owlishly leaning and roaring to Belle and the boys to hurry -- "in the name of a patient and merciful God!" When Belle came out and saw Oliver she had another of her laughing spells, right out on the street, and Paul had to run back and get her Vericolate pills.

This was Sunday.

Yes, Sunday, the day of the spirit, was to Paul the dreariest day of the week, the time of spiritual drought, when dull ritual and empty form took the place of fun and joy and living. He could never forget these dragging, colorless Sundays: Sunday school on Sunday mornings in the damp basement of the Presbyterian church with its stale cupboard smell of a thousand forgotten church suppers; the nasal, wet-lipped evangelistic whine of old Mr. Veale, the Sunday school superintendent, so implacably firm in the conviction of his own salvation, so fanatic in his zeal to confer it on others; the shiny tinny-sounding upright mahogany piano, always out of tune, which accompanied the children's tiny chants -- "Jesus loves me, this I know..." -- the twin bulletin boards on the peeling calsomined walls which recorded last week's attendance and collection, and the 'oh's' and 'ah's' the children were supposed to emit, always with intemperate enthusiasm, when thisweek's gate receipts were larger; the interminable lessons concerning long-dead people of a far land who had queer, difficult Hebrew names, and who were forever shamelessly 'begatting' one another; the weekly copy of the "Forward" which the children were supposed to read with wild relish and report on the following Sunday.

Sunday: The time of going to church with Belle and sitting for an endless dreary hour or more listening to Mr. Hayward, the minister, shouting and droning through his sermon like a tired actor, discharging his neatly prepared syllogisms of unassailable theology, in winter to the accompaniment of clanking steam pipes and hissing radiators, in summer to the noisy chirpings and mating cries and rich throat warblings of the sparrows and robins in the lacy vines and rustling trees just outside the tilted open stained glass windows.

The minister always began his sermons with a matter-of-fact quotation of Biblical verse. Paul was never fooled by this. Then Mr. Hayward would pause and stare at the congregation. He would hold this staring thyroid pause so long that Paul would wildly fear that the man had taken a fit, a fainting spell, or had fallen into a sudden cataleptic trance. Then, when Paul had abandoned all prospect of the man's going forward, and waited hopefully for Mr. Veale to pad up and take him away, Mr. Hayward would repeat the verse, this time in an entirely changed accent and in a lowered, sepulchral tone of voice. It was a deceit which always made Paul flush with shame. In this false, assumed, unnatural accent and voice, which sometimes rose to a petulant quaver, he would proceed through the entire sermon, while Paul slowly counted the light bulbs in the three sprouting brass chandeliers -- they always came to thirty-seven -- retallied the pipes in the organ, the number of bald heads present, his consciousness occasionally swimming up to the sermon when he thought that surely all the sin in the world must now be cleansed, all doubt finally resolved. "Now he's going to quit," Paul would think to himself. " -- this time he's surely going to stop -- here's a peachy place for him to end!" -- but the near town clock would heavily bong the noon hour and Mr. Hayward would drone on and on, and Paul would dully wonder if Mr. Hayward ever washed his ears.

Paul might then desperately fall to reading the memorials on the stained glass windows -- "In memory of Minnie Grew Tucker, wife, 1854-1907" -- that made the poor lady fifty-three when she croaked -- and then Belle would be miraculously plucking him to his feet for the final hymn. Mr. Hayward then gave the benediction to the bowed congregation and would ~~hurriedly~~ creak on elaborate tiptoe, like a stage footpad, to the back of the church, Paul peeking sideways at him in head-hanging fascination. During his adagio down the patched red-carpeted aisle the choir put a brief musical seal upon the minister's words. Then Mrs. Vivian would boom out wild music on the organ, much to

Paul's delight. When it was time to go, this was the one time he wanted to stay and listen. The released congregation suddenly resumed life once again, just as though nothing had happened, and shook hands and chatted with one another and gradually sifted out past poor tired Mr. Hayward, haggard and spent from his spiritual labors, shaking his limp moist hand, congratulating him on his sermon, enquiring after Mrs. Hayward and the endless brood of little Haywards who lived in the little mortgaged manse at the top of Blueberry Hill.

"My, how you've grown, Lincoln," Mr. Hayward would say to Paul, confusing him with his brother Link, taking his small hand and gently passing him toward the exit. "Mrs. Biegler, it's so good to see you with us again this Sunday. Oh, thank you -- yes -- why Mrs. Davis -- --" and Paul would suddenly be out in the clean open air, free once again, fighting the goatish impulse to shout and yell and whistle and leap high into the air...

Sometimes the usual Sunday tedium of church would be relieved by a visiting missionary, usually a gaunt, hungry man, with blazing, visionary eyes, who had spent years in the Far East. Generally there was a tired little wife who hovered and smiled in the background, patiently herding their children, who were dressed in the habits of the distant place from which they had come. The missionary would invariably have lantern slides showing "our missionary headquarters in Canton" or some exotic place, and the throngs of converts: graceful Indians, wound in yards of cloth, thin, staring Chinese, and doll-like, hobbling, innocent-faced little Japanese -- all so quaint and harmless -- who had flocked to enlist under the banner of the Lord. To Paul there was magic in these pictures.

The showing of the slides would be embellished with a running comment of ponderous antiseptic humor by the missionary. "That's little Fang and his mother going to Sunday School! How would <u>you</u> like to come to church on <u>your</u> mama's back? Heh, heh, heh..." Paul would glance at Belle and try to picture her toting him

up Blueberry Hill, his skinny legs dragging on the ground. Then the shutter would finally click, the church chandeliers give out their coppery glow. There would be a special prayer, then, followed by a special offering -- taken up by the missionary's scampering children -- to carry on the work of those who brought His word to the lost and benighted of those far and distant lands. Paul was once more back in Chippewa...

There was a dry and dusty poverty about these Sundays that filled Paul with dismay and stirred in his young heart a growing doubt that in this dead and joyless ritual lay the way to celebrate the stirring, awful, tragic legend of Jesus, the gentle son of God. These church men were professionals, he felt, who had helped to annotate the Lord and all his works, and who quietly created the impression that they had an "in" with Him, that they had known Him man and boy, that He was a sort of spiritual Santa Claus who would remember the good little boys and girls... Yes, that somehow they were practically lodge brothers, and if you paid your dues regularly and didn't miss too many meetings mind you, why, they would "fix it up" to reveal Him to you. It was all very comfy and cozy and, Paul felt even then, just a little obscene. He never expressed these views to Belle. He sensed how necessary to her was her faith, and how cruelly his misgivings would have hurt her.

CHAPTER 9.

That Halloween was a clear, cold, moonless night of a thousand glowing stars, and the smoke from the chimneys of the houses was drawn in ghostly columns high up into the harvest clarity of the still night air. For the occasion Paul and his "gang" banded with the Irish boys at the end of Paul's street, Toodles Cronin, Monk Mooney, Timmy Connors and Chuck Woodlock -- he of the cleft palate -- for at Halloween in union there was strength; strength to topple a reluctant fence or outhouse; strength to scare off marauding gangs from "enemy" locations. Each gang was supposed to confine its mischief to its own neighborhood and at the same time protect it from the depredations of rival gangs.

Led by Fritz, the boys had already rumbled two of his grandfather Jaeger's large delivery wagons up and then down Lake Street, and plunged them into the disturbed and gleaming waters of Lake Bancroft. There was the fleeting satisfaction of a job well done. "There comes 'Paddy the Peeler'!" Gunnar shouted. Paddy Driscoll, the old Irish nightwatchman, whose feats of high courage and deadly marksmanship were legendary with the boys of Chippewa, came lumbering rheumatically down Lake Street, waving his nightstick, shouting "Oi'll put ye behint the bars, ye vandals ye!" In the meantime the vandals gaily scampered up Euclid Street, their running footsteps resounding hollowly on the numb October sidewalks. "Oi'll folley ye to hell" came faintly from behind them. Paul laughed and breathed deeply the sharp, acrid smell of burning leaves. The grass in the yards and along the curbings lay bent and rimed with frost.

The boys paused for breath at the Ridge Street School and tried vainly to dislocate the stout iron fence which surrounded it. Paddy hadn't even hove into sight. This was the same iron fence to which Paul had got his tongue frozen the winter he was in second grade. The janitor had had to use water to separate Paul from the fence... The boys then ran down to Hematite Street and gathered in the shadows under the tall elms in front of Paul's house. Paul

looked in through the parlor window and saw Belle and Mrs. McGoorty sitting talking in the glow of the new electric lights. Belle wasnodding her head and removing her glasses. From the street lights seeping through bare branches, the other boys gazed longingly at the tall wooden picket fence around Paul's yard. Timmy Connors tentatively tested it. But the fence was safe as it was not cricket to molest the property of the gang unless released from one's honor, as Fritz had just done with his Grandpa Jaeger's submerged delivery wagons.

As the boys stood in the shadows a rival gang from the direction of Swedetown location galloped shouting down Bancroft Street, past Jaeger's corner, and after a little while old Paddy the Peeler came hobbling after them, on a new scent, still brandishing his nightstick, still hurling after them the sinister threats of cold prison bars... The boys waited until Paddy was safely led out of their precinct, then they ran down garbage-strewn Pine Street to the railroad tracks. This nearness to the city jail and the lights of downtown and Main Street lent a certain exhiliration to their enterprise. They paused in the shadows behind old Dan Kane's flag shanty, the windows of which were boarded for the night.

Fritz, who had a fertile brain for devising inspired new mischief which was contrary to the spirit and letter of the Michigan juvenile code, perceived that the round metal chimney of Dan's flag shanty was belching black smoke. This was caused by the burning chunks of soft locomotive coal in Dan's pot-bellied stove. Paul had often helped one-armed Dan gather up the coal which the firemen tossed off their passing engines.

"Let's put a pail over the chimney and see what happens," Fritz suggested. The novelty and evident good sense of this proposition immediately appealed to the boys. Paul felt a pang of envy over Fritz's ingenuity. A pail over Dan's chimney became as imperative as breathing. Gunnar ran home to the back of the Taleen house just a half block away, and came back with a small lard pail. The boys boosted Monk Mooney unto the low roof. "Just like a glove,"

Monk whispered, as he squeezed and twisted the pail over the round metal chimney.

The boys retired up the tracks away from the street light, awaiting in attitudes of scientific detachment the results of their experiment in combustion. They were not long in coming. Almost at once a curling oily black and white smoke came rolling from under the eaves, eddying out of the cracks of the door and boarded windows, making the little shanty look like a Finnish farmer's log steam bath on a Saturday night. As they stood there Paul and the boys heard a series of coughs followed by a sighing groan. Then they heard nothing.

"Jiminy -- old Dan's in there -- let's beat it!" someone said. None of the boys moved. Paul's impulse was to run home and get into bed and hide under the covers. "I've got to save him," Paul wildly thought. "I can't desert old Dan." He could picture Dan, his faithful old friend who had given him so many dimes, lying crumpled and dead on his leather-cushioned bench -- or perhaps on the dirty floor with his wooden leg askew. Monk Mooney began to cross himself and sniffle. "They'll send me to pr-prison for this for the r-r-rest of my -- --"

The door of the shanty flew open. There was a smoke-belching pause. Then out stumbled a woman, without any clothes, choking and coughing, modestly holding a rumpled piece of clothing over her face. They looked like bloomers to Paul. Close on her bare heels, but without benefit of even a nose covering, trotted Terrence Slattery, a brawling young Irish lout who worked at the roundhouse beyond the Firehall and who sometimes relieved Dan at the crossing. Paul was touched by Terrence's fidelity to duty. Like a torch Terrence held aloft a quart whiskey bottle as the two ran stumbling and coughing, the woman's hair flying, across the cindered tracks and into the dark shadows of the billboard at the rear of Weiler's Feed Store. At this juncture there was a loud rocketing report. The lard pail had blown off the chimney pipe, high into the air, landing up on Canada Street with a metallic thud just as Paddy

the Peeler rounded the corner by Oliver's saloon breathlessly shouting, "Oi'll put ye behint the bars -- heh, eheh -- that I will -- heh, eheh -- ye wickit spawn of the divil!"

In ten minutes Paul had circled a dozen blocks and crossed several darkened backyards into his own. He stood on the back porch catching his breath, looking up at the myriad wheeling stars. On earth it was Halloween... He then slipped in the kitchen door -- "'Evening, Mrs. McGoorty" -- and up the backstairs to his room and into his bed where, for a long time, he lay wondering and pondering the devious ways there appeared to be to celebrate the eve of All Saints' Day...

In the meantime the great ground swell of war was flooding over Europe and lapping at the very shores of America. The previous spring Italy had declared war on Austria-Hungary and a German submarine had sunk the Lusitania with the loss of over a hundred American lives. President Wilson was still exchanging a series of strong notes with Germany over this sinking, and it was evident that his expressed policy that the country remain "neutral in fact as well as in name" was fast becoming an idealistic dream.

All of the mines of Chippewa had put on a night shift to fill the slavering maws of the steel mills with iron ore for the war. The town was booming, there was work for everyone, and night and day Paul could see or hear the miners going past his house to and from the Blueberry mine, clomping along in their hobnailed boots, their mine-stained red towels rolled under one arm, their shiny "Lisk" dinner buckets under the other. Business was so good Oliver had been obliged to put on an extra bartender.

Paul and his companions often played in the high-fenced storage yard of the Blueberry Mine at the west end of Hematite Street. The sprawling yard was a museum of fascinating and ponderous mining machinery: rusting steam shovels, engines and boilers; tramcars, scrapers and greasy motors. The base of the

"no trespassing" sign of the mining company served the boys nicely as the third base in their baseball games. Over this thoughtfully provided corporate playground loomed the towering headframe of the mine entrance down into the underground. Paul often watched the hematite-bronzed miners crowd into the cage, the large steel elevator which transported them swiftly underground.

From listening to the miners around the dry and from questioning Jimmy Cudahy, the skip-tender at the shaft, Paul had gained a working knowledge of the iron mines which dominated the life pulse of the town. Once Jimmy had given Paul and Bernie Redmond a swift and unauthorized ride to the bottom of the Blueberry mine and back. It was like a descent into hell, a terrifying ride into a damp and dripping blackness of ringing bells and aching eardrums, a huge clanking and hurtling past the creaking timbers that guided the cage, a swift winking of lights as they rushed past the various levels. Paul had never wanted to go underground again.

Paul knew, as did every boy in Chippewa, that the towering steel and timbered head frame of the shaft, the entrance to the mine, was called the shafthouse; that the deep vertical hole down through the glacial drift and solid rock was the shaft itself, the passageway into the mine; and that the dripping timbered compartments in the shaft accommodated the steel skips used to haul the ore, and also the large cage, the great steel elevator which was used to transport the miners and mining material, and finally that the remaining timbered compartment was the manway, with its labyrinth of ladders and air pipes, and water pipes and electric conduits.

Paul had learned that the business of mining iron ore was largely a practical problem of both employing and defeating the law of gravity, so that the crushing tons of ore would have to be lifted as little as possible; and that the mine was simply a series of underground passageways and burrows, designed to get out the ore as quickly, safely -- and cheaply -- as possible.

His young imagination had come to liken an iron mine to a great city building, the kind he had read about and seen in pictures -- a massive and yet

curiously insecure skyscraper where the dwellers, the miners, entered from the roof; where the elevators were called skips and cages; where its stairways were manways and ladderways; where the various floors, over a hundred feet apart, were called levels: first, second, third, and so on; where the long, winding corridors into the ore bodies were called drifts, upon which ran the clanking tramcars, travelling into the ore chutes at the bottom of the steep raises or smaller ore shafts.

Paul knew that far above each level the miners burrowed and tunnelled deep into the ore bodies, gouging out subterranean chambers. Some of these great underground rooms, in the hard-ore mines, could easily accommodate a cathedral, towers and all. The ore which the miners blasted and scraped out of these hot rooms, the sublevels, was then dumped into the log-cribbed raises, then the tramcars were loaded from chutes at the bottom of these raises, these cars in turn rumbling out to the main shaft, dumping the ore into huge ore pockets from which it was again emptied into the skips -- so that the only time the raw, dripping ore was actually lifted, from the time it was wrenched and blasted from the breast of the sublevels, was when it was finally carried to surface by the whining steel cables attached to the laden skips.

That fall Paul and Fritz were playing in the Blueberry mine stockyard after school. It was a Friday afternoon, like any other afternoon except that there was no haunting spectre of school the next day. Suddenly there was a series of low, short, coughing blasts from the mine whistle. Fritz looked at Paul. Men were running into the shafthouse above them. The snorts of the whistle continued. "What's that, Polly?" Fritz said. "I never heard the whistle go like that before. What does it mean?" Paul had grown chilled with the first whistle sound. "It's an accident, Fritz. Somebody's been hurt -- or killed." Curious Fritz wanted to run up to the shafthouse and see. "Come on, Polly -- let's go and look."

Paul shook his head. He could still vividly remember the time two summers before when he and Chuck Woodlock had been playing in the same yard,

and the same whistle had sounded in the same way. He and Chuck had scrambled up the rocks to the shafthouse just as the grim-faced men had carried out two curiously misshapen mounds of flesh on the stretchers, still clad in miners' clothes, the faces a loose and dirty gray even through the redness of the hematite. The eyes of one of the dead men were still half open, like those of the frozen deer Oliver brought home from the woods each fall...

"No, Fritz -- don't go up there," Paul said. "Let's go down to the cigar shop and see Bernie. Please, Fritz..."

The Iron Ore carried the account the following afternoon. These reports of mine deaths were as common and as stereotyped as the "card of thanks" which invariably followed from the bereaved family.

> "Jacob Silanpaa, age fifty-four, was instantly killed yesterday in the Blueberry Mine by a fall of rock. Christ Koski, Silanpaa's working partner, said that the deceased had been barring down a large piece of rock, preparatory to drilling for a blast. The rock suddenly fell, pinning the deceased under it. Death was instantaneous. 'I ran and told Captain Hampton about the accident and then went to the surface to get the basket,' Koski said.
>
> "Sillanpaa is survived by his widow and four sons. He was a member of the Knights of Kaleva. Services will be held Monday afternoon at 2:00 at the Finnish Lutheran Church, Reverend Ollikainen officiating."

While iron mining was simple in theory, Paul had come to realize that in actual practice it was grandly complex and bewildering -- in its damp burrowing and clawing, in its crushing huge foulness, a sunless and obscurely heroic task, fit only for the slow and prosaic and fumbling labors of these trapped giants in the earth...

Snowless November came, a month of raw and cold, leaving the naked northern earth a frozen, lumpy tundra; a month which sent Oliver and his cronies on their deerhunt in the long green wagon which could be converted into a

sleigh. Paul lay in his bed at night and listened to the wind whining and mewing down the kitchen chimney which passed through his room, a wild and wailing wind which sometimes fell to whispering and muttering like a demented woman, a wind which felt and insanely pried at every crevice of the old frame house and tossed and pressed the tall elms until they sobbed in creaking torment. The days were sunless, a time of glowering clouds scudding low from out of the northwest.

Lake Bancroft froze early into a sheet of mirrored dark glass ice. Fritz and Paul skated nearly every afternoon. Often they skated with two sisters, Gladys and Pearl Wing, jolly Cornish girls whose long underwear and elastic garters showed under their skirts, skating cross-armed around and around the lake until the frosty cough of the mine whistles ~~Grammar School clock~~ warned of supper-time. With Oliver in the woods it did not make much difference if one were a few minutes late. The boys even rigged up a crude and flimsy burlap sail with which they flapped across the gleaming ice. Then one day shortly before Thanksgiving, the first storm hurled out of the north, reluctantly retreating after two days of lashing blizzard, burying the lake and the town under a deep blanket of snow.

Oliver and his hunting party were caught in the blizzard, hurrying for town, and had to put in at Matti Kauppila's farm for three days until the county plows fought their way out to the Big Dead River. The Biegler boys were grateful for this unlooked for manna from heaven which kept "The Kaiser" in the woods a little longer. Shortly after the War had started, quiet brother Link, in his dry, casual way, had started referring to Oliver as "The Kaiser." The name had stuck.

Oliver made no bones about wanting to see Germany win the war. Especially did he want to see England get beaten. "I'm tellin' you," he would proclaim at the dinner table, resting his two fists on the tablecloth, still holding his knife and fork slanting off his plate -- "I'm tellin' you -- there'll be no peace in this bloody world until that sly an' graspin' John Bull gets

put in his place! When Berlin ('Berleen' Oliver called it) gets through with Roosia then John Bull will be shown a thing or two! I'm tellin' you..."

The slow drift of the United States into the conflict on the side of the Allies drove Oliver into gales of vein-swollen rhetoric. "Why don't we stay home and mind our own goddam business!" he would demand of Belle, as though the issue lay in her short lap. "Tell me, woman -- why in Christ's name don't we stay in our own backyard!" Belle would sit pursing her lips and nodding her head. "Don't let it excite you so, Oliver," she would say. "It's nothing you and I can help -- --"

"Carnegie and Wall Street -- that's why!" Oliver would shout her down. "Greed and the almighty dollar! Money, money, money -- all under the goddam lawyers' cloak of 'freedom of the seas!'" He would glare around the table at the silent boys, then take up his tableware, savagely attacking his food as though a vulnerable part of John Bull himself lay steaming and ready on his plate. Paul knew that Belle's sympathies lay with the Allies, for much the same race-tangled and emotional reasons that Oliver's lay with Germany, though she never dared breathe it to her husband. But she did not want war. She hoped that President Wilson would be re-elected because he had promised to keep the country out of war. Her reasons were simple. Link had finished high school and was over eighteen, Nicky was sixteen -- and there was even Paul, her baby...

Paul was mystified by the whole thing. He did not know what they were fighting for over there, anyway. He vaguely hoped that God would make it stop soon. And he was puzzled that the Germans appeared to be so adept at waging war. Day by day there were stories of their continued successes reported in the Iron Ore. It was strange. Paul had thought that nearly all Germans were nearsighted, doddering old men, who wore thick glasses, who loved beer and music and shuffled about in a thin mist of falling dandruff -- a simple, kindly people who made ingenious new toys... He had thought of them as quiet family men like old August Schmidt or happy, whistling individuals like

Ed Schwemin or absent-minded, scholarly old Gustav Fohrman, who ran the dusty music store, with dangling violins and mandolins in the window, which stood nextdoor to the Chinese laundry on Main Street.

After one of Oliver's "war spells" the boys would gather upstairs or down by the furnace. "Boy -- the Kaiser was really loaded for bear tonight, wasn't he?" Link might say. "Yup, I'll bet the island was sure shaking some tonight," grinning Nicky would answer. Often, at the height of his spleen, Oliver would refer to England simply as "the island." "I'm tellin' you -- Berleen'll shake the goddam island!"

That January Oliver got in a wild and extravagant argument over the war with a Cornish miner, down at the saloon, and finally threw him out on Main Street. Lanky Will Tregembo, Oliver's Cornish bartender, had taken off his bar apron and stamped on it and shouted at Oliver that "'e was through workin' for a goddam pro-German!" It had taken Charlie LeRoy and half the saloon to keep Oliver and Will apart. After that very few Cornishmen went into Oliver's saloon. The tremors of Oliver's island-shaking had been finally felt in Chippewa. After that Oliver's war diatribes at home rapidly grew worse instead of better. Paul lay in bed at night and haltingly prayed for the war to end. He remembered old Doctor Gourdeau's words. "Please God, put out the fires that are burning the earth..."

But war or no war, in February came Chippewa's annual ski tournament.

The praying maples and thin birches, silent and frozen in the deepness of midwinter, reached beseeching naked arms up the wailing wall of the tall hill, fringing out to the width of the ski slide, and sober small boys and some drunken men clung to the limbs of the trees -- perhaps the better to watch the ski jump, though they could not see as well.

Urgently lining each side of the ski slide were the crowds of spectators, their dragon breaths upon the frosty February air. Down below across

the wideness of the valley were the rows of cutters and sleighs, the horses silent and steaming under their blankets. And over all it was cold and clear, and the obscure sun was high, its frost-thin glitter feeble upon the deep snow.

Far up the hill, rising above its steep and snowy crest, fluttered the American flag from the ski tower, the scaffold, from which the clustered, waiting skiers looked like little men, like childhood gnomes from out a Christmas book, standing so far up there against the cold blue Northern sky, quietly waiting for the signal to fling themselves on down along the steep and narrow way.

Standing far up on the starting tower the bugler raised his bugle to his lips -- "Marble Eye" Carlyon, a little Cornish miner who had lost an eye in the mine and had never done anything about it -- and when this bugler raised his bugle he pouted and then he blew, and the last notes still raced and rang and echoed across the valley even after he had taken his bugle down and replaced it with a bottle, grinning, gurgling: 'Hi can pl'y 'pon any hinstrument which 'asn't a bloody reed!'

The first rider raised his hand that he was ready, and far below, by the great jump, another more sober, far-seeing, and less colorful bugler answered, blurted, "Ready!" and the poised rider shuffled forward and dipped off and down, hurtling, rushing down, crouching low, cupping his ears from the tremendous and freezing speed, here now at once incredibly at and past the jump-off, seeming to straighten and to spring far out, leaning forward, looking lying on his skis as he soared into the air, far out into a rushing space, at last man stole freedom from the earth, arms waving and circling like children's playful angels in the snow, still soaring out into the air, the skis now gradually, then quickly, won back to earth, now landing with clear and wooden slap far down the hill, into the bleating of the crowd, one foot forward, crouching low again and racing, crunch-whistling, far down and out across the valley, finally swirling to a circling, skirling stop before the practical, solemn small boys who liked to see their heroes near, closeup.

Fritz turned to Bernie and Gunnar and Paul. "God, it -- it's beautiful!" he said. "I never thought there was anything like this." The boys glanced at each other but did not answer. They were not used to this sort of talk. Somehow it embarrassed them. But Paul knew what Fritz meant. It always chilled him to watch the incredible beauty and grace of the riders. This lovely soaring seemed more like poetry than anything his teachers ever taught him in school...

The bugler bugled his bugle once again, and another skier took off the tower, hurtling, rushing down the slide, sailing, too, far out into the air, but -- hah -- falling, tumbling, landing in a waving heap, losing his skis, clown-rolling down the hill, the crowd roaring and yawing its ready laughter for defeat -- 'go find your slats, you bum' -- as the snow-glutted skier limped falsely grinning down the hill to retrieve his runaway skis.

Down and down they poured with each bugle note, rider after rider, some falling but most of them standing. During the intermission Paul and the boys made their way through the milling crowd to the outdoor stand conducted this year by the earnest ladies of the Methodist church. Reckless of expense, Paul squandered his entire weekly allowance on a cup of coffee and a steaming Cornish pasty.

The bugle blew through the afternoon as the eager riders hurled themselves off the hill for the thrill of the crowd that gathered annually on Washington's birthday for the ski tournament of the Chippewa Ski Club. There were hundreds of miners there to proudly watch their sons and relatives, for the tournament was a local holiday and there was no work, war or no war. Most of the ski riders lived in Swedetown or Finn town. Both bugles sounded once again. Then came the megaphoned announcement of the winner by the president of the Ski Club, Swan Peterson. Paul thought there was a note of sadness in his voice. "Ladies and yentlemen! Da vinner an' noo shampion -- Uno Saari!" A great cheer went up, especially from the Finn miners. For this was the first time a Finnish rider had won the main jumping championship on Suicide

Hill. For many years, even before Belle had come to Chippewa, the Swedes and Norwegians had taken all of the first places. Fritz and Bernie and Paul turned on Gunnar, chanting: "Ten t'ousand Svedes vere lost in da veeds, in da battle of Copenhagen!" Then there was another announcement -- not so sad this time, Paul thought. "Ladees and yentlemen! Da runner-oop an' las' yar's shampion -- Mister Anselm Bjork!" Paul smiled to himself. Mister Bjork indeed!

"Go piddle up a hemp rope!" Gunnar said, grinning from ear to ear. At least one Swede had won. The boys walked the two miles back to town. It was a big day, a gay day. They had a chicken supper and ice cream and coconut cake in the dining-room of the Taleen House, with a table all to themselves by a drooping fern -- and a blushing young Finnish girl to wait on them. Waiting for their dessert Gunnar told the boys he had seen her with nothing on the Saturday before, running from the girls' bathroom upstairs to her room. "Boy oh boy oh boy," he said, describing undulant curves in the air with his hands. Paul regarded the girl with new interest...

Spring was the worst season of the year in Chippewa. During the winter the snow gradually built up many feet above the ground, so that before Spring one looked up at the passing sleighs and cutters on the snow-packed streets. As the snow receded the manure from the horses and the winter's accumulation of soot ~~coal dust~~ from the houses and mine boilers lay gradually exposed in all its melting dirt and drabness, like the pictures of ancient excavations. The poor horses would hobble along the treacherous packed streets, sinking past their fetlocks or knees at one step, or being held up by the frozen insulation of their own manure on the next.

By March the frozen grip of winter started to convulsively relax. Then it would freeze again, the lashing March winds whipping the gleaming snow shield of the iron earth until Spring appeared to have become a forgotten legend. But lo! the real thaw would finally come. The city workers would dig ditches in the high snow banks along the curbings to drain the melting snow.

The boys would then spend every daylight hour after school racing wooden matches and tiny boats down these flowing drains, betting round black "jaw-breaker" candies from Sjolander's on the exciting results.

Spring never really came to Chippewa until the suckers started to run in Chippewa River, and the screaming sea gulls would come winging in from Lake Superior to flap and fight over the fish the boys caught with their hands, above the sewerage outlet, and tossed up into the mucky fields behind them. After the fish had lain there a few days, Paul was sure the sea gulls must have smelled them from Iron Bay, the county seat, located on Lake Superior some sixteen miles east of Chippewa. Regardless of calendars, when the suckers ran and the boys could find a damp patch of bare earth on which to play marbles -- that was Spring.

Spring for Paul was the time of wheeling gun-metal crows, crying and cawing, of lash-like wedges of honking geese, of rich-throated morning warblings and quarrellings of the robins; a time of raking the yard around peeping crocuses, taking down storm windows, fighting Belle's "spring tonics." Spring was a time of playing hookey with Fritz or Bernie or Gunnar or all three and tramping out to the farm and playing in the winter-emptied haymow in the big barn or climbing the rocky bluff behind the farm and searching along the mossy damp ground for the little hidden flowers of the trailing arbutus -- the Mayflowers -- the tender, modest, delicate flowers of such elusive, subtle fragrance that no perfume in the world could ever imitate it. Spring was the morning of a new world...

CHAPTER 10.

Oliver's warehouse on Canada Street was one of those fated structures which abound in the small towns of America, in which no enterprise ever succeeded. There was a "hant" on the place, and insolvency and despair was the portion of any optimistic soul who sought to dispute it. For years Oliver had been trying vainly to get a tenant in the place who could continue to pay his rent after the first month. Oliver enjoyed the heady feeling of being a landlord. And it gave him an opportunity to use the jealous knowledge of higher education he had gained in Milwaukee years before: his course in double-entry bookkeeping. Oliver kept an elaborate set of books, recording the minutest transactions in his beautiful copperplate handwriting. "To Martin Hallgren -- one seccond hand slay for farm.....$4.75."

The old two-story frame building had been built by Paul's grandfather Biegler years before as a storage place for his beer. Grandpa Biegler had lived but a year or so after it was completed. He was the first of a long procession of occupants. The warehouse had a damp and moldy stone-walled basement with a stone floor. The ground floor had a large work room in front, and in the rear there was a series of flimsily partitioned rooms, more like cages or coops. The front work room was lighted by a rippling expanse of pigeon-stained windows covering the entire front from the ceiling to the floor and broken only by tall narrow double-doors in the middle. There was a sliding side door in the alleyway and wide double-doors in the rear opening out into the barnyard beyond which stood Oliver's horsebarn. The upstairs was a storage room, which Oliver never rented with the rest of the buildings, and which he kept fanatically barred and locked from prying tenants. This loft was a place of creaking pine rafters and fluttering pigeons. The three floors were joined by a partitioned great-wheeled elevator which ran through the center of the building and was operated by hand with an endless rope.

This jealously guarded upstairs was packed to the rafters with a most curious assortment of articles. There were piles of used lumber: planks and

laths and pairs of old flooring with the nails still in them; old carpets and mattresses and bed-springs; scores of cigar boxes of rusty nails and screws, old keys and washers and broken locks, each duly labelled by Oliver in blue crayon; old furniture and heaping barrels of dusty dishes and pewter from the home of Oliver's dead parents; battered and bulging trunks full of old clothing and letters in faded handwriting; a packing-case of my Uncle Karl's photographic equipment; an old clamped and leather-bound German Bible which weighed almost as much as Paul. There were odds and ends from Grandpa's old brewery and obsolete saloon fixtures: various tanks, meters and valves, copper vats and an old pool table, a rack of tipless cues, beer pumps, miscellaneous tables and chairs, chandeliers...

From the cobwebbed rafters dangled a dozen or more large Alaskan kerosene lamps which formerly adorned the brewery and saloon, and pails partly filled with hardened paint left by a former tenant. There was a rusty weight-lifting machine from the saloon -- Oliver could once ring its bell with one arm -- and also a kerosene-lighted early slot machine of picture views of "Paris at Night." Paul's My older brothers had long since pilfered the pictures of the fine plump ladies. There was a row of old wooden wall telephones each a yard high, and a pile of tombstones, both left by former tenants. The list was endless. There was even a dust-covered racing sulky with hard-rubber tires, a memento of the days when Oliver used to race at the County Fair. Over all of this silent museum lay a thick covering of dust mingled with pigeon droppings. This was the building for which Oliver endlessly stove to find a paying tenant...

"This here place is centrally located," Oliver would say to some hapless prospective tenant, as they prowled about the warehouse, roping themselves up and down the elevator, poking about the smelly damp basement. Paul I usually hung in the background to watch the familiar ritual. "An' it's nice and close to the railroad tracks, too," Oliver would add. And indeed it was. If it were any

closer to the railroad tracks Paul was sure it would have been run over. The building shuddered to the foundations with every passing train.

When he was trying to rent the place Oliver became as gentle and full of guile as an artful woman. He would grow falsely pensive, drawing the palm of his big hand under his chin, dubiously shaking his head, drawing down his lower lip, blinking his eyes. Paul was held in a kind of thrall. "But I sorta hate to let the place go again," he would say. Chuckling. "You see -- hAh! -- I got all my tools and woods paraphernalia here." Serious again, shaking his head. "No-o-o- I guess I can't..." ~~Paul brightened.~~ This usually made me brighten. It looked like the deal was off. Then there would be a sudden note of firm resolution, a square and manly lift of the head. Oliver would look the prospective tenant straight in the eye. Enough of this childish indecision. "I'll tell you what, man -- I shouldn't do it, but I'll let you have it! Hell, I'll move my things again -- just to help you out, friend. Here -- I got a little lease all drawn up." Softly. "What do you say?" It seemed almost a shame for a tenant to take advantage of Oliver. Yet no gentleman could resist this generous sacrifice. It had become a point of honor. "What do you say, man?"

At this juncture Oliver would produce a ninety-nine-year lease which he had painfully typed out with one finger at his desk down at the saloon on an ancient machine which was the residuary legacy of a former tenant of the warehouse. This typewriter stammered, automatically repeating each letter in an engaging lavendar ink. But Oliver did not seem to mind. Paul thought that perhaps Oliver hoped the document would thereby be doubly binding. "You sign on that there line there," Oliver would say, professionally pointing at the lease he had copied out of Maitland's "Every Man His Own Lawyer." Oliver had a deep distrust of all attorneys -- "bloody connivers" he called them -- and would pit his Maitland against the Supreme Court itself, any day in the week. Paul once estimated that if all of the ninety-nine-year leases which had been put on the place were laid end for end that the millenium could not be far behind. It was a ghastly thought...

I would wait

Paul waited in quiet awe, watching the master at work. The helpless prospect would stand staring down at Oliver's lavendar lease. I held my breath, whispering over and over to myself, "Don't sign, don't sign, you poor fool... Don't you know you'll go broke... The place is bewitched... It'll mean we got to move all this bloody junk around again -- -- Oh, there, he's signing it... Oh Lord, there goes another one..." Oliver would triumphantly fold the lease and put it away and shake hands with his new tenant. "I'm tellin' you -- you're gettin' a real bargain, mister. Nice an' close to the tracks an' ever'thin'..." It occurred to me that Paul thought it was unfair, it was no match, that somehow a black form of hypnosis entered in these transactions. This ceremony of the ninety-nine-year lease was virtually a semi-annual affair.

The old warehouse mutely bore the evidences of the host of tenants who had briefly roosted there. Wistfully hopeful plumbers, blacksmiths, fuel dealers, feed merchants, horse traders -- once even a local telephone company and a travelling evangelist had paused there. Their number was legion. The place still stank from the rotten apples abandoned by a disconsolate fruit merchant who had finally fled Chippewa with his pretty blonde bookkeeper. Since he was a married man with a large brood of children, the authorities had been obliged to bring him back. Oliver appeared as a witness down at Circuit Court and joyously testified against the unhappy man. In later years I Paul wondered if the blonde bookkeeper might not have had something to do with it. Oliver was ever a solicitous landlord... The walls of the warehouse were bedizened with great gobs of paint left by a partnership of bankrupt decorators. They had also left a large farewell sign painted on the wall inviting their landlord to go to hell. "O. Biegler can go plumb to Hell!" Oliver, in a wild rage, had in turn painted this over in a mottled robin's egg blue. The upstairs floor groaned with the weight of the brownstone tombstones left by a defunct monument company. One of these drab red stones, a little marker with a child's head carved on it, read simply "Paul." That was my name. In bed at night I often indulged in dark speculations on the reasons why Oliver kept it...

When the desperate tenants would finally abandon the warehouse, jumping the lease, leaving ninety-eight or more years of the term dangling in midair, they were usually so deep in Oliver's debt, so eager to get hence from the damp and malodorous building, so filled with black despair, that they usually left all manner of their belongings behind them -- like dazed war refugees fleeing before an advancing enemy. By some uncanny instinct Oliver had these wild flights timed to the day, often to the very hour.

As Oliver sensed that another beautiful landlord and tenant relationship was drawing to a close, he would employ various diabolical shifts and ruses to hasten the evacuation. In this way more loot was apt to be left behind. One of his favorite strategems, as the zero hour approached, was to dispatch some sad-eyed barfly from the saloon up to the warehouse to casually drop the word that Oliver had left that morning to spend the day at camp. "But he belongs to be gettin' back now most anytime before dark," he would add. This last bit of intelligence was vital to create confusion and the need for haste. After planting these sinister seeds the barfly would leave. His departure would invariably be followed by a wild and hurried final exit from the premises, the frantic tenant usually trying to remove all of his possessions in one groaning drayload on Cornishman Benny Gobb's dray.

In the meantime Oliver would be waiting down at the saloon, pacing up and down, peering out the alley door, getting periodic bulletins on the course of the retreat from his boozy accomplice. Almost before the harried tenant had rounded the corner of Tilford's Drug Store on Main and Canada Streets, precariously ranging from Benny Gobb's dray, Oliver would descend on the place, invoking some mysterious provision of his lease, putting new secondhand locks on all the doors, and gleefully appropriating everything that had been left behind. Paul I have always felt certain that Oliver enjoyed gathering in this miscellaneous swag infinitely more than he ever did receiving his regular rent payments. Oliver would stride about the littered and deserted place, poking into boxes, peering in drawers and cubbyholes, grunting

and ahing over each new surprise. "My, my -- a nice new cribbage board an' a deck of cards! An' poker chips! No wonder that there lazy bastard failed -- settin' around on his fat prat all day playin' cards! Ah -- look what we have here..."

There was always this thrill of discovery, of unexpected treasure, like the time the Chippewa Monument Works had left behind the ghastly row of tombstones. Oliver had gloated over them like a ghoul. It was this same establishment that had forsaken the stuttering typewriter, along with boxes full of unused pads of gummed order blanks for tombstones, all in triplicate, first on white paper, then pale green, then pink. All through the lower grades in school Paul had been obliged to use the backs of these hateful order blanks in place of tablets. Oliver had put an inventory value on each pad and doled them out to Paul, six at a time, scrupulously crediting the transaction to this ancient rent account in his double-entry books. Oliver was not going to be hoisted on the petard of his own lease, despite the fact that the poor flown monument men were probably long since sleeping under their last tombstone. There were still a few of the pads left -- but one afternoon just the fall before in seventh grade Paul had finally foresworn using them ever again.

It had come about this way: Paul was sitting at his desk in school. It was a late study period, and nearly time for school to let out. He had been drawing pictures on one of his pads, as he often did. This time it was a picture of the South Camp. He turned the pad over and examined the printing on the blanks as he had done scores of times. Musing over the blank he idly fell to filling out one of the tomstone order blanks to fit his school teacher, sweet, tired Miss Lindquist, of whom he was very fond. He had subconsciously chosen her, simply because she was standing up there in front of him. It helped to pass the time and was more fun than studying. Paul warmed to his task, filling in each blank space. "NAME: 'Karen Lindquist'; DATE OF DEATH: 'October 2nd'; DATE OF BIRTH: 'The Lord knows, being her childhood contemporary, but He won't tell'; TYPE OF MONUMENT: 'Consult my old man, the

used-magnate of Chippewa'; SIZE OF MONUMENT: 'One that will be sure to hold the old girl down'; INSCRIPTION: 'Here lies a maiden lass, She never had a pi-- -- -- '"

So much Paul had written, absorbed in his idle composition, oblivious that Miss Lindquist had silently padded around the room and stood behind him, reading the glowing specifications of her own tomstone over his shoulder. There was a strangled moan, and Paul wheeled about to see Miss Lindquist, grown deathly pale, supporting herself between two desks. She stared down at Paul with bright horrified eyes, as though he were a reptile, a feeling about himself which he quickly shared with her. She tottered and seemed about to collapse.

"Oh, Miss Lindquist -- --" Paul began, rising and reaching out to assist her. He wildly feared that the tombstone order might not be in vain. "Don't touch me!" Miss Lindquist shrilled, shrinking away from him as from a leper. "You -- you monstrous youth... Oh, how could you do this to me... And -- and such a sweet good m-mother, too..." The stricken woman had finally found relief in tears. Paul's misery was boundless. The dismissal bell sounded in the corridor, and Miss Lindquist vaguely waved the bewildered children out of the room. She still stood weeping by Paul's desk. Paul hung back, burning with shame, and then hurried from the classroom. Fritz was waiting for him in the hall, his pale blue eyes round and staring with curiosity. "Hully gee, Polly, what did you do? -- goose her with your jack-knife?"

Paul fought a hysterical impulse to shout and whinny and leap and swear -- and even to go back in the room and do just what Fritz had feared he might have done. This was the end -- why hold back now... He thrust the fateful tombstone order at Fritz. Fritz's eyes bulged as he read on. "Oh my gawd, Polly," he whispered, "she didn't read this! Oh my gawd..." Paul nodded his head, pursing his lips tightly, seeking to control himself. Little gusts and blurts of laughter constricted his bowels and welled up his throat and

beat against his pressed lips. Paul feared he was going to get one of Belle's helpless laughing spells, and this very fear seemed to add a sort of macabre comedy to the situation.

Miss Lindquist slowly came out of her room, wearing her wraps and dabbing her red eyes with a knotted wet handkerchief. Fritz silently faded down the hallway. Paul's teacher stood in the dusky corridor, staring dully at Paul, sniffling, fighting back her tears. A wisp of damp gray hair hung down his forehead. All the laughter drained from Paul in an instant. Miss Lindquist looked so lost and forlorn that he wanted to throw his arms about her and cry with her. In a flash of perception he saw her as one of the brave procession of unselfish women, the school teachers of the world: loveless, lonely, misunderstood; sensitive, patient, intelligent; often blamed for faults which inhered in a creaking educational system and not in them; constantly paying the price of spinsterhood, not despite but because of their very pride and superior endowments; patiently guiding and developing the children of lesser women who happened to be more adroit after dark; lavishing on the ungrateful brats of these other women their starved and thwarted affections... All of these things swept over Paul in a wave of understanding. He had never before in his life felt such sympathy and humility -- and such abject shame...

"Oh Miss Lindquist," Paul heard himself saying in a croaking voice that didn't sound like his own, "from the bottom of my heart I am sorry for what I did... Please believe me that it was entirely thoughtless -- I -- I didn't realize..." Paul stopped, the words clogging in his throat. He knew what he wanted to say but he could not say it. He impulsively clutched at her hand and held it. "Next to my mother, Miss Lindquist -- I think you're one of the finest ladies I ever knew. Honest cross my heart, Miss Lindquist..." Then Paul turned and blindly ran out of the school, Fritz falling in beside him. Paul did not stop running. The two boys ran all the way downtown to the cigar

shop. Paul wanted to laugh and he wanted to cry. On the way to Bernie's shop Paul pledged Fritz to black secrecy. The next day Miss Lindquist acted as though nothing had ever happened. She even nodded and smiled brightly at Paul when she saw him come in the next morning with his new writing tablet.

* * *

CHAPTER 11.

Elmer Lessard was currently the incumbent lessee of Oliver's warehouse. Fritz and Paul frequently visited his garage and watched Elmer and Paul's brother Link and the other machanics working on the automobiles. Most of the cars they repaired were Fords or Dodges, but occasionally a high old Winton or Marmon or White or some other big lumbering car would be standing there, its insides littered about the front work-room floor. As a tenant Elmer had hung up some sort of record. Nearly two years had passed and he was still there...

Elmer was an excellent mechanic and had done well in the warehouse from the start. He was one of those rare mortals whose hobby also happened to be his trade. Whenever Paul came into the place Elmer would be in or upon or under some sick automobile or bent over his work bench, covered with grease from head to foot. This mask of grease always gave his teeth-flashing "Hello, Polly" a curiously Pullman-porter sort of warmth. Even late at night from his bedroom Paul could hear Elmer still working, by the anvil-like hammer and clink from the garage. On other nights Paul could see the shifting reflection of his acetylene lamp out in the moth-swarming barnyard, by the light of which Elmer was building, of all things, an airplane.

Oliver's latest tenant was a blond young man in his mid-twenties, yet to Paul he seemed considerably older. He was quiet and husky and had strong white teeth. He was the first person Paul ever saw wearing the type of haircut which later became known as the "Von Hindenburg" and still later as the "crew" haircut. Nobody seemed to know just where Elmer hailed from. He had arrived in Chippewa one day in a throbbing and mud-spattered old Mitchell touring car loaded down with tools, and bearing an Ohio license plate in front and a California plate behind. He had spotted the "FOR RENT" sign in Oliver's old warehouse standing there "so handy to the tracks." He parked his car in front of the warehouse and walked around the place. He saw Dan Kane out at the crossing and went over and asked the old flagman to direct him to Oliver.

Old Dan pointed to the alley door of Oliver's saloon. "Moind what ye sign, bye," Dan darkly warned Elmer. "There's many a foine man sleepin' in depots an' boxcars what's after rented that there place from Oliver Bay-gler, there is!"

Paul was helping old Dan carry in a fresh supply of coal from the tracks, and he heard Dan's sound bit of local disloyalty with grave delight. Dan turned to Paul, shaking his head. "Lead the poor lamb to slaw-ter," he said. Paul collected his dime from Dan and accompanied Elmer into the back door of the saloon, again drinking in the wonderful briny fermented smell of the place. The usual veinous red-nosed cribbage gang was at the card tables, where Paul sometimes suspected they slept at night. Oliver was standing up at the front by his safe, playing Twenty-one over the cigar counter with Con Ludington, the Singer Sewing Machine man.

"Pa," Paul eagerly said, "here's a man who wants to see about renting the warehouse." It was a moment of high pride. Oliver looked up from his game. Elmer quietly introduced himself and then proceeded to tell Oliver what old Dan had just said. Paul was aghast at this betrayal. He drew in his breath, waiting for the storm to break, fearing that Oliver would rush out of the place and dismember Dan's two remaining limbs. But no, there was no telling what his father would ever do...

"Ho, ho, ho!" Oliver laughed, extravagantly, uproariously, throwing back his head, slapping his thigh, incredulously wagging his head from side to side. "That's a good one! -- Did you hear that, Ludington? -- I've got men sleepin' in depots an' boxcars -- Ho, ho -- Oh me, oh my -- --" Oliver was quite taken with this frank young man. After he had "ho-hoed" sufficiently long enough to reduce Dan's absurd insinuation to the level of senile whimsey, he bought Elmer a drink and then softly asked him if he wanted to look through the warehouse. Paul stirred restlessly. Another grand tour, another semi-annual prowl was about to commence. "Can you step up there now?" Oliver asked, stroking his chin, getting himself in the mood for his favorite role.

"I've seen it," Elmer said, smiling slightly. "Is the place for rent?"

"Why yes --" Oliver began uncertainly. Paul could see that Oliver thought this was a strange tenant, indeed, who would deny him the morbid pleasure of rehearsing once again the drama of the ninety-nine-year lease. "Why yes," Oliver repeated. "That is -- all but the upstairs. I kinda store a few odds an' ends up there." Paul thought this was a masterpiece of understatement. Oliver frowned and grew a trifle petulant. "But can't I show you over the place, young fella?"

Elmer grinned his infectious slow blond grin that wrinkled his nose and the corners of his blue eyes. He shook his head. "Give me the key, Sir, and I'll pay you three months rent in advance -- By the way, what is the rental?" In an awed voice Oliver told him. Elmer drew out his wallet and counted out the money over the bar. "And a round of drinks for the house," he added. There was an instant scraping of chairs and a rapid shuffle from the cribbage tables towards the bar. There was a "live one" in the house... Elmer looked down at Paul and winked. "How's that, pardner? And what's yours on my new garage?"

Paul stood up on the bar rail next to Oliver's new tenant, happily drinking his cream soda with his new friend. When they were done, Elmer pocketed his change and asked Paul to accompany him to the warehouse. Paul was delighted. Oliver and Elmer briefly clasped each other's hands. Both of them smiled slightly, a sort of knowing, sheepish, guilty smile, Paul thought -- as though they had discovered things about each other that were secret from the world. Paul and Elmer were nearly out the back door when Oliver called after them. "Hey there, young fella! Don't you want a receipt for your rent?" Elmer carelessly waved his hand and smiled at Oliver. "When you drop up sometime you can give it to me -- Landlord," he casually answered.

It was only when Elmer rattled the key in the lock of the front door that Paul remembered that another ancient precedent had been ~~smashed~~ shattered. Not only had Elmer not been escorted through the warehouse -- but he hadn't signed a

ninety-nine-year lease on the place! Why, there wasn't any lease at all. All Oliver had was a blond smile and a handshake. As Elmer and Paul entered the dusty, littered warehouse, still vacant from the last tenancy, Paul reflected that perhaps this was Fate -- that maybe this was the one way to lift the evil spell from the place...

Paul's guess had been right. Elmer regularly paid his rent. Oliver was consequently very fond of Elmer and frequently extolled his merits at the dinner table. "That young fella's a born mechanic, I tell you -- a mechanical genius," he dilated. "There ain't nothin' he can't fix!" He would draw for Belle odious comparisons between Elmer's pure art and the manifold deficiencies of his own fumbling sons. "Why, take your baby, there," he told Belle one day, referring to Paul, who indeed lacked the faintest rudiments of mechanical aptitude -- "The other day I ast him to drive a staple in a cedar fence post out at the farm -- just a goddam staple, mind you -- an' he bent the bloody staple an' hit his finger -- an' then he just stood there an' bawled." Oliver shook his head and wearily consulted the ceiling, musing over the fate that had spawned him such a groping child. "When I was his age, woman, I dug and built an outhouse in one day -- mind you, all alone!" Paul burned with silent shame over this exposure and wished Oliver had fallen into the structure. Belle quickly smiled and blinked her eyes at Paul.

"Wouldn't this be a strange world though, Oliver, if all of us were efficient mechanics?" Belle innocently asked her husband, turning her bland, smooth face and steady gray eyes on him. Paul felt a warm rush of gratitude towards his mother, and another feeling, increasingly frequent of late, that in some subtle way she was constantly poking fun at this great, infallible man...

"The thing is -- you got to be deliberate," darkly continued this giant of impulse, wagging his great middle finger at the boys, ignoring Belle's

thrust, driving home his daily moral with true and steady aim. "Before you boys start monkeyin' with anythin'" -- here Nicky daringly grinned at Link -- "you got to study it an' understand it, an' know which a way you're headin'. Be deliberate!" Paul sat enchanted listening to this lecture on self-control from the man who would kick in a faulty door if it failed to respond to his first lunge.

When Oliver bought the wrecked Model T Ford from Ed Schwemin, it was Elmer who repaired the car and patiently taught Oliver to drive it. When Oliver gleefully discovered some new gadget to hang on the auto as he hungrily thumbed through Elmer's accessory catalogs, it was Elmer who promptly got it for him wholesale. Oliver lavished on his Model T all the love and affection which he carefully refrained from exhibiting in his home. When he bought Whistling Ed's car he soon found he had just the bare framework of his real desire, like a man who buys a fireplace before he builds his house.

In less than six months the old Model T looked like a painted harridan as it sputtered down Main Street, with hunched Oliver proudly wedged under his new over-size steering wheel, trampling on two and sometimes even all three of the special rubber-covered foot pedals with his size thirteen shoes, or pressing his hideous-sounding new Klaxon horn -- which, far from accelerating the escape of pedestrian peasants, froze them with paralytic horror in their tracks. Oliver had bedecked the poor car with patented mirrors and spotlights; an eagle flew from the radiator cap (Oliver's sole concession to the non-functional); a huge metal trunk sagged from behind over the sighing new shock absorbers; a new tourist rack enclosing special vari-colored emergency cans for gas, oil and water flowed along the left running board. The vehicle looked like part of a gypsy caravan.

Under the tiny hood there was a maze of complicated gas-saving attachments and anti-palpitants. The chassis and undergear was as full of felt silencers and pads and trusses and rubber slings as an old actor. Oliver had covered over all this glory in a paint he had found in an old pail hanging from the rafters in the loft over the garage. A fancy color it was, Golf Green. It was not that Oliver had taken up running with the country-club set.

Oliver had read about camouflage and sagely concluded that this color would be less apt to startle the deer, driving to and from the South Camp. Paul thought it was a debatable point... Lawyer Belden had crystallized Paul's growing sense of shame and horror over the car. Paul and Fritz were standing on Main Street one day as Oliver sped by, grimly sounding his Klaxon. Lawyer Belden was standing nearby talking to old Mr. Dyson. After Oliver's car had shuddered past, Lawyer Belden quietly spoke to Mr. Dyson. "There goes Oliver Biegler's Ford -- all dressed up like a whore going to a christening!"

Paul's brother Lincoln had finished high school. He was eighteen and worked at Elmer Lessard's garage. Elmer was very fond of Link and frequently urged Oliver to send the boy on to college. "He's more than a good grease-monkey, Oliver," Elmer would frequently tell Paul's father, "he's a sort of a mechanical dreamer...he seems to sense the large plan and drift of the principles with which he works. I wish I had half his instinct." Elmer's blue eyes would get a faraway look. "That boy of yours could go far, Oliver..." Oliver would usually throw back his head and guffaw at such a wild fancy, reminding Elmer of the historic outhouse he had once dug and built from dawn to dark. "An' I was only fourteen...Hell's fire, Elmer -- that boy of mine don't know enough to come in out of the rain! College! Balls!"

Brother Link had already started attending the Saturday night dances at MacDonald's Hall which stood on a Main Street corner two blocks south of Oliver's saloon. This hall occupied the third story of the brick MacDonald Block -- "A. D. 1882" the cornerstone read -- and also housed one of the many local fraternal lodges. The walls were hanging and emblazoned with the lodge's exotic draperies and trappings and plaques and tantalizing evidences of exclusive and mysterious ritual. The ceiling was festooned with colored crepe

bunting, which always seemed a little dusty and faded, twisted in gala strands to the ornate brass chandelier which foamed out of the ceiling in the center.

Fritz's bachelor uncle, Richard Jaeger, led the orchestra and played the piano. He was a slender, dark, small-featured man with a bulging forehead and a thin moustache. "Jaeger's Jass Band," the orchestra had been called, but lately Richard had renamed his group Jaeger's Jazz Band, a sublety of spelling and phonetics which was lost on Paul. At night, even in wintertime, Paul would often stand in the shadows by Jaeger's big house on the opposite corner of his block and watch and listen to Richard playing the big grand piano. Richard never worked, even at Christmas time during the rush at Jaeger's big store with the clock tower. Fritz was very fond of his uncle Richard despite the fact that he thought him a little "nuts." Not to be outdone, Paul told Fritz about his own Uncle Karl, and the time he had leapt off the boat when Paul was a baby... Paul's spine would tingle as he stood outside of Jaeger's house listening while this slender, silent man with the long bony fingers played all the latest pieces -- "Down Among the Sheltering Palms," "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," "In My Harem," "Missouri Waltz," "When You're Away," "St. Louis Blues" -- Richard knew them all.

Since Fritz and Paul had become friends, Paul would occasionally be taken into this big, deep-carpeted house with the stained glass windows and actually sit and watch Richard play the piano. Richard rarely read music, and never seemed backward about playing for anyone. He always appeared a little tired and bored and seemed scarcely aware that the boys were around. Best of all Paul liked it when Richard dreamed over the piano, which he often did, bending his head sideways down over the keys like an abstracted piano-tuner, working out oddly beautiful and dissonant arrangements of the current favorites, or playing fractured and fragmentary improvisations on haunting melodies which Paul had never before heard. Richard played the piano beautifully. His was entirely different from Belle's playing. There was a sure and yet subtly modulated masculine touch about his playing, and his harmonies often

possessed a tortured, strangled quality which was disturbingly moving and different from any Paul had ever heard...

On Saturday nights, however, it was Jaeger's Jazz Band, and tired Richard and his musicians huddled up on the high narrow platform at the front of MacDonald's Hall and thumped and played for the dancing pleasure of brother Link and the other young bloods of Chippewa. The tall ornately-carved chairs of the reigning knights of the lodge would be used by Richard's musicians, the perspiring violinist resting in one between numbers with a handkerchief tucked in his collar. The chairs of the lesser fraternity brothers were backed against the high shuttered windows on the street side of the room and against the opposite wall under the rows of draped and bewhiskered pictures of deceased lodge potentates. These smaller chairs of the lodge commoners would be occupied by the young women and girls, while like restless steers the young men stared and milled about the far double doors by the entrance, tall wooden doors, slotted for grim inspection by inner and outer guards on lodge nights, but now standing open for all to enter who could pay: "GENTS 75¢ -- LADIES 25¢."

Richard Jaeger and his band would strike up the music, perhaps the latest favorite, "Keep the Home Fires Burning," and the knots of eager young men would break up and eddy about the room, seeking out a partner for the dance. There was a boisterous democracy about MacDonald's Hall where a glowing and soaped young miner might dance with his boss's daughter, and where blonde Finnish and Scandinavian hired girls gaily rubbed elbows with the daughters of their mistresses -- despite the fact that "nice" girls were not supposed to go there on Saturday nights and were somehow believed to be "fast" if they did.

On summer nights when the breeze was favorable Paul would lie in bed by his open window and listen to the strains of the orchestra, wavering and receding, floating high above the burly and scuffle of Saturday night in downtown Chippewa. Then later, as the town grew quiet, Paul could even hear

Richard playing his frequent solo passages on the piano. This far music at times was so distant that only certain oddly dominant notes carried through to Paul, then the sound would whisper and die into utter silence, then fleetingly surge back in a rush of cascading notes. Paul lay listening with aching avidness to the hauntingly sad and fugitive quality of these broken snatches of tinkling music, coming from too far away, rising and then fading, softly borne on the air of the still summer night... Paul could visualize Richard sitting at the battered piano in the dusty, smoky dance hall, staring into space, looking so much like the pictures of a poet called Poe, lonely and oblivious of the shuffling couples, expressing in the only way that he could the troubled quality of his secret dreams.

Short olive-skinned Link loved to dance and he danced with all of the girls until the last strains of "Home Sweet Home" died away, and a tired and cynical Richard Jaeger paid off his men and put on his derby hat and form-fitting topcoat with the velvet collar. Richard then walked rapidly -- always alone -- over to Oliver's saloon and drank several double whiskies with water and then made his way, still alone, to his darkened home on Hematite Street. As for Link, Paul occasionally overheard him telling Nicky of the "little pippin" he had taken home that Saturday night. "Her name was Daisy -- and da-ai-sies don't tell!"

After the dance the dancers would pair off and the girls be "escorted" home or some of them, on warm summer nights, "for just a walk" to the silent hills and bluffs surrounding the town. Some of the couples and the thwarted swains would repair to Tasker's Restaurant for a late lunch or sit among the imitation palms over at Acropoulous' Candy Kitchen for a soda or banana split at the round marble-topped tables under the whirling drone of the large propellor fans. The "fast crowd," the utterly dissolute, would go to Urho Suomikoski's Cafe, run in conjunction with Urho's saloon, and there drink foaming steins of beer and even whiskey, Paul had heard it rumored, until closing time.

Belle did not mind Link's dancing but she worried over the late hours he kept. When Oliver was not around she would speak to Link about it. Paul was learning the pattern of these inconclusive lectures by heart. "Lincoln, why can't you get home at a reasonable hour?" Belle would say, at the Sunday breakfast table, smoothing the tablecloth with her hand, peering uncertainly at Link, reaching for her glasses. "The dance was over hours before you came in last night." She would hesitate. "I -- I know you wouldn't do anything wrong" -- here knowing Nicky might wink at Paul -- "but I couldn't sleep a wink till you got in. While I realize you're young and full of high spirits, still you're too young to be out all hours this way. Please come home earlier -- for my sake," she would plead, making excuses for him as she spoke, anxiously waiting for him to reassure her.

A slow, wistfully attractive smile would spread over Link's usually solemn, oval-shaped face. "Don't forget the night air, Mom. 'Night air is bad for growing young people,'" he would say to her, reciting one of Belle's dearest girlhood beliefs, speaking in his low drawling voice, so different from the usual staccato northern "tawk" of Chippewa. This quotation usually made Belle reluctantly smile. It was only once that Link had hesitantly reminded her that since Oliver wouldn't send him to college, and insisted that he work at Elmer Lessard's garage and pay board, he should be able to stay out late once in a while. That time tears had come into Belle's gray eyes... Anyway, that was not Link's way. Link, the quiet, wryly humorous one, never liked to hurt anyone's feelings. He had a quiet horror of dissension and bickering and gratuitous hurt. "Aw, Mom," he would conclude, "a fellow's only young once. In a few years I'll be married and settled down and be bringing your grandchildren over here to take piano lessons or" -- and his dark face would cloud -- "or maybe I'll be in the War. Who knows? We're only young once." And he would get up and go over and awkwardly pat her shoulder and give her a fleeting kiss, leaving Belle sitting there, pleased and dubious and still smiling uncertainly. "Don't worry, Mom -- we're only young once..."

Paul was not so sure. He often wondered if Link had ever been young. Link had always seemed to Paul to be one of those persons who were born old, who somehow, all of their childhood, at any stage and under whatever circumstances, even in their play, appeared to possess a quiet maturity, a sort of adult reserve, which set them apart from other young people. Link was that way. Ever since Paul was a child he had possessed a curious feeling when Link came to the table, even with Oliver and all of the family there, that the head of the table was where Link sat. It had been so the night, years before, when Oliver had struck Link, and young Oliver had intervened. That was the time young Oliver and brother Emmett had run away...

It was not that Link was sad or moody or affected by fits of depression. On the contrary he had a quick and even rollicking sense of humor, and next to Belle he was the most even-tempered member of the Biegler household. It was more than patience,Paul felt; it was a restraint, a deliberate self-control, a sort of calm ability to wait... Indeed, it seemed to Paul it was this very evenness, this sure control of himself, that set him apart from the other boys. He was not quick-tempered and he never flared up explosively like brother Nicky. Nor was he nervous and jumpy -- "high strung," Belle called it -- and given to moods of quick exhilaration and brooding pensiveness like Paul himself.

Of her three boys Link was most like Belle. He even looked like her, having the same small capable hands and delicate bone structure, the same short quick step, the same sort of oddly aristocratic carriage which, for some vague reason, to Paul always conjured up the word "plucky." Link had the same large quiet gray eyes and wide high brows, Belle's same darkly pale, calm expression -- "O false-faced Dutch woman!" -- her thin, high-bridged nose, somewhat curved and slightly flaring at the nostrils... This was quiet brother Link, who enjoyed dancing with all the girls at MacDonald's Hall and taking the "night air" with one of them afterwards, and who worked as a machanic at Elmer Lessard's garage and proudly paid his board to Oliver, and who, at eighteen, believed that he would only be young once...

T H E B U R N I N G E A R T H

A Novel By

ROBERT TRAVER

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

-- George Santayana.

THE BURNING EARTH

by Robert Traver

PROLOGUE

The sprawling upper peninsula of Michigan is a historical museum, a geological freak and a political waif. During the course of the volcanic convulsions and rumbling growing pains of a continent, uncounted centuries ago, Nature, in a cynical mood, craftily contrived to bury huge deposits of rich iron and copper ore and many other minerals deep into the broad bosom of the Upper Peninsula. When the last of a series of great ice sheets reluctantly relaxed its iron grip on the Peninsula, and slowly withdrew to the North, Nature, with an innocent smirk, hid her handiwork under a lush growth of trees: cedars, hemlocks, tamaracks, giant white-pines, Norways, balsams, spruces, jack-pines; and hardwood maples, elms, birches, and oaks. Nature marked this huge glacial retreat with thousands of lakes and hills and plunging waterways. As a tail-lashing farewell, the last of the doomed glaciers completed the gouging out and final delineation of an inland sea, the largest in the world; one which ever since has been hurling itself at the rocky northern boundary of this secret treasure chest -- the Upper Peninsula. Men came to call this turbulent sea Lake Superior.

For centuries only the Indians -- mostly of the Chippewa and Ottawa tribes -- passed along this way, hugging the south shore of Lake Superior in its rare moods of quiet in their large bark canoes, or padding silently beneath the sighing cathedral roofs of shaded forest trails, on ancient carpets of pine needles. The Peninsula was a broken, wild and harsh land. There were swamps to be skirted, rapids to be ridden, falls to be portaged; fishing, trapping, hunting; feasting, ritual, dancing; camps to be built and torn down; children to be born, dead to be buried; all this as the Indians made their way to and from the lower Great Lakes and the swampy headwaters of the Mississippi, beyond which lay the wide buffalo plains. There were no clocks to

hurry their passage, and time was the period between dawn and dark, between birth and death. It did not matter.

So far and hidden were they that for many years the coming of Columbus and the white man was a forest legend, the campfire gossip of toothless old men, the rumor of an occasional tribal vagabond, all as fugitive and meaningless as the evening whisper of a rustling pine. But finally the white men did come, and the old men were right: Strange, restless, bearded men called Frenchmen, followed by Englishmen, from far across the Eastern sea, bringing the Indians God and whisky, bright baubles and disease, gunpowder and treaties; taking their game and fish and furs, their camp-sites and even their women. Their gentle priests could not contain them. It was not long before the members of a new white tribe, the Americans, came to add to the Indian's woes. Like maddened giants, consumed by some fatal inner lust, these strangers came, always pressing, crowding, pushing ever westward.

The British fought the French and Indians; the French fought the British and Indians; the Americans fought all three. Craftily these mad strangers pitted Indian against Indian, sowing dissension, tribal hatred and bloodlust. The American Indian was being brought the "new order" of his time.

The fierce resistance of these peninsula Indians was a stirring and now-forgotten forest saga, long since embalmed in the murky pages of history. Forgotten were the wild night raids, the shouting painted warriors in a thousand canoes, the feats of incredible bravery and dark treachery; the nights and days of fire, famine, and bitter cold. For a few Indians the love of homeland could not surpass the love of whisky. The rest, the vast majority, finally found that the silent arrow could not still the barking sting of the white man's musket...

The peninsula Indian was defeated. Indeed, he was nearly exterminated. There were no monuments to mark his passage. All he left behind was a few bleached bones and scattered arrowheads for the tourists to paw over. The gloss of history -- "historical perspective" is the phrase -- cast its soft

patina over these proceedings, and finally forgave the Indian his sin in fighting for his home and for his freedom. The conquest of this portion of the northern Middle-West was remembered merely as a series of skirmishes against a handful of reluctant barbarians, a pot-shot at a few ungrateful heathens -- a minor footnote to the grand larceny of a continent.

All this time Nature smiled and fluttered a lidless eye. Save for the ancient copper workings of the Indians -- she did not worry about them -- her secret of buried treasure was still intact.

The Upper Peninsula was finally conquered; a beaten waif; a foundling on the doorstep of a growing young nation. All about it territories and states were being carved out of the Northwest Territory, of which it had become a part. None of these sought to annex the U. P. In appearance and geology it most resembled the Laurentian Uplands of Canada, but was separated from Canada by Lake Superior. Nobody wanted the lonely, rugged U. P.

Michigan became a territory in 1805 -- but shunned the U. P. At length in 1836 Wisconsin Territory took the U. P. under its reluctant wing, like a dubious hen adopting an ugly duckling. In the meantime Michigan Territory's admission to statehood was delayed when she became embroiled in a bitter controversy with the new state of Ohio over the latter's northern boundary. Feeling ran so high over this disputed land -- the so-called Toledo strip -- that border patrols were organized, shooting occurred, and a minor war seemed imminent.

When that phrase still possessed a quaint charm, Congress viewed these proceedings with alarm. It decided it must take a "firm stand." So Congress stepped in and flatly told Michigan she would not be admitted to statehood unless she would surrender her claims to the Ohio strip. Michigan still stoutly refused to concede Ohio's claims. Congress was equal to the occasion. For that august body had already adopted as its motto: When in doubt, compromise!

The politicians in Congress huffed and puffed and blew through their whiskers -- and offered Michigan the U. P. as a compromise. Michigan was cut to the quick. The Upper Peninsula! That howling wilderness of snow and cold! Why, it wasn't even physically attached to Michigan -- look at the Straits of Mackinac which separated the two! Anyway, gentlemen, our fine neighbor, Wisconsin, already owns the U. P. Perish the sordid thought.

But, alas! Congress discovered that Wisconsin was delighted to abandon its foundling on Michigan's doorstep. Michigan ruefully concluded that it wanted statehood more than the coveted Ohio strip, so when Michigan was finally admitted to the Union in 1837 she found that she possessed -- literally as a political afterthought -- a three-hundred-odd-mile-long appendage attached to the northern tip of her mitten -- the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

The lusty young state of Michigan determined to make the best of a bad bargain. She would look and see what was on this damned Peninsula. What was there to these ancient rumors of copper and Iron deposits? In 1841 a young state geologist called Douglass Houghton was sent North, following the old Indian trails, and during the next three years he discovered large deposits of copper in the Lake Superior region. In 1844 a surveyor called William Burt observed his compass making frantic gyrations as he and his party stood on a lofty peninsula hill near what later became Negaunee. Surveyor Burt nodded at his companions. Only the presence of iron could account for that phenomenon.

The following year another group of explorers came to the Lake Superior district to locate an iron mine on Burt's magnetic hill. After frantic search the party could find neither the hill nor the iron. A runner was then sent to L'Anse to get Marji Gesick, chief of the Chippewas living there. This old Indian was reputed to know every foot of the territory. Chief Gesick returned with the runner and, after a preliminary powwow and exchange of gifts at the explorers' camp at the mouth of the River du Mort on Lake Superior, he led

them inland to Teal Lake. Thence he turned south and climbed the remarkable iron bluff which William Burt had crossed the previous year. The party stood on a mountain of solid iron ore. "Here!" old Gesick said in Indian. Chief Gesick returned to his wives and the remnants of his tribe at L'Anse, bearing his gifts, and the white men founded the Jackson Mine, the earliest of the Peninsula's fabulous iron mines.

So after countless brooding centuries, the first of the Peninsula's rich copper and iron deposits had been found. More discoveries followed in quick succession. Michigan's fathers broached a cask of rum and congratulated themselves on their wisdom, their acute vision. That ancient Cinderella of the North, the Upper Peninsula, had at last been found by her dream prince!

Nature compressed her thin lips, smiled wryly, then shrugged and turned away. After all she had kept her secret a long, long time. How many million years was it? Ho hum. If worst came to worst she could always conjure up a new ice sheet or two. But first she really must go West and investigate the intriguing possibilities of these dust storms. That was a new wrinkle. The Peninsula could wait a bit. Nature could bide her time...

CHAPTER 1.

The saloon stood on the west side of Main Street in Chippewa, Michigan. The entrance door was in the middle, and on either side of the door there loomed tall potted ferns supported by sticks, standing in the tall windows in front of the suspended cloth curtains. Just inside the door there was a broad standing mirror, framed in ornate mahogany and serving to screen the iniquities within. On this mirror, in gold leaf, was printed the following:

Oliver Biegler -- Saloon
Fine Wines and Choice Liquors
Beer -- Free Lunch

North of the saloon, on the corner next to the town square, stood the brick Miners' State Bank. There were fourteen saloons on the town's Main Street, and many more on the other streets. Today all of them were busy. For it was pay day at the town's iron mines, and hundreds of miners were downtown cashing their checks, paying bills, buying new boots and socks and heavy miner's underwear -- and most of them, to the dismay of the local temperance workers, "sneakin' a few dollars on the ol' woman for a bloody drink or two!"

Oliver Biegler stood at the front end of his bar, up near the cigar counter, playing smear for drinks with three miners. He was a tall, big-boned man, slightly over fifty. Occasionally he glanced up from his game, looking the length of the smoky bar at his three perspiring bartenders -- the two regular bartenders, French-Canadian Charlie LeRoy and Cornishman Will Tregembo -- and the relief bartender, who helped out on pay days and Saturday nights, George Douglass. The big Swiss music box, against the opposite wall, was working overtime, obedient to nickels, the shuddering metal discs creaking up and down between each selection. Some travelling saloon artist had filled the entire wall, opposite the bar, with his alcoholic visions: a sinister, dank, malarial woods scene at night, dripping gloom, of no forest which ever grew in Michigan, and relieved only by a troubled moon which peered from racing, troublous clouds.

The long, high room rang with the clink and buzz of drinking men. The worn mahogany bar ran nearly half the depth of the building. At the far end

of the bar stood the free lunch counter, covered by cheese cloth against the droning flies. This was flanked by the massive ice-box. Beyond that was the partitioned, green-tabled poker room. At the back of the saloon was a small kitchen and the "Sunday door," leading out into the alley at the rear.

Behind Oliver, against the bar wall, stood the square iron safe, with the dish of colored fruit painted on its door, which was slightly ajar. It was a warm afternoon in early August. Oliver had been cashing checks all day. He kept them in a smooth, worn "Green Seal" cigar box, in the safe. Each check cashed meant that he had to take at least one drink. The cuffs of his shirt were turned up once on his big wrists. Oliver's face was somewhat flushed; he was gently drunk.

Charlie LeRoy edged up along the bar and whispered to Oliver. He mopped his dark Indian face with his soiled bar apron. "Polly's here, Oliver -- says Mrs. B. wants you to come home an' not to forget the package -- it's the kid's birthday -- havin' a little doing. Go 'head, Oliver -- I can handle alone during the supper hour." Oliver's bartenders had a great deal of respect for Oliver's wife, Belle. "That Mrs. B. -- she's a real lady, I tell you." They always said this to each other with a sort of quiet belligerence, as though someone had challenged the proposition. Oliver slowly nodded at Charlie and glanced down the bar at his youngest son, Paul. Oliver smiled, tossed down a drink, and turned to finish his game of cards.

Paul had come in the alley door. He stood by the free lunch counter drinking a bottle of cream soda one of the bartenders had given him. His gray eyes rested on Old Man Dyson and "Gineral" Gaynor playing a timeless game of cribbage at one of the card tables next to the tall coal stove by the opposite wall. "Fifteen-two, fifteen-four," they droned. Paul drank slowly, out of the bottle, savoring the liquid's cool sweetness, enjoying the tingling sensation in his nose as he regurgigated. All the while he listened intently to the music box. To Paul its tinkling trills were compounded of the music of the spheres. The laboring machine was playing "The Eva Waltz" -- one of his favorites, by a composer whose name he could never learn. Paul swayed his

head ever so slightly, closing his eyes. He drank in the delicious, stale, boozy smell of the place, a combination of beer, mustard, cold ham, old cheese, brine of pickled herring, spilt whiskey, tobacco smoke, over-loaded spittoons, and sweating men. It was heavenly, rivalled only by the tantalizing smell of Tilford's Drug Store...

Oliver finished his card game in a crescendo of shouts and knuckle-rapping plays. "One more, Oliver. Jus' one more!" He grinned and shook his head. He turned and closed the safe door, spun the dial, took his battered Panama hat from the top of the safe, and nodded to Paul. Outside on Main Street Paul had to run to keep up with his father's long strides. He glanced up at his father. "Mom wants you to bring home the paper -- and a -- a package from Joachim's hardware, Pa."

The large frame Biegler house stood on a corner at the bottom of Blueberry Hill, just a block north of the Northwestern tracks, which ran through the center of the town. As Paul and Oliver approached the crossing, Paul clutching his birthday present, old Dan Kane hobbled out of his shanty on his wooden leg. He resolutely held his warning flag aloft in his one good arm, glaring at Paul and his father, as a long, slow, iron ore drag cut him from their view. The train had two locomotives in front and pusher behind, as it hissed and cursed its weight of raw red hematite ore towards distant Escanaba and the ore docks, there to be loaded into the waiting ore boats. Paul stood there beside his father, listening to the rhythmic rattle and din of the fleeing car trucks.

Old Dan Kane was one of the many fantastically injured industrial cripples in which the town abounded. He had got his on the railroad. One leg on one side; an arm on the other; a neat trick. Dan had an Irish brogue as rich as mulligan stew. He had the face of an old pirate, and he always shouted his most idle comment. He and Paul were good friends. Sometimes it

pleased old Dan to fancy himself a wounded Civil War veteran, and he held Paul enthralled as he recounted, always in great and colorful detail, the desperate campaign in which he was so gallantly wounded. Paul could hear the very rumble of artillery. Each engagement was different but was always concluded, with a wink and a nudge, with a shouted "We routed the divils!"

One day he told Paul he had got his injuries when he had yelled "To hell with Ireland! Down with the Pope!" in a Dublin whorehouse. "They almost assassinated me," he declared. Paul laughed uncertainly and ran home to ask Belle, his mother, what a whorehouse was. "Where did you hear that, son?" Belle asked, brushing back the hair on her high broad forehead in white Presbyterian horror. Paul told her Dan's story. She pursed her lips into a horrible grimace in her efforts to keep a sober face, but laughter welled up in her plump body in gusts and gales, and she had finally sat on the floor and Paul ran to get her a glass of water and her bottle of favorite red Vericolate pills. "Don't listen to that immoral old blatherskite!" she finally chortled. "What's 'immoral,' Mama? What's 'blatherskite'?" Paul asked, and Belle was away again. Paul had fled the house and reported back to Dan. Old Dan grinned, muttered 'Protestant pups' under his breath, dug in his long leather purse, winked at Paul, and had given him a dime. Another time -- --

Oliver prodded Paul in the ribs. "Are you going to stand there dreaming all day, son? The train is by."

"Hello, Oliver!" Dan shouted. "Who's that foine young bye ye got wit ye?"

Oliver winked broadly at Dan. "Hello, Dan. He's my new bartender -- just up from Green Bay. Yup. It's his birthday today. He's -- he's -- how old are you, son? Eleven? He's eleven years old today, Dan."

Dan's mirth was uncontrollable. He slapped his good leg with his flag and reeled and almost fell. "That shure is a good one, all right all right!

Oliver Biegler!" he shouted. Dan beseeched the neighbors to bear witness. "Bejaysus, he's got so many byes he can't keep thrack of them!"

Oliver and Paul turned into the Biegler back yard. Oliver expertly flipped a clove into his mouth and stalked into the house with the afternoon newspaper, "The Iron Ore," for Belle. Paul ran around to the fenced side yard with his birthday present. Gunnar Taleen was there waiting for him. Gunnar helped Paul claw open the bundle. There in a box lay a brand new baseball and bat and a black leather pitcher's glove.

"Bats!" Paul shouted, asserting the youthful prerogatives of ownership. "I borrow to pitch," blond Gunnar sensibly concluded. Paul lined up at home plate at the front of the yard, under the drooping box elder tree. He spat in his hands. Gunnar faced him halfway down the yard, scowling professionally as he elaborately wound up. Gunnar pitched. Paul swung. There was a clear wooden 'bonk' as the bat struck the ball. With a fatal premonition they watched in frozen horror as the ball sped in suspended, dream-like flight towards the house, under the open porch, and into the sitting-room window. The crash and rain of glass attracted Mrs. McGoorty who was taking down her washing across the street. Paul, in the clarity of his horror, saw her cross herself. She knew Oliver Biegler's temper. From long experience, all of the neighbors did.

Paul noticed that Gunnar had developed a greenish-white pallor as he turned and fled the premises. Paul saw that he himself was still holding his new bat out in front of him, at the end of its swing. Then he observed his father standing on the side porch, looking at him. Paul winced and waited for the tumult to start. His father was speaking. In a low voice. It was a miracle.

" -- she's laying on the sitting-room floor in a dead faint. An' not a drop of liquor in the house. Run up and get Doc Gourdeau. Run! Oh, for Christ's sake..."

* * *

Paul's mind raced with him as he ran up Blueberry Hill for Doctor Gourdeau. He was filled with terror. Had the baseball struck her? he thought. What if Mama should die? I killed her on my birthday with my little bat. Why wasn't there some whiskey in the house? Or at least some wine? But Paul knew why there wasn't. Belle had never permitted a drop of liquor in her house since Paul was four years old. On that fateful day brother Nicholas, aged eight, had found a tall bottle of port wine, "company" wine, hidden behind Belle's washstand. By this time she and Oliver occupied separate bedrooms.

Nicky had opened the bottle of port and craftily inserted his thumb in the neck. He pretended to toss off a manly portion. He then passed the bottle to little Paul, who still wore his yellow curls. They had sat on the floor near Belle's large wooden bed. Paul needed both hands to tilt the big bottle to his mouth -- whereupon, not to be outdone, he downed his first drink, a mighty draft. It also developed that it was his first drunk. For four days and nights friends and neighbors had come to view the tiny sot, lying unconscious on his mother's bed. They suggested all manner of "cures" for Belle to try. She was nearly frantic with remorse and fright. But Doc Gourdeau had shrugged his French shoulders and shaken his head. "Doan worry, Mis' Beeglair -- from dat dey always wake up."

As he was running past the Ridge Street school, Paul was suddenly caught and held in his tracks. With a throaty, preliminary jungle cough, the steam whistle at the Blueberry Mine had begun its evening Angelus. Then, as Paul stood there, another mine whistle growled its answer to this challenge, then another and another and still another, gathering volume, gradually swelling and filling the town with their mighty symphonic roar. Paul was always deeply stirred by the vast calliope chords of the mine whistles. Through this great wail of sound there always ran a surging, vibrant pulse, a throbbing overtone,

which prevailed until the last whistle had hurled its echo at the lonely, bald iron hills which surrounded the town. Paul exhaled sharply, and darted on towards Doctor Gourdeau's house.

Old Doctor Gourdeau had asthma, and he was puffing and wheezing dreadfully as he and Paul hurried into the Biegler sitting room. Belle was sitting by the broken window calmly reading The Iron Ore. The curtains billowed gently in the evening breeze. Paul was glad to observe that Oliver was nowhere in sight. One of his brothers and his half-brother Gregory were eating in the dining-room.

"Good evening, Doctor." Belle smiled pleasantly. "I'm sorry we had to bother you. I guess I must have fainted."

Doctor Gourdeau clutched at his moustache and earnestly shook his big, shaggy head. He had delivered Belle of her three sons -- and the little girl, the one that had died, who was born before Paul, her last child.

"W'as mattair, Mis' Beeglair," he said wrathfully in his hoarse, froggy bass, "'isteria, no? Was dat 'usban' of yours bodderin' you again?"

Belle watched the plump doctor standing there clenching and unclenching his fists. With a little sigh, her gray eyes rolled up in her head, and her body began to shake. She snorted and vaguely waved one plump hand toward the broken window. Paul could see things were coming to no good. It always frightened him when Belle got one of her laughing spells. "Doctor," he said, "I batted a ball through the window glass. I -- I guess I knocked Mama out or frightened her." Paul turned to his mother. "What happened, Mama? Please tell us."

"War," Belle muttered helplessly, rocking in her chair as the newspaper fell from her lap. "Th-though we were being sh-shot at."

The fallen newspaper lay open on the carpet. Paul and Doc Gourdeau stared at its headlines.

"FRANCE, ENGLAND, RUSSIA AND GERMANY AT WAR!"

Old Doctor Gourdeau continued to stare at the newspaper. Paul looked at him. As he looked, the doctor seemed to shrink and sag and to curiously age. He held out towards Belle his dry physician's hands, cupped and close to his body, one shoulder slightly hunched. She had stopped laughing and was watching him intently, her face white and drawn.

"God, God, God," he said wearily, closing his wet eyes. "De eart' -- eet is burning ones again." He turned and slowly went past the stares of Paul's brothers through the dining-room, out the side door -- the screen door slammed -- trudging along the wooden porch past the broken window and out of sight.

Paul was eleven years old on August 5, 1914.

CHAPTER 2.

Even at this age Paul was perplexed, as he was always to be, by the part that raw chance played in his life, in the lives of his parents, his brothers and friends and, as he gradually came to see it, in the lives of every person who ever lived upon the earth. Why, why, why? he would ask himself. Why am I here? Where am I bound? Where are all of us going? What strange destiny drew my mother and father together in this boisterous mining town in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan? He pondered these things and found no answer.

Sometimes he would haltingly confide his troubled questionings to Belle, but she spoke sharply to him and told him a boy so young should not entertain such thoughts. "It isn't healthy to dwell upon yourself so much, son. Run out and play. Bounce your ball off the roof." Belle had a fixed notion that in physical action lay a panacea for all ills of the spirit. She had had to seek its solace often enough herself. Paul gradually grew secretive and kept his own counsel. But the strange thoughts still persisted.

Paul knew, from Belle's constant repetition, the surface story of how his mother and father had met; the manner of their courtship and marriage; of how his father, Oliver, had brought Belle to live in his big frame house with her three step-sons, Paul's half-brothers: young Oliver, Emmett and red-headed Gregory. They were the children of Oliver and his first wife, the sweet Irish girl who had died of "the consumption."

Ever since he could remember, back when Belle would give him his daily bath downstairs in the dining-room, in a large porcelain washbowl, by the soapy warmth of the surging wood stove, she had told him stories of her family, his father's family -- of his Uncle Karl, Oliver's brother, who was in a sanitarium for those who were sick in their minds. "That means," Paul slowly puzzled out, "that my uncle Karl is crazy, he's in the nuthouse." This intelligence made him feel vaguely proud and gleeful, somehow different from and

superior to his little playmates who could not lay valid claim to uncles languishing in insane asylums.

Paul had a shadowy, babyhood recollection of his uncle Karl -- a tall, slender, brooding man, younger than Oliver, with dark wavy hair, who would come and look intently down at Paul in his crib, with large staring blue eyes; who sometimes suddenly laughed in a high frightening falsetto, and made graceful wand-like gestures in the air with his arms. Paul did not know, then, that at these times Karl was leading a symphony orchestra.

The last memory Paul had of Uncle Karl was a bizarre scene on a boat. When Paul grew older, he asked Belle to confirm his childish recollection, but she laughed uncertainly and said he must have been dreaming, he was just a toddling baby, nothing as fastastic as that had ever happened. "It's just that imagination of yours, son. You read too much. You should play more. My, my -- what am I ever going to do with such a dreamer!" Paul knew she was lying to him -- "for your own good" -- and that it had really happened.

Oliver and Belle had taken Uncle Karl on a voyage on the Great Lakes for his "nervousness." They had taken Paul along. Grandma Fraleigh had come up to Chippewa from Detroit to take care of the other boys while they were gone. It was all very hazy in Paul's memory. Boat, water: this was about all he could remember.

But there was one part that was clear, with a deadly stereopticon brilliance: The boat was docked at a wharf. Paul and his parents were in their stateroom looking out of the portholes. He saw a sidewalk and water. The sidewalk was held up by tall wooden piles. There was a strange, fishy smell and the sound of lapping water. Oddly, there was water under the sidewalk. A large turtle, with raised, reptilian head, was slowly swimming under the sidewalk. Small boys were diving off the wharf into the water to recover coins tossed by the boat's passengers. They would climb, dripping, up on a ladder and dance and shout and then dive again. Suddenly there was shouting and sounds of wooden scuffling. A grown man had leaped off the boat into the

water. He was all dressed up and even wore a hat. There was a furious splashing...

"Oliver!" Belle had cried. "It's Karl -- he's in the water!" Oliver had said "Christ God" in a weary, low voice, and had run out of the stateroom, slamming the door. Belle had tried to get Paul away from the porthole, but he had clung there, howling, and would not leave until Oliver and some sailors had fished the dripping, shouting man out of the water. The diving boys and the turtle had gone away. The people had stopped throwing coins. Paul never saw his Uncle Karl again...

"Soap yourself, Paul," Belle would command, as she gave him his bath, wringing out the washcloth and pushing her graying hair back on her forehead with a damp hand. "It's 9:30 and I've got a piano lesson to give at ten." Shortly after Paul had been born, Belle had started giving piano and vocal lessons in the little music room just off the sitting room, on the old ebony Bechstein upright. Paul learned every piece in Czerny by heart -- and he never played a note. Even from upstairs he could detect some hapless child's error, and visualize Belle's impatient admonition and the occasional rapping of uninspired knuckles. "One and two and one and two," he would hear her droning and chanting hour on end to the disconsolate throng of aspiring little Rachmaninoffs and Paderewskis who filed in and out of the Biegler house with their black leather music rolls, haunting his boyhood with daily sounds of discord and a million sour notes.

"Tell me, Mom, how you and Oliver came to get married," he asked Belle one rainy day. All of the boys called their father Oliver or "the old man" when he was not around -- a practice which Belle vainly tried to halt. Paul must have been six or seven, which meant he had quite recovered from his epic

wine jag. Belle was in the kitchen ironing the last big washing while the Finnish hired girl was down in the cellar laundry, banging the wooden tubs about and muttering over the next washing. Paul sat on the high wood-box, next to the warm kitchen range, watching his mother iron. He loved the starched, burnt-cloth odor of ironing. "Tell me, Mom," he repeated, "how did you and Oliver meet?"

Belle smiled at him, coloring slightly. Her skin was usually white, almost waxen. She never used any powder or makeup. "Oh, I've told you that already, youngster -- a dozen times. Now you run along and play."

"No you haven't, Mama," Paul lied steadily. "Not all, you haven't. There was a snowstorm -- I remember that," Paul started, urging her on. "Let's see -- you were lost in a snowstorm, wasn't that it? And Oliver found you." This was violently incorrect and Paul knew it.

Belle got a hot iron off the kitchen range, tested it with a moist finger -- psst -- and started on one of Oliver's shirts. They were so large that Paul always aspired to use one of them as a tent.

"I had just finished my course at the Detroit Conservatory of Music" -- Belle began, smiling to herself, almost talking to herself -- "and your Grandpa Fraleigh" -- Belle's father -- "had just come in off the road and told me that they wanted a music teacher for the public schools, 'way up in the northern peninsula of Michigan -- in a place called Chippewa -- --"

"Chippewa!" Paul cried. "Why -- why that's where we live, Mama!" It was part of the formula; he said it every time, just at this juncture, like a veteran trouper.

"That's right, son," Belle ran on, as Paul settled back on the wood-box and smiled to himself. "Grandpa had just got back home from Chippewa, and Mr. Scribner had told Grandpa about it himself." Mr. Scribner was the superintendent of schools at Chippewa. "Grandpa was the out-of-town representative of the Ferris people, you know," Belle ran on. Paul always resented

Belle's efforts to make her father's employment sound genteel. Somehow it shamed him. "Grandpa was an underpaid travelling salesman for a tight-fisted seed company, more like it," Paul thought to himself, being something of a small realist at seven.

"So I sat down and wrote Mr. Scribner about myself -- and guess what happened?" Belle went on.

"They didn't take you," Paul quickly said. This was a variation of the theme, and was clearly not cricket, and Belle looked at him closely.

"They did too take me," Belle said, pursing her lips and folding the shirt and spanking it smartly with the hot iron. "Out of seventeen applicants, mind you, they accepted your mother." Paul wondered, as he had wondered scores of times, where he would have been if they hadn't; if his grandfather Fraleigh, "The out-of-town representative," had not run into a schoolman called Scribner. If -- --

"The beautiful maple leaves were tinted and falling when I arrived in Chippewa," Belle went on. The cycle of the northern seasons had always affected Belle deeply, and she rhapsodized a bit, falling into the easy conventional literary cliches of her girlhood. "The hills and woods were a veritable riot of color." Belle paused over her ironing, and her gray eyes grew unseeing. "Yes, the place was wildly beautiful, a strange, rugged, harsh land. I loved it at once -- and always have. It was like" -- she paused again -- "it was as though I were coming home..."

Paul drew in his breath sharply and hugged up his knees on the woodbox. She has never said that before, he thought. That was a beautiful thing she just said -- why, it's true, it's true!

"What happened after that, Mama?" Paul softly said.

"Oh yes, son." She was working on one of Oliver's nightshirts now. His dress shirts could contain only a side-show, but his nightgowns could house the entire main attraction, Paul thought.

"Well, I got a lovely front room at dear old Mrs. Donovan's -- and I started my new music work. That's all there was to it, son."

Belle glanced at the crazily ticking kitchen clock. One of those damned piano kids are coming, Paul thought. I just know they are. "No, Mama -- that isn't all there is to it. You haven't met Oliver yet," Paul said to his mother.

"Well, sir," Belle went on rapidly, "with my first November here came the first big blizzard I had ever seen. It was so big -- why, son, you know the kind of snowstorms we get up here," she concluded lamely.

"Yes, Mama, I know," Paul said.

"I was coming home from school. It was during the noon-hour. The blinding snow was streaming out of the northwest. I was holding an umbrella out in front of me, like this." Belle motioned and laughed. "You know, son, no one up here ever uses an umbrella in a snowstorm -- I was that green. I was on my way to Mrs. Donovan's, passing the backyard of our house -- where we live now -- and I bumped right into a tall man coming out of the backyard." Belle was talking rapidly now. "I stumbled. He caught me in his arms. He held me tightly. It was snowing. We looked at each other. He said he was sorry. He let me go." Belle paused and sighed.

"When I got to Mrs. Donovan's, I asked her who lived there -- where we live now -- and the dear old lady crossed herself and told me it was a widower with three little sons. She told me his name. Now who do you think it was?" Belle asked.

"Oliver Biegler -- my old man," Paul responded loyally, curiously regarding his mother, who had become strangely beautiful and young again as she stood bending over her ironing.

By the time he was eleven, Paul had heard the story of Belle's romance many times, and had grown somewhat weary of it. Sometimes he became irked with

Belle, thinking to himself: Why on earth did Mama ever marry such a crabby, vile-tempered man as Oliver? Why couldn't my father have been a gentle, considerate, generous man? One who played games with his children, like other fathers? Paul had another thought too, one that colored his entire boyhood: Why couldn't my father have been almost anything but a saloon-keeper?

Paul knew, with quiet dismay, that his playmates' parents must have discussed his low estate at home, because when he would have one of the fierce, fleeting childish quarrels with one of them, the worst they could seem to think to say was: "You're nothing but a dirty saloon-keeper's son!" Or: "Polly's old man keeps a saloon! Red-nose Polly, red-nose Polly!" No one ever thought to shout at his playmates: You're a dirty miner's son -- or a vile minister's son -- or even a street-cleaner's son. Saloon-keepers were the lowest of the low.

Even the very school books of the time taught Paul that there was little hope for him. Anyone that dabbled in alcohol inevitably became a social pariah as well as a mental and moral degenerate. His spawn was doomed to be naught but gobbling idiots and lurching, shambling imbeciles. Why, it was printed right there in the book. Some of the school books would even show startling pictures of yards and yards of human intestines, every inch a glowing, healthy red. These were the guts of the righteous, unsullied by the demon rum. On the next page would be an illustration of a sorry gray mess, looking something like a platter of deflated liver sausages. These were the dreary bowels of the boozers. Paul smarted over these experiences as though he had been struck with a lash. He never told Belle about them. His older brother Lincoln had done so once. Paul had witnessed the scene...

So insistently was the conviction of his inevitable mediocrity borne upon him, that Paul felt that he annually became a sort of embarrassing curiosity to his teachers and classmates each time he perversely managed to move from one grade to the other. The fact that he found his school work easy, and

that he was always among the leaders of his class gave him little comfort. He supposed that he and his brothers were merely the exceptions to prove the rule. At times Paul felt like a Kallikak who had made good.

Paul, then, knew all too well how his parents had met and married. But he still did not know why. Why, why, why? Belle loved to sit and talk with her boys, and time on end, as she talked, Paul pondered the fickle destiny that had mated the son of an immigrant German brewer -- his grandfather Biegler -- with the daughter of a New York Dutchman -- his grandfather Fraleigh -- whose family had settled on the Hudson River long before the American revolution. And why did this German brewer meet and marry the tall, imperious German woman, Katrina Zien, whom he had met on the ship, coming to America in 1845? What sly play of fate had brought the budding young seed salesman to meet and marry a young Scotch girl, Margaret Broun, and bring her from New York out to Detroit? Was he hurrying West so that he could be in Chippewa in time to hear of a teaching job for a daughter yet unborn? No, Paul decided, that would be at once too comforting a thought and too monstrously egotistic.

When Belle first came to Chippewa, she "had an understanding" with Will Lamoree, a rising young Detroit photographer. In her affections he seemed to be the most successful of her cluster of deserted Detroit swains. Paul had seen his picture in Belle's album -- a hirsute, be-moustached, wing-collared young man standing in an attitude of heroic self-abnegation, who looked exactly like all of the pictures of all of the young men in all of the albums he had ever seen. There seemed to have been a separate race of album-men. Paul would wince when Belle would say, "That's the young man who might have been your father, son." Sometimes she would musingly say: "Will was very much in love with me. He was so sweet -- I -- I wonder what it would have been like if I had married him?" Paul often wondered, too.

* * *

Belle Biegler was the family historian, recorder, recollector, and arbiter in all things intellectual. She was the court of last resort on all questions pertaining to grammar and usage. She really had an amazing recollection. Her mind was a patchwork of things remembered. And she could parse a sentence so that it bristled like a battleship on war maneuvers. It was more than Paul could ever learn to do. In the language department the boys early found that Oliver rated A in emphasis but was deplorable in pronunciation, spelling and syntax. "Ask Mom, she knows."

Belle, as was her way, had saved all of Oliver's few love letters. She had carefully stowed them away in a shoe box tied with traditional blue. Then she couldn't find them. "Tsk, tsk, tsk -- now where did I put those letters?" It took the combined efforts of Paul and two older boys to unearth them -- under a mattress in his discarded crib in the dusty attic. Nestling with them they had found a cracked old hot-water bottle. Love must not cool, Paul thought. When the family spirits were at a low ebb (and Oliver was safely out at camp), Belle would occasionally read some of the love letters at the dinner table. They never failed to start a wild Bieglerian hooting.

Oliver had once taken a six-week bookkeeping course in Milwaukee, the intellectual advantages of which he never tired of expounding. Oliver's beautifully written double-entry love letters were gems of cloying copybook sentiment, tiny hymns to unsullied womanhood, as warm and pulsating as a notice of overdue box rent. Belle had even found in the tall bookcase in the music-room the book out of which he had copied them. "Professor Cuyler's 'Letters For All Occasions.'" A pretty tome it was, with shameless little cupids swimming naked all over the cover. In all of these letters Woman was a shrine, the lofty keeper of the stork, to which evil Man tremulously addressed his abject petitions.

Belle would sit at her end of the table, near the pantry door, endlessly smoothing the tablecloth, brushing away imaginary bread crumbs, adjusting her

nose-glasses, drinking her steaming Bulgarian tea -- one of the endless assortment of dreary health brews and formulas which she consumed with a touching, child-like faith -- and reading Oliver's old love letters. Most of the time she would laugh heartily, but sometimes her gray eyes would grow misty. Again, she would read from Professor Cuyler's book -- excerpts of letters which she really thought Oliver should have sent her. One of Oliver's classics ran as follows:

"The grave beauty of your mien, your sweetly solemn smile, distracts me so that I cannot properly attend to my duties as (here state business or profession)." Oliver had gone the whole hog and copied everything, directions and all. Perhaps, Paul thought, he shied at the word 'saloon-keeper.' The only original note that had crept into this one was in the salutation. "Dear Angle," it ran.

But "Dear Angle" had married her Oliver. He had proposed to her on a Sunday drive around beautiful wooded Iron Cliffs Drive. "He looked so big and strong, driving his fast horses," Belle told her children. She had forsaken Will Lamoree and her orderly little regiment of suitors in Detroit. The advice of all her new Chippewa friends had gone unheeded. "I tell you, Belle, he's nothing but the keeper of a low dive. He cheats at cards, he chases fast women -- and he beats them, too. And he -- he's not even your own religion!" Oliver was nominally a Roman Catholic.

Kate Donovan, who ran the Donovan House where Belle lived in Chippewa, was chief among Belle's self-appointed saviors. She was a wispy, good-hearted, hank-haired little widow of sixty, with the thin, busy wet lips which seem peculiar to certain Irishwomen. When Kate was excited she had a slight brogue, which was to say that she always spoke with a slight brogue. "Don't marry that man, Belle! No good can come out of it. Those there Bieglers is all crazy. He's a pup, he is! (Kate's pups always rhymed with 'hoop'.)

"I tell you he kilt his first wife, that he did. A fine Irish girl she was. Three sons in four years! God help ye, lass." Belle had pursed her lips and quietly nodded.

Belle married Oliver on Midsummer's Day in St. Xavier's church. The ceremony was blessed by Father Keul, and Oliver took his music-teacher to his big frame house on Hematite Street and told his three young sons, "Here is your new mother." They had stood and stared at her. Red-headed Gregory had burst out crying. The following March Belle presented Oliver with their first son. Grandpa Fraleigh, the seed salesman, had fought in the Civil War, and had been a prisoner in notorious Andersonville prison. So the first child was Lincoln. In less than two years Nicholas was born. That appropriately took care of the memory of Grandpa Nicholas Biegler, the brewer. Then had followed Katherine, the little girl who had died of "convulsions" while teething. Then Belle had gone to Chicago where Doctor Murphy removed her left breast; a cancer of the breast, he said it was. On her return Doctor Gourdeau insisted that she have a separate bedroom and not to have, under any circumstances, another child.

When Paul was born Belle had nearly died. Grandma Fraleigh had hurried north from Detroit. "Our Belle lies like a poor, broken reed," she had written the Detroit relatives. "The new baby is another fine boy -- the plumpest of the lot." It was a distinction which was not to stay long with Paul. As for Doctor Gourdeau, he was beside himself with rage.

"Dat 'ulking brute -- dat 'uge German beast -- I tol' you 'e should 'ave wan beeg t'rashin'!" he said, flashing his dark French eyes.

It was a sentiment which Paul was to warmly share with him many times.

CHAPTER 3.

The summer that Paul was eleven he was as usual shocked and surprised to discover that he had been admitted into sixth grade, into the room of Miss Eddy, the principal of Ridge Street School. "I passed, Mom, I passed!" he shouted, waving his "promotion card" that fine June day. But he was even more gratified at this evidence of advancing manhood. Paul was anxious to grow up for three reasons: He wanted to be able to play with his older brothers; he wanted to be a big, strong man like Oliver; and he wanted to be a great writer like James Oliver Curwood.

There seemed little prospect that any of these ambitions would soon be realized. Paul was a gangling, big-eyed youngster, small-boned like Belle, and his thin arms and spindly legs, in their corduroy knickerbockers, looked like the stems of old Pat Lyons' clay pipes. He also had weak kidneys, and still occasionally wet the bed at night, a condition which Belle ruefully lay, like the indictments in his school books, to his early bout with alcohol. Belle sought to use him as a walking laboratory for her latest health concoctions -- "Mother's got to put some flesh on your poor little bones, son" -- and she once even tried to persuade Oliver to buy a goat. She had just read an illustrated newspaper account in "The Iron Ore" of a 115-year-old Turk who had got that way from drinking and eating vast quantities of goat's milk and cheese. After studying the picture of the venerable Turk, Paul was for once humbly grateful to hear his father's thunderous no.

"You read too much, son," Belle would say to him constantly, and it was probably true. Too much, that is, but not always too well. Long ago Paul had read all of the Brownie Books, the Billy Whiskers series, and every book of fairy tales in the Chippewa Carnegie Library. "Andrew Carnegie's library!" Oliver would roll his eyes and shout, being a slavish admirer of Teddy Roosevelt and his big stick. "Out of all the millions of tons of ore he took out of this bloody town, that's the only goddam thing he ever sent back!"

Paul had romped through Horatio Alger until he thought that some special destiny lay ahead for his little schoolmates who wore a certain kind of clothes -- clothes that were "threadbare but clean and neatly patched." Poverty became the golden spring from which all ambition flowed... His shabby schoolmates, Paul concluded, were all hellbent for marrying the boss's daughter and getting elected to Congress -- a prospect which even then left Paul quite cold. Then had come the saga of Tom Swift and his adventures with miscellaneous giants, fantastic inventions and infernal machines, which ran into many volumes. Nor did the groaning library shelves devoted to the checkered boyhood of the Rover Boys escape him -- Dick, Tom and Sam Rover. Serious-minded Dick was the oldest, and timelessly in love -- in a pure, Eagle Scout sort of way -- with a curiously sexless creature named Dora Stanhope. The brothers Rover and little Dora were constantly being harried and badgered by the diabolical machinations of a bully called Dan Baxter, ably assisted by a "toady" whose name had finally escaped Paul. There were so many...

Paul waded through the opium dreams of Jules Verne and a gelded version of "The Arabian Nights." Then came the thralldom of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer! Belle couldn't even get Paul to his meals during that magic time. More lately he had discovered, much to Belle's approval, the Great Out-of-doors -- "Run out and play, son -- don't read so much" -- and by turns Paul became Hopalong Cassidy, who could whirl and shoot the eye out of a gopher at seventy paces; a big game hunter on the South African veldt; then the slugging hero of "The Spoilers." He soon became a vicarious authority on all manner of cattle brands, breeds of Alaskan sled dogs, and the manifold forms of successful placer mining. Tarzan had not yet emitted his first curdling jungle shriek to a startled and expectant world.

As he read these floods of books, and many more, Paul yearned to see these far places -- and then to write about them like the gifted authors he had read. It seemed to him the ideal life: to see; to experience; and then to tell. It was easy. All one needed was a stub pencil and a Big Chief writing

tablet... James Oliver Curwood was his latest literary idol. Paul shivered with Curwood's stalwart heroes as they mushed out of the frozen North, their frosty dragon breaths trailing after them as they shouted to their faithful dogs -- racing, ever racing to get across the big Mackenzie before the spring breakup... The closest Paul had yet got to achieving the burning thrill of literary expression was a story he had written the year before in fifth grade. After considerable pencil biting he had finally entitled this effort, "Lost All Night In a Swamp With a Bear." Following that there had seemed but little to add, except possibly "gr-r-r," but Miss Welch had liked it and had even read it aloud to the class. After all, it was a start...

Paul felt that Belle was partly to blame for these incipient literary yearnings. Just two summers before she had written a scenario for the moving pictures. There was little that Paul doubted his mother could not do -- she could make the best orange sherbet in the world, run a big house full of boys, give scores and hundreds of music lessons, not to mention two recitals a year -- and even live with Oliver. And now she had added authorship to her accomplishments. It was true. Paul had actually seen her in the desperate throes of literary creation, had even hefted the heavy finished manuscript tied with blue ribbons which had been typed at night by Miss Casey, Lawyer Belden's stenographer. There was one thick copy for a breathless Hollywood, another copy for Belle, and the third for Orville.

"Orville" was Orville Trembath -- "my collaborator," Belle called him -- the son of spry, deaf little Mrs. Trembath, one of Belle's old friends and neighbors. Mrs. Trembath dyed her hair and wore the only ear trumpet Paul had ever seen. Her son Orville was an actor. He had been "in stock" and was home "resting between engagements." He was a pallid, languid young man, with dark patches under his eyes, who reminded Paul of a picture of the man who shot Lincoln which he had seen in Leslie's Magazine Yearbook. Paul never warmed up very much to Orville. And he had finally been insulted by him.

* * *

Paul had been swimming all afternoon out at distant Cooper Lake. The walk home had been hot and dusty. He was late for supper and he was hungry. His brothers were even later than he. Of course they all knew that Oliver was out at the South Camp on another of his endless fishing trips. Paul ran in on the side porch into the dining-room. There was no supper on the table. It was Thursday, the hired girl's afternoon out. "Mom must be having one of her sick spells," Paul thought. It was quiet in the big house and smelled of freshly baked cookies. Paul peered anxiously into the front rooms. There were Belle and Orville. Belle sat at her high secretary in the parlor writing furiously. Sheets of paper lay scattered on the parlor rug. A slanting shaft of light from the sinking sun poured upon the parlor floor. Orville had maneuvered himself into this glow of dusty light, holding the precious script in his hands. He cleared his throat. Belle stopped writing and removed her nose glasses. She sat looking dreamily out the side window at Lindstroms' woodpile. Orville's hands were trembling, he began to speak, his voice was low and vibrant, like Reverend Hayward's at the Presbyterian Church. On and on he read. Paul was held, fascinated, caught in a fiend's clutch. He was witnessing the birth of Literature. Orville paused, glanced down, and shifted with the sun. He had come to <u>the part</u>:

> "(Old Doctor Simpson removes his stethoscope and gently pulls the white sheet over little Ella's still, white face. He turns to Ella's weeping mother, throws out one hand and bows his head.)
>
> "(Caption) 'Mrs. Worthington -- this is the end -- little Ella's suffering is finally -- --'"

At this point Paul shouted, "Ma, I'm awful hungry -- please give me something to eat!" As a matter of fact Paul had quite lost his appetite, but some irresistible impulse had compelled him to speak.

Orville wheeled on Paul -- Orville never executed mere turns -- and looked at him, slowly, scornfully, up and down. There was a pregnant pause.

"Listen, kiddo," he finally said, " -- go peddle your papers!" Then he turned abruptly on his heel. Paul waited for a curtain to drop. Instead Belle had dropped everything and rushed out to the kitchen. Paul saw that her fingers were stained with ink. She had a smudge on her cheek. She had given Paul a fine supper, one of her magical suppers, with not a single one of her health recipes in it -- a supper topped off by fresh cookies and toast and tea and her own grape marmalade. As he lazily ate, Paul reflected disloyally that perhaps Belle might be a better cook than she was a writer.

The death of little Ella had had to wait... In fact as far as Hollywood seemed concerned this particular Ella seemed destined to live to a ripe old age. In despair over repeated rejections Orville had finally gone back on the road. Hollywood! Hollywood was the home of the morally warped, the intellectually blighted, the artistically dead. Belle was convinced that the crafty moving picture people, full of envy and low cunning, had stolen her brain-child. After that every time she went to a picture in McNulty's Opera House in which a small child departed this life -- and the infant mortality rate in the movies of the time had reached epidemic proportions -- she would indignantly whisper "Plagiarism!" and take Paul's reluctant small hand and hurry from the place. Once she even went to see Lawyer Belden about it...

Yet these dreams of virile manhood and literary fame were fleeting and seemed far off. They could wait. Most of all Paul wanted to grow a little and be able to play with his brothers Link and Nicky and their jolly companions. His brothers and their friends always did such wonderful things: Building shacks in the woods for the "gang"; or making big, greenish, foul-smelling wet-cell batteries to run their telegraph sets; or selling magazines to all their parents' friends to win some big prize, just as illustrated: a new bat and catcher's glove or an erector set or a magic lantern; or giving carnivals

and circuses at which they sold lemonade; or perhaps gathering and selling empty whiskey bottles back to the saloons -- four cents for quarts, two cents for pints... But grow as he might (and Paul was nearly as tall as Nicky, who was fifteen), his brothers always kept ahead of him. And they didn't seem to want him around. Nicky was the worst. Link was rarely gruff with Paul, and sometimes tolerantly let him tag along when the gang went swimming. But Nicky, two years younger than Link, was jealous of his seniority over Paul. Nicky used all sorts of clever ruses to get rid of Paul. All of them did. Paul had lately guessed that the gang did not really want him. "That's it," Paul bitterly thought, "they don't want me." It was always the same.

School was to open in just a few weeks. Link and Nicky and the Cooley boys and Dick Crabbe were going out to Fire Center near the Big Dead river to tent for a week and pick blueberries. Paul wanted to go. Belle had finally said he could if it was all right with Oliver. It was all right with Oliver -- "I'll be glad to get the lazy whelps out of my sight!" -- but Paul didn't go berrying at Fire Center.

"Listen, Mom," Paul had come in and overheard Nicky pleading with Belle. They were in the sitting room. Belle was sitting in her rocker by the window to the left of the tall mirror. Paul quietly breathed through his mouth and stood by the dining-room stove and listened. "Listen, Mom, please don't make us take Polly along. Please!" Nicky was saying. "He'll spoil it all. Mrs. Cooley don't make us lug Edgerton all over. Dick Crabbe's Ma don't make us nursemaids for Donny. Why don't he play with the kids his own age?"

"The word is 'doesn't'," Belle said. Paul could hear her rocker creaking.

"Anyway, Mom," Nicky ran on hopefully, shrewdly trading on Belle's concern for "her baby," "there's bears out there -- big, black bears!"

Paul quietly leaned and peered and saw Belle purse her lips to keep from smiling. "Well, Nicholas, if that's the case maybe it's too dangerous to let any of you go -- don't you think?"

"No, no, Mom -- they ain't that bad -- the bears, I mean," Nicky said. "It's just -- you know he's scared of the dark -- it's just that Polly will get lonesome at night and bawl. And he'll -- he'll pee all over the bedding -- oh, can't you see, Mom!"

Paul tiptoed out to the kitchen, and slipped out the back door, letting the screen door gently close. His ears were hot, his cheeks were flaming. He walked over and sat on the clothesreel platform, dangling his legs, back and forth. His corduroy trousers made a noise as they rubbed at the knees. His thoughts were racing, his heart was filled with bitterness. "They don't want me. They don't like me. Nobody likes me. I'm a stranger in this house. I'm not even their child... They found me one morning when I was a baby -- lying on the back porch... Maybe my father was a famous author passing through Chippewa on his way to Alaska. But they won't tell me -- they're keeping it from me. I might as well run away... Nobody wants me... I don't belong here -- --"

"Why don't you run and skip and play, son?"

It was Belle; she had come out and was standing on the back porch smiling at him. She was forever trying to make a bounding little faun out of him. "Go bounce your ball off the roof. Don't sit there dreaming to yourself."

Paul sat watching his mother. She was smiling at him, making eager little nods. She was wearing a house dress -- it was cleaning day -- and had neglected to put on the false corset thing she usually wore after her first operation -- when her breast had been removed. The left side of her chest was flat like a man's. Paul looked away. He saw an ant rapidly carrying a dead fly towards the clothesreel. The fly was twice as big as the ant.

"I was just thinking, Mom," Paul slowly said. "I was just thinking that I don't want to go berry picking." Paul watched his thin legs as they kicked back and forth. "I was just thinking it was a lot more fun staying at home."

Paul looked up at his mother. Belle stood on the back porch smiling brightly and still nodding at him, with her head slightly tilted. A long dimple showed in her right cheek. "I've got the same dimple in my cheek," Paul thought. "Everybody says I look like Mom. I'm really her son. They didn't find me on the back porch."

"Listen, son, your father's out at camp -- he won't know," Belle said. "Do you want to take his field glasses and go out on Pilot Knob?"

Paul leapt off the clothesreel and ran towards his mother. "Oh, Mama, can I really take Oliver's field glasses?" Oliver's imported, German-made binoculars were among his most cherished possessions -- like all of his fishing and hunting equipment -- and high on the long list of the Biegler boys' taboos. Mama must be in a fine mood today. He and Mama were conspirators. The old man's field glasses! Who the hell wanted to go picking blueberries, anyway?

CHAPTER 4.

Paul the Explorer walked west on Hematite Street carrying Oliver's field glasses in their frayed leather case carelessly slung over his shoulder, hanging from a thin leather strap. Oliver used the glasses mostly for deer hunting. Paul held himself straight as he walked, and kept sighting the sun for direction, ever on the alert for signs of danger. This was all in a manner that was becoming to one of the early explorers of the U. P. For he was really Douglass Houghton, the young geologist, searching for ore deposits. It was the summer of 1841 and great numbers of passenger pigeons whirred overhead. Anyway, there were seven. Poor birds, little did they know that they were doomed to early extinction. Alas! Paul and Audubon knew, but they didn't... Paul walked along with an odd, shuffling gait, keeping his feet close together and pointed straight ahead, even a little pigeon-toed. For the woods-wise Indians always walked that way. It was kind of hard to do, but you were supposed not to tire so quickly.

Two blocks west of his house Paul came to the east boundary of the large Blueberry Mine property. It was the largest iron mine in Chippewa. Everything about the mine shone a dull red from the ore. Even the leaves of the scraggly poplars seemed stained with ore. This was before landscaping formed a part of industrial budgets. The nearest towering shafthouse, which enclosed the skips and cages which transported the men and ore from far underground, stood near the west end of Blueberry Hill and loomed high above the neighborhood, dwarfing the surrounding houses. Its twin tower rose west of it, nearly a quarter of a mile away. These were evidently some of the old Indian mine workings he had heard about, Paul thought. He heard a great rumbling sound from the shafthouse of falling fresh ore being dumped from the ore chutes into the crusher cars. He nodded wisely. Some old Indians must be still pottering about, Paul concluded. He must remember to make field notes of this phenomenon...

At the top of the hill, on the corner of Ridge and Lake Streets, stood a little frame house literally in the shadow of the great shafthouse. One of his playmates, Bernard Redmond, lived there. His father, Dennis, was a

cigarmaker and also the esteemed treasurer of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Bernie had told Paul so. Bernie was an altar boy in the Catholic church. Paul studied Bernie's house. This must be the crude log home of an early pioneer, he thought. I will stop and ask my directions and perchance quench my thirst. Ah yes -- maybe one of the male members can be persuaded to guide me. After all, a man of Douglass Houghton's ability didn't mope around in the woods all alone.

Mrs. Redmond came to the kitchen door, holding a broom which had a dusting cloth tied around the straw. She was a plump, near-sighted, motherly little woman who wore thick, gold-rimmed spectacles. Behind her Paul could see a small statue of the Virgin Mary and an alarm clock standing on the kitchen shelf.

"Is the head of the house in, Ma'am?" Paul asked, casually shifting Oliver's binoculars to the front.

"Hello, Polly. Why ~~Jerry's~~ Dinny's down at the cigar shop. If there's anything I can do..."

Paul had to be very patient with these backwoods people. "Are there any other male members of your household at home?"

Mrs. Redmond peered at him anxiously through her thick spectacles. Then she smiled at Paul. She wasn't quite sure just what the game was, but she would try to play it -- after all, she had three children of her own...

"Well, perhaps -- now perhaps if you will tell me --," she began.

"I'm looking for someone to guide me to Pilot Knob, Madam. I'll make it well worth his while," said Paul.

Paul saw that this simple, good-hearted pioneer woman was crushed. She pursed her lips like Belle. "I'm so sorry," she said. "My son is assisting his father to harvest the tobacco." Paul knew this meant that Bernie was helping his old man strip tobacco leaves down at the musty old cigar shop on Pearl Street. "The Indians around here are great smokers, you know," she added, nodding her head earnestly. "Great smokers!"

Paul bowed his head. "I'm sorry if I have disturbed you, Madam," he said with quiet dignity. "I shall proceed on my way alone." He turned to go.

Little Mrs. Redmond was getting into the spirit of the thing. She stepped out in the stormshed, still carrying her broom, and motioned to Paul to follow her. Out on the sidewalk she stood and pointed her broom handle north.

"You see that there lake down at the end of this road there?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

"Well sir, that's Lake Bancroft -- named after an old Indian chief," Mrs. Redmond said. "You wouldn't of guessed it -- few do -- but that's a typical Chippewa Indian name -- like Sussex or Yorkshire -- or even Dublin."

"Why, Mrs. Red -- why Madam, that is indeed a -- a surprise," Paul said.

"Yes, isn't it? And do you see that there high rocky bluff just on the other side of it?" she went on, pointing.

"Yes, Ma'am," Paul said in a small voice.

"Well that's your Pilot Knob -- so get along with you." She was smiling as she patted him on the shoulder, giving him a gentle push. "Get on with you, Polly. I've got my cleaning to finish. You're a worse pixey than my Bernie -- and he's bad enough, the Lord knows."

"Thank you, Mrs. Redmond," Paul said, smiling. His smile was a trifle wan. "Please tell Bernie I was looking for him -- tell him I had got hold of my father's field glasses. I'll try to get out and come up and see him tonight -- my father's out at camp, you see."

Paul started to walk down Lake Street. He walked rapidly, then he broke into a run. As he turned, running, into the mine road which ran around the lake, he looked over his shoulder. The hospitable old pioneer woman was still standing on the path looking at him, holding her trusty musket. A kindly soul she was, Paul thought -- the stuff from which a great America was being forged... She waved her hand at him and turned toward her lonely

wilderness home. Paul waved at her, still running, as he darted out of view by the side of the long one-story brick mine dry, where the miners changed to and from their ore reddened mine clothes and bathed their ore-reddened bodies. Looking, Paul almost ran into a walking miner carrying his shiny "Lisk" dinner pail. "Looking out vare you be running," the big miner said, smiling at Paul. As he ran on Paul reflected that if he didn't know his Indians so well he would have sworn this one had a Finnish accent.

Pilot Knob was a steep bald bluff, with a sheer drop of cliff on the lake side, composed largely of low-grade iron-bearing rock. It was one of the highest points in Chippewa and Paul could see for miles in any direction as he stood looking through Oliver's field glasses. Despite his temporary rebuff, he was Douglass Houghton again -- cool, calm, and collected -- once again a dispassionate man of science making careful mental notes.

Paul studied the towers of the twin shafthouses of the Blueberry mine which rose like narrow ancient pyramids on the hill south of him. Between the two shafthouses stood the tall ore crusher, connected to each shafthouse by a narrow trestled railway. As one loaded dump-car of raw ore emerged from the bottom of the shafthouse onto the trestle, another ore car would just be leaving the crusher from the other side to get a new load from the opposite shafthouse. The two cars were connected by steel cables. This went on, hour after hour, day after day. "First one ant went and got a grain of sand, and then another ant went and got another grain of sand..." had run the endless story in the fairy tale. There were the little cars now, looking strangely like the train set Paul used to play with in his sandpile under the clothesreel...

Paul could see the slate roof of the Ridge Street school which stood on the top of Blueberry Hill. As he looked Paul could fleetingly smell the familiar school odor of varnished desks, the geraniums on the window-sills, and the red powdered stuff the janitor used to sweep the floors with after school. Paul knew his house lay at the bottom of the hill, among the tall

trees somewhere below the school. Belle would be there, working with the hired girl, finishing up her cleaning. Far, far south and east Paul could even make out the tall ski scaffold on Suicide Hill where they held the ski jumps each Washington's Birthday. A portion of Iron Cliffs drive skirted the ski hill. Oliver had asked Belle to marry him as they drove around the Iron Cliffs drive... Turning north and east Paul could see little but woods and hills and trees, beyond which lay a bright mountain of dumpling clouds marking Lake Superior. West of Paul sprawled the wide farming valley through which flowed the Chippewa River. Everything looked so trim and neat, divided into little squares by the fences of the Finnish farmers. Paul could even see their cribbed, ventilated haybarns and log "saunas" or steambaths, just as they built them in Finland. And everywhere he looked, it seemed, were the tall smokestacks and shafthouses and red stock piles of the iron mines...

The town lay in a broad, undulant valley between serpentine chains of ancient iron bluffs. Some of these bluffs were covered with thick maple groves which flamed into color each fall, but most of the hills near town were virtually bald save for low bushes and occasional patches of gnarled, wind-scarred pines. So irregular was the topography of the country that some of these hills erupted in the town itself, giving it Badger Hill and Grammar School Hill and Blueberry Hill, among many others. Paul was now standing on Pilot Knob, one of the tallest bluffs of all. He could see the clock on the Grammar school tower. It was nearing six o'clock.

In truth, the town was just one hill after the other, in turn surrounded by still more hills. With boyish acceptance, Paul had once charitably ascribed this pleasant circumstance to the concern of the town's planners for their children's coasting and skiing fun. That was before he had heard Oliver's dilations on "that goddam greedy Wall Street Scotchman," meaning, of course, Andrew Carnegie, the Steel King. It seemed that the town had simply grown up haphazardly around the iron mines. It was all sheer accident. If the ore had instead been found under a flat plain, then Chippewa would have

been a flat plain. As Paul wrote in a fifth grade theme: "Chippewa grew up like a crazy quilt." Thinking, perhaps, that the daring originality and color of this figure might be too confusing to his teacher he had added " -- or 'growed up like Topsy.'" This distinguished bit of whimsey had garnered Paul a grade of 98 and clinched his growing conviction that one day he would become a famous writer...

The course of part of the stream of European migration to America could be roughly reconstructed in the successive settlements in the town. All of the mines had their own "locations," tiny villages within the town which had sprung up around each new mine as it had been built. Frenchtown Location lay clustered near the old, abandoned Angeline mine against the south range of hills. It was the first settlement in Chippewa. The log houses of these early settlers still sheltered the families of their descendants, most of whom were miners.

Near the old Angeline mine Paul could see the spot where his Grandfather Nicholas' first brewery had stood; the wooden one that had been built by his grandfather before Oliver had been born, even long before the Civil War, shortly after Grandpa Biegler and his young bride had completed their long trek across the Peninsula by ox team. This first brewery had been destroyed by fire in the summer of '72. The new brick brewery had not been built till '81. In the meantime there had been a panic or something, Belle had said. Belle knew more about the town's history than Oliver did. Belle seemed to know everything. Paul could not see the new brewery, but he knew it was there by the old firehall, whose bell tower he could see. The last brewery now housed the horses and shiny carriages of Burke's livery stable.

Swedetown Location lay clustered around the Blueberry mine, and part of it reached the foot of the hill upon which Paul stood. Then the coming of the Nelson mine gave Chippewa Cornishtown Location. In the late 80's and early 90's the advent of the Trembath mine on the eastern outskirts brought Finn Town, and the Laughlin mine on the west finally flowered into "Little

Italy" or "Dago Town." When you asked a boy where he lived he did not say Chippewa, but "Swedetown" or whatever location it was. The rest of the town represented a gradual, inching junction between the various mining locations. Paul lived in one of these twilight zones, but his house was closest to Swedetown. For some obscure reason, the residents on Paul's street were composed largely of Irish and Germans.

The Irish had early settled in the town, coming in large numbers, but, like the relatively few German and Scotch saloonkeepers and tradesmen, they rarely worked down in the mine but contented themselves with becoming railroad men or diamond-drill runners, or firemen in the mine boilers, or operators of the huge clanking steam shovels whose angry dragon snortings could be heard all over the town as they hoisted the raw iron ore from the mine stock piles into the string of waiting ore cars. As Paul thought of it, it occurred to him that some of these Irish even became the town's politicians and policemen.

By and by the town, with its mixed population, came to support quite a few churches. Even then Paul did not understand nor concern himself too much with the niceties of the various religious dogmas. But he did know there was no shortage of churches... There were several Scandinavian churches; two or three more Finnish churches; separate shrines for the Congregationalists and Baptists, who seemed to be composed largely of religious strays and individualists; an English Methodist church for the Cornishmen; the vine-covered Presbyterian church to which Belle firmly sent Paul to Sunday school, and which was also a sort of stray sanctuary; and the "swell" Episcopal church, which the "mining crowd" attended for their devotionals. Even the good Catholics had two churches, the Irish and Italians attending the "Irish" church, and the French worshipping in a big frame church all by themselves. Each church had a bell, and on Sundays, when the mine whistles were quiet, the town would be filled with the wild music of clanging, tumbling bells. "O come all ye faithful..."

* * *

Virtually all of Chippewa was undermined by a maze of stopes and drifts made by the burrowing miners. The actual mine diggings were so far down in the earth that the mining-company engineers had long ago assured the townspeople that there was no danger of a cave-in. Since the mining crowd seemed to live placidly enough all over the town, in "company" houses, the townspeople gradually forgot about the possibility of danger. Like Paul, most of them had never thought of it because they had never lived anywhere else. Even the dull giant thuds of blasting heard regularly each day, shuddering and reverberating far underground, gradually became so common a part of the daily round as to excite no special notice -- unless too many dishes rattled and fell in the pantry. If the dishes were broken, as they occasionally were, some of the braver and more articulate of the townspeople might write an irate taxpayer's letter to the editor of The Iron Ore. "Dear Mister Editor: The other day my Aunt Minnie's china bowl was broken..." The lion-hearted might even write to H. Hall Keith, the stern-visaged superintendent of Chippewa's biggest iron mines, who lived in a large house on the big wooded estate at the south edge of town. Paul had often stood in awed silence as the great man whirled by the Biegler house to the Blueberry mine office driven in his fine rubber-tired carriage. With his pointed beard, H. Hall Keith looked like the pictures of the reigning head of the House of Windsor. Even more so, Paul thought. Oliver, in his more charitable moods, loudly called him "Carnegie's graspin' tool!"

The town's planners, being practical ore diggers, had not gone in for conferring difficult, romantic and guttural-sounding Indian names on everything, as had so many other Michigan towns. There were available no picture postcards of quaint Michimillimackinac Hotels or romantic Ossingowanamacachoo Lakes which tourists could mail from Chippewa; just plain Taleen House or Mud Lake or Commercial Hotel or Lake Bancroft. In fact there were no tourists. At the time no efforts were made to lure other restless Americans to the

place; there was no cheering Chamber of Commerce or Chippewa First League; the town's soothing properties for hay fever had not yet been properly appreciated. The only travellers that came to Chippewa were mining people, occasional relatives of the townspeople, or single-minded hunters and fishermen. The U. P. had one of the largest deer herds in the country. And fishing... Oliver fished so much that Paul sometimes feared he was going to develop gill slits.

Paul reflected that the town was only a sort of permanent mining camp -- rich and seemingly inexhaustible, but nonetheless a mining camp. What would there be there without the mines? Nothing but the lonely woods and Lake Superior. Oliver's saloon depended on the miners, Bernie Redmond's old man made cigars for the miners -- why most of Paul's schoolmates were the sons of miners, and would themselves one day probably grow up to be miners. Was it true? Did every boy do what his father did? Would he some day wear a starched white apron and work behind Oliver's long bar? Would -- --

"Hello. Could I have a look through your binoculars?"

Paul lowered Oliver's glasses. A plump, chesty, red-headed boy dressed in a cowboy suit stood smiling at Paul. "My name's Fritz Bellows. I'm new in town. What's yours?"

Paul saw that Fritz had a broken tooth in front -- and that he smiled all the time, an engaging, wide smile that made his pale blue eyes wrinkle at the corners. He did not seem to have any eyelashes.

"My name is Paul Biegler. Yes, you can look through the glasses," Paul said. "But be awful careful -- they belong to my father."

With elaborate care Fritz took the glasses from Paul and adjusted them to his vision. Paul watched Fritz as he scanned the town. Fritz wore a leather holster, from which a nickel and black handle protruded.

"Is that a real revolver you're carrying?" Paul said.

Fritz lowered the glasses. "Sure. It's a thirty-two and loaded. Would you like to try it?"