

An hour or so of this and we would be at the first of the sheep camps, McGrath plunging the pickup off into a rough sweep for the herder and his band. What mood we would find when the herder at last showed himself, his saddlehorse and dogs eyeing us with twice the interest he was, had always to be a gamble.

no#

of McGrath's herders
I can think of only one ~~herder~~ who seemed to thrive on the life--Louie, a tall soldierly man with a German accent. He owned a pair of tiny binoculars which snapped open like a case for eyeglasses, and spent his time peering for wildlife on the mountain slopes. Yesterday a black bear come, up over there. I watched at him all morning. But the others had the ~~usual~~ common herder's affliction, the mind sprung ~~back~~ by the weight of the silences against it. One I remember hated to say even Hello when we arrived at his camp; he would stand half-sideways with his eyes darting to the timber until gradually he would face around at last and begin to make sentences. Others ~~Several~~ were ~~deeply~~ wiz'n trapped in

their homeland language. When McGrath blared and chortled at him, Finnigan could only shake his head slowly as an ox and clack some Nordic mystery back at him. Karl

the Swede was another uncertain talker, his shy throaty sentences so low they seemed to come out of his shirt collar instead of his mouth. 9 But however slowly, there always would be news from a herder: a coyote seen on a hillside, a ewe gone lame or ripped by a snag, a porcupine treed by his dogs as they suicidally tried to get their faces full of quills. Dad would smoke and chat until the herder began talking,

the area of forest economics he long had watched: "Of the 20 largest lumber producers, 8 disappeared through mergers, 3 went out of business, and 1 became a cooperative." He pointed out, too, that never was the lumber industry a

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Munger might have had his own ~~initial research~~ ^{early career} in mind when he insisted on carefully-plotted expenditure of time and effort. In 1908, not quite 25 years old, he ~~had been~~ ^{was} ~~sent from Forest Service headquarters~~ in Washington, D. C., to study the encroachment of lodgepole pine on Ponderosa pine in the Pacific Northwest. Since Munger's Forest Service career at the time amounted to ~~the grand sum of~~ two months and he had never laid eyes on either species of pine, ~~in his life~~, the assignment was, as Munger later understated it, "rather presumptuous." But it served to get the young New Englander to the Pacific Northwest; the brief project into the pines led to a full career in this. 1929 to work on the forest survey just then getting underway.

Cowlin had been drawn to the Experiment Station in improved timber species.

intensified on the production of better tree seed and the forestry school of Oregon State College, and research years. Now facilities were obtained at Corvallis through and in Thornton Munger's test site plantings in the next few in the establishment of the Wind River Arboretum in 1912.

research had begun well before the Station itself, back genetics became a full-fledged research division. Genetics ~~had been one of his professors in graduate school.~~ ¹⁹¹⁹

William B. Greeley, who headed the ~~Forest Service~~ ^{agency} from ~~1919~~ ¹⁹²⁰ to 1928, earned his master's degree in the Yale forestry program a few years before Munger did likewise. And Munger not only knew Gifford Pinchot, the storied and flamboyant ~~first~~ ^{Chief} ~~father~~ of the modern Forest Service, but was on hand the

then only nod and ask enough to keep the flow coming. McGrath's style was to blurt at the man until he set off on some startled telling or another, the two of them building to full exasperation. Then abruptly, an instant before the herder was ready to fling ^{his} the job in McGrath's face, we would wheel ~~around~~ ^{away} to move the sheepwagon to a new ~~meadow~~ ^{pasture} site.

^{could be seen to be}
The sheepwagon ~~was~~ a child of the prairie schooner. With its rounded ~~white~~ canvas top and high spoked wheels, a first glance easily ~~seen~~ ^{found} it back amid the beadlike file of ~~wagons~~ ^{white-topped} westering ~~was~~ ^{existed} through our history. But a sheepwagon always ~~is~~ alone, remote as a drifting brig on the grass ocean. It was built for one ^{narrow} man to bide through the months in, ^{and that single life only.}

^{no #} Inside the wagon, it felt to me as if space, ^{the very air,} ~~air itself,~~ had changed, somehow tidied and tamped itself. Nowhere else ~~was~~ ^{sense of shrinkage} had the compactness, as if a house had ^{pulled in} ~~been shrunk~~ and ^{pulled in} ~~shrunk~~ until it came down just above your head and ^{out} ~~past~~ your fingertips. Storage bins doubled as places to sit, the table hinged daintily down from a wall when wanted, every built-in cabinet had a tiny ~~for~~ firm clasp snugging its door. The bunk bed fit across the inmost end of the wagon as properly as a blade ^{snicked} ~~into~~ a jackknife.

To let the herder see out more easily to the sheep, the wagon had a Dutch door; with its bottom half closed, I could teeter out and feel far up on a lookout across the pasture of summer.

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But the very size and abundance of Pacific Northwest
timber ~~was deluding.~~ ~~bred a delusion.~~ Such forests were thought to be
inexhaustible. The notion prompted logging practices which

Richard McArdle would rise to be Chief of the U. S.
Forest Service. Thornton Munger would oversee test plots
of selected Douglas fir stocks which have been yielding
valuable reforestation information ever since.

Just so do yesterdays count up into today. Just so
does the story which opens with a single curious passerby
flex itself into a history of Forest Service research on
the timber and range resources of the Pacific Northwest.

is
In place, the wagon ~~was~~ a kind of ship's cabin for the herder, tidy,
buttoned, comely. But during the move to the next site, it ~~became~~ ^{becomes} only
a floating bin. Everything loose must be packed away in the wagon's
nooks, then onto the floor is piled whatever firewood the herder has
chopped, his fuel oil can and likely a creamery can full of drinking water,
sacks of salt for the sheep, and last of all the small front steps for the
doorway. Because a sheepwagon sits so high on its running gear--the
floor nearly chest high to a man on the ground--it ~~moves~~ ^{tows} across rough
country with a staggering topheavy gait. A successful move of a sheepwagon
is one that doesn't topple the ~~stovepipe~~ ^{chimney pipe} and leave it to be searched out
of a few miles of roadside brush. At the new site, there is leveling
to be done. A cup of water is put on the table to see how the wagon
tilts, then small holes are dug for the wheels to drop in, or a stout
stick is shouldered under a corner of the wagon box to lift it ~~into~~ into
steadiness for another week.

Such, at least, was how a sheepwagon was properly moved. McGrath in
his headlong way was apt to tow it as if dragging a stump. More often
than not, he would forget to fasten the cabinet doors, and a flour can
would fly out and explode snowily over everything, pots and pans then
avalanching out of the oven and likely a can of lard or jar of jam
leaping in after. ⁴ Credit him, McGrath always seemed genuinely surprised

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which bristled mile upon mile, mighty trees often a height of two hundred feet and more.

The beginnings of scientific research into this trove of timber make savory reading -- adventurers onto a strange shore plucking off the odd specimens everywhere around them. On a voyage with Commander Vancouver in 1792, a Scottish surgeon and naturalist named Archibald Menzies went up the Columbia River 100 miles by longboat and collected twigs, needles, and cones along the way. Menzies' jaunt gathered in specimens from the Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and western red cedar -- the four great timber species in the ecosystem west of the Cascades.

Then in mid-October of 1805, the Lewis and Clark expedition arrived at the Columbia River in what is now southeastern Washington. Continuing westward to the mouth of the river, the Corps of Discovery would spend a total of 196 days in the country of the Columbia, and the journal entries by Captain Meriwether Lewis diligently recorded flora and fauna. As the introductory quotation shows, the big tree now called Sitka spruce mightily impressed diarist Lewis. "this timber is white and soft throughout," he wrote, "and rives (splits) better than any other species which we have tryed."

Another species, one which would become the mainstay of generations of Northwest logging, took its name from a visitor two decades after Lewis and Clark. In 1825, David Douglas

to fling back the door and find the gooey wreckage. For a minute or so he would dab at it doubtfully, firing pots and pans back into the oven and kicking flour out the door in tiny puffs, then would snort The hell with it, a shepherd's got more time than I ~~have~~^{do}, and off we would ~~be~~ buck to the next sheepwagon move.

We spent more than two years on the Camas, the seasons milling into one another like the fitful sheep themselves. Dad and Grandma steadied the ranch with their work, but had less luck with each other. Ours was a brink of a family, the two of them at sudden edge with each other, then calming again. In the winter months I lived in town, staying either with one of Grandma's sons or some family friend, parceled some place or another a month or so at a time across the cold center of the school year. When Dad and Grandma came to take me to the Camas for weekends with them, the mood seemed to me as chancy as among McGrath's wild shepherders. But as the third winter of this was about to begin, something vaster to judge came along. McGrath had made a proposition.

He was giving up the Camas, and instead had leased a small ranch two hundred miles to the north. He ~~was going to~~^{would} put two thousand ewes on the place: would Dad run the sheep for half the profit?

None of us had been to that region of Montana, and naturally McGrath's prospects were as unpredictable as the country. But Dad was for going.

circuits open and close, in a car pool or a skyscraper, to the desk and write your equations or symphonies awfully efficient. But it seems to be the way this goes. It does seem to us, not by reason of any personal but by asking people to whom the creative accident time-to-time occur, that one good way of suppressing act is to press too hard. The physicist who plays the rhododendrons, or distills his own bourbon knows well, whether he's doing it on Riverside Drive, in a living room, or in the Northern Valley, or Clinton, New York, Me.

A Small Planet To Visit

- William Caldel

As soon as the astronauts are ready, we've a planet to discover.

It's the fifth biggest in the large system of satellites around the central star, its mean distance from the sun the order of 93 million miles. On it there is a firmament of the waters, dividing the waters from the land there are a day and a night.

Its surface brings forth grass and the herb yielding fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in it.

It has climate. It is surrounded by an envelope of air and the axis on which it rotates is inclined to the orbit at an angle of 23.5 degrees.

And so there are winds. There are waves on its margin. Their tides beat and crash except where the sea lies because the gases in the atmosphere refract the light. The star it seems to rise very swiftly into a vault of green and amethyst and scarlet, and when it goes

Coast was rain." But anyone familiar with the dousing which this rumpled corner of the country undergoes in a cycle of the seasons might agree that rainfall should have been high in the reports of the earliest European mariners who cruised this coast. We do know with more precision how impressed the explorers were with the vast growth fed by this damp North Pacific weather -- the dark-green forests

He took me aside and talked out his reasoning: Ivan, I think I'll take
on those two bands of sheep for McGrath. He's a bearcat to work for,
but the son-of-a-buck knows livestock and he knows how to ~~find~~^{turn} money....
going up north.
I think it's a chance to take, But I don't know now, how do you feel
about changing schools? Eight weeks earlier I had started high school,
 with the classmates I had known since we had come away from the mountains
 after my mother's death. The school, the town, the valley made all the
 lifestream I knew anything about. I swallowed and gave my father the
 answer he wanted, and perhaps ^{the one} I secretly did too: I feel okay about ^{that} ~~it~~.

Grandma. he ^{rehearsed} to me a dozen arguments he would put to her,
 and when the time came said simply: This damn valley has never got us
much of anywhere, Lady. All either of us has to ~~show~~ show for our lives
here is a helluva pile of hard work. I say we ought to try out new
country. She was silent a long while--but a thinking silence, not a
 perturbed one. At last: All right then. When can we be gone and get
it over and done with?

The two of us watched, struck silent, as she honked into a handkerchief
^{then} and clouted pots and pans onto the counter for the next kitchen chore.
 She was truly corded to us now, and the fact ^{came as} ~~was~~ a triumph and a wonder.
 And somehow, a concern.



ARTHUR HOPPE

Seattle Post-Intelligencer Fri., Nov. 13, 1970 S 11

The Son of Horatio Alger

—San Francisco

Once upon a time there was a young man named Horatio Alger who lived in a country suffering under a Great Depression.

Times were terrible. Horatio couldn't find a job. He had to share a run-down flat with 10 other unemployed bums. They wore add, cast-off clothes. They had no soap, no razor blades, no privacy and not much hope.

And all they had to eat were beans, bagels and broiled rutabagas — day after day.

"But I shall persevere!" said Horatio grimly. "I shall persevere so that my son will have a better life. He will have a decent home, decent clothes, decent food and a decent job. He shall never have to live like this."

And Horatio persevered.

HE FOUND A JOB lifting bags and toting bales for 20 cents an hour, 12 hours a day. He suffered. He persevered.

He formed a union. He called a strike. The police clubbed him on the head. The Establishment scorned him as "an anarchist" and "a troublemaker." He suffered. But he persevered.

"I must do my part to reform society and make this a better world," he said. And he did.

Thanks in part to his efforts, times changed. Minimum wages, old age pensions, unemployment insurance and the eight-hour day came into being. Prosperity gradually returned.

At last Horatio's suffering and perseverance were rewarded. Like most of his generation, he now had a decent home, decent clothes, decent food, a decent job, two cars in the garage and chicken every Sunday.

And he had a son, Horatio Junior.

"It was all worth it," said Horatio proudly and happily as he watched the lad grow up, "to know that we will never have to undergo what I underwent."

Junior, as sons inevitably will, grew up. "What, Dad," he asked one day, "should I make the goal of my life?"

"Why, son," replied Horatio with some surprise, "the goal of life, of course, is to get a decent job so that you can have a decent home, decent clothes, decent food, two cars in the garage and chicken every Sunday."

"But I've already got all that," said Junior. And a week later he dropped out.

JUNIOR JOINED A commune and lived in a run-down flat with 10 other unemployed bums. They wore odd, cast-off clothes. They had not soap, razor blades or privacy and, in conformity with their Zoroastrian religion, they ate nothing but beans, bagels and boiled rutabagas — day after day.

The police clubbed them on the head. The Establishment scorned them as "anarchists" and "trouble-makers." But Junior persevered.

"I must do my part," he said, "to reform society and make this a better world."

"But why, son?" cried Horatio, wringing his hands. "Why?"

"The trouble with you, Dad," said his son sadly, "is that you don't understand the finer things in life."

MORAL: Cheer up. Our grandchildren will be just like us.

FLIP

Let me call her Ruth here.

She came to the ranch on one of the first ~~pink~~ pale days of spring, hired to cook for us during calving time, and stayed on in our lives for almost ^{three} ~~four~~ years. Living womanless had left us wide open for Ruth. To me, she was someone who might provide some mothering again. Not much mothering, because she kept a tight, careful mood, like a cat ghosting through new tall grass. ~~Ruth's life of sight through life would always center on Ruth.~~ But patches sewed on the knees of blue jeans, fruit and fresh cookies added to my lunchbox, even a rare open grin when I found an excuse to come into the kitchen -- all were pettings I hadn't had recently. And for Dad, Ruth must have become a chance to dodge the past, a newness to pull him from what he had been through in the ~~iron~~ bog of months just behind us. ^{A woman} ~~Someone~~ undead to think on.

It happened faster than any of us could follow. This man who had spent six careful years courting my mother now married the young ranch cook he had known only weeks. Ruth, Dad, ~~and~~ only the loins could have ^{drawn together the} ~~decided such a~~ pairing. For the sake of the both of them, my struggling father and the woman who had stepped

inside my mother's outline, I hope that there were times in bed
before the ^{quick}~~lightning~~ marriage, and that something close to love
kindled then. Because all too soon, the war between them had begun.

Even now Ruth is mysterious to me, and her time in our lives
dusk and half-seen silhouettes.
a strange season all mist and ~~glimpse~~. I have to puzzle to bring

Nothing of her -- photograph,
back exactly what she looked like. ~~No photograph of her, no written~~
~~written line, keepsake --~~
~~line, not one keepsake~~ has survived. It is as if Dad scoured ~~all~~ ^{every}

^{Ruth}
trace of ~~her~~ from our lives. But ^{along} ~~in~~ the crevices of memory,

^{glimpse}
I ~~glance~~ her. I see best the eyes, large and softly brown with

what seemed to be some hurt beginning to happen behind them -- the

deep, trapped look of a doe the instant before she breaks for

cover. The face was too oval, plain as a ^{white} ~~platter~~, but those

madonna eyes graced it. ~~into~~ Dark-haired -- I think, brunette;

slim but full-breasted; and taller than my mother had been, nearly

as tall as Dad. A voice with the grit of experience in it, and

a knowing laugh twice as old as ^{herself} ~~she was~~. Never ~~pretty~~, entirely

^{Ruth}
pretty, this taut and guarded ~~woman~~, but close enough to earn

second looks.

Even how she came to be there, straight in our path just after Dad turned our lives toward the valley, seems to have no reason ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~behind~~ it. Never before or since did I see anyone like her on a ranch. Ranch cooks always ~~seemed to~~ ^{would} be stout spinsters or leathery widows, worn dour and curt by a life which gave them only the chore of putting meals on the table for a dozen hungry men three times

The sameness of cooks usually was such a day. ~~Cooks usually had such a sameness~~ that the men didn't

bother to learn their names, simply called each one Missus. But

~~didn't fit~~ Ruth ~~was no~~ Missus, she was Ruth to everybody. Those eyes were

the kind which caught your glance on the streets of Great Falls

or Helena, where young women went to escape to a store job and

the start toward marriage and a life they hoped would be bigger

than the hometown had offered ~~Yet here Ruth was in the valley,~~ ^{--city eyes, expecting eyes.}

passing the syrup pitcher along the table, and for all anyone

could tell, she seemed ready to stay until ~~she~~ ^{she sorted through to} ~~those eyes found~~

~~whatever~~ ^{whatever} ~~the man~~ she was looking for.

Already Ruth had misread twice -- two marriages failed, and still she couldn't have been much older than 25. And Dad must have known about the husbands before him; the valley kept no such secrets. Yet somehow they came together, moths bumping one

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another on the way to flame. I would give much, now, to know the arguments they had used on themselves for that marriage. All too soon, I was hearing every argument either could think of against it.

I remember that

When the two of them began to carve at one another, ~~I don't~~ know for sure. But I remember that it was before we ^{moved from} left the ranch,

several months after the wedding. The ranch itself ~~must have~~ *got nipped* away at ~~on~~ everyone's nerves. Every sprinkle of rain, the road puttied

into a slick gumbo, and the pickup ~~trucks~~ *wallowed* slid at helpless angles. It was like living at the far end of a ~~mile or~~ ^{hay} mile-long trough of molasses. Yet the ranch was too dry for good ~~grass~~ or grain, and too shaley

up in the hills where the cattle had to graze. ~~This~~ *This* goddamned rock

~~pile,~~ *that* Dad began calling it, the surest sign ~~he was beginning~~ *had started* to talk

dropping himself into the share-lease. Ruth probably was ready to leave

after the first night of howling coyotes, of of a cougar edging

out of the Castles to scream down a gulch. *Working as cook* Cooking on the big

ranches out in the *open expanse* heart of the valley was one thing, but slogging

away there in the *tumbled* ~~rough~~ foothills was another. ~~I can hear across~~

the years what she would have said:

Her mouth could fire words those soft eyes must have been afraid of.

I can hear across the years what she would have said:

5

Charlie, I don't have to stay here, I didn't marry this
hellforsaken ranch... I got places I can go, Charlie... Places,
Charlie!... Charlie... Charlie...

When Dad and Ruth gave up ~~that~~^{the} ranch, they turned toward White Sulphur and ~~did~~^{undertook} the one last thing in the world anyone would have expected of either of them: they went into the cafe business.

The Grill, ~~a small cafe straight~~ across the street from The Stockman, had come up for rent. It was the third and smallest eating place in a town which ~~didn't~~ had not quite enough ~~business~~^{trade} for two.

Somehow Dad and Ruth, this pair who had never been around a town business of any sort and who already were finding out that they flinted sparks off one another all too easily -- somehow they

talked one another into trying to run a cafe together, and somehow

they turned out to ~~be good~~^{have a knack for} at it. With her years of cooking for

crews, Ruth could handle a kitchen. From all the ranches behind him, Dad knew something about purchasing, and better yet, he knew

the valley and its people. He put up new hours for the Grill:

it would stay open until after the last saloon had closed. ~~There~~^{There} at the last of the night and the first hours of morning, The Grill

6

found its customers. Truckers on their runs through the pitchy night, ranchers headed home from late business in Helena or Great Falls, some of the Rainbow crowd trying to sober up on black coffee and T-bone -- the night ^{gypsies} travelers began to ~~begin~~ fill the counter stools and the few booths ^{by the hour.} Steaks and hashbrowns covered Ruth's stove, and Dad dealt platters of food ~~among them~~ until his arms ached.

~~the business began to find The Grill.~~ ^{came into} And other eaters ^{presented themselves,} showed up,

too. Just then in its history, White Sulphur was seeing the last

of a generation of aging sheepherders and ranch hands. Several of

them, I remember, had nicknames of a style which would pass when

they did: Diamond Tony, who had a baffling Middle European name

and an odd, chomping accent to go with it; Mulligan ~~name~~ John, ^{called so} ~~named~~ _n

for the meal which had become a habit ^{with} ~~for~~ him in the aloneness of

~~solitary~~ sheep camps; Hoppy Hopkins; The Swede. ^{Maybe half a hundred} ~~Three or four dozen~~ ₁

of these men, gray and gimpy and familyless, ^{making} ~~made~~ their rounds downtown,

coming out for a few hours to escape living with themselves. Any

time after dusk, you found them in the saloons in pairs

or threes, sitting hunched toward one another, nodding their heads
 as parsons
 wisely as they reheard one another's stories. # The Stockman, where
 Pete McCabe was known to be ^{the kind of fellow} a man who would set up a drink even
 when the pension check hadn't yet come to pay for it, drew most
 of these oldtimers, sometime in the night, sometime ^{through} in the week.

Now, over across the street, Dad was good for ^{an emergency} a meal as well. How
 many times did I hear one or another of them, joking so as not to
 seem begging, ask for a meal "on account" -- on account, that ^{was} is,
 of being broke? However many, it was very nearly the same as the
^{total} number of times, in the weeks and months and even years afterward,
 that the men would stop Dad on the street and say, ^{Charlie,} "Here's that
Grill money I've been owing you."

Ruth, I think, ~~did~~ never objected to those meals Dad would jot
 (They might fight over a spilled holder of toothpicks, but not the "account^{ants}es." on the tab.) Out ~~an~~ in the valley ranches, she ~~too~~ had seen, in those
 crews ^{clipping} ~~treeping~~ in to the supper table, the ^{who were} ~~men~~ growing too old
 for the work they had done all their lives, and soon too old for
 anything but those lame rounds of Main Street. Age was making that
 same wintry push on the one person Ruth steadily loved, too. She
 had been raised by her grandmother -- her family so ^{poor and at war with} ~~at war within~~
^{it had shunted her off there}
 itself ~~in the mountains~~ -- and regularly she went across the Big Belts
 to see the old woman. Several times she took me with her on those
 visits. Creased and heavy, stiff

(7a)
 in the legs and going blind, the grandmother was the most ancient

woman I had ever seen, and her house the shadowiest and most ^{silent} ~~lifeless~~.

She spent her days ^{entirely} in the kitchen, finding her way ^{through the cataract ~~in~~ webs} by habit. She

would sit and talk, eyes and legs going lifeless in a body not yet

willing to die, and Ruth, listening, would be a different person,

softer, younger.

But whatever Ruth took from those visits ^{might} stopped at our own
doorsill. Time and again, she and Dad faced off, and the house
^{full of silence}
went silent for a day or more.

Or worse, one would be silent and the other would claw on and on.

They both had ^{the} habit of storing things up against one another.

The that time that you ... I told you then ... There was a calendar of
combat, and either one would refer as far back as could be remembered.

4 If they had fought all the time, the marriage might have snapped
apart quickly and neither would have been severely hurt. But they

bickered
~~fought~~ in seasons -- weeks, maybe months, passed in calm, then a
blast of argument, of not talking, sulking. Sometimes Ruth would
leave. Sometimes Dad would tell her to leave, and she would refuse.

Behind the bickering, each had a fear. Dad would not admit to his
in marrying her,
mistake, not look a fool to the valley. He was wrong there; the

only mystification anyone seemed to ^{harbor} ~~have~~ was why he kept on with
^{mismatch} For her part,
a hopeless marriage. Ruth would not face up to another split,

would not let one more marriage break up entirely.
broken marriage point to her as an impossible

8A

9/ wife. There she was wrong, as it would turn out. Each time, one or the other would make a truce until Ruth felt restless again or Dad's despair twisted in him again. If nothing else set them at each other, there always was the ~~everlasting~~ argument about

our small herd of cattle, which Dad was pasturing in the foothills of the Big Belts. He drove out each morning to pitch hay to the cattle, then came back to work in the cafe from ~~in~~ mid-afternoon until closing. Ruth suspected, ^{rightly} accurately, that Dad had not given all intentions of ^{rightly} up ranching. Dad suspected, just as accurately, that neither of them could keep up the pace of the cafe work for long, and that our living soon was going to have to come from livestock again. however long this bayoneting match could go on, In the meantime, we were town people, and I began to learn more of White Sulphur than its saloons.

(8A)

The plainest fact, so plain I never thought of other possibilities, was that the town lived on livestock. All the places I liked best had the sounds and smells and feels which came one way or another from the herds and flocks out ^{on} in the ~~summer~~ slopes of tan grass. In the creamery where Dad bought milk and butter for the cafe, the air hung so heavy with the dampness of processing that it was like walking against pillows, and everyone talked loudly out of the sides of their mouths to be heard over the rumble of churns. Nearby, the grain elevator took a noise like that and tripled it, the roaring clank of conveyors carrying off wheat and barley and oats somewhere into the tower. At the railroad shipping pens, the noises came directly from the livestock. Sheep go through life in a near-panic anyway, and their frenzied bleating as they were wrangled up the chutes into boxcars grew to a storm of sound. The cattle could be heard all over town when they were pastured near the pens a day or so before shipping -- a constant choir of moaning, like wind haunting into ten thousand chimneys at once.

White Sulphur was as unlovely but interesting as the sounds of its commerce. Sited where the northern edge of the valley began to rumple into low hills -- by a settler who dreamed of getting rich from the mineral water bubbling there ^{and didn't} -- the town had ~~simultaneously~~ grown in the design of a very wide T. Main Street -- the top of the T -- ran east and west, with most of the town's houses banked up the *low* hills on either side of the street at its eastern end. To the west lay the sulphur slough, the railroad and shipping pens, and

the creamery and grain elevator. The highway, in its zipper-straight run up the valley, came in there like the leg of the T onto Main Street. Much of the traffic, then, was aimed to this west end of town, while all the saloons and grocery stores and cafes -- and the druggist and the doctor and the two lawyers, since it took two ^{an odd strung-out} to make a court case ^{did business} -- were at the east *end*.

This gave White Sulphur an odd, strung-out pattern of life, as if the parts of the town had been pinned along a clothesline. But it meant there was an openness to the town, plenty of space to roam and to see on to the next thing which might interest you. Even the school ~~gave~~ gave off this sense of open curiosity, because it had been built down toward the ^{base} ~~leg~~ of the T where two of the town's main attractions for a boy had also ended up -- the county jail, and the sulphur slough.

Since the nine saloons downtown fueled a constant traffic of drunks, the jail was kept busy, and most schooldays we had a fine clear view of the ritual there. ^{It was only} ~~about~~ a few dozen ~~yard~~ yards from the diamond where we played ^{work-up} softball ^{to where} the brick jail building stood atop a small embankment. Just in from the edge of this embankment, a wire clothesline ^{had been} looped between two fat posts. Right there, the prisoners ^{had} ~~would have~~ a morning recess at the same time as ours. They ^{were} ~~had been~~ sent out to ^{pin} beat their bedding on the clothesline and beat some cleanliness into it -- and, I suppose, to huff some of the alcohol out of themselves. Shepherders who had come in from the mountains for their annual binge, the regular winoes from the Grand Central who were tossed in jail every few months to dry out, once in a while a ^{skinny} scuffed-up cowboy from the big Rankin ranch -- there they would be, on the embankment like performers on a stage.

Most of the men I could recognize from my nights downtown with Dad. But one morning a single inmate came out, a slender man I didn't know but whose face I seemed to have seen before. The softball game stopped entirely as we all puzzled at that strange familiar face. The instant before any of us figured it out, one of my classmates rushed to get his words into the air first: ~~Hi Dad!~~ ^{all right,} Hey, that's my Dad! His face was the same as the man's, but skewed into a pleading grin, his eyes sick as he looked from one to another of us. One more time he said it -- That's my Dad! -- before we faced around, shame heavy in the air, toward the next batter.

At the bottom of the slope from the ^{school grounds} ~~football field~~, as if it had seeped down from the ~~lined yard lines~~ and the overflow off the ~~prisoners'~~ ^{White Sulphur} bedding, lay the sulphur slough which gave ~~the town~~ its name. On cold days, the slough steamed and steamed, thin fog puffs wisping up from the reeds, as if this was where the ^{entire} ~~valley~~ breathed. Any weather, the ^{water} ~~slough~~ stewed out an odor of rotten eggs.

At the slough edge nearest the school stood a gazebo, a rickety scrap from the town's days ^{when it had tried to be} ~~as~~ a resort. Either ~~for~~ ^{as} decoration or ^{a roof against} ~~to ward off~~ bird droppings, the gazebo sheltered a small hot spring.

A corroding cup hung on one pillar of the gazebo, and if you dared to touch it, then you could dare the taste of the sulphur spring water.

One of my classmates, Kirkwood, downed the water as if it were lemonade. His grandfather, a nasty ^{-faced} character who indeed gave every sign that he might live forever, had convinced Kirkwood that the stuff was an elixir for a person's insides. After Kirkwood had slurped down a cupful, I would reluctantly sip away. What bothered me even worse than the ~~rancid~~ ^{rancid} taste was the ~~look~~ ^{look} of the spring.

Sulphur water has a way of layering its minerals into a kind of

putty on stones and clay and even ^{the} ~~underwater~~ ^{strands of} grass, and the spring
always was coated with this sickly whitish curd, as if something

poisonous had just died in it. And yet, nowhere else had anything
^{this place}
like ~~it~~, and so the slough and its ugly water drew us.

I thought that nowhere else ^{could have} ~~had~~ anything like the giant
carcasses of buildings ^{for} ~~which~~ White Sulphur boys ^{to} ~~could~~ poke into,
either.

~~its wrecks~~. Late in the last century, when the town ~~had~~ ^{figured} ~~thought~~
^{grow}
it might ~~amount to something~~, a few grand buildings had been put
up, and they had not yet fallen down entirely. Near the sulphur
slough stood the remains of the Springs Hotel, a long box of
gingerbread-work and verandahs which had been built for resort-
^{came to take}
goers who ~~were taking~~ the waters. I seem to remember that
whatever was left of this building was so treacherous none of
us would set foot inside; you could fall through the sagging

floorboards to some black awfulness below.

But across town loomed a huger wreck, probably just as risky but much too inviting to pass up. [#] This one was called the Old Auditorium -- a sad comedown from its original name, The Temple of Fun -- and it had been built in the 1890's by a ~~local~~ ~~bedazzled~~ group of local businessmen who totally misjudged the town's need for a structure of that size. ~~Probably~~ Probably there never had been enough people in the entire county to fill the place, even if they all had been herded in for culture's sake at gunpoint. Built of ~~red~~ brick, with a shingled dome rising from the middle of the roof and a forest of chimneys around the ~~edges~~ edges, the temple had never been finished by its exhausted backers, although it was complete enough to use for school recitals and graduation ceremonies by the time the 1925 earthquake shook it onto the condemned list. ^A ~~The~~ great red elephant of a building, it collapsed little by little for 30 years or so after the earthquake; now the remains stood over us, roofless, ghost-like, magical.

#

I think it must have been not only the size and gape of the place, but the glacial spill of red brick that attracted us. Only a few buildings in ~~our~~ ^{White Sulphur} clapboard town were made of brick, and here was the largest stack of the reddest brick we could imagine.

We could prowl in -- windows and doors had vanished long since --
 and in the clattering emptiness walk the old stage, study out
 from the ~~delapidated~~ walls where rooms had been. Echoes flew back
 at ~~a person~~ ^{us} as if the auditorium had stored ~~the sounds~~ ^{all} ~~in its~~ ^{from}
~~primeval~~ years. It stood as a kind of ~~lighthouse~~ ^{cavern of history} for a few of us,
 a place where you could go into an expanse of both space and time.

One other large brick building graced White Sulphur, and if
 the old auditorium was a cave to be sought out, this ~~other~~ ^{next} was
 a ~~giant headland~~ ^{man-made mesa} you could not avoid. You came to it -- the Sherman
 Hotel -- as you walked up Main Street: three massive stories of
 brick and cornicework snouting out into the thoroughfare as firmly
 as a thumb crimping into a hose. At the very start of White
 Sulphur's history,

there had been a dispute about where main street ~~would~~ ^{ought} to run. The doctor who held the land at the west end of town

banked too heavily on the notion that some judicious slough drainage

and timber road-bedding would ~~route~~ ^{draw route} the ~~road~~ along his holdings.

A rival laid out a plat ^{to the} east of him, complete with ^a 25-foot jog away from the direction of the slough, and directly into path mapped out for Main Street. In some wink of

confusion or bribery, the ~~jog-plot~~ ^{jog-plot} was accepted by the ~~county~~ ^{authorities,}

commissioners, the town grew up along the misjointed plat lines,

and for the next 60 years ^{White Sulphur's} the biggest hotel ^{squatted} sat halfway into ~~the~~

main street.

mod In the hotel lobby, a wide high window had been installed near the outer edge of this prow-like jut to take advantage of the outlook.

It made a pasttime, and the town didn't have many.

For some reason I can't summon back, once in these years Dad and I checked into the Sherman Hotel for a night. The room

in the Sherman Hotel. It was worse than we had expected, and

worse even than ^{the hotel's run-down} its reputation. A bare lightbulb dangled over a

battered, ~~squeaking~~ bed; I think there was not even a dresser,

nightstand, or chair.

The bedsprings howled with rust; Sometime in the night, Dad said
Call this a hotel, do they? I've slept better ^{wet} in sagebrush.

One last landmark from those years, the gray stone house called The Castle. It speared up from the top of the hill behind the Stockman, a granite presence which seemed to have been there before the rest of the town was ever dreamed of. Actually, a man named Sherman had built it in the early 1890's, ^{with} ~~out of~~ the money from a silver lode. He had the granite blocks cut and sledded in by ox team from the Castle Mountains, and from a little distance, the three-story mansion with its round tower and sharp roof peaks looked like one of the sets of fantasy pinnacles which poke up all through ~~those same mountains~~ ^{that range}. So in name and material and appearance, all three, old Sherman built for himself an eerie likeness of the mountains which had yielded up his ~~silver~~ ^{fortune}.

If the outside was a remindful whim, the inside of the Castle was Sherman's new money doing some prancing. It was said he had spared nothing in expense -- woodwork crafted of hardwoods from distant countries, crystal dangles on every chandelier, a huge water tank in the attic which sluiced water down to fill the bathtubs in an instant, a furnace which burned hard hot anthracite coal shipped ^{all the way} ~~in~~ from Pennsylvania. All this was known only by rumor as I would circle past, ~~the~~ because Sherman had been dead for twenty years and the Castle stood with boards across its windows and swallows' mud nests clotted onto the fancy stonework.

At that time, White Sulphur had a population of about a thousand, with a second thousand persons dotted out on the ranches from one far end of the county to another. Of all those twenty hundred faces, the one clearest to me now is a madman's.

What had torn apart Virgil's brain -- defect of birth, some stab of illness or accident -- I have never known. But he was everlastingly there at the edge of town life. His parents, old and made older by the calamity which had ~~ruined~~ ^{twisted} their son's mind, would bring Virgil to town with them when they came for groceries. Slouched in their pickup or against the corner of the grocery, Virgil grimaced out at us like a tethered dog whose mood a person could never be entirely sure of. He was able to recognize friends of the family, such as Dad, and make child's talk to them -- innocent words growled out of a strongman's body. Somewhere in the odds and ends of his mind he had come up with the sure way to draw people to him. He would gargle out loudly what could have been a plea or a threat: YOU god uh CIGuhREDD? No one would deny this spectre a cigarette, and Virgil would puff away with a twisted squint of satisfaction, his eyes already hunting along the street for his next donor. Dad, who was uneasy around any

affliction but was fond of Virgil's family, always lit the cigarette carefully and said a few words, while I peeked up at the rough man.

All through ^{those years} ~~my boyhood~~, I can pick out again and again that scene of poor clever lunatic Virgil, and a town uneasy under his glare.

In those years I looked up into three other faces which were strange to me -- the black faces of Rose Gordon, Taylor Gordon, and Bob Gordon. The Gordons, I know now, were one of the earliest families of White Sulphur. Rose and ~~Robert~~ Taylor and Bob all had been born there after their parents came in during the town's short heyday of mining wealth. But to me then, they could have been newly come from the farthest end of the world, where people were the ~~like~~ color of night. They were very black -- Rose in particular had a sheen dark as ink. Their faces were unlined, not crinkled at the corners of the eyes as Dad's and the other ranch men's were. And their voices chimed amid the burrs and twangs of everyone else downtown. ⁴ Taylor was a singer. ~~Once in a while~~ ^{Every so often} he would perform at the high school auditorium, singing the spirituals he had heard from his mother as she worked at her wash tubs. ~~The~~ His voice could ripple like muscle, hold like a hawser across the bass notes: ~~Swinging~~ ^{Swiling} low, sweet chaaaariot... The strong, sweet sound had carried him to New York once, where he sang in concert halls and on the radio. He also had gone through money ^{into the streets of Harlem,} back there as if he were tossing confetti, and when the Depression hit, he ended up back in the valley herding sheep.

He brought with him New York stories such as no one in the valley had ever heard or dreamed of. Of his writer friend Carl Van Vechten:

He was a big Dutchman, he had very buck teeth, rabbit teeth like, and weighed about two hundred pounds, let's say, and was six feet tall. But he wasn't what they called a potbellied six...

He liked sometimes to wear a phantom red shirt, reddest red I ever saw. He wore rings, y'know, exotic rings, something that would stand out, or a bracelet, somethin' like that. Bein' a millionaire he could do those things.

I remember one night we went to a party. Carl and I was dressed as in Harlem, dressed in kind of satire. Some man gave both of us sam hill. He said, You got somethin' to offer the world. You ain't don't have to do anything out of the ordinary, just be yourselves. Carl laughed and said, Well, can't we have a little fun?

Of a black man he said had a magic with words and deeds:

When everybody was broke, a lot of people would go to Father Divine and get the best meal in the world for thirty-five cents, see. And you'd be surprised -- white, black, blue, green and the other, they'd eat in Father Divine's, because you could get a meal you couldn't pay two dollars for downtown for thirty-five cents, including ice cream dessert. And he had 'em lined up, you'd thought a baseball game was goin' on.

Of how people in Harlem could tell where a man was from by the scar on his face:

In Harlem they can tell what section of the country the fella come from by the brand that was on him, y'see. They could tell where he'd been in a fight. If you were shootin' craps, you more or less would be bendin' down when you got cut and that way you'd get it across the forehead here. Whereas if you were playin' poker, you were more apt to be settin' up, they you'd be apt to get this one here across the cheek. Then if you were playin' what they called 'skin,' why you'd apt to get this other. So y'see, if a fella was cut here, he was from Geechyland, if he was cut this other way he was from Selma, Alabama, and so on and so on.

Now, either Taylor or Bob owned the building the post office was in, and the pair of them lived on the second floor. Taylor came and went in a bold erect style, always with some new plan for singing in New York again or making a fortune from some ^{gadget} thing he had invented.

He also took pride in being the one writing man the valley had ever had. Taylor was a talented storyteller -- it was as if his voice ^{put a rich gloss on} made richer anything it touched -- and while he was in New York singing at society parties, he met white writers who urged him to ^{make a manuscript of} put down his stories of early-day White Sulphur. They steered him to a publisher and illustrator, and shepherded his ^{quackwork} shaky grammar into print as a ^{memoir} book with the title Born to Be. That book with his name

on it naturally impressed Taylor into thinking he could do another. This time there was no help, and no publisher. The failure must have worked on his mind for years; Eventually he saw conspiracy. The man who published his first book ^{had} ~~became~~ John Steinbeck's publisher as well, and for the rest of his life, Taylor ^{told} ~~would tell~~ anyone who would listen that Steinbeck and the publisher had pirated his second book idea and made it into The Grapes of Wrath.

While Taylor built that phantom scheme in his mind, Bob crashed back and forth between street and room, a desperate drinker even by White Sulphur standards. I would see him sometimes when I went for the mail, off somewhere in his plodding stagger. I remember that he wore suspenders, one of the few men in town who did, and the straps made a slumping X across his big back as they slid down his shoulders. Brothers indeed, Taylor and Bob, in desperation as well as ⁱⁿ skin, the one daydreaming of New York and second fame, the other fumbling for his next bottle of whiskey.

^{Gordon}
Rose lived apart from her brothers, in both place and behavior.

She was the one in the family who had chosen to be jolly toward the white faces all around, and a time or two a week she came along Main Street with her constant greeting, How do you do? And how are you today? Rose had faith in words and manners. The death of any old-timer would bring out her pen, and a long letter extolling the departed. She was especially fond of two groups in the valley's history, the Scots who had homesteaded in the Basin and the Indians who had worn away before the tide of settlement.)

~~Before I was very old, I understood~~ Her passion for the Indians, ^{dark} was understandable enough. fellow sufferers for the ~~shade~~ of their skin, They were the first ladies of this land, she would say of the Indian women she had seen when she was a girl, and the saying of it announced that Rose Gordon knew ladyship from personal experience. But the transplanted Scots, my father's family and the others who had never seen black faces before and in all likelihood didn't care ~~much~~ ^{words} for them when they did? It was their talk. The lowlands burr, the throaty ~~song~~ which came out their mouths like low song, captivated Rose. She was as entranced with the spoken word as Taylor was with the written, and the oration she had given when she was valedictorian of her high school class

of eight students -- that oration given ^{from a rostrum in} ~~on the stage~~ of the old auditorium, a large American flag ~~squaring~~ fastened square and true along the back stage wall -- had been the peak of her life. When I had become a grown man, she astonished me once by reciting the climax of that oration ~~sixty~~ sixty years before:

I gave my address on the progress of the Negro race. I ended, I said; The colored soldiers have earned the highest courage, and they won unstinted praises by their bravery, loyalty and fidelity. They have indeed been baptized into full citizenship by their bloodshed in defense of their country, and they have earned the protection of that honorable emblem, the Stars and Stripes!

While Rose held those words in her memory as if they were her
only heirloom, other voices plaided White Sulphur life the way I
remember it. ~~The Missourian twang, gritting out of Lloyd Robison~~
The twang which gritted out of Lloyd Robison and the
other Missourians: You could of talked all day long and not said

anything of
that.... Seen that long-geared geezer who was gonna break that
gelding for me?

that, ^{a haze} In June, mosquitoes would come in ~~clouds~~ off the Smith River,
and the mosquito stories would start; Bastards're so big this year
they can stand flatfooted and drink out of a ~~bx~~ rainbarrel ... saw
one of 'em carry off a baby chick the other day ... yah, I saw two
of 'em pick up a lamb, one at each end ... Any time of year,

the muttering against Rankin and the way he ran his ~~land~~ vast
holdings in the valley: That goddamn Rankin's so ~~mean~~ crooked he
couldn't sleep in a roundhouse ... so tight he squeaks ... so mean

the coyotes wouldn't eat him ... One rancher or another proud
of a new woven-wire fence: Horse-high, bull-strong, and hog-tight,...

was the color and quality of mud: No, by God, she's more of a kind of
tansy-~~brown~~ ^{gray}, the color of cat's paw ...

by ~~damn~~... Christie in The Grill ^{shaking over} in early morning coffee: I

^{got} ~~was~~ lit up like a church last night ... Went home and threw my
the door
hat in first. It didn't come back out, so I figured I was safe...

always, always,
 # And ~~the~~ two voices which went at each other ~~within our walls.~~
 just above my head.

Ruth, where the hell you been? If you think you can just walk

off and leave me with the cafe that way, you got another think

coming.... Mister, I didn't marry you to spend all my time in any

damn cafe. Where I go is my business.... ^{The} ~~A look from one or the~~
 in my direction,

~~other~~
 then: Better leave us alone, Ivan ... But the voices would go on,

through the walls, until one more silence set in between my father

and my second mother.

~~How many silences there must have been in those few years.~~

The silences stretched tauter until a day sometime in the
 autumn of 1948, when The Grill and our town life ~~and~~ came to an end.

Dad and Ruth could agree on one thing: the hours of cafe work

were grinding them down. They gave up the lease ~~on the Grill,~~

and now bought a few thousand head of sheep and arranged to pasture

them at a ranch on Battle Creek, not far from the Basin where Dad

had grown up. The two of them would try a winter truce. Out where

they were going lay the

~~What happened next was a winter truce. Dad bought a few thousand~~
~~head of sheep and arranged to pasture them at a ranch on Battle~~
~~Creek, not far from the Basin where he had grown up. It was the~~
 emptiest corner of the county, just as it had been when Peter and
 Annie Doig came there to homestead and as it is whenever I drive
 its narrow red-shale road now. Gulch country, spare, silent.
 Out there in the rimming hills beyond the valley, 35 miles from
 town, Dad and Ruth would have time alone to see whether their
 marriage ought to last -- could last. ⁹ Whatever either ~~had~~ expected,

of the testing winter, the unlooked-for happened: the worst weather
 of thirty years blasted in, and Dad and Ruth found themselves in
 a contest not with each other, but with the white wilderness outside.

As bad winters like to do, this ~~one~~ ^{one} came early and fast.
 Snow fell, drifted, crusted into gray crystal windrows, then fell
 and drifted and crusted gray again. Dad and his hired man pushed
 the sheep in from the pastures to the ranch buildings: nothing could
 root grass out of ~~those~~ ^{solid} that ~~had~~ snow. Ruth helped the men pitch
 hay to the sheep. The county road began to block for a week at a
 time. Winter was sealing the Battle Creek country into long gray
 months of aloneness.

In town, I was boarding ~~out~~ with relatives of Ruth's, the
 Cartwright family.

no 41 One of the things that had surprised us about Ruth was that although she was not from the valley, she had a scad of relatives ^{hard-creased} there. All of them seemed to be bony, ~~emaciated~~ ^{estimate} people who looked as if they were trying to ~~calculate~~ ^{estimate} where their next meal was coming from. The only difference the Cartwrights showed from the others was how long and hard they worked. Fred Cartwright was a fireman on the branch line railroad which snailed from White Sulphur to the main route of the Milwaukee Road at Ringling. The locomotive was a belching old barrel ~~engine~~ ^{engine}, and the ~~uneven~~ rails wavered and dipped along on top of rotting ties and sagging roadbed. It was a grindstone of a job, and Fred came home at uneven hours of the day and night, black with coal dust and so weary he could hardly talk. In her own way, Harriet Cartwright looked just as worn -- rimless glasses on a face too busy for makeup, hair bunned severely, hands perpetually in bread dough or ~~dishwater~~ ^{would have} dishwater. The Cartwrights and I ~~had~~ ^{would have} a lot of time that winter to see how each other lived.

Dad

~~had said he would~~ ^{he could} was to come to town for me each Friday night and take me to the ranch for the weekend. As soon as ~~winter~~ ^{the snow} started, six weeks passed before I saw him or Ruth.

At the Cartwrights, I was living for the first time with other children. There were two boys and a girl, thin copies of one another. The older boy, ^{ERIC}~~Marvin~~, homely and giggling and friendly as a puppy, was my age, and we slept in the same bed and snickered at each other's jokes in the dark. ~~Characteristically~~, Dad had left me ~~plenty of~~ pocket money and told the Cartwrights to let me go around town as I wanted, go to a movie any time, even on a weekday night. Sometimes that winter, my few dollars of pocket money probably were more than Fred and ^{Harriet}~~Marvin~~ Cartwright themselves had on hand, and my habits clearly were looser than ~~their children~~ anybody else's in the household.

It could not have been easy for Harriet Carter ^{wright} to have me come blearing home in the cold dark with a headful of celluloid scenes, like some drunken dwarf idling in from a night of sin long after her own children were safely asleep. They weren't, of course; they were lying up there in the dark waiting to hear me ~~recount~~ retell the movie.

^H ~~W~~orst of all, I seemed to thrive on such loose living. I never had any homework to do, while her own children stared away their evenings into schoolbooks. I could do arithmetic in my head faster than she or ~~her~~ her husband could on paper, and the ^{went into new} worry lines over her eyes ^{5/10/51} wrinkled in puzzlement when this happened.

The winter weeks ^{went on.} ~~passed.~~ I learned to like to use honey
 for sweetening, the way the Cartwrights did; sugar was a luxury
 they never bought. Eric and I walked to school ^{through the snow,} together, came
 home for snowball wars with the boys next door. One night, smoke
 was smelled in the house. Somehow a light bulb had dangled too
 close to a pile of blankets and quilts in an upstairs bedroom.
 Fred Cartwright ^{sprinted} ~~ran~~ for the stairs, shouting to Eric and me to
 turn on the water in the bathtub. We clambered to the tub and
 hit a plumbing problem. Hot water would roar out of the Cartwright
 bath spigot, but the cold ^{only} ~~drizzled out in a trickle.~~ We ~~would~~
 fill the tub faster with hot water, but would hot water put out
 the fire, or would it ^{need} ~~take~~ cold? Overhead we could hear the
 commotion as Fred gathered the smoldering bedding and started down
 to douse them in our still-empty tub. Panicked, we did the one
 thing ^{we could think of:} ~~possible:~~ we turned on both spigots full blast.

At last, late on a Friday night when I had given up hope again, Dad appeared. He couldn't take me to the ranch with him then; he had spent ten hours fighting his way through the snow, and there was the risk that the countryside would close off entirely again before he could bring me back to town Sunday night. But if I would do the extra schoolwork needed, he ~~could~~ ^{would try to} come in ~~the~~ next Friday and take me to the ranch for two whole weeks.

All week I stayed in at recess and worked ahead in every text. Before school was out on Friday afternoon, Dad came to the door of the classroom for me. The highway was bare, a black dike above the snow, as he drove the pickup to the turnoff toward Battle Creek. ^{Then} white drifts ~~The snow~~ stretched in front of us like a lake whose waves had suddenly stopped motion ^{to hang} ~~and hung~~ in billows and peaks against the sky where the wind had lashed them. The very tops of fenceposts, ^{old} gray cedar heads with rounded snow caps, showed where the road was buried. Between the post tops, ~~was a set of~~ ruts had been rammed and hacked by Dad and the few other ranchers who lived near Battle Creek. ~~The pickup growled into the ruts.~~

into the sea of snow

Dad drove ~~with~~ big turns of the steering wheel, keeping the front wheels grooved in the ruts while the rear end of the pickup jittered back and forth spinning snow out behind us. Sometimes the pickup ~~would~~ growl ^{ed} to a halt. We would climb out and shovel away ~~the snow in~~ heavy chunks like pieces of an igloo. Then Dad would back the pickup a few feet for a running start and bash into the ruts again. Once we went over a snowdrift on the twin rows of planks another of the ranchers had laid for support. Once we drove entirely over the top of a drift without planks ~~at~~ all. Where the road led up to the little ridge above Badger Creek, we angled between cliffs of snow higher than the pickup. Near Battle Creek, with our headlights fingering out into the dark, Dad swerved off the road entirely and sent the pickup butting through the smaller drifts in a hayfield. It had started to snow heavily, the wind out of the Basin curling the flurries down ~~into~~ to ~~the~~ sift into the ruts. I watched the last miles come up on the tiny numbers under the speedometer as Dad wrestled the wheel and began his soft Scots cussing: Snow on a man, will ye? Damnitalltohellanyway, git back in those ruts. Damn the weather. Hold on, son, there's a ditch here somewhere.... The twenty-fifth mile, the last, we bucked down

a long slope to the ranch with the heavy wet flakes flying at us
like clouds of ~~moths~~ moths. Dad roared past the lighted windows
of the ranch house and spun the pickup inside the shelter of ~~the~~
~~lambing~~ shed. Done, damn ye! he said out into the storm.

Battle Creek was not living up to its name and

To my surprise, Dad and Ruth were getting along better together ~~there~~ there.

It may have been that there simply was so much work to be done,

feeding the sheep, carrying in firewood, melting snow for water

when the pump froze, that they had no ^{stamina} ~~energy~~ left over for argument.

Or perhaps they had each decided that the winter had to be gotten

through, there ^{would be} ~~was~~ no route away from one another until spring.

Each morning

Ruth stood at the window sipping from a white mug of coffee,

watching as Dad and the hired man harnessed the team to the hay

sled; then, if Dad had said they needed her that day, she would

go out and ^{take the reins} ~~drive the horses~~ while the men ~~disturbed~~ forked hay off

~~the sled~~ to the sheep. Dad helped her in the house, the two of

them working better at the meals and dishes than they had when

they were feeding half the town in The Grill. The pair of them

even joked about the cold journey to the outhouse which started

each day. Whoever went first, the other would demand to know

whether the seat had been left good and warm. It damn well ought

to be, the other would say, part of my behind is still out on it.

Or: Sure did, I left it smoking for you.

If we care only about our biological child, he may feel he has value, but not value others.

If we care only about children who are like us and in our area, he may acquire these same values.

If he has a child of another race as a brother, both will be better prepared for the future when they must live together--and so will our neighbor's child, for having a Negro as classmate and friend.

And, they will be better prepared, not only for having learned to live in this way with other people, but because they have found a way that enables them to do so.

Given in Ann Arbor, Michigan
October 1967
Clayton H. Hagen, Supervisor
Adoption Unit
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota

The ranch house had been built ~~up~~ with its living quarters on the second floor, well above the long snowdrifts which duned against the walls. A railed porch hung out over the snow the full length of the house, and from it the other ranch buildings were in view like a small fleet seen from a ship's deck. The lambing shed, low and cloud-gray and enormously long, seemed to ride full-laden in the white ~~swells~~ ^{crash} of winter. Most of the time, the sheep were corraled on the far side of the shed, their bored bleats coming as far as the house if the wind was down. Not far from the lambing shed stood the barn, ^{dark} ~~high~~ and bunched into itself, prowling up out of the ~~stillness~~ ^{stillness higher than anything else in sight.} ~~of the snow.~~ A few small sheds lay with their roofs disappearing in drifts, swamped by this cold ocean of a winter. Battle Creek flowed just beyond those sheds, but the only mark of it was a gray skin of ice. ~~nowhere with visible fringing~~ [#] In this snow world, Dad and his hired man skimmed back and forth on the hay ~~boat~~ ^{sled}, a low wide ~~sled~~ ^{hayrack on a set of runners} pulled by a team of plunging workhorses. I rode with them, ~~hanging~~ ^{men,} hanging tight to the framing above ^{where} the horses' heels chuffed into the snow. When the men talked, their puffs of breath clouded out in front of their faces. Our noses trickled.

Dad put a mitten against my face ^{often} ~~every~~ once in a while to see that my cheeks weren't ~~from~~ being frostbitten.

Afternoons, I would climb the slope behind the house, to where

A long gully ~~behind the house~~ ^{toward} trenched to Battle Creek, ~~and~~
~~lay packed so full of snow~~ ^{had packed the gulch so full} that I could sled down over its humps
^{for hundreds of feet at a time.}
and dips. Trying out routes, I flew off a four-foot shale bank

and in the crash sliced my right knee on the end of a sled runner

as if I'd fallen against an ax blade. Blood sopped out as I

hobbled to the house with both hands clamped over my leg wound,

and Ruth shook as she snipped away the dark-stained pants leg.

The cut was long but shallow and clean, and dressings took care

of it.

The winter sprang at us again and again. Our dog crashed through the ice of Battle Creek, and the wind carried the sound of his barking away from the house. We found the shatter where he had tried to claw himself out before the creek froze him and then drowned him. A ~~two-day~~ blizzard pushed against the back wall of the house, for two days without stop. Outside the snow flew so thick it seemed there was between the flakes no space left in the air, just an endless crisscross of flecks the whiteness of goose down. When they went to feed the sheep, Dad and the hired man would disappear into the storm, swallowed, thirty feet from the window where Ruth and I watched.

The two weeks passed in surges of that winter weather, like tides flowing in. On the last morning, no snow was falling, but Dad said so much had piled up that we would get to town only by team and sled. Ruth said she ~~would~~ wanted to go with us. Dad nodded.

Dad and the hired man had taken the rack off the hay boat and put on a cutter seat which fastened above the rear pair of sled runners. Inside that seat, blankets piled thickly onto the heavy coats we wore, we sat buried in warmth, almost down in the snow as the horses tugged us along. Harness buckles sang a ching-tink, ching-tink with every step the team took. Dad slapped the reins against the horses' rumps and headed us toward the hayfields along Battle Creek. The clogged road would be no help to us, drift humped onto drift by now. We would aim through

The greyness stretching all around us baffled my eyes. Where I knew hills had to be, there were no hills. No sagebrush, in a countryside forested with its clumps. The cold overcast had fused land and sky together, one gray sheet over and under and around. Even our sleigh was gray, weathered ash moving tinily through ashen weather.

Dad headed the team by the tops of fenceposts when ^{he} we could see them, and where the snow had ^{buried even} covered them, by trying to ^{pick out} see the ^{thin} dark hedge of willows along the creek.

In late April, Dad saddled a horse and plunged off through
the drifts to ^{the} ~~a~~ neighboring ^{Keith} ranch to borrow a bottle of whiskey.

^{Probably}
~~The winter had been relentless, and perhaps the truce with Ruth~~
^{"talking and"}
was breaking down. He sat in the kitchen, drinking coffee with

~~Mrs. Keith~~
~~the rancher's wife,~~ while waiting for the men to come back from
feeding the cattle. As he talked ~~with the woman,~~ Dad watched a

large snowdrift on a sidehill near the house. Suddenly he shouted:

^{At last,}
"It's broke! It's broke, it's broke!" and ran to the door. The

winter ~~at last~~ had broken; a chinook was warming the air and

^{Dad}
melting the snowdrift even as ~~he~~ burst into the yard. The men

^{Keith}
of the ~~ranch~~ had gone out on the hay sled that morning thickly

bundled against 20 degrees below zero, and now they were coming

home in shirt sleeves, with their mittens off.

When the winter ended, so did Dad's marriage to Ruth. It took

several months, but they were months of steady wrecking, of the

two of them trying to fling each other out of their lives. Ruth

announced she was leaving, this time for good. Alone with her

later, I asked her not to go. ~~Isidore~~ My asking didn't cure

things as it would have in the storybooks. Ruth gave me her

tough grin, shook her head and said she had to leave, ~~because she~~

Your dad

~~and Dad would never get along together,~~

and me are never gonna get along together again.

Dad now would not even say Ruth's name. Instead, he took up

only to our household's civil war

a taunt provided by one of the ~~women of the town~~. The town, of naturally,

~~some~~ could not resist choosing up sides in ~~a~~ such a squabble,

and ~~the~~ ^a woman, coming to Dad's defense reached for a phrase

contemptible enough for the deceiver who had married him. At last

she spluttered: Why, that ... that little flip! For whatever reason,

that Victorian blurt of disgust captivated Dad, put him in the right

in all the arguments he was replaying in his mind. From the moment

the taunt got back to him, he would talk of Ruth only as Flip, that

darned Flip.

On the other hand, the more a person tries to find himself in his race, the less adequate he feels as a man, for his race isn't him--it only describes him.

The fourth consideration is that we must find confidence in what we do, and believe we are able to do what needs to be done. We need to feel that we also are persons of value, if we are to convey value to others.

It seems that our generation finds it so difficult to be proud of what we have done. We are heavily and severely criticized for the mess the world is in, for problems such as air and water pollution, congested cities, materialism, hypocrisy in civil rights, and making a superficial, plastic world. And we agree and admit our guilt and shame. We should of course face up to our problems, but it seems we should also feel our own value, and take pride in what we have done if we are to convey value to the next generation. And we have good reason to do so, for our generation, more than all before, has been concerned and involved with other people. We have fought a major war, not to acquire land, but because we believed others should not be deprived of their value. Even the present conflict in Vietnam is based on our belief that people should not be ruled by force, although we debate the wisdom of our involvement. We have taken our father's dream of a League of Nations and improved it to the United Nations, admittedly not perfect, but yet a structure and method to prevent wars which have plagued mankind throughout history. Our grandfathers believed that no man should be a slave, and men from Michigan and Minnesota died to implement that belief. Our generation, after recovering from the agonies of the depression and war, began to

Ruth went, and Flip stayed, a poisoned word which was all that was left of two persons' misguess about one another. I have not seen Ruth for twenty years, nor spoken to her for twenty-five. But her life straightened after those few warring years with my father, like a ~~pink~~ piece of iron seethed in fire for the anvil. She married again, the marriage lasted, there was a son. I am curious about him: was he taken by Ruth to see the grandmother blinking back age and blindness? Did Ruth stand with him, white mug of coffee in her hand, to watch snow sift on ~~him~~ a wind from the Basin? But the curiosity stops there. When Dad and Ruth at last broke apart, ~~from one another~~, the one sentiment I could recognize within me -- have recognized ever since -- was relief that she had gone, and the two of them could do no more harm to ~~each~~ ~~one~~ another.

For the next year, Dad and I simply followed the seasons up and down the valley. He went to one ranch as foreman of the haying crew, on to another to feed cattle during the winter, to a third for spring and the lambing season. He rented a cabin in White Sulphur, and when he could not be there or I could not be at a ranch with him, I lived with Christie and his wife and walked across town to school. When the summer of 1950 came, Dad bought a herd of cattle, and we moved them and ourselves to a cattle camp on Sixteenmile Creek.

Now our life was holding a steadier pace than I could ever remember. The two of us lived in a ^{small} trailer house, the only persons in several square miles. Dad taught me to shoot a single-shot .22 rifle, using as targets the tan gophers which every ^{horseback} ~~riding~~ man hated for the treacherous little burrows they dug. We shot, rode into the hills every few days to look at the cattle, caught trout in the creek, watched the Milwaukee Railroad trains clip past four ^{every} ~~a~~ day. Then I had my eleventh birthday -- five years since my mother had died -- and it seemed to trigger something in Dad.

One evening, after he had been silent most of the day, he told me
a woman would be coming into our ^{lives} ~~life~~ again. # It was an astonishment.

Ruth had come and gone without much effect, except for the scalding
mood Dad showed whenever he had a reason to mention her. But this
time the woman was my mother's mother, and our lives were going to
change as if a new planet had come under our feet.

Start
down here

As the Irish fellow says, this place must be the back of the

neck of the world. For once, my father's damnation of a new ranch

was underdone. We had ~~come in~~ ^{driven in during} the night, and as Dad puzzled ~~his~~

~~way~~ through the dark ^{mess} ~~along~~ ^{fainter and fainter} ever-thinner scruffs of prairie road,

forebodings began to ~~flap~~ ^{shroud} in on us. Before we were halfway, Grandma

suddenly demanded: Gee golliess, aren't we never gonna get there?

Dad notched his chin ahead another full inch. I tried to stare

shapes out of the blackness, but could find only an occasional jackrabbit

racing in the net-edge of our headlights. At last, Dad gave a

start, began to brake the car ^{sudden} ~~down a long~~ career of slope, and

the headlights fingered onto a squat white building. By gee, at last. That was Grandma; not a word out of Dad. Where is the place, ~~she~~ down in a hole like this? More silence from him. As we stumbled

from the car toward the house of the Jensen Ranch, the white walls ^{too}

seemed to hold back from us in the dark, ghostly and telling nothing

of themselves.

Daylight did all the telling, ^{we wanted.} ~~in tones so stark and alarming we~~

~~could only try to joke to keep from gulping.~~ ^{Testing} Trying doors, we found

ourselves locked off from all but the back three rooms of the house--

a small bedroom for Grandma, one ^{hardly larger} ~~not much bigger~~ for Dad and me, and

a cavern of a kitchen. I'll warrant you, McGrath's doings, Grandma announced rightly:

he had euchred himself a bargaining point of some sort with the ^{ranch-owning} Jensen

family by allowing them to store their belongings in the front rooms

of the house. ^{In alarm,} ^{uneasily} We studied the ~~old~~ living space left to us, and the

single narrow envelope of view out the kitchen windows--to a ~~dark~~ dilapidating

bunkhouse, the outhouse, and a bit of ~~the~~ brown treeless ramp of slope

^{sheering} ~~running~~ up to the benchland. [#] Grandma and I went out to peer in the

windows of the denied rooms, ^{as if we needed} to confirm McGrath's treachery. I glanced

around toward the silver-boarded sheepshed which squatted hugely across the yard from us. At least, I tried in what I thought was an ~~admirably~~ ^{entirely} grown-up way, old McGrath got us scads of room for the sheep. But Grandma's attention had hit on the bleak benches

of land rimming above us in every 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} ~~speak to~~ Dad 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 elling off into the coulee for another forty, then closed around with a high board fence like a stockade. Moose of a damn place, Dad said as if trying to shrink it. [#] 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} ~~they had been dumped~~ ^{hard,} into place ~~only~~ an

^{eyeblink} ~~instant~~ before. Nothing ^{greater} ~~larger~~ than a spear of grass, not even a ^{pitying}

fluff of sage, backed the buildings; the ^{entire} ~~only~~ two trees on the ~~entire~~

ranch hunched at the front of the house, ^{evidently,} trying to cower in out of

the wind. McGrath had told us the Jensen ranch began as a homestead,

which meant that people had lived here ^{from} at least forty years ~~before~~ 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, ~~and~~ a granary shed answered on the other. Between

the pair ^{bulked} ~~loomed~~ a barn built of notched logs, and its brown ^{mass} ~~bulk~~ only

made the sheds look all the more ^{cadaverous} ~~frail~~. 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 ~~one~~ place on the

ranch where he could stand ^{at} without one foot lower than the other that

he pronounced the Irish fellow's lament on our new home. Then ~~he said~~,

Skavinsky, we might as well

Aw the hell, ~~Ivan~~, let's go see what the grass looks like, and the two

even to ^{risk} ~~try~~ a peace gesture ~~toward~~ in Grandma's direction yet--
of us--neither willing to ~~approach~~ Grandma for the moment--drove back

^{snout}
up the long ~~face~~ of benchland in front of the house.

5✓
the cliffs and back into the plummet of canyons, we could make out the rough

~~beds~~ ^{spills} of scree beneath the ^{columns} ~~walls~~ of rimrock. And along the

uncountable summits, all the eighty miles of gashing skyline, ^{new snow} ~~new snow~~

^{the two of us} ~~The two of us~~ ^{was} ~~was~~ draping down. Dad and I had lived our lifetimes beneath ~~western~~ weather-

making mountains, none of which had tusked up into ~~the~~ storm clouds

^{mightily as} ~~as~~ this Sawtooth Range of the Rockies would. Both of us knew what cold hell

might be ahead when winter ^{poured} ~~came~~ down ^{off} ~~out~~ of these ^{north} ~~mountains~~, yet for

the moment, to have ^{come upon} ~~grandness~~ anywhere near this spavined ranch,

neither of us cared.

^{it turned out, this north country stretched} ~~it turned out, this north country stretched~~
^{Out} ~~Down~~ from the mountains as well, ~~this~~ was a land of steady expanse,

of crisp-margined distances set long and straight on the earth. ~~and~~

All the obliques of our valley life seemed to have been erased and redrawn

here as ruler-edged plateaus of grassland, furrowed panels of grainfield,

arrowing roads, creeks nosing quick and bright from the Rockies. The

clean lines of this fresh landscape everywhere declared purpose and capacity,

^{trumpet} ~~seemed to say~~: 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} ~~looked into~~ the ^{bold-edged} ~~distances~~ north and south and east.

^{and turned to grin at me.} ~~Dandy country~~, he said. ^{As the fellow says,} ~~just dandy fine.~~ Let's go

tackle that Lady situation.

6 ✓

Dad by now had learned a considerable trove about 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} ~~gonna~~ 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 oughta 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 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. Dupuyer lay tucked along a broad band of brush which marked its creek; off from either side of the 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 ~~the~~ up its sidings. 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 ^{tackle} to ~~do~~ both jobs. While Dad and I searched out someone to put gas in the ^{pickup} ~~car~~, 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 stood in front of her and thought, until finally she said, No, nobody comes to mind. I guess most people aren't willing to take in someone they don't know like that. ^{looked the stranger} Grandma fastened

with her steadiest look on the woman: Well, how about you then?

cells, which were awarded on
ough the solitary block, totally
closed. "Snail Mitchel," read a
Solitary 14. "The only man that
slow." Beside it was a calendar,
wall with the days scratched off,
ome unnumbered year.

in penology dates from the day
as a potential property, talked
utines and pointed out the beach
as killed trying to escape. (They
he said he would rather be shot,
r room with the soap still in the
program from an Easter service
g the dead? He is not here, but
tes on an upright piano with the
and I tried to imagine the prison
ights playing over the windows
patrolling the gun galleries and
a bag as it was checked in after
nmon up some distaste, some
king and the boat pulling away.
liked it out there, a ruin devoid
uman illusions, an empty place
here a woman plays an organ
nd an old man plays ball with
ll you that I came back because
maybe it was because nobody

1967



The Seacoast of Despair

-- Joan Didion

I WENT TO NEWPORT not long ago, to see the great stone
fin-de-siècle "cottages" in which certain rich Americans
once summered. The places loom still along Bellevue
Avenue and Cliff Walk, one after another, silk curtains frayed
but gargoyles intact, monuments to something beyond them-
selves; houses built, clearly, to some transcendental point. No
one had made clear to me exactly what that point was. I had
been promised that the great summer houses were museums
and warned that they were monstrosities, had been assured
that the way of life they suggested was graceful beyond belief
and that it was gross beyond description, that the very rich
were different from you and me and yes, they had lower
taxes, and if "The Breakers" was perhaps not entirely tasteful,
still, *où sont les croquet wickets d'antan*. I had read Edith
Wharton and I had read Henry James, who thought that the
houses should stand there always, reminders "of the peculiarly
awkward vengeance of affronted proportion and discretion."

But all that turns out to be beside the point, all talk of

Ringings
out west
didn't hav
chanical w
Oh, yes
too. One c
all up in
housekeepe
have it, so
Jersey cow
milk the
wouldn't s
I got her
milk into
I came ou
green gras
the grass.
cow eat it
and Charl
to school
pills and
morning
was, I for
breath. D
minutes a
eration or
most of t
hours the
farm, a
and Whit

k City and if I could get
ee a lucky man. Kennally
music. His mission to the
e Mr. Ringling was leaving
to hustle for food to make
resh eggs or lamb kidneys,
s favorite breakfast dishes,
er.
ere hooked on the tail end
d. The following morning,
ilroad company always al-
n the station as long as he
as a rule, he left the car
was hooked on to hit the
all the small towns, and
he car—also in the south-
as. We stayed in Chicago
ling joined us. From there,
t was the first time I had
nearly five years before.
the berries. I had already
owns than any six people
together in their lives.
the old Parbery house, the
of Main Street, south side.
uses in that part of town.
the railroad station.
the big house, my duty
d chauffeur. Ed and Jessie
nk they had been with the