"Sure," Paul said, eagerly. He had never shot a gun before in his life. Belle wouldn't hear of it. "What'll we shoot at?"

"See that tin can behind you? Shoot that. Here you are. All you got to do is pull the trigger."

"Yes, I know," Paul said. Paul turned and saw a small can lying on a rock about twenty paces away. His back was towards Fritz. Squinting his eyes like Hopalong Cassidy, he raised the revolver in the general direction of the can. He wanted to block his ears. "What'll I do now?" he thought. He closed his eyes and pressed the trigger. "Spang!" Paul blinked his eyes. Like the fragile and inexperienced ladies in the Sunday supplements, who always seemed to be unerringly drilling their husbands and lovers, he had made a bull's-eye.

"Why that's swell, Polly," Fritz shouted. "Right on the button! Say, you can shoot! Want to try it again?"

Paul shook his head. He swallowed. His ears were ringing. His nose wrinkled from the smell of burnt powder. He gingerly handed the revolver back to Fritz. "No thanks. I don't want to waste your bullets. Anyway, it's nearly my supper time," Paul said. "Nice little gun you've got there," he carelessly added.

Just then the mine whistles began sounding their evening call, and Fritz and Paul stood together on Pilot Knob silently listening to the great symphonic waves of sound which surged over the town, followed finally by the haunting forlorn echoes. Then it was still. It was always thus. The two boys looked at each other. Fritz spoke first. "Say, those whistles sure get me, Polly. I've never heard whistles like that before in all my life. They give me a lump in my throat -- and goose pimples, too."

Paul turned quickly to Fritz. "Do they? Do they really?" he said eagerly.

"They sure do," said Fritz.

"They do me too, Fritz. I often wondered if... I guess that's right. Let's go -- it's supper time," Paul said.

"All right, Polly. Let's go," Fritz said.

On the walk home Fritz told Paul that his father was the new jeweler that had come to town. Daddy had married a town girl, Fritz's mother, but they had never lived in Chippewa. You see, when Daddy married Mama he was an actor, an actor who had come to McNulty's Opera House with "The Mikado." That was a light opera by -- well -- by a couple of fellows. Daddy had an important part in that show and could sing the whole thing through, every one of the parts. It was a very funny opera, but Mama never liked Daddy to sing it. The show had kind of gone broke in Chippewa, but it wasn't Daddy's fault. He'd heard Mama remind Daddy about it when they quarreled. Sometimes she accused Daddy of marrying her because the show went broke. It seemed everybody's parents quarreled once in a while.

"Yes, that's so," Paul judicially agreed. He was relieved to learn that Belle and Oliver were not alone. Still and all, he thought, he'd bet that few fathers could rival Oliver in a downright family row. In the first place, few of them could shout as loud.

Fritz told Paul that his grandfather was old August Jaeger who owned the big store in town. Yes, that was the same Jaeger that lived on Hematite Street. Oh, so Grandpa and Grandma lived on the other corner on the same block as Paul -- it must be them because they were the only Jaegers in town. Yes, his Uncle Richard was the one that played the piano. Fritz guessed that Grandpa Jaeger didn't approve much of Daddy. He thought Daddy was too happy-go-lucky. He claimed Daddy never stuck at one thing long enough. Besides being an actor Daddy had also been a salesman, an optometrist, and had even taught elocution. And other things, too. He could do almost anything. Daddy also played the mandolin and guitar. Fritz was learning to play the mandolin. "Can your father play anything?" Fritz said.

Paul stopped walking and then Fritz stopped. They were standing in front of the now deserted mine dry. Paul shook his head. "No, Fritz, my old man can't play anything -- he's a saloonkeeper. He keeps a saloon." Paul watched Fritz closely.

"Why that's swell, Polly," Fritz said. "Just think -- all the ice-cold pop you want. Free. And fights -- I suppose your Dad sees lots of fights?"

"Yes. Sometimes he gets in them," Paul said. He felt an odd surge of pride. "You see, he's the -- he's one of the strongest men in the whole world. And there's a swell music box in the saloon."

"Holy smokes! Have you ever got it nice. I wish my -- I wish my old man ran a saloon and was big and strong like that. My dad is pretty strong, but he's got asthma. That's one of the reasons we moved here. Daddy wasn't very anxious to come here. He said the place was nothing but a dirty mine-stained dump. But I guess maybe it's because the opera went broke here. I like it here. I don't know many kids yet. I sure like those I've met..."

Paul and Fritz had got to the corner of the Ridge Street school. "This is going to be my new school. Do you go here?" Fritz said.

"Yes," Paul said. "I'm going into the sixth grade."

"That's great, Polly. So am I -- why, we're in the same room."

It was growing dusk. "Well, I've got to be going down this way," Paul said.

"Where do you live?"

"Down here on Hematite Street," Paul said.

"Oh yes, you told me that. Well, I live on North Main. Yup. Well -- I hope I'll see you again, Polly," Fritz said.

"Come on over," Paul said. "Any time. Say -- I wanted to ask you, Fritz -- how did you bust your tooth?"

"A billiard ball. My little brother Harold did it with a billiard ball. You ought to see my little brother Harold. If you think my hair is red... He threw it at me. We've got a pool table home. Mama says I've got to grow more before they fix it -- my tooth, I mean."

"You've really got a real pool table? At home?" Paul said.

"Sure. Come on over and we'll play on it, Polly," Fritz said.

"You bet I will," Paul said.

"Say -- there's just one thing I wanted to ask you -- you said your daddy was one of the strongest men in the world. Do you know someone stronger?" Fritz said.

Paul was silent.

"Do you?" Fritz repeated. "I was just wondering."

"Yes," Paul answered, "My oldest brother is stronger. His name is Oliver like my father. But we call him Roge. He's stronger than my old man. He really is. Roge is the strongest man in the whole world."

"Is that so. Gee, you're lucky. Well, so-long, Polly," Fritz said.

"So-long, Fritz. Come on over and see me," Paul said. "I'll show you my old man's boats and stuff. Maybe -- maybe I can even show you his saloon."

"So-long, Polly. I'm glad I saw you today."

CHAPTER 5.

At the time the war flamed over Europe there were but four of the six Biegler boys at home. The two oldest boys, Paul's half-brothers Oliver and Emmett, were working in distant Butte, Montana. Paul must have been about six or seven when his half-brothers had left Chippewa. As time went on they became, like his Detroit relatives, little more than names to him -- serious-faced young strangers (each marked with the typical Biegler cowlick, as were all of the boys) who stood gazing so mutely at Paul from the family group picture which hung obscurely on the wall next to Belle's writing desk, "the secretary," in the front parlor.

This photograph had been taken at Childs Art Gallery shortly before Belle had her second and last operation -- this time for the removal of a tumor. It was while she was away in Chicago for this operation that the two boys had fled, run away. Belle kept the family picture in the little used parlor so that Oliver would not destroy it in one of his fits of temper. She dared not actually hide it; she knew he would have raged at that, too. It was one of the many things about the Biegler home that required a nice but wearing calculation. After young Oliver and Emmett -- young men then -- had run away their names were never mentioned when Oliver was about the house. They were gone. They might have been dead. All they had left behind was Emmett's name, which he had scratched with Oliver's diamond stickpin on the glass of the kitchen door. "Welcome to the home of Emmett Biegler, age 12, Chippewa, Michigan." At the time Emmett was roundly thrashed by Oliver for this gesture of errant sentiment.

When Belle had married Oliver she had developed a deep affection for the three quiet, motherless boys. She not only washed and baked and ironed and mended for them, and nursed them when they were sick; she saw to it that they regularly attended their mother's church, the Catholic church. Swallowing her girlhood Presbyterian suspicions of the Church of Rome, she helped the boys with their catechism and with their lessons at the Convent school --

"Their poor mother would want it so" -- and later in the high school. But most of all she acted as a buffer between them and Oliver's frequent rages.

All during Paul's boyhood there hung over the Biegler home a constant pall, a dark cloud -- Oliver Biegler's temper. No one could predict when the storm would break, how long it would last, or how destructive its fury might be before it spent itself. There was but one sure storm signal: When the little blood blister on Oliver's lower lip would begin to pout and grow purple, it was time for all good mariners at 205 West Hematite Street to scurry for cover.

Paul would grow chill with terror at Oliver's outbursts. And his very insides would shudder convulsively as he watched his mother at these times. Belle's features would seem to take on a waxen pallor, a mask-like expression, to grow sharper, sort of pinched and frozen, as she tried to placate her ranting husband. Her efforts were always in vain. "Oliver, please, please, Oliver, the children -- think of the dear, innocent children!" Belle's earnest calm, her very stillness, seemed only to goad Oliver to further heights of ecstatic fury. The initial cause of the outburst would be abruptly forgotten, lost. Belle would now become the red banner that had come to torture him.

"Don't 'Oliver' me!" he would roar, turning on her, his face working and livid with rage. Belle would face him with her clear unblinking gray eyes. She was all of a foot shorter than he. "O woman, take your hateful false Dutch face out of my sight, I say!" he would howl. Then he would roll his blazing eyes up to the ceiling, the nearest Paul ever saw him approach an attitude of prayer. "Why in the name of merciful God was she -- <u>she</u>! -- ever blown into my arms during that fatal Christly storm!" This bitter allusion to their first meeting always made Belle wince, her bloodless lips would tremble ever so slightly, and Paul's heart would turn to solid stone. Paul knew -- and he sensed with dismay that his father in his rages also craftily knew -- how deep was her hurt, this trampling of her cherished romantic dream.

"This madman is my father, this madman is my father, this madman is..." Paul would murmur to himself, over and over, like a litany, as Oliver would lash himself into a purple frenzy over some trivial domestic mishap. A whole complex series of household taboos had grown up in the Biegler home to avoid and appease Oliver's wrath. Don't be late for your meals! Don't leave your sleds or coaster wagons about the yard -- put them carefully away in the woodshed or under the back stoop! Don't leave your coats and caps lying about the house! Don't disturb the old man when he is taking his nap after lunch! Don't breathe! Don't! But all these ruses and careful avoidances were of no avail; like the picture of the geyser in Paul's school geography, Oliver's temper would periodically erupt and foam over, nothing could ever seem to stop it, and that boy was fortunate who was not around... Perhaps the soup was too cold, or too hot and had scalded Oliver's sensitive tongue; or the woodbox was empty, the taxes were due; or the boys had used one of his many shotguns (reason enough), and had -- "O merciful God!" -- neglected to clean it. Or perhaps, as was most usual, one of his "worthless whelps" had done something wrong at the farm.

The Biegler farm was several miles out of town, beyond Chippewa River. This broad river had once carried Indians to Lake Superior but now it exclusively conducted the town's sewage to that restless sea. The farm lay in a broad mucky valley at the foot of the second range of rocky bluffs north of town. Oliver had purchased the land from one of the mining companies when he was a young man, and Paul suspected it pleased his father to regard himself as a gentleman farmer. Oliver had cleared and drained but a relatively small part of the land, which he planted each year in hay and oats and potatoes and truck vegetables. He cut the ice for the saloon and the house off of Cranberry pond; the firewood for the house came off the uncleared land. In her darkest hours Belle would always say: "You must give him credit, boys -- your father is always a good provider." This oft-repeated plea would be greeted with cynical snorts. "That's right -- give the devil his due, Mom!" Belle was ever generous

in extending credit to Oliver. With pathetic eagerness she seized upon anything which she thought might put him in a better light with his sons.

In the course of the years Oliver had acquired quite a complete farm, as farms went in and around Chippewa. The long, bitter winters, the short growing seasons, discouraged all but the most hardy farmers. "How many bushels of icicles did you grow on the farm last winter, Oliver?" some brave soul might ask Oliver, in the saloon. Oliver would give the foolhardy wag a brief, cold-blue stare, and that would be the end of that brief exchange of conversational punts. Oliver always had several Jersey milk cows, from whose yellow cream Belle made rich butter and heavenly orange sherbet. Paul had served his apprenticeship turning the big ice- and salt-packed freezer on the back stoop. Oliver kept at least one work team and a team of fast-stepping driving horses, and a single horse which was used for the daily trips to and from the farm and for Oliver's shorter camping trips. (Even the old house itself seemed to join in the general sigh of relief that went up when Oliver went to the woods.) Then there was the inevitable herd of drooping, nondescript nags and plugs which Oliver maintained solely, as far as Belle and the boys could see, so that he might trade them for still other nags.

Paul had never forgotten the time he had stood by the Miners' Bank waiting for his father to come home from the saloon for lunch. Oliver stood on the curb deep in a conversation with old one-eyed LeMay, trumpeting in his ear, extolling the virtues of some spavined nag he was trying to sell the crafty old Frenchman. At this inopportune moment Matti Kauppila, a Finn farmer who lived out by the Big Dead river, came down the busy Main Street in a lurching buckboard drawn by a shaggy beast called Charlie. The poor horse was obviously suffering from the "heaves," the horseman's picturesque name for consumption. Even Paul could see that. Matti had got the horse in a trade with Oliver the week before.

Matti spied Oliver talking to old LeMay. He pulled up the tottering horse -- "Whoa, Sarlie!" -- and pointed a gnarled, work-soiled finger accusingly at Oliver.

"Oleever," he shouted, " -- dat horse you sell for me las' veek -- he's to be dat heevy horse!" The benighted animal stood there in front of Oliver and old LeMay, swaying and wheezing horribly. But Oliver knew old LeMay's hearing and eyesight were not what they used to be.

"Oh, hello Matti," Oliver said pleasantly, smiling and nodding and stepping off the curb. Oliver's delight was unbounded. He raised one big hand as though in greeting -- then brought it down smartly on the beast's sagging rump, genially shouting, "Yes, Matti -- he's a nice, big heavy horse. I'm glad you like him so well -- Say, what's your hurry! Well solong, Matti..."

Whenever Paul would awaken in the night to the sound of galloping hooves, and hear his father's muffled curses as he lit the breathing gas lamp in his bedroom to route the older boys, he knew that the neighbors were resentfully awake, whispering, "That Oliver Biegler's horses have broken loose and come to town again. There ought to be a law!" As regularly as Oliver's fits of temper, the horses would break out and race wildly into town, past the house, and on to Oliver's town barn. They always followed the same route. Oliver's barn stood in the block east of the house, next to the Taleen House. The horses would be led there by oat-craving Fred or Chief, one or the other of the big white work horses.

Milling and neighing and biting each other, all the horses would gather in the barnyard, between the barn at the rear and Oliver's "warehouse" which faced on Canada Street. The two-story warehouse had been built by Paul's grandfather for beer storage. It now housed Oliver's fringed, rubber-tired carriage and buggy and cutters and sleighs, and his boats and canoes and

tools -- even an old racing sulky... By and by one or two of the older boys would come down to the barnyard and light a lantern. Oblivious to Gust Taleen's awakened and cursing boarders, they would sleepily round up one of the leaders with a pail of oats. Then they would leap upon Fred or Chief, bareback, and thunder all of them back to the farm and lock them in the big farm barn until the broken fence could be found and mended the next day.

When his older boys were smaller, Oliver used to keep a hired man or two on the farm to do the chores. But as young Oliver and Emmett and Greg graduated into their teens, they also found that they had graduated into hired men on the farm -- hired, that is, but never paid. Oliver even tried to take them out of school. "When I was a boy of twelve I was through school and could load a beer car alone in one day!" This was a familiar refrain, this harking back to the days when Grandpa Nicholas Biegler had run the brewery. Men seemed to have worked regularly twenty-five hours a day in those days, Paul concluded. Belle, in her quiet way, fiercely fought Oliver's efforts to take the boys out of school.

The second year young Oliver had worked on the farm, he was just fifteen. He was a silent, short, broad, thick-wristed boy, with curly, bushy black Irish hair, but which had the usual Biegler cowlick. Even then he was as strong as the average grown man. His playmates had already nicknamed him "Rajah" for Barnum's successor to Jumbo. "Ladees and gentlemen: Rajah -- the biggest elephant in the world -- four inches taller than Jumbo!" Except for his age and lack of whiskers Paul concluded that young Oliver was the exact duplicate of Paul's short, barrel-bodied German grandfather, mild Nicholas, whose large velvet-framed picture hung so squarely and uncompromisingly from the sitting-room wall. His brothers and playmates called him "Roge" for short.

This second summer on the farm for young Roge was one of the high points in his father's epic rages. The farm was so low and swampy that it had to be ditched to drain it. One summer day one of the driving horses had gone to the main ditch to get a drink. Maude, a spanking, high-spirited bay. Her trim

forelegs had sunk in the treacherous peat, and the doomed animal had evidently leapt to free herself and had only managed to land in the deepest hole in the ditch. Young Roge was alone on the farm, milking the cows. He had run out of the barn when he had heard the frantic screams of the drowning animal. He raced across the lumpy damp fields but when he got up to the ditch only the tail of the stricken animal, like Ophelia's hair, could be seen floating on top of the turgid water.

Paul must have been so young that he was in his crib when Roge reported the loss of Maude to Oliver at the hushed supper table. Paul was awakened and lay cowering, listening to the frightful noises and shouts downstairs, and his mother's mingled screams, "You've killed him! O, you've killed him!" Oliver had beaten the boy nearly into unconsciousness and had pushed him down the cellar stairs. Later that night Belle had come and tearfully gathered Paul into her arms and taken him, and all the boys, to the Taleen House. This old schoolhouse-red brick hotel faced the Northwestern tracks and was run by Gustav and Sophia Taleen, the parents of Paul's boyhood playmate, Gunnar Taleen. There Belle and the boys had remained for a week. Belle went to see a lawyer about a divorce. He was drawing the necessary papers...

Oliver was full of contrition and self-abasement. He haunted the Taleen House, sending sheaves and sprays of flowers to Belle, and bringing extravagant gifts for all the boys. Paul got a crying teddy bear as his share of the loot, and wistfully thought Belle should do this more often. Paul had a shadowy picture of his father, on his knees before Belle, in a strange high bedroom, denouncing himself as roundly as he usually denounced others; pleading, promising, cajoling. Belle sat in a creaking rocking-chair. "Think of the children, the poor children," Oliver had mistakenly said. Waxen-faced, Belle had turned on him a look of infinite scorn. "I am, Oliver -- my God, I'm doing just that..."

But Belle had gone back, and there was a period of strange calm in the Biegler house. This creaking stillness reminded Paul of the time Belle had

carried him up Blueberry Hill to the Donovan House to look at Kate Donovan lying so white and still on a high couch, surrounded by tall lighted candles and flowers... Paul almost missed the shouted curses and wild tumult. Then by and by it had all started again, and the old frame house resumed the uneven tenor of its ways -- rang once again with the familiar shouts and mingled cries and wild curses. "O merciful God! O false-faced woman!"

Belle was in Chicago again recovering from her second operation. "I have been blessed with another fine doctor," she had written, "a poet with a medical degree -- young Doctor Max Thorek." This time Grandma Fraleigh was unable to come up from Detroit, and the boys, being older, had been left to the indifferent attentions of Amanda, the large Swedish hired girl. Amanda had her hands full, trying to take care of the big house as well as the amorous attentions of a big miner called Axel.

Paul was now regularly attending the Ridge Street school and had written Belle in his childish rounded scrawl:

"Dear Mama:

I am a good little boy. I am glad you are well again. Come home soon. Don't forget my button shoes and the popgun -- the kind with a cork in it. There was a big fite and Roge and Emmett have gone away. Hurry home. I am a good little boy.

Your son,
Paul.

I love you, Mama. Don't forget the button shoes and the popgun."

Belle had sent a frantic telegram to Oliver. What had happened? "I kicked the ungrateful whelps out," he had replied. His account was not strictly accurate.

* * *

It was supper time. Outside it was dark, a windy fall night. Oliver and five of the boys were seated around the long dining-room table. There was one empty place -- the chair of Lincoln, the quiet one; he was late. Paul sat in his junior high chair, as usual on his father's left, next to the chimney-sighing dining-room stove. Paul could smell cloves on his father's breath. With her bounding grace, red-faced Amanda had brought in the boiled dinner, and Oliver and the boys were eating in stony silence. Devoutly all of the boys wished that Lincoln would stay away until Oliver had finished supper and returned to the saloon. Then there was the familiar click of the kitchen door, the rattle of the loose pane, the whish of clothing carefully hung on the rack over the woodbox, and Lincoln slipped into his seat at the table, his gray eyes fixed on his empty plate.

With terrible calm Oliver turned and glanced up at the old Seth Thomas clock. His lower lip began to pout, the blister on it turned a mottled dark purple. The boys had given up any pretense of eating. Their food gagged them. They simply sat and waited. Biegler-wise Amanda had quietly locked herself in her bedroom off the kitchen. "Ay vill marry Axel nex' veek!" Paul heard the inside door lock of her bedroom softly click. The tenseness had whipped his perceptions to an uncanny acuteness. The boys waited for Oliver to speak. Or was this to be one of those awful silent scenes? Paul sat in an agony of awareness of impending disaster. Here -- it was coming...

Oliver had put down his knife and fork so that they slanted off the edge of his plate. With his big hands he pushed his chair back and circled the table. He stood over abject, numbed Lincoln. Paul held his breath, his throat was dry and constricted, he wanted to swallow. Then Oliver raised his hand and struck Lincoln flush on the face with the back of his hand. Lincoln reeled from the blow, then recovered and looked up swiftly, briefly, at Paul. Their eyes flickered in mute misery -- there had always been an inarticulate bond between them. Lincoln's cheek had turned a patchy greenish-white pallor

where he had been struck. Oliver raised his hand to strike the boy again. ~~Frederic~~ Lincoln hunched himself, waiting for the blow. Paul closed his wet eyes. The blow did not fall.

"Don't do that, Pa." It was Roge, young Oliver, speaking in his low, nasal voice. He was over twenty, now, a grown man. He had his own mug and shaved regularly.

"Who's going to stop me!" Oliver turned on Roge with a deadly calm.

"I am." Roge had risen and moved quickly before his father. "I am, Pa," he repeated.

Oliver's mouth twitched loosely with incredulous rage. He raised the great beam of his arm to brush this rebellious vision from his maddened sight. Young Oliver reached out his short right arm, his thick blunt fist gathered in the lapels of Oliver's coat, twisting, high up at the throat. Slowly, implacably he pushed and lifted his father back against the stair wall, next to the stove, holding him out with one knotted, straining arm. The other boys slowly turned and watched as in a dream. Oliver's long arms flailed wildly at his son, he kicked with his legs, his eyes rolled up in his head, glaring insanely; he grated his teeth, he gurgled and foamed, he muttered horrible, guttural curses...

But there was the miracle, the immutable fact: young Oliver held his father nailed against the wall. "Cool off, Pa," he said in his low voice, occasionally relaxing his grip so that Oliver could take a rasping breath. "Calm down, Pa. ~~Freddy~~ Link didn't do nothing." Thus spake Rajah, "the biggest elephant in the world -- four inches taller than Jumbo!" Paul knew at that time, in that frozen instant, that young Oliver could easily have killed his father.

Paul sat in his high chair chilled with ripples of goose pimples, gripped in an icy trance. The scene, in all its nightmare reality, was being irrevocably scarred upon his memory with hissing irons. His mind and heart surged with a shuttling rush of wild thoughts and emotions... His father, the

man who regularly pitched drunken miners and lumberjacks into the middle of Main Street -- his father, the strongest man in the world, had been vanquished! The tiger and the bear... Good for you, Roge old boy -- give it to him, give it to him! Why don't you knock his bloody block off, Roge? Why don't you? Now's your chance, boy! Have you forgotten all the times he used to beat you? Have you? Don't you remember when he threw you down the cellar stairs? You can't forget! You can't, you can't, you can't forget! Give it to him! Don't -- you're killing him! Good! I'll wear my new button shoes at his funeral -- I'm glad poor Mama isn't here -- I wish I had my popgun -- I'd shoot him! -- Where are the heroes of yesteryear? -- O God, I never thought anyone could do the old man...

The next day Amanda had found a scribbled note on Emmett's and young Oliver's undisturbed bed:

"Goodbye, kids. We're heading West. Give
our love to Mom -- she was sure swell to us.

Emmett
Roge."

CHAPTER 6.

The day that Paul had been once again rebuffed by his brothers, when they had not wanted him to go berrying with them, was also the day that he had met Fritz Bellows on Pilot Knob. In some way, which even Paul could not understand, it had marked a turning point in his boyhood. He could not recall that he had made any solemn resolutions or sworn any rebellious oaths. In fact, he could not remember that he had given the occasion any particular thought. There seemed only that some vague instinct had been awakened which told him that he should become more self-sufficient, that he must not depend so much on other people, on his brothers, even on Belle...

Anyway, wasn't Belle always telling him he must "stand up for himself" -- ever since the time three years before when Danny Gaynor had called Paul a "dirty saloonkeeper's son" and given him a black eye and sent him home crying? Belle had raised a terrible rumpus, and had twice gone and seen Mrs. Gaynor. Little Mrs. Gaynor had five boys of her own and the two women had finally wound up crying in each other's arms. Paul was filled with shame... The following summer Danny had kept his hand in by again beating up on Paul. It was beginning to look like an annual event. The last time Paul had told Belle he had fallen off Jaeger's barn while playing "chase." Paul had never fought Danny back. He had simply stood in a spell of sick horror while Danny pummelled him until he grew tired. What was the use? Danny's father worked at the firehall and was an ex-boxer. He gave all of his sons boxing lessons, standing them on a chair to beat the firemen's punching bag. Paul had enviously watched the Gaynor boys train. Danny even travelled about the Peninsula, fighting other youngsters at the annual firemen's tournaments. "Danny Gaynor, the pride of Chippewa," one of the placards had read. It hung by the punching bag in the firehall. So what was the use?

Paul had slept in Belle's big wooden bed with her until he was nearly eight. After that he had occupied a small cot in her bedroom. It was a pleasant room, full of heavy varnished furniture, the largest bedroom in the

house, and looked out on the tall Lombardy poplar trees which lined the side yard. For eleven years Grandma Fraleigh's sweet Scotch face had watched him from her picture on the wall. There was another smaller picture of Grandma, Belle and Paul on Belle's dresser. Paul had curls and wore a white dress. But Paul wanted to get out of his mother's room. It had grown hateful to him. He did not know exactly why. He loved Mama as much as ever. He only knew that it had become terribly important that he move his bed. He could not seem to be able to bring himself to speak to Belle about it.

It was November. School had reopened in September and Paul was comfortably situated in the A class of sixth grade. This was in Miss Eddy's room on the second floor, just over first grade. Fritz Bellows sat two seats ahead of Paul in the same row. Elizabeth Gluyas, a lame Cornish girl, sat between them. She was a quiet, dark-eyed girl, with heavy dark eyebrows, who wore large bow ribbons in her thick braided hair. She also passed notes between Paul and Fritz. Bernie Redmond, the cigar-maker's son, was also in the sixth grade, but he attended the Convent school across the tracks by the new firehall. Gunnar Taleen had moved up to the Grammar school, in seventh grade. Bernie and Gunnar had not yet met Paul's new friend, Fritz. Paul hoped they would like each other. Miss Eddy was writing in Palmer method on the front blackboard. "Abou Ben Adhem, may his tribe increase..." The class was learning the fruits of Ben Adhem's rectitude. Paul and Fritz already knew the bawdy parody.

Paul passed a note to Elizabeth for Fritz. He saw Elizabeth's small ears flush with excitement as she timidly touched Fritz's shoulder with her index finger. Fritz casually itched his back and took the message.

"Dear Fritz (the note read):

Where do you sleep at home? With your brothers? How long with your mother? Please give full information and oblige. This is extra secret.

Your friend,
X x X"

The elaborate series of X's was to confuse and confound Miss Eddy and whatever other uninitiates whose hands might profane their communications. Paul and Fritz were working out an elaborate code, but they had not yet completed it. Paul waited for Fritz's answer. Here it was coming, in another series of itchy backs.

"Dear Polly --

With my brother Kenny as long as I can remember. Harold sleeps in a cot. Mother and Dad have twin beds. How about you?

Your friend,
O o O"

After school Paul avoided Fritz and ran home. Belle was at the piano giving a music lesson to an unhappy child who seemed to lack even a rudimentary sense of rhythm. Sometimes Paul thought he was growing to hate all music. He hurried from the sitting room. He went to the cellar and filled the scuttles with hardcoal for the two coal stoves, the one in the front hall upstairs, between Oliver's and Belle's bedrooms, and the one in the sitting room. They were tall round Michigan Garlands, with bright metal crowns on top, and each had a little kettle of water which rested on a shelf on the back by the damper, and there were small squares of isinglass in the coal door and in the small grate doors on the sides. Paul filled the kitchen woodbox and emptied the ashes from the kitchen range. The dining-room stove had not yet been lighted. For this service Belle gave Paul fifteen cents a week: five cents for following the endless "Perils of Pauline" at the matinee on Saturdays at McNulty's Opera House; five cents for candy at Sjolander's so that one would not grow too weak during the perils; and the extra five cents, Paul supposed, for charities and riotous living during the following week. Sunday school money was extra, something in the nature of a divine dividend.

Belle finished her piano lesson and came out to the kitchen. Paul could hear the hired girl scrubbing the bathroom floor upstairs. A heat register in the kitchen ceiling opened onto the bathroom floor. "Hello, son,"

she said. "Why aren't you out playing?" It was what she always said. Paul did not answer. Belle added water to a stew kettle on the stove. Belle's glasses had become steamed and she stood wiping them with her handkerchief. Paul sat on the edge of the woodbox. Now, he thought, was the time...

"Listen, Mom -- " Paul began. He found he could not continue. There a choking feeling in his throat. Then he began to cry, he couldn't help it. The more he tried to stop the more he cried. Belle quickly put her glasses on the warming oven of the stove and came over to Paul and sat beside him on the woodbox. She held him close to her, resting his head against her side -- her good side. "There, there, son. It's all right. Whatever it is, it's all right."

Paul stopped crying except for occasional convulsive sobs. He pulled away from his mother and went to the kitchen door. He stood scowling in the open door, looking at Belle. "What is it, son?" Belle said. "Whatever it is, it's all right," she repeated.

"Mom," Paul said, and his voice did not sound like his own. "Listen, Mom -- Fritz Bellows sleeps with his brother Kenny. Oh, Mom, he -- he can't remember ever sleeping in his mother's room!"

Belle reached to her nose for her glasses but not finding them she made an uncertain little circle with her hand in front of her face. Her gesture was one of utter helplessness. Her gray eyes stared at Paul. Somehow she reminded Paul of a little girl. Numbed with shame, Paul wished he had not spoken. "I love you, Mama," he blurted, and then he turned and ran outdoors.

That night when Paul went to bed he found his cot in the corner of the boys' back bedroom. There was a clean flannel nightgown lying folded on the pillow. Nicky and Link occupied the double bed. They were not home yet. After Paul was in bed, lying awake and still in the dark room, Belle came into his bedroom. She leaned over and kissed him. She brushed his cowlick back

from his forehead with her hand. "Good night, my little man," she whispered, patting his head, and then she went away.

The first winter of the War was a time of great snow in Chippewa. There was always plenty of snow in winter, but this was unusual. Articles appeared in The Iron Ore and the town's graybeards consulted their diaries for parallels from the past. "I mind the winter that..." they would say. So far the winter of '79 was out in front. There was so much snow that by Christmas the boys had finally despaired of keeping the ice clear on Lake Bancroft for skating. The big horse-drawn gang plows had been out on the streets several times before Christmas. But snow or not there were many other things to do. There was akiing and coasting and best of all, there was bobsledding on north Pine street, on the north slope of Blueberry Hill. Paul could not remember when he had had so much fun in the wintertime.

That Christmas had been unusually good to Paul. Who cared if Santa Claus was an exploded myth if you could get a brand new "Flexible-Flyer" sled, a new Mackinaw coat, a red knitted tassel cap and new "Gold Seal" rubber snow boots? And a new pocket knife from Grandma Fraleigh? Anyway, Santa had never given Paul a new sled before. It was the first new sled he had ever owned. Not that it represented any concession on Oliver's part. Up to that time Paul had used an old sled which had been Oliver's when he was a boy. It was a heavy, low wooden sled with grooves in the pointed wooden sides fitted with round iron runners. It was a fast sled. Its name was "Bruno" but Paul and his brothers, from whom Paul had inherited "Bruno," had all dubbed it the "pig-stabber." "Bruno" had finally earned a long rest.

Oliver was forever making things for the boys or buying and trading secondhand articles such as used bicycles, ice skates, coaster wagons, skis and the like. It seemed to Paul even then that it was not so much penury on Oliver's part as much as his desire to have an excuse for tearing the things

apart and putting them together again. And also, of course, to teach his boys "the value of a dollar." Oliver was an excellent carpenter and mechanic, and he had a complete tool shop which he kept under heavy lock and key in the barn at the rear of the Biegler house. This tool shop had once been located in the warehouse on Canada Street, down by the tracks. Oliver had moved it the summer before to make room for a young blond fellow called Elmer Lessard, who had opened a new establishment called a "garage" in the old warehouse. On any Sunday when Oliver was not out in the woods he would spend the day tinkering out in his tool shop, making or repairing something for the house or farm or the saloon -- or remodelling some bit of junk he had traded or bought and which might be made to do for the boys.

Belle knew how much the boys smarted over having to use these made-over playthings. Sometimes she would try to reason with Oliver, but that would only provoke a scene. "I'll learn the lazy whelps ~~to know~~ the value of a dollar!" he would howl. Oliver, the Roger Babson of his day, was forever conducting impromptu shouted lectures on the value of a dollar. "Anyway, the stuff they're makin' nowadays is no bloody good! Everybody's after the almighty dollar... Money, money, money!" he would rant. "Now when I was a boy..." and away he would go on a colorful and profane exposition of the tender love and expert craftmanship that had gone into all of the merchandise that was made when he was a boy. Then he would extol the sled "Bruno" as exemplifying all these deathless qualities, often dramatically producing the battered sled and thrusting it at Belle for her white-faced inspection. "Lookit that, woman! Love went into that job! Love, I say!" Naturally this blighted love would lead him inevitably to the subject of the gnawing horrors of Wall Street -- the seat of all modern skullduggery -- "an' that goddam graspin' Andrew Carnegie!"

So, as with Paul's new "Flexible-Flyer," Belle would quietly write Grandma Fraleigh in Detroit and tell her what the boys wanted and would send Grandma some of her music-lesson money. Then either Uncle Alec or Uncle

Stephen would ship them north by express as ostensible gifts from the bountiful Detroit relatives, along with their usual gifts, if it was Christmas. All Oliver could do was fume and mutter that Belle's relatives were "spoilin' the bloody boys so's they'll never learn the value of a dollar!" Paul reflected that the whole thing ran in circles, like a squirrel in a cage...

That winter Paul and Fritz and Bernie Redmond and Gunnar Taleen built a bobsled over in Bellows' basement with the help of Fritz's dad, J. Barry Bellows, the jeweler and ex-actor. He was a fine, jolly little man with graying reddish hair, and brilliant brown eyes, unlike Fritz's, and he would try to help them and pound his fingers with a hammer and then laugh, or else just sit in front of the furnace door and watch the boys and tell them stories or sing snatches from Gilbert and Sullivan, accompanying himself on the guitar. "O the flowers that bloom in the Spring, tra la..." Paul's heart was filled with envy to see a father like Fritz's... It took the boys eight days to finish the bob, working after school and on nights they could get out. Finally they installed the shiny new bell on the front (no bob was complete without a clanging warning bell) and proudly painted the name along the top, "The Chippewa Flash." Then that last afternoon before the paint was fairly dry they tenderly carried the new bob from the Bellows' cellar and started for the Pine Street bob slide.

"Good luck, boys!" J. Barry Bellows shouted after them.

The boys "shacked" a ride on the delivery sled of Danny McQuiggan, one of Jaeger's teamsters, who was passing by on the late afternoon round. Danny, upon seeing that Fritz, one of old Jaeger's grandsons, was in the group, whipped up the horses and galloped past the homes of waiting, anxious housewives. Paul sat up in front on the dashboard with Danny on the lumpy cushion -- "dry-asses" the teamsters called them -- made from hay thrust into a burlap feed sack. After all, four of them did not need to tow the bob. "Hello, Polly.

What do you hear from your brothers Emmett and Roge?" Danny said. Paul shook his head. As the racing sleigh slewed around the corner near the top of Pine street hill, Paul could hear the kerosene sloshing in the oil tank under them. The spigot was sealed with a potato. Danny delivered the boys and their bob in a cloud of vapor and chiming sleighbells at the top of the hill. "Gee there, Fred, Dick!" Danny shouted, as he wheeled his steaming horses about and slid away. Elmer Lessard's new garage had not yet caught up with Danny...

It was growing dark, but the iced run gleamed in the carbon street lamps as far as they could see. Lucky Gunnar had pulled the long straw to pilot the first ride. They squared the bob around in front of the take-off. Gunnar adjusted his feet on the front sled guides and wrapped the rope around his mittens. Fritz jumped on behind Gunnar, then Bernie, and Gunnar shouted "Ready!" Then Paul pushed her away and leaped on the back. "Clang, clang, clang!" went the bell, Fritz proudly working the bell cord. "Every man his position knew, This stout and battered motley crew."

The bob plunged down the steep hill, the runners rumbling on the ice, gathering speed, as the shouting boys shot past the intersection of Bluff street, then Ely street, then Empire, and finally straightened out on the final bouncing rush into Morgan's Swamp. They let the bob go as far as it would, and were filled with exultation to discover that it had travelled nearly as far as some of the long, heavy twelve- and fifteen-seater bobs owned by the older boys. It was heavenly -- their own bob, made by their own hands. As they ran chattering back up the hill Paul began to sense some of the pride Oliver must feel in making his own things.

As the boys reached the top of the hill for the next ride they saw that another bob was getting ready to take off. It was owned by Danny Gaynor and his brothers. Short, stocky Danny was there with his brother Stevie and some of the "firehall gang" that lived around the Convent school. When Paul saw his arch enemy Danny, he hung back to let him get away. But Danny had spied Paul by the street light. He was not going to let this opportunity

pass. After all, the whole summer had slipped by without his thrashing Paul. And here was an audience. Danny turned to Gunnar. Gunnar didn't like Danny any more than Paul did, but was also deeply respectful of his prowess as a fighter.

"Well 'Swede'," Danny said to Gunnar, "since when did you start chumming around with a baby-killing Hun like Biegler here?" He motioned at Paul with his thumb without looking at him. Danny was a master at disdain. Paul stood chilled in his tracks. His feeling was one of yawning dismay. Something new had come to torment him. It was one of the little unreported casualties of the War. He was now not only a dirty saloon-keeper's son but a Hun as well. At that moment he knew how all the trammeled peoples in the world must feel...

Then Paul saw Fritz looking at him, his pale blue eyes wide with blank astonishment. "So this is my cowardly new friend," he was sure Fritz was thinking. It was written on his intent white face. "Polly," Fritz said in a low, awed voice. "Polly," he repeated. Paul's misery was complete. "Hun!" Danny said.

Paul felt something give way in him, as though some vital organ in his body was being wrenched from him. He became so weak that as he staggered up to Danny he almost fell. Danny could have pushed him over with his hand. There was fear in him, but there was also something deeper than fear alone. Paul had always loathed any offensive physical touching, as he was to all of his life. All he could see was Danny, leering, smiling, squint-eyed Danny. Paul wanted to retch. "Hun!" Danny repeated. It was Danny's tactical mistake. Paul's strength surged back in a wild exultant rush and he was upon Danny, flailing him with his thin knotted fists, hitting and hitting his hateful face in a whirlwind of blows. Then Danny was miraculously lying upon the icy street and Paul was upon him and his hands were tight about Danny's throat and his mind was as cold as the ice he kneeled on. Warm blood was running from Danny's nose on to Paul's hands...

* * *

Fritz went out of his course and walked home with Paul, dragging the new bob. On the way Paul washed the blood from his hands in the snow. They did not speak. When they got to Paul's corner, under the guttering carbon street lamp, they stood there silently regarding each other. Fritz seemed to be pondering something. He finally spoke. "Polly, you hit him and choked him when he was down. You shouldn't have done that, Polly," Fritz said. "You know that."

"Yes, I know," Paul said.

"You won't do that again, will you?" Fritz said, anxiously.

"I don't know," Paul said. "You know, Fritz," he slowly said, "I -- I think I might have killed him if the others hadn't been there to pull me off."

"You were afraid of him, weren't you, Polly?" Fritz said.

"Yes," Paul said. "I've been afraid of him for a long time. You don't know, Fritz, you don't know..."

"But you're not any more, are you, Polly?"

"No, I'm not afraid any more, Fritz," Paul said.

"Good night, Polly -- you're a swell pal."

"Good night, Fritz, you're a swell pal too."

Paul paused on the kitchen porch whistling "I Wanta Go Back To Michigan" very softly. The mine whistles were blowing six o'clock. Paul went into the kitchen and washed at the sink and combed his cowlick at the kitchen mirror. He grinned at himself in the uneven mirror. "The baby-killer of Blueberry Hill," he whispered to himself, distorting his mouth in one of the ripples of the glass. He went into the dining-room and slipped into his corner seat between Oliver and Belle at the supper table. Nobody noticed a thing. Paul did not tell Belle or anyone about his fight. She only found out two days later when Danny's mother, Mrs. Gaynor, paid Belle a belated return call. The two women had a good cry. As for Paul, he had never had so much fun in the wintertime.

CHAPTER 7.

Oliver's love of the woods was a sort of quiet madness tacitly recognized by Belle and all the boys but rarely openly discussed by them. Paul was gradually coming to see that this plunging, impatient man was never really happy unless he was miles from town, far from the sounds of the trains and mine whistles, away from his family, away from his saloon -- always away, away, away...

That summer Oliver began taking Paul to the woods with him, especially to the South Camp. During these trips Paul scarcely knew his father for the same man. Dan McGinnis, one of Oliver's woods cronies, usually accompanied them, and the fashion in which these two carried on and laughed and played grotesque Paul Bunyan jokes on each other reminded Paul of himself and his own playmates. Nor could Paul forget the way his father would throw back his head and show his firm ~~yellow~~ tobacco-stained teeth in a grim smile as he would work a tugging trout into shore over at Blair's Pond. He talked to his fish, coaxing them, flattering them, slowly killing them...

"Come on me speckled darlin' -- no, no, out of dose dere veeds," he would tenderly croon, in a comical mixture of the various local dialects. Oliver's eyes would wrinkle at the corners and his flyrod would be bent into a palsied hoop. "Vat iss diss? 'Ere, naow, com' to yer bloody Pa, me son! <u>There</u>!" And the tired trout would be finally lying in Oliver's sagging net. Paul would stand watching in open-mouthed wonder. "'Vat iss diss' indeed," he thought. Then after they had taken enough fish Paul would follow his father and Dan back to camp, through the wavy high grass of the soggy beaver meadows, across the fallen log on the creek and up the hill to the square camp made of white pine logs which stood on the birch-covered ridge.

Oliver had three camps: two hunting camps north of Chippewa, in the region of Silver Lake and the Big Dead River, and then the South Camp, far out beyond the looming Green Hills. He haunted the South Camp during the summer fishing season. While there were plenty of deer around the camp, Oliver had

not hunted there since Paul was a baby, the fall that Oliver had actually heard the faint rifle shot of some witless stranger who had dared to wander near the fringe of his hunting domain. "Hell, Tom," he had said to old Tom Eckman, one of his hunting partners, "Hell, Tom, it's gettin' so's a man can't step outa the bloody camp without he falls over a couple or two tres-passin' deerhunters!"

Each November Oliver and his woods cronies made mighty preparations for the deerhunt up North, which involved assembling blankets and snowshoes, socks and mittens, food and rifles, not to mention whiskey and beer and the "fixins" for the whiskey sours. He spent hours in clove-consuming conferences at the saloon with Tom Eckman and the McGinnis twins, Dan and Dave, making endless lists and lists, and then lists of lists... Finally "the day" would arrive, and Oliver would stoop and kiss Belle, as she stood on the back porch, and the others would respectfully touch their caps to her and say "Goodbye, Mrs. Biegler." Then Fred and Chief, the big white team, would draw the laden jumper out of the back yard. Oliver would be gone for weeks -- much to the boys' delight -- and then one night, always in the black dark, Paul would hear the dull frosty sleigh bells and the clomp of the horses behind the ~~home~~ house. The mighty hunters were home from the hill!

Paul would race for the kitchen and run out on the porch and watch the tired and mumbling bearded men in the vapored lantern light as they tossed the deer off the sleigh like cordwood. The frozen bodies of the deer were always rigid in the attitude of their final leap, their bloody tongues waggishly protruding from their mouths, their slotted eyes a shrivelled, sunken blue. On these occasions Paul always pretended dancing ecstasies he never felt. He really wished they would not have a single deer, and dismally reflected that Belle would have roasts and chops and mincemeat enough to last through the winter -- all from these poor deer, so beautiful, so slender, so very dead... The heads of those with good racks of horns would be mounted by

Garceau the Frenchman, and added to those that already thronged the walls of the saloon.

About this time, too, Paul realized with dismay that his father and Belle led no sort of social life together. After a busy day of running the big house and giving music lessons, Belle generally spent her nights alone, darning and mending or ironing, or helping the boys with their lessons, or rocking in her chair by the window in the sitting-room, chatting with her neighbors, Mrs. Trembath or Mrs. Coffey or Gunnar's mother, hard-working Mrs. Taleen. When Belle went to the Presbyterian church it was alone or with Paul. It was the same way with her visits to the movies or the occasional roadshows which came to McNulty's Opera House. It seemed that on these occasions Oliver always found he had to work at the saloon. "Someone around this bloody house's got to have a sense of dooty!" he would wail, drooping his head under the sudden oppressive weight of his cares. Oliver, however, was fascinated by Lyman H. Howe's movie travelogues, with sound effects, as was Paul. Regardless of "dooty" Oliver never missed their annual visits to Chippewa. He would put on his best salt-and-pepper suit and sit in an aisle seat, because of his long legs, watching in hunched absorption as the parade of pygmies and elephants and strange exotic sights flickered across the screen.

Then during the intermission he would remain fixed in his seat, cramped and enthralled, while Lyman H. Howe's pianist came out and bowed and then played a series of brilliant, florid passages on Maestro McNulty's battered upright; selections fairly dripping with glissandos and rippling arpeggios, and usually taken from Liszt or some fiery Italian. Oliver would lean across Paul, smelling of cloves, and sibilantly whisper to Belle, "Genius!" Belle would smile and nod and whisper, "Yes, Oliver." For once Paul was in accord with Oliver. Any man was indubitably a genius who could wrench music from Mr. McNulty's piano.

Belle still occasionally tried inviting other married couples over to spend the evening, but had gradually abandoned the practice in silent horror after one or two grim experiences. Oliver, resigned and stoic in the salt-and-pepper suit and starched collar and diamond stickpin, his thinning cowlick pushed back on his head, would sit through the evening like a caged lion, his powerful hands clenching and unclenching his knees, responding in grunted abstracted monosyllables to the timid overtures of some unhappy husband of one of Belle's friends. Or worse yet, Oliver would sometimes be drawn into sudden conversation by some chance word and would launch into a thunderous, eye-rolling monologue on the iniquities of his two pets: Wall Street and Andrew Carnegie, or -- since the War had started -- on a scheming and villainous Great Britain.

Oliver never discussed his views with any man; he simply announced them. Where he got them Paul never really knew because he rarely discovered Oliver reading anything other than The Iron Ore or Grover's definitive work on the "Diseases of Horses" which stood in the high bookcase in the music room. Yet he seemed to know all about Carnegie and the iniquitous steel tariff, Eugene Debs and labor injunctions, Henry George and the single tax, and all the rest. Belle and the guests would sit in a stunned silence, nodding their heads in automatic agreement as Oliver hurled his sweeping charges of graft and corruption, of dark cabals and foul alliances, both foreign and domestic, national and international... He rarely stooped to buttress these indictments with facts or sources; wagging his finger, he merely shouted the dire conclusions. "You mark my words -- John Bull and Wall Street will have us in this bloody war yet!" Paul could hear these thunderous forbodings distinctly from his cot upstairs. "Don't, Oliver," Belle would plead with him after the startled guests had fled. "Please don't get on those sore subjects when we have people over. Please, Oliver -- I don't ask much of you..."

The very next time Belle "had people over" gave Oliver his chance to demonstrate how meekly mindful he was of Belle's plea. Before the visitors

fairly had their wraps off Oliver began dilating on the uncontroversible merits of the sitting-room coal stove; this time to Mr. Trembath, the bookkeeper at Jaeger's. Oliver glanced at Belle. He would show her he could bandy small talk with the best of them... There certainly wasn't a belligerent coal in this topic. Belle waited, smiling uncertainly, nodding brightly, anxiously pursing her lips. Little Mr. Trembath and his wife, who at this juncture had no earthly need for her ear trumpet, sat in spellbound, gulping silence as Oliver heaped ringing tributes on the stove. As he warmed to his subject, so intense became Oliver's desire to convince his neighbors that all modern stoves were trashy junk compared with this venerable tall queen, that he finally stalked out to his shop in the woodshed and came back with an armful of soiled tools and sprawled on the floor, salt-and-pepper suit and all, and virtually dismantled the lighted stove before their horrified eyes. Then, to Belle's utter and final shame, he wound up trying to sell the stove to Mr. Trembath. "Mind you, I'm doin' you a favor, neighbor! You'll never get a better bloody buy, Trembath!" he shouted, waving a wrench in the air, " -- not if you scour the hull damn Peninsula! I'm tellin' you, man..."

That was the end. The Trembaths hurried home, without the stove, and in the future Belle resigned herself to "having just the ladies over," which was quite all right with Oliver. "Hell, woman," he ranted, "them grubbin' husbands of your lady friends! All they can think to talk about is their goddam stocks and bonds and money -- how they made money here, or lost money there, or how they're goin' to make more money next week or next year. There's no goddam fun in their miserable shrivelled souls! How can you put up with it, woman! Answer me, I say! Don't stand there -- O merciful God, answer me!"

"Yes, Oliver," Belle said. "Yes, Oliver." That was the way it always was. "Yes, Oliver."

It was not that Oliver hated people or was unsocial. In fact, as Paul pondered as he grew older, it seemed to him it was because the man was so tremendously alive and full of wild vitality that he could not bear to waste a

moment of his time on the gentle, noncommittal sparring that commonly passed for the social amenities. That summer Paul overheard a snatch of conversation between Oliver and Dan McGinnis out at the South Camp. Oliver and Dan were having "just one more" whiskey sour. "Christ, Dan," Oliver laughed, "when I spend my time talkin' to a woman I want to be figurin' how I can get her into bed!"

Paul thought, even then, that this casual ribald remark held one of the keys to the man's character. His father seemed to live only for the high moments of life -- for the curbing of the runaway horse, the final shot at the mortally plunging buck, the hooking and landing of a fighting trout, the subduing of a high-spirited woman... The conventional concepts of Family and Home, of Work and Duty, were simply not meant for the man. They were without his ken, and their manifestations all about him drove him frantic with a lashing impatience. He could not abide even the thought of the restraints they would impose on him. In the woods he could be free... The man's unconventionality was not mere ignorance, Paul gradually realized, but was, with all its raw crudeness, a deliberate and inevitable expression of his philosophy of life.

If Oliver found his only true happiness in the woods, Paul thought, then surely Belle found hers in her home and in her family, especially on those rare occasions when she and her husband and all her boys were together. These usually occurred during those periods of uneasy domestic truce which Belle called "our Sunday-evening musicales" but which quiet brother Lincoln irreverently referred to as "The Cremation of Sam McBeethoven!" Belle clung to the notion that no household was completely a home unless both parents spent time in it, together contributing to the cultural development of their children. Such had been her girlhood in Detroit and, so help her, so would it be for her boys in Chippewa -- even if one of the parties to this proposed

cultural revelation was a man called Oliver Biegler. "It gives a home a feeling of security," Paul once heard his mother say to Mrs. Taleen.

So when, after the Sunday night supper, Belle would hum to herself as she popped up a bowlful of buttery popcorn in the wire basket over the kitchen range, or cooked a platterful of fudge to cool on the little shelf on the back stoop, the boys would know they were in for another musical evening. Then, in some mysterious fashion which Paul could never fathom, Belle would brave imminent destruction and lurch and tug her snoring husband off of the sitting-room sofa and into the music-room piano. She would sit at the piano and play from memory the melodies of her girlhood, old Scotch airs, the songs of Stephen Foster, while the great rumple-haired man stood behind her silently swaying and sleepily blinking his eyes. When she thought Oliver was sufficiently awake, she would swing into one of the old German songs, usually the beautiful "Still wie die Nacht" as a start, singing the air in German in her clear sweet soprano. Then she would glance over her shoulder at Oliver, still singing, nodding her head for him to join her, which he would invariably do, slowly blundering into the song with his hoarse rumbling bass, Belle pausing for him to catch up or hurrying to overtake him. "Still wie die Nacht..."

Meanwhile the boys, the recipients of this musical feast, would sit clustered around the breathing gas lamp which stood on the sitting-room table, pretending to read, glancing at each other, sluicing popcorn into their grinning mouths and -- when Oliver wandered too far in the "Nacht" -- surreptitiously holding their noses with one hand and pulling the air with the other.

Paul would join his brothers in these subtle criticisms of the Biegler musical appreciation hours, holding his nose with the rest of them. Yet rarely did one of these Sunday evenings draw to a close that his heart was not clutched with a feeling of ineffable sadness, a sense of wry and unutterable gloom, as he watched his mother in her feverishly gay efforts to bring "security" and "culture" into the home of herself and her boys...

How can there be security? Paul would ponder, staring sightlessly at his book. How could such an illusion be fostered in a home where one did not know, from one moment to the next, when the head of it might not suddenly become transformed into a raging lion, and stamp cursing from the house or else turn snarling on one or all of its occupants? For some inarticulate reason, buried deep in his tangled childhood memories, Paul was to look back on these Sunday evenings together as among the saddest of his entire boyhood. Popcorn and fudge was not quite enough...

That summer it was Belle who finally got Oliver to take Paul to the woods with him. Paul knew it was part of her relentless campaign to make a little Tarzan out of him. But he did not care. Even Paul had to admit that Belle had always tried hard enough "to put some flesh on your poor little bones." For as long as he could remember he had waged a constant losing battle to avoid Belle's nostrums and vile health brews. Her assortment was endless.

High on the list there was Vinol, which contained a magical new property which every human system craved, called "iron." Paul was so glutted with it he sometimes wondered if he would not be struck by lightning. Iron attracted lightning, did it not? Under Belle's watchful eye he had consumed casks of the stuff. Again there was cod liver oil, which was still worse than Vinol, and then Scott's Emulsion, which brought on waves of nausea when Paul merely visualized the schools of rigid dead fish, one of which adorned the oily label of each of the endless bottles he had emptied. Then of course there were prunes, mashed, boiled and -- well no, never quite fried -- and goose-grease on his chest in the winter, overlaid with a square piece of flannel cut from an abandoned Biegler-ian nightgown. In the Spring, O glorious season, he was tolerantly given his choice of weapons: either a dose of castor oil or a draft of Rocky Mountain tea or home-made sulphur and molasses -- a wearing decision

to have to make. Alphabetic vitamins had not yet appeared to enchant and revive a drooping world which appeared to Paul to be reeling along an abyss of incipient anemia and galloping consumption. Going to the woods, even with Oliver, was preferable to these endless bouts with Belle's deadly decoctions...

Oliver and Dan McGinnis left from the back yard in the old buckboard drawn by a high raw-boned gelding called "Carnegie." Paul had kissed his mother goodbye a half-dozen times, and was sitting on a bale of hay on the back. A lantern was clamped on the dashboard and a battered water pail dangled from the rear axle. "Are you sure you have your long underwear with you in case the weather changes?" Belle asked Paul once again, standing on the back porch, shading her eyes. "Ye-e-es Mom," Paul answered, somehow shamed by this anxious maternal concern for a hardy woodsman. "Giddap, 'Thousand Dollars,'" Oliver said, raising a big tanned hand in farewell, and away they clattered out on the street, south across the tracks, out of sight of Belle's waving handkerchief, past the alley behind the saloon, and cut South Pine street, beyond the old Angeline mine, up the steep Frenchman's Hill, past the last of the Finnish farms, finally turning off on a two-rut sandy road which Oliver called the "head of the plains."

They stopped at the bridge over the sweeping oily flow of the Escanaba River, where Paul launched his Tarzan-hood by dipping out two pails of water for perspiring Carnegie. He noticed that the brook trout were quietly rising in the river, just below the bridge, but he said nothing to Oliver and Dan. He knew they'd never get to camp. During this interlude Oliver and Dan improved their time by stuffing and lighting their pipes with "Peerless," and hoisting two drinks apiece out of a pint bottle. Paul was enchanted at the genteel manner in which Dan combed out his moustaches, after his drink, the right hand neatly caring for the left side, the left hand for the right... Then began the long climb up the sandy hill out of the river valley. Paul half closed his eyes and listened to the sand sifting off the metal rims and

wooden spokes, concluding that the sound more nearly approximated that made by the sea shells on Belle's what-not which stood in a corner of the parlor -- --

"Look, Dan!" Oliver said. "A fine running shot!" Paul wheeled to the front and watched a running buck and two does, flags up, leaping across an open stretch, finally bouncing into a cover of jackpines and out of sight. To Paul the white-tail deer were the most innocent and graceful of all of Nature's forms of animal life, including man. He wondered, as he was always to wonder, what high courage could prompt his father or any man to crumple their bounding flight.

At birch-surrounded Brewery Hill Spring the ritual of water, Peerless and bottle was rapidly assuming the force of immutable tradition to Paul; then a few more miles and they entered the dense woods, putting up two coveys of partridge, then they crossed the log bridge over the creek, partially flooded by the backwater of a beaver dam, then a little way and there was a fleeting glimpse at Biegler Lake -- Oliver's lake -- through the tall spruces. Then they came out into a small clearing on the ridge on which stood a log camp and a log barn. "Whoa Carnegie, you ol' buzzard," Oliver said, throwing the reins out on the ground. This was the South Camp. Paul heard the hot click of grasshoppers and crickets in the sun-lit clearing. A groundhog ran frantically from the side of the little outhouse to its burrow on the edge of the woods. "I'll fix him tonight, Oliver," Dan said. "In the meantime I suggest we have ourselves a little snort."

As Oliver and Dan unharnessed and ministered to the tired horse, Paul went down the hill to the creek for water. Shadowy trout darted away as he dipped the first pail. When he got back up the hill with the full water pails he stood panting outside of the camp. The sun was sinking in the northwest. Oliver and Dan were inside the camp having "just another one." Oliver was talking to Dan. "Christ, Dan," he was saying, "when I spend my time talkin' to a woman I want to be figurin' how I can get her into bed..."

CHAPTER 8.

That fall Gunnar and Fritz and Paul were reunited in the Grammar School. Gunnar was now in eighth grade; Fritz and Paul were in seventh. Miss Lindquist was their teacher. Bernie Redmond still attended the "Irish" school, but every afternoon the four would meet after school, usually in Fritz's basement, but sometimes at the old Pearl Street cigar factory of Bernie's dad. A weathered sign swung out over the door: "Dennis J. Redmond -- Fine Havana Cigars." The place reeked of tobacco, and hung with waving cobwebs and old leaf-tobacco calendars. It had once been a Finnish bagnio and the flamboyant flowered wall paper still shown through the dust. It was a great hangout for the local Irish of all ages. Most of them were railroad men, and lodge brothers of Bernie's father in the Hibernians. For some obscure reason nearly all these Irishmen wore soft dented black Stetson hats. Some of them would smoke cigarettes to tease "Dinny," who would glare malevolently at them and mumble over his bench. "Smokin' those goddam coffin-nails..." The boys would help Bernie strip the stems from the dampened tobacco leaves and spread the leaves on the drying racks in the back room so that Bernie could get away early and play. Paul had entered the world of commerce: he had started banding cigars for Dinny, for which he received five cents for each hundred cigars from Bernie's easy-going father. Fifteen cents an afternoon -- sitting down, mind you -- was making Paul view Carnegie in a new light.

Sometimes when Paul had caught up on his banding he would watch Dinny make cigars. Dinny would sit hunched over his square work block, his faded greenish-black derby pushed back on his bald head. He wore this hat only when he worked. First Dinny would cut out a double binder leaf, then reach into his stock box for the filler leaves -- this was where the "Havana" came in -- expertly shaping them in his nimble fingers and then roll them with his palm into the binder leaves. Quickly this "bunch" would be fitted into the propped wooden cigar mold, until the mold was filled with twenty-five bunches. Then Dinny would suddenly kick back his chair, which always fell clattering to the

floor, and clamp the wooden cover on the mold, and then squeeze it in the large iron press. At the same time he would remove another mold, right his chair and glare at his watchful Irish compatriots -- "who the hell knocked that there chair over!" -- and then sit and roll these pressed bunches up into finished cigars in the fine-veined, delicate wrapper leaves which came from distant Sumatra. All the time that he worked Dinny hummed and chanted a mysterious song, a song without words, without meaning, without tune, without end. "Yanh, yanh, yanh...di di dum...col sor roll de ol..." This song would occasionally be punctuated with an occasional chanted oath if a bunch broke or a wrapper tip tore while he was pasting the end of a finished cigar. "Yanh,yanh, yanh...goddam, goddam...rum si razza rol..."

Paul would sit and watch and often wonder why it was that the fathers of all his playmates were always so disgustingly good-natured. Unlike Oliver, Dinny's bite was unequal to his bark. Paul's heart was gnawed by envy. Could his schoolbooks be right? Was whiskey the seat of Oliver's canker? Yet there were lots of good-natured saloonkeepers on town. Paul and the other boys had sold crates of salvaged whiskey bottles to these great, chuckling, purple-veined men. When the cause was just and the necessity was grave, they had even stolen bottles from Oliver's saloon and resold them to his competitors.

During the past summer there had been a number of changes made at the old frame house on Hematite Street. Paul's half brother, Greg, had married his sweetheart, Eileen Deasy, the Irish girl he had gone through school with, and they had a little house of their own on Bluff Street, on the north end of town. Red-headed Greg had left high school in the eleventh grade and had started to work as an electrician for the Chippewa Ore Company, which operated the large Blueberry mine. That summer the company had made Greg a foreman of one of the electrical crews, so he had celebrated his good fortune by getting married.

Paul's brothers, Link and Nicky, moved into Greg's bedroom, leaving Paul to occupy their double bed in the calsomined back bedroom. Paul's cot was stored in the dusty attic. Paul missed the companionship of short, quick, laughing brother Greg. Greg had really paid more attention to Paul than either Link and Nicky did. Nearly every evening after supper Paul would follow Greg up to his room and watch him get "spruced up" for his date with Eileen. "What'll we sing tonight, kid?" Greg would say. Paul sat on the edge of Greg's bed and sang in a piping tenor as Greg carried the air. "Now some people say that a darky won't steal..." Greg would begin. They went through all the verses, piling up the damning evidence to negative this charitable assumption, Greg adjusting his elastic armbands, getting into his blue serge suit, prying his necktie into his hard collar, currying his swooping red cowlick with stiff military brushes. "But I caught two in my corn field!"

Paul hoped that some day he would have a room like Greg's. Pennants on the walls: "Cornell," "Michigan," "Ferris Institute," "Chippewa High School" — beautiful pictures of Maude Adams and Geraldine Farrar, of Lillian Russell and Pearl White; kewpie dolls and crossed bamboo canes and ticklers from a host of forgotten carnivals; a pair of pearl-handled hunting knives and a Navajo blanket he had won on a punchboard at Gill's candy store — —

"Diggin' up potatoes row on row..."

Greg always kept mint candies and Yucatan or square-shaped Bloodbury gum in his top dresser drawer or in his best suits hanging in the little clothes closet. During the day while Greg was working Paul often very casually reviewed the contents of this exciting room. He pretended he was just sort of helping Belle to keep the room clean. Sometimes Paul suspected that Greg did not always go out with Eileen when he said he was. Once Paul found a nearly empty pint of whiskey and some toy baloons in a small box which read "Sold for the prevention of disease only." Another time Paul found an envelope containing an exciting series of photographs of women without any clothes, including one of a man and a woman in a most curious attitude...

"Now if that ain't stealin' Ah doan know!"

Greg had finally adjusted his tie, carefully inserted his stickpin, brushed a flake of dandruff off his shoulder -- "Listen Polly, do you know the best way to stop falling dandruff? I'll give you a nickel if you can tell me." Greg rattled the loose coins in his trousers. Paul pursed his lips and wrinkled his brow. Greg was ready to go. This was always the pay-off. Greg was at the bedroom door. "Wear a blue serge coat!" Paul blurted, poised on the bed to catch the nickel which Greg tossed to him.

"'Way down yonder in the cor-r-r-n-n field..."

Before he had left the old house Greg had installed electric lights throughout, dangling magic bulbs that glowed instantly when one snapped the buttons on the wall marked "On" and "Off." Gone were the gas lights and the tall old kerosene lamp which stood for so many years on the chiffonier in the back hall to light Oliver into his bedroom when he came home from the saloon late at night and creaked heavily up the back stairs. Discarded was the long-handled lighter that had a paraffin wick and a notched metal end so that the gas lights could be turned on and off without standing on a chair.

That fall Oliver installed a secondhand furnace; an asbestos-clad hot water furnace bristling with doors and dials, whose long fingers probed into every room of the house. Belle raised Paul's allowance to a quarter a week for taking care of it, although it was much easier than ministering to the old coal stoves. Paul eased his conscience by putting it down to war profiteering, a gently growing social phenomenon of the time. The two tall Michigan Garland coal stoves -- "The finest bloody stoves in America, I tell you!" -- were finally sold to old Moses Schwartzberger for junk, and in November Oliver carted the dining-room woodstove, under which a generation of mittens and socks had been dried, up to the Silver Lake hunting camp and oblivion...

But the advent of a furnace and electric lights was as nothing compared to the purchase Oliver had made just after school opened that fall. Oliver -- the lover of horses, who'd always said automobiles were a "goddam

crazy fad" -- Oliver had bought a Model T Ford touring car! It was second-hand, of course, and belonged to Ed Schwemin, the local distributor of Schlitz beer. "Whistling" Ed Schwemin had got it new the summer the War broke out. Then he found he could not learn to drive it. So it had stood in his barn until Elmer Lessard had opened his new garage in Oliver's warehouse. Elmer had given blonde Emma, Ed's buxom daughter, two lessons on how to drive the thing. That was enough for capable Emma. All summer long Emma had been careening around the hilly streets of Chippewa in Ed's Ford, leaving a string of startled citizens and rearing horses in her wake. She lived on Ridge Street, the street north of Paul's house. Paul's brothers called Emma their "Great Big Beautiful Doll" after the song.

The day Oliver bought the car flaxen-haired Emma came racing up Hematite Street, honking the bulbous rubber horn at Paul and Fritz, who were playing in the street. When Emma saw Paul she applied the brakes and almost stood the car upon its brass-nosed radiator. "Want to come for a spin, Polly?" she smiled at him, showing her even, milky-white teeth. "You and your friend there?" She was a good-natured big girl, who always seemed to be blushing. Oliver and Emma's father were good friends. Oliver bought beer from Whistling Ed and occasionally took him to the woods when Ed's tall wife would let him go.

Paul and Fritz huddled on the edge of the cool leather seat in the back. They clutched the robe rack on the rear of the front seat, grinning at each other, as Emma whirled around Jaeger's corner, ^ bravely down across the tracks, past the firehall, out South Pine Street and onto the curving hematite red dirt road that led past Old Frenchtown. "With a squealing of brakes like a stallion in May, She scattered the peasantry out of the way..."

On a sunny afternoon in September 1915 several small boys and some miners' wives in their backyards taking down clothing in Frenchtown Location

were interested to remark the progress of a woman and two boys in a Ford automobile as they watched it leave the road at the abrupt turn into the Trembath mine, careen through a barbed-wire fence, sway crazily across an open field with a portion of the fence, and finally plunge over the yawning crater of an abandoned mine pit.

This was in the days before the people of Chippewa and all America had grown surfeited with the curious pageantry of automobiles careening off highways, ramps and bridges; climbing trees and lamp posts; running against or in front of fast trains; plunging into, through and sometimes out of houses, outbuildings and various public and private structures. So quite a crowd gathered around the rim of the mine pit. The next evening even the Iron Ore recorded the event on the front page, rivalling the news of the startling German defeat of the Russians in Galicia and the Zeppelin raid over England.

> "Miss Emma Schwemin, aged nineteen, daughter of Edward Schwemin, local merchant, and Paul Biegler and Frederic Bellows, both aged twelve, miraculously escaped death and serious injury yesterday when Miss Emma lost control of her father's new Ford touring automobile and plunged down a two-hundred-foot embankment into an abandoned mine pit in Frenchtown Location. Miss Emma was taken to the Chippewa Hospital and treated for bruises but was released this morning. The two boys were none the worse for their harrowing experience. The automobile was badly damaged and was reported purchased by Oliver Biegler, local merchant, for an undisclosed figure."

Belle kept Paul in bed all the next day. She had given up her piano lessons and spent the day hovering over Paul, wavering between anger and solicitude. It appeared that castor oil was a new specific for plunges into mine pits. Towards supper time she brought the newspaper up to his darkened room along with a steaming bowl of barley broth. Paul heard her quick steps on the back stairs. He lay back and closed his eyes and held his thin body rigidly still. Belle came into the room and stood watching him. Paul cautiously raised one slotted eyelid. Belle stood anxiously peering down at him with her gray eyes. She hastily put down the soup bowl and held her head close to his chest.

Paul held his breath. "O my God!" Belle whispered, clutching at his hand. "Wah-wah-what's the matter, Mom," Paul said, blinking his eyes, " -- huh? -- supper time already?" "That stupid, criminal girl," Belle said, referring to Emma. "I never want to see her evil German face again as long as I live!"

Paul sat up in bed and proudly read of his exploit while Belle spooned the scalding soup into him as though he were a baby. "How's Fritz?" Paul asked between mouthfuls. Fritz was going to live. "He was over here before breakfast this morning," Belle said. "I sent him packing -- here, take this broth, you -- you adventurer!"

Oliver had bought Ed Schwemin's wrecked car. Oliver and Whistling Ed had arrived at the mine pit together in Doctor Gourdeau's lather-flecked buggy. Miss Emma, the great big beautiful doll, lay crying on a man's coat, holding her thumb, her blonde hair awry, her great breasts heaving with her sobs. "Papa -- papa," she kept saying. "Oh papa -- papa -- papa..." Some perspiring men were just leading Paul and Fritz out of the pit, from which they had just finished carrying Emma. Whistling Ed looked down at his weeping daughter. He held out his hands and bowed his head in anguish. "I never want to see that hateful contraption again -- oh, my poor baby -- I -- I'll sell the goddam thing for twenty-five dollars -- I'll -- --"

"I'll take it, Ed," Oliver said, walking to the edge of the pit, squinting through narrowed eyes, figuring out the best way to hoist his new car to the surface.

Oliver's elegant carriage, the rubber tired vehicle with the long elliptical springs and fringed top, the one in which he had proposed to Belle, finally went the way of the gas fixtures and the old stoves. In his stormy affections it was promptly replaced by the Ford. The boys were glad to be rid of the carriage and its hateful memories of bleak and wasted Saturdays spent dressing the harnesses, washing and polishing the carriage, greasing the axles, filling the lamps with kerosene and burnishing the reflectors. Then there was the grim ceremony of the Sunday drives.

On summer Sunday afternoons following dinner Oliver would go down to the barn and harness the lively bays, yellow fly netting and all, and drive around to the front of the house under the shade of the rows of tall elms he had planted when he was a young man. If Belle and the boys were not ready and waiting for him he would lean over the side of the sagging carriage and shout for them until they arrived. Belle would sit in the back. "Scrape your feet before you get in," Oliver would darkly warn the boys, who did everything but genuflect before they boarded their father's pride and joy. Then Oliver would touch the quivering rumps of the bays with the tall whip, and whirl all of them around the Iron Cliffs Drive or the Cooper and Deer Lake Drive, or sometimes out to August Schmidt's farm.

Old Schmidt had known Oliver's parents, and he and Oliver would sit and smoke and drink beer and reminisce for hours in Oliver's halting, rusty German, while the boys played in the big barn or tested the progress of old August's apple orchard. Sometimes Belle would play and sing old German airs on the parlor organ. When the sun began to wane and the nighthawks began to swoop they would return home, in stiff and rigid silence. The boys would gleefully wheel the carriage up the ramp into the dusky barn and reverently cover it in its shroud for another gala Sunday, while Oliver unharnessed and fed the bays and bedded them down for the night. That night, if the boys were really unlucky, Belle might initiate another of her Sunday evening musicales...

Elmer Lessard and two of his mechanics helped Oliver tug the stricken Ford out of the mine pit. Brother Link was helping Elmer in the garage that summer but he was not allowed to assist in raising the Ford, much to his relief, because Oliver always maintained that none of his boys "had enough brains to come in out of the rain." Elmer sent to Detroit for parts, and in the interim gave Oliver driving lessons in another Ford. Then one Sunday afternoon before Halloween Oliver was sitting out in front of the house in the rehabilitated Model T, hunched over the tiny wheel, wearing, of all things, a pair of goggles,

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 <u>necessary</u> 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 was nodding 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 ~~Grammar School clock~~ frosty wail of the mine whistles 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.

Insert 1

A 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, like a great bird, 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. A

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 ~~coal dust~~ soot 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 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 parents; battered and bulging trunks full of old clothing and letters in faded handwriting; a packing-case of 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 the 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 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 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." 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. 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...

Paul waited in quiet awe, watching the master at work. The helpless prospect would stand staring down at Oliver's lavendar lease. Paul held his breath, whispering over and over to himself, "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'..." 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. 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." In bed at night Paul 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 hanging 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 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-monument 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 <u>because</u> 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 harmonics 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...