Why did life write me way it has? Were there no bystander roles?

"Legally, he's not ours. His uncle went back to the old country. He's, well, a boarder."

Hoop stirred. "My poor wife"—a widower, he: Griff was a born bachelor—"she used to ask, 'Maynard, why do they play so rough in Butte?' All's I could tell her, 'That's just Butte.'"

I had been that, oh, how much in my life?

Sandison's variant of the Butte eye was The L...

This tortured, boastful, inventive, grudge-ridden, wisecracking city built not upon bedrock but copper ore was impossible to banish, like some wayward family member you can't help but keep in touch with. If Butte fairly often got under everyone's skin, including mine, the heart is located there as well as the spleen. Not to mention, I suppose the red blood.

If Butte fairly often got under my skin, what can I say but that the heart is located there as well as the spleen. Not to mention, I suppose the red blood.

Spring came to Butte...I could still see my breath, yet hints of green as that Napoleonic winter at last left Butte

thumping overhead.

"What was that?"

"Giorgio at his exercises. Jumping jacks. dumbbell."
I held my tongue somehow about the aptness of that word associated with the Mazzini creature.

"It's something you said."

She sat up in alarm.

"'The way things have always been.' Pluvius and I may be ble to do something with that."

Nor is there a malefaction--mark it well: the word comes Latin, *malus* meaning "bad, ill, evil" and *facere* meaning "to do"--more unjust to the honest citizens of the Treasure State than the tax burden heaped upon them while the copper colossus pays hardly pennies.

An appetite for change, anyone?

dispatched to the public library

Morgie was added to my wardrobe of names

"I have a reputation to uphold." A crafty look came into his eyes. "More than one, come to think of it."

"I have a whale of an idea.

with an odd expression

Extra, Extra, extra!

Butte was not a place where pedigree was all, or even much.

Like earls chumming with field hands

Who would have guessed Sandison, sunk in his beard and collecting fixation, had such a keen social sense?
Cattle king turned vigilante turned city librarian. Outsize personality that he was, still spoken of in low voices when it was ruleless country sufficiently to build up a store of admiration and exasperation, Griff had once described him to me as meaner than the devil’s half-brother. as tall and imperious as him.

“to clean things up a bit.”

turning sooty gray.

the democracy of a good time

Her late husband, the otherwise faultless Arthur, every so often wagered his weekly pay on greyhound races, the surest way to have one’s wages go to the dogs.

I had encountered her case of hives once before, in boarding house days when she began to fear—justly, as it turned out, that our attraction to each other was the serious sort. blowup

Casper had unbelievable reflexes. I had seen him toss a palmful of silver dollars in the air and catch all five or six with that same hand, almost in an eyeblink. He also had great mischief in him.

He was left-handed, so I retrained him, the two of us sparring by the hour, to box as a righty.

Rose, as fragrantly pretty as her name

We had all risen. Casper through the West Side fight clubs while I worked my way through the University of Chhicago, Rose from domestic service in Minneapolis.
an easily beaten palooka and then another, mixed in with some journeyman who would up enough of a battle for Casper to sharpen his skills.

another chapter in the book of life.

Casper was always cocky, from boyhood on. What is it about a younger brother that...? We need a Darwin to study sibling evolution.

By some lucky trick of fate, Rose was in a dress shop and I was at the tailor when the mobsters invaded our suite and seized Casper.

The money is moldering in some grave of its own, squirreled away by Casper in a tin box somewhere because he did not trust banks.

Chicago was strutting onto the world stage. straw-haired Scandinavian named Carl Sandburg...In the autograph album I had as a boy were inscriptions from Harriet Monroe and Edgar Lee Masters

He hadn't called me an unflattering name in days and days.

While at this, he was positively benign, Father Christmas giving himself a present.

If ever there was a citywide factory turning the holdings of hard rock into human gain, this looked like it.

Everywhere around, mining operations were in full swing.

The Richest Hill On Earth in essence a factory

Yet Butte and its Hill drew hardrock miners from throughout Europe and Great Britain.

a siren song for some.
looking up at me as if I were the leader of a heavenly choir.

In the person of their immigrant fathers and mothers, the dance called America still went on, and these young lives ticketed, like those, to the mines were its next chorus.

Fugget it

"It hasn’t always been."

"One, shave and a haircut. Two, shave and a harcut."

"Show of hands, please. How many of you have had fathers or brothers hurt in the mines?"

Slowly hands went up from a majority in the room.

"Are thee counting miner's con?"

"Sadly, yes."

Many more hands went up.

Ah, but--every intersection has four corners."

Without a word I turned to the blackboard and sketched an intersection.

"One, two, three--

"We get out of the hoosegow to do this, right?"

"You will be carriers of the Thunder. The 00 of Thor."

"That don’t sound half bad."

It was the postman, dressed like a fur trapper, with his arms around something sizable. "Another box of rocks for S.S. Sandison. Are you his houseman?"

"Hardly."

"He’s still here. In residence, I mean.

He dutifully inscribed my name and Grace’s in his route book.

"Don’t I know you already? You look awful familiar."
Trying to cover my surprise, I said I didn’t like to think of my countenance as significantly awful, and no, I was new to Ajax Avenue and its environs. “Must be some other spiffy dresser I’m thinking of,” the postman allowed and went his way.

The return address—GARDINER EX LIBRIS NEW YORK CITY—told me the contents were weighty in another way.

possible add to Purity scene, Jared/Rab inveigle Morrie into going to a union meeting. Use this to show the balancing act Jred has to perform with his constituency, come up with something to fight Anaconda (the newspaper idea) while not going too far left—Wobbly territory; Quinlan activist faction. Scenario could include:

--logistically, Morrie dispatches Famine, in his old messenger role, to tell Grace he will be late getting home (some excuse has to be thought up); Rab reminds Famine tomorrow is a schoolday, she herself goes home, leaving Jared and Morrie to go to the union hall, perhaps with conversation along the way about the latest Anaconda atrocity, the shooting of strikers in broad daylight in the spring of 1920.

--At the jam-packed union hall when Jared presents his new tactic, a newspaper to take on Anaconda, someone in rank and file, or Quinlan, scoffs that there have been union papers before and all failed. Jared retorts, But we have a secret weapon this time, the Professor! Morrie, uncommitted as yet, is taken by surprise and acclaim as the union men salute his prior songmaking effort and sing (some of) the work song/ anthem, Song of the Hill. Probably this should not be one of Morrie’s star-turns onstage, but he is moved, maneuvered, whatever into committing himself to the newspaper job.
details:
--union hall scene can convey the ethnic mix of miners, the evocative names of the mines, to flavor the plot a bit.
--Morrie w/ Sandison at some point remarks on the larcenous origin of Song of the Hill, Sandison having swiped it from an obscure old poem. Sandison snorts that’s nothing out of the ordinary, The Internationale is O Tannenbaum fancied up with red bows or something.

where silence seems to resound,
“Elbows in, forearms up.”
“What?”
“Merely thinking out loud. We don’t want to give Cartwright an opening.”

mercurial

“One of ’em held me and the other one whaled me.”

A villain is supposed to have a distinctive fce. The Anaconda Copper Mining Company wore the most impassive mask in America: that of Wall Street.

who has things trailing after him”--she scratched more furiously than ever--“like bear tracks.”

It was not so much a matter of siphoning, as overflow...the mixing of (books)
"He lowered his voice, even though it was just we three in the cavernous room. "There's a rich cattleman up in the Two Medicine country, name of Williamson. He can't afford drawing attention to himself in helping us--the gent already has skirt trouble, the rumor is--but that doesn't stop his check-writing hand."

"I'd say equipment like this forgives him some sins."

he unconsciously fingered his short ear--"

"The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

"Now we need to find a name for the paper."

"What about The Plain Truth," Rab said brightly. "That's been in short supply in Butte newspapering."

Jared rubbed his jaw. "I like something with more punch to it, like The Crusader."

You have to call it something.

"Comic as they often seemed, the two of them were veterans of the mineworkers' long and agonizing struggle for a fair wage, decent hours, and sane safety measures. To put it plainly, Butte for a decade had been a labor battleground, but out of the turmoil of 1919 the mineworkers had regathered themselves under a banner of fresh leadership and an anthem of solidarity--which I had modestly contributed to--and I asked now with a measure of hope, "How are things on the front lines of the good fight?"

"You didn't hear?" said Hoop.

"It was a rough time, while you was away," said Griff.

"You don't mean--"

"Anaconda did it to us again," said the one, the other chorusing in, "the damn snakes."
The Civil War veteran who staked a claim at a lucky spot on the Butte hill surely had no notion that the name of his mine would become a byword for reptilian corporate behavior. He merely had christened it to honor a hope much expressed in the Northern press during his soldiering, that the Army of the Potomac would squeeze the Confederacy like an anaconda. The mine and the world's richest veins of copper that it tapped into passed upward and upward, as valuable things tend to do, until reaching an apotheosis of ruthless capitalism: the Anaconda Copper Mining Company.

"What was it this time," I asked uncomfortably as one who had been shadowed and threatened by the copper oligopoly's hired thugs, "more goons?"

"Worse."

"A lockout?"

"Worse yet."

I winced, for now I knew, as surely as if rifle barrels and bayonets were being thrust in my direction right then. "How many infernal times does that make?"

One of them thought it was the sixth time soldiers had been sent in to Butte as strikebreakers, the other believed it may have been the seventh. By any count, Anaconda through its manipulation of politicians in the statehouse retained its grip on the workings of The Richest Hill On Earth even if it took troops to do it. Or as Griff was now putting it, "The snakes on the top floor of the Hennessy building stay up nights thinking how to rob the workingman of what's his," Hoop nodding absolute agreement. I sympathized heart and soul. Strictly speaking, I had never been a workingman of the industrial sort. But I had done manual labor and sweated through a hatband and known what it is to worry in the dark hours over an
inadequate wage. You do not need to be a galley slave to know what is fair in this world.

"The lost dollar," I exclaimed, as if asking after a comrade-in-arms, the answer already there to be read in the lined old faces. "The union won it back, didn't it?"

"You bet, Jared got that done in '19 and made it stick. It takes a Welshman," Griff reflected proper pride in the successful rallying of the miners by their astute young leader, Jared Evans—an accomplishment I had a bit of a hand in, not to take anything away from that worthy man—which among other things forced the copper company to restore the dollar a day, a cruel twenty percent cut it had imperiously clipped from mine pay. "But," Hoop enlarged on the matter, "Anaconda's right back at it, threatening to whack wages just the same again if the union don't roll over and play dead."

"Which we aren't about to," vowed Griff, "no matter what they try next, the--"

Their agitated telling of the latest sins of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company all at once petered out as they looked past me down the side hall, and in unison doffed their hats and clasped them to their breasts.

Which led me to wonder how much of Griff and Hoop's report he had heard before materializing in the side hall the way he did.

"They pretty well mopped up the Wobblies."

guest room in the maze of, a far step down from the master bedroom bequeathed to Grace and me

The snakes are feeling pretty cocky
Farmers and ranchers are sick of paying more than their share of taxes while the copper bosses toss in a few pennies."

Those first days of the war in ink, I relished the battle with the Post, and by implication its puppetmasters high atop Butte and loftier yet on Wall Street. The journalistic exchange of insults was something like the stutter-step when you meet someone in your path and each moves in front of the other.

"You're doing your part like a real fighter, Professor. Just what we need." Intense as ever, Jared consulted the calendar as the contrapuntal rhythms of typewriters and telephones rose and fell around the trio of us in session at the editor's desk. Three and a variable fraction, actually, as he had Russian Famine with him while Rab attended to some after-hours task at the detention school. The boy was in motion even standing still, wiping his nose with the back of his hand, taking his cap off and putting it back on, restlessness accentuated by being confined indoors and with grownups, no less. Absently Jared stopped him from playing with the spindle where Armbrister spiked unused stories, the calendar still foremost on his mind as he resumed to the other two of us. "Only a few weeks now until we can spring the trap on Anaconda. But I wish we could be sure we're getting across to people by then. I make the rounds through the tunnels at chow time and more men have their noses into the funnies than the editorial page."

Watching him, my imagination took flight to the Senate in Rome, a young Caesar, the Rubicon and so much else in his future.

But I wish we could be sure we're getting across to people by then.
“You two are the experts, and the Thunder and the Professor’s editorials read like holy writ to me, so help me out on this. I made the rounds through the tunnels at chow time, and more men had their noses into the funnies than the editorial page. Are we getting across to people, enough? What does it take?”

“There were plenty of cowboys from here who were Rough Riders with him at San Juan Hill. Had a few of them in my crew, later on.” He laughed, none too humorously. “How you do it, Morgan, I don’t know, but sometimes you plunge in blind and come out walking on water.”

a dude with pinchnose glasses.”

“Bent but not broken,” he more than answered my question.

Slandering Anaconda on a regular basis.

Jared bucked up my spirits

the reality of that encounter softened into something more like imagination, much more comfortable to live with.

“There’s more to it than that, I’m afraid. If we have a source purloining this within the Post, it is not impossible they could place one here.”

Armbrister pulled at a fold of his face while thinking. “Cavaretta lost a brother in a cave-in, so he has it in for Anaconda. I’ll name him assistant layout editor and put him in the backshop while the paper’s being made up, to be sure none of our galleys sneak out.”

he shook his head over a piece of filler overset in which the only recognizable word was lutefisk,

Taking stock, in the aftermath of Thor’s and my command performance at the detention school, much seemed to have been lately set right in the world of me and mine.

in the aftermath of Thor’s and my command performance at the detention school,
That casts a different light on things.”

His bushy eyebrows flying at all angles,

“That time of year, is it. I’d lost track.”

He gave a nonchalant gesture

Meanwhile, I don’t know where to turn.

“You could try in my direction.

It was impossible for him to know about my successful impersonation of the Highliner.

descended on me on like iron fate.

“It jingles a 00 tune now.”

Her face clouded

“Let’s don’t be hasty, Jake.

“Yes, but

“Didn’t I see the union bug on

“Just suppose—”

Jared did not have to finish my thought.

“Quinlan went at things headfirst, 00 after. There’s no knowing.”

but throws in makes me look like the soul of reason So far, it’s still just
dickering, but they’ll do it like that,” he snapped his fingers, “unless--Professor,

are you listening?”

responded, nice as pie, on the surface

“I think—” Jared began,

Jared says Quin would take on Anaconda barehanded, if he only could.”
You needn't, Rab.

He had a sudden thought. "It probably asks a lot of you, Professor, to do your wordslinging without due credit. That isn't how Tom Paine got to be famous, is it."

"Never fear.

A duck to pondwater. A hungry soul to a feast. An actor to the perfect circle of spotlight. Whatever the most fervent cliche, that is how I took to newspaper life.

Quin had a voice on him, as the saying was. That he used it to render something out of The Little Red Songbook was slightly scandalous at wakes. "Whatever else you think of the Wobs, the scoundrels know their tunes."

He was not a man averse to center stage.

He made as if to slap me on the back, but dropped his hand. Manners.

"Brace thyself, Jared. 'Tis Quin and his drilling partner."

" and telling anyone who got in the way, "Step aside, please. Press

Two desks, neither occupied. I did not tempt fate by appropriating the superintendent's and its telephone, but at once claimed his assistant's territory and phone and hurriedly tapped the switchhook for an operator, to place the call to the rewrite desk in the newsroom.

"I'll take my chances.

He made the familiar fist of union ire.

"Not to my knowledge."
The equipment was up-to-date.

It was fortunate we did not make Quin too much of a martyr

Our nicest,” as Creeping Pete termed it. Candles and all.

put a hand to his forehead

The six of us slid the coffin

It was in that frame of mind that I arrived to the newsroom on what would go down in Thunder history as the red-letter day. At first, nothing seemed out of the ordinary, typewriters rat-a-tat-tatting and wisecracks circulating as usual. Armbrister and I were mulling the makeup of the editorial page, debating whether to pull a Pluvius piece out of overset and settle for that or fill the hole with a fresh offering, which would put us perilously close to deadline by the time I could write it. Whichever we chose, the page mockup looked as lively as ever, right down to the filler at the bottom where it was the turn of the Serbs. “I don’t even want to guess,” Armbrister groaned over the unintelligible spatter of language. At that moment, Jared Evans made his appearance, still in his senatorial suit and tie but also wearing a warrior’s conquering grin.

At the jerk of his head, Armbrister and I stepped out into the corridor with him. “We’re ready,” Jared told us, tired but exultant. “It took so much arm-twisting that half the legislature look like pretzels, but the votes are lined up.” His eyes met mine, the message there before he spoke it. “Let’s tell the world, copper is going to start paying its way. Get out the big type, Jacob.”

Ever the skeptic, Armbrister was unsure now was the time to show our hand. “What if we stick our necks out all the way for a tax commission, and some of your legislative friends have their minds changed for them in the meantime? We’ll look like the usual kind of goody-goodies who can’t make anything happen.”

W A d o n ’ t w a n t o l o o k l i k e
I could see his point. Without its cause successfully fought for, the Thunder could lose the reading public’s interest and end up just another newspaper lining the bottom of canary cages. But Jared was insistent. “Now’s the time to spring this on Anaconda, before they can lobby the bill to death. One of the ‘Professor’s phillips’”—he gave me a wry look but there was no mistaking the imperative behind it—“will stiffen some political spines that might need it.”

When Armbrister finally recited the last iota of innuendo, he removed his eyeshade and mopped his brow. The younger staff members glanced around nervously.

to the ballot box...a more enlightened leadership in the state capital.

“Out of the way, mister.

“No! Don’t!”

“Morgan, what’s going on?”

“The books, Sandy.”

“We can’t risk it. We have to spray that whole area.”

Sandison grabbed a fire axe and with one swing chopped the hose. “Find some other way.”

Swearing and threatening, the fire chief dispatched half of his men outside and the rest into a bucket brigade which Sandison and I joined.

The office was gutted.

All right, I confess: money has always managed me more adroitly than I have managed it.

Observer as well as participant, I was in my element.
whose opinion counted most, read the piece as soon as I brought the paper home. Without a word, she came and hugged me fiercely; backed off to look at me with concern,

who would have believed it without seeing it,

Barnes, the city hall reporter

Where the four of us were looking on at the busy newsroom scene, Jared had a sudden thought.

We would call the Post a tissue of lies. It would denounce the Thunder as 00. Back and forth, the editorial war of Butte raged.

A story, the ancients instruct us, is like the wind. It comes from we know not where, it brings the unexpected, and it whispers of the wilder reaches of life. All such buffets included, this is mine.

"Can the 00 wait until after payday?"

By that, Grace did not mean my impromptu role as a dance caller, acclaimed though that had been. Robbie Burns now officially one hundred sixty-two years old plus a few nights, we were the Thunder rustling as she laid the newspaper open against the bedspread.

This had become our nightly bedtime scene, Grace partway under the covers on her side loyally reading my latest tirade while I spread out the Sporting News on mine.

She pursed a kiss in my direction.
The staff of the *Thunder* was stimulating to be around; odd lot that newspaper people are, it is strange what good company they are.

And, really, crusading journalism had no better target than the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. Life settled to that pace after the Burns party.

He dismissed my ingratitude with a shrug.

Sandison's chest heaved in mirth.

need look no further than to find the phrase used. It is uttered by, the squire of Yosnya Polyana,

"What the heck can a fellow do?"

if it does not exist in Russian, it should--"served up like warmed-over cabbage."

Make no mistake:

"Merely humming 'The Flight of the Bumblebee.'"

"Don't smart off.

"How come they threwed you in the clink?"

"For reckless resemblance."

"Is that some kind of being drunk?"

"When are Americans going to get off their duffs and write things like this?"

"Probably before you know it. *Poetry* I was but a boy."

"Don't I remember. You dropped *The Cattleman's Roundup* to do it."
"You constantly amaze me." "That's not necessarily in your favor, you know."

There was more,

"Morrie, you can't let this worry you to death."

She was more right than she knew; I had to hope ambush etc. did not lead to that destination.

...the 00 was in Norwegian, in which the only identifiable word was 'lutfisk.'

"I realize I married you for better or worse, but I don't remember 'both and then some' in the wedding vows."

Her expression took on deliberation.

"Nor do I, but 'for better and for worse'\n
That does it.

with my jaw set in resolve

Friends and neighbors,

It was in that frame of mind, not long after the Burns celebration, that I was on my way to the Thunder when my usual route was interrupted

Rose went through a convulsion of love

Oh, how I remembered him The cold-eyed coldhearted Cecil Cartwright, wouldn't you know, got his start as a sportswriter in Chi, back when Capper Llewellyn was lightweight champ and I was his manager and we threw the title fight and the rest is history. Cartwright's latest notch in his belt was breaking the story of the Black Sox scandal, the fixed World Series that Morrie won his big bet on, and Cutthroat,
as I would always think of him, further has stirred things up by causing various authorities to investigate not only crooked baseball but, yes, fixed fights. I knew I was in deep, deep trouble if Cartwright ever saw through my beard.

He thrust his hands in his pockets,

“You have your work cut out for you.

It makes you look important, if you know what I mean.

Before I could figure out a safe protest to that, she was asking, he said with steely determination:

A picture of worry, she asked,

“Eventually.”

Does the Post editorialist expect this smear tactic to pass unchallenged?

Not bad, given what you had to work with,

Luck is as mysterious as 00.

“Boy, what a worldbeater of an idea that was, boss.”

though I did think twice now about my choice of phrasing.

We three men as if cold water had been thrown on us

Jared tugged his shorter ear.

returned the admiration in the spirit it was given.

knocked on my brain demanding answer.

I cleared my throat to enter the general discussion.

I cracked the door open and peeped out. Sleek as a sheik, there stood Cecil Cartwright.

“Moe sent me,” he parodied the speakeasy *Open, Sesame* that had practically become the national mantra since Prohibition. “Come on, chum, where’s your western hospitality? We need to have a chat.”
the John Held caricature that topped his column in the Chicago Herald. The heavy eyebrows, the pencil-line mustache. dashing
dapper

"Fancy digs. How do you rate a Taj Mahal like this?"

"A gift of providence."

"I'll bet." "Needs some upkeep, doesn't it." "Providence as well as the premises, maybe?"

"This is where the gunplay was, hmm? You're lucky, you know. The Post was going to plaster that little episode on the front-page, drag you through all the mud it could and the Thunder along with it. I made them spike the story."

"I'm guessing that your generosity comes with a price."

"Anyway, I made it known they shouldn't be trying to knock you off, if they were. You're worth more alive than dead, Morgan. Not everybody who takes on the Anaconda Copper Mining Company can say that."

"State your business, Cutthroat."

"All in good time. We ought to get to know each other a little, don't you think? Journalistic blood brothers that we are?" I didn't like the way he kept looking at me. "Morgan. Welsh name, right?"

"By the thousands," I replied tightly.

"The way you sling words, you must have had quite an education. Where?"

"Around and about."

"Modest, hmm? That can cover a lot."

"I grasp that Anaconda is very near almighty in this city."

"They didn't do a good job of that. Shooting people in broad daylight, with dozens of witnesses including the cops. Sometimes these Wall Street types could learn a lot from Chicago."
I watched him start to prowl in search of how this could be put into words. A chill went from my soles up to my soul. I did not like the particular intiontion he gave it. I banked my anger. That found a seam in him. We drew new assessments of one another.

Cartwright:

"I know no more of that than a walrus does of the Gulf of Carpentaria."

He rolled that around in his head a few times, glowering at me.

"I'll level with you. They're worried, up there on the top floor of the Hennessy Building. They don't like the looks of that Evans in the legislature and whatever you rabble-rousers are up to with the Thunder. You can make some real money. It doesn't need to be obvious. It's like a game of catch we used to play on Maxwell Street--were you ever in that neighborhood?"

"Somebody who looked like you, I must be thinking about."

"I have a confession to make. The winning wager I made on the World Series--I bet your book collection."

"Of course you did, lamebrain. How else were you going to put up a stake like that?"

"You knew? All along?"

That;'s the trouble with you bunkhouse geniuses. You think nobody else has a clue about what's going on."

"You--you're not angry?"

"If I lost my temper every time you did something, I'd be going off like Old Faithful, wouldn't I."
“You’re losing your touch, I hope you know.”

“How so?”

“Cutlass anticipates your every move lately. If it were chess, Morgan, you’d be off the board.”

“No one is that good a guesser, not even this Cutthroat bird. Somebody’s tipping off the Post, Morgie.”

“I think I’ve figured out” -- “who our informer is.”

“Great. Just point the finger. I’ll fire whoever it is so fast it’ll make it’ll make their head swim.”

“It’s not that easy.”

It fell to Jared to ask: “Why isn’t it?”

“Because it’s Russian Famine.”

“I can’t believe it. I won’t. Mr. Morgan, you have to be wrong.”

Jared “Are you sure?”

“It has to be him.

He dropped the newspaper bag and bolted.

“I’ll go.

“I seen the look on all your faces. I might as well be dead.”

“All it was is them long sheets of paper in the waste basket. People was gonna read ‘em anyway in a couple of hours.”

“I wanted to get my own.”

“You know. Knuckles.”

“Give me your hand.”

“No ma’am. Not without ...
As she swallowed before saying anything
went perfectly still
If ever there was a citywide factory turning the holdings of hard rock into
human gain, this looked like it.

on the rising ground
open up like a good fellow.
It is part of my personality that I don't have any doubt that I can carry the
day. Only that the burden is worth it.

"This is from the Chicago boys, fixer."

"Moe sent me," he parodied the speakeasy password that had practically
become the national "Open, Sesame" since Prohibition.
riding along in the back of the converted military ambulance from the Great
War.

Butte had long practice in getting people to the hospital in a hurry, and I
clung to whatever I could in the back of the ambulance clanging its way to St. 00's.

"hang on, please, doctors do wonders these days."
was often shaded with the odd illusion that
What would we be without women?" He shuddered.

"What?" I was still in a daze.
Get on with life, man."
Surely Mrs. Sandison, were she here, would chide you that you're being
overly hard on yourself." Not to mention, on me.

I do have to say,
Eyebrows working, he gave me

The old rogue was accustomed to tapping into the payroll budget to buy
books. Not merely that, but adding them to his collection that formed the core of
the Butte Public Library’s unique holdings, the editions with the SSS bookplates. There was a paste pot on his desk there, too.

on the scorecard of worry,

“The Chicago pinky ring. Interesting.”

where he stood aside looking jilted while the postman protectively clutched what appeared to be a wrapped box, about the size of a cracker tin.

The first bullet nearly parted my hair, as Sandison’s arm clubbed the shooter front and center in the chest.

In less that an eyeblink Sandsion batted the shooter’s arm,

“You want him bumped off?”

“No! That’s too extreme—”

“Then I can just send a couple of boys around with crowbars to work over his legs, how about.”

“I appreciate the thought, but not that either. What I really want done is—”

Hears one mug in aside to another:

“That takes care of that, huh?”

An exhalation of awe at the simple wisdom of that.

“You look bright enough not to try anything funny. Am I right?”

“About not trying anything, I can only speak to.”

with the flip of a hand --by the way, Smitty thought it was a stroke of genius on my part--

“And what will poor Robin do now, poor thing?”
I slept like the dead, waking with that muzzy feeling of not knowing where I was. The arched window told me, and the absence beside me in bed told me even more forcefully.

00ed the story of myself like an arrow.
A plural existence.  
It had come to this.  
the iambic beat of the question posed by Sandison—"You don't happen to be this Highliner...?"--
In this fresh tailoring of character,
If I could rewrite myself, so to speak. Enveloped. Tempting to think about.

Tempting to contemplate
"Sandy, I swear..."
Frowning, he fussed with his beard. 
Sandison crossed the threshold of what was now unmitigatedly bachelor quarters and dropped into his favorite chair.  

(check against Work Song) The only mirth he showed was when he spotted a bargain in a rare book catalogue and he would let out a "heh!" and smile beneath his wreath of beard.

a white beard like a wreath of frost around the moon. There was a lot of him, in all ways.

Sandison deposited himself in his desk chair. He turned my way so weightily the chair groaned.

The chair groaned under him as he shifted haunches.
He snorted that away. "Talk sense."
"Morgan? Are you listening?"
"Assuredly."
Sandison droned. harrumphed. barked.
the drumbeat of his heels and utterances.
Sandison satisfied as a sachiem.
"Don't be a numbskull."
"You have something between your ears besides dust even if you don't always behave that way." a white beard like a wreath of frost around the moon.
There was a lot of him, in all ways.
the bearlike figure.

The beat of the drums could have brought down the wall of Jericho.

Blacksmiths and helpers, their leather aprons flapping with every step.
Pressmen in the square newspaper caps they wear.

Medley of national tunes...
Bunting looped down the announcer's perch (4th of July '19)... Rough Riders

Cartwright:
"I know no more of that than a walrus does of the Gulf of Carpentaria."
He rolled that around in his head a few times, glowering at me.
off-kilter behavior is largely excused as long as your fingers can still find the right typewriter keys.

the coldest of metal behind my ear.
I put two and two together
beyond the bright lights of downtown
Bundled up in overcoat and gloves as I was, I could’t even reach to an inside pocket for my brass knuckles.

A glint came into his eyes.

I started to ask, uselessly.

Which is putting a hornet up Anaconda’s nose

“If you say so. What is that”

He laughed, genuinely this time.

“What’s wrong with that? Our beards

His eyes narrowed.

I’ll lay low as much as I can

His eyes narrowed as he considered me, as if critical of a reflection.

On we go.

“Aren’t you coming to bed?”

“Shortly.”

“Morrie, you can’t let this worry you to death.”

She was more right than she knew; I had to hope ambush etc. did not lead to that destination.

“That does it. I’m going down to the barber shop and have it shaved off.”

Grace pursed her mouth. “I’ll miss the beard. But of course, do what you think best.”

I was passing the Thunder building when Armbrister thrust his head out the window. “Morrie! We’ve been looking high and low for you..”

“I’ll be by later, I’m on my way to a tonsorial appointment.”

“Never mind that, get yourself in here. We’ve got big trouble.”
When I entered the office, the entire staff was clustered around Armbrister’s desk. He was scowling down into what I could tell was our contraband early copy of the day’s Post, the ink practically dripping from it. “All right, everybody. Hold onto your hats and listen to this.”

There was more, much more. All of it invective, expertly done.

the soviet of Butte.

Griff observed to Hoop, “That’s pretty strong, ain’t it.”

“How--how is it signed?” I asked. Although I was afraid I already knew.

Distastefully Armbrister read off the editorial signature beneath the diatribe:

“‘Cutlass.’”

More properly known as Cutthroat Cartwright, the most famous and feared journalist in the savage pages of Chicago newspaperdom. Oh, how I remembered him The cold-eyed coldhearted Cecil Cartwright, wouldn’t you know, got his start as a sportswriter in Chi, back when Capper Llewellyn was lightweight champ and I was his manager and we threw the title fight and the rest is history. Cartwright’s latest notch in his belt was breaking the story of the Black Sox scandal, the fixed World Series that Morrie won his big bet on, and Cutthroat, as I would always think of him, further has stirred things up by causing various authorities to investigate not only crooked baseball but, yes, fixed fights. I knew I was in deep, deep trouble if Cartwright ever saw through my beard.

“Never fear. Pluvius will respond in kind, fang and claw.”

I wished Chekov had shot a toe off in a hunting accident, so he’d not been so eager to proclaim his theatrical dictum that when a gun appears onstage, it must ultimately be fired. The weapon I was facing, in however this scene played out,
"I have my ways of keeping track of what the cops are up to." I recalled the startled desk sergeant, perfect conduit if there ever was one.

Just trying, I said, "This might go more easily if I had a name to call you, inasmuch as you know mine."

He said coolly, "Not in this life, friend."

"You didn't spill about the warehouse. You could have, you know. Cut a deal. Given them the boys and the booze, to let you off."

I answered stiffly, "I am not a stool pigeon or whatever you call it."


"I get the idea."

"You're not as enterprising as you could be, are you."

That stung. "All I want is to mind my own business."

"Which is putting a hornet up Anaconda's nose." He shook his head.

"There are easier ways to make a living. Bootlegging, for one."

(Latin for To each his own)

"If you say so."

This was unnervingly like talking to myself in a full-length mirror. Upon close inspection, and mine of him was nearly microscopic in intensity, the Highliner was more solidly built that I was, but the pounds I had put on in the traveling year with Grace enforced the resemblance. My beard was a shade lighter, chestnut to his cinnamon brown, but again, similar enough that it took more than a casual look to tell the difference. Our taste in clothes was not identical--tweed for me, serge evidently his preference--but overcoats concealed that. And as if we shared a forehead like Siamese twins, both of us chose snappy fedoras that pulled down low over the brow, a rakish effect I had liked until now.

"Interesting how close we are in looks, isn't it," he broke my trance.

"Breathtaking."
“Am I right that you won’t try anything funny?”

“Nothing even close, I assure you.”

The pistol went into a handy pocket.

“How is it that you, or I, or we, are so recognizable to the world at large?”

“Don’t you know? That propaganda sheet, the Post, ran a likeness of me and a big story, back round Thanksgiving. Anaconda doesn’t like to see anybody make a dollar besides them. How’d you miss something like that?”

“I was away.”

“You passed up the chance to walk off with a bundle of money. How come? Some kind of Holy Joe, are you?”

“Not noticeably. The temptation was tempered, so to speak, by the prospect of you dogging my trail every step of the way.”

He smiled. “You’re not wrong about that.”

“How’d you know about Whiskey Gap?”

“Ocular logic.”

“That or a lucky guess? It came out the same either way. It’s a great 00 for us. I ought to thank you somehow. Would you like a case of hooch?”

“No, I would not. But if you really want to do me a favor—”

“Yes? What?”

“Shave.”

He chuckled. “Nothing doing.”

“I should warn you--you’re not the only one with people on the lookout for you.”

“Is that a fact. It must be our irresistible good looks.”

He whistled through his teeth. “Man, you’re a case. I thought bootlegging was complicated. I’ll lay low as much as I can.”

“Don’t you carry?”
“Carry--? Oh. A gun.

“You want him bumped off?”
“No! That’s too extreme--”
“Then I can just send a couple of boys around with crowbars to work over his legs, how about.”
“I appreciate the thought, but not that either. What I really want done is--”

Hears one mug in aside to another:
“That takes care of that, huh?”
An exhalation of awe at the simple wisdom of that.
“I didn’t say anything to the boys about you. Nothing to be gained from that.”
“You look bright enough not to try anything funny. Am I right?”
“About not trying anything, I can only speak to.”
with the flip of a hand

“Just so it doesn’t sound like 00 around here, maybe you had better call me Sandy.”
“Sure thing, Mr.--Sandy.”

In my mind’s eye, I was taken back to
The gatherings of miners in the 00 basement

--actually on the rising ground of the Hill--undulated with the usual commerce of an energetic city, but
Butte was a compressed world, thick as its geology. Streets were glaciers of people when a shift changed at the mines—the Cornishmen flowing to the 00 neighborhood, the Irish to Dublin Gulch, the Welsh and Italians and Serbian and Finns and Norwegian to their own enclaves. The Constantinople of the Rockies, another appellation locally favored,

covering the hillside

The tall downtown buildings: made possible by the advent of elevators; Morrie had seen Chicago rise.

Butte was as if Chicago’s smaller skyscrapers had been crated west. (or shrunk/

from their earlier recital of labor’s struggles that the Anaconda Company some time back had lowered miners’ wages by a dollar a day, a sharp cut, and the union leadership at the time had called a strike that shortly failed at the point of bayone

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. No day since then have I not thought of Marias Coulee.

The world has put on new clothes without you even noticing the needle was threaded.

"Will miracles never decease," Sandison said sourly.
as if it was all the encouragement in the world.
This was an opening bid if there ever was one.

How, behind any one person, the others lingered. The past calved them, as surely as icebergs emanate from the glaciers of Greenland. Some certain skein of event changed what would come, what would be fixed into memory.

By all signs there was no hope of putting him at ease, so I put him to work.

"I was given a helping of that myself."

I was supposedly a figure of learning. What were you left with? You teach generations of children, instill in them every facet of life you can think of, show them what stories are made of, drill the dancesteps of the language into them until they helplessly recite in their sleep, and even so, against all expectations of civilized outcome, people ride off the face of the earth without a trace.

Let them think what they think.

Without thinking, I said:
fresh as the next heartbeat.
The belief that they’re silkier inside than the rest of us.
That could be a little or a lot.
You know, there’s always the chance that was meant to be funny.

...as if the first pages of a book lay open.
a skein of feats like a tapestry hung through the mind
with everything in me (i.e. wholehearted)
How much can a person dare and yet remain bound to the world -- not fly
off in the mind beyond touch of all that is real?
“He, aw, you know.” Russian Famine vaguely put up his dukes.

Everything was new once.
“A road runs both directions, Grace.”
My life has not been saturated with schemes, like some.
“I can see so.”
“It’s not that unusual,”
It was too late to bell that cat.
Trying to teach an old dogma new tricks.
Forever and a day could go by, and I...
“Now that you mention it.”
the proportion to touch and turn a life.
I tried to calm down into some semblance of a rational being.
It hurt all the way to the heart, to hear that the puddled settlements on the
great prairie were drying up.

Tactics. Always the great question, those.
The only ammunition expended was the joking calibre.
As though he had caught a fever.

“The crannies of the cranium, yes.”

Which it is. I was born Morgan Llewellyn.
Dreams are gatherings.

and stay in a way nothing else does

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

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...

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

Murmur mutter cuss cuss

"You're having yourself quite a day."

"Kiss yourself goodbye."
The percentage of him between his ears may not have been much, but...
green as a magic forest
And found myself in a literary garden of delight.
pigeon-breasted

The holdings of the shelves
It couldn't be.

That found a seam in him. "You know Latin? How about Greek?"
gold-titled
had drawn strange glinting looks from Grace and Hooper as well, that suppertime.

She nodded. From her expression, I could tell that there luckily was not more.

as if I was in on a conspiracy.

It was not popular with him, but...

"You are getting along with Sam Sandison?"

"Oh, you mean Sandy?" I said airily. "We're like that." I held up my first two fingers, crossed.

That is all another story for another time

"Don't you keep up?"

"You're awfully thick with..."

"Ah, on that. I need to speak with you."

"I value my sanity too much."

with a set face.

This was uncomfortable.

What precipitated this? gave me a look that took inches off my height.

"Not until there's a pill for shrillness."

in pulpits from there to Cardiff every seventh day.

said as if it had been on her mind throughout

He inspected me as if noticing my existence for the first time.

rough factions ready to do the fighting.

as if made for my pores
“Mmm, ...—I’m joking, Grace, don’t look so put out.”

in my earlier venture in the open-ended part of America.

Rab

“They’re not. Can you believe it, they’re not.”

I had pledged not to go back to Marias Coulee.

Running up and down the staisstep of eight grades like a lighthouse keeper

of minds

“I must take you into my confidence.”

As a schoolgirl, Rab was always ready for conspiracy.

“Rose and I had a falling out. A family matter.”

(Rab imagines a version.)

“I could not have put it better myself.”

She was not my sister; rather, my sister-in-law.

Rose went through a convulsion of love

a matrimonial pairing

Jared was the kind who could make waves in a birdbath.

Rab had a racehorse keenness about her.

To be around Rab was to hear the patter of little ideas running through her

mind.

“Just for fun, let’s say you...

“That is so typical.”
Morrie talking to her class about Australian songlines; realizes his audience of schoolkids doesn’t know Wagga Wagga from Walla Walla.
Rab was onto that like a kitten finding cream.
That put a different light on the matter.

Rab was young as springtime and equally as guileful.
Slim and supple as anyone could be, just before the topography of womanhood began curving and thrusting.
that sudden season of last childhood, spent trying to figure out how the truces of life are won or lost.
chunky boys and 00 girls.
Children as golden tan as honey.

“You were putty when you came to me, at age what?”
Jared: tall, husky through the shoulders, mild blue eyes, black hair slicked back.
onward, to call it that, into the trenches of death in France.

“There, see?” Rab nudged Jared.
in editorials in a crusading newspaper that will campaign for taxing the beastly Company until it hurts.

Rab, ajump with ideas

She poised for a moment before settling to the desk, in the attitude of a canny abbess.

It was like her,...
I thought of the Marias Coulee homesteaders. They had come from somewhere and that somewhere had not left them. (lingered in them)

I told him an Aussie survivor of Gallipoli had told him he felt the cupped hand of God around him in the war. "Putting aside for the moment the question of whether there is a Higher Intelligence--was it something like that with you?"

A heart-to-talk talk, the saying goes. But Rab's heart and mine were quite different ages, pumping different streams of experience, racing and fluttering to different excitements. Perhaps chin-to-chin is always the best that can be managed.

Rab was going to have a cat fit, but she'd just have to.

my prize pupil Paul Milliron, bright as a new coin

"Not until there's a pill for shrillness."

Rab had to be handled like an opened jackknife. She sometimes jabbed just because she happened to know how.

This was Rab at her conspiratorial best.

the mood lashing in her

a chunk of a boy

the freckle epidemic

a bothering child

"I don't know what we'd do without your jawbone."

"You're the one to talk."

cinnamon eyes

Russian Famine: "Could if I had to."

"Vixen."
"There’s been someone, hasn’t there."
And even after ten years, I needed no reminding, I still was bound by the
terms of that farewell.
Rab switched her tail and pounced.
"That will do, Sharp Ears."
She already was making a big bet in choosing life with this soldier on the
front lines of the miners’ union, I thought to myself.

"I’ll accompany you, if I may. There’s an idea we perhaps should
explore."

"You couldn’t dream up a better candidate. Catholic, so Butte would vote
for him about a hundred and ten percent. Suffrage supporter from way back, there
was the women’s vote. War hero, even a limp to go with it."

"What happened?"

"A woman."
Jared recited the saga of Williamson... "Second-best could be a lot worse.
Dixon doesn’t have any love lost for Anaconda either. He’s an old Bull Mooser,
was a pal of Teddy Roosevelt. The thing is, he’s a real politician, swings like a
windvane. If we can get up a 00 for a tax commission, he’ll be for it.

who looked like he could go lion-hunting with a switch.

with the zeal of a schoolgirl and the chest and legs of a circus bareback rider. Jared
had made a fortunate catch with her. And she him.

"I hear what you’re thinking."
"That is so much like you, Mr. Morgan."

"That hoyden."

"Petey, don’t scratch so much," she bossed with natural authority. Eleven-year-old girls could put the word to rights if we would let them. Rabrab at that age very nearly had.

Butte was as if Chicago’s smaller skyscrapers had been crated west. (or shrunk/)

clustered on the horizon as though the earth had rumpled beneath it all

Still feeling grumblesome,

pard

, I drew in a lungful of frigid air and said with

we’ll point out the house to you."

At the oaken front door I used the brass knocker, shaped like the business end of a branding iron into the initials SSS, to announce our presence. “Coming,” a familiar gruff voice called from somewhere inside, “don’t wear out the knocker."

Grace flushed. 

Giving me another frown,

A determined hum of “Work, for the night is coming” to dismiss that.

Her head gave a fierce indication toward the adjoining room

She was not surprised at the knock of tongues that had followed her since she took up with Jared Evans.

October, shapeshifting tenth month

He may have been dumb as an anvil, but...
"But they're minding the boarding house." They were not as old as the
Butte hill, but close

the greater adversary we shared.
I matched her trace of smile with my own.
sized up the mansion as they might have
The white web of stars above the city
In my youth I had seen Chicago rise. The Constantinople of the Rockies
had a long way to go
The lilt was back in her voice.

"I'll accompany you, if I may. There's an idea we perhaps should
explore."
"I hear what you're thinking."
"That is so much like you, Mr. Morgan."
sufficiently to build up a store of admiration and exasperation,
"Becoming what, a dustmop?" Sandison
Grace flushed.

Butte itself is a storied place, as I found when I arrived in 1919. on the
rising ground
Giving me another frown,
A determined hum of "Work, for the night is coming" to dismiss that.
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Quinlan struck an operatic pose.

Toreadora,

Don’t spit on the floor-a.
Use the cuspidora-a,
That's what it's for-a.

"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. 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.

She poised for a moment before settling to the desk, in the attitude of a
canny abbess.
It was like her,...

in editorials in a crusading newspaper that will campaign for taxing the beastly
Company until it hurts.

"They're not. Can you believe it, they're not."

I had pledged not to go back to Marias Coulee.

Running up and down the stairstep of eight grades like a lighthouse keeper
of minds
"I must take you into my confidence."

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That put a different light on the matter.

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Slim and supple as anyone could be, just before the topography of womanhood began curving and thrusting.

that sudden season of last childhood, spent trying to figure out how the truces of life are won or lost.

teaching chunky boys and gawky girls.

Rab, ajump with ideas

This was Rab at her conspiratorial best.

"I don’t know what we’d do without your jawbone."

"You’re the one to talk."

cinnamon eyes

Russian Famine: "Could if I had to."

"Vixen."

"There’s been someone, hasn’t there."
And even after ten years, I needed no reminding, I still was bound by the terms of that farewell.

Rab switched her tail and pounced.

"That will do, Sharp Ears."

you can't pass that up

"Say, don't I know you?" The postman

Mornings I would see the line of people at the library, Sandison counting his staff into the building as he had done with his cowboys at the corral on the ranch.

Grace doesn't know M's real name; section ending:
If she only knew.

My rightful name is Morgan Llewellyn.

Guys will have so much reading material

"Morrie," she said tragically, "you're giving me hives."

"I shall try to uphold the tradition."

It couldn't be your good looks."

It probably wasn't your cologne."

But these ain't everyday circumstances, huh?"

Options as to why Bailey has been sicced onto M:

--The Senator is about to investigate Black Sox scandal, and along with it, fixed fights. At Sandison's suggestion, he wants M. back in Montana to help finagle taxation of Anaconda.

--Sandison has sent Bailey, similar to above, because Sandison has been named head of new tax commission.
--Dora S. has left Morrie and Grace the Butte mansion--but S. along with it. (or vice versa)

with her wonderful lilt.

may be old as the hills, but he

When it comes to brains,

"...when you were Down Under."

"Under? Ah, yes. Terra australis. Tasmania and that."

The island continent accounted for my ten-year absence from Montana,

previous to...

(S quotes editorial) "Not bad."

"You have a suspicious nature, Morgan," he sniffed. "It's unbecoming."

"Did you just now figure that out?" "You're slowing down, Morgan."

The beat of the drums could have brought down the wall of Jericho.

Blacksmiths and helpers, their leather aprons flapping with every step.

Pressmen in the square newspaper caps they wear.

Medley of national tunes...

Bunting looped down the announcer's perch (4th of July '19)... Rough Riders

"...when you were Down Under."

"Under? Ah, yes. Terra australis. Tasmania and that."

The island continent accounted for my ten-year absence from Montana,

previous to...
Only in America. That shopworn
tall, husky through the shoulders, mild blue eyes, black hair slicked back.
onward, to call it that, into the trenches of death in France.
the treacherous mineshafts of Butte.
with these two as his guardians.
“You were putty when you came to me, at age what?”
How, behind any one person, the others lingered. The past calved them, as
surely as icebergs emanate from the glaciers of Greenland. Some certain skein of
event changed what would come, what would be fixed into memory.

She already was making a mighty bet in choosing life with this soldier on
the front lines of the miners’ union, I thought to myself.
some I could mention
at a loosened floorboard in the drawing room

maybe about says it, Professor.”

Montana found itself shackled instead of wed. If the hill of copper was a
horn of plenty, the miners had come out at the little end.
copper collar

“I grasp that Anaconda is very near almighty in this city.”
from their earlier recital of labor’s struggles that the Anaconda Company
some time back had lowered miners’ wages by a dollar a day, a sharp cut, and the
union leadership at the time had called a strike that shortly failed at the point of
bayonet.

“What’s the other saying--‘bloody but unbowed’?”

Jared was not one to daub his life thick with philosophy. “Don’t get me
started on Anaconda.”
“Might as well,” he
He smiled ever so slightly.

“Ah, those.”

“We have to keep the troops out of it,” Jared said.
The idea is to come up with fair tax rates and put it to a statewide vote.
Puzzled, I spoke the most common of knowledge.
Rab swooped on that. “Just for fun, let’s say you...
He grinned across the plates at me.

Anaconda goons on the lookout for me,

Were I a family man,

“Can we count on you?”

“Somebody has to worry about you if you won’t,” she muttered.
She scooted her chair closer to mine.

“For a minute there, I thought you’d sprung Sigmund Freud on us.”
an idealistic countenance here and a cynical one there
to hit Anaconda where it hurts.
Young, old, eager, dyspeptic, fashion plates and near bums, even a few
women.

and his union lieutenants

on the quiet—which was to say, in strict secrecy so as not to alert Anaconda
and its mouthpiece, the Post. The word judiciously passed in speakeasies, spread
to country weeklies where a fledgling reporter or a veteran compositor might be
ready to move on, sprinkled into even such unconventional precincts as the Butte
Public Library;
the thought lofting me as if in balloon ascension

"I don't doubt that we can get people to read the rest of the paper,
Professor,
pleaded that my ears were burning
get away with fancy wordslinging and that'll do the trick. People will
want"

Although there was the creeping feeling that nature's example of carrying a house
on one's back is the snail.

We each tend to think the past has happened only to ourselves. That it is
our marrow only, particular and specific; filling our bones a special way.
Words have shadows, just as surely as we do.
Sleep didn't come, although the recurrent dream that was memory did.

After all, a life is a contraption, more complicated than most.
The geography of my life.
the wares of the world

the zigzags of life
Life plunges on.
Yet the universals were there.
It was one of those thoughts that came out of nowhere.
When a heart breaks, it falls into no predictable pattern.
only what I deserved
ours was a trade that took us various places.
When did the world ever work like that?

Whatever trails us through life, however,

The midpoint of a man's life—or perhaps more profoundly, a woman's—

I was nearing the...

I have long known so... There is no getting around the fact that... a time comes when you must examine what you are made of. Oh, it can happen more than once in the span of a life; but each time, it...

Numbers are an easy enough matter of manipulation for me, although unfortunately that facility tends to vanish around the vicinity of my wallet. matters such as a moose of a house and

take your time, but not too much time,

smirk and all,

he dropped Chicago persona

You can make some real money. It doesn't need to be obvious. It's like a game of catch we used to play on Maxwell Street—were you ever in that neighborhood?

"I've passed through."

"Not giving much away, are you?"

"Somebody who looked like you, I must be thinking about."

That's what I'd like about you, if I could,"

"Modest, hmm? That can cover a lot."
"I grasp that Anaconda is very near almighty in this city."
I watched him start to prowl in search of how this could be put into words.
A chill went from my soles up to my soul.
I did not like the particular intonation he gave it.
I had banked my anger all during this, but now it flared. "Join the side of
the murderers. you mean."

He looked sour, "They didn’t do a good job of that. Shooting people in
broad daylight, with dozens of witnesses including the cops. Sometimes these
Wall Street types could learn a lot from Chicago. You’ve been there, natch."

That found a seam in him.
We drew new assessments of one another.
Cartwright:
"I know no more of that than a walrus does of the Gulf of Carpentaria."
He rolled that around in his head a few times, glowering at me.

on the rising ground
open up like a good fellow.
It is part of my personality that I don’t have any doubt that I can carry the
day. Only that the burden is worth it.

"This is from the Chicago boys, fixer."
"Moe sent me," he parodied the speakeasy password that had practically
become the national "Open, Sesame" since Prohibition.
Butte had long practice in getting people to the hospital in a hurry, and I
clung to whatever I could in the back of the ambulance clanging its way to St. 00's.
"hang on, please, doctors do wonders these days."
was often shaded with the odd illusion that
What would we be without women?” He shuddered.

“What?” I was still in a daze.

Get on with life, man.”

Surely Mrs. Sandison, were she here, would chide you that you’re being overly hard on yourself.” Not to mention, on me.

I do have to say,

Eyebrows working, he gave me

The old rogue was accustomed to tapping into the payroll budget to buy books. Not merely that, but adding them to his collection that formed the core of the Butte Public Library’s unique holdings, the editions with the SSS bookplates. There was a paste pot on his desk there, too.

on the scorecard of worry,

“The Chicago pinky ring. Interesting.”

“Not now,” Sandison gave out another groan. “I can’t irrigate and enunciate at the same time.”

Was it against my better judgment that I let him in?

“A gift of providence.”

How low do you think you can go
dapper dashing “Needs some upkeep, though, doesn’t it.” “Providence as well as the premises, maybe?”

the last-word expression of the aslant mouth

He turned to me with a sardonic curl of his mouth.

a trap, was that?--

“Not bulletproof, though, I guess.”

This is where the shoot-'em-up was, hmm?

You got anything to drink in this 00?”

“I thought we were exchanging words enough in print,”
the cocky grin sure of having the last word

What did the jokers at the paper tell me is in this dump town,” he pondered,

“the old gray mare?”

I’d been trapped into responding naturally to the Chicago pronunciation.

“This is where the excitement took place, hmm?”

Just to get things rolling, you got anything to drink in this chateau?”

“By the thousands,” I replied tightly.

“Modest, hmm? That can cover a lot.”

“I grasp that Anaconda is very near almighty in this city.”

“That’s what I’d like about you, if I could,”

What was it about being met daily by Armbriester’s directive of how many column inches of editorial space I had to fill

that busied my mind to the perfect extent?

for editorial give-and-take

I shortly was back at Armbriester’s desk produced a paragraph so quickly that Armbriester looked in startlement at the sheet of paper.

The editor frowned as only an editor can.

resounding and then stilled on the carpet,

“Can I see you a minute?”

Jared fingered his bullet-lopped ear

“If you’ve got evenings free, I wondered if...

She thinks you hung the moon

With a little shake of his head,

“How about it? Show Famine how to handle his dukes?”

“There’s a lesson there, too. A person can’t have too many means of defense.”
like bad luck trails after a black cat. isn’t it.

Cautious as I was in answering the door since Sandison’s shooting, a very jumpy Russian Famine was huddled under the porchlight by the time I let him in the following evening.

“Sounds a little better.”

, he more than ever was skin and bones, but Jared was right, he was growing.

was shuffling his feet as if trying to get a start

inged into the hallway

His eyes grew round as he gazed past me at the extent of the house. “All this yours?”

“For now. Until Sandison comes home from the hospital.”

His voice went hushed

The question spilled out of him.

Darting glances right and left and finding no evidence of carnage, he looked so crestfallen I took pity and pointed to the bullet holes in the ceiling. Those drew a properly impressed “Huh!”

He gaped around at the house.

If possible, Famine became even more jumpy

All too plainly, he burned through food without adding

“Mister? I gotta tell you.

if I hadn’t rolled with the punch, that would have seemed more fittingly outfitted as a pirate than as a homeowner

in the marrow of my being. Beng alone was nothing new in my life, but never had I felt so lonely. One’s own footsteps, the only parlance in the emptiness between hyphens of carpet, are a sad stutter of existence hour upon hour.

I craved solitude when I could get it.
Hence the art of self-defense, which

"That's better!" Appreciatively he counted the ceiling perforations to himself, then gave me an awkward glance.

The boyish eyes brightened, then searched mine.

My questioner

"Yeah, well, that puts a lot on both of us, don't it."

It was uncanny

Even standing still, Russian Famine was in motion.

Sparring with Casper

I was panting.

"Huh. And that's with these powderpuffs on."

Try it again.

Now, though, I missed Grace in every bit of her being, down to the dimple.

I even missed Hoop and Griff making a racket in the precincts of the house.

Other than the camels Grace and I had briefly tried at the Sphinx, ...

He still was laid up,

I was, but Armbrister remained dubious.

Hold it.

I think I recognized the style before Sandison fully did, which was not the same as grasping its signifance.

I pitched in some horses for the cause, and

said I was too old to be saddling up and going off to war.

so fast it'll make his head swim."

"No ma'am. Not without ...

As she swallowed before saying anything
went perfectly still

"What'll he do, hop a train?"

"I'll go."

Sister Magdalena holds the firm belief men are the weaker sex

The statewide vote could not be held until the fall, added to the ballot in the
off-year county and local elections.

and while Jared in the interval was rallying support in every nook of society
he could think of—the Daughters of the American Revolution rated a big headline in
our pages when they were coaxed into declaring the Anaconda-influenced tax
system to be taxation without representation--

the copper press in other cities relentlessly parroted the company line against
our own.

All along the route to the newspaper office
.

It was eerie, and that meant it was news.

"And we're in trouble."

this isn't helping anyone but Anaconda."

We would also see how In the time ahead, we were to see a lot.

I forced a chuckle of demurral.

"We'll see about that."

In this time of tension, the Miners Day parade ... Instead, the Anaconda
Company is throwing open Columbia Gardens, free for all, with the addition of the
Circus...

Ducks in a row.

Jared picked up on that while Armbrister and I were still at the starting
line. "All of us march in the little parade then, with the kiddies and their
sparklers, you mean? Pull a fast one on the mayor's bunch and make it Miners
Day, whatever the hell patriotic whoop-te-do they try to call it?"
“There must be something in the air,” Jared Evans laughed for probably the first time in weeks. “Make it sound good, Professor.”

His advice...

practically orchestral in hitting high notes and low
one day accusing Anaconda of villainous bullying, and the next, sounding a note of defiance for the citizenry of Butte to harken to
that would reach its fullest measure on Miners Day
Jared grimaced at the comparison, but remained firm
He took a long breath as if gathering strength.
, steel in his gaze
Thanks all to hell, up there in the Hennessy Building
He puffed out his cheeks
about the latest Cutlass slash, Rab along for moral support,
Armbriester leapt at it.
The threat made my skin crawl

The Miners Day parade, I knew from experience, was Butte’s version of New Orleans’ Mardi Gras, Venice’s Carnivale, Munich’s Bierfest, of all such gala holidays from the daily strains of life, a civic celebration giving mineworkers a chance to march in their thousands under peaceable conditions, the various lodges and brotherhoods and sisterhoods to show off their regalia, businesses to build floats to wow and woo customers, on and on through the ranks of all those with local pride or some cause to flaunt. Even the Anaconda Company declared truce of a sort, with free admission to its Columbia Gardens recreation park at the far edge of the city for the day.
It was on that uniquely Butte day, two years since, that Grace and I first courted, watching the parade together and then strolling the amusement park called Columbia Gardens like bashful lovers.

A day like the most perfect dream.

blah blah blah.

The Legion lets in any outfit with a color guard and marching units, from the DAR to the GAR.” then, you mean, with the kiddies and their sparklers and the patriotic folderol, a couple of blocks long?

“The American Legion parade then, you mean, with the kiddies and their sparklers and the patriotic folderol, a couple of blocks long? Pull a fast one on the mayor’s bunch and the Hennessy?”

Jared was off and running with the idea.

“We’ll run a special section,” Armbrister pitched in, “playing up the idea--Butte Marches for Loyalty and Country. Let the readers catch on, loyalty to what.” “We’ve got tons of union members who were in the war or the Philippines or Mexico against Villa or some goddamn where. There isn’t a neighborhood on the Hill that can’t come up with a color guard and plenty of marchers.” Catching up, thinking of how the Daughters of the American Revolution would be costumed and the Grand Army of the Republic veterans would be in their Union blue, I contributed, “And you, Sergeant Evans, must wear your uniform and be out front, like a good soldier.”