

Guesssing, I recited: “‘Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey/Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.’ Rather daring for his day, wouldn’t you say, Sandy?”

“Romantic twaddle about how nice it was to live in huts, I’d call those elegies of his.”

“That’s too dry a reading of him,” I protested. “He had a wicked wit. Who else would have said of Garrick that on stage he was wonderfully simple and natural, it was only when he was off that he was acting?”

That brought a snort. “Doesn’t mean old Goldilocks could tell a hoe from a hole in the ground. Robert Louis Stevenson, now, he knew his stuff about how life really is.” And with that, Oliver Goldsmith or whomever would be consigned to the vast second rank.

“Morgan?” The dubious drawl that met me this particular day told me I was in for another assignment of the Sandison sort. “You started something with that damned music stand. Now Miss Runyon claims she can’t function unless she has a corkboard on a tripod to pin pictures on for the kids’ story hour. Go down there and see what you can rig up.”

As I was passing his desk, he squinted at me over his spread-open newspaper. “Oxford flannel?”

“Serge.” I brushed a bit of lint off the new blue suit. “Like it?”

“You look like an undertaker.”

Down the stairs I went, past Miss Runyon’s cold eye, to the spacious meeting room all the way in the basement. The basement had originally been intended as an armory, and its thick walls made it a fine auditorium, no sounds escaping to the outside. You could about hear the spirited echoes of the Shakespeareans and the philosophical ones of the Theosophists lingering amid the pale plaster foliage of the scrollwork around the top of the walls. A curtained stage



presided across one end of the room, and at the other stood a spacious supply cabinet. I was rooting around in the cabinet for anything resembling corkboard and a tripod when I heard the main door swish closed behind me.

I glanced back and there the two of them were, big and bigger.

"Look at him, Ty." The one who was merely big had a pointed face with eyes that bulged like those of an eel, probably from all the time spent planted in front of store windows peering sideways. "In that prissy suit, you'd almost think he's the real item, wouldn't you."

The response from the figure half a head taller than him clip-clopped in at a heavy pace: "If we wasn't smart enough to know he's up to something, yeah."

The lesser goon was alarming enough, but Typhoon Tolliver I knew to be made of muscle, gristle, and menace. In the boxing ring his roundhouse blows stirred a breeze in the first rows of seats--hence his nickname--and had he been quicker in either the feet or the head, he might have become an earlier Jack Dempsey. As it was, his career of pounding and being pounded made him no more than a requisite punching bag that other heavyweights needed to get past on the way to a championship bout. His flattened features and oxlike blink were the kind of thing I had been afraid would happen to Casper, another reason behind cashing in on our fixed fight and the intention to steer the ring career of Capper Llewellyn into early retirement after he regained the title. Trying not to stare at Tolliver and his ponderous bulk, I brushed my hands of my cabinet task and managed to utter:

"The business of the library is conducted upstairs, gentlemen. If you would follow me--"

My break for the door was cut off by Eel Eyes. "We like it down here," he said lazily. "Nice and private, we can have a talk." He sized me up with a tilt of his head. "Let's start with what brings a fancy number like you to Butte. We figure you for a snooper."



That threw me. "Snooping for what, may I ask--dust on library books?"

Eel Eyes scowled. "Snoopers come in lots of kinds. Like the ones that keep trying to pin something on the company"--that could only mean Anaconda--  
"about what its smelter stacks put out."

I waved that off. "Chemistry is not one of my stronger subjects."

"Then how about union work, Fancypants?" He leered at me. "Got your choice in Butte, don't you. You can sneak into this town as an organizer either for those stupid miners up on the Hill or for that Red pack of Wobblies."

"One of them agitators, yeah." Tolliver's belated utterance unnerved me a great deal more than anything from the other goon. His conversation came from the top of his head and out his mouth seemingly without ever passing through his brain. It was as if he had speaking apparatus on the outside of his head, like English plumbing.

"I am a denomination of one," I protested hotly, "employed by no one but this library, whose gainful work you are keeping me from. Now if you will accompany me upstairs, I can lead you to someone who will set you straight about--"

Typhoon Tolliver took a flatfooted step and planted himself in front of me. "You look like somebody, under that face spinach. Ain't we met somewhere?"

"Surely I would recall such a mishap."

"Don't get smart on us." He loomed in on me. "You been somewhere I been, I just know it. Chicago, how about?"

Here was where family resemblance was a danger. I looked like my brother, whose face had appeared on boxing posters on every brick wall in that city. Maximum as my mustache was, it amounted to thin disguise if someone concentrated hard enough on the countenance underneath to come up with the name *Llewellyn*. Goons do business with other goons, and this pair would not waste a



minute in transacting me to the Chicago gambling mob. Which meant I was a goner, if Tolliver's slow mental gears managed to produce the recognition he was working at.

I snapped my fingers. "Aha! The World's Fair, of course! The African native village and the big-eyed boys that we were." Wiggling my eyebrows suggestively, I took a chance and leaned right into the meaty face. "The bare-breasted women of the tribe, remember?"

Tolliver blushed furiously. "Every kid in Chi was there looking."

"We know of two, don't we, although the passage of the years has dimmed my recollection of you more than yours of me."

"Yeah, well, sure, what do you expect, a mug like yours--"

"Knock it off, both of you." The one with eel eyes impatiently moved in on me. "Let's try another angle on what kind of fourflusher you really are. What did you do in the war?"

"I was elsewhere."

"Like where?"

"Tasmania."

"Say it in English when you're talking to us," Tolliver warned.

"It's in Australia, stupe," the other one rasped. "And you weren't in any rush to come back and enlist, is that it? You look like a quitter if I ever saw one. No wonder this country is full up with pinkoes and--"

"Agitators," Tolliver recited mechanically.

"--and stray cats from half the world and--" The lesser thug's yammering broke off and he eyed me suspiciously. "What're you cocking your head like that for?"

"Just listening for the clink of your own medals."

You find concern for reputation in strange places. The pointy face reddened

sideways  
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to the same tint Tolliver's had. "I kept the peace here at home."

"I can imagine."

"Listen, you, we don't have to take that kind of noise from a--"

*Swish*, and then *bang*! All three of us jumped.

Samuel Sandison towered in the doorway, the flung-open door still quivering on its hinges behind him. "What's this? The idlers' club in session?"

All at once there was more breathing room around me, both goons stepping back from the perimeter of authority Sandison seemed to bring with him. What was I seeing? He was twice their age, and though of a size with Tolliver, no physical match. Yet the two burly interlopers now looked very much like spooked schoolboys. Why the white-faced wariness all of a sudden?

Sandison's ice-blue gaze swept over them and onto me, and I blinked innocently back. "We're only here because this helper of yours is up to something," the pointy-faced one was saying, not quite stammering, "and the people we work for need to know what he's--"

"Quiet!" Sandison boomed, the word resounding in the enclosed room. "You tell them on the sixth floor of the Hennessy Building that they maybe run everything else they get their hands on, but not this library. Clear out of here, and I mean now."

The pair cleared out, but not without glares over their beefy shoulders at me.

Now all I faced was the stormcloud of beard. Sandison inspected me as if having missed some major feature of me until then. "Miss Runyon told me you were taking an unconscionably long time down here. Morgan? Are you up to something?"

"Sandy, I swear to you, I am an utter stranger to the battles of Butte." That left Chicago out of it.



He shook his head. "If you weren't such a book man, I wouldn't have you on the payroll for more than a minute." Turning to go, he said as if he was ordering me to head off a stampede: "Get that damn corkboard rigged up so we don't have to hear any more from old lady Runyon about it."

I picked at my food that suppertime, drawing a look of concern from Grace. "More turkey, Morrie? It's not like you to be off your feed."

Down the table, two sets of bushy gray eyebrows squinched in similar regard of me. Neither Hoop nor Griff asked anything about my disturbing day, however, in respect of our pact not to bother Grace's head about the goons' interest in me. Pushing away my plate, I alibied: "A touch of stomach disorder, is all. Nothing a restful evening in my room can't fix, I'm sure."

Upstairs, flat on my back atop the dragon coverlet while I stared at the ceiling and waited for inspiration of some sort to show up, I never felt less sure of fixing anything. The zigzags of life were more puzzling than ever. There I lay, in the most comfortable circumstances I had known for a long while, with work that nicely employed my mind, and the goons of the world were sure I was a snooper, a spy, an agitator, on down the list. It was dizzying. If America was a melting pot, Butte was its boiling point. The Richest Hill was turning out to be also a Cemetery Ridge of copper to be fought over, and some trick of fate had dumped Morris Morgan--all right; Morgan Llewellyn--right in the middle of it. Not the spot I thought I was choosing when I stepped down from that train.

A train runs both directions, the ceiling reminded me, as boarding-house ceilings tend to do. Lying there looking up at the map of plaster imaginings, I felt an old restlessness. It was a lamplit evening in the Marias Coulee teacherage, when I knew I was losing Rose, that a faint stain in the beaverboard ceiling seemed to suggest the outline of Australia. Even here in Grace Farraday's well-maintained

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home



accommodations, did that swirl in the plasterer's finishwork over by the window resemble South America?

Fate comes looking for us, often when we are most alone. Stealthily the conclusion I was waiting for crept down from the ceiling and took shape in the corner of the room. My gaze followed it to my satchel, shabby reliable companion in a portable life.

I swore softly to myself. Ordinarily I do not use profanity, but that was the least of what had been fanned up in me by the bluster from Eel Eyes and Typhoon Tolliver. Bouncing off the bed, in a hurry of resolve now, I crossed to where the satchel waited. Grappled it open wide. Dug to the bottom of it, past spare socks and the volume of Matthew Arnold, to where they lay.

Brass knuckles. The 'Chicago pinky ring,' weapon of choice for the streetwise combatant facing an unfair fight.

It had been years since I needed to resort to these, but they never aged. As I tried them on now, they fit across the backs of my hands cold and secure. Even the most vicious street fighter had to hesitate at the dark sheen of armor on a fist, the set of nubs that could gouge into skin like a can opener. Of course, knuckles of metal did you any good only within striking range of an opponent. But I had sparred enough as a warmup partner for Casper in training camp; I knew at least as much footwork as that lummoxx Tolliver. And unless I had lost all knack of sizing up an adversary, the more mouthy goon was the type who would blink hard at the sight of brass knuckles. He would not rush to have that smartaleck pointy face marred to the bone.

Quitter, he'd called me. We'd see.

Wouldn't you know, no sooner was I prepared to put my fortified knuckles on the line against Anaconda's lurkers than they ceased lurking. Even when I

H Adams



deliberately dawdled on downtown streets, passing the time of day with the newsstand merchant, Blind Frank, or picking up the latest salty gossip from the hack driver Fat Jack, I could not draw the goons out. The days were lengthening, so their cloak of shadow shrank, further discouraging any encounters between us. Fondling the brass knuckles in my suitcoat pocket as I went to and from the library, it was as if I was rubbing amulets that kept away evil spirits. Although I knew the real force that had stopped the goons cold in their tracks was Samuel Sandison, whatever that was about.

As for me, he kept me hopping. It was a mystery how the Butte Public Library had managed to operate before I was there to catch all the tasks delegated from that kingly desk of his to mine. This particular Friday had started as usual, with Sandison drawling "You know what needs doing or at least should" and disappearing off to somewhere undisclosed, while I faced tabulating the week's checkout slips sent up from the issue desk. He was a demon promoter of the library, and wanted the list of favorite books unfailingly in the newspaper at the end of each week. It was not an inspiring task, as the most popular book of the past seven days invariably turned out to be Mrs. Mary V. Terhune's *My Little Love*, and I sometimes had to adjust the arithmetic to get Thomas Hardy and Edith Wharton onto the list at all. So, by the time I fiddled with the citizenry's literary taste to more or less satisfaction, the messenger would be there waiting to rush my compilation to the *Daily Post*. Messengers raced all over Butte, jumping on and off the trolleys and trotting the edge of the sidewalks as they carried typed instructions back and forth between the downtown headquarters and the mine offices, workers' cashed paychecks from stores to banks, small goods from the department store to the wealthier homes, and so on. Our stretch of street was served by a gnomelike courier named Skinner. Old enough to be thoroughly bald, Skinner nonetheless had the pared build of a jockey and was never motionless, on one foot and then the

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other as he waited to be handed whatever was to be delivered. I had learned to let him jitter there in the doorway, the man apparently was not constructed to sit in a chair.

I was completing that week's list from Miss Runyon's checkout slips when Skinner, waiting restlessly as usual, blurted:

"Where you from, pal?"

"Mmm? Chicago."

"Small world. Me, too." I stiffened. "Maxwell Street and Halsted, know it?" he said from the side of his mouth, sending a deeper chill through me. The toughest neighborhood of the toughest section of that hardknuckled city. Was this going to be a repeat of Tolliver and Eel Eyes? Another message of the threatening sort from the Anaconda Company? Panic began to set in as I realized I was in my shirtsleeves, with my suitcoat--and its protective cargo of brass knuckles--on a hanger all the way across the room. A disturbing look on him, the wiry man now bounced toward me on fleet feet as I grabbed for an inkwell, anything, in self-defense. Practically atop my desk as he leaned in face to face with me, Skinner demanded:

"Cubs or White Sox?"

I relaxed somewhat; baseball rivalry was not necessarily lethal. But it is surprising how an old grudge can hold up. In a ring constructed over the infield of the White Sox' stadium, Comiskey Park, Casper on a cool clear Columbus Day had defeated Kid Agnelli--knockout, third round--before twenty-five thousand paying customers, and the owner of the White Sox and the ball park, Charles Comiskey, had shorted us on the purse. Not for nothing was he known in Chicago sporting circles as "Cheap Charlie." I would root against him and his team if they were the last baseball nine on earth. "My allegiance is to the Cubs," I put it more temperately



to Skinner. "I once saw Tinker to Evers to Chance produce four double plays in one game. Masterful."

Skinner hooted. "The Cubs ain't what they used to be. The Sox got the real players these days, they're going to the Series, you watch."

"I shall." Sealing the book list in a gummed envelope, I handed it to him indicatively. "Now do you suppose this missive could possibly find its way to the *Daily Post*?"

No sooner had the messenger scampered off than Sandison filled the doorway. Bypassing his desk, he lumbered over to the stained glass window and peered out through one the whorls like a boy at a knothole, a sign that something was on his mind. Something on his desk that he did not want to face.

"Sandy, you seem perturbed," I said diplomatically.

"I've just been with the trustees. They raked me over the coals about the library budget. Wanted to know where every damn penny goes." Turning from the window, he shook his head, the wool of his beard quivering. "They have a reason, I suppose. Few months ago, the city treasurer took off with everything he could lay his hands on."

"Bad?"

"Enough that all the elected fools in Butte see an embezzler under every bed now. Damn it, I thought it was hard to keep track of a few thousand cows--that was nothing compared to running this outfit." He passed a rough hand over his cowlick as if trying to clear his head from there on in. "Spending that much time on numbers drives me up the wall, I don't see why the idiot trustees can't just trust a man."

I remember it exactly. Opportunity was in the air of that office, distinct as ozone. Idly piling paperwork from here to there, I said as though his bookkeeping



burden was merely something I could add to the other stacks on my desk: "Thank heaven you have an arithmetical person on hand."

"Who?" Sandison eyed me. "You? You mean you can handle books that don't have mile-long words in them?"

"Assuredly."

"Are you telling me you're a certified accountant?"

"Mmm, 'certified' perhaps is too confining a term. As you might imagine, standards different from here to there. But along the way in life, I've had considerable experience with ledgers."

Sandison abandoned the window and came and dropped into his desk chair, his weight sending it wheeling toward me. "Morgan? You just said you're not an accountant. What the hell then do you do with these ledgers you're talking about?"

"Oh, mend them. From the inside out." From his furrowed look, I could tell Sandison was not satisfied with that reply. "Let me put it this way, Sandy. Numbers are simply a language I happen to understand--Latin, numeracy, both have certain principles, fundamental in themselves. Surely you know the story of the bookkeeper and the desk drawer? No? Allow me. Every morning, a certain bookkeeper would come into the office of the firm, hang up his hat and coat, seat himself at his desk, pull out a drawer and look in it for a few seconds, shut it, and only then turn to his work. For forty years, this went on--the same drawer, opened and shut, every morning. Finally came the day he retired, and the minute he left the office for the last time, the rest of the office staff crowded around his desk and one of them slowly opened that drawer. In it was a single sheet of paper. On it was written: 'Debits go on the left, credits on the right.'"

Sandison did not find my little tale as entertaining as I had hoped. "The long and short of it is," came his rumble, "you claim you know how to balance the books."



I nodded. "To the last penny, if it comes to that."

He sat there and frowned for some time. He could be intent as a fiend when he was mulling a matter. "All right," he sighed at last. "I suppose you get to prove it. You're in charge of the bookkeeping. Come over here and start getting acquainted with the ledgers."

I walked on air back to the boarding house at the end of that day. The one fundamental principle of bookkeeping that had always stood out to me was that if you know how and where the money flows, you are hard to get rid of.



"Morgan, did you say your name is?" The depot agent, an individual so slow I thought I might have to draw a line on the floor to see him move, was gradually commencing to hunt through the baggage room for my trunk, shipped ahead. "Any relation to old J. P., Mister Moneybags himself?"

I sighed to myself. His remark could hardly have been farther from the mark. Nonetheless, I couldn't resist dishing back some of the same:

"Cousins, thrice removed. Can't you tell by looking?"

The railway man let out a rattling laugh. "That's about as removed as it gets, I'd say." Poking into one last cluttered corner, he shook his head. "Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Third Cousin, that trunk of yours took a mind of its own somewhere between there and here. You could put in a claim, if you want."

So much for a storybook "Welcome back!" to the Treasure State, as Montana liked to call itself. While waiting for some sign of life in the agent, I already had been puzzling over the supposed treasure spot in plain view out the depot window--the dominant rise of land, scarred and heaped and gray as grit, which was referred to in all that I had read as The Richest Hill on Earth, always grandly capitalized. Had I missed something in the printed version? As far as I could see, the fabled mining site appeared rightly christened in only one obvious respect. It was a butte, called Butte.

"You definitely have left me in want," I reacted to the agent's news with honest dismay, equipped with only the battered satchel that accompanied me everywhere. "The bulk of my worldly possessions is in that trunk."

Squinting at me, he tossed aside his agent's cap and donned a businesslike green visor. "Possessions like that do tend to bulk up when the claim form comes out, I'd say." He slipped the pertinent piece of paper onto the counter in front of me, and I filled it out as expected, generous to myself and not the railroad.

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With only the clothes I stood in and my meager satchel, I gathered what was left of my composure and stepped outside for my first full look at Butte. It took second and even third looks as well, for the city before my eyes was an unlikely metropolis of nowhere: seventy-five thousand people atop the earth's mineral crown, with nothing else around but the Rocky Mountains. The copper capital's reputation for ambition in its every cornerstone was surely there to see, its precipitous streets climbing the blemished slope until neighborhoods of workers' cottages mingled with mines and slag heaps along the top of the namesake hill. Up there, the long-legged black steel frameworks over the mineshafts populated the skyline like a legion of half-done miniatures of Eiffel's tower. Beneath, every manner of building from shanty to mansion, church to chicken coop, was mixed together from one topsy-turvy block to the next. I have to admit, I felt a catch at the heart at how different it all was from the solitary homesteads and one-room school I had known the last time I tried my luck in this direction. Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in a prairie teacherage in that prior time. But an urge can spin the points of a compass as strongly as the magnetism of ore, and so, in spite of all that happened back then here I was, in territory off the map of imagination once more.

While I was busy gazing, a couple of bull-shouldered idlers in the shade of the depot eyed me with all too much curiosity. But with barely a glance their way, I squared my hat and hastened past as though I had an appointment. Which could be construed as the truth of the moment. The Richest Hill on Earth and I--and if my hunch was right, its riches--were about to become acquainted.

First things first, though. I set out up the tilted city streets in search of lodging. In the business district ahead, proud brick and brownstone buildings with soot in their

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Left with only the clothes I stood in and my meager satchel, I stepped outside for my first full look at Butte. If you were to take the fable of Atlantis and turn it upside down and roughen it up, you would have something like the upthrust city before my eyes: sixty thousand people atop the earth's mineral crown, in the mile-high air of its Rocky Mountain setting. The copper capital's reputation for ambition in its every cornerstone was surely there to see, its angular streets climbing the blemished slope until neighborhoods of workers' cottages mingled with mines and slag heaps along the top of the namesake hill. Up there, the long-legged black steel frameworks over the mineshafts populated the skyline like a legion of half-done miniatures of Eiffel's tower. Beneath, in the downtown business district, fledgling skyscrapers thrust up here and there, waiting for the metropolis to fill in.

And I have to admit, I felt a catch at the heart at how different it all was from the solitary homesteads and one-room school I had known the last time I tried my luck in Montana. Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in a prairie teacherage in that prior time. But an urge can spin the points of a compass as strongly as the magnetism of ore, and so I Both as a site and a sight, back in the part of America beyond the map of imagination, was once again in the part of the world where I had left off, so to speak.

A couple of bull-shouldered idlers in the shade of the depot eyed me with all too much curiosity, but I squared my hat and hastened past as though I had an appointment. Which could be construed as the truth of the moment. The Richest Hill on Earth and I--and I hoped, its riches--were about to become acquainted.

First things first. I set out up the tilted city streets in search of lodging. In the business district ahead, proud brick and brownstone buildings with soot in their

It lived up to its reputation as a uniquely oo in Butte

compant

cut

107



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That was my welcome back to the Treasure State, as Montana liked to call itself. An absence of nearly a decade did not seem to make the civic heart grow fonder. While waiting for some sign of life in the agent, I already had been putting the best face on the scene out the depot window: the dominant rise of land, scarred and heaped and gray as grit, which was known as The Richest Hill on Earth. As far as I could see, it appeared rightly christened in only one respect. It was a butte, called Butte.

"You definitely have left me in want," I reacted to the agent's news with genuine dismay, equipped with only the battered satchel that accompanied me everywhere. "The bulk of my worldly possessions is in that trunk."

Squinting at me, he tossed aside his agent's cap and donned a businesslike green visor. "Possessions like that do tend to bulk up when the claim form comes

J. P. Morgan

So much  
for a  
storybook  
"Welcome  
back!"



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With that done, I stepped out <sup>9</sup> to have a first full look at Butte. Except for the dollar signs that were always mentioned along with it, the city before my eyes sounded like the reverse of Atlantis: sixty thousand people atop the earth's mineral crown, in its Rocky Mountain setting. The copper capital's reputation for ambition in its every cornerstone was surely there to see, its commercial streets climbing the blemished slope until neighborhoods of workers' cottages mingled with mines along the top of the namesake hill. Up there, the long-legged black steel frameworks over the mineshafts populated the skyline like a legion of half-done miniatures of Eiffel's tower. I thought I was versed in places beyond the map of imagination, yet I recall standing rooted as a sapling there in mile-high circumstances, trying to take in both the site and the sight. And I have to admit, I felt a catch at the heart at how different it all was from the solitary homesteads and one-room school I had known the last time I tried my luck in Montana. Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in a prairie teacherage in that prior time. But an urge can spin the points of a compass as strongly as the magnetism of ore, and so, I gathered myself there on the weatherbeaten depot platform for the next chapter of life, whatever it might be. During all this a couple of bull-shouldered idlers in the shade of the depot eyed me with all too much curiosity, but I squared my hat and hastened past as though I had an appointment. Which could be construed as the truth of the moment. The Richest Hill on Earth and I--and I hoped, its riches--were about to become acquainted.

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like some  
strange  
storybook  
out of

Montana  
such as JP  
Morgan who  
like owner  
of a corner  
candy store

treasure  
a decade  
before  
H. Darwin



"Morgan, did you say your name is?" The depot agent, an individual so slow I thought I might have to draw a line on the floor to see him move, gradually was commencing to hunt through the baggage room for my trunk, shipped ahead.

"Any relation to J. Pierpont, Mister Gotbucks himself?"

That remark could hardly have been farther from the mark. But it deserved a retort, and I pulled my attention from the transfixing view beyond the weatherbeaten depot platform to draw myself up and proclaim:

"Cousins, thrice removed."

The railway man let out a rattling laugh. "That's about as removed as it gets, I'd say." Peeking into one last cluttered corner, he shook his head. "Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Third Cousin, that trunk of yours took a mind of its own somewhere between there and here. You could put in a claim, if you want."

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rejoice

Human  
nature  
being what  
it is,

A storm  
to joy

genuine

Dented  
but not  
daunted

That was  
my welcome  
back to  
T St, or MT

no easy  
touch



1

start?  
eventually  
quit  
whistling

1

"Morgan, did you say your name is?" The depot agent, an individual so slow I thought I might have to draw a line on the floor to see him move, gradually commenced to hunt through the baggage room for my sea trunk, shipped ahead.

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I pulled  
my attention  
away from  
(view  
outside)

I donned  
such a visor  
my welcome  
back to  
TST, ?

That was  
my welcome  
(back to MT)



Living up to a name of that sort is no small trick. The dominant rise of land ahead of me, scarred and heaped and gray as grit, showed itself to be rightly christened in only one respect that I could see. It was a butte, called Butte.

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First things first, however. Left with only the clothes I stood in and my meager satchel, I set out up the tilted city streets in search of lodging. In the business district ahead, proud brick and brownstone buildings with soot in their cornices stood several stories above a forest of poles and electrical wires, another novelty I had not encountered in earlier Montana. But the world of 1919 was not that of a decade before in hardly any other way either; the Great War with its four years of trenches filled with mud and blood had seen to that.

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storybook



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That was my welcome back to the Treasure State, as Montana liked to call itself. As I stepped out of the depot, the source of so much of that treasure inescapably caught my attention: the dominant rise of land, scarred and heaped and gray as grit, known far and wide as The Richest Hill on Earth. Right away I could see that it was rightly christened in at least one respect. It was a butte, called Butte.

This was -  
(type of)  
welcome  
\* had hoped  
for in my  
return to

Got a  
depot  
window

w/ a  
view  
down



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Even yet I wonder:

Was it my active imagination, or did something hang over this unfinished

~~tableau~~ tableau besides smokestack plumes? All I can say is that in my

up-and-down life until then, I had never stepped into such a sudden serenade

of high notes and low.

*encountered such a mix of  
been so suddenly serenaded by*

Butte, then, and myself, in that year [when the world changed.]

*discordant  
odd (est)*



beyond the reach of my wallet. I dreaded the sort of fleabag hotel that I would have to resort to without my sea chest--even the most suspicious hostelry, in my experience, unblinkingly provided a room if the luggage was prosperous enough.

While I was studying the lay of the city and trying to divine my best approach, a sign in the bow window of a hillside house caught my eye.

There is something in me that attracts situations, I know there is. The Chicago matter, to name one. More on my mind, however, when I stepped from the train that first day of all this, was the heady spell of time spent in the expanses of Marias Coulee, years before. Situations are never gentle. Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in a prairie teacherage then. And I had kept my promise to stay away, ever since. Going strictly by the map, I still was, even though my ticket had brought me back to the Treasure State, as Montana liked to be called. So, telling myself I was maintaining a reasonable distance from the past, I went into the depot to collect my possessions, the necessary first step toward treasure of any sort.

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on  
leads  
1 can

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[Camest. br.]  
well 1

1 heady  
spell of time  
spent in MC,  
you before.

6 responses 7

hmm.

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*both w/ our hopes up in that oldest of years, 1919.*

Butte, then, and myself, I have to admit, I felt a catch at the heart at how different it all was from the solitary homesteads and one-room school I had known the last time I tried my luck in what was known as the Treasure State. Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in a prairie teacherage in that prior time. But an urge can spin the points of a compass as strongly as the magnetism of ore, and so, gathering myself there on the weatherbeaten depot platform, I began my return <sup>allurements</sup> to the attractions of Montana. Where I left off, as it were.

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*some kids  
now  
parents  
themselves  
...  
world had  
taken a fit  
improve  
"attractions"*

*hooted.*



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Left with only the clothes I stood in and my meager satchel, I stepped outside for my first full look at Butte. If the legend of Atlantis were turned upside down and roughened up, you would have something like the city before my eyes: sixty thousand people atop the earth's mineral crown, in the high thin air of its Rocky Mountain setting. The copper capital's reputation for ambition in its every cornerstone was surely there to see, its sharp streets climbing the blemished slope until neighborhoods of workers' cottages mingled with mines and slag heaps along the top of the namesake hill. Up there, the long-legged black steel frameworks over the mineshafts populated the skyline like a legion of half-done miniatures of Eiffel's tower. Beneath, in the center of the city, fledgling skyscrapers thrust up here and there, waiting for the metropolis to fill in. Both as a site and a sight, <sup>an m. broadest</sup> the city before my eyes was somewhere off the map of imagination, and I have to admit I felt a catch at the heart at how different it all was from the solitary homesteads and one-room school I had known the last time I tried my luck in Montana. Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in a prairie teacherage in that prior time. But an urge can spin the points of a compass as strongly as the magnetism of ore, and so I was once again in the part of the world where I had left off, so to speak.

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you were  
40  
+ then

then  
place

back in  
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of am  
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There is  
something in  
me that

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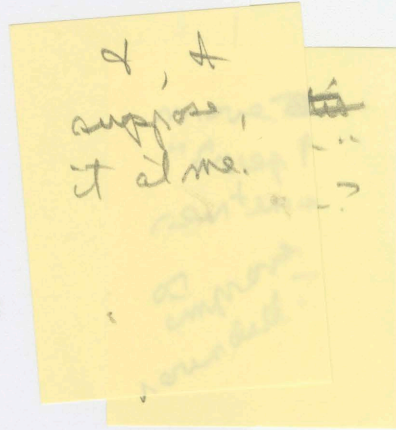
scattered  
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There was little time left in my day for such thoughts: I needed a place for the night. The airy accommodations I could glimpse in those lofty blocks were beyond the reach of my wallet. I dreaded the sort of fleabag hotel that I would have to resort to without my sea chest--even the most suspicious hostelry, in my experience, unblinkingly provided a room if the luggage was prosperous enough.

While I was studying the lay of the city and trying to divine my best approach, a sign in the bow window of a hillside house caught my eye.

#### CUTLETS AND COVERLETS

OR IF YOU'RE NOT WELSH:

#### BOARD AND ROOM

Smiling to myself, I headed directly to the blue-painted front door of the house.

My knock was answered by a woman a good deal younger than I expected a boarding-house mistress to be. Her violet eyes met mine in mutual appraisal.

"Madam," I began with a lift of my hat, "I feel the need--"

Richie  
Hill on  
Earth

America  
was a  
tumultuous

ahead

on a  
spacious  
lot?

more  
depth  
of Grace?



*Red-hot winter Can't get any news!*  
newsboy: "Latest news, sir?" w/ newspaper bag as big as he was  
caught up with headlines as he scampered off.

Ah, America; not merely a nation, but something like a continental nervous condition.

Att'y General Warns of Domestic Bolsheviks

Wilson Calls League of Nations Best Hope for Lasting Peace

*I handed him a coin*

*(NY) Reverend Caught in Love Nest  
at Minister*



She was compact, in the manner of a dressmaker's form, shapely but with  
no excess. A <sup>substantial</sup> tidy braid the color of flax tugged the upper lines of her  
face toward quizzical, as if she <sup>though</sup> ~~was~~ being reined by <sup>some</sup> ~~a~~ hand unseen.  
~~were~~

Whatever portion of the world had knocked on this door, she seemed freshly  
inquisitive about a caller such as myself, well-dressed but not well-heeled,  
her violet eyes...



"I've heard that one before from half the men in Butte. I'm not a madam," she said, cool as custard, "and this is not a house of ill repute. That's on the next block."

"Let me start over," I amended. "With night overtaking me in a city where I don't know a soul, I feel the need of warm quarters and a solid meal. Your sign appears to offer those."

"Ah, Griff's latest masterpiece," she turned to consider the freshly painted words, a bit of lilt coming into her voice. "He'd turn this into Cardiff West if he could. Step on in, please, Mr.--?"

"Morgan. Morris Morgan."

"Griff will approve, you sound as Welsh as a daffodil." She extended a slender but work-firmed hand. "Grace Farraday, myself."

The upstairs room she showed me was neat and clean, with subdued wallpaper. On the bed was a coverlet of an old style with an embroidered dragon rampant; it would be like sleeping under a flag of Camelot. I can be picky, but I liked everything I had met up with under this roof so far.

As I clicked the toggle switch to make sure the overhead electric bulb worked--another innovation unknown in my earlier Montana stay--my landlady-to-be similarly checked me over. "Drummer, are you?"

It took me a moment to recall that the term meant a traveling salesman, one who drums up business. "No, life has given me other rhythms to march to, Mrs. Farraday. My family originally was in the glove trade, until circumstances did that in. I now do books."

"Poetry?" she asked narrowly.

"Ledgers."

"Then you'll appreciate my own bookkeeping, which starts with a week's rent in advance."

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"Very wise," I said with composure, although coming up with the sum took nearly all I had. Now I really had to hope opportunity of some sort presented itself without delay.

"Welcome to Butte, Mr. Morgan," Grace Farraday said with a winning smile, complete with dimple, as she pocketed my cash. "Supper's at dark this time of year."

The table was laid for four when I came down a few minutes early to scout the premises. There was no wax fruit nor fussy display of doilies on the sideboard, a good sign. Instead, under the blaze of the modest but efficient electrical chandelier above the dining table, a wedding photograph was propped there in the spot of honor. Grace Farraday, even more fresh-faced than now, smiled out as capriciously as if the white of her bridal gown were a field of ermine, while beside her in a suit that only fit where it touched stood a foursquare fellow I took to be the much-mentioned Griff. He at least had good taste in women and mustaches, as he wore a full-lipped Rudyard Kipling version not unlike my own.

Just then my hostess popped out of the kitchen with a bowl of boiled potatoes and nodded to where I was to sit, saying "Make yourself to home, the other pair will be right along. Griff had to stoke the furnace and I told him to go wash up or eat in the street--ah, here's the thundering herd."

Through the doorway limped two scrawny half-bald figures that made me think I was seeing double. Both wore work overalls that showed no evidence of work, both held out gnarled hands for a shake, and both were grinning at me like leprechauns or whatever the Welsh equivalent might be. The nearer one croaked out: "I'm Griff. Welcome to the best diggings in Butte."

"Same here," echoed the other. "I'm Hoop."



Was it humanly possible? I wondered, doing my best not to look in the direction of the wedding photo during the handshake exchange with the wizened Griff. What manner of marriage could deplete a man from that to this?

With a bit of a twinkle, Grace Farraday rescued me from my confusion. "These specimens are Wynford Griffith and Maynard Hooper, when no one is looking. They've been part of the furniture here since my husband passed on and I've had to take in boarders." As the duo took their places like old Vikings at a feast, she delivered as a fond benediction: "We all three could be worse, I suppose."

"I'll try to fit in, Mrs. Farraday."

"Start by calling me 'Grace' and passing those spuds, please."

"I go by 'Morrie,'" I reciprocated, and formalities fell away in favor of knives and forks. "Didn't I tell you, Hoop?" Griff said as he sawed at his meat. "That new sign works like a charm. What part of Wales do your people hail from, Morrie?"

"Chicago."

"Before they crossed the pond," he persisted.

"Griff, I am sorry to say, the exact family origins are lost in the mists of--" I searched the gazeteer of my mind-- "Aberystwyth and Llangollen."

"The grand old names," he proclaimed, adding a spatter of woolly syllables that could only have been Welsh. "'Tis the language of heaven."

"Why nobody talks it on earth," Hoop explained.

By then I was on about my third bite of the meat and ready to ask.

"Venison?"

"Close," Grace allowed. "Antelope."

"Ah." I looked down at the delicate portion. "What a treat to be served cutlets, " I emphasized the plural. "Are there seconds?"

glance

change  
fond  
around



She mulled that. "Tonight there are." Off she went to the kitchen stove.

While Grace was absent, the history of my tablemates came out. Now retired--"at least the tired part"--the pair had been miners, to hear them tell it, practically since the dawn of Butte. Which was to say, since copper became a gleam in the world's eye. The Hill, as they called it, held the earth's largest known deposit of the ore that wired everything electrical. Much of this I knew, but there was a tang to hearing them recite it with the names of mines such as the Orphan Girl and the Anselmo and the Badger. The crisscross of their conversation about life deep underground was such that I sometimes had to remind myself which was Griffith and which was Hooper. While they looked enough alike to be brothers, I figured out that they simply worked together so long in the mineshafts that the stoop of their bodies and other inclinations had made them grow together in resemblance as some old married couples do.

"So, Morrie, you've latched on in life as a bookkeeper, Grace says," Griff was holding forth as she appeared with the replenished meat platter, rosettes from the cookstove heat in her attractive cheeks. It was surprising how much more eye-catching she was as the Widow Farraday.

"Except when the books keep me." Both men bobbed quizzically and Grace sent me a glance. Offhand as my comment was, it admitted to more than I probably should have. With rare exceptions, my stints of employment had been eaten away by the acid of boredom, the drip-by-drip sameness of a job causing my mind to yawn and sneak off elsewhere. One boss said I spent more time in the clouds than the Wright brothers. I had found, though, that I could work with sums while the remainder of my brain went and did what it wanted. "But yes," I came around to Griff's remark about bookkeeping, "I have a way with numbers, and Butte by all accounts produces plentiful ones. First thing in the morning, I'll offer my services at the office of the mining company, what is its name--Anaconda?"



Forks dropped to plates.

"You're one of those," Grace flamed. She pulled my rent money from her apron pocket and hurled it to the table, very nearly into the gravy boat. "Leave this house at once, Whoever-You-Are Morgan. I'll not have under my roof a man who wears the copper collar."

"The--?"

Hooper and Griffith glowered at me. "Anaconda is the right name for company men," Griff growled. "They're snakes."

"But believe me, I--"

"Lowest form of life," Hoop averred.

Enough was enough. Teetering back in my chair as far as I dared, I reached to the switch on the wall and shut off the chandelier, plunging the room into blackness and silence. After a few blank moments, I spoke into the void:

"We are all now in the dark. As I was, about this matter of the Anaconda Company. Can we now talk in a manner which will shed some light on the situation?"

I put the chandelier back on, to the other three blinking like wakened owls.

Grace stirred first. "How on earth, Morrie, can you land into Butte as innocent as a newborn?"

"I have been elsewhere for a number of years," I said patiently. "I knew nothing of this ogre you call Anaconda. To the contrary, I always heard 'the Richest Hill on Earth' spoken of as the argonauts must have talked of the California goldfields in 1849."

Hooper built up a sputter. "That, that's--"

"Hoop, house rules," Grace warned.

"--baloney. The company hogs it all. They've turned this town into rich, poor, and poorer."

more  
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of Grace  
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Griff furiously took his turn. "Anaconda men sit around up there in the Hennessy Building on their polished--"

"Griff, the rules," came Grace's warning again.

"--rumps figuring out new ways to rob the working man. They bust the union, and we build a new one. They bust that, and we try again. Accuse us all of being Wobblies, and sic the National Guard on us."

I looked around the table for the definition. "Wobblies?"

"You really have been off the face of the earth, haven't you," Griff resumed crossly. "The Industrial Workers of the World. They're radical, see, and when they hit town, they tried to edge out our miners' federation. The Wobs had their good points, but they riled things up to where the company squashed us all."

One chapter spilled over another as Hoop and Grace chorused in on Griff's telling, but Butte's story across the past ten years was that of the Romans over the tin mines of Britannia, the colonial cartel over the diamonds of the Transvaal, the Sydney financiers over the gold of Kalgoorlie... In short, the ruling powers mining the miners, the lowly laborers in the pits of wealth. The Hill and the city, I was told, had witnessed a cat's-cradle of conflicts among the federation of miners, the Wobblies (they were called that, I learned, due to certain members' foreign accents that turned the *dubel-yu* sounds of IWW into *wobble-you wobble-you*), and the Wall Street-run company. There had been strikes and lockouts. Riots. Dynamitings. The Anaconda Copper Mining Company bringing in goon squads. A lynching, if I understood right. Half a dozen times, troops had come marching in to impose order. And that was not all.

"Then there was the fire." Grace's voice stumbled. "In the Speculator mine two years ago." She drew a breath. "One hundred sixty-four men were killed. My Arthur"--all the eyes in the room, including mine, darted to the wedding picture--  
"among them."

more  
personification  
of Grace?  
mistaken eyes



Griffith and Hooper moved uneasily in their chairs. "We was on the earlier shift," Griff murmured, "or we'd be pushing up daisies with the rest of them."

"Any mine, anywhere, the bulkheads are supposed to have escapeways," Hoop provided in almost as low a voice. "The Speculator's were solid concrete."

In the pause that followed, I sat there before the jury of their faces.

There is something in me that attracts situations, I know there is. Here I was, faced by three people I had only spent an amount of time with that could be measured in forkfuls, asked to make one of those choices in life that can dwarf any other. I had to pick a side, right now, or else hit the chandelier switch again and bolt into the night. I looked around once more at my expectant tablemates. Mentally asking their pardon for what might be called situational loyalty, I made a show of making up my mind. "The Anaconda Copper Mining Company," I declared, "shall not have my services."

"Now you're talking!" Griff slapped the table resoundingly and Hoop nodded. Grace favored me with a dimple of approval.

"But what am I to do?" I turned out my hands, empty as they were. "I need work with decent pay to it. My funds have been delayed in the course of my journey." If you substituted *sea chest* for *funds*, that was perfectly true.

Griffith looked the length of the table at Hooper.

"Creeping Pete," said Hoop. "Needs a cryer."

"Possible," said Griff. "Too sober?"

"Not for long."

"Righto. Got just the thing for you, Morrie."



Living up to a magical name can be tricky. The fabled spot known as the Richest Hill on Earth, scarred and heaped when I stepped from the train that first day of all this, showed itself to be rightly christened in at least one respect. It was a butte, called Butte.

I thought I was versed in places beyond the map of imagination, yet I recall standing rooted as a sapling there in mile-high Montana circumstances, trying to take in both the site and the sight. Except for the dollar signs that were always mentioned along with it, the city before my eyes sounded like wildest make-believe: sixty thousand people atop the earth's tarnished mineral crown high in the Rocky Mountains. Butte's reputation for ambition in its every cornerstone was surely there to see, its wide open streets climbing the blemished slope until neighborhoods mingled with mines along the top of the namesake hill. Up there, the long-legged black steel frameworks over the mineshafts populated the skyline like a legion of

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half-done miniatures of Eiffel's tower. I admit, I felt a catch at the heart at how different it all was from the cordial homesteads and one-room school I had known the last time I tried my luck in what was known as the Treasure State. Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in a prairie teacherage in that prior time. But an urge can spin the points of a compass as strongly as the magnetism of ore, and so, gathering myself there on the weatherbeaten depot platform, I began my return to the open-ended part of America. Where I left off, as it were.

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I pondered just what it was that deposited me back in this direction. The cyclonic force of memory? Or some devilish imp of impulse?

Whatever it was, I felt a catch at the heart from being back in Montana. Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in a prairie teacherage in that prior time. I still was bound by the terms of that farewell. Yet when I had reason to ask myself where on the planet I ought to locate myself next, this open-ended part of America kept coming to mind. Where I left off, as it were.

*Yet after  
(10) years  
something*

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circumstances

man



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[Some places of this earth say hello in the strangest ways.] The fabled spot known as the Richest Hill on Earth, scarred and heaped when I stepped from the train that first day of all this, in its <sup>initially</sup> greeting lived up to its name in only one respect that I could find, <sup>readily</sup> for all my looking. It was a butte, called Butte.

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Whatever it was, I felt a catch at the heart from being back in Montana. Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in a prairie teacherage in that prior time. I still was bound by the terms of that farewell. Yet when I had reason to ask myself where on the planet I ought to locate myself next, this open-ended part of America kept coming to mind. Where I left off, as it were.

And so, I once again set foot into the land of hopes, this time accompanied only by the stares of a couple of bull-shouldered idlers in the shade of the depot eyeing me with all too much curiosity. I squared my hat and hastened past as though I had an appointment. Butte and I--and I hoped, its riches--were about to become acquainted.

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Left with only the clothes I stood in and my meager satchel, I set out up Butte's tilted streets in search of lodging. In the business district ahead, proud brick and brownstone buildings with soot in their cornices stood several stories above a forest of poles and electrical wires, another novelty I had not encountered in earlier Montana. But the world of 1919 was not that of a decade before in hardly any other way either; the Great War with its four years of trenches filled with mud and blood had seen to that.

There was little time left in my day for such thoughts: I needed a place for the night. The airy accommodations I could glimpse in those lofty blocks were beyond the reach of my wallet. I dreaded the sort of fleabag hotel that I would have to resort to without my sea chest--even the most suspicious hostelry, in my experience, unblinkingly provided a room if the luggage was prosperous enough.

While I was studying the lay of the city and trying to divine my best approach, a sign in the bow window of a hillside house caught my eye.

#### **CUTLETS AND COVERLETS**

#### **OR IF YOU'RE NOT WELSH:**

#### **BOARD AND ROOM**

Smiling to myself, I headed directly to the blue-painted front door of the house.

My knock was answered by a woman a good deal younger than I expected a boarding-house mistress to be. Her violet eyes met mine in mutual appraisal.

"Madam," I began with a lift of my hat, "I feel the need--"



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To hear it described, the city of Butte sounded like make-believe: forty thousand people atop the earth's tarnished mineral crown. Yet there it awaited, ambition in its every cornerstone, its streets conspicuously climbing the blemished slope until neighborhoods mingled with mines along the top of the namesake hill. Up there, the long-legged frameworks over the mineshafts populated the skyline like a legion of half-done miniatures of Eiffel's tower. The site and the sight, both amazing. All of it could hardly have been more different from the mile-apart homesteads and one-room school I had known the last time I tried my luck in what was known as the Treasure State. But an urge can spin the points of a compass as strongly as the magnetism of ore. Gathering myself there on the weatherbeaten depot platform, I pondered just what it was that deposited me back in this direction. The cyclonic force of memory? Or some devilish imp of impulse?



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Both the site and the sight were cause for wonder. There across the tracks, the ambitious city climbed the blemished slope until neighborhoods mingled with mines along the top of the namesake hill. Up there, the long-legged frameworks over the mineshafts populated the skyline like a legion of half-done miniatures of Eiffel's tower. All of it could hardly have been more different from the plucky dry-land homesteads and one-room school I had known the last time I tried my luck in what was known as the Treasure State. But an urge can spin the points of a compass as strongly as the magnetism of ore. Gathering myself there on the weatherbeaten depot platform, I pondered just what it was that deposited me back in this direction. The cyclonic force of memory? Or some devilish imp of impulse?

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Living up to a name, I have found, is seldom a small task. But the place that had dubbed itself the Richest Hill on Earth, <sup>poring</sup> squatting none too elegantly against a backdrop of true mountains when I stepped from the train that chilly spring day, decidedly did so in at least one respect. It was a butte, called Butte.

I could see at once that the <sup>ambitious sprawled</sup> upthrust city scattered across the slopes--for Butte carried the further reputation of a crude mining camp ballooned into a junior metropolis--actually mingled with the mines near the crest of its namesake hill. I

paused to fix in mind that first sight of the long-legged frameworks over the shafts like fifteen or twenty half-done miniatures of Eiffel's tower. Civic attainments of that odd sort, I was caused to reflect, were a far cry from the prairie homesteads and one-room school I had known in my earlier venture in that part of the world.

Remarkably,  
populated  
like a  
region



However, the world of 1919 was not that of a decade before in most other ways either. The Great War had seen to that, and now that the trenches with their four years of mud and blood were healing over, I found myself drawn back with renewed anticipation to the open-ended part of America. Where I left off, as it were. And so, I once again set foot on the platform of a Montana depot, this time only in the company of a couple of bull-shouldered idlers eyeing me with all too much curiosity. I squared my hat and hastened past as though I had an appointment. Butte and I--and I hoped, its riches--were about to become acquainted.

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"You indubitably have left me in want," I replied, looking in dismay at the modest satchel that accompanied me everywhere. "The bulk of my worldly possessions is in that trunk."

Squinting at me, he tossed aside his agent's cap and donned a businesslike green visor. "Possessions like that do tend to bulk up when the claim form comes out, I'd say." He slipped the pertinent piece of paper onto the counter in front of me, and I filled it out as expected, generous to myself and not the railroad.

Left with only the clothes I stood up in and my meager satchel, I set out up Butte's tilted streets in search of lodging. In the business district some blocks higher on the rising ground, proud brick and stone buildings with soot in their cornices stood several stories above the pavement, another novelty I had not encountered in earlier Montana. Unfortunately, the substantial accommodations I could glimpse in those lofty blocks were beyond the reach of my wallet right then. I dreaded the sort of fleabag hotel that I was doomed to without the wherewithal of



my sea chest--I had found that even the most suspicious hostelry unquestioningly provided a room if the luggage was grandiose enough. While I was studying the lay of the city and trying to divine my best approach, a sign in the bow window of a hillside house caught my eye.

**CUTLETS AND COVERLETS**

**OR IF YOU'RE NOT WELSH:**

**BOARD AND ROOM**

I smiled to myself and headed directly to the blue-painted front door of the house.

My knock was answered by a woman a good deal younger than I expected a boarding-house mistress to be. Her violet eyes... "Madam," I began with a lift of my hat,

"Grace Farraday."

There are two other boarders, permanent as the roofbeams, scrawny old miners named Tom Griffith and Frank Cooper. Griff and Coop looked enough alike to be brothers, but I soon figured out that they simply worked together so long in the mineshafts that the stoop of their bodies and other inclinations had made them grow together in resemblance as some old married couples do.



"I'll not have under my roof a man who wears the copper collar."

"The--?"

"Anaconda is the right name for company men," Griff said. "They're snakes."

"But I--"

"Lowest form of life," Coop said darkly.

Griffith looked the length of the table at Cooper, although I was yet at the early point of acquaintanceship where I had to monitor to myself which was looking at which.

"Creeping Pete," said Cooper. "Cryer."

"Maybe," said Griffith. "Too sober?"

"Not for long."

"Righto. Got just the thing for you, Morrie."

"Might I be of help?"

"You can dry, if you don't have dropsy."

I took up a dish towel. "Your china is secure in my hands."

"He was old-country Irish.



It affected him like a ruffle of trumpets.

During my Australian excursion, I found occasional employment as what might be termed *chef de cuisine* of ledgers--which was to say, cook of the books--for certain imperiled mining firms. Numbers are an easy enough matter of manipulation for me, although unfortunately that facility tends to vanish around the vicinity of my wallet. There among the would-be mining magnates Down Under, I heard a place spoken of as the 1849 argonauts must have talked of the California goldfields.

Night.

The time after sundown was an elixir for Butte, you could see it being mixed, with the deep shadow of its outline combining with the blaze of its streetlights. Butte blazed with manufactured light.



Living up to a name, I have found, is seldom a small task. But the place  
<sup>that had</sup>  
<sup>itself</sup> none too elegantly against a backdrop of  
 dubbed the Richest Hill on Earth, squatting amid true mountains when I stepped

<sup>these chilly springs</sup>  
 from the train that first day, decidedly did so in at least one respect. It was a butte,  
 called Butte.

<sup>man-made</sup> I could see at once that the city piled across the <sup>slopes</sup> uneven terrain in unlikely  
<sup>scattershot</sup>  
 fashion--for Butte carried the further reputation of a brawling mining camp grown  
<sup>ballooned</sup>

into a junior metropolis--actually mingled with the mines near the crest of the

<sup>man-made hill</sup>  
 humpbacked slope, the long-legged frameworks over the shafts like half-done

miniatures of Eiffel's tower. Civic attainments of that odd sort were a far cry from

the prairie homesteads and one-room school I had known in my earlier venture in

that part of the world, but the world of 1919 was not that of a decade before in most



other ways either. The Great War had seen to that, and now that the trenches with their four years of mud and blood were healing over, I found myself drawn back to the open-ended part of America. Where I left off, as it were. And so, I once again set foot on the platform of a Montana depot, this time only in the company of a couple of idlers eyeing me with curiosity. Butte and I--and I hoped, its riches--were about to become acquainted.

W/ fresh  
removed  
100 down?  
anticipation  
W/ Rose  
dear Rose

I squared  
my hat

"Morgan, did you say your name is?" The depot agent, an individual so slow I thought I might have to draw a line on the floor to see him move, began hunting through the baggage room for my sea trunk, shipped ahead. "Any relation to J. Pierpont, Mister Gotbucks himself?"

That remark could hardly have been farther from the mark. I could not resist responding in kind:

"Cousins, thrice removed."

The railway man tittered. "That's about as removed as it gets, I'd say."

Peeking into one last cluttered corner, he shook his head. "Well, I'll tell you,

#  
Mr. Third Cousin, that trunk of yours took a mind of its own somewhere between

'Frisco and here. You could put in a claim, if you want."



"You indubitably have left me in want," I replied, looking in dismay at the modest satchel that accompanied me everywhere. "The bulk of my worldly possessions are in that trunk."

Squinting at me, he tossed aside his agent's cap and donned a businesslike green visor. "Possessions like that do tend to bulk up when the claim form comes out, I'd say." He slipped the pertinent piece of paper onto the counter in front of me, and I filled it out with due generosity to myself.

That left  
me,  
however,  
w/ little +  
than  
satchel to  
my name



Living up to a name, I have found, is seldom a small task. But the place that had dubbed itself the Richest Hill on Earth, squatting none too elegantly against a backdrop of true mountains when I stepped from the train that chilly spring day, decidedly did so in at least one respect. It was a butte, called Butte.

I could see at once that the city scattered across the slopes--for Butte carried the further reputation of a crude mining camp ballooned into a junior metropolis-- actually mingled with the mines near the crest of <sup>its</sup> the namesake hill. I paused to fix <sup>what I'd</sup> in mind the sight of the long-legged frameworks over the shafts like half-done <sup>1500 20</sup> miniatures of Eiffel's tower. Civic attainments of that odd sort <sup>I reflected,</sup> were a far cry from the prairie homesteads and one-room school I had known in my earlier venture in that part of the world, but the world of 1919 was not that of a decade before in most other ways either. The Great War had seen to that, and now that the trenches with their four years of mud and blood were healing over, I found myself drawn back



with renewed anticipation to the open-ended part of America. Where I left off, as it were. And so, I once again set foot on the platform of a Montana depot, this time

only in the company of a couple of bull-shouldered idlers eyeing me with *all too much* curiosity.

I squared my hat and hastened past as though I had an appointment. Butte and I-- and I hoped, its riches--were about to become acquainted.

"Morgan, did you say your name is?" The depot agent, an individual so

slow I thought I might have to draw a line on the floor to see him move, *gradually* began

*commenced to* hunting through the baggage room for my sea trunk, shipped ahead. "Any relation

to J. Pierpont, Mister Gotbucks himself?"

That remark could hardly have been farther from the mark. I could not resist responding in kind:

"Cousins, thrice removed."

*cackled*  
The railway man tittered. "That's about as removed as it gets, I'd say."

Peeking into one last cluttered corner, he shook his head. "Well, I'll tell you, Mr.

Third Cousin, that trunk of yours took a mind of its own somewhere between

'Frisco and here. You could put in a claim, if you want."



"You indubitably have left me in want," I replied, looking in dismay at the modest satchel that accompanied me everywhere. "The bulk of my worldly possessions in that trunk."

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Living up to a name, I have found, is seldom a small task. But the richest hill on earth, presenting itself as I stepped forth from the train past a couple of idlers on the platform, decidedly did so in at least one respect. It was a butte, called Butte. I saw at once that the city rampant on this geography--for Butte carried the further reputation of a rough boomtown grown into a junior metropolis--actually mingled with the mines near the crest of the <sup>broad</sup> tall slope, the winding wheels...

Very well, I said to myself, Butte and I shall see what we make of one another.

# —————  
“Morgan, did you say your name is?” The depot agent, an individual so slow I thought I might have to draw a line on the floor to see him move, began hunting through the baggage room for my sea trunk, shipped ahead. “Any relation to J. Pierpont, Mister Gotbucks himself?”



"Morgan, did you say your name is?" The depot agent's <sup>misadvised search</sup> rummaging <sup>imperturbable</sup> through the baggage room for my sea trunk was as amiable as it was futile. "Any relation to J. Pierpont, Mister Gotbucks himself?"

<sup>cooling my heels</sup> That remark could hardly have been farther from the mark. I could not resist responding in kind:

"Cousins, thrice removed."

The railway man tittered. "That's about as removed as it gets, I'd say." I had stepped down from an electrically-driven Milwaukee Road train, a far cry from the smoking coal tub that dropped me at a raw town called Westwater in my first Montana adventure. What an epoch of change we live in. On the other hand, in the Sixteenmile Canyon the right-of-way fence was festooned with rattlesnakes slain by railway. Peeking into one last cluttered corner, he shook his green-visored head.



“Well, I’ll tell you, Mr. Morgan, that trunk of yours took a mind of its own somewhere between ’Frisco and here. You can put in a claim if you want.”

“You have left me in want,” I replied, “indubitably.” I looked in dismay at the satchel that accompanied me everywhere. “The bulk of my worldly possessions are in that trunk.”

“Possessions like that do tend to bulk up when the claim form comes out, I’d say.” He slipped the pertinent piece of paper onto the counter in front of me, and I filled it out generously.

The world had changed beyond compare since 1910, when I took leave of America and Montana.



I first spied the richest hill on earth when my own fortunes had plunged as low as they could go, as they have a habit of doing.

“Morgan, eh? Any relation to J. Pierpont, Mister Gotbucks himself?”

My welcome to Butte from the depot agent was the type of remark that could not be farther from the mark, and my severe gaze in return told the fellow as much. I must confess, however, it is difficult to repel such barbs when one is threadbare in as many ways as I was on that day I stepped off the train at the bottom of ‘the richest hill on earth.’

Griffith looked the length of the table at Cooper, although I was yet at the early point of acquaintanceship where I had to monitor to myself which was looking at which.

“Creeping Pete,” said Cooper. “Cryer.”

disturbing



"Maybe," said Griffith. "Too sober?"

"Not for long."

"Righto. Got just the thing for you, Morrie."

It affected him like a ruffle of trumpets.

During my Australian excursion, I found occasional employment as what might be termed *chef de cuisine* of ledgers--which was to say, cook of the books--for certain imperiled mining firms. Numbers are an easy enough matter of manipulation for me, although unfortunately that facility tends to vanish around the vicinity of my wallet. There among the would-be mining magnates Down Under, I heard a place spoken of as the 1849 argonauts must have talked of the California goldfields.



Tasmania, Montana, melancholia, absentia--the recent course of my life is compassed by locutions nominatively open at their far ends, I can't help but notice.

Once a Latinist always a Latinist, I suppose.

I found employment of a sort as accountant for a mining firm. Numbers are an easy enough matter of mainpulation for me, although unfortunately that facility tends to vanish around the vicinity of my wallet. There among the miners I heard a place spoken of as the 1849 argonauts must have talked of the California goldfields.

Its name was Butte.

My earlier adventure in Montana, cut short for reasons best not gone into here, lingered in me. I had a yearning, a yen, a positive homesickness for a place where I had spent only one short teaching year.

...this recounting for history and the proper authorities, if they have the gumption to act on its facts. History's justice I have more confidence in.

I stepped down from an electrically-driven Milwaukee Road train, a far cry from the smoking coal tub that dropped me at a raw town called Westwater in my first Montana adventure. What an epoch of change we live in. On the other hand, in the Sixteenmile Canyon the right-of-way fence was festooned with rattlesnakes slain by railway.



"A good many of them are mine."

"Yours?"

"Hell yes. From the ranch."

"Ah. The ranch. You were a livestock entrepreneur, I take it? Sheep, horses?"

"Cattle." He delivered me a look that made me want to duck. Well, how was I to know? Montana and Australia both appeared to me to be as populous with fleeces as the heavens are with clouds.

"You mean you really never have heard of the Triple S ranch?"

"I confess I have not, but I have been in town only a matter of days."

"It's gone now," he growled. "That's why I'm here. It was the biggest spread in the state, everybody and his dog knew the SSS brand."

"Mmm. By 'brand,' do you mean the practice of searing a mark onto the animal?"

"That's what branding is. It's the Latin and Greek of the prairie."

That startled me. "Intriguing. And so SSS would translate to--?"



He laughed harshly. "Saddle up, sit tight, and shut up, my riders called it. Most of them stuck with me anyway." An odd glint came to him. "I had an army of them, you know."

"I regret to say, I am not seer enough myself to know the intricacies of reading burnt cowhide." It fell flat with him. "But I am eager to grasp the principle behind alphabetizing one's cows--"

"It's not alphabetical, fool. Brandabetical."

"--excellent word! the brandabetical concept, then. Do you start with the full lingual entity, in this case 'saddle up, sit tight, and shut up,' and condense from there?"

"Hell no," he let out and immediately after that, "but you're right in a way. SSS stood for Seymour-Stanwood-Sandison. I had to have partners in the ranch operation. Money men." Those last two words he practically spat.

"You looking for work?" he asked.

"A wage, yes," I put it more honestly than that.

...

"Rabrab!" I blurted.



"Mr. Morgan. Your mustache is back." I had last seen Barbara Rellis as a sixth-grader. She was always advanced, physically speaking, and now she was a stunning young woman.

"Will miracles never de cease."

"Don't you know who Sandison is? He's the Strangler."

"Are you dim, man? What you need is an eisteddfod."



Living up to a name, [I find with the one I have had to try on,] is a tricky business. No amateurs need apply. But the deceptive locale that had dubbed itself the Richest Hill on Earth, scarred and windswept when I stepped from the train that initial day, showed itself to be rightly christened in at least one respect. It was a butte, called Butte.

Pausing there on the weathered depot platform, I wondered at the urge that brought me to such a westerly point of the compass again. Some imp of impulse kept me company throughout my return journey, but what? Everything I knew how to part with, I left behind in a prairie teacherage in that prior time. Perhaps it was the force of memory that drew me back in this direction. Or perhaps just the mysterious course of life. Either way, here I was and there across the tracks the