different version used in June '95 revise:

surface with him this time; when Franklin Delano Roosevelt got up into the air, on a political platform and on out into the ethers of radio, he took you over by all the tricks there are, [the sheriff concluded.]
on C's advice, cut from ice scene p. 489+ this name gimmick:

Quincy or Kingsley or something like that

Kingston and Quentin or whoever he was

Whatchamacallim's, Quinn's or King's
Bruce took a chance with this otherwise not particularly fathomable uncle. "Warming your toes on Proxy's tummy."

Darius stopped stomping and looked at Bruce. Then he downright giggled. "Toes!" The rest of the day, he every so often would hoot: "Toes!"

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changed ch. 5 title from Mercury and Other Elements to: Plugging the River
(16 March '95)
The hammers hit higher notes while the pile driver gave bass whumps beside the river. The bluffs of the Missouri had heard clamor before: the bawling rumble of buffalo herds, the axes of woodhawks cutting fuel for the steamboats. But there had been fifty years of comparative silence since either of those. (tractors, farming?) Now the first loud pinions of the Fort Peck project were being driven: the supports of the spur railroad trestle, the nails of a dancefloor.
And like urchins imitating higher society, the towns built themselves, shack by shanty by flophouse by gin mill; rough arrangements of neighborhood, no platline defining where Wheeler left off and New Deal began but everybody somehow knew...

People, such as Margaret Duff, who would have sworn they hated the roistering side of life, now found themselves practically aswim in it, just from residence in Wheeler.
different version used in ch. 2:

"So here you are, Mrs. Duff—the Congo."

Charlene couldn't manage a laugh. The jitney bus stopped in the middle of Wheeler, and Owen and she got off... If the Fort Peck damsite was a jungle of mud and grotesque equipment, the so-called town of Wheeler was a Hooverville plastered with advertisements. They picked their way to 00 street and the boxlike shanty.

"Here you go, Mother—brought you the other love of my life."
which Owen’s most recent letter had likened to trying to play poker in a hailstorm.
for what that was worth. The general nature of the project, feel of crew and diagrams of organization, already was taking over. They had filled out employment forms, been given a brass button with an employment number (9 for Hugh, Neil 10, and Bruce inexplicably 57) to pin on a shirt pocket, and now climbed up into one of the crew trucks for the jouncing ride of seventeen miles to the river. So far, Hugh thoroughly despised everything about government relief work.
The valley of the Missouri at Fort Peck was more open and tapered and capacious than the canyon country of the Duff homestead. The first impression was of greatly more valley than river, cloaked as the Missouri was with brush and stands of cottonwood along its banks. But this river of wood, in and of itself, was immense, signifying how wide the channel of water within it must be.
The kind of man who'd send one present to cover three boys...

"What does it run on?"
"alcohol." (1919 Problem) Not for 1st time wondered over brothers' devilment betw. Hugh's hands - big square mitts the ed. help too was deliberate...
"We have three," Hugh Duff had given him that corroded chuckle again. But one's a dirt dam engineer."

There at first, then, the Duffs were only a single handful, five in total. Hugh and Dora, Neil, Bruce. Owen. And the Fort Peck project was big enough to hold them. The sheriff later dug out that, back the in '33 when the farmers were cleared out of the damsite and in turn were hired to clear the damsite of brush and cottonwoods, the situation
The sheriff later dug up the fact that, back there in '33 when the alfalfa farmers were being cleared out of the Missouri River bottomland and in turn hired to clear the damsite of brush and cottonwoods, the Duffs amounted to only a single handful. . . . But then, Sheriff Kinnick reminded himself bitterly, that was always the thing about the damnable dam. From day one, everything about Fort Peck was going to set a record.
Sangster was a bridger, and the Fort Peck project was going to require bridges galore, railroad bridges and truck-traffic bridges, never-quite-done-before bridges. Even more, though, the project needed Owen's specialty. Earthfill. Soil, gravel... Think of a mile, and pile its
different version used?

Neil and Bruce watched as if they had just been adopted into a new family. The give-and-take among the Duffs was nothing new; oo-and-oo roar-and-roar back, truly was.
"I dunno, though," Sangster said. "Hellish far from anyplace."

"What," Owen gave him with a grin now,
"This wind, though," Sangster asked, "it go on like this all the time?"

"Nah." Owen couldn't resist. "Usually it really blows."

"Guess I better get used to it," Sangster said with a sigh, "or marry money."
different version used:

After all, this was their way out from defeat, was it not? Hugh had refused to see it so, stubborn against the evidence: the wane in crop prices, the now annual wrath of grasshoppers.
go thru these in one of the final revises for anything usable
changed in Jan. '95 revise:

Hugh's Xmas jape of "We'll come to the table...everything that seems sort of stable"

to

...everything this side of the stable."
he sketched a wet arc. "But the original river went like this. Rivers are always changing, that's the history of it that we have to put up with. What a river does, any river, is geologically temporary." Tutor to his parents, Owen glanced up earnestly to make sure they, particularly the male one, were seeing this revelation of the river's courses.

"Until glacial times changed things around, the Missouri River didn't flow anywhere near our place."

"These are not glacier times!" Hugh all but shouted.
Some will tell you he's one of those bughouse cases, radical of some kind.

That's only the Finn in him, I figure."

Darius took a swallow of beer and carefully tried: "That sounds

like perhaps a different tack from your Sheriff Kinnick's."
changed in Jan. '95 revise:

The sheriff didn't know squat about married life, and so it never did dawn on him that Charlene Duff could have been jealous of a mound of dirt.

p. 33B follows
changed in Jan. '95 revise:

lately come down with it.

Hugh only said, "Never a bad idea, to keep matters aboveground."
omitted in Jan. '95 revise:

blizzard that swept through Fort Peck unsettled him in a way the infestations on the bottomland farm never did. The, what, general nature of all he had been set on as his work in life had fallen into ques--

"A penny for them," Meg said, to draw him out of his well of silence.
So now we got October left to go, he put his mind to. Two months that I'd better treat as one sixty-day one, just maintain fifty thousand yards of goop a day and there it'll be, sufficient unto the goddamn year.

Won't matter that it's been October, November, autumn on the Montana Riviera, any of that. Take it day by day, sixty more times, is what I've got to do. Move the mud, that's the daily drill, Duff.
cut in Jan. '95 revise, after "fusel oil" material went into ms; this seemed one mention too many.

with the current bottle of beer (he wished the art of brewing would come to America), this Friday night he brought with him what he had just heard from Jaraala.
The *Producers News* editor briefly broke into line, said a few words to Mott, and was gone out the door.

"That Plimpton, though, Tom," Darius observed. "A belly on him like a burglar's sack."

"He knows his stuff, even if he does look a little bloaty," Jaraala maintained. "He gets against somebody in that newspaper of his and he tears them a new asshole. Him and Mott have worked together a long time."
that plumpish editor up there at the end of the front row; The Producers
News, as he ran it, was a wordslinging fiesta. Every fluctuation of politics, up, down, sideways, red, blue or yellow, was registered in its prairie ink. For those who liked that sort of thing, Plimpton produced plenty for them to like.
Not by accident did Meg and Hugh Duff's double helping of sons mimick a looking-glass comparison, for Birdie Hinch's benefit. Neither Neil nor Bruce could ever pass up a mirror, and neither wanted to see any twin exactness reflected back. Naturally they'd had all the pacts that twins start out with—as toddlers, their private language for everything from the spoon in their mush to petting the dog; as growing boys, that
Darius saw with Sorel, the French thinker: the syndical... The strikes were not big enough. To squash the big bugs, the managing directors of the Clydeside shipyards who ruled the workmen's wages and hours, you had to
floodplain. By a third of the way through this century, the pattern
was as set as cry and echo, each annal desiring a next: the human tide
and the Missouri River, flowing together to story. [To this one.

Siderius always kept to the same spiel, had it down slick by now:
changed in Dec.'94 draft:

Owen to Medwick: "Sure, Cece, we all know that." (To: "Sure, Cece, everybody and his uncle knows that.")
different version used in Dec. '94 draft:

how to read. "Can't I be just curious?"

"What happened was, I hear this hissing and growling right there in what's left of the old room Bruce and I used to sleep in," Neil was saying across the tableful of potluck to Rhonda, "and there's this bobcat..."
"They patty-caked him in '32," Jaraala elaborated. "Democrats didn't run anybody for a bunch of county offices in exchange for Republicans not putting up anybody for sheriff, the deal was. So then both parties put their whole vote against Mott and his people, and it beat them."
Far enough, thought Darius, there's ever the question: how far is far enough? Politically, he could agree with Mott almost in a trice, by reflex: there had to be a better way to run the world than letting the big bugs of finance do it. But the other measure, out from yourself to what you let yourself be capable of... Crawfurd, damnable Crawfurd. The look on him after... "I'm--interested."
if a person could just stand defining "temporary" as including the next three or four years.

The Duffs, no strangers to the crosscurrents of Fort Peck since day one, were spending that 1934 summer in an unexpected new pull, in the direction of Neil.
"She's at the stage of desperate craving for pickles, and nothing else compares with Mr. Jaraala's gherkins."
different version used in Nov. '94 writing:

(Tom Harry:)

"Duff, you're a goddamn delight. I wouldn't trade you for a pinto pony."
It was Neil who spotted the Diamond Reo.

He went over to the truck as if he could rub it and have three wishes granted. The one-ton Diamond Reo was a bulldog model, the engine snug almost directly beneath the windshield. True, the snub cab and the rest of the vehicle had seen better days, quite a number of them; the paint had to be guessed at as originally brownish green. From farm experience, though, the Duffs knew that when sun and other elements had blistered a piece of machinery down to blue metal, it was just getting nicely broken in.
possible version for end of Meg-Charlene argument:

"Nobody said he has to stop being your--"

"Well, then!"

"Well then, what!!?"
Uncomfortably joining the rest of the Duffs, Neil brightly proffered

"How you doing, Ownie?" [(Bruce was not speaking to Owen since getting his ears boxed, which Owen found something of a relief)] while Bruce said to nowhere, "Thought we'd get out of the house for a change."

"A need of fresh air, no doubt," said Meg.
as if testing it for sharpness. "It's not a matter of that. I know Owen
and you have"—she glanced at Charlene's hair, which Charlene suddenly
realized still had all the runnels and other muss made by Owen's fingers—
"yourselves to do with."
change Neil's final "line" to unspoken (on the theory of making him
him, and possibly Rhonda, characters who don't talk as much as the other
Duffs), something like:

...It was as good as said, which was good enough for Neil.

...Both brothers heard at the same time how wide open Bruce had left
himself. Neil's opportunity was right there, in about seven words' worth...
Across the first two weekends in March of 1934, the Duffs whacked lodging together two such sets of Wheeler residence, a rough-lumber cabin of two rooms for Hugh and Meg, and a one-room beaverboard special for the enthusiastic new bachelor householders, Neil and Bruce.

Sheriff Carl Kinnick took up the implications of the Wheeler frontier.
It somehow went neither. Hugh said with savage satisfaction, "A few more hundred domestic miracles, and we'll almost be living like people again," then went to wash for supper.

Neil and Bruce were in their cinematic period. A Wheeler entrepreneur had deduced that people could not drink and dance one hundred percent of the time, and opened a moviehouse; the two Duff brothers became instant
different version used in May '94 writing:

Owen knew his thesis did it. He had worked the topic to death, tabulating the performance of earthen dams. The trip to Panama to see the Gatun Dam, the biggest earthfill dam ever done, making use of the material moved in cutting the Panama Canal. Working on a freighter to get there...

And on around to the U.S. east coast, to look back on the one that spooked everybody--Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Two thousand two hundred and eighty lives lost, when that dam went out in 1889.
Dear one, about the other dams; I know you will do what you think best. I only want the world to see Goin' Owen really go.

If they chose the right ladder, there was no limit to the height her Owen could reach and keep.
changed in May '94 revise:

"The rest get thrown in free. Charlene, this only until they can get themselves squared away here. The real hiring is going to start any day, and I've got enough say, here and there on the project, for Neil and Bruce and even the Old Man to come up with pretty damn good jobs. So, all I'm saying is it'd help everybody's situation by not having my mother on the outs with us." Owen put a hand into her hair, stroking gently. "How about just giving that a try for me, think you can?"
Meg brightened right up at that, and although Owen had told Charlene about the bottomland jobs that the other men of the family had caught on at, Meg's rendition of the Duffs of the dam had an amused pride that drew Charlene's interest in spite of herself. As little as she knew them, Neil seemed to her a skim-milk version of Owen, while Bruce seemed to be the family's wild jackass. Hugh she had figured as an out-and-out ogre, from Owen's shakes of the head and snorts when he spoke of his father.
Hugh had hoped they were leaving this behind them in Scotland.

But he never quite knew, with Meg. That was the glory and the damnation in being wed to this woman. He loved her so much, how could hers for him possibly be equivalent? Back there in Crail he had won her, then was afraid his victory might not hold, and that brought the turn to America. An ocean and most of the American continent seemed to him about the right distance between them and the Crail memory.
Nothing seemed to impress Rhonda. Bruce could go into the dammedest antic he could think of, and she would simply meet it as if it was the time of day.
Certainly the next few days did not help matters much. Ninian and Flora's children were formidable.
unused in July '94 ms version:

Darius preached sheep to them--more accurately, to Hugh--
There was another pair of beers involved, and closer dancing, before the two of them found themselves in the cab of the truck, trying out some kissing.
the end of Neil-Rosellen's 1st date:
originally--  "Maybe they're better...here?"
              "Yes. I think so."
changed to--  "Maybe they're better...here?"
              "Yes. They're doing fine there."
"A standing time, is what I want. The same each week. Here:

after work, Fridays—put me in, pretty please, Owen."

He picked up the appointment pencil as directed. "Paydays, yeah, those are always popular," he said musingly, glancing from Meg toward his father. At the edge of the croquignole league, Hugh stood looking like a man with something on his mind, or, worse, like a man trying not to have something on his mind.
Traffic, afoot and automotive, was thick enough to be a hazard to the two men as they dodged across the main street. Evidently the clientele was beyond local. Late in from a trout stream somewhere, a fat fisherman in chest-high waders arrived at one of the saloons, rubber in front of them and stood, massive bulge filling the doorway, for a moment. Home, home, he knew it entering, and exultantly copped on in.
Hugh in bar w/ Darius, uses "kitchy-coo" instead of "foofaraw"

Darius. For one thing, it takes away the--” Hugh woozily searched for word he wanted "--kitchy-coo. And it holds up well. Darius, you know, they say even a mouse grows tired of going in and out of the same hole. But I never have."
different version used in Nov. '94 writing:

Shakespeare shaped the language, Dr. Johnson said only a dunderhead ever wrote except for money, Mark Twain...

Rosellen knew none of this, yet she was on a cloud of it all. Her pencil agonized, and liked the agony. Time escaped, and she minded not at all.
Hugh ran in streaks. There'd be an obstinacy, as about staying on the place, and about the boys; then alongside it there'd be a softness such as his sprees. Darius hadn't shown her any such differentiation; Darius was all of one metal. But her father had been that way, too; pure preacher, in an impure congregation, the world. She hadn't wanted the rest of the absolute that came with Darius; she was ready to try a bent tool... Hugh had already been bent (dented) by the world... the dents in...
a creamery

Hugh came home in a mood that would have curdled cream and found Darius established at the kitchen table.
One thing puzzled Darius. "'Permanent,' though—why's this hairfixing called that?"

"That's American for 'more than overnight,'" Hugh informed him. "If you think I'm going to call it spasms, Darius, you have another think coming."
Oddly, it was the advent of Owen that seemed to make Hugh, Meg, and Darius a threesome. The boy's birth was followed by an acceleration from those visits of Darius. It ought to have been natural enough, that his fond attention to the child meant time in proximity to the mother, too. Hugh, though, already had to live with the suspicion that Meg's choosing of him had been a close decision in the first place; now here, down from Glasgow every fortnight, was another form of that. Hugh could not, did not dare, believe that she would actually toss him over for
"Probably just what houseboats were invented for," she said, scraping her chair back from the table. "Come on, elucidator."
One big moment stayed with Bruce from that Christmas. He couldn't account for it, how he had even noticed it with all the dinner distraction going on; or why he hadn't thought of it before. Neil sat next to him,
Tricks of direction aside, Owen already felt at home in these big sweeps of valley and plateau and plain that the Fort Peck country presented.

Gimcracks of nature bothered him. Back there at the home place, the Duff homestead, where Go-Devil Creek flowed into the Missouri there were formations of rock in fantastic shapes. Rocks that were mimicking toadstools and beehives and icicles made Owen uneasy. It seemed to him that the life of the planet ought to be more serious than that.
and dimensions of Owen's engineering world. Watching him, Meg bit her lip. Then he said, "A few more hundred domestic miracles, and we'll almost be living like people again," and went to wash for supper.
When they had to break their clinch or risk freezing permanently together nose to nose, Owen glanced at the sun and said they'd better for all time.
it had to be. The river hadn't heard the logic, and in this Valley County stretch, the Missouri regularly coiled back and forth—river miles, the engineers categorized these distances which looped back on themselves—between headlands as if dutifully depositing topsoil into every corner of the giant trough of valley, then shot out of its series of writhes with an abrupt notion to go north. The Fort Peck midpoint of this brief
"Huh uh. You want crazy, that's Bruce."

"--and then I thought, maybe he has something there. Maybe my Fort Peck husband and I ought to be each other's gift."

"Pretty good one, so far." Owen's hand did one of the things she liked done. "Once a person gets you unwrapped," he went on murmuring, "there's quite a lot of--"

A storm of coughing announced that the occupant of the room next door had come awake.
changed, when this argument was shifted from shack to Blue Eagle:

"How can this ever work?"

Owen saw that Hugh was gazing in the direction of the lateral blueprint, the dam in its unprecedented width. "It'll work, don't worry yourself about that," he stated tightly. "What we'll be doing is using the flow of the dredge material to sort--"
that we've been put out of a place that would send Eden to shame. Hugh, the place, these years—when there weren't too many grasshoppers, there was too little rain. When the crop was good, the price wasn't. When the price was good, the crop wasn't. The place made us a start, but it never made us much else. The wages here, if we her look said you—"keep at it, can fetch us to somewhere better. That wasn't the only place on the face of the earth where you can grow a stalk of alfalfa."

"It's the place we had," Hugh said.
The idea on high was from John Maynard Keynes, compensatory-spending-by-the-government-to-set-the-economy-in-motion, by way of the Roosevelt Administration, but down here at the far end...
different version used in Aug. '94:

[Even the Dabneys back into history instantly wowed Bruce.] Out of all the tortuous routes that were depositing thousands of people willy-nilly at Fort Peck, Rhonda's story was the least expected: local. Her family had run the Fort Peck ferry, upstream only a little way from the damsite activity. "Down the bluff from Happy Hollow, if you know where that is," she slipped in on Bruce with a straight face.

"Heard of it," he said, then hastily: "But honest to God, tied to the wagon?"
supper together, these happy two, who could talk to each other about
everything under the sun

but the river.
patrolled by Army troops. (The nearby Fort Peck Indian Reservation was a waiting swamp of venereal disease; no, the Fort Peck Indian Reservation had the cleanest safest women imaginable.)
"Suppose that's Herbert Heifer Hoover, out looking for work?" Neil said to be saying something.

"Maybe the guy's selling the cure for grasshoppers," came Bruce's version, "and the Old Man's trying to jimmy the price down a little." Inch-long 'hoppers batted against their pantlegs as he dolloped water into the mixture while Neil stirred with a long-handle shovel. "He better hurry up."
around at the broad valley and the milky river winding slowly through it. Farren of course was right: where the hell were the big oxbows, the great carving swings of the river to wear away this much valley?

Or if water hadn't done it with centuries of patience, where then was the till of glaciation, the boulders and other grinding material? Where was anything the damned textbook said ought to be here?

"Before the glaciers," Farren gave them a hint, then couldn't help spelling it out. "Lake Great Falls--the meltwater had to go someplace."
different version used; apply this to one of the dam towns? Toston?

seemed to lose interest in the river and pottered off onto a route

that noodled through the Highwood Mountains, on into downtown Shonkin, which was about the size of a barnyard, down in the middle of a tremendous swale. They clattered into Havre, and on through, Zell choosing to make camp in the Milk River Valley just east of town. The next morning, they weren't entirely done with breakfast before Zell cleared his throat, paced back and forth a few times, and said, "Welcome to the Missouri River."
unused in hotel bed scene after Charlene comes to Glasgow:

"About your staying, though. You're sure, are you?"
Owen could not have been more pleased with Neil, the go-at-it attitude he was showing in the dam work. Heaven knew, Owen needed him as an ally. With the two of them and their mother, there was a chance to steer this family out of its skid, get everybody earning, sober, serious—Fort Peck could be the making of the Duffs, if enough of them could persuade the others along.
Dig, shoot, mow, flow, and shout. (formula for claiming land, derived from C'sen's foreword to The Public Lands)
different version used:

face-on. Hugh saw the alfalfa fields
the Fort Peck country head-on, when the truck

The stubble of the alfalfa fields,

patterned..., sent Hugh even more morose. Neil and Bruce

bluff, Neil caught the outline of lime laid by the surveyors... Even

skeleton

Bruce hushed up a minute, in study of the white outline...

skeletal white on which the dam and reservoir

There were about seventy-five of them, gathered when the trucks

and a few pickups and some government cars
Saturday morning, December 23rd, Charlene was unlocking the big fresh inch of damp double doors of Winningham's, the night's snow  doughy snow under her overshoes. Perfect for snowballing. Perfect for anything, and she wished it had held off until Owen would get here for New Year's.

She made a mental note...
and Shorty jabbered about the haircut heaven ahead when all the Fort
Peck hirees needed a haircut at once, some Saturday night soon, the
sheriff only half-listened, still trying to think out this Fort Peck
project situation. Okay, say they were half-crazy to start with, over
there in Sheridan County, Scandinavians and such. The fact remained
his mind still stuck on the question of this Fort Peck project. Depression,
drought, grasshoppers, you name it, the past years had dumped them all
on northern Montana. So the sheriff had to admit that this part of the
country could stand something done about it, for it. But to it?
Meg looked distinctly less surprised than her twin sons as they came over. "Seeing the sights too, lads?"

"How you doing, Ownie?" from Neil. Bruce had not spoken to Owen since getting his ears boxed, which Owen found something of a relief.

"You're out on the town too, huh?" Owen grinned at the discomfited pair. "Must not be working you guys hard enough."

"Thought we'd get out of the house for a change," Bruce said to nowhere.

"A need of fresh air, no doubt," Meg said.
"You're looking spruce," Hugh eyed Owen's attire. "Isn't he, Meg."

Owen tried to measure his father's mood

"Is this guy behaving himself with you, Mrs. Duff?"

an absolute

"He's a marvel," Meg said

"If you're through discussing me in front of my back
"At least I get the chance," the brunette said coolly.

The blonde gave the brunette a little slap, which was a mistake.

The brunette came up out of the chair like a shot, fists balled, and knocked the blonde onto a nearby table.
changed in Feb. '95 writing:

Fingerprinting occurred the next Friday, a day hotter for some at Fort Peck than even the soaring July thermometer indicated.

"Some new regulation from the alphabet guys in Washington, D.C.,"
Neil and Bruce watched as Darius poured cream and sugar on his slice of rhubarb pie, then dug into theirs. While Bruce and Darius talked through mouthfuls, Neil let his gaze drift after Rhonda, curious to see whether she went at things the way Rosellen would have. Not really. Rosellen would have scurried with the plateloads of food, the relentless coffee pot. None of Rhonda's take-it-or-leave-it style.
"I'm not. But if you think I'm going to pass up a crack at blasting something like this"—J.L. jerked his head and skinny neck in the general direction of the frozen river—"you've got another think coming."
omitted in April '95 writing:

ms p. 460, "as he (Owen) gave the first blink of that night's semaphore of recognition."
as things were built and things were demolished, Charlene got her bearings from the railroad bridge which linked the two halves of the dam. A long lattice box of steel from the railroad bridge. Owen always said Sangster had worked a miracle with that bridge, one long lattice box of steel which spanned the Missouri supports except its concrete piers on each bank; Max's running without any mid-river supports jump across the river, he called it.
On this Rosellen was her own first-hand source. Simply to come
to work, a person had to load on so many clothes you felt like you were
traveling in a closet.
If he were the gatekeeper of it all, he would stamp himself under foot like a bug. On the other hand, not so fast. He, Hugh, wouldn't write himself off entirely. In lieu of life, there was always planning.
"I keep reaching up to pinch the brim of this thing down." (pith helmets) (When Gunga Din filmed?)

Hats were too hot. A boxcarload of the remedy came into Glasgow, but the branchline dispatcher said he'd be damned if he'd make way for such a cargo. So Neil got the trucking assignment, and the pith helmets were sold right out of the back of the truck.
doesn't it, this one. Quite the device, really. You screw it on the bed and it makes your cares go away, eh, Darius? Of course it may depend on what your cares are.
go. (That was another thing about the Darius-Proxy situation she had to marvel at. Didn't he know that Proxy, unless she'd had an angelic conversion, must go out back of the Blue Eagle with a particularly cashy customer every so often? There had to be nights when Darius, right off the bat, was getting what men snickered at as 'sloppy seconds.()'
seem to, poor damned sad baboon. But even those who aren't Bible
huggers..." Darius broke off. She knew his word for the miles-away
I can about imagine, though. He cocked a new look at her. Genuinely curious, he asked, "Where would you say this leaves us, Meg?"

On the spot, is how I would describe it, at least in your case, Hugh. Aloud, though, she said carefully: "With you as the provider of the paycheck now."
different version used in May '95 writing:

Rosellen-Rhonda conversation about Rhonda going back to work.

--general conversation, the 3 couples, about Meg needing something to do.
(Rhonda says it; broaches going back to the Rondola; it bothers Bruce to have this thrashed out in front of the others.)
"Mmm," said Charlene, proprietress of the A-I, marital partner of one of the dam project's top engineers, co-signer.
It was one of those periods in a family when...

Everyone kept saying, "We ought to get together more."

--Charlene evaluates Owen's mood, w/ the dredging going well.
different version used in May '95 writing:

I for one can barely hardly scarcely wait, but it conveyed itself.

Vigorously drying Rhonda's hair, she heard her say something. "Rhond,
sorry, I didn't quite catch that."
A different version used in May '95 writing:

dog flopped on the flowered linoleum—but by nightfall the stories about the photographer's visit were all over Wheeler. It was told that when the photographer asked the names of the uneasy trio on duty in the parlor, she got back the jingle, "We're just three destitute prostitutes." Well, maybe. Another tale was that while the Colonel's driver went into the Riding Academy first to clear the way for the photographer, a drunk tapped on the car window and asked if she was in the market for a man.

"I already have one," she said. "He's inside." The drunk stared and said, "You are the most even-tempered woman I ever heard of." Well, maybe.
and Darius talked trestle through mouthfuls, Neil let his gaze drift after Rhonda, curious whether she went at things the way Rosellen would have. Not even close. Rosellen would have scurried with the plateloads of food, the relentless coffee pot, typhoon sweeping from customer to customer. None of that in Rhonda's take-it-or-leave-it style, although she covered the territory, he could see that.
different version used in June '95 drafting:

down"—Bruce a little theatrically peered at the ugly water—"whenever you say."

Jesus, where does he get it from, the Old Man? Depend on Bruce

Duff to bring chaos out of order every time. Aloud, actually quite loud, Owen said: "And I think we don't want to go off half-cocked
different version used in June '95 drafting:

the capillaries of the vast drainage system. One by one the myriad
creeks began to lift the rivers, first the basic trio of Gallatin,
Calhoun the dredgemaster had come down from the lever house and was standing next to him. "What now, Cal?" When there was no answer, Owen glanced up from his checklist to see what Calhoun wanted.
Hugh thrashed until he was propped in a semi-sitting position in the mechanical bed, heaving with the effort and air that it took.

Owen didn't like being around sick people, did he. Well, Hugh didn't either, particularly when he was one of them. "Christ in his mighty, Owen, stay until your mother shows up, can't you at least?"
in bed that she could, well, challenge Owen. As much rumpus between the sheets as ever, they both made sure of that; then, as they lay spent, she would gradually provide her hip and leg in a cat rub against his, he would have to respond to the luxury of that, or if not, then her hand, seeming to drift, touching him there where he went hard; and then a second go. (Proxy. Second helpings were nothing there. Numerous must be the word.)
moved in June '95 revise, from picnic scene to Rosellen's writing:

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perfect early fall. In a country usually slammed by wind, today's was a gentle stirring. Come, this breeze laughed, help me chase the grass and set the wildflowers to jigging on their stem legs.
"Fancy that," said Darius, deciding it was easier to stay mystified than to delve into it. He was about to start solving supper instead when he saw that she had something more to say.
changed in July '95 writing:

and commence swearing at the stuff.

"The core pool is way to hell up," Blegen reported as if relieved to be rid of the news. "The freeboard is only three feet."
In spite of himself he shot a glance at the dredgeline, eyeballing an estimate between its discharge pipes and the pool water beneath. The freeboard, the distance between the water level in the core pool and the dredgepipes emptying into it, needed to be four and a half feet for the fill to settle properly. The reading Blegen had just given him, Christ, a discrepancy of a foot and a half, meant either a tremendous amount of shale had slipped into the pool or the dredgeline had sunk like crazy.

Owen kept watching Blegen's face. "You're not fooling, huh?"
changed in July '95 writing:

said in quickstep: "No, I didn't know it was hot, it was not my fault, nobody's fault, 'It could have happened to a bishop,'" mimicking one of Darius's sayings. "But something about it was dumb, Owen. The, I don't know, the situation was dumb, if nothing else."
"3rd time was a charm" clandestine meeting; other possible versions to work with:

--what did that make this? (discarded because of "make love" in next sentence)
"Just because you're all gussied up," Charlene said to the back of Rosellen's head. "Some of us know the meaning of work." Addressing the intent two at the back of the shop: "Mrs. Foraker is going to have my scalp if I don't get to hers right after this, isn't that so, Mrs.
And you, Hugh, would be the specimen you so long were, a rampaging drunk.
changed in July '95 writing:

it would take was some other member of the family noticing. Or picking up a bit of gossip. Reading it back into the behavior they both thought was so pussyfoot. Then word would be dropped, well-intentioned and devastating: They're not going off together to learn to play the zither, are they.
changed in July '95 writing:

"What can I get you, a glass of holy water or what?"
crayon mark across the entire valley, and while Bruce granted that it was nice all their work, especially his, had added up to this, it left him restless and bored.

nice all their work, especially his, had added up to this transformation, it left him restless and bored.
So the name of Birdie Hinch was kept among Fort Peck's missing, lastingly. As to the personage himself, that night he hopped a boxcar on a Great Northern train bound for the Pacific Coast and a try at a next life.
Bruce seemed to run out of breath. Now he was the one who looked
dazed. "Rhondie, we've got it made, again."
The stonelaying crew nearest the east bank comprised the main number, perhaps a hundred. They were just starting to lay the next tier of riprap, the crane hoisting big quarry boulders from the railcars to the men who steered the rocks into place on the face of the dam. The crew of this shift had been feeling good about itself and its luck; the morning shift had got in a jam when the crane sank into unusually wet gravel and it had taken exhausting hours to walk it up the slope of the dam on huge wooden mats. The crane sat high and dry on the crest of the dam now, which meant the crew had level running when the slide started.
unused in July '95 writing:

"The jackpot, for a change—you figure you can stand that?" he asked her, grinning a mile.
"And you?" he said in worse than a whisper. "You know all about counting on people, do you, Proxy?"

He walked out onto the spillway, alone this time.

Why didn't I savvy...
"It went fast," Darius mused. "You wouldn't think soil could outrun a man. Seven men." He watched the speeder go across the dam to the slide area and stop, the section crew climb off. "Damn near eight, counting our Neil."
to him kept at it. Kept hating the Duffs for their mysteries within
and back and forth toward one another, and just as helplessly loving them
for this last hard stone of sheriffing to gnaw on, this case of theirs
that would not let itself be solved.
different version used in July '95 writing:

When they were ripping it out of here why didn't I come and run water tests on... The lost face of the dam's east section had slid on the shale and its streaks of bentonite like a hog on ice. Huh uh, slicker and quicker
different version used in July '95 writing:

Rhonda was doing battle with the ready-counter of the Rondola,
pointing out that her three orders of biscuits and gravy still showed
no signs of gravy, when in he walked and marched right past the counterful
of customers. He turned her around to him, lifted her off the floor in a
full-length bear hug, and carted her like that through the swinging door
into the kitchen.
Veteran incompetent that he was, Birdie managed to flip the valve setting the only wrong way there was, totally backward. At once the suction much pump sucked off too enthusiastically as a vacuum surge came through the intake line, blowing off the top seals of the pump, sudden tons of
all along the way, the earthfill history that entranced him. At least
she could start here and now, she told herself as she leaned back
against him with determination, by swallowing the fact that what looked
to her like the most haggard country in the world looked to Owen like
dirt engineers' heaven.

"Knowing me, I'm gonna need to watch but it doesn't get to be a
letdown," Owen was conceding to himself in a tone unexpected enough that
she turned around to look at him, "the actual dam instead of the one
I could draw for you blindfolded."
changed in Aug. '95 revise:

(chose "Owentown"; other possibility "Duffalo")

"They're certainly going to name it Owensboro, I hope?" she teased to reward him.

"Hmm nn, no such luck. The Corps boys came up with something real original—'Fort Peck.' But tell you what, we'll do better than that, right now."
they would treat this as if it was done in a language only they knew,

Duff vocabulary; although she wished this was the kind of thing she
could rake through with Rhonda.
changed in Aug. '95 revise, to make this match Rosellen's April noon of writing in "Plugging" ch.
corners, his sign of joshing at himself. "After all, it's already the first day of summer."
Both Rhonda and Rosellen had done their firing standing up, using the hood of the truck as a gun rest. Charlene made sure of Neil for a moment, then went to her knees, and then stretched face-down in the grass.
At that, Rosellen pitched in for Charlene. "You bet. Show these gorillas how it's done, Charlene."
expanded in Aug. '95 rewrite:

to keep yourself occupied?" Owen prodded Proxy along some more.

"Umm, nothing worth mentioning," was all he could draw out of her, though. Proxy watched her step where Owen was concerned, not wanting to cross tomahawks with Charlene.
to hold him in a standing position, the President of the United States of America grunting himself ready, then the actual abrupt massive tottering rise like--

The sheriff didn't know like what, but it was damn sure unforgettable.
Even the FDR handshake provoked the sheriff. A quick half-grasp, only the forepart of the hand offered so that there was no chance for the other person to squeeze palm to palm. The master politician's proffer of just-enough: this much touch of my flesh shall ye have, and not a pore more. The Roosevelt handshake style haunted the sheriff from that day on, because he could never afford to use it himself; in big-boned Valley County, he as a small man had to exhibit a grip like a monkey wrench.
At the county fair every election year thereafter, he thought of Roosevelt
dainty-handing his way through the whole damned national electorate
with probably less wear than it took Carl Kinnick to campaign his way
through the livestock show-shed.
over the crowd. These press monkeys were something, too. Back at Glasgow

when a young squirt from one of the High Line weeklies tried to shoot a

picture of Roosevelt heaving out of his wheelchair, one of the national

photographers stuck a shoulder in his way until FDR was securely upright.

"Whoopsie daisy," the sheriff had heard the national photog say with a grin,

"give it a try now, buddy." No lack of shutter clicking here at the speech

site, so far as the sheriff could see; all cameras were blazing away,

pictures of the presidential platform lineup by the actual damn truckload.
The big *ripple* himself came to show off at the dam after they had
Owen snuck a look at Rosellen, who to his surprise had begged to come along on this righting of the wreck and the interminable tow job, and then put his best ocular effort back to work on Neil. It wasn't like Neil to spill a truck on a straight dry stretch of road like this; Owen
he was still directing his argument to Owen, "I'm the one who has to--"

"I still say it's a matter of timing," Owen insisted, "we've got

to know when the crest will get here and work from--"
"Why care?" Proxy asked as if she could use the answer. "Why let yourself in for heartburn?"

"Proxy, now, you know as well as I do that's one of the all-time questions," Hugh told her in a tone that gave no ground. "How we stumble onto the object of our interest, amid all the other possibilities."
Before the President's car even pulled away from the Glasgow railroad station, the sheriff personally had heard Roosevelt say three separate times, to three different flocks of Glasgow bigwigs, that he surely wished they had that Kiltie band in Washington, D.C.
"Three years have come and gone and I see a great change," the Roosevelt intonation echoed out. "When I was here before, there was just the beginning of a dam, and now it is about three-quarters finished. I have been thrilled by it, not only because it is four times larger than any other earthfill dam in the world, but because of what it is
going to do for the people of Montana and the whole Missouri Basin.

I wish that lots of people could have taken this trip with me," the
President confided to Fort Peck's thousands. "I wish in particular
that a certain type of citizen could have taken it, the doubting Thomases."

One of those, the sheriff of Valley County, shifted uneasily atop
the truck cab.
cut in Aug. '95 revise to speed FDR scene:

\[ \text{All cameras kept blazing away no matter what was going on, the sheriff noticed, pictures of the presidential platform lineup by the actual damn truckload.} \]
Congressman O'Connell's wife, a young knockout, was being carefully stationed just to the right of FDR and slightly behind; when people gawked at her, they'd get an eyeful of FDR as well. The sheriff knew the drill, and dreaded it: the Governor would welcome the President, all the dignitaries crammed there on the platform would be introduced and get to wave a hand, and then Roosevelt would start spieling out his political guff, next chapter in Carl Kinnick's bad dream.
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Under it all, the real nightmare. What if somebody took a shot here at Roosevelt the way that crackpot did back East in '33?
"I'm not much one for doing it in vehicles," Darius said.

"Aren't you," she mocked. "I suppose you can come up with someplace fancier."
you and Hugh decided so, long since, didn't you." The smile onto that, again. "You remember me, Meggie. Takes some while for me to catch up with the way of things."

But when you do... she recalled, too. "You're here for good?"
"Hateful weather," Jaraala eventually half-shouted above the motor-noise of the car. Darius entirely agreed. The Saturday afternoon had turned sultry, hot air blasting in through the car windows. In more than two hours they had met virtually no traffic, black-locomotived Great Northern trains passing them by the only other moving things in the late blaze of afternoon.
of the buildings of Plentywood.

Before Jaraala could see it coming, a rolling washtub met the Whippet's radiator grill and bounced away.

Jaraala managed to steer into an alley where the Plentywood Mercantile sat broadside between them and the dust storm. The dust fury went on for an hour. They could hear it stinging wherever it could find wood, scouring off the paint of the buildings around them. And the two men watched, astounded, out the mouth of the alley as not just dirt but gravel,
Tumbleweeds

spun tirelessly through town, and every so often a stovepipe flew by.

Jareala peered out into the lessening hurricane of murk. "I think we can give her a try, now."

Darius at last could see something of the situation of the town.

Substantial
Tree-lined streets. Neighborhoods of decent-looking houses. Downtown

corner buildings of actual brick and stone, Plentywood this and Plentywood

Pair of
that on their plate glass windows. Three towering grain elevators.

Compared with Wheeler, high civilization.
changed to fit Verlaine MacDonald's suggestions, during polishing in Sept. '95:

Roosevelt, though.

Roosevelt had to be tackled carefully, and Mott needed to concede that some parts of the New Deal (particularly the parts that put money into farmers' pockets) constituted a worthwhile start. But only a start.

Mott kept slipping that in, that well-intentioned as he maybe was,
The New Deal was a raw deal, Mott thundered on. There could be no true new deal under capitalism; the flag of Fusion, workers and farmers looking to their own interests together, was the only banner catching the winds of history, he told them as if giving directions to Eden.

Roosevelt was not going far enough. None of them in Washington or next door Helena or for that matter the county courthouse right here in Plentywood, by Mott's unsparing yardstick not a one of them was going far enough.
changed in Sept. '95 polishing; to avoid repetition when Darius later tells Proxy this in dialogue.

but prancy Fiona.) The 1911 bolt of excitement at labor’s Triple Alliance, the miners and dockers and railwaymen readying to shut down all of Britain’s coal, cargo, and rail, until war fervor shut down the Alliance instead. October, 1917: the Russian masses toppling the Czar and the entire wormy old edifice of royal rule. Darius’s attendance throughout those years at
Not quite as green as grass any more and now known in the barracks as Red from Red Lodge, the kid who had approached their table shifted from one foot to the other but stood his ground, managing to say out:
redone in Sept. '95 polishing to make Lee Rolfe's points that "twilight sleep" anesthesia was available at the time, that giving birth feels like a colossal bowel movement, and that there should be a beat of time between the doctor saying something about the baby appearing and "I have him."

act of delivery would be with her. Didn't matter, didn't MAT-ter,

she raged, it was occurring all at once now, like pain of a lifetime's ailments concentrated between her thighs.

She hung onto the bed rails and convulsed the lower half of her body, feeling crazily inside-out but not enough, not yet...

"I have it, nurse, I have him." Doctor's voice, cheerful as cherry pie. "Mrs. Duff, you have a son here."
which proved to be in neutral. He'd half expected that, but it still made him scowl. And the emergency brake lever of course didn't work when he reached down and tried it; there wasn't a truck in Montana with any use on it that didn't have the emergency brake burned out. Which made the damned gearshift even more—
she was brunette. Her skin was not the sort that sun and wind are kind to. Her eyes, though, were memorable wide-set ice-blue ones (the sons produced by her and Hugh were copies of Hugh's tall spare Duff build, but their eyes and hair color took after Meg's Mine-side) and she had a little nock in her chin, a tiny divided place like a mark of character.
She could see Owen think before he said the next. "So, Charlalene, set your face for a Duff family gathering. Bruce won't give me the time of day, which suits me fine. The Old Man and I agree we're going to disagree, without quite taking an axe handle to each other. As you maybe noticed about Neil, he's got his own set of tracks he follows. Sometimes it's a close call, whether enough of us are speaking to the rest of us to get the salt and pepper passed. We'll just have to see."
put the run on him, not even Charlene, and Bruce considered that one of the marks of progress in the history of Fort Peck, too.
Crawfurd, damnable Crawfurd. The look on him--
meant was, it's a way to find out how things look to me, that I hadn't
figured out how to figure out before I put them down on—oh, fudge, Neil,
that's right back to batty in a hurry, isn't it. But don't you ever
have that?" She put her hand on top of his, hoping he would follow suit.

"Wanting to see on through the everyday kind of things?"
"Fancy," said Darius, as if mostly to himself, and peered again down the canyonwall of the mammoth manmade trench. "If you have all the room in the world to gouge around in, I suppose you can do it." Owen
"Some sweet mess, huh?" Neil muttered to Rosellen as if he hadn’t heard Owen’s prescription for the truck.

"You’re not hurt, that’s all that counts," she held on to him after he’d had to hitch rides all the way back to Fort Peck yesterday.

"Tell me again. The eclipse and all."
"They keep saying this is the biggest dam of its kind, ever."

Charlene's expression said So what? Her next words aloud weren't much better to Meg.
to say. This was not like him, everybody knew, but figured it was the shock of the close call.

That night, Darius returned to the damsite and carefully lodged a wrench where it would strip the gear teeth of the project's biggest hoisting crane.
Darius's heart skipped some beats. "I've had the ha'penny tour of the spillway once already, you know, Owen."

"Get in the goddamn pickup before I stuff you in it!"

Darius closeted his anger in the face of Owen's, and followed down