How I came to write this book:

All of us went to school with some indelible kid whom we’ve wondered about ever since: “Whatever happened to—?” One inspired day in the writing of what turned out to be the best-selling of my books, Dancing at the Rascal Fair, I had the luck to create Susan Duff at the age of nine and perch her on horseback, regally leading “the child cavalry of Scotch Heaven” from their homestead shanties to their one-room schoolhouse in 1893. Susan arrived onto my pages bossy, smart, indomitable, and possessed of an unforgettable singing voice. Naturally I had to know what would happen when she grew up, and that landed the two of us, intrepid character and intrigued writer, into an era so volatile that our shared American highland never recovered from it. In World War I, Montana suffered the highest toll of war dead, proportionate to population, of any state. The 11/11 of the time—the November 11th armistice that at last stilled the guns in 1918—became a necessarily cathartic day for that generation, expressed in observances and “Over There” memorial projects such as the one I involve Susan in. A homefront disaster was unfolding in the meantime as the great wave of prairie settlement crashed and broke, and on the currents of blame and fear the Ku Klux Klan maneuvered into the western states; at the Klan’s peak in the mid-1920’s, there was a white-hooded chapter in nearly every county of Montana. This fictional chance to explore led me into research caches such as the Klan records of the next town along the railroad from where I lived when I was Susan’s “child cavalry” age, and a heartbreakingly vivid diary, retrieved from a city dump, of an officer killed on the Western Front just before Armistice; and much, much more. But I owe the Prairie Nocturne story to Susan, over whose squarely-set shoulder my imagination has wanted to peer since that first lucky writing day.
Author’s description of the book:
Ranging widely through time and geographical arc—from the battlefields of World War I to a romance in Edinburgh to a ghostly cavalry fort to the Harlem Renaissance and the Harvard Club in New York City—*Prairie Nocturne* draws together an unlikely trio of thwarted performers in one last inspired grasp at life’s set of gold rings: love and attainment. In so doing, the book carries forward into the war-haunted harshness of the early 20th century a handful of characters first met in *Dancing at the Rascal Fair* and challenges them with new figures pushing forth from the baronial West.

Wes Williamson, once the political scion of a cattle-empire family, inaugurates the plot when he seeks out an old amour: Susan Duff, suffrage activist and song recitalist whose career has stalled into teaching tunes to moppets. He announces he has the pupil of a lifetime for her: Monty, his down-at-the-pockets black chauffeur. Monty, fully named Montgomery Rathbun, is distantly known to Susan from their growing-up years in the Two Medicine country—he is the descendant of a “buffalo soldier,” the black troopers sent west to fight Indians—and yet an enforced stranger because of the racial divide.

When Susan realizes he possesses a singing voice of rare splendor, she joins Wes’s Pygmalion-like project to launch Monty on a performing career. From there the book becomes a tantalizing melody of involvement and suspenseful peril in the form of night-riders set against Monty and the Williamson ranch by the Ku Klux Klan. The crossed fates of this trio of main characters, as Susan and Monty must cope with their growing attraction to each other across the era’s dangerous barrier of color, as Wes’s mysterious motives increasingly unsettle everyone including himself, make this a deeply longitudinal novel, into everlasting questions of allegiance, the grip of the past on us all, and the heart-held costs of love and career.
The Washington Center for the Book at The Seattle Public Library, sponsor of the Washington State Book Awards, gratefully acknowledges the following individuals and organizations for their generous contributions of time, expertise and financial support for the 2004 Washington State Book Awards:

**Washington State Book Awards Jury**
Karen Maeda Allman
Mary Harris
Tod Marshall
Venta Silins
Edwin Weihe

The Seattle Public Library Foundation
The Elliott Bay Book Company

*For more information:*
Washington Center for the Book at The Seattle Public Library
1000 Fourth Ave.
Seattle, WA 98104
www.spl.org

Chris Higashi, Associate Director
(206) 386-4650 • chris.higashi@spl.org

---

38TH ANNUAL

**Washington State Book Awards**
(formerly known as the Governor's Writers Awards)

WEDNESDAY,
**October 27, 2004**
7 P.M.

**THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY**
**MICROSOFT AUDITORIUM**
1000 Fourth Ave.
(206) 386-4636
Award Winners

Gay Seattle: Stories of Exile and Belonging
by Gary Atkins
(University of Washington Press)

Range of Glaciers: The Exploration and Survey of the Northern Cascade Range
by Fred Beckey
(Oregon Historical Society Press, distributed by University of Washington Press)

Rodzina
by Karen Cushman
(Clarion Books)

The Actual Moon, the Actual Stars
by Chris Forhan
(Northeastern University Press)

The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717
by Alan Gallay
(Yale University Press)

Bold Spirit: Helga Estby's Forgotten Walk Across Victorian America
by Linda Lawrence Hunt
(University of Idaho Press)

The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America
by Erik Larson
(Crown Publishers)

King of Fish: The Thousand-Year Run of Salmon
by David Montgomery
(Westview Press)

Visible Bones: Journey Across Time in the Columbia River Country
by Jack Nisbet
(Sasquatch Books)

Set This House in Order: A Romance of Souls
by Matt Ruff
(HarperCollins)

Finalists

Sherman Alexie, Ten Little Indians
K.K. Beck, Opal, A Life of Enchantment, Mystery, and Madness
Michael Byers, Long for This World
Linda Carlson, Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest
Molly Cone, Howard Droker, and Jacqueline Williams, Family of Strangers: Building a Jewish Community in Washington State
Chris Crutcher, King of the Mild Frontier: An Ill-Advised Autobiography
Pete Dexter, Train
Ivan Doig, Prairie Nocturne
William Gibson, Pattern Recognition
David Guterson, Our Lady of the Forest
Christopher Howell, Just Waking: Poems Uncollected and Otherwise
Charles Johnson, Turning the Wheel: Essays on Buddhism and Writing
Tetsuden Kashima, Judgment Without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II
Jonathan Raban, Waxwings
Nance Van Winckel, Beside Ourselves
The Washington Center for the Book
at The Seattle Public Library is proud to honor
2004 Washington State Book Award finalist:

IVAN DOIG
author of:
PRAIRIE NOCTURNE

in recognition of its significant contribution to
Washington's literary landscape

Chris Higashi, Associate Director
Washington Center for the Book
at The Seattle Public Library
October 27, 2004
March 5, 2004

Erica Gelbard, Publicity Assistant
Scribner
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

Dear Ms. Gelbard:

It is my great pleasure to inform you that your book *Prairie Nocturne* is a finalist in the Western Writers of America 2004 Spur competition for the Best Western Novel category. Final results and winners will be announced in April and can be found on the WWA website (www.westernwriters.org).

Since 1953 the Western Writers of America have honored the best in Western Fiction, non-fiction, and film scripting. We are honored to add you to this list of the most distinguished Western writers of the last half-century.

The Spur Award luncheon will be held at noon, Friday, June 18, 2004 at the Casa Blanca Hotel and Resort in Mesquite, Nevada. Convention registration materials are available on the WWA website. All finalists and their publishers receive a certificate at the luncheon.

We hope you will be able to join us in Mesquite this June. Congratulations on this recognition of your outstanding achievement. Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Paul Andrew Hutton
Spur Awards Chair
President, WWA

PAH/tlc
2004 Spur Awards Judges

**Best Western Novel**
Bruce Dinges
Arizona Historical Society
949 E. 2nd Street
Tucson, AZ 85719

Gary Scharnhorst
Department of English
MSC03 2170
1 University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87131

 Paxton Riddle
6 Corn Hill Road
Shelton, CT 06484

**Best Novel of the West**
Frederick Chiaventone
1330 Northwest Spring
Weston, MO 64098

Mary Elizabeth Goldman
P.O.Box 53
Medina, TX 78055

Michael LoFaro
465 Hillvale Turn West
Knoxville, TN 37919-6624

**Best Original Paperback Novel**
Bob Cherry
272 Road 6 R1
Cody, WY 82414

Rita Cleary
Box 309
Locust Valley, NY 11560

Larry K. Meredith
Heatherwood Condo 28
116 County Road 33
Gunnison, CO 81230

**Best First Novel**
Johnny D. Boggs
10 Dovealla Road
Santa Fe, NM 87508

Dusty Richards
P.O. Box 6460
Springdale, AR 72766

Sandy Whiting
2558 Egret Flight Court
Park City, KS 67219-1733

**Best Western Nonfiction Biography**
Paul Fees
1718 Wyoming Ave.
Cody, WY 82414

Paul Hedren
103 E. Clay St.
O’Neill, NE 68763

Joseph Porter
4208 Crisfield Court
Raleigh, NC 27613-1505

**Best Western Nonfiction Historical**
R. David Edmunds
Arts & Humanities –JO 31
University of Texas at Dallas
Richardson, TX 75083

Nancy T. Koupal
South Dakota State Hist Soc
900 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501-2217

B. Byron Price, Director
Charles M. Russell Center
520 Parrington Oval Rm202
Norman, OK 73019

**Best Western Nonfiction Contemporary**
Charlene Porsild
1417 Illinois Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Elliot West
Dept. of History
Old Main 416
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701

David Wrobel
1835 Country Meadows Dr.
Henderson, NV 89012

**Best Western Short Fiction**
Mike Blakely
P.O. Box 1818
Marble Falls, TX 78654

R.G. Robertson
9607 E. Cavalry Dr.
Scottsdale, AZ 85262

Larry D. Thomas
2006 Commonwealth
Houston, TX 77006-1804

**Storyteller Award**
Stef Donev
813 Hewlett Street
Bakersfield, CA 93309

Tracey Hutton
5009 Justin Drive NW
Albuquerque, NM 87114

Stan Lynde
120 Greenwood Drive
Helena, MT 59601-0374

**Best Western Drama**
Max Evans
1111 Ridgecrest Dr. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87108

Stephen Harrigan
2801 Clearview Drive
Austin, TX 78703

Miles Swarthout
8180 Manitoba St.
Pacific Club Apts #354
Playa del Rey, CA 90293

**Best Western Documentary**
Max Evans
1111 Ridgecrest Dr. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87108

Stephen Harrigan
2801 Clearview Drive
Austin, TX 78703

Miles Swarthout
8180 Manitoba St.
Pacific Club Apts #354
Playa del Rey, CA 90293

**Poetry**
Bobby Bridger
5231 Sanford Road
Houston, TX 77035

W.C. Jameson
832 Ballard Ave.
Silt, CO 81652

Laurie Wagner Buyer
125 Rolling Park Dr.
Woodland Park, CO 80863

Please remember that UPS and FedEx do not deliver to P.O. Boxes.
Ivan Doig
17277 15th Ave. NW
Seattle, WA 98177

March 8, 2004

Dear Ivan,

I was relieved to get your very warm missive. It struck just the right note over the situation in which we find ourselves. Luckily the paperback of PRAIRIE NOCTURNE and your backlist will provide much opportunity for us to remain in touch.

I would be remiss, however, if I let you go to another publisher without expressing two important points to you directly. First, you have created a rare legacy of work and it was a privilege to be allowed to participate in that process, however briefly or ineffectually. And, second, you are one of the most delightful human beings with whom a publisher can interact—helpful, dedicated to both your craft and your marketing, and a heck of a great dinner companion.

It is a loss to the venerable imprint I serve that we could not come to terms over your next titles. But Liz has found an excellent home for you and I will be rooting as hard as anyone for the change in publisher to result in a change in the sales pattern we experienced.

My best to Carol. Never hesitate to call upon me for anything you need.

Best,

Susan
Dear Susan--

The business part of the book business gets in our way every so often, doesn't it. But I'm still pleased, and immeasurably proud, that we were able to put *Mountain Time* and *Prairie Nocturne* into the world as Scribner books. And now that I'm part of the Scribner backlist--a fate I couldn't have dreamed of when I was a kid writer reading the other writers whose names are everlastingly attached to your publishing house--I'll of course continue to do my full damnedest for the paperbacks we have in common.

But that's business again, and with the mention of it out of the way, I just want to say what a classy touch you have always lent to the book biz, not least in these past weeks when numbers have come between us. That's about the only thing that could, Susan, or I'd happily write for you as long as the ink lasts. Immense thanks for these six years you provided me under the Scribner roof.

Best,
Nan Graham
Editor-in-Chief, Scribner
1230 Avenue of Americas
New York NY 10020

Dear Nan--

It's always too bad when numbers get in the way of the words we so much want to make together, but both of us have been incurably professional wordsmiths long enough to know it's going to happen every so often. So, this is a time to step back from arithmetic and say how valuable in personal ways it has been to work with you on *Mountain Time* and *Prairie Nocturne*. I'm going to miss the lightning-bolt phone calls, the classic jotted faxes—the full range of grace you bring to the making of books. I understand from Liz we still have considerable mutual paperback life ahead of us, and I'm glad of that; I'll of course continue to do whatever I can for that Scribner backlist batch with my name on it. In the meantime, sixfold thanks, Nan, for this productive half-dozen years together.

Best,
Brant Rumble
Associate Editor, Scribner
1230 Avenue of Americas
New York NY 10020

Dear Brant--

I guess it’s official enough, now, that I am migrating to Farrar, Straus & Giroux. At any rate, I’m putting into this same mail my letters of appreciation to Nan and Susan for six adventurous years together. But as far as I know, you and I are an ongoing duo in the not inconsiderable world of paperbacks, and I hope you know I’m perfectly happy to have it that way—no troublesome numbers between us except page numbers, right? So, I look forward to whatever tending to the backlist we need to do, and of course the making of the paperback of Prairie Nocturne—and as I savvy it from Liz, English Creek along with it this fall? How about giving me a buzz when you have the paperback schedule in hand, so that I’m not AWOL to Zion National Park (Carol’s taking me there in late April) or somewhere when you need something done. Anyway, I’m glad that at least the two of us apparently are going to keep making books of some kind together.

Best,
February 5, 2004

Ivan,

It's wonderful to hear that you gave The University of Oklahoma Press your good word regarding *The Secret Life of Cowboys*. We have actually now finalized a paperback deal with them, and we're thrilled!

What I'm much less thrilled about is the possibility that your next step might or might not be with us. I am confident, however, that, with Liz doing her thing, this will all work out for the best. If, as a result, I have to be deprived of some pleasurable work, then I suppose that's one aspect of the business—though not my favorite.

We'll be in touch regardless.

All best,

Brant
5 Feb. '04

one-page fax to Brant Rumble, associate editor, Scribner

Brant, hi--

I'm a dab late in reporting this, but FYI: toward the end of last week I had a long phone conversation with an acquisitions editor at the U. of Oklahoma Press about *The Secret Life of Cowboys*. Evidently none of their usual sources of recommendation--Kittredge etc.--had caught up with the book yet, and while I had to frankly admit I'd only been able to do a hasty reading while on the bookstore trail, I said it seemed to me a perfectly fine book for them to take on. I cited them some good comments I'd heard from booksellers in Kalispell and Missoula, told them it looked to me like the book had done pretty well in a tough year, Groneberg is a guy whose backlist may pay off good for them in the time ahead, and so on. Anyway, I put in what innings I could to add to their cautiously favorable inclination, so keep those fingers crossed.

Best,

[Signature]
Dear Ivan,

Thanks so much for the original of The Seattle Times with Frank Deford on the cover of the Arts Section.

It's one thing to know that the book is on their very exclusive Neb's 2003 fiction list. Another to see the jacket once but twice.

No wonder you stayed on the Pacific Northwest independent booksellers' bestseller list!

It is coming in shortly to talk about a non-fiction idea. I'm totally intrigued.

Again, thanks so much for your stamina, spirit, and extremely effective salesmanship.

Ever Nan.
19 Dec. '03

one-page fax to Brant Rumble, associate editor, Scribner

Brant, hi--

Appreciated the copies of the "best" lists and the zingy Providence review, by a reviewer we ought to put on the payroll. I'm beginning to adjust to life off the bookstore trail--for days now, no one has come up to me and said we went to grade school together, remember? In terms of signed-and-sold copies the tour produced quite well, I think--three dozen readings and/or signings, an average of 73 Nocturnes sold at each event. About as good as it gets, in my experience of 25 years of peddling literature by hand. Speaking of peddling, Liz had told me there was going to be a New Yorker ad for Nocturne: I don't watch the magazine myself, but friends haven't spotted it. Did that happen, is it still gonna happen, or did the notion get scrapped? In short, what's up with that? I mean, I really liked the ad in High Country News, but...

Happy weekend and for that matter, holidays. Vernon Reid passed through town on a Living Color tour a week or so ago, and when Carol and I visited him and Gabri in the motel, there was luggage everywhere, instrument cases everywhere, and their five-month-old daughter everywhere; Vernon cast a look around from diapers to guitar and moaned, "The glamorous life of a rock star." Gave me a new perspective about the booktour, but even so I'm glad to be done.

Best,
17 Nov. '03

one-page fax to Nan Graham, editor-in-chief, Scribner

Dear Nan--

Susan, Monty, and Wes at the ABT gala, huzzah. Made me almost want to scan Bill Cunningham's celebrity photo montages in the Sunday Times for them. Thanks so much for putting Prairie Nocturne into that venue, and I'm also glad to hear that you think High Country News is worth an ad; under our transcontinental wings, everything prospers.

On the highish society end of things out here, I'm doing a reading/signing on Saturday at the zingy new Tacoma Art Museum, at the behest of a go-getting young staff of curators. We all know it's an experiment, but I haven't done signings in Tacoma the past several books because of a dearth of independent stores or other reasonable venues, so we'll hit 'em with this and a Costco signing in a couple of weeks and see if there's any pent-up demand.

If we're not back in touch before Thanksgiving, happy holiday. Best,
13 November 2003

Ivan Doig

Dear Ivan:

Thanks so much for your letter and for your heroic continued efforts on behalf of Prairie Nocturne. And please thank Carol as well, because she’s clearly been a key participant. We are especially grateful that you are so Costco-friendly. It’s a gigantic business, but they’re responsive to individual cases if the individual is charming enough.

We absolutely will advertise in High Country News. I’m all for targeted marketing. Thanks for that suggestion. I don’t think it was exactly on the radar of our advertising people.

Re. postcards: it’s too late in the cycle for a real postcard, and stores are increasingly apt to toss them. But what we’ve found to be extremely effective is e-postcards. We email the jacket with review quotes, bookseller quotes and bestseller notices. And that we will do right after Thanksgiving. Great quote from the Seattle Weekly. “World class and a master...” Not bad.

I don’t think we told you that the book got into the hands of 750 of the New York elite. We had a chance to put a book into the goodie bag at the American Ballet Theater annual gala, and Prairie Nocturne it was.

That Kalispell store needs to clone itself.

All best to you and Carol and again thanks,
17 October 03.

Dear Ivan,


You look as if you could face down anyone — Bush, The reviewer, a buffalo. And great to hear about the next book, too.

Always always to you — Nan.
Dear Ivan,

This is a gorgeous book. I am thrilled. Let us know to whom we should send. We've got a fresh list.

-Nan

8/27/03

Ivan-

I'll let her know that we've got a fresh list. -BK
Ivan—

3 copies hot off the press. More to come straight from the warehouse.

The book is a beauty!

BRANT RUMBLE
VOICE 212 632 4932 FAX 212 632 4918
brant.rumble@simonandschuster.com
www.simonsays.com
29 sept 03

Dear Ivan,

Got your email. What an amateur performance. 92 days with NO ads or notices?! Cannot tell you how valuable this kind of legwork is and how few writers do it with such enthusiasm and grace.

Thank you!

Nick
two-page fax to Brant Rumble, associate editor, Scribner

Brant, good Friday morning—

Appreciated your hurrah phone call about the USA Today spotlight; we all know the book biz is a constant roll of the dice, so when a rewarding spot turns up that way, it’s nice.

If you or Nan haven’t apprised Liz with a fax copy, would you, please? In this same vector of trying to get some national eyes on the book, I used one of your Airborne chits to put in a query to the Washington Post Book World editor, Marie Arana, for a possible piece in that “writing life” series they do; FYI and Nan’s, a copy of my letter herewith. We’ll see. I’ve also done a quick photocopy paste-up poster of the USA Today piece with the Prairie Nocturne bit highlit and everybody else, well, offstage, and put on it in big letters “You can order autographed copies of Ivan Doig’s acclaimed new book in this store” and am sending them to the fifteen or so sturdy small-city independent stores that are on the booktour schedule.

A few logistical items, which I apologize for zapping you with this late in the week—none of it has to be got to today, as far as I’m concerned, but I do need to pass ‘em to you before they vanish in my desk deluge:

--the mailing list: the U. of Montana writing program is so deep with possible mentioners/reviewers/whatever that I forgot two of the strong newcomers there. Please send copies to Debra Earling and Deirdre McNamer, at the same U. of Montana address I gave you for Judy Blunt.

--What was the initial print run? I need to know just so as not to seem dim at the Pacific Northwest Booksellers regional in about ten days, where there’s always a lot of shop talk. Also, could I possibly get a printout of orders thus far? The national ones I can never do anything about, but I am enough of an old tusker here on western ground to say to some of these bookstore owners I’ve known for years and done signings for, Hey, are you sure you’ve got enough books? It astounds me every time, but there are still veteran booksellers who need reminding that I’ll sign up every damn book they order and they therefore need to stock up, while I’m in the store, for the holiday season.

--Reviews: I don’t want these to drive you crazy, and as you know, I’m maybe a little more thick-skinned about them than some writers. So, as a policy, how about we keep on with your radar instincts, alerting me pronto to sizable stuff good or bad, just so I can be on my toes with interviewers and booksellers, but when the reviews start coming in several at a time, simply bundle ‘em and mail ‘em to me every week or two. Sound workable?

Onward to the weekend. Best,
Dear Marie Arana—

Besides dieting and pushups, one of the preparations I’ve had to make for the booktour trail this fall is the writing of talks, and I wondered if an essay version of my delving into the origins of my fictional characters might fit your series on the writing life. I don’t have much available time between now and when Scribner sends me on the long road for Prairie Nocturne later this month, so I thought I’d provide you a brief sample in the form of a lead and a few indications of what I have in mind, and see what you think:

When I was about as tall as my father’s elbow as he judiciously bent it in the nine taverns of our town, I saw a lot of character on display. Among his own many western aspects—he’d been a homestead kid, broncbuster, sheepherder, short-order cook—my father was a haymaker: a haying contractor, a kind of free-lance foreman, who would hire his own crew and put up the hay for a rancher for so much per ton. Those small-town Montana saloons, where I was lucky enough to tag along with him, were his hiring halls, and as he would sound out a hayhand on whether the man had ever handled workhorses and where, quite a ritual of sizing up went on. So, it was maybe back there as I silently hoped for my father to make a rare bad guess and hire a breezy faker whose team of horses would run away with him minutes after he climbed onto the hayrake, rather than signing up another good solid silent workman probably named Swede, that I developed an abiding interest in the trait called character and its even more seductive flowering into a plural form, characters.

The piece would go on to discuss:
--How my characters sometimes will start, in my head, with their tone of voice.
--The problem of noses.
--Why not to draw on an actual person, even if he or she is safely historically gone.
--An example or two of great character skills, such as Joseph Conrad’s magic with minor characters: in Typhoon, all we ever know or need to know about Captain MacWhirr’s wife is the line: “The only secret of her life was her abject terror of the time when her husband would come home to stay for good.”

Well, that’s the sort of thing, and if you have something on the topic in inventory at the moment or are otherwise overrun with pieces, of course so be it. But if this one does sound apt to you, I’d need to get to work on it practically instantly or it becomes a 2004 project.

Greetings to Yardley and Dirda, whom the late characterful Reid Beddow handshook me around to, back in the day.

Best wishes,
21 Aug. '03

one-page fax to Brant Rumble, associate editor, Scribner

Brant, greetings--

Here's the travel advisory for next week: Carol and I make our rapid impromptu trip to Missoula on the 26th for the memorial service for Jim Welch the next day, and we're coming right back on the 28th. The nights of the 26th & 27th we'll be at the Doubletree Missoula/Edgewater, (406)728-3100.

Best,

[Signature]
ADVANCE PRAISE FOR PRAIRIE NOCTURNE

"Ivan Doig never disappoints those who love good writing and Prairie Nocturne is Doig at his best."

—TONY HILLERMAN, author of 
The Wailing Wind and The Sinister Pig

PRAISE FOR IVAN DOIG

"In matters of work and grief, of place and kinship, [Doig] can make you remember with him and sometimes weep."


"Doig does his usual splendid job of interweaving several time frames to bring alive America history and to chart the evolving relationships of thorny, independent people who love fiercely but never go easy on one another or themselves. . . . It all combines to create a compelling story that ends too soon."

—Kirkus (starred review)

"Doig has fashioned a mythic landscape as memorable and real as Faulkner's."

—TIM MCNULTY, The Seattle Times

"[Doig] understands his characters well, and manages to make them all the more interesting not in spite of their flaws but because of them. . . . He lets the story tell itself, which is what stories are supposed to do."

and the trio's crossed fates form a deeply longitudinal novel that raises everlasting questions of allegiance, the grip of the past, and the costs of career and passion.

IVAN DOIG grew up in a family of Montana ranch hands in the 1940s and 1950s. His books include *Mountain Time, Bucking the Sun*, and the highly acclaimed *Montana Trilogy—English Creek, Dancing at the Rascal Fair, and* *Ride with Me, Mariah Montana*. He lives in Seattle with his wife, Carol. For more information visit www.ivandoig.com.
ADVANCE PRAISE FOR PRAIRIE NOCTURNE

"Ivan Doig never disappoints those who love good writing and Prairie Nocturne is Doig at his best."
—TONY HILLERMAN, author of The Wailing Wind and The Sinister Pig

PRAISE FOR IVAN DOIG

"In matters of work and grief, of place and kinship, [Doig] can make you remember with him and sometimes weep."

"What sets Doig apart from others who have farmed the same terrain is the deft way he handles the fruits of his research; fact and anecdote are woven into the text with a light and often humorous touch."
—JOHN HARVEY, San Francisco Chronicle

"Doig has fashioned a mythic landscape as memorable and real as Faulkner's."
—TIM McNULTY, The Seattle Times

"[Doig] understands his characters well, and manages to make them all the more interesting not in spite of their flaws but because of them.... He lets the story tell itself, which is what stories are supposed to do."
including himself, and the trio's crossed fates form a deeply longitudinal novel that raises everlasting questions of allegiance, the grip of the past, and the costs of career and passion.

IVAN DOIG grew up in a family of Montana ranch hands in the 1940s and 1950s. His books include Mountain Time, Bucking the Sun, and the highly acclaimed Montana Trilogy—English Creek, Dancing at the Rascal Fair, and Ride with Me, Mariah Montana. He lives in Seattle with his wife, Carol.
FROM ONE OF THE GREATEST novelists of the American West comes a surprising and riveting story set in Montana and New York during the Harlem Renaissance, drawing together an unlikely set of thwarted performers in one last inspired grasp at life's set of gold rings: love and attainment.

Susan Duff—the bossy, indomitable schoolgirl with a silver voice from the pages of Doig's most popular work, Dancing at the Rascal Fair—has reached middle age alone, teaching voice lessons to the progeny of Helena's high society. Wesley Williamson—business scion of a cattle-empire family—has fallen from the heights of gubernatorial aspirations, forced out of a public career by political foes who uncovered his love affair with Susan. Years later, Susan is taken off guard when Wes arrives at her door with an unusual request: to train his chauffeur, Monty, in the ways of voice and performance.

Prairie Nocturne is the saga of these three and their interlocked destinies. Monty is distantly known to Susan from their childhoods in the Two Medicine country, yet an enforced stranger because of the racial divide. When she realizes he possesses a singing voice of rare splendor, Susan joins Wes's Pygmalion-like project to launch Monty on a performing career—only to find the full force of the Ku Klux Klan in their way. As Monty and Susan overcome treacherous obstacles, Wes's mysterious motives unsettle everyone,

(continued on back flap)
**SCRIBNER**

**FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO</th>
<th>FROM</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ivan Doig</td>
<td>Susan Moldow</td>
<td>7/14/2003</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHONE NUMBER</th>
<th>SENDER'S CONTACT:</th>
<th>SENDER'S CONTACT NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>206-542-6658</td>
<td>Terra Chalberg</td>
<td>212-632-4965</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Dear Ivan,**

Even without the Susan connection I would have been delighted by my prairie ball-cap. I’ve been aware of the Buffalo jump for some time and so was thrilled to have such a handsome commemorative of it and of PRAIRIE NOCTURNE.

I know we’re all heartbroken about the Steichen cover but I honestly feel that those ignorant souls who don’t know what they’ve been denied will all be very pleased with what remains. And how about that Kirks?

Thanks again and I hope that you and Carol are exceptionally well and in training for the tour this fall.

Much love,
Ivan,

Let me know what you think (except for the antiquing).

Thanks

BR
P.S. I (we) just rec'd the hats. They're fantastic. Thanks
14 July ’03

one-page fax to Brant Rumble, associate editor, Scribner

Brant, hi--

Just a travel advisory, in case we have to field anything else about the book or the jacket: I’ll be here and reachable all this week and next Monday the 21st, but will be out of the country (all the way to Canada!) July 22-26.

Best,
Ivan,

I rec'd your voicemails and fax. Here's the marvelous Kirkus! Nan tried to fax it to you yesterday, but I guess that didn't work.

I've tried to reach you by phone, but I've gotten a signal that must mean you're online or have the fax turned on. Let's talk re Cover.
8 July '03

seven-page fax to Brant Rumble, associate editor, Scribner

Brant, hi--

This seemed the quickest way to get the latest set of page proof fixes to you. I hope it’s all legible enough--I relied on the most plain-spoken technology I have, the typewriter.

As to the cover: have talked with Liz, both of us are underwhelmed by the "antiqued" version, but we are game to take a look at a sepia version if you guys think that’s worth a try. For myself, I have to say it’d need to be pretty damned good--carrying the sharpness of the original, the pale force of the woman’s face, and retaining the nice luminous clarity of the wonderful title line--but I’m always willing to be wowed.

What’s the current game plan on blurbs etc.--go with the Hillerman quote and something from the Kirkus review?

Best,

Ivan
some of the same slant of shoulders from a life on horseback. If Monty was lucky, all resemblance stopped there. Mose's ilk, in denatured white form, Wes had met up with again and again in the AEF: lifer sergeants, old striper, who thought the chevrons on their arm meant they could get away with anything. He'd had to bust some of them so far down in rank they slunk around saluting civilians, but Mose Rathbun had never been his to command, thank the Lord. Soldiers not in the manuals became the pencillings of fate.

"Major? Something I did?"
"Why, is there something on your conscience?"
"Not any more than usual."
"Then concentrate on the road for a change, will you."

That put a stopper in Monty, and Wes tried to find his way into the maze of papers in his lap. In them lay the route to bring bald-faced cattle to the dun hills of the Fort Assinniboine country, a fresh new Williamson brand seared on their left hips. But this other business, the Rathbuns and their wander into nagging orbit around his own father and now Whit and him, kept slipping in between the lines.

"Damn it," he murmured. Then notched up more civilly: "Monty, I take it back."

What now? was registered in the pair of eyes that met Wes's in the car mirror.

"These papers can wait a bit. How's that voice of yours?"
"In operating order, I guess."
"Then why don't we have a sample." Wes swished his sheaf of papers down onto the seat next to him as if the matter was decided.
"What type of thing are you and Miss Susan working up?"
"You've pretty much heard them, one time or another," Monty hedged.

"Try me on a fresh one then."
"Uhm, lot of songs in the world, Major."
"The kind your mother would have sung."

For once Monty was glad of all Miss Susan's bellyaching at him about posture, what with the man making him sing while he had to sit here like a lump. He squared himself up behind the steering wheel, pouter-pigeoned his chest for all available capacity, lifted his
Seeing the expression that drew, he tacked on: "Don't be that way. You're in another calling now."

"That better be the case," Monty muttered, spit-rubbing a dab of dust off the door panel of the automobile.

"Oh, and these." Wes reached into the backseat and presented him a plump bundle wrapped in butcher paper and twine.

"What's this then?"

"Tailoring," Wes spoke as if the brown-paper bundle could not be anything else. "Susan's orders. You didn't think you were going to make your Fort Assinniboine debut dressed like a ranch hand, did you?"

The clock finally having to confess to the appointed hour, Monty hustled out of his quarters dressed in concert gear, drawing deep practice breaths as he went. The mid-morning light here where there was nothing any higher than those stunted cottonwoods to break it was already hard on the eyes as he gingerly navigated his way to the auditorium. He felt more than medium ridiculous at having to try to keep the cheatgrass out of these silk socks, but he had decided that if any of Bailey's bruisers snickered, they were welcome to do so until they choked on it. He wasn't the one sitting on his tail day and night up in the drafty second stories of Fort Skin-and-Bone guarding them.

When he stepped into the capacious horseshoe-shaped room, which was cleaner than it was yesterday but still not clean, naturally she was already up there in possession of the stage. Enseconced at the piano, she was writing furiously onto a sheaf of paper held in her lap. Looking things over, he did have to grant that the piano, by whatever method it had been manhandled into here, added surprising serenity to the scene of harum-scarum seats and lath walls with bare ribs showing. But everything else within the confines of the gaping performance space seemed in what barely passed for working order, and he had a growing feeling this included him.

Susan halted her scribbling to herself to take in his appearance. The tie was not quite flying level beneath his chin but at least it was proportionately tied, and the tails of the tuxedo draped as suavely as any ambassador's. His boilerplate white shirt would have wakened the
they were on their way across the blowy parade ground for lunch, to try her on this. "Know what? I miss being on a horse, any."

Susan stopped short, the better to weigh the dimensions of the oblong field—untrotted on for so many years—hemming around the two of them. "It would be about like being on a merry-go-round, but let's see."

When she went to Bailey, he instantaneously said: "I'll need to ride with you."

"Whatever for? We know you'd all hemorrhage if we set a hoof outside the fort. We just want to canter around the parade ground."

"So my men don't see you and him alone together any more than they already do."

"What a remarkably hateful line of work you are in."

"Miss Duff, my business right now is to try and save your skin. Not to mention his skin."

The next day when the worst of the noon heat was past, Monty whistled as he saddled up for the three of them. Once they were on the parade ground, Bailey rode between Monty and Susan like an extra shadow of one of their horses, until she spoke up.

"Mr. Bailey, as much as we appreciate your company, there are matters I must talk to my client about in confidence. Secrets of the singing trade, shall we say. It would be worth it to us to put you in for a bonus with the Major."

"Miss Duff, I go deaf when I have to. If you have things to say to each other that you don't want the light of day on, I can ride ahead a ways and you can talk soft." He spurred to a short distance in front of them as if his horse was too frisky for theirs.

Susan and Monty kept their voices at a murmur.

"You worked that pretty slick."

"Loyal to the last dollar, our Mr. Bailey. Well? There was something out here you wanted to go over with me, you said."

"Promise not to think I'm ready for the bughouse?"

"Monty, please don't start that. I'm already putting up with riding circles in a weedpatch."

"All right then. You know how sometimes a person pretends? I'm at that, an awful lot."
"Would I know a case of it if I saw one?"

"Not if I have brains enough to grease a skillet with. The bruisers already think I'm the oddest thing going." She watched as he tugged his hat down to a sharper angle, for more shade against the sun or the speculating eyes of Bailey's men. Barely moving his lips, he went on: "I don't mean pretending like an actor or some such would do. Just in my head. Trying to figure out how things were to my people here."

Susan encouraged him by not trying to herd him with questions. Monty rode alongside her in the easy slouching way a cowboy could go all day, hands resting on the saddleshorn and the reins idly held, but he wasted no time in indicating toward the old hospital and the washhouse in back of it.

"You take, over there. Put my mind to it and I can about tell you how any of Angel Momma's days went. From the night before, actually—she'd butcherknife some pine shavings off, leave them on the oven door so they'd be dry and nice to start the fire in the morning. Did that all her life." He squinted in concentration, as if to see this next more clearly. "Quick as breakfast was off the stove, on went her irons. Then had to carry her own water, for the washing. She was swimming in laundry and ironing here, and me to handle, besides. And all the time having to prop her clotheslines"—the memory was one of those that stood out like a tinted picture in an album, of himself darting around beneath the poles she used as though he was loose at a circus—"so the wind didn't take them to Wyoming. All that, she must have been one hard-put woman, wouldn't you say?"

"'Man's work is from sun to sun / Woman's work is never done,'" Susan responded rat-a-tat-tat. She patted under her horse's mane to steady the animal as a charge of hot wind came from nowhere and a tumbleweed skittered by. What Monty had depicted sent her thoughts in a loop, out across this prairie to the ruts into homestead after homestead, the suffrage campaign's flivers quivering to a halt in front of yet another shanty where the blue-gray scab of ground in what passed for a yard told of washings done with water hard as liquefied mica. "I'd say your mother was very much of her time, out here, in being worked to death, yes. Go on."

Monty took a minute in piecing together the next. "Then there's my father, here," his words rushed when they came, almost as if he and
Still holding off on the newspaper, he could not help glancing toward it, its masthead New York World expectant on the table. Quite the world, all right. Last night he had walked onto the stage in front of a packed audience of twelve hundred, and tonight's would be no more than three dozen at best. Another musical. The take wasn't great, but J.J. scheduled these with as much care as he did the big-hall recitals. People on the in; sassety, J.J. called such gatherings.

Pulling out his song sheets to make sure they were in the right order, he tried to picture the probable musical scene. (Another of her prescriptions.) A number of Strivers Row's own movers and shakers always adorned the evening's chosen living room, to be sure, but right in there with them mingled the fairhaired downtowners who came up here on the lure of the music or their own highly honed curiosity or just because it was the thing to do. The Rabiznax, turnabout of the Zanzibar, he couldn't help but think of those as: cluster of white folks who stuck out oppositely in Harlem like the dark-skinned habitués in off Clore Street did there in Helena. Which was to say, reverse to the overwhelming color around them, the way faces show odd in the negatives of a photograph. Not that it bothered him—he had been mingling, to call it that, since the day he and his parents entered the pearly kingdom of the Williamsons—and it didn't visibly bother the Rabiznax or the Harlemites, but he did find it close quarters compared to dealing with a stage audience. Close and elevated. Women who were said to have diamond-studded garters (not that he had chanced onto such a phenomenon himself yet). Men with books to their names, or handed-down money they hadn't bothered to count yet. Conversation that circled as mercilessly as the rims of their gin glasses. "Oh, there's Blanche and Alfred, I'll bet he's scouting. . . . Oh, look, the Sitwells are over from London. Did you hear Heywood say, 'They don't with me'?” It helped that the Major sometimes was on hand, providing some force of gravity. At the last one of these even his wife was there, looking as if the presence of other people was a strain.

Couldn't count on seeing him there tonight, though, it occurred to Monty, given what time of year it was. He thought a moment and rearranged the order of the night's songs, putting the Medicine Line one last so that he would have some guff about Montana and the Tenth Cavalry and so on to give out with when he had to be on his
ago, they wouldn’t have let me in here,” he said what they both knew but it helped clear the parlor air by saying it. “Maybe even now, but the Major put in a word.”

“Tell me whether I’m seeing things. A man out in the gardens looks all the world like Bailey.”

“None other. I had him hired. There’s a bruise or two around somewhere, too.” He rushed through that as if it was an ordinary part of business, but Susan was looking at him so pointedly that he broke off and made a small patting motion in the air. “Nothing to be excited about. The people I’m with are sort of spooked by what the clucks tried on you and me, is all. I thought they were going to back out of town when I told them about the Confederate Gulch gold and the Johnny Rebs who turned into galvanized Yankees out here as soon as they had money in their pocket. Took the pair of them around to Clore Street and that settled them down some.” His turn to put a point to her with his eyes. “Life been treating you all right, I hope?”

“Atrociously. I haven’t been around a world-beating voice for what seems like ages. Until the one I’ll hear tonight.”

“More what I had in mind was you being out there alone at Scotch Heaven all that while. It’s been bothering—”

Surprised at the urgency in his voice, she cut in with what she always said when people got going on how much time she spent with herself: “Don’t fret, ‘alone’ isn’t spelled the same as ‘lonely.’”

“Maybe around the edges, it’s not,” he said as if his experience did not jibe with hers.

She made a conceding murmur and ducked onto surer ground. “At any rate, you can quit worrying—I’m going to lease out the homestead. Helena has me on her hands again, poor old town.”

Now Monty was the surprised one. “The Major didn’t say anything to me about you giving up the place.”

“No? Did you check the reflections in his vest buttons?” Fanning a hand and holding it with her other, Susan expertly mimicked a person playing cards close to the chest.

He acknowledged that with a slow nod. “I’ll need to do that when he comes in from the ranch tonight, you think?”

“What’s, too, while you’re at it. You knew you’re going to be honored with his presence, didn’t you?”
Brant Rumble
Associate Editor, Scribner
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York NY 10020

Dear Brant--

One more time, the transcontinental pass of the page proofs. A couple of my earlier fixes, from my May 19 letter, don't show up as having been made (on p. 258, especially, which I really want fixed, and the stray hyphen on p. 314), so I marked them in again; of course if they've been made, no problem. Otherwise, I simply handled John's inquiries or put my OK on as is, so there's not a lot of changing around, this time through. My main fret, and probably everybody's, would be whether the changes for nicety on p. 249 screw up the pagination; I labored to make them not to and can't see how they will, but call me pronto if they don't fit within what was there, okay?

I don't feel I need to see any more full sets of pages (unless you guys want me to), but would like copies of the specific corrected pages from this batch, just for my own archival files. For your reference, those would be pp---

38  61  143  156  213  248  249  258  314
363  364

I hope this go-through does it. Onward to finished books.

All best.

[Signature]
Before the next bout of scrubbing, she stepped outside and took her leisure at the perimeter of the yard, idly whacking cockleburs and nettles out of her way with a stick. Nearby, the creek duked past behind its stand of diamond willows, plump at their ends with bud-break. A well-behaved school of white clouds coasted over the highest peaks to the west. Door or no door, Susan conceded, she at least had lucked into the picture-perfect time of the North Fork valley, with wild hay surging in the bottomland along the creek and fresh grass on the buttes and foothills that tilted the valley to the spring sun. On a day such as this when the clear air was a delicate shellac on every detail of each gray-blue pillaring cliff, the mountains castled up even closer than she had remembered over the Duff homestead and the dozen other deserted ones of Scotch Heaven.

Green-stained stick in her hand, Susan stood stock-still for a minute and listened with all her might.

The silence. Eloquent of the space, of the reach of country here along the footings of the Rockies, the cathedral-rise of the continent into the blue stillness of sky, the prairie unrolling from the other horizon like Bedouin tarpaulin.

Her ears took in the solitude while her mind stayed busy with the comings and goings of the dead and the momentarily absent. This place’s traffic of presences, of one shade or another. Not that she at all believed in the specter world, but right now she rather wished she was capable of it. Ghosts ought to be interesting company, she reasoned, particularly here. Not gauzy visitors who popped out of walls and gabbed when least expected; she could do without those. But why shouldn’t leftover spirits, to call them that, constitute a kind of echo of the soul, lingering tunelike in the air after life was gone? A nocturne, she wouldn’t be surprised: ruminative, tending toward melancholy—after all, the poor things are no longer the freshest notes in the musical arrangement, are they—yet with a serenade melody that would not leave the mind. Chopin, she decided, pensive a moment herself; Chopin surely would be the court musician of eternity’s nightsingers. She wished her piano were here; the opening passage of her favorite of his pieces had found its way into her fingers and wanted out right then.

It took no real prompting to remind herself that she currently had enough concerns dealing with the living. To name the closest to
“Here, I’ll barn the horses, you git in there and take your medicine from her,” Dolph rattled on as they dismounted in the now familiar yard. “Ask her for me what she’s doing with all the milk from that damn cow, feeding an orphanage?”

As he approached the house Monty could hear her in there plinking the piano in a testing way, *da dum, da dum da da*. Knowing she was just waiting her turn at him, he knocked and already had the door handle in his grip and his hat ready to flip onto the peg by the time she called the customary “Come on in, Mister Rathbun.”

She didn’t migrate into the kitchen to swoop him in as usual, though, only poked the top part of her around the inner doorway like the front end of a clipper ship. “Here’s an idea. Come see.”

Monty sensed something arduous ahead. But when he stepped in to where she had taken up her station, the only thing new was that her windup Victrola had been moved to front and center, its morning-glory horn expectantly aimed their way.

“Today I have something I want you to hear, Mister Rathbun—do you suppose it would be all right if I call you Monty? It would save some on the world’s supply of breath that I’m eternally after you about.”

His short-measure nod. He still was trying to come up with an educated guess as to what this was about. Stand around and listen today, after standing around chasing through the scale those other days? *Am I ever going to get to just sing?*

Vigorously she cranked the phonograph and set the needle onto the record. Out poured a profound bass sound as if the foundations of Heaven were shifting; Chaliapin in *Boris Godunov*. Monty appeared ready to take to the hills.

“Whoops, not that one,” Susan said with a chuckle. She grabbed the intended record from the imposing stack on the sideboard. More whirls of the phonograph handle, and a voice soared high and clear:

> “Let us break bread together on our knees,  
> Let us break bread together on our knees.  
> When I fall down on my knees  
> With my face to the rising sun,  
> Oh Lord, have mercy on me.”
as she went humming her way up the brief path she could even dimly make out that someone had hung a sack on her door. More than likely the latest unsought generosity sent over by Wes, a gunnysack of the past week's newspapers and, who knew, another helping of picnic makings?

She would have to remember to tease him about his Williamson bag of surprises, she was telling herself as she stepped to the gray shelter of the doorway and reached her hand to the hanging shape, and touched not burlap but cat fur.

The realization struck her like a hot spatter. Jerking her hand away from the blood and hair, by instinct she stifled outcry with a gagging swallow, not giving whoever might be out there the satisfaction of hearing her scream. She backed away one step, then reached around for the doorknob from the side of the doorway and waited to a count of ten. Breathing with greatest care now, she pushed open the door with the cat nailed to it, and hurriedly stepped over its puddle of blood on the threshold.

She sensed, as much as saw, that the kitchen had been disrupted. In moments she managed to feel her way to the silverware drawer and had the butcher knife in her hand. Every ounce of her knew she had to get back to Angus and Adair's at once, but she also had a furious need to know how much had been done here. She felt along the wall by the stove to the matchbox holder. In the flare of the first match, she saw that the kitchen table had been kicked over. Carefully lighting another, she sighted in on the spare lamp on the sideboard and brought it to flaring life. Corners; the kitchen suddenly seemed to have many. No one but shadows there, though, and she was drawn, lamp high and knife clutched as tight as her fist could go, to the doorway to the next room.

Then she saw the white paint across the music room wall, using the worst words about her and Monty.

His door erupted open, bringing him blinking out of a jumble of bedclothes and dreams. He swung his feet onto the cold floor, meaner chill whiffing in from the doorway but, further confusing him, a flicker of flames candled somewhere out there above and behind the
WAS HE LOSING his marbles, Monty wondered every little while, or did this constitute the exact last place on earth he could have expected to be plunked down in and told to set up housekeeping? And the music that came with it wasn’t helping any.

"Jake and Roany was a-chousin’ along
And Jake was a-singin’ what he called a song—
Ob-da-lay-de-ob-da-lay-de-000 . . .”

“Now there’s homegrown music for you,” the announcer’s voice crackled out of the radio set with professional enthusiasm. Not in my book, Monty grumbled to himself as he made his bed, the only chore he could find left to do. Call that a yodel? “That was the Medicine Line’s own Prairie Troubadour, Andy Olswanger, singing a traditional cowboy song,” the announcer rattled on, “right here in our studio. Well done, Andy! Say, friends, we here at station CINE, the voice of Medicine Hat and the province of Alberta”—a gulp of distance, then the sound wavered in strong again—“bringing you the finest listening that radio has to offer, from the Medicine Line to the High Line, all across these splendid wide open spaces where two nations meet in—”

Bunch of open spaces between their ears, Monty fumed as he stepped over and pinched off any more yowling from either the yodeler or the
and open up his house, he would be along later. Susan had waited for him at the front door and let him do the honors with the key.

They stepped in to apparent emptiness. Wes did not know whether to feel vindicated or crestfallen. Helena had been searched these past days, the one Negro policeman on the force shaking Clore Street by the heels, Bailey’s men casing other parts of the city, and Monty had not turned up. Nor did he now. Susan, however, was everywhere at once in her downstairs, opening a window to let fresh air in, putting a shoulder to the music parlor doors, asking Wes what time it was as she set the grandfather clock and wound it back to life. Catching sight of herself in the hallway mirror, she abruptly stopped everything else she was doing. Wes looked on, the apprehensively fascinated way men do at women tending to themselves, as she plucked out hairpins unerringly. Her hair flowered to her shoulders.

“Come up.” She was already on her way to the stairs.

Wes swallowed hard. Have mercy for once, Lord. If she was hiding Monty in her own bedroom and word of it ever got out—

The long loft room was so full of belongings it took him several moments to be certain none of them was alive and breathing. Susan was making her way through them on some course known only to her, trailing fingertips over some, the cupped palm of her hand on corners of others as she passed. With Wes watching as if trying to learn the secret of the ritual, she bypassed her desk to a cabinet along the wall. A crackling noise took over the room. She tinkered with the radio set until the static quit.

Monty watched the clock.

He squared himself up, attentive now on the figure almost shoulder to shoulder with him. Somebody else made a pointing motion, which after the workings-over Susan had given him in the auditorium he would never have to think twice to recognize as a cue.

“Now for your listening pleasure here on station CINE, our latest troubadour of the Medicine Line, Montgomery Rathbun.” The announcer looked at him sidelong but kept his mouth aimed at the almighty microphone on its spear of stand between them. “Welcome to ‘Evening Encore.’ For those of you not fortunate enough to have
of resurging spirituals, when almost weekly new arrangements of timeless field songs can sometimes resemble musical chairs.

The songs he brings are only an added gift, however. Montgomery Rathbun could sing the pages of the telephone directory and lift your soul. His is the latest and perhaps most phenomenal troubadour’s role in the renaissance of “sorrow songs” heralded in the pre-war recitals of Harry T. Burleigh, enhanced when Roland Hayes added spirituals to his classical presentations, furthered by the innovative scorings of the piano-and-tenor duo of J. Rosamond Johnson and Taylor Gordon, and burnished to a luster now that the profoundly gifted Paul Robeson has turned from dramatic roles to musicianship. At the onset of an earlier generous artistic flourishing, Ralph Waldo Emerson proffered to Walt Whitman: “I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere.” Harlem’s chorus of spiritual-singing virtuosos must similarly now pay their respects to Montgomery Rathbun, who stands forth as their latest compatriot and rival.

All that and the reviewer did not even have an inkling of how rocky that bottom had been. Reading back, finding the diary days when some bit of coaching or coaxing had worked and both of them felt another breathworth of soar in his song, Susan was starved all over again for that experience of the lessons with Monty. Don’t I wish there were another one where he came from. Leading the South Fork schoolchildren in “Flow Gently, Sweet Afton” in preparation for the program all the parents were invited to, there had been times when she thought she would break off into a maddened howl. Very well then, face up and admit it, she had been spoiled by the particularities of Monty’s voice. At least she was not totally bereft of it. One more time she picked up the letter the review had come with. I did not pay the man to write this, honest. The handwriting, in pencil, was welcomingly familiar from the greetings he sent from wherever he sang; they amounted to postcards mailed in envelopes, safe from small-town
post office eyes. She could picture the jackknife-sharpened stub, the 
estern crouch over the stationery—somehow the words even stood 
slow and careful on the paper—and found it that much more reward-
ful that he thought she was worth the diligence. This letter was 
almost warm to the touch. *Something, isn’t it? To think that the spirit*
*songs are having a heyday? And that the foreground, they call it, was the old*
*wagontrack where you about made me run my legs off? She smiled a moment*
at his growing penchant for question marks—he seemed determined 
to make punctuation count as much as it could, too—and skipped to 
the bottommost sentence: *I hope the old town is ready for me? He was*
*coming to Helena on his concert tour through the West. She circled*
*the day on her calendar. Ahead of it by a week was the X’ed-over set*
of days she was to spend with Wes in the Two Medicine country.*

*U*nder the highstanding sun the cattle were mothering up. 
Their mode of reacquaintance was repeating itself a couple of 
thousand times at once, every cow moaning anxiously and making 
sure with thorough sniffs that the calf trying to raid milk from her 
udder was entitled to it.

Next to Wes in the shade of the boss tent, Susan speculatively 
watched the bawling scene along the lakeshore. Hers was not the only 
appraisal of what was being done to a calm noon at Lower Two Med-
icine Lake: around the reflecting rim of water, sphinxlike mountains 
with manes of timber seemed to draw in closer to frown down over 
the intrusion.

She glanced at Wes, still busy checking his tallybook before he 
and whoever was sent out from the Blackfeet Indian Agency counted 
the cattle onto this reservation allotment, its rugged foothills practi-
cally in the lap of Glacier National Park. Simply by eye the massed 
cattle seemed to Susan an excess of livestock for any summer range. 
But mob of feeders though this might be, she knew it was only a por-
tion of the Williamsons’ growing Deuce W herd. Thousands more 
were out in the coulees of Fort Assinniboine and the other outposts 
of the new ranch. Greater thousands than that were spread as usual on 
the home range of the Double W. The tallybook in Wes’s hands had
about the audience problem. "Can't explain it, but I don't get choky
with the songsheets right there, even if I never need them."

"Told you." Her face lit, she urged: "Now your turn. Those fancy-
pansty musicales of yours—tell all."

From there on their conversation kept jumping its banks. He told
her about hobnobbing with the Rabiznaz, wanted to know how her
own music was coming. She told him she was within shouting dis-
tance of the end of the operetta if the shout could be a better song
than she had managed to come up with yet, and what were his living
arrangements in Harlem like? They were back and forth at this a mile
a minute until they heard a notifying cough. In the doorway of the
parlor stood J.J. and Cecil, fluffy bathtowels over the arm of each.

"This is my poor put-upon teacher I told you about," Monty reeled
off the introductions. "Wasn't for her, the most I could look forward
to would be changing sparkplugs every three months."

"Ah? Then the ears of the world are in your debt, Mrs. Duff," J.J.
said with something between a nod and a bow. Cecil's wordless
acknowledgment of her certifiably amounted to no more than a nod.

"It's Miss."

"Mizzz Duff, excuse me all hollow." J.J.'s sibilant antic made
Monty want to bat him one.

"Sorry to interrupt," J.J. swept on, "but we were just passing. We
are off to the waters," meaning the natatorium across the hotel
grounds. "Cecil here needs to cook like an egg to thaw out from this
Rocky Mountain air, he claims. We are told we will have a generous
portion of the pool to ourselves." J.J. smiled as if at the wonder of
that. "Roped off for our very own use, I gather the procedure is. West-
ern hospitality is really quite something."

"We did give the world Monty, from out here," Susan offered as
though it were a neutral observation. "We may be coasting a bit much
on that."

"That was generous, I can't help but admit." J.J. fussily checked
his watch against the parlor's grandfather clock as if two opinions
were needed on the hour of day, then recited: "Keep an eye on the
time, Montgomery, don't forget to catch some rest."

"It's as good as caught, J.J."

"Good day, Miss Duff. Been our pleasure."
J.J. did a skip-step to keep in stride with her. Whatever Susan was marching to today, it didn’t know slow. They were already bearing down on the el station and he still was trying to catch up with her surprise prognosis.

“Really ready?” he persisted. “Enough that I can put him up in front of people and they won’t mob me for their money back?”

“His voice is ready,” she repeated.

“Well, then, amen,” he made his decision. “I’ll set up a musicale or two, sprinkle him around town that way at first. Let Montgomery tune himself up without the whole world listening.”

“And then?”

“Maybe tour him some before letting the New York crickets at him. One thing, Miss Duff.” He halted so abruptly at the base of the el stairs that Susan flew past him a couple of steps before she could attend to his next utterance. “You have to understand, you probably won’t see us in Helena again,” and he handed her the black bag in the usual ritual of goodbye.

At the office in the days after, Susan plunged her mind as far into work as it would conceivably go. She came in very early, now that there were no journeys to Harlem these mornings, and in no time was well on her way to wringing extra effort out of every Over There chapter on the eastern seaboard. This day, with the watchmen’s barrel bonfires barely quenched in her window-framed view of the awakening docks, she just was starting rapid-fire typing when the jangle of the telephone joined in. She let it ring a couple more times while she gathered her mental forces. At this hour chances were it was either the New Jersey state chairman who could not wait to howl about the stiff letter she had sent calling attention to the collecting prowess of the Tammany political machine versus his in Jersey City, or—

“This is the Amsterdam News,” came the sweet voice at the other end, “wondering if you might be interested in our introductory subscription price for downtown folk.”

“Monty, it’s all right. I’m here alone, except for a crazy man on the phone.”
our human hues are displayed together." As Wes stepped away to a thunder of handclaps, he had to concede that even the applause sounded better in Carnegie Hall.

He stayed just offstage now that his part in the evening was over. He ached like fury from standing so long on the hard flooring but he kept to his carefully planted stance there and watched Susan radiantely deliver her lines about the Harlem letters collection to perfection, endured Tammany next, then the mid-show comedy and its counterface of tragedy in the letters and diaries, and as Vandiver began making his pitch for Bonds of Peace, he knew he could delay no longer and moved off to the hallway and stairwell that would take him to his seat up in the box circle.

He stepped with care into the darkened box. Nodded a series of apologies for his lateness as he squeezed behind the retinue his wife and Mrs. Smith had assembled in the seats there. Automatically shook hands with Governor Smith in passing. Merrinell, in whispered conversation with the governor's wife, gave a little acknowledging whisk to where he would sit. His bolster chair was installed at the angle needed to favor his knee, and he settled into it facing a bit away from Merrinell, which he figured he may as well grow used to. From her flutter of gesture, word had not yet reached her about his rehearsal declamation. But it would be told as many ways as there were tellers. When she heard, whatever version she heard, Merrinell with her active history of suspicion would do her best to make his life a ceaseless purgatory. Not that it much resembled anything else to him from here on anyway.

Straightening up, forcing his mind to the moment, Wes looked out over a Carnegie Hall such as he had never seen before, a marbled crowd, rows of colored faces and immediate other rows of pale ones and mixes in between. Below, in the front row and the space between there and the stage and out into the side aisles, were the veterans clutching crutches or armrests of wheelchairs or in the case of the blinded ones, an arm of the person next to them. Their array reminded him of a field hospital, the one place he had seen troops of both colors quartered together in either of his wars.

Up on the stage Vandiver finished as he had begun, with a flourish. Now out they came, one from each wing, Susan to the grand piano and Monty to the music stand near it. A ripple of programs, and
more, met her entrance. In what applause of welcome there was, though, Monty walked toward her and extended an arm of introduction. They did not quite touch. Wes fully knew that if they hadn’t already done so in private, they soon would.

With one finger, then two, then the fan of his hand as if in pledge, Wes pressed lightly on the breast pocket of his suit where Susan’s diary rested. “You’ll know the proper cubbyhole for this,” she had whispered as she slid it into his hand, backstage, before she went out to speak. In the half-light of the stage manager’s nook he had done what anyone would do, gone to the pages of the last few days. Lord, should earthly existence cause a person to laugh or gasp? He wondered how long it might take—into the next century?—before some delving scholar burrowed into the papers of the Double W and the Williamson family, flipped open this stray item as far as the flyleaf and Susan’s elongated handwriting there, and be drawn into the diary to its final inkdrops of sentence: I hope never to be forced into harder deciding than that brought on by Wes’s visit tonight, but life being life, who knows. The cavalry hat, and the knot of harm carried in our family lines, are turning to ash in the fireplace as I write this. Needless to say—no, perhaps this is precisely what does need to be set into permanence here—Monty will know from me only the same silence Wes has vowed over this. Some truths stand taller than others, and the one that I am betting the rest of my life on is my love for Monty.

Monty stepped to the microphone.

“It’s my pleasure to bring back onstage Miss Susan Duff, who has kindly agreed to accompany me tonight. She is an A-1 musician in her own right—as we say uptown, she knows how to negotiate the numbers.” Laughter spread, dark to white, at that. “The particular number of hers,” he played off the line while the audience was still in chuckles, “that we’re going to perform for you is the finale of a fine piece she has written. The tune has something of a nocturne to it, and seeing as how we’re all nocturnal enough to come out this evening to this particular hall, I thought it might fit the occasion.” He paused for a moment to gaze out at them all. “Any of you who have been caught in range of my voice before will know that I’ve been in the habit of starting things off with an old song of the prairie, where I am from—
Brant Rumble
Associate Editor, Scribner
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York NY 10020

Dear Brant--

One more time, the transcontinental pass of the page proofs. A couple of my earlier fixes, from my May 19 letter, don’t show up as having been made (on p. 258, especially, which I really want fixed, and the stray hyphen on p. 314), so I marked them in again; of course if they’ve been made, no problem. Otherwise, I simply handled John’s inquiries or put my OK on as is, so there’s not a lot of changing around, this time through. My main fret, and probably everybody’s, would be whether the changes for nicety on p. 249 screw up the pagination; I labored to make them not to and can’t see how they will, but call me pronto if they don’t fit within what was there, okay?

I don’t feel I need to see any more full sets of pages (unless you guys want me to), but would like copies of the specific corrected pages from this batch, just for my own archival files. For your reference, those would be pp.--

38  61  143  156  213  248  249  258  314
363  364

I hope this go-through does it. Onward to finished books.

All best
knew by heart every gruff note and passionate coax he was capable of, and how effectively the mixture worked. "The copper companies that have looted this state for thirty years think they are immune to fair taxation," she had heard him send crowds into a rising roar as he uncoiled his campaign tag line, "I promise them an epidemic of it!"

No other politician in the state had stung back as fiercely at the Ku Klux Klan as it crept west and its flaming crosses began to flare on the bald hills above Catholic towns and railheads bringing immigrants to Montana land: "This cuckoo Klan, they seem to be scared the Pope will descend on them in their beds, else why do they go around wearing their nighties over their heads?" The cause in her own bones, women's right to vote, he had furthered at every chance in the state legislature. "Comets attend the death of kings," his famous words to the 1910 suffrage convention as Halley's fireball swept across the Britain of the newly deceased Edward VII, "perhaps to see whether they truly fit their filigreed caskets. Across the water, there is a government, with complicit silence from its throne on down, that has fought its suffragists with detention, forced feedings, and truncheons. But this country, this state, with its every voice must greet the women who are pointing out true democracy to us." There never had been a hairbreadth of difference between him and her on politics, only every other field of life, and she had been all for his gubernatorial bid and the passions he gave such voice to. In his other great campaign, in the bloody mud of France, the words of Wes were known to have made the difference between life and death. Her head swimming, four years out of practice at dealing with the mesmerizing side of him, she carefully chose her way around his entreaty now:

"If it's one of your daughters, I wouldn't feel right about—"

"Not even close. Fatherly pride isn't anywhere in this. Promise me you'll give a listen."

"I seem to feel the presence of the Williamson disposition to bargain."

He reflected for a moment, as if she had shown him something about himself. Then said only: "I don't consider I've ever lost anything by it. About giving a listen—how can that hurt?"

She had to grant, "For a singing teacher, hearing is believing. All I ever ask is to be amazed."
middle of a section of plank fence and the bull plowed it out from under you, then you were in a hell of a fix—and leaped, grabbing for the post with both arms and pulling his legs up under him. The fence shuddered below him as the bull slammed into it, but he was high and dry, and at that moment full of complete joy at having pulled off the stunt. What could be better? the triumphant chorus in the loft of his brain sang all through the rest of him. The bull down there in a fit of snot and slobber and other fluids of rage, himself perched up here a bit out of breath but otherwise cozy, the big Helena crowd yowling in his favor: he’d take this a thousand times in a row.

Dolph rode up to encourage the bull to the exit gate, then reined around to check on the puff-cheeked clown as he slid down off the fence. Hands on his thighs as he spent a minute getting his wind back, Monty admitted: “This is getting to be a long day.”

“One more go-round and you can quit teasing the livestock,” Dolph commiserated.

There was a break in the action now while the chutes were being reloaded, this time with broncs. Dolph dismounted and Monty swung up into the saddle and slumped there like the end-of-the-trail Indian while Dolph led the horse across the arena, another surefire act. The dried-up little cowboy walked as if his feet hated to touch the ground, which was not an act at all.

When they got over by the chutes Monty slipped smoothly off the horse and Dolph tied the reins to the arena fence.

“Monty?” The pickup man inclined his head in the direction of the bull pen. “You don’t want to run too many of them footraces with these bastards.”

“I’ll have to remember that.”

“It makes for quite a show, though,” Dolph granted with a shortle, “you lighting out across there with that bull’s horns tickling your hip pocket.” He sized up the riders and ropers and hangers-on clotted around the chutes. “Now’s a good a time as any to pass the hat for our hardworking rodeo clown, don’t you think?”

“I been paid,” Monty said swiftly. “Mister Whit already—”

Dolph looked as if he hadn’t heard right. “What’s that have to do with the price of peas in China? You got something against extra money?”
Before the next bout of scrubbing, she stepped outside and took her leisure at the perimeter of the yard, idly whacking cockleburrs and nettles out of her way with a stick. Nearby, the creek ducked past behind its stand of diamond willows, plump at their ends with bud-break. A well-behaved school of white clouds coasted over the highest peaks to the west. Door or no door, Susan conceded, she at least had lucked into the picture-perfect time of the North Fork valley, with wild hay surging in the bottomland along the creek and fresh grass on the buttes and foothills that tilted the valley to the spring sun. On a day such as this when the clear air was a delicate shellac on every detail of each gray-blue pillaring cliff, the mountains castled up even closer than she had remembered over the Duff homestead and the dozen other deserted ones of Scotch Heaven.

Green-stained stick in her hand, Susan stood stock-still for a minute and listened with all her might.

The silence. Eloquent of the space, of the reach of country here along the footings of the Rockies, the cathedral-rise of the continent into the blue stillness of sky, the prairie unrolling from the other horizon like Bedouin tarpaulin.

Her ears took in the solitude while her mind stayed busy with thecomings and goings of the dead and the momentarily absent. This place’s traffic of presences, of one shade or another. Not that she at all believed in the specter world, but right now she rather wished she was capable of it. Ghosts ought be interesting company, she reasoned, particularly here. Not gauzy visitors who popped out of walls and gabbed when least expected; she could do without those. But why shouldn’t leftover spirits, to call them that, constitute a kind of echo of the soul, lingering tunelike in the air after life was gone? A nocturne, she wouldn’t be surprised: ruminative, tending toward melancholy—after all, the poor things are no longer the freshest notes in the musical arrangement, are they—yet with a serenade melody that would not leave the mind. Chopin, she decided, pensive a moment herself; Chopin surely would be the court musician of eternity’s nightsingers. She wished her piano were here; the opening passage of her favorite of his pieces had found its way into her fingers and wanted out right then.

It took no real prompting to remind herself that she currently had enough concerns dealing with the living. To name the closest to
“Here, I’ll barn the horses, you git in there and take your medicine from her,” Dolph rattled on as they dismounted in the now familiar yard. “Ask her for me what she’s doing with all the milk from that damn cow, feeding an orphanage?”

As he approached the house Monty could hear her in there plinking the piano in a testing way, *da dum, da dum da da*. Knowing she was just waiting her turn at him, he knocked and already had the door handle in his grip and his hat ready to flip onto the peg by the time she called the customary “Come on in, Mister Rathbun.”

She didn’t migrate into the kitchen to swoop him in as usual, though, only poked the top part of her around the inner doorway like the front end of a clipper ship. “Here’s an idea. Come see.”

Monty sensed something arduous ahead. But when he stepped in to where she had taken up her station, the only thing new was that her windup Victrola had been moved to front and center, its morning-glory horn expectantly aimed their way.

“Today I have something I want you to hear, Mister Rathbun—do you suppose it would be all right if I call you Monty? It would save some on the world’s supply of breath that I’m eternally after you about.”

His short-measure nod. He still was trying to come up with an educated guess as to what this was about. Stand around and listen today, after standing around chasing through the scale those other days? *Am I ever going to get to just sing?*

Vigorously she cranked the phonograph and set the needle onto the record. Our poured a profound bass sound as if the foundations of heaven were shifting; Chaliapin in *Boris Godunov*. Monty appeared ready to take to the hills.

“Whoops, not that one,” Susan said with a chuckle. She grabbed the intended record from the imposing stack on the sideboard. More whirls of the phonograph handle, and a voice soared high and clear:

“Let us break bread together on our knees,
Let us break bread together on our knees.
When I fall down on my knees
With my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.”
"HALLO, AMIS!" The not combative how-do-you-do had wafted across the few hundred yards of battered ground between the Germans' trench and his men as they were digging in. "Woher kommt Ihr?"

"Aus Montana, Fritz," a buck private fresh off a potato farm in the Gallatin Valley cupped his hands and shouted back. "Wir sind Rocky Mountain buckaroos."

"Aus dem wilden Westen? Habt Ihr 'six-shooters' wie Old Shatterhand und Winnetou?"

"Nein, nein! Fur Euch Hunnen genügt ein!"

At the time Wes laughed helplessly. If only the conduct of war did match up with Karl May's dashing pages of prairie shoot-'em-ups as imagined from the woods along the Rhine, and if only one bullet per Hun were enough.

The enemy's attentiveness to newcomers in the stale flat-footed killing match that was the Western Front was understandable: Montanans were the mold for reinvented soldiers, American Expeditionary Force—style—hunters from the time they were boys on ranches and homesteads, well acquainted with shovel calluses and dirty chores and rough quarters. Most of all, not worn down as the Europeans and British were by the routine of trench life, which was mud and rats and boredom interspersed by the warning whizzes of every caliber of weapon known to man. Wes remembered thinking
with hospitality as they were, Susan let her stage sense steer her through. Back when her voice was still regarded as finding its promise rather than having reached its limits, she had performed throughout Europe—cities a cut below Paris and Vienna and Berlin, true, but a swath of Europe nonetheless—but never at an occasion so bedecked as this. Franco-American tricolors aside, everyone there knew this gathering was intrinsically auspicious, coinciding as it did with the imminent date on the calendar which would put the worst of wars one full year into the gentling distance of the past, into calculable history. Here at St. Mihiel, where America’s doughboys and France’s Poilus had fought together and broken the German salient, their countries would erect for all the world to see a monument of that hardest alloy to attain, peace. If her given part in that was to hold herself high enough tonight for the French to sight along, she could stiffen herself to it.

Yet under this sense of mission Susan, for all her common allegiance with the other Americans who had been sent, was there to represent the postage-stamp trust territory populated entirely by herself and Samuel. The colossal memorial statue, to rise out of the field of white crosses marching in place, she had not bothered to have an opinion about, and could not believe Samuel would have. But the archive proposed by the French, to hold forever the letters and diaries of the killed soldiers—their stories in whatever scrawled moments, adding up to the last chapter of a sacrificed generation—she would have skated the Atlantic to see done. Tucked in her luggage back at the clammy stonewalled pension was the packet of Samuel’s letters, the most costly of donations.

Dear Susan—Funny place this world, where they put a fellow on a troop train at [censored] and he gets off a ship at [censored]. Where’s any progress in that? She had seen him and the other recruits off at the Great Northern depot at Havre, therefore he had alit at Le Havre, the first of the pushpins she deployed on the wall map of Europe newly put up in the music parlor. Without him, the house seemed howlingly empty. Four crammed years, his high school years when his rambunctious intelligence broke the boundaries of the homestead as her voice once had done, he had been both the man of the place and its kaleidoscope of boy. It was with an eye to Samuel’s future, and the music
onto the bunting-draped rotunda by their hosts. Susan had to stifle the little something at the back of her throat again when, a sudden study in concentration, he disposed of his champagne glass to the monocled military aide as if to the nearest waiter.

Exactly as she remembered, his speech-making voice sounded sandy, unvarnished, and the more appealing for that. He spoke not in thunderous phrases, but as if concerned to find the right words, the path to their ears. He did not pander to this audience with bits of college French or frontlines Franglais, and while it was not clear how much of his well-carpentered tribute to the fallen of all nations was understood, Susan noted that the French men of government, in their various sashes and decorations, angled their heads in connoisseurial appraisal. Was there anyplace in the world, she wondered ruefully, that didn’t eat out of a Williamson hand?

The haberdasher followed in the speaking order and stuttered out how honored, deeply honored, they were to be there.

Her turn. Susan stepped forward and in a voice clear as mint delivered the fiscal report—the amount pledged from bereaved Montanans toward the Great War memorial over here—to somber applause. Then onward to the banquet, and no backward glances until the morrow.

“In the style of Saint-Gaudens, is all I am saying. I have in mind ‘Grief,’ a statue which a family I’ve known—”

“The Adamses, you must mean, Major? In memory of the sad case of Henry’s wife, Clover, isn’t it?”

“You have seen it then, Miss Duffy?”

“Of course. It is indulgently weepy to the point of lugubrious.”

The French members of the advisory committee on the design of the memorial were managing to appear appreciative of spirited debate rather than appalled at the American war hero and the American woman going at one another as though they wore spurs on their tongues. The haberdasher from Missoula doodled circles in the margin of his agenda sheet, looking at neither Wes nor Susan.

“And you aren’t one for weeping?”

“Oh come, Major. Tears have their time and place. But we can’t
hand only when the words You're fired! or I quit! flew through the air. But the lord of pay, there by the safe, so far hadn't decreed the one and Monty had no intention of uttering the other. He hesitated, then went and scooped up the tall-standing coins. "I'll stay a stranger to trouble this time, honest."

Wes still didn't say anything. He sat back down to his desk, eyes into the familiar field of paper, as the door closed behind Monty.

It was not that many blocks to where Clore Street elbowed a gravelly hillside for enough room to cavort, but it was to the city limits of the world known by white Helenans. Among other parts, Clore Street immediately took a nighttime visitor by the ear and nose. "Night bite!" the swooping chant of the street vendor echoed every minute or so among the hard-used few blocks of buildings, brazier smoke and smells of cooking wafting from his cart of f'savouries. "Baloney cold, molly hot! Night bite here!" Supperless, Monty stopped long enough to devour what was advertised as a tamale. Laughter and protestations between women and men could be heard from second-story rooms overhead, and between that and the cartman's Tabasco a considerable warmth began to spread in his middle.

Fortified in at least that much of himself, he quickstepped on up Clore to the destination that announced Saturday night with a good-time wall of noise. In the Zanzibar Club, which had taken on the Prohibition guise of a social card parlor that happened to have a bar still in place along one entire side of the room, the permanently bored barkeep greeted him with the usual:

"Look what the cat dragged in. Where you been keeping yourself, Sticks?"

"Home on the range," one of the nearby regulars furnished, "where the steers and the roping dopes play—that's still the stomping grounds of Wrangler Rathbun, ain't it?"

"Funny as a bunion, Hawkins," Monty said levelly. Ranch hand that he was accused of being and indubitably was, he stood akimbo a minute at the head of the bar looking over the situation before putting his shoulder to it. Pretty much the usual Saturday-night bunch of jokers, from all appearances. He could pick out the railroaders down the bar by their starched shirts with suitcase folds. Here nearer the door but leaving a newcomer enough space to get his buying hand into
as she went humming her way up the brief path she could even dimly make out that someone had hung a sack on her door. More than likely the latest unsought generosity sent over by Wes, a gunnysack of the past week’s newspapers and, who knew, another helping of picnic makings?

She would have to make sure to tease him about his Williamson bag of surprises, she was telling herself as she stepped to the gray shelter of the doorway and reached her hand to the hanging shape, and touched not burlap but cat fur.

The realization struck her like a hot spatter. Jerking her hand away from the blood and hair, by instinct she stifled outcry with a gagging swallow, not giving whoever might be out there the satisfaction of hearing her scream. She backed away one step, then reached around for the doorknob from the side of the doorway and waited to a count of ten. Breathing with greatest care now, she pushed open the door with the cat nailed to it, and hurriedly stepped over its puddle of blood on the threshold.

She sensed, as much as saw, that the kitchen had been disrupted. In moments she managed to feel her way to the silverware drawer and had the butcher knife in her hand. Every ounce of her knew she had to get back to Angus and Adair’s at once, but she also had a furious need to know how much had been done here. She felt along the wall by the stove to the matchbox holder. In the flare of the first match, she saw that the kitchen table had been kicked over. Carefully lighting another, she sighted in on the spare lamp on the sideboard and brought it to flaring life. Corners; the kitchen suddenly seemed to have many. No one but shadows there, though, and she was drawn, lamp high and knife clutched as tight as her fist could go, to the doorway to the next room.

Then she saw the white paint across the music room wall, using the worst words about her and Monty.

His door erupted open, bringing him blinking out of a jumble of bedclothes and dreams. He swung his feet onto the cold floor, meaner chill whiffing in from the doorway but, further confusing him, a flicker of flames candelied somewhere out there above and behind the
"Monty, maybe—"
"Wait, Wes." Susan brushed at his words as if erasing a blackboard. "Please, there's something Monty and I have to go over first. A minute alone, may we?"

Williamson etiquette came to rest on Whit. Wordlessly he gestured them to the office.

After the two of them were out of the room, Whit turned to his brother. "Going to lose some of the crew. Saw it in their faces at breakfast."

Wes nodded. "Any others we want off the place?"

"I can think of a couple or three."

"The ones we stick with, jack up their wages a bit. That never hurts loyalty."

"Didn't mean to lay you open to trouble." Staying standing, Monty put his hands on the back of a chair and kneaded the leather. "I never thought, with the Major and all—"

"Shush about that."

The chair leather still was receiving a going-over. "No, I've got to make you know. Whatever bright idea, I wouldn't have opened my mouth on that boat if I'd known this was coming."

"Don't let me hear anything of the sort from you, now or ever." Anger spots as round as dollars had come to her cheeks. He cocked a look at her. Ever? Where does that come into the picture? "Your music," she was saying as if to drum it in, "is worth whatever the Knightynights hiding under their stupid sheets try to put any of us through. Never mind shaking your head, I know what I'm talking about when it comes to a voice like yours. Climb over them with it, you have to—Monty, it's the only way for you to leave them behind. Up in life is the best distance to be from those who want at you." For all she knew she was the first person from Scotch Heaven ever to be in the Double W's inmost lair, but she gestured to the office and its furnishings and its shelves of the royal maroon ledgers of the Williamsonsons as if showing him around. "You don't have to ask very far around here to discover that."

Monty could not hold it all in any longer.
MEDICINE LINE

1924

WAS HE LOSING his marbles, Monty wondered every little while, or did this constitute the exact last place on earth he could have expected to be plunked down in and told to set up housekeeping? And the music that came with it wasn't helping any.

"Jake and Roany was a-chousin' along
And Jake was a-singin' what he called a song—
Oh-da-lay-de-ob-da-lay-de-000 . . ."

"Now there's homegrown music for you," the announcer's voice crackled out of the radio set with professional enthusiasm. *Not in my book,* Mony grumbled to himself as he made his bed, the only chore he could find left to do. *Call that a yodel?* "That was the Medicine Line's own Prairie Troubadour," Andy Olswanger, singing a traditional cowboy song," the announcer rattled on, "right here in our studio. Well done, Andy! Say, friends, we here at station CINE, the voice of Medicine Hat and the province of Alberta"—a gulp of distance, then the sound wavered in strong again—"bringing you the finest listening that radio has to offer, from the Medicine Line to the High Line, all across these splendid wide open spaces where two nations meet in—"

*Bunch of open spaces between their ears,* Monty fumed as he stepped over and pinched off any more yowling from either the yodeler or the
brand of melody, for sure—her fingers racing all over the piano keys—but everything new that kept coming into it tiptoed back to meet the main tune. Then off a wonderful trickle of music would go again, eventually to shy back to the melody. It had its melancholy side, but the piece stayed full of exalted tricks like that, and as many of them as his ear could catch, Monty followed with stone-still attentiveness. He couldn’t not. This was music that sawed its way into the darkness of mood he had come down with, but lulled it into thinking better of itself. Showed the mood how to console itself, so to speak. Curative music, all the way. Mesmerized, he watched her fingers in their minute acrobatics along the keyboard, forth and back, as the Major would have said. How did she know to pull off a stunt like this?

When the last elegant notes had faded up into the rafters like setting stars, he shook his head to indicate he couldn’t come up with what such music deserved. “What’s something like that called?”

“Chopin. Nocturne in F sharp.” She was tingling from the playing. It had been a long time between auditoriums. Abruptly she announced, “Here’s mine,” and began fondling from the keys the opening bars of Prairie Tide.

This music too rose and rose, finding its way as if riding a breeze, then taking delicate steps back down, raindrops would they be? A beat, a beat, another beat, and the piece took on storm next. But glided at the end into harmony so perfectly lovely it seemed to settle the air of the room.

He was thunderstruck. When she had finished, the best he could do was whisper, “You’re up there with him,” meaning Chopin.

Susan frowned, hiding pleasure. “Nowhere close. That’s the overture, then it gallops off to be sung to, like so.” She demonstrated, the music bounding out of the piano now, but still as sure of itself as anything he had ever heard.

The clatter of a chair going over backward cut that off.

Monty was up, but leaden on his feet. “And you’re putting in all this work on me? What for?! Holy God, woman—Miss Susan, I mean. You’ve got yourself to try and pitch to the top of the heap!”

This had turned around more than she intended. “Monty, no. There’s every difference. As the old fiddler of Ecclefechan said when he heard a Stradivarius being played, ‘Ay, mon, there’s knackiness and
and open up his house, he would be along later. Susan had waited for him at the front door and let him do the honors with the key.

They stepped in to apparent emptiness. Wes did not know whether to feel vindicated or crestfallen. Helena had been searched these past days, the one Negro policeman on the force shaking Clore Street by the heels, Bailey's men casing other parts of the city, and Monty had not turned up. Nor did he now. Susan, however, was everywhere at once in her downstairs, opening a window to let fresh air in, putting a shoulder to the music parlor doors, asking Wes what time it was as she set the grandfather clock and wound it back to life. Catching sight of herself in the hallway mirror, she abruptly stopped everything else she was doing. Wes looked on, the apprehensively fascinated way men do at women tending to themselves, as she plucked out hairpins unerringly. Her hair flowed to her shoulders.

"Come up." She was already on her way to the stairs.

Wes swallowed hard. Have mercy for once, Lord. If she was hiding Monty in her own bedroom and word of it ever got out—

The long loft room was so full of belongings it took him several moments to be certain none of them was alive and breathing. Susan was making her way through them on some course known only to her, trailing fingertips over some, the cupped palm of her hand on corners of others as she passed. With Wes watching as if trying to learn the secret of the ritual, she bypassed her desk to a cabinet along the wall. A crackling noise took over the room. She tinkered with the radio set until the static quit.

Monty watched the clock.

He squared himself up, attentive now on the figure almost shoulder to shoulder with him. Somebody else made a pointing motion, which after the workings-over Susan had given him in the auditorium he would never have to think twice to recognize as a cue.

"Now for your listening pleasure here on station CINE, our latest troubadour of the Medicine Line, Montgomery Rathbun." The announcer looked at him sidelong but kept his mouth aimed at the almighty microphone on its spear of stand between them. "Welcome to 'Evening Encore.' For those of you not fortunate enough to have
of resurging spirituals, when almost weekly new arrangements of timeless field songs can sometimes resemble musical chairs.

The songs he brings are only an added gift, however. Montgomery Rathbun could sing the pages of the telephone directory and lift your soul. His is the latest and perhaps most phenomenal troubador's role in the renaissance of "sorrow songs" heralded in the pre-war recitals of Harry T. Burleigh, enhanced when Roland Hayes added spirituals to his classical presentations, furthered by the innovative scorings of the piano-and-tenor duo of J. Rosamond Johnson and Taylor Gordon, and burnished to a luster now that the profoundly gifted Paul Robeson has turned from dramatic roles to musicianship. At the onset of an earlier generous artistic flourishing, Ralph Waldo Emerson proffered to Walt Whitman: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere." Harlem's chorus of spiritual-singing virtuosos must similarly now pay their respects to Montgomery Rathbun, who stands forth as their latest compatriot and rival.

All that and the reviewer did not even have an inkling of how rocky that bottom had been. Reading back, finding the diary days when some bit of coaching or coaxing had worked and both of them felt another breathworth of soar in his song, Susan was starved all over again for that experience of the lessons with Monty. Don't I wish there were another one where he came from. Leading the South Fork schoolchildren in "Flow Gently, Sweet Afton" in preparation for the program all the parents were invited to, there had been times when she thought she would break off into a maddened howl. Very well then, face up and admit it, she had been spoiled by the particularities of Monty's voice. At least she was not totally bereft of it. One more time she picked up the letter the review had come with. I did not pay the man to write this, honest. The handwriting, in pencil, was welcomely familiar from the greetings he sent from wherever he sang; they amounted to postcards mailed in envelopes, safe from small-town
post office eyes. She could picture the jackknife-sharpened stub, the
earnest crouch over the stationery—somehow the words even stood
slow and careful on the paper—and found it more rewarding that
he thought she was worth the diligence. This letter was almost warm
to the touch. Something, isn't it? To think that the spirit songs are having
a heyday? And that the foreground, they call it, was the old wagontrack
where you about made me run my legs off? She smiled a moment at his
growing penchant for question marks—he seemed determined to
make even his punctuation count as much as it could—and skipped
on to the bottommost sentence: I hope the old town is ready for me? He
was coming to Helena on his concert tour through the West. She cir-
cled the day on her calendar. Ahead of it by a week was the x'ed-over
set of days she was to spend with Wes in the Two Medicine country.

U
nder the highstanding sun the cattle were mothering up.
Their mode of reacquaintance was repeating itself a couple of
thousand times at once, every cow moaning anxiously and making
sure with thorough sniffs that the calf trying to raid milk from her
udder was entitled to it.

Next to Wes in the shade of the boss tent, Susan speculatively
watched the bawling scene along the lakeshore. Hers was not the only
appraisal of what was being done to a calm noon at Lower Two Med-
icine Lake: around the reflecting rim of water, sphinxlike mountains
with manes of timber seemed to draw in closer to frown down over
the intrusion.

She glanced at Wes, still busy checking his tallybook before he
and whoever was sent out from the Blackfeet Indian Agency counted
the cattle onto this reservation allotment, its rugged foothills practi-
cally in the lap of Glacier National Park. Simply by eye the massed
cattle seemed to Susan an excess of livestock for any summer range.
But mob of feeders though this might be, she knew it was only a por-
tion of the Williamson's growing Deuce W herd. Thousands more
were out in the coulees of Fort Assinniboine and the other outposts of
the new ranch. Greater thousands than that were spread as usual on
the home range of the Double W. The tallybook in Wes's hands had
about the audience problem. "Can't explain it, but I don't get choky
with the songsheets right there, even if I never need them."

"Told you." Her face lit, she urged: "Now your turn. Those fancy-
pantry musicales of yours—tell all."

From there on their conversation kept jumping its banks. He told
her about hobnobbing with the Rabiznaz, wanted to know how her
own music was coming. She told him she was within shouting dis-
tance of the end of the operetta if the shout could be a better song
than she had managed to come up with yet, and what were his living
arrangements in Harlem like? They were back and forth at this a mile
a minute until they heard a notifying cough. In the doorway of the
parlor stood J.J. and Cecil, fluffy bathrobes over the arm of each.

"This is Miss Duff, my teacher I told you about," Monty reeled off
the introductions. "Wasn't for her, the most I could look forward to
would be changing sparkplugs every three months."

"Ah? Then the ears of the world are in your debt, Mrs. Duff," J.J.
said with something between a nod and a bow. Cecil's wordless
acknowledgment of her certifiably amounted to no more than a nod.

"It's Miss."

"Mizzz Duff, excuse me all hollow." J.J.'s sibilant antic made
Monty want to bat him one.

"Sorry to interrupt," J.J. swept on, "but we were just passing. We
are off to the waters," meaning the natatorium across the hotel
grounds. "Cecil here needs to cook like an egg to thaw out from this
Rocky Mountain air, he claims. We are told we will have a generous
portion of the pool to ourselves." J.J. smiled as if at the wonder of
that. "Roped off for our very own use, I gather the procedure is. West-
ern hospitality is really quite something."

"We did give the world Monty, from out here," Susan offered as
though it were a neutral observation. "We may be coasting a bit much
on that."

"That was generous, I can't help but admit." J.J. fussily checked
his watch against the parlor's grandfather clock as if two opinions
were needed on the hour of day, then recited: "Keep an eye on the
time, Montgomery, don't forget to catch some rest."

"It's as good as caught, J.J."

"Good day, Miss Duff. Been our pleasure."
“Good house tonight,” J.J. recited to Monty as he always did, whatever the audience size.

Monty stepped out onto the curtained stage to check that his music stand was on the mark, then made a beeline for the stage manager’s peephole.

J.J. was not stretching it tonight; a sellout crowd, packed from the front row to standees along the farthest wall. What seemed to be Clore Street intact filled one entire balcony. He spotted Susan beside the Gustafsons. A row behind and a few seats over, the Major and Whit Williamson in full evening regalia, one slick and one mussed but otherwise drawn by the same hand.

“One minute,” the stage manager called, nervously watching Cecil, who was still fussing with his music sheets in the rack for them on the piano, moving them an inch one way and then the other, although Monty seriously doubted music racks differed very much from piano to piano. But as he always did, with seconds to spare Cecil sashayed over into the wing alongside the rest of them as if the curtain could not rise without his elevating presence, the first bow of the evening deliciously his.

The accompanist stopped up applause somewhat overlong, Susan jabbed the comma in as if it were a thumb in Cecil’s ribs, bobbing like one of those toy birds that dips its peak in a glass of water. But then Monty made his appearance, and the real applause started.

As he came out I saw that he had been right to resist my attempts to cure his walk—that cowboy saunter of his lets the audience know this is a person who has come an extreme way to reach this point. He handles himself notably in every other way that counts, too. It has been long years since I sang on the Marlow stage myself, but I thought I remembered its particularities, and Monty did me proud when he took his mark exactly where I had guessed. As if the stage belonged to him. As if he had inherited it from the most royal line of singers.

The applause poured over him until he steepled his fingers in a gesture of thanks and readiness. He had decided against saying anything first, just hit them with the first song. Now he nodded ever so slightly to Cecil, who piously unclasped his fingers from his lap as if raveling out a prayer, and the piano music rippled out with a parade-ground prance.
work, and the first time she heard it in the middle distance she laughed incredulously and made straight for it. The neighborhood was a few away from hers, but she knew that was only by luck of the moment. Back in her younger experience here, she had learned that New York perpetually colonized itself. A stretch of street that was a lens grinders' district the last time you looked would have turned through some cosmic New York logic into a major center of the making of lampshades, and the spot on the river where you bought imported perfume was all at once where the banana boats came in. She couldn't remember what these precise blocks of ironfront buildings had been before, but now they were unmissably the radio district.

No, that almost inaudibly said it; Babel and Bedlam freshly seeded with Radio Corporation of America amplifiers, was more like it. Trying to face one another down across the contested air of the street, a couple of blockfuls of these fresh enterprises chorally dinned out the samples of their wares. The ebonite loudspeaker over the entryway of one radio store blaring out Paul Whiteman's jazz band at the St. Regis Hotel, the tin glory horn out the transom of the one next door dizzily trumpeting the fanfare of Carmen, the noise emporium across the way countering both with Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink in grave Wagnerian matinee mode at the Metropolitan Opera—her first time through, Susan couldn't believe her ears, but only a stone-deaf person could doubt this. Turn her head toward New Jersey, and she received the WOR chant of Bernarr Macfadden calisthenics. Incline in the general direction of Brooklyn, and some boy baritone reached forth all the way from the WAHG studio to present her "Roses of Picardy." As best she could tell, there was an inviolate pact among the stores that none would play the same radio station as any other one, but beyond that anything went—banners, installment plans, money-back guarantees, free aerials, complimentary shrinelike bamboo stands to set your set on. At least once a week she feigned interest in the infinite varieties of radio cabinetry, store window by store window, to walk slowly through the mad glorious gauntlet of confusion and attune herself to how zealously the world was enwrapped in voices. To imagine each time one more soar of sound into the atmospheric mix, from up in Harlem.
J.J. did a skip-step to keep in stride with her. Whatever Susan was marching to today, it didn’t know slow. They were already bearing down on the el station and he still was trying to catch up with her surprise prognosis.

“Really ready?” he persisted. “Enough that I can put him up in front of people and they won’t mob me for their money back?”

“His voice is ready,” she repeated.

“Well, then, amen,” he made his decision. “I’ll set up a musicale or two, sprinkle him around town that way at first. Let Montgomery tune himself up without the whole world listening.”

“And then?”

“Maybe tour him some before letting the New York crickets at him. One thing, Miss Duff.” He halted so abruptly at the base of the el stairs that Susan flew past him a couple of steps before she could attend to his next utterance. “You have to understand, you probably won’t see us in Helena again,” and he handed her the black bag in the usual ritual of goodbye.

At the office in the days after, Susan plunged her mind as far into work as it would conceivably go. She came in very early, now that there were no journeys to Harlem these mornings, and in no time was well on her way to wringing extra effort out of every Over There chapter on the eastern seaboard. This day, with the watchmen’s barrel bonfires barely quenched in her window-framed view of the awakening docks, she just was starting rapid-fire typing when the jangle of the telephone joined in. She let it ring a couple more times while she gathered her mental forces. At this hour chances were it was either the New Jersey state chairman who could not wait to howl about the stiff letter she had sent calling attention to the collecting prowess of the Tammany political machine versus his in Jersey City, or—

“This is the Amsterdam News,” came the sweet voice at the other end, “wondering if you might be interested in our introductory subscription price for downtown folk.”

“Monty, it’s all right. I’m here alone, except for a crazy man on the phone.”
mussed bedding, their entwined bodies made a memory duplicate of their 1919 spell together, but this time as if caught in the hot light of an explosion.

He managed to pause long enough in what they were at to ask: “You’re supposedly where?”

“Mmmh?” She had to think for a second what she had told Vander. “Oh. Carnegie Hall.”

“You rate it.”

Afterward, the surprise on her this time, he took her to supper at the dining room of the Brevoort Hotel. Quite possibly on the basis, it looked like to Susan, that this was the nearest palace he could think of. The headwaiter fussed them into place, chanted Monsieur and Madame while enthroning them at the nicely placed table which one glance at the cut of Wes’s suit evidently had enticed them to. Something was whispered in Wes’s ear that made him nod gravely, menus were conferred on them, and then they, like the other dining couples, were by themselves in the sea of ice-white tables. Glancing around at the murmuring class that obviously frequented here, Susan wondered how far back in history the rule ran that as the caliber of the family name goes up, the velocity goes down. Wes could be counted on to be the exception.

“Too bad Montana doesn’t have a seacoast,” he was saying as if something should be done about that. Running a finger rapidly down the seafood side of the menu, he chose clams, specifying à la crème.

She ducked her head to the menu, not fully trusting her expression in front of a man whose version of eating fish on Friday was clams prepared in cream. “I’m hopelessly carnivorous.” In French probably better than Wes’s and the waiter’s combined, she ordered loin of lamb, cooked à point, s’il vous plaît. “Back home we never ate the little delicacies, you know, or maybe you don’t,” she rattled on to Wes to be saying something. “Mutton, yes. Religiously. So to speak.” She didn’t want to babble at this, but words were not the surest part of her at the moment.

Wes felt around under the draping tablecloth and pulled out a champagne bottle. “Louis informs me the only available wine is on
ger down the list of the men who possessed the prairie then: Granville Stuart, the bookish cattle king chosen as president; James Fergus, who had a county named after him; among the others, the invited ranch operators from just over the Dakota line, including one T. Roosevelt. Wes knew enough of the story; certain members of the cattlemen's group had evolved immediately into vigilantes with pedigrees. Secret lynching crews—Stuart's Stranglers—had been set loose against suspected rustlers in the Missouri Breaks and across the eastern plains of Montana. He ran down the founders' list again, even though he was as sure as anything can be. Notably missing was the name Williamson. That was like him. Whatever else might be said about his father, Warren Williamson had always had his own way of doing things in the Two Medicine country.

He stacked the scrapbooks aside, then with soldierly care lifted out the holstered horse pistol that young Lieutenant Warren Williamson had used with effect in the Union cavalry corps, and never after. It took Wes over for a moment, the antique pistolry of his father's war compared to the mammoth-caliber barrages of his own. A peashooter like this to Big Bertha—there's progress for you. He stuck the gun aside with the scrapbooks and dipped again into the trunk until he could reach what he was looking for. There, beneath it all, the box that he and Whit had long ago agreed they wanted off the ranch.

Surprisingly light but awkward to handle, at least the thing had a carry-string, as such boxes do; he wouldn't have to go there holding it in both hands like something that was about to spill. Not that it's anything that will ever wash out, no matter how careful I am. The box had risen, in his grasp, only to the brass-edged rim of the trunk, insecurely resting where the corners lipped together. Holding it there he stayed in the half-crouch, still deciding, bothered raw both ways. There would have been a time when he'd have prayed, in such a position, to work out what to do; sought some justifying snippet of code in the holy accumulation of teachings, some overlooked affidavit of motive that would spell out whether to keep the silence or let this box speak its piece. But, in a wealth of confusion as unsortable as the attic around him, faith had entirely too many meanings in this situation. The word was as shifting as bits of alphabet shaken into a kaleido-
know about girding. He put his hand to where the scars were, his ribcage and then the column of his throat, reflexively tracing those near misses of death in a manner as old as when warriors of The Iliad touched places where their armor had shielded off a blow, as thankful as when a cavalryman stroked a brass buckle that had turned a bullet. Oddly, he found that the grievous harms he carried on himself put him in a calmer mood for tonight. Plenty of company coming tonight, when it came to bearing wounds: the shot-up veterans, like—well, like the Major; the busloads down from Harlem, unpenned for one night from the segregation line at 125th Street. Everybody who would be here tonight was a survivor of something. His voice would need to reflect that.

“Whatever patient clock ticks out there in the night of the universe has brought us again to the eleventh day of the eleventh month, which holds the moment of stillness when the Great War stopped. Into that holy silence of the Armistice we bring, on this night of observance, the greatest vows of which we are capable, some in spoken word, some in glorious song, all from the heartsprings deepest within us.”

Wes broke off reading and stepped away from the microphone. “And it goes on like that for a further four minutes and thirty seconds,” he notified the stage echelon of command congregated in the wings. He was truculent about the rehearsal, Susan could tell. Of all of them, Wes was a maestro of impromptu, his political years having given him a natural ease at climbing up in front of any gathering and r"speaking his piece." I can think of one I wish he had choked on.

The stage manager hastily clicked his stopwatch off, Phil Sherman looking bemused beside him. “Major, we have plenty of rehearsal time, you are free to go through your whole speech.”

“What for?” the shortly put question answered itself. “You requested five minutes’ worth and that’s what it will be.” Wes all but marched off the stage, the slight hitch in his gait made increasingly plain as he covered the desert-like distance from centerstage.

Been around the man since he came back with that in ‘18 and never noticed it that much. That told Monty something about the proportion of matters here. One more time he studied around at the amplitude of
our human hues are displayed together." As Wes stepped away to a thunder of handclaps, he had to concede that even the applause sounded better in Carnegie Hall.

He stayed just offstage now that his part in the evening was over. He ached like fury from standing so long on the hard flooring but he kept to his carefully planted stance there and watched Susan radiantly speak her piece about the Harlem letters collection to perfection, endured Tammany next, then the mid-show comedy and its counterface of tragedy in the letters and diaries, and as Vandiver began making his pitch for Bonds of Peace, he knew he could delay no longer and moved off to the hallway and stairwell that would take him to his seat up in the box circle.

He stepped with care into the darkened box. Nodded a series of apologies for his lateness as he squeezed behind the retinue his wife and Mrs. Smith had assembled in the seats there. Automatically shook hands with Governor Smith in passing. Merrinell, in whispered conversation with the governor's wife, gave a little acknowledging whisk to where he would sit. His bolster chair was installed at the angle needed to favor his knee, and he settled into it facing a bit away from Merrinell, which he figured he may as well grow used to. From her flutter of gesture, word had not yet reached her about his rehearsal declamation. But it would be told as many ways as there were tellers. When she heard, whatever version she heard, Merrinell with her active history of suspicion would do her best to make his life a ceaseless purgatory. Not that it much resembled anything else to him from here on anyway.

Straightening up, forcing his mind to the moment, Wes looked out over a Carnegie Hall such as he had never seen before, a marbled crowd, rows of colored faces and immediate other rows of pale ones and mixes in between. Below, in the front row and the space between there and the stage and out into the side aisles, were the veterans clutching crutches or armrests of wheelchairs or in the case of the blinded ones, an arm of the person next to them. Their array reminded him of a field hospital, the one place he had seen troops of both colors quartered together in either of his wars.

Up on the stage Vandiver finished as he had begun, with a flourish. Now out they came, one from each wing, Susan to the grand piano and Monty to the music stand near it. A ripple of programs, and
more, met her entrance. In what applause of welcome there was, though, Monty walked toward her and extended an arm of introduction. They did not quite touch. Wes fully knew that if they hadn’t already done so in private, they soon would.

With one finger, then two, then the fan of his hand as if in pledge, Wes pressed lightly on the breast pocket of his suit where Susan’s diary rested. “You’ll know the proper cubbyhole for this,” she had whispered as she slid it into his hand, backstage, before she went out to speak. In the half-light of the stage manager’s nook he had done what anyone would do, gone to the pages of the last few days. Lord, should earthly existence cause a person to laugh or gasp? He wondered how long it might take—into the next century?—before some delving scholar burrowed into the papers of the Double W and the Williamson family, flipped open this stray item as far as the flyleaf and Susan’s elongated handwriting there, and be drawn into the diary to its final inksdrops of sentence: *I hope never to be forced into harder deciding than that brought on by Wes’s visit tonight, but life being life, who knows. The cavalry bat, and the knot of harm carried in our family lines, are turning to ash in the fireplace as I write this. Needless to say—no, perhaps this is precisely what does need to be set into permanence here—Monty will know from me only the same silence Wes has vowed over this. Some truths stand taller than others, and the one that I am betting the rest of my life on is my love for Monty.*

Monty stepped to the microphone.

“It’s my pleasure to bring back onstage Miss Susan Duff, who has kindly agreed to accompany me tonight. She is an A-1 musician in her own right—as we say uptown, she knows how to negotiate the numbers.” Laughter spread, dark to white, at that. “The particular number of hers,” he played off the line while the audience was still in chuckles, “that we’re going to perform for you is the finale of a fine piece she has written. The tune has something of a nocturne to it, and seeing as how we’re all nocturnal enough to come out this evening to this particular hall, I thought it might fit the occasion.” He paused for a moment to gaze out at them all. “Any of you who have been caught in range of my voice before will know that I’ve been in the habit of starting things off with an old song of the prairie, where I am from—
Brant —

2nd pass for Ivan.
I'll need it back 6/16.

[Signature]
June 4, 2003

Ivan Doig
17277 15th Avenue NW
Seattle, Washington 98177

Dear Ivan,

Well, John McGhee is out again today. He’s caught a flu bug that’s been going around. So, while I’m not able to send you a new, clean set of pages, I am able to include John’s marked up pages, which reflect the only fixes that would be made to a new, clean set. As you will see, I’ve slid these few pages into this set, and I’ve attached a copy of them to this letter. I hope this will suffice.

All best,

[Signature]
stock. The very next morning, quick as he was done with the milking chores, Monty stuck his head in the boss's office off the kitchen and mentioned that he'd heard Mister Whit was turning into a rodeo producer and if he happened to be hard up for someone to do that clown job, here stood a person fool enough to try. Whit looked him up and down—young enough yet and built on springs; a bit of a cutup on payday since he was off his mother's apron strings, but it didn't matter to the ranch how a man behaved in town—and saw no particular reason why the Double W choreboy couldn't give it a whirl, on rodeo weekends; somebody had to put on the clown getup.

That had been a dozen rodeos ago and here they were at the last and biggest of them all, in the fairgrounds of the capital of Montana. As was their custom, the Williamson's were using the occasion to play both ends against the middle. Somewhere up there in the shaded side of the stands would be Wesley Williamson with Helena society and the money men from as far away as Boston and New York, while Whit ramrodded the show down here at the level of hooves and horns. The ways of the Williamson's were beyond Monty, the manner in which they divvied up being in charge while leaving the impression it was merely the natural order of things, but it didn't especially matter to him either. Like the other hands on the WW ranch who'd been chosen to try their luck at putting on rodeos, such as Dolph and the stock handlers and the unfortunates trying to pry that bull loose, he was along for the ride, so to speak.

Right about now he could have used a sample of that grandstand shade. He mopped himself some more, taking care not to touch the mask of makeup; he figured he knew at least that much about how a woman felt. It was Mister Whit, who had traveled and knew about these things, who decreed the whiteface cosmetic: "Those minstrel shows, they put on blackening. Be kind of funny if you did the opposite, wouldn't it?" Monty saw the point.

At last there was hope at the chute; the horn was grating out from between the planks after great contortions by all involved. A minute or so more, and he'd be matching wits with a bull again. He dug himself a starting place with the heel of each boot, stretched down and cleared away pebbles of any size, checked once more that the barrel was sited right. Stood ready again.
“Afraid, who said that? But . . . how do I go about it?”

The piano music startled Dolph where he was puttying the weathered sash of a kitchen window. Monty’s voice thundered out sometimes atop the notes and sometimes not, the song lifting uncertainly over the valley.

A letter for you, Mister Williamson."

Here? “Popular, am I. Thank you, Jenkins.” Wes plucked the envelope from the deskman’s hand and went on in past the oil portraits of one President Lowell after another, their own expressions carefully fixed in the obligation unto eternity to present the face of Harvard to heathen New York. Not until he reached the quiet library, deepest recess of the club, did he hurriedly slit open the envelope with his penknife.

Her handwriting leapt to him, from love letters now consigned to ashes.

Dear Wes—

I thought you were due some accounting of our pupil, and it seemed best to send it to your lunch lair.

You will be pleased to hear we have made some strides, or rather, I have pushed and Monty has progressed in some steps. Some, I emphasize; less so in others. His vocal range is improving, although of course not yet as much as it ultimately must. His tone remains his strongest point. In presentation, he no longer stands as if he were made of warped barrel staves. All in all, after these first weeks, I can say Monty is in better possession of his voice. But his voice is not yet in possession of him, which is the breakthrough for a true singer.

You are missing quite the contest. He is a striver.

Amenable, to a point, and stubborn as a stumps beyond that. (He will not hear of using a music stand, insisting it flusters him to have that in his face. Besides, he indignantly tells me, his memory is good enough for a few songs.)
tim'rous beastie could get through. Passable Robert Burns from the man
who ordinarily fumbled the Scottish tongue, no less. Where did he
summon that from, even given his knack to perform up to what
nearly any circumstance asked? She should know something about
gauging that capacity in him, and it bothered her that she did not.
Rehearsals were her field, but run those clinching sentences of Wes's
over and over in her mind as she would, she could not decide whether
he had rehearsed those lines.

Hated to ask you to come all the way across town, but I didn't
know how else—"

"All that way, tsk. This is a treat. I'd have been happy just to poke
my head backstage and say hello after you floor them tonight."

"Couldn't let you off that easy. Get you something? Tea and honey?"

"You. Inflict my own medicine on me, would you. But thank you,
nothing. Monty, this—I have to say, I'm impressed."

"Not exactly Fort Skin-and-Bone, is it." He followed her gaze
around the parlor of the Broadwater Hotel, Helena's finest, complete
with plush grounds and natatorium. Now that he and she were estab-
lished in the plush chairs, nicely out in the open but far enough from
the lobby not to have every word overheard, he felt relieved. Even yet
this was not easy to make happen right, not here, not anywhere that
he knew of. From the window of his room he had watched like a
hawk, if hawks are ever nervous, until she pulled into the grounds in
her car, its doors and fenders still peppered with what likely was
Scotch Heaven mud. Then made himself hover out of sight at the top
of the stairwell while she announced her purpose to the desk clerk, to
see how it went before he would need to go down and try to bluff the
clerk. Damn it. All we want to do is visit with each other like human beings.
They lucked out on the clerk: the man turned out to be the father of
one of her pupils in years past, and Susan's sweetly put "here for a
musical consultation with your famous guest Mister Rathbun" did
not stand his hair on end. Here then they sat, decorous amid the
nearly smothering decor of velvet and Victoriana and tasseled rugs.
Monty could tell she meant surprised along with impressed. "Year
bite. She had never seen him this grim, even in the worst of despond after his beating. What he was saying sounded as if he had to half-strangle it to control it at all:

"This ought to give us enough of a taste, hadn't it? Of what we can't have?"

She knew this had nothing to do with sweet potato pie. Thank goodness his words stumbled out low, wrathful as they were. "You saw for yourself how it is. Just on our little jaunt to here. People looked at us like we're out of our minds—"Oh/Oh, black man and white woman together, the world is about to end." She winced as he fiercely rubbed the side of his neck. "And this is nothing," he flung his hand out to indicate the front of the restaurant and beyond, "to what would happen if you took me into a Schrafft's, anywhere downtown."

She made her own words surge before he could go on. "It is the saddest thing, yes. That people can't see past that aspect. But Monty, we've done miraculously, you and I, given all that's against us. Your voice is unstoppable now, and as for me, this experience with you has been the best thing that could ever happen to a drying-up voice teacher. And," she tried to maintain momentum despite the catch in her throat, "onward we each go, in spite of—"

He cut her off with the force of the expression that had come onto his face.

"Susan, I—I'm stuck." He knew he had to get it out if it killed him, even though this was the sort of thing that could. "With telling you how I feel about you. I chickened out of doing it," he faltered on, "that time at the Broadwater."

... chickened out of doing it, that time at the Broadwater, she was equally shaky when she recorded it in the diary that night.

"I wouldn't do it now, neither, if I felt like I had any choice," Monty had gone on brokenly. The anguish in his voice jarred her. She felt like a raw nurse facing a patient who had something she could not afford to come down with. As she held her breath, he mustered his and gulped out the hardest kind of words. "But it works me over, night and day. That I can't even begin to say how far gone I am over you." He spread his hands, palms up, as if their emptiness spoke it
knowing laugh. "Not to mention the fine assortment of brown honeys. Wouldn't hurt you to get yourself one of those, you know."

Monty made an amused sound at the back of his throat and was about to rib back by asking him what sort of manager he was trying to push a poor angelic recuperating singer into the clutches of wild women, when J.J. 's next words hit:

"Because you ought to lay off the white lady."
Monty swung his head around the guarded way he used to when there was trouble in the vicinity of the bull chutes.
"Goddamn it, J.J., where's your evidence on that?"
J.J. tapped his temple impatiently and then went back to squinting past the wipers into the torrent of taxicabs the rain had generated.
"Too careful says something, too, you know."
"I thought you got along with her."
"Getting along with her isn't the same as getting in deep with her.
Montgomery, the last time I looked half an hour ago, that woman was white, white, white. Mingle with them, chin to chin, elbow to elbow, that's fine. But draw the line where the skirt starts, okay? You got no business up there anyway. Whatever you may have heard, that pink thing of theirs doesn't run sideways in them. At least not in the French ones, I can speak from experience. So don't go being curious."

"She's—the music—" Monty fumbled for how to say it. "'We've gotten to be friends, her and me. Been through damn near everything together, trying to bring the songs up out of nowhere and me along with them, Godamighty, J.J. You know most all of that. I don't see why—"

"You are not seeing, that's why I have to bring this up. Godamighty yourself, Montgomery. You can't count on the rest of the world going around blind. Cecil's noticed, too."

"Cecil is going to be counting his teeth in his hand if he—"

"This isn't about Cecil. It's about the fact that you and her can be mental kissing cousins over the songs, if you have to, but you're still of the colored persuasion and she's still Miss Pond Cream. Bruise around among the ladies if you want, you're entitled. But you're plenty bright enough to tell black from white.″ J.J. delivered the next with the finality of slamming a door: "Don't let these lah-de-dah musicales fool you. This is still a country where they run one of us up on a rope every—"
is all—the two of them are asking for trouble if they so much as make eyes at each other. If I’ve noticed they’re on the brink, others will.”

Of necessity Wes found words, for what they were worth. “Phil, really. Aren’t you reading rather a lot into a couple of people simply working up music together? I know you’re a professional noticer, but in this case I think you’re jumping to conclusions.”

“And you’re dodging them.” Phil leaned in, diagnosing as he came. “There are times when you don’t see what you don’t want to, Wes. Probably that saved your skin when the odds of getting past machine-gun nests were involved. But it can cost you everything you’ve put into Monty’s getting somewhere, if you don’t snap to.” Pup of the historic old wolves in his family, Phil Sherman knew how to nip when he had to. When he was satisfied that his words were sufficiently under Wes’s skin, he settled back again. “Don’t I wish I were misreading,” he said more leniently. “Seeing the way he lights up around her—I thought at first it was gratitude, on his part. Missy from the nice house, helping him up in the world—why wouldn’t he feel grateful? He’s feeling more than that, though, I’d bet anything. She doesn’t show any signs of allergy to his skin either, if you know what I mean. If that doesn’t bother her, why wouldn’t she set her cap for a man on his way to being famous?”

Incalculably more irritated than he dared to show, Wes managed to say by the book: “My family knew hers. She’s from different circumstances than you and I. She doesn’t work that way.”

“That makes it worse then,” came back implacably. “A steel heiress or a countess with enough money to be naughty might get away with a fling across the color line. Not someone whose name only carries the letters it has in it.” Phil tapped the tabletop in emphasis. “Susan Duff throws everything out of kilter. I’m not poking my beezer into this for the fun of it—you of all people know me better than that. I like Monty, I’m all for him. Nothing against her, for that matter, if you like them on the tall prickly side. But I’m not entirely disinterested in how they behave with one another. The sky is the limit, for a voice like his—I can imagine him someday in the right kind of Broadway vehicle. Green Pastures of the West, why not? If the gossip columns take in after him, though, that fries that.” He raised a cautionary hand. “We don’t want to upset the applecart before the