, bigger and soldier.
whirled into Dupuyer most nights of the week. They had come for beer, would drink it in their cars, then drive off again in a lurching stutter of traffic. Every few weeks there would be slaughter, a heery pickup-load crashing off a highway curve and the limp bodies catapulted against cutbanks and along the barrow pit. The state highway department sternly put up a white cross wherever an auto victim died, and some curves on the highway north of Dupuyer were beginning to look like little country graveyards.

And I had read avidly what a reservation correspondent named Weasel Necklace wrote in one of the region's weekly newspapers about the doings of his tribesmen: Some of the people went to Conrad to do some shopping, and they all managed to come back through Dupuyer. From there they came home fighting and singing ... Jesse Black Man was picked up at a ranch last week disturbing a home. And when police found him he was in a hay stack, with just his head covered ... Something wrong--Stoles Head Carrier has been staying home, he won't go to town. He does wrong when in town, and now has started to go wrong here. ...

The Blackfeet seemed to be a rambunctious people; I wondered what they thought of our white faces and gray sheep against the backcloth of their prairie past.

As we passed the accident crosses nearer and nearer to our reservation lease, like silvered warnings along a route of pilgrimage, the creeks emptied and emptied until there was no hint of flowing water or tree cover. Then a sudden trench of both: the Two Medicine, a middling green-banked
him such terms, nothing.

That first time, in 1918, the planet was dealing in death so plentifully that perhaps Dad simply happened onto some of the surplus. The flu epidemic ripped at families, World War One gutted open entire nations. Dad was hired by neighbors whose son had been plucked away by the draft board. That job, on a tatter of a ranch near the canyon youngsters. One family's boys, he remembered, started school so skittish that when someone met them on an open stretch of road where they couldn't dart into the brush, they flopped flat with their lunchboxes propped in front of their heads to hide behind.

Dad on horseback every chance he had, on his way to being one of the envied riders in a county of riders; me reading every moment I could, tipping any open page up into
river which somehow had found itself a gorge worthy of
a cataract. We came behind the sheep down a long sharp
skid of slope, looking below to high clumps of cottonwoods,
a few tribal houses, even what seemed to be an entire
tiny ranch or two, lazing east, the Two Medicine wand
out of sight beneath a cliff face which banked up about a hundred feet
high, like a very old and eroded fortress wall; we were told later that
the site
had been a buffalo jump, where the horseback Blackfeet stampeded
the animals over the edge to death. Then the final bridge
of our route, across the mild flow of river, and the highway ramping
up the facing canyon slope. The Two
Medicine carved the southern boundary of our summer
gedography, our lease rimming off at the cliffs. And so,
late in the third day the sheep at last fan onto the pasture.
We call in the disappointed dogs and let the band ease,
graze, rest. For the next hundred days and more, the
slow munch of the ewes and lambs across the ridges will
be our pace of life.

A new country again: this reservation land lay like
long tan islands in a horizon-brimming tan ocean. Westward
the Rockies jagged as if they were the farthest rough
edge of the world, but the other three directions went
to grass, grass and grass. Eastering ridgelines such as
the one we would live along ran from the base of the
mountains tawny as lion's backs and crouched forward
a bit toward the draining rivers, the Two Medicine in
its plummet of gorge to our south and the Marias—a name
I would hold on my tongue half the summer—beyond sight
Peter Doig stepped outside the log house. He had been spending time on errands—to the county fair the day before, where he had won prizes for his lambs and rewarded himself with a fine thorough drunk, this morning to his nearest neighbor's house on some small matter—and the ranch chores were piling up. He strode down the path to the garden to begin digging the potato crop. Going through the gate, he clutched at his heart, fell sideways, and died. He was four months short of his 37th birthday.

A few mornings later, a lumber wagon with a casket roped in place jolted out of the Tierney Basin and set off on the day-long trip to the cemetery at White Sulphur Springs.
to the east.

Open and as it was, the land seemed tense with its contradictions. All that flatness and yet a purposeful tilt to it, our own ridge dropping after a few paces southward, hollowing off to a coulee which pitched deeper and darker until it shot like a flume through the cliffs above the Two Medicine. The sun wheeling so hotly above it that the sweat cooked from you even as you stood, yet on the horizon there might be white-gray clouds billowing coldly. A landscape nearly no water, and of water plentiful but unseen—a single tiny spurt of fresh water for us at a trickling spring near the ridge base for the sheep, dreg pools from the melt of winter's snowdrifts hidden in the bowl bottoms between ridgeline. Then the contradiction which answered my wondering about what it would be like living among the Blackfeet, we were amid them, all right, in the heart of prairie which they had and ruled roved for generations, and there was to be an Indian in sight—nor anyone else, inhabitant or traveler—on our allotted grassland across the entire summer.

That left the question of how we would live with ourselves. Almost before we had fanned the sheep onto the new grass of the reservation and could begin to find out, McGrath arrived with another of his sudden projects.
He had a contract to build several miles of fence on a ranch west of Great Falls, and Mickey-and-Rudy were at some other chore for him. He wanted Dad to subcontract the fencing from him. It would be quick money, which we could use; Dad could easily finish the job in a few weeks. He turned to Grandma and me: Can you pair handle these sheep for that time? Not at all sure we could, we both echoed that we supposed so. Dad drove off with McGrath. Grandma and I stared down from the ridge to the four thousand grazing animals which now were our responsibility.

When we went down to take a closer look, we found that not all of them were grazing. A few were on their sides, legs stiff in the air, dead as stones. We looked at them in bafflement: they were some of the plumpest, best ewes in the entire band. Poison? There were no white-green blossoms of death camas in sight.

and neither Grandma nor I could think of any other threat. Queasily, I snicked open my pocket knife. I had watched Dad skin the pelts from carcasses before, but never had done it myself.

By the time I had sliced and ripped the pelts from the dead sheep, Grandma was puffing back from a look at the far side of the band. Gee gods, there's another one dead over there. I seen the trouble. They're getting themselves down to scratch.

It dawned what this treeless, flowing grassland
rode and the packhorse haltered behind would plod up out of the shadows which pooled in the valley under our jackpine slopes, until at last the rider would step down from his stirrups into the cabin clearing and unknot from the packsaddle the provision sacks, faded white as tiny clouds, which bulged with our groceries and mail. My father's joke: Bring us some T-bones and a gallon became six years old, my mother's life drained out at 51 years.

So: June 27, 1945, at the start of memory's gather. I say she is dead, your mother is dead, sobbing as the words choke
meant to us just then there was not one upright particle on all these miles of range for a sheep to rub against, and an attack of ticks was beginning to make the ewes itch beneath their heavy fleeces. Of course it had been one of McGrath's economies that the sheep hadn't been sprayed for ticks as they were at the Camas: *Aw hell, in this country I don't think ticks will amount to anythin*. Now the sheep were rolling themselves on the ground to scratch—a roll which easily carried them too far onto their deep-wooled backs to be able to get up again, and within minutes their struggling would bloat them to death. We had the prospect of endless ballooned corpses around us. I choked to Grandma: *What the hell are we gonna do?* She snapped: *I don't like to hear you say 'hell.'* Then: *we're gonna have to stay with the sheep and turn 'em off their Godblasted backs.*

We spent every daylight hour of the fourteen days patrolling the sheep. When we spotted the telltale kick of hooves in the air, I would run to the ewe, grab deep into her fleece and heave her over; she would wobble off, lopsidedly bulging with the bloat gas built up in her, but alive. Grandma used Spot and Tim as a ewe's desperation as she looked along the ground and saw those eager jaws bulleting for her usually was enough to thrash her onto her feet.
But we could not be everywhere every moment, and so we lost sheep—some, sometimes two a day, which I would skin out bitterly and carry the spongy pelt back to camp. We had lost about twenty when McGrath and Dad drove in one noontime. McGrath was furious at the sight of the stack of pelts, each of them a few cents' remainder from one of his high-priced ewes. He found he was less furious than Grandma, who scorched him up, down and crosswise for not having sprayed the sheep for ticks. Dad let it go on for a while—it was not often a person got to see McGrath take a hiding and at last broke in: All right, all right, this isn't helping a thing. Let's get matters going again. First thing, Mac, will you watch the sheep a couple hours while we go into town for grub? Lady's gonna have to do a helluva shopping. By now, McGrath saw no way to refuse, and Grandma and I sulked into the Jeep with Dad. On the way into Browning we defended ourselves endlessly, until at last settled us down by pointing out that the fencing money already was bolstering our bank account and that most of the loss of the ewes would come out of McGrath's end of the shares arrangement. I know you did your level best with the sheep. I'd trust the both of you with 'em again in a minute.

Grandma and I were improved by the time we drove back from Browning. We improved more when the Jeep growled
down to the sheep and we spotted McGrath, for he was up to his elbows in skinning a dead ewe. Unable to range far and fast enough on those brief bowed legs of his, he had lost three sheep on their backs while we were gone. A truce came down over all mention of our stint of herding alone, never broken.

With Dad back on the scene, we settled into our slow summer, the trailer house towed back and forth along the ridge summit each week or so like a silver turtle creeping the horizon line, the sheep nuzzling east or west on the prairie below as the grass led them. The lives of the three of us by now had touched down in dozens of sites, but nothing out of the past of any one of us quite prepared a person for this ocean of prairie. The country provided two items: earth to navigate over, and the bunchgrass, sprouting like countless elfin quivers of ten arrows, with slim white tips, to nourish the sheep. All else had to be fetched, if it first could be found. Every second evening, we bounced down the ridge in the Jeep to fill our water cans at the tiny trickle of a spring, and perhaps to have a swimming bath in the mud-banked reservoir below the spring. Fire fuel was scarcer than water, not a twig of wood grew anywhere within sight, and we had to rove like horse thieves to find a collapsed shed or a driftwood pile along the Two Medicine.
weather, could head off a future of national forest boundaries and rich cattle companies.

All this was coming, but unseen, when Peter and Annie Doig took up land in the Basin. They had other things in their heads than the days beyond tomorrow. The young wife could hear the howling of wolves and coyotes—and worse, the splitting cracks of thunder when lightning storms cut down on the Big Belts. To the end of her life, she claimed she never had gotten over those unruly sounds of the Basin, nor its isolation. The young husband was more the one for staying. He built a house of pine logs from a nearby timbered slope and filed papers for the 160-acre site—which qualified best under a law for the taking up of "desert land." Over the next dozen years, they managed to make a start in the sheep business and to add six more children to the family.

Annie Campbell, a Scotswoman who cooked for ranch crews. A year or two after the marriage, one son born, they took up land a mile west of D.L.'s small ranch in the Tierney Basin.

Those homesteading Scots families of the Basin—Doigs, Christisons, Mitchells, a few who came later—could not know it at first, but they had taken up land where the long-standing habits and laws of settlement were not going to work. The homestead staked out by Peter and Annie Doig lay at an elevation of 5700 feet. At first, the hill country did pay
There was a mockery here, because as we explored off across the empty spans of prairie, we again and again came across what seemed the eeriest of abundances: seagull flocks. Grandma and I had never seen them before, but Dad recognized their white soaring from his winter on the Pacific Coast: Must be in here feedin' on grasshoppers. Grandma, however, noted only that the gulls would scavenge a carcass as avidly as magpies, and at once adopted them as the same sort of nemesis. She dubbed them sharks, and the reservation ridgelines began to ring with: Git, GIT, you go—darn sharks, nothin' dead around here for you good-for-nothings...

Our source of groceries was the reservation headquarters town of Browning, some ten miles to the northwest. Going in for supplies once a week broke our monotony on the herding range, but replaced it with sour notions of the reservation people.

Whatever time of day we drove in, Browning always seemed a stunned place, snuffling in the dust from its chuckholed streets and bleary from booze or boredom or some worse affliction all its own. It broke our monotony on the herding ridges, but replaced it with sour notions.
of brown leghorns which were sleek glosses of feather and comb, and renowned as prize breeding stock. The trophies won at fairs and expositions covered most of one wall of the house, and D.L.'s wife sewed a quilt from the prize ribbons. Until the Depression and old age at last forced him out, D.L. could be found there in the Basin, fussing over his prize chickens, sending someone down to the Milwaukee Railroad tracks to fetch the jug of whiskey consigned for him every week, and asking not one thing more of the world.

The other Doig remembered for doing entirely what she pleased was D.L.'s sister, Margaret. She is at the outermost edges of the family memory, glimpsed and gone in someone's reminiscences as remembered by someone yet again. Margaret was the one in the family who went off from Scotland into the British Empire,

Behind the rough hearse coiled a dusty column of riders on horseback and families in spring wagons, neighbors and kin. They buried Peter Doig, tailor's helper in Scotland and homesteader in Montana, and rode their long ride home into the hills.

This is as much as can be eked out--landscape, settlers' patterns on it, the family fate within the pattern--about the past my father came out of. I read into it all I can, plot out likelihoods and chase after blood hunches. But still the story draws away from the twinings of map work and bloodlines, and into the boundaries of my father's own body and brain. Where his outline touched the air, my knowing really begins.

Charlie Doig was ten when his father died, made old enough in that instant to help his mother and his brothers carry the body in from the dark garden dirt. It must have
of the reservation people. For we found in Browning a
remnant of the Blackfeet nation even more mauled than
those who frequented Dupuyer squinty leather-colored
people, men with black braids dropping tiredly from under
their cowboy hats, women so fat they seemed to waddle
even standing still. These people dipped and veered
along the sidewalks, entire families drunk by mid-day,
cars racketing away with bodies spilled half out the
windows. Which was explainable enough: anyone who was
industrious was out of sight somewhere earning a living,
and to judge a people entirely by the Browning street
scenes was as blinkered as walking into the non-Indian
saloon crowds on a Saturday night in White Sulphur Springs
or Dupuyer and declaring that no white person in the county
could be capable of drawing a sober breath. Yet we did
judge that way, and hard. When we met an Indian rancher
at the eastern boundary of our lease land who was diligent
and prosperous, Dad said: Well, they can do some work
if they want to, I guess. But most of them Browning
boozes ought to sign on for lessons from the Hoots.

Since the Blackfeet never appeared out on their own
landscape, we took advantage of the emptiness to become
steady poachers, letting the pothole lakes feed us
Ducks and geese dabbled in them all summer long, and our
.22 rifle made a soft, quickly-gone whinny which couldn't
be heard beyond the ridges. Dad and I had sharpshooting contests, trying to snick off the ducks' heads without touching the body meat. Spot, forever ready for trouble or help, instantly learned to retrieve; Grandma whooped orders and scoldings at him until he would deposit the birds to her gently as a feathery bouquet.

Life inside the trailer house was as cramped as life outside was unbounded. Our entire space was about twenty feet long and seven feet wide; Dad and I shared the bunk which went across one end, Grandma made her bed on the padded built-in bench which doubled as seating along one side of the table. Between the beds were walled a welter of tiny drawers, cabinets, closets, a cookstove, and the breadbox-sized battery radio on which Grandma listened to her soap operas in the mornings and Dad and I listened to the baseball broadcasts while the sheep were shaded down at mid-day. The sun's heat hit the aluminum-painted roof of the trailer and went bowling off in dizzy waves, but even so, the central and went of the dogs abandoned us to lay drooped and panting in the square shade beneath the Jeep. When we weren't trying to doze through the hot hours, Dad and straightening her glasses in disgust and I read, Grandma either played solitaire or crocheted, periodically giving her mutter that Wouldn't you just know, this thread keeps tangling itself six ways from Sunday.
alighting on some remote flood plain of India as a teacher or missionary, no one now is quite sure which. The rememberers tell that twice in her last years she came around the world to visit the relatives in Montana, a sudden ghost from Victorian days in her long black dress and the wooden shoes of India. She spent the rest of her life in India--died there, was buried there--and in her own way must have been as bemused with the existence she had worked out somewhere under the backdrop of the Himalayas as her brother was with his champion chickens.

D.L. was followed into his chosen Montana foothills by two of his brothers. Another of the faintest of family stories has it that the brother named Jack came to D.L.'s ranch on a doomed chance that mountain air would help his health, and there quietly waited out the year or so it took him to die. The other brother, Peter Doig, somehow made his way from Scotland just after his 19th birthday. He had been a tailor's helper, and in the new land at once began a life as far away from needle and thread as he could get. For several years, he did the same jobs on sheep ranches that his son would do a generation later, and which I would do, a generation after that, as his son's son--working in the lambing sheds, herding, wrangling in the shearing pens.
The one among us truly at ease with the drifting prairie life was Kitten, who instantly turned into a long-grass hunter. We would catch early-morning glimpses of him padding off through the ridgeline's feet-high veldt, an intent tiger the size and shade of a jackrabbit. To Grandma's agitation, Kitten always was away on a hunt whenever we moved the trailer house to a new site; she always would mutter fretfully about his absence, Dad always would declare, as if he knew everything in the world about cats, He'll turn up when he gets his fill of prowlin', and always that night or the next morning, Kitten would come purring in among the wheel tracks on the grass and leap casually into Grandma's lap.

But for the three of us cooped in the trailer house, this boundless northland—mockery again—seemed to be tightening and tightening our lives. The first weeks of July came, and the ewes were sheared by a Mexican crew who put up a canvas town amid the tan grass for two days and then vanished. The prairie hung even emptier with their musical jabber gone. The land's tautness grew and grew into us until an afternoon in midsummer, when Dad got up from lunch to go look at the sheep. He asked if I wanted to ride along. My nose sighted into a book, I said my usual No, not unless you need me. I recognize now that he did need me, in a way neither of us could have put to words then, but he said only no, he'd go alone, be back soon. He came back an hour later pale and pawing his chin nervously. What's got into you?
By the time I was a boy and Dad was trying in his own right to put together a life again, the doubt and defeat in the valley's history had come down into a single word. Anyone of Dad's generation always talked of a piece of land where some worn-out family eventually had lost to weather or market prices or both as a place. Not a farm or a ranch or even a homestead, all those empty little clearings which ghosted that sage countryside—the McLoughlin place there by that butte, the Vinton place over this ridge, the Kuhnes place, the Burkey place, the Winters place, all the tens of dozens of sites where families

my life, I can say: here I turned myself. Two decades later, amid an interview of a man who had become famous in forestry, first as a research chemist and then for his skills of administration, I asked him how he had gone into his career. In no more words than this, he told me of deciding one day, when he was a schoolboy plowing in his father's field in Indiana, that he would go off as soon as he could and become a chemist. The simplism of it made him look at me with unease and challenge. But I could only smile to have pulled them so far into the hills: to raise sheep, and to graze them on grass which wouldn't cost anything.

Cup your hands and look down into them and you see a ready map of what these homestead families had in mind. The life lines and contours in your palms are the small creeks and gulches angling into the center of the Basin. The main flow of water, Spring Creek, comes down to squirt out through the pass called Paddy's Run there where the bases of your palms meet. Toward these middle crinkles, the settlers clustered in
Grandma demanded. Damn-it-to-hell, he breathed: I just
almost shot a man.

When he climbed into the Jeep to go, Dad as usual had taken his .30-30
hunting rifle with him. We had been warned in Browning that a dog pack
was savaging sheep in the area, and I want to be able to cut down on the
bastards if they get into ours. What caught his eye from the topmost

lift of the ridgeline, however, was not a few dogs but
an entire band of sheep, like a giant wedge aimed on a
long ripping route all the way across our range. A band
on the move of course was allowed to cross a person's
range—a necessary code of the country—but these sheep
were broadly flung and grazing, not being driven. It
would take them three days to cross at their pace, and
in that time they would scythe out our summer's best grass.

Dad drove down to the munching band, and pulled up
near the herder and his dogs. I says to old mister herder,
'these sheep are eatin' the prime out of my range; suppose
you can swing 'em nearer those north ridges and
clear 'em out of here by tonight?' He looks at me and
says, 'I got a right to trail these sheep through here,
I always have.' I says, 'Then why don't you trail 'em?'
Then he started cussin' and came right for me. Startled,
his hands still innocently on top of the steering wheel,
Dad kicked the Jeep door open to show the .30-30 cradled
across his lap. That slowed the honyocker up some, you
country. Your thumbs and the upward curl of your fingers make the mountains and steep ridges all around—and on all that rim of unclaimed territory, the Scots families surely told one another time and again, countless bands of sheep could find summer grass.

What had picked up the Doigs from a village outside Dundee in Scotland and carried them into the Montana foothills this way, there is no knowing. Dad wrote it off to Scots mulishness:
can just bet. He took a good look and backed off and put those dogs on the sheep and didn't stop until he was off our grass. But if he'd kept comin' at me there, I'da had to shoot . . .

That day sobered us--Dad shoot someone? The deathly clap of the .30-30 shatter the prairie silence, blood spurt onto our lease grass?--as if we had been pulled from a trance. After that, I rode with Dad whenever he drove out to check on the sheep, not the least of the lesson from the face-off was that if I had been with him instead of burrowed into a book, the two of us could have handled the charging herder without a rifle coming into it. Grandma was sympathetically subdued, on guard against herself from saying anything risome. Instead, one morning she came out with: I just been thinking I could take a turn looking at the sheep if I could drive the Jeep. Suppose you can learn me? Apron flapping, this woman who had teamstered horses in weather and terrain most people wouldn't set foot into now strode out with Dad and me and settled nervously behind the first steering wheel of her life. Although she never would venture onto a road or be talked into trying for a driver's license--I'm scared of that written part--the reservation's expanses after this regularly heard the sound of her grinning the Jeep along in low gear, bonused with the beep of surprise as she brushed against the horn button every so often.
between high country and higher, and in that area of Montana, the weather is uglier and more dangerous the farther up you go.
The very floor of the Smith River Valley rests one full mile above sea level. The foothills homesteads were hundreds of feet above that. The cold, storm-making mountains climbed thousands of feet more into the clouds bellying over the Continental Divide. Whatever the prospects might seem in a dreamy look around, the settlers were trying a slab of lofty country which often would be too cold and dry for their crops, too open to a killing winter for their cattle and sheep.

It might take a bad winter or a late spring to show this unseeable fact, and the valley people did their best to live with it. But over time, the altitude and climate added up pitilessly, and even after a generation or so of trying the valley, a settling family might take account and find that the
Dad made his own conciliatory efforts. He suggested that Grandma and I make a visit to White Sulphur Springs for a week. I know you want to see your family, Lady, you deserve to and I'll be all right alone here. I'll see there's no more funny business like that. The two of you go.

We did go, did our visiting, the Smith River valley seemed to me to lay beneath narrower castled horizons now. Where was the expanse, the sense of living at the ridgeline of the entire continent, in any of this? Yet where in our summer trailer or in the Jensen house was any of the knit of the past which each of us, and Grandma most of all, still could feel from the valley? I drove us north again wondering to myself how we were going to fend. If I wanted to look at our situation in its coldest light—and being a worrying youngster, I did—the three of us added up to a makeshift family who lived in half a house for two-thirds of a year and then trooped off onto the prairie to exist more oddly yet. It was nothing to recommend to the rest of society.

But say this for ourselves, we still were together, after nearly four years of grimly cobbled truces between Dad and Grandma. And I found, as I mulled it, that a knack for cobbling was not a small thing from thin-tempered those this-season pair.

I had another fret when we were back with Dad on the ridgeline and I rode with him to look at the sheep: These lambs don't look as big to me as the ones at the Camas. Dad had a grinning answer for that: They're not. But they're heavier. The grass is so crisp up here it makes a hard fat on 'em. They won't be roly-poly like the ones in the Smith
While the Castle Mountains make an uneasy horizon for the rising sun, the range to the west, the Big Belts, cast some eeriness of their own down on the valley. The grandest peak of the range—eminenced on maps as Mt. Edith, but always simply Old Baldy to those of us who had to live with it—thrusts up a bare summit with a giant crater gouged in its side. Even in hottest summer, snow lies in the crater like a patch centered on a gaping wound. Always, then, there is this reminder that before the time of men, unthinkable forces broke apart the face of the biggest landform the eye can find from any inch of the valley.

Nature's crankiness to the Big Belts did not quit there. The next summit to the south, Grassy Mountain, grows its trees and grass in a pattern tipped upside down from every other mountain in sight. Instead of rising out of bunchgrass slopes which give way to timber reaching down from the crest, Grassy is dark with timber at the bottom and opens into a wide generous pasture—a prairie some few thousand feet higher than any prairie ought to be, all the length of its gentle summit.

Along the valley floor, omens go on. The Smith River turns out to be little more than a creek named by a near-sighted optimist. It worms its way across the valley, forever kinking up three times the distance for every mile it flows and delivering all along the way more willow thickets and clay-greased cutbanks than actual water. On the other hand, the water that is missing from the Smith River may arrive in some surprise gush anywhere
River country, but they'll weigh like all hell when we ship 'em.

He was right. On the late September weekend when we chuted the lambs into stock cars at a railroad siding north of our range, their poundage made it a festivity. McGrath broke into a crooked-toothed smile as he penciled the profit figures, Spot outdid himself as a virtuoso among sheepdogs. Even Tip, cruising along the outside of the shipping pens to grab bites of sheep whenever he saw the chance, seemed surprised to look up once and find his brother bounding atop the backs of a crammed knot of ewes to get to his next tactical post. I had heard that highest phrase of praise, a dog that'll run on wool, but never had seen it until Spot performed. A railroad worker asked Dad who had trained the white-and-brown dog. My mother-in-law right there, Dad said with his admiring grin. She's got him so he'll do everything but dance the schottische. Grandma answered with a deeply pleased humpf!

September also meant that I had to come off the Reservation for my
with him when he met a man in the street, backed away, and stared the stranger out of sight in wordless hatred. The man had worked at the ranch where my mother died, and a few days after her death had told Dad blurrily to forget her, get on with life as a man ought to. All that time and distance later, Dad still despised him for those clumsy words.

Not until then did I understand how hard a time it had been when he came for me after school in those earliest weeks after my mother's death and we would drive back to a borrowed room in a pitying friend's house. Day by day as autumn tanned the valley around us, now with bright frost weather, now with rain carrying the first chill of winter, Dad stayed in the dusk of his grief. He must have had a kind of battle fatigue, the senses blasted around in him by that night of death and the thousands of torturing minutes it was followed by. He might go through the motions of work, even talk a bit with Clifford, but any time his eyes could brim and he would lapse off, wordless, despairing. I never knew, either, when some sentence I would say, or some gesture I would make in the way my mother had, would send him mournful again.

Then coaxing began to crack through to us. Mine came easiest. Some one instant—the giggles of a game of tag, or the arc of a swing going so high it looked good and risky—must have pulled me onto the school playground, and into friendships. Several of my classmates carried a black tin
second school year at Valier, now with the notion beginning in me that I had better become more purposeful about what I studied. This did nothing to cure me of reading whatever print I could lay my hands on, but it did get me over the delusion that I ever was going to be a baseball player. I didn't even have a right knee that worked properly, although the doctor said I was in the last year of having to wrap the elastic pressure onto it. When I tried to think of other choices of life ahead, ranching held itself up first. By now I knew much about livestock, especially sheep-raising, and Dad could teach me endlessly more. If that was where life was pointing with this fresh start in the north, our family chance at last to count up with profits that would lead to the buy of a ranch, there must be a logic behind it. I enrolled for the high school's vocational agriculture class, joined the school chapter of Future Farmers. But I also chose Mrs. Tidyman's Latin class, and found I was at least as interested in the textbook version of Caesar's farmers—

Galba agricola est—as I was in vo-ag's mechanized version.

The school had a new superintendent now, a silent large-headed man who seemed to have to spend his full time trying to look dignified. The effort went to doom at once when someone learned that his middle name was Eldo. As far as I could tell in the rest of my high school days, he showed never an idea about education except to patrol around it with El-do, El-do mocking off his measured footsteps. But I see now that his ambling swoon may have been lucky
At the same time, Clifford was beginning to nudge Dad out of his sour haze. The two of them had been friends since before they could remember, left home together as teenagers to go off to a lumber town away out on the coast, knew and liked each other in the easy way that happens only a time or two during life. Clifford had come out of a homestead family as poor as the shale slopes crowding in on their shanty. He had never flinched from anything for very long ever since. Now he heard of a small ranch for rent at the south end of the valley, and somehow drew Dad into saying he would look it over.
for any of us trying to learn, ignoring as it did whatever useful that Mrs. Tidyman and one or two others of the teachers resorted to in the classroom. By second luck, I had arrived at Valier into an unusually self-steadying group of classmates. High school often is written of as a torchlit, raucous time, when friendships and enmities sear deepest. Perhaps because I had so much blaze elsewhere in my life, my high school class seems to me now, as then, a regiment of calm. A dozen girls and ten boys, ours was the most equable population I had ever belonged to; Mrs. Tidyman could give out more uproar reading a paragraph of Dickens than the bunch of us might in a week. No one was particularly prettier or handsomer than those in the classes which had gone through before us, nor I think any more winsome or wicked; but several of us were more persevering than was usual, and a surprising number had more cleverness. I found, after Mrs. Tidyman's easily keelhauling examination of me when I first arrived, that I got along at the school. Clearly I was an odd commodity—my mind did tricks nobody else's did, nor did anyone else come out of anything like my sheep ranch—Reservation-Dupuyer cafe jumble of backdrop, nor were any of the other boys as stoic as I seemed about the subject of girls—yet none of these classmates seemed more than bemused by any of it. And I did contribute the point of pride that in those school-wide academic exams, I could be counted on to trounce the juniors and seniors for us.

I went through the year to three steady themes: days at school in Valier, nights at the Chadwicks', weekends on the ranch with Dad and Grandma. Just once did life threaten to fly apart. In early December, Grandma abruptly told us she was going to spend Christmas with her sister in Wisconsin. I had not been at the ranch while that decision brewed, but knew that there was little holiday flavor to it. She'll get it out of her system this way, Dad said, and maybe then . . . And maybe then come back and tell us the trip had been so clarifying that she was going to keep on right out of our lives, yes, I could see
a hundred or so head of cattle if a man knew what he was doing. Better, Clifford knew, the work demanding to be done there would elbow the grief out of Dad's days.

Somewhere in himself my father steadied enough to decide. He shook hands on the deal for the ranch. For the third time in a dozen weeks, the pair of us bounced across the Smith River Valley.

On the blustery near-winter day when we left the highway and drove onto the gray clay road of our new ranch, we began to live out the close of a story which had started itself eighty years earlier. In the 1860's, the first white settlers had trickled into the area of central Montana which came to be known as the next new area of California. There was then money at the start of the 1890's, dead overgrazed, and then a first prosperous settlement, a silver strike town across the far slope of the range. That town of Castle Cared with new granite had stood in the way, soon enough, the Castle Mountains' wind and snow melted to work on that county. Trying down if the valleywinters could have gauged it, was a measure of how thin the boulders, until the Fancy Stone Boulders were too thin—someone had seen enough of the forest floor whenever.
all the and maybe then.

What the episode was all about, I never knew, nor did Dad seem to have any notion. Perhaps my grandmother simply reached a point where she had to make some test on life for herself, and certainly her turn was long overdue. We said an apprehensive goodbye to her at the bus station in Great Falls. She gave us a chilly farewell and marched aboard. I had no idea how the ranch household could run without her. To my surprise, Dad housekept diligently. He cooked as heartily as she had—I had forgotten his stint in the White Sulphur cafe—and we lived richly on venison steak and milk gravy he made from the fry grease to layer over discs of fried potatoes. But the house echoed empty enough to boom lessons into us, and Christmas spluttered out as a wan winter day we were glad to see end. When Grandma arrived back in her promised two weeks, cheerful and uncomplaining Wisconsin—Gee gosh, I forgot how dampish winters come back there—we were overfed and entirely eager to have her with us again.

The winter went in truce, then it was the lambing season again, time the moment for another of the Jensen ranch's routine springtime calamities to conk us. A mid-May blizzard hit and in a day and a night sealed the ranch in fat heavy snowdrifts. The Hoots came crashing across the benchland with giant bulldozers and punched our way to the stranded bunches of sheep. We had some loss, but not nearly what it might have been, and we pushed the sheep north to the reservation at the start of summer with the thought in our minds that this year's worst lay behind us.
slogged uptown and talked a dry-goods merchant out of two sets of raingear on credit. But a drier skin didn't ease Dad's mind entirely. He toughed it out in Aberdeen for a few months, told Clifford he was so homesick he couldn't stand it and headed back to Montana.

He couldn't have thought, when he came home shaking off the Aberdeen damp, that he was heading into the job he would do for most of the rest of his life. But now the valley, which could always be counted on to be fickle, was going to let him find out in a hurry what he could do best. Sometime in 1920 or '21, Dad said his goodbyes to the Basin again, saddled up.

The cook. He was made choreboy, back again at the hatched round of multitasking.

on, but that was the most that could be said for the job.

River-and the hard years could be evened out with the wealth of acres of bunchgrass slopes along the east fork of the Smith.
But as soon as we finished shearing the sheep in the first few days of July, worry and edginess set in on Dad. The weather had an unaccountable chill.

Gee golly, is it gonna snow on us for the Fourth of July? Grandma demanded of the sky—and with our shorn ewes we had on our hands a double thousand of the world's most undressed creatures, caught in only their paunchy yellow-white carcasses, like hospital invalids with their gowns suddenly ripped away. Within a week, they would be gray and hardy again, their next fat round sponge of fleece already beginning to cloak them. But for those first days, they stood naked, helpless to a storm. And dragging across the spire-line of the Rockies, black clouds were beginning to fray into rain.

Early on the second morning after shearing, Dad came back to the trailer house gnawing his lower lip. He had not yet turned the sheep out of the temporary corral where we were penning them these first uncomfortable nights. The worst thing that could happen would be for a storm to panic the band in the corral and stampede them onto one another in suicidal piles. But the next worst thing would be for that storm to maul into them on the unsheltered range, and here was the risk the storm clouds were forcing on us. That weather's comin' in sure as hell. We're gonna have to mighthail it for the brush on Two Medicine with these sheep. Lady, you'll have to work the dogs; dog the bejesus out of 'em. Ivan can run, he can get on the head end of the band and try to push 'em toward that big coulee. I'll take the jeep to round in the breakaways.
way to the precinct station, the Doig brothers caught the
next train home.

Before long, Dad and his friend Clifford Shearer were
talking each other into heading west for the coast. What they
were going to do there, they had no idea at all, but probably
it would be more promising than home.
The first blast of wind awayed the trailer. We piled out the doorway into the longest hours of our lives.

Before we could reach the corral, a sharp rain began to sting down. The mountains had vanished, and the gray which blotted them was taking the ridgeline. Chill air as the rain drilled through. Now a steady wind sharpening the storm's attack. The sheep milled as if being stirred by a giant paddle, quickening and quickening.

A stalled wave of them had packed so tightly against the wooden gate Dad and I couldn't undo the wire that held it closed; the gate bowed, snapped apart against the tonnage of four thousand struggling bodies. The white shapes of the ewes rivered past us, slapped and spun us. Lambs dashed at their mothers' heels in blattering panic. Shoo 'em, Spot!

Grandma was shrilling. Way 'round 'em there! Bite 'em good, Tip, God damn their crazy hides! I ran the first sprint of endless running, crying Hyaw! Hyaw! as I tried to head the leaders. I could hear the Jeep gunning as Dad set out after another runaway group.

What we faced was a rapid steady push toward the devastation of our sheep. The rain was pelting out of the north, as it spun the cold terrified sheep straight south before it, they were aimed like an avalanche to the cliffs which bladed up from the gorge of the Two Medicine. Countless of them could crash off there as the buffalo had in their fear-blind rush from the whooping Blackfeet. Only our animals were being whooped on to death by the storm, a voice which could not stilled.

There was one way open to us to get the sheep safely down to the shelter of the river brush: drive them along the bottom of that one coulee which
the doom which was inside her since she was born, the asthma
grabbing at her breath.

But her own voice does not come. I do not know the sound
of it, can never know it. Instead she is in the others tracked
through the years. Her teacher at the one-room schoolhouse in
a sea of sage: The first morning of school, here I saw this
girl coming up on a black horse, just coming as fast as ever
she could. And it was your mother, and she was rushing up to

them five at a time, and your mother -- your mother'd cook them
at noon when the sheep had shaded up. We'd eat one apiece and
seal the rest in quart jars and cool them in the spring water
so we'd have them cold for supper. They were the best eatin'
in this world. Lot of times we'd have them for breakfast too,
before we moved camp. Y' see, on forest reserve you're supposed
to move camp every day. The first summer there on Grassy, we
moved camp fifty-eight times in sixty days. We had a brand new
funneled deeply across our range and out through the western edge of the Two Medicine rimrocks. But to do it, we would have to fight the sheep west into the cleft of coulee, sideways along the punishing storm.

And so we fought, running, raging, hurling the dogs and ourselves at the storm-blind waves of sheep, flogging with the gunny sacks we had grabbed off a corral post, shaking the wire rings of cans to a din, and steadily as the rain drilled down on us, we lost ground. We were like skirmishers against a running army: we might bend the band slightly and gradually toward the coulee, but all the while their circling panic was carrying toward the cliffs now not more than a few thousand yards away. Only several minutes away for sheep running headlong. It was not yet mid-day, and grayness had clamped in on the ridgeline over us as if to rain for the rest of time.

We could do nothing right in the curtaining rain. I hurled a ring of cans to head off a breakaway ewe, and the wire circle fell neatly over her neck and sent her clattering across the prairie at twice the speed. Minutes later, I tossed a rock as I had a thousand times to scare another ewe back into the band. The wet stone slipped in my hand, wobbled straight for the ewe and hit her exactly at the joint of the hind leg. Broken leg flapping as she struggled at the rear of the band, she haunted me everlastingly that
day. I quit throwing things, tried and failed to make up for it with sack-flailing runs to turn the band. Grandma's voice was wearing to a croak. I saw the Jeep drop into a pothole so hard that Dad sat for a minute to collect himself.

Now, slowly, wearily, some of the sheep began to stop running. They sank to the ground to die. Nothing could move them—kicking, lifting, even Tip's attacks. Exhausted and freezing, they jutted their necks flat along the ground, rolled their eyes, and did their dying.

We abandoned these stragglers, humped white on the prairie behind us like boulders left by a glacier, and fought on with the sheep still eddying across the grassland. Then, for minutes, the rain eased away. It left a sensation of acute, tingling emptiness, as in a blackened snagland after crowfire had hurtled through then Dad was roaring: Give 'em hell now! Grandma charged the southmost bulge of the sheep with the dogs, and Dad jounced the Jeep, horn button mashed down in a steady blare, into the head of the band where I was whooping myself hoarse. We rammed the animals a few hundred yards westward, close now to where the coulee shadowed darkest on the darkened land. What achieved the last atom of push for us, there is no knowing—perhaps some instant of Spot's savvy or Tip's savagery, perhaps a whip of wind momentarily lashing around in our favor instead of against us. Perhaps only the force field of our desperation. Whatever levered them the last inches to the west, a trickling few sheep at the front of the sodden swirl at last were dodging into the coulee, and the main mass pressing blindly after them.

It cost us the rear hundreds of the band. When the rain
I don't know about him. If I was in as good a shape as he says I am, I wouldn't be sick at all...

Again the sentences snap, I see the handsome straight mouth clamp itself, the chin-dot of scar come close beneath, small but deep like a tool mark nicked in when his strong head was carved. A single slight notch at the bottom of his face, as if it might be the first lightest scratch of calamity on him.
a frenzied surge of them bulleted harder again, they broke sideways around the dogs and spilled away from us like wheat out of a tipped sack. The rest of the sheep we held, barely, at the ground we had gained, and watched the breakaways scuttle across the rain-beaten grass toward the cliffs.

Now the sight in the coulee became one both to hurry and to hold back. The sheep still trying to plunge ahead of the rain's fury could pile themselves to destruction even in the veers of the coulee's banked sides and had to be headed, beaten to a slower pace; the ones beginning to give up and drop had to be savaged into moving on.

Dad abandoned the Jeep, came leaping down the coulee flank to join Grandma and me. The long white vee of sheep accordioned wildly down the coulee as we pushed and held, held and pushed. None of the three of us said a word now, our voices long since given out. Silently if the dogs barked as they knifed back and forth along the band, we did not notice. Silently Dad and Grandma and I flogged sheep with the damp gunnysacks as if they were a stubborn wall of flame and watched for the mouth of the coulee to inch out of the rain toward us.

We reached it in almost-dark, and the sheep spewed down beneath the juts of cliff to the river's brim of willows and cottonwoods. In a dozen hours, we had managed to fling 3500 desperate sheep a little more than four miles, a hundred or more carcasses spotted the prairie behind us, dozens more strewn the base of the cliffs which the runaway clump had avalanched toward.

If this was victory—and we had to tell ourselves it was, for we could have lost nearly all the sheep in a pushing
Doctor now, write to out for us, we were heading for town. Cliff and I stood it for about a week, then we told the boss to fetch a bucket of water or they'd bring it back up. When you, they had men on that place that by God you wouldn't send with you. That place was a haywire outlet from the start, or I'll put it in a beartar to work for, but the ess-of-aa-bee knows Livestock... I mean, I'll take on a band of sheep for MacLachlan. He's buried voice, the retellings, the years and jobs of his life could do about anything a man could rode, slung a pack. Overseen their range the first summer on grass mountains. She was so slim down the waist and hips that the seat of his pants forever bagged in, and the tongue of his belt had to flap far past the buckle. Certain photos catch him as almost mischievous, cocking the dry half-grin which sneaks onto my own face as I look at him. In others there is a distance to him, a sense that except for accident he might be anywhere else in the world
massacre off the Two Medicine cliffs—I knew I wanted no part of any worse day.

I remember that I looked back from the mouth of the coulee toward the dusky north ridges, still smoked with gray wisps of the storm. As much as at any one moment in

my life, I can say: here I was turned. How long such a moment had been in the making, I am the last to say, because once made it seemed to have begun farther back than I could remember and yet to have happened like an eyeblink. Two decades later, readying to write about a man who had recently retired from decades of fame as a forestry scientist, I asked him in mid-interview how he had found his way into his career.

He had been talking easily and in fine detail until then, but here he hesitated as if afraid. Then in no more words than this, he told me of simply deciding one afternoon, when he was a schoolboy plowing in his father's field in Indians, that he would go off as soon as he could and become a chemist. Helpless to find any deeper decision back inside himself, he sat back with both plea and challenge in his face. But all questioning was gone from me as well, lost in the recognition of what I had just heard, so close a chord with my own unwordable instant. As soon as I could manage to do so after that July storm, over Grandma's dismayed protest and Dad's unspoken one I found myself a job for the rest of the summer—piling bales in the hayfields of a ranch south of Dupuyer.

I had no steady idea yet about what I would do in life, but I intended now that it would not include more seasons of sheep on that vast gambling table of Blackfeet rangeland.
town of Ringling. She was a slim high school girl, not much more than five feet tall, and with a fragile porcelain look to her—pale skin set off by dark hair, a dainty way of arching her head forward a few inches as if listening to a whisper.

Her family, which skimped along in a life hard and poor even for a country which had tumbleweeded so many families out of desperate foothills ranches, had come west from Wisconsin a dozen years before, in the hope that the crisp Montana air would ease her asthma. That dainty thrust of the head came from breathing deep against the clutching in her lungs.

Probably Dad liked the grit Berneta showed against such homestead apart and put it together time and again as they tried to make it go. Out of that way of growing up and an unhaltered shrewdness all his own, then, this young cowboy who would become my father had a feel for the valley's seasons and all their chores, and it made him a reputation early.

But as quick as he was making his name as a foreman, a reputation of another sort almost cost him his life again. Each summer Sunday, the best riders in the county would gather at a ranch and try to ride every bucking horse they had been able to round up out of the hills. It was the kind of hellbending contest young Charlie Doig was good at, and made it onto the fence when the battering caught up with him. Blacking out, he pitched off the corral backwards, into the path of the gelding as it rampaged past. The horse ran over him full length, full speed. The running-over fractured Dad's left collarbone and ripped most of the skin from one side of his face, and the gelding would have hollowed him out like a
It amazes me yet that I was the first, even as mildly and temporarily as I went about it, to declare my way out of our alliance of a household. Dad nearly achieved it first, for the mauling the sheep had taken left its toll on him, too: what had been a year of certain profit now was going to be one more time of eking by, of hard and skillful work drawing small wage. Soon before I was to leave for my hayfield job, a noontime spat built and built between Grandma and him, like the clouds boiling again on the peak-flames of the Rockies. At last he announced: I'm going into Browning. She said in ice, Go drinking beer, I suppose. You're damn right, he said in fire, and flung off over the ridgeline in the Jeep. He was gone for the day, and then the night. When he came back the next noon, the extent of what he had done stunned us all, and we passed around it with as little said as possible. Erupting loose from whatever it was that held us together was not a thing we dared look at too closely, for within the past half year every one of the three of us now had shown some such urge, and I was on my way for the next several weeks across some boundary best known to my sixteen-year-old self.

When I went from the reservation that mid-summer to my first work as a hired man, in effect I stepped across time to Dad's life at the same age, going off to earn from the very surroundings which had been so stingy to the larger household. But where under him the broad muscles of horses
The rancher next would plead: Hell, he didn't need to quit, they'd fix it up somehow.

This was the trumping time Dad had been waiting for:
No, by God, he wouldn't work on any ranch run the way this one was, not for any amount of money. Write 'er out, whatever salary he had coming; he was going to town.

Go to town he would, and in a day or so on to the next job, because the bedrock fact under my father's life was that he knew all there was to know about ranch work. One thing the hardscrabble Basin homestead had done for Dad and his brothers was to teach them how a ranch ought to operate; the Doigs couldn't help but learn from having had to take their past just fights—were not scruffy little mustangs. They were half again bigger and a lot less rideable

he didn't pass up chances to show it.
had rippled and become a way of life, beneath me machinery throbbed. In the hot weather of that year and the next to come, I learned to keep the pace of piling eighty-pound hay bales all day long onto a moving truck, of cocooning inside the roar and dust of tractors crawling across of steadying a grain truck beside a lurching combine to catch the harvested flow of gold. The north country opened and beckoned for me as the sage distances of the valley must have for Dad at my age. Clock hours changed, stretched, in that summer light; lunch happened whenever food arrived in the field, to be eaten gratefully in the shaded dust beneath a tractor or truck, supper came into the schedule when at last it was too dark to do anything else. The Reservation's glacier of slow weeks was left to Dad and Grandma now, to fend with that and themselves however they could, in one of the unspoken but obstinate bargains our household ran on, I would help with the trailing of the sheep at the start of each summer, and with the first week or so of settling into the routine of the ridgeline, but then I would go. I could be expected to visit whenever I had a rare Sunday off from work, but all the other days of my summers were my own now—and I meant for them to run full and swift.

I learned rapidly that I either had luck or had to make it. My second summer of hiring out, I heard of a job on a ranch somewhere far to the north of the Reservation, near a point on the Canadian boundary called Whiskey Gap. I asked Dad for the loan of the old Dodge car we had acquired and set off, fighting muddy roads and asking directions at any house I saw until at last, fifty miles beyond Browning and within a glance of the Canadian border, I found the ranch. Dusk was going to dark, and no one answered my knock. I stepped out of my muddy shoes on the porch, walked in and went to sleep on the couch in the living room. In a few hours when the rancher came home and snapped on the light, his wife large-eyed
The pioneer old-timers businesslike chose for the valley, on his way to the new job, back saloon wall, and minutes later be in the rancher's pickup.

The ranch hands might have his bedroll tight there along the plinking music at the back of the room, and couples would

crowd into the booths to sit with their sides snuggled into one another from knee to shoulder.

Doig/57

then its whomping diesel engine, then its battery of control levers inside the sheet-metal cab. He rode with me a few rounds on the field, showing me the quick dance of brake-and-clutch to lurch the monster around corners. I could eye like pretty wheels of green velvet. A small, sad-faced eye for a cattledrad, and at the back, poker tables caught the light, the woodwork and breakfast tables been carved and sheened like the wooden bar.
behind him, I said my name and Dad's, and asked if I could have the job. I could.

Apparently as a reward for having found the place at all, I could ask for. The rancher's grown son, drove one elderly red truck, I drove its mate, by gunning along the narrow graveled dike of road as fast as we dared, we could make one haul to the grain elevator at Cut Bank in the morning and another in the afternoon. There was a breakneck hill in the middle of the run which Ron and I traded jokes about. I had the world moving on my last load, he would drawl; by the time I hit the bottom of that sonofabitch hill I must have been going a thousand miles an hour. Near the end of summer, I was slamming my truck into higher gear on a flat stretch of the road when I saw a trench of potholes ahead. With no traffic coming, I swerved at slight angle across the holes to reduce the jolt. There was a bounce, and a second, and the horizon plunged away as a concussion crumpled the rear of the truck down into a howling tilting skid, dust fuming into the cab, metal screaming on gravel.

At last I sat, stopped, looking up into the sky, gripping the steering wheel which now haloed above my face. I groped the door open and bailed for the road. The truck angled above me like something monstrous, with a broken lower back. I looked at the rear wheels, had to be, and