

The Hermit of Turkey
Hill

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Published by Loyd L. Fueston, Jr.

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Part I

A Young Man and a Strange Man

1 A Hot Day in the Hometown

After wiping the sweat from his forehead, Charley MacGregor looked at his sister and asked, “Why do you do all that ironing when it’s so hot out, Helen?”

The twelve year-old boy was sitting at the kitchen table, his forearms resting upon the table, his chin resting upon those forearms. Helen looked down upon her half-brother nearly fifteen years younger than her. She smiled and then reached down for the small towel hanging from her apron strap. After she wiped some of the sweat from her forehead and her cheeks and her throat, she told him, “It’s got to be done, and I have to cook dinner later and then do the dishes and then the darning has to be done. You poke holes in your socks faster than anybody in town.”

He shrugged, not in the mood to be teased, not even by the half-sister who’d been more his mother than a sibling, his own mother having died when he was only six, days after the birth of his youngest sister, Margaret.

“Why don’t you grab your fishing pole and head up to one of the ponds, Charley?”

“Fishing would be no good in this heat.”

“By the time the heat calms down, Father will be home and he’ll have you out weeding and pruning in the garden.”

No more than a shrug came from the lad who’d already weeded the vegetable garden two nights before and had even taken all the suckers off the young tomato plants. It would take only minutes to pull any weeds that had popped up in the meantime though the suckers seemed to grow awfully fast on their dozen tomato plants. “Anyway,” he informed his sister in his finest lecturing voice, “late-night fishing or early morning fishing is best when the summer heat is on us. The water stays hot through the evening.”

“You promised me a load of those ugly fishes with the sweet white meat.”

“Bullheads. They’re more likely to bite at night.”

“And Father is not likely to let you head up fishing in the middle of the night. And, if he did, the constable might grab hold of you and bring you right back. Twelve year-olds belong in bed at that time.”

Charley was staring at his sister, thinking she looked a lot like both Helen’s mother and his own mother, sisters and not the same woman. Helen was his cousin as well as his sister, his father having married his sister-in-law after his first wife had died. That was the reason for William MacGregor’s move to the New World, a move that had occurred more than ten years before the influx of Scottish immigrants, mostly experienced textile workers who were brought to the United States by the Jenckesville Mill Company. Some of those later immigrants had been loaned the money for the trip, some had merely been provided with letters saying they had jobs ready—such letters making it easier, sometimes simply making it possible, to get through Ellis Island instead of being put back on the ship to return to the Old Country. William MacGregor had been a prosperous skilled worker, a tinsmith, and had not needed a subsidy to move to the New World; in fact, he had bought a house shortly after settling in Jenckesville. And he’d had a choice of several jobs, working for the mill company only because it was convenient; they had also offered him a bit more money than any other metal-worker in the mills.

It had been Helen who had once explained to her young brother: by Scottish law, a man could not marry the sister of his dead wife. And so, Mr MacGregor had come to the United States, bringing his daughter from that first marriage which had proven to be so short. In those days, it had been easy for a respectable man to get through Ellis Island, so long as he was not actually indigent or obviously ill. And so long as he was from England or Scotland or Wales. Helen had said the authorities assumed such a man was coming to the country to take advantage of the nearly boundless opportunities. It had taken him only a year or so to establish himself in the New World, at which time, his once and future mother-in-law came over, bringing her younger daughter.

“How about this, young man,” suggested Helen, “why don’t you run down to the train-station. It’s five past one. The train should be pulling in ten minutes from now. I’m expecting a parcel some time this week.”

With eyes wide and ears perked up, Charley stared at his sister wondering what she might be getting in the mail. Parcels didn’t arrive every day and usually they contained something very special, such as the package which had been sent by Aunt Bea at Christmas-time. She had gone to

San Diego with a cousin of hers from Boston who had a son stationed out there on the Navy base. Aunt Bea sent back a box with two dozen large, juicy oranges in it. He had been sure that they were a lot better than the oranges they sold near Christmas-time in the downtown department stores. Not that he'd had many chances to eat those fancy-store oranges, but the two he'd had in different years had been a little dry and the ones sent by Aunt Bea had been juicy and delicious.

“Don't bother asking, Charley. I don't know what's in the parcel. It's something Aunt Bea is sending to me. She spoiled the surprise a little by writing to warn me so I could keep a lookout for it.”

Having worked himself into a lazy mood and not even interested in checking on a parcel. . .

He thought a second time and jumped up from the chair, heading for the door and nearly knocking over a basket of linens to be ironed. He pushed the basket back onto its chair and ran to the door. After pushing open the screen door, he jumped off the porch and turned to run alongside the house, heading towards the street.

2 A Stranger Comes to Jenckesville

The voice came out of the shadows of the covered porch in front of the Jenckesville Inn: “Charley, aren’t you going to come over to greet an old friend?”

The voice was that of Mr Cormier, one of his father’s friends, but Charley had to fight to move his eyes from the two horses being led from the stables across the street and on the other side of the railroad tracks from the Jenckesville Inn. Sometimes Charley had gone down to watch the grooms take care of the horses, even doing free work a few times so they wouldn’t kick him out. He’d not yet had many chances to ride saddled horses and only rarely got to go in a carriage, but he knew something about horses. Those horses being walked out of the stables were Morgans. Clearly, those beauties were high spirited by the standards of that calm breed, but they were reddish and his father was always telling him that red-heads were like that: spirited and prone to anger and other forms of excitement. “If you want a life of excitement, lad,” he’d said more than once, “find yourself a woman with red hair and flashing green eyes.”

Turning towards the Inn, the twelve year-old told himself that red horses were much more interesting than red-haired women, though he’d found his eyes straying the past year at school towards the pretty blonde hair of that Polish girl, Katia Chrzan. Mrs Browne had even caught his eyes once and had given him a silent warning to pay attention that she not have to embarrass him in front of the class. Not that that mattered much since it had already been decided that this past year was to be his last year in school. After all, he knew how to read and write and do arithmetic. His father, a tin-smith just like he was going to be, had even taught him a little bit of trigonometry that he would need for some of his work with metal and

with cutting machines. Mostly, from Charley's viewpoint and that of his father as well, six years of sitting in the classroom were more than enough.

Charley climbed the stairs and went over to smile at Mr Cormier, an Englishman who'd traveled over with his father on that first journey from Glasgow, shortly before Mr MacGregor's sister-in-law and future wife had come over with her mother. Mr Cormier gestured to the chair next to him, "Rest your weary bones here, lad. You might be young but these muggy days in this New Land will take the strength right out of the toughest Englishman. Or even a Scotsman, no matter how tough you people claim to be."

Thinking to protest that he was an American and not a Scotsman, he kept his tongue, remembering that Helen had once laughed after Mr Cormier had just left their house. "After all these years, he's an American with a Birmingham accent," she'd said, adding, "He even jokes like an American. I've watched as his dry English sense of humor had been plenty moistened by American waters over the past twenty years or so. But he still thinks he's as English as the King himself."

As Charley sat down, Mr Cormier asked him, "What are you up to, lad?"

"I'm down here to see if Helen's package comes in on the morning train, Mr Cormier."

"Ah, she's expecting a package, is she? Material for a new dress? Or maybe a gift from your Aunt Bea?"

"Aunt Bea is sending something, Sir."

"She knows not what?"

The twelve year-old boy shook his head but then remembered his manners, "No, Mr Cormier."

The train whistle sounded just then, relieving Charley of his fears he'd have to sit by Mr Cormier's side and listen to him tell stories for a while. Sometimes that was fun, but the boy had felt restless as soon as he'd gotten moving, as lazy as he'd felt while sitting in the kitchen watching his sister iron.

"Did I ever tell you about the buffalo hunt I saw when I first came to this country?"

And the train whistle sounded louder, giving a stronger excuse to head right out to the platform. Mr Cormier laughed and waved Charley on, and the lad ran down the long porch and onto the platform where passengers disembarked and personal freight items were unloaded. Sometimes the

train would then pull down to the lumber-yard where all large items were unloaded on the more massive dock with its ramps and built-in hoist, but sometimes the train was long enough that the freight cars could be down at the lumber-yard even while the passenger cars were at the dock near the inn.

Shooting by some of the town's lounge-about, Charley was at the edge of the platform only to hear the voice of Mr Toland, "Hey, boy!!" Looking over, he saw the station-master waving him back. The few steps he took backwards made little difference to his view of the incoming train since he stood near the corner of the platform closest to that direction of approach; he could see the smoking locomotive a hundred yards or so down the track. It was crossing North Street and running along parallel to Winsor Street and Hubbard Street, about halfway between the two. Once he'd been with Tommy Dunn in his backyard right there on Hubbard Street when the train had come through. The fireman had left his usual duties to stand at the door to the engine, hanging out a little ways so that he provided an extra set of eyes as the train rode through the heavily populated area. As the train had been passing, the big, red-headed man had called out a good morning to Mrs Dunn, calling her by name. It had been impressive to a young boy who'd thought his friend's mother actually knew one of these men who traveled all over New England, running the big coal-eating and smoke-belching engines, taking people from Springfield to Boston, and bringing parts for the mills on the return trip. His heart had sunk just a little when Tommy had explained, "We never so much as shook hands with Mr Kernighan. He's just real friendly when he rides by, hanging out of the engine's cab and looking for stray cows or little children. When it's moving slowly, we talk to him a bit, so we got to know his name and he got to know ours." In an effort to reclaim some of the prestige thrown away by his honest ways, Tommy had added, "Mr Kernighan lives up in Palmer and rides the train in to work every day."

As the train rolled slowly towards the platform, crossing onto Sewall Street, it wasn't Mr Kernighan but rather a short and slender man with dark hair who was lending the engineer another set of eyes. Those two men, with their soot-spotted overalls and their black-smudged faces waved and smiled as they rolled past the platform. The cow-catcher of the engine was edging past the start of the freight platform before Mr Toland gave the signal to stop. The engineer disengaged the lowest of the gears, a sound of magic to Charley's ears, as was the shrieking complaint of the big coal-

burning engine, upset as it was suddenly kept from doing its job of hauling people and freight around the countryside at terribly exciting speeds, thirty miles an hour. Some folk said that trains sometimes went above forty miles an hour on straightaways.

As the train had come to a halt, the cars had been positioned so that the passenger car, and there was only one, had stopped right in the center of the platform. Charley wandered back the short distance to where the station-master was talking to the train's conductor while signing for a couple small bags of mail, bags not looking as if they contained the sort of package Aunt Bea usually sent, but he wasn't really sure what she might have sent to Helen and he waited, at the back of the platform, his boredom returning. He was wondering if he should maybe head up and pretend to fish for the rest of the afternoon, figuring he would be digging up more garden when his father got home from the mill, probably at about quarter to four, but maybe an hour or so later if there was overtime. The year before the mills had laid off a lot of the regular workers, porters and sorters and loading-dock workers, and even skilled metal-workers like his father had not gotten their full hours every week. Things had improved but overtime wasn't coming often enough for his father's tastes. And that was why there were going to be more cabbages and carrots going in for late fall harvesting.

A few seconds later, the lad was watching as the downtown postmaster came onto the platform, heading for the station-master and the bags of mail when...

There were sounds a commotion on the passenger car. A mixture of grunts and sounds of protest could be heard though the only distinguishable word was "rude," and then the conductor broke away and rushed the short distance to the steps of the passenger cab. He was turning and about to climb onto the steps when a man came out of the car, rushing, no...

That man wasn't rushing. So far as Charley could tell, he was simply moving along, not paying much attention to what was in front of him. The conductor was brushed to the side, not violently, not with any signs of malice on the man's slack face. It was the same way a fisherman might have pushed aside a branch while he was making his way along the edge of a waterway, looking for a good place to cast his line in. And the man strode across the platform, heading for the stairs which would take him to the sidewalk on Sewall Street, though nearly everyone walked to the porch at the Jenckesville Inn and then onto the sidewalk by the Inn's stairs.

The conductor was looking at the man's retreating back, a cloud over

his face, but he spoke not a word when the station-master asked, "Who was that?"

The man had gone by, not fast but it had still been hard to see him well, as if he were surrounded by some sort of mist or maybe some magical spell. On an impulse, the twelve year-old lad headed after the man who was now making his way up Sewall Street towards the empty lot standing next to St Paul's Methodist Church. As he descended from the platform, the boy could hear the sounds of protest: "How rude can a person be?" asked one woman whose voice he couldn't identify. But he wasn't even interested enough to turn and look. Charley was striding down the street, keeping pace with the man now about twenty feet ahead of him.

The old man, for he looked old to a youngster, turned sharply just as he was about to take a step onto the empty lot next to the church. Left he headed, towards North Street perhaps, though the boy wasn't sure. There were a couple of small streets which he could take and still reach North Street, by slightly shorter distances, if he knew the layout of this neighborhood. As the old man had turned, Charley had seen he had a beard, mixed gray and brown, that went halfway down his chest. His hair also looked a bit long. In his denim pants and heavy wool shirt, the old man looked a lot like the prospectors in picture-books about the Old West.

The lad had loved those books back when he'd been real young, in the days when he'd thought there were still wild Indians and herds of buffalo that covered the plains for miles. Mr Cormier, who was full of all sorts of tales of those days, had spoken words of disappointment: "No, lad, in the last century, there were Arapaho and Sioux and Comanche. There were herds of buffalo that blackened the entire state of South Dakota. There were men like Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill Cody and the Earp brothers. But times have changed. We're in a new century and all of that is gone. Nowadays, there are farms and towns and even a lot of fast-growing cities, some of them with a lot more people than Springfield. There might even be some with more people than Boston."

For a while, Charley hadn't believed Mr Cormier, even when his father had told him it was so. Mr MacGregor could always be taken at his word for he was a man who could laugh heartily at a good tall-tale but told none of his own. He was the sort of man who mostly told the plain and honest truth.

The old man walked by Elm Street and Charley figured he was heading directly for North Street. He was wondering which way the fellow would

turn when Hubbard Street came to an end, but then the fellow surprised him by turning right on Maple Street, a block short of North Street. At the end of Maple, a short street, the fellow turned left, heading back towards North Street. To no surprise on the young boy's part, the strange man reached North Street and headed right with no hesitation at all.

The man was walking north, as if headed for the marshlands that lay a half-mile away. Heading up North Street, he would have to travel through a good two miles of wilderness, relatively dry that year because Spring rains had been light. On the other side of the wilderness lay Jenckesville Center where lived many of the old Yankee families which had founded the town shortly before the American Revolution. Farmland and pastures with a scattering of large white houses surrounded by flower gardens and well-trimmed forsythias and rhododendrons. No one had to actually wade though the marshland because there was a pretty good road for the dairymen and other farmers to carry their goods to downtown Jenckesville and to Springfield.

Jenckesville Center, as the up-country region was known, was a mysterious area to most of the downtowners. The up-country farmers came to downtown Jenckesville on a regular basis, not quite mixing with the Scottish immigrants or those from French Canada; those dour men, for the women rarely came to downtown, mostly went about their business of selling or delivering milk and cheese and fresh vegetables. Some of them were a little friendlier if a young lad made clear his admiration for men who drove horse-drawn wagons around for a living. Mr Chapin, in particular, let Charley ride on his wagon sometimes, when he was up early enough. By eight in the morning, Mr Chapin had finished making his downtown trips and deliveries and was up-country for the rest of the day. Each of the two regions even had its own Congregationalist church, though the downtown area also had a Methodist church and a small Catholic for the French-Canadians who were served by priests who came through at least once a month.

Charley had followed the man a minute or so up North Street when the stranger turned and looked back. Figuring he had been caught, he was about to turn to the side, pretending he'd just been coming up to go someplace, rather than coming up to follow the bearded man. There was no place to go hereabouts, but the stranger wouldn't have known that.

But the bearded fellow didn't turn and get angry; he didn't so much as focus his gaze upon the lad. Instead his eyes panned the area as if looking for something suspicious, but those eyes passed right by his pursuer as if he

were no more than one of the blueberry bushes growing in the boggy land just off the road.

The boy shivered and remembered that story about the invisible man. Had he become invisible? Maybe the fellow was blind? But no, he was making his way as if he could see fine.

The stranger finished panning the area that lay behind him and then ran his gaze quickly back across that same area, as if thinking he might catch something he'd missed the first time. Frozen in place, Charley imagined he could feel the man's eyes pass over him, and the fellow's head movement did jerk the tiniest bit as his vision arrived at the lad. But then he continued looking the land over that second time. As if he'd not seen anyone following him up the road, he turned and continued north, walking up to the land of the Old Yankee farmers.

Hesitating for just a few seconds, the young fellow burned with a vague curiosity and he decided to continue following the man. After all, his sister had tried to send him up to this very area—where his favorite fishing holes were. And he wasn't very far from downtown. He'd often gone farther even when he wasn't supposed to be away from home. He wasn't like some of his friends who'd never been more than a few minutes walk away from downtown Jenckesville. It wasn't for nothing that he already had the reputation as being a boy who knew these marshes and woods as well as any grown man in town, as well as any of the fishermen and hunters. Charley had even explored some of the fields and woodlands near Jenckesville Center, occasionally running into the farmers and managing to have a conversation with some of those stone-faced fellows.

Up the road strode the man, though he didn't so much stride as just mechanically move, seeming almost like a puppet being moved about rather than a man moving through the world, purpose perhaps lying behind the movement but not being part of the body. A pleasantly fearful shiver passed up the twelve year-old spine as Charley imagined himself an invisible boy following a thing that looked like a man but was really one of those mechanical contraptions like that duck that his father and Mr Cormier had discussed: a long time ago in Europe someone had built a duck out of metal that could quack and walk about and eat grain and even take a dump after the grain had been ground up in its stomach of steel or copper or whatever metals the inventor had used. His father, a skilled metal-worker had thought about looking into the matter further, but had decided he'd do better by adding more ground to his garden.

A Gypsy?

Maybe the stranger was a Gypsy?

Never having seen one, Charley was pretty sure they looked more exotic than this fellow. His father had been apprenticed to a Gypsy when he'd learned the tin-smith trade back in Scotland. Several times, he'd heard his father tell people that there were no people more skilled with metal than those wandering folk but he'd never spoken to either deny or confirm their reputation as a strange people.

Having followed the bearded man for nearly fifteen minutes, the lad was back to wondering if this man was an Old West prospector. In the books they looked just like this fellow. Denim pants, wool shirt. A heavy belt around his waist and it looked to be no more than a partially tanned strap of leather with a simple hook attached, the same sort of a hook that they used in the mills and at the railway loading dock when they were strapping something up to lift it. His boots looked to be the same sort that the common laborers wore when they were digging out the foundations for a new house. That reminded Charley that the mill's crews were putting up new houses up off of East Street on some new roads which had been cleared and paved early in the Spring.

He paused, thought about turning around to go watch the construction workers, but then decided to follow the stranger. He had nearly the whole of the afternoon. When his father came home, some time between 3:30 and 5:00, Charley would have to do some work and then get ready for dinner at 6:00, maybe followed by some more digging and hoing. He looked up and saw the sun was still approaching the high point in the sky. There was plenty of time to walk up nearly to the up-country farms and back before his father would get out of the metal-shop, even if he had no overtime. Five miles would take him to the border of Belchertown and he had timed himself often. He could go a mile in twenty minutes walking at a comfortable pace, fifteen minutes if he double-timed it, and as fast as ten minutes if he were running several miles at once. If he moved too fast, he might be too tired to work as hard in the garden as his father would expect, but he would take the chance.

Nearly an hour after the pursuit had begun, they reached and passed the First Congregationalist Church which was already a mile or so into the domain of the Old Yankee families. The street had changed name by this point, becoming Center Street though it was pretty much a continuation of North Street. The boy drifted a little towards the side of the road, putting

himself in the shade of the trees which had been left standing to line the road when most of up-country Jenckesville had been cleared for fields or pasture land. Not really wanting to start talk amongst the farmers and their wives, he was hoping the shade would keep him out of sight of the up-country folk. Many of them knew Charley, at least by sight, as a downtown boy. Though they were somewhat accustomed to seeing him in the wilderness or, rarely, in the up-country region, they might still be wondering what he'd be doing up here on this particular day. Those who didn't know him might well be more suspicious at the sight of a strange man followed by a strange boy. Downtown folk would mostly gossip about a stranger who didn't seem harmful; up-country folk might well summon the constable or maybe pick up a shot-gun and go out to ask some questions themselves.

Onward the man traveled, followed and not seeming to care, if he even noticed. Charley was wondering if he hadn't made himself more suspicious by trying to stay out of sight. Still, he hadn't seen anyone and wasn't sure if anyone had seen him. A half-hour or so after the pair had passed the First Congregationalist Church, Turkey Hill came into plain view off to the left, lying between the reservoir and Belchertown. He'd only seen the reservoir twice since it had been completed the prior summer and was reminded of his plans to fish it soon, though there were signs posted at the gates to the grounds saying that no one except authorized personnel were to enter. It might be a little risky to go into that forbidden territory since there were workers on the grounds much of the time during the day and also a caretaker who had a house on the grounds, but Charley could move fast and freely through the woods.

Charley was bored and his mind was wandering as he walked along. "What is happening back at home?" he asked himself only to be answered, "Not much at all. Maybe Helen is cleaning the living-rooms or maybe she's headed out for the store to buy something for supper. Five year-old George is probably trying to take something apart, or maybe he's already done it and is putting it back together."

There was no sense to thinking much about his little sister. Though he loved little Margaret dearly, her little-girl cuteness didn't interest him much. George was more fun. And he was young enough that people mostly laughed at his antics, like the time he'd taken apart a pump that his father was supposed to fix for one of the up-country farmers. It had been an important piece of equipment since the farmer used it to fill the water-troughs for his dairy cattle, but Mr MacGregor had only laughed when he'd

gone out into the back-yard where he'd left the pump on a canvas tarp the prior night. George had managed to get the gaskets out, damaging them a little but they were needing replaced anyway. He'd also gotten some of the casing bolts out; no one could figure out how a five year-old could have had the strength to...

Detecting an important change, Charley pushed aside his line of thought and watched the stranger walk across Center Street as they drew near Turkey Hill. Feeling the journey was coming to an end pretty soon, Charley barely hesitated before crossing the street and following the stranger onto a road that led into the woods. The road was as much an immediate curiosity as the odd fellow moving into the woods. Since no one had ever shown any interest in clearing Turkey Hill, why had someone cleared a road into the woods? Did that road climb up the hill, at least partway if not all the way to the top? He was thinking it would be a tremendous view. He'd probably be able to see all the way to the town-center in Belchertown, where he'd been only once, the prior September when he had helped his father repair a metal roof on a church steeple. From the top of Turkey Hill, a person would certainly have a panoramic view of downtown Jenckesville with the large brick mill buildings lying along the Chicopee River and enough clear spots in the trees to let him identify the areas most heavily built up with houses. In fact, the areas with the newer houses had often been stripped of trees to make the construction easier, making it easier to pick those areas out from afar, so long as you were looking from a high spot.

A couple hundred yards up the road, the sound of buzz-saws could be made out not much further up the road; someone was clearing some trees in this area, likely to provide some lumber for the construction in downtown. The stranger stopped and looked in the direction of the wood-cutting operation, but then turned to his right and took a step towards the lower slopes of Turkey Hill. He took only that step before looking back. For just a second, Charley thought the fellow had seen him; after all, the boy was standing in the open in the middle of the logging trail cut wide enough for a large wagon to haul equipment in and lumber out. No. The stranger looked back in his pursuer's direction, looked to his left and to his right, even above his head as if expecting to see something in the trees overhead. And then his head jerked downwards and he looked right at the boy, but he blinked and seemed to lose sight of Charley once more. And he turned and walked up the wooded slope of Turkey Hill.

Needing to get back and feeling a bit nervous about following the fellow

up the hill, Charley turned around and headed back towards downtown Jenckesville, fearing he might already be in trouble if anyone had seen him wandering about way up-country. He would have had an excuse if he'd only had a fishing-pole in hand, along with a can of worms, but what could he say under the circumstances? Would it have been sufficient, or even polite and decent, to say he'd been curious about another human being, a rather strange one at that?

3 An Interrogation

As was his custom, Mr MacGregor came home and went up to his room, after telling his oldest son to fetch him a bucket of water. He was already stripped down to his undershirt when Charley came up with the water, but he'd put on an expression which was bothersome to the boy, though it was not an expression of anger on his father's face but rather much the same expression his father wore when he was trying to build a replacement part for an engine and thinking how he might be able to work a piece of metal into such an odd shape.

Thinking it best to skeddadle, Charley filled his father's wash-basin half-full and then set the bucket down beside the stand. He turned towards the door saying, "I'll be back to fetch the dirty water when you're done, Dad," but he'd gotten no more than a step when he heard his father tell him, "Sit down, lad. There's a matter that needs discussing and now seems as good a time as any."

The nervous lad sat on the edge of the bed, as he usually did, and waited, wondering if the axe were about to fall.

"Mr Upham was down delivering cream to the office building at the mills and he stopped by to tell me you were seen up past the First Church early this afternoon."

"Yes, sir, I was up there." To fill in what seemed to him an uncomfortable pause, Charley added, "I was just out and about, exploring. I'm always exploring around the marshlands and ponds."

"Exploring. A fine activity that is, lad. And maybe you have the makings of a Richard Burton in you, Charley." With that, Mr MacGregor grew silent once more as he set to shave, first stropping his straight-edge a few times. This was often a relaxing time for father and son alike, the father seeming to enjoy his second shave of the day as much as the son enjoyed watching it. But the next stage in the ritual was the part that

the lad liked best to watch: the waxing of Mr MacGregor's magnificent handle-bar mustache. And then he would put on his second-best suit, even knowing he'd be working a bit in the garden. Sometimes it seemed crazy to an twelve year-old boy who liked wearing old clothes. That way no one got upset when he slipped down a muddy bank and came home covered with algae as well as mud.

"There's such a thing as exploring too far from home, Charley. You're still a wee mannie as your mother would have said, a man, but a very young man. You could get hurt in a place where no one would go for days. And there are some suspicious characters around. I've never tried to make the world seem more civilized or more gentle than it is, Charley, so you know there are men who carry knives and guns and enjoy using them."

Mr MacGregor finished shaving himself and wiped the soap from his face, rubbing in some lotion at the end of the ritual. The smell of lavender was filling the room when the man turned to his son and gave something less than a smile. "Don't you be heading for regions so far away while you're so young, Charley." Mr MacGregor turned and looked into the mirror over the wash-basin. After an inspection of a few seconds, he seemed to decide that he'd done a decent job of shaving and he turned back to his son. "If you give me your word to use your common sense, we'll say no more about this matter."

"You have my word, Dad."

"You're already a man of honor and your word is good enough for me."

And then began the waxing of that magnificent mustache. The world seemed to be in good order so far as an admiring son could tell.

4 A Man of Honor But Not a Scotsman

With his muscles pleasantly sore from digging up another patch of yard, Charley set out with his brother George to get themselves ice cream cones or maybe a bag of chocolates or cinnamon hots. His father had been so pleased with his oldest son's work in the garden that he'd given him a nickel to get a treat for himself and one for George. And Charley thought that he'd earned his treat. He and his father had dug up enough ground that they would be able to put in another row of turnips as well as some more carrots and cabbages, all crops that would grow into the cold weather and could be easily stored over winter.

With George running ahead, Charley was strutting down Winsor Street, hearing over and over again his father's words: "You're already a man of honor and your word is good enough for me." From an early age, he had told himself it was best to stick to the rules you'd been taught. Not that Mr MacGregor taught his son a lot of rules of behavior, telling him instead that a man needed to do what was right but needed freedom to maneuver in a difficult world. And he had heard him tell the minister once that "A boy that's always well-behaved might not have what it takes to survive in a world like this one." Even when he'd broken a rule or two, Charley had always told the truth. Originally, it had been for a practical reason: if you were going to get a wallop, you might as well take it like a man, like "a wee mannie" as his mother would have said. That way, you got it over and you avoided the few extra smacks for lying.

Well, he hadn't done too many things deserving a wallop. He smoked a cigarette occasionally when he was given one by one of the guys who hung around the stables or around the Inn; they thought it was funny to see a twelve year-old smoking and were surprised the lad could handle it without

even coughing. He'd been caught smoking by his father once; it had been a cigar and that had been enough to make him sick. His father hadn't punished him badly, telling him it was enough to be sick, but Charley had not been able to go on the wagon ride up to pick pumpkins with the youth group from church.

No, he wasn't given to too much in the way of bad behavior, and he only smoked a few cigarettes a week. Rather than getting into mischief, he preferred to use his extra energy to fish and to do extra chores, for his father or the neighbors; that way he might earn the money for a hunting rifle, though it seemed his father would not let him have one for several years more. Mr MacGregor wasn't opposed to getting Charley a rifle, but he'd told his son that he didn't see much practical need for it. "Most ways you could use a rifle right now would be wrong and might get us all in trouble." The suggestion arose that there was a need to protect the garden from raccoons and skunks, but Mr MacGregor had said that no one should be shooting a rifle in a neighborhood where the houses were only fifty feet or so apart. "If the varmints become a serious problem, a few traps set around the garden at night will do fine."

Having been lost in dreams of a hunting rifle, Charley looked ahead to see no George on the sidewalk between him and the intersection where East Street and Winsor Street crossed at a diagonal. His eyes shot here and there, his heart was filling with panic and a vague dread; he was starting to wonder how a man of honor could have lost track of a five year-old brother when he noticed a small crowd of both adults and children near a house that was one building up from the point where East St and Winsor St crossed. Not sure if George was with them or gone ahead, Charley ran up near the house but didn't run onto the yard until he saw George in the middle of the crowd face-to-face with a lad who was about his age.

He tried to push his way in to get to George's side but was first thrown back and off-balance by a mere wave of an arm by a heavily muscled and stocky fellow. That man, only about five or six years older than Charley, turned around and laughed.

"Look," he spoke in a Scottish brogue as thick as the meat pudding in a haggis, "there's anither o' these Yankee deils."

Regaining his balance and coming forward again, determined to get to his brother's side and protect them, he let the fellow know, "I'm not a Yankee devil." As he came up to confront the young man, he realized he was nearly as tall as this fellow but a good forty pounds short of him, all of

that additional bulk on the young man being solid muscle so far as could be told from looking at him.

“Deil haet, this Suthron bairn can speak the true tongue o’ God.”

“Nae, he spake like a Yankee but he knaes a word or two o’ the Scots’ tongue. It be a matter worthy of pondering.” The words had come from a pleasant looking young woman who’d come up alongside the brawny young man, putting her hand upon his arm as if to keep him under control. “Don’t be starting trouble, Sawnie. Not on your first day in the country.”

Despite the pleasant tone to the woman’s voice, despite the friendly smile she passed Charley’s way, he spoke in a defiant voice, “I am Scottish. And so is my brother George.”

That woman kept on smiling as Charley realized she’d dropped the thickness of her brogue a bit when she’d started scolding the young man. She was clearly not on her first day in the country, and she did look familiar. A week or so ago, she’d been in Townes’ Department Store buying a pile of blankets and sheets. He’d heard her tell the clerk that her parents and her brothers and sisters were arriving soon from Arbroath in Scotland.

Despite the young woman’s strong presence, the Yankee who claimed to be somewhat Scottish was facing off with the burly young man, though neither was making a real threat of physical violence. Though feisty and a bit aggressive in his tone of voice, the recent immigrant from Scotland showed no signs of using his young adult strength against the twelve year-old boy. And, then, from a short distance came a young voice heavy with a lowland Scot’s brogue: “Ye’re not a Scotsman,” followed by George’s protest, “I’m an American but my dad and my mom are Scots.” A wave of embarrassment brought a flush to Charley’s cheek as he realized George’s voice was indistinguishable from that of any Yankee child in town. And he knew his voice was no different. The two brothers were able to understand words spoken in a thick brogue and even had a small vocabulary of words peculiar to the Scots’ dialect of English, but neither of them could have put on a convincing brogue.

Charley broke away from his staring contest with the muscular young Scot. Walking through the small crowd, which parted for him as if he were someone special, he came up alongside his brother and said defiantly, “Call us Yankees if you wish. We are, I guess, but our father is a Scotsman and our late mother was a Scotswoman.” With that, he took George by the hand and led him back out through the crowd. As they was heading for the sidewalk, the two boys passed by a matronly woman of stern expression,

but the sternness was directed at the crowd of immigrants rather than the two departing lads. The two brothers were not yet out of the yard when they heard a powerful woman's voice asking, "Sawnie, are ye turnin' my bairntime into a pack of hooligans before we're e'en settled in this new land? And, Mary, why didn't ye stop the upset?"

Before they were far down the street, Charley turned around to see what might be happening with the woman and those she was scolding, but there were two figures detached from the small crowd who drew his attention. A man had come out of the house and stood watching the young Yankees leaving. The man had a powerful upper body but legs that were stunted and deformed, bowing under him. He stood with the assistance of two canes. At his side stood a girl near twelve. She might have been one of those who'd been gathered around George and the younger boy he had been arguing with. The man and the girl who might have been his daughter or granddaughter turned and went their way, as did the two brothers, who were soon talking about the choice between an ice cream cone and a handful of candy.

An image came into his mind of the display of candy jars. There were black licorice sticks and red licorice sticks. Gum-balls and jelly bears. Malted chocolate balls and chocolate bars. Hard candies, hot or sweet. And there was the ice-cream: chocolate and vanilla and strawberry and usually a special flavor as well. Sometimes pistachio or vanilla with chips of chocolate. Sometimes even mint-flavored vanilla with chips of chocolate.

5 The Hermit Settles In

A week passed to find Charley standing in the living-room and feeling irritated by the pleasant laugh of his sister Helen. She looked over at him from her seat on the couch, three year-old Margaret at her side, a copy of *Aesop's Fables* on her lap. "Yes, Father said that you and George can both go in and sit with him and Mr Cormier if you wish. In any case, Mr Cormier brought over bottles of root-beer for all of us. You can go and open the bottles for George and Margaret and bring them in before you join them." With another laugh, she pointed out, "George doesn't look to be interested in going in, so it'll be just you men in there." And she laughed again in that same annoyingly pleasant way.

Truth to tell, George had settled into a corner of the room where an old rug had been spread while he busily took apart and re-assembled various doo-dads that his father had fixed up for him. There were metal boxes that hinged together at one side or another; other boxes that hooked together at corners. There was even an assembly of gears and small drive-shafts that looked to Charley a bit like the insides of a large music-box. His father had told him it was a worn-out part to a machine that moved over a paper tape, looking for holes in that paper, holes which represented patterns and were turned into movements of a machine. There were no such machines in the Jenckesville mills which were mostly processing raw jute into various sorts of fibers which would be shipped to other plants to be woven into linen or various sorts of twine or rope. Mr MacGregor had told his son there might be machines of that sort in the mills before long as the managers were considering an expansion into weaving operations now that skilled weavers were in town and a full weaving operation would include both tape-driven weaving machines and also machines operated by people. As it had turned out, one of the skilled weavers was Mary MacDonald, the young woman who'd scolded that rather pushy Scottish immigrant the day that George

had decided to insist he was a Yankee with a difference, a Scottish difference.

Charley quickly finished his task, bringing in root beer for his brother and sister—Mr MacGregor had insisted the drink be poured into small glasses for the young ones, especially if they were drinking in the living-room. And, himself allowed to drink from a bottle like his father and Mr Cormier, the proud twelve year-old was soon sitting at the kitchen table, his father at his right and Mr Cormier directly across. The men had already been joking and telling each other little bits of gossip for ten minutes. Charley couldn't make sense of the strange tales Mr Cormier was weaving.

“So, I guess I could summarize it and say the fellow made a fortune in the Yukon gold-rush, which fortune was stolen by his partners before the same fellow took that fortune that he no longer had down to San Francisco where he lost it to the intrigues of seven or eight loose women from France and China and South Carolina.” He'd cast a quick glance at Charley and then at Mr MacGregor as he'd spoken of loose women but went on to say, “And then he went off to the war in Cuba where he was a cowardly hero who caused the loss of the same unit of cavalymen he'd gone on to save. Suffering from a bad case of the nerves, after all he wasn't sure himself if he were a rich hero or a coward who'd had a fortune stolen from him several times. . .” Mr Cormier and Mr MacGregor both laughed before the tale was finished, “And having no other place to go, he picked the town of Jenckesville off a map of New England and came up here, not knowing the town at all, though he made his way along the streets, without a bit of hesitation, heading to the very hill where he has decided to live the rest of his life, grieving over his lost fortune, his lost heart, his lost honor, but happy that he's still a rich hero with a buried chest filled with gold doubloons.”

The two men laughed again and Mr MacGregor said, “Most men are surely fools and never aspire to anything better, but I'm glad on the whole that the men around here spend their time on such wasteful gossip rather than turning their energies to the evil that lies deep in their souls.”

Mr Cormier laughed and accused his friend, “You may be attending a Congregationalist church. . .”

“Not often, though Helen had expressed the desire that the children be brought up in church. I do my best to go with them to church on Christmas and Easter and I send the boys to Sunday School each week.”

Mr MacGregor cast a silently heavy gaze upon his son for several seconds and then he turned his attention back to the grinning friend who corrected

and finished his accusation, "An unfaithful Congregationalist you might be now, but, in your heart, you're still a Presbyterian of the strongest Calvinist sort."

Charley suddenly realized they'd been talking about the stranger he'd followed up to Turkey Hill. As if to confirm it, his father said, "And the poor soul has settled in on Turkey Hill?"

Mr Cormier nodded and said, "I might joke about you having a black view of human nature. . ."

"I wouldn't deny my opinion that there is some blackness in the heart of every man, though I don't have a Calvinist's faith that God will forgive some men of that blackness and cast all others who are no worse into eternal flame."

"Well, you're not the only one in town who feels there is some blackness in the hearts of men, at least in the hearts of some men. Our up-country neighbors noticed right away that a stranger was in their midst, though not introducing himself or even saying a word. Over the past week, they have inventoried all their belongings and now they don't go to bed before counting every sheep and cow, every spade or wheel-barrow in their sheds, every piece of silverware and every pie and cookie in their pantries."

Mr MacGregor snorted. "It didn't take that poor stranger to make those Old Yankees like that. From my very first day in this town, I could see they were as tight as a Glasgow merchant. Every man jack of them, and their women as well."

"You're not a man given to speaking your views in soft words, Bill."

"I wouldn't deny that, and I wouldn't be inclined to take it as an insult, even if you had intended it that way."

"No, Bill, and I'd agree with you on that. Honesty is one of the virtues that can add a bit of nobility to even a man given to the most forbidden of sins."

The men sat and sipped on their root-beers for a few moments, Charley also sipping away and feeling wonderful to be considered worthy of sitting with the men at the kitchen table.

"So, the mills might be going into the weaving business, Bill?"

Bill MacGregor looked intently at the table for a second before saying, "There's no reason for them not to go into the weaving business. Of course, I'm not sure there's a good reason to do it, either. As things stand, Jenckesville has no particular resource other than the flow of the Chicopee River. There are some skilled workers in town, but not many, at least not yet. We

have some trouble recruiting experienced tin-smiths, whatever people might say about New England being filled with skilled craftsmen. The managers are all from Scotland or England. Except Bert Cummins, and he's from Richmond, Virginia by way of that engineering college near Boston. . . .”

Mr Cormier laughed. “You better show more respect than that for MIT or someone might suggest you be sent back out through Ellis Island.”

“That hell-hole! I'm damned glad I came over when a civilized man could come right from Glasgow to Boston without having to strip naked or be humiliated by questions about his ability to make a living.”

“You've got that right. I was talking to James MacDonald this morning when I happened to get to the mills a bit early. I needed to calculate some figures for my department and expected to be too busy to do it during working hours. Anyway, that poor fellow just over from Scotland had just arrived at the mills, struggling along on those twisted legs of his, his daughter Mary carrying his lunch-pail for him. He told me his children, including Mary, went home for lunch, but it's too much of a struggle for him to make the trip more than twice a day. At that, he told me that walking on his legs on a bad day is far better than being humiliated. He was down to his skivvies and standing in front of a doctor smelling of rum while that doctor was telling him the United States didn't need any more cripples and beggars. It got no better when a second doctor showed up. As sober as one of the up-country Yankees, the second doctor was even more convinced the country didn't need a man with legs curling up underneath him.”

6 A Community Get-together

Two more weeks passed and another Saturday arrived, but it wasn't any old Saturday. There was to be a community picnic at the downtown park on East St and facing the mill's main office building, followed by a dance at the new community center on Chestnut St which ran along that same park. The center had been built in honor of one of the previous owners of the mill-complex, a Scottish engineer, his widow putting up most of the money but the current owners had put in a lot of money as well according to Mr Cormier. Charlie had also heard from Mr Cormier that Mr Stephenson had been well-known to the current owners, a group of Scottish investors, mostly bankers and marine insurers who had cash to throw into other people's businesses. Some of that had been beyond the world-view of an twelve year-old, but he'd understood the part about the mills being closed for the afternoon, in honor of Mr Stephenson.

It would be the first time that most people in town would have a chance to see the insides of the community center—the swimming pool and the basketball court and the music and crafts rooms. The mill workers were being encouraged to go to the picnic. It was to be a grand party, nearly three hundred people were expected and the mill company was supplying hot dogs and soda and watermelon. The managers had encouraged the supervisors to organize baseball games for the young men and field games for the young women and the children. That was the problem for Charley. His father, in telling him about the picnic, had not made it clear whether the lad should consider himself a young man or a child for the purpose of the sports and games.

And the twelve year-old lad, lay in bed wondering if his father had been true in telling him he was a 'man of honor'. And he wondered if he could be a 'man of honor' but also be considered too young to play baseball with the young men. He could already field the ball better than most teenaged

men in town, better than most of the men in their twenties. He could also make good contact with the ball though he was honest in realizing he hadn't the bulk yet to hit the ball very far. Still, he could place it between the infielders or maybe just over their heads. And some of those older fellows knew Charley could play with them. He'd played with them in pick-up games before, though they'd been letting him play just to fill a hole in the field. He'd done his best to show them he could hold his own on a sports field.

Just as he was throwing off the sheet but not quite rising, a shadow came over him. Helen had entered his bedroom and was standing between his bed and the window, her arms crossed over her chest and an expression on her face which was hard to read, though Charley thought she was not quite amused but not quite angry. "Are ye expecting your breakfast to be served in bed, Lad?" Helen's relapse into a brogue was enough to let him know that he shouldn't try any sort of wise remark. She might not be angry quite yet, but she was a bit piqued.

"I'll get right up." With that he jumped up and turned to throw his sheet and bed-cover up over the bed so that they were somewhat flat. Helen shook her head but was smiling when Charley told her, "I was just planning what I would do at the picnic today."

"Well, get moving. You'd do yourself a favor if you went out and helped Father mow the lawn and trim the hedges before you head off somewhere." Stepping forward to fix the mess he'd made of his bed, Helen added, "But take yourself at least a few mouthful of the oatmeal that's sitting on the stove. Even little Margaret is already up and fed and ready for Mrs Cormier to take her to the picnic."

With mixed feelings, he asked, "How about George?"

Helen looked at him, a bit of curiosity showing in her eyes, but she turned back to straightening the bed-clothes and merely said, "She'll be taking him as well. She'll have her nephew from the Orchard and he's six but really not even as mature as George. They'll have fun together, I'm sure."

"As long as George doesn't try to take him apart to see how he works."

Charley's heart had not been in his joke, and Helen must have detected his troubled feelings because she looked at him for just a second, and then gestured for him to sit down on the edge of his bed.

"Is something bothering you, Charley?"

Helen's voice was soft, flattened towards a Yankee accent. It was that

which kept him from refusing to talk though he had little hope she would understand. After all, she was his sister and what would girls or women understand about...

“Dad told me about the activities at the picnic and the young men are going to be playing baseball while the boys and the little children and the girls have sack-races and play dumb games.”

“Ah, I think I see. You’re a betweenner, Charley, that’s for sure.”

He bolted into a rigidly upright sitting position and stared at his sister for a second or two before she deigned to explain, “In many ways, you’re a man, but you’re also an twelve year-old boy. You’re between the two stages of life. Dad is doing his best to bring you along to manhood but you’re still pretty slender compared to some of those beefy young men.”

“I can field a ball better than almost all of them. I can also hit almost any pitcher in town.”

“But how far can you hit the ball?”

“I can put it between the infielders. Sometimes.”

Helen smiled in a manner that seemed to indicate sympathy but Charley thought she was likely amused as well. He rose from his bed and told her, “I guess we’ll see what happens. Maybe I’ll try to play baseball with the young men.”

“And I hope they’ll let you if that’s what you really want.” With that, she set to work again on the bed and he left.

* * * * *

“That was a fine game you played there, Charley.” Zeke Carter, the hero of the game was smiling at the lad while both were applying plenty of mustard to hot dogs which had just come off the large charcoal grill. A good ballplayer, on top of being a man of honor, he beamed and decided he might never take off the red ribbon pinned to his cap. He’d been on the winning team, the Reds and they’d walloped the Blues, 11-4. Zeke Carter had been the real hero with his two home-runs and his double, knocking in six of the runs, but Charley had made it to base all three times he was up, the first time by hitting a single right over second base, the second time on a walk, and then he had hit a hard grounder between the second-baseman and the first-baseman. And he had done well when he’d been in the field, throwing two guys out from his position at second base. He was happy though he’d not so much as scored a run. He’d been placed down in the

order and his side had been put out before one of the good hitters, like Zeke, could have knocked him in.

Still, he was happy enough that he didn't even care that Zeke just walked off without another word to him, heading towards a gathering of men and women in their twenties. Since Zeke had complimented Charley, he knew he had a good chance of being invited to play with the young men at picnics or maybe even in one of the local leagues—maybe not that for a year or two. He'd been by far the youngest player in the baseball game and he'd done well.

A smile remained on the boy's face as he wandered over to the edge of the park and looked out on East Street and towards the clock which towered over the near end of the mill complex. He stood there, eating his hot dog and was just swallowing the last bite, a smile still on his face, when he looked a bit more to his left and saw an odd figure shuffling down Chestnut Street, around the corner and over to the main-door of Townes' Department Store. Charley knew by the long, grayish beard that it was the stranger who had gone to camp out on Turkey Hill. There were some who said he'd settled down to live there for good, but Mr MacGregor had denied that anyone could have known such a thing: "So far as I understand, the poor soul has not exchanged a word with anyone. Mr Pincker, the assistant manager of Townes', told me he didn't even say a word when he went shopping the day after he'd come to town. Just pointed to what he wanted, used hand signals to say he only wanted six cans of peas and a couple cans of ham, and then he paid silently."

And then the stranger stepped back from the door to the store; he was in a state of confusion, so far as could be seen from fifty yards away. The lad knew there was a sign on the door saying the store was closed for ordinary business but Mr Pincker was available at the soda cooler for emergency purchases. The man turned back towards the park and began to walk along the sidewalk, looking neither to the left nor to the right. Rather than turning up Chestnut Street, he kept on along East Street. It seemed the fellow was probably on his way over to fetch Mr Pincker and maybe complain about this inconvenience and the fellow did come on, crossing Chestnut Street rather than turning to walk back up the way he had come.

Just as he was across the street and at the corner of the park, Bret Osborne's dog ran over and set himself in front of the stranger, baring his teeth and growling as if he intended a serious attack. There was something that Scout didn't like about the fellow; the dog's hackle was standing and

he was braced for a charge. Charley took a step forward and prepared to run at Scout, who knew him and wouldn't bite him. In that split instant, he heard movement behind him as if others were readying themselves to assist a man about to be attacked by that black and brown beast that was a bit on the mean side, though he'd never yet bitten anyone.

The stranger simply walked on as if he'd not even noticed the dog was there. He walked through the dog or rather through the spot the dog had been standing on, for Scout had gone to the side, onto the grass of the park and was now on his belly and whining as if he'd just been bitten by something particularly nasty. And the stranger walked past, but, close up, Charley saw no sign of nastiness, not even any anger in the fellow's face. Having been thrown slightly off-step by the store being closed, he seemed to be just accepting the blow and getting on with his life. He was heading around the curve where East Street turned into North Street and then he kept on walking, five miles or better to go before he reached his camp-ground, his home if you wanted to call it that.

Part II

Character and Principles

7 Revelations

Charley turned to Alexander Bain and put out his hands for the whiskey jug being passed around. The young man laughed and passed it right by the younger man and into the hands of George MacDonald who was home from the sea for a month or so to see his folks and siblings in the New World. George also laughed, and Charley, only fourteen—though out of school and working for nearly three years, sat back and sulked.

“Be ye careful, Sawnie,” spoke George in a serious tone, “I hear this tough young laddie has already faced you up several times and let you off each time. So far.”

Sawnie laughed and nodded his head. “The first time was my very first day in Jenckesville. Charley was all of eleven, maybe twelve on a good day, and probably about eighty pounds on a better day. And I was irritable from working my passage across the Atlantic under a captain that would have made Bligh seem like gentle Jesus Himself.”

“And you backed down, did ye.” George threw a wink at the lad he’d playfully insulted and who was now sitting back and sulking. Taking a quick slug of the whiskey, George passed it on to Fergus MacAlister who had just returned from dancing a brutally athletic jig with Minnie, one of the MacDonald sisters.

Sawnie nodded and said, “Though it was really Mary MacDonald who backed me down. From the look in her eyes, I knew she was about to belt me with the closest hard object available.”

It was Fergus who suggested, “Maybe she would have hit you a good one with her brother Jimmy. If she’d gotten you with his head, it would have knocked you clean out.”

Charley looked up to see Jimmy standing just in front of the group, smiling tolerantly as they teased his eight year-old self. Laughing hard, George MacDonald and Sawnie Bain and Fergus MacAlister all jumped up

as the piper and the whistler stood and readied to play another jig. They shot across the large and open space which was the kitchen and work-room of the house the MacDonald family rented. Those young men were headed towards the gathering of young women across the room. Not Charley who was little inclined to dance, and certainly not one of the strange and demanding jigs from the old country. At that he'd been attending parties at the MacDonalds for a year or so for the good food and the cheerful atmosphere and friendly talk.

Jimmy looked as if he were maybe wishing he were somewhere else, smoking on one of the cigars he always seemed to have, and could smoke without so much as a cough, as young as he was. Or maybe he would have been happy just fishing or wandering about away from the adults. "Why'd you even want a drink of that poison, Charley?"

"As much as you smoke, you've never wanted to have a good, stiff drink?"

Jimmy shook his head and looked over, a grimace on his face. "Not after seeing what it does to my father."

"He doesn't drink so much anymore."

And, by coincidence, Margaret and James MacDonald happened to look across the room at the two lads who were standing there and watching the older youths dance. They exchanged waves before the dancers charged between them.

"He still gets loaded sometimes, Charley."

"He's got a better excuse than most men who drink." The bottle made its way to the MacDonalds, and then it was handed to Margaret, the matriarch of the family, the one who'd held everything together when James MacDonald's drinking had lost him his fancy shoe-shop and shoe-factory both. She didn't seem to hold the stuff to blame, passing the jug on to her husband without so much as an expression of warning. And James Gordon took a sip before grabbing a cork from the table behind him. He corked up the jug and set it on the floor.

That jug had looked inviting close-up and it still looked inviting on the other side of the dance-floor. Charley would have liked a sip. He'd not had many chances to drink, but he'd liked it when he had tasted the stuff. Once he'd been allowed a sip of whiskey by Sawnie Bain when no one else was around. The whiskey had burned his throat but it had made him feel good inside, and made his head delightfully light. A couple of other times, he'd had a few good swigs of table wine made by a friendly old Portuguese fellow

who worked in the metal shop down at the mill. The old fellow had even brought out some white lightning once, table wine which had been distilled like whiskey. It had been even more powerful than the whiskey Sawnie had given him. And it had burned more, but even that strong medicine had tasted mighty good. After his eyes had stopped watering, that is.

The two boys remained silent for the few minutes that it took the jig to finish. As the dancers were bowing to each other, thanking each other for the pleasure, and bowing to the musicians, Jimmy turned to Charley, "Yeah, the old man's all right, but he almost beat my brother George senseless back in Scotland. That was when Mom sent George to sea. And the old man scared the rest of us a few times." Then he laughed. "Except Mary, of course, but she isn't scared of anyone she's met. Wonder if there is anyone on Earth who could scare my sister."

It didn't seem likely but Charley didn't say anything, partly because Maggie MacDonald was trying to catch his eye without making it look that way. She had been doing things like that lately, flashing him looks with those clear bluish-green eyes, blushing in a way that made him wonder if she could do that on purpose. They'd talked several times, but not about anything much, a couple of times about a party or a town picnic coming up, but usually about their families. And that got old pretty quickly for a fourteen year-old boy and a thirteen year-old girl.

"I think Maggie really likes you." Jimmy's tone was off-hand and communicated mostly a lack of interest in his own observation.

8 An Overview of a Small Society

It was a sunny but cool day in May when Charley MacGregor stood freely upon the slanting roof of the First Church steeple. Not a rope held him in check, no scaffolding stood ready to catch him if he slipped. He could have stood upon such a slanted surface if it were set upon the ground; what difference could it make if it stood sixty feet above the ground? And it did not, in fact, make any difference to his body or to his mind, his inner ear or his perception of a sharp drop at his feet. His body and mind were not disturbed by standing on a slope near the ground, why should they be disturbed just because he perceived that sharp drop near his feet?

So it was that the sixteen year-old tinsmith stood there, hand raised to shade his eyes from the morning sun. He looked out towards the southwest, towards downtown Jenckesville, remembering the sermon he'd heard one of the few times he'd been in church since leaving Sunday School as a twelve year-old. The minister had spoken of the need for repentance for even, for especially, those who were the most virtuous and the most generous of people. He had spoken of Jenckesville being founded upon stolen land, land stolen from a brutal and barbaric people, but "God's people they were as much as the most pious of Pilgrims." And that minister had made some people in the congregation angry and others ashamed because of crimes they'd not committed.

And Charley's eyes focused on the steeple of the Union Church, where he had attended Sunday School, where he had heard that sermon, where he had since become something of a stranger. The young tinsmith smiled and thought it might be nice to go to church occasionally; his mother would smile down upon him from Heaven. But, then, he remembered that frustrating feeling of guilt for crimes committed by people long dead, people he'd not

even been descended from.

And then he noticed some people standing near the entrance to the up-country cemetery just a hundred yards down the road. A slender young woman was pointing up at him and he waved in response, laughing—he knew most people would get dizzy just watching him move around on a church steeple without so much as a rope. And it was at that moment he noticed a figure moving up Center St towards the First Church. As soon as he saw the gait—more mechanical than life-life—Charley knew it was the Hermit of Turkey Hill and he knew he had no right to think of any aspect of the man as not being fully life-like or fully human. That was a type of guilt he could understand: guilt for thinking badly of another person when there was no good reason to do so. That was something he was responsible for, and he was not responsible for the actions of Puritans that died a long time ago, men and women he wasn't even related to.

The people near the cemetery entrance had moved inside the burial grounds; they had seen the Hermit and were retreating as if afraid. . .

Of what? It was unlikely the fellow's oddness was catching. . .

Or was that how people passed on ideas and habits. . .

Maybe you could pick up ideas and attitudes and habits by being around a person. And that would say that it was dangerous to be near a fellow like the Hermit. . .

Not being able to complete his line of thought and having already found the source of the leak into the belfry, the young tinsmith turned to head back into the church belfry so that he could go down to fetch some flashing to replace the strip which had been weather damaged and then largely dislodged.

Once on the ground, Charley hustled to his wagon but surprised himself by untying Saratoga from the railing and then jumping into the front-seat. A few seconds later, he'd turned the horse around in the church lot and then had entered Center St ready to head north. He waited a minute or two until the Hermit came up and then headed out only to stop just in front of the man who, as usual, seemed oblivious to the presence of another human being, but he responded immediately to the young man's offer, "Want a ride?" That is to say, the Hermit climbed into the front seat of the wagon without a word and without so much as glancing at his benefactor.

"Nice day. A warm day following a cool September night. Sure was good sleeping weather. And today it's good weather to be out and about. Can't get much better than this."

Out of the corner of his eyes, Charley could see the fellow had not so much as glanced sideways at a young man who was giving him a ride and was trying to be friendly.

“I see you’ve been shopping again. Got your food for the next few weeks?”

And again there was no response, not so much as a tic at the corner of the man’s eyes. And the thought came that no mortal man could understand this poor unsociable creature. Many people in Jenckesville thought so. Shortly before his death, Mr Cormier had claimed that a sociable young man, of all people, couldn’t possibly come to understand such a misanthropic fellow, but that claim had assumed the Hermit was a misanthrope. Still, Mr Cormier, and everybody else, seemed correct in their assumptions this fellow was deeply, deeply strange.

For the first time ever, Charley felt uncomfortable being near the Hermit of Turkey Hill. No longer just curious, no longer just surprised at a man so uninterested in other living creatures, the young man fought to suppress a shudder of aversion. It was just then that the horse turned left. As the master’s attention had wandered, the beast of burden had turned up the dirt road leading off Center St and skirting the lower edges of Turkey Hill. A few seconds later, the unsettled young man was nodding to Bill Tompkins as he drove a load of timber towards Center St. Another half minute or so and he was stopping to let his silent rider jump out.

As he watched the Hermit stutter-step into the shadows of the trees covering the lower slopes of Turkey Hill, Charley fought down an urge to call out and ask the fellow if he’d see him at the community dance the upcoming Saturday. It would have been a casual and friendly question for nearly anyone in town, even some of the older folk crippled up with arthritis would go to the dances and climb the forty or so stairs to see the youngsters and midsters have a good time with reels and waltzes and the occasional sword-dance. It was no more than a matter of cruelty to ask the Hermit such a question, at least in a casual manner. Several of the ministers in town, as well as the welfare administrator and representatives of various fraternal organizations, had made trips up to the Hermit, or caught him on a shopping trip to town; they’d asked if he’d do them the honor of coming to the pot-luck supper held every Wednesday evening at St Paul’s Methodist Church or to the New England boiled dinner that the Masons sometimes put on for the public at the Union Church. None of those good men had made any sense out of the lack of response on the Hermit’s part. None

of those good men had been willing to extend invitations on behalf of the Ladies' Scottish Guild at the Union Church or the Ladies' Aid Society at the up-town First Church. The men didn't think ladies should be having much at all to do with the Hermit, even in the name of Christ Himself.

Charley emerged from his ponderings to see that he was passing the cemetery down the road from the First Church. Chuckling at this unusual bit of absent-mindedness on his part, he turned the horse and wagon around, using the entrance to the burial grounds to make the horse's job a bit easier. Saratoga was protesting a little; he must have thought he had been heading down to the stables and a mouth-bag of oats. Instead, he soon enough found himself unburdened of his harness. That wasn't bad for the four-legged fellow because his master put him on a long tether in the field alongside the church. He would be able to browse for a while, fixing that flashing would be a good two hour job since some of the metal roofing would have to be pulled back—carefully, so as not to crease it. It might even turn into a three hours if he once more found his eyes and mind drifting over the beautiful land all around him.

9 Saturday Night at the Community Center

Joan MacDonald was smiling impishly at Charley. Her sister Maggie was looking the other way, but the sixteen year-old man suspected that Joan, a playful fourteen year-old, was smiling on her sister's behalf. And perhaps against her sister's desires. A smile was returned by a young man not sure what was up, even suspecting he might be the butt of some joke. Still. . .

Joan was a likeable young lady. A real tomboy who starred on the games-field at picnics and on the very basketball court just five feet away. Short and slender, she had a good set shot and even better instincts for moving around the court and knowing where her team-mates and opponents were. Quite different from Maggie. Joan was nearly as much fun as a little brother. She held her own in games and sports at picnics and during community recreation hours when pick-up games sometimes ended up co-ed. Maggie was not at all like that, but she was more Charley's type with her often expressed desires to be a wife and homemaker as well as being only a year younger than he was, and both were approaching marriageable age.

Charley was pondering the situation when he felt a hearty slap on his upper back; Tom Chamberlain's voice boomed out: "So, I hear you've been tracking the deer already and deciding on the locations for your blinds."

With a puzzled look, the younger man looked up at the six and a half-foot tall man approaching sixty but still wearing a crown of bright reddish-orange hair. "It's no more than common sense to pick out your deer blinds ahead of time. Anyway, I've been hunting wild turkeys as well. Got a couple early this morning."

"And probably rabbits as well."

"They're easy to get. It's harder to keep track of the worm season

for the little beasts.” Hunting was one of Charley’s favorite activities—he would have quickly given up a chance to go to a dance in favor of a good hunt. Yet, he found himself thoroughly uninterested in hunting at just that time. He shifted his shoulders and let his gaze drift over to the other side of the dance-floor where sat many of the MacDonalds. He caught Maggie looking his way and waved to her. She looked a bit flustered but returned his greeting.

“She sweet on you?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, you look like you’re interested in her, but you’re the big man about town now.” Tom laughed. “Even at sixteen.” He laughed again before claiming, “A fellow like you would be a good catch. Even if the boom with factory and mill jobs were to end, you’re the type who could always put a good meal of fresh trout or venison on your family’s table. And likely it is that you’d always be able to scrape up some decent money with side-jobs on people’s plumbing or heating systems.”

“I’d rather be a policeman.”

A friendly but skeptical laugh boomed out of Tom and this time Charley noticed that a few of his friends also joined in. Burt Jones was laughing the loudest, though Charley didn’t feel at all angry at him. The son of one of the more aggressive and more successful businessmen in town, Burt had his hard side but was mostly a pleasant and well-intentioned fellow. Thad Sinkiewicz, a cheerful and large-bellied fellow from Palmer, was smiling but holding back on the laughter, perhaps because he didn’t know Charley that well and didn’t wish to upset him. Bill Tompkins, the up-country jack-of-all-trades was not even smiling, but Bill, approaching thirty, was still standing with the young bachelors because his childhood sweetheart had died along with their first child and he seemed to be nearly ready, after a year, to find himself another wife.

Suddenly reaching a decision, Charley said, “See ya later, fellows,” and strode off, not even sure what decision he’d reached until he had nearly made his way through the waltzing dancers. And he stood at Maggie’s side. “Would you do me the honor...” He did no more than to wave vaguely towards the dance-floor, but Maggie smiled shyly, dropping her gaze to the floor for just a second before her eyes looked up at him, and he realized, not for the first time, that her eyes were as clear and blue as the sky on a dry June day. Other times, they’d seemed to have a greenish tint; it was as if she were able to change her eye color from green to blue-green to blue,

trying to catch the mood of the moment. And her skin. . . Baby-clear and, he hoped, baby-soft. No, he knew, for he had brushed against her, had even given her a gentle kiss under the mistletoe just the past New Years' Eve.

As he led Maggie off for the last half or so of a waltz, he noticed that Margaret MacDonald, grand and terrible dame of the clan, was unable to hide a struggle between joy and fear. And she was looking little better when Charley led Maggie back to the MacDonald women gathering again after several of the young ones had been waltzing with either a beau or a more casual admirer. Emma Jane and Minnie and Mary had been off for the entire dance, Mary with John Powell, the young construction worker who'd recently come over from England after a tour of duty in the cavalry in India. Joan had retreated a bit and seemed to be exchanging jibes and jokes with some of the other young teenagers.

The Yankee lad stood in the midst of the Scottish family of MacDonald, mostly the women though James had himself come to the dance and was sitting nearby, seeming to have little to do with his own wife and daughters as he watched all the dancers. For the first time he could recall, Charley was feeling uncomfortable with the MacDonalds—at least the women, largely because Maggie had seemingly forgotten he was there as soon as he'd led her back from the dance-floor. She'd no sooner reached her sisters than they began to talk rapidly and in a thick brogue. That confused him as they all spoke clear American English when they were talking outside of their family; in fact, the two youngest, Joan and Jimmy, couldn't really speak a convincing brogue at all.

A few more minutes of the MacDonald women talking a mile a minute to each other and Charley took the opportunity to quietly slip away. Before he had gotten too far he looked back to see that the matriarch and Mary, the oldest sister, were looking at him in a manner far from hostile. James MacDonald looked up and gave a friendly wave.

And soon enough a mildly confused but happy young man was breathing the fresh air out on the sidewalk in front of the Community Center. He crossed the street and entered the small park with its young trees finally growing large enough to provide some shade to picnickers. He was lighting a cigarette when he heard the sound of laughter and then a sentence he couldn't make out except for the words 'win' and 'set-shot'. The voice was vaguely familiar and then he heard a guttural voice call out, "Hey, Charley, leave your sweethearts to pine for you?"

After a deep puff, he set out towards Jamie Campbell and the other fel-

lows who proved to be Burt Jones and Whitney Calley and Tommy Dunn. “The girls must all be crowding the windows and doorways by now, wondering where their dear Charley has gone.” So far as the accused was concerned, the joke was played out, but he smiled in a good-natured manner before hoisting himself up on the top of the picnic table right near the group of four young men.

“Charley ain’t the type to lead the young ladies on,” said Tommy as he tossed a wink in the direction of the accused. “He’s just too kindhearted to push them away like a good and holy Congregationalist should do. It’s the same with the Hermit. The old ladies and little girls in town are scared of the old coot and everybody else just makes jokes about him but Charley is always looking out for the Hermit, offering him rides and scolding the kids who throw rocks at him. Our Charley is just too kind a man for his own good.”

All but indicted, all he could say in his own defense was, “There are other people in town who are nice to the Hermit. At least others who try to be nice to him. It’s surprisingly hard to get the fellow to even accept favors, at least when they involve socializing in any way. And then if he lets you do him a Christian favor, he just walks off, not even acknowledging the favor. Sometimes it’s hard to know if he is even quite aware that you’re there.”

“So, why do you give him so many rides and haul so much junk for him to maintain that shack?”

Once again on the defensive, Charley spouted out, “Seems to me the best way to serve the Good Lord in this world is to help our fellow-creatures.”

Jamie’s deep and rasping voice boomed out in another laugh. In a manner apparently intended to be melodramatic, or at least serious, he said, “This from a fellow who probably won’t even be seen in church for his own funeral.” Charley was suddenly feeling quite annoyed with all of them.

Tommy assured his companions, “He’ll probably be off somewhere having a good time when the rest of us are gathered to mourn his loss.”

“Along with all his grieving sweethearts.”

And Charley jumped from the table as Jamie was still speaking. “Think I’ll head off for a walk and then maybe an early night to bed.”

A half block or so up Chestnut St, Charley heard someone walking fast to catch up to him. He turned just as Burt came up alongside him, breathing hard. “Want a drink, Charley?”

“You got some beer in your old man’s cellar again, Burt?”

“No. I got some white lightning in the office at the lumberyard. Me and the boys will sometimes end the day with a good, stiff belt before they have to go home to their wives and kids.”

“Sounds good to me.” Sounded too good to Charley and he knew it. He’d taken a strong liking to hard liquor and his father had picked up on that and given him a stern lecture about the value of sobriety in leading a prosperous and decent life.

But a man was only sixteen once. Soon enough he’d be settled down soon, and he might as well live just a bit of the wild life while he could. Now was the time to for Charley to do it, so far as he could tell. After all, he was making decent money at the Jenckesville Mill metal-shop. Having little seniority and no one to support, he was also the first to be laid off when business got slow, but he certainly didn’t mind the occasional vacation. And he was always able to pick up a few side jobs when he needed some extra pocket money.

He was doing quite well, so far as he could tell. A good salary, half of which went to his father, and half of what was left went into a savings account—by his father’s orders. The rest was his to spend on hunting guns and ammo, renting a horse when he felt like a good ride or was taking a sweetheart to a party at the uptown church. He always had a few bucks in his pocket at church fairs or town picnics.

A few minutes later, the two young men had fetched the jug from the lumberyard office and had set off towards the trestle which carried the trains over the Chicopee River, Burt leading the way and keeping a sharp eye out for any constable who might be roaming around. To avoid people, they walked along the railway tracks. Within a few minutes, they reached North St and Burt was about to lead the way across and towards the river when he stopped and pointed north. Charley came up alongside his friend and looked to his right to see some crazy shape making its way up the street, a block or so to the north of the two young men. It was a rectangular shape and then it nearly squared off before it became extremely rectangular and then . . .

“What’s the crazy old fool got himself this time?” asked Burt of no one in particular though it was his friend who asked, “What crazy old fool?”

Sheltering the jug of white lightning from any stray eyes, Burt turned with an expression nearly sarcastic. “The Hermit of Turkey Hill. Who else would be making his way up the street with someone else’s junk at this time of the night?”

And the strange object now seemed to be one of the pieces of scrap metal that had been put out on the curb-side near the metal-shop just that afternoon. Technically it was stealing, but it was understandable he would have thought the stuff was there for the taking. The sheet metal and some damaged machine parts had been put out at the curb because the trash-haulers at the mill were to pick up the metal and take it down to a foundry in Springfield that paid for usable scrap metal. The value of any one sheet of metal was negligible but more importantly...

“That wasn’t really trash if he took it from the curbside down at the Mills but he wouldn’t have known.”

Burt seemed suddenly uninterested in anything to do with trash or with the Hermit and, after a quick look around, he stepped across the street and led the way down the train tracks towards the trestle. Charley followed, wishing he’d been in his wagon so he could offer the Hermit a ride and find out what the old fellow was going to do with that small sheet of scrap metal. But he wasn’t about to go fetch a wagon. Not at this time of night...

And there was the jug of whiskey...

And Charley felt thirsty. He could barely wait for the jug to be uncorked. And then they emerged into the clearing surrounding the cliff called Indians’ Leap. Burt stopped on the large rock ledge which formed the base for one end of the trestle which crossed the Chicopee River. He raised the jug above his head and shouted out, “Don’t I make a fine figure in the moonlight?” And the river was shining in the moonlight, though the clouds cut down on the light a bit.

“You know, Burt, I don’t really care much one way or the other if you want to pose for the raccoons in the brush but I wish I had my fishing pole. It’d be a beautiful night to be down there, catching bullhead and drinking good whiskey.”

Burt laughed. “Good whiskey? Not this stuff. This is the same stuff my father buys for the boys on holidays. It’ll rot your gut out, but you’ll feel good while it’s happening.”

Charley laughed while Burt pulled the cork on the jug and lifted it to his mouth. A long, slow swallow later, the jug was passed along. It tasted good! It felt good as it burned throat on the way down, burned stomach when it reached the end of its journey. Doc Clemson had given him a lecture on drinking once and had told him the alcohol went right from the stomach into the bloodstream where it hitched rides to the liver and the brain. That medical man had told Charley, “A little bit of whiskey is probably good for

you, but a lot of it will destroy your liver and make your brain prematurely old.” He’d added something about the heart as well, but the words had started to blur a bit after the first five minutes or so. He had figured his father had put the doctor up to that ambush during a routine checkup while Charley was recovering from a mild case of pneumonia.

A half-hour or so passed with the two young men sitting on the ledge, feet dangling fifty feet or so above the Chicopee River; they were both a little tipsy. A few more minutes, and a few more sips, passed and Charley was still feeling quite capable of safely sitting on the ledge but he decided that Burt was in some danger of falling over. He rose and took hold of the jug of whiskey before moving back to the trees. Finding himself a good sturdy lime-tree, he sat down with his back to it. As he sat down he could see Burt rise and come towards the whiskey jug.

They continued to drink, largely in silence but occasionally trading a joke or a funny incident that had involved someone they both knew. Those jokes and funny stories were blending into one another when Burt suddenly seemed to grow serious.

“So, are you going to marry that MacDonald girl, Charley?”

“Marry? I hardly know the lass.”

A snort came out of the dark where Burt was sitting and then: “Word is, she’s got her eye on you. She’s a strong-willed girl from what I understand, even if she does seem so shy and quiet. At least in public. I hear tell from Sawnie Bain that she’s more lively when she’s with family and with people she knows well.”

“She’s always seemed plenty friendly to me.”

Burt laughed. And laughed some more—a bit harder. Charley was thinking his friend was about to lose control and start rolling around on the ground when Burt’s laughter sputtered a bit. A few seconds later, with his breath coming in gasps, Burt told him, “Of course she’s friendly with you. You’re the one she’s chosen to be her lawfully wedded husband. For the rest of your lives on this earth. Or whatever they say in that damned ceremony.”

It was Charley’s turn to laugh, though it was no more than a short outburst before he pointed out, “You seem to have a bad attitude towards marriage, Burt.”

“I don’t mind marriage, so long as it doesn’t tie me down. I’m gonna find me a woman who knows her place. I’ll take care of her. And I’ll be good to her, but she’ll have to know when to keep her mouth shut. And

she'll have to know to keep her nose out of my business."

"And that'll be when you feel like going out on the town? To drink with the boys or to spend time with a girl-friend."

"Damned right. I'm not going to let any marriage certificate ruin my life."

Charley sighed. "Well, I hope that I'll settle down into a marriage that'll satisfy me and keep me off the streets. I'd just as soon stick by the rules."

"Rules?" Burt laughed. "If you think of marriage as just being so many rules, Charley, you're as good as looking for ways to break them already. I know you that well."

With his face safely flushing in the dark, Charley was silent for a minute. Then he claimed, "I always try to stick by the important rules and I don't think of marriage that way. As just a bunch of rules. It's when a man and woman love each other and decide to commit their lives to each other. And to any children that are born."

"Fine. Why should that stop the man from living a good life?"

Silence fell over the two friends for a minute and then a reply came in an uncertain voice: "It doesn't stop him from living a good life, but..." A few more moments of struggle led to no more than: "It all depends on how you define a good life."

10 A Visit to a Dwelling off the Beaten Track

Charley took his time wandering up the hill towards the Hermit's shack. He even took a side-trip to that stone out-cropping which afforded a clear-eyed man a good view of northwestern Jenckesville heading over towards the city of Chicopee. Five minutes or more did he linger, not sure what to think of the town growing even as he watched from a hillside. And then he turned, still more unsure, as he found himself unable to say why he had come up to Turkey Hill.

It was clear how he'd come to be in the area. He'd come up to fix a pump for a sheep-farmer. It had been an easy way to make some pocket money while he was waiting for the mill to call him back to work. He'd been off a week already and expected to be off another week and then maybe on half-hours for a while after that. The real question was: "Why are you going up to the Hermit's shack, young fellow? Surely, an eighteen year-old man has better things to do than visiting a crazy old hermit." And visiting was an odd term when it concerned a trip to the Hermit in his shack. He'd dropped the fellow off at the bottom of Turkey Hill numerous times and had never gotten a word of thanks, let alone an invitation up to a drink or even a quiet talk. Once he had walked up uninvited and hadn't exactly been welcomed with open arms, but Charley could no longer even imagine the Hermit being friendly to another creature, man or beast. He didn't understand a person being that way, though there were other people who perhaps had the same attitude as the Hermit without being tough enough to separate themselves from the human society which didn't interest them.

The Hermit's clearing had never been nearly so disgusting as some people had claimed—without ever having been near the place. The shack itself had smelled, not in an unsanitary way so much as...

It had a pungent odor of unwashed human being. There had been no signs of bugs or rodents in the shack or in the clearing where the Hermit had seemed to do much of his living. There had even been a small but neat pit where the Hermit threw his garbage; that pit had a pile of dirt next to it, so that fresh garbage could be covered. The animals might get to it sometimes but that was a risk on the cleanest of homesteads.

Charley asked himself again, "Why did I come up here?" and there was still no answer, though he'd heard that the old fellow had been showing signs of some sort of illness the last time he had gone down to Townes' to buy groceries. He'd been coughing and his eyes had looked more clouded than usual.

"Love thy neighbors as thee love thyself, or however they say it in the St James Bible." And then he told himself, "Maybe you should go to church more often, Charley me boy. Your dear mother in Heaven would probably prefer you to be a good, practicing Christian, but maybe it's sufficient to be a good Christian even if you don't go to many services."

A breeze was coming down Turkey Hill as Charley left the stone ledge and re-entered the pine forest. A minute later, when he was no more than a hundred yards or so from the Hermit's shack, he thought he could smell unwashed human being once more, but he put that down to an overactive imagination. Another minute and he was walking into the clearing where the Hermit had his shack. All was quiet. It seemed as if the wind itself had stopped in this place though there had been that steady breeze out on the stone ledge.

And there definitely was a smell of habitation by a human being not given to too much washing; it was no longer just an overactive imagination that detected a strong odor, even if it had been that before. But it was far from a disgusting smell. Not much worse than the smell at some hunting or fishing camps, and probably no worse than a fellow would find in a lot of barracks or war-time camp-sites.

A sound came from the woods on the other side of the clearing. Charley froze for just a few seconds before the Hermit emerged, carrying an armload of dry branches. September was coming in warm and it was unlikely the fellow needed to heat his shack for a while yet; he probably was more capable of bearing cold and hardships than anyone else living in Jenckesville. Cooking? Some folks had claimed he ate his canned peas and canned ham cold but the Hermit did buy flour and lard and other things that were pretty much useless unless he did some cooking.

After taking a seat on a boulder near the edge of the clearing, the young man just kept quiet and watched as the Hermit went about his tasks of piling the wood between two trees that were no more than ten feet from the shack. The younger man observed the older man, but tried to do it in a manner that would not be disrespectful. He didn't want to study the old fellow in quite the same way he would study a nice buck moving about the edges of a grassy meadow. There was a way of observing people that was polite and some people knew the way; others didn't.

The fellow's beard was still trailing halfway down his chest, but it was now a dingy sort of yellowish white, as was his hair which covered the back of his neck but didn't go much farther than that. Charley had seen other people's hair go that same color as they grew older, so he knew it wasn't necessarily a sign of dirt or grease in the hair. Some people simply weren't lucky enough for their hair to go a dignified gray or a pure white. At least not in the first stages of losing their hair-color.

Sometimes Charley worried about his hair. He already had a widow's peak and was afraid he'd be bald early. His father wasn't bald, but he'd been told baldness came from the mother's family and he'd seen no pictures he could remember of his mother's father or her uncles.

The Hermit was, maybe, casting suspicious side-glances in the direction of his visitor and that led to questions about the fellow's real perceptions. Was the old fellow really so oblivious to the presence of most other living creatures? Or was it all a well-practiced act? No one had offered the Hermit so many favors as Charley had, and many of those favors had been accepted quietly—not so much as a word before or after. No one had been so consistent in offering a hand of friendship to the Hermit, though various ministers and town fathers and other good citizens had tried off and on.

And the Hermit rose and went to his shack. A few minutes later, he came out with a can of ham in one hand and a plate in the other. The plate held a fork and what looked to be a hard-tack biscuit, the sort that Maggie's brothers George and Tom complained about after spending years at sea in the British merchant service. It seemed that the fellow must have still had a good mouthful of teeth, unless he soaked the biscuits to a mush; George had told him that some of the sailors had to do that.

The visitor was starting to feel very unwelcome, but he stayed sitting as the Hermit moved to sit upon a nearby stump which had been flattened with a saw, however the trunk and branches had originally come down. He opened his can of ham and used his fork to scoop half of it onto his plate.

And then he set the can down on the ground before taking a bite out of the biscuit. It was then that he cast a brief but bitter glance in Charley's direction. Or was he warning the young man not to try to take his food? Not that the young man would want such food when he'd been invited to his sister's house to eat dinner with Helen and her husband. She was a good cook and was probably going to cook a good piece of meat along with some hearty vegetables. He couldn't help feeling guilty thinking about Helen's cooking while he watched the Hermit chew away on a rather dry looking hunk of canned ham, supplemented by a drier looking hard-tack biscuit. Suddenly feeling he was intruding, Charley rose. Before leaving, he looked over at the Hermit and told him, "If you need anything, just get hold of me. Everybody downtown knows where I am most of the time."

The Hermit looked up! But he did no more than to squint his eyes in the general direction of his uninvited guest, as if he were trying to make out the source of some annoying distraction.

Getting the message, the visitor turned and left, wondering if some of the boys might be around to share a few drinks. Burt always had a jug of whiskey which he was willing to share with friends, but Charley himself had ten or so bottles of beer; he'd helped Sawnie Bain to make a big load of beer and had been given twenty-four bottles for his efforts.

11 The 25th of January

“There isn’t a true Highlander in the bunch,” and Sawnie Bain smiled without a trace of maliciousness.

“We can all eat haggis without gagging.” And twelve year-old Jimmy MacDonald went on to claim, “That makes us at least honorary Highlanders.”

Sawnie laughed in an open manner that contrasted greatly with the sneering laughter that sometimes came from his lips if someone had done or said something stupid. Charley liked the fellow and spent a lot of time with him, fishing or drinking or just horsing around, but he found Sawnie to be rather harsh in some ways, a man who didn’t suffer fools much. And a man who had a rather wide definition of what a fool was.

But the Scottish immigrant was in good spirits. Maybe it was the good fortune which had come his way lately. After five years of cleaning and hoisting in the mill’s textile plant, he’d managed to find a job as a bricklayer, the trade in which he’d apprenticed back in Glasgow. He’d also found himself a sweetheart, though she wasn’t around to celebrate Robert Burns’ birthday with Sawnie; she’d gone to New York City with her mother to visit an aunt and her family. Himself inclined to look at life optimistically and enjoy whatever was thrown his way, Charley was glad that Sawnie had good reasons to have a more pleasant viewpoint than usual. It made him a better companion in some ways.

From the crowd on the other side of the room, Charley heard a dignified tenor voice reciting:

When frae my mither’s womb I fell,
Thou might hae plungéd me in hell,
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,
In burnin’ lakes,
Where damnèd devils roar and yell,

Chain'd to their stakes;
 Yet I am here a chosen sample,
 To show thy grace is great and ample;
 I'm here a pillar in thy temple,
 Strong as a rock,
 A guide, a buckler, an example
 To a' thy flock.

Sawnie laughed and drowned out the voice in his immediate vicinity. "The Burns bards hae started to teach a new kintra how to speak properly."

A snort came from an approaching fellow in a long, black coat. "Burns wasn't much for any but the houghmagandie when he could keep it from his wife and if he couldn't, he'd troke with old hornie right in front of the poor woman."

"Uncle Scottie," and it was Jimmy who presented his puzzled voice before Charley could open his mouth. A short delay and, "What is howgmandie?"

"Houghmagandie," spoke Sawnie before laughing hard. With tears coming from his eyes, he turned to the man who was Uncle Scottie to every Scotsman or Scotswoman in Jenckesville. "You going to explain that to the young lads, or should I?"

"Houghmagandie means 'fornication', Jimmy, and that was Bobbie Burns' favorite activity. Left lots of poor bastards all over Scotland, he did."

"And what's it mean to 'troke with hornie'?"

"To bargain with the deil." Uncle Scottie stood by Jimmy's side and looked down at the young men sitting on the bench. "I heard what ye said about no one here being a Highlander, Sawnie..."

"Excepting you, Uncle Scottie."

"I'm not much of a Highlander either, lad, but it strikes me as funny that so many people celebrate Bobbie Burns' birthday when they have little enough to do with his culture. And few of them have bothered to read much of his poetry."

"Any excuse for a party," suggested Charley, drawing a smile from Uncle Scottie.

"At least you're not one of those who's looking to find some sort of link to the Highlands when your branch of the MacGregors took up with the Lowlanders and their cousins the English many years back."

"Uncle Scottie," spoke Sawnie Bain in his thickest brogue, "you're a

smart man but many folk are less interested in the historical truth than they are in attaching themselves to something that seems noble. Why not let people pretend to be Highlanders? It's all a compliment to Highland culture, if you have the right viewpoint. Though," he confessed, "I joke about such people myself."

"Many of the people who like to pretend to be Highlanders are descended from folk who murdered the Highland women and children after the men had gone off to other continents to fight for a country they thought was theirs as well. They came back to find their families wiped out or living in poverty in the Lowland cities or just gone. The lucky ones were able to get word of their wives or children or parents living in California or New Zealand or Australia."

Sawnie shrugged and told Uncle Scottie, "History is filled with crimes like that, but you can't live in the past."

"In the present-day, mon, we live with the wealth which came from those horrible crimes committed during the Highland Clearances for it was the sheep grazing where Highlanders had once lived that provided the wool for the textile mills of England. It was Highland blood more than coal which fired up the Industrial Revolution in England."

"And the black slaves who provided the cotton for the mills of New England."

"Exactly my point." And Uncle Scottie's voice was riding on wings of triumph though Charley wasn't quite sure what the man's point had really been.

12 A Dishonorable Act

Charley's stomach was nearly as unsettled as his mind from the time he drove the carriage out of the stables and headed towards the MacDonalds' house near the intersection of Winsor St and East St. A pretty good poker player and occasional sponsor of practical jokes, he had been known to keep a straight face in some stressful situations, but he wasn't sure he could go in and face Margaret and James MacDonald as if he were just taking Maggie out for a ride. He respected them too much and was under the strong impression they thought highly of him. And James MacDonald was quite fond of him, had been fond of him since the two of them had joined Sawnie Bain and a couple others in killing a jug of whiskey on Bobby Burns' birthday nearly a year ago and then, two months later, the two had celebrated Charley's nineteenth birthday.

The minutes passed by far too quickly as he drove from the stables to the MacDonalds home. Charley spent only a minute or so gathering his breath and composing himself and then he forced himself to jump from the carriage in a manner that might have been called jaunty. Striding to the front door and wishing he were moving in a manner less determined, he saw someone's face disappear behind the curtain on the window at the landing of the stairway going to the third floor with its bedrooms. He thought it was surely Maggie. Usually she, or any of the others in the family, would have waved rather than pulling back in a manner that would have attracted suspicion were anyone watching.

Guilt was in the air and fears that Maggie had let something slip. Had she told one of her sisters? Or all of them? Had her parents somehow begun to suspect something? Or to know something? Charley was ready to confess everything when Margaret MacDonald opened the door, but then she smiled at him. "Good evening, Charley. It will be a good night for a ride under the stars, but a bit cold. I hope you've brought plenty of

blankets. . .” She looked past him at the carriage and pursed her lips before saying, “I’ll fetch some more blankets for the two of you. I don’t wish either of you to catch a cold.”

How could he defend himself, though he had placed a pile of heavy wool blankets in the back of the carriage? With enough guilt to cover all his actions and thoughts, he nervously smiled his thanks and wished it was fifteen minutes later and he was in the carriage heading for the less populated regions of Jenckesville with Maggie at his side.

Fifteen minutes passed in the hallway and then walking through the dining-room and then sitting in the parlor watching James MacDonald smoke his pipe. Then the old man smiled at Charley, passed him a wink and stage-whispered, “It’s a wee bit more comfortable down in the kitchen.”

A minute or so later, the two men, middle-aged and young, were in the large room in the basement where they were shortly joined by Jimmy, leading down Finlay Fraser. The kitchen for the house was set at one end of the same large room used for the parties and other gatherings. Dumb-waiters carried food and dishes up to the dining-room or back down. Of the four who were gathered around the small table near the stove, only the old man and Finlay seemed much interested in the jug of whiskey which was being passed around. Jimmy was uninterested in drinking and was, in any case, only thirteen. Charley, at nineteen, enjoyed drinking perhaps a bit too much but his stomach was unsettled and his mind on other matters; he sat there, letting both the jug and the banter pass around and over him, wishing he knew why Maggie was delaying when it was she who had talked him into this course of action. Was it not something best done and over with? Some would say no; it was the sort of thing best done slowly so that it could be enjoyed. Like most men, he had mixed feelings on the matter, but, under the circumstances, he just wanted out the door with Maggie, so they could head up-country where there would be no MacDonalds or MacGregors to observe them. No watchful eyes and no suspicious minds.

“Charley, what’s up? You’ve passed the jug by twice now.”

Without looking James MacDonald in the face, Charley stammered a little before confessing, “My stomach isn’t quite settled.”

James MacDonald was holding out the jug as he spoke in a gruff brogue, thicker than usual. “A good slug of whiskey might be just what you need.”

“I’ll be driving the carriage on roads that might be a bit icy. . .”

The jug was passed on to Finlay with no more than a shrug on the part of James. Before Finlay could raise it to his lips, Charley put out his hand

and, with the slightest of smiles on his face, Fin handed the jug over to the young man who then took a good slug before passing it on. The next time the jug passed, he took a smaller slug; the time after that, he passed it on without putting it to his lips. The jug passed on a couple times more and then was he relieved to hear Mrs MacDonald, the matriarch herself, call from the main floor: "Charley, Maggie is finally ready to go for your ride." There was more than a little annoyance sounding in her voice.

The next minute or two passed quickly as he nearly ran up the stairs, took Maggie by her well-wrapped elbow and hustled her to the front door. Where Maggie's mother stood, looking annoyed. So far as Charley was concerned, that was not a good start to an adventure he would rather not have had. Though he wanted to . . .

But not this way.

Though many couples . . .

But Charley had too much respect for Maggie. And for her parents. And for the rest of her family for that matter. And he told himself, "My own father will be more than a bit upset though probably less than the MacDonalds will be."

Once he had passed by the matriarch of the family, Charley released Maggie's elbow and offered her his arm. She took it with the sweetest of smiles, and suddenly was his stomach settled. He was now sure that things would turn out all right, though he was also still sure that things would have turned out still better if they'd stuck to the rules that most people followed.

A flick of the harness signalled Saratoga to start and Maggie squeezed in closer to Charley before she said, "The Forsythes must be waiting. We're late."

Not a word came out of the mouth of the man in control of the carriage. He had to struggle only a little to suppress his urge to point out that he had been on time; it had been Maggie who had delayed their departure.

Why?

Had something been going on upstairs?

It seemed suspicious to Charley that none of Maggie's sisters had come down the stairs. Not Minnie. Not Jane. Not even the young and rambunctious Joan. Had Maggie been pouring her heart out to them so that they had been afraid to come down lest their expressions inform their mother that something was going on? What sort of reception would there be for the young lovers when they returned home later that evening?

Charley worked his way through the maze of small streets where stood the houses mostly belonging to the mills and rented to the workers, though there were a scattering of houses owned by more prosperous and more settled workers, such as his own father. As he pulled up in front of the Forsythes' new house, he could see someone looking out the front window of the parlor. He'd not even made it halfway up the sidewalk when the front door opened and Bert Forsythe waved to indicate that he and Jillian were on their way out.

Bert closed the front door but it was only a few seconds later that it opened once more and Bert walked out briskly, followed by Jillian who was running to keep up with her tall and lean husband. Bert looked solemn for an occasion deserving mixed feelings, but Jillian came up, laughing under her breath and then puffed out great clouds of vapor as soon as she came up close to Charley. "Why look so glum on the most marvelous night of your life?"

"I'm not always one for following rules, Jillie, but I'm thinking it might have been better to follow the rules this time."

"Oh, you're going to turn into your father some day if you keep thinking like that."

"That's not such a terrible fate."

"No, he's a very nice man, but he's also a fuddy-duddy."

"Who's a fuddy-duddy?"

Jillie looked over at Maggie bundled up in a fur coat, over warm leggings and a dress, and then all covered over with a wool blanket. She laughed and said, "Charley's father. But even he might say you're a bit over-protected, my dear."

"I can't afford to catch a cold and miss any work. I've already stayed home to help my mother four times this month."

Jillie looked away without saying another word. For his part, Charley kept his peace and kept an eye on Saratoga as the horse made his way up a route he knew so well—heading north on North Street which would soon be Center Street as they entered another realm.

A mile or so up the road, Bert pointed ahead a bit as something moved in the deeper darkness on the side of the road. "The old coot is out and about at this time. Wonder what's up?"

The carriage came up quickly upon the Hermit walking along in the cold air and the dark and Charley found himself speechless. He'd never had any particular suspicions that the Hermit kept to regular hours, or any sort of

schedule, so he wasn't surprised to find the fellow wandering about late in the evening, though it didn't seem safe to be moving up and down Turkey Hill in the dark. Then again, the fellow probably knew the paths so well he could have traveled along them with his eyes sealed shut. As they were passing the Hermit, he looked in their direction, showing more response to nearby creatures than was his custom. It seemed too bad the carriage was moving so fast because it was possible the fellow had given some sign of recognizing his would-be friend, but then again they had passed him fast. In the dark. And he'd rarely shown so much as a sign of recognition before, except for the way he'd immediately moved towards Charley's halted carriage.

"It's awfully cold out tonight." The words and the tone had been intended to carry no implications, but Maggie shot a warning glance at Charley. It was as good as saying, "Don't you dare stop to give him a ride on this night of all nights." So it was that the Hermit's would-be friend said, "He's used to the cold and to walking long-distances. I guess he's all right for now. I would stop for him if the weather conditions were dangerous tonight."

Bert laughed and pointed out, "We wouldn't be out tonight if the weather conditions were dangerous. And I hope he wouldn't be either. I admit to being one of those who doesn't think the Hermit of Turkey Hill is quite so crazy and so stupid as he sometimes seems to be."

The four people laughed and the carriage moved on and, soon enough, they were turning in at the First Church Congregational. The lights were on; the minister was presumably there and ready to do his part. . .

Charley moved slowly as he dismounted and tied the reins to the hitching post. Bert and Jillian were on the ground by the time that Saratoga was blanketed and fitted with a nose-bag with a small amount of oats. Maggie was staying put, obviously waiting for a private talk before she would enter the church. The groom nodded to Bert Forsythe, as good as saying, "Go ahead and we'll meet you inside in a minute or two."

After helping Maggie down from the carriage, Charley held her gloved hands tight in his, wishing he were holding her bare hands that he might feel the soft and smooth skin. . . She tried to pull away, but he held on and asked her, "Do you want to go through with this?"

Wide the eyes and pursed the lips as she asked in return, "Why, Charley, don't you wish to be married to me?"

"Maggie. . ." He held his peace for just a second as he composed himself

that the scolding tone might leave his voice. “You know I want to marry you more than anything else in the world. I object to doing it behind your parents’ back. And without a good reason so far as I can tell. They like me. We’re legally old enough to get married... Or else the Reverend Holmes wouldn’t do it.”

“Charley, I’ve told you again and again. My mother thinks I’m too young to get married even if I am eighteen.”

“We should talk to them and get their permission...”

“We don’t need their permission.”

“That’s true and that’s part of what I’m saying. We should at least *try* to get their blessing. If they don’t give it, we could still get married.”

“Charley, you’re a man of nineteen and I’m a woman of eighteen.” With no more than that, Maggie turned towards the front door of the church. After he had caught up to her, she announced, “It’s a bit cold to be standing outside and holding a conversation we’ve already held several times.”

And he followed her in, to be greeted by the Reverend Holmes already in his black gown as if he were to be conducting a service for a full congregation. He was smiling, but clearly not happy about the situation. In his private talk with the minister, Charley had told him that he would have preferred telling the parents, his father and Maggie’s mother and father, and giving them the option of blessing the marriage or opposing it. He would have had no problem going ahead against opposition, but he hated this sneaking around, though he knew some people considered these sorts of events to be romantic. The minister had encouraged Charley to follow his better instincts, but...

“If you’re ready to start, we can get right to the ceremony.” The Reverend Holmes was now showing his unease a little more openly and Charley knew that the minister disapproved of any such marriage where the bride and groom could end up going their separate ways on their wedding night. They had discussed the young couple’s inability to make quick arrangements to be together on this important night. For his bride’s good, he would be forced to leave her at her parents’ house and head to his father’s house. He couldn’t imagine telling the MacDonalds that he and Maggie had just got married and, “Could we have our wedding night in your house tonight?” It would end up an unpleasant night for them both even if the MacDonalds hadn’t yet found out...

Charley could feel his stomach gassing up a bit; he felt even more pain elsewhere as he grew angry with himself for going along with a plan he’d

known to be crazy. But he had gone along, and events were moving along on their own. More or less.

And the minister led the two couples into the sanctuary where Mrs Holmes was waiting. After greeting them, she took her place at the organ and began to play a soothing melody. The minister was true to his warning that he would get right to the ceremony. He quickly positioned the two couples, asking only if the wedding rings had been remembered. When Charley took them out of his pocket and handed them to Bert, the wedding rite began. And it seemed to Charley that it was over nearly as soon as it had begun, and he was wishing again they'd done it the right way so that they could have had their families and all of their friends present.

The right way...

A wedding followed by a big celebration with tables loaded down with food. With jugs of good whiskey making their way around the room. With a band, maybe even a piper, and lots of dancing. American style dancing but also some of the Scottish dances. Maggie's sister Joan, the young and athletic one, could dance a mean sword-dance. Mary and her husband James could have been there. Minnie could have been there with her husband Finlay. Burton Jones and Gracie, the woman he'd recently married. Sawnie Bain and his recent bride. Jamie Campbell and his recent bride. Charley had attended all three weddings and thought them to be grand affairs, though Sawnie and his bride had not been able to afford anything fancy—James MacDonald, to be sure, had supplied a couple of jugs of whiskey.

The groom was carrying the cake from the church's kitchen to the reception room when he heard himself speculate, "Maybe we could have had a wild wedding party in the MacDonalds' basement. Just like the MacDonalds had thrown for Minnie and Finlay." It seemed useless to follow such a line of thought and he dropped it before he even set the cake down at the end of the table. Soon enough, Mrs Holmes had brought in a large pot of tea and Bert followed carrying a small bowl of punch.

The Reverend Holmes came right behind her, carrying a knife for cutting the cake and a small pile of plates. With silverware already set out by Jillie, they were ready for the only celebration they were to be allowed because of the way they had decided to get married.

As soon as everyone was gathered around the table, and not yet seated, Bert set to work handing out glasses of punch. "It's not spiked, of course. Not that any of us here are teetotalers, but this is a church." The six

people all laughed pleasantly, and Maggie's smile broadened greatly when the best man raised his glass and toasted: "To the beginning of a long and happy marriage." That seemed enough of a speech and Maggie picked up the knife. Soon were bride and groom cutting their cake. Soon the three couples were each eating a generous piece of cake. Soon they had washed down the sweet food with their sweet drink. And Charley found himself at the door of the church, handing an envelope to the Reverend Holmes, who nodded in a dignified manner as he took it discreetly and put it in the inner pocket of his jacket.

As he was checking on Saratoga, who had done fine during that short time, Charley looked up and saw a figure shuffling along Center St, heading north. Had he taken a long time to go his past two miles? Would he take a long time to go the next mile and a half to reach his shack? Or had Charley's sense of time been thrown off by the ceremony—something so important could not have possibly taken such a short time. But he suspected it had, and he fought off the desire to pull his watch out of his pocket to check the time.

And he walked around to the other side of the carriage to help Maggie up. Before he did so, he opened his arms and let her fall against him. As he hugged her tightly, he put his face down and whispered into her ear, "I'm not good with words, Maggie, so I'll never be able to tell you how much I love you." She buried her face in his chest for a few seconds and then pulled back to tell him, "You tell me how much you love me in a lot of ways, Charley, even if you aren't very good with words." He smiled and helped her into her seat, noticing that Bert and Jillie were huddled up and whispering to each other as if they hadn't seen or heard the revealing scene between the two young lovers.

13 Paying the Price

Charley walked into the MacDonalds' house, right behind Maggie, and found her mother standing right in the hallway. Margaret MacDonald did not look happy. The young groom knew that his mother-in-law knew that she was such. And the angry matriarch turned to her daughter, who was looking defiant but didn't seem overly confident that she could stand up to her mother...

Charley wasn't so sure he could stand up to the woman either, but he was being ignored rather than scanned with those angry eyes. And then came the sound of steps interspersed with the tapping of two canes. James MacDonald came out of the kitchen to stand right behind his wife, who seemed to be taking up the entire house, not just the narrow hallway. The gruff old patriarch was looking pretty gentle by comparison to the matriarch of the family. He even passed the groom what seemed to be a sign of sympathy.

"And what were you up to this evening, Maggie?" Maggie was still composing herself and trying to work up an answer when her mother plowed forward, "Never mind. I already forced it out of Emma Jane." There was only a short pause before she went on, "Here you are sneaking off and getting married without so much as telling your own father and mother."

"I didn't think you'd give permission..."

"You didn't think..." Margaret MacDonald's face reddened a little before she went on, "And why would that make a difference? You're old enough to get married on your own, else no respectable minister would have married you. If we had refused our permission, and you had thought yourselves right, you could have gotten married anyway. At least you would have been honest with us. And at least we could have seen you being married even if we didn't approve."

Charley remained silent, realizing he was in the awkward position of

agreeing entirely with his mother-in-law against his bride. He was embarrassed at being ignored as if he were of little or no consequence in the entire affair, but he found himself being somewhat glad that no one was asking him any questions that would have put him on his mother-in-law's side and opposed to his bride.

"And where do you expect to be setting up your household, young lady?" And Margaret MacDonald's gaze turned to Charley. "I would have expected better from you. Maggie can be flighty at times, but here you are, a man of nineteen, working full-time at a good job, and enjoying a generally good reputation. Didn't you stop to think about the consequences of sneaking about to get married?"

At that instant, Charley was upset at himself, for multiple reasons, but one reason was standing out boldly in his mind: He'd gotten himself and Maggie into a difficult situation and he wasn't even going to be able to enjoy his wedding night. He knew what was coming next. . .

"I think you better be heading back to your father's house, Charley. It's not much of a wedding night for either of you, but you did it to yourselves."

Inclined to confess and admit he and Maggie had been wrong, Charley decided that discretion was the better part of morality. At least in some situations. And he found he didn't even know how to say, "Good-by," to his bride or to his new mother-in-law and father-in-law. And it was James MacDonald who made the groom's escape easier. The crippled man made his way to the side of Charley who was standing just inside the doorway. Setting one of his canes against the wall, he put his hand gently upon the younger man's shoulder and turned him towards the door. As Charley's hand touched the door-knob, James MacDonald spoke softly, "Come by early tomorrow. We'll have the porridge on for breakfast and the women will be preparing themselves for church. We can all settle this situation and see if we can't make the best of it. And then you and I can settle down for a good, long talk as soon as the women head off to church."

A few seconds later, Charley found himself heading out to his carriage and wondering how he was going to tell his father what he and Maggie had done. Well, he decided flat-out honesty would be best. And his father would probably withhold his judgment, and his anger, until he talked to the MacDonalds. After all, it was Maggie who was in the worse situation, being a woman. And he knew, no matter what happened his father would be holding the groom primarily responsible. After all, he had not acted the part of the responsible and honorable man his father had raised him to be.

And had always given him credit for being.

Part III

Supporting a Family

14 Starting a Family

Charley let his pipe go out as he was afraid of filling the living-room with smoke, though Margaret MacDonald had claimed it didn't bother her even when her husband and her son-in-law were smoking their pipes at the same time. Maggie was a little less tolerant about even the sweetest smelling tobacco smoke, though he thought her to be growing accustomed to it. In general, living in his in-law's house was proving to be easier and more pleasant than he had expected, partly because the household had shrunk so much over the past year or so.

Minnie was married to Finlay Fraser and they were living in a nice house in Springfield, convenient to his high-paying job as a wire-weaver at Springfield Manufacturing Company; Fin was definitely the most prosperous member of the family. Mary and her husband lived, with their daughter Margaret, nearly a mile up East St, the boondocks as some labelled that part of downtown; the road wasn't Macadamized and there was not yet any town water. Jane and her husband rented one side of a two-family house just a few blocks away. George and Tom were living out of the area.

The household now consisted of James and Margaret MacDonald, their youngest children—Joanne and Jimmy, a couple of young men who were boarding and didn't much disturb anyone, and the young married couple of Charley and Maggie. And Maggie was pregnant, so there would shortly be an infant in the house. Mrs MacDonald had both sighed and smiled when she had been told, though it had happened that she'd already guessed her daughter was pregnant. The proud young father-to-be had not asked his mother-in-law how she had guessed, but he figured it was one of those women's things like morning sickness. To be sure, he'd thought Maggie had been coming down with a cold or such like, but he'd never lived in a house with a pregnant woman, at least not since he'd been old enough to notice. Nor had he even been around any pregnant women much. His older

sister had not had children so far after marrying in her mid-thirties, just a short time before Charley and Maggie had married.

Yes, it was a pleasant household and he got along fine with the MacDonalds, sometimes better than his wife got along with them, her own parents. Still would it have been nice if he and Maggie had their own place, even one of the smaller apartments above Townes' Department Store. It would have been nice if Maggie had not quit her job at the mill. It would have been nice if he were getting more hours. It would have been nice if a lot of things had been so.

Charley smiled over at James MacDonald who had looked up from *David Copperfield*. "Haven't you already read that book a couple of times?"

"Only twice. And there don't seem to be any decent books around the house that I haven't read yet. So I picked up one of my favorites."

No one else in the house liked to read the true-crime and detective books which were Charley's favorites. So, he didn't offer a book to his father-in-law. Instead he asked, "What about that box of books that Mary sent over?"

"Achh. Not a decent book amongst the lot. All women authors, even that one that wrote under a man's name."

"George Eliot?" It wasn't really a guess on the part of the young man who knew little about literature; he had seen a thick, thick book named *Middlemarch* on Maggie's side-table up in the bedroom. After a short and confusing conversation, he had learned that George Eliot was a woman who'd written her books in the mid 1800s. Another short and confusing conversation followed; Charley had tried to figure out why Maggie and her parents and sisters didn't read some of the new novels, especially ones written by Americans. James MacDonald had read some by that fellow Mark Twain; the old Scotsman had spoken favorably about Twain's books but had said he wasn't much interested in reading any books by other American authors.

Charley had also read *Tom Sawyer* when he was a boy and *Huckleberry Finn* and *Roughing It* more recently. All in all, he preferred detective stories, sometimes imaginary but usually real-life. And he returned to the tale of the failed efforts of Scotland Yard to track down Jack the Ripper. The book had all sorts of strange suggestions about who that brutal killer had been: a doctor or a member of the royal family of England or a policeman. The killer had been brutal but his methods of killing and mutilating had suggested he knew human anatomy well, maybe had even been trained in

surgical or undertaking techniques.

“You ever think about becoming a policeman yourself, Charley?”

Out of the corner of his eyes, the young tinsmith could see Maggie’s eyes widen with mild fear and his mother-in-law’s eyes narrow suspiciously. He thought a few seconds before answering, “Only in my dreams. There is little call for policemen in a town like Jenckesville. A few constables to tell people to keep track of their animals and children are all that’s needed. A small town in this day and age has no need for real cops. Just fellows willing to walk around and keep the peace.”

“And,” said James with a smile, “that’s not very exciting, is it? Not like tracking down a world-famous killer.”

The crippled and aging Scotsman returned to his Dickens novel and Charley looked out of the corner of his eye to see that Maggie had returned to her darning and his mother-in-law to her *Emma*, another novel by a woman author and another novel that surely would not have ever been opened by James MacDonald. The younger man smiled and returned to London where Scotland Yard was running itself into various dead-ends in the hunt for Jack the Ripper.

15 A Sick Hermit and a Sick Child

Nearly five years passed and Charley and Maggie were living in a large apartment over Townes' Department Store with their children, Mina who was going on four and Bill who wasn't quite two. It was a nice apartment, nicer than any others in the large building because of Maggie's efforts: she had painted every wall and piece of trim in the four rooms, had made curtains and tableclothes, and had even put down a nice, bright oil-cloth in the kitchen and a darker oil-cloth in the bathroom.

Indoor plumbing they had, fresh water coming to the sinks and toilets that flushed the waste into the pipes leading to the sewage treatment plant built by the mill company. Many houses in Jenckesville had not yet had indoor plumbing installed, and some had fresh water coming in from the water system built by the Jenckesville Mill Company but didn't have a connection to a sewer system. Outhouses in the backyard with a smelly cesspool underneath were still common in town.

Maggie was proud of the apartment, one of the nicest living quarters in town, and Charley was proud of Maggie for having made the apartment so nice. And not just for having made it nice in the first place. . .

She worked hard, too hard in his opinion, each and every day to keep it the cleanest and best-looking apartment in town. There was barely a spot of dust, no, not even on the floors of the closets. There was never a hint of muddy footprint even when Bill and Mina came in from a hard day of play in the nearby park. The beds were made early but not so early as to force her to drive anyone from an occasional, and well-earned, late morning of sleep. The meals were on time and were as hearty and as good-tasting as those prepared by the cooks at the houses of the mill company agent or any of the top executives. Charley knew what it was like in those houses

since he was often sent up to fix the plumbing or heat-venting systems in those houses and he had eaten a few meals in the agents' house, though he'd eaten in the kitchen with other workmen and the cook. He knew the agent only to exchange somewhat formal greetings with the man who lived in Boston and was only in Jenckesville once a month or so for his meetings with local management.

* * * * *

Not long after Charley and Maggie had moved into that nice apartment in the block, he had gone in to work and had spent a hard morning building some brackets from a hoisting system at the main loading dock of the jute operation. After measuring the brackets, for not the first time, he was confident they matched up to the specifications provided by the loading-dock foreman. Satisfied that he'd done a simple job but done it well, he set out to help install the brackets on the main loading dock at the building where most of the jute twine production took place.

He hadn't gotten far when he noticed Mary Powell, his sister-in-law and freshly divorced. It had been a rather scandalous affair. John had been devastated and had returned to England just a month ago, shortly after the final decree. Mary seemed to have been relieved more than anything else, though she'd not been gleeful, not had she been happy at John's misery, but she had remained so angry with him as to have refused to so much as talk to him before he left. Or to let him see their daughter, whose total custody had been awarded to the mother, not because of anything John had done. It was simply that she was...

The mother.

Mary had plowed forward with her life, including those parts which had aggravated her problems with John. He'd not liked her going to labor union meetings in Springfield, particularly since she'd been the only woman at many of those meetings. Since the divorce, Charley thought her to have been busier than ever in establishing contacts with labor unions, which rumors had made their way to the mill's managers who likely suspected her interest in labor unions was more than a frivolous hobby. She'd also become more active socially than most married women in Jenckesville, even going so far as to attend shows and concerts in downtown Springfield.

And there she was, standing at the center, as usual, of a group of wet-weavers on break from the cold water. For a second, Charley feared Mary

was agitating the workers, telling them they should be getting better pay or better working conditions—he agreed with her for the most part but was afraid of the consequences if the mill management decided she was a troublemaker or even an agent of some union. And he suspected they would not have been wrong on the second of those ideas.

If Mary were labeled an union organizer, the consequences might spill over to all the MacDonalDs. Still, it didn't change his feelings at all towards Mary; he even admired her that much more for the sort of hardheaded, devil-be-damned courage that he had rarely seen in women. Inclined to stop and see what the discussion was about, he pushed his cart forward, remembering the foreman of the metal-shop was expecting him to be back to help with a difficult fabricating job that afternoon—a manufacturer was not going to be able to ship a crucial part for an automated loom for several days and the metal-workers were going to make a try at making a new part in imitation of the mangled old part.

Charley had, in fact, started to think about making that part. It seemed likely to be a difficult and interesting task since they were going to be guessing at some of the dimensions by looking at the mangled part and the other parts of the machine with which it interacted. A taxing job that would require some hard thought and some hard imagining. He was interrupted from his thoughts when he heard one of the supervisors, a Mr Dumont, say, "The old coot hasn't been seen for nearly two weeks, not even to buy his usual load of canned goods and flour."

For a second Charley was thrown off-track. He'd been so sure Mary had gathered a crowd while she talked about the incompetence and moral thickness of management, but she certainly would not be giving such a talk in company with Mr Dumont. And then he realized Mr Dumont had been talking about the Hermit of Turkey Hill. He would have been likely to know if the old fellow had not been seen for a while since Mrs Dumont was one of the floating supervisors in Townes', going here and there to keep her eye on the cash registers, on the stock, and on any clerks or floor-walkers inclined to relax too much. She knew more of what happened in the store than the manager himself.

Charley wondered if the Hermit was sick. He had no one to even check on him. True, one of the ministers in town would check on him, or send someone to check on him—if they suspected anything. But maybe people didn't like to gossip to their ministers. . .

"Now, we can get to work, lads!"

Looking away from his thoughts, Charley saw the foreman of the loading-dock was rising from a crouching position. He motioned for Joe and Tony to come over to start the work of installing the new lifts. The two Portuguese immigrants came over and stood still by the cart which held the new brackets. Neither of them spoke more than a few words of English; neither of them understood many more words of English than that. Hard workers but coming from peasant farms no more than a year ago, they needed to be directed in nearly every stage of a task, and that wasn't so easy to do for most people. . .

And Al Szarlan, the foreman, let loose with a stream of what seemed gibberish to Charley until he switched mental gears. Portuguese it was, and not much smoother or more grammatically correct than the clumsy and slangy version that Charley spoke to his hunting and fishing buddies from the Little Portugal region of Jenckesville. Between the two of them, Charley and Al were able to direct Tony and Joe; between the four of them, they were able to mount the new brackets on the timbers freshly replaced above the dock. Other brackets were put in the walls and on a few select spots of the floor. Pulleys would be attached, ropes would be run through for leverage or to be tied off, and the dock-workers would be able to move more bales of processed jute out of the plant, more raw supplies or machines into the plant.

Just before leaving the dock, Charley told Al, "Don't know where all this is going to. The world's speeding up too much. We're working too fast and maybe even making too many things. Not that I'm opposed to prosperity, but. . ."

"I know what you mean, Charley, but Mr Burke and the other managers tell me that it's competition. They've got to compete with other companies, got to get bigger and faster and more efficient. It's compete or die. Or so they tell me. It does seem funny to me. Most of us came from folks that wanted to get to the New World for a better life, but it seems to me we got that better life for ourselves and now we're shooting right by it and threatening to work ourselves into an early grave."

Charley had finished packing his tools back onto the metal-shop cart when Al had finished speaking. There seemed to be nothing to say in response, so the young tinsmith just nodded at Joe and Tony, then at Al, and turned his cart back towards the plant. On the three minute trip back to the metal-shop, his thoughts turned back to the Hermit of Turkey Hill. If the poor fellow was up there sick, someone would have to go and check

on him. Who else but Charley?

But he had been working overtime for the past few weeks and had not given proper time to his responsibilities as the head of a young and growing family. But didn't every man also have responsibilities to help those who had no one else to help them? He was sure that the Bible taught that lesson in numerous places. It was the sort of commandment that Jesus would make, so far as he understood what Jesus had really been like.

With his mind full of charitable thoughts, Charley returned to the metal-shop and was soon at work fabricating that funny-shaped cam for the automatic loom which was one of only two in the plant which wove linen thread into patterned cloth that was shipped in large roles to companies which produced table-clothes and napkins. Production was running at half-level in that department with the one major loom down; some of the workers in that plant had been put on half-hours for the upcoming week, including some who could not afford the cut in pay. The supervisor of that particular part of the mill, a Mr Newman and a decent fellow to all his employees, was on the spot—if the production was not brought up before the loss of contracts, he would likely lose his job.

Thus it was that Charley helped some of the plant-workers to install the new cam just before four in the afternoon with many eyes upon his skilled hands, the hands which had made a part which might save them all a little bit of financial hardship. After the part was installed, the workers set the loom up for a trial run. After they had stepped back, Mr Newman stepped up to the main switch for the loom. The shaft running from the water-mill was engaged so that the power was on, and then the switch was turned to engage the gears which connected that shaft to the loom and. . .

The machine sputtered. Parts began to turn. A clanging sound came, but that ended after a fraction of a second. The loom started to work. Various parts began to turn, including the one newly manufactured by way of guessing its proper dimensions from that damaged part. It seemed to be moving properly, transforming a uniformly circular motion into a funny sort of motion, and then the shuttle began flying back and forth, filling the spaces of the warp with the woof. A few seconds later, a piece of cloth began to inch its way out into the waiting hands of Mr Newman who looked up with a smile that signalled the test pattern had come out right. The workers cheered, except for one teenager that Charley could see was not happy—undoubtedly, he had been hoping for a few days off to goof off. . .

No. And an emphatic no at that.

The worker with the disappointment showing on his face was young Tor Berensen, the fellow recently come from Iceland, and Charley knew he had been hoping for time to work on the skis he'd been trying to make before winter came. It was easy to make skis, hard to make them to the standards that Tor had set for himself, wanting something special to show around to stores that he was hoping would order some from him. That had surprised Charley when the young man had spoken of his plans to set up a shop to make skis for selling in large numbers.

Tor was smiling sadly when Charley let his eyes drift away from that young man who was so admirable and so mysterious. Someone had to set up companies that made things; they didn't just spring up as large companies with dozens or hundreds of employees, but he had never thought much about real, concrete people doing such things. Everyone in Jenckesville simply went to work for existing companies, except for doctors or the occasional fellow starting a small store. And he had certainly never thought that it would be possible to earn a living by making something like skis, though maybe that was no more ridiculous than making and selling fishing equipment. Maybe. . .

But skis couldn't help you get yourself a good and tasty meal. . .

Unless you could hunt from skis or use them to get you to a good spot for ice-fishing. Charley found himself throwing a friendly smile in Tor's direction just as he turned to go back to the metal-shop. And he found himself thinking about the future. Was it possible he could provide for his family, perhaps in a very generous manner, by starting a company? What sort of a company? Plumbing? Heating? There were a lot of houses in Jenckesville that were getting indoor plumbing for the first time, that is, beyond the simple pipe running into the kitchen from the well or the mill's water system. There was also talk of installing central heating in some of the houses, perhaps starting with the executives' houses, and that of the company agent—of course. A lot of the houses were owned by the mill company and any work would likely be done by company employees, but there had always been some houses owned by the more prosperous and, generally, more highly skilled workers, as well as the small number of small businessmen, merchants and craftsmen. Mr MacGregor had been one of those workers—though never owning his own company. He'd bought his house shortly after arriving in the New World, nearly thirty years ago. Most folk in town, especially Maggie, assumed that Charley would also be able to buy his own house before too long. After all, he was already one of

the most highly skilled metal-workers at the Jenckesville Mill and he had the presence to be at least the supervisor of the metal-shop; he was the sort of fellow sometimes even promoted into management.

The second shift had taken over the mill for nearly an hour before Charley got back to the shop and was able to put away his tools for the day and head home before going up to check on the Hermit. For all the presumed urgency of his mission of mercy, he found himself struggling with his own doubts, telling himself, "Maybe the Hermit is fine. He hadn't been seen downtown in two weeks, though I don't know why I hadn't noticed, pretending that I'm the fellow's only friend in the world. I sometimes wonder why he doesn't offer so much as a word of greeting or one of thanks when I haul him and his food or collected junk up to Turkey Hill, and here I am not even noticing the poor man has disappeared and is maybe sick or even dying. Then again he might have stocked up on his staples and he's just lying low for a while."

Charley crossed the street, walked to the beginning of State Street, where it forked off of East Street and walked across. After going across Sewall Street, he was on the block where Townes' sat, and his apartment sat two floors above that department store. Less than a minute later, he was walking down the hallway towards the living room entrance, the kitchen entrance going out to a short hallway shared with just one other apartment. That hallway led in only one direction: to the multi-level wooden porch on the back of the brick building. The living-room was next to the kitchen, with a doorway to an interior hallway shared with three other apartments and leading at one end to the stairway going down to the main door on East St. After the living-room, there was a bedroom, used as the children's bedroom for now, though Maggie was quick to point out that it would be nice if Bill and Mina could have their own bedrooms. If you passed through that first bedroom, you came to a second, the one used by the parents since it was the most private room in the apartment.

Maggie had turned that apartment into a showplace in a very short time. Sometimes she annoyed Charley just because she was so clean and organized and not always willing to sit down and relax with him those times he needed it and those times he felt she needed it. There was always something to do in the apartment. She'd gotten a clean coat of paint over the entire apartment, and Charley suspected she was about to start again at the beginning. Curtains had been made and they would have to be mended or cleaned on a very regular basis. Floors had been scrubbed and finished

and waxed and it was unlikely Maggie was about to stay off of her knees for long. Of course, she had to stay up long enough to repair or clean furniture and Bill's wooden train set and all of Mina's very well-dressed dolls.

It seemed ungrateful to complain about Maggie being so busy all the time, too busy to even socialize with her own husband at times. After all, she was busy making a home for her husband and for her children.

And the young metal-worker had no sooner opened the door to that home when the smell of corned-beef and cabbage struck his nose. His favorite meal. On this night of all nights, when he was going to try to sneak away early. Well, Maggie liked to eat at five, more or less on the button, and it was nearly quarter to. He would be able to eat his regular supper and then head off to talk to the Reverend Atkins. That good man, minister at the Union Church for only a year or so, might well be willing to take the ride up to check on the Hermit. The Reverend Atkins had made several attempts to visit with the Hermit and to invite him down to church social events, such as the pot-luck dinner held most Thursday evenings.

The Hermit had been willing to accept a small pot-bellied stove which used to sit in the minister's office at the church until Mrs Palmer, wife of the most prosperous lawyer in town, had given the church a larger and nicer-looking stove. Charley had helped the minister and Tommy Matthews transport the stove up to the Hermit's shack where they had installed it, even putting a hole through the roof and closing it around the pipe with fireproof flashing. They had brought a piece of metal sheeting to put underneath the stove and another to be fastened to the wall behind the stove. So far as any of the three volunteers had been able to judge, the Hermit had remained sublimely indifferent to the entire project. While they had slaved away to make him safer and more comfortable, he had disappeared into the woods, to return fifteen minutes later with dry brush which he piled up near the circle of stones where he made his cooking fire during good weather, which he defined much more broadly than the average person who was used to living inside heated and dry houses.

The Hermit had set about his daily tasks, nearly oblivious to the presence of the men trying so hard to make his life a little more comfortable. Yet, Charley had been up there several times since and had noticed the Hermit had used the stove on a cold night back in May, though he had moved back outside for most of his living since the weather had gotten better. "Maybe I better take a load of fire-wood up when I go to check on him?"

“What did you say, Uncle Charley?” Six year-old Margaret had looked up from the floor where she sat paging through a picture book with Mina who was looking a bit sleepy. That wasn’t surprising since she’d been bothered a little by ear-aches over the past week or so and had been up a few times, keeping her mother up with her and waking her father as well a couple of times. Assured, both times, that it was nothing unusual for a child, Charley had gone back to sleep after going in to sit with his daughter for just a few minutes. And his eyes moved a little to see his son Bill spelling out ‘bxaq’ with the wooden blocks his Aunt Mary had brought home from Boston.

Pleased by the sight of the three happy children, Charley chuckled and told his niece, “Oh, nothing, Margaret. I was just saying to myself I need to make a short visit to the Reverend Atkins.”

From the kitchen came, “And what do you need to be seeing the minister for? You see him around town enough, and often enough, at the pot-luck dinner, though you would be better to see him Sunday morning as well.”

“I’m content to follow the Lord’s commandments, Maggie, without going to His house every Sunday. I’m sure it’s the obeying that’s most important.” He was now speaking to her directly as she had appeared in the doorway mixing a bowl of floury paste, which he knew would shortly become biscuits. That told him dinner would be served shortly, earlier than usual. With the oven hot, it took only a ten minutes or so to cook up a batch of biscuits, and Maggie always timed everything perfectly, so that the hot biscuits were arriving at the table only seconds after she had set out the main-course with its meat platter and vegetables. The timing would work out well, letting Charley get up to check on the Hermit and then back home that much earlier; he was a man who preferred to get his eight hours of sleep every night.

And so went the dinner—perfectly, as anyone might have expected, had they known Maggie. During dinner, Margaret announced that her aunt and her grandmother had agreed to let her stay over the night, and that saddened Charley a little since he would be gone. Margaret had taken to the role of older sister to Mina and got on like a sister with Bill—meaning they got along well one minute and were fussing with each other the next. As much as he liked to get lost in a good police or cowboy story, Charley didn’t mind at all being interrupted by the noise of playing children. In fact, he rather liked it.

He settled down in the living-room after dinner, Bill on his lap, but

planned to sit there for only fifteen minutes or so. And those were peaceful minutes indeed, as he talked to Bill about the fishing and hunting adventures they would be having in a few years. It seemed not long at all before Maggie came in from the kitchen, followed by the two girls who'd been helping her, or maybe hindering her, as she cleaned up after supper. And the fifteen minutes passed, but Charley didn't want to leave. He'd not had enough time lately to enjoy time with Maggie and the children, but...

A man had his responsibilities even towards those who weren't particularly pleasant to be around, even those who didn't so much as show any gratitude. Though, to be sure, Charley didn't pretend to always know what was going on in a man's insides, not even his own insides at times. Maybe the Hermit was truly grateful for all the favors people had done him over the years.

Charley looked about. Maggie was settling down at one end of the couch with another of those novels about Scotland, this time it was about King James. One of them. It wasn't clear which one. He really hadn't even gotten the matter straight when Maggie's Uncle Albert had gone through an explanation of where the dozen or so men named King James really fit in. All Charley could remember was that one of them had sponsored that translation of the Bible named after him, but he dropped all thoughts of Scottish kings and rose to walk over and sit beside Maggie. As she set her book, open pages down, on her lap, he took her hand in his and told her, "I've got to go out for a little while."

She looked suspicious as she asked, "Where do you have to be going at this hour, Charley?"

"Over to see the Reverend Atkins and then maybe to do an errand with him."

Maggie's face relaxed at the mention of the minister, but then her face tightened up again and she asked, "It doesn't have anything to do with that crazy old man on Turkey Hill?"

Charley pursed his lips while he thought for just a moment, but decided there was little to think about. He spoke as he was inclined to speak: "He hasn't been seen downtown for a couple weeks or so. I'm going to see if the Reverend Atkins thinks someone should check on the poor man."

Her face relaxed again and a tentative smile appeared. "I know the good Lord would want us to help the poor creature, but, Charley... The hour... It's dark already and that's not a good road north of Howard St. And it's not safe to be climbing through the woods of Turkey Hill. Not in the dark."

In truth, Maggie preferred a town sidewalk to a nice wooded path, even on a bright Summer afternoon. But Charley had other tastes and, besides that, he knew how to move safely even through a dark wood. “If we go up to check up on the Hermit, the minister and I will be sure to bring lamps. So long as we don’t trip and fall, we’ll be all right. There’s few things in the woods up there to hurt a full-grown man, especially one who knows how to take care of himself.”

* * * * *

It was approaching eight when Charley and the Reverend Atkins set out from the parsonage towards the stables where they had hitched a horse up to a carriage and headed north towards Turkey Hill. Mrs Atkins had made it clear that, as charitable as she was, she thought it dangerous for the two men to be going up to check on the Hermit at such a late hour, and the men had agreed, for the sake of peace in their two households, they would hurry and get back within a few hours or less.

With such an attitude, and one of the strongest horses from the stables of the Jenckesville Inn, it took only a forty-five minutes to travel the five miles to Turkey Hill, most of which time was passed in silence. After lighting the lamps brought by the minister, the two men headed up into the darkness that lay under the thick woods of Turkey Hill. The pace was slow, for the benefit of the Reverend Atkins, who was not soft by any reasonable definition—he was merely not used to walking steep grades, especially at night when it took a fair amount of concentration to be able to walk without slipping on a loose rock, without tripping over an exposed tree-root. At that, it took only a half-hour before the two men entered the clearing where the Hermit’s shack stood. They had not gone many steps farther before they heard the sounds of a human being struggling for breath. Both men took off at a run for the shack no more than thirty feet from them. It was the minister who stepped into the shack first and the younger man stepped in after the man of God had taken up the Hermit’s hand in his own. The poor man looked to be near death, grayish of complexion and covered with a liquid that looked to be soft wax rather than sweat. His heavy wool blanket was soaked.

“How are we going to get him down to the carriage?”

The Reverend Atkins looked back at Charley and said, “We’ll take turns, one carrying him while the other one carries the lantern.”

And so it was that they struggled down Turkey Hill, Charley carrying the Hermit on his shoulder for nearly the first half, trading man for the two lanterns for the next stretch, and then taking the man back again for the last stretch of hill. It was lucky that they had rented a two-seat carriage and luckier still that it had two blankets underneath the back-seat. The Reverend Atkins took a seat next to the Hermit in the back and wrapped the poor soul in both blankets though that didn't seem to halt at all the man's violent shaking. There was also a small amount of foam coming from his nostrils and his mouth.

"Head for Doc Wesley's house," commanded the Reverend Atkins. "It's just a little bit south of the First Church."

"Yeah. I was just up there, installing some vents to allow hot air to rise through the house to the bedrooms."

Doc Wesley was the closest of the town's doctors, but there was another reason to head towards his house. He had built an ell onto the side of his house; it had three rooms in it, one an office and the other two were for seriously ill patients who needed constant care. The doc's wife was also a nurse and a woman said to be accustomed to going the night long caring for someone hovering near death or, more pleasantly, a woman on the verge of giving birth.

Fifteen minutes later, Charley was hitching the horse to the railing in front of the doc's house when the door opened. The good doctor himself stood there, a book in his hand. In a quiet voice, Dr Wesley asked, "And why would you be bothering the peaceful reading time of an overworked man, Charley MacGregor?" And then his face tightened as he looked at the back-seat of the carriage and saw the Reverend Atkins holding a human being who was, at that instant, shaking violently.

The doctor started forward and helped the minister let the sick man down into Charley's arms. Carrying the Hermit like he was a small child, and in truth he weighed little more than some twelve year-old boys, Charley followed the doctor who led the party in the house through the front door. They were walking through the kitchen and towards the door to the medical wing of the house before the doctor called out, "Millie. We have a patient," but it was to little purpose as Millie had already entered the kitchen and walked past them to open the door for a man and his light burden.

The husband and wife, become doctor and nurse, took over, no more than hinting to Charley and the Reverend Atkins that they should retreat to the less professional part of the house where the minister, a regular guest,

felt free to stoke up the fire in the stove and to put the kettle on to boil. A few minutes later, there was a full pot of tea brewing and the minister was pulling down four cups. And it was just a minute after that, that the cups of tea had been prepared. Before they could even knock on the door to the medical rooms to offer tea to Dr and Mrs Wesley, the door opened and the nurse herself walked into the kitchen. She smiled at the sight of the tea-cups, all filled with tea and the right amount of cream sugar for each palate. "You and Mrs Atkins have spent too many nights up here with sick parishioners or women having difficult labors."

The minister accepted the accusation with a gracious smile and then asked, "How is your patient doing?"

"The doctor says that he is very sick but not so near death as he first appeared. He's a tough old fellow and is already responding to the clearing of his throat and bronchial tubes."

Charley decided he didn't want to hear how that clearing of the breathing passages had been accomplished and asked, "Will you be able to keep him here for a few days?"

"For an ordinary patient, I'd say we'd be keeping him here for two weeks unless there was nursing care available at his house. I doubt we'll be able to keep him down after he's partly recovered. . . He'll probably be able to get up in five days to a week. I imagine he'll just walk off and head for his shack at that time."

"As long as he's okay to leave."

"I don't know about okay, but he'll probably do no more harm than to prolong the recovery stage of his pneumonia."

The minister coughed in a delicate manner. When Nurse Wesley looked over at him, he asked, "Are we safe going around other people or is it possible. . ."

"Anything is possible, but you're probably in no great danger. My husband reads in his journals that pneumonia isn't highly contagious. It seems to strike randomly, but mostly at people who have some other medical problem which has left them weak."

"Aren't children always. . ." After a short pause, Charley told her, "My Mina already has some sort of a head-cold or something. She was suffering an ear-ache a few nights ago and her throat was sore last night, though she seemed fine by the time I got home from work."

Mrs Wesley smiled in sympathy but spoke in a professional tone: "I wouldn't worry too much. There are probably several people in downtown

Jenckesville who have a mild pneumonia right now, with the colder nights coming down on us so quickly after a warm September. And children will get sick no matter what you do.”

“Yes, but pneumonia. . .” protested Charley.

“A good, warm hat and warm socks and boots will do more to keep children healthy than keeping them away from people with colds or pneumonia.” Having said her piece, Nurse Wesley smiled and took a drink of tea before setting down her cup and picking up the one for her husband, but she had barely done so when the door opened and Dr Wesley walked into the kitchen, looking tired but not so gloomy as if attending a man sick unto death.

He even smiled. And then, in a quiet voice, he told them, “Whatever might be the problem of the Hermit of Turkey Hill, it does not involve a liking for the bottle. I had to pour the two shots of whiskey down his throat while I squeezed his face to keep his lips open. Then he tried to spit the stuff out. Lucky he’s too weak to put up a good fight.” Dr Wesley took the cup of tea his wife offered him and then drank a goodly mouthful before telling them, “He’s stable and he’ll be all right for the next couple of days. He needs some rest in a dry, warm place but I don’t know if we’ll be able to keep him here after he starts to recover. He’ll be wanting to go up to that drafty, leaky shack of his as soon as he can stumble a step or two.” Then he shook his head and asked, “Has anyone ever heard the man utter a word?”

Charley shrugged and told him, “I’ve heard him say a word or two in Townes Department Store, but even there he usually just points to what he wants. He understands English fine, but just doesn’t seem to want to say anything.”

“Was anything wrong with his voice when you heard him speak?”

“It was only a few words. He said something like, ‘Give me spoon.’ His voice was a bit raspy but it might be just from underuse.”

The doctor nodded but said nothing even as his wife walked away and entered the medical rooms. It was a few moments later that he said, “She’s settling him in for the night. You two can head home to your families. We’ll keep watch as long as it is necessary, and if he remains very sick for a while, I’ll bring up one of my nurses to allow me and Millie a rest.”

* * * * *

It was nearly one o'clock in the morning when Charley had walked back from the stable and was about to enter the apartment building. As he turned to walk up the two steps to the entrance, he heard a horse neighing and turned around to see a horse complaining that he was made to be up and about when any such decent animal would be asleep in his stable. If his owner were a kind. . .

Charley felt the smile fading on his face as he realized that the carriage was that of Dr Harrison, the medical man who lived only a quarter mile up East St. He was the doctor Maggie used. . .

And he also took care of the children!

The frightened husband and father turned back to the apartment building and took the two steps in a single bound, nearly running into the door before he could open it. He took the inner steps three at a time, reaching the third floor and turning hard to head down the corridor leading to his apartment. A deep pain came to his gut as he saw light peeking out from under the door to that same apartment with Maggie and Bill and Mina. And Margaret? He couldn't remember at that instant if she had been staying for the night as she sometimes did though living with her grandparents just a couple blocks up the street.

The door flew open almost of its own accord and the young father and husband ran a couple of steps into the living-room, finding himself alone. Charley was confused for a second or two, and more confused when he saw the empty space where Maggie's upholstered chair should have been standing, and then he heard someone moving about in the kitchen and someone else moving about in the children's bedroom. And he was confused again for just a split-second before he turned towards the kitchen where he found Maggie boiling water on the stove and chopping ice on the table. She was wrapping the ice in a blanket and the tears were welling up in her eyes.

"What's wrong, Maggie?"

She pursed up her lips for a second and then burst out with, "You were off taking care of that damned fool and your own daughter got sick and you weren't around to help and. . ." She'd gotten no further before Charley was at her side with his arms wrapped around her.

"She has a fever?"

After a couple of sobs, she said, "Dr Harrison says she has an ear infection, and he doesn't like it. Says he has no medicine to deal with it if it doesn't clear up on its own."

Not sure what to do with himself and anxious to see Mina, he asked,

“Do you want me to take in some of the ice?”

She shook her head and said, “It’ll take me another minute to get enough.” Almost as an afterthought she said, “I had to wake Mr McKay up next-door and he went up to fetch Momma. She came and took Margaret and Bill to her house. Mr McKay also fetched Jane on his way back and she’s in there helping the doctor and Momma is coming back to relieve us after she gets a few hours of sleep.”

A few moments later, Charley walked gingerly into the children’s bedroom and found the doctor napping in that easy-chair which had been moved in from the living-room. His sister-in-law, Jane, was sitting on the side of the bed and wiping Mina’s face with a wet cloth. He moved over to sit on the very edge of the bed, opposite Jane. “Is she all right?”

Jane tightened up her face. “The doctor says she’s threatening to burn up with fever. Maggie’s getting some ice and we’re going to put bags of ice around her.”

“Did he say if she’s. . .”

“He said it’s largely out of our hands. All we can do is to try to cool her fever and then keep her warm and dry. He said some children with bad ear infections survive and some. . .”

More frightened still than when he’d left Maggie, Charley reached out and touched Mina’s cheek with the back of his right hand. “She’s had ear-aches and sore throats and even a bit of a fever last night, but she was so healthy this evening.” Charley grew silent for a minute as he remembered how tired she’d been, but that wasn’t so unusual for young children. In a quiet voice, he continued speaking, “Mina had an appointment with Dr Harrison Friday. Tomorrow.”

It was just then that Maggie walked in carrying some bundles which looked to be sheets and blankets wrapped around ice. Dr Harrison rose and moved towards the bed. The young father retreated to the wall, feeling suddenly useless. He watched as the two women helped the doctor to pull Mina’s bed-clothes down and then position the bundled chunks of ice around her feverish body.

After they were finished, Charley asked Jane, “Can you stay for another hour or two?”

“I’m here until dawn. Dad will tell my supervisor what’s going on. Mary will be here in the morning along with Momma.”

Charley had been planning on getting Maggie into bed for a couple hours of sleep. Instead, he offered, “Do you want me to move the couch in

here, Maggie. I'll just push the bureau into our bedroom and there will be plenty of space for it. Then you can get some sleep without leaving Mina." And then it struck him that the MacDonald women were mobilizing as if knowing this was a very serious illness, very serious indeed.

Hoping the fear was not showing in his face at a time when he needed to be strong, for his family's sake, he looked over at Maggie. But she hadn't even looked up at him. She was responding to his suggestion by shaking her head violently, but then she said, "I'm not going to sleep when Mina needs me." Charley looked at Jane standing behind her sister; Jane was frowning as if to warn him.

Before Charley could move, the doctor announced, "There's little I can do here for now, but I'll be in my office by ten, and I'll stop in here at noon or so if I haven't made it before then. I'll make a couple more visits in the afternoon and evening if her condition doesn't improve. Send me a message if her condition worsens in the meantime."

After escorting the doctor out, Charley moved the children's bureau into the back bedroom and then moved the couch into the children's bedroom. As Jane was making the couch up as a bed, she told Charley, "Why don't you go get some sleep? You've got to be at work tomorrow. You might as well go. There'll be plenty of women taking care of Mina and we can send for you if anything happens, God forbid."

His heart filled with fear that his daughter would die, Charley went to sit at her bedside for a minute or two before heading into his own bed where he soon fell into a restless sleep, disturbed a number of times when he thought someone had called him into Mina's sick-room. Several times he did rise, twice he went into the next room. Once Jane was sitting by Mina's bedside in the easy-chair; she waved the tired man back into his bed. The other time Maggie was sitting up; she seemed oblivious to anything but Mina. The three year-old's condition seemed to be neither worsening nor improving, and that seemed bad.

"How long can a small child bear such a fever?" had he asked to no response, no recognition of a sound, by Maggie.

Finally came the dawn and though Charley could have slept a little longer, he rose. After dressing, he put on his work-clothes and went through the sick-room on his way to the bathroom which was near the kitchen. Jane was napping in the easy-chair and Maggie was asleep on the couch. Mina looked unchanged from the last time he'd checked on her the prior night.

After washing and shaving, he put the kettle on to boil and sliced the

bread to make toast, for himself and for another two or three people. He took the butter and a jar of strawberry jam from the ice-box and set them on the table along with several small plates and a knife and a spoon.

On his way back to the sick-room, Charley was just passing through the living-room when a knock came on the door. It opened before he could respond and his mother-in-law and Maggie's sister Mary came through. Mrs MacDonald was carrying a paper-bag; the green tops of root vegetables could be seen rising from the top of that bag. Before he could say a word, she told him, "I'll be making a pot of hearty Scottish soup to keep everybody going. I've been through this a number of times with children. God willing, it will end soon and Mina will be up and running around. But it can drag on sometimes."

She had left unsaid. . .

A number of years ago, Charley's mother-in-law had told him that the hardest part of leaving Scotland had been leaving her three infants who'd been buried there. A tremble passed through the body of the young father, but he recovered almost immediately, only Mary gave sign of having seen the shiver. He moved forward and took the bag from his mother-in-law and told her, "Jane and Maggie are both sleeping."

"And Mina?"

"She's sleeping also."

"She hasn't slipped into a coma?" Blunt-spoken was the woman who knew how to grieve for those she had lost and knew how to stay on top of her more recent problems. Charley said not a word, gave not a sign of an answer other than the tears which he suddenly felt come to his eyes. Mary and her mother passed by him, Mary giving him a pat on the shoulder before going over to the closet to hang up her coat.

The first of the mill's morning sirens was soon sounding. It was nearly time for the first shift workers to on their way to work, but he found himself hesitating as he was putting on his coat. It was then that his mother-in-law walked back from the sick-room. A moment later, he could hear her rustling about in the bag she'd brought and then she walked back into the living room, a brown paper-bag in her hand. "Someone will fix you lunch if you come home to check on your daughter, Charley, but here's some food to get you through the morning break. Maggie told me that you go through three sandwiches a day, and sometimes four, and it's no wonder as hard as you work."

Charley accepted the bag and forced a smile, or something similar, be-

fore opening the door and walking out into the hallway.

16 A Long Day of Work

Mr Watkins was the man who'd been brought in to supervise the metal-shop after Mr MacGregor had retired. He was a big, reddish man with years of experience in a motorcycle manufacturing operation in Springfield. His hair was red, as was his complexion. Much of the time, even his eyes were more red than green. And he was a man who was said to keep an eye upon all that went on in the metal-shop, seemingly able to do the same for each of his workers when they were on the other end of the plant repairing a machine or helping to install hardware in walls or floor or ceiling. Maybe it was his legendary powers of observation, maybe he had simply heard a rumor, but Mr Watkins walked over to Charley at one of the turning machines and said no more than, "Let's go have a talk in the office, lad." It was only 8:00 and serious work was barely under way, but it was clear that he thought some things of still greater importance. . .

At least in the short term.

Something important indeed. It had shown in his eyes that had rested upon the young man when he'd come over and spoken. . .

But Charley, and likely everyone else in the shop, had known those eyes were focused upon him the moment he walked into the shop, returning from the stables where he had torn out a broken spring on one of the big wagons used to move machinery and large amounts of freight. The young tinsmiths' head had been filled with a variety of thoughts as he found himself under Mr Watkins' gaze. His mind was turning the spring that lay on the cart he had pushed into the metal-shop; he was watching that spring as it turned this way and that, so that he could get a good idea of the spring's thickness and tightness, of the dimensions and shapes of the plates to which it was attached; if the local dealers had no such springs in stock, a replacement would have to be fabricated and that would take a merciful effort. He was also thinking much, too much, of Mina lying in a fever and perhaps a coma.

He was thinking every so often of the Hermit lying in a fever but expected to recover.

Was Maggie going to work herself into a state of exhaustion caring for that daughter she loved so much? Would she collapse into sickness herself? Charley had already seen that Maggie rarely got sick, but when she did, she often got very sick indeed. But she would be safe, should be safe. Her mother had made it clear she would be over regularly to help care for Mina and to put Maggie to bed and keep her fed. Her sisters, Jane and Mary, had already been over for long hours. Joan would surely be over to help though she was only fifteen herself. And Jane had told him that Minnie would be out on the tram from Springfield before the morning was over.

“I hear your daughter be sick, Charley.”

Mr Watkins’ eyes were as wet as they were red and then his hand moved. He was motioning his young employee towards the small office which was mostly a place to store the metal-shop’s paperwork. The two men entered the room which was useful for conversations only because it had a door which could be shut so that the other workers knew not to disturb them. Mr Watkins shut the door, the thin door which kept out no more sounds of the machine shop than did the thin walls or the single-paned plate glass.

One part of Charley wanted to return more fully to the noise and the grease and the activity which was suddenly not hectic enough. Another part of him wanted to be in the apartment, but there seemed no purpose to that; what could he do for Mina that was not already being done by his wife and her sisters and her mother? Still another part wanted to go up and check on the Hermit; there seemed something calmer in his concern for that creature of God than there was in his worries for his daughter. Something more cold-blooded even.

Mr Watkins motioned Charley to take the only chair of three not covered with piles of paper. As soon as the younger man was sitting, Mr Watkins pushed some papers over on the work-table and sat on the edge. It wasn’t clear how the fellow did it without pushing something off the other side of the crowded table. And the problem remained unsolved when Mr Watkins asked, “Do you wish to go home, Charley?”

The young metal-worker shook his head. “What good would it do? I’m better off continuing to make my living. The bills might...” After a moment during which his thoughts became still more muddled, Charley managed to tell Mr Watkins, “Dr Harrison said she might have to go into the hospital.”

The supervisor nodded his head, his eyes upon the floor and then shifting to observe the metal-shop through the glass-wall of the office. "Well, Charley, you're one of my best workers and perhaps the one I can trust the most to supervise yourself when you're working in one of the mill buildings. Truth to tell, it would be hard for me to do without you for very long, so I'm glad you're wanting to keep working. And you're right. You wouldn't be able to do much except sit around and worry while you watched the women-folk take care of Mina. I've been through that myself with little Betsie..." Mr Watkins voice drifted away as did his eyes, but just for a second before he returned in a strong voice, "Thank God she's still with us though..."

A tired and worried father was reminded of the suffering sometimes endured by children as he remembered the time he'd met that poor little girl in the heavy braces she'd wear the rest of her life. And she would be using canes for so long as she could walk at all. Suddenly anxious he was to be working with his hands so that his brain could be handling problems that could be solved. That spring...

"I'll let you go back to work, Charley, but I'm noticing you're more than a bit distracted. It would be good for the both of us, and for your family if you were very careful today. Until your worries are eased a bit so your mind can return fully to the job."

As he was returning to the spring to lift it upon a work-table, Charley was a little disappointed to get the message that a dealer in Springfield had a spring in stock which would be close enough to fit the disabled wagon. It would only take a little reworking of the bracket fastening it to the wagon's chassis; so the dealer had wired back to the telegraph station in the mill's central offices. And the part would be at the mill first thing the next morning. At least he wouldn't have to fire up the forge, but...

"What do I have to do that will take my mind off..."

Not in much of a mood to take on another project of his own, Charley found himself wandering about the metal-shop for the rest of the morning, helping one man or another, helping to weld a patch onto a small tank and then helping old Abe Saperstein to reshape a flattish block of metal into a gear for one of the lathes in the metal-shop. And then came lunch and he double-timed his way towards the exit of the metal-shop, remembering he'd not touched the food Mrs MacDonald had been so kind as to pack for him.

He was rushing with a large crowd toward the main-gate of the plant

when he heard Mary's voice call out, "Charley, wait up a second and I'll walk with you for a short bit." He slowed but was not able to come to a complete stop with everyone rushing to get home for a bit of relaxation and lunch. And so it was that Mary was not able to work her way to his side until they were outside of the main-gate and about to cross State St. Mary would be heading up Hampden St to cut through to East, while Charley would be walking in the opposite direction to reach the lower part of East St; they stood across the street from the main gate and waited a few seconds for the crowd to thin out a bit.

And then she told him, "I'll be running by your apartment on my way back to work, but I've got to get home to help Bella to feed the children. She's been a God-send, and it's a good thing that Mother offered her a room when she came over from Scotland. And she might be even more help with Mina since she's a trained nurse, though not yet licensed in this country." This seemed an unnecessary conversation and Charley was fidgeting a little, ready to go check on his little girl. Mary reached out and touched his arm. "Relax, Charley. Whatever can be done for Mina is being done. I've heard that Dr Wesley is coming down to talk with Dr Harrison about Mina's condition." He was continuing to fidget, and she was needing to move on herself; dropping her smile and looking to be all business, she told him, "We've decided it would be best if you were to move up to the house for now. The room you and Maggie used is empty but the bed and a dresser are still in it. Minnie and Jane were going to go by and get it ready for you."

He had taken his leave of Mary before he even thought of protesting, but then he told himself it was probably best. It might be a little easier for him to get some sleep so long as he was working through this crisis. And Bill was up at the house; the poor little fellow was probably confused and a guilty father realized he hadn't even been thinking much about his son, so worried was he about Mina and. . .

As he walked up the stoop to enter the apartment building, Charley realized he'd been thinking more about the Hermit than about his son. There was a reason for that. The Hermit had been an awfully sick man, though not so sick as Mina from what he could gather. Bill was a healthy young fellow and sometimes the needs of the healthy had to be sacrificed. . .

That still didn't seem right, no matter what the Bible might say about such situations. . .

But he wasn't really sure what the Bible did say about such situations.

And his thinking was interrupted by the sight of Dr Harrison walking down the staircase. The medical man grimaced a little and came to a stop on the same step as Charley. After sighing, the doctor told the young father, "I wish I could give you better news, but there's been little change. She's feverish and sleeping too deeply in my opinion. A short period of coma wouldn't bother me too much, but she's stabilizing in that condition, and that worries me. Her ear canal is also entirely closed up. I may have to drain it, and that would require putting her in the hospital."

Without another word, the two men passed by, one going up towards his daughter's sickroom in a disrupted home, one passing by to return to his office where he could pretend to be more effective than he was currently feeling.

Charley walked into his apartment to the smells of a beef and barley soup warming up on the stove. He felt suddenly hungry, as much as he had not even thought of food that entire morning, working right through his morning break without even having remembered doing so. But he did remember that there had been no walk down the corridor to one of the mill break-rooms, no alternative walk out the door to sit on the stoop outside the metal-shop—which he often did on warm, sunny days. And he couldn't even remember if the day was warm and sunny. He could only think of his daughter, but his stomach distracted him for just a second before he turned left towards Mina's sick-room. He froze, not sure if he would be a hindrance, if he would even be tolerated to enter. Then he stepped forward, but he'd not had a chance to so much as knock when the door opened, as if on his own. He found himself face to face with his sister-in-law Jane. She looked as weary as he felt. And her voice was weary as she told him, "She's no different than she was when you left, Charley. For good or bad, her condition is unchanged. The doctor just left and he had little to tell us, at least little good and that told us..." She stopped herself before saying the obvious: that no good news was itself very bad news under the circumstances. She composed herself and told him, "Maggie and Minnie are giving the poor thing a bath with cool water. After that, they'll change her bed-clothing and put a fresh night-gown on her. The pot of soup is warming up on the stove. Why don't you come and have a bowl and then you can go in and see Mina? They'll be through nursing her by then."

The soup tasted better than Charley would have expected. A typical MacDonald soup, thick with turnips and carrots, some cooked down into the stock and some added later in the cooking process and still having good

substance. There were some chunks of beef though mostly a vegetable soup, and, in fact, largely a root-vegetable soup. And Jane gave him a hunk of bread covered with butter alongside the large bowl of soup nearly as thick as a stew. Yes, it tasted good though he was beginning to feel guilty for being able to eat so well when his daughter was lying in a feverish coma.

But his stomach, upset for most of the morning, seemed now to be unconcerned with Mina's illness. The soup quickly disappeared along with the hunk of bread and butter. He was pondering the possibility of a second bowl and Jane had turned from washing dishes as if to ask him if he wanted more, but he'd not had a chance to so much as decide when Maggie entered the kitchen. Charley shot to his feet and took two quick steps before he was able to wrap his arms around her. She had looked exhausted as she was walking into the kitchen and she even felt exhausted as he held her. She felt as if ready to collapse. Since she had plenty of help, he was thinking it was worry that was wearing her down; undoubtedly, she was not getting very restful rest, even when her mother or sisters forced her to lie down a bit.

Maggie sobbed a little as she let Charley hold her tight against himself, she even rested her head against his chest for a few seconds, letting him feel he was not a useless bystander. Then she pulled away from him and stood a couple feet away, dabbing at her eyes with a handkerchief she'd pulled from the pocket of her smock. One of her prettiest house-dresses it was, blue irises interwoven with long, viney branches sprouting green leaves. He couldn't even guess if she had put it on simply because it had been on top of the drawer or if she had been trying to cheer herself up.

"Why don't you go in and see her, Charley? She's not... Go in and see her while I help Jane to get lunch ready for Minnie and Mother."

Charley let Maggie into the kitchen and then nearly ran through the living-room, though he came to a stop at the now open doorway into the children's bedroom where lay...

Steeling himself, the young father opened the door and strode into the room, not coming to a stop until he was at the bedside of his daughter. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Minnie rolling up the dirty bedclothes and night-gown into a sheet. Mina's grandmother was standing on the other side of the bed, caressing the poor child's forehead. Though she was one of the toughest women he had ever known, there were tears flowing out of the eyes of...

But he knew she had become tough, only in certain ways, caring for a

convalescent mother and then dealing with the problems of a large family while her husband was sinking into medical problems and climbing into the whiskey bottle. And he knew the woman had left three of her own infants buried in the soil of Scotland. She had struggled with the decision to leave Scotland, to leave the land which held those infants, had finally been able to do so only for the good of her living children.

Shifting his weight a few times from foot to foot, Charley wasn't sure what to do as he stared down at his daughter who looked so peaceful at that moment. He knew it was a misleading moment, and he knew it would not be long until her clothes and sheets were soaked again. But how long could that continue? Mina wasn't able to either eat or drink though he saw his mother-in-law squeezing water from a wet cloth into the corner of Mina's mouth. But they couldn't get much water in her that way; in a sleep approaching a coma, the little girl would choke on any significant amount of water. And she wasn't able to take in nourishment in even the smallest amounts.

Suddenly, Mina looked as if he were seeing her at the bottom of a stream and then Charley could feel the tears rolling down his cheeks. And he feared. . .

"Charley," and his mother-in-law's voice was softer than he could remember it ever being. "Why don't you grab some lunch and go on and get back to work? You can't do yourself or Mina any good here and you should get your mind off problems you can't solve."

He thought of telling her his fears that. . .

But all he could say was, "I just had a bowl of soup." His daughter was dying and he couldn't speak of much but eating and sleeping and. . .

But that was the stuff of life. When those matters were no longer a confusion to you. . .

That dream he'd had during the early morning hours. A frightening image of Mina at peace, lying peacefully at the bottom of a stream. Her eyes closed, her hands resting on her tiny belly, her posture that of a state of perfect peace. . .

No longer on the surface of the world.

It didn't correspond to any image Charley could remember from the Bible or from any fairy-tales. . .

He went to one knee alongside the bed and reached over to caress Mina's cheek with the back of his fingers, but then he drew his hand back. His skin was so rough from the work he did, from his hours fishing and hunting. . .

Sad as he could remember ever being, he rose to bend over Mina. After kissing her on her forehead which was hot and...

It was dry and not sweating up!

But he knew that wasn't a good sign either. Nothing would be a good sign but...

Even without being a doctor, Charley could see that there was something wrong with Mina's right ear. It was swollen. Swollen shut but also just swollen out and red as could be. Near that ear, her cheek was also swollen and reddish. The infection was raging and there was nothing the doctor could do about it.

With tears streaming down his face, Charley was trying not to grieve as he turned and walked out of the room and went to the bathroom where he set to work washing his face. It wasn't that he was ashamed to be showing tears for his little girl who was so sick, but there was no need to make others back at the mill share his misery.

17 The Fate of All Creatures

Charley returned home that evening to find Dr Wesley and Dr Harrison sitting on kitchen table chairs that had been pulled into the living-room. The two men, who were in some sort of conference, rose and Dr Wesley took a few steps forward to shake Charley's hand. "Maggie has kindly brewed some coffee for us. I think there is still a cup or two in the pot." When Charley didn't say a word, Dr Wesley smiled as if to say he realized why the young father was having trouble speaking. "Take a few minutes to relax and then you can come back here and we'll let you know what our thinking is on your daughter's illness." Dr Harrison was looking away and that seemed an ominous sign, but Charley did as the other doctor had suggested, going straight into the bathroom to freshen up a little, though he had washed before leaving the mill. And he had not done too much dirty work that afternoon, having spent the time helping some of the mill supervisors check the weaving machines in preparation for a short maintenance shutdown the next week.

It was only a minute or so before he shot out of the bathroom, stepping into the kitchen to pour himself what was left of the coffee. He stepped right into the living-room from there, a cup of steaming, black coffee in his right hand. Maggie was sitting in her easy chair, her mother and Dr Harrison were sitting in the kitchen chairs. Dr Wesley was staring out the window, looking out the back of the apartment building. From there, the good man could have been looking only at the back-entrances to the town's hospital, the back of the Community Center, and the roof of the fire-station the mill company had built for the town's volunteer fire-brigade.

Nervously did Charley take his stand at the side of Maggie sitting in her chair. Nervously did he wait for the axe to fall. And he had not long to wait before. . .

"She's not doing as well as we would have hoped." Clearly, Dr Harrison

was soft-pedaling the news, but no one complained though they already knew: “The infection is raging. She’s not always in a fever now, but the periods of coolness are not good news. It might be that she’s already lost a lot of strength and is having trouble fighting the disease.”

Dr Harrison grew quiet and met the gaze of Mrs MacDonald for she was the only one meeting the gaze of the doctors. And then Dr Wesley spoke in a soft voice, “Dr Harrison has some reservations, but I think it’s very likely the infection is pushing into Mina’s brain.” At that, Charley looked up, not at the doctors, but at Maggie whose head was bent over, Maggie who was dripping tears into her own lap. As bad as the young father had felt at the news of his daughter’s state, the young husband was feeling even worse at realizing how his wife was going to take the young girl’s death. . .

Hardheaded in many ways, Charley had not before that instant thought of Mina actually dying. At least not in so many words, though that image of her lying at peace at the bottom of a stream. . .

And his head shot up, his gaze attacked first Dr Harrison and then almost immediately Dr Wesley who took the assault and nodded sadly before saying, “We think she should be put in the hospital. She’ll be more comfortable there and we might be able to do something to reduce any pain she might be feeling.”

Maggie practically shrieked as she asked, “Is she in that much pain?”

Dr Harrison looked a little nervous to Charley’s eyes as he replied, “We don’t know in these sorts of cases. She might be in pain. There are no pain nerves in the brain. . . But there is a high density of pain nerves in the region of the ears and there are pain nerves surrounding the brain. . .” His voice had trailed off before he explained, “I’m not trying to give you a scientific treatise because no one, not even the professors at the best medical schools, know if someone with a brain injury leaving them in a coma. . . I mean. . .”

At that, Maggie’s head shot up and turned to the door leading to Mina’s sick-room, but she didn’t have time to rise before the door opened and Jane emerged to say, “She’s moaning and moving about.”

To his surprise, Charley reached the bedside of his sick daughter even before Maggie, but he was less surprised than he was worried: Mina wasn’t just moving about, her face was pinched up as if the poor thing was. . .

Maggie gasped and then she pushed her husband and Dr Wesley out of the way to get to Mina’s side. “She *is* in pain.” She sank to her knees but only remained in that position for a moment before her mother took hold

of her by the shoulders and pulled her to her feet.

Mrs MacDonald was perhaps speaking to all the laymen in the room when she told her daughter, "Let's get away from her bed and let the doctors examine her," but Dr Wesley was already on the other side of the bed, armed with the stethoscope he'd taken from his black bag sitting on the table next to Mina's bed.

Dr Harrison appeared at the side of his colleague and looked at Mrs MacDonald, a solemn expression upon his face. "She can stay at Mina's side so long as she doesn't move her. Our examination will be quick."

And a moan dwindling into a whimper came from Mina's lips, tearing her father's heart and not doing any less damage to the heart of her grandmother and aunt. Even the doctors winced, and Charley was glad he couldn't see Maggie's face, fearing she was bearing pain unto the torments of Hell.

And it was Dr Wesley who pronounced, "There's little doubt now. The infection in her ear has grown to the point where it's pressing into her brain." When Maggie looked up at him, he steeled himself during the briefest silence and told her first, "She is feeling pain now, though I think she will drift back into a coma before long. Then we won't know if..." He paused and took a deep breath before going on to say, "I think we should put her in the hospital to..."

Maggie cried out, "No! We can take care of her better here. I won't leave her bedside." Even her mother, the strong-willed matriarch of the MacDonald clan stepped back, not willing to cross her daughter, at least not at that moment. Charley found himself merely feeling uncomfortable and useless and looked towards the foot of the bed at his sister-in-law Jane who returned a frown of empathy and sympathy.

Dr Wesley breathed deeply but didn't say anything; he shifted his gaze over to Dr Harrison who looked at his colleague for just an instant before turning his head to shift his gaze between Charley and Mrs MacDonald, Maggie having returned to her knees and having returned her attention fully to Mina. And then Dr Wesley seemed to make a decision and his gaze settled upon Mrs MacDonald. "Why don't you let Dr Harrison and me examine her alone for a few minutes?" Charley realized it was the first time he'd heard a doctor make such a request as a question and not as a polite command. He wasn't sure if it were Maggie's torment or Mrs MacDonald's commanding presence, but...

He turned and left the sick-room just behind Jane and just ahead of

Mrs MacDonald steering Maggie, hands upon shoulders.

* * * * *

As James MacDonald was spooning out the soup into a bowl, his back was to Charley sitting at the table with his son Bill and his niece Margaret. When the gruff old Scotsman turned around, there was a tear in his eye, but he asked no more questions about Mina now that the children were down in the kitchen with the two men. "We could move up to the dining-room or the living-room, if you. . ."

Charley shook his head nearly as soon as the suggestion was starting out of the mouth of his father-in-law. "This is fine, and it's easier since you have the pot of soup down here." And he turned to his three year-old son to ask, "And what did you have for dinner?"

"We ate out," he replied in a voice proud with his accomplishment and a voice surprisingly clear for such a young lad. Still, he wasn't quite two and it was Margaret who explained a little: "We went to a deli with Uncle Finlay."

It was James MacDonald who explained the unusual expedition, "Fin drove them into Indian Orchard to the Polish bakery and they had sandwiches and Polish soup."

"Polish soup? Are we adventurous?" And then Charley looked directly at Bill and asked, "Lots of cabbage?"

"He didn't eat his soup." And Margaret informed her uncle further, "He just ate his ham sandwich."

"That's a hearty enough meal, though soup is good for you, Bill." And Charley shifted his smile to Margaret. "And did you eat your soup?"

"Every drop. I like soup. I'm a Scottish lass."

"And I suspect you listen a lot to your grandfather." She nodded and Charley winked at her before whispering loudly, "He's sometimes as full of blarney as any Irishman I ever met."

"Don't make the lassie doubt the veracity of her grandfather." James spoke from near the stove where he sat smoking his pipe.

"I wouldn't want her to doubt your veracity any more than I doubt it."

And James MacDonald smiled, as if satisfied with that response, though Margaret looked confused. She had no chance to ask, "What is 'veracity'?" before someone entered the house on the main floor overhead. Silence

reigned in the basement as the feet moved towards the closet, grew still for a moment, and then moved down the hallway.

A couple of seconds later, Margaret MacDonald called down, “Are the bairns down there with you, James?”

“Yes,” he called out, not having to speak overly loud as his voice carried so well. “And Charley is down here having a bowl of soup for his late supper.”

Having not much left in his bowl, Charley finished it quickly and carried his bowl and spoon over to the sink and started washing it while James MacDonald began his painful way over to the stairs. Moving slowly, the father feeling so dulled of mind and soul gave the old Scotsman a good minute or so and then turned from the sink to nod towards the stairs, letting the children know that it was time to follow their grandfather up the stairs. Margaret went first, going slowly enough that her grandfather was up the stairs and halfway to the living-room before she reached the doorway. Bill followed her, a bit anxious to move faster though the stairs were a bit steep for his little legs, but he slowed his efforts when his father put his hand on his shoulder. “That’s a fine fellow. You’re behaving very well during a difficult time.” In truth, even Margaret at six didn’t understand fully what was going on, though she knew her cousin was very sick; Bill didn’t understand much at all, but he seemed to be carrying himself with more than a little bit of adultish dignity when he walked down the hallway side-by-side with his father.

When Charley reached the living-room, he sat down on the couch, his niece Margaret at the opposite end and his son Bill in the middle. Mrs MacDonald had taken her easy-chair and her husband was in his rocker, filling his pipe from the stash of tobacco he kept in a jar that sat on the side-table that was otherwise used to hold the one or two books he was reading at any given time. On that night, two books happened to be lying on the top of that table: *Journey to the Center of the Earth*—Mary had finally convinced her father to read a Jules Verne novel, and *Ivanhoe*—which book James MacDonald had already read at least twice.

And his mother-in-law waited until everyone was seated before saying, “There’s been little change though Mina’s not as restless as she was when you left the apartment. Maggie still is determined to keep her home.” She paused for a few seconds and looked over at Margaret and Bill as if to make sure they were not overly upset. “I think it is a good idea that you stay here so you can get your rest... I don’t know if my daughters bothered

to discuss the matter with you before they decided, but it is a good idea. Still, you should feel free to go over and see Maggie and Mina before you settle in for the night. Bella is at the apartment now. She went straight there from work, and I'm to take back a bag for her with a change of clothes. She'll be staying at your apartment and going to work tomorrow from there. Since she's a nurse—though not yet licensed in this country, the doctors were happier about the arrangement, and they're going to have one of the hospital nurses go by the apartment tomorrow."

Charley felt his chest tighten up and he suddenly had a craving for a cigarette, which craving was being aggravated by the smell of his father-in-law's pipe tobacco. A pipe-smoker himself, Charley could still tell the difference between a cigarette and a pipe, and it was the stronger boost that he needed. He rose and asked, "Will someone get Bill to bed for me?" Margaret volunteered, "I will," though the lad didn't look too happy about the prospect.

Suppressing the sad smile that threatened his lips, Charley passed his attention to James MacDonald, the old Scotsman continued to puff contentedly on his pipe even as he nodded his head. Mrs MacDonald told her son-in-law, "I'll be back over to relieve Maggie and Bella after I get a few hours of sleep."

It took only a few seconds for Charley to get on his jacket, checking first that he had a reasonably full pack of cigarettes in the inner-pocket. It took not many more seconds before he was outside on the public sidewalk walking along East St. He lit a cigarette before taking many steps toward the apartment building. Setting out at a brisk pace, nearly a slow run, he was a little short of breath when he came to Sewall St. As he was crossing it, he could see Dr Wesley's carriage tied up in front of the apartment building; the horse was drinking from the cast-iron watering trough.

And the doctor himself came out of the building just before Charley reached the main entrance. With a nod, the good doctor invited him to stay for a talk and...

Charley pulled out his box of matches and lit the doctor's cigar after refusing one for himself. The medical man was puffing away as the anxious father explained, "I like a good cigar every so often, and a pipe to relax me in the evening, but it's a cigarette I crave when I'm active."

"Or nervous?"

"Do I have reason to be nervous?"

Dr Wesley contemplated the matter for a long puff, and blew a perfectly

formed smoke-ring before gesturing with the cigar. "You know, Charley, these things are not good for us. I have some colleagues who urge people to smoke, thinking the heat and smoke kill infections. They are wrong without a doubt. Smoking causes a lot of problems. People who breath in smoke have all sorts of problems and sometimes die without having any other obvious injuries. People who smoke cigarettes develop a variety of consumptive lung problems and all sorts of cancers. I've observed operations in Boston where surgeons had to remove nearly all of a man's jaw because of cancerous growths and they tell me it's almost always a cigar-smoker or pipe-smoker. Cigarette-smokers breath more deeply into their lungs and they lose their ability to breath after a while, as sure as do those poor fellows who work in the coal-mines in Pennsylvania or Colorado."

"I smoke mostly cigarettes but also pipes and cigars, Doc. Maybe I'll die of everything all at once."

Charley looked over to see a frown returned against his desperate smile. "You're a good man, young Mr MacGregor and a young husband and father to boot. I don't consider it a humorous matter to think of what can happen to you if you keep up your bad habits." And then Dr Wesley shrugged. "On the other hand, some people seem resistant, or maybe just lucky. I have some patients approaching 100 who have been heavy smokers and heavy drinkers all their lives. But I wouldn't recommend either heavy smoking or heavy drinking."

"How is she doing?"

"Mina isn't doing too well, Charley. Not too well at all. We're moving her to the hospital tomorrow. Even Maggie is wearing down, not that it's exactly dragged on, but the poor girl has been restless and showing signs of pain for much of the evening. She even seemed to be conscious and pleading for us to do something for a little while. I wasn't there at the time, but Bella was, and, being a trained nurse, she can tell when someone is really conscious and not showing false signs." He shook his head. "It's always worse when it's a child and they don't understand at all why they're suffering so much."

An image came again of Mina lying at the bottom of that stream, beyond pain but that didn't seem so clearly a good thing. At least not...now. Not knowing himself what his thoughts meant or where they were leading, Charley asked, "Is Maggie holding up?"

"She's tearing herself to pieces inside. I know it's hard for a mother to watch her child die, especially when the poor, little thing is in such pain..."

All the young father could think of was his willingness to take on that sort of pain himself if it would save his daughter, but all he could say was, "How's the Hermit doing?" At that, he pulled out his pack of cigarettes and took a fresh one. As he was lighting it and relighting Dr Wesley's cigar, he wondered if he should take the next couple of days off to . . .

"He got up and walked out this afternoon. Still sick, but able to take care of himself. I guess. He's an ornery bugger, but so are a lot of respectable citizens. I get sharp pains in my own legs every time I watch your father-in-law walk down the street on those twisted wrecks that he has for legs. And I know he destroyed two prosperous businesses and nearly destroyed his family by trying to cover the pain with alcohol, but I still admire him for being able to bear up."

* * * * *

Charley rose as soon as he saw the Reverend Atkins rushing in, Bible in hand and Mrs Atkins right behind him. "What about Sunday services?"

"Jim McDowell is going to lead one of his layman's services. It's more important. . ." The minister looked over at Maggie sitting and quietly crying but had no chance to say or do anything before his wife sat down and took the grieving mother's hand. While the two women were sitting quietly, the minister gestured Charley to the other end of the waiting room. "Do they know how long she'll last?"

"Not long. She's fallen more deeply into a coma and she's starting to gasp for breath. The doctor says that a sign. . ." Charley's voice broke up and the Reverend Atkins patted him on the shoulder before reassuring him, "Then she'll be with the Lord Jesus and beyond pain before long."

"I wish he'd taken her three days ago before she had to go through with all of this."

"And then we would have all been sad that she was taken suddenly with no chance to recover." Charley's head jerked up, but he didn't look angry so much as questioning. "There is much, Charley, that we have to accept. No one knows why the Good Lord made the world the way He did, but the world is what it is. Our job is to make the best of it, to go on when something terrible happens."

"I know. My mother-in-law has already spoken to me of her own grief at losing her children in Scotland and she said it isn't any better to be

watching one of her grandchildren dying. She told me that I can't sink too deeply into grief because Bill still needs me."

"And Maggie."

"Yeah, I guess she needs me, or at least she'll need me at some point. But she won't even talk to me much. Not about the weather, not about our son, not about our dying daughter. She'll need time to recover a little before anyone, even her mother, will be able to talk much sense with her. About this, I mean. I expect she'll be back to taking good care of Bill pretty quickly."

"I'll come by sometime this week and try to talk to her, but first..."

The minister had no sooner turned towards Maggie and his wife than Dr Harrison came into the waiting-room, but he stopped before saying anything. The tapping of canes could be heard. James MacDonald was making his halting way along the hospital corridor after struggling up two sets of staircases to reach the third-floor intensive care ward. The doctor moved further inside the room and had to wait only a moment before James MacDonald appeared in the doorway, followed by his wife and then by Minnie and her husband Finlay.

Maggie gasped, perhaps because they were all dressed somberly, as if all ready for the funeral. But it was no different than they would have dressed on most Sundays to attend church. Her mother marched forward and took the seat next to Maggie and on the other side from Mrs Atkins. James MacDonald shook hands with Dr Harrison and with the Reverend Atkins and then Finlay did the same before they moved apart to let Minnie move in and take a seat.

With the women sitting near each other, Dr Harrison took up position in front of them and directly facing Maggie. The men circled around to his left and to his right, and he took a deep breath before saying, "The end to her suffering is getting near. The nurses are through cleaning her and we've put some topical pain-killer on the right side of her head. I honestly don't know if it will do any good, but we are at the point now where prayer is our only option. She's been moved to a corner of the ward and screens have been put around her. There aren't many people to disturb. It's your choice if you want to all go in or... Well, it's actually up to Charley and Maggie if they want to go in alone." There was a pause and then he repeated, "It won't be long now."

Charley looked over towards Maggie but her head was dropped upon her chest. He was about to tell the doctor to let the entire family in when

Margaret MacDonald caught his attention and shook her head as if knowing what he was thinking. He took just a second to steel himself to the task of comforting Maggie without the help of her mother or one of her sisters and then, "It will be best if Maggie and I go in alone, Dr Harrison."

A hint of protest flash across the face of Minnie, and, for sure, she had loved her little niece and spoiled her as much as the best of aunts could have done. But she must have thought again of the situation and she rose to walk over to her sister and ask, "Would you like to go and freshen yourself up just a bit before you go in to say good-bye to Mina?"

Clearly, the issue was less the freshening of the face and more the composing of the person. And it took just a minute before Minnie led her sister back from the lady's room; Maggie's eyes were still red and her beautiful and smooth skin was still stretched tight as if she were herself were sick. But she was holding herself erect when Charley came over and offered her his arm.

A few moments later, the two heart-broken parents were looking down at their dying daughter. He had been aware that the nurses had steered them towards Mina's left side, and he could see a hint of the right-side bulge that had apparently grown a lot over the evening hours. He could also see that much of the skin of her face was red and raw looking as if it were about to peel off. The best indication he could see of his daughter's suffering was the swollen right eye, so swollen that she could not have opened it if she had been conscious. He felt as if a knife had just ripped right up through the left side of his chest. The sensation was strong enough that he grasped for the enemy though it was inside his rib-cage, but, no, there was no enemy. Or, rather was the enemy inside his daughter's ear and swelling into her brain, killing her and. . .

"She looks almost peaceful, Maggie. Maybe the good Lord has already relieved her of her suffering even if He hasn't taken her yet."

And it was at that instant that Mina's little chest heaved and she made a sound as if trying to suck air in through a swollen throat. The nurse, who had been hovering nearby, rushed over and put her hand tenderly on Mina's forehead before telling the horrified parents, "Don't be upset. She's not in pain. She's not conscious and her body is going through some reflex actions."

His mind a muddle, Charley couldn't help noticing how beautiful were the hazel eyes of the red-haired angel of mercy. Then his own eyes returned to his suffering daughter. . .

Was she still in there, in that small, suffering body? Was it no more than flesh, with Mina's soul already gone to be with Jesus? Mina's flesh, if that was all that was left of her, was still showing some signs of distress. And then that flesh gave another heave, more gentle this time, and something told Charley this was the final heave for his beloved daughter. He leaned over a bit and put his hands over those of his kneeling wife.

Out of the corner of his attention, he could perceive Dr Harrison at the other side of the bed. He checked for a pulse on the wrist and then on the neck and then he put on his stethoscope and checked on the lung-side of Mina's chest and then to the left of the center of her chest. And then the doctor stood up. Charley looked up in time see the Dr Harrison drop his eyes and close them. The medical man's lips moved as if he were saying a prayer. And then he nodded at Charley, Maggie having eyes only for Mina's corpse, and he left.

Only a minute had passed before the shadow of another person fell upon the bed. The Reverend Atkins stood at the side of Mina's bed opposite of the dead girl's parents. That good man reached out and caress Mina's swollen face. Then he stood upright and opened his Bible. He stood silent for a moment or two, and then came a soft, soft voice:

The Lord is my shepherd, I'll not want;
 He makes me down to lie in pastures green,
 He leadeth me the quiet waters by.
 My soul He doth restore again;
 and me to walk doth make
 within the paths of righteousness,
 E'en for His own name's sake.
 Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
 yet will I feel no ill
 for Thou are with me,
 and Thy rod and staff me comfort still.
 My table Thou has furnished in presence of my foes;
 my head Thou has with oil annoint,
 and my cup overflows.
 Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me.
 And in God's house for evermore my dwelling place shall be.

The time passed so painfully and slowly fast and then...

And then Charley looked up to see a question forming on the face of the minister. The grieving father nodded and he turned to help Maggie to her feet. She was passive, not cooperating much, but she wasn't fighting as he pulled her up, nor did she fight as he led her to the exit of the intensive care ward. Dr Harrison was waiting near the nurse's desk, and he nodded to the stricken father before returning his attention to Mina. To what was left of Mina. And Charley found himself suddenly wishing, as he had never wished before, that the more devout members of his family were right. . .

Or maybe that they were wrong. . .

Hope of Heaven, of eternal bliss, they had, even the harshest of Scottish Presbyterians, but never the sort of certainty that he had noticed amongst many in the younger generations. The same sort of certainty he'd noticed in many of the American-born people down in the mills or even amongst the fellows at the stables, not many of whom were even church-goers. And Charley wished he could be so certain as they were, certain there was a merciful God, certain there was an afterlife in Heaven, certain he and Maggie would one day be joining Mina. Less the hope and more the certainty. . .

18 No Greater Love...

It had been a successful side-job. Charley had pocketed a good amount of money and had been satisfied with the heating system he'd put into Dr Harrison's new house up on East St. Satisfied? Hell, he'd been downright proud of his work. Even the fit and finish work had gone so well that the builder had not had to call his finish carpenters back in; Pierre had joked, in his heavy French-Canadian accent that he'd like to hire Charley as a carpenter. He was proud and happy that he could do such high-quality work, but he was also happy about the money, being now the father of four, and 1931 wasn't such a good year to be responsible for supporting a family of six. True it was that Margaret was a grown woman at twenty and earning her own way with a job at an insurance company. And Bill was halfway through high school, old enough to go to work full-time in a pinch. But Charley wanted to pay all the bills and he wanted the children to all finish high school, maybe even...

"No, old man, that isn't likely, though Bill is the sort to really take charge of his life once he figures out what he wants to do. He might decide to become an engineer or a doctor or, more likely, a lawyer. And then nothing will stop him."

With the stables behind him, he turned left onto Chestnut St, heading towards the apartment by a slightly roundabout route, only long enough that he might have time to smoke a cigarette or two. He'd gone most of the morning without smoking much as the fancy wallpaper had already gone up in the Harrison's house and he knew that the smell of smoke bothered Mrs Harrison. The doctor told him that there was going to be one room in the house where he would be free to smoke his occasional cigar; otherwise, Mrs Harrison's wishes would rule, at least when it came to smoking. But that had been an easy sacrifice for the doctor since he really wasn't a heavy or even a regular smoker. And he was also one of those who preached against

all forms of smoking. And Charley had listened to several lectures over the years. None today, for which he was glad.

As he stopped to light his cigarette, Charley wondered if the doctor was right about the dangers of smoking. He'd heard of other doctors who claimed smoking was good for you; Dr Harrison had told him that he knew some of his colleagues were of that opinion, but he considered those fellows to be blind to the obvious damage that smoking did to the human lungs. But Charley didn't have bad lungs, at least not at forty.

He breathed out a heavy cloud of smoke and smiled. He was once again thinking of his children: Margaret who was twenty, Bill who was nearly fifteen, Finlay who was going on twelve, and Dorothy who was only seven. Maggie planned on no more than three children when they'd first married, and he didn't blame her; he had his own selfish reasons to keep his family fairly small since he was wanting to live well and provide a good life for his wife and children.

Three of their own, after losing Mina, and they'd had Margaret as their daughter since her grandmother had died in the Great Flu Epidemic back in 1920, less than a year after Mina had died of her ear infection. Margaret MacDonald had been raising her granddaughter, Margaret MacDonald Powell, since Mary had gone into union work and started traveling. That had started when Margaret had been young but only on a sporadic basis. By the time that Margaret had turned ten, her mother was on the road, or in Boston or Chicago, more weeks than not. And then it had not been much longer before Mary had accepted a job in Boston, working for a group that was not part of a labor union but it did support work, making sure that workers were educated, that the families of striking workers were cared for, lobbying against certain types of abuse—including child labor.

The schools were just to the right of the man who was remembering and that made him remember those who'd died in the school buildings, converted to hospitals during the Epidemic. Margaret MacDonald and her daughter Emma Jane had died in the school, though Jane's twins—born when she was already in a coma—died in the MacDonald's house. The poor little creatures had not lasted long and had never had a chance to enjoy life the smallest bit.

The sight of those shriveled little babies was what had affected Charley the most, even more than the deaths of his mother-in-law and his sister-in-law. James MacDonald had been so tender and gentle as he had worked on those straps that their little cradles could be held right up against the

kitchen stove which had been kept always going at a gentle level. The old Scotsman had been still more tender and gentle as he had done what he could to give the poor, little things some loving attention and to get some water and warm milk into them. Until she fell sick herself, Maggie had also been over to help, and young Margaret had also helped as if she were a little mother herself. And young Margaret had herself fallen sick, though not near unto death. And, then, they'd almost lost Maggie and also Mary—who at least had been lucky enough to fall sick when she was home in Jenckesville and not on the road.

So much had happened. And those terrible events were eleven years safely into the past. Not that the present was bereft of its own dangers and problems. And opportunities.

Half finished with his cigarette before he started moving again, Charley finished walking past the two elementary schools which had been built back in the 1800s by the mills to provide classrooms for the children downtown; the outlying areas had been served by a number of small schools, mostly built and maintained by the people in each of those areas. He stopped to look at the large building which stood where once the Union School had been. The Union School had been the original downtown school, built back in the 1860s by the company then owning and running the mills. That school had been torn down decades ago, replaced by a new brick building which had more recently been more than doubled in size. The oldest part was being used as the junior high school and the large addition being used as the high school.

It surprised an old-timer how many children were going at least through the eighth grade. Even with the depression worsening. And many of those were going right up through four years of high school. One young fellow had done that the year before and was now attending MIT, the big-wig engineering school near Boston. Charley stopped for a second and looked at the school, shaking his head in mild wonder at the way the world was changing so rapidly.

Not having gone past the sixth grade himself, Charley didn't pretend to know much about education, but he was told that a centralized school with students separated by age and achievement was the best way to educate the children and the young men and women. That made sense to him and he didn't feel at all upset at the amount of money the town poured into the schools each year. The world was changing much and. . .

As Charley turned to continue his short journey down Chestnut St,

he saw two large black cars drive up to the building which housed the Jenckesville Savings Bank. As he stood there, he saw Mr Crenshaw emerge from the bank and walk over towards the cars. When he saw the manager of the payroll department, he knew what would come next. Sure enough, state policemen started pouring out of the two cars. Five of them, not counting the drivers. A few seconds later, the trunks of the cars were opened and the troopers pulled out submachine guns and shot-guns. It was a regular, weekly occurrence. The bank-robbers in the Midwest were enjoying such success that everyone in New England was also spooked. The mill-company managers had requested the governor to help guard the payroll, but he had already beefed up the state police in preparation for his plans to provide such protection, whether requested or not. So had been the tale told by Dr Hooker, the young dentist who was involving himself in local politics with perhaps more energy than he was putting into his year-old practice.

It didn't seem right to have all these state troopers here when Jenckesville seemed large enough to support a small, professional police force. Instead there was a constabulary force, which mostly consisted of a group of middle-aged or elderly men walking around in the evening, and taking occasional walks throughout the night, to enforce curfew rules and to watch for animals which had broken loose and might cause damage in backyard gardens. Charley was thinking that there was a future for real policemen in town.

Those gangsters like Capone showed the future as much as those G-men in Washington working for that Hoover fellow. Fast cars and powerful weapons were the way of the future. And ruthlessness. Capone was said to have little respect for human life; in his own, more law-abiding way, Hoover was also ruthless. At least he was pretty ruthless in the new-reels and the newspapers, and he was apparently happy to cooperate in that presentation of his persona. Or public persona.

The state troopers were looking suspiciously at Charley who had stopped to watch them while he smoked another cigarette. One of the troopers near the doorway to the bank turned to Mr Crenshaw, who then turned towards Charley. The paymaster smiled and waved and seemed to say something to the state policeman. And then they seemed to ignore the man who was smoking a cigarette while watching the guard detail and wondering...

He wasn't sure what he was wondering. He knew he didn't want to be this sort of policeman, armed as if a soldier moving through an enemy population and acting in a similar way. So he wasn't at all wondering what

it would be like to be holding a submachine gun and waiting for an attack in the midst of a community of peaceful, law-abiding citizens.

Still, the young metal-worker suspected there was a great future for cops who would be part of the community. More like town fathers than soldiers coming to occupy enemy territory. Friends and guides to the law-abiding citizens, though some of those needed correction at times. Guards with adequate weaponry to protect the decent and law-abiding citizens against those few in the community who went bad and those outsiders who entered the community to take advantage. . .

The rough sounds of a low-g geared transmission broke Charley out of his line of thought. The armored car was coming up East Street from the bridge. It turned to come up Chestnut Street, followed closely by a large black car. The state troopers moved into position even before the armored car came to a halt. One at each corner of the building, to watch for any car or person moving up the street in the front of the Jenckesville Hospital and one to watch for movement in the alleyway which lay between the bank building and the Community Center. Another trooper moved down Chestnut a little to take position in the middle of the block which was occupied by the Center. And still another walked up Chestnut Street a short ways in the other direction. The last trooper went into the street as if to warn all traffic away. And the two who must have been driving the cars had appeared near the entrance to the bank, where they stood with Thompson submachine guns at the ready.

One more trooper, as well as two private guards got out of the armored car. And the unloading operation began. The young father and metal-worker grew bored and he began to walk down Chestnut Street towards the apartment building just on the other side of the Community Center, though the main entrance was around the corner and halfway down the block on East Street.

Barely a step had Charley taken when he saw the Hermit turn the corner of East Street and Chestnut Street. He was coming up towards the bank-building, and the trooper in the middle of the street had already noticed the lone man walking towards the armored car filled with cash. He signalled his fellow troopers and the two near the bank entrance began to move towards the Hermit, striding down in front of the Community Center. They went less than halfway down that block before they took a stand facing the Hermit as he walked up the street, seemingly as indifferent to heavily armed men as he had always been towards vicious dogs.

The two policemen switched something on their submachine guns; they had released the safeties and were ready to shoot.

And the Hermit came on, leaving Charley in a quandary. The troopers were now on high alert, and he didn't want to give them reason to shoot at him. He kept on walking, but took a step into the street, passing between two cars, and he turned to the trooper in the street who also looked ready to shoot. "He's a harmless old man." Knowing it would be more effective to just label the Hermit as a 'crazy old coot,' Charley found himself unable to use such words to label a fellow human being, however much truth there might have been in that label.

Walking fast but being careful not to break into a run, Charley intercepted the Hermit halfway up the block, and only about fifteen feet from the two state troopers who looked as if they meant business. Knowing that several submachine guns, and probably ten sets of eyes, were on him and the Hermit, Charley found himself to be calm as he took the Hermit by the arm. The old fellow didn't fight. He didn't protest. The Hermit tried to walk on, oblivious to the hand firmly grasping his left bicep, but he stopped trying to move when he found himself unable to advance.

"Come on, old fellow," spoke Charley in a quiet voice. "Let's go back this way and you can just walk up North Street." The Hermit was still looking ahead and not at the man by his side, but it seemed he wasn't really perceiving the men with the powerful, modern weapons. Turning back towards the troopers, Charley nodded and smiled in a formal manner and then turned the Hermit back towards East Street, finding that to be a surprisingly difficult task. It wasn't that the man was struggling against his would-be rescuer; turning the Hermit was more like lifting a dead-weight. He had helped to move corpses several times and had found the effort of lifting a dead person to be greater than that of lifting an equivalent weight of metal or wood. Was it because of the awkward distribution of the human body? Was it because of the softness and looseness of a corpse not yet gone rigid? And why would a living man, up and walking about, be as difficult to maneuver as a corpse?

But he managed to turn the Hermit back down Chestnut Street, and then he found it relatively easy to steer him across Chestnut Street and to head him down the last block of East Street. The street would merge seamlessly into North Street where both streets came to Puts' Bridge which joined Jenckesville and the Indian Orchard region of Springfield. And the Hermit seemed quite content with his new route well before the two men

had even reached that bridge.

Charley stopped near that curve where one street became another. The Hermit went on, without any sign of recognition of a would-be friend who had rerouted him and who was no longer moving along with him.

“I hope no one saw that.” The words were spoken quietly and were not intended to be heard by another. “Maggie would be frightened that I had risked my life for that fool. . .” At that word, a smile came to the mouth of a man who didn’t understand the behavior of a fellow who didn’t seem to be much a part of the world around him. And, he told himself, “Maybe there is nothing to understand about the fellow. There are some crazy people who need to be cared for. Maybe the Hermit of Turkey Hill is nothing more than a crazy man who has enough of a mind to be able to care for himself so long as everything moves along smoothly in his life, but, as soon as something goes wrong, he needs help from one of his fellow-men. And I know for sure I have no right to call him a ‘fool’.”

Remembering the wad of bills in his pocket, he suddenly thought of the prospects of one of Maggie’s wonderful meals. Maybe a large roast of beef, or even a good pork roast, one of Maggie’s favorites, though he preferred it heavily seasoned the way he’d tasted it once in the home of an Italian widow who’d needed some plumbing. . .

Charley tried to keep his mind on the pipes he’d installed when the lady had decided it was time to install a full indoors bathroom, but he couldn’t keep himself from remembering those pretty eyes so nearly black, that body so strong and shapely though she was well into her forties. And she’d been so cuddly and so intent on feeding him well and making him comfortable after he’d finished his work each of those three days.

Trying to keep away thoughts and memories that were improper to a married man, Charley felt his face growing red and hot as he decided to walk up North Street himself. He needed to walk around a couple of blocks or so before he returned to Maggie and the children.

19 A Young Businessman

Jack Dias looked over at Tony Bello before taking another sip of his beer. Then both men looked over at Charley before Jack told him, "I can understand Maggie's concerns about you giving up a good income. You bring home a good pay now that you're the supervisor at the metal-shop." He took another sip before going on: "We're offering you the chance to get in at the beginning. Hell, man, this town is growing fast and the mills aren't interested in housing everyone and taking care of their houses. They did that to start because it helped them build up a good workforce but it's 1932 now and times are changing." Jack locked eyes with the fellow he was courting but that fellow was more interested in catching the eye of the inn-keeper. And that good fellow looked over to catch the motion indicating a second round. And it would have to be the last round though it was a Saturday afternoon. Charley was not able to hold much money back for pocket money. Maggie needed nearly every penny he could make to run the household because he wasn't making as many pennies as he had been making even a few months before. No overtime hours were to be had during this Depression that seemed to be growing and deepening. It was nice in some ways to be through with work at 3:30 on Friday afternoon and to be off until Monday, but it made it hard to pay the bills. And that at a time when they had been thinking about buying a car; it would have been nice for going fishing, for taking Maggie and the children into Springfield to visit Minnie and Finlay, for going shopping to some of the nicer stores that Maggie preferred.

"I know the money would be good if the business worked out, Jack..."

"Good, hell, it's a great opportunity even during troubled times. Another ten years and everyone in this country is going to have indoor plumbing and central heating."

Even Tony looked a little sceptical at Jack's enthusiastic claim, though

it was Charley who asked, “You really think that’s going to happen by 1942?”

“Hell, Charley, our current problems will be all over by then. This country will be prosperous and moving ahead so fast you’ll hardly be able to recognize it as being the same place. . . .”

“The 1920s seemed damned prosperous as well, Jack, and look where we are now.”

Jack waved away such an insubstantial objection. “It was all those idiots on Wall Street that did this to us. Look at the fellows who started local businesses. Sure, they’re not bringing in barrels of cash anymore, but Victor Putnam is doing fine with that Buick dealership he started up during the boom times. He’ll survive and eventually be rich. All the lawyers in town will survive and more. Most of them anyway. And Tony’s doing fine with his plumbing business.”

Tony winced before speaking in the voice of an Neapolitan who’d learned English when he was already in his late twenties. “I have lots of work, Jack, but I can’t always collect money for all those jobs. People try, but some have trouble feeding their own children and. . . .”

Jack waved away that objection as well but he didn’t have a chance to speak again before Reggie, the bar-keep at the East Street Tavern, set down three fresh beers on the table. A few seconds later, after Charley had taken his first sip from the fresh mug, he asked, “So you think heating will do even better than plumbing?”

“Hell, everybody in town, except maybe the Hermit, will have central heating before the decade is through.”

“A wood-stove probably works fine for those who live in one-room shacks.”

Jack and Tony both laughed, though Tony’s laugh seemed more polite than humorous. He was one of those good people who’d done a lot for the Hermit. Once, he had helped Charley to repair some heating ducts up at the First Church. With the encouragement of the minister, they had bought twice as material as they had needed; once done at the church, they had headed up to the Hermit’s shack where they had tried to make that shack a little more air-tight and water-proof. Tony had spent nearly two hours on his back crawling around the shack so that he could seal the gaps between walls and floorboards. There seemed to be an awful lot of decent folks in the world and Tony was one of the most decent even if he couldn’t speak English well enough to express his deepest feelings or thoughts.

“You’re drifting away, Charley. That’s not like you. You tired?”

“I guess so. I was on patrol last night and I stayed out a while longer than I had to. Didn’t get back to the house until one or so.”

Jack laughed. “Charley, you don’t get paid as an auxiliary cop, and you’re putting in overtime.”

Charley laughed and downed his beer before replying, “No job that pays is giving overtime right now, so why not put in some overtime on a job that doesn’t pay anything?”

“You’d be better off putting your energy into side-jobs. And you’d do even better if you go with me in starting a business to install and repair residential heating systems. Hell, Charley, besides everything else you’ve done, you’ve been maintaining the heating plant and conduits down at the mills for years and you built a central heating system for the house you’re *renting* and you did that out of scrap parts from the mill.”

“Actually, it was fun to do it. And I had my brother-in-law Fin and my brother George to help me. It wasn’t even much work all things said and done. Not for me anyway. I was able to mostly supervise because the both of them were anxious to learn how to work with high pressure heating systems. And they got to play with the tools I borrowed from the metal-shop. Fin is thinking about installing a central heating system in his house. I told him I’d help him and maybe be able to borrow the equipment from the metal-shop.”

“Charley, you’ll be building central heating systems for half the people in the area and not making any money off of it. . . .”

As he rose, Charley put up his hand. “Doctor Harrison paid me well to put in a heating system in his new house. And I’m sure as hell not going to charge my own brother- and sister-in-law for helping them to fix up their house. That’s not the way that families work.”

In the background, Tony was nodding his head vigorously. He was a real family man. Tony and his wife and their baby were still living in the basement of a large house he’d fixed into a nice three-family house. The taxes and maintenance were being paid by the rent on the first- and second-floor units and he was banking a goodly share of the money he was making, all so he could help two brothers bring over their large families from Naples. Some elderly people were also supposed to be coming, some likely Tony’s parents, but some in-laws and aunts and uncles were apparently also to come over. It was hard to keep everyone straight in these extended families the Italians still had.

“Just think about it, Charley. I’m not asking you to commit yourself.” Suddenly realizing he was talking a bit loud, Jack looked around to see Reggie deliberately looking away, pretending there was not a word being said near his bar. But there were a couple of old men sitting at that same bar who were nearly falling off their stools leaning over to catch every word in the conversation that seemed so important to at least one of the three men. Jack pulled out his wallet and threw down a bill, telling his two companions, “The second round was my treat, fellows,” and then he put his arm around the shoulder of the fellow he was courting and steered him to the door, not speaking again until they were out on the sidewalk, and then only after checking that there was no one within hearing range.

“Look, Charley, during hard times, you can’t be too careful. There’s many men looking to displace other men and managers sometimes looking to save money by getting rid of their highest paid workers.” Feeling a little naive, the object of concern tried to protest that not all people were so self-serving, but Jack hushed him and said, “Just think about it, Charley. It’s going to be a good thing, this business that I’m starting.” The excited entrepreneur turned to Tony and smiled before adding, “Tony and I are going to become prosperous men. We’re going to have to work hard and I have no illusions we’re going to become as rich as Rockefeller or Ford, but we’re going to be able to live well and to retire in some comfort while we’re still young enough to enjoy life, to spend time with our grandchildren and to just tinker around the house and the garden without having to do anything to make any more bucks. Hell, Charley, you could even put on a cop’s uniform and spend all night patrolling around town cuz you wouldn’t have to get up and go to work to feed your family. You’d just be drawing a check from the guy we’d hire to manage the business once we had it up and running.”

* * * * *

Charley set his book down on his lap and looked around the quiet room. Margaret was gone with friends. He hadn’t bothered to ask her where she was heading. Usually, he would have asked just to know where she was in case of an emergency, but he’d been too tired to ask and, and she was twenty-one and awfully level-headed. Her father wasn’t too worried about her; of course, she and her friends tended to be well-behaved young ladies, though one of them had been having an on-again, off-again affair with a

fellow who had once been one of Charley's closest friends; and they were still good friends though Charley didn't know what to do about...

The affair had begun after Claire was legally old enough...

But Burt was in his forties, more than twenty years older than the young lady. And Burt was also married to a good woman, though she was the sort to tolerate behavior she shouldn't have...

"Would he have married her if she weren't that type?"

"What was that, Charley?" He looked over to see Maggie peering over her book.

"You gave up on that Hemingway book, Maggie?"

She pursed her lips in an expression of mild disgust before saying, "It was a piece of filth. Loose people doing things they should have been ashamed to do. And any decent man would have been ashamed to write about such things."

He tried to catch the title of the book in her hands, but he couldn't and Maggie lifted it up for his better view of the front cover before she announced, "An old one, *Wuthering Heights*."

"Is it a good read?"

"I read it when I was young, and I wouldn't be reading it again if it weren't a good read."

"Maggie?"

"Yes, Charley," and she spoke without raising her eyes from her book.

"Jack Dias is coming closer to setting up his company. It seems like a bad time to do it. Here it is three years after the stock market crashed so badly and the economy is doing worse than ever. I hear the problems are spreading and deepening throughout the world."

In an offhand voice, Maggie conceded, "Maybe my sister is right that the problems won't be settled until we get Hoover out of the White House and put in a Democrat who won't be so concerned about protecting the rich people."

"Maybe, but Jack..."

After his voice had faded off into silence, Maggie looked up from her book. It was a couple more seconds before she asked, "Is he trying to get you to leave a good job in the mill? You know you can't take a risk like that when you've a family to support, Charley."

20 A Vocation and Avocation Both

He'd heard her the first time but she repeated her words, "I wish we'd stuck by our plans to buy a house, Charley, I really wish we were living in our own place."

"We have too many other things to spend our money on, Maggie. And a house can be expensive, even for someone like me who can do nearly anything to maintain it."

"You can do anything, Charley, but you lost interest in plumbing and carpentry a long time ago. All you can think about is hunting and fishing and police stories."

Charley looked out on North Street from his canvas chair on the porch of the house where he and Maggie rented a flat. Here it was 1934 and, after years of good intentions, he'd never quite gotten himself into position to buy, but Maggie was no better than he was when it came to money. If he spent too much on good food and on fishing and hunting equipment, she spent far too much on fixing up places that they were only renting, places that belonged to other people.

He started counting to himself but had not reached ten before five cars had passed by. First had been the large black Buick that Dr Harrison had bought for his retirement to an up-country house, but it had not been the doctor or his wife driving; a young man and undoubtedly it was the nephew who was said to be staying with them the summer. Then had been a car that he had not even recognized, followed by Dr Hooker's Ford, and then another car that was unknown, and then the cruiser that the town had bought when they'd brought John Riley to town to be the town's first real police chief. It had been Chief Riley himself who'd been driving, and he'd waved to Charley and Maggie as he'd passed by.

“Your brother George tells me it was a waste of money to bring a cop in from New York City and then to start buying him cars and radios and fancy guns. He said there isn’t a Dillinger or a Pretty-boy Floyd to be found in Jenckesville.”

After a deep drag on his cigarette, the words came easier to Charley: “George is a frugal man, and he has a right to his own opinion, especially when it concerns the town where he pays his taxes.” And that seemed to have been the wrong thing to say since George was directly paying taxes to the town—he and Ella had bought a house the prior year. Five years younger than his brother, in the workforce for that shorter length of time, George had managed to save a down-payment and to even have some money to furnish most of the house right from the start. Still, while George and Ella didn’t starve themselves to save a penny, they didn’t exactly live a high life. Generous to a fault when someone truly needed something, they lived a very simple life and saved a lot of pennies, if not quite every penny George brought home from the metal-shop at the mills. For that young man had followed his father and brother into the tin-smith trade, which was no longer much concerned with tin, but rather with all sorts of metals. The older brother had done plumbing and heating and machine repair, but the younger brother did all of that and more. And he was far more interested in that sort of work.

It was after several minutes of silence that Charley spoke again. “You know, Maggie, that police radio saved the life of that old fellow up in Little Canada. Sergeant Cochrane went right up to the house after the fellow’s son had called the police station. The man was choking, slowly suffocating on a piece of meat that had gone down the wrong tube. The sergeant used the radio to call down to Dr Polk’s office and the doctor wasn’t in but the nurse told him how to hit the fellow on the back in some special way to dislodge the food that was stuck in his windpipe. And it worked and they took him down to the hospital. The doctor doesn’t think the fellow would have survived if Sergeant Cochrane hadn’t gotten that food out of his windpipe.”

“I never said it was a bad idea to have police cars and radios, Charley. I was just telling you what George said.”

A car came whizzing down North Street at nearly twenty-five miles an hour, so far as Charley could tell. As it came within a couple of blocks, it could be seen as the Chief’s cruiser, with that small red dome on top of the roof. This time, there was a second person in the car and the Chief looked

busy; he didn't wave as he passed by.

"You'd think that he of all people would have a little more sense than to drive so fast when there's children out in the yards playing."

"He's driving on the street, Maggie. Not on people's front yards."

She didn't smile and didn't grimace, letting Charley know that she had taken the remark as a joke against her person, perhaps against her intelligence and perhaps just against her understanding of the rapidly changing world. After all these years of marriage, it was still hard to remember that she often took gentle kidding in a personal way. Anything that smacked of criticism, no matter how lighthearted it was, could lead to a withdrawal on her part.

Silence reigned until a shout came from the sidewalk in front of the house. Charley looked up to see the smiling mug of Sergeant Cochrane advancing towards the front-porch of the Cziernack's house, where the MacGregors rented the second-floor flat. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Maggie also smiling. She was suspicious of all the cops in town, as well as some of the town fathers, since she was convinced they were encouraging him in his dreams of becoming a full-time policeman, but she had been getting along very well with Sergeant and Mrs Cochrane ever since the two women had gotten together to make a wedding gown for Mrs Cochrane's younger sister.

And her liking for the man showing up in a certain lightheartedness as she asked him, "Would you like a glass of fresh-squeezed lemonade, Sergeant Cochrane?"

"Maggie. Are you keeping secret stocks for our guests and not even letting me know about them? I would have taken some lemonade if I'd known it was in the ice-box." Charley winked at Sergeant Cochrane, but noticed that Maggie started to say something and then thought better of it.

"Ah, Charley, you know it's always the husband who gets the second-best. My own wife does it to me as well." Sergeant Cochrane passed on the wink to Maggie, who smiled. It was clear she didn't mind this sort of teasing. At least not from him. "And, I'll take you up on your offer at that, Maggie. I'm going to be on my feet all day, walking around the downtown and greeting our fellow-citizens in this crime-free town. Well... Mostly, crime-free."

As soon as Maggie had gone inside, Sergeant Cochrane took a seat beside his host and dropped his voice to say, "The Chief would like to talk to you,

this afternoon if possible. He was a bit surprised to see you at home on a Thursday.”

Charley shook his head. “I was working until eight the first three days of the week and the mill has gone to giving time off instead of overtime pay. Not that I mind the occasional day off, Bob, but I could use the extra pay right now. Anyway, I was able to get in a couple of hours of early-morning fishing.”

Bob Cochrane, though a sergeant in the Jenckesville police department, had always struck Charley as a fairly timid man. Not lacking in physical courage, but not the sort to be able to stand up to a neighbor and tell him to clear off his share of the public sidewalk or to get his house quiet at night. Still, he seemed the model policeman in many ways, perhaps just because he filled out his uniform in a broad-shouldered and generally manly way. And, true to himself, he looked to see that Maggie wasn’t coming before he leaned over and whispered, “I was trying to keep quiet because I know she isn’t happy whenever you talk about becoming a full-time cop.”

“I’m not going to be able to keep it a secret from her, if I do, Bob. She’ll eventually notice me around town in a uniform during work-hours. If that’s what the Chief wants to talk about.”

With his face reddening, Sergeant Cochrane confessed, “I wasn’t supposed to say anything.”

“Well, you didn’t. You just gave too much of a hint.” And he followed with a wink to the policeman still red of face, even as Maggie came out the door and handed him a glass of lemonade. She examined the face of the embarrassed man for only a second and then she looked back at Charley who was grinning as he took another deep drag on his cigarette.

Nobody said a word until Maggie sat down and began asking about Mrs Cochrane and their two teenaged children, the other two having died young in a measles epidemic. When it was settled that those children were doing well, as were the two adult and two younger children of the MacGregors, Sergeant Cochrane turned to leave, but Charley rose and called out, “I’ll walk down with you, Bob.” And then he turned to his wife to tell her, “The Chief just wants to talk with me. I’m sure I won’t be too long.”

She looked suspicious and started to say something before stopping herself. But he had barely time to pick up his pack of cigarettes and his book of matches before she asked, “And what does the Chief want to talk to you about?” When he didn’t answer right away, she threatened, “Don’t go and do something dumb, Charley. You’ve got a good position as the supervisor

of the metal-shop down at the jute-mills.”

Charley laughed and said, “He’s probably wanting to talk about that banquet he wanted to have for all the policemen and their families this winter. Including us mere auxiliaries.”

Maggie didn’t look convinced, but she didn’t protest again when he put the cigarettes and match-book in his shirt pocket and headed towards the porch stairs. A few seconds later, he was walking down North Street towards the police station only a hundred yards or so down the road.

* * * * *

“You want to join the police force, don’t you, Charley?”

“You know I do, John, but Maggie wants me to stay at the mill, and I’ve got to give her a chance to talk me out of this before I accept.”

Chief Riley smiled before he asked, “So, you will accept? Remember, I’m going to bring you on as a sergeant, not just a patrolman. It doesn’t happen often. At least not when I’m in charge. I didn’t do it more than twice in my fifteen years as a lieutenant and captain down in New York City and this is the first time I’ll be doing it in Jenckesville.” At that, Chief Riley leaned back and laughed. “Of course, I’ve got a large force of four men here, including myself.” With a twinkle still showing in his blackish eyes, he looked over at Charley and said, “And you’ll make it five.”

Chief Riley rose and offered his hand to Charley, who rose to accept it. “Talk to Maggie about it, Charley, but if she’s afraid of the money issues, remember to tell her that a good cop has a secure job and nothing is secure down at the mills or in any factory in this world right now.”

* * * * *

“Maggie. . .” As Charley rose from his chair to follow his wife out of the room, he signalled the children to stay put. Neither Dorothy, the youngest at eleven, nor Finlay, next in line at thirteen, seemed inclined to move. Margaret stirred but settled back even before she saw her father signal. Bill had stayed calm and unmoving through the entire scene, as short and tear-filled as it had been, and he didn’t seem inclined to get excited now. The young man had once before claimed that his mother got quickly excited under certain circumstances but she would calm down if left to her own,

not quite as quickly as she'd gotten upset, but quickly enough. As Charley walked out of the room, he was guessing Margaret was of the same opinion about her mother's excitability—that it was sometimes best to leave her alone, or at least to leave her to Dad.

It was only a short walk down the hallway to the back bedroom, and it was one Charley found himself wishing he'd not taken when he came to the doorway and saw that Maggie was sitting on the bed with pictures of Mina, their long-dead daughter, spread out on the covers.

"Maggie," and he said her name in nearly a moan before he could stop himself. She just continued to sob quietly as she looked down at the pictures of Mina. Coming closer, he could see that the picture Maggie had in the center of the display was one taken just minutes after Mina had won the little girls' beauty contest down at the Forbes & Wallace department store in downtown Springfield.

He sat down on the bed next to her but facing to the side while she was facing towards the foot of the bed. A sigh escaped from his lips and he silently swore at himself, figuring it would do no good to make the mood still more melancholy. After a few minutes of silence, which he hoped would be interpreted as a sign of his sympathy, he turned halfway around and put his hands on Maggie's shoulders from behind, starting to gently massage them. That went on for a moment or two and Maggie barely responded, not even letting her shoulder muscles loosen.

Dropping his hands from Maggie's shoulders, Charley pleaded, "You've got to ease up on yourself. And everybody else, Maggie. Mina was a sweet child and I loved her dearly, but she's with the Lord Jesus now."

"You're a good one to talk about Jesus. You won't even go to church with me and the children, not even on Christmas or Easter."

He thought about reminding her he'd gone to church on Easter a few years back, but figured that would just support whatever point she was trying to make, so he kept his voice quiet. "We'll talk about the job with the police department later, Maggie. After you've had a chance to calm down and to think about it." With those words he rose and left, turning back to see that she was straightening out the pictures of Mina as if preparing to put them back into the box where she kept them, separate from all the other family pictures.

* * * * *

“You’ll not be sad that I’m making this switch, Maggie.” He was trying to look into her eyes, but she kept looking away, inspecting the room, even to the farthest corners, as if trying to see if there were any mites of dust she’d missed in her evening cleaning. It had become a custom with Maggie to do her light dusting in the evening, after everyone else had gone off to bed. And everyone had gone off to bed, or at least to their rooms. Perhaps they had figured it would be best to leave Mom and Dad alone to work out this situation. But Charley didn’t see much immediate prospect for working anything out.

Still he sat quietly for a good fifteen minutes, giving Maggie a chance to say something in support of his taking up a new career before rising and telling her, “I’m going to go out and take a walk around the block before I settle down to bed.”

He left the room with no more words exchanged between the two, but before leaving the apartment he went to Margaret’s room where she was quietly reading one of the leather-bound novels her Boston mother had sent her. “I’ll pass by the Portuguese bakery while I’m out and pick up some rolls if you’re up for a late-night egg sandwich.” She smiled her assent and he left.

The streets of Jenckesville seemed awfully quiet when he reached the sidewalk in front of the house. North Street was the main roads in town, though East Street was pretty busy at times and promised to grow a lot more busy as Little Portugal to the south of the street was the fastest growing part of the town, in prosperity as well as population. And the man suddenly feeling lonely headed up North Street but only went a couple of blocks before turning just before the small church that the Polish community had put up while working to raise the money for more adequate facilities. Charley had been talking to Father Kubic and the young priest had said the Polish people in town intended to put up a community center as well as a large church building, but no school. The priest and the leading members of the Polish community in Jenckesville were planning to send the children to the school at the Polish church across the bridge in Indian Orchard.

“Well, the Polish Catholics in town certainly have a nice piece of land to do a lot of building.”

The voice didn’t come close to filling up the night and a man walking through the darkness felt lonelier than he’d felt in a while. He didn’t like the feeling because it hinted of remedies that weren’t proper for a married

man. Not that Charley wanted to do anything sinful so much as he just wanted to be with a woman that he could talk to. And he wondered if that was sinful in itself. . .

Sewall Street was as quiet as North Street though it was tempting to think of it as being even more quiet. Dark was the street; lamps had only been installed on the first quarter miles or so of East Street and North Street though the town had agreed to go through with the installation of street lights throughout most of downtown. But it would be slow even with Roosevelt and his people pushing the electrification of the country. There wasn't enough money to do all the initial work and not enough money to pay the electric bills each month.

Money seemed to be the country's big problem. Not enough of it, and Charley didn't understand economics well enough to know why that was so. Everybody in Jenckesville seemed to be at least surviving though some had lost their houses and others were said to be on the verge of losing houses or businesses or cars. It didn't seem the banks or insurance companies had much of a reason to foreclose on all the loans which were past due if there would be no one to buy all the empty houses. Might as well give the local barber or the house-owner a chance to catch up. The banks might lose money that way, but they were less likely to lose all their money, or so thought a man who considered himself to be pretty much an ordinary joe.

Money. The subject had never seemed interesting to a man who was willing to work hard so long as he had the opportunity to enjoy life. So long as bills were paid and there was a little left over to take the family to the beach or a country fair, so long as there was some money to buy fishing and hunting equipment, it seemed an ordinary joe should be happy.

Near St Paul's Methodist Church, the quiet of the small-town night was suddenly broken by scuffling sounds. Behind the church, there was a small pile of things, likely the left-over items from the recent rummage sale at the church. Charley started to cross the street, curious what was going on. It didn't seem likely that a raccoon would be much interested in worn-out easy chairs or tattered shirts, but the mystery was partially cleared up when a man suddenly stood up from where he'd been bending over as he dug through a pile of goods. A bearded man with longish hair. The Hermit of Turkey Hill was looking for something, though no one had ever figured out if he came to town looking for specific items or just to rummage through other people's tossed-out goods.

The two men were only ten feet apart before the Hermit's eyes seemed

to focus on the intruder, though it wasn't clear if he were really perceiving a fellow human being. Over the years, Charley had grown less certain what the fellow saw, what he thought when a man, or a dog, was in front of him. But he wasn't given to letting himself indulge in philosophical trains of thought, and he nodded at the Hermit, and wished him, "Good evening, sir."

It almost seemed as if the Hermit moved his head in the slightest hint of a nod, but there had been hints of that sort in past years and nothing ever came of it. The fellow remained isolated from his fellow-men. . .

The Hermit looked past Charley towards the street, clearly looking for something. It wasn't clear at first, but then. . .

"No, I don't have a horse and carriage with me tonight. And I don't have a car though I'll soon have a cruiser at my disposal."

Neither man seemed to know what to do, and it seemed a good sign that the Hermit stood there looking in his general direction instead of turning back to his own business as soon as he knew there was no possibility of a ride. But maybe. . .

"If there's something you need in that pile, set it aside and let me know what it is. I'll let the Reverend Barnes know to keep it and then we can arrange to get it up to your shack this weekend."

There was no clear response but the Hermit looked to his side and down at the pile, perhaps at some of the old pots or perhaps at the small wooden cabinet which was awfully chipped so that it showed at least three colors of paint, the top white and then a yellow below that and red nearest the wood. Maybe. And maybe there were more layers below the red. It would need to be scraped and repainted before it could go in most houses, though perhaps it would do to store cans of paint in a basement or to store cans of peas in a shack in the woods.

Thinking it would do no good to ask the fellow what he wanted, Charley walked away figuring he'd go by St Paul's the following morning to see if some items had been set aside. If they had, he'd talk to the minister before the pile was hauled away to trash.

21 A Dream Fulfilled

Sergeant Cochrane laughed nearly as hard as Charley at the Chief's words in the announcement that the newest policeman had been appointed the department's first detective: "The taverns are where policemen find the most useful information and no one should be surprised when they see Sergeant Charles MacGregor hanging around those taverns, talking to people of all sorts."

"Charley, Maggie won't be happy that such words were published in the town's newspaper."

"She hasn't been happy lately about much of anything. Bill almost signed up for the Navy after graduating from high school. He decided not to, but that didn't seem to make her feel any better. I don't know why she'd be upset anyway. Her two brothers did well on the sea."

"And I hear she's still not happy about you becoming a cop. Even with the mills putting the metal-workers on short hours."

"When she has her mind set against something, mere facts don't affect her opinion much."

Sergeant Cochrane stopped smiling. "There's a little of that in all of us, and I don't see Maggie as being much worse than the general lot of us."

"And she's not, Bob. I'm just feeling frustrated. After years of wanting to become a cop, I finally get my chance and she doesn't share any of my happiness. It even makes her sad." Charley thought of Maggie pulling out the pictures of Mina, which she had done several times in the past few weeks while he was winding matters up at the mill and getting ready to start with the police department. And then she'd started to head up to the Island Pond Cemetery on her afternoon walks, or so he'd been told by Bill and Margaret. Soon enough, he'd see for himself while patrolling the town, though he wasn't going to be doing as much of that as the other fellows on the force since he'd been appointed the department's first detective.

* * * * *

Charley stood at the entrance to the Cork County Tavern in Indian Orchard, letting his eyes adjust to the darkness inside on this bright June day. As he stood there, he pulled out his pack of cigarettes, but had barely gotten one to his lips before a figure appeared, coming his way from the deeper darkness near the bar. He was fascinated but, out of the corner of his eyes, he could see Lt Fitzhugh waving him towards a nearby booth. The copper could wait a few seconds; after all, there was an artificially red-headed woman wiggling her way closer to him, her wiggles a bit out of rhythm as if she'd already had too many and it wasn't yet noon. A detective was supposed to be curious about unexplained behavior.

"Got an extra cig, buddy?"

While looking down into her deep cleavage, Charley raised his pack of cigarettes and shook one loose for her to take. After lighting her cigarette, which was shaking in the lips longing for another drink, he pulled his eyes out of that space between her ample breasts and said, "Excuse me. My friend is sitting over there waiting for me."

She smiled in a funny way and then wiggled away uncertainly upon her spike heels.

Charley was sitting down at the table when Lt Fitzhugh laughed and said, "She's got you pegged as a cop and now me as well. That's all right. I doubt if we'll learn anything about the break-ins here. I just picked this place because of their Thursday special, a corned-beef and cabbage platter." That got the new cop's attention; perhaps it was because he'd been born on St Patrick's Day or perhaps it was just because he liked food that stuck to a man's ribs, but that Irish favorite had always been the favorite of his Scottish stomach.

The Springfield detective waved over the waitress, who was sitting and drinking with the red-headed woman who'd approached Charley. It was only then that he noticed that Lt Fitzhugh was dressed in greasy khakis, trying to give the impression that he was just stopping in for a quick one on his way back from doing a job out of the shop. Then the new detective noticed his colleague's hands before looking down at his own thick and calloused hands. Large and strong-looking hands were those of Lt Fitzhugh, but they were not the hands of someone who smashed knuckles up against machinery every day or worked with harsh chemicals nearly as often. He didn't think the lieutenant had this undercover business down any better

than he did.

After waving off the beer, Charley settled back and thought about the corned-beef platter. He looked at his watch though having checked it not ten minutes prior, just as he was pulling up to a parking space on the street in front of the tavern. After verifying it was slightly past eleven-thirty, he looked up to find his colleague exchanging inviting looks with the red-headed woman of ample bosom. And then the detective broke the exchange with a wink before looking over at Charley and telling him, "A whore, but an amateurish one. Probably doesn't even have a pimp. Just works the bar to pay the rent and get her drinks for free. Usually the bar-keeps don't like that sort. Not much chance to get a share of the profits and cheap hookers attract johns without much money."

"The corned-beef is really good here, is it?"

"Charley, you're a man ruled by your stomach. You can pass up a beer, at least early in the morning. You can flirt with a whore and then walk away. But let anyone mention some good food and you're hooked." Lt Fitzhugh laughed to shake his belly, already ample though not folding over his belt too badly.

"Beer goes to my stomach also."

"So, you're ready for one now that five minutes have passed?" Lt Fitzhugh winked again, giving the impression that it was his favorite mode of communication.

"Not quite, Tim. Not quite. And I've got to meet with Chief Riley and the head of the highway department later this afternoon. We're trying to do something about all the intersections downtown before someone gets killed."

The Springfield cop laughed again. "Jenckesville's going to get some stop signs, is it? Next thing you know, the town will have a traffic light."

"Not for years, Tim. Not for what they cost to put in and to maintain and operate."

"Ah, so you've looked into it, have you?" Tim looked up as the waitress placed the fresh mug of beer on the table. With a disinterested smile on her face, she took the bill from the undercover cop's hand and returned to the bar for change.

"The highway department supervisor looked into it. He talked to the contractor who does traffic light installations for Springfield."

"Cory's a mug. But he's said to know his business."

Charley looked over to the bar; the red-headed woman was looking at

him, casting him a glance which seemed a mixture of invitation and fear.

“Well, Charley, she likes you, but she knows you’re a cop and she doesn’t want to be locked up with the real hard girls, the hookers we pick up every so often from the best neighborhoods of Springfield.”

“Every so often?”

“Every night, to be sure, but most are out working the next evening. After all, they gotta make a living too.”

“And these are hard times, Tim.”

Another short belly-laugh was followed by the comment, “But there are certain goods and services which a man will pay for even when he doesn’t have enough left to feed himself.”

Charley didn’t laugh. He was too involved in thinking about that red-headed woman, though he’d pulled his eyes away from her. And then he thought about, “Corned-beef and cabbage. Want to grab some lunch while we talk? Before we get down to serious work.”

“This is about as serious as it gets, my good man. From here, we make a quick stop at a downtown Springfield bar to talk to one of my best stoolies. If he can’t nail down the situation for us, and likely he won’t be able to. . . He’s a dope-fiend so he’ll do his best to please me even if he doesn’t know anything. And when I verify he doesn’t know anything, we’ll visit a couple of pawn-brokers. We’ll be nice and polite and gentle today, unless we have reason to suspect someone. Save the hard stuff, and the threats to break heads, until it’s something more important than some small break-ins.” After a hearty gulp of his fresh beer, Tim wiped his mouth with his dirty khaki shirt-sleeve and suggested, “Let’s have some corned-beef and then we can head downtown.”

* * * * *

The sky was clear and the air was a bit cool for the early part of September when Charley decided to leave his observation post near Chestnut and East Streets. He was thinking about grabbing a quick sandwich and then heading up to Turkey Hill to check on the Hermit, something he’d only done twice his first two months on the force, though he’d told himself he would be more free to check on the fellow, in fact, he figured he would have a duty to check on the man who was a resident of the town and didn’t have anyone living nearby if something went wrong. There had been the time

that Charley had gone up with the Reverend Atkins to check on him and it turned out the Hermit was flat-out sick with pneumonia.

And just as had happened that time, the Hermit hadn't been seen around town in a while, nearly two weeks, though that wasn't so unusual anymore. There were a couple of other men who would give the fellow a lift when he did his shopping trips; the Hermit had started to pick up more goods at a time if he knew that one of those fellows was nearby: Charley or the Reverend Collins from Union Church or Al Jenkins who was a clerk and deliveryman at the hardware store. The Montini brothers, who owned the hardware store, encouraged Al to be nice to the Hermit, perhaps because they were good fellows themselves and perhaps because they were close to young Bill MacGregor and knew all about that strange and special relationship between Charley and the Hermit.

After picking up a hunk of chourica and some rolls at the Portuguese bakery, Charley set out north towards Turkey Hill, nibbling at the sandwich he'd made as he drove along. And wishing he had a way to get some coffee out of the thermos without spilling it all over his new suit.

Halfway up the long road to Turkey Hill, he saw a car at the side of the road, with its rear end jacked up to replace a tire. The situation looked under control, but he decided to stop, if only to pour himself a drink. As he pulled in behind the car, he could see a middle-aged woman standing off to the side while three young men were busy changing her tire. Two of the young men were very young indeed, he doubted they could be more than twelve; the other was a fellow he knew, Jack Ford, a sixteen year-old who swung a hammer for his father, one of the builders in town, while still going to high school.

Seeing that everything was under control, Charley got out of his car but poured a cup of hot coffee into the tin cup from his thermos and quickly gulped it down before walking up to talk to the young men and the woman, whom he now recognized as Grace Monroe, a woman who had been a waitress at Teddy's Spa for years. By the time he was approaching her, Mrs Monroe was waving enthusiastically, a large smile on her face.

He waved back and started walking her way but had not quite reached her when she spoke: "I hear you've been promoted, Charley. A lieutenant. The first lieutenant on the Jenckesville police force. So my boys tell me."

In fact, Charley himself was surprised to be promoted after two months on the force, but there were rumors that the selectmen were considering enlarging the force, mostly because of the growing traffic problems in town.

But there were more problems than that. And more problems passing through. It was likely that the idea of promoting him to lieutenant had occurred to the town fathers and Chief Riley after Charley had gotten the drop on a killer from New Jersey who had been number two on that most-wanted list put out by Hoover and his boys in the FBI. And he had gotten the drop, after receiving word that a suspicious fellow was hanging around the East Street Tavern and looking for a place to stay for a day or two. The killer had given up peacefully when he realized that a cop had a gun pointed right at his chest, and he had apparently judged that cop as being willing to shoot.

And he'd not had to get himself dirty helping Grace Monroe to change a tire. He nodded in a friendly and respectful manner at the two young boys, causing both boys to smile proudly, and then looked at Jack Ford. "I'm glad to see you boys were here to help a lady in distress."

"We were on a hike up to Turkey Hill, getting ready for a twenty-mile hike in a couple of weekends. We saw Mrs Monroe driving on a flat tire and I called out to her to pull over and we'd help her."

"I was trying to make it up to my nephew's house up the road," was all she could say in her own defense. And Charley understood why a woman out driving on her own would risk ruining a tire and maybe even a wheel rather than stopping in an area which saw a lot more traffic than a few years back, but there were some long times between cars during some parts of the day.

"You were maybe doing the right thing, Grace. It's just lucky that Jack and his friends were here to help you." And he turned to Jack to ask, "Any particular reason you were hiking up to Turkey Hill?"

"No. It's just a convenient place to head for, and it's a nice four miles each way from my house. That's where we started from."

"Why are you hiking all around town? Not enough chores to do at home?" And he winked mischievously at the boys.

"That's what Boy Scouts do," volunteered one of the young boys, a freckle-faced red-head who'd been wearing a grin since the town's only detective had arrived and maybe since he had entered the world.

"The new troop down at the Union Church?"

"Yes, sir." And Jack went on to add, "The minister told me he's a fan of the Boy Scouts and he'd been looking for some one to start a troop since he got to town. Excuse me, Sir. I've got to help them put everything away."

The two boys had rolled the flat tire to the back of the car and Jack

helped them to put it in the tire-well along with the jack and the tire-wrench.

Charley watched them, waiting until the trunk had been closed before saying, "From what I can see, it must be a good organization." And he winked again at the two boys before adding, "Unless you fellows were so neighborly and helpful to begin with." The boys blushed and the police lieutenant turned to Grace Monroe to offer, "I'll follow you up to Ed's house to see that everything is all right. Not that I doubt the boys' ability to change a tire, but I'm going that way. In fact, I'm heading up to Turkey Hill. I'd offer you boys a ride but that would defeat the purpose of a hike. Wouldn't it?" Jack Ford merely smiled sheepishly but the two younger ones were smiling proudly as if it were something to get the attention of the second-ranking fellow on the Jenckesville Police Department.

And, at that, thought Charley, "Perhaps my position is something that makes me a man to be looked up to, though I'd like to think I was always that sort of a fellow. But maybe I can use this prestige to help these fellows and other young fellows. Maybe even guide some of them away from trouble, though I doubt I'll be able to do myself out of a job."

A few minutes later, Grace turned into the driveway at the new house of her nephew Ed Miller, and Charley tooted the horn on the cruiser as he drove on by heading on up the road towards Turkey Hill. It took not long to reach the beginning of the path heading up to the Hermit's shack. Getting out of the car, he took his time settling his fedora on his head before heading up that path, side-tracking to the ledge where he had stood a number of times before, a number of times when he was heading towards the Hermit's shack and a few times when he was passing over the slopes of Turkey Hill while out hunting. From that ledge, he could see the increasing number of gaps in the woods that once covered the swampy and dry regions alike of Jenckesville south of Chapin Pond. Houses were going up as fast as the builders could get money to buy some cement and a few two-by-fours.

The world was changing, in many ways for the better, in some ways for the worse, in most ways for the different. And different was often hard to get used to, especially for a middle-aged man who was settled in his ways. For the most part.

Wondering where it would all lead to, and wondering if his children could possibly enjoy life as much as he had—most of the time, Charley set out towards the Hermit's shack and soon found himself in the clearing sitting on the stump which the Hermit had flattened with an old rusty saw years ago.

A visitor's stump? So far as Charley could tell, the old fellow always sat on the flattened stump closer to his shack and very close to the are where he made his cooking fires. And he had one going now, probably letting it burn down to charcoal to better roast the sourdough he was wrapping around a stick.

"Simple food is all you need, isn't it, old fellow?" The fellow went on with his task, paying no mind to the uninvited visitor who soon found himself wondering how old the Hermit really was. It had been thirty-one years ago when the Hermit had first disembarked from that train down at the Jenckesville Inn. "1903. Was it a good year or were you escaping some sort of horror, old fellow?" There was still no response though it seemed the Hermit had perked up in a way that indicated he might be following another man's words.

Well, Charley didn't know what to say to the fellow. He would have liked to listen to the Hermit tell of his troubles. What had caused him to throw away whatever life he'd had to come here and live on Turkey Hill? Or had his life been taken away from him somehow?

Old he was. It wasn't clear how old, though Charley was thinking near seventy. Still the old fellow went on. Walking downtown to get his supplies on cold and snowy days during cold spells, on rainy days during wet spells. And then a fellow like Charley... He lived in a comfortable, well-heated, dry house; he took just the right amount of exercise according to Dr Polk: an evening constitutional of an hour at a slow pace along with his walking on the job and his walking while out fishing or hunting.

"Of course," thought Charley as he took out his pack of cigarettes, "I do have a few bad habits. These things. I drink too much and I eat a lot of heavy foods that bother my stomach some. Dr Harrison says they might bother my heart some day also, though there's a lot that doctors don't know."

Out loud, he said, "You know, old fellow..." and the Hermit glanced in his direction though it was still uncertain what he perceived when he did rarely look at one of his fellow-men. "I think I'd rather live a softer life, enjoy all my bad habits, and die of a heart attack." The matter seemed of little concern to the Hermit who finished wrapping his dough around his stick and then leaned the assembled product against a tree before rising and walking into his shack. He emerged only a few seconds later, carrying a can of beans and a small pot with a handle for hanging it over the fire.

"Canned beans and a hunk of sourdough bread roasted over a fire."

There was no butter in sight. No jam, though some of the groups at the churches sent such things as jars of jam and pickles up on a fairly regular basis. Charley had made a number of deliveries of such items over the years, and some of the ministers and other good folk had also made occasional trips to bring the Hermit one treat or another. None of which he seemed to crave. It wasn't even clear that he appreciated all those gifts, using them no differently from these most basic foods that he bought at Townes, carried up here in a canvas sack, and then cooked in the plainest manner over an open fire in good weather. On rainy days, in the winter, perhaps at other times, he could cook inside on the new stove that had been paid for out of the proceeds of a meat-pie sale at St John's.

"What are you going to do when Townes' Department Store closes in January and you have to start shopping somewhere else? Will you be able to tolerate the change in schedule?"

The Hermit started as if struck lightly but noticeably. He looked up at the intruder who could almost detect some worry in the glance, some concern that the outer world was not cooperating with the man's desires.

"I know the feeling, old man, but there are people who'll do their best to help you over that major crisis." And with a pleasant laugh that was meant to be reassuring, Charley turned to leave, noticing the Hermit looked up again at him, some confusion showing on the fellow's face.

22 A New Opportunity

Chief Riley reached up and restored the long strand of hair to its place, running across the bald dome which was not about to be covered with less than a full toupee. But the Chief was not a vain man, though a bit proud and more than a bit stubborn. And it was that stubbornness. . .

“Sometimes I wonder why you accepted my offer to join the force, Charley. I know you looked forward to policework, but I warned you what it could be like when your bosses are politicians. . . And you had some good opportunities at the time from what I understand. You could have started your own heating and plumbing business, and I heard some of the guys starting construction companies had wanted you in on the ground floor.”

There was a short period of silence, comfortable enough between those two men who were less than friends but respected each other and trusted each other.

“There is no lack of respect for my personal abilities or for my judgment as a cop, Charley. And I’ve used that respect to recommend, privately so far, that you be appointed my successor. I know you’ve not had much training for the job. You’ve been on the force only two years. . . Yep, since 1934, wasn’t it?” Charley nodded but didn’t say anything and Chief Riley looked at him for no more than a second before turning his gaze to the far wall. “I’ll make the recommendation publicly at the next meeting of the Board of Selectmen, this coming Thursday. At the same time that I announce my intended resignation, stating that I’m leaving for personal reasons. The script has been written, so I know that the selectmen will announce they accept my resignation. With deep regrets, of course. Not that it will fool many folk. I’ve been butting heads with them more often and sometimes in public, at meetings or even when I happen to see one of them while I’m out walking.”

“You got something lined up, John?” He was about to add that Sandy,

John's oldest daughter was about to head off to an expensive woman's college, but he held his tongue, not wanting to risk adding fuel to the flames.

"I got something lined up for sure, Charley. And I'll be making a bit more than I'm making here." He paused and seemed to be thinking deeply about something, but it took only a few seconds before he came to some sort of conclusion. "It's not public knowledge for now. I can't even tell the selectmen yet, but you can keep a secret and you deserve to know what's going on. More than those small town, tin-horn politicians. I'm going to be setting up security operations at Chapman Valve."

"Security? They're going to pay you a lot of money to keep their employees from stealing tools?"

Chief Riley laughed. "I wish we lived in that sort of a simple world, Charley. No, Chapman will be doing a lot of work for the submarine corps of the British Navy, and the American Navy if things work out. It was some experts in the Pentagon and the FBI who advised them to start looking for spies and saboteurs."

"Who the hell wants to spy on a company making valves for ships and boats?"

"The Germans, I guess. Maybe the Japanese but the boys in Washington aren't nearly so worried about the Japanese doing much on the East coast, though they're afraid of what they might do in California or Hawaii or the Philippines." John Riley snorted out a laugh of sorts before telling his subordinate, "If you're like me, you're probably a bit surprised to hear that the boys in Washington are even scared of the Japanese. I knew they were causing some trouble in Manchuria, but I never thought of them being able to attack us. I guess I'm still doubtful." Chief Riley looked away again, seeming to be inspecting part of the ceiling. He was silent for just a second before speaking in a voice that seemed to express a distaste for something. "Well, to get back to things that you and me can understand, there is a complication to all of this Charley."

"Civil service regulations?"

"Yep, you'll be the first Chief to be under the regulations, and that means you might have to meet the official requirements."

And a man whose heart was full of desire felt his stomach sink. He'd only had those six years of formal schooling and the main requirement for a civil service position was passing the appropriate civil service exam. A written test and a long one at that!

The Chief looked away as he added, “Because of your short schooling, the selectmen might send Tom Malone up to take the test as well. Abe is the senior guy on the force, and he would have been up for the spot ahead of you if he hadn’t such a liking for the bottle.”

The unschooled man felt his stomach gassing up a bit. Ironhead Malone, as he was known because of his exploits on the football field, had finished high school; he was way ahead of Charley in formal schooling and in knowing how to take written exams.

“I wouldn’t worry too much, Charley. Malone is a good *young* man, but you’re the one with the experience so the selectmen can trust your judgment in tough spots. And Malone is only an auxiliary, a patrolman, with no supervisory experience at that. He needs more seasoning, in police work and in life. Some of the town fathers aren’t too thrilled with his liking for motorcycles and football and rugby. They’d like a chief who’s not likely to get his skull split open with some weekend excitement.”

23 A Confirmation of a Man's Role

"Two years, Charley, but now it's all settled." Dr Hooker smiled as he offered his hand after coming out to greet his friend in the empty waiting-room.

All that came to Charley's mouth was a smile, though his appointment to Chief had been, more or less, a foregone conclusion for nearly a month. He'd done a bit better than passing on the test though Ironhead had done very well on the exam. His excitement would have been complete if only Maggie could be happy about his career as a policeman, but she was still wishing he'd stayed in a quiet job out of the public eye.

"Something wrong, Charley?"

"No, Doc, not really."

Dr Hooker looked at him suspiciously but then he grinned and announced, "I should be to over your house pretty soon. I was talking to Maggie a week ago or so and she was feeling a bit frustrated by the continued delays in your permanent appointment. She was telling me you've done a good job as acting Chief for nearly two years and that should be proof enough that you can keep on doing a good job. So she told me she'd cook your favorite meal and have me over as soon as the Board made it official that you are the police chief and not just filling the spot temporarily." Once again, the dentist and town father shook Charley's hand and then he asked, "How about joining me for lunch? I'll treat. Won't be as good as..."

Dr Hooker stopped speaking in response to Charley shaking his head.

"I stopped in for a minute when I got your message but I'm on my way up to check out some reports of missing sheep. I think it's dogs, maybe living in the wild and maybe just roaming about in packs during the day. At least two of the sheep-farmers agree it's likely dogs, but some people

think it's the Hermit."

"The Hermit?!" After stepping back a short ways as if in shock, Dr Hooker asked, "When did people start up with that again? I heard he was accused whenever something was missing when he first got to town, decades ago, but, so far as I know, he'd never taken anything unless it was on a trash pile."

"Well, to be sure, his judgment of what's a trash pile has sometimes been off. Once, he took some items from a pile about to be moved to the Union Church for a rummage sale the next day. But he's not done anything worse than that. At least not to my knowledge."

And so it was that Charley shortly found himself behind the wheel of a cruiser, heading up to talk to the farmers who had been a bit touchy on the phone. There was also a witness to the existence of dog-packs on the vicious side. Norman Douglas, a self-employed handyman, had been putting in bushes around the Daniel Shays Inn when he'd been backed onto the porch by three snarling dogs; Norman had claimed at least two of the dogs had been wearing collars and maybe town licenses.

As he was just about at the First Church, Charley saw some broken brush off to the right side of the road. Since that was just a hundred feet or so from one of the sheep pastures, he pulled over. A few minutes later, he had walked back and forth over a patch of tall grass and brush and had finally found what he'd thought to find. Hunks of wool and sheep hide along with a lot of bones. And dog-tracks all around as well as the tracks of a lot of scavenging animals. Despite rumors that the wild dogs were hungry, the Chief was betting that they were killing for pleasure and not for food. That could be worse since they might go after human beings, and not just threaten them this time, if they were not hunted down soon—whether or not they were fully wild or someone's pets acting wild when they were let loose. "And 'wild' might be the wrong word. Wolves and coyotes don't kill the way these animal are said to kill, mutilating and brutally tearing the animal apart and leaving it for other scavengers to eat. These are wild animals with a wild animal's sense bred out of them."

And then he smiled sadly. "There are a lot of men nowadays who are similar. Brutes, but not brutes from the wild. Rather civilized brutes who've had the sense of a wild savage bred out of them."

Realizing that a few animals could mean the difference between making it or not for a small farmer, Charley started thinking of the best and most trustworthy hunters in town. He had a mental list of five men, including

himself, by the time he was sitting behind the driver's wheel of the cruiser and getting ready to head on up the road to talk to those farmers who'd lost animals.

A couple hours later, the October sun was approaching the tree-tops when the Chief had finished talking to the farmers; he decided to take a short walk up Turkey Hill to the Hermit's shack as long as he was in the neighborhood. After parking and before walking onto the wooded slope, the Chief pulled a fresh pack of cigarettes from the glove compartment of the cruiser. He finished smoking one while standing near the car and then he lit another for the walk up the hill, but a minute or so up the trail, he started coughing badly and had to stop and lean over, his hand against a nearby pine-tree to keep himself from falling. He had never felt dizzy like this before, had never used to feel dizzy at all, even when he was on the roof of a church steeple, without safety equipment and standing at the edge. "If you had felt dizzy those times, you old fool, you wouldn't be here to feel so terrible." And his head was pounding, along with something in his throat, but, after a few minutes, he was able to recover enough to get moving again.

At that, his head was still aching and his vision was still a little blurred when he walked into the clearing where the Hermit's shack was. He stumbled once, over a small stick, but made it to his usual stump which was about fifteen feet from the shack. As he was sitting, he could see through the door into the shack. The Hermit was sitting on his bed, hunched over something. The Chief coughed and the Hermit's head jerked around. There was an expression of panic on the man's face, usually so free of human emotions. He glared at the Chief for just a second before the old fellow stood up and spun around in one motion, positioning himself as if to block whatever was on his bed, but it had been too late for the uninvited guest had seen what looked to be a wooden ammo box. The door closed on the shack, leaving Charley to wonder if the Hermit had a gun? No, he'd never seen the slightest bit of evidence of a gun, certainly not of a gun being used.

After sitting there for a few minutes looking at the door to the shack and thinking about the Hermit's behavior over the years, the Chief decided the box might carry some mementos of the poor fellow's life before he'd come to Jenckesville. He must have had a family and friends at some point. So thought the Chief. It was likely he also had a store of cash. After all, his needs were simple and he'd not spent much money since he'd come to Jenckesville, but he had been spending some money, nickels and dimes and occasionally a dollar or two, to buy his staples. Most of his non-perishable

supplies, as well as some food, had come from leftovers of rummage sales or gifts from church groups or civic clubs, sometimes a kindly individual. But he'd spent a fair amount of money on his cans of peas and bags of flour over the past thirty-five years.

Nearly five minutes more passed; the door had not opened and the Chief decided the Hermit wasn't going to come out until he left. Maybe he needed to calm down, perhaps having convinced himself that no one had figured out he must have had some small stock of cash up here in his shack, or maybe buried nearby. It was a little surprising that no thug from Jenckesville or a surrounding community had ever come up here to try and find out how much money the poor man had, but the Hermit. . .

As he rose and prepared to walk back to his cruiser, the Chief spoke softly to himself, "It must be true that there is a special Providence for fools and drunks."

Part IV
In Charge

24 Ask Not...

The mill's siren was blasting out the signal for lunch when Charley climbed into his cruiser. For the past five years or more, it had also been a signal that all was not well. Anyone standing near the main gates of the mill would see the day-shift workers streaming out, but some of them were going for the day, not to return for the additional three hours of afternoon work. When he had first headed the metal-working department down at the jute-mills in the late twenties, that department had been working two full shifts of workers, and working them hard to keep the production departments going without interruption; some of the jute-processing departments had gone to three shifts. By the time he left the mills for a full-time position on the police force in 1934—only four years prior, he'd had to lay off three workers in the department, out of fourteen, and there was no overtime except for emergencies related to production problems.

There were now rumors that things would get better as the United States began to produce weapons and other supplies for England and maybe France. There were even some politicians, though not Roosevelt, who were talking of gearing up the American military. As he turned on to North St to head up to the Hermit's little shack, Charley was thinking it would be a real shame if prosperity was going to return by way of war, or at least by building a lot of weapons and ships to prepare for war. It would be a lot better if the mills were to return to full production of threads to be woven into table-clothes and curtains rather than uniforms and bandages.

A couple of minutes later, he was leaving downtown Jenckesville and approaching the woods around the string of bodies of water which ended near North St with the biggest and clearest: Chapin Pond. He was in a rush. If he got home on time, he'd be able to eat his fill of Maggie's meat-pie that she'd made the evening before, spend a little time with her, and then head up for a little bit of twilight fishing. He was thinking he'd like to do

some fishing with his son Bill, but the young man would be getting married soon, to Margaret Drummond. Mame, or Mamie, as everyone called her had been his fiancée for nearly two years, and, as was proper, Bill was spending most of his time with her now that he was considering a hitch in the Navy. It was as if he was preparing for the stretches when he'd be gone. Still, Charley told himself he might be able to get Bill out for an evening or two of fishing before he shipped out. The air was feeling awfully sticky, so the fish might be biting if they hadn't already gotten their fill over the past couple weeks of muggy weather.

Fifteen minutes further up the road, Charley pulled off Center St and headed up the dirt-road which curved partly around Turkey Hill. A deer ran across the road in front of the cruiser, a doe, maybe two years old. No youngsters following her—unless they were hidden somewhere; if she had no fawns, and even if she had already given birth to young ones this past breeding season, some buck would probably mount her this coming fall. Not that he was ever sure he could predict the behavior of men or animals, else he might be able to guess why she would be active in late afternoon, the hottest part of the day in early summer.

Reaching a patch of dying spruces, he pulled over and parked in the shade of the evergreens gone brown. When he stepped out into the heat of late afternoon, he pulled his handkerchief out and wiped off the sweat from his forehead and the back of his neck. If a man walked briskly, it was only a ten minute walk up the slope and into the woods before reaching the small clearing where the Hermit had his shack. The Chief had been up there many times, though it had often seemed that there was not much point to the journey; it wasn't that the Hermit had made him feel unwelcome so much as he'd made Charley feel he didn't even exist. The Hermit had played host to Charley the same way that he played host to the trees and boulders surrounding his humble abode. The poor fellow had gone about his simple activities, ignoring the presence of other creatures.

Charley could feel a smile playing its way across his lips as he entered the deeper shade of the hardwoods that had come to dominate a few stretches on the slopes of Turkey Hill and would maybe take over the entire hill before too many decades had passed. A minute later, he turned to his left, leaving the trail up to the Hermit's shack and heading out onto the out-cropping of rock to carry out his ritual observations of the rapidly developing western regions of Jenckesville; it looked almost as if the town were about to merge into Chicopee just as it seemed that downtown Jenckesville was merging

into the Indian Orchard region of Springfield. At least there were still some undeveloped parts of Jenckesville in 1938, some regions left for hunting or fishing or just wandering around underneath the canopy of the forest. No one had ever expected the town to have grown the way it had, so there seemed no way to guess how much development was coming their way and he was not certain the good hunting and fishing in town would outlive him by much.

As he stood on the ledge, in direct sun, sweat popped out on his forehead and upon the back of his neck. He hadn't realized how cool it had been underneath the oaks and lindens and ashes until he had stepped out into the direct sun on the out-cropping. Despite the discomfort, he stood there for a minute or two, just letting his eyes pass over the cool green of the trees and brush of Jenckesville. He could almost imagine seeing the blue waters of the various fishing waters around town: Chapin Pond and Harris Pond, Murphy Pond and Minnechaog Pond, Alden Creek and the Chicopee River herself.

Not many weeks before, he'd brought in a string of bull-heads on the Palmer side of the Chicopee River and then he'd lost a big hook and a lot of line to something that seemed too heavy to move. Likely it had been an eel wrapped around a log or rock, but it might well have been that twenty or thirty pound catfish that he'd never managed to catch. He knew of reliable reports of such fish on the Connecticut and figured there might well be some such monsters in the waters of the Chicopee as well. A grandpa fish like that wouldn't be good eating, but it would be a thrill to haul in a huge fish that might have been older than him. Well, he couldn't even see the Chicopee from this angle, and he had a citizen to check on. A rather strange citizen, to be sure, and one who showed up on neither the voter rolls nor the tax rolls, but he was a human being who resided in Jenckesville and, so far as Chief MacGregor was concerned, that made the Hermit of Turkey Hill a citizen of the town.

As he turned and pushed into the cool air under the trees, Charley remembered Maggie's meat-pie was waiting to be warmed-up that evening—ground meat cooked with onions in a broth with just a little gravy to thicken it up. And all wrapped in a flaky, buttery crust. And it got better with a day or two of aging. Simple but delicious. At least, it was delicious the way Maggie cooked it, but she could work wonders with simple foods. If only she were more willing to try cooking with some of the exotic sausages or spices. Garlic was certainly no more pungent than the smell of the boiled

down organs that were a part of some Scottish meals. But Maggie, perhaps most people, were odd in being able to tolerate what they were accustomed to and unable to stand what was new or different. Though she was able to stay in the kitchen while making head-cheese or haggis, Maggie had never let him keep his Limburger or other exotic cheeses in the house. He'd built a special box which hung on the sill of the pantry window, so that he could get himself a slice of smelly cheese by opening that window.

His stomach was beginning to rumble and Charley was thinking it wanted to be filled with that meat-pie. He walked still faster, regaining the main path in a few seconds and headed up towards the Hermit's shack. The silence grew thicker, though he was sure that was just his imagination. After all, no matter how closed-mouthed and anti-social the Hermit was, a sensible man wouldn't blame the quiet of the woods on the presence of that poor fellow; that sensible man should expect the woods to be quiet, especially on a hot afternoon. There might well be some deer around grazing, or maybe a raccoon or two scavenging for whatever could be found, but there was a good chance that most animals were napping a while with the heat just reaching its peak. Even if they were moving around, it was that human ears would be able to detect them, even a big stag moving through thick brush. They moved damned quietly.

A sniff of the air told Charley nothing, but he always felt the urge to sniff ever since some people had told him that the Hermit's living area could be smelled from a good hundred yards away. It was certainly true that the Hermit might well have taken not a single bath in the 35 years that he'd been in Jenckesville, but Charley had never noticed a truly repulsive odor about the man. Most of the people talking that way had never been near Turkey Hill, let alone the clearing with the Hermit's shack. They had no need to visit a place to know what it was like. Still—even the most tolerant of people noticed a definite edge to the man in closed spaces, even the larger areas of Townes' Department Store, just as there was a definite odor hanging around those hard-working and honest men who had spent the day digging ditches at construction sites.

Charley sniffed again. Something did smell. Pretty bad at that. Pushing the thoughts of corned beef and cabbage out of his mind, he was hurried on by concern for the Hermit. Another few seconds and, as his foot was about to enter the clearing around the shack, he called out, "Old man, are you around?" It wasn't a very polite way to speak but the fellow had always refused to reveal so much as a Christian name to any soul in Jenckesville.

On past visits, when Charley had felt the need to call out to the Hermit, one call had brought the man shuffling out into the open though he had then ignored the uninvited visitor's presence and gone about his activities, perhaps mixing up a batch of sourdough and wrapping it around a stick before baking it over an open fire. It had never been clear to anyone what the Hermit did during those immense stretches of time when he was alone and didn't have any chores to keep him busy.

Slowing down after advancing a few steps into the clearing, the Chief shuddered at the thought of such intense emptiness in a life and then let his eyes search the ground as his feet took him closer to the shack. He opened the door to the shack. There was no noticeable smell, so he must have been imagining the odor of death as he approached the clearing, but there was little doubt the Hermit was dead as he lay there on the floor, his feet towards the door, his head resting against the small wood-stove that the good folk of St John's had sent up years before.

The Chief looked down again at the Hermit lying on the floor of his shack. There was no doubt possible with the gaping mouth and the eyes open and staring at the ceiling. One of the Hermit's arms was over his chest, the other was wrapped around behind his head, as if he'd maybe tried to catch something as he fell and had only succeeded in twisting himself around. Charley stepped up, placing his foot between the Hermit's feet and near his crotch before he was able to step onto the bare floor near the poor man's head. Stooping down, he reached out to move the man's out-thrown arm into a less awkward position and then closed the dead man's eyelids. No need even checking for a pulse; the flesh was cold and the arm was just beginning to stiffen. He must have died early that morning.

There was no blanket to be seen in the shack but for a rather ragged blue wool blanket on the cot. And it was disturbed. And a quick look confirmed that the poor man had been wearing no more than his union suit when he'd apparently been awakened from his sleep by . . .

It wasn't clear what had happened that the poor fellow had been awakened instead of going quietly and peacefully in his sleep, but maybe he'd been up for another reason and . . .

In any case, the blanket didn't look appropriate for wrapping a dead man, no matter how poor the man was and no matter if that rag had been what the man used when he was still breathing. There was a heavy blanket with the box of emergency supplies in the trunk of the cruiser, and he was going to have to head down to the car anyway, to call the station and have

them send an undertaker up to take care of the corpse. He'd have one of the patrolmen come up as well to help with any necessary tasks. While he was waiting for the undertaker and the patrolman, he would do what he could to find any information to identify the Hermit.

Halfway down to his cruiser, the Chief had a sudden fear that he would find nothing at all when he went back up to search the Hermit's shack. They might have to bury the man under a marker that didn't so much as tell the name he'd taken from his father or the Christian name he'd been given by his mother and father. Not that the man was necessarily Christian, but it was the most likely possibility. Though there were an increasing number of non-Christians in the area. Some were Jewish... That Chinese family that had been driven out of Jenckesville had been Buddhist. The fellow might have come from a non-Christian area of the world. Or maybe not. Poland? Brazil? Spain or Italy? California or Mexico? Syria or Bulgaria or some other country that a simple copper could know little about?

With his mind full of poorly formed images of various exotic lands, Charley reached the road and then the side of his cruiser; he found himself heating up quickly in the bright sun. Too hot but a beautiful day at that. Still it was not enough to dispell the gloom—a fellow human being had died. The sweat began to pour from his forehead and neck.

After calling in to the station and giving orders to send up an undertaker and a patrol car, Charley sat behind the wheel of his cruiser for a minute or two, lost in thoughts of the Hermit and his strange way of life. From an early age, the Chief had been a socializer, perhaps too much. In the opinion of many, he'd dated too many different women by the age of 19 when he'd settled down with Maggie, though that sort of behavior had become respectable enough in the 1920s as the young men returned from Europe and as the country grew prosperous. Back when he was a young man, he'd also been known as one of those who attended the poker games held up in the woods north of town. It was true he'd been places that he shouldn't have been and that he'd engaged in activities that he was now bound to suppress—at least when they were seen as a threat to the community's peace and order, but much of the time, he'd been sitting outside of the poker games, trading fishing and hunting stories with the other fellows who were there more for the free atmosphere than for the gambling.

Of course, he wasn't really proud of some of the socializing he'd done with women not his wife...

Putting aside such thoughts, pleasant and painful at the same time,

Charley told himself he had always found a way to fit in with society, to have a little fun with some good fellows, well-behaved or not, and to deal respectfully with the ladies and with the distinguished elders and leaders of society. He'd never even thought about it but had taken to gregarious ways from the time he'd been just a young lad.

As close to a friend as the Hermit had ever had since moving to Jenckesville thirty-five years before, Charley found it impossible to understand how the man could have chosen to live such a life, more isolated from his fellow human beings in many ways than that Robinson Caruso character had ever been. From what he could remember of that book that he'd read as a boy, he thought that Robinson Caruso had longed for contact with his fellow-man. The Hermit had never been out of contact in the same way as the ship-wrecked Caruso, but the anti-social fellow had taken no advantage of that contact except to buy foods down at Townes' and to scavenge through the dumps to find pieces of metal or wood for his shack. From what Charley knew, the fellow had not even bothered to respond, "No," when the occasional good-hearted soul or another had invited him to dinner, either at a church social or at a private home. It was likely the Hermit would have simply stood there with blank, staring eyes while the invitation was being proffered and then he would have turned without a word or maybe walked away from the kind soul without a word.

Well, there wasn't much good in losing himself in his thoughts, and, with that thought, he rose and fetched the blanket from the trunk before heading back up to the Hermit's shack. A short but painful walk later, the Chief hung his suit-coat and tie from the branch of a tree near the shack. He entered the small shack and tried, with only partial success, to lift the Hermit's corpse in a reasonably dignified manner; he didn't want to drag the poor fellow around like a sack of flour. Soon that corpse was lying in the clearing, covered with the blanket from the cruiser. The fellow's corpse was even lighter than most would have guessed from his sinewy and skinny body. There was little to him, at least little more than there was to the body of a...

A fourteen year-old girl.

It was odd...

Charley had dealt with a bad problem the prior year: some well-respected citizens had been preying upon two young retarded girls, and, yet, those men had been truly a part of human society while this fellow had not been. This man who had neither hindered nor helped his fellow-men in any signif-

icant way. And those men were still, for the most part, respected citizens, Charley having been forced to call them into a private meeting and scare them off those girls without being able to prove enough to charge them, let alone convict them. And, yet, they'd been married men, having children of their own, being members of church communities, active in some of the mens' clubs in town. Respectable citizens. At least, in the eyes of most people in Jenckesville.

It was a problem beyond an ordinary joe, this business of how people connected themselves to society and how they acquired reputations. Besides that, he had more immediate problems, such as finding out who the fellow was. The Chief headed back into the Hermit's shack hoping to discover his identity or to even find a name or address of someone who might be a relative or a friend. It seemed fitting he at least have a name on his grave-stone and it would be good if a long-lost friend or relative were to at least be notified. Would it be too much to hope that a sister or a childhood buddy might show up for the funeral?

Once he was back inside and taking visual inventory, it seemed less likely than ever that he would find anything which might point to a past for the man. There was an iron cot, a bit rusty but looking to have been scoured not too many years back. A lumpy old mattress sat on the cot with that ragged blanket thrown to the side. There was no pillow. Nor was there a night-stand. No clock so far as Charley could see. A small shelving unit in the far corner supported a few cans of food as well as some tins that likely held flour and sugar and maybe some crackers. The man had definitely been one of those who ate to live rather than living to eat, but it wasn't clear why mere existence had meant much to him. If it had meant much to him.

A small cabinet stood near the wood-stove. The cabinet showed its various layers of paint: yellow and red and white at different times of its usefulness in some Jenckesville residence. There was a cast-iron frying-pan and a beat-up tin pot on that cabinet along with a chipped plate with a tulip design. A few pieces of flatware stood on that plate. No napkins. No sugar bowl or pitcher. No vases for fresh flowers. No woman's touch but not even the touch of a bachelor concerned about some degree of contact with the civilizing influences of his society.

The bed drew Charley's attention once more and he walked over and, in one motion, lifted it up and pushed it against the far wall to reveal a wooden box that looked to have once been an ammunition box. Two latches had

been mounted with two small padlocks holding the lid shut on the box. He remembered having once seen the Hermit going into that box while sitting on his bed; the old fellow had seemed quite nervous that anyone had seen that box. Did it hold his store of cash? More importantly to the Chief, did it hold some clue to the man's identity?

With the box in his hands, the Chief turned and walked out the door, going to a nearby boulder upon which he placed the box and then stood back and looked around him, keeping his eyes away from the blanketed body no more than twenty feet away. It was feeling a bit hot and more than a bit close even under this section of woods with the pines already being starved of sunlight by the young oaks which nearly forty feet or more. Tall but scrawny things, likely to be replaced by more robust oaks over the next five or six decades, but they were the pioneers of the once and future hardwood forest to cover the slopes of Turkey Hill. He mopped his forehead and the back of his neck off once more and then pulled out his package of cigarettes. He was lighting one up when he thought to wonder how long it would take the undertaker's van and the squad car to get up here. Undoubtedly, the town would be paying for the burial of the Hermit, as they paid for a simple burial for a number of poor people each year. It was the decent thing to do.

Of course, the undertaker and his assistant might not have been immediately available. With only two other squad cars on the road, covering the entire town of Jenckesville, it might also be a while before a patrolman arrived, and he prepared himself for the possibility of a long wait with the Hermit's corpse.

While he was thinking of such practical matters, his eyes happened to drift towards the stump he'd once used as his chair whenever visiting the Hermit. It was rotting away and looked to be food for termites. Judging from some of the gashes in that rotting stump, some skunks had made their way into the clearing while the Hermit was gone, ripping apart the wood so that the termites had themselves become food.

After taking another deep drag on his cigarette, Charley stooped over and picked up a hand-sized rock and knocked away the padlock and the latch with one casual swipe, not even much effort behind it. And then he took care of the padlock on the other side with no more effort. He threw the rock to his right and lifted the lid off the box to see a piece of newspaper neatly covering whatever was below. He pulled the paper away and crouched in front of the box, looking at several bundles of 20s

and 100s, not sure he was really seeing what he was seeing. After a few more deep drags on his cigarette, Charley still didn't believe what he was seeing, having expected to see some loose change and a hundred dollars or so at most. He stood back and spent a minute or two finishing his cigarette and wondering how the old man had broken the large bills down without rumors spreading throughout town. A miser the man had apparently been and his miser's instincts would have told him that he couldn't flash around even a single 20 or 100 or every scoundrel in Western Massachusetts would have been paying him a visit in the dead of night. After breaking up his cigarette butt and putting the paper in the tobacco pouch he was carrying as an ash-tray, he lifted up the top bundles to see only more 20s and 100s, but then he noticed a few singles crumpled into one of the corners of the box. The box was less than half-full. Maybe the empty space had once been filled with singles.

If that was so, the foolish old man had died when his singles were almost used up. Another few months and he would have been forced to take one of his 20s or 100s downtown for his shopping. Then he would have been a target for the local hoodlums, not that there were too many of those in Jenckesville, but talk in a bar in-town or in Springfield would have led some real desperado to the Hermit's shack, just as it was bar talk that had led Charley to that killer who'd been on the FBI's most wanted list. Of course, someone with a bit of moral integrity might have heard the rumors and done something to protect the Hermit and his money before harm had arrived. And maybe the Hermit would have had enough sense to come to the police chief or to one of the clergymen for help in breaking a large bill.

After casually browsing through the box, he left the money in place, deciding he wasn't even going to bother counting it until he got it down to the Probate Court, or maybe to Judge Cady's house. It was likely the judge was around, since he was retired, and Charley quickly decided he would just drive down to his house rather than taking the money to the safe at the station or directly to the probate court.

It seemed fitting that he wait for either a patrolman or the undertaker before leaving the Hermit's corpse. It wasn't that he was expecting any animals to rush into the clearing and start gnawing away at the old fellow; it just seemed proper that even a dead man not be abandoned until all the forms had been followed and the corpse had been placed six feet under. And so he closed the box up and set it down on the ground, not far from its former owner. Lighting another cigarette, the Chief went and sat down

on the boulder which had held the box of money only seconds before. He looked up the long trunk of an elm tree that shot gracefully up through the stubby pines. It was a more natural way of growth for an elm than for an oak, so this tree might be here on the hill for a goodly number of years. Maybe even another century or so, another two or three generations of men.

A breeze was coming down the higher slopes of Turkey Hill and its companion hills, none of which were more than mounds of dirt by the standards of even the Appalachians, let alone the Rockies. But these little hills were a pleasant break from the marshes and plains which sloped up from the Chicopee River towards the somewhat greater hills of Central Massachusetts. And they provided good shelter for the deer and other wild-life, if only because some of the hills had never been cleared completely even in New England's glory days as a farming region. And those which had been cleared had been used for pasturage, leaving an opportunity for some wild animals to also graze on pastures not often visited by men.

"Chief?" Charley was breathing in a heady mixture of tobacco smoke and pine-scent when he heard the voice of the patrolman, immediately identifiable as Curtis Wilkins. Dependable Curtis. Not the man to send on a task requiring rapid thought or action, but just the man to be trusted to do what he was told to do and, in the event of an unexpected situation, he would do what he thought he would have been told to do if that situation had been covered in his orders. A few times he'd been right when forced to think for himself, and that was all right with a chief of police who was determined not to ask for anything more than a man could deliver.

The two men met just a few feet from the corpse and the Chief just nodded down at the Hermit's remains. "May the Good Lord have mercy on his soul," were the first words out of Curtis' mouth.

"I'm sure He will, Curtis. I'm sure He will." A few seconds of heavy silence followed before the Chief asked, "Do you know if Sergeant Baker was able to get hold of Larry Ellsworth down at the funeral parlor?"

"Mr Ellsworth is sending up a man to fetch the poor fellow's corpse. He should be right behind me."

"Well, I'm going to have you stay here until he arrives. And give him a hand if he needs it. Nose around and see if you can find anything that might point us toward any relatives or friends. Might be more important now. At least to the Probate Court. Turns out the old fellow had a box full of cash, mostly 20s and 100s. A few singles were crammed into the box

as well.” Charley paused as Curtis whistled and then looked down at the Hermit’s covered body with an expression of wonder though not necessarily respect. It didn’t seem appropriate that the discovery of the money should really change anyone’s attitude towards the Hermit. The town would be spared the expense of a pauper’s burial, and some relatives might get an unexpected inheritance; if no heirs were found, the state of Massachusetts would get the money. Other than that, Charley couldn’t see any differences between a dead man with a box of cash and a dead man without a penny in his estate, but he was realistic enough to know that the man’s position, prone as it was, would change dramatically as soon as word got out about the box of cash.

“While you’re looking about, you could check around the clearing for any sign of something stashed away in a tree-hollow or maybe buried in the ground. I wouldn’t expect to find any more money, but it’d be nice to find some evidence of who the man really was. And it’d be nice if his relatives could get the money instead of it all going to the state.”

Curtis whistled again. “You mean the state gets all that money if they don’t find any relatives?” Charley merely nodded, and Curtis whistled once more. It was almost funny the way the fellow’s roundish and placid face had shown more signs of life and of wonder these past few moments than Charley would expect from him in a year. “That doesn’t seem fair, Chief. I mean, you found it, and you were also the only friend the fellow had in the world. Never did understand how you could tolerate his ways, but you stuck by him all these years.”

“Well, the law’s the law, and I make a good enough living enforcing it.” Charley felt ill at ease when the words came out of his mouth, as if he’d been forced to provide a practical justification for a simple and straightforward act of honesty and that didn’t seem right to him. If honest Curtis felt that way, Charley knew he was going to be meeting with a lot of people, even some close friends, who would tell him he was crazy for not taking at least some of the cash in the box. “We’ll probably have to keep a watch on this place for a few days, Curtis. There’ll be some who’ll be coming up to find any pots of gold the Hermit might have left here. We might see Turkey Hill dug away to flat ground before they decide there’s no more chance of finding boxes of cash.”

Curtis laughed as well, a laugh deep from the belly which was already prominent though the fellow was no more than 35. Charley fetched his tie and jacket as Curtis moved towards the shack and began to walk around,

keeping his attention upon the ground near the edges of the shack. After putting his jacket and his fedora on, Charley went and stood near the head of the Hermit's corpse, removing his hat once more. He stood in silence, though he struggled for the words to a proper prayer, and then he decided that all that was needed was a simple, "May God have mercy on his soul," spoken out loud and a silent acknowledgment that all men were made of the same dust and would return to that dust. And was that to be the end of it? That was a question that ministers were better equipped to deal with. Or at least church-goers and Bible-readers.

After putting his hat back on, the Chief fetched the box of cash and started to walk away before turning back to call out, "If you find anything that might be of worth, Curtis, bring it in down to the station and lock it up in the safe."

"Not likely to be much of value here, Chief. . ." Curtis' voice trailed off as his eyes took hold of the wooden box in the Chief's hands.

The Chief decided to walk away towards the road without pointing out he was hoping more for something to identify the man and not at all for another box of cash, and it seemed likely that neither was to be found.

25 Men of Authority

Judge Cady's house had once been in the country by Jenckesville standards, though only a half-mile or so east of downtown. Now the town had grown out into that region; ground was even being cleared near the Judge's house that a golf course might be built. It was still quiet out there, but not so perfectly isolated as it had once been. The occasional fisherman or hunter passed by heading into the real country, and there were a few houses along East St that could have been seen if not for the boxwood hedges and stands of lilac bushes that stood on much of the border to the Judge's property.

Charley drove up the long driveway and as he stopped near the front corner of the house, he remembered the struggle he'd had to bring up the pipes and the furnace itself when he'd installed a central heating system in this house. And then he pushed the thoughts aside, telling himself, "Charley, you must be getting old, as much as you're tending to live in the past nowadays."

The Chief got out of the car, put his coat on and his fedora firmly on his head before going around to fetch the box on the floor in front of the passenger seat. With that box of cash under his arm and a smile on his face, he was halfway to the front door when he was greeted from above, "Well, what brings the busy Chief of Police up to visit a retired man of the bar?" Judge Cady was looking over the wooden railing that enclosed the sitting area outside his bedroom.

"I've got some Probate Court business, and I'd appreciate some help in taking care of it properly and expeditiously."

"I don't know, Chief. I'm pretty busy these days. Only halfway through trimming up the rose-bushes and I should get around to counting the silverware at some point." The Judge never so much as let the corners of his mouth move as he was speaking. Then he smiled and made a grand sweeping gesture with his left arm, "Come on in, Charley. The front door's open. I'll

meet you in my den, just off the front hallway.”

The Chief entered the house and walked into the den but stood in the middle of the room rather than taking his usual seat in the leather-upholstered upright that stood near the Judge’s favorite recliner. It took only a half minute or so before he heard the quiet sounds of movement on the carpeted stairs and then he heard the Judge’s voice at the door: “Take your usual seat, Charley.”

“Thank you, but no. I’ve got something to show you first.” Charley walked behind the desk in front of the center window. He set the box down and lifted up the top just as Judge Cady got there.

After Charley pulled out the newspaper on top, the Judge saw the bills and whistled before saying, “That’s a good boodle, there, Charley me boy. Did you find yourself a leprechaun’s stash?”

“No. The Hermit died, may he rest in peace, and this was under the cot in his shack.”

The judge didn’t look much surprised. “There were rumors a couple of decades back that the old fellow was a miser who had a hoard of gold buried up near his shack. I was always surprised that some of our more pious citizens never went up there to try to relieve the man of a source of sin. If they’d guessed it was in a box in the shack and not even buried, they probably would have done him such a service. And if they’d known how much the Hermit had, they definitely would have done their best to help him on his way to salvation.” Judge Cady stepped forward and lifted the top half inch or so of bills and made only a cursory inspection of the bills lying below before he dropped the money and stepped back. He didn’t say a word until he was sitting in his recliner and staring up at the chandelier hanging over the center of the room. “Did you count it?”

“No. Maybe we should do that now?”

The Judge nodded and came over to stand behind the desk. He handed Charley a pad and a pencil and motioned him to take the seat at the desk. The Chief set to work. After a few minutes of work, he announced, “\$9,432,” rose, and handed over the pad and pencil. “Now it’s your turn.” The Chief wandered over to look out the window though not much could be seen but the driveway and a boxwood hedge. A few minutes later, Judge Cady said, “I’m finished and got the same.” And then he sat quietly for a few seconds as if he were thinking about something. Then, moving slowly, he took a sheet from the pad and wrote out *\$9,432* in a cursive hand before signing it and dating it.

The Chief came behind the desk once more. As he was signing and dating the sheet of paper, the Judge spoke as if he were lost in contemplation of some small wonder. "If he'd invested it wisely, he'd have died a very wealthy man indeed. As it is, that's enough to buy the nicest house in Jenckesville and have a bit left over to buy some groceries. Might even set a man up in a damned fine business." Judge Cady smiled in a quiet and dignified manner as he looked at Charley who had walked back around to the front of the desk. "Even most honest men would have thought about what the money could buy before they went on to do the right thing, but I'll bet you never even spared a thought to such matters, Chief."

Shaking his head sadly, Charley said, "As I was driving down from Turkey Hill, I couldn't help thinking about the house that Maggie has always wanted. The house I might have been able to get for her if I'd taken some of my chances to go into business over the past five or ten years. She's a good woman, and maybe she deserves that house if that's what she wants, but I've always preferred to live well and that's used up any money I could have saved on a policeman's salary. Truth to tell, I don't just enjoy eating well and having good fishing tackle. I also love the life of a cop, and I'll take it even with its limited financial rewards."

"You've given Maggie a good life, Charley, and she's done well by you, though, if you forgive an old man's honesty, you seem to have given each other more than the usual amount of heartaches as well. Quietly, so that few in town have so much as a suspicion about your differences. You're both damned fine people, but your marriage wasn't really a match made in heaven. You weren't prepared to live the quiet life she really wants, and she's never been willing to take on the role of a wife of a public figure."

Without a word, Charley closed the top on the box and picked it up. He'd turned around before saying, "I'd appreciate it if you could come down to the court-house with me. It would go a lot smoother and a lot quicker if the most respected lawyer in the area were handling the details and shaking all the hands."

"I don't think you'll need my help all that much, Charley, but I'll be happy to accompany you. I guess my life-time of experience in these matters might help things move along more quickly so you can get home to Maggie a little earlier, and I'm getting a bit bored trying to figure out which branches on those damned rose-bushes will be the most prolific and which should be cut out to make room for the others. Maybe I'll even volunteer to be the executor for an estate that will be easy to handle. Once they find no

heirs, which is likely to happen, I'll just write out a check to the state of Massachusetts and that will be that."

The judge had fetched his hat from the hallway before he turned to Charley and said, "Since you came here and gave me the news, I haven't so much as asked the Good Lord to have mercy on the soul of that poor man." After a pause, he added, "It doesn't seem there'll be much of a shortage of funds to pay for a decent funeral, but I'll arrange for the Reverend Whitcomb to conduct some sort of a service, though not a one of us can so much as guess if the Hermit knew, or cared, much of God, let alone one of the Good Lord's churches. You and me might be about the only ones at the funeral, besides the good pastor and the undertaker, and maybe one or two of the idlers about town hoping for a piece of gold to fall out of the casket as it's carried out."

"I'm going to have to stop at my apartment on the way down, Judge, just to let Maggie know I'll be a little late for dinner. When I was grabbing a sandwich at Betty's Diner, I saw Phil Edmonds, the butcher from Polansky's Meat Market, and he told me Maggie had bought a slab of corned beef to cook for the evening's meal."

Judge Cady laughed and said, "And you wouldn't want to miss one of Maggie's magnificent feasts, would you? There's some fine cooks in Jenckesville, but I haven't heard of one who could make a boiled New England dinner to beat Maggie's. And I might be inclined to sell my soul for one of her cakes if she weren't so generous in giving them away."

"Not to everybody, Judge. You're one of the privileged few to get cakes. And she has to guard the cakes she gives you. The rest of us in the family eat all of Maggie's treats before she would have a chance to give them away. Though sometimes I have to sneak a treat behind her back now that she's decided to do something about my eating habits."

26 A Good Man and a Good Woman

Charley could smell the corned beef already blanching in the warm water. “Well,” he told himself, “it takes a while to get the excess salt out and she can hold it a while longer than that before putting it in the oven for the final baking.”

Underneath the smell of the corned beef, he had already detected the smell of wallpaper glue and he followed that underlying smell to find Maggie in the entranceway to the flat which was the middle floor of a three family house. She was on her knees measuring along the woodwork trim, itself freshly painted just a week or so before. They’d been in this apartment not quite three months and she’d already redone every other wall, as well as scrubbing and oiling all the floors; it was time to finish up so she could start at the beginning, probably by scrubbing down and repainting the kitchen walls. Or maybe she’d make new curtains and drapes since she’d done little more than sew together some of the drapes from the old apartment to fit the triple window in the front room. She’d used drapes she’d made for their last apartment on the other windows as well, but those had fit without alterations.

Filled once again with admiration for Maggie’s skills as a homemaker, Charley stood at the boundary of kitchen and entryway for just a couple of heartbeats as his mind shifted over to wonder how two people could love each other so much and still have such different desires on how to live the wedded life they shared, and he wondered why it was that such a thought had come to him at this time. Had it been Judge Cady’s words? He thought not. . .

Maggie had noticed him, and, carefully moved the rolls of wallpaper to the side where no one would step on them before she rose. “And what

brings you home early, Charley? Have you taken part of the day off?"

He walked closer to her and took her right hand in his, giving it a gentle squeeze before saying, "No, I just wanted to let you know I'll be a little bit late in getting home. Court business. The Hermit died and, much to my surprise, some of the silly, old rumors about him turned out to be true. He had a box of cash, over \$9,000, stashed under his cot, not even buried or much hidden." He laughed. "I guess that's a sign that our town is still a safe place."

She closed her eyes for just a second and breathed out, "May the good Lord have mercy upon the poor man's soul." They were both wordless for several seconds before she shyly said, "I've got your favorite meal on cooking," as if afraid to speak such words so soon after calling down God's blessing upon a person recently deceased.

"If you could delay the meal just a half-hour or so, I'd be grateful, Maggie. The courts themselves close right at five, so I won't be very late. Judge Cady is waiting in the cruiser; you might say he's guarding the money. So I've got to get going, and, the sooner I get going, the sooner this business will be taken care of."

Maggie's face had wrinkled a bit. It was perhaps the hard-headed Scot in her that took over as she asked, "Where would the old man have gotten that kind of money?"

Charley laughed. "If I knew the answer to that, I'd probably know who the money belongs to, but it'll be the court that will have to figure out who he was and who his proper heirs are."

"And if he has no heirs. . . Or if the court can't find them?"

He released Maggie's hand and stepped back. "I believe the law says the money will go to the state of Massachusetts."

Her mouth settled into a firm line as if her Scottish pessimism had been confirmed once again to be a proper guide to the ways of the world.

"Well, Maggie, I've got to get going if I want to finish this business up in time to get back for dinner. And Judge Cady is waiting for me in the car." With that, Charley turned around and walked towards the back-door, but he'd not walked out before Maggie called out, "If you've made the Judge wait for you, you could at least invite him to dinner."

After a short burst of laughter, he called back, "Do you think I'm going to share some of your corned-beef dinner with any man, even a good friend." He laughed again and said, "I'll invite him for sure, Maggie, and it's good you were thinking more of your Christian duty than I was." With those

words and a smile upon his lips, he walked out, but his mood had darkened again by the time he'd reached the cruiser where he got in but didn't put the keys in the ignition for a few seconds.

"Is something the matter, Charley?"

"No, I was just thinking. If I'd found the money in the woods with no clue who might have owned it, I would have reported it as found and put it in trust at the bank. If no one had proved themselves the proper, or even likely, owners, then it would have been mine after some appropriate time. Since I found it near a dead man, then the state will get it if he has no proper heirs."

The Judge looked his friend straight in the eye for a second before laughing. "The law is what it is and what it is is what we've inherited, Charley. The only thing you can say in favor of the Anglo-American system of law is that it's worked out so much better than any other systems that mankind has ever tried." He laughed and then confessed, "Of course, I am a little biased since I've made a good living at the practice of the American variety of that law."

27 A Rest for the Weary

Charley settled back in his easy chair, hands resting on the side-arms for a minute or two before he reached over to the other side of the table and took hold of his pipe and then his cannister of pipe tobacco. He got his pipe going and leaned backwards for a few minutes, his eyes closed, taking a puff and letting the sweet smoke roll over his tongue and down his throat before exhaling and taking another puff. Though his doctor had warned him against tobacco, and he'd heard words of warning from a few doctors in town other than his own, he still enjoyed the bitter and energizing taste of the cigarette smoke during the active parts of the day, the occasional strong-tasting and intoxicating cigar after a banquet or a game of whist, and, to cap off the day, the sweet and relaxing taste of his favorite pipe tobacco while he prepared to settle in for an hour or two spent with a good detective story.

Tales from Scotland Yard. That good book was sitting on the side-table and under his gaze. Yes, a very good book, in his opinion. Maggie's sister Mary had brought it home for him from Boston. When she wasn't organizing relief for the poor or protesting against child labor, when not leading a strike or testifying in favor of one woman's right or another, Mary spent a lot of time in book-stores. All sorts of book-stores. The popular sort that most people went to. Also, dingy back-alley stores piled high with books both new and ancient, and it was in such unpromising places that she bought histories or fancy novels which didn't make much sense to Charley. Used book-stores were her favorite because they had such a variety of books, including many not currently in print or not readily available because of changes in fashions.

There had been an occasion years back when Maggie's Uncle Albert had tried to explain why some people loved to spend time in a good used book-stores. That strange but lovable man had talked about Edinburgh as if it

was mostly so many little alley-ways that were home to used book-stores and little else but the occasional tea-room. But Uncle Albert had had his own perspective on life. Both a brilliant man and an odd bird. And it was birds that he had known so well; bushes and trees as well. An amateur naturalist of the first rank, Uncle Albert had been consulted regularly by professors at some of the best universities in the United States, sometimes professors from overseas as well, but he'd never managed to make a living from his great knowledge and great feel for the natural world. Albert Mitchell had made his living in the mills along with the other immigrants from Scotland.

Maggie entered the room in a bustle just as Charley chuckled at the memory of her late and lamented uncle. A sweet and lovely man, but. . .

When Maggie looked over at her husband as if to ask what was so funny, he laughed a bit more openly and said, "You know, I couldn't help thinking that a casual observer watching your Uncle Albert walk down the street first and then the Hermit right after might have thought them to have been the same sort of odd bird."

Maggie looked insulted, as he should have expected. "Uncle Albert was one of the most generous and sweetest souls that ever walked upon God's good Earth. The Hermit was a stingy old miser who used to live by taking from those who had less than him. As it turned out, he was taking favors from those who were struggling to feed their own children, and then he would head up to his shack to count his hoard of money."

"Now, Maggie. Don't be so critical of the man. We don't know what had caused him to be the way he was. He might have borne more pain than a mortal man can stand. He might not have understood how much money he really had. Anyway, he paid his way. Mostly. Most of what he took for free were clothes and scraps of metal or wood that people were throwing out."

She stood in the middle of the room for a few seconds, her right hand raised to her forehead and also serving to cover her already closed eyes. Charley set the book of detective stories down and then set his pipe in its stand before rising and going over to take tender hold of his wife's upper arms. "What's bothering you, Maggie?"

She gave evidence of struggling in her inner parts but didn't say a word. After a few seconds, her husband drew her close and kissed the top of her head before gently pushing her away a short distance and then escorting her to the couch. When they were seated together, he saw Margaret come to the door and then turn away when she saw her father trying to comfort

her mother.

“Did Bill go through with signing up for the Navy?”

She shook her head but it took another few seconds before she was able to say, “He didn’t sign up yet, but he’s got the papers. They came in the second delivery this afternoon.” Maggie struggled to gain control of herself and then said, “Of course, his wedding date is set for September, two months from now, and it wouldn’t be decent for him to leave for a while after that. I told him it wasn’t right to get married and then head off to sea, leaving Mame and us here to worry when there’s more and more talk of war every day.”

“Well, Maggie, I agree a man shouldn’t abandon his bride so soon after their wedding day, and I know that Bill isn’t planning on leaving quite so abruptly, but he’s got his reasons for thinking he might want to make a career for himself out on the sea. How he got that into his head growing up in Jenckesville is beyond me, but maybe it was all those Horatio Hornblower novels. Anyway, if there’s a war coming, it’ll probably be against those Nazis in Europe and a young fellow might be pretty safe in a ship, all things considered. And it’s far from certain war’s coming. Roosevelt and the fellows in charge in England and France seem to think they have everything under control.”

Maggie just shook her head, and, truth to tell, Charley had spent a couple of sleepless nights himself worrying about the likelihood of war coming, in Europe for sure so far as he could tell and in the Pacific according to some. Weren’t the Japanese allied to the Nazis? And he was ignorant of the details but knew dozens, maybe hundreds, of American soldiers and sailors had been killed in China in previous ten years of so—without the American government even doing anything in retaliation. Maybe that was for the best; maybe the remaining soldiers and sailors should just be withdrawn and all those people left to solve their own problems.

After missing the Great War because he was already a young father, and one with higher level skills working in an important factory, Charley had not missed observing the horrors of modern war. When he had once given a speech at a local convention of the VFW, he’d seen a number of fellows missing one or more legs and that one fellow who had been missing half of his face. An artillery shell had taken the left side of both his upper and lower jaws off as cleanly as a surgeon could have done and no surgeon in those days had known how to put his face back together, though some army dentist had done what he could to give the fellow a partially functioning

set of jaws.

Now feeling as agitated as Maggie was, Charley pulled back from his wife. "I see you have another novel about Mary, Queen of Scots. I would have thought they'd explored every aspect of her real and imaginary lives by now." As he spoke, he handed his handkerchief to Maggie and then took one more step away from her as she was wiping away the tears from her eyes. She had not cried much, just enough to water her eyes good. That encouraged him to believe she would be fine spending the night quietly reading her novel while Margaret read one of hers and he finished his book of tales from Scotland Yard. Bill was likely out, maybe with Mame or maybe horsing around with some of his buddies. Margaret would be good company for her mother, and in her 20s and making herself a living at Mass Mutual, she was a grown woman with an understanding of her mother's fears for Bill's safety.

"I think I'm going to get some fresh air, Maggie. Just a walk around the block."

She looked up at him suspiciously. "I hope you aren't going to sneak into a Portuguese or Polish restaurant for some chourica or kielbasa." He had the feeling it wasn't spicy sausages that were on her mind, though she did have to live through his periods of gas and general stomach upset after he ate a lot of spicy food. And, no, he was aware of no intentions of going to Annette's apartment, though he doubted if Maggie knew that Annette Folkes was the woman Charley visited from time to time.

Once on the street, he felt drawn in two different directions. First, he thought of heading towards East St where he could find a couple of diners that served up heaping plates of either eggs and chourica or eggs and kielbasa, but he'd stuffed himself with Maggie's corned beef and cabbage. And he found himself thinking of a house with two large flats, one of them occupied by a woman often as lonely as Charley sometimes was. Instead, he turned right and headed up North St, hoping to run into an old friend, or even a casual acquaintance, whom he could talk to for ten or fifteen minutes before going home and returning to his book.

As he pulled out his pack of cigarettes, he could see his hand was shaking, but he managed to get one out of the pack and to light it up. He'd only dragged in one lungful of smoky air before he heard someone calling out, "Ho, Charley. How's the rich man doing?"

Burton Jones, the close friend of his youth and now the owner of Jones & Sons Feedstore and Lumberyard, was coming across North St. True enough

it was that Charley, as a responsible citizen, was annoyed by the fellow's affairs with women barely of age; as a policeman, he wasn't concerned since those women were all over the age of consent. Still, Burt was basically a good joe, if somewhat loose on the edge of his morals. And that good joe was wearing a big smile by the time he come up onto the sidewalk; he stuck his hand out aggressively towards a man not poor but certainly not rich.

“Just a matter of time now, Charley, and you'll be buying Maggie that house she's always wanted and you'll be driving around in one of those big, black Buicks, just like the bootleggers in town.”

He was suddenly annoyed as he realized that Burt had not been joking about him being a rich man. Wanting to just get away, Charley didn't even blink an eye as he asked, “What are you talking about?” It was looking to be a long few weeks ahead as an honorable man struggled to convince people he hadn't taken any of the Hermit's money and wasn't going to get a penny of it even if no relatives were found.

28 Always on the Job

The air had grown both hot and still when Charley went out for a walk after lunch. Maggie had looked at him a bit suspiciously, perhaps thinking it wasn't normal for a man to head out for a walk at a time more suited for a nap or at least a quiet sit-down with a book and a glass of lemonade or ice-water. It was possible that he was giving signs that he was seeing another woman on the side; for reasons he couldn't figure, he was feeling more guilt than he'd felt during previous affairs, though some of those had been more dangerous to his marriage. His affair with Annette was not much from the viewpoint of passion, nothing at all like the consummated or unconsummated love-affairs he'd been having since he was 16 or so. Annette provided an oasis for him. Not that Maggie didn't provide a good home, but she was so uninterested in being the wife of a public figure that she wouldn't even attend the Chiefs' annual banquet and ball. Well, he was a public figure and wasn't going to give that up even though Maggie had always refused to play the role of a wife of a public figure. And if he had to get his comfort elsewhere. . .

Feeling suddenly rotten about the way he was leading his life, the Chief crossed the street to stand in front of the police station for just a few seconds before heading south on North St. A minute later, he passed the Union Church. No more than twenty yards more did he travel before he crossed back over North St and walked by the Hubbard Memorial Library, wondering if Margaret was inside. She spent a fair amount of time there, browsing the shelves for interesting books. Charley had spent time of his own browsing the shelves there, but mostly in the short shelf of true-crime books, which he had run through pretty quickly. On occasion, he'd taken out a mystery or two, but those seemed to him to be overly stylized and not nearly as satisfying as the true stories, even though some of the better crime-fiction he'd read had done a good job of showing the tedium and

mind-numbing detail work that was part of solving crimes in the real world.

Not that he had ever had many chances to solve major crimes. Serious crimes had been as few and far between in Jenckesville as one would expect in a small town, and even small crimes were hardly a daily occurrence; at least not any worth prosecuting. More regular the need to ensure that people develop good habits as cars were coming more and more into common use. In fact, Charley and Ironhead Malone and one of the young patrolmen were scheduled to spend some time the next week just quietly observing some of the intersections in town which had been scenes of small accidents as well as a number of incidents involving discourteous drivers or of pedestrians walking out into the street without looking. He knew those intersections pretty well and figured he would end up recommending that some stop signs be put up, some crosswalks painted more prominently, and maybe some consideration given to full-scale redesign of intersections or streets. At that, he might be forced to tell the boys on the force to start giving out tickets more aggressively; it was beginning to seem as if it took a fine and the possibility of losing one's license to make a dent in that small but prominent group of irresponsible drivers.

The Chief was noting that some of the crosswalk and lane marking lines needed refreshing along East St and up Chestnut St when he saw Hook Mulligan coming out of the post office just ahead, on the other side of Chestnut St where it met East St. That was truly one of the problem intersections he wanted to do something about and, before he saw Hook, the thought had come that he should retreat into the shade of the park trees and watch the behavior of the Saturday drivers and walkers. He was glad he hadn't, and he came near Hook who spoke in his usual hale and hearty manner: "Hello there, Chief. How's the rich man doing?" A wink told Charley that Hook was kidding him, but, if he'd needed confirmation, he now knew that tales of that box of cash were spreading widely.

As Hook came up, he slapped Charley on the back and laughed before saying, "I guess Diogenes never came to Jenckesville."

"Who the hell was Diogenes, Hook?"

"Oh, some crazy Greek philosopher who used to walk around with a lantern looking for an honest man. Never found one, according to my daughter the history teacher."

A grin split Charley's face. "That explains it. It was Katy who told you about that Diogenes fellow. Didn't think you'd put the deck of cards down long enough to read a serious book."

“Ah, you’ve got me wrong Charley,” protested Hook. “You know I only play cards when it’s too dark or too cold to play golf.” He laughed and confessed, “Yep, it’s Katy who’s interested in more serious matters and not me. She was over for dinner last night with the fellow she’s going to marry next year, and Patrick, the prodigal son. . . Ah, I love the lad who’s so much like me that it hurts to think of what he must be doing when he’s out of sight.” After a dramatic sigh, Hook went on to say, “Anyway, Pat came in a bit late. I was about to scold him for being so impolite when a future member of the family was over and he told me about the poor Hermit and then about the box of cash. Everyone was saying you and Maggie had already made an offer on the Widow Hopkins’ eighteen room house up-country on Fuller St.”

“Wasn’t me and Maggie who bought it but an out-of-town businessman. Someone moving here from Boston. Escaping the big city life. He plans on turning it into an inn with a nice restaurant. The board of health and the building inspector are already working on that one.”

“Anyway, I knew the whole story was phony because I knew that you’d turn the money over even if you had a legal right to claim it. Besides, her house isn’t that big. It only has thirteen rooms from what I’ve heard from more reliable sources.”

“Thirteen rooms wouldn’t be big enough for me and my family for sure. We’re wanting a billiards room to go with the conservatory and a private parlor for the each of us, but thank you for having such faith in me. At that, I’m not sure I’d give it up if I had a legal right to it, though it would be a bit difficult to maintain the public trust if I were to get rich from doing my job.”

“Yes sirree, Charley, \$25,000 must be awfully tempting even to an honest man like you.”

“It was only a little more than \$9,000.” And then, Charley broke into a grin and said, “Heard you made some headway on raising the funds to finish that golf course.” With a grin just as wide, Hook nodded. “Well, you better watch out, Hook. If you get too much practice, you’ll be losing your nickname.” With that, Charley patted his friend on the side of the arm and winked before turning to head up East St.

The smells of kielbasa were in the air as he drew near *Teddy’s Spa*, the owner of which probably made a good quarter or so of his money taking bets on the numbers pool and international soccer, a favorite of the Portuguese and Polish immigrants. Father Alves had called on Charley on occasion

to crack down on the gambling in town, especially that which affected the immigrant Portuguese families. He'd only been in town a couple of years and that first year after he'd been sent out from the Fatima region in Portugal had been tough on a lot of people. The enthusiastic young priest had been quite a terror that first year, but he had settled down after realizing the community could not be made a community of saints by action of the cops and priests, and probably not any other way either, except for the direct intervention of God, and the good Lord didn't seem inclined to force matters quite like that. No, sins, whether crimes or not, were not all to be suppressed by the actions of men, and so, the town fathers and the town clergy had quietly endorsed the existing arrangement: the small-time bookies would be allowed to operate so long as they didn't hook up with the gangsters in Springfield or Boston or Hartford.

Charley could remember a few occasions when he'd gone into *Teddy's Spa* at odd times and Teddy had quickly shut a ledger book and shoved it under the counter. The unexpected visitor had known what was in that book, and Teddy had known that he knew, but the proper form had been followed: Teddy had said something about doing his store's accounts while he had a free moment and the Chief had calmly returned comments about how important it was to book every penny when you were a small businessman. On the other hand, when Teddy had started controlling blocks of betting business at other small stores, Charley put on his dress-blues and had gone in and made comments about the suspicious young men running around downtown at odd hours, letting it be known he would pull in some of the runners if Teddy kept up the expanded business. Teddy had gotten the message; not only had the runners stopped running, but the word had quickly made its way to the Chief's ear that each of the bookies in town was running his own book though they were still said to cooperate in sharing the risk of bets out of balance. After checking with a friend on the Springfield force who was a gambling expert, Charley had had a good laugh at the thought of how sophisticated that sharing of risk could be—much like an insurance company, but it had already become clear to him that the simplest and least-educated of men could sometimes act in ways quite ingenious if money were involved.

Bookie or not, Teddy sold the best kielbasa in town, but *The East Street Tavern* beckoned from a distance and then beckoned more strongly as he drew near. He wondered if he should go in and have a quick one and maybe share some jokes with the fellows that gathered there. Smiling

as he remembered Riley's public statement about where the information was, Charley picked up his pace, heading for the door of the tavern. Soon, he was sitting in a booth in the back corner of the place, unfolding the newspaper to get to the local news for the Springfield area. As a rule, the local chiefs kept in good contact and each was likely to hear important news from another town soon after the reporters were on it, and sometimes even before the snoops found out that something was up. The lesser items, things like small-time and non-violent heists of one sort or another, would also be spread about from one chief to another, or, increasingly, from one lieutenant or sergeant to another, now that most of the departments in the area, except in the smallest towns, were growing in size and professionalism. At that, it was harder to stay on top of everything; crime was growing and booming even during periods when the rest of the economy was struggling.

"Fine weather we're having this year, Chief. The farmers will be happy and maybe the corn prices will be going down." Barney set a mug of draft down on the table and winked before adding, "That might drop the prices of mash whiskeys."

"Stomach's been bothering me, Barney. I'll be sticking to the beer for a while." The bar-tender pulled out the small towel from his apron string and wiped the table in front of the Chief who cooperated by holding up the paper.

"Heard there are a couple of real nice houses going on the market, Charley. The Widow Hopkins' place. And some are saying the Judge will be giving up his place and moving in with his daughter, what with him getting old and all."

"I understand the widow's place is sold. But it's not the sort of place a working fellow could buy. Or keep up." Charley's eyes returned to scan a report of a rash of burglaries in some of the small stores and restaurants in downtown Springfield. He searched his memory but couldn't think of any reason to believe any Jenckesville men, or places of business, were handling much in the way of hot goods. Well, it might be worth nosing around town at that. Or sending some of the boys to nose about, though most of them were a bit clumsy and obvious when trying to gather information. At the edges of his perceptions, he noticed that Barney had walked back to his station behind the bar. He also noticed that the bar-keep hadn't taken any of the change that was on the table to pay for the beer. He'd drop the money off on his way out. If merchants started giving policemen gifts, if the policemen accepted them, it wasn't necessarily going to lead

to wide-scale corruption. The legitimate businessmen in town were not the sort to be needing to corrupt public officials, nor did they want to. But, circumstances often arose involving the best of citizens, and if some of those best thought that some of the policemen, or selectmen, owed them personal favors, well. . .

Another sip of the beer and Charley decided it was one of those days when beer tasted sour, perhaps because of the gas coming up from his stomach. Leaving the mug half-full, he folded the paper neatly and left it where he'd found it. Then he rose. After checking there was enough change for the beer plus a small tip, he walked out, placing the coins on the bar near the cash register. He put his hat on and immediately doffed it in the direction of Manny da Costa, sitting at the end of the bar. A hard-working fellow, Manny dug ditches and moved around heavy supplies for eight to ten hours a day for a big construction company over in Wilbraham. Nearly a year back, he'd bought a run-down house up East St a ways and fixed it up as a three-family residence. Recently, it had been occupied by renters, including the young Williams girl and her husband who worked in the payroll department down at the jute-mills. It truly warmed Charley's heart to see another family started by a good young woman and a good young man. And he enjoyed seeing a hard-working fellow making out well. It was with a genuine smile that he said, "Heard you bought another house, Manny."

Lifting his glass of red wine towards the Chief, Manny grinned and said, "The work never ends, Chief. It never ends." His accent was thick and not the same as the other Portuguese in town; he had grown up in Argentina, apparently a member of a Portuguese speaking community but surrounded by Spanish speaking people. Even the other Portuguese in town claimed to have some trouble understanding his speech.

"You're too ambitious for your own good, Manny. Why don't you relax a bit and enjoy life. You're on your way to being well-off. You already own your own house and a three-unit rental house on top of making a hard living with a shovel. And now you've gone and bought another place that needs fixing up."

"Haahh," was the guttural response. "Work is good for you. It's what men do."

With a smile on his face, Charley waved to Manny and Barney and turned to the door. Once outside and in the bright light, he checked his wristwatch. It was 1:30. Depending on the short features, the early matinée

might be getting out at 2:00, and there had been reports of drivers not being careful going by when the groups of children were coming out of the afternoon shows. He turned to head back down East St, vaguely in the direction of the theater. He was glad he didn't have too much time to kill because he was now craving a kielbasa sandwich though he could feel his stomach gassing up a little. It might have been the beer that had done it. Maggie had served poached eggs along with some hash she made from a couple potatoes and a tin of canned meat, and that didn't usually upset his system at all. But, it didn't matter as there wasn't time for even a quick sandwich if he wanted to be near the theater in time to check the traffic as the movie was ending.

29 A Pleasant Interlude

The beers freshly bottled at the tavern were already frosted when Charley took them out of the paper bag and set them on the table in Annette's kitchen. The air outside was hot, still, and heavy with moisture but her kitchen was not too bad. She had gotten one of those new table fans and had it set up to keep the air in the kitchen moving. It didn't do much to cool the air, but moving warm air felt better than still warm air, and then he suggested, "Why don't you try to put a bowl of cool water in front of the fan. Maybe with a chunk of ice in it."

Ever willing to take his advice, Annette fetched a large steel mixing bowl from her well-stocked cabinets and then took the ice-pick from its hook on the wall. Charley walked over just as she opened the door to her ice-box and said, "Let me do that while you hold the bowl." A few seconds later, he'd taken a good chunk off the soft outsides of the block of ice in the top compartment of the ice-box. He placed the ice in the bowl and Annette went to the sink and half-filled the bowl with tap-water. When she set the bowl in front of the fan, he felt the air cooling off immediately, though it might have been just in his mind, but Annette sighed, standing in front of the fan, as if she were comfortable for the first time in weeks, though it had only been hot for a few hours, the night and morning hours having been unseasonably cool.

He popped the spring-tops on one of the bottles of beer and poured himself a glass of beer, half a glass for Annette who looked over at him with a tender expression that unsettled him.

He lifted his glass and touched it to Annette's glass before taking a small gulp while she sipped in a lady-like manner, probably getting a little foam and not much else. "Is there enough to let me have a sample, Annette? You know how I love your cooking."

She laughed and squinted in his direction, pausing as if deep in thought.

After a couple of seconds, she admitted, "I can spare you a couple of meatballs. You know I always make more than people can eat, Charley. And my sister-in-law will be fixing up a platter of sausages and peppers. And there will be salads and loaves of Mom's fresh-baked bread. We'll have plenty to eat. Besides, you haven't eaten a full meal here in a couple of weeks." She looked about to say something but, instead, set her glass on the table where the fan blew a little of the foam away from the lipstick marks. When he looked back up at her, she was stirring the sauce on the stove, her back to him. He sat down and took a sip of his beer. It tasted good. Cold and tingly. Fresh out of the tap at the tavern, and good, strong ale it was, brewed at a large pub down in Springfield. And he could handle it as his stomach had settled down in the last hour or so since he'd left the East St Tavern.

Silence reigned for a few minutes, though Annette was busy at the stove, stirring the sauce occasionally while she was cutting up the more tender ingredients like mushrooms so they could be added after the onions and tomatoes had cooked down a bit. He breathed deep. Good kitchen smells, if a bit strong on garlic, a spice not used very heavily in a Scottish kitchen. When it had come to borrowing strong foreign spices, the Scots had taken up curry rather than garlic, though Maggie and the other MacDonald women didn't really use curry much either. Charley would not have minded at all if Maggie and her sisters had used a bit of garlic, though he was just as glad they didn't use curry. The last time he'd had a dish heavy in curry, a lamb dish at a police chiefs' meeting in Worcester, it had upset his stomach even more than garlic and hadn't tasted nearly as good. Not when he was eating it and not the rest of the day and night as the curry-flavored gas bubbled up from his stomach.

"You're distracted, Charley. Are you worried about some case or..."

Annette didn't like to talk about his home-life, except for asking about the children. She was a bit upset over the possibility of Bill going into the Navy when trouble was brewing in Europe and maybe in the Pacific as well, and she was concerned that Margaret wasn't yet married at 27, more worried than Maggie or Charley or Margaret's mother. And then there was the question of Finlay's future: should he go to college or get married? And, as for Dorothy, she was doing extremely well in school and looked to be headed for college, perhaps while continuing to do office-work at the station, but...

He looked up and smiled at Annette who'd returned to tend the pot of

sauce on the stove. Maggie was a good woman, but so was Annette, and she was more sociable without leading a wild life. She was willing to have a glass of beer with him. She was easier to talk to, about the most casual of topics, and he didn't have to argue with her about the children, though they might have had differences of opinion if they'd been married and raising children. He was sure that Annette would have been quite willing to take on the public responsibilities of a police chief's wife, at least attending the chiefs' annual ball and the fund-raising banquets in town. The wives of the other men seemed to enjoy themselves at those affairs; Margaret had even enjoyed the chiefs' ball she'd attended with him, though much younger than the other women and having much different interests.

It took those several moments of thought before, "No... Well, actually it's just the same old worries about Bill going into the Navy."

Once more silence reigned, and Charley sipped his beer in a state of peaceful contemplation of a basically good life. A good quiet town, basically clean; policemen in Worcester and Boston had told him they would have loved to deal with a town where the big crime problems were just keeping the local bookies under control and dealing with a few bad intersections. He felt himself drifting away to thoughts of police-work when he heard Annette's voice: "Charley?"

"Yes, Sweetheart?"

"People are spreading strange stories about you being rich. Some say the Hermit left you all his money when he died and some say you dug up a box he had buried that was filled with gold and old silver certificates. Someone told me he had a trunk full of silverware and jewelry that's been stolen from the rich old Yankees up-country."

The heartiness of his laugh surprised even Charley a bit. After a few moments, he sputtered out a final chuckle and took a healthy gulp of his beer before saying, "At least the rumors are getting a little more interesting. But, no, Sweetheart. The Hermit was a miser and he left a box of cash, but it's not mine and it won't be mine no matter what happens. The Probate Court has the money and they'll try to find proper heirs. If they can't find any, the money will go to the state of Massachusetts. And, so far as anyone knows, and so far as anyone ever will know, he came by that money legally and brought it with him when he came to Jenckesville back in 1900."

Quietly, giving the impression of being deep in thought, Annette dropped a plate of sliced mushrooms into the sauce and then stirred them in before turning to the table. She didn't look at Charley and still seemed to be deep

in thought as she came over and picked up her glass of beer to take a small sip. And then another, and still one more, before saying, "That doesn't seem fair. I don't mean it isn't fair because you found it, but you were the only friend the Hermit had. Not that he was much of a friend to you. You told me he never even thanked you for any rides or other favors..."

She looked genuinely confused, or perhaps she was just concerned that her Charley had been taken advantage of. Well, there were apparently other good people in town who were concerned their poor Chief of Police didn't know how to protect himself in a cruel, cruel world. He chuckled again before telling Annette, "I can't say that I'd expected to get anything in return when I did him those favors."

She turned away and walked to her cooking area where she fetched a pot. Soon she had it half filled with water and was boiling a good serving of spaghetti.

"You aren't going to have any with me?"

She laughed, a little relieved of her worries if only because there was nothing to be done to protect her Charley now that the money was in the hands of the Probate Court. "Afraid I'm not cooking enough for a hungry man?"

"No. I'm not even that hungry, but your cooking is so good, I could always eat a plateful, whether I'm hungry or not."

"Eating just because it tastes good is a bad habit, Charley. My father's doctor told him a man could easily eat himself into the grave."

Remembering his own doctor's advice to lose 20 pounds or so, he pushed back his chair and patted his own belly. "I'm healthy and prosperous, not yet fat." Then he winked at her and pulled himself back to the table where he emptied the first bottle of ale into his glass before he unsprung the top on the second bottle. "You're not keeping up with me, Annette."

"It's kind of early in the day for me to be drinking, Charley. And I don't drink much even after dinner. Just one small beer or one glass of wine will relax me fine for sleeping."

30 An Anti-social Stomach

Charley's stomach was bothering him by the time he left Annette's place. He decided to go by Boyle's Drug-store and pick up some stomach powder. Wilbur Boyle was sitting on one of the chairs at the soda-fountain bar when Charley was walking back to the aisle with the stomach remedies, a walk he'd made far too often lately. The two men exchanged nods and the wily old merchant rose, most likely heading towards the cash register. That was unusual for him to leave his observation seat when he had people on duty. The store's new pharmacist was standing behind his counter, pouring pills into a bottle, and the Dudley girl was at the magazine rack with a couple piles of magazines at her feet. It wasn't clear if she were putting out new issues or perhaps gathering up the unsold copies of old issues; once Charley had made a comment to Wilbur about having to absorb the costs of all the magazines he couldn't sell and the sharp-witted businessman had grinned slyly and told him that unsold copies were sent back to the publishers, for full credit. The old fox likely returned to the racks the copies he and his family had read and then had them sent back for a refund. Well... Maybe not.

"Is your stomach bothering you again, Chief?"

Charley smiled and waved at the young pharmacist while trying hard to remember the fellow's name. Reaching the area of shelves where stomach remedies were displayed, he looked for only a few minutes before pulling out a couple packets of some powder from England that had done the trick for him a couple of times. If only he could remember the fellow's name...

It was Polish. That much Charley could remember...

'Sinkiewicz' came to mind just as he remembered the fellow trying to convince him to take a bottle of Coca-Cola syrup a couple weeks back. No fizzy water, just the straight goopy, sugary...

"You still not ready to try the syrup?"

'Thaddeus Sinkiewicz'. And he returned his full attention to the smiling young man behind the pharmacy counter. "You said they call you 'Tad', didn't you?"

Tad smiled and nodded his head. "I was named after my uncle who lives in Ware. When I told him I'd met you, he said he knew you and some other fellows down here in Jenckesville. Used to come down to some of the dances and he said he kept up with you for a while. Used to hunt deer and turkey with you. And bear a couple of times, but that was years ago."

"Good ol' Tad. I should have guessed you'd be related to him after that first time we talked but I didn't even connect the names, and it turns out you're named after him. Yeah, I remember Tad well. He was good friends with Tommy Dunn and Jamie Campbell. The Mick, the Polack, and the Cheapskate is what they called themselves. And Tommy and I did some serious hunting with your uncle, though the three of us haven't gotten together for a while. But I think it was only a couple years back that I bought some beef sausage and some pork chops up at his butcher shop. He'd told me the chops came from a hog that'd been just slaughtered so that the echos of its squeals were still ringing through the neighborhood."

The young man laughed in a pleasant, almost shy manner. "I've seen Uncle Tad butcher animals, and I'll tell you he takes such good care of the beasts that they're calm and quiet right up to the second they're quickly and painlessly dispatched. He gets angry with anyone who does the slightest thing to upset the animals in the holding pen." Charley had the impression the fellow had to force himself to be so open and friendly with the general public. Well, in his opinion, it was good training. It was differences that made the world go round, but the realities of modern life put too many burdens upon people who weren't sociable enough, with strangers and casual acquaintances as well as relatives and close friends. And likely that was one of Maggie's problems—she was made for a world oriented to families and villages.

The young pharmacist forced a wink in Charley's direction, a somewhat spastic movement of the right eye, but it was good effort. The young man pointed to the packets of powder sitting on the counter alongside other stomach remedies. "That's a good powder you've got there. At least a lot of people claim it works for them, though I still recommend coke syrup for the initial upset. Anyway, I think Mr Boyle is waiting for you at the cash register. Probably wants to find out about your newly-found riches."

"It'll be a short story at that. I don't have any riches, newly-found or

any other kind.” In response to the surprised look on Tad’s face, Charley found himself spewing out some words about the Probate Court and the state of Massachusetts, barely aware of what he was saying.

“That’s too bad, Chief MacGregor, but I better let you go before Mr Boyle comes back here to fetch you.”

Steeling himself for a repeat performance of the story, Charley waved the powder endorsed by the young druggist and said, “If this doesn’t work, maybe I’ll be by to get some of that syrup.”

“I hope the powder does work, Chief MacGregor, but come on by for some of the syrup if it doesn’t.”

A few minutes later, Charley was leaving the drug-store after he’d had trouble convincing Wilbur Boyle that he wasn’t upset that not a penny of the Hermit’s money would ever be his.

As his feet were hitting the pavement outside, he saw his brother George coming out of the company store which lay on the other side of East Street. After Townes’ Department Store had been closed up, the mill-company management had started the store, claiming to do it for the good of their employees, but Charley had suspected, and still suspected, they had simply seen an opportunity. Well, he told himself that there was certainly no law against seizing a good opportunity.

Moving slowly, he reached the corner just in time to meet George coming across the street. The younger man was wearing a smile. No, it was even a grin. That was unusual. One of the most generous souls Charley knew, a man quite pleasant and even tolerant once you accepted his blunt honesty, George usually wore the same mask as the most cold-blooded of Yankees, and maybe, at that, those Yankees, some at least, were not so cold-blooded as people thought.

“I guess you’ve heard that the saga goes on, George.”

The younger man grinned a little before noting, “People don’t seem to know you very well, Charley, considering how long you’ve been a prominent man about town.”

Motioning up Sewall Street with his head, Charley said, “I’ll walk you partway home.” Then he laughed before adding, “It’ll be good to talk to someone who doesn’t think I’m crazy for not keeping that money. Or at least part of it.”

“I didn’t say you aren’t crazy, Charley. I’m more concerned about taking care of next week’s bills than you are, but I would have done the same under the circumstances. That doesn’t mean you aren’t crazy. Maybe we

just carry crazy blood in our veins. There is a certain amount of prosperity which comes to those who are a little looser in their morals.”

Wishing to forget his worries for a while, Charley looked around for something to talk about and noticed the trees lining the road. “These oaks are providing some good shade, for the school park and for the street. I can remember when they were put in. That must have been 30 years ago, and they were probably not more than ten or fifteen years old when they were transplanted from up-country.”

George slowed down and reached out to firmly place his hand against a nearby tree before pulling his hand back as they walked on. “I can remember when they moved all those saplings down-town. To line the roads and to provide some shade in the park as well, that is to provide shade ten or fifteen years later. Anyway, I was only eight and it was pretty exciting for a young boy to see all those trees being hauled down on those-horse wagons being hauled by those teams of big, powerful Belgian draft-horses. Sometimes you could go weeks without seeing any of those big wagons out on the streets outside of the mill-grounds.”

“And, of course, you would have never seen them moving around the mill grounds since it was restricted to people working there.”

George grinned. “No, I guess we were all well-behaved and wouldn’t have even thought to jump the fence to see what was going on down at the mills.”

“Or to fish the river from the banks down near the storage sheds.”

“No, we would have never done that, Charley, but you sound like you know something about a good fishing spot down there.”

“I never fished that stretch of the river before I worked there and had permission to do it.”

As Charley stopped at the corner of Sewall and Hubbard, he heard George chuckle and then, “I’m glad to hear there were a few rules you followed in those days.”

In a distracted voice came the response, “And there are still a few rules I follow nowadays.”

George kept a diplomatic silence; at least that was Charley’s interpretation though he’d never talked to George about Annette, or the three before her. . .

The brothers locked eyes for just a second before George shrugged and said, “Maggie was with Ella when I left. I think they were making arrangements for dinner tomorrow. Likely enough, Margaret and Harry will be

over and maybe some of your in-laws.”

“Your table isn’t that big, and I’m sure Dorothy will be there even if none of our other children go. She wouldn’t miss a chance to be with her favorite aunt and uncle.”

George laughed and said, “You mean, her favorite aunt and uncle alongside all the other ones who spoil her. Anyway, we can always squeeze a hungry body or five in, but maybe they’ll decide to have the dinner at your apartment. That would make the squeezing more comfortable.”

“Well, Maggie certainly likes to keep our place set up for entertaining people. Not large groups and not usually people from outside of the family, but...” Charley stopped, hoping he’d not sounded bitter about Maggie’s reluctance to have people in, even with him helping to raise the money to support the recreation building when the mill company turned it over to the town, and that not far into the future, the next year from what he understood though no legal papers had yet been presented. Well, maybe it was better to have larger gatherings for such affairs and to use banquet facilities at a church hall or one of the clubs in town, though some women were still affluster at this new-fangled idea of going to a building with a bar in it, even to raise money for a good cause.

“Is something bothering you, Charley?” Clearly was something showing. George was a caring soul but not the sort to pry at all unless he were really worried.

“No.” And Charley knew that he wasn’t telling the truth but he wasn’t really lying because he wasn’t really sure what was bothering him. It was likely to be a passing mood and he’d feel more cheerful before the day was even out.

When Charley didn’t respond beyond a simple denial, the two brothers stood quiet for a few seconds before George looked away in the direction of his house. “Well, I’ve got to get going. The garage trim needs painting and today might be the only day I’ll have to do it for a month or so.”

“George, you’re certainly one to maintain your property.”

“If I don’t take care of it, who will?”

31 Lost and Found

Judge Cady was smiling gently as he followed Maggie into the living-room. Charley placed the book about attempted escapes from Alcatraz on the side-table and rose to extend his hand.

“How are you doing this Monday evening, Judge?”

“Pretty fair, Chief, though my knees are getting a bit stiff. My hip joints as well, but I shouldn’t be complaining. Not many make it into their 70s in such good health as I’m enjoying.”

“No, not many. I don’t know if I’ll be that healthy myself. My knees are already stiffening up.”

“You need to get out and walk around more, young man. Maybe head out into the woods to get yourself a deer or a string of trout. Not that it’s usually a man’s knees that do him in.”

Charley laughed. “No, it will probably be a gassy stomach that will do me in, unless Maggie manages to train me in better eating habits. So far as the movement goes, I usually manage to make time for hunting and fishing, though I’m forced to sit at my desk during the work-week, more and more. It’d be nice if I could spend more time walking around this town I’m supposed to be protecting, so I could see what needs done the most.”

Under the solicitous gaze of his host, the Judge had been seated by Maggie in her own chair, one firmer and built lower to the ground, easier to rise from than the couch. “Would you like a spot of tea, Judge?”

“I will, at that, Maggie, and don’t you be bringing out trays of your delicious treats that are too rich for my aging body.”

Maggie had barely disappeared into the kitchen when the front door opened and Margaret came walking in, smiling and carrying a small load of books and papers. “Dad, I’ve made the arrangements for my singing lessons...” Entering the room, she halted and blushed as she saw the Judge sitting with her father. “I’m sorry, I...” Then, she smiled as if it

had taken her a second or two to recognize her father's guest. "Judge Cady, I didn't mean to interrupt you, but I was just so excited."

"Come in, Margaret." He motioned her to the couch with an energetic gesture. "Tell us your good news. What we have to talk about can wait. I was just about to tell your father about the handling of the Hermit's estate."

Margaret tried to control a laugh, but it squirted out, to the amusement of both the Judge and her father. Under their questioning eyes, she told them, "There are some people at Mass Mutual who think you're now a rich man, Dad. I don't know if they think the money is yours legally or if they think you..." She blushed again as if reluctant to mention the possibility of her father stealing the money, even as a joke.

The Judge laughed, though Charley delayed an instant before joining in the laughter. With curiosity in the wrinkles around his eyes, Judge Cady looked at his host but had no chance to ask a question before Maggie walked in bearing a tray with a tea-pot, several cups, and a small selection of baked goods—including a couple slices of her famous tomato-soup, spice cake covered with a frosting that was sure to be flavored with cream cheese. She brought Charley his tea, after putting in but a half-spoon of sugar and a dollop of milk.

"Maggie," scolded the Judge. "You're leaving the desert tray between me and Margaret. There are not two people in Jenckesville with less resistance to sweets than us." With that, he winked at Margaret, before adopting a more serious expression and saying, "I may as well quickly tell you what is happening at the Probate Court." He paused as if to increase the tension and then shrugged before admitting, "Nothing, to be as blunt as possible. At least, nothing of consequence. They've obtained fingerprints from the corpse. A useless exercise since he was in Jenckesville and isolated from humanity before they started to take prints of criminals and soldiers and government employees and other questionable people. Descriptions of the man have been wired to the state police and Probate Courts in all the states. Also to the FBI, for whatever good that might do. I doubt if he was sneaking off to Chicago over the past decade, a secret member of Capone's mob, and I don't know that Hoover and his boys are much interested in anything but fighting all those gangs made so wealthy and powerful by Prohibition." The judge gave out with a world-weary sigh and summarized, "I don't expect any positive results, and I don't think that the court clerk or his investigators do either. The Hermit's identity will remain a mystery to

all mortal men.”

For his part, Charley was thinking of that spicy cake with the cream cheese frosting. Ordinarily, he preferred salty and spicy foods over sweets, but that cake was something special. Though she knew how much he liked it, Maggie had pointedly not offered him the desert tray and he didn't imagine she'd be happy if he rose to fetch himself a piece. Margaret looked over at him in sympathy, and he thought it likely that both she and the Judge would look the other way if he grabbed a treat while Maggie was out of the room, but she sat down, a small woman, lost in that couch built to hold three long-legged men.

“So,” drawled Judge Cady after swallowing his first bite of the cake, “the Hermit's funeral is tomorrow?”

Charley was held silent by a feeling of mild envy, and it was Maggie who nodded her head. “You're not going to see me there. If it were a matter of having someone to see the poor soul off, I'd go, but all the ne'er-do-wells in town will be there from what I understand. Probably hoping they'll get a clue where the poor man buried the rest of his money.”

“Or maybe his diamonds and his Spanish Doubloons,” suggested Margaret with a twinkle in her eyes.

“You say that in jest,” said Charley with a grin, “but if the poor man had a box of cash out in the open in his shack, he might have had a treasure chest buried somewhere up there on Turkey Hill.”

Judge Cady laughed. “You better not joke like that in public, or some of our fellow-citizens might head up there to excavate the entire hill, and only the good Lord knows where they might deposit the dirt.”

“They would probably bury the Tompkins sawmill yard since it's the largest bare space in the area. Will you be at the funeral, Judge?”

“It'll be a struggle since I'll be returning from an afternoon meeting in Hartford, but I'll make it if only to see the spectacle.” He winked at Maggie before saying, “In truth, it will be a shame if the poor soul is not allowed to leave this Earth with some dignity, perhaps more than he allowed himself to suffer while he was alive. Maybe having a few prominent citizens there will add a pinch of solemnity.”

Charley said quietly, “I'll hold you a seat in the rear. I'm not going to let the Reverend Collins drag me up to say the eulogy. When he tried to recruit me this afternoon, I made it clear to him that will be part of his responsibilities. Not that he knew the man well, though he did his best to be kind to the poor soul, even offering at one point to have someone

bring him down to church on Christmas. The Hermit had as little response to that as he had to any of my invitations over the years.” He noticed Maggie started as if afraid to even ask if the Hermit had been invited into her home. Not that she’d not been kind to the man in her own way. Once, when money was tight, he had insisted on taking some food up to the Hermit during a stretch of bad winter weather. Maggie had complained that their own children were already going short on Christmas presents, but Charley emptied the bag on the table in the Hermit’s shack to find some special items that he hadn’t packed: an orange and a half-dozen or so oatmeal raisin cookies. That hadn’t been the only such incident.

A short while later, the Judge had left, after he and Margaret had discussed music while enjoying more of Maggie’s home-baked treats. Once he was alone with Maggie, Charley had returned to his book on escapes and attempted escapes from one of the great prisons of the United States; he preferred books which dealt with efforts to solve the crimes which put the men there, but the tales of the escapes and escape attempts seemed to speak much of the desperation, sometimes desperate courage, sometimes even the strange mixture of discipline and impulsiveness, that seemed a part of the make-up of great criminals.

Charley read on, though taking the occasional peek over the top of his book, keeping an eye on Maggie as she passed into and out of the kitchen, pressing a good, white shirt and steaming his good uniform. She’d remembered he was heading downtown the next day for an unofficial conference with some of the other chiefs in the area, which conferences Maggie didn’t like since they were usually held in taverns. A short while later, he could see her leave the kitchen with his shirt and his uniform on hangers; she passed back into the kitchen a minute later, carrying his good shoes. Soon enough those shoes would shine brightly enough to impress the most demanding drill sergeant in the U.S. Army. She didn’t have to do that, especially on the days he was going into Springfield—there were plenty of shoe-shine stands in the city, and sometimes there were young boys ready to shine shoes in the barber-shops in Jenckesville. Well, she was what she was and that was a woman who liked everything in order in her household, a woman who didn’t like anyone from her household walking out the door in less than perfect condition.

Margaret had gone off to study the materials given to her by the woman who taught singing and Bill had come in and had gone right to bed, having to be at work a couple of hours early to prepare for some sort of audit.

It was nearly 10:00 before Maggie returned to the parlor and picked up her book from the wall-unit before going to settle in her chair, moving the ottoman closer beforehand. She didn't even look up as she remarked, "And you should have your legs raised as well, Charley. You know you've been having problems with your circulation, not even being comfortable in your shoes on some days." He half-expected her to fetch the foot-rest placed neatly against the far wall, but she didn't make any sign of moving and he rose and fetched it himself. Truth to tell, he was thinking of taking the advice of his doctor and getting a good recliner so he could raise his feet up to the level of his waist. And without so much effort on his part.

32 A Man is Publicly Laid to Rest

Thursday evening came and the Reverend Collins was looking suspiciously at the envelope the Chief was delicately offering him. “I want to thank you for coming down to conduct the service on short notice. For a man who wasn’t a member of your church and a man you barely knew.”

“This isn’t necessary, Chief, and I did try to get to know the Hermit. As is my duty as a minister of Christ, I offered him my friendship, but... I know the stories about the man’s box of cash, but that’s with the court and...”

“This isn’t from my own pocket, if that’s what you’re thinking. It’s from the Hermit’s money. Judge Cady made arrangements with the Probate Court to pay for a decent funeral for the man, and the court sent me the money today to pay you and the funeral director.”

The minister from the First Church took the money and placed it in a pocket in his robe, before remarking, “It’s amazing how many people will show up for the funeral of a wealthy man. I wonder if it’s simply the lure of the money or if maybe they wish to be assured that rich men also die and go to Heaven or to Hell.”

“Well, Pastor, I don’t think they really consider the Hermit to be a rich man. Most are probably here out of a normal sense of curiosity. They should have been decent enough to have constrained that curiosity, but...” Charley shrugged. “People are what they are, I guess, and it’s not all bad that there are some people here to see the poor fellow off.”

With a sigh, the black-robed minister of God, admitted, “And I guess it’s time for me to move to the front of the crowd.” The Reverend Collins took a second to make sure his robe was hanging straight, then he let a solemn mask come over his face before he stepped forward and nodded to

the organist. She then turned to see if the crowd was settled. For the most part they were, though a few were talking and one or two standing up and socializing with one neighbor or another. She started to play, slowly even by the standards of a funeral dirge, giving thereby the signal to sit down. By the time everyone was settled, she was playing at a normal pace for a dirge and the minister had marched down to take a position in front of the casket which had been closed at the first notes from the organ.

As his eyes panned the crowd, Charley could see that there were some quite respectable folk in the seats as well as the loafers from the street-corners and taverns in town. He rose with the rest of the crowd, opening the hymnal to the page announced by the minister just as the organ began to play *Amazing Grace*, an unlikely song to describe the Hermit's spiritual state so far as any mortal man could have ascertained. The people in the small crowd were soon enough closing their hymnals and sitting down. Moving quickly, as he had been asked to do, the minister made short work of announcing that he would now recite the 23rd Psalm and others were welcome to recite along with him from page 537 at the back of the hymnal. The recitation, stately and pious for all the haste in getting it started, had barely begun when Charley saw the funeral director head up the aisle towards the well-oiled door. A few seconds later, Charley felt a tap on the shoulder and he looked up to see Judge Cady.

As he was shifting over one seat, Charley nodded politely at the Judge, and saw the man was looking around with a confused expression though Maggie had predicted a crowd. Then he shook his head just as the minister began to say a few words. Ordinarily, it would have been a eulogy, a short personalized statement of the path one soul had followed before moving on to the next world. What could the best of speakers say about such an enigma as the Hermit of Turkey Hill? Well, the Reverend Collins did his best, even mentioning that the fellow had been a good friend to him and to Chief MacGregor. He'd been a good friend to the extent of taking what was offered to him in the nature of material goods and other favors. . .

But that line of thought was not appropriate, especially at the poor man's funeral. It was more proper to think the best of any fellow human being, particularly when he had recently gone forth to his Judgment. Not that either the Reverend Collins or Charley MacGregor had ever asked anything in return for the friendship they had offered. It might have been nice if he'd returned a truer friendship but there were plenty of more sociable fellows who had refused to return or even acknowledge offers of friendship.

Still . . . the Hermit had been the only human being Charley had ever known to refuse any and all offers of friendship.

And likely those sorts of thoughts filled the heads of the people who turned around to look at Charley doing his best to ignore them for now. How many of them had ever acted kindly towards, or even had a kindly thought towards, that man who'd cast himself out of society? To be sure, no one, not even those who had helped the Hermit over the decades, had any idea what the earlier years of his life had been like, no idea why he was so unsociable. Some had wondered if he had gone through some horrible experience during the Spanish-American War or even one of the Indian wars out west. Some had thought he'd made his money with a small find in the Yukon gold-rush and then had to flee murderous bandits. The truth of the matter was now beyond the reach of mortal men, but it might well have been that the Hermit had been purged of all his social desires by brutal and cruel acts by his fellow-men.

"Now, let us rise and join together in singing *Nearer My God to Thee* hymn number 311. And let us send off this our fellow-man with our prayers that he be found worthy of spending eternity in Heaven with the Lord God."

And all rose to sing, Charley mostly moving his lips though Judge Cady belted out the hymn in a robust, tenor voice. A verse or two passed by before the minister headed up the aisle, but he chose to walk up the aisle towards the insides of the building rather than heading more directly for the door. When he was near the back of the room, he paused and motioned for Charley to come with him. That seemed appropriate since he was the closest to a friend the Hermit had ever had in the world so far as anyone could tell. And, so, the two men, minister and police chief, took up position near the door, the funeral director standing just behind them and Judge Cady sitting in a nearby chair. Few words were exchanged as people left, some giving the impression they were embarrassed at being there. Was it because they were there just out of curiosity or had a few the moral sense to have wondered if they could have acted more decently towards the Hermit? Or maybe they were thinking of some other outcast or downcast person who had likely needed a friend. Or maybe some of them were remembering failed attempts to make friends with the Hermit.

A few minutes later, the funeral parlor was clear of all but the minister, Charley, and the Judge. The funeral director and his assistant had taken the casket downstairs to the storage vault. The interment would take place the following morning with likely no one present but Charley, the minis-

ter, the funeral director, and the workers from Jenckesville's public works department who would open the grave and then close it over the casket.

33 A Child Remembered

Charley walked into his apartment and took off his fedora, putting it on the rack which provided hooks for all three of his best civilian hats and for two guest hats. He hung his suit-coat in the hall-closet, assuming Maggie would find it there and hang it in the warm, moist air of the late evening bathroom along with the pants fetched from their bedroom. As much as Maggie was concerned with the appearance of the members of her household, especially Charley while performing his public duties, she didn't think there was a need for excessive expenses at the dry-cleaner, nor a need to be making constant trips down there.

He'd not even walked away from the hat-rack before deciding the apartment was too quiet for his tastes, though it wasn't unusual in recent years with three of the children being adults and Dorothy being a studious teenager. And he decided he was just letting his cop's instincts get out of control, telling him there was something wrong when. . .

Instead of going to his easy-chair, he walked into the kitchen thinking that Maggie was maybe sitting at some quiet task such as making a grocery list, but she wasn't in there. Nor had she been in the parlor sewing or reading, but those weren't the sorts of things she did at this hour, and Maggie had her habits, else she wouldn't have been such a good housekeeper. He walked down the hallway towards their bedroom and his heart sank as he turned the corner and saw her sitting on the edge of the bed, her head drooped over some pictures that lay on the bed beside her. Before he'd even gotten a good look at the pictures, he knew whose they were: Mina, their daughter who'd died twenty years before.

For just a second, he hesitated and thought about going out for a walk, maybe over to Annette's, or maybe just around the block. After he had quickly rejected the idea of disappearing for a few hours into Annette's domain, he was still thinking a quick walk would give Maggie a chance to

pull herself together. They'd been over and over Mina's death so many times over the past twenty years and there was nothing more to say. There had been little enough to say at the time. A sweet three year-old girl had died a painful and nasty death, but you had to grieve and you had to put it behind you. When Maggie's own mother was first getting sick with the Spanish Flu that would kill her, Charley had sat at her bedside and listened as she told him, not for the first time, why she'd been so reluctant to leave Scotland, even for the good of her family. She'd loved the old country for sure, but it had been the three children she'd left buried there. She'd given birth to eight children who'd lived to adulthood, but the ones who had died young had left their special, painful memories burned into their mother.

Charley sat on the bed and reached out but didn't touch Maggie. And then he moved off the bed and crouched in front of her. Taking her hands in his, he looked over to see a picture of Mina dressed for that beauty contest for three year-olds; Mina had won, and, according to Maggie and her sisters, there hadn't been another child nearly as pretty. And Mina had been a real sweet little girl as well, and he was suddenly glad when he remembered that she had been baptized, as an infant—which didn't count according to some Christians, but Charley thought...

Truth to tell, Charley didn't have many ideas on the subject of life after death. He just desperately hoped for something but he knew not what. And his voice was perhaps dripping with that desperation as he pleaded, "Don't do this to yourself, Maggie. You did everything you could have done at the time, and you mourned Mina at the time, just as you had to mourn your mother and your sister and your two infant nieces before another year was up. And that was after you almost died of the flu yourself. It's good to mourn and it's good to remember the dead as the years go by, but it's not good to continue to mourn for decades after God has taken someone from us."

She looked up at him, twisting her hands around in his so that she could squeeze his hands. A smile she tried to force with only a little bit of success, and then she managed to say, "I'd best get going and make us some supper, Charley. It's late enough as it is."

With a sigh sneaking out of him, he rose and then pulled Maggie to her feet. She let him pull her up but shot right by him, heading for the kitchen without a doubt, but... He'd not moved from the spot before he heard the water running in the bathroom. She was washing off her face and getting prepared to drop the role of grieving mother and take up that of

efficient housewife. Charley sighed again and looked down at the pictures of poor, little Mina, remembering the horror of watching a three year-old suffer so much pain and not be able to do anything about it. He picked up the several pictures and prepared to put them away, but he froze, looking at one of Mina's baby pictures: Maggie holding Mina only minutes after she'd arrived home from the hospital, one of the first babies in town to be delivered in the hospital built more than ten years earlier. It had taken women a little while to get used to this idea of going to hospital to give birth.

Just a few years before Mina had been born, Mary had given birth to Margaret in her bedroom at her mother's house, before she and her husband had moved to a house of their own. Maggie had been the first of her family to give birth in a hospital. How the times were changing, and mostly for the better so far as Charley could tell, but he couldn't see any signs that all that progress was eliminating human sadness and misery. He walked towards the dresser, the pictures in his hand. Placing them into the box which Maggie had pulled down from the closet shelf, he shuffled the captured images around a bit, as his vision blurred. Getting hold of himself after a moment, he closed up the box and walked to the closet. He used his foot to push aside the stepping stool that Maggie had used and returned the box of pictures to its resting place on the top shelf of the closet.

With the past stored safely away, in his heart and in the dark of the closet, Charley walked out of the bedroom and headed for his seat in the parlor. On the table next to his chair was a book his brother had given him, tales of Pinkerton agents in the old West, tales involving the likes of the James Brothers and the Dalton Gang. He looked at it for a moment but then remembered there was a magazine down at the station he had intended to bring up. One of the men's magazines had an article on the new methods of detectives: picking up fingerprints from the shiniest and cleanest surfaces, looking at foot-prints and tire-tracks; most importantly, looking at blood type and finding evidence of blood even when the criminal thought he'd washed it away. He swore under his breath at his own forgetfulness: Wilbur Boyle had sent him the magazine figuring he'd be interested and the darned thing was down at the police station, sitting on the table in the meeting-room.

He rose and went to the hall closet to fetch his suit-coat. As he was slipping it on, he looked up to see Maggie standing in the doorway to the kitchen and staring at him. "It's nothing, Maggie. Wilbur Boyle sent me

over a magazine with an interesting article about forensic science and I left it down at the station.”

She didn't look too happy at hearing that, but her look changed from worry to no more than annoyance. “Don't you be getting involved in anything down there, Charley. You do that too often. Going down to the station on a quick errand and then you get involved in something and we don't see you for hours.”

He laughed, the thought of the station and of the article having revived his spirits. “You've got me there, Maggie. I do that far too often for my own good or the good of my family, but I'm too much the copper to ever change.” He winked through the hallway and into the kitchen, and she caught the wink with a skeptical expression upon her face. Not knowing what she was thinking or suspecting, he said, “And to think, you didn't even know you were marrying such a fellow back when we first eloped and I was a decent tin-smith instead of a policeman.”

34 A Familiar in a Strange Land

With a bounce in his step and an unrecognizable but happy tune whistling through his lips, Charley covered the three blocks to the station in a short time indeed and was exchanging greetings with Ed Podolski, the auxiliary cop who was working some evening shifts on a regular basis for at least the next few months. The force was currently short-handed because of vacations, but there was another, longer-term problem: the Chief was finding he had to move more shift hours to the day as traffic required more police surveillance. He would have to go to the Selectmen to ask for permission to hire more policemen at a time when the town was still having trouble meeting its budget, a time when many people in town were still unemployed or short on hours of work.

At the station, Sergeant Podolski was filling out some sort of paperwork attached to a clipboard, his feet raised on a shelf beneath the duty officer's desk. The two men exchanged smiles and a few polite enquiries about each other's families and Charley went on to the room which served both as a meeting-room and a break-room. He picked up the magazine from the table covered with coffee stains and turned to leave.

A few minutes later, he was back in the apartment. The empty parlor and the general reign of quiet—but for sounds of pots and dishes being moved around in the kitchen—indicated that Charley was still alone with Maggie and that was mostly good for now. She would calm down if she were to spend the early evening hours carrying out her household duties and then the later hours reading some novel about exciting times in sixteenth century Edinburgh. The last thing he needed right now was for her to get morbid about Mina's death so long ago. If her mother could have left three children buried in Scotland, a person would think Maggie should have been

able to leave one child lying peacefully in her grave. Then he remembered the way that Mina used to walk behind him while he was pacing the parlor in that apartment over Townes' Department Store. He'd always had the habit of clasping his hands behind the small of his back, as many people do, and Mina, sweet, pretty, little Mina would walk behind her Daddy, hands clasped dutifully behind the small of her back as well. Bill had also done that when he'd been a toddler. He smiled at the realization that he had a strong enough influence on children that they would try to be just like him.

"A heavy responsibility, that is, my good man."

From the kitchen, Maggie called in, "Did you say something, Charley?"

"No, just muttering to myself while I'm reading this article."

"It didn't sound like muttering and that's not a smile appropriate for a man reading about detectives, Charley." Maggie was smiling somewhat peacefully at the entrance to the room. When he returned her smile but said nothing, she told him, "Dinner's ready. Nothing fancy. Just ground beef stew over mashed potatoes and some creamed corn from a can."

"Sound's wonderful, Maggie. Truth to tell, I've been eating out too much and you may be right that I'll have to cut down on the rich foods." He rose and walked her way, and she turned and led him to the small table in the kitchen. While he was sitting down, Maggie went about the business of putting the food on the plates. After setting in front of him a plate with smallish portions, she went to the ice-box and took out a quart container of milk.

"I bought some milk when I went to get the ground beef. I thought it might help settle your stomach."

"It might do that, and you know I like a good drink of milk sometimes but, other times, it upsets my stomach as much as a hunk of chourica." He laughed and asked her, "What do you think the other chiefs would say if I order milk at our next meeting?"

"Charley," she said as she was walking his way with the glass of milk. She set it down before she continued, "I hope you aren't drinking much beer at those meetings. I know how Chief Flaherty and Chief O'Brien love their beer and you're too inclined to go along with them."

After that, silence fell over the kitchen while they were eating. As Maggie was beginning to gather the dirty dishes, they asked each other a few questions about each other's day before Charley moved into the parlor while she finished cleaning up. He was absorbed in the article about the latest techniques of forensic science, amazed at what these scientists could

do and wondering how much education would be required to be a policeman in future years, when she came in carrying her Bible and sat down to read quietly; Charley felt reassured that she was settling down. All would be well and peaceful in their life together. For a while.

So it was that the magazine came to rest on his lap, the third page of the fascinating article showing, but Charley's eyes moved up to stare into seemingly empty space. He was at peace with the world though more comfortable with the way it was ten years ago than the way it currently was. The future was somewhat frightening to him, not so much on his own account, though he was middle-aged and had enough firm habits to expect some troubles in a rapidly changing world, but he was very worried on the account of those to follow him. After all, worrying about the future was a part of his job as a police chief.

Charley wasn't sure how long he'd been sitting there, enjoying a troubling peace, when the phone rang. Maggie jumped and looked worried. She was starting to use the phone more to talk to her sisters or her sister-in-law, but that was during the day. He looked at his watch and saw it was nearly eight. Not exactly the middle of the night, but "Who would be calling at this time of the night?" came from Maggie's suspicious person.

He rose quickly, fearing that it was an emergency in the family, half-hoping it was about something interesting going on at the station. His greeting was returned by Sergeant Podolski's voice saying, "There's trouble down in Little Portugal, Chief."

Charley snorted louder than he would have liked, drawing the attention of Maggie from across the room, though he suspected she'd been watching him out of the tops of her eyes while pretending to read her Bible. He turned away from her, looking at the door to the hallway closet while saying, "Probably an exaggeration. You know how the people in town feel about all the immigrants."

"I know, Chief. I grew up in a Polish speaking house, and it was bad enough for me, especially when I went to school. It must be even harder for the Portuguese nowadays, but they say that two guys are facing off right in the middle of Winsor St and they say they both have big knives. 'Machetes' was the word they used."

Not wanting to say much in front of Maggie, Charley replied, "I'll be down there in just a few minutes to pick up the cruiser."

"I'd already called the Malone's house, Chief. Trying to keep the burden off of you. Tom was out. If you want me to go with you..."

“No, it sounds like a quick and easy bit of work, Ed. You can stay by the radio and I’ll call you if I need any help.” When he turned back to Maggie, he saw she was a bit worried. “It’s just another family argument down in Little Portugal, Maggie. Nothing to worry about. I’ve handled plenty of these arguments down there and up in Little Canada.” He was thinking he’d explained too much and had been too defensive about his mission. Sure enough, she looked still more worried than she had before, though he was sure she’d already feared he was being called out for a dangerous task.

He walked over and crouched at the side of her chair only to hear her ask, “Why can’t one of the boys on the force handle it? Isn’t that why they’re policemen?”

“Yes, Maggie, that’s why they’re policemen, but they’re not accepted yet in some of those immigrant communities, not even Tom Malone or Ed Podolski who are closer to the Old Country than I am.”

“And why does it have to be you? You’re just like the old Yankees that most of the immigrants despise.”

“I guess I am one of those old Yankees. The Scots blood in me doesn’t seem to have much effect on the way I act or talk.” Charley remained in his crouch for just a moment to caress her shoulder, and then he rose and turned in one motion, heading towards the closet to fetch his coat.

It was just a few minutes later that Charley was driving the chief’s cruiser out of the station’s parking lot; he had not gone into the station since he kept a set of keys on him. It took only a few minutes more before he was driving down Winsor St and saw a good number of people gathered in the middle of the street. He parked a block or so away from where the crowd was gathered, and that was a block short of the Portuguese-American Club’s store-front meeting room, another block short of the temporary church building which was to be replaced soon by a pretty brick structure. Charley had seen plans at the time they had been shown to the Chief of the Fire Department. The church was to be dedicated to ‘Our Lady of Fatima’, which made sense since the new priest had come from that parish where the mother of Jesus supposedly appeared to those children.

As soon as the Chief’s feet were on the pavement, he put his fedora upon his head and began to walk towards the crowd. Drawing closer, he saw that the people watching the spectacle, still hidden to his eyes, were amused and relatively quiet. One of the men in the crowd, a short and muscular fellow in tar-stained denim overalls turned and saw the Chief approaching. He tapped a nearby companion on the arm and was about to

let him know of the Chief's presence when something else, behind the Chief, caught the fellow's attention. Chief MacGregor turned and saw Father Alves approaching, wearing his cassock and his angry face.

The two men exchanged nods and met just five feet or so from the crowd which seemed to be formed two or three men deep in a circle of about fifteen feet in diameter, and the men were not exactly shoulder to shoulder. The crowd was fairly small and seemed to be amused rather than looking for blood. That seemed to be more confirmation that there was nothing going on that would be dangerous if everyone kept their wits about them. No, if the spectators were that close to men brandishing knives, they must have been pretty sure those knives weren't going to be used.

The crowd divided as the priest and the Chief of Police walked forward, side by side. In the road stood two men, knives raised only to waist-level, but they were glaring at each other as if about to charge, to end it all in a mutual decapitation. Charley recognized one of them as a worker at a company that did asphalt roofs—a messy, demanding job of the sort that was often filled with a Portuguese immigrant. The other fellow also seemed familiar though Charley couldn't place him.

It was time for the policeman to go to work and he signaled the priest, with a touch on the arm, to stay at the edge of the crowd. Charley walked up to a point just a step short of being right between the knife-wielding men. Seeing that the knives were ordinary hunting knives, he figured they were probably used mostly for skinning rabbits or gutting the occasional deer. In a quiet voice that seemed to carry in the silence that had fallen upon the area, he told the men, "Put the knives away, fellows, before someone gets hurt."

They relaxed a little in their stances but both continued to hold their weapons at the ready, and Chief MacGregor repeated, in a slightly louder and much more threatening voice, "I'll tell you once more, fellows, put the knives away."

The crowd gave a collective murmur of sorts as both men pulled the knives above their waists only to turn them and slip them into sheaths. Charley noted that there were others in the crowd as well who wore sheathed knives on their belts. They could be seen so that they weren't illegal. . . . And he thought some of those knives were likely used in the men's work, but he figured it was just so many accidents waiting to happen if the men down here were getting themselves accustomed to wearing any weapon, even so much as a hunting knife, when they were out having a drink or just talking

to their buddies on the street. Deciding it was a problem to be handled another day, he turned to the crowd which grew quiet as he passed his eyes along its ranks. "Why don't we break it up, fellows. You've all got a hard day of work tomorrow and you should be heading home to get yourselves some rest."

When he turned back to the men who'd been facing off, he found that both of them had been pulled to the sidewalk by Father Alves who was speaking to them in Portuguese, a sharp tone in his voice, a hard expression upon his face. Charley just stood there a few seconds longer as the crowd disappeared, the members fading into the shadows mostly in groups of three or four, some of which members could be heard talking excitedly as they got a little bit away. And then he turned and tipped his hat in the direction of the priest who merely nodded his thanks and then turned back to continue berating the men.

As Charley headed back to his car, he thought that he just might stop at the bakery and pick himself up some of those Portuguese rolls. If Margaret got home soon, from wherever she had gone, he might be able to talk her into a late night meal of eggs and bacon on a nice, soft Portuguese roll.

35 Still Poor After All These Rumors

Bill laughed in his quiet way and Margaret giggled the harder the more she tried to keep a straight face. Maggie was managing to keep a straight face as she told her tale.

“And, then, she asked when we were leaving for our winter home in Florida. She thought we might wish to stay up in the North through the Christmas holidays and then head down. I told her she could certainly expect to see us in this area during the Christmas season.”

“I don’t know, Maggie. I think I’d like to go on a cruise this year instead of going down to the seaside mansion. Miami can be such a bore with all the riff-raff that moved in after Al Capone built his pink castle down there. You can’t even be sure to get up a good game of lawn tennis anymore without seeing a gangster or a working businessman on the other side of the net.”

“I don’t think I would like a cruise, Charley. I wouldn’t want to be without the Rolls that long. No, we’d have to get around on the islands in taxis and rental limousines. It’s not our style.”

“That’s for sure, Maggie. That isn’t our style.” With no uncertainty showing in his voice, he added, “And we can hope it will never be our style.” He turned his attention back to the book he’d borrowed from the library at American International College. It was attempting to explain the criminal mind, but all he’d gotten out of it so far was that impulsive young men with poorly formed habits sometimes became criminals, and that wasn’t something he’d needed to learn from a book.

All had grown quiet and Charley thought that everyone had turned to a book or their own thoughts when Bill cleared his voice in a loud manner intended to gain attention. And everyone did give their attention to him, all afraid of what he was about to say.

“I signed my papers today, but I’m not going to be heading out to training camp until after the holidays.” Bill paused to let the news sink in before continuing, “That was best for me and it turned out the Navy recruiters weren’t unhappy about it. They’re trying to enlarge the fleets, though Roosevelt and Congress are stalling a bit with the money. Some of the Navy people, and some in Congress or the Cabinet, want to start showing the American flag more aggressively in the Pacific. Just like Teddy Roosevelt did.” One look at his mother’s face led Bill to add, “The first President Roosevelt did it to maintain the peace and it worked. It’ll work for the second President Roosevelt as well.”

Maggie looked as if she were about to cry, but she bit her upper lip and gained some control over herself. “We can only pray to the Almighty Lord that we’ll have peace and not the war so many seem to fear. And some are even looking forward to war. Or looking forward to the prosperity they think it will bring.” She cast a glance over at her husband as if he’d had to be reminded of what he’d told her about the ongoing expansion of the companies making weapons and other goods for the American and British armed forces. Nor did Margaret have to be reminded, having been at the kitchen table while her father had been sadly telling of the possibility of ill-gained prosperity coming their way, but then he had admitted he was not one who could judge men wrong for wishing to feed their children better and to maybe enjoy a few pleasures in life. There was silence for a few seconds, but then Maggie looked ready to burst into tears and all eyes were on her. Barely able to control her voice, she said, “I guess maybe the Hermit did see something that the rest of us have been missing all our lives.”

“Likely it’s true that any man sees something other men don’t see, Maggie, but I can assure you the Hermit missed a lot more than he saw. A whole hell of a lot more.”

Appendices

Colophon

This book was typeset using the LaTeX typesetting system created by Leslie Lamport and the memoir class written by Peter Wilson.

The LaTeX typesetting system is a set of macro commands using the TeX typesetting system written by Donald Knuth. The body text is set 10/12pt on a 33pc measure with Computer Modern Roman designed by Donald Knuth. Other fonts include Sans, Smallcaps, Italic, Slanted and Typewriter, all from Knuth's Computer Modern family.

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