

ambitious city of Butte was, climbing the blemished slope until neighborhoods mingled with the 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. I marveled at both the site and the sight. Civic attainments of that odd sort could hardly have been more different from the plucky dry-land homesteads and one-room school I had known in my earlier venture. The world of 1919 was not that of a decade before in most other ways either, for that matter; the Great War had seen to that. Now that the terrible trenches with their four years of mud and blood were left to heal over, nothing imminent stood between me and trying my luck anew in the open-ended part of America. Where I left off, as it were.

And so, I once again set foot into Montana, 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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"Cousins, thrice removed."

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"You most certainly have left me in want," I replied, looking in dismay at 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.

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 ahead on the rising ground, proud brick and brownstone buildings with soot in their cornices stood several stories above the pavement, another novelty I had not encountered in earlier Montana. Unfortunately, the airy 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 my sea chest--I had found that even the most suspicious hostelry unquestioningly provided a room if the luggage was substantial 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 met mine in mutual appraisal.

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

"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 work-firmed hand. "Grace Farraday, myself."

Whistling leftovers:

He went perfectly still.

"Can you go that far with me?"

"Rose will think--"

"I'll straighten it out with her. The crooked shall be made straight, Paul."

"I fear that for a woman to be married to me would be like holding a lightning rod."

"Do you know the saying about how an imminent hanging wonderfully concentrates a person's mind? Casper's fate had that effect on Rose as well as me. I dare say she will walk the straight and narrow, where your father is concerned. And you'll have a mother." He gave the wan smile again. "Although the Milliron household now may have to quit paying a housekeeper and hire a cook."

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"I will be moving on, at the end of the school year."

"Where's Morg--Morrie?"

He came and went like the comet, in our lives.

telegram. Tasmania. For the next few weeks I went down to the
Westwater public library and read every newspaper. I never did find the story of a
Tasmania-bound ship going down. I wondered if Father similarly was reading,
with his finger.

Dreams are gatherings.

and stay in a way nothing else does

Dreams, episodes, fragments of lives...they add up to years, to having
lived.

October, shapeshifting tenth month

The moon had the sky to itself then, and there just ahead of winter was the
big harvest version. Outside the window as I tried to fend off sleep...

I am prepared to use all the political instincts and administrative wiles--and, admittedly, the reverse--that have kept me in office all these terms. I don't have any doubt that I can carry the day. Only that the burden is worth it.

--a good many of them donated from his own lifelong collection, which not incidentally persuaded the city fathers to make him librarian--

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If I know anything, it is how to layer cotton words over hard facts.

A clause, a phrase, innocent as a pill with the poison in the middle. Perhaps not even in the appropriations committee, perhaps the governmental operations committee where I have an ally or two. A housekeeping measure.

It is there, I sense it. It only needs enough thought. And the right bit of dream.

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The fabled spot known as the Richest Hill on Earth, scarred and dusty when I stepped from the train that initial day, lived up to its name in one respect. It was a butte, called Butte.

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 whether it was the cyclonic force of memory that deposited me back in this direction. Or some devilish imp of impulse.

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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 broad earth I ought to locate myself next, the open-ended part of America kept coming to mind. Where I left off, as it were.

And so, I once again set foot into Montana, 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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"You definitely have left me in want," I moaned, equipped with only the battered satchel that accompanied me everywhere. "The bulk of my worldly possessions is in that trunk."

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this

Not so much as a *hmm* met that; Peterson apparently took it as a matter of principle that anyone representing the funeral home should be at least as well-dressed as the corpse. He scrawled something on a pad and handed it to me. "Take this over to Gruber the tailor. He'll fix you up."

Tucking the note in my pocket, I turned to go, the vision of a new suit warming me inwardly. "Mr. Morgan," the sepulchral tone stopped me in the doorway. "You have been to Irish wakes before, haven't you?"

I was intimately acquainted with mourning; how many variations could there be? "Uncountable times."

"You start tonight."

The bantam figures of Hooper and Griffith, each talking into one of my ears, took me around town later that day. Downtown Butte, set into the lower slope of the Hill like the till in a cash register, drew pithy comments from my pair of tour guides. Passing the *Daily Post* building where the faint whiff of newspaper ink hung in the air, Hoop spat and said, "Anaconda owns that rag." When I remarked on the architectural preference of brick over stone in so many of the tall office buildings, I was informed the Anaconda Company owned the brickworks. Not to mention--although Hoop and Griff assuredly did--the lumber yard, profiting off the woodframe neighborhoods where the mineworkers lived. Then our stroll brought us to the Hennessy Building, dressier than its neighbors in its terra cotta trim and window mullions--if buildings could be said to be attired as we are, the Hennessy wore cufflinks and a tie pin.

But the pertinent article was escaping my attention, Griff and Hoop had me know, as one or the other profanely attested that here was where the copper collar was fashioned: the headquarters of the Anaconda Company.

the two of them truly came into their element. To me, the Hill seemed otherworldly, half mammoth factory, half fathomless wasteland; to my companions, it was home. Their bent backs straightened, and their gait became more spry. The ear-stinging screech of pulleys as ore cars were pulled up from the depths of earth and elevator cages were let down seemed to reach them as the most melodious of sounds. It was Griff who outright exulted, "The gallows frames are sure humming today."

His pronunciation of it, as I was to find common in Butte, was *gallus*, like the old word for suspenders. Accordingly it took me a moment to realize the term meant suspension of quite another sort. "That's rather a grim name for headframes, isn't it?"

"Miner humor," said Hoop, and to this day I cannot decide whether he deliberately meant *minor* as well.

My tour, to hear my guides tell it, now was about to really begin. For there, amid the gray polar wastes of that Richest Hill, were scattered the pockets of populace that I had glimpsed from the train station.

My curiosity was tickled. "The copper *collar*, though--why does just that phrase keep coming to your lips and Grace's?"

Hoop looked at Griff. "Might as well let it rip," he said.

"Think so?" said Griff. "Right here?"

"Where better?"

"Righto. Here goes."

There on the sidewalk, Griff squared himself up, took a stance amid the passersby like Caruso among the opera extras, and began to sing in a tremulous tenor.

My old copper collar,
It makes my heart so proud.
When I wear the copper collar,
I fit right with the crowd.

No wedding band
Was ever so grand,
So it is always there to see,
The old copper collar,
That Anaconda fastened on me.

Griff finished on a sardonically sweet note that was very nearly a warble. Up in the top floor of the Hennessy Building, someone in a celluloid collar frowned down and the window was shut with a bang.

"The Butte spiritual," Hoop defined Griff's performance for me, and onward we went.

It was when the two of them tramped me up the streets to the other butte, the rising ground where those long-legged headframes spraddled atop the dozens of mineshafts and piles of tailings spilled down the hillside like gopher diggings, that

meant suspension of quite another sort. "That's rather a grim name for headframes, isn't it?"

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My tour, to hear my guides tell it, now was about to really begin. For there, amid the gray polar wastes of that Richest Hill, were scattered the pockets of populace that I had glimpsed from the train station.

"Here's where the work of the world comes from," Griff pronounced, and Hoop nodded. Between them, they pointed out each neighborhood. Finntown, straggling below a mine called the Neversweat. The Italians, it was stressed to me, occupied Meaderville, not be confused with Centerville where the Cornish congregated. Griff proudly singled out the smallish Welsh area of St. David's, christened for its church, near our boarding house; beyond that, the Serbians had their own several blocks, elsewhere the Scandinavians had theirs, and below at the edge of downtown lay Chinatown, self-explanatory. My head was beginning to spin, and we had not even come to the sprawl of streets dead ahead, the Irish avalanche of small frame houses and overloaded clotheslines that constituted Dublin Gulch and beyond.

Wisely, Hoop hailed a mailman, and in a brogue that justified his assignment to the route, the postal carrier told me with great elaboration how to find the house of that night's wake.

That job done, Griff proclaimed: "You're all set, Morrie. The only thing to watch out for tonight is--"

Commotion blasted the last of his words away, so sudden and sharp my eardrums winced. The Hill had turned into a calliope, whistles shrieking at every mineshaft. "Change of shifts!" one or the other of my companions yipped as if school had let out.

Those next minutes will never leave me. Down from the mine mouths into the sloping streets cascaded hundreds of grimy men, turning into thousands as we stood watching. Here, on foot, the neighborhoods sluiced together as the miners trudged past, accented English of several kinds mingling with tongues my ear could not readily identify, until each contingent came to its own set of home streets. It was as if Europe had been lifted by, say, the boot heel of Italy and shaken, every toiler from the hard rock depths tumbling out here. Old habits had followed them across the ocean, husky Finns clustered with other Finns, the Cornishmen not mingling with the Italians, on across the map. You never know what the mind will do, and I found myself in an unexpected reverie, thinking back to the recess battles of my Marias Coulee one-room school, the boys taking out the animosities of nationalities--Swedes versus Slavs--on each other with flailing fists and bloody noses. The cure there had been separate recesses. What on earth could ever hold the nations of Butte together?

By now Griff and Hoop were wistfully calling out to fellow Welshmen going by. "Keep fighting for that extra dollar, ^{II}boys! We're with you all the way, Jared!" This last, I could tell, was addressed to a lean ^{strong}sharp-featured individual at the front of the group, not nearly as far along in years as most of the other miners but plainly a leader. Striding along with a measured tread I identified as military; the younger man grinned through his grime and sent my companions a half wave, half salute.

The last of the miners filed past, the next shift went deep underground into the catacombs of copper ore, and we three turned back down the Hill toward the boardinghouse. On the way, a question at the back of my mind made its way out.

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"Griff, Hoop, help me to understand something. Why does Peterson, as Scandinavian as they come, pattern his business so strongly to Dublin Gulch? Hiring me to stand in for him at wakes, for instance."

"Norwegians don't die enough," Hoop imparted. "The Irish, they're another matter."

"You're the cryer," simpered the woman, her own eyes red from weeping, who opened the door to me that evening. "I can tell by the cut of your clothes." Truly, I did feel quite distinguished in the olive-brown herringbone worsted suit,

Jared

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last 1.

vest included, that the tailor had produced. The boardinghouse trio had assured me I looked freshly spit-shined.

"Ma'am," I began, having learned my lesson in Butte manners of address that first time with Grace, "at this sad time, I wish to convey the deepest sympathy for the loss of your husband, on behalf of the--"

"Ma!" she brayed over her shoulder. "It's the funeral home fellow, dressed to the gills, come to pay his respects." She all but swept me into the house and steered me toward a tiny elderly woman, attired in the dignity of black and settled in a wicker armchair beside the open casket. "It's my rogue of a father, Lord save his soul, at rest there in the coffin," my escort instructed into my ear as she led me over. "Ma has been expecting you ever so much."

Approaching the wizened woman perched there on the wicker, I carefully held my hat over the vicinity of my heart and started my recital over. I had made sure with Peterson: I was not expected to actually cry, but a mournful mien, complete with murmurs and respectful remarks toward the deceased, was the order of the night.

"--and you may be assured I speak for Mr. Peterson in offering fullest condolences, Mrs. Dempsey," I concluded the set piece I had memorized.

The widow gazed up at me in her crinkled way, nodded an inch, and broke into a crescendo of sobs.

"There, there, Ma," the daughter consoled but made no other move, "you just cry it out, that's the girl." To me, frozen there as if I had set off a burglar alarm, she hissed: "You'll want to circulate yourself, people will be coming for the next some while."

Shaken by the storm of wailing behind me, I headed for the refuge of the long table where angelfood cakes and sliced bread and bologna and a plethora of pickles and preserves and a carnival-glass bowl of tame punch sat. There, I

figured, the crowd as it gathered would find its way to me. The thought was the deed. In no time a strapping black-haired man of middle years detached himself from a hushed group that I took to be other Dempsey daughters and their uncomfortable husbands. He came at me like a wind around a corner. "Pat Quinlan," he provided, ready with a handshake. "That's what I like to see, someone with the good sense to wrap himself around the food."

In turn, I told him who I was as he fastened a keen gaze on me. He had the thrust of head I'd noticed in the miners at the change of shift, as if stooping under a mine timber. Facially, he showed the olive skin and conquistador cheekbones that affirmed the tale of Spanish Armada survivors washing up onto the coast of Ireland and contributing to the population.

"Morgan is your handle, is it," he seemed to taste my name. "Creeping Pete is maybe getting the knack. Last time he sent a scissorbill called George King. How much more English does it get, I ask you?"

"If he had dispatched King George to the occasion, perhaps."

"Sharp as a tack, are we. I like that." With a glint of his own, Quinlan asked: "What brings you to Butte?"

"Reputation," I began to invoke the Richest Hill on Earth, but he cut in with an all too knowing grin: "Yours or Butte's? Ah, well, this isn't the time or place to go into that, is it." The widow's wail had settled into a kind of teary drone that still had me flinching, but Quinlan showed no sign it registered on him. Rocking restlessly on his heels, he critically observed the slow traffic of griever across the room, the men bending a quick knee at the low coffin bench for a muttered *Our Father*, the women kneeling in earnest to recite *Hail Mary*. I felt like a heathen, or at least distinctly unIrish, but my companion at the table clapped me conspiratorially on the shoulder. "Standing around without something that fits the hand, what kind of a wake is this?" Quinlan plucked two glasses from the

table. "Here, hold these while I do the needful." Reaching into a pocket, he brought out a whiskey bottle and began to pour, back and forth, with a heavy hand.

Hastily I asked, "Didn't I read that Montana voted itself dry?"

"'Dry' doesn't mean 'parched to imbecility,' you could look it up."

"Mr. Quinlan--"

"Quin," he insisted, still pouring.

"Quin, then. I do not normally partake."

"Nobody else does it normal at a wake either."

He corked the bottle and it vanished to its nesting place. "Upsy daisy." Quinlan drank as generously as he poured, while I took a small mouthful that left a sting all the way down. When my eyes cleared, I inquired into the source of the supposedly forbidden liquor. "Bootleg rye." He gestured northerly. "What else is Canada for?"

"You were a close friend of the deceased, Quin?" I asked, to give the whiskey time to settle.

"Scarcely knew him. But a miner stands by another miner, to the last six feet of earth." A moment of brooding came into his dark eyes. Catching me watching this, he resorted to the knowing grin again. "Drink up, Morgan my man," he set the example. "One swallow is a lonesome bird." As if remembering his manners, he hoisted his glass in salute toward the casket and its occupant. "Tim there knew what thirst is, he was healthy enough in that respect."

"He wore a mighty name," I mentioned, alluding to Jack Dempsey, the heavyweight boxing champion.

"The name was the all. See for yourself--Tim was a shrimp. Look at him there, add in the bouquets and he's still a lightweight."

"Featherweight, I'd say, the 120-pound class," I said, drawing a look from Quinlan. Just then another man with the tilt of a miner came up to us. Like Quinlan, he was in what must have been his church clothes, a tight-fitting suit no doubt worn for both marrying and burying. "Mike McGlashan, meet Morgan, the new cryer," Quinlan did the honors. "Join us in commemorating poor old Tim."

"Never, Quin." McGlashan wagged his head piously. "I'm on the wagon."

Quinlan's expression said he had heard that one before. He produced the bottle again, uncorking it like a magician. "Run that past your smeller and tell me if it's not the scent of heaven."

"Save me from myself, then," McGlashan sighed, covering his eyes and holding out a glass.

During this, the fiery rye splashed into my own glass, and on into me, as Quin and McGlashan gabbed and drank. The conversation and the alcohol flowed along until another of those cloudy moments descended on Quin. Gesturing toward the Dublin Gulch neighbors trooping from one black-draped member of the Dempsey female clan to the next with long faces brought out for the occasion, he said in a commanding manner: "This is way too sad, you could cut the air in here like crepe." He reached in another pocket and came out with a small red book. It was about the size of a breviary, but if my eyes and the rye weren't misleading me, musical bars filled its pages. Yet it had none of the binding of a hymnal and I wondered aloud, "What is that?"

"What's it look like, boyo. It's the Little Red Songbook."

McGlashan snickered. "Quin's a Wob at heart." By then I could glimpse on the crimson cover a drawing of a black cat puffed up with fury and the words INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD. The boarding house rondelay about

Lard
Evans

McGlashan snickered. "Evans will think you're a Wob at heart." By then I could glimpse on the crimson cover a drawing of a black cat puffed up with fury and the words INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD. The boarding house rondelay about Buttes's factions of miners returned to me, and I appraised Quin with fresh interest.

"Jared has a level head," he turned aside McGlashan's remark and kept on thumbing through the little book, "even if he is a Taffy." I had thought I was the only trace of Welsh amid the wall-to-wall Irish, but now I spotted across the room the soldierly figure whom Hooper and Griffith had called out to on the Hill.

"Besides, he's just here with the union tribute." As I watched, the sparely-built *youngster with a native* young miner approached the widow, hat off, and bestowed on her an envelope which from the bulge of it contained a goodly amount of cash. "Are you going to stand there slandering me," Quin was chiding McGlashan now, "or sing? Tim always liked a tune. Ah, here's a nice one," he asserted, crimping open the crimson book to it. "Get Pooch Lampkin over here, he has a voice on him. And Mick Collins, while you're at it."

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I ducked away while the musical troops were organizing themselves, not sure my initial night as cryer should be spent in song. Peering over Quinlan's shoulder at the small songbook, the impromptu ensemble squared up and let loose:

Oh Lord of all, of fowl and fish,
Of feast of life, of ev'ry dish;
Observe me on my bended legs,
I'm asking You for ham and eggs.

"They're at it again!" a woman shrieked. "Quick, the true music of the faith!" Hastily the opposition vocal force formed up, a number of women in their darkest funereal best and a few older men pinched at the elbow by their wives and conscripted into the choir. Rigid as if they had been called to their feet in church, the bunch of them chorused out:

O'er the sod of God,
O'er the bogs of peat,
Everlasting choirs
Raise a concert sweet!

Undeterred, Quinlan and McGlashan and colleagues soared into their next verse.

And if thou havest custard pies
I'd like, dear Lord, the largest size.

Across the room the choir of the righteous responded in a roar:

Heathendom shall go down,
 Though it be everywhere!
 God the Father's kingdom
 Fills heaven and earth and air!

Sweetly as boys, the Quinlan quartet warbled a last verse:

Oh, hear my cry, almighty Host,
 I quite forgot the quail on toast.
 Let your kindly heart be stirred
 And stuff some oysters in that bird.

"Shame!" cried a particularly broad woman in black, charging across the room. "My poor uncle, Heaven forgive him, gone on beyond there in the plush box and you singing one of those red songs. Pat Quinlan, you banshee. May God make your tongue fall out."

Quinlan chortled. "Betty, you'd sell tickets to that, wouldn't you. Come have a glass with us, girl."

"I'll girl you, Quin." Nonetheless a glass appeared in her hand. "A taste, if you insist."

"Meet Morgan, the cryer," Quinlan thought to officiate. "He's new to Butte."

"Another pilgrim to the Richest Hill on Earth, have we here?" Betty turned her sharp face to me. "Join the long line, Mr. Morgan." Luckily the bottle made its rounds just then, and while I hid into a gulp from my glass, I noticed that around the room the tone of the wake had lightened into loud conversation and laughter. "You're all so musically inclined," Betty was doing her part, "what do you get when you drop a piano down a mineshaft?" Quinlan and McGlashan and the others who had spent years underground cocked their heads in anticipation.

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She delivered the punchline with relish. "A flat miner. I'd hope it was you, Quin."

Resounding hoots greeted that, and were washed down in tribute. Centered as I was in the commotion, I apprehensively looked over toward the casket, the item of business I supposedly was here to attend to. The widow seemed to be crying to herself in contentment.

I jumped slightly as Betty fingered the fabric of my lapel. "My, quite the glad rags Creeping Pete's put you in." With a critical squint she studied the rest of me. "You look awful learned to be among miners."

"One can never get enough of the school of life," I said with slightly slurred dignity. Tonight was certainly proving that. I had found out that Butte did not sprout shrinking violets.

As if I needed any more proof, Betty batted me companionably on one shoulder and Quinlan on the other. "A man who knows his blarney," Quin commended. "I like that." He aimed his glass at me. "Morgan, a man as cultured as you can't help but have a tune stick to him along the way. Favor us with something, why don't you." The entire crowd around the table loudly seconded that.

"I regret to say, from what I've heard here tonight I'm not equal to the task."

Betty turned indignant. "You don't mean to tell us Creeping Pete's sent a man who can't sing a lick?"

"Really, I--

"EVERYBODY!" Quinlan let out a shout. "The cryer's going to do us a number! Step on out, Morgan, and show us your tonsils."

I had no choice and someone gave me a push toward the center of the room besides. The houseful of people suddenly loomed around me like a crowd

at a bullring. Even the widow was wiping her eyes and watching me. My glass half full in one hand, I braced back with the other for some support and found I had put it on the foot of the casket. Inches away, the highly polished toes of the shoes of poor departed Dempsey pointed in the air. Swallowing deeply, I stayed propped there against the coffin wood as if this was the natural spot for the representative of the Peterson Modern Mortuary and Funeral Home and tried to think of any appropriate snatch of music. What issued forth was as much a surprise to me as to the audience.

I cannot sing the old songs now.

It is not that I deem them low.

'Tis that I can't remember how

They go.

In the silence that met that, I bowed and retreated all the way behind the casket. After long seconds, someone tittered and that loosed a chuckle in someone else, and then the whole crowd gave a collective belly laugh and people pressed in on me, a dozen at once making conversation and clapping me on the back and testifying what an enjoyable wake this was.

It was during this that I realized I was drunk as a gnat in a vat.

The rest of the evening became one long blur of relatives of the man who lay in state beside me and miners telling stories out of an endless supply and black-clad women wanting to know if they couldn't fetch me just a bite more of angel cake, while I concentrated on not tipping over into the casket.

At last everyone wore down, and after a groggy round of farewells and a final whap on the back from Quin, I stepped out into the street and began to make my unsteady way out of Dublin Gulch. The chill air of the Butte night collided with the alcohol in me. The stars were out but, I scolded them, too far to be any help to me. Such splotches of illumination as existed shone from mines along the

Hill that were being worked around the clock, and nearer to downtown I met up with occasional streetlights, so that my route as I wove my way home toward the boarding house went back and forth between lit and dim. It fit my condition.

Then, though, came the strangest sensation. Out of that dapple of light and dark, the shadows began to follow me. They took shapes as warped as in a bad dream, sometimes huge and foglike, sometimes small and flitting. Like a chilly breath on the back of the neck, I could feel the darkness changing forms behind me. Some small sane part of my mind kept telling me these specters were the distilled and bottled sort, but the corner of my eye was convinced otherwise. A time or two when I suddenly looked back, the shadows nearly became human, then faded into the other patterns of the night. If anyone was there, they were as uncatchable as cats.

Telling myself woozily this was what came of an evening spent in the company of a casket and its contents, I clattered in to the boarding house and bed.

The morning after, Grace left on the stove a pot of coffee of a stoutness that would have brought the Light Brigade back to life.

Numb everywhere above my shoulders, I sat at the kitchen table and worked cup after cup into myself. I had missed breakfast. The household was well into its day, Hooper in the garden hoeing weeds at a stately pace and Griffith passing by in the hall on his way to some chore with a monkey wrench in hand. Catching sight of me, Griff backtracked and poked his head into the room.

"How's the crying game going?"

"I can still smell it on my breath."

"Didn't I tell you so?"

"Unfortunately, not quite." I wished for that moment back, when he was warning me of the one thing to be watched out for at a Dublin Gulch wake and all the whistles went off.

Griff waved away silly concern as he limped off. "You'll get used to the elbow-bending. It beats toadying for Anaconda."

I still was debating that with myself when Grace bustled in with her day's food shopping.

"Morning, Morrie," she said pleasantly, "what's left of it."

"Short days and long nights are the career of a cryer, I foresee. The coffee was an act of mercy; thank you. Can I help you with those provisions?"

"You had better sit quiet and let your eyeballs heal, I'd say." She began putting groceries away. "I've had the good luck never to go to a wake, what was it like?"

I recounted to her what I could remember of the muddled evening. Mostly, the clink of glasses and the clash of singing voices came to mind. At the mention of Quinlan, she bobbed her head in approval. "Quin was a friend of my Arthur, although they didn't see eye to eye on union matters."

"Then there was a Dempsey niece, a rather stout woman named Betty--"

"Betty the bootlegger," Grace had no trouble with the identification. "She knows the right people along the border. Prohibition is the making of her."

I sat wordless, more than ever a novice in the ways of Butte, dumbly considering a mourning occasion fueled with moonlight liiquor that redounded to the profit of someone in the family. The C.R. Peterson Modern Mortuary and Funeral Home maybe was in the wrong end of things.

"Morrie?" Grace closed the cupboard and joined me at the table, settling lightly. "I've had a fair number of boarders, besides the palace guard"--Griff

could be heard banging in the basement--“but none of them blew in from nowhere quite like you. What was your last place of address, if I may ask?”

“Oh, that. Down Under, as they say.”

“Under what?”

“I refer, Grace, to Australia.”

“I was teasing. I’m not surprised you have an ocean or so behind you.

You have that look.”

“It’s the mustache.”

“My Arthur always said his was the bit of brush hiding the picnic,” she reported drily. “Women don’t have that disguise.”

“Spoken like a high priestess of the plain truth, Rose--I’m sorry; Grace.”

Before my embarrassment could pool on the table, Grace gave my slip of the tongue the gentlest of treatment. “Whoever she was, was she as pretty as her name?”

“At least.”

“Maybe it was worth Australia, then,” she left me with, rising and reaching for her apron. “It’s nearly noon, I have a meal to fix or the three of you will have to go in the yard and graze.”

My workdays--nights, rather--took a topsy-turvy pattern. I would nap in the afternoon, storing up energy as a pugilist must for a bout, stoke up some more at suppertime with Hoop and Griff and Grace, then past sundown ascend the Hill, suit and vest and hat and shoes freshly brushed, to that evening’s wake. I admit, I felt oddly like one of those mechanical statuettes of Death that clank out of a guildhall clock tower at the appointed hour and chase the merrymakers around the cupola. Yet, wearing as the wake routine was, I had to concede Dublin Gulch whatever manner of mourning it chose. The Hindus set their departed afloat on

the Ganges on a raft of fire. The Sioux placed their deceased warriors in bowers in trees. On it goes, around the world, the ceremony of farewell. If the Butte Irish, faced with so many early graves from the toils of mining in the depths of the earth, chose to dilute grief with imbibing, it was an understandable mix.

"That oak job--how much does the Creeper get for that?"

"Quin, my sympathy." I tucked in his pocket the funeral home's price list the size of a playing card. "I hadn't realized you are in need of a casket."

"Of course I'm not. I just want to know how much that Scandahoovian soaks a person for one that will grow acorns."

"They say you gave them a poem at Dan Kelly's wake."

"Did I? Would you like one said--'To the Road's End,' perhaps?--on this sad occasion, Mrs. Rafferty?"

"It'd be a relief from the pernicious singing."

"My golly, you're in demand." Peterson rubbed his hands over the ledger. "*O'Day, McManus--* the wakes are lined up waiting--*Popovich, Higgins...*"

"Popovich?"

"He married into the Carnahans, they're doing him the favor."

Those initial weeks, the job of cryer was an introduction to Butte, definitely, although hardly the one I had sought. Life at the mortuary remained, well, creepy. First of all, there was always someone dead on the premises, in one room or another. And the wage, while steady, was obviously not one of the Hill's paths to riches. What disquieted me more than either of those, however,

was that question of shadows. Was it a trick of the darkness and the bootleg rye? The occasional night when I managed to slip away from the conviviality of the wake long enough to dump my drink in the kitchen slop bucket, the shadows on the way home perhaps behaved less like lurking black furies; but they never quite vanished. Watching over my shoulder as I zigzagged to the boarding house, I had to wonder whether an old loss was catching up with me. Every footfall, it sometimes seemed, brought back the thought of my brother and the cold lake waters that took him.

Not all haunting is mere superstition. I'd noticed a certain look in Grace's eyes whenever Griffith and Hooper got going on Anaconda and the Speculator fire and its perished miners; at such moments Arthur Farraday left his matrimonial picture frame and came to her side, I would have wagered.

One of those suppertimes, as Griff and Hoop hobbled off to their own pursuits, I spoke up as she somberly cleared away the dishes.

"May I be of help?"

She took so long to answer, I wondered if she considered the question hypothetical. But then she looked over with a bit of glint and said, "You can dry, if you don't have dropsy."

Following her into the kitchen, I took up a dish towel. "As Marco Polo said, I know my way around china. I did dishes at the Palmer House between school terms."

Grace filled the dishpan, leaving the rinsing and drying to me. It had been a long while since I settled in side by side with a woman to such a chore. With her black hair bunned and her sleeves rolled up, she was an aproned vision of efficiency at her task, but the dimple did sly work of its own as she glanced at me and inquired: "Off on a toot again tonight, are you?"

"Grace, it is my job. I seem to recall you being all for it."

"Anyone who runs a boarding house needs to be in favor of anything a lodger does to come up with the rent." That little glance sideways again. "Within reason."

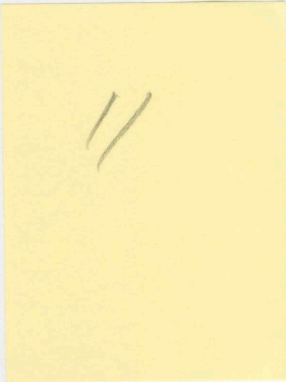
I smoothed my mustache while I thought that over. "Actually, life as cryer has its drawbacks. A main one is that I wake up each morning feeling as if my brain were being pickled, gray cell by gray cell."

She prompted: "And while you still have a few to spare?"

"Tomorrow I shall find the public library and consult Polk."

Grace paused in her sudsy grapple with the meat platter, puzzled. "Poke who?"

"The Polk City Directory." I smiled. "The treasure map to where ledgers are kept."



McGlashan snickered. "Evans will think you're a Wob at heart." By then I could glimpse on the crimson cover a drawing of a black cat puffed up with fury and the words INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD. The boarding house rondelay about Buttes's factions of miners returned to me, and I appraised Quin with fresh interest.

"Jared has a level head," he turned aside McGlashan's remark and kept on thumbing through the little book, "even if he is a Taffy." I had thought I was the only trace of Welsh amid the wall-to-wall Irish, but now I spotted across the room the ^{young} sparely-built miner whom Hooper and Griffith had called out to on the Hill.

"Besides, he's just here with the union tribute."

an envelope which from the bulge of it contained a goodly amount of cash.

"Are you going to stand there slandering me," ^{Quin} he was chiding McGlashan now, "or sing? Tim always liked a tune. Ah, here's a nice one," he asserted, ^{his} thumbing through the little book. "Get Pooch Lampkin over here, he has a voice on him. And Mick Collins, while you're at it."

Over by the door, I saw the ^{young} union man smile ^{to himself} slightly at it all, put his hat on, away and slip from the proceedings.

3

There is an old story that any Londoners with a madman in the family would drop him off at the library of the British Museum for the day. I was given a searching look as if I might be the Butte version when I presented myself at the desk of the public library that next morning and requested both the *R.L. Polk & Co. City Directory* and Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars* in the original Latin.

The stout woman I took to be the head librarian--she had eyeglasses enchaind around her neck commandingly enough for it--scrutinized me some moments more, then marched off into the maze of shelves while I found a seat at a broad oaken table. Everything was substantial, the brass-banistered stairway up to the mezzanine of books in tall rows, the green-shaded electrical lights hanging down from the high ceiling like watchfobs of the gods. I have always felt at home among books. It seemed like old friends dropping by when the woman from the desk plopped my requested two in front of me.

Aware that I should get down to business, I instead drew the *Gallic Wars* to me first, unable to resist. I had ordered it up by habit, as a test. To me, a repository of books is not a library without that volume in the mother of languages,

but merely a way station for worn copies of Ryder Haggard's jungle thrillers and the syrupy novels of Winifred Estes. No, Caesar's prose that reads like poetry--*Omnia Gallia est divisa in tres partes*--was essential in a collection of knowledge, a siren call from Roman words to ours. Handling the book fondly as I was, I became aware of its own touch: tanned leather, not the more common calfskin cover put on for show. I examined the binding: sewn rather than glued. What I was holding was an exceptionally fine copy, so much better than my own that had gone astray with my missing sea trunk that I momentarily found myself jealous of the Butte public library.

Sighing, I patted Caesar and closed him away. Opening the city directory, I began to work my way through the idiom of Polk. There they were as ever, the abbreviated citizens found throughout America, *brklyr, carp, messr, repr* et cetera. The skills of bricklayers, carpenters, messengers and repairers were not my own, and I paged through looking for where ledgers lived. Butte, I discerned, had a modest number of banks for a city of its size; a plenitude of funeral homes; an uninspiring variety of mercantile enterprises; and one Gibraltar of assets, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. I admit, it was tantalizing, that financial colossus which surely needed *bkprs*--bookkeepers--of a certain talent to sluice the riches of the Hill into Anaconda coffers.

Temptation had to vie with distraction, however. Something about the *Gallic Wars* at my elbow kept diverting me. Even when they are closed, some books do not shut up. Why was this beautifully sewn leather edition, a collector's item if I had ever seen one, spending its existence on a public shelf in a none too fastidious mining town? Once more I peered at those tall rows on the mezzanine, and if I was not severely mistaken, many other volumes sat there beckoning in bindings of royal reds and greens and blues and buffs. Curiosity got the better of me. Up the stairwell I went.

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And found myself in a literary heaven.

As though some printerly version of Midas had browsed through the shelves, priceless editions of Darwin and Schopenhauer and Tolstoy and Goethe and Melville and Longfellow and countless other luminaries mingled on the shelves with more standard library holdings. What on earth was the matron at the desk thinking, in scattering these treasures out in the open? Yet the more I looked, the more I met up with the complete works of authors, surely deliberately collected and displayed. Mystified, I was stroking the rare vellum of a Jane Austen title when an all too loud voice made me jump.

"You look like a bookworm on a spree."

I am of medium height, but when I turned around, I was seeing straight into a white cloud of beard. Considerably above that, a snowy cowlick brushed against furrows of the forehead. In a suit that had gone out of fashion when the last century did, the man frowning down at me had considerable girth at the waist and narrowed at the chest and shoulders; like the terrain around us, he sloped.

Caught by surprise, I had no idea what to make of this apparition confronting me amid the books. That beard was as full as that of Father Claus, but there was no twinkle of Christmas nor any other spirit of giving in those glacial blue eyes.

Keeping my own voice low, I responded: "Butte is rich in its library holdings, as I assume we both have discovered?"

"Too bad the town doesn't have the brains to go with the books," he drawled at full volume. "Quite a reader, are you? Who do you like?"

Appropriately or not, my gaze caught on a lovely marbled copy of *Great Expectations*. "Dickens," I began a whispered confession that could have gone on through legions of names. "There's a person who knew the words."

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My partner in conversation grunted and reached farther along in the shelves of fiction. "I'll stick with Stevenson, myself. That Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." When he took down the book, the backs of his hands were ridges of bone and vein. Abruptly he swung around, towering over me again, and demanded loudly: "You like Kipling or don't you?"

Oh, was I tempted to recite: "When the Rudyard's cease from kipling/And the Haggards ride no more." Instead I put a thumb up and then down, meanwhile murmuring, "His stories are splendid sleight-of-hand, the poetry is all thumbs."

Just then a couple of elderly ladies entered the reading room below, still chattering softly from the street. Frowning so hard the beard seemed to bristle, my companion leaned over the mezzanine railing. "Quiet!" he roared. You could shut down Hell with a voice like that.

That legendary pairing, madman and library, seemed to be coming true as I watched. All heads now were turned up toward us, the woman at the desk whipping on her eyeglasses and glowering in our direction. I envisioned arrest for disturbing the literary peace, even if I was barely an accomplice. "Perhaps," I whispered urgently, "we should adjourn to a less public spot, lest the librarian take steps--"

"Nitwit, I am the librarian." Straightening himself to new white height of cowlick, he scanned down at me, frowning fiercely all the while. "Do you genuinely not know who the hell you're talking to?"

"I remember no introduction," I said coolly.

He waved that off. "Samuel Sandison. Come on into my office before you cause any more ruckus, I want to talk to you."

I hesitated before following, but the exquisite books were an irresistible lure. Edging through the doorway of his overflowing office at the back of the mezzanine, I made sure that the nameplate on the desk matched what he had told

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me. Sandison sandwiched himself behind the desk and wordlessly pointed me to a book-stacked chair. I cleared away the pile and gingerly sat. "Mr. Sandison, the books you have here--" I hardly had the words. "They're exquisite."

"They ought to be," he rumbled. "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?"

"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.

Sandison leaned ~~into~~^{across} the mess of his desk as if I might be hard of hearing as well as dim of intellect. "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 short time."

"It's gone now," he growled. "That's why I'm here. It was the biggest spread in the state, everybody and his brother 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. Eyeing me as though I were guilty by association, he drawled: "I saw you with your nose stuck in Polk. I suppose you're another refined hobo who heard about the Hill and came here to make a killing."

"A living, I had in mind."

"Ha. You packing around any education worth the description?"

"Oxford."

He looked at me skeptically.

"I bootstrapped my way through."

"Another shoeleather philosopher," he growled. "The Wobblies were full of them, they must empty out the bughouse into Butte every so often."

"I see my little joke did not catch on. Actually, I did work my way through an institution of higher learning--the University of Chicago."

He tugged at his beard. "That fancypants place next to where the World's Fair was in '93?"

"That is the only University of Chicago there is, I believe."

"In other words," he said as if it might be my epitaph, "all you know anything about comes from books."

I bridled. "That is not a fair assessment of--"

"Never mind. You're hired."

"Where? Here?"

"Here is where the books are, ninny."

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"Sam Sandison? He's meaner than the devil's half-brother. If you're gonna be around him, you better watch your sweet--"

"The rules, Griff."

"--step, is all I was gonna say, Grace." Griffith speared a potato and passed the dish onward to me, along with a gimlet gaze. "You must have hit him when he was hard up for help, Morrie. He don't hire just anybody."

"I was as taken by surprise as all of you appear to be." Announcement of my sudden employment at the library had set my suppermates back in their chairs, for some reason that I could not decipher. "What can you tell me of my new lord and master? None of you were so bashful about the business practices of the Anaconda Company." I beckoned the gravy boat from my potato compatriot. "For a start, Griff, what exactly is the meaning of 'meaner than the devil's half-brother' in regard to Samuel Sandison?"

"He's one of the old bucks of the country, tougher than"--cutting strenuously at the piece of meat on his plate, Griff glanced in Grace's direction and hedged off--"rawhide. Had a ranch they say you couldn't see to the end of. I don't just know where. You, Hooper?"

Hooper waved vaguely west. "Someplace out there in scatteration."

"Employing, he told me, a veritable army of cowboys--but I would imagine any livestock enterprise of that size needed a rugged crew and a firm hand?"

"You're lucky he's only bossing books around any more," was all the answer from Griff. Vigorously chewing, he turned toward the head of the table.

"Heck of a meal, Grace."

I sampled the stringy meat and sent an inquiring look. "Not chicken."

Grace shook her head.

"Rabbit, then."

"You do know your way around food, Morrie," she remarked. It occurred to me how much I was going to miss the tablefuls at wakes.

"As I have been trying to say, Mr. Peterson, I am sorry--"

"But you're the most popular cryer I've had in ages." He himself appeared ready to weep.

"--to have to give notice, but another opportunity has presented itself."

He cast a mournful look at the ledger. "One of our busiest times since St. Patrick's Day."

"I am sure an equally qualified cryer will be called forth by the need."

"There'll always be an opening here for you," he said feelingly, the lids of the caskets standing at attention behind him.

That was the end of being chased every night by shadows. Yet something lurked from that experience, that sensation of being trailed through life by things less than visible. I tried telling myself Butte after dark simply was feverishly restless, what with the thirst of thousands of miners built up in the hot underground tunnels being assuaged in speakeasies now that saloons were prohibited, and desire of another kind busily paying its dues in the red-light section known as Venus Alley--practically nightly, Grace turned away at her door some lit-up Lothario seeking a house of the other sort. One could easily come down with the feeling in that city of thin air and deep disquiets, I decided, that even shadows had the fidgets. It is surprising how persuasive you can be when talking into your own ear.

My new career required resetting the clock by twelve hours, Samuel Sandison having instructed me to present myself at the library the next morning at nine sharp. When I approached the rather fanciful Gothic building on the central street called Broadway--modesty seemed to have no place in Butte--I saw a cluster

of people outside the front door and was heartened by this sight of an eager citizenry lined up to get at the library's holdings.

In their midst, however, loomed Sandison, and bringing up the rear was unmistakably the reading-room matron, looking sour. The group proved to be the entire library staff, all the way to janitor. Sandison was counting heads before letting anyone through the arched doorway--the same mode of management, I was to learn, he had used on his cowboys each morning at the horse corral.

He took notice of my presence with a vague gesture. "This is Morgan, everybody. He'll be puttering around the place from now on."

I filed in with the rest of the staff, happily conscious of the castlelike grandeur, the Tuscan red wainscoting, the dark oaken beams set against the ceiling panels of white and gold, the all-seeing portrait of Shakespeare above the reading room doorway. And beyond, the royal reds and greens and gilts of those alluring books of Sandison's collection.

But no sooner were we in the building than he cut me out of the herd, and just as adroitly, the matron of the reading room. "Miss Runyon will show you the ropes," Sandison provided with another of those gestures that might mean anything, and mounted the stairs to his office.

Miss Runyon and I considered each other.

"What foolishness has he put you in charge of?" she demanded, as though she had caught me trespassing..

"That seems to be yet to be determined."

"That man." Her voice had a startling deep timbre, as if the words resounded in her second chin. "He runs this place to suit himself. The trustees would never have named him librarian but for those precious books of his." Clapping her chained eyeglasses onto her formidable nose, she directed: "Come along, you had better know the catalogue system."

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Miss Runyon kept me in tow as we circumnavigated the reading room, her realm and her orb, her temple and her fortress, she let me know in every manner possible. I took note of the goodly assortment of dictionaries and cyclopedias, and the selection of *au courant* magazines and the newspapers racked on spine sticks, all of it recited to me as if I were a blind man in a treasure house. One oddity, though, she paid no attention to; conspicuously paid it no heed, if I was not mistaken. It was a display case, glassed over, taking up one corner of the room. My mild inquiry about it brought:

“Pfft, that. The boys’ dollhouse.”

Naturally that increased my curiosity and I went over to it, Miss Runyon clapping after me. Encased there, with plentiful nose smudges and handprints on the glass testifying to the popularity of its viewing, sat an entire miniature mine. It looked so amazingly complete I half expected it to bring up teaspoonfuls of earth from under the library. The headframe--gallows frame, I corrected myself--the machine house, elevator shafts, tunnels, tiny tracks and ore cars, the entirety was a Lilliputian working model. Sniffily Miss Runyon told me the diorama had been built for a court case over a mining claim and afterward donated to the library. “He--” her eyes swept upward toward Sandison’s office “--insists it sit here in the way. It’s a nuisance to keep clean.”

“Wonders often are,” I murmured, still taken with the remarkable model of what made Butte the place it was.

“Now then,” Miss Runyon said briskly, “is that enough of an initiation into librarianship for you?”

“The most thorough, Miss Runyon, since my introduction to the Reading Room of the British Museum.”

I seemed to have invoked the Vatican to a Mother Superior. “You, you have actually been--?”

"Under that great domed ceiling, with its delicate blue and accents of gold, with every word ever written in English at one's beck and call," I dreamily sketched aloud, "yes, I confess I have. And would you believe, Miss Runyon, the very day I walked in, my reader's ticket in my hand, the seat of power was vacant."

"The seat of--?"

"Seat number three, right there in the first great semicircle of desks." I leaned confidently close to her. "Where Karl Marx sat, those years when he was writing *Das Kapital*. I will tell you, Miss Runyon, sitting in that seat, I could feel the collective knowledge, like music under the skin, of all libraries from Alexandria onward."

With a last blink at me, Miss Runyon retreated to her desk and duty.

When I went up to Sandison's office, I found him standing at its cathedral-like window, trying to peek out at the weather through an eyelet of whorled clear glass. "Damned stained glass," he grumbled, "what do the nitwits think a window is for?" He rotated around to me. "She show you every mousehole, did she?"

"Quite an educational tour. What I am wondering, Mr. Sandison--"

"Hold it right there." He held up a rough hand as he moved to his oversize desk chair and deposited himself in it heavily. "When somebody calls me that, I feel like I'm around a banker or lawyer or some other pickpocket."

To escape that category, I asked: "Then what form of address am I to use?"

He looked across his desk at me conspiratorially. "I'll tell you what; call me Sandy. On the ranch, only my foreman got to do that. It'll drive that old bat Runyon loco."

"Sandy, then," I tried it on for size, none too comfortably. "What I need to know is the scope of my job."

"I suppose." Rubbing his beard, he gazed around the cluttered room as if some task for me might be hiding behind one of the piles of books. "Morgan"--there was a dip of doubt in his tone as he spoke it--"how are you at juggling?"

"Three balls in the air at once is a skill that persists from boyhood," I answered cautiously, "but when it comes to ninepins--"

"No, no--the calendar, oaf, the calendar." Irritably he pawed around in the pieces of paper that carpeted his desk and finally came up with that item. "People always want to use this damn place, they need a room to hold this meeting or that, you'd think a library was a big beehive. Myself, I don't see why they can't just check out a couple of books and go home and read. But no, they bunch up and want to cram in here and talk the ears off one another half the night." He squinted as if drawing a bead on the offenders penciled in on various dates on the calendar. "The Shakespeare Society. The Theosophists. The West Side Arts and Crafts Club. The Ladies' and Gentlemen's Poetry and Social Circle. The League of Nations Advocates. The Jabberwockians. The Gilbert and Sullivan Libretto Study Group. And that's hardly the half of them, wanting some damn night of their own to come in here and take up space. They've all got to be juggled."

"I think I can tend to that, Mr.--"

He shot me a warning glance.

"--Sandy."

There may have been a sly smile within the beard. The librarian of Butte, for all that entailed, settled more deeply into his chair. "I figured if you're a man who knows his books, you can deal with the literary types who come out when the moon is full." He passed the much scrawled upon calendar to me. "They're all yours now, Morgan," said Samuel Sandison with that intonation I came to know so well.

Looking back, that exchange that first day set a telling pattern. You would think, with two persons in one cloistered office, for he had me clear a work space for myself in a corner, that he might sooner or later call me *Morrie*. Yet that familiar form of address never passed his lips. Each time and every time, he would either preface or conclude what passed for conversation between us with a drawled *Morgan?* even when it wasn't a question. As if it were my first name.

As if he knew.

Morgan Llewellyn. That is my rightful name. I know I carry only a minor share of its reknown in the world, but reflected glory is still glory of a sort. It was my brother Casper who reigned as lightweight boxing champion of the world, "Capper" Llewellyn in the inch-high headlines every time he won by another knockout. And I was his manager.

Even yet he causes me to lie awake, when the mind tussles with itself before sleep comes, thinking of how life paired us so peculiarly. Casper was a dazzler. Even as a boy, he had the cocky outlook that nothing was out of the reach of a good left hook, and my role as older brother often amounted to fishing him out of trouble. Which perhaps made it inevitable, when he was matriculating as a boxer in Chicago's West Side fight clubs and I was graduating from the university, he insisted I become his manager. He did not possess my brains and I did not have his brawn, he said with all too much accuracy, so we had better join onto one another as if we were Siamese, in his words. Casper could be exasperating, but in the ring he was a thing of beauty, a Parthenon statue of a perfect athlete sprung to life, and I have to say, I felt somewhat wizardly in fashioning his boxing career for him. Carefully I chose opponents who would build his record, alternating his bouts between the easy fighters called cousins and the tougher ones we stropped Casper's

skills on. It became only a matter of time until the name Casper Llewellyn would be on the card of a title fight.

Now the other tussle in the mind's nightly shadows. Rose.

Along the way he and she met, a wink served its purpose, and they fell for each other like the proverbial ton of bricks. Brother-in-law was added to my responsibilities. At first I was wary of Rose as an adventuress--why don't I just say it: a gold-digger--but soon enough saw that she and my brother were a genuine matching of hearts. Pert and attractive, whimsical and ever whistling, she was a sunny addition to the Llewellyn name. Luck seemed to have found us all, as Casper's purses for winning grew and grew, and when he became the lightweight champion, we felt we had truly hit the jackpot. The three of us grew accustomed to high living. A bit too high. Rose never saw a satin dress that did not appeal to her, and I myself like a goodly wardrobe. And Casper threw money around as if it was going out of style. It was one of those situations you know you ought not to get into, but do: the pugilistic science, the fight game, the glove trade, was good to us, yet income did not keep up with outgo. It was Casper's idea to throw the fight with the challenger, Ned Wolger. Rose and I might not have listened to him but for the odds on his side--he was a three-to-one favorite to wallop Wolger. That walloping could simply be postponed, as he put it, until the inevitable rematch. In the meantime, all we had to do was put our money on Wolger, spreading those bets around out of town to not attract suspicion. Rose and I saw to that, and in the last round of the title match Casper, shall we say, resigned from the fight. And we collected handsomely.

Too much so. The Chicago gambling mob turned touchy about the amount it had lost on an apparent sure thing.