AVON/V2314/75¢

At last—the dazzlingly prophetic and wildly adventurous novel of the new magic

by Wyman Guin

THE STANDING JOY

"A compelling voice in science fiction—original, gifted, powerful."
ROBERT SILVERBERG

THIS BOOK MAY
OR
MAY NOT EXIST!

Perhaps it exists only in the world created by Colin Collins. Perhaps you live in that world.

And if you live in that world and the book does exist, you may find the answer for your life.

WYMAN GUIN DOES EXIST!

The author of the celebrated stories collected in LIVING WAY OUT has produced in THE STANDING JOY a work of major importance. Using the arts and sciences of philosophy, anthropology, mathematics, and fantasy, he has wrought a novel utterly different, comparable to no other.

THE STANDING JOY

Wyman Guin

AVON
PUBLISHERS OF
DISCUS • CAMELOT • BARD

This Avon edition is the first publication
of *The Standing Joy* in any form.

AVON BOOKS
A division of
The Hearst Corporation
959 Eighth Avenue
New York, New York 10019
Copyright © 1969 by Wyman Guin.
Published by arrangement with the author.

All rights reserved, which includes the right
to reproduce this book or portions thereof in
any form whatsoever. For information address
Larry Sternig Literary Agency, 2407 North 4 Street,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53210.

First Avon Printing, November, 1969

AVON TRADEMARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. AND
FOREIGN COUNTRIES, REGISTERED TRADEMARK—
MARCA REGISTRADA, HECHO EN CHICAGO, U.S.A.

Printed in the U.S.A.

CONTENTS

	The Magic of Naming (prologue)	11
1.	Colin Collins, Boy Scientist	15
2.	Family Love	26
3.	The Broken Columns	41
4.	Rapist, Killer, Spoiler	44
5.	Dreams of the Future	58
6.	The Standing Cold	62
7.	The Gorse	70
8.	The Voice	73
9.	The Presence of Dread	89
10.	The Motherless World of Magic	101
11.	Motherly Women	122
12.	A House of Women	125
13.	Mother of The Magic World	139
14.	All Kings Fall	156
15.	Discovery	163
16.	The City	176
17.	Love for The City	190
18.	The Giant	193
19.	Tht Prophets	202
20.	The Meaning of Meaning	210
	Collins Colorado (epilogue)	223

THE STANDING JOY

"... Man stands alone. ..."

Julian Huxley

PROLOGUE

The Magic of Naming

As it had for billions of years, the Earth turned in the presence of its star. In a film of air, soil and water on Earth's surface, the light of the star had generated a ferment of plants and animals. This living stuff stirred as the light fell upon it—blooming, buzzing, copulating, killing, suckling, thinking . . . and believing.

Certain of the animals had named themselves Homo sapiens. For many of these, this turn of the globe marked February first, in the year of their Lord 1914. The band of this dawn swept past Lake Baikal in the northern latitudes. The steppes of Russia rolled endlessly into the light until the Ural Mountains sparkled out of the dark.

Not long thereafter, in a particular moment, the light fell upon a house in a Russian village near the western border. In this house a woman shrieked three times. Then she began grunting. After the light had brightened on the house a few moments, there was a cry and a man said, "You have a fine boy, Mrs. Boritzsch."

The woman's tired, happy voice exclaimed, "What a big boy he is! No wonder he hurt so much!"

"Mrs. Boritzsch, he is not only one of the heaviest babies I have delivered recently, he is the longest baby I have ever delivered. What will you call him?"

"I will call him Boris."

Meanwhile the globe was turning, and now the great cities of Europe rolled into the light and each greeted the light with pealing bells.

The dawn swept out over the great ocean where it lighted, in the warmer latitudes, jewel-like fields of jellyfish, and in the colder latitudes, sporting whales,

lonely ships, and storms that walked the waters on frothy feet.

The sparkling coasts of America were followed at once by the snowy Appalachians. Then came the Middle West, a land where the cities had been laid out with a straight edge, where the roads ran along section lines, and where the farms were defined in snow-blown rectangles running straight north and south, and straight east and west.

Now, on one of these farms in Oklahoma, came another particular moment. In this house there was another cry. While the light warmed the white siding of the house, a man said, "You have a fine baby boy, Mrs. Collins."

"Oh, isn't he a darling!" the woman exclaimed from great weariness. "What a lovely baby boy! Oh, let me hold him!"

"What will you name him?"

"I shall call him Colin." She pronounced it in the colloquial manner, with a short "o."

"Well, I have some happy news. He has a twin coming."

The Earth turned on, tilting slowly on its axis so that spring came to Russia and to Oklahoma, then summer came to Russia and to Oklahoma . . . Earth turning a few more times out of its billions.

One morning the cities of Europe greeted the dawn, not with bells, but with the guns of great war. This had no effect, of course, upon the turning of Earth, but for the human animals that spawned in its thin film of life, it began a century of great misery which these animals had prepared for themselves. For these guns ended their last era of faith. From now on there would be only illusion.

The men who deployed these guns defended no faith, though they might claim otherwise, and the men who died before the guns came to know this with terrible certainty, though they might pretend otherwise. By the time these guns were stopped Colin Collins and Boris Boritzsch were old enough, and precocious

enough, to read for themselves the words of Saint John.

> And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

Colin and Boris were four years old by the end of the war and able to reflect separately that, like Dante's hell, the visions of the prophet John, were the bile-of-dreadful-wish that lay also in the hearts of his readers who had killed and prayed in the trenches of Europe. No wonder Homo sapiens was entering the time of the saint's apocalypse. No wonder John would probably prove accurate. He had only to look into his own heart; saint or not, as black as Man's.

The boy Boris said aloud, "What can one do with this animal?"

And Colin said similarly, "How can we save ourselves from ourselves?"

For, though each was gifted in perception, they were not of the gloomy sort who hate themselves. They were joyful lads who loved many of the people about them.

1

Colin Collins, Boy Scientist

"In those days past boyhood, I was beginning to distinguish the world of magic from the world of science. I decided that sexual pleasure must be the greatest magic of all, the lingering boy in me was so startled by it."

The Diary of the Equations

Toward noon, for an interval, his vigil of lust became tiresome. Colin Collins knew there were snakes all about him under the slabs of rock in the sun-brazed grass. Brief curiosity about the snakes diverted his concentration from the county fair below the hill.

Without moving his sneakered feet, he put his right hand forward onto the ground, arched his naked back, and lifted his blue denimed seat from the slab he was sitting on. He was an athletic boy, and in this ridiculous position he looked for a moment like the young Lord Greystoke, née Tarzan, about to leap off the sandstone ridge into the brushing treetops. Instead, he lowered his head till his straight brown hair hung into the bending, brown grass. He reached back between his legs with his left hand and raised the edge of the slab.

Surre enough, three or four slate-black snakes were coiled there. One of them seemed almost three feet long. Colin made a mental note to check the scientific name, and it occurred to him to wonder if the snakes had survived the Pleistocene cold at this Oklahoma latitude. If they had, then long ago they had raced in these grasses between the dainty feet of Eohippus, father of horses.

Gently, Colin let the slab back down over the snakes

and sat upon it. A grin spread over his sunburned face, flaring the nostrils of his freckled nose. The blue eyes, beneath the wisps of hair that now licked into the perspiration on his forehead, were seeing into the long-age when he had been just a kid of ten, more than three whole years ago.

He and Billy Sellers had gathered up a full bucket of these snakes, lugged them to Main Street, and dumped them onto the sidewalk in front of the movie house just as the doors released a matinee audience. Already surrounded by a gaggle of women, the pile of snakes had exploded on the hot sidewalk slithering for cool grass.

Now, as his eyes widened on the memory of the shrieking women, Colin began to laugh. Just as suddenly he sobered and winced. One woman, her eyes rolling wildly, her throat raised to the sky and bawling like a cow, had staggered up the street and over to the curb where she had thrown up all over the right front wheel of a brand new model-T Ford. Then she had sat down, grotesquely spraddled, and she had collapsed.

Colin shivered and shook his head over the memory. Of course today, "going-on" fourteen, he would never think of doing such a thing. In the first place it had been cruel to the snakes. And in terms of cruelty there didn't seem much difference between killing a woman and scaring her nearly to death.

He quickly scanned the fairgrounds to forget the poor woman's face, and the insight into himself extended to the crowds with another shiver. He muttered to the snakes, "You see, the apes have come from all around to honor their best pigs and steers and chickens and sheep. Secretly, the apes know how lucky they are that meat can be eaten. If they couldn't use part of their cruelty to kill for eating they would be even more cruel to each other.

"You snakes will understand, I know, that it is best for the apes if each has to kill his own meat—stab his own squeeling pig, club his own staggering bull, wring the hot neck of his own chicken. What is bad for the

apes is any arrangement where they can be gluttons over meat they haven't personally killed.

"You snakes would laugh, I can tell you, if you could hear some of the philosophies about themselves which the apes make up when they have that arrangement."

Colin knew intimately the hard-work killing on the farms and the taciturn people who conducted it. At the same time he had an almost prophetic sense of the industrial future. The imaginings of the new science fiction writers and their lurid magazines came easily to him. He saw clearly into this brazen future that was so contrary to the dawn-to-dusk work on the farms. Now, suddenly, he saw the "prepared-and-packaged" foods of the future cities where people would be isolated from the farm life below him. "What crazy philosophies of 'love-pure-love' will come then?"

With a returning grin, he apologized to the snakes. "I'm sorry. I was talking to myself. In case you wonder how I make myself so clearly understood by you, I'll tell you I'm part snake myself. Right here in my pants. Yes, siree! I've had a few injections given me by a snake-doctor friend of mine. Have a special thing here, never been seen before. In fact, I'm on my way just now to give this magic dingus a test run."

Colin's delicious lust stirred again, and he returned his attention to the bucolic scene below the hill. Directly beneath the hill and across his view ran a narrow ribbon of pot-holed concrete that extended two miles out of town in the direction of Oklahoma City before it decayed for the rest of the trip to the usual gravel-and-clay ruts between ditches of weeds that sagged under crusts of red dust.

Beyond the concrete road, and to his right, lay the fairgrounds from which arose an incredible noise of bawling animals, sideshow barkers, and crying children. This din sparkled from within the solid shriek of a calliope.

To his left, beyond the road, lay a great cow pasture from which, every fifteen minutes, arose another racket that, in truth, flew at Colin. On these intervals onetime war ace, Mr. Marty McCord of Redfork, Oklahoma,

taking up his next two fee-paying passengers, clattered over Colin's head on the frail wings of his old Curtiss JN-4 biplane and flew off into the cloud-splattered blue.

Peacefully, beyond all these things, the creek ran through its ribbon of trees. In its own hush it glittered across sandbars and pooled greenly under elms. Within its bend, it was decorated theatrically for the fair with the six large teepees of the Indian dancers.

There, the primordial promise . . . somewhere there . . . she with the voluptuous navel and the breasts like cantaloupes.

The calliope stopped, and at that stunning moment the thought of her chocolate nipples made him shiver.

He was trying his precocity in poetry these days and he rolled back upon the dry grass, giggling and writhing, while he composed aloud in pubescent squeaks.

"Oh, nut-brown goddess,
Goddess of the nuts,
What a precious thing I bring you!
Made to my design
In living flesh,
It makes poor Priapus blush."

He lay still for a moment, pleased with this flummery, especially at having used the pagan name, Priapus.

When he sat up again to watch the teepees, he found a redheaded, freckle-faced boy of twelve standing about twenty feet from him. Colin blushed to have been caught talking to himself and acting so silly.

The boy said respectfully and shyly, "Hi, Colin. I saw you up here from down on the road."

"Hello, Orvie." It was little Orville Fuller, the son of the high school principal.

"Can I talk with you, Colin?"

"Sure, Orvie."

When the boy sat down, Colin saw that he was scared to death. He was sunburned till his nose and forehead were peeling. Yet pallor circled his eyes and tight-lipped mouth.

Colin asked softly, "What do you want to talk about, Orvie?"

"Yu . . . yu . . . you. . . ." The boy sat in misery staring at the ground with his hands firmly clasping his knees.

Colin took the trembling chin in his hand and lifted the scared face. "Go ahead, Orvie. You don't have to be afraid of me."

"Oh, I'm not, Colin. You're my hero! Dad says you're the best student in the state—maybe in the whole world! And you're captain of the basketball team and the track team, and . . ."

Colin shook his head with firm lips. He placed his fingers over the boy's racing mouth. "Come on now! What brought you up here? You're scared about something."

Orvie's voice shook. "Did you know the world is gonna be 'consumed-in-flames?' "

Colin was silent.

"It says so in the Bible," Orvie insisted.

"I know it does."

"Don't you believe it?

Colin was silent a long time, during which Mr. Marty McCord came racketing up out of the cow pasture, verily one of St. John's world-destroying nightmares.

When the plane had passed beyond the town, Colin said, "I don't know."

"Anyway," the boy declared in misery, "I'm gonna burn in hell like the evangelist at the tent said. It will boil out my eyeballs."

Suddenly Colin understood the boy's pitiful fright, and just as he did Orvie turned to stare in horror directly at Colin's face. He opened his legs and made a gesturre at his penis. He could scarcely whisper.

"Colin, I can't keep from doing this. Afterward I'm so scared I have to go throw up. Colin, did you ever do like that?"

Colin's heart hurt for young Mr. Orville Fuller, and he felt tears spring to his eyes. "Sure, Orvie. Sure I have."

"It's an awful sin, isn't it?"

Colin reached out and gripped the boy's skinny arm. "I don't know much about that, Orvie. But I do know one thing. You don't run around with the kids in your neighborhood, do you?"

Orvie shook his head. "My folks won't let me. Mother says there aren't any more good American boys in town since people are coming from the East to work in the oilfield. Dad says you high school men are 'the-last-of-a-kind.' "

"Orvie, did you ever wonder what the boys do when they go down to that old shiplap shed where the Sutton place burned?"

He nodded his head. He sure had wondered.

"I'll tell you. They all sit around inside and do what you've been doing. They do it right in front of each other and they laugh about it."

Orvie was stunned. "How do you know, Colin?"

"I used to go to the same barn."

Colin grinned. "When everybody in the barn has finished doing that, do you know what they do?"

Orvie had green eyes and now they looked like two moss agates on white saucers. He shook his head with dreamlike slowness and looking right into Colin's face, focused on the next motion of his lips.

"They all go out back and see who can piss the highest on the side of the barn. That's where I made my first track record. I pissed fourteen boards high."

Orvie had begun to giggle like he would never stop, and Colin was laughing.

"You won't believe this, Orvie, but that first record at the barn led directly to me being track champion today."

Orvie couldn't stop giggling, and he shook his head to indicate he didn't believe it.

"I've skipped a couple of grades and I'm younger. But ever since those guys saw me piss fourteen boards high the first time up, they've known in their hearts I can beat them at anything."

Colin heard the thump of the tom-tom. He looked that way quickly, and sure enough the Indians were

gathering to tramp their way to the park of honey locust trees on the west side of the fair. There they would perform on the bandstand.

Orvie had returned to cautious concern. "Doing it won't make me go crazy?"

Colin's first thought was to reassure the boy seriously. Then, on an impulse, he rose from the stone he had been sitting on and pulled a little snake from under it. He put the serpent in Orvie's left hand and lifted the hand a little so that Orvie presented the snake to the world.

"Now, after I'm gone, get your peter out of your pants and hold it with your other hand. You won't be just the sanest man at the fair, you'll be a god up here on the hill . . . healing in one hand, and love in the other."

Mr. Marty McCord, whispering in the sky about St. John's terrible "Revelation" on the island of Patmos, slid over the hilltop. He was headed for the creek where he would bank back toward the cow pasture.

> *And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*

Colin stood over his ambidextrous and happy creation, little Aesculapius-Priapus, and watched with troubled eyes the wings that turned above the teepees.

"Orvie."

"Yes, Colin?"

"About the world being consumed in fire. I wouldn't worry about that, if I were you. I think we can avoid that."

"Sure, Colin!" In the dazzling world of accepted masturbation, Orvie found the prevention of great wars passing certain.

"So long, Orvie."

"So long, Colin. See you later, Colin."

As he descended the hill Colin scanned all of the creek area one last time. He was sure no one had gone

out that way in the morning, and now the Indians were coming to the fairgrounds. Colin didn't want to be seen leaving the fairgrounds in the direction of the teepees, so he skirted the grounds through the fields to the west until he could drop down to the creek.

It was noon, and a relative hush had fallen over the fair while the country folks ate their "dinner." Many of them would spread cloths on the tables in the honey locust grave and eat cold fried chicken brought from home together with hot corn on the cob bought two-for-a-nickle at the Ladies Aid tent. After that they would cut up the huge rattlesnake watermelon they had brought with them. And all the time they would watch the Indian dancers.

In fact, as Colin raced down stream over the blinding sand, splashing through shallows in his tennis shoes, he heard the voices of the braves join their chanting to the tom-tom, and that was the sign he and the girl had agreed upon.

He flew through the big bend the creek made around the teepees, and his excited, blue eyes never left the wooded edge of the red-clay embankment above him. A cloud dimmed the hard light briefly just as the stream sparkled out into a shaded pool. Here he sprinted up the embankment and slipped through a stand of elms. He came again to blinding light and dove down into sunflowers.

Back on the high ground beneath which he had passed, a cooking fire, hidden by the teepees, raised an acrid stream of smoke that crawled toward him under the languidly pressing heat. There was no other sign of life there. He looked everywhere across the sea of sunflowers.

Presently, kneeling in the honeyed bitterness of the flowers, he clutched his groin in both hands and moaned. With an ecstatic smile and his eyes ludicrously wide, he fell forward grinding on "old Mother Earth."

The noon torpor exploded. The calliope shrieked into a sky-splitting version of "Jada." The barkers began to shout and were crushed in the stampede of a

hundred horses as Mr. Marty McCord revved the old biplane.

The slipstream whirled the field of sunflowers into golden billows. Colin kicked out of his wet shoes, flipped onto his back and slithered out of his Levis to get the whole cooling benefit of the slipstream. "Jada, Jada, jing-jing, jing!"

He shouted into the racket. "Yes, folks, gather round. I'm only thirteen years old and I have designed for this little dingus of mine a completely new hormone environment. Its just my own regular male dingus as you can see, except that it gives a boy repeats like girls can have. Thought up these hormones myself and had them built to order by a couple of experts. Just think, folks, what I'll be doing with a college education!"

"Oh, yes! Yes! Jada, Jada, jing-jing, jing!"

"Stop that. Shut up."

The Cherokee girl was right there on the ground beside him. Her flat, Indian face was intent on struggling out of her shift. She was about two years his senior and a mighty fine specimen of the aborigine. She plumped her brown bottom into the sand and almost lifted him over her.

Then, for a moment, her rapid panting stopped. She became very still and intent and glared into his face while she placed him.

At last she commanded in a fierce whisper, "Now . . . make it like you did last night."

Bringing back his first two passengers of the afternoon (the local baker's son and a farmer's daughter), Mr. McCord slid the old "Jenny" in over the creek and dropped toward the cow pasture. His passengers were absorbed in the flight, but Mr. McCord saw very clearly in the sunflowers the vigorous beast-with-two-backs.

Fifteen minutes later, with new passengers, he took another unbelieving look into the thrashing flowers. The girl's mad eyes glared up at him, obsidian-dark

gems set in alabaster balls, and the greased leather mask shrieked at him through alabaster teeth.

Mr. McCord flew the biplane into the cow chips with its tail skid four feet in the air. "Holy mackerel," he muttered. Remembering some of his own performances, he reflected with some comfort, "That lad would have to be drunk."

Again, some fifteen minutes later, almost stalling the ship, Mr. McCord found the young goat still at it with fantastic energy and the girl in a stupor.

It was an impossible performance.

This time, however, there was a man in khaki wading through the sunflowers. It was Mr. Collins, the county agricultural agent. Even through the slipstream he heard the man call, "Colin! Are you out there?"

At that Mr. McCord saw the little goat thrash free as if his back had been scalded.

"Colin, are you out this way? You're wanted at home."

From a cosmos of intense, endless pleasure no man before him had experienced, his father's voice jolted Colin Collins back into a rank reality of crushed sunflowers. He flopped off the stuporous girl. In a supine panic he struggled into his Levis. Then he stood dizzily.

The Cherokee girl snored pleasantly in spraddled ease. Her sweat-drenched body was caked with dust the inquiring biplane had raised. A silver amulet rolled comfortably between her breasts. Colin bent quickly and jerked this from her.

His father approached through the sunflowers, a dark silhouette of feverish hues cut into Byzantine gold. Colin tried to step forward, became tangled in stalks, and was too late.

The silhouette freed itself from the field of gold, rose up among the white stallions of the sky, and became a man.

He was a kindly, hard-working man, and Colin understood that he feared his own lust and that he knew this himself. He had taken off the khaki hat to wipe his

red face on his khaki sleeve when he saw the Cherokee girl.

Colin watched the heated blood drain from his father's face, and Colin's anxiety pounded in his chest. The man raised a work-scarred hand to wipe the sweat from his vision, and the boy saw with a pang that the hand trembled. He watched his father try to turn to him and saw him find it impossible to tear his eyes from the slumbering savage.

At last the boy could no longer bear to witness his father's travail. Colin raised his right hand to clavicle height, and there beneath his chin the lazy amulet turned.

"Father, look at me."

His father faced him in bewilderment, too deep in lascivious shock for anger to kindle.

"Father, you are very sleepy. You must close your eyes. Your mind must rest and hear only what I speak to you."

Magically, prepared for the suggestion, his father's eyes closed and his head sank until the chin rested on his chest.

Colin loved and respected his father. He hated imposing this indignity. In general, he used his mesmerizing power as little as possible. He had to be careful of accidentally using it in logical discourse because his mesmerism was greatly heightened after he completed a convincing argument of any sort.

In this instance, Colin persuaded himself that he had used the power over his father to spare the man's feelings. He knew that his father was bone tired from the responsibility of running the fair. So he went up and told him gently to lie down for a few moments of deep rest.

Then Colin stepped back to the Cherokee girl. He dropped the amulet onto her belly and watched it roll into her dusty navel. He grinned in gratitude all across his sunburned face and bent and shook her gently. She opened her eyes at the sky and then focused on him as he straightened.

"You can't stay around here like that," he declared. "You might get raped."

Abruptly, she cackled. She lay there spraddled and cackling. He grabbed his slim belly, his eyes rolled up to their whites, his face turned up to the sky, and he howled.

They howled and cackled at each other, and he understood what had stunned his father's eyes. She was an incredibly filthy, soul-jarring "Yes!" to lust. Her thighs caked with mud and her butt stained with green; the hair of her head matted in grease and her flagrant pubis lathered in rut—*rape* her? The danger was that some man happening along might fall into her.

His sides ached, and he could no longer draw breath as he stumbled tear-blinded back to his sleeping father.

2

Family Love

"I felt we primates had invented continuous sexual magic to crown the invention of love that had been made previously by all milk-givers. I marveled at the magic of the incest rules that made possible the hot-house of family love."

The Diary of the Equations

Colin waited until the Indian girl, back in her dress and hobbling a little stiffly, had made her way to the teepees. Then he awakened his father. Colin looked down on his father with proud affection. Even so completely relaxed, the determinations were still there in the man's ruddy face.

It was the easiest of this man's determinations to be a good Christian and the most difficult to master his polygamous nature. He was equally determined to stop the spoiling of this Oklahoma land. He brought good farming practices to his county with "selling" determination. Where the land already had been spoiled, he

persuaded stubborn, red-necked men to fill gullies, terrace hills, and replenish the sick soil by planting legumes. Mr. Collins took the children of his farmers as seriously as he took his own children. Out of this one county he had taken two boys from red-dirt farms to Chicago as national 4-H Club champions, a seemingly impossible feat. He had probably had a character-forming influence on more young people than any other man in the county.

But the culture of good farming and child-rearing were only part of Mr. Collins' determinations. He was determined also to bring the culture of humanity to these red hills. He had an excellent tenor voice and had studied and taught music in his youth. Nowadays, crossing churchly denominations with an abandon that shocked some, he organized great choirs and trained them with inexhaustible energy until one day, magically, these churchly midwesterners could perform one of the great oratorios. Mr. Collins was especially fond of Handel and had twice produced the "Elijah."

Mr. Collins was, on top of everything else, an omnivorous student of history. In this religious town where no one else had ever heard of some of the esoteric histories he read, he conducted a Sunday afternoon class for adults which he called "The Bible as History."

In short, Mr. Collins was building a world. Colin loved his father and awakened him gently. The man seemed a little dazed at first. Colin said nothing to him but simply guided him back through the sunflowers toward the fair.

Shortly, the father and son walked into the fairgrounds along the edge of the pasture where Mr. Marty McCord was collecting fare from his next passengers.

"How's business?" Colin's father called heartily.

"Just fine, Mr. Collins." Then the pilot's eyes focused on Colin with wonder. "Fact is, with the kind of scenes you can catch around here, I may be able to double my fare."

Colin had been completely oblivious to the passing plane. Now he understood with a shock that they had

been seen. He managed to ignore the pilot, otherwise a great hero of his.

"Father, did you have to search long for me?"

"No, I guessed you might be swimming over there in the creek on a day like this. How in Sam Hill did get so dirty afterwards?"

Colin indicated the war-vintage plane. "He blew dust all over the swimming hole. What did mother say she wanted?"

"I didn't talk with her. One of the women at the Ladies Aid tent took the call."

They had reached the spot where the county agent intended to turn off for the animal barns. He hesitated with a seeming mystification. As if at a loss he said, "Well, I have to go over to the cattle barn. Go right home now."

"I will."

"And try to get cleaned up a little before your mother sees you."

"Yes, dad."

Again the father hesitated.

The smell of rancid popcorn sat massively on the littered, bare earth under the wilting catalpas.

The man shook his puzzled head. "Son, when was the last time I whipped you?"

Now Colin could not keep his eyes elevated. "Year before last, when we were on the trip to New Orleans."

"Well, you're too big for it today, but it seems to me I ought to be whipping you now."

Colin's breathing stopped.

"Still, you've been a fine young man in practically everything." The big rough hand rumpled his hair. "Hurry home. And clean up before you see you mother."

Colin got a ride into town with a man driving a brand new model A Ford. It was old Mr. Norton of the bank. Colin had not previously ridden in one of the cars, and he was thrilled with it, especially since the opinion of many that old Mr. Norton drove like a demon, proved to be true. The pavement was potted

with holes, and Mr. Norton made a great game of driving too fast to miss them while trying to miss them with desperate wheel work.

"Young man, why haven't I seen you out at the golf club? You used to be out there caddying every afternoon."

"I've been awfully busy, Mr. Norton."

"Don't need money, is that it? Got so rich a quarter doesn't mean anything to you, is that it?"

Colin couldn't help grinning.

"What are you grinning about?"

"I think your new coupé is great, Mr. Norton."

"Young man," old Mr. Norton turned sharply and fixed Colin with his thinly handsome, blue-eyed and goateed face while the coupé bucked unheeded through a series of potholes, "Young man, if you want a car like this you'll have to caddie and mow lawns and put your quarters in the bank."

Colin nodded sincerely. They were passing the local oil field, and his young heart sang in the exciting stench of the oil field.

"It's just that I have been so busy studying, Mr. Norton."

"Studying what?"

"Economics, financing, and banking law, sir."

Mr. Norton did not hear Colin. He had to shoot the car onto the shoulder to pass an oncoming string of mule teams drawing a wagon load of casing for wells.

Colin noticed that the casing caliber was very small. Then, upon the hillside, he saw the new wells that had been added to the field. They were quite unlike the old wells with which he was acquainted. He realized with a start that they were using the new way of drilling about which he had read—rotary drilling.

Mr. Norton skewed back onto the pavement and slid between two giant holes on his exciting way to town. Suddenly, Colin could no longer contain himself over the thrill of the car and the smell of the oil and the exciting future they raised in his mind.

"Oh, Mr. Norton, everybody in the family will want an auto like this."

Before Colin's home, Mr. Norton came to a proud stop. He lit a Melachrino cigarette in a long, ivory holder while Colin thanked him and complimented him again. Then he sped away to the world of hardheaded finance.

Colin walked up the curving sidewalk (the only curving cement sidewalk in town) which his father had built with his own hands because the local mason had refused to try to build it.

The Oklahoma City paper lay on the front porch where it had been thrown after his father had left for work and where it had remained because his mother read only God, Shakespeare, and *The Mentor*. Colin picked up the paper and walked around to the back of the house opening it to the financial pages. Under the clumps of waxy, red blooms sagging from the old-fashioned trumpet vine on the back porch, he paused and scanned the columns. His photographically retentive mind immediately assimilated and correlated the figures.

American Battery was up another two dollars. Prairie Petroleum was up three and a quarter. He had got off that letter dumping International Holdings just in time; it was five dollars off already. Everything else he held was gaining nicely. In two years he had parlayed a hundred dollars in caddying quarters, birthday gifts, and Christmas money into his first hundred thousand dollars.

Colin did not bank this money with Mr. Norton, of course. That would have meant mesmerizing every clerk in the bank. Banking in Oklahoma City and setting up the beginnings of his future financial world had required only one "you-are-so-sleepy" session with one banker.

Colin stared at the financial page in humility. He had an awful lot to learn. That new stock, Petroleum Tools, was up another ten dollars. Too late he knew it represented some part of the rotary drill revolution.

In spite of such missed opportunities, Colin was certain he would be able to liquidate a million dollars before the stock market fell apart. For Colin, almost

alone among economists, was certain that the national economy was headed for disaster. Only his natural modesty and his sense of the inappropriateness of his youth prevented him from publishing parts of his analysis.

When Colin walked into the kitchen his twin sister, Colleen, younger than he by twenty minutes, was making lemonade. She squeezed the lemon halves clumsily into the glass dish-squeezer. She was a pretty brunette who had been a career tomboy and was sullen in her pubescence about the loss of that freedom. She was not beyond making exaggerated avoidance of anything that might bump against the buds of breasts.

"Uncle Fred is in the living room with mother. He looked at my tonsil operation, and now he wants to look at your *thing*. He seems real worried, and I don't blame him, having to handle one of those awful worms."

She imitated vomiting. "Yawk! Yawk!"

"A wonderful wife you're going to make if you don't learn new ways. Hate the penis and then can't squeeze a lemon." Colin had been washing his hands of savage, dust and sunflower stains. "Here, let me do that."

"Decent men don't want their wives to be like that. They want them to be *cultured*."

Colin laughed. "Someday you'll be grabbing in the dark for one of these worms. Your mother just can't be as honest with you as she is with her husband. She loves doing that."

"Colin Collins! What an awful thing to say!"

"Do you think we're a virgin birth? Come on, cut some lemons. I'm going to want six glasses of this."

Her brown eyes were grimly contemplating her own conception. "They did it one time. They did it in a horrible, dark room that smelled of asparagus. Then they ran to separate places and threw up."

"Come on, you nut! Cut some more lemons and watch out for your big fingers."

Actually, Colleen had very lovely hands, expressive and quick. It was just that the slippery lemon squeezer

had been hard for her to hold. She and Colin loved each other more than most siblings, as it sometimes happens with twins. Colin could have explained to her that the fun their parents had downstairs in the big bedroom was the basis for an uncommon sense of love in the family, but he felt he had put in his stint of lectures on sex for one day.

Mrs. Colins put her head in the kitchen. She was a handsome woman, from whom Colleen's dark looks had come. "Well, Colin, I thought I heard you. I'm glad you got home so fast. Dr. Ordway is here all the way from Oklahoma City to have a look at you. Good heavens, you're filthy! Did you wash your hands before doing that?"

"Yes, mother. Tell Dr. Ordway I'll just take a quick bath. I'll be back down while you're having the lemonade."

Mrs. Collins withdrew, saying, "Just hurry, dear. Dr. Ordway is anxious to catch the train to the city."

Colin knew better than that about Dr. Ordway's anxiety. He was worried about having cooperated in this wild scheme to create a genital superman. Colin had no way of knowing how much of his hypnosis might have been used unconsciously in their early conversations. But he would have used it to obtain the good doctor's enthusiasm, which, at times like this, thinly veiled a nagging guilt.

Colleen had sliced the rest of the lemons. Now she stared down at them with her mouth open and wiped saliva from her lips with the back of her hand.

"It makes your mouth ache," she declared. Then she turned to stare at Colin. "I suppose that's the way your mouth aches for Miss McAllister?"

Colin's heart jumped at the mention of the beautiful young teacher, but he kept a calm face before Colleen's examination.

"You're sickening, Colin, the way it shows. Everybody in school knows, you look so sick when she's around."

Colin did not suppose that this was really true about it showing all that much, yet he had a lump in his

throat, and he squeezed lemons in silence until he had gained back some control.

Family love! In a little pocket of sex taboo around the mother love bloomed in jealousies, and both the love and the jealousies lasted a lifetime.

Colin gulped lemonade. Then he slapped his sister's firm behind. "Love will bite you, too!" he declared as he left.

She jerked away. "Don't you touch me, Colin Collins!" And she shouted after him, "That's what you'd like to do to her, isn't it?"

Colin did not resent this show of her jealousy. Every word she had said was true. His two test runs with the Indian girl made it certain he had created something new on Earth, "the genital superman." On Christian grounds his new creation could not be justified, perhaps, but Colin was living in the rarified heights of Zarathustra and was determined to test his superhuman powers in a case of true love.

Colin bounded up the stairs with Miss McAllister thudding in his blood. In the upstairs hall he stood for a moment picturing her vividly against the amber woodwork of his door.

"Ah, love! We'll break this sorry scheme of things entire."

He turned aside into the bathroom and started water running into the tub while he got fresh clothes from his room. To enter his room he had to take a stool from the hall closet and stand on it to get the secret key from the molding above the door.

His mother had slipped his mail under the door. There was a letter from his broker acknowledging the sale of his stock in International Holding.

There was also a letter from England addressed to Colin Collins, in care of the *American Journal of Mathematics*. Colin recognizes with excitement the internationally known name of the sender. He took the letter with him to the bath pillowing it on his fresh clothes. He opened it and placed it on the dressing stool as he stepped into the tub.

Dear Doctor Collins:

We are unable to find you in any of the directories. We hope to reach you through your publisher.

I have been an admirer of yours since your exquisite paper of two years ago extending Boole's algebra. Your three subsequent papers have excited many of us here who would like to enter into correspondence with you.

Selfishly, I hope you will first allow me to write on some modest thoughts of my own about Huntington's postulates, especially

$$(\exists O)\,(a) \cdot O < a$$

Please, sir, allow to us this privilege.

Your sincere admirer,

BURCHARD BROUGH
Professor of Mathematics
Cambridge, England

Only half-dried from his bath, the boy returned naked to his room, again pillowing the letter on his intended clothing. He kicked the door of his room closed behind him and deposited the treasure on his bed.

Slowly he looked around the room at the library of philosophy and science he was collecting; at the set of expensive golf clubs Mr. Spats Shiller had bequeathed him on the spot the day Colin, his caddie, had accepted the little man's brassie and hit a drive across the creek on the seventh tee. He thought about the fat Oklahoma City bankbook that was locked in his desk He glanced out the window at the little barn which had served as the laboratory for his early animal experiments extending the endocrinology of the day, and finally he looked down at the result, his limp rod of proven magic.

None of it counted as much as the letter from Professor Brough. Colin found tears in his eyes and wiped them away.

From the foot of the stairs his mother called, "Colin, dear, please hurry! Dr. Ordway is very anxious to examine you."

Colin opened his door a crack and called down.

"I've finished my bath. Why doesn't Dr. Ordway examine me up here?"

Doctor Ordway was a very skillful and intelligent man who was wasting his time snipping out appendixes and gall bladders at the rate of a fortune so that Mrs. Ordway, a cousin of Colin's mother, could take their four "stuck-up" daughters on jaunts to Europe to soak up "culture." Colin understood that the man was bored to death and needed a thrill in his life. Well, he was going to get one now!

Presently, the doctor knocked and entered, closing the door behind him. He was a man of about forty, a little overweight and jowly and beginning to bald. He had bright blue eyes that were wide with excitement, which was falsely enhanced by breathlessness from the climb up the stairs.

"Well . . . well! Did it work?"

Colin could contain his smile no longer, and as he raised his eyes to the ceiling, it spread in a beatific hyperbola across his sunburned face.

"Oh, doctor! It worked! It worked! It worked and worked! We have created the genital superman."

They grasped hands and danced in a circle, Dr. Ordway tiptoeing as quietly as possible in his heavy shoes, and Colin prancing nakedly as in some primordial rite. Dr. Ordway's jowls jiggled with his geeful hopping and he giggled. "Oh, a physician should always include himself in his experiments! I'm going to get some new nurses for myself I can tell you! And I'm going to turn this pretty little wild rose of an orgasm I've been having all too seldom into a great big American Beauty like yours . . . and have it every day," he sang in hushed jubilation, "and have it every day."

Colin chuckled and reflected that he was in the incongruous position of contributing to the delinquency of an elder.

Dr. Ordway stopped dancing abruptly and became in one moment a serious professional. "How's that circumcision coming along? Let me see! Sure, that's fine, and I think you are probably right . . . it may help space out the emotional reactions."

Colin pulled on his shorts and undershirt. "Now, we must tell Harkins and Johnson."

In addition to its curving sidewalk, the Collins home was an unusual one for the time because it had two phones, one downstairs and one in Colin's room.

When he had finished dressing, Colin went to the phone and presently he spoke to the operator. "Long distance, please . . . yes, I want to speak with Dr. Jack Harkins in the chemistry department of the University of Oklahoma in Norman. The number is two, six, four, eight."

During a long wait, Colin raised his hand to cover the mouthpiece of the wall phone and turned to Dr. Ordway.

"You know, Harkins has never believed this would work, though he was fascinated with the synthesis of the cyclopentanophenanthrenes I suggested to him and it's all I can do to keep him from publishing on them. It's Johnson who has had a suspicion we would succeed—those pituitary extracts were mighty convincing to him."

Colin turned back to the mouthpiece, speaking loudly, "Hello! Hello, Jack? Can you hear me? . . . Listen to this! It works! . . . You know, the series of injections! Its working! . . . Yes! I don't care if you believe it or not! Yes! Multiple orgasms. Over and over and over! . . . At about five minute intervals . . . well, don't believe it, but get over to pharmacology and let Johnson know. He'll believe it."

Now Colin waited through a long harangue which the telephone rendered grainily harsh, but which both Colin and Dr. Ordway knew was coming from a soft-spoken little man of some twenty-six years who was desperately in love with a big-busted, blonde senior student he struck about nipple-high. Otherwise he was a man of impeccable and stubborn logic which now gushed from him in tinny rasps over the telephone wire.

Colin began spreaking while he grinned back at Dr.

Ordway. "Dr. Harkins! Dr. Harkins! Dr. Haaaaaarkins?"

The rasping over the wire ceased.

"Dr. Harkins, I know I owe you respectfulness because you are so much older than I am. Why, you're almost old enough to get married, eh? But that doesn't keep you from being pigheaded, does it? So Dr. Ordway and I . . . he's right here with me . . . we have a plot. Unless you come around to being a true believer in the sexual superhuman, we're going to tell your fiancé what you're doing her out of by not taking these injections yourself."

Colin turned and beckoned Dr. Ordway closer to the phone. "But let me put a question to you, Dr. Harkins, that may be more convincing. How would you like a new position with a starting salary of six thousand a year?"

There was a querulous grate over the wire.

"I said six thousand, Dr. Harkins. Dr. Ordway wants you as the chief chemist in the new Institute for Primate Studies he is founding."

Doctor Okrdway had been standing with lowered head trying to decipher the raspy sounds over the line. Now his head snapped up with raised eyebrows.

Colin grinned at him and lifted a placating hand. Over the phone he continued, "Can you and Dr. Johnson meet with us next Saturday at Dr. Ordway's clinic in Oklahoma City?"

Colin raised his chin and looked questioningly at Dr. Ordway who shrugged "yes" in mystified agreement.

"All right. Call me when you've talked it over with Dr. Johnson. He'll start as chief pharmacologist at seven thousand because he's even older than you are."

Colin hung up, chuckling. "Money sure is a convincing argument," he said to Dr. Orway, "even in science. Forgive me, Doctor, if I seemed rude, but I couldn't resist springing my idea of the institute on you in that dramatic way."

Dr. Ordway was captivated, and Colin saw that the man was going to begin living with the thrill in his life

that he so needed. With his bright eyes hopeful on Colin he asked, "What is this about?"

Colin opened his desk and drew out his checkbook. He began filling out a check to Dr. Ordway. "Let's start this Institute for Primate Studies," Colin proposed, "sexual studies, that is. We'll create a new dimension in human sexuality. I'll match you dollar for dollar in the investment, and for openers there's twenty thousand. In the next ten years let's find cures for venereal diseases, a simple means to prevent conception, and develop the one-hour male orgasm we've already proved possible. Doctor, we'll change the course of history."

The doctor was nodding his head in wide-eyed agreement not a bit surprised that a lad who could design this neuro-endocrine miracle could write a check of such size.

Colin warned, "My folks do not yet know of my wealth . . . so, please!"

Dr. Ordway brushed aside the request for confidence.

Colin had heard the front doorbell ring. Now, he heard his mother's voice in pleased accents. Then he heard . . . *the voice of the turtle*.

The world trembled on dove notes. He felt his strong, young heart slam into the chest wall and struggle toward the light. Every time the dove spoke the world trembled in a diaphanous mirage. This was the world of delicious mystery in which lived . . . Miss McAllister.

Colin went down the stairs rudely ahead of Dr. Ordway.

Her eyes were what color? Like what was her hair? Who could say? She was made of shimmering light and of the fluting of doves and of honeysuckle fat.

"Good morning," Colin erred as if the day had just begun.

His mother was saying to him, "You didn't know, did you, when you began begging to be tutored in French, that Miss McAllister has a degree in Romance languages."

"No, I didn't," Colin lied.

For some reason Colleen was transfixing him with squinty eyes and white-tight lips.

"Well, beginning Saturday after next, Miss McAllister is going to tutor you and your sister in French."

Oh, dear, innocent mother! Shatterer of dreams!

"No, please, mother! Colleen doesn't want to learn French. And it was unfair that I got to weekend in the city all last year while she didn't once. Dr. Ordway was just saying that Colleen should spend the weekends with his daughters for a while, weren't you, Dr. Ordway?"

"Why, yes, Colin. Martha loves having young people about."

"Oh, please, mother! Let me. Like Colin says, it's unfair."

Mrs. Collins sighed. "Well, of course, that's true."

Dr. Ordway turned to Colleen. "Walk with me to the station, dear."

The dove spoke. "Colin, it's so refreshing to find a young man as healthy and popular as you are who is truely interested in cultural things."

She put her arm about his shoulder and drew him affectionately to her. The firm breasts slid across his shirt and (delicious penetration of the mirage) he felt her nipple harden.

Colin experienced what the local lads called "a fainty spell." After introducing Dr. Ordway and the young teacher, Colin's mother went to the front door with Colleen and the doctor and, simultaneously, his father entered from the back door. Colin's father was accepting Miss McAllister's extended hand when his mother returned from the front door.

His mother exclaimed, "Why Mr. Collins! You home?"

"I just have a couple of things to discuss with you."

"Miss McAllister is going to tutor Colin in French this fall. You'll recall I discussed the possibility with you at the time he began begging to take lessons."

"I think it's a fine thing." He turned to Colin.

"You're sure, young man, that you won't just be wasting Miss McAllister's time?"

"Oh, no, father."

When Miss McAllister had left, the magic began clearing from the room and settling on Saturday after next. Colin's father spoke to him a little self-consciously.

"Son, why don't you run along. I have some things to discuss with your mother."

Colin thought he could guess what his father had to discuss with his mother—the retention of phallic rites in the Christian world. He might start with a little dissertation on Maypoles. He had a bad case of "slumbering savage" under his conscious mind, was what the man had to discuss.

Colin dredged around for some Oedipus complex to fit the occasion and couldn't come up with any. He excused himself, went back to the kitchen, and poured and gulped a glass of lemonade. He slammed the back door with unaccustomed noisiness.

Then, as he passed beneath their bedroom window, he heard his mother exclaim, "Isn't it sweet to see Colin in his first puppy-love?"

"I don't blame him. Miss McAllister is quite a flapper."

"Now, Mr. Collins, you stop that."

"You're beautiful. Come here."

Colin fled on happy feet into the afternoon of singing cicadas. He stood in the middle of the hot lawn and lifted his face to the Oklahoma sky. Up there a wind had risen. The white stallions were racing toward evening, toward Saturday after next, toward luminous autumn. He paid no notice to Mr. Marty McCord, gnat of the future, skittering in gasoline fumes over the rumps of the stallions. He contemplated Miss McAllister straddling a fast charger.

He whispered, altering Verlaine slightly to express his sweet anticipation:

"Le soir tombait, un soir équivoque
d'automne
La belle se pendant rêveuse à nos
bras
Dit alors des mots si spécieux tout
bas,
Que notre âme depuis ce temps
tremble et s'étonne."

Colin Collins, boy scientist, was hopelessly in love.

3

The Broken Columns

"How strangely intimate it has always seemed to me that, so far apart, we were simultaneously beginning to work in the same direction. Naturally we were in contact at once with Professor Brough, the world's authority on the algebra of classes . . . but Boris more purposefully than I."

The Diary of the Equations

Boris Boritzsch was enduring his first spurt of pubescent growth. Even there supine in the Mediterranean sun, his bones ached. People were beginning to exclaim that he would be taller than his father. His father was six feet two inches. In Greece where they now lived, that was a tall man.

In Russia, perhaps, that had not been so tall, but quite satisfactory to the Czar's armies, and Boris's father had waited only long enough for his wife's confinement. Then he had fled Russia to Switzerland. A professor of mathematics, he had inherited a small patrimony, and they had been able to live out the war in the peace of great mountains where Mrs. Boritzsch had had two more babies, both petite girls, and where Mr. Boritzsch began teaching his precocious son the rudiments of mathematical thinking.

Even more important than mathematics to Mr. Bor-

itzsch was his passionate avocation, love of the antiquities. Lying there feeling the cool shadows of white cloud-puffs drift past his closed eyes, Boris felt himself smile as he thought of his clever father. As soon as the war was over, the man had obtained a good teaching position in his beloved Greece, and had come down out of the mountains with his burgeoning family.

Now, all these years he had been able to delight himself on weekends and summers, studying ancient ruins and drawing architecturally accurate sketches which someday he might publish. Boris frequently went with him as was the case today on this more ambitious trip to the island of Crete where his father had spent several days sketching the excavations of Knossos.

Boris raised himself to one elbow. He opened his eyes and shaded them against the autumn sun, searching down the path for his father. No, his father had not yet come out of the ruins.

Breezes off the Sea of Crete raced up the hillside and through the olive grove there, turning the leaves over in silver waves. Boris pondered this silent landscape that had so long ago sparkled with the sights and sounds of Minoan culture. What had happened here three thousand years ago to bring this silence?

Yes, there had been great earthquakes. But that is not sufficient to destroy a people. Yes, the Greeks had been pressing from the north, and things were not going well with Egypt to the south. But why had the Minoans given up the grandeur of their Aegean position?

In his aching bones Boris suspected that the Minoans simply grew tired. In only a few centuries they had transformed this landscape with agriculture, architecture, sports, and arts. Then, for more centuries, they had lived in this completion, every man in fitness with everything he had projected. But the pain of living simply began to outweigh the pleasure they took in their image.

"Is that what happens to all human meaning?" Boris saw that an answer to this would require algebras he had never heard of. "I want algebras whose functions change with time."

In the distance his father was approaching. Wistfully, Boris watched the man's springy, youthful step. He himself was awkward and already ponderously footed. Except in height, he was not at all like his father. He saw, too, that he would never be clever like his father, outwitting history that way and living a long life in peace with many children and beloved antiquities to enjoy.

Suddenly, as he watched his father's joyous step, the mysterious silence of three millennia that stood in the olive grove became a presence to Boris—the presence of the absence of Man. He was abruptly filled with a great sense of urgency that set his heart thudding. It vaulted him to his feet, and he went in gangling haste to meet his father.

His father called across a few remaining steps. "Boris, what has alarmed you? Don't tell me you've been bitten by a snake on Crete! I won't believe it."

Boris came up and stopped, facing his father a little breathlessly, feeling a little foolish, too, but nevertheless convinced of the great urgency.

"Father, I must go to England to study."

Mr. Boritzsch was a man of stringy muscle with a scholarly slump in strong shoulders. His sun-bronzed face was finely molded around blue eyes that were set in lines of humor. It was a gentle face of patience and pragmatism.

He spoke now in English, as had Boris. "Well, now, son! I had been expecting this, but perhaps not so soon."

"It is urgent, Father."

"Yes, I am sure it is. Your mother will be devastated to lose the first of her little ones."

"I must go to study with Professor Brough in England."

Mr. Boritzsch nodded. "I understand. Certainly you long ago passed the point at which I or anyone else in this part of the world could teach you anything."

Mr. Boritzsch turned his head, and for a long time he stared out across the silver waves of the olive grove.

"You know, son, sometimes I think what attracts me most to the sites of antiquity is the great peace that comes when Man is gone."

4

Rapist, Killer, Spoiler

"In the trauma of my first love I learned that romance is an invention of desperate imagination. Even while I was suffering this early lesson, comically enough, I met the dear girl who set off in my head the notion of romanticizing prostitution so that the rapist and spoiler in us would be used."

The Diary of the Equations

Up the autumn skies of Oklahoma swept awesome dawns and sunsets. Everyone except Colin and Miss McAllister talked about this. On a visit to the college at Stillwater, Mr. Collins discussed it with some of the faculty. Later, he reminded people that the Pacific island of Krakatoa had exploded back in the 1880s. It, too, had filled Earth's atmosphere with dust and brilliance.

"This is dust like that," the county agent declared. "It's the dust of Texas up there and next it will be the dust of Oklahoma."

Throughout Indian summer the town burned its leaves in pillars of smoke. Outside their window incredible bursts of evening light flared in this haze. Miss McAllister did not like him to look on her multicolored nudity. Each time she struggled to consciousness from her bedroom stupors, she murmured in piteous shame. Across breasts marinating in chartreuse she drew pillows. Beyond a dainty pubis japanned in orange, she clutched for sheets.

They were so intent on each other the Earth seemed to have spun away and left them in this light-shot passion. It was quite different now for Colin than it had

been with the Indian girl. These breasts were beautiful and desirable, but they were so much more than that. *They were hers*. Beneath them raced *her* blood and *her* fires that sent her hands to crush his head to her.

Miss McAllister became real to him now . . . a hungry reality that filled him with awe and filled her with fear of herself. He found that she had hazel eyes and that tiny brown freckles were peppered across her nose and tanned cheeks. Actually her voice was quite low, a little gravelly, and had an occasional comic squeak; it was not at all like the cooing of doves. But the honeysuckle fat was there and had been fired to glowing.

There certainly was no longer any doubt that the series of synthetic hormone injections had wrought a permanent change in Colin, allowing him, after the usual male ejaculation, a long series of increasingly intense orgasmic experiences.

No wonder it was three weeks before Miss McAllister remembered she was supposed to be teaching him French. She sat upright in the bed shrieking, "French!" The sheet fell from her breasts and she grabbed it back.

"Oh, Colin, I'm in a daze, I love you so. I walk around dreaming and don't know where I am. Now what are we to do? I can't think straight enough to teach you anything."

He reached up with his left hand and grasped the nape of her neck and drew her head down to his chest.

"I already know French," he admitted. Then he recited for her several verses including the one from Verlaine.

"Where did you learn French?" she asked without surprise. "That last was lovely."

"From a girl."

"What kind of girl?"

"A French girl." Colin was staring at the ceiling while he stroked Miss McAllister's soft, auburn hair.

She had stopped kissing his chest and was silent for some time. "I knew that you had had other girls, you

are such a wonderful lover." There was another silence. "Did she teach you that last poem?"

"Heavens, no! She didn't know a line of poetry."

"It's our poem?"

"If you like it."

"I think it's beautiful. But let's not talk in French again."

"Good."

"Did you make up that last poem?"

Colin said a stupid thing for which he could have instantly bitten off his tongue. "No, that was written by a drunken insurance clerk who was in love with his mother."

Miss McAllister became very quiet, but there was no sense aggravating his blunder by trying to correct it. This matter was the only trouble in their paradise, and her modesty was the signal of it. Colin rarely looked his fill at her lovely body. At first he had begged to see her. Later, with understanding, he was more considerate.

At first she had been saucy with contempt for the sexual morality about her. She had cited legendary loves between youth and woman. But, as it developed, she was not just under the sexual restraint of her Oklahoma world. She was tortured by her classic crime, this "monstrous desire" for his youth. Her modesty before his eyes was a genuine withdrawal that slowly intensified its conflict with her passion.

"Colin, I am so ashamed every time you come here . . . I am so old for you." She stammered to a halt.

It was dusk. They had made love, and they were sitting across from each other in her parlor. She was dressed in a yellow silk dressing gown, and he had on trousers and undershirt. He was putting on his socks and shoes.

She continued. "The Lord knows I know you are more than a man. But your folks don't know, nor the townpeople. Colin, I would die of shame if they found out about us, and it scares me so because, actually, I want to tell everyone. I want to shout it for joy in the streets."

Colin did not at all resent her feeling, and he thought he understood its sources. He was sure, from the areolar bloom of her breasts that she had had a prolonged affair while she had been at Teachers' College in Norman, Oklahoma. From things she had told him, he was sure it had been she who had broken off the affair because she had decided that, after all, he was not much of a man.

She had dated frequently until this fall, and she had told Colin on several occasions that none of the eligible young men in the county were worth marrying. Not one of them could compare with her father, he gathered.

So here she was, girlhood gone, five years a teacher, increasingly demanding in her image of a husband, and desperately, heart-burstingly in love with a youth who had not yet completely muscled out.

No, Colin understood her feeling, and he wanted more than anything in the world to help her over it.

He smiled to her across the darkening room. "If anyone ever finds out, darling, just tell them the truth, that I raped you."

It was very nearly true. That first evening Colin had been certain she would allow him to kiss her mouth. He had been equally certain she would never allow him anything further. There could be no pussyfooting his way into an affair with her. The French lessons would stop in zero time if she but suspected. It would have to be accomplished in one try. There could be no thought of bed, and the couch was too small. So here on the parlor floor it would be.

Yes, she had allowed him to put his left arm about her, not noticing that he was placing himself to enable him to pin her arms. Yes, she had smilingly allowed his youthful kiss on her mouth, not expecting the kind of kiss she got.

She had stiffened mightily, but his right hand was already in her cleavage with a firm grip on her brassiere and dress. As they rolled from the couch to the floor with a crash, he had ripped the garments from her and taken her nipple into his mouth.

She had emitted one astonished and shaken "Colin!"

After that, she had struggled in grunting silence, but he was a big, strong boy determined not to fail in faint-heartedness, he had clamped her legs in a tight scissor-hold, and for a time, with her legs bound like that, she had flopped the two of them about the floor like absurd fish while he pressed his desire with brutal insistence.

Of course, it hadn't been rape. In the end she could have resisted successfully. But she had begun to moan, then to relax, and finally to respond.

Now she was paying for that in an agony of guilt. She sat on the couch bent forward and staring at the floor where the sunset lay like red wine. Her perspiring hands washed themselves in the silk of her yellow lap.

She moaned. "Oh, can you imagine the shame of being discovered? Just think, Colin, what it would do to your family. And my life would be ruined."

"I'll tell you what I think. Instead of the ignorant, fumbling initiation young people give each other, the kids should learn from experienced elders. People who are parents and have a vested interest in being considerate and instructive."

Miss McAllister rose. She came to Colin and placed her fingertips over his lips and leaned her cheek into his hair. "Darling, no more. You're so good for me. Now I feel silly to have worried about our ages."

But it worked only for the next week or two. Colin saw that each awakening to her sun-painted shame brought her closer to a time she could not bear. Gauntness shadowed her face. With a jolt of maturation he saw a fatigue that was growing ravenous.

In the last days she could only approach him moaning, her body dampened in apprehension. She would grasp him with birdlike cries of grief and guilt that would mount into the apocalyptic sunsets where, each time, bliss destroyed her, and destroyed her, and then destroyed her.

One afternoon exhaustion stilled even her modest hands. He sat up in her bed and looked his fill at her

supine body. With lids half-open she made not a move to cover herself.

She had been so quick to pull his mouth to her breast she had not even thought to draw the curtain. So the room about them, like the world beyond the window, was submerged in pink, a pink to be respected. It had the beat of the sun in it, a golden beat that hammered pink deeply into things.

It hammered her body, and it hammered his mind, and suddenly, through it, he saw the raw lineaments of romance . . . the effort needed to maintain this magical illusion. A shudder seized him.

"What is to become of me when everything has become illusion and credulity in my heart where I feel the magic instead of just in my head where I think about a science of it?"

He looked on the agony of shame and desire he had made of Miss McAllister and found that he was breathing in harsh gasps and that his eyes were stinging.

And so Colin Collins, boy scientist who had dissected the myths of religion with intellectual ease, found that the truth about love was a scalpel in his heart.

He reached out and touched her breast, beneath which the heart fluttered in weariness. "I will give you wings," he whispered, "to hunt a new love. For we must part."

The next day was Saturday, and Colin went with his father on the county agent's field tour about the county. Colin had been waiting for this particular trip because Mr. Collins intended to make a stop in the little town of Redfork where the war ace, Mr. Marty McCord, kept a dirt-floored garage.

The dirt road to Redfork went straight over the red, clay hills and straight down into the sand-ochered bottoms between woods of black-boled oaks. The chilled branches whipped stiffly at the overcast sky, and Mr. Collins had the top up on the new Dodge he was so proud of.

He had named this car Betsy. Colin watched his father's hand caress Betsy's steering wheel each time she successfully crested a hill and he listened to the endeared assurances that coaxed her through each slithering, sandy bottom. Poor, squeaky old Annabelle had been forgotten in two weeks.

Months later Betsy would break down for the first time. Then, Colin knew, his father would begin to reminisce about "good old Annabelle" who would begin to appear as having been a truer and, incongruously, a more dashing and worldly mistress. These passions for his cars never bothered Mrs. Collins. She had a solid instinct about sublimation.

"Son, how are your French lessons?"

"Oh, fine. I'm going to stop them for a while. I've picked up enough that I can study on my own."

"That's mighty fast. You just started."

"I don't mean to sound conceited, dad, but languages seem to be easy for me."

This was a considerable understatement. Colin's rapid, permanent retention of the rote material he needed was phenomenal. In the case of languages he required only a sufficient sampling of the actual speech to develop his ear for the emotional logic of this rote.

Just there Miss McAllister's pitiful school French would have been useless, and as Colin thought of the dear woman he found himself in tears before his father.

Mr. Collins put forth a shy hand and patted Colin's knee. "Can I help you, son?"

Colin shook his head and wiped his eyes and finally replied, "No, father, something just made me feel sad."

"Don't be afraid to talk to me about it."

Abruptly, the county agent kicked Betsy in the brakes. "Look!"

Colin finished wiping his eyes in time to see two gray squirrels bounding from the road.

"That's a dinner for the Kincaids up at the next crossing." Mr. Collins brought the Dodge to a halt and leaped out.

Using the heel of his boot he began kicking stones

loose in the chill dirt of the road. Colin jumped from the car eagerly and grabbed four large stones his father left for him. The two squirrels clung alertly to the bole of an oak just inside the unfenced woods. As Mr. Collins leaped the ditch, they flashed to the other side of the tree.

"Stay on this side, son. I'll go under."

Colin stopped between the road and the tree. He stood, holding the extra rocks for his father, and watched him walk backward under the tree. One squirrel whisked around to Colin's side. The other leaped out onto a branch and stood tensely, tail twitching against the gray sky.

"Throw, dad, throw!"

The county agent was hesitating strangely and circling to the right. "If I miss him I would hit Betsy out in the road."

The squirrel picked that moment to race for the end of the branch. Colin saw his father's beautiful right arm whip back and then forward as the man's whole body lunged with the throw. The rock streaked whitely in the crisp air. There was a "PLOP" and a little explosive shriek. Sagging below the bright trajectory of the continuing stone, the squirrel flew toward Colin and fell like a wad of rag.

"Where is the other one, son?"

"Right here."

"Chase him around."

Colin thought he probably could have hit the nervous target himself, but this was his father's game. He threw lightly and hit the tree about a foot below the squirrel. Abruptly Mr. Collins was stumbling about in the brush trying to get a clear sight as the squirrel spiraled up the bole and into the small branches.

This was a high, difficult throw, and Mr. Collins missed three times with the squirrel changing twigs each time a rock whistled past.

Colin took the extra rocks to his father, and on the next throw there was the "plop-shriek" and the sailing rag.

Mr. Collins remembered a persimmon tree they had

just passed. They backed the car there and picked his hat full of the ripe persimmons so Mrs. Kincaid could make a pie to go with the squirrels.

The county agent put his arm about Colin's shoulder. "Are you feeling better?"

"I'm feeling great."

Mr. Kincaid should have been squat and mean-mannered with other suitable resemblance to the rowdy, cheating, bushwhacking murderer skulking under that name through so many pages of "the wild West." Instead, he was tall and scrawny with a long red neck and a huge adam's apple that had to tremble a moment or two before he spoke.

He and thin, white-haired Mrs. Kincaid were happy to receive the squirrels and persimmons at the kitchen door, and after some trembling of the adam's apple Mr. Kincaid was able to invite them in.

"That's mighty nice of you, Mr. Collins. If there were elephants to hunt in these woods I couldn't see them at fifty feet."

The kitchen was steamy with a wash Mrs. Kincaid was boiling. She inspected the squirrels with grateful expertise. "Are there shot in them, Mr. Collins?"

"He killed them with rocks," Colin allowed. "He hit the first one with the first throw while it was running along a branch."

Mr. and Mrs. Kincaid looked at one another and then at the county agent. Mr. Kincaid's Adam's apple became quite active.

"Rocks, Mr. Collins?"

Colin's father was blushing. "I throw pretty straight sometimes. You really ought to have seen my younger brother who was killed in France."

The adam's apple started again. "You knocked them out of the trees with rocks? You ought to be pitching for the White Sox."

At this Mrs. Kincaid became quite firm. "Now, Mr. Kincaid! I wouldn't like it a bit if Mr. Collins gave up being the county agent."

After Colin and his father were back out in the car

and waving goodby to Mrs. Kincaid who was flashing her apron from the back door, Mr. Kincaid hesitated over closing the door on Mr. Collins' side and visibly persuaded himself to bring up a subject.

"I hate to ask this of you, Mr. Collins, but you know what we talked about last time you were out here. If you could speak to Edgar Quinlan maybe he'd do something now to protect my back sixty. The soil isn't too hard yet."

"I'll take care of it right now," Colin's father promised.

Minutes later Betsy pounded her way to the top of a long hill, and Mr. Collins suddenly swung her into the rutted drive of a weather-beaten farm where frost-shriveled jimson weed clogged the shallow ditch and a scraggly patch of cotton had never been picked.

"Now this place belongs to Edgar Quinlan, and it's a shame. This farm is going to ruination, and on top of that it is washing red dirt down over the Kincaid place and cutting gullies into sixty acres of fine lowland."

As the car rolled to a stop in the chicken droppings of the bare yard, a tall, handsome man who had been gray in his youth, came out onto the sagging steps of the side porch.

Edgar Quinlan had the shrewd smile and penetrating glance of a man who enjoys himself practically all of the time, especially when other people criticize him. By the time Colin's father had opened the car door Edgar was there shoving out a hand of pleased greeting.

"Mr. Collins, it's good to see you." He peered through the car at Colin. "And who is this handsome feller?"

"That's my son Colin, Mr. Quinlan."

After Colin had clambered from the car, Edgar Quinlan stood looking at him. "Now ain't he goin' to be the Lochinvar! Son, you got to meet my daughter. She's a few years older, but that just makes for early comforts and later gratitudes."

A silent covey of Quinlans had gathered in barefoot dignity on the side porch. Over them stood a ging-

ham-sheathed sylph of about seventeen. Sun-bleached drapes of silky hair fell straight to her slim shoulders. There was a long, smooth firmness beneath the faded dress and a full, voluptuous calf below that extreme rarity, a pretty knee.

"Master Colin, that's my daughter, Pretty. Do you think I could marry her off to you some day? I'd like nothin' better than to have professional folk like your paw fer relations. Pretty, come on down here."

A cadaverous woman appeared momentarily behind the screen door and rasped at the girl. Without turning to the screen the girl said something soft that did not carry down to the car. Then she left her little brothers and sisters and descended the steps with a command of her motion that was a sight to behold.

Colin felt his breath suck in. He saw that her eyes were almost too blue for her tawny skin. The full lips were not smiling. She was just looking directly at him as she approached.

"Pretty, you take Colin 'round and show him the farm. Mr. Collins and I have a lot of talkin' to do about how I could farm better." He glanced at the county agent with that shrewd and self-deprecating smile. "I suppose you want to walk around where my land runs down to Kincaid's."

Colin's father nodded.

Pretty said to Colin, "Come on down to the barn. I'll show you the filly."

The waxy face of the mother appeared once more behind the screen. "Pretty, git yerself back in here."

The girl paid no heed. Instead she shrieked at the porch without turning. "You kids stay here, y'hear?"

The gravitation toward her ceased abruptly. Everyone backed up to the top step.

"Come on down to the barn. I got sump'n important to ask you."

Colin followed her, watching the compact hips roll with effortless rhythm and feeling the feverish eyes of the sick mother on his own slim back.

Pretty closed the decaying barn door behind them. They walked past the team where Pretty didn't bother

stopping to show him the suckling filly. She started up the ladder to the hayloft. Colin watched the butterscotch flesh pumping its way up to the loft of sweet hay, and he followed in such confusion that he barked his shin.

When he staggered onto the loft floor Pretty was standing in the new hay about ten feet from him. "The filly I wanted to show you is me."

She unbuttoned the front of the dress and let it drop. Then she dropped a pair of cotton panties that had been made from a flour bag. That was all she had had on. She raised her arms a little at her sides. Then she turned prettily this way and that without smiling. Solemnly she turned her backside to him and wiggled for a while. Then she faced him and bumped her golden-fleeced pubis at him. Finally, with instinctive artistry, she shook her pink-nippled breasts at him.

"What I wanted to ask you is, if I run away from this god-forsaken place and go to the city to lead . . . you know, what they call a life of sin, do you think I can make a success of it?"

Colin heard himself gulp.

"I mean, do I get your pecker up right away? And, would I get it up over and over?"

"Gosh, yes!" Colin was finding it very difficult to breathe.

"You don't think I'm too skinny?" She turned again and wiggled her satiny bottom at him while she regarded him in serious concern over her shoulder.

"Gosh, no!" What little breathing space Colin had left was badly crowded by his thudding heart.

"Don't you think my breasts are too small?" Turning back to face him she cupped one in each hand and, looking down at them, bounced them critically.

"Oh, no! Not at all! Not . . . at . . . AAALLLL! They're dainty and pretty like your face . . . JUST LIKE YOUR FACE!"

"Then if I do go into sin and work hard at it you think I can make a success of it and not just be like they say in the Bible—a whore?"

"Oh, goodness, no! You'd be terrific."

Pretty bent and pulled the panties up over her hips. "Good! I had to jump at the chance to ask a city boy like you. I wouldn't show myself to these lummoxes around here. They wouldn't know."

She was pulling on the dress. Colin couldn't bear to see the perky little breasts disappear. He moved toward her with hungry hands.

She backed off. "No, Colin. I've promised myself I'll never let any man touch me for free. Do you have any money?"

Colin had his checkbook with him, but in the money Pretty would understand he hadn't a dime. He shook his head mutely.

"There, you see! Colin, I'm so grateful to you for your advice, I think if you had a quarter with you I'd let you be the first to do it. But you wouldn't want me to break my principles when I'm just starting out, would you?"

"I suppose not," Colin stammered. Then, for the first time in his life, he heard in his bones the whisper of power. "I can get you an awfully good job."

She looked at him from deep suspicion as she finished the buttons. "Job? What kind of job?"

"Oh, it would be pure sin. You'd make big money."

"Colin, you're not much more than a boy. How would you know of such things?"

"Pretty, please! I want you to promise me you'll stay here on the farm another year. Then I'll have a very good job ready for you. It will take you straight to success in your line of work."

"What kind of job are you talking about?"

"You'll be an airline hostess."

"A what?"

"I want you to fly on airplanes to the West Coast and take care of the passengers."

He could see she didn't believe him, could never believe such a fantastic thing. "Pretty, you are very sleepy . . ."

Thus Colin persuaded Pretty Quinlan to wait on the farm. He respected her principles and did not, though

his mouth ached, reach out and uncover Pretty's pretties.

She had stimulated in him even more than his blood . . . a new look at prostitution that could mean big things in the future for both of them.

When Colin and the girl got back to the house, Colin's father and Edgar Quinlan were standing beside the Dodge. Colin kept his slightest glance from the screen door where he felt the eyes of the sick mother.

The county agent looked tired and from his hand hung a dim government blueprint which Colin recognized as the plan for a simple home-made, triangular grader on which a man could stand and ride behind a plow horse to build up terraces across his fields. The county agent contended that such terracing and contour plowing would keep this country from washing and blowing away.

Colin felt the girl squeeze his hand. "Mother thinks we've been bad down in the barn. I have to go in and make her feel better. She's awful sick. Thank you for the good advice. I'll wait here on the farm 'til I hear from you."

Colin nodded. He had eyes only for his father. Clearly the man had anger for Edgar Quinlan, but this was now buried under defeat. As the man stood here in these particular chicken droppings the accumulation of defeat he had suffered on countless farms was making his shoulders sag.

Edgar Quinlan actually was embarrassed. "Mr. Collins, you know I already know how to farm better than I do. I jist never seem to git the time. So how'm I ever goin' to build all them terraces and then plow the wrong way 'round the hill?"

Edgar stared at the man he had silenced beyond expectation. A storm of worried disbelief touched his face. "Look, Mr. Collins, I'll see what I can do in the spring. You and the boy come in for some noon victuals. In spite of the way things look you'd like the food. You can eat off ma's kitchen floor. . . ."

Then that quick and crooked smile. "Fact is, with

what the kids have dropped there, you could eat well for a month or so."

Mr. Collins was clearly anxious to get away. He thanked Edgar Quinlan and even shook his hand. "We'll grab a bite in Redfork."

Colin got into the car with his father and they drove off. His father was sunk in a depression too deep to disturb. Colin watched the poor, red-dirt farms slip by, and he saw that the only way to save this land was with huge farms run like a business.

Abruptly he saw into the future. These people were all going to have to leave this land. Where else could they go but to the West Coast. It was going to be a mighty big river of dirt-poor people sloshing West on Highway Sixty-six.

5

Dreams of the Future

> "The 'future' has always had great meaning in America . . . building the future. Even back there in those Oklahoma days, a voice was trying to whisper to me about an industrial future undreamed of in those red hills. That was why my heart went strongly to Mr. McCord . . . he dreamed so urgently of great ships in the air."
>
> *The Diary of the Equations*

Colin and his father ate a silent, tasteless lunch at the little counter in Redfork. Then, while the county agent drove a way out of town to see another farmer, Colin walked down the short street to the dirt-floored garage behind which stood the old Curtiss JN-4 biplane roped down to stakes in her own cow pasture.

From a flue on the side of the little frame workshop, sheets of lost heat scintillated skyward shaking into the street the heavy scent of kerosene. Inside, the stinging fragrance of alcohol arose not only from the leaky ra-

diators of two model-T Fords on which Mr. McCord was working, but also from Mr. McCord himself. The pilot had clearly made some noontime progress toward a solid-phase drunk.

"Well, if it isn't Master Colin Collins, the greatest unsuspected rod in the Indian Territory." Mr. McCord came forward, lanky and cheerful in khaki coveralls, wiping his greasy hands on a ball of wadding.

He put out a hand of respect. "Son, I've always admired my own performance, and in England and France I added some cultural qualities to my bucking . . . but what I saw in those sunflowers last summer will live in my memory."

Colin was both abashed and pleased over this compliment. "Oh, Mr. McCord, it was no more than any red-blooded American lad could have done for the lady."

The airman shook his head to indicate that Colin knew better than that. He had started rolling a cigarette in the dangerous fumes of the garage. Now he took the dangling bag of Bull Durham from between his teeth and cuffed Colin alongside the ear with it.

"You have a big future ahead of you, Mr. Collins."

Colin watched Mr. McCord swing a big kitchen match over the drippings of gasoline and oil and loop the sputtering light through the fumes of alcohol and kerosene. The only thing that seemed unlikely to ignite was the spittle-drenched tobacco.

"How is your business, Mr. McCord?"

The airman stood with the cigarette drooping from his mouth, and Colin saw that subtly, Mr. McCord himself had begun to droop. The young, brown face sagged a little, and as he turned slowly away, Colin saw that the temples were quite gray.

"Son, I'm sure your dad doesn't know how you carry on in the brush. I hope he wouldn't mind you seeing me take a drink."

With which Mr. McCord lifted a flask from his hip and had himself quite a jolt. "It would be against natural law for you to drink, son. It's only against unnatural law for me to drink."

Mr. McCord walked across the little garage and stood looking through a dusty window at a big red barn outside. "You asked about my business. What business? You can't make money off these poor farmers who don't drive anything but an old model-T. I'm so broke I can't fly Jenny to the West Coast and get a job."

Colin went over and stood beside the man and helped him look at the big red barn. "Didn't you realize that before you moved out here last year?"

"Last year the Redfork oil field was supposed to come in south of here. This year that street out there should have been pot-holed by big trucks that would be breaking down and need fixing in my garage. Next year the inside of that barn would have been a beehive."

"Do you own that barn?"

"I own this whole farm because it has the biggest, flattest, most unobstructed cow pasture in the state . . . and one of the biggest barns."

"What's in the barn?"

Mr. McCord turned and looked at Colin with liquor-moistened eyes. "The two biggest, most beautiful, radial, air-cooled engines in the world. I want to build a plane, Mr. Collins, a high-winged monoplane with one of those beautiful engines out under each wing and a fuselage like a gull . . . a plane to carry passengers, Mr. Collins."

"That's what I've come to talk with you about."

"What have you come to talk with me about?"

"An airline. Regular flights west, and regular flights south." Colin drew the checkbook from the hip pocket of his Levis and opened the fountain pen. "How much will it take, Mc. McCord, to finish the first ship?"

The airman was staring at Colin in sudden sobriety. "After those sunflowers I believe you can do anything. You do have the money, don't you!"

"I have it, Mr. McCord. But keep that secret to yourself."

"It would take nine thousand dollars."

"I'll make it for ten. By the way, you don't drink when you fly?"

"Never!"

"We'll form a corporation and call it 'Colinair'. I'll own fifty-one percent of it. Is that agreeable with you?"

"Of course."

Colin handed him the check. "Someday we'll be flying a hundred passengers on our ships. For the next few years, however, we are in our experimental stage. So let's have a little fun. Let's just provide exclusive travel for very wealthy gentlemen . . . one gentleman at a time . . ."

Colin grinned knowingly at the airman. "One hostess to the gentleman . . . charming young women accomplished in lullabies and madrigals . . . serving delicacies of the Southwest such as quail under glass, hot tamales with chilled melon, peeled grapes . . . young women accomplished, Mr. McCord, in just about everything. So you will want to furnish your cabins with luxury. You might consider mink carpeting, and certainly swansdown for the couch."

Mr. McCord guffawed earthily.

Colin smiled. "I have already chosen two of the young ladies. One of them lives in town." He felt his face sober, and he dropped his head to stare at his feet. "These girls will make very fine marriages, don't you think?"

"There can be no doubt about marrying money. All a girl would have to do for the perfect marriage is wait for a goat to her taste. What's this girl's name?"

"A Miss McAllister."

The airman's eyes popped. "You mean the young teacher?"

Colin nodded.

"Whewee! You aim high."

"Contact her as soon as you have the ship ready. Tell her I asked for her to take the job."

Colin brightened. "The other girl I will put you in

touch with later. Her brief career on Colinair will be only her preparation for bigger things . . . a delectable project that is beginning to form in my mind."

6

The Standing Cold

". . . our religions, our romantic love, our dreams of the future and our pride in the present are all the magic of illusion. I do not mean to sound like an old sage. I mean it positively . . . that illusion is magical meaning, the spark of human endeavor.

"Is it possible we could develop a mathematics of illusion . . . the equations of magical meaning?"

In a letter to Professor Brough

As that fall of 1928 converted to an Oklahoma winter, Colin experienced an inner sense of maturing. It was a continuously pleasant experience, sometimes an exciting one with bursts of insight, but with it came a growing detachment from the people about him. He wrote voluminously to Professor Brough in England, the only man he yet knew, who could understand his new thoughts.

The family confronted his intellectual maturation on a Saturday evening early in December. It was dark outside, and they were dining by candlelight because they were having calves liver. Liver being "a poor man's meat," Mrs. Collins always served in the dining room on a white tablecloth with the best silver and glasses when she cooked it. And ever since Murphy and Minot of Boston, speaking as loudly to Mrs. Collins as to the Nobel committee, had reported the successful treatment of pernicious anemia (but pernicious) with liver, the Collinses ate it once a week in this style that suggested an honored guest, perhaps the spirit of the calf.

Conscious of all this, Colin smiled at his plate as he cut a bite of meat. Colleen, mistaking the passing smile for happiness, took a shot at it.

"This will be the fourth Sunday in a row that Colin hasn't been to church at all."

Colin sighed heavily vowing to tell her later in private that the "Miss McAllister thing" was all over.

Mrs. Collins returned a forked bite to her plate, raised a shining linen napkin to her lips, and declared, "Yes, Colin, I trust that you will at least attend church services tomorrow."

"Well, mother, actually I hadn't intended to. I have some reading to do and I. . . ."

Mr. Collins slammed his knife back to the linen beside his plate. "I'd like to know, young man, what kind of reading you consider more important than the study of the Bible?"

Colin saw at once that his father, intentionally or not, had converted the matter from a question of attending or not attending church, to a question of the relative merits of certain books.

Actually, Colin had planned to laze through the day rereading some of Shaw's plays. He saw that he should not admit that, and so he lied, "Well, dad, I don't mean that there is a comparison between the two books, but I was going to do some reading in Spinoza's *Ethica.*"

"You're not reading Spinoza," Mr. Collins declared. "You're reading a German. . . ."

"Well, yes, sir. Nietzsche. Yes, I have been."

"I took the liberty of glancing through that red book you fell asleep over the other night . . . *Thus Spake* . . ."

". . . *Zarathustra.*"

Mrs. Collins had not meant this turn of events. "Let's all eat now. It's getting cold."

Mr. Collins was looking steadily at Colin. "I can quote you a thing or two I read. 'If there were gods, how could I endure it not to be a god? Therefore, there are no gods.' What about that?"

"What kind of logic is that?" Mrs. Collins put in

from a full mouth she otherwise would never have used.

Mr. Collins raised a hand to silence her. "How do you interpret that?" he asked his son.

Colin owed his father complete frankness, and he delivered it. "Well, sir, I have felt that Nietzsche demolished in one phrase, the life-work of Spinoza. Religion is a matter of faith, not logic, and Nietzsche's line is a spoof of Spinoza's logical method."

There was a long silence over the cooling calves liver, and there was no doubt in this silence that it was to be Mr. Collins who would speak next.

Finally, he declared, "I think you are right about that. Now, while you are devising a departure for yourself from that dangerous area, you may absent yourself from church. But you will spend that time devising your departure from the dilemma you have yourself in. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir." Colin was both grateful to his father and disturbed. He saw that it was not over between them, but he was not sure what was left over.

There was a big snow the week before Christmas, a phenomenal snow for the Indian Territory. Colin's father had one of the farmers bring a team and sled of hay and leave it in town so that, on an evening a few days before Christmas, Mr. Collins could drive the family out to the old farm where Colin and Colleen had been born and where aging, ailing grandmother Collins insisted on living.

"Over the river and through the woods, to grandmother's house we go. . . ."

Colin's father and mother sang sweet harmony up on the seat as the team plodded and the sled squeaked over the snow. Colleen giggled with Freddie Stapleton on the other side of the hay. All the while she sang, Mrs. Collins kept glancing back at those two. Colin could have told her she had nothing to fear under that blanket, or under his own, for that matter.

The girl they had invited for Colin was remarkable in many respects, not the least being why his parents

had wanted her so much to be Colin's companion for the evening.

Judith Oliphant came from a small, neat, well-run farm where everybody had to work brutally hard. Judith was the oldest of nine . . . methodical and serious beyond her years. She was brilliant and studious in school, and on the farm, in spite of the weariness in the evenings, she prepared herself fervently to teach a large class of children each week at Sunday school.

Judith was a stubbornly principled girl. This was reflected in the care of her rich auburn hair which was styled after a prewar photograph of her recently deceased mother, as she had explained.

Like her hair, the rest of her features were handsome without prettiness. Her mouth was actually beautiful, but its outstanding promise was the firmness of a remarkable character. She had large, lovely eyes. But they probed you with an alertly analytical focus devoid of demureness. Colin had always admired Judith Oliphant, but she was not his choice for a hayride.

None of this involved suspicion that Judith was prudish. One easily pictured her setting aside the bowl of peas she was shelling, closing the open Bible beside her, walking down to the barnyard, grasping in both hands the swollen yard of a lunging stallion, and helping her father and brothers guide it into the quivering mare.

Now, staring up at the sparkling night, this no-nonsense girl spoke with awe. "I love the stars. I think of them as God's first message, the message nobody will ever understand."

She was not a large girl, and not yet fully matured, but she commanded the fine, vibrant voice one might expect from pulpits. Colin agreed defensively with a mute nod.

The stars, the stars beyond stars. And now we know that the nebulae beyond the stars are other clouds of suns. How immense is this exploding dust of fire in which an occasional granule may teem with life!

Are you out there, anyone?

"Colin."

"Huh?"

"Why don't you ever come to church anymore?"

Colin felt a smile flick his lips. So that was it. Judith was supposed to persuade him to go back to church. Colin was a little angry about this forced companionship.

"I do it for Christ."

"Don't be sacrilegious, Colin."

"I'm not. I stay away from churches for Christ's sake. I don't want to insult his memory going to an hypocritorium."

Beyond Judith's sculptured curls of hair Colin saw his father's back stiffen, and Colin was suddenly aware that the singing had stopped. His father turned momentarily to look back in his direction from a face barely discernible in starlight.

Now, Mrs. Collins was repeating the song ". . . to grandmother's house we go. . . ."

No, I can't go back to that house, mother. There is only one direction left, mother. It's out there between the stars. But, oh, my warm mother! This winter's night is just a breath of the cold out there. It stands out there to eternity, mother, the one thing that will never change, mother.

Judith Oliphant broke a long silence. "That's an awful thing for you to say, Colin Collins. It confuses people for you to do wrong, because you're the most popular boy in school. Lots of us in school have noticed lately how you stay more and more to yourself. That's what comes of being irreligious."

Her voice broke.

Colin had hurt her deeply, and he endured a moment of shamed "come-uppance." He knew then and there that he would never again in his life treat faith meanly. He fumbled in the hay and found her hand, work-roughened at puberty.

"I'm sorry, Judith. That *was* an awful thing to say. Forgive me."

"You're an atheist, aren't you, Colin Collins?"

"No, Judith, I'm . . . I'm an agnostic."

"What's the difference? Neither one believes in God.

An agnostic is just afraid to be as definite as an atheist. 'I don't know' is all he's willing to say."

Colin shook his head. "Not since the war. Today, I think . . . well, I think an agnostic would still say, 'I don't know,' but it would be turned the other way. He would really be saying, 'I don't know what you are talking about.' "

Colin felt Judith stiffen, but he went on. "You know what I don't like about atheists? They are against other people believing in gods. They believe in not believing in God. And sometimes they can get pretty violent about it."

He watched her star-limned face staring out into the heavens, and she spoke in a hushed voice. "You mean the word 'God' has about as much meaning for you as 'Jabberwocky,' don't you, Colin?"

"Well, it's pretty much like that. But I feel strongly that most people should believe in some kind of god."

Now Judith's voice was tightened up and small. "You're very insulting, Colin."

"I know I am. I didn't mean it like that. I mean, I think we have to believe . . . but, I can't."

Judith was silent, and Colin could practically feel the determination firing up in her. It was transmitted through the resolute hand.

"I can prove to you there is a God!"

"Don't try, Judith. A friend of mine has raised a monument of such proof."

"Who is he?"

"His name was Spinoza."

"Oh, him! My grandfather reads him."

Colin's father and mother had switched to harmonizing "Silent Night," and Colleen and Fred Stapleton had joined them.

Incongruously, Colin's sense of intellectual freedom suddenly burst from him in happy laughter.

Judith was shocked. "Colin! How can you lie there laughing? This is a serious conversation about God and the meaning of the world." She was embattled. "There has to be a meaning in the world! God is the meaning."

At exactly that moment, prompted by her angry words, he saw for the first time what his life was for. "I am to create meaning!" he thought in astonishment.

It came to him with great clarity, and with an orgiastic sense of flowing out from himself into everything else.

"Yes!" he murmured to himself. "If the world had meaning in itself, I would be useless. It is my function to invent meaning because I am a human animal."

He saw how poignant it was that the living and dying of other animals *meant* only the evolution of their species, but the living and dying of the fear-ridden humans had individual and social meaning because, with the evolution of this animal that could foresee its own death, a species had appeared that could use meaning. It was a more complex thing perhaps, but the human animal had developed meanings and gods just as spiders had developed webs. Such was the animal's way.

Judith was staring at him. "You frighten me. A wonderful person like you that doesn't believe frightens me."

As the sled halted in the farmyard Colin rolled toward her and kissed her cheek. He found it dewed with a chill perspiration. She had followed him briefly into the abyss and seen Man standing alone, doing his best and worst, the poor, suffering ape.

Colin helped her off the sled. He whispered reassuringly, "I will believe, Judith. I will believe."

Colin watched her walking to the house across the starlit snow, and she seemed so tiny and defenseless that tears sprang to his eyes. She was not, of course, defenseless. She was a burning pillar of faith that would only burn the brighter at each future breath of his own disbelief.

Mr. Collins unhitched the team and now he asked Colin to put them in the barn. He stood before Colin for a moment while the others went to the house.

Then he spoke. "I heard what you said to Judith back there. I was not through with you the other night at the table because I knew something like this would

happen that would prove how dangerous your position is becoming. Now, I want to tell you something. Don't you ever again let me hear you trying to destroy faith in someone else. Do you understand me?"

Colin felt his shame burning through the chill of his cheeks. He spoke in a small voice. "Yes, sir, I understand."

His father went to the house, leaving Colin very alone.

Grandmother Collins kept only a little Jersey cow in the barn. After Colin had the two horses in stalls, he stole some of her hay for them. She turned and blew her hot breath over the back of his head.

Colin closed the barn on the snorting animals and walked back across the squeaking snow. Through the windows that lighted the snow he saw that they were all in the kitchen in the light of a Coleman lamp warming their hands over the wood stove. Colin stopped there in the chill night and watched. Everyone was laughing. Colin saw that grandmother, with trembling hands, was lining up on the kitchen table the little cups engraved, "State of Oklahoma, 1907". Into these she would pour, for her chilled guests, "blood-building" blackberry wine (sharply distinguished from the "booze" she had aggressively helped vote out of the country).

Here in the lonely house of her expected death she would, a few evenings hence, witness for the last time, little Jesus born again. And the visible proof of his birth would be the happiness on every face. Do you need more proof than human faces in a warm house so full of old meaning you cannot leave it?

Over the house turned the stars, the light years of standing cold across which was scattered this dust of fire. Abruptly, the human faith within the house was as vast a miracle to Colin as was the wheeling firmament. Both were impossibilities between two slices of nothingness; the nothing that had been before the universe, and the nothing that would be after it. The universe suddenly turned inward upon Colin, crushing him into nothingness.

He fell backward rigidly as if in a seizure. He lay on the snow glaring into the sky in a terrible moment of total, meaningless understanding.

When it was over he was almost too weak to stand. Even after he was on his feet he waited a while before entering the house. And he walked, knowing with stunned certainty that he had left his boyhood there in the snow, that his people were apart from him in a house of meaning he would never again penetrate.

Mother, mother, it's cold out here where I will be.

7

The Gorse

"Colin, I enjoyed very much your thoughts on Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Certainly I agree, Man's first invention in meaning had to be a world of magic meaning and certain it is that everywhere Man has invested the nature world with his own magic world of forces he can manipulate with rituals.

"How I wish you were here to meet young Boritzsch who is studying with us. His is the greatest mathematical mind . . ."

Professor Brough in a letter

Boris Boritzsch suffered through that long, damp, foggy, cold, unheated, "foreign" winter with aching bones about which he said nothing. At last . . . at long, long last, spring came to England.

Spring had brought this dreamy warmth and put fresh green in the good-smelling grass where the two of them lay, and it had brought out the distant, weekend tillers bending over brussels sprouts and potatoes.

Spring had also brought out the lovely, girlish breasts of Laura Brough, and in addition, a scarlet mite who now made his way up one of these pretty hil-

locks as if it were the route to the potato plantings far beyond.

Carefully and slowly, trying not to awaken Laura, Boris lifted his hand from her belly, brought his thumb and index finger up between his nose and her flesh, and ever so gently, tried to pick up the mite. The mite however, had made his way into the tender territory of pink nipple, and Laura laughed a little with an "OOOOoooo!"

She drew his head to her with careless love and innocently mashed the poor mite to a bitter death under Boris' nose.

"Oh, Boris, that was one of the funniest things I've ever watched. I had to cross my eyes to see it, but I was cheering for you all the way. 'Will Boris get the mite before the mite gets to the tickly part? . . . Oh, he's going to get him! No, no, the mite has won!' "

Boris raised himself onto his left elbow, slipped his right hand under Laura's neck, and lifted her head a little. She was a lovely, sensual, and desirable girl, "emancipated" completely, and pragmatic to a point that sometimes shocked Boris.

With her this was no youthful pose. She came from a gentle family of intellectuals which had lost a great many brilliant sons and cousins in the war. Now, between wars, in a grief too huge to mention, they did their duty in the most efficient way possible without any clutter of unnecessary "opinion."

Boris lifted the gray-eyed face a little further and kissed the full mouth gratefully. "That was a wonderful love," he murmured. "You are a sweet girl."

"I'm not sweet at all. I just love doing that with you."

"That's what I call sweet."

"You know, in the worst way, father wants his baby daughter to marry you someday."

"No, I didn't know that."

"Oh, yes. He wants a mathematical genius for a grandson. I must say, I wouldn't mind at all having your babies."

Boris' heart bumped and then paused alarmingly

over this touching frankness. But a voice was trying to speak to him. It was the first time Boris had heard this voice, yet it was intimate to him. It spoke, too, of intimate things. There would be a girl for Boris in another time and place. The voice spoke so urgently, a shudder of anticipation transfixed Boris.

"What's the matter, Boris?"

He was hesitant and filled with wonder. "I . . . I have a destiny. It is urgent."

Laura Brough raised a gentle hand and placed it in silence on his cheek. Looking into his eyes without any hurt she said, "Father will be terribly disappointed. He has never got over the loss of our brothers."

"I'm sorry, Laura. If it weren't for my destiny I would marry you this minute. You're the most desirable girl I've ever . . ."

She placed the tip of a finger against his lips and sat up. She pushed her skirts down and began buttoning her blouse. Then she stood up, smiling upon him and shaking her head.

"Come on, Boris Boritzsch, let's get on with the cycles."

He got to his feet with awkward effort and stood towering over her. "Just the same, you are the loveliest girl in the world."

She patted his chest. "You're a dear. And you're a genius, too. I'm quite sure you do have a destiny."

He nodded, looking down upon her without self-consciousness. "I have to go to America. Your father is a great man, but if what I need to know is known, I will have to find it elsewhere."

"Father will be doubly disappointed. He expected you to bring great honor to the college."

When Boris had stood up, he had got a headache. Of course he didn't mention this. He bent way down and kissed the sweet nape of her neck. They walked over to the roadside and lifted their bikes from the grass.

8

The Voice

"These men jump from buildings over a paper world of ruined magic. My poor father and the men about him have the truth on their faces. In the business world the first magic consists of generating anxiety in others and protecting yourself from it."

In a letter to Judith Oliphant

Colin found that the encounter with Judith's faith, and his discovery of "Man, the inventor of meaning" had greatly strengthened him. He longed for companions to share his thoughts. Then something happened which promised wider friendships.

In the spring, after the death of grandmother Collins, Mr. Collins came to a decision to abandon eleven years of government service for a future in private industry. He would move the family to California where he would manage an agricultural development that was already under way. It was 1929.

In anticipation of the depression Colin already was converting his holdings to cash that lay idle in vaults where bank failure couldn't reach it. He would be, as he had promised himself, a millionaire before he was fifteen.

Colin debated with himself about trying to dissuade his father from going into industry and decided against it. With all his foresight, he was not mature enough to anticipate the depression in terms of human suffering.

Before the family left Oklahoma that spring of 1929, Colin went down to the local bank and had one of his "you-are-so-sleepy" sessions with Mr. Norton. His suggestions as to how Mr. Norton could avoid going broke and make a fortune were the part of his instructions which Colin allowed Mr. Norton to remember—and with gratitude. Colin had learned that

speed-demon Norton was "fast" in other ways. It was a promising omen, he felt, in an associate who could handle money.

On the first day of bud-bursting, deep in the beautiful woods beyond the country club, Colin had chanced upon the model-A parked in a cow path and old Mr. Norton parked on a blanket with Miss Prime the choir leader at the First Presbyterian Church.

For one otherwise rather thin, Miss Prime proved to have surprisingly large and lovely breasts. And Colin had seen at once why the banker sported his long, silvery goatee. With it he was tickling the life out of Miss Prime.

Right then and there "old Mr. Norton" became young Mr. Norton to Colin and a partner he was to value for years to come.

After his session at the bank with young Mr. Norton, Colin hitchhiked out to Redfork and provided Mr. Marty McCord with enough money to start two more McCord Gulls and speed up production on the first one.

Two days later men came early in the morning and began emptying the Collins house of its furnishings and trucking them down to the Santa Fe station to load them onto a boxcar. One of the men was Mr. Sellers. His son Billy, who had helped Colin dump the bucket of snakes in front of the movie house, was there to help his father. When the last load was on the truck, Billy and Colin went back through the house for a final check around.

"Well, I guess that's it," Billy said. He extended his hand to Colin. "I guess you'll be pissing fourteen boards high the rest of your life."

Colin laughed, and in the empty house his voice was hollow. Then, before Colin could quite believe it was happening, all of the Collinses were sitting in Betsy, which was loaded with camping gear and boxes of food and suitcases of clothes, and they began the first rolling of wheels on the long trek westward.

Colleen and Mrs. Collins were both wiping tears

from their eyes. Colin's eyes didn't begin stinging until, at a cross street, he stretched his torso and raised his chin looking down the street. Through a budding pecan tree two blocks away, he caught a glimpse of Miss McAllister's bedroom window.

When they were out of town skewing along the brief stretch of pot-holed concrete beyond the oil field, Colin again stretched his torso and raised his chin to see the bend in the river where the teepees had stood. Soon another sea of sunflowers would lie there, but it would stand this year in hot, breathless silence, because Mr. McCord would be building ships, and the "greatest unsuspected rod in the Indian Territory" would be in California.

In Oklahoma City they stopped to say good-bye to the Ordways. Colin estimated that Dr. Ordway had lost twenty pounds. His jowls were gone, and he looked great. With his eyes dancing, he took Colin away into his office on the pretext of giving him "a little checkup."

He grabbed Colin's shoulders into one arm and hugged him while gesturing widely with the other arm. "My boy, you don't know what you have done for me. I'm a new man. Look at this!"

The office was stacked with journals and texts.

"I read everything . . . everything . . . anthropology, paleontology, zoology, endocrinology . . . sometimes until four in the morning. Then I drive out into the country and walk for miles thinking about it all.

"Colin, our Institute for Primate Studies will begin next year with a thousand burning questions. Do you know how long sexual intercourse lasts for a baboon?"

Colin admitted he did not know.

"Less than ten seconds!"

"You have to be kidding!"

"Would I kid about a thing like that? Do you think a baboon would kid about it? Just think! Just think! The greatest gap between us and the apes, the thing we have advanced furthest in, is sexual intercourse. Our brains are quite comparable to the ape brain. The apes are perhaps better behaved than we. Tools and sexual

intercourse . . . meaning no pun . . . these are the things we have."

Colin was happy for the doctor and for the project. "Shall we put a little more money behind it?"

"Yes, indeed! I want to give up more of my practice. How about twenty-five apiece?"

"That's fine with me."

Dr. Ordway seemed to have visions in front of his eyes. "I am beginning to think that no animal below the human female has a female orgasm. All higher animals have the male ejaculatory orgasm. But this female orgasm . . . how mysterious and wonderful it is . . . another human invention like the human meanings you told me of. Perhaps a woman's ability to have this orgasm is a measure of her genetic quality . . . eh!"

Colin smiled in keen interest.

The doctor clapped him on the shoulder. "Eh?"

Colin began to laugh.

"My son, if that proves to be true, how simple it will be to go out shopping for your wife! Eh?"

They began to roar with laughter.

Colin's mother came to the door and knocked on it. "What's coming off in there?"

Now they were convulsed with their laughter.

Betsy broke down near Elk City, and again near Amarillo. Mr. Collins began reminiscing about Annabelle. Mrs. Collins patted his knee.

After Amarillo it rained on the Texas Panhandle. It rained and rained and rained from the heavy sky. The black mud of Highway 66 seemed mixed with grease. They were stuck in the ditch on the left and in the ditch on the right and also, often, right in the middle. Near Vega they were stuck for hours before a truck came along. They reached New Mexico and Mr. Collins had exhausted the expletive, "Consarn it!" When they were stuck the last time, he said, "God damn it!"

Later that day the sun came out, but Mrs. Collins remained silent and tight-lipped over the blasphemy.

Two days later, when they reached Albuquerque, all

was good cheer again and Mr. Collins decided they would take a side jaunt up to Santa Fe to see the old Spanish town.

Colin had brought the imagined presence of his dead grandmother on this trip because she had always wanted so to see "the golden West." Now, through his eyes, she saw the narrow streets, the thick adobe walls, the potted geraniums, and the oaks about the fountain of the old town. Back on Highway 66, she saw the incredible sandstone bluffs near Gallup, and Colin told her about his premonition.

"Something awaits me here in this desert, grandmother. Something wonderful and exciting."

Colin had no idea what awaited him here . . . up there north perhaps . . . up there near the big mountains in Colorado. This country was built into his future as surely as Oklahoma was built into his past.

Each night they camped in the chill desert. One morning Mrs. Collins awoke screaming. Using his shoe Mr. Collins flipped a scorpion out the flaps of their tent. Smelling powerfully of vinegar, the waxy little creature retreated in alarm to the cover of some rocks.

At first they were in dry desert. Then it was the blooming desert of spring in central Arizona, breathtaking stretches of gold and purple. They saw tarantulas "as big as a man's hand" and giant cacti and poppies everywhere, and once there were peccaries beside the road.

Mr. Collins was an expert on pigs. When they saw the peccaries he stopped and wanted to get out and inspect them. Colin had read how dangerous they were and dissuaded his father.

Their mother declared in angry fright, "Mr. Collins! Just look at those tusks and get this car going before they rip the tires off it."

Shortly after that they were in the alkaline desert, and it seemed that the miles and miles of desolation would never end. Finally, on a hot afternoon when everyone was becoming quite irritable, Mr. Colins alerted them with a joyful call: "Mountains ahead! The Sierra Nevada!"

Colleen had a family reputation as an eagle-eye. After some peering she declared, "I don't see any mountains."

Colin was staring into the sky ahead and he could make out nothing.

"You can't see them by looking ahead like that," their father called into the back seat. "You have to look away as if at something to your right or left. Then you'll see them out of the corner of your eye. I learned that years ago in New Mexico."

Colin did as his father directed, and he was stunned by the great ghostly massif that arose on his vision for a moment as his head turned. He turned the other way and saw it again. He heard Colleen exclaim, "Oh!"

Then Mrs. Collins exhaled in alarm. "Are we going to have to cross that?"

Mr. Collins patted her knee and chuckled, "Not over the top, dear. We go through a pass."

They climbed in hot, boulder-strewn, waterless canyons until Betsy boiled over. When she boiled over again, Mr. Collins got to talking about Annabelle. At last the pass was down hill. Mr. Collins put Betsy into second gear to slow them and patted Betsy's steering wheel; he was rather proud of her at that.

In the late afternoon there came a moment Colin knew he would remember all his life. They rounded a precarious bend and the San Bernardino Valley stretched below them. Under a golden sunset lay green, green, green that disappeared into a blue haze out of which rose distant granite hills.

"Grandmother, look! This is the Golden West!"

After they had been in California only a few weeks, Colin became as thrilled as his father over the land development the man was managing. It was a sort of thing for which, one day, Colin wanted to use part of his money.

In a stride of miles per month the development was converting a vast stretch of Southern California's semi-desert into fig groves that rolled across horizons, grape vineyards that looped over the serene feet of moun-

tains, hushed valleys of grapefruit. Deep wells went down ahead of the marching crops and brought up glittering, cold water that had once formed the high snows of San Gorgonio and San Jacinto.

Wide-eyed over glossy brochures, rich and busy men in Chicago and New York bought shares in this miracle just to farm a little by proxy while they were so busy making money on paper. Colin momentarily forgot himself in this heady triumph over the desert, and he gloried in his happy father whose hand guided the miracle.

In October of 1929 the grading machines were still smashing roads through the cactus and sage almost as fast as a man could walk when the great black word "CRASH" began to roll off the world's presses almost as fast as a man could think. Presently, the ruined "farmers" in Chicago and New York began splashing on the pavements like a rain of tragic fruit that had somehow rotted at the height of season.

By the next summer the waterless trees of the land development would be withering from mountain to mountain. They were not yet bearing, and who could support them until they did? Who could buy their fruit?

Those first years of the depression revealed to Colin that he had a destiny and that it spoke within him. The anxiety, misery, and crushed dignity about him frequently stirred shallow plans to reveal his secret wealth to his parents and undertake some magnanimous relief of his family and neighbors.

The voice would speak, and each time it spoke it grew stronger. "That is the first step in a wrong direction. There are so many wrong directions and only one right direction for you."

Mr. Collins took a poor job as a salesman. A new car he had bought Mrs. Collins was repossessed. He lost their equity in a forty-acre orange grove he had been buying. He had indeed done badly. Colin frequently brought home small sums from his local checking account claiming that he had earned them at odd

jobs. But to any larger plans for relief of the family his inner voice would not listen.

Mrs. Collins became snappish, and for the first time in his life Colin heard her nagging. It was not the least element in the atmosphere of blame and failure that so rapidly enveloped his father, that he had made his mal-appropriate move from the safety of government service so promptly after the death of his lingering mother. In retrospect one saw that he had delayed for her sake a move to private industry which he had thought for years would be best for his family.

In a moment of waspish spite Mrs. Collins reminded him of this. Of course he had thought wrong about the move in the first place. Oh how he had thought wrong!

The worst, however, was the orange grove which Mrs. Collins had not wanted to buy. A *friend* had held the note and now the "friend" had foreclosed. She insisted that Mr. Collins confront his FRIEND with the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He, knowing that "the rules of the game" by which he had lost, was a document more firmly woven into the law, could only defend himself halfheartedly against the accusation of weakness.

Colin ached for his father, but he listened to his own inner voice. "These people are stronger than this. Let them be for a while."

And the voice was right. The most painful part of the depression was the scanty table to which they sat down. Mr. Collins attacked this basic problem by driving the country from dawn until after dark selling veterinary drugs for his small, ailing manufacturer. Very soon he began bringing home large amounts of produce. From then on the family surely ate better than anyone in town. In fact, it got so Mrs. Collins was constantly calling members of their congregation and giving away good things to eat.

Colin could see what was happening. His father was strictly on commissions, so his time was his own. After he had sold a farmer a vaccine for his hogs or medication for his poultry, he was free to offer his services to help doctor the animals. He would refuse money and

accept produce for helping a man save his whole flock of white leghorns from coccidiosis. The farmer naturally became Mr. Collins's lifelong friend and would buy drugs only from him.

By this means, in six months, Mr. Collins was his company's leading salesman and was going to the home office in Los Angeles once a month to train the sales force in veterinary medicine.

Mrs. Collins returned quickly to her habit of respect and love for him. One summer evening after they had stuffed themselves on fried chicken, Mr. Collins laughingly allowed that the farmer who had given these to him would gladly give him twelve fryers a week if there was any point in accepting them.

Mrs. Collins was instantly alert. She was wearing her hair drawn back into a bun, these days. She had grayed very prettily in the last year and it was becoming to her.

"Are there many farmers like him, dear?"

"Everyone I work with," he allowed proudly.

Mrs. Collins sat in thoughtful silence for a while Then she declared firmly, "We are going to start converting this largesse to money."

Mr. Collins, knowing his wife to be a determined woman, was a little alarmed. "How would we do that, dear?"

"We are going to start serving Sunday dinners here in our home. And charging for them."

Her dark eyes were looking across the table at Colin without seeing him. She was planning it in detail, determination molding her handsome face as her thoughts raced ahead.

"You don't mean it!" Mr. Collins was visibly shaken.

"I certainly do."

"Oh, mother!" Colleen was mortified. "This is our home, not a restaurant!"

"Now, I'll hear no more of false pride." Mrs. Collins was smiling slightly to herself with eyes staring beyond the table at menus, arrangements, and the manner of dividing up the work load in the family.

"You, Colleen, and Colin, will help me prepare vegetables and fruit and the meats on Saturday and wait tables on Sunday afternoon. Mr. Collins will only work in the kitchen. I will greet the guests, work in the kitchen, and wait tables. We'll serve large parties here in the dining room—somewhat smaller parties in the den."

"How much will you charge?" Mr. Collins asked.

"Fifty cents a person . . . all they can eat . . . and I'll have a special sauce for the potatoes so they'll eat a lot of them. There'll be no ordering, just what we have."

"Oh, mother!" Colleen was struggling with herself. "What will my friends think!"

"They'll think, missy, that you are better dressed, fed, and educated than they are, because you will be." Now with wifely genius, she turned to their father. "Your father is making as good a living as any family needs in these times, certainly better than most have. It's a depression and he's working hard enough to beat that. But if we want extra things we'll have to do something extra. And your father has already made that 'something extra' possible by making friends with all those wonderful farmers."

With that she reached across the corner of the table and took her husband's hand, and Colin saw he was about to get tears he was so proud.

Colin was delighted. He could see that her plan would work. "You can get all the guests you can handle right out of your own church. That's a well-to-do congregation."

She nodded. "I'll put a notice in next Sunday's bulletin. They'll have to agree for a certain number of weeks which will make planning easier."

Now, Mr. Collins was grinning. "All they can eat of Mrs. Collins's cooking for fifty cents! How can they lose. It won't be long before we'll be buying produce from the farmers."

That night, after they were all in bed, Colin heard his mother come out of the master bedroom and down the hall. She knocked at his door, and he asked her to

enter. She closed the door behind her and came and sat on the edge of his bed.

"There is something on my conscience I must talk to you about."

Colin knew this was going to be very difficult for her. She was a proud woman.

"When he needed me most, I deserted your father. I was very mean to him . . . he didn't deserve any of that."

Colin heard the choking in her voice, but he did not try to ease her. He had been bitter about the way she had treated his father. He had silent tears running down his face, but he did not try to ease her.

"Your father acted in everything as he saw best, and it will be proved that he did the right thing in leaving the government. I became frightened and behaved badly. . . . Your father is a brave man and a good man and surely you know that I love him."

"Mother, have you spoken to Colleen?"

"No, but I will, Colin."

He sat up then and put his wet cheek to hers. "I love you, mother."

"Why, Colin! You're crying."

"I've been known to."

She was right about her husband being proven right. Mr. Collins was called in to Los Angeles in the fall of 1930 and was offered the job of national sales manager for his company. After only brief bargaining he ended up with about twice the income he had been making on commissions.

"National" meant west of the Rocky Mountains since the company had no representation beyond there. "I'll change that," boasted Mr. Collins. "Before I'm through we'll have representation all the way to the east coast."

"And perhaps," added Colin, thinking of Doctor Ordway and the Institute of Primate Studies, "Your company will have diversified into human medicine."

Through young Mr. Norton, who was now of several banks and very grateful to Colin, Colin had al-

ready completed arrangements for one of his future holding companies. Before Colin's graduation from high school in June, Mr. Norton had purchased Mr. Collins's drug firm for a very good price.

"Now," the voice of his destiny complimented Colin, "this is the way I like to see you do things. Next year, after your father has learned more about managing the business, you can arrange for him to be made president and see that your owning company provides him with a huge budget for research. You must not, in these early days, interfere with history, but there is a vast future in drugs which you must begin now to weave into your destiny through patents. Between this company and the great things you will do with Ordway, I would say you have made an excellent start."

There was one other of his future enterprises for which Colin began plans that summer. This came about because, of all things, he discovered Mrs. Tompkins raiding a garbage can. The event was so patently a bit of business from a Chaplin movie that at first Colin could not believe it, nor later could he believe what his inner voice advised.

Upon transferring to his new school system the year before, Colin had caught the last quarter of Mrs. Tompkins's class in English literature, and he had learned that he could share with this lovely woman endless delights from as far away as Chaucer and as nearby as e e cummings. The youth and the lady had grown very fond of each other.

Like Colin's father, Mrs. Tompkins had picked the eve of the depression to make a big decision, hers, to retirè from teaching that next June. She was a widow with a married son with whom she could have lived on her small savings.

Now, by the summer of 1930, the savings were lost and the son was out of his job as a citrus chemist. Nevertheless, when Colin met her that morning as she came from a grocery with a small purchase, Mrs. Tompkins wore over her left breast the lovely old gold watch on its gold chain with which she kept the preci-

sion of her appointments. Slim and upright, she was wearing a neat cotton print that was very becoming to her. The dainty collar was clasped with a cameo broach that matched two earrings peeking from beneath her silvery hair.

Colin asked immediately about her son.

"Oh, he is having a hard time, Colin. He just couldn't find work in Los Angeles, so he is driving Ethel and the children to the Midwest, probably St. Louis or Milwaukee. He'll take anything there for the time being. Then, if Prohibition is repealed, he can get a good job in one of the breweries."

Half an hour later, quite by accident, Colin glanced down a residential alley he was passing, and there was Mrs. Tompkins taking the back way to her modest cottage. She glanced between the garages. Then the arm under which she held her small package lifted the lid of the garbage can behind the Blackstone home. She stared into it, grabbed something, and tucked it into her package.

Guilt and shame slapped Colin on his way. In the next few days he determined that Mrs. Tompkins regularly visited, at the same hour, the garbage can behind the Blackstone house and sometimes also the one at the house next up the alley. He determined, in addition, that about an hour before Mrs. Tompkins's arrival, Mrs. Blackstone always had a bit of garbage to bring out which she seemed to arrange rather carefully within the can.

Colin withdrew five hundred dollars from his checking account. Back home in his room he typed a noté on plain paper:

> I have been an admirer of yours for many years. I cannot divulge myself. In these terrible times I know it must be difficult for you.
>
> Please accept this gift as if from an old friend to whom it means nothing unless it can make you happier.

Colin sealed the note and money in an envelope and

addressed it. Then, as he stood up from his desk, his inner voice commanded, "Don't do it. It is another step in a wrong direction. . . . When will you learn humanity is not yet suffering. Suffering will come, and even then, I will not let you get involved."

"Involved in what?"

"You know very well."

"The next World War?"

"Every action you take must be aimed for after that."

Colin had never before carried on such a conversation with his inner voice. He was a little astonished at the convincing sense of duality within himself.

"What harm can it do to give a lady a little money?"

"You are not *using* her. You must use everything you come upon as your destiny dictates."

"How can I possibly use Mrs. Tompkins?"

"Hasn't it occurred to you what a marvel she would be as educational director in your chain of *houses* . . . Delectable Groves, as I have heard you think of them?"

Colin laughed out loud. "That was just a private joke. Some *inner voice* you turned out to be!"

"Don't be flippant with me!" The voice left angrily.

Colin sat back down to his desk in a silence to which he knew his voice would not return. It was true that ever since his breathtaking encounter with Pretty Quinlan he had given occasional charmed thought to a grand manner of prostitution conducted gracefully in Elysian surroundings. In fact, he had come to think of the one-passenger days of Colinair simply as a brief introduction to Delectable Groves of the future.

The prospect appealed not only to his sensuality but also to his business sense. He correctly saw that prostitution should be run by banks.

Left to mobsters, as it was, the profession would degenerate to such a sordid level that masculine recourse to the office romance and other amateur attractors would become a real threat to marriage. By contrast, bankers could make the profession so attractive the

best girls in the country would be seeking opportunities.

A girl could start her career at eighteen and would automatically retire with a tidy fortune at thirty. Meanwhile, the bank, which owned the house, would pay the house only costs and overhead and let the girl keep by contract only a specified amount of spending money. The rest would accumulate as invested capital.

With such enormous sums coming in from a fairly populous house, the girls could have available courses in manners and language, instruction in music, literature, and the arts. Or, if a girl wished, she could prepare herself for a later career in medicine or the sciences.

Colin tore open the note he had written. Then he set off with the money to see Mrs. Tompkins.

She was not at all surprised to see him, as he often visited her to discuss poetry and literature. She was witty and vivacious and sometimes a little naughty in these conversations with him (Something I could never have been with my own son.)

"Mrs. Tompkins, I know you will not think me too young to speak to you on this subject. A well-to-do and serious-minded friend of mine, an 'older' man, is thinking of ways to help the increasing number of girls who are falling into prostitution."

Colin paused and smiled with wistful suggestion. "Who knows, perhaps he wishes to make amends for something in his youth."

Mrs. Tompkins had turned a shade of pink. Yet she straightened with interest where she sat facing him from the worn sofa. "I suppose we shouldn't probe the origin of a good motive."

"One of the programs he has in mind, is a charitable organization, an educational fund . . . which would work with these girls even while they are engaged in their trade, to help prepare them to break away from it, or at least to break away in better circumstances than they entered it."

"Colin, how did an older man come to broach such

a subject to you? Are you always as frank with everyone as you are with me?"

"Well, the truth is I went to him first, about a young friend of mine named Pretty Quinlan who has gone into prostitution already and needs help," Colin lied. "So then he told me how he would like to set up this charitable fund—he's a banker back in the Midwest—so that these girls could receive education in music and literature and things that would prepare them for a better life.

"Then I thought of you and told him I would speak with you in his behalf."

"You thought of me?"

"Yes. No one could do a better job of organizing an educational program of that sort. And you have such a way with young people . . . you inspire them to want to learn."

"Well, Colin, I must say it is an interesting idea. But I'm afraid my conscience wouldn't allow me to become involved with the girls while they were still actively engaged in their profession."

"But, don't you see—that's the whole objective. Any other plan for these girls makes them charity cases and injures their pride. Lord knows, before they went into prostitution some of them had been reduced to rummaging in garbage cans."

Mrs. Tompkins flushed deeply.

Colin went right on talking. "That's just how it happened with my friend, Pretty Quinlan. Mrs. Tompkins, she is a lovely, intelligent girl who is earning her own living and could proudly repay the foundation for her education."

Mrs. Tompkins threw a hand over her mouth to stifle a laugh that was also a little shriek. "Colin, you're mad!"

Colin had pulled the five hundred dollars from his wallet, and he saw her handsome gray eyes widen on it.

Her voice dropped to an unconscious whisper. "What is this, Colin?"

"This is the first handful of madness. It was for-

warded to me by young Mr. Norton of the banks. He offers it as your first two months of salary to act as director of the new educational fund. We can start by bringing Pretty Quinlan to you. . . ."

Still in a whisper, and with her eyes desperately hard on the bills, Mrs. Tompkins chanted, "I will not teach a thing to a girl who is paying for it by. . . ."

"Mrs. Tompkins," Colin raised the money until he held it just below his chin. "Look at me. You are very sleepy . . ."

So Colin and Mrs. Tompkins agreed on her title as Education Director of Delectable Groves, the chain of establishments that would one day add such charm to the serious business of his destiny.

9

The Presence of Dread

"Thank you, Colin, for your compliments on my recent papers. It pleases me to have you say such things, but I am afraid my pride these days is all in my grandson . . . my first, by the way.

Little Boris was a present to his mother Laura last Christmas. Already he is extremely intelligent looking and certain to be the greatest mathematician of all time . . . in a very sweet way he has somewhat replaced the loss of my sons."

Professor Brough in a letter

Colin did not enter college that fall. He had spent the spring before his graduation from high school, and the summer after it, reading voraciously in several branches of higher mathematics. He had persuaded his parents to let him postpone entering college for a year so that he could complete these self-imposed studies. After all, he had been two years younger than his

graduating class's other young members, though few realized this because of his size.

Colin was becoming handsome, with a growing ruggedness that turned a girl's head. He was pleasant and thoughtful and just naturally liked. But he was properly considered a loner who did a lot of hiking in the hills and desert.

In truth, Colin was more and more troubled by the great-war-to-end-war that was so recent, and the next-war-to-continue-war that was so near. He saw how easily illusion, delusion, and hallucination could be marshaled into human order and meaning.

Deep in a September night he awakened in perspiration. Are there any meanings that are not in part insane?

Colin dressed and slipped out of the house. He walked out of town along a macadam street that was without sidewalks. He passed the last house on the street, the adobe home of the Garcias, and he was out in the orange groves.

The day, dawning over the mountains, began to filter down through the windbreaks of white-boled eucalyptus trees. He came to the last of the groves and struck up into the sage of the hills.

The hills heated rapidly, and Colin was just in sight of the treed mountain when he first rested. The treed mountain was his goal. It stood apart from the San Bernardino range, and yet it was high enough to bear a grove of pines on its shoulders.

Colin looked up at the mountain while he raised his arm and wiped his forehead on the sleeve of his jacket. Then he stepped aside and sat down on a boulder. Instantly he was back on his feet with his whole back quivering. A harsh buzz filled the world ten feet around him there in the hot arroyo.

The buzz continued intermittently, and Colin knew where it came from. After his heart had slowed, he stepped back carefully and looked over the boulder to see the snake. He found it in a patch of shadow under a bush. It had been a good eight feet from him when

he sat down, but the sound of it had seemed wrapped about his head.

It was not certain the rattle snake was alone, and Colin watched ahead carefully while he clambered to a higher, open area where he sat down to rest. He remained there for some time thinking about the brutal fear of death that is so necessary to life.

Colin was looking down across a swale of sycamores. He was suddenly aware of deer—a buck and two does were browsing under the trees. Colin watched the deer for a long time, and he observed something.

The dry grass in the little valley was stirred, off and on, by the light feet of thermals. With every approach of these breezes, the buck suspended cropping and stood alertly. Time and again he checked the swirl of grass. Colin saw that the buck lived in a timeless world of "animated" threat. Probably each of the buck's alerts concerning the animated grass involved a small dose of the physiologic explosion Colin had experienced down in the arroyo . . . the alarming NOW of fight or flight.

Colin saw, too, how distinctively human it was that he himself paid no attention to the moving grass. They were right who said he had a daily habit of unawareness, of assuming rather than really seeing what was going on about him. Why should he bother looking at NOW? In his time-filled world he had so much sense and nonsense he could believe about NOW . . . abstractions like "thermals," "breeze," or "the breath of Zephyrus."

As he had expressed this to Professor Brough in a recent letter, "Look what men in tribes have been able to do with their time-conscious abstractions. The storm that stampedes the cows and cows the lion doesn't bother the magic-making bipeds. The old ones have seen other storms and know it is just the sky-lion loose in the clouds. You take up certain sticks and go to the mouth of the cave and do a dance and thrust the sticks at him. Soon he will go away, and you can say to the kids, 'See what you'll be able to do when you grow up.'"

In this way, each particular storm the humans melded into a continuum, an animated force in the magic world they could control with ritual. Could our cousins the vegetarian apes accomplish anything like this magic?

It occurred to Colin at that moment that most study of the anthropoids which he had read had been conducted in zoos. Would Colin have been able to observe the buck's timeless, animated world in a zoo? Undoubtedly not. Colin decided right then and there that the Institute for Primate Studies would have field divisions observing the wild state.

Colin rose and climbed the treed mountain confident of an impending revelation. But, in the humming grove of pines, his inner voice did not come to him. He waited over the noon hour with a growing unease.

From his mountain, Colin looked over many valleys, and as the afternoon went on, his attention more and more frequently turned north where an array of ugly buildings stretched for a mile along the base of the hills. He shivered. This was a hideous city to itself—the city of the insane.

What went on behind those walls? What awful cells were hidden there? By mid-afternoon Colin's attention was entirely on the ugly, yellow, stucco buildings.

Then the voice of his destiny spoke. "You will go there and learn from the beginning."

"There?" Colin heard the fright in his voice and his heart jumped.

"You must go there and learn how facile you are with half-sense about animals and men. You do not know about the magic of men. Yes, fear is NOW. What you have not learned is that dread is everywhere else."

In a stammered whisper, Colin asked, "Dread?"

His voice did not answer.

Colin arrived home that evening just in time for dinner. He washed up hurriedly and changed clothes, but nevertheless Colleen sniffed across the table at him

with exaggerated hunger. "You always smell so good. You're a sagebrush bunny."

Mr. Collins said, "It goes well with the beef, son."

Colin announced in breathless abruptness, "I have to get a job as an attendant in the insane asylum. I want you to get Thurston to help me."

All motion at the table ceased. Colleen was frozen leaning over her plate with a fork in her mouth. If he had announced that he was going to visit hell they could not have stared at him in greater shock. For that matter, he had scared himself with this blunt announcement, and he wished he had used some preliminaries.

At last, Mr. Collins spoke. "Son, what has brought you to this conclusion?"

Colin tried to make amends with a voice of enthusiasm. "Dad, there are so many things I need to know that I can't learn anywhere else."

"Like what?"

Colin really did not know. All he could do was guess from what his voice had said.

"I need to know . . . well, how people react to dread . . . I need to know about . . . magic."

"Magic? In an insane asylum?"

"Yes, sir."

Mrs. Collins spoke in a hushed and strained voice. "I will not allow it. You are a minor, and you must do as we say. I will not have you in there with depravity."

"But, mother . . ."

Colin supposed that in the final analysis he could use his mesmerizing powers, but he didn't want to do that. Still, he was at a loss to express his need to them.

Colleen had removed the fork from her mouth, but no one was eating.

Mr. Collins said, "That is the real point. You are a minor, and it would be impossible to get you a job there. Even Dr. Thurston couldn't do it."

Dr. Thurston was single but not a resident at the mental hospital. He roomed in town and went to the same church with Colin's parents. It was the Collins's

impression that he was a mighty important man at the hospital for one so young.

Colin replied to his father. "I thought he might be able to get me in on something like a student-auditor basis. Especially if I am going to study medicine and psychiatry."

This was news. Mr. and Mrs. Collins looked at each other in astonishment. Colleen started to raise another forkful to her mouth, and then put it back. She looked like she was about to begin crying.

"You're going to study medicine?" Mr. Collins was deeply concerned.

"I'm thinking about it."

Mrs. Collins was shaking her head. "I will not allow it. You may be planning to study medicine, but you don't have to study it there."

"But, why not, mother?"

"Those people are dangerous, and . . . and they are . . . depraved."

Colleen burst out, "Colin Collins, you're crazy yourself to want to go in there. Why do you have to come here with such a crazy idea and scare us all?"

She began to cry and flew from the dining room and up the stairs to her bedroom.

Mr. Collins was deeply concerned. He was clearly torn in his emotions. "Now, mother, Colin has been rather abrupt with us, but we must not be hasty in judging what is best for him."

Colin had an inspiration. "Let's talk to Dr. Thurston. He can judge whether this is a way for me to explore my career."

Mr. Collins, as if dinner now didn't matter at all, got up and went to the phone. Presently he could be heard talking to someone, and then he returned to the table.

"He'll be over in about an hour."

Dr. Thurston was in his mid-thirties, devoted to medicine, but on the verge of deciding to marry Stella Masters, a beauty in the congregation who was rapidly approaching the "no-spring-chicken" classification.

He was a craggily handsome fellow who could be enthusiastic without nonsense.

After he had listened to Colin, he turned firmly to Mr. and Mrs. Collins. "I think it's a splendid idea for Colin to want to explore his career possibilities in such practical terms. Most young men decide on medicine or psychiatry romantically. They go into their education without the least knowledge of what they are in for. Too many of them reach a point in that education where they can't go back before they fully understand what they're going to be doing the rest of their lives."

The doctor turned back to Colin. "If we had more young men with your foresight," he declared, "we wouldn't have so many doctors in this field today who don't belong in it and should never have tried to get into it."

Mr. and Mrs. Collins were staring at each other in dismay.

The complexities of arranging for a minor to work on the staff of attendants on any basis at all were sufficient unto themselves. The real problem, Colin found, was himself. He became increasingly terrified at the prospect of working in the hospital, in part no doubt because the horror his parents now hid in themselves was contagious.

The situation contained a special temptation. Colin was still reading some in higher mathematics as well as in social studies and history. Now, for the next few days, in every waking hour he was tempted to forsake all social studies, to retreat permanently into meditation with Maxwell, Gibbs, Russel, and Whitehead, and to tell his voice to call off his destiny.

Late on an autumn afternoon he had fallen asleep over Korzybski's "Manhood of Humanity" when his mother knocked on his door.

"You're wanted on the phone, Colin."

Colin saw on his mother's smiling face that something was up.

Over the phone came a calm, crisp voice. "Colin, this is Judith Oliphant."

"Judith!" Colin couldn't believe it was her, and he was stunned at the joy her voice brought him. "Judith, where are you? Are you in California?"

"We lost the farm, Colin. We've been here since June, but I didn't want to call you till we were at least a little settled and could offer you a meal. We still can't offer you much of a meal, but at least we have some place you can come to."

"Where are you?"

Judith gave him the address.

"Why, you're out near the Garcias." Colin thought he could picture the drab little cottage. "I walked right past you the other morning when I started out on a hike. Listen, Judith, suppose I brought over some frying chickens. Dad gets them free from his farming friends. Could I stay for dinner tonight?"

"Oh, Colin, these kids haven't had chicken since we had to leave the farm last spring!"

Mrs. Collins was beaming upon him when he hung up. She sure thought the world of Judith Oliphant. Well, who didn't?

Colin cut five fryers into pieces and insisted on paying his mother for them.

"They'll never eat that much, but if you insist on paying me, I'll donate some sweet corn." She selected two dozen of the best ears from her current bin.

At the last minute she thought of several other things to throw in, and the bag became quite heavy as Colin walked out to the edge of town.

In two years Judith Oliphant had matured very nicely. Beneath the definite personality of character, there was now a very handsome, sensual young woman. If a young man were determined to establish a Protestant mission in Africa or Tibet, here was the girl for him.

The cottage and yard seemed swarming with children even though the two older boys weren't yet home from their part-time jobs. Then Colin realized half the children belonged to the Garcias down the street.

There were two small bedrooms in the cottage. The

four Oliphant boys slept on cots and pallets in one; the five girls slept in the other. Mr. Oliphant slept on the muscle-broken couch in the living room on Saturday nights when he was home. Judith was expecting him shortly, in addition to the boys. She was so thrilled with all the food her cheeks began to flame. She grabbed up Cindy, the little four-year-old and hugged her.

"Oh, honey, you are going to fill your little belly tonight!"

Colin didn't have to be told how they had lost the farm. It was too small to support its own mortgage on depression prices. What he couldn't understand was how they could make out at all on the kind of jobs available in California.

"The boys bring in some money, of course. But daddy works at three jobs. Not counting time to drive the flivver from one place to another, he works twenty-four hours a day except on Saturday when he takes the evening off."

"Twenty-four hours a day!"

"He really does. From seven o'clock in the morning until four he runs a bailer in a scrap-paper company. Then in the evening, from about five to nine or ten he washes dishes in a restaurant. Then, all night he runs the irrigation flumes in a spread of orange groves."

"But, that's impossible!"

"Not the way daddy does it. He drives out to the groves when he's through at the restaurant and opens the flume into a set of furrows in the shortest grove he has to do that night. Then he goes and opens a flume into a set of furrows in a longer grove. Then he goes back to the short grove, walks down to the end, lies down in one of the furrows and goes to sleep.

"When the water reaches his face he wakes up, goes up and closes the furrows, goes over to the longer grove and waits till he can switch the flume to the next set of furrows. Then he goes back to the short grove, opens the next set of furrows there, and walks down and goes to sleep again in one of them.

"So far he hasn't had any complaints because he has it planned so well."

The boys, Edom and Cecil, got back from their odd jobs. They were more slanty-eyed, like their mother had been, and the eyes had a glare across the whites as if they half cried with fury. Yet, they were pleasant and soft-spoken, and Edom walked back into the town with Colin to a little neighborhood store because Colin had learned from Judith that there wouldn't be any butter for the corn.

Colin bought a pound of oleo, and they started back.

"Isn't Judith going to college, Edom?"

"How can she, taking care of all of us?"

They were silent for a while as they walked. Then Edom declared, "She's the one ought to go on. Cecil and me aren't the brightest. But Judith is sumthin'. Our dad wouldn't have it any other way if he could afford to think about it. I guess he hasn't thought about it because it's impossible."

Mr. Oliphant was light of weight and knottily muscled, the kind of man that seems just naturally to father a big family on a big woman. He was gaunter and grayer than Colin remembered him. The large eyes were the source of Judith's eyes, and his frequently had the unfocused stare of worry.

He played with the little children and criticized the older ones as a general course of expected action. He talked laconically with Colin about losing the farm and packing what they could into the flivver and making it across two thousand miles of semidesert and desert. He didn't laugh much. He was pretty matter-of-fact. But the young people laughed a lot telling Colin anecdotes about the crazy trip west, and Mr. Oliphant seemed to enjoy hearing them tell about it.

Colin's mother had been wrong. They ate all of the chicken and all of the corn and all of everything else, and they wouldn't have needed one of the Garcia children, Cindy's little lover who was an invited guest, to help them do this. The Garcia child and Cindy kissed each other greasily at the table and fed each other

choice bits of chicken and, like everyone else, stuffed themselves glassy-eyed.

After dinner the little children lay about on the living-room floor like overturned toads, Cindy and the Garcia boy sleeping in each other's arms. The young people said almost nothing, and Mr. Oliphant was asleep on the sofa.

"Come on," Judith begged, "I've stacked the dishes and I can do them tomorrow. Let's go for a walk."

Colin walked with her straight out through the moonlit groves of orange trees, and they were obviously headed for some spot she knew. Presently they began the climb of a sage-brushed hill that was knobbled with rotting-granite boulders. The bright moon was much higher when at last they sat down on top of the hill.

They were both a little breathless from the climb and sat in silence for a while. A haze of plant terpenes filled the valley, glowing bluely in the moonlight. Out of this quiet sea the hills and mountains rose in a horizonless heaven like the landscapes of Japanese painting.

Judith took his hand with unassuming trust. "How beautiful it is. God speaks so lyrically from up here, and His view is always from the mountaintop."

"Judith, surely you intend to go to college."

"How can I, Colin?"

"You must."

"There just is no way. I have thought and thought, and there just is no way. Not until this poor family is all grown."

Colin sat in silence for a while. Then he spoke firmly. "You must become my most steadfast critic, Judith." Then he felt ridiculous and laughed with pleasure. "Of course, you will always lose the argument . . . the one woman who will be logical . . ."

She glanced at him and smiled with her own certainty.

"Judith, I am going to tell you something because you are my friend and because it is the only way to persuade you to do what I wish."

"Yes, Colin. Go ahead."

"I have a destiny. It speaks in me with a voice and commands me to do things."

"That's God."

"Good enough. I also have money, a great deal of money, and this is known only to my bankers. The voice of my destiny tells me what to do with my money . . . if you will, *He* is my head banker."

"Let's not make bad puns about God, Colin."

"Your education is essential to both of us. I have the means, a thousand times over, to make it possible. And there is a simple way.

"I will establish a bank account for you out of which you can pay Mrs. Garcia to take care of the children. This will free you, and it will help the Garcias who are half-starving like most other people. . . . Will your father go along with the plan?"

Judith did not have to think much about that. "My father is a proud man, but no more than a drop of it is false pride. He would give anything to have me go to college, especially a drop of false pride.

"But I must tell you about him. He no longer believes in God. On Sundays he works for an Italian farmer instead of going to church. Part of his pay on that farm is a gallon of wine. He says that is his new god and that it makes him feel better than he ever felt in church.

"When we get back to the house he will have had two glasses of wine, and when we tell him about the bank account he will only be happy for me.

"You know that I accept your help because I trust you and because I know your voice is God. You are a godly man, Colin, however you pretend."

"That is what I hope you will be able to prove to me in the next fifty years. I wish to die squared away with faith after a lifetime consorting with the tarts of science."

Judith smiled at him tolerantly in the moonlight, and suddenly Colin blurted, "Judith, to learn what I must know, I have to go work in the insane asylum.

I'm very afraid. It's not physical fear . . . I'm just afraid of insanity itself . . . I, Judith. . . ."

She had put her arm over his shoulder, and she drew him to her. "Now, with fear, Colin, *I* can help *you*. Come kneel here with me."

Colin knelt as she commanded, and he found himself suddenly shaking with his fear.

Judith spoke seven simple words to her God. "God, this is my dear friend, Colin."

Then she prayed in silence.

10

The Motherless World of Magic

"I met him in the city of the insane, the marvelous man who would voyage with me. He showed me that many patients were exorcising dread with magic . . . failure-magic, he called it. We saw there was a continuum from these cells to the drawing rooms of the city where magic was still the way of life . . . the magic of meanings that exorcise dread."

The Diary of the Equations

Slight, epicene, and slump-shouldered, as if the body had shrunk in an effort to follow the withdrawing mind —there were so many of them like that. Twice in each night, before mass bed-wetting could begin, it was necessary to flip on the harsh lights of the huge ward and chase them to the urinals.

Then they fluttered between the long rows of beds like a flock of unfeathered pullets, but without the group order of chickens. Nightshirted to the thighs and absorbed completely, they paced and pranced in rituals, bumped about in confusion, got lost in four square feet.

Dementia praecox . . . the early insanity . . . the

great mystery that filled a fifth of all hospital beds in the world. Some said it was inherited "bad blood"; others said these half-men were the wreckage of emotional hurt in infancy and childhood. No fat ones among them! The business of concentrated thinking, or a ritual of motion, or of grinning-and-talking at the air was far more important than eating. Sometimes they had to be fed through a tube.

Not all, of course, had this same look. There was the young murderer pacing a cage. He was so violent he could not be allowed clothing or a blanket. No shriveling of the body for him! Superbly muscled and handsome, he paced with smooth, efficient concentration.

At eight years of age this young man had been questioned about the drowning of a playmate. His teen years had been a long history of his attacks on others, and these had ended, after he was already married, in a string of three dead girls who had been foolish enough to go out driving with him.

Now, with his shaven head lowered, concentrating on the bare wooden floor, he paced and paced and talked to his wife who apparently lived under the floor.

"Doris, honey, please take me back. I'll do anything you say, Doris. I'll do it all your way, if you'll just take me back. . . . Please, honey. . . ."

"Shut up, you ugly son-of-a-bitch! Who'd take back an ugly bastard like you?"

"Please, honey, I love you so. Please take me back . . ."

"Nobody's gonna take you back, you ugly bastard. You're gonna pace that floor till we have to replace it. Then you're gonna wear out the next one."

"Doris, honey. . . ."

The young man in the cage was so piteous to Colin the night he first saw him that the "kind words" of Colin's companion-attendant were a jolt. Then he learned that this attendant had four daughters, three of them in their teen years. In addition, he found that the young man in the cage paid no attention to, or probably

never heard, these brutally truthful, routinely growled pronouncements.

During his first two weeks Colin watched the violent young animal and realized at last that his body, too, was withdrawing with his mind. While he paced and paced and pleaded with Doris, he frequently masturbated in her honor. Yet, no one on the ward had ever seen him attain an erection.

He did not look like the epicene "youths", but he was a member of this club.

Those first two weeks, Colin lived on the hospital grounds without leaving them. The world outside seemed a lifetime away. As the shocking sights and sounds and smells of Bedlam piled into his mind, his understanding of the outside world was changing.

Then, two nights before his first weekend off, he found a young man dead who shouldn't have been dead.

The young man had occupied a cage at the far end of the ward from Doris's pacing husband. His cage had a cot in it because he had not actually belonged on this violent ward. He had only been transferred here temporarily from a bedridden ward where he was undergoing malaria for his syphilis. He had had a persistent, violent reaction to these therapeutic fevers that had required his transfer to this ward. Now Colin found him sprawled half out of bed onto the floor.

The ward chief unlocked the cage in alarm. The next-to-the-worst thing that could happen to a ward chief was an unexpected death. The worst thing was an unexplainable death.

"Call the administration building," he ordered Colin. "Have them start locating the doctor responsible for ward E tonight. Tell them I'll be at the phone in just a bit."

It was seven o'clock in the evening and a long time before a doctor got there. When one did arrive it turned out to be Dr. Thurston. When he saw Colin his eyes widened. He didn't say anything. He just stared at Colin as he walked past and into the dead man's cage.

Dr. Thurston had "pulled a lot of strings" to get a minor of sixteen into the hospital. Even so, during two of Colin's interviews at the administration building he had been forced to use his "you-are-so-sleepy" technique.

Now the young doctor finished his examination of the body and straightened, stuffing his stethoscope into the pocket of his white jacket as he explained to the ward chief that it was on the record the dead man had had a very bad mitral valve from the rheumatic fever of his impoverished childhood.

Then Dr. Thurston turned and stared at Colin while he continued with the ward chief. "What on earth is this boy doing on this violent ward? I gave specific instructions he was to work only on ward K with Rappaport."

Of course the chief didn't know anything about it because Colin had been sent to the most violent wards at his own mesmerizing request.

"Get ward K on the phone for me, will you please?"

They followed the ward chief back to the night office. Dr. Thurston apologized to Colin for the danger to which he had been subjected and promised to apologize to his parents.

On the phone he said, "Hello, is this Chief Hodges? This is Dr. Thurston. Is Rappaport on duty there? Who's with him? . . . Please ask Harris to come over here to E for the rest of his shift, and tell Rappa I'm bringing over that young man Colin Collins I told you both about."

As they walked together in to ward K, Dr. Thurston said to Colin, "Over there is the man you'll be working with. He's . . ." Dr. Thurston fumbled for some expression he apparently had thought would come easily. Then he gave up. "Well, let's go meet him."

A block of muscle and bone in a white uniform was bending over a bed catheterizing an elderly gentleman. The rest of the ward was awake in bright light, and another attendant was getting the bed-wetters up.

"Rappa, this is Mr. Collins," Dr. Thurston said.

The block of muscle and bone had a head of closely cropped black hair lowered over the job he was doing. The head did not turn, but a firm, rather high voice promised, "I'll be with you directly, Mr. Collins. Please excuse me."

The elderly gentleman was sweating and grunting with the pain of the rubber catheter passing his old gonorrheal strictures and then passing the new stricture at his enlarged prostate gland on its way to his painfully distended bladder of urine.

Now he inhaled a large gasp.

From the blocklike chest in white issued the inappropriately tight voice. "I'm sorry, Mr. Tompson, but we're almost there."

Colin was watching the big, blunt fingers of the attendant work with deft and gentle assurance. Suddenly another inch of the rubber tubing slid into the old gentleman's penis, and at once there was the tinkle of urine in the container between his legs.

The attendant straightened, wiping his hands on a towel. Then he turned and extended his right hand to Colin.

The head of an eagle carved from teak. An incredible beak and wild eyes in deep slits. A huge scar from temple to jaw that lay like a rope on the broad plane of cheek.

"I am Jesus Rappaport."

Colin gawked at the man's shocking presence and then at the improbable name.

Dr. Thurston was chuckling as if he had planned Colin's surprise, and the teakwood eagle was grinning with a broad mouth that suddenly flashed a vast array of teeth.

"The name is easily explained, Mr. Collins. I am a Mexican-Jewish bastard. To be one or the other is nothing. To be both—that is distinction."

When he laughed the full import of this young man came through to Colin. It was a stunning moment in which a world-historic friendship arose full bloom. There had been no one in Colin's life before this moment—his parents and sister, Miss McAllister, Pretty

Quinlan, Mr. Marty McCord, young Mr. Norton of the banks, Mrs. Tompkins the educational director—all of them remained back there in the dumbshow.

Here was a man who could voyage in the abyss.

Jesus Rappaport was twenty years old when Colin Collins first met him. Colin usually called him Rappa, as Jesus Rappaport wished. But, in affectionate recognition of the difference in their ages, Colin sometimes called him Rappapapa.

On the other hand, from that first night in the hospital, Jesus Rappaport never called Colin Collins anything but Mr. Collins. He would never explain this, but he was adamant about it. When Colin tried to tease him out of it by calling him Mr. Rappaport, it made Rappa look so disgusted that Colin gave up and accepted the ridiculous situation.

That first night on ward K, Rappa explained his Jewish-Mexican bastardy to Colin as easily as he had catheterized Mr. Tompson. It seemed his father's people were very big in the garment industry in New York and owned a small woolen mill near Monterey. Back before the war the baby of the family, little Sidney, had expressed himself stubbornly against the garment industry. To break him in, in a romantic way, the family had sent him down to "sort of manage" the Mexican plant. Little Sidney was eighteen years old and six feet, three inches tall. He promptly fell in love with a pretty sixteen-year-old girl who worked in carding. He arranged a hideout in the mountains, and they escaped to it without so much as a "do-this-or-that" about managing the well-run plant.

Sometime toward the end of their first month of bliss, Sidney took time out to write a very final type of letter back to Manhattan. It outlined plans such as marriage to an aborigine, and a farewell to garments —the making, sale, and wearing of them.

The delegation which promptly arrived in Mexico and beat a terrifyingly accurate path to the door of the garmentless couple included half of the mature males in the family. Little Sidney was a big man in many

ways, but he couldn't outshout the thundering of so many prophets. He was led weeping back to Manhattan where he became a genius in the garment industry. Now, having married the family's choice, he had four sons who would probably also enter the garment industry.

"My full name, the name mother got on the records, is Jesu Rappaport y Casafuerte. To the day she died she never asked anything further of life than the blessed month she had spent with Sidney . . . and me, her ugly little issue."

"He must have been quite a man, your father." The two excited new friends sat in their white uniforms in wicker chairs in the night office of the ward. Colin felt his cheeks burning with his excitement, and when he spoke of Sidney Rappaport he loved the man for fathering his friend.

"Yes. I must say he is."

"You've seen him?" Colin was astonished at this.

"I called on him in Manhattan just before I came out here. That man has money and power, let me tell you.

"I waited until his pretty secretary had closed the door. He was sitting there under the impression I was the son of a certain wool grower from Zacatecas. Then I said, 'Papa, don't you recognize me? I am your eldest son, little Jesus.' . . . You might say he came close to soiling himself."

Colin was fascinated by this confrontation. "What happened?"

"He was immediately convinced, I think, that I was up to blackmail or something. But that was the last of the fun in it. I told him as gently as I could that mother had died. It hit him much harder than I had expected. He turned gray and stared at his desk till I decided he had forgotten I was there. His face was twitching, and all you could hear in that office was some long-ago storm in the mountains of Nuevo Leon.

"Then he got up and went to the big windows of his office that look down across half of Manhattan, and he

began asking questions about how my mother and I had managed all these years.

"So it became clear that he hadn't known his own folks had bought my mother a good farm after they learned from the mill manager that she was pregnant. Sidney hadn't known she was pregnant, that was certain.

"This made me feel a lot better about him, and so I helped him out of the next difficulty he was going to get into, which was what to do with me."

The two attendants had their chairs placed in the night office facing the door to the ward so they could watch the half-darkened area. Rappa suddenly called out, "Ketchum, get back into your own bed."

"How did you help your father out of that? You were sitting there big as life."

"Well, I explained to him that I had money and that I was coming out here to California to work my way through a couple of engineering degrees at Cal Tech.

"I think the greatest thing about him was that he wanted to offer me money and didn't. We both knew it would be wrong for me to take money from him even though his other sons were probably dunning him at a thousand a month."

They had hours ahead of them, and the two friends talked and talked without ceasing. Colin felt an ecstasy of revelation as he told Rappa about his stunning experience with "the standing cold" and about the sudden appearance of the voice of his destiny. Rappa listened attentively, nodding as if Colin were revealing exactly what he had expected.

"I have an instinct about us, Mr. Collins. I wasn't a bit surprised to encounter you, you know. I think we are destined to work out some very important things together, though what they are I leave to you."

Suddenly, Colin knew what it was they were to work out. He remembered one of his letters to Professor Brough . . . and he knew. "We will paint a self-portrait, a portrait of the animal Man, Man the inventor of meanings. We will paint, not as scholars do, but as artists . . . human meaning in bold colors. We will

paint so there can be equations written about these magical meanings."

His voice had in it something of the somnabulist. They were silenced by it. When he finally spoke, Rappa was very matter-of-fact telling Colin how he had got his scar.

"Do you know about the Cristero in Mexico?"

Colin had read about the Cristero with some care, but he wanted to hear his friend talk about it and shook his head.

"Our Constitution has some pretty strong things to say about the Church and the State. A few years back President Calles was in the middle of his fight over oil rights with you Yanquis when Pius XI took it upon himself to fire off a blast about our wicked laws regarding the Church.

"He couldn't have picked a more likely time to set fire to the country. The priests protested against Calles and the laws by walking out of churches and refusing services. The government retailiated by confiscating church property and deporting priests. Blood began to flow in large amounts.

"I am an athiest, and I was a hothead for the revolutionary government. With some other like-thinking students I left school and went down to Jalisco and Guanajuato to get into the big fighting.

"While I was down there I saw a priest and two nuns die, and I began to grow up. They were very brave, and I began to see that many of the episcopate were sincere, self-sacrificing people."

Rappa was silent for a while staring into the past. Suddenly he called out, "Ketchum, get back in bed."

Deep in the darkened ward Colin saw the old ghost prance back to its bed. Colin waited for Rappa to continue.

"Well, I got back up home and my mother was ashamed of me. It was the year before she died, and she was ashamed of me all that year. She never said anything, but a big sadness had come over her.

"Then new fighting of the Cristero broke out near us

and my former comrades came for me to go with him. I told them I couldn't go.

"After that my mother brightened, and now she could speak to me about it. This is exactly the way she put it. 'My son, I know how good your revolution is. I am happy about the new schools and the big irrigation plans. But, my son, I have to believe. If I cannot believe, I am nothing. Don't take that away from me.'

"Though she was already ill, her eyes were very beautiful. I am sure they were even more beautiful than when Sidney looked into them. I saw in those eyes the great calm of her belief. I saw all of the people in her eyes and their need for faith. I understood that I didn't have anything to offer them except better homes, more food, better education, and better health. Fine. Those things come first. But when they got to be as well off as Yanquis they would still need faith, and in that line I hadn't even as much to offer as the Church."

Colin felt a great stillness about them. This was part of what he had to learn over and over again . . . these simple words spoken by Rappa's dying mother. Man is a believing animal—*Homo sapiens credulus*. He *must* believe. He *thinks* in order to believe. No one is more credulous than the scientist or engineer. He believes in the value of what he is doing—silly man. But what would happen to him if he stopped believing that—poor man!

"Just once," Rappa continued, and the great stillness startled and flew, "after she died, I got to confer with the local priest about my change of heart. When I came out of the church, there were my former comrades with smiling faces come to greet me.

"One of them clapped me on the shoulders amiably and said, 'This is a big day for you, Jesus. You are going to get your Jewish head chopped off. Let's see if an Indian grows in its place.'

"They took me out to a canyon beyond the town and beat me almost senseless. They chopped off the top of a barrel cactus and knelt me with my face shoved in the stump where I would lose my Jewish

head. They let go of me and I rolled over so that the executioner's machete cut through the side of my face instead of my neck.

"I rolled down a shale slide and off the canyon wall. Two days later the buzzards were just about to start picking at me when an old sheep herder found me.

"He cut my clothes off me and set my arms and legs with great talent and without once saying a word. I fainted over and over, but at last he had bound splints to my broken limbs, and I found that he was bathing me very carefully with warm water, and also that a stew was cooking. He had boiled a needle and thread, and he sewed up my face. When I came to, later, he fed me all the delicious broth and ate the solid food himself.

"The sun had gone down. He stood before me in the firelight and declared, 'I have long ago given up God.' With that he lay down behind me, threw a blanket over the two of us, and buggered me till he fell asleep."

Rappa finished his story laughing and swearing that it was the truth.

After a moment of stunned disbelief, Colin howled. They laughed at each other and at the ceiling and at the floor. Colin doubled up in his chair, fell over onto the floor, and lay there gasping.

Even after their work-shift was over the talk continued. They went to the night kitchen and got a big jar of coffee and took it to Rapa's room. Colin could hardly tell Rappa his whole life fast enough, and it seemed to be the same with Rappa. Sometimes Colin felt the great winged silence return and settle about them. Other times they howled at each other all over again.

Only two things Colin found he could not mention to his friend—his mesmerizing powers and his repeating orgasm. He had a shyness about these things.

Suddenly it was dawn, and Rappa was going to be late for classes. They piled into an old dented coupé Rappa owned and raced through the dawn up the foot-

hill Boulevard to get to Cal. Tech. in time for his first class. And they talked all the way.

Rappa parked in a lot and ran for his class. Colin got out and walked back to a corner where he had seen a stationary store. He bought a thick, blue-lined notebook and some pencils. He brought these back to the car, and after sitting for a while, he wrote at the top of the first page, "The Diary of The Equations."

He sat and stared out across the parking for some time. Then he began writing.

> This is the diary of a quest after understanding of "Man, the inventor of meaning." We seek a description of the making of magic generally, and of the invention of magical meanings particularly, that will make possible the application of an algebra of classes.
>
> The term "magic" will be used more broadly than it is used in *The Golden Bough*. Magic is all human behavior such as the arts and belief such as religions which, have meaning to people and are not scientific. In this sense the measurement, 574.5 millimicrons of wavelength is made in a branch of science, but the corresponding *color*, yellow, is magic we invent in our heads . . .

Colin wrote on for an hour. Then he fell asleep.

Rappa returned around noon and he slept in the car while Colin drove back to the hospital. Colin wanted Rappa to come home with him for the weekend, but Rappa begged off.

"I'll tell you the truth. A lady friend of mine owns a 'house-of-good-repute.' I'm going to spend every minute of this weekend with those lovely girls. Believe me, its essential.

"I'm awfully grateful to you though. I hope you'll invite me again next weekend."

"Sure, Rappa."

Colin expected that young Mr. Norton of the banks would have put Pretty Quinlan on a train three days ago. When he got to Mrs. Tompkin's house with his throat aching and his chest pounding for Pretty, the education director had a letter for him instead.

Pretty was delayed. Her father had finally got her ailing mother to the doctors, and they had removed a large, benign tumor from her abdomen. She would be all right, but Pretty must stay a little while to take care of the kids. Pretty greatly appreciated Colin's offer of ten dollars a weekend to sleep with her, and she certainly did accept. She was so glad he was going to be the first one.

Colin would have given anything to know where Rappa's "joy house" was located.

Instead, he went home and found that he did not know how to talk to his folks about the hospital. He felt he was one of Hemingway's war characters returned home and unable to talk to people about his experiences.

What had happened to Colin in the hospital in the two weeks before he had met Rappa was a total experience which he found he could not yet fragment into incidents. It had all been violent, piteous, horrifying, nauseating, and stunning in such fast sequences that now he was unable to isolate any given emotion because the one he had experienced just before that one and the one he had experienced right after it overlapped it and blurred it into the continuum of Bedlam.

He found that that continuum now extended for him right out into the world beyond the hospital. Now he knew the look of a man who is hallucinating in the street, and he saw the tics and terrors and rituals of Bedlam everywhere about him, subdued as far as people could manage.

Colin found that family attitudes toward him had changed drastically.

"Son, is there great depravity?" His mother was clearly sick at heart.

"They are just sick people, mother."

She knew better than that. "You must have experienced more horror in two weeks than your father has in a lifetime. But I couldn't bring myself to resist your wish, after Dr. Thurston spoke so strongly."

"I was right, mother. I have learned important things which I couldn't have learned any other way."

"Your father admires you for this tremendously. The thought of working among the demented frightens him."

"It scared me to death at first, I can tell you. But it's just like home now, mother dear."

Mrs. Collins smiled at his fun. "Put your father's mind at ease, Colin. He has slept very poorly these last two weeks. He gets up almost every night and sits in the living room worrying about what it's like for you."

"You've slept like an old sow, of course."

She laughed. "All right. I'll confess, I want you to tell him what it's like so he can tell me."

"I'd be more embarrassed to tell him about 'depravity' than to tell you. Women must understand 'depravity' better. They say all that sorts of things take place on the women's wards. On our wards we have mostly prayer meetings."

Now when she laughed it was with a sharing of adulthood. "Just the same, put your father's mind at ease." She reached out and took his hand. He was indeed her conquering son, and he had conquered the most feared of worlds, the world in which, as she believed, sexual depravity had reached "MADNESS."

Colin tried to divert the family focus on "depravity" by admitting at the dinner table that the notorious murderer of three girls had been a patient on one of his wards. Murder was a subject they could discuss without the last embarrassment, and the concern over Colin switched from the assumed threat to his mind at seeing depraved sexuality to this talkable threat to his person.

Colin reassured them it had been accidental he had been placed briefly on such wards and told them to expect Dr. Thurston's apology. They were greatly relieved and animated with concern.

Then Colin told them about Wilber Scranton's ritual when he made his way from bed to toilet; three steps forward, one step back—stir the air over your head with your index finger—three steps forward, one back, and stir the air again. Repeat this all the way to the toilet and back to bed.

Colin's father was vastly relieved to hear of such innocent exorcisms.

Now that their peace of mind was restored Colin told them about Rappapapa. He found his cheeks glowing and his voice tightening as he described his wonderful friend. He could see that his father and mother were not greatly impressed, and perhaps a little alarmed, over the self-styled Mexican-Jewish bastard. On the other hand Colleen was fascinated.

"If he's all that hideous I don't suppose he has any girlfriends."

"I didn't mean that he's *hideous*. Actually he's beautiful when you begin to see through to him. But I think you're right," Colin lied, with his mind on the house-of-good-repute, "I believe Rappa is rather lonesome."

After their parents had gone to bed, Colleen sat up with him and they talked until late.

Though she was blossoming now into a beautiful young woman, Colleen was not yet over her pubescent disgust with sex. Certainly their mother had been at some pains to "instruct her properly."

"I suppose they do all kinds of disgusting things right in front of each other?"

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Colleen! The most human thing about us is sex. All that the other animals have is reproduction. Us apes invented menstruation and made humanity possible . . . sexiness for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. All year! It's built right into our thinking."

"Oh, Lord! Let's change the subject."

"I will if you'll stop abusing my poor patients. The trouble most of them have is no sex, maybe not even the sucking sex of babies."

They were silent for a time in which Colin thought about the origins of language. He wondered if he should suggest to Dr. Ordway a field study to determine if the great apes in their natural habitats evoked the orgasm with any patterns of sound.

Presently Colleen demanded, "Tell me more about your friend Rappa."

He sure had got through to her on that subject.

Rappapapa returned to work from his weekend with the "lovely girls" wearing a beatific face for all men. He didn't even yell at Ketchum when the old pederast slipped into the idiot's bed.

"It can't hurt the idiot seeing the old boy doesn't have syphilis. Don't care for it myself, as I've explained, but I'm sure the idiot doesn't mind."

The idiot was a thirty-year-old achondroplastic dwarf about the size of a big, hairless bulldog with a noseless, heavily folded face like a bulldog. Flies could crawl in his mouth and out his ears, and he wouldn't know it.

Rappa muttered, "He's the only warm, lovable thing Ketchum has," and went back to his text in advanced calculus.

Then he sat up and shoulted, "Ketchum, get back in your own bed."

Colin watched the indefatigable old ghost prance his silly way back to his bed.

Rappa spread his book on his lap again with a mumble of explanation to Colin. "Rules are rules. You can't run a madhouse as loosely as the outside world."

Then Rappa interrupted his reading again. "Incidentally, there is one patent you absolutely must keep Ketchum from. Come on down here in the ward. I don't think I've pointed him out to you."

They left the lighted night office and walked down the darkened aisle until Rappa stopped at the foot of a bed where a man lay wide-eyed in the moonlight praying in a whisper. Colin recognized him. He was a little gray man who prayed all day long standing alone out in the compound. He prayed all night long, too, except for snatches of sleep.

"You won't believe his name," Rappa whispered.

"I suppose not," Colin allowed.

"His last name is Dribble."

"No!"

"Peter Dribble. And you know something? Right this minute he's wetting his bed a drop or two per prayer. This man is pissing-scared of his God.

"But the reason it's so important to keep Ketchum

out of his bed is that he is so busy praying he doesn't know he's being buggered until Ketchum has long gone.

"Then, an hour later it will come to him that while he was praying so well back there an hour ago, someone was buggering the hell out of him. Then he'll start shouting his sin to God, and it usually takes him till morning to get the point across upstairs with everybody awake two wards away."

Except for practical exchanges like this the two new friends talked very little that week. Rappa had a heavy schedule of studying. Colin was reading Havelock Ellis's seven volumes on the psychology of sex. When Rappa had any time free of his engineering studies he was reading Briffault's *The Mothers*.

Thus, for a few days, they were silent and let these new, fecund science-myths teem in their minds. Then one night Rappa broke the silence because of an incident that made him so angry he had to start talking.

Shortly after they had come onto the ward that evening and relieved the two previous attendants, Rappa said under his breath, "Well I'll be God damned!"

The patients were in bed, but the lights were not yet off. Rappa walked over to a bed where a long, gangling man with a shock of black hair was propped up reading a newspaper.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Weber, but you'll have to give me the paper."

The man smiled in full-lipped, sensitive embarrassment, ducked his head like a guilty little boy, turned his face away, and then promptly thrust his chin out into the air at such an oblique angle it drew the full lips into a tight line. Then he closed his eyes tightly and began to speak.

"Riverside; completely furnished four-room bungalow. Ideal for young couple or retired. Twenty-five hundred dollars. Phone only evenings, five-seven-six-two.

"Colton; spacious five-room Spanish with attached garage. . . ."

Rappa came toward Colin with the paper and brushed past in cursing anger. "That God damned Noonan! I'll kill him."

Colin turned and followed Rappa to the office with a little anger in him because Rappa's reaction was beyond his knowledge. "What's happened?" Colin asked. "Is he actually reciting the paper?"

"Every word of it, just as it's printed, from now until morning. That son-of-a-bitch Noonan does it on purpose. He's been told five times and always denies he knows how Weber gets hold of a paper. This time he walked off his shift and forgot to take it away from the poor nut."

Rappa started swearing over the phone to the ward chief and then apologized. "Two of us saw him walk off the ward and leave a paper in Weber's hands. Please get a doctor's permission for me to move Weiss out of cell 6 and put him in restraints out here on the ward. Then I can put Weber back in the cell where he won't disturb everybody."

Suddenly, Colin saw that Noonan had come back onto the ward in a hurry. Rappa saw this, too, and he hung up the phone. Noonan stopped in the middle of the ward. Rappa walked toward Noonan with a funny walk. Colin had not seen Rappa walk like that before. It was if he was holding back a bladder of boiling urine.

Noonan was a big, bluff, handsome lad, full of fun. He stood a head taller than Rappa. He said flatly, "That's not my paper, Rappa."

"Call me Rappaport. I'm Jesus Rappaport, you papist, Irish son-of-a-bitch!"

Still holding back his terribly hot urine by using those tight-hipped, short steps, Rappa walked into Noonan, put his left foot down on Noonan's toes, and drove a very short, fast right into his midriff.

It was like an explosion. Before Noonan's body left its footing his wavy hair flapped over his suddenly popping eyes. He stumbled back and collapsed over Ketchum's bed. He lay stunned on the lap of the old

pixie while his arms reached in the air for handholds that weren't there.

Ketchum, his white halo of hair as soft as his swansdown thoughts, sat grinning wistfully on all this beauty. He looked at Colin and slowly shook his head.

Late that night after Weber had been put away back in cell 6, the two attendants could hear him reciting the financial pages like he was announcing the Kentucky Derby. Rappa had cooled off, and now he began to talk while he lighted one of his occasional Mexican cigarettes.

"There's an awful lot of crap about Freud already, and you can be sure it's going to get hip-deep. As far as that goes, I'm sure the Freudians are often right. But there is a lot more than that to understand about these patients, especially about how they relate to the rest of the world."

Rappa turned back to his cigarette with contemplative sensualism. "Yes, I believe these patients were emotionally starved in infancy and childhood. They can't relate to each other or to you and me because they never got related to mommy or daddy. You'll never catch them in an organized insanity like going to war because they can't *join* anything.

"Their insane behavior is quite inflexible, repetitive, and sparse. But it differs from the insane behavior outside these walls largely in not being organized."

Colin nodded. "I suppose Peter Dribble would be an acceptable citizen if he could confine his praying to the chapel when *sensible* people are doing it."

"Our murderers here are no more violent than men who get decorated for killing in war."

"No. But they are unpredictable. "You never know when or who they'll kill."

"You're right. They're not organized killers like we are. Now let me ask you, can you see any great difference between Weber's need for newspapers and the businessman who would 'go out of his mind' without both morning papers and both evening papers? Watch Weber reading a newspaper and you see a very calm

man, for all the world a businessman. It's like a drug to him. Sometimes I think he developed that photographic memory the way an alcoholic hides a bottle. It's an escape from himself."

"Well, the business man does make money at it."

"That's right. His insane concentration on the papers is organized and related to the business world. But he needs his papers just like Weber does, and just like Dribble needs his prayers."

Rappa jutted his chin out toward the bed nearest the night office. From this bed they could now hear the faint whispering of Weiss, who lay in leather restraints. "Kill me. Kill me. Kill me. . . ."

"Weiss, there. Nobody knows what collapsed in his world and led him to need death so much. But is it any different from the men who are jumping from buildings these days?"

Colin allowed that there didn't seem to be much difference.

"So, now! What are all these patients here doing. They are all very busy, aren't they?"

"Very, very, busy."

"Why is Peter Dribble so busy praying?"

"He's afraid."

"He is in DREAD. His only defense against it is his abracadabra of prayer. For Weber it's submersion in the newspaper. . . ."

"Kill me. Kill me. Kill me. . . ." The horse whisper came through lips swollen and cracked from constant mouth breathing. If you went out there now and stood beside the bed, the cadaverous Weiss would recognize that you had come up. The rhythm of the whisper would change. "Don't just stand there. Kill me. Don't just stand there. Kill me."

The last time anyone had put loose restraints on Weiss he had managed to get hold of his own scrotum and, vomiting in pain, had very nearly castrated himself with his fingernails.

Colin found that both he and Rappa were listening to the barely audible whisper. A shiver transfixed

Colin, and Rappa gave him a tight-lipped shake of the head in understanding.

"Weiss's wife came down here from Pasadena shortly after he was brought here. She was a lovely young woman, but after she had seen Weiss she broke down and cried in the chief's office. She told him that Weiss had been a very brilliant, handsome, and witty man. He had occasional 'moods,' but usually he was the life of the party, this lad was.

"Now, her report will be instructive to you, Mr. Collins, only if you can believe what this man did for the first six months I knew him."

"What was that?"

"He laughed. He lay over there in one of those beds, his right hand out of the covers resting on his chest with the index finger raised like he was blessing the ceiling. He was like a slow metronome. His head would roll till he was looking at the south ceiling, the finger would point that way and he would give a little laugh. Then the head would roll toward the north ceiling, and the finger would turn that way, too, and he would give another little laugh.

"Even when he was asleep, if you stepped up close, you would find the head rolling in an arc of about an inch, the finger tipping with it, and those barely audible chuckles."

"What on earth changed him?"

"Who knows. One night I came on duty and he wasn't laughing. I asked the attendant I was relieving when it had happened, and of course he didn't know.

"I went over and said, 'Hello, Mr. Weiss.'

"He looked up at me without any expression.

"I asked if there was anything I could do for him, and for all I know that gave him the idea of attacking me. A little later I was catheterizing Mr. Tompson, and there from behind me was Weiss flailing at my head.

"I suppose I looked mighty mean to him with the scar, the beak, and the Indian eyes. I believe he thought that if he attacked me I'd kill him. There was something about the way he did it."

The two friends were silent for a while. Colin waited patiently for Rappa to conclude, and at last Rappa spoke.

"You see how dread lies at the center of the whole thing. These people have been reduced to one problem . . . exorcising dread. They accomplish this with rituals, projections, abracadabra, laughter . . . with magic.

"For most of his life Weiss evaded his anxiety with laughter that amused other people. He was a drawing-room magician with the quip. Then I suppose there was a period when other people didn't get it. By the time he reached here his laugh had become a metronomic ritual. Now that the metronome has run down he wants out."

Rappa lit another of his cigarettes. "Mr. Collins, Man is a magic-maker. He has to be. Evolution has given him this gray gloom of dreadful thinking."

It was the last time, for two days, that the friends were close to each other and on duty Friday evening, Rappa was sullen and short-tempered with Colin. Colin could think of nothing to account for Rappa's sudden coldness.

11

Motherly Women

"Of course, Rappa and I had no premonition there would be a third party in our intellectual adventure. Now that we had discovered Man's first invention in meaning, the nature world of magic, we were pretty cocky. How naïve I was to think I commanded enough mathematics to apply to the classes of meaning!"

The Diary of the Equations

Depression America was kind to Boris Boritzsch. People were kinder to one another anyway in those

hard years, but they were especially kind to the big awkward foreigner with the hesitant, preoccupied speech. Depression prices, too, were kind to his slim purse which was kept in contents only by the little Boris's father could send along to support his intellectual adventure, and by occasional odd jobs Boris could pick up.

He learned to sleep and cook in the open and ride freight trains. He was so huge by now that he was seldom successful at hitchiking. His charm became apparent only on closer inspection and then seemed always apparent to motherly women.

Boris shuttled back and forth between campuses all over the East and Midwest. He located thinkers on these campuses and also in hamlets and city warrens. In only a few months he had a community of his own, a community of mathematicians and philosophers scattered from Iowa to New Hampshire who had this one thing in common . . . they all knew and awaited the next visit, the next burning talk with Boris Boritzsch.

All this was pleasant and exciting for almost two years. In the end it was a life far too tempting. The urgent voice in Boris demanded not just "virtual" worlds and fascinating algebras. As Boris's second year in America was drawing to a close, his voice demanded with increasing specificity that he find a system of observation against which he could apply himself.

He was ready. Where were the men with the material he could put to his algebras?

One October morning in the Chicago apartment of two friends Boris awakened and said to the ceiling above his cot, "I must go to the West Coast."

He struggled from the cot and onto his feet. Then he leaned his weight on a creaking chest of drawers while his vertigo passed. When he was able, he dressed and went out to the kitchen. After drinking two glasses of milk and writing a note of thanks to the professor and his wife, Boris slipped from the apartment carrying as usual only a briefcase of clothing and papers.

He had walked about a block on Oak Street, am-

bling west toward Michigan Avenue, when a blue Plymouth roadster with a rumbleseat pulled up to the curb beside him.

"Hi, Boris!"

It was a girl Boris had seen often at parties and sometimes had talked with. He struggled for her name and then got it.

"Oh, hello, Gloria!"

"I'm going down the avenue. Want a lift?"

Boris was grateful and climbed in beside her. She was an unusually tall girl, even for an American. She was busty, well buttocked, pretty as a picture in a creamy way, and a very good-natured, lighthearted person.

Also, her father was rich as hell.

Gloria? Gloria? What was her last name? Fastenbaum? No, Fastenberg! Yes, Fastenberg.

"How are you, Gloria? You're very pretty this morning." Boris was unconscious of his engaging haltingness which made it sound as if he had weighed everything and arrived at a definite conclusion.

Gloria smiled prettily. "That's the sweetest thing anyone will say to me all day. Where can I drop you?"

"Well, I'm on my way to San Francisco. Anywhere along the way will do." Boris laughed hugely at his joke.

She looked at him curiously. Then she turned, and for a moment stared into the golden glow of an autumn maple across the street. Finally, with a preoccupied face, she put the roadster in gear and pulled out into Oak Street.

At Michigan she waited for the stop sign without a word. The sign changed, and as she turned left heading down the avenue, she asked, "Would the Saint Francis be all right?"

"What's the Saint Francis?"

"A hotel. The cable cars go by there."

Boris was nonplussed. "Anywhere that's convenient for you, Gloria."

It was so often that way for Boris Boritzsch.

Motherly women!

12

The House of Women

"The failure magic of the patients led us to profound appreciation of the ancient magic world that had been raised by the mothers to exorcise dread for the whole tribe. Perhaps before that the first men had been rogue males, mad like our patients.

"Certainly the magic of the hunt and of killing the neighbors were secondary practicalities compared to the magic a mother raises by tucking a tot's head between her breasts. That magic came first."

The Diary of the Equations

On Saturday morning an unusual, rain-laden wind was pouring in from the sea. As Colin walked across the grounds on his way to the dining hall, the pepper trees were thrashing bright clusters of seed out into the air.

Colin was joyed to find, as they had more or less planned it, that Rappa was approaching the hall at the same time. Then, as they walked up the steps in the blustering wind, he was shocked to find between them the strain that had come about on duty the night before.

In the cafeteria they put identical breakfasts on their trays and together went to a table apart. The strain deepened into silence. It had come from nowhere seemingly, and was about nothing that had happened seemingly, and here it was as solid as a wall.

Colin found that his troubled gaze had focused across the room on a pretty blonde waitress, and he quickly turned his eyes back to Rappa's face, then down to his plate.

The waitresses standing along the walls were patients, and when Colin had first arrived in the hospital

he had taken an immediate shine to this pretty girl. One morning she had failed to appear, and he had been horrified to be called up that same day before the hospital administration where he had learned that his smiles and greetings had disturbed the girl and caused a setback in her progress. He had learned in no uncertain terms about aspects of his relationship to any female patient and to some male patients.

Now Colin used the present incident to break the dense quiet between him and Rappa.

"My God! I found myself staring right at that girl I had the trouble over. You remember, I told you about it."

Rappa made no effort to shorten the distance in his voice. "That's what I thought you were doing. You're just going to have to learn that you are a handsome, charming fellow."

Colin shriveled at the bite of envy in his ugly friend's voice. Then Rappa's constant, deep sympathy for the patients drove his tone to the firmness of accusation. "Your charm carries with it a responsibility, Mr. Collins. You have no more right to flirt in a dangerous situation than has a pretty girl. You can set off some mighty awful things."

Colin had felt so guilty about the girl that he didn't need another tongue-lashing, and he knew that Rappa knew this. So he floundered in confusion, his face burning, his palms drenched, while a stone grew in his chest over the awful thing that was happening between him and Rappa.

Colin started to rise, but Rappa's heavy hand reached across and pushed him down into his seat.

Rappa's tone was still accusatory, and now it was also hurt. "I can only guess what's been bothering you, but I'm going to tell you what's stuck in my craw. Mr. Collins, you said something about inviting me to your home this weekend."

Colin raised an astonished face. "Oh, Rappa, I'm so sorry. I was only thinking of myself."

Without any trace of humor, Rappa spread his big

mouth across the walls of teeth, and the slitted eyes were glittering. The scar was livid.

"What's the matter? Are you ashamed of me?"

"Oh, Rappa! I've told my folks all about you. And they're so eager to meet you. But I. . . ."

"But you what?"

"There was something else I wanted us to do this weekend . . . and I've been ashamed to ask you. Then last night you became so quiet I was afraid to ask you."

Rappa had softened to curiosity. "What on earth can it be?"

"I've wanted to go with you to your friend's 'house-of-good-repute.' "

Rappa sat in wonder. "You, in a whorehouse, Mr. Collins?"

Suddenly Rappa roared with laughter, so that amused eyes turned to them from across the dining hall. Then, except for an occasional gasp, Rappa contrived seriousness.

"Well, I *have* noticed the thickening of the shoulders and neck." He lowered his head a little and looked closely at Colin's face. "Yes, the eyebrows are getting craggy, aren't they, and the fat little cheeks a bit gaunt. I suppose your equipment is long enough?"

Colin contrived innocence. "Oh, yes, Rappa!"

This set him off again, laughing himself into a fit of coughing that tightened Colin's lips and narrowed his eyes while he muttered to himself.

"All right, Mr. Rappapapa, self-styled Mexican-Jewish bastard! I'll show you a thing or two, you common bastard! Then I'll show you how to piss fourteen boards high!"

The wind was blowing a light rain steadily by the time they started down town in the coupé later in the morning.

Colin said, "I called my mother and she hopes you'll stay over next weekend."

Rappa expressed pleasure over the prospect. Then,

about a mile later he allowed that he intended to buy himself a new suit.

"I thought we were going to a movie."

"Well, the matinees won't start until one o'clock. It won't take me that long to throw on some new threads. I want to look good for the girls tonight. Madame B likes to be proud of her customers."

"Is that your friend?"

Rappa nodded and then grinned. "Incidentally, she is a very handsome German-Mexican mix with a common-law husband who claims to be descended from the lost dauphin."

"You're kidding!"

"No, I'm not. There was a guy up in Wisconsin who was famous as the lost dauphin. The French government sent somebody to look him over, and he got the okay. He was sought after all over the country as a houseguest, and Mr. Roy claims he is descended from one of this guy's bastards."

Rappa laughed pleasantly over his outlandish friends. "But let me tell you, that man can cook! He is a great artist with food."

After they were in one of the men's stores on the main street of town, Rappa said carefully, "I'm particularly glad to have you with me. I want you to help me find the kind of thing you wear."

The clerk had just put a double-breasted powder-blue jacket on him. It was clear that Rappa was thrilled with this and everything else in the store that contradicted "the kind of thing you wear."

It was a very good store, with suits running twenty-five dollars and up, and there was nothing wrong with the fabrics and styles. So Colin didn't see any sense in disagreeing with Rappa's taste.

Finally Rappa said, "All right! If it's the only way to get help from you, I'll confess. I don't give a damn about tonight. I want to buy something that will look right in your home."

"Rappa, whatever you wear will look right in my home. If I could make any suggestion it would be that

you wear a single-breasted jacket. You have a natural grace that's hidden in one of these sacks." Colin indicated his own double-breasted suit.

Standing there in the powder-blue jacket Rappa guffawed, and it was like a block of granite being dynamited under a tight tent. "I'm going to make you ambassador to France. You have a natural grace that's hidden here in the States."

As it turned out, he bought a single-breasted suit in a very becoming pinstripe of his own choice. The trousers had to be shortened, and the tailor promised to do this while they were in the movie.

Rappa also bought a tie. He had disciplined himself about the suit, so on this little item he let himself go. Colin could just hear his sister whispering to their mother, "Good heavens! The poor man's caught his tongue in a fan. And just when he was coming down with jaundice, too."

Colleen had become very "smart" and fashion-conscious since living a short journey from Hollywood. Well, to hell with her! Rappa wasn't her friend!

It was just two doors up the street to the movie marquee, but they got damp from the rain even in that distance. They bought four bags of popcorn for lunch and sat and munched and watched Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel*.

Rappa had seen the movie once before. Shortly after Miss Dietrich appeared on the screen he leaned sideways and whispered, "Does that whet your appetite, Mr. Collins?"

"Whew-eee!" Colin breathed.

"You're going to see it like that alive in a little while."

"Whew-eeeee," Colin repeated, his heart thumping in his double-breasted suit.

The "red-light district" was extensively out of proportion to the size of the town because it served much of Southern California. Directly back of the main busi-

ness street, it ran three blocks down to the river on Devon and Evon streets.

A few of the houses on these two streets were large old homes in the turn-of-the-century style, but most were the remains of some young couple's "rose-covered cottage." When Rappa pulled the coupé off Devon Street, he turned into a pot-holed gravel drive beside one of the big old Victorian houses. Two very tall, thin, clean-boled palms stood out front beating at the leaden storm. Huge pepper trees thrashed over the drive, and the potholes of water churned in the downpour.

Rappa stopped beside a lighted kitchen in the rear of the house, and the lights of the car fell on the weathered, wooden swing-doors of a one-car garage just ahead of them.

"Let's sit it out here in the car," Rappa said. "This will slow in a little while."

Then Rappa rolled down the car window on his side and waved toward the kitchen. Colin bent forward in his seat and saw the rain-blurred faces of two girls at the kitchen window. The window flew open, and one of them squealed.

"It's Rappa, Madame B! It's Rappa!"

Rappa laughed with delight and waved again and shouted, "Hi!"

Somebody was complaining about the rain coming in the window, and it was slammed down. Colin looked again for the faces of the girls, but they had disappeared.

A single bare bulb over the back steps had been turned on. In contrast to the drab, unimproved and unlighted street side of the house, Colin saw that there was a pleasant, brick-surfaced patio in back with an arbor of bougainvilla and a wall on which stood potted plants and flowers. It was completely out of place, and it gave him heart about entering the house.

There was a sharp drop in the downpour.

"Now!"

Rappa shouted this with an unaccustomed squeek in

his voice. They jumped out on opposite sides of the car and danced through puddles up to the back door.

A handsome, bosomy woman in a black satin dress was holding the screen door open for them. As soon as they were inside, she grabbed Rappa into a hug and laughed into his ear.

"Oh, honey, you're not wet. Why, you're dry even behind the ears."

"Madame B, this is my friend, Colin."

There was a blur with people in the background, but Colin had eyes only for this woman.

"Colin, this is Madame Bovary."

The woman was voluptuous without undue fat. But when Colin's mouth opened upon hearing her name she chuckled, and it spread slowly over her body, the voluptuous, quiet response of a mature woman.

She put an arm on Colin's shoulder, not with familiarity, but with warmth and respect. "How do you do, Colin! That's one of my old stage names, honey. I use it now just to seem as important as my husband, who is descended from the lost dauphin."

Her presence was commanding and nevertheless sensual, almost demandingly so. Her hair seemed naturally amber blonde, an extension in color of her tawny skin. She wore it quite short, and it seemed to curl naturally, too. But her satin dress, with the generous exposure of shoulders and breasts, and above all the flashing jewelry and perfume, shouted the defiant joys of "sin."

Colin looked into her dramatic and mobile face completely fascinated. She was looking him right back with growing warmth. Suddenly she whispered to herself. "Say, this is no boy we have here. This young man has been around." Then conversationally to Colin, "Come on in the front room and meet the girls."

There was a side room off the kitchen with a closed door, and as they passed it Colin heard cards slapped onto a table. The heavy, phlegm-choked voice of a big man said, "It's your bid."

The people Colin had glimpsed beyond Madame B

when he entered had been girls standing in the entrance to the dining room. Now they were gone.

Madame B led the way through the big dining room saying, "I'm sorry to bring you through the back way like this, but it's just as well. The front walk is flooded."

The living room was not as large as Colin had expected. The expansiveness from the front of the old house was mostly porch. One girl was standing directly in front of him, and three were seated sedately on the sagging furniture.

Rappa was grinning like a ravenous beast and nodding to the girls. Madame B said, "Rappa, you know everybody. I'm sorry now that Helen and Joyce went into L.A. They went to visit friends after the storm got so bad. Colin this is Lucy."

Colin's attention had already focused on the standing girl. She was a pretty little brunette with a cute figure hidden in a gaudy red dress. She was young and barely suppressed a giggle.

"And this is Virginia."

Virginia was much older, maybe twenty-nine. She was an extremely handsome woman with dyed red hair and a hard face of chronic resentment.

"And this is Betty."

This girl was sitting on the couch beside Virginia. She was in a short-skirted, pale-blue dress that displayed most of her expansive breasts. She had a face so softly pretty and complacent it was almost repellent to Colin.

"And, Colin this . . ." Madame Bovary had put her arm around Colin's shoulder again, "this lovely young lady is Galway Bay."

Madame B pressed her forehead against Colin's cheek with delicious, quiet laughter. "That's one of her stage names, too, honey. Isn't she lovely?"

Galway was around twenty-five, a natural redhead, with freckles that powder did not cover, and eyes of Irish green. No resentment in this face, none at all, and she was generous everywhere.

Even as she nodded and smiled welcome to Colin,

Galway called out, "Rappa! What a handsome suit! Is it new?"

After trying it on, Rappa had decided to wear the new suit. He pirouetted over to her with that "natural grace" to which Colin actually had referred. "Don't you just think it's the smartest thing since double-breasted girls?"

Madame B was whispering, "Colin, honey, which of the girls do you like?"

Suddenly, the thought of actually picking one girl over another and, before all present, going off into a room with her with everybody knowing what you were going to be doing, was a prospect that almost chased Colin back out into the rain.

"Do you like Lucy?"

Lucy had gone over to admire Rappa's new suit. Colin nodded with a frozen grin. He felt awkward, as if perhaps he should indicate that he preferred Madame Bovary herself.

"She's something we don't see very often, Colin. A girl who is in this business simply because she loves every minute of it. I think that's what you'd like at first, don't you?"

"Oh, yes!" Colin agreed. His knees had begun to tremble.

"Lucy," Madame B called.

Nobody paid any attention but Lucy. She came skipping over at once.

"Lucy, take Colin upstairs, will you, dear?"

Lucy put a warm hand in his. As they started up the stairs Colin saw that no one gave them the least notice. In fact it seemed that Madame Bovary already was preparing to send Galway with Rappa to some downstairs room.

Lucy was saying, "Oh, Colin. I'm so glad you picked me. You're the sweetest stuff that's ever walked in here."

The upstairs was so dimly lighted it was almost dark. There was heavy snoring from down at the end of the hall.

"That's just Madame B's husband," Lucy explained. "He accidentally got drunk this afternoon."

Lucy had opened a door, and she walked ahead of Colin to the middle of a dark room. She pulled the cord on a single unshaded bulb that hung from the center of the ceiling.

The room was spartan and clean, wall-papered in little pink flowers that had been there a log time. There was a worn Axminster rug; a bed with a mattress that sloped from all corners to the center and was covered with a yellow chenille counterpane; a solid-wood chest of drawers on top of which, surprisingly, stood a row of very good novels between bookends. Colin saw Conrad, Melville, and Mann.

Lucy turned to find him staring at the books. "Mr. Roy, Madame B's husband, reads a lot. He has books in every room in the house. He says good sex and good thinking go together."

The girl stepped up close to Colin. "Now, honey, give me two dollars to take to Madame B and I'll be right back."

Colin got out the money with trembling hands and gave it to her.

She patted his chest with the other hand. "I'll be right back. If you want to, you can start undressing."

Colin turned to watch her close the door and found that a glossy print of Christ in Gethsemane hung in a frame on that wall.

Colin pealed off his jacket and removed his tie. Then he took off his shoes and got a knot in one of them. He seemed to have a hell of a time unbuttoning his shirt.

Lucy came back in and shut the door. "Honey, now I have to have a look at you."

She gestured, and Colin unbuttoned his pants. She gave him a thorough inspection for gonorrhea.

"Cute and clean as a whistle," Lucy declared, and then laughed at herself. She kicked off her high-heeled shoes. She loosed three buttons on the front of her dress, shimmied out of it in one motion, and there she was.

A knock came at the door. Colin still had his member standing out and he jerked his pants back over it like someone was shooting at it.

Unperturbed, Lucy went to the door and opened it halfway. The slim, milky-nailed hands of a Negro girl handed Lucy two towels and a bowl of water that steamed of lysol.

The door closed and Lucy went to a closet, opened the door, and put these things in there. Then she came back, collapsed gracefully onto the bed, and rolled into its center. She beckoned with her suppinated fingers.

"Come on, you sweet stuff."

Colin had not experienced anything like Lucy. It felt like the girl had a fever raging in her. The ache in Colin emptied itself. This was the beginning for him, and in Lucy's experience, the end of what she would get. She clasped him tightly to her, stopping him.

Colin was desperate to continue with her, but suddenly he remembered he had a whole house of girls ahead of him. With that thought he collapsed on Lucy.

"Oh, Colin, would you like to do it again with me later?"

"Yes, Lucy! Oh, yes!"

When they returned to the living room, Rappa was just entering from the direction of the kitchen carrying an armload of unlabeled green bottles which Galway helped him put down on the coffee table.

Rappa gave Colin a wink as if nothing had happened. "Colin, I ordered us all some of Madame Bovary's home brew. I think you're old enough to have a little."

Colin was terribly thirsty, though he had never tasted beer. Presently everyone in the room was drinking from foaming glasses, and Lucy showed Colin how to clink glasses. He found that he liked the yeasty stuff and drank it rather fast.

They all sat drinking for a while. Then Rappa got up and opened more beer and courteously refilled their glasses.

"What do you think of my young friend, Madame B?"

The tawny woman smiled warmly upon Colin. "I am deeply impressed."

"We have determined that we have a destiny to fulfill together," Rappa declared.

Madame Bovary raised her fine brows at Colin. "A destiny?"

Colin was proud of Rappa's pride in him, but the word *destiny* was embarrassing. He waved a hand deprecatingly. "We have set out to paint a self-portrait of Man in words which we think will one day guide us in some great decision . . . we don't yet know what that might be."

Rappa sat down again with a full glass. "You'll never guess what we have discovered to be the first element in our portrait."

"I suppose not," Madame B agreed amiably.

"We have decided that magic is the basis of all human meaning and that it is the mothers who generate the basic magic."

Colin saw a subtle attentiveness appear on Madame Bovary's face.

"In the first place," Rappa continued, "while you're getting your milk from a woman you're getting your magic, and if you don't get it from her you end up out there at the hospital with your own brand of failure-magic which you have to work at all the time."

Rappa gulped at his beer and went on expansively. "The use of magic is to dispel dread and that's how our patients are using it. But, back in prehistory the tribal mothers built a whole structure of magic . . . pillars and beams and ceilings and walls to keep dread outside for the whole tribe."

Her warm, full-bodied humor returned to Madame Bovary with inner chuckling. She reached into the chair next to her and took Galway's hand.

"Now, *that* I like! Eh, Irish! These young men have made a good start, don't you think?"

"A great professor in New York," Galway provided, "who used to accept my favors before I came out here

to go into movies, told me that, before the druids, the mothers were the most powerful ones on earth. He told me about that often, especially when he was doing certain things I shouldn't mention."

With comic unconsciousness Galway's hand strayed in loving remembrance to her cleavage.

"You are right to the point," Rappa assured her bluntly. "Mr. Collins and I have decided that the magic world of the mothers was cemented in place with the best of all stickem—the lust of the rogue male."

Madame Bovary's inner mirth bubbled forth. "Ah, my dear husband must hear of this when he is recovered."

Rappa beamed at her pleasure. "So now, you understand that we are not here just for the fun of it. We are here as sociologists studying the structure of matriarchy."

Madame B howled. "Yes," she gasped, "I noticed how quickly the two of you got into your studies."

Now everybody, even the resentful Virginia, was laughing. Then abruptly, there was a banging out front.

Madame Bovary stood quickly. "Lucy, I have to go speak to the men in the back room. If that's any of our gentlemen friends, please take them in the side room and make them comfortable."

Lucy bounced up and then hesitated, and Colin saw a visitation on her face. Then she went promptly to the front door. The foyer of the old home was completely curtained off from the living room by folds of heavy green velour of ancient loom. Lucy disappeared through these drapes.

They all sat in awkward silence for a moment, and then Colin realized it was the duty of the other girls to keep conversation moving during the curtained entrance of the new visitors.

Galway asked, "Virginia, what's the name of that book you and Betty are reading?"

"*Jalna.*"

"Isn't that a pretty name?" Galway asked Ruppa. "But wait till you hear the name of the author."

Resentful of having to answer, Virginia supplied, "Mazo de la Roche." She was sitting on the arm of a big old overstuffed chair in which the complacently gorgeous Betty was sunk.

Suddenly Colin understood the relationship between these two girls. Trying to help Galway, he asked Virginia, "Do you read aloud to each other?"

"She reads to me," Betty said, and yawned. "Interminably."

Lucy came back through the velour folds. "It wasn't anyone. Just the wind, I guess, banging one of the porch chairs."

Suddenly she said to the other girls, "Doesn't it just send shivers down you to think of some of your folks walking in here? Every time I have to go to the door, I think, 'God, what if it should be some of my kin!' Not countin' my brothers, I have seven cousins would beat me to death if they walked in here."

The girl's shoulders shivered violently. "Why do men have to hate you for doing what they wanted in the first place?"

Virginia, white-faced, tight-lipped, and hot-eyed over Betty's answer to Colin, stood up without hearing anything Lucy was saying and flounced off upstairs just as Madame B returned to the room.

Madame B turned to Betty with her own lips tightened. "What's the matter with her?"

Betty shrugged insolently.

"Mind how you answer me."

"I don't know. She's just sore about everything."

Madame B looked inquiringly at Lucy, and Galway supplied, "It was nothing. Just the wind."

Madame B went directly to the arm of the couch beside Rappa, sat on it, and whispered in his ear with her arm around his shoulder.

Rappa was nodding enthusiastically to what she was saying, and now he beckoned to Colin. Colin went to Rappa and bent over to catch his report.

"Listen to this! Madame B will shut up the house

and we'll have a party and a feast with liquor and all the girls we want if we'll put up fifteen dollars each. How about it? Come on!"

"Sure," Colin breathed.

Madame Bovary now focused on Galway. She spoke softly, accenting each phrase with pride. "Go, wake my husband! Minister to him! Dress him in royal raiment, and bring him here."

Galway went at once to the upstairs.

13

Mother of the Magic World

"The world of magic meaning the tribal mothers projected was an unchanging, animated order of magic forces to which each person had his lonely relationship. Everyone was his own magician all the time. What he wanted socially he knew how to get only by way of this magic world. There could be little history and little society beyond the tribe."

The Diary of the Equations

While they awaited the entrance of Mr. Roy, Rappa exclaimed to Colin, "Remind me to prove to you that only ten percent of power is held by force. The rest is held by magic. Take my father. That man has charisma, let me tell you. There is magic in the way he turns his head or softens his voice. But he also surrounds himself with magic. By the time you get to that man's inner office you have been mightily impressed with the symbols of power."

Lucy said, "Oh, now! Here comes Mr. Roy!"

Colin was stunned to find that the man was a huge albino. Rappa had said nothing about this. As he stepped from the dimness of the stairwell, Mr. Roy drew rimless dark glasses over his pink eyes. His white hair was plastered to his noble head in dampness, and

Galway was still drying her hands and arms. Clearly, she had helped him soak his aching head.

The "royal raiment" consisted first of a very white, very light-weight, turtle-necked sweater. It had the soft look of something as costly as vicuña. The trousers were bottle-green and loosely hung. They ended above bare feet in clean straw sandals. Colin knew he was looking upon a highly cultivated person.

Mr. Roy shook hands firmly and spoke with a deep, elegant softness. "I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Colin. Galway has spoken highly of you, and any friend of Rappa's is a friend of ours."

Now he turned to Madame Bovary with a lilt of excitement. "What's this Galway tells me about a feast?"

Madame B smiled upon him like tawny sunlight. "I knew it would please you, lover. Lucy is locking the house and drawing the blinds against anyone who would chance out in this storm. We'll get out the brandy and liqueurs our friends brought from Mexico, and you, my husband, may prepare one of your works of art. Rappa and Mr. Colin have been most generous, and you need not consider the expense or your preparations.

Now Colin saw Madame B with her lover. Whether or not he was descended from the lost dauphin, this man had power. It put a glow on the tawny face of Madame Bovary.

Mr. Roy was becoming very excited. "Oh, we may be very fortunate. Dimaggio's nephew took a truck up to San Francisco yesterday. He was going to race back today with some barrels of crab. They kindly offered me a share, which of course we could not afford. Perhaps it is still not too late to get some.

"But we must hurry. The shops will close." He headed for the wall phone in the dining room.

Colin said, "I would be glad to go to the stores, but I wouldn't know how to find them."

Rappa explained, "Colin is from over near Riverside. Could someone go with him?"

Madame B nodded matter-of-factly. Her attention was on Mr. Roy, who was already giving orders over

the phone. After a moment she turned happily to Rappa. "He got the crab he wanted. Isn't that wonderful! Yes, Rappa, Celeste will go with Colin."

She went to the foot of the stairs and called gently, "Celeste?"

Presently the Negro girl answered. "Yes, Madame B?"

"Sweetheart, will you come down and go to the shops with one of our guests?"

"Of course, Madame B, I'll be right down."

The huge albino had reached yet another number. "Tell me, Mr. Miller, do you have one of those lovely, whole-beef tenderloins you sold me recently? Wonderful! And I need some fowl. . . ."

Celeste descended the stairs wearing a pale-blue, sleeveless knit sweater that fell richly over small breasts from her slim, high throat; a plain, brown woolen skirt; ankle socks to match the sweater, and brown saddle shoes with flaps.

Madame Bovary sounded a little surprised. "Why, Celeste, dear, how pretty! You've fixed yourself all up. And earrings, too."

The girl did not seem at all embarrassed. She stepped into the room with nubile grace, her head raised and tilted, looking with a little curiosity at Colin. She was Colin's age and came about to his shoulder.

"Celeste, this is Mr. Colin, a friend of Rappa's."

"How do you do?" She smiled upon him but did not extend her hand.

The little earrings were Indian silver and turquoise to match the sweater. Besides her loveliness and Negro features, there was something mysteriously exotic about Celeste. Suddenly, Colin knew what it was. She did not straighten her hair. It was simply trimmed fairly close to her head, and in a lovely line around her face and neck. Therefore, there were no commonplace highlights to her pretty head. It turned away from him in its own dusky space.

She passed on through the green velour drapes and presently returned wearing floppy black galoshes and

carrying a black raincoat and rain hat. Colin helped her on with the coat. Her skin was dark brown overlaid with a delicate chiaroscuro in blacks. Georges Braque had put black over brown that way.

While Celeste buttoned her coat, Madame B told her which stores Mr. Roy was ordering from.

After they were in the car, Celeste directed Colin to the center of town. Then, looking ahead at the wet pavement she said, "You don't remember me, do you?"

"I'm sure if I'd ever met you, I'd remember you, Celeste."

She laughed lightly. "I'm being unfair. Do you remember the orientation trip for junior high kids when you helped your biology teacher take us down to Balboa and the south beaches?"

Colin looked at her in astonishment. "You can't be *that* girl!"

"You saved me from *certain death*."

They both laughed, and Colin almost ran the car up onto a lawn, exclaiming, "My God! You've grown up!"

On a field trip she had slipped off the rocks near Corona del Mar and had fallen into a tide-dish the waves were washing. There had been just one terrifying thought in her mind. "Octopuses! Oh, Lord, save me! I'm into a den of octopuses!"

Colin had jumped off a fifteen-foot height, down into the basin of sand and rock, out of which he had lifted the frightened girl up onto a ledge clear of the tide.

"My God! You've sure grown up since then! But, Celeste, weren't you Jim Holcomb's sister?"

Jim Holcomb had been a track man in high school. Colin had avoided most track after he came to California because it took too much time. But he had continued the high jump to keep the coach off his back. Now, turning the coupé to his right into the lights of the business district, he could remember the bright day of the track meet when he had managed to clear five feet with the old-fashioned scissor-style. Jim Holcomb,

who had worked so hard on the revolutionary new roll style had next cleared five feet one inch, then five feet two, then five feet three inches.

Right there in broad daylight Jim Holcomb had pissed several boards higher than Colin Collins, and Colin had a deep respect for him.

Celeste was nodding. "Yes, Colin, but you know, since our daddy was killed, Jim and I haven't lived in the same house. It's sad, but we hardly see each other. He has lived with our grandparents, and I lived with my Aunt Susan and Uncle Ralph, who are from the other side of the family.

"There's Dimaggio's on the left."

After Dimaggio's, on their way to the next store, Colin said, "I don't remember hearing about Jim's father."

"Do you remember Steg Shutz, the race driver up at Ascot Speedway?"

"He was killed last year."

"Our daddy was his chief mechanic. He went out with Mr. Shutz that morning to listen to an engine sound and something happened. Nobody knows. They spun into the rail and exploded."

"I didn't know about Jim's father being in racing. He never mentioned it."

"He was so proud of daddy he would have been embarrassed to mention it. It would have been like bragging about being rich."

After they had the groceries from the last store packed into the coupé and were on their way again, Colin asked carelessly, "Celeste, earlier you said you lived with your aunt and uncle. What happened?"

Celeste was silent a long time. At last she spoke disjointedly. "Before our mother died she used to do housework for Madame Bovary, so I've known her practically all my life. Madame Bovary loved my mother very much."

Colin apologized. "I'm sorry, Celeste. I had no right to ask about things that are none of my business."

"Don't say that, Colin!" Then she added in a preoccupied voice, "You have the right."

Colin's skin was shivering in embarrassment. He would have given anything if he hadn't asked the question, but it would have been silly to apologize again.

"I know what it is," Celeste said to herself.

"What what is?"

"People know at once that you're a hero, and it's proper for you to ask about their lives."

"Oh, please, Celeste!"

"Yes you are, Colin. Some day you will be known as a hero."

Colin laughed nervously. "I'm a hero to you because I lifted your scrawny little legs out of the octopus den."

"Oh, of course, Colin! You've always been my hero." Celeste leaned toward him, stretched up, and kissed him warmly on the cheek.

Colin Collins, boy-scientist and "man-about-town," found all of a sudden that his heart was slamming into the back of his tongue.

Celeste sat back in silence for a while and then she blurted, "My uncle Ralph raped me."

Colin had known for sure, after all this talk, that that was what had happened. But he hadn't expected her to tell him, and the surprise made him stutter.

"I . . . I'm sorry, Celeste."

"No, you mustn't feel that way. I just feel sorry for him because he couldn't help himself. He'd be all right for weeks, but then it would happen again, and he'd be crying like a baby and begging me not to tell my Aunt Susan. So I had to leave."

Colin found that there was an unexpected openness in Celeste over this matter. There didn't seem to be any shyness or self-pity, but instead, almost a purposefulness. Then abruptly, profound shyness appeared.

"Now, I'll tell you why I've told you." Celeste spoke haltingly. "My Uncle Ralph was so scared, you know, he made me doubly scared, and I . . . would . . . be so tightened up . . . he would hurt me . . . terribly. Now I'm scared of it all, and living at Madame B's

hasn't changed that. But I think that with you . . . with you I. . . ."

"Celeste!"

Colin shouted her name to stop her painful effort to talk. He reached out desperately to stop her hands that twisted together in her lap. They were damp and they fluttered a moment before submitting to his pressure.

Her eyes were wide ahead, and she heaved a shallow, leaden-chested sigh. "Now I've said it to my hero himself."

Colin stopped the coupé right in the dim middle of Devon Street and threw his arms about her. He started to kiss her passionately and abruptly became very gentle, kissing her face and lifting the cold, trembling hands to his kiss.

Dark, dark eyes with whites like doves over the first ash of creation. "Oh, Colin! I don't want to make any more brown babies in this world. But, oh, Colin, I want my hero to make love to me."

He pressed her face between gentle hands and kissed her eyes. She kissed his lips and then drew back.

"What I have told you Madame Bovary does not know. She thinks I am an innocent little girl. She loves me and I wouldn't hurt her for the world."

"Well, it won't hurt to let her know I'm your hero."

"No, that would be all right. It's easy to see she likes you very much. But she wouldn't want us fooling around without her permission. She has plans for me."

"Plans?"

"Last week she said, 'I may have to beat your little black ass all the way to U.S.C., but you're going to college.' "

It certainly was true that Mr. Roy was an artist with food. Some surprisingly beautiful serving pieces came out of the old house, and Colin had never before seen such a lavish buffet. Madame Bovary announced permissively that they needed an air of bacchanal and commanded Virginia and Betty to serve the table clad only in their black lace panties. Lucy wanted to strip,

too, but Madame B declared with massive nonlogic that she was too young for such exposure.

The cold cracked crab, the salad, the tournedos of beef, the little broiled chickens—everything was delicious, and Mr. Roy was mightily complimented. Colin carefully sampled the wines, and when the brandy bottle came by he poured himself a little of that for a try. The explosion in his mouth that settled like a rosy bomb into his midriff sure was an experience.

Betty and Virginia sure were beautifully made. The grace of them, even in their tipsy recoveries as they occasionally went from the table to the buffet, reminded him sentimentally of the fat little feet on which each had taken her first step, the fat little impossibilities of architecture evolution had devised so that each silly, beautiful, happy little girl-animal could stand with free hands and take her first step.

So tonight, beginning his first drunk, he saw their wrists and arms and shoulders and spines and breasts and bellies and thighs and ears and hair and eyes and buttocks and bellies and thighs and eyes and lips and thighs and lips and hands and arms and breasts . . . as miracles, like the feet of little children. . . .

. . . the female of an improbable species, *Homo sapiens credulus* . . . the standing joy!

Most beautiful of all was Madame Bovary at the head of the table. Rappa was beautiful with his scar blazing in excitement. And when Colin could see her beyond the bulk of Mr. Roy, dear Celeste set his heart thumping. How was he ever going to tell Madame Bovary that he wanted Celeste?

His desire was spurred to aching by the luscious sight of Betty who sat on his right around the corner of the table. The girl relished her exposure and constantly drew his attention to herself. The two of them had another little spot of brandy.

"Would you like some coffee, Colin?"

Colin came awake with a start. He had no idea how long he had been sleeping sitting up in his chair. "Yes, Betty, thank you."

Colin blinked his eyes and looked around the table,

bringing people into focus. The dinner was definitely over. On his left Virginia was sound asleep with her head on the tablecloth. Apparently, Lucy slept with her head in Rappa's lap, and beyond him, Galway was sound asleep on his shoulder. Rappa's eyes were glazed, and he discussed the possibility of a second World War with Mr. Roy in tones of slurred authority. Colin could not see Celeste beyond Mr. Roy except that her arm was extended across the head of the table so that Madame Bovary could hold her hand.

Madame B's eyes were closed, and she rocked almost imperceptibly back and forth in her chair, snoring gently. Beyond her, from the direction of the side room off the kitchen, came thunderous snores. The two cardplayers had been served back there and were sleeping off a bottle of brandy Madame B had sent in to them.

"Would you like some of this, Colin?" Betty was extending a square bottle toward him.

"What is it, Betty?"

"It's Cointreau. It's to have with your coffee."

Colin shook his head.

Betty pulled at his arm. "Come on, honey, rest your pretty head in my lap."

Colin craned his neck to make sure Celeste couldn't see into Betty's lap, then he rolled himself under the corner of the table so that his butt remained in his chair and his head rested on that luscious lap. He looked up between the beautiful breasts, and she smiled down on him between them while she stroked his hair.

She declared, "Now I know you'll have some cointreau." She lifted the slim cordial glass to her left nipple, tipped it against that tender corking, and marinated the part for a moment.

Colin was abruptly wide awake. He hissed, "My God, Betty, not here in front of everybody."

She whispered, "No one will see," and replaced the cordial on the table. Then she leaned forward, resting her forehead on her hands on the table with her el-

bows flared to further shield their naughtiness. With that the morsel swung to his reach.

Colin captured every drop of the delicious Cointreau. When he stopped she straightened without even looking down at him and glanced around the table. This time she put the glass to the other nipple.

Somehow, it tasted better and even more exciting from that side. Colin decided he could easily become addicted to Cointreau.

Betty straightened dreamily with glistening nipples. Colin found that he was in heart-thudding excitement. He laughed gleefully. "Please, ma'am! I'll have the whole bottle that way, if you don't mind."

"Oooooh, you darling! You know how to do that! Don't you want to go to one of the rooms with me?"

He sat up abruptly with widening eyes. There it was! The straight, the certain route to the arms of Celeste.

"Oh, Betty, I'd love to. But I ought to confess something to you."

"What's that, honey?"

"You won't tell anyone?"

"Of course not, honey! What is it?"

"Celeste and I are in love. I want her desperately, but I know Madame B wouldn't allow it. That won't make any difference between you and me, will it?"

Betty was stunned. She stared at him above an open mouth.

"You won't tell anyone, will you, Betty?"

"Huh? No! Of course not." Betty reached out and patted his cheek.

Madame Bovary had awakened to her commanding self. She was now leaning across the table in front of Celeste, holding Mr. Roy's hand affectionately in both of hers and bragging about him to Rappa.

"Excuse me, Colin. I'll be right back." Betty rose from her chair and passed around the table in the direction of the kitchen. Colin saw her catch the eye of Madame Bovary.

Presently Madame B got up and went out to the kitchen. They were out there a long time. Betty came

back first. Colin held her chair for her as a gentleman should. When he sat down Betty put her hand in his lap and started stroking him. Colin found that, strangely, there was no personal intent in her caress.

Madam B re-entered the dining room, and Colin took a quick glance at her while her gaze was on Celeste. There was a glare of tears in her eyes. Just as he knew her eyes would turn to him, Colin turned to Virginia and put his arm gently over her naked shoulder.

"Virginia, honey! You don't want to miss the party, do you? Come on, I'll pour you some coffee."

Lucy sat up with Rappa's hand sliding off her shoulder. "What's going on?"

"Nothing, Lucy. I was just waking Virginia. Can I pour you some coffee, too?"

"Oh, God, yes!" Lucy reared back in her chair yawning widely and holding her head. "Put some brandy in it. I have a headache. Colin, you're a darling!"

Virginia sat up slowly. Colin was very conscious of the eyes of Madame Bovary. He fixed a cup of coffee and brandy for Virginia as well as for Lucy. Betty had stopped stroking him. She was watching him intently. Gently he returned his arm to Virginia's shoulder and drew her to him while he lifted the coffee to her lips. She raised both hands and took the cup. She sipped at it for a while. Then she put it down, leaned toward Colin, and gave him a gentle kiss on the cheek.

Madame B stepped around behind Celeste's chair, raised her by the shoulders, and led her into the living room. They were in there a long time. Colin did not turn, but he saw from the eyes at the table that the woman and girl were sitting in there on the couch. Occasionally he caught the low vibration of Madame B's tender voice. Colin drew Virginia to himself and put the stimulant to her lips again. She drank eagerly.

Betty was looking at him. She laughed. "You're a cute one," she decided. "There's more to you than I found in your pants."

Suddenly Celeste was back in the room, and Mr. Roy, standing, was helping her with her chair. She

looked upon Colin with a smile of inestimable warmth, and Colin's heart bumped to hear Madame B call him into the living room.

Colin went in and sat down beside her and he could hardly breathe. "Yes, Madame B?"

"You want Celeste?"

Colin stammered. "Did . . . did Betty tell you? She promised she wouldn't tell anyone."

"Don't trifle with me, boy."

"Oh, Madame B! Yes! Yes! I want her. There is just one thing. Can you be sure we won't make a baby?"

"You don't worry about that." She glared hard into his face. "You will be more gentle with her than with anything in your life?"

"Yes, Madame B."

"She wants you, she confessed."

"Yes, Madame B. We didn't know how to ask you."

"Well, it will be better for her with you than with anyone else." A huge sigh filled and escaped from the woman's chest. "A man should get what he wants. That's what he's for, to get what he wants. My dear husband always gets what he wants. When it's the wrong time of month for us, I give him one of the girls. No one can ever accuse me that he doesn't get what he wants."

Suddenly, she grabbed Colin to her and kissed his mouth violently.

When they were back in the dining room, Madame B stood at the head of the table and spoke. "Now, listen to me. This is a very important moment. My dear little Celeste is going to lose her flower to Colin. This is almost the most important moment in a girl's life, and we are going to have a ceremony. After the ceremony the lovers will be left alone in the downstairs room, and the rest of us will celebrate their ecstasy out here.

"But during the ceremony they will drink a cup that I shall prepare myself with knowledge I have of ancient times. It is a very powerful potion that increases the ecstasy of love and gives great endurance in ecstasy

and will give our darlings a nuptial delight beyond what humans otherwise can have.

"There will be a bathing ceremony for my little Celeste, and she will have handmaidens . . . Virginia to bathe her and Betty to dress her in flowers."

Virginia was sitting upright, wide awake, with her eyes on Celeste.

Madame B spoke directly to her. "The purpose of this bathing is to excite the child so that she accepts her lover with terrible passion. I will bring you scents and powders for this ritual. You go in there now and prepare the bath."

Madame Bovary turned and went into the kitchen carrying one of the candles. She could then be heard awakening the cardplayers in order to command them to stay in their room. Whatever it was she put to boiling on the stove, it presently filled the old house with a fantastic, stinging spice.

From time to time Madame B left the preparation of the potion to go oversee the bathing ceremony. The bathing was taking place in a bath tucked under the stairs next door to the downstairs bedroom. Once, Colin heard Celeste moan.

Madame B commanded Lucy to take Colin into the velour-draped foyer and keep him there until the ceremony started.

In the foyer Lucy hugged him. "Oh, Colin, I wanted it from you again, myself. But I'm glad Celeste is getting such sweet stuff for her first time."

Then the girl set herself to watch through the separation in the drapes, giggling occasionally, and wiggling her buttocks over the exciting preparations.

"It's going to start soon. Ooooh! Isn't it exciting!"

Presently she turned in awe. "Here comes Madame B."

Colin saw gooseflesh rise on her shoulders.

"Oh, Colin," she whispered, "It's all so mysterious and thrilling. Now she's asking for Celeste to be brought into the room. Virginia is bringing Celeste.

"Oh, oh . . . isn't she pretty! Oh, she's so pretty!" Suddenly, Lucy was crying and sniffling. "Now, Colin!

Madame B is asking for you. She's asking for you, Colin. Hurry!"

Colin was deeply embarrassed as he stepped through the drapes. The whole thing was so silly, and he felt six times a fool. Then he found that no one was looking at him. Celeste was standing over by the stairs with her "handmaidens." He was thrilled to find that she was nude except for some dazzling white flowers over her pubis. She was indeed a lovely thing, but no one was looking at her either. All eyes were on Madame Bovary.

She stood at the end of the living room near a shaded table lamp that lighted her obliquely. With both hands she held a cup between her breasts. It was rather large and handless, of white porcelain with a flared lip. There was a presence about Madame B, an air of power that had focused the attention of everyone in the room. All sense of foolishness left Colin. He suddenly found that he was submitting to this thing, and with that it became real and very compelling.

"Come here, children." The voice was trancelike and shocked Colin.

He went forward with Celeste and stood on the girl's left.

"Take her hand, Colin. You will drink with your left hand. Celeste will drink with her right, as is fitting."

Colin found that Celeste was trembling, actually panting from the lascivious ceremony of the bathing. Her hand in his was hot and dry.

No one in the room was moving, but now Mr. Roy stepped over to the phonograph and turned it on in a low volume. A sad, sweet, sensuous, and wordless call! Ellington's great band as sensuous and provoking as every stripping woman wishes she were, and Adelaide Hall calling in wordless hunger.

Madame B offered the cup to Colin. "Sip of love, Colin."

He sucked about a tablespoon of dark brown liquid from the cup. It was incredibly bitter for a moment. Then it inflamed like tabasco, and finally, in his belly it announced that it would consume him.

Madame B took the cup from him and passed it to Celeste. Colin almost begged Madame B to spare Celeste the brutal cup. Celeste gasped, and her slim hand spasmed in his.

Madame B retrieved the cup from Celeste, and suddenly she was intoning. Suddenly, she had some language—was it Nahua?—deep in her blood. It was cadenced in a monotony that rose up from her bowels like a separate being of utterance. Colin glanced at Rappa over the mystery of the strange language and the trancelike voice that rose out of Madame B. Rappa responded with an almost imperceptible shrug of wonder.

The voice issuing from Madame Bovary stopped, and immediately she handed Colin the cup. "Sip of love, Colin."

There had been a faint hope that one sip would do the trick. Now it was clear they were going to have to drink the whole violent draught. It followed that the more he consumed the less poor Celeste would have to endure. So Colin took a heroic gulp of the agony. The assemblage had seen on their faces the reaction to the first sip, so now a soft "Ah!" of admiration went up. Behind his squirting tears Colin knew with sad certainty that he would never breathe again.

When Celeste's turn was finished and her nails were biting into his hand, Madame B retrieved the cup and intoned over it again. So it went while Mr. Roy played "Creole Love Call" a second time. Colin took the last of the cup without saving a drop for Celeste, and by this time he felt as if the marrow of his bones had dissolved.

Madame Bovary stepped forward, placed a hand on each of their heads, and intoned briefly.

That was it. Colin could have his girl.

Jesu Rappaport y Casafuerte had witnessed the sucking of the Cointreau, the message by way of Betty to Madame B, the babying of the lesbian, and Madame B's reaction. He was filled with admiration for his

young friend's determination and daring—not to mention his exquisite choice in ladies.

Lucy had opened a beer for Rappa and was sitting on the arm of his chair staring down the little hallway beyond the stairs toward the nuptial door. "I wonder if they've started to do it yet. Oh, I can't stand this!"

Madame B called from the couch where she sat with Mr. Roy. "Lucy, why don't you put on some gay music." She laughed permissively. "We have to give our lover girls some excuse for hugging each other."

Betty and Virginia had made it up since sharing the lascivious torture of bathing Celeste. They were together in the dark of the dining room.

Rappa gave Lucy a kiss, and she hopped up to do as bidden. Just as she was about to turn on the machine, a moan came from the nuptial chamber.

Lucy turned to Rappa with an alert smile. "Now, isn't that sweet to hear!"

Celeste's moaning came again, and it was more prolonged. Lucy's head raised and she stared into space with her whole body alerted. Madame B had straightened on the couch, and she raised a hand for silence. Betty and Virginia came back into the living room and stood listening. Galway smiled at Rappa and then sat staring into the floor before her chair.

Suddenly, the lovely little "bride" filled her chest to its limit and slowly, slowly released it in a bright glissando. She did this again. And then again.

All the tensed people in the living room relaxed in empathy.

"Now, that was lovely!" Mr. Roy exclaimed.

Lucy lamented, "I wish I'd known this afternoon he could do things like that."

Still listening, Madame Bovary swept her arms out as if she were leveling the earth. "Sssssshhhhhh!"

Then Rappa could not believe what he heard.

With many thrills Celeste's voice lifted again like a rapturous lark. This sweet bird rose into her sky and sang up there over a heavenly meadow. The young god himself bayed out now like a hound. He whooped

down great slopes and barked through ravines, following his sweet lark.

Rappa watched the two big pimps come out of the back room and stand in the arch to the dining room, each holding a pinochle hand.

Abruptly, for a time, the lark settled on the meadow into a happy nest, where there was chirping and clucking and cooing, like a clutch of warm and sleepy little birds discussing bliss. So everyone in the living room expected it to stop. But it didn't stop. The lark rose again, and the hound bayed out again following her across that meadow.

It wasn't possible, but it was happening. It went on and on. Rappa's heart was racing, and blood thudded in his temples. He found his whole body trembling, and the muscles of his face were twitching.

The heads of the girls were raised with flaring nostrils, and Rappa saw a rosy blush rising between Galway's breasts. Lucy was panting so that he heard her across the room. Now she went to Madame B and knelt before her, moaning.

Then a fantastic sequence took place. Rappa was, afterward, not always able to convince himself it had happened. The raptures from the bedroom ceased. Simultaneously, outside the house the storm shrank away with a fading shriek. Madame B put Lucy's head aside compassionately and stood.

As she did so, Rappa saw the mantle of magic power descend upon her. Every eye in the room turned to her in this certainty. Indeed, she stood before them wearing the awesome mantle of Hecate.

Then there was a little earthquake.

It had not been the wind. It had been a little earthquake, and Rappa had seen the old stained glass shade over the dining table swing about two inches. The two pimps knew it had been an earthquake. They were stunned. They turned at once and went back to their room.

No, there is no mistaking the slightest of earthquakes, the little nudge that reminds you that you are

nothing at all. Perhaps because of the great shift in barometric pressure which the storm represented, perhaps for no reason at all, there had been a little slipping deep in the San Andreas Fault.

Perhaps, for that matter, it had been a requirement in the visitation of magic upon Madame Bovary.

Before her gaze, Virginia and Betty retreated meekly up the stairs to their shabby love. At her feet the shocked Lucy begged in whispers for a crumb of such ecstasy as she had heard.

Galway lifted Lucy to her feet and took her off to put her to bed.

Madame Bovary stood where the visitation had occurred.

She knew it had been an earthquake, that was certain. Maybe she had commanded it.

Now she walked away, saying quite simply, "Good night, gentlemen."

14

All Kings Fall

"It pleased Rappa that the old magician-kings the matriarchs had raised learned to avoid their own sacrifice by using scapegoats. I once described to him how I thought they then used the magic of war to become soldier-kings with power over the tribal mothers.

"This stirred his pride in his father. "Now, tell me of the magic that displaced soldier-kings. Tell me of the Medicis, Fuggers, and Rothschilds.' "

The Diary of the Equations

Rappa and Mr. Roy sat up together after all the others were asleep. Mr. Roy was playing the record of "Creole Love Call" again, but when it was ended he had forgotten it, and the needle ran in the center with

a monotonous clicking. He took a drink from a bottle of brandy beside his chair and heaved a sigh.

"I have been living with some naïve notions," he reflected gravely. "I had no idea such sexual prowess was possible. It leaves one quite sick at heart to realize one has lived the better part of one's life without knowing true ecstasy."

Rappa nodded silently. Mr. Roy set his bottle on the floor in front of his chair, placed both hands on his knees, and rocked himself back and forth moodily.

"If this were ancient times, I suppose I would be sacrificed tomorrow, and Colin would be made king. Are you aware, Mr. Rappaport, that originally the king was sacrificed at any time for the good of the tribe and also at special ceremonial times? The matriarchs, the old tribal mothers, set it up that way."

Again Rappa nodded silently.

"I have been much interested in the origins of kingship and have studied the subject rather extensively. Perhaps my interest stems from my position here, in what is essentially a matriarchy dispensing sex as since the dawn of man."

The albino became aware of the clicking phonograph and got up and turned it off.

He came back to his chair, saying "I enjoy my life here, but I am aware that I am a very old-style king from the days when there was no history and very little social meaning. History begins with the warrior-king who raises the terrible stone gods. The first thing he learns is to trade in captured women and free himself of the tribal mothers."

Rappa found himself very deeply depressed. He did not know what it was about unless it was for all the fallen kings of the world and the sadness of being a king. He saw again his father's face, ashen with lost love.

"I am very depressed, suddenly."

Mr. Roy stood. He said with deep sympathy, "Good night, Mr. Rappaport."

"Colin?"

"Yes, Celeste?"

"I could tell you were awake. Is anything wrong?"

"No. I just woke up and was feeling how sweet it is to be tangled up with you like this."

"Yes, Colin! Isn't it sweet. OH!"

"I'm *sorry*, darling! Do they hurt that much?"

"Yes. But go ahead and kiss them. I want you to."

"I'll just hold you to me carefully."

"Down *there* is where I really hurt. But, darling, it's such a good hurt."

"Oh, Celeste!" Colin got up from the bed.

"What are you doing, Colin?"

"I'm going to get some cold towels for you."

"Oh, don't do that."

Colin opened the door quietly and stepped out into the little hall. In the dark of the living room he saw that Rappa was sound asleep on the couch. Colin found that he was cotton-mouthed thirsty. He slipped into the bathroom without waking his friend.

When he re-entered the bedroom he could see in the dim light from the back porch that Celeste had raised herself on one elbow. He extended the water glass to her carefully.

"Reach out carefully. I'm handing you a glass of cold water."

"Oh, thank you! That sounds delicious."

Colin waited until she was through drinking. Then he sat down on the bed and relieved her of the glass.

"Now, open your legs."

Celeste jumped when he pressed the cold towel to her and exclaimed in a shiver, "Ohhhh! That's cold!"

"Is it too cold?"

"No. It will be good for me."

"I have three more of them."

After a while Celeste said, "You're so sweet, Colin."

"You're the sweet one."

When he was back in bed beside her with her head pillowed on his chest she nibbled on his nipple and sent little thrills through him. Then she rolled her head

back on his shoulder, and he knew she was staring into the dark of the ceiling.

Celeste broke the long silence. "Someday I will find me a sweet man, the blackest sweet man I can find, so I can have sweet black babies. Just the same, all my life, and when I am an old woman, sometimes, just sometimes when I am sitting alone, I will remind myself in my heart, 'A hero once made love to me.' "

"A no-good, white hero."

"True! True! A *whiiiiyet* hero!" She gave a little laugh. "Our daddy used to say 'white' like that. He went to the road races in Europe with Steg Shutz. Over there it was different being a Negro. He had always taught Jim and me to be proud of ourselves instead of hating white people, but when he came back from Europe he told us he was going to take us to a country where *whiiiiyet* people lived."

"Negroes are often in my dreams, and it's always in the same way."

"You don't have to tell me about it."

"I want to."

Colin raised Celeste's hand and kissed her fingers. "For example, I dreamed I was sitting on the lawn in a park with a white companion. We were sitting at the edge of a gravel path. I picked up a handful of the pebbles and idly tossed them, one by one, over a nearby hedge.

"Then we decided to be on our way and stood up and walked past the hedge. Only then did I see that a Negro family had been picnicking there all along. I was terribly embarrassed.

"I said to the man, 'I hope I didn't hit any of your family with those pebbles.'

"He replied, 'You did.'

"I said, 'Why didn't you complain?'

"He didn't answer me. His wife and children were paying no attention to me, and now, without a word, he returned his attention to them."

Celeste rolled her head on his shoulder and buried her nose in his throat. "A hero once made love to me. I'm tired of Negro dreams. Let's have a white dream

where you are a Negro caddie and you are out at the country club idly tossing some pebbles through an open window when you find there's a white family in there having their lunch." Celeste began to giggle against his throat. "Tell me some of your *whiiiiyet* dreams, Colin. Ow!"

Colin had reached down under the sheet and slapped her little bottom.

She poked him in the ribs. "Cut that out! I'm sore everywhere, and it's all your fault." Abruptly she stretched herself and kissed his cheek. "No it's not, darling. It's my fault for not being in better training and all."

Colin chuckled.

They were silent for a while, and then Celeste asked, "I wonder what time it is?"

"Do we care?"

"I just hope it isn't anywhere near morning."

"Let's sleep for a while and then wake up and talk again."

"Yes, darling. May I stay here and listen to your heart?"

Colin stroked her shoulders gently, and promptly she was asleep. He was very sleepy, too, but unexpectedly the voice of his destiny spoke to him.

"Guide her in her education and see that it includes travel and study in many lands. One day the two of you will work together on a great message of hope to which the whole world will turn . . . your city."

"My city?"

"We will discuss that later when we discuss your continuing education and that of Jesus Rappaport. For now, you and this girl discuss her education .And remember, you do not yet know what I plan for her."

Colin and Celeste did not discuss anything that night. They slept all the way through to mid-morning.

Colin was awakened by voices out in the direction of the foyer. A bright morning, cleared of storm, lay outside the windows of the little bedroom. Celeste was

sleeping prettily, the tips of two pearly teeth peeking between her lips.

Colin got up and dressed and slipped out into the living room, rubbing his eyes. The green drapes to the foyer were flung back, and Madame B stood looking out the open front door drinking a glass of beer. In the living room stood Rappa and Mr. Roy. They were also drinking beer.

Suddenly, Colin found that Rappa had turned to face his entry with his glass of beer raised. "Mr. Roy! The king is dead! Long live the king!"

Colin felt himself flushing deeply, and he determined that he would tell his friend about his mesmerizing powers and his neuro-hormonal change.

After the two men had finished gulping their beer, Rappa smiled weakly at Colin. "For some reason, I got very depressed last night. I don't know why. Anyway, I don't feel much better this morning. Let's get back to the hospital."

Madame B suddenly exclaimed, "Celeste, dear, are you all right?"

Colin turned to find Celeste, wrapped in a blanket, hobbling into the living room as if she held a small basket of eggs between her knees. She gave Madame Bovary a smile of unearthly sweetness.

"Oh, yes! *Yes,* Madame B!"

When Colin and Rappa got back on duty Sunday evening a great many things had happened. Peter Dribble had gone into a catatonic trace. After a full day of this it looked quite permanent and the doctor had ordered tube feeding. They fed him an eggnog.

Jones, a syphilitic whose flesh was rotting from his bones, had soared to a temperature of 107.1°. They checked it with three different rectal thermometers before calling administration.

There had been a new attendant on duty in the afternoon. He had allowed Weber to get hold of the Sunday paper and Weiss to get hold of his own scrotum. The ward chief had already had Weber moved back

into cell 6, and Weiss moved out beside the night office.

It was necessary to watch Weiss closely because he was occasionally vomiting bile and might strangle. He had more reason than ever to beg to be killed, but he was still asking for it in the same tone of voice. The doctor had ordered dry heat to the swollen mass between his legs. They accomplished this with bags of salt heated in the kitchen oven and placed under a folded sheet near his bandages.

With all these and other duties, it was some time before the two attendants could sit down in the office chairs for a rest. They sat in silence for a while listening to Weber, back in the cells, recite the sports pages.

Finally, Colin screwed up his courage and told Rappa about his mesmerizing powers. Then he told him about his neuro-hormonal change that had made possible the loving of Celeste. Finally he told him about his wealth and the Institute for Primate Studies.

Rappa listened to all this with an occasional nod. "I am greatly depressed, Mr. Collins, filled with a dread for which there seems no reason. Even so, I am greatly impressed with what you have accomplished."

No small anger arose in Colin, and he was abruptly confident of being able to tongue-lash Rappa out of his silly mood. Fortunately, he was prevented from this in the next three seconds.

Colin was half-conscious that Weber had shifted from sports to the front page. Abruptly the man's voice crackled about their heads like the end of a broken power line.

"New York City, New York—Sidney Rappaport, Manhattan textile king, shot and killed himself this morning in his fashionable Scarsdale home. The body was discovered by a son. Rappaport had suffered financial reverses and was estranged from his . . ."

Very, very slowly Rappa was rising from his chair. He was ashen and his scar was like a cord of wax. He was whispering, wide-eyed. "I was so proud we didn't need each other. But I thought he would be there. I knew that. I knew he would be there."

Colin was on the phone to the administration explaining about Rappa and asking for immediate substitute attendants because the ward office had closed long ago.

Rappa was starting to walk away. "*¡Ay, Dios Mío!*"

Colin hung up and gently pushed him back down.

"*¿Cómo puedes pedir que quiera a mi madre?* But I did want him to love her, and he did love her. I can tell you."

". . . Rappaport revolutionized textile marketing in the early nineteen-twenties by. . . ."

". . . kill me, kill me, don't just stand there . . ."

Rappa shrieked at Weiss. "Shut up you Goddamned Jew . . . aw, shit! *¡Ay, Dios Mío!*"

All kings fall, Rappa. It is the cities they build that stand. Perhaps not eternally, but long enough. The voice of my destiny has spoken, dear Mexican-Jewish bastard.

It is the cities we must understand.

15

Discovery

"I had read P. W. Bridgeman's *Logic of Modern Physics*. I understood that science had its demonology of 'forces at a distance.' Beyond that, I was sure it was precisely the magic meaning of discovery that drove the most objective experimenter.

"We needed greater austerity in both our science and our magic. Maybe we had already achieved some austerity in our religious magic by giving up the terrible conviction afforded by human sacrifice. Or was I naïve to suppose we had given *that* up? Only a science of magic could tell us before there might be horrifying events."

The Diary of the Equations

Colin talked it over with both Rappa and Dr. Thurston and then, using Rappa's bereavement as excuse, he resigned himself and Rappa from their hospital jobs the day after Sidney Rappaport's suicide. Colin had been in contact with Mr. Marty McCord for some weeks by telegraph because they were planning the first trial flights of Colinair. The flight from Tulsa to Dallas to Houston had already begun with Miss McAllister as hostess. Now Mr. McCord was, without hostess, trying out the Oklahoma City to Los Angeles route. Today, two days after the suicide, he was taking Colin and Rappa with him to Oklahoma as Colin had arranged. Colin hoped the trip would divert Rappa a little.

Mr. McCord had decided to fly out through the San Gorgonio Pass. The peaks of the mountains had crested with snow in the big storm. They crept by in awesome solitude, and Colin was thrilled. He had been up twice before in Mr. McCord's old Jenny, but this flight of the McCord Gull was really something. Off to his right, nestled at the foot of the San Jacinto Mountains, he could make out the little hamlet of Palm Springs.

Rappa was sunk in gloom and stared through the windows unseeing.

After they were out over the desert, things were quite different from what Mr. McCord had expected. A great backlash of warmth was sweeping into the winter desert. Up from Sonora rolled yellow oceans of blowing sand that flowed under the ship. Mr. McCord turned north, and the pretty little Gull fluttered. Rappa paid no attention, but Colin's heart was in his mouth.

When they landed near the town of Needles for gas, they taxied on a side road out to a filling station on the highway. While they were gassing up, Colin and Rappa had to stand on opposite sides of the Gull, hanging their weight on the struts to steady her. The sand stung Colin's face in gusts.

Mr. McCord decided to follow the Acheson Topeka and Santa Fe tracks, and so they flew to Flagstaff, then

to Winslow, then to Gallup over stormy deserts. But at Gallup there was really bad news. There Mr. McCord's landing was on a hard sandy field in back of a filling station, and at the station a man in a blue suit and yellow shoes was cursing because all the paint had been sand-blasted off the driver's side of his new Packard. East of Gallup a frightful storm was roaring up out of Chihuahua. Mr. McCord decided to fly north again and try to get around it.

And so it happened that, somewhere beyond the Colorado border, Colin saw the site for an incredibly beautiful city of the future. He saw the site and he envisioned the city simultaneously in one stunning moment. Here would stand a city dependent on no port but the ocean of air; a city where the vast, esoteric industries of the future would congregate in defiance of the geography of coal and iron; a city for the people who lived and worked in it; a city like America—based on an idea.

Beyond a range of snowy peaks that cupped alpine lakes tumbled a highland river of great proportions. Part of this river could be brought through the mountains in a tunnel and form a lake behind a dam up there in the pine country. A broadly swaled valley up there would take this first lake.

From there the precious water could be tunneled and canaled across the thighs of the mountains to the sites of other dams and other lakes. These lakes would be the sources for many small rivers that could flow down out of the pines across a tableland of cedars till at last they tumbled over red bluffs to a land of semi-desert.

Colin craned his neck but couldn't see where the water would flow below the bluffs. He pounded on the wall to the pilot's compartment and unlocked the small, opaque window meant to keep the pilot from being distracted by the fun and games in what would later be the flying bedroom. Mr. McCord opened the window and Colin shouted at him.

"Mark this spot well, Mr. McCord. I want to come back here. Fly around a bit."

Colin turned to Rappa excitedly. "Rappa, look! This is the site for our city."

"What city?"

"Didn't I tell you? We are going to build a city!"

"You never told me a thing about it."

Rappa was blunt and hurt at having his grief disturbed.

Colin quieted himself ashamedly. "I'm sorry, Rappa!" He put out his hand shyly and touched Rappa. "Would you, though, just look a little? See there where that high river runs back of the mountains? It could easily be brought through the mountains below that gap."

Mr. McCord was taking a wide turn back out over the semidesert. Now Colin saw with deep pleasure that, after the streams had tumbled over the red bluffs, they would collect again in a great meandering lake full of many islands. The commercial city could be partitioned with great beauty and efficiency down there.

On the other hand, the industrial sites would be located up on the barren elevations in irrigated parks. Up there, too, would run the arteries of heavy traffic which could outlet to proper portions of the city below.

Rappa was watching now, seemingly without interest, but Colin knew it would all register for a later time. What Colin now wanted most to know was what would happen to the water out lower in the desert. He pounded on the compartment and got Mr. McCord's attention.

"Fly down the valley and out between those great red pillars of rock."

An ancient river had thundered down this valley from thrusting teats of the virgin Rockies. Below the red bluffs it had torn away all of the Triassic sandstone except six great pillars that stood way south at the end of the valley. Mr. McCord flew between these pillars at about 800 feet, and they emerged from the valley of the city.

Then Colin saw a wonder. The ancient river had dropped and fanned out across a desert plain, cutting

it everywhere with meandering drainage. He had Mr. McCord fly to the end of the plain where he saw that a system of dikes could retain the water on this plain creating a land of pleasant islands. Right then Colin determined that he would find a way to process the sewage of his city into usable fertilizer instead of running it down here and ruining this promise.

So this would be their city, stretching from alpine lakes to desert sea, arranged for the pleasure of its people. Here, in a dozen research institutes, men would invent and patent for him new synthetic fibers and materials, aircraft and rockets, science fiction machines able to compute and think, new drugs against aging and disease. Above all, Colin would have his city speak with a new voice—on paper, on the air, and on film, and they would broadcast the living events of the city for all the world to see and emulate.

He whispered to the voice of his destiny. "I will bring together here the world's most brilliant people. Up in the mountains there will be three small colleges of liberal arts, one for each lake . . . and different trout in each lake. Down here in the city I will have the greatest technical university in the world. There will also be schools of music and drama, of graphic arts and literature. I will place observatories up on those pillars of rock so the people can look out into the abyss of space and reflect upon it."

Mr. McCord had turned the ship east now.

A day later, in Oklahoma City, Dr. Ordway was ecstatic. "You won't believe the things that are developing. This new research building is nothing. Sorry you're missing Harkins and Johnson, but they're at a pharmacology meeting in Chicago. They've both been through the neuro-hormonal change like I have, and all three times it's been a success. Guess who wants the injection series next?"

"I could never guess," Colin admitted.

"Your banker, Mr. Norton. He and I have become very good friends since he is handling your donations to the institute."

Dr. Ordway opened doors onto a long series of glass-walled lab rooms. "Here are the new endocrinology labs. The animal rooms are back there. The monkey and rat cages are arriving next week. We're going to study ovarian hormones and the menstrual cycle looking for a hormone contraceptive."

Colin admired the efficient-looking setup.

"Yes," Dr. Ordway rushed on, "Young Mr. Norton is quite an old boy. He remarried, you know."

"No, I didn't."

"Girl much younger than he. Come to think of it, she's from up in your town."

Colin remembered the bosomy choir leader being tickled out of her mind by young Mr. Norton's silver goatee.

"Miss Prime," he supplied with certainty.

"That's it. They had a premature baby. Biggest premature I ever saw. Weighed twelve pounds." Dr. Ordway was bland as puck.

Colin laughed. "I'll have to congratulate him. I'm seeing him for lunch."

Suddenly Dr. Ordway was freshly excited. He grabbed Colin's arm and began pulling him down the main corridor of the research building.

"All this is nothing. Wait till I show you the really big thing that is happening.

"I had a young Negro in the clinic with a badly infected ulcer on his leg. I tried everything and couldn't dry the thing up. One week he walked in with a dirty old poultice on it. Said his grandmother had been putting them on him. I couldn't imagine what the gummy stuff was until he explained it was bread mold.

"You know, I had the distinct impression that ulcer was much better.

"Come in here. This is part of the new pharmacology laboratory."

In the labs, Dr. Ordway marched Colin to a long lab bench which was topped with a series of hinged glass lids. Under these glass lids Colin saw array after array

of agar plates, flat round dishes of a nutrient on which bacteria can be grown.

"Maybe," Dr. Ordway admitted, "that ulcer just got better itself. I don't know. But I got to thinking about that old colored lady's bread-mold poultice, and suddenly I said to myself, 'Why shouldn't moulds have special protection like any other form of life? Maybe molds have chemical defenses against bacteria! . . . eh? Eh? Eh?"

Dr. Ordway was gripping Colin's arm and chuckling gleefully. Colin shivered with a thrill on his back.

"Look at these dishes, my boy. Look at this one. That's gonococcus growing there, taken from a handsome young man who sells farm equipment here in the state, and at the same time, until I stopped him, was spreading this bug among the farmers' daughters.

"Well, my boy, what do you see there in the middle of the plate?"

"It looks like a spot of mold."

"It is! It is! Penicillium notatum! Bread mold! And what do you see around the mold?"

"An area clear of bacteria!" Colin was experiencing an elation that made him dizzy. He put out his hand to steady himself against the lab bench.

"My God! Dr. Ordway! What's in that clear area?"

"Who knows. I call it penicillin. Whatever it is, it's death on gonococcus, and several other bugs."

Colin's elation was so great he could not express it. He was stunned and thrilled.

Dr. Ordway put a hand on his shoulder. "Will you match me with a hundred thousand dollars to research this?"

Colin was thinking of Jones who had died at 107.0° "Of course, Dr. Ordway," he whispered. "Of course. And I'll do something else. I'll get my father's drug company to back the development. They're going into human medicine now."

After another awed silence, Colin spoke again of his father's company. "They'll be a big company . . . the biggest in drugs. I want to move them to a site I've seen in Colorado. Incidentally, Dr. Ordway, don't

spend more than you have to on new buildings. I want to move the Institute for Primate Studies out to Colorado, too. Your family won't mind, will they?"

"They spend all their time in Europe soaking up you know what." Dr. Ordway didn't use "culture"—as if it were a dirty word.

"Mr. Marty McCord is also moving his aviation industries out there. We're planning a huge operation for him—motors, planes, research—even rocket research."

A whisper came to Colin from the voice of his destiny, and he turned to face Dr. Ordway.

"I don't understand why, but no one else must know about your discovery just yet. I don't understand why, but it would be a breach of history just now."

Onetime ace, Mr. Marty McCord, who had now graduated to aerospace coordinator of future projects as well as fifty-one percent owner of McCordair, had personally driven Colin out to the Institute for Primate Studies so they could talk en route. He had begged off entering the institute because he had wanted to "jist sit in the car and do some thinkin'."

The kind of "thinkin'" he had been doing burst from Mr. McCord as soon as he had started the car back down town.

"Yes, sir! Someday we will have an engine that sucks in air, compresses it in a turbine while it's mixin' in the fuel, and explodes the mixture while it's being exhausted. That thing will go like a fartin' demon."

"You have mentioned this before, Mr. McCord, and I think you are right. Why don't you set aside some funds to begin researching the idea?"

"I'm goin' to."

"How is Miss McAllister?" Colin asked, with a catch in his voice.

"Mr. Collins, I want to tell you, that is some girl! Naturally I sampled her talents before hiring her for the Tulsa to Houston run . . . not that I doubted your judgment.

"That girl has those Texas boys loco. Why, old Ferg . . . that's Charlie Ferguson, flies that plane some-

times two and three trips a week tryin' to git her to marry him, the bandy-legged old goat."

"Charlie Ferguson! *The* Charlie Ferguson?"

"That's old Ferg."

"How much money do people estimate 'old Ferg' has?"

"Billions. Nobody knows."

Colin was silent while Mr. McCord made his way into the downtown traffic.

Dear Miss McAllister! You will help me, won't you? Really, could there be more fun for you than being Mrs. 'old Ferg'? Dear, I need a partner with just about that much money. I will be cursed many times for conniving, no doubt, but not by you, my sweet.

The voice of his destiny nudged Colin appreciatively.

Young Mr. Norton was waiting without impatience in the lobby of the hotel. He allowed it was a pleasure watching the milky-skinned daughters of well-to-do farmers pass through the lobby. Colin grinned and congratulated him on his twelve-pound boy.

Upstairs, in the suite, Mr. Norton joined Mr. McCord in a prelunch jolt of genuine, imported scotch. Then he sat down to talk with Colin while Mr. McCord had a second whisky and dreamed about his "fartin' demon."

Mr. Norton was a product of one of Colin's "you-are-so-sleepy" sessions, true, but also he was most admiring of Colin and listened to the planning of a whole city with narrow-eyed concentration on the "hows" of doing it.

Colin had lunch brought up, and while they ate cold roast beef and each drank a bottle of Mr. McCord's unimported, yeasty beer, Colin discussed with Mr. Norton his trip to Denver which Colin asked him to make as soon as possible.

"Please set up our offices as 'Rappapapa Enterprises.' Study the Denver law firms carefully and retain the best for us. We will need a public relations firm,

too. I leave it to you whether the bank we already own there is sufficient for our needs.

"But . . . the thing which must be started immediately, is your contacts to arrange our future lobbying activities in the state legislature."

There was the sound of a key in the foyer, the entrance door opened and closed, and presently Rappa walked into the parlor.

Colin had been worried about him and was overjoyed to see his friend. "Rappa, we ordered an extra plate in case you returned. Won't you join us?"

Rappa was haggard now from lack of sleep. "Thank you, no, Mr. Collins. I don't feel like eating, but if Mr. McCord doesn't mind, I'll have a spot of his whisky before I lie down in my bedroom and try to get some sleep. I've walked all over this town, and I believe I am tired enough."

"Please help yourself," the aerospace coordinator requested.

They sat in silence while Rappa was out in the kitchenette. He came back presently with a water glass of scotch and proceeded directly to his bedroom.

"I'll see you, gentlemen."

"Have a good sleep, Rappa." Colin had been so concerned he had not even thought to introduce Mr. Norton.

"I'm sorry I didn't introduce you, but he is very disturbed."

Mr. Norton waved his hand without concern. "You know, I think I'll skip coffee. You have cut out a mighty big job for me in the next few weeks, and I had better start making my arrangements here in Oklahoma City so I can be off for Denver.

"That was delicious beef, by the way. And great whisky, Mr. McCord. Mr. Collins, your scheme is a heroic one, but I must admit you are approaching it in most practical terms. Our relationship has always been most lucrative, if fantastic, and I see no reason it should not continue so in this fatastic venture."

Edgar Quinlan was subdued by what he thought to

be the elegance of the hotel. He came through the door first, allowing Pretty to trail him into the suite. Mr. Marty McCord couldn't keep from grinning as he watched Pretty enter. He had expressed distaste for this trip because of a little item called the Mann Act. Now it was clear that he was convinced, as Colin had assured him, that Pretty's trip was for purposes of getting educated by Mrs. Tompkins.

Edgar was shaking hands obsequiously and glancing about the large living room in awe. "It's mighty good to see you, Mr. Collins . . . oh, I've seen Mr. McCord at the county fair many a time. Never had the pleasure, though."

"Hello, Pretty." The sun-bleached drapes of hair; the long smooth firmness of limb: the eyes almost too blue for the tawny skin; the full, solemn lips . . . this was Pretty all right!

"Hello, Colin."

"Pretty, this is Mr. McCord."

"How do you do, Mr. McCord?"

Colin turned to Edgar. "Why don't you step into the kitchen with Mr. McCord, Mr. Quinlan. I'm sure he can fix you an interesting cup of tea."

"Never had tea," Edgar allowed slyly. "Like to try a spot," and the two of them walked out to where Mr. McCord kept his scotch.

Colin stepped forward and took both of Pretty's hands. He was surprised to find them moist and trembling.

"Oh, Colin! Now that it's here, I'm scared."

Colin was deeply touched and took her tenderly into his arms. "I think you'd better change your mind."

"Oh, no, Colin. I must do this. It's so important for me to make a success on my own."

Colin made up his mind right then that he would not be the instrument of Pretty's defloration. He decided, however, that she would be deeply hurt if this decision were revealed. So he comforted her sensually.

They separated as Edgar and Mr. McCord came back into the parlor.

Edgar was expansive. "I have the letter from Mrs.

Tompkins, Mr. Collins, sayin' that she'll take care of Pretty. Ma and I think it's a real chance for the girl to be gittin' out of them red hills."

"I'll watch after Pretty, too, Mr. Quinlan."

"I know you will, son. Yer a fine young man and yer pa's the best. Tell him I finally terraced that field. Will ya tell him that?

"Well, I gotta be goin'." Edgar stepped up to Pretty awkwardly and kissed her on the cheek.

Pretty returned the gesture only for form. Because of him and the plight of her ma, she could never in her life have faith that a husband would sustain her. Because of this man she had only the bitter faith that she could do it on her own.

Mr. McCord said heartily to Edgar, "I'll go downstairs with you. I have some business to attend to."

They had taken a separate room for Pretty down the hall from the suite. Colin carried her small, dilapidated, cardboard bag as he escorted her down to it.

"After you've freshened up, come knock on the door to the suite and we'll go out and see the town, shall we?"

He opened the door for her and set the bag inside. But Pretty pulled at his arm and drew him in with her and shut the door behind them.

"Please, Colin, do what has to be done. I know it won't be fun for you with me all tensed up like I am. But, then we'll have it over with, and I'll start learning how to be good for you. Come on, I want to undress for you again."

If she were given a fortune it wouldn't be enough. She had to know absolutely that she could make money, lots of it, any time she wanted. A concept like marrying a rich man's son was too nebulous for her needs. It was the immediate, brutal reality of hunger she had to ward off with the immediate means at her disposal.

Colin undressed, too. Then he picked up his trousers and drew a ten-dollar bill from the pocket. He grinned

wanly and handed it to her with a queasy thrill at such purchase.

She laughed and took it with a shaking hand. "I almost forgot."

Pretty had been right. It wasn't fun for him. Presently he just stopped. Pretty got up at once and went into the bathroom. He thought it probable that she was crying in there.

Colin dressed and stood at the window looking down on the street. This was a farming and cattle town becoming an oil town, and it was a mighty busy place.

In the distance was the state capitol building. Like all capitols and most public buildings of the day, it was fake Greece façaded onto ponderous utility. American cities did not *speak*. They had not even the meaningful quaintness of European cities. They were visual noise.

Colin was familiar with the new architecture of Walter Gropius at the German Băuhaus, with Le Corbusier, Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and Alvar Aalto. He would like to bring them all to Colorado and design a city that would speak to the next thousand years. A thrill transfixed him as he thought of the wild and beautiful site of his city.

Pretty came from the bathroom wiping her flushed face with a damp cloth, but smiling genuinely. "I'm over it now, Colin. Oh, Colin, you were so sweet and gentle."

He went to her moved with affection. He hugged her and played jokingly with the pretty little breasts. Then he told her to get dressed.

He took her out shopping. He bought her clothes and clothes and luggage and clothes until she was delirious. Then he bought her a lavish dinner.

That night they tried it again, and this time it was very good indeed.

16

The City

"We saw that now we had to account for the next invention in human meaning . . . the cities of social meaning. These would be the ancient cultures described by Oswald Spengler.

"It was not sufficient for our portrait of 'Man, the inventor of meaning' simply to know these great systems of social meaning had existed. We had to account for their origins in our own terms of dread and hope."

The Diary of the Equations

Colin had thought that Pretty might comfort Rappa, but Rappa hardly paid attention to her. Abruptly, Colin knew what to do for his friend.

He had Mr. McCord fly them all back to California as fast as possible. After a night in Needles that fretted Colin, they completed the last leg of their trip with the dawning sun at their backs.

From the airport, Colin drove Rappa's old coupé straight to Mrs. Tompkins's where he left Pretty. Then he drove home.

It was a Saturday morning. Now that he was an officer of his company, Mr. Collins sometimes did not go to work on Saturdays. He and Mrs. Collins were sitting over the last cup of coffee in a late breakfast back in the kitchen.

They were overjoyed to see their son back from the perils of flight. Colin hugged them and said he had Rappa in the living room. Colin had not told them last week about Rappa's father, and he did not tell them now, because he wanted their meeting to be as natural as possible.

He brought Rappa into the kitchen. "Mother, dad, this is my friend Rappa."

Colin's father stood up and shook hands, smiling down on the chunkier Rappa. Mrs. Collins extended her hand matter-of-factly.

She said, "Forgive us, Mr. Rappaport, for bringing you back to the kitchen, but Colin insisted. Sometimes I think we live too informally.

"Do sit down. We've heard so much about you, and we were sorry you couldn't make it last week."

Mr. Collins did not sit down immediately. He went to the stove and brought coffee for Rappa and Colin. "How was your trip?" he asked, hungrily. "That must have been mighty exciting."

"It really was, dad."

"Oh, I couldn't stand the thought of you boys up in the air in that contraption. Have you had any breakfast?"

"Not much," Colin confessed.

"Then I'll fix you some."

While Mrs. Collins filled the homey kitchen with the delicious smells of frying pork sausage and eggs and toast and freshly squeezed orange juice, Colin told them all about the flight, about discovering the fabulous site for a city, and about Dr. Ordway.

Colin heard sloppy slippers and turned in time to see Colleen slouch through the doorway in pajamas and an old robe. She was yawning at them through a head of hair like a fancy latrine mop.

She shrieked, "Oooohhh, God in Heaven!"

"Colleen, this is . . ."

The girl shouted in retreat, "I can see who it is, you idiot!"

Mrs. Collins turned from the stove with muffled explosiveness. "You watch your language, young lady." But Colleen was gone.

Rappa was sitting there open-mouthed in the new suit and tie he had bought to impress the Collins family.

Colin howled.

Mrs. Collins stopped him. "That was cruel, Colin. We should have warned her Mr. Rappaport was here."

She was just placing Rappa's plate in front of him

when she jerked her hand back in horror. "Oh, Mr. Rappaport! I never once thought of your religion. I hope the smell of the pork didn't offend you."

Suddenly, for the first time in days, Rappa laughed. "That's all right, Mrs. Collins. I routinely eat pork on Fridays in order to break both my religions. I'm really a Protestant at heart." He pronounced it with the accent on the second syllable.

Clearly, to blot out immediately her first presentation of visage, Colleen re-entered. How had she done it? Her hair was neatly combed, and she had on as much makeup as Mrs. Collins would allow. She was wearing a very pretty blue-flowered robe and fancy slippers. She had also doused on some cologne, and she came through the sausage and eggs like a petunia in an onion patch.

She grabbed Colin's hair from behind and shook his head violently, meanwhile saying sweetly, "How do you do, Mr. Rappaport. We've heard so much about you. Though the source was questionable, one can see at a glance you're a gentleman. May I sit next to you?"

Rappa jumped up to hold her chair. His slitty eyes were as wide as they could get, and his scar was flaming in excitement.

Colin spoke to his father, intending to thwart any attempt Colleen might make to monopolize Rappa.

"Dad, I hoped you would drive Rappa and me out to the old land development this morning. You can tell us many things that will help us in developing the land around our city."

"I'd be glad to. I've already decided not to go to work."

Colin knew that his father did not really believe in the city. He did not even know of the beginnings of Colin's wealth. The man simply believed that young people should dream, and the bigger they dreamed the more he respected it. He would take the city as seriously as if he knew it was to be a reality tomorrow.

It turned out that Colleen had to go to the hairdresser that morning, something Mrs. Collins seemed to have forgotten. Colleen allowed she was dying to see

Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel*. Colin watched with widened eyes while Rappa, as if he had never heard of the picture, offered to take her that night.

While Mr. Collins was saying a last word to his wife, Colin and Rappa walked out to where the car was standing in front of the garage.

Colin said, "Rappa, I didn't say anything to them about your father."

"I'll tell them. I need to tell your father about the suicide."

Driving out to the area where the land development had been, Colin's father told Rappa all about how the company had been started, and how it had failed. He felt that if they had not overestimated the subterranean water supply they might have made it in spite of the depression.

When his father stopped the car they were on a height in a ruined vineyard from which much of the land development could be seen. it was an absolutely deserted area. There was a wheelless wagon bed about a hundred feet off the road.

Colin got out of the car saying that he had to urinate. He walked around behind the car and stood with his back to them while his father and Rappa walked over to the wagon bed.

Colin didn't have to urinate at all. He stood looking out across the rolling desert with its pitiful signs of the once glorious development, and he thought with a shiver, "This is what would happen if I fail in Colorado."

The voice of his destiny stirred angrily and resentfully.

Colin walked slowly toward where his father and Rappa were sitting on the weathered wagon bed. He found some brilliant stones along the edge of a drift of sand. He pretended to become interested in these.

Presently, he saw his father put his arm over Rappa's shoulder and keep it there while he talked softly to him.

Colin picked up some of the stones and tossed them away into the sand.

After a time his father and Rappa rose, and Colin straightened, too, and walked toward them. Rappa called to him and behold! Colin was stunned.

"Colin . . ."

Behold! Rappa had spoken that name!

He said, "Colin, your father wants to talk about our city."

They were brothers now. Now, indeed, Rappa was his brother.

Rappa turned to Mr. Collins. "I can tell you, that was some beautiful country Colin pointed out to me up there in Colorado. Really, Mr. Collins, you should come back up there with us and see it. Do you think Mrs. Collins would let us all fly in that 'contraption' again?"

Colin was overjoyed. He grabbed up a little stick and dropped to his knees in the sand.

"Look, dad, it's like this."

Colin drew a map of the Colorado area and a profile of the drop from the mountain river down to the desert.

Mr. Collins nodded, and nodded again, as he understood the topology. "The first thing you'll have to do up on that cedar table land and down in the desert is plant windbreaks . . . windbreaks everywhere, thick on the ground and high in the air . . . fast-growing trees, some of the wood-pulp pines perhaps up on the table land. I don't know. I'll have to study it. . . . but that's what you must be ready to do as soon as you bring the water through. All this is going to take a lot of money."

Mr. Collins declared this, not as a gentle reminder of the impossible, but as a fact that required first attention.

Colin looked at Rappa and found him grinning. So he told his father about his early wealth, and that he already owned Colinair, McCordair, and his father's own company.

"But I didn't have anything to do with you becoming sales manager. That was your own idea."

Mr. Collins sat in stupefaction.

Rappa was roaring with laughter. "This is some son you have here, Mr. Collins."

Rappa's laughter was infectious, and suddenly Mr. Collins was roaring along with him. Colin joined them with more subdued and self-conscious mirth.

Finally, when Mr. Collins had gasped to a halt, he said, "But, son, no matter how much money that seems, it would be only a drop in the ocean of money you'd need on this development."

Then Colin told his father and Rappa about "old Ferg," the hardest drinkin', longest lovin' billionaire in Texas. He had once bet a million dollars that a prize-winning hereford would drop her calf before a friend could finish a quart of bourbon. So they had sat up till dawn to find out, and he had lost to a dead drunk.

Why wouldn't old Ferg be willing to sell large stretches of waterless Texas and buy smaller stretches of Colorado where water was certain? After that, wouldn't he want to improve the value of his new real estate with windbreaks in the country and shaded streets in the city? After all, the state of Colorado would be tunneling a river to him. Why wouldn't he buy plans for ponds and lakes and fountains by the thousand and shade them with decorative trees from the whole world garden?

He would be using depression labor to do it. It would never again come as cheaply.

Colin's plan for Charlie Ferguson poured from him. He himself planned to make his billions in the industry he would bring in to fulfill the patents that would arise from research institutes. He would be happy to have Mr. Charles Ferguson make more billions on the real estate, especially since he considered the man practically one of the family, marrying Miss McAllister like that.

So Colin told his father and Rappa how badly old Ferg wanted to marry the pretty stewardess. And he concluded shyly, "You know, dad, I was always . . . well, sort of a favorite of hers, and I'm sure I could talk to her about the wisdom of marrying a very rich man and introducing us to him."

Colin found himself blushing, and he hurried on to other matters.

"One of the first things we will need out there is construction equipment. And the state of Colorado will need a lot of it, too, for roads and dams and tunnels and canals.

"I have some ideas for giant equipment of the future that will be able to lay roads and dig canals like it's never been done before. I thought I'd buy control of a small construction-equipment firm and move it out there. We'll build our machines right there and maybe have our own small steel mill and railroad the ore in. New kinds of cranes, dads, and derricks, and scrapers, and shovels . . . everything moving on its own tracks and tires.

"When we've developed it all, building our own city, we'll start selling it to the world."

So they sat at the wagon bed in the desert and planned the city that would speak in a voice quite different from the voices of Europe and like a strange cousin to the East Coast, the South, and the Midwest . . . a voice speaking of the next thousand years.

Colin watched his father become tremendously excited over the city. The man speculated about the city out of deep knowledge of soils, crops, and irrigation.

"With such a man as this, old Ferg will surely buy us."

All that sweet winter, Colin knew with constant delight that he could, whenever he wished, visit Pretty Quinlan in her cozy little room where Mrs. Tompkins had her reading Chaucer. Mrs. Tompkins always smiled assurance upon Colin that these visits were none of her affair, and usually she left the house to visit some friend or other.

In contrast, Mrs. Collins, who had lovingly fixed up the attic room for Rappa to live in, kept a sharp eye on her daughter. Colleen knitted a sweater for Rappa for Christmas and kissed him under the mistletoe. Mrs. Collins cleared her throat at the point she decided the kiss had lasted long enough.

Colleen was clearly arrayed in cloth of love, and Rappa's eagle gaze turned to dove's eyes whenever she entered a room. He had forgotten about Pretty, or had never understood the arrangement. So he took it upon himself to have a "serious talk" with Colin about the evils of a place like Madame Bovary's. He explained this astonishing stance simply as a matter of growing into moral responsibility.

"Good grief!" Colin muttered afterward.

He knew from the blissful smile on her face that his sister had tossed overboard all her adolescent horror of the penis. Very well. Colin Collins was a true prophet, so far. What mystified him was that onetime whoremonger Rappaport y Casafuerte accepted the mere touch of this girl's hand as the thrill of thrills.

Colin studied his sister carefully. She was pretty enough, witty enough, and promising material for a wife. But how could she inspire this blindly monogamous pose in the teakwood eagle and prompt from him a condescending speech about Madame Bovary, the mother of the magic world?

"Ah, well!" Colin went to work vigorously on the plans for his city. He was preparing a presentation for Mr. Charles Ferguson who had another, most fortunate case of the monogamy-stance.

Mr. McCord had furnished aerial photos of the whole region, which were mounted as a map covering a wall of Colin's room. In addition, he was receiving elevations and maps from the two surveying firms Mr. Norton had working in the area.

Mr. Collins often worked with Colin, especially in planning the irrigation systems. One night he asked, "What do you intend to name your city, son?"

Colin grinned. "I will name it after your family—Collins, Colorado. Its a pretty name, isn't it?"

Mr. Collins's ruddy face beamed.

At Rappa's spring vacation, Mr. Collins took a few days off, and the three of them flew out to the site of Collins, Colorado, with Mr. McCord. This time the desert was bright and clear, carpeted with bloom. Mr.

Collins was thrilled with the smooth, powerful flight of the McCord Gull.

Rappa was thrilled with the desert. He would stare at it in a trance as miles and miles drifted beneath them. Then he would become agitated with the beauty of it.

Once he shouted over the motors. "This is the kind of country in which my paternal ancestors invented the omnipotent, omnipresent God . . . the eternal ONE. They had to invent Him, shuttling back and forth that way between Babylon, Egypt, and Rome out in all this loneliness. The old stone gods of the cities weren't any good to them. Golden calves were trash not worth lugging. They needed a god they could call upon anywhere, anytime. And there he was, the vast silence of the desert."

It was a subject dear to Mr. Collins's heart. "I like your thinking Rappa. But your god wasn't invented. *He* was! It was the old baals of the cities, the cruel stone gods standing in their bloodied 'places,' that were invented. Men had to invent gods before they had access to true religion."

Rappa smiled and nodded, a respectful, acquiescent son.

Suddenly, Mr. Collins raised his hands before himself, beating time and smiling at Colin. He began to hum firmly. Immediately, the roar of the plane became the joyful chorus of the Elijah as it tells of the fire that descended from heaven . . . the triumph of the unseen God of the Jews over the great stone Baal.

Colin smiled back in understanding. Then he called to Rappa, "Dad is right. Your Jewish God was a great improvement. But, my friend, we have first to account for the raising of the baals. Surely you will not try to tell me the matriarchs had them raised?"

Rappa grinned across his walls of teeth. He shook his head. "No, the mothers had all the meaning they needed swelling in their breasts and bellies and clinging to their knees."

At last the wild mountains that would look down on

their city spun beneath them as Mr. McCord passed back and forth before landing in the snowy mountains on an icy lake.

They were dressed for it, but the mountain cold was quite a change from spring in the orange-grove country. Rappa and Mr. McCord built a fire on the frozen lake's bank and heated cans of pork-and-beans while Colin walked about with his father inspecting the timber. At this altitude the timber was sparse. But below them aspen groves were spotted in the stands of huge Western pine. Mr. Collins loved this mountain country. When they had lived in Oklahoma, he had taken many trips to New Mexico and Colorado because he was an expert trout fisherman.

After they had eaten they took off again and flew down over the broad plateau of cedars. Mr. McCord could not land, but he flew about while they studied the terrain. It was littered with an array of fantastic rocky outcroppings, but the shallow, windblown snow revealed wide fields of sandy loam that could be irrigated easily from a network of canals.

Colin called to his father over the motors. "There can be orchards up here, can't there?"

Mr. Collins nodded. "And other things. It's nice and dry for poultry. And you could raise angus beef and holstein milk cattle here in small fields."

Mr. McCord had long ago picked the site for the airfield down at the city proper. It would be on the barren flats above the city where the industrial parks would be located. They lowered to the desert on whistling wings, and presently Mr. McCord side-slipped into the sage-brushed flat where he would build his airport. Colin saw, at the end of the temporary runway, two large fires burning midway between pitched tents.

They clambered from the plane into a mere chill. Mr. McCord started pulling their gear from the luggage compartment. He explained to Colin that the men at the other camp were from one of the surveying companies. He also announced to Colin that equipment for constructing the airport buildings and runways was being trucked up from the railroad next week. Colin

had not known about this, and he was pleased. He liked to find that the people working with him made their own decisions. He made a promise to have Mr. Norton get the first spur of the railroad in as soon as possible.

Mr. McCord's pressing enthusiasm was expressed laconically. "Have to make this a regular stop next month, soon as we start the run between Oklahoma City and Glendale. Have to keep stopping here until I get the third ship ready so we can get the people in here we need. I'll make the route go to Denver. Then south around the Sangre de Christos. Then up here before heading for Flagstaff. Have to hire a new pilot, and I have a good man waiting. Your stewardess ready?"

"Yes, she's ready," Colin said noncommitally with a little skip in his heart that he would be losing Pretty.

Mr. Collins was a camper from way back. He prepared to fry ham and eggs and potatoes for them while Rappa and Colin pitched two tents. After a brief conversation with Mr. Collins, Mr. McCord brought out a bottle of rum for them and a bottle of beer for Colin.

They sat around the fire wrapped in blankets and drank while it got dark and Mr. Collins watched two skillets. Someone over at the camp of surveyors was playing "Shenandoah" on a harmonica.

Mr. Collins was expansive after a little of the rum. "Yes, sir! This is going to be the greatest city in the world. It will put ancient Babylon and Rome to shame. You young people are going to prove old Oswald Spengler is wrong."

Mr. Collins was a great student of the Bible and of history. He had happened to read *The Decline of The West* without any prompting from Colin. He had devoured Spengler's description of the nine great cultures. But he saw all kinds of reasons why the West was not a "culture" in Spengler's sense, not the least of these being the presence of the Christian religion.

"Yes, sir! You young people will prove old Oswald was wrong. You'll make Chicago and New York look like dumps."

Colin smiled into the fire. His father had never been to New York, but he sure would never forget how filthy Chicago was.

Now, while another fellow sang, the harmonica player switched to an old song that grandmother Collins had taught Colin and his sister when they were little kids. It was curiously contrary to Mr. Collins's assertion.

"Puttin' on the agony,
Puttin' on the style,
That's what all the young folks,
Are doin' all the while . . ."

But, was it so contrary? People were always "puttin' on the style"—the style in Babylon, in Egypt, in Greece. The style was the culture of the city and differentiated the city man from the peasant. A gorgeously feathered young Mayan strutting before the country people in Chichen Itzá wasn't much different from a kid in top hat and tails out on the town in New York.

Certainly, Colin intended to strut his style in building Collins, Colorado, and he knew instinctively he would be "puttin' on the agony," too.

Under his blanket Rappa shoved his elbow at Colin and nudged him. "About your arrogant demand of this morning for profound answers! I will just remind you that those boys back there in the old magic world were up against matriarchs who had a monopoly on the magic of sex and birth. Except for fights with the neighbors the boys had only their sticks for 'magic meaning,' and we all know that's not much to lean on."

Both Colin and Rappa laughed. Then Rappa nudged him again. "Listen, Colin, there is hardly a society I've read about that doesn't have a puberty rite for boys. In those rites the boy receives the tribal lore in secrecy away from women. He becomes a man with the meaning of a man. Since being a man didn't have much meaning beyond sex, the magic of the hunt, and

killing neighbors, you'd expect that somewhere, sometimes those boys would start inventing some meaning for themselves."

Colin saw that Rappa was right. Meaning, explanation of themselves, identity, was much more deeply needed by men. The first thing they would invent would be a family of gods. Colin had taken to carrying a small pocket notebook in which he jotted down their thoughts as they arose. Now he took this out with a pencil and began to write in the firelight.

> Of course this could happen only along with an agriculture that would support the city. But of equal importance was the invention of the gods, especially the father of the gods. This makes possible the meaningful society built on top of the old magic world . . . the family of gods raised in stone to look out across eternity.

> Now a man could walk in glory . . . be a priest, a warrior-king, and emulate the gods. That is how the tribe becomes a city and brightens the land with its culture.

Colin raised his head and stared into the firelight, thinking of the brutal propitiation rites of the old glowering gods.

He explained his writing to Rappa. "The boys of the tribe invented the gods of course, but those gods were all so mean."

Mr. Collins heard this. "All of the old baals were mean."

Mr. McCord heard Mr. Collins through quite a bit of rum. "No meaner than my God."

"Ah, but Mr. McCord, your God gave his only begotten Son that you might . . ."

"That's mean enough!"

Mr. Collins was a kindly man, and he saw that Mr. McCord needed food. He hurried the potatoes around in the skillet.

Rappa reached out and patted Colin's knee reassur-

ingly. "Well, eventually the Greeks invented better gods. By that time the gods were smiling."

For two days they explored the area of the future city on foot and on horses borrowed from the camp of the surveyors. The contours in which the city would lie delighted Colin with vision after vision. The largest of the lakes he would create (which he promptly named Lake Colleen to please both his father and Rappa) would mirror office towers throughout half the city.

The envisioning of his city filled Colin with sensual delight. In addition, he and Rappa intermittently discussed their discovery . . . that the earliest cities, their gods, and their meaning, must have been invented by the boys and the magician-king out in the secret house of their rites. Out of that murky hut, cave, or kiva, sometimes stinking of the prepuces torn from screaming boys, had grown the gods and the cities, the society of meaning in which a man could strut.

Colin saw the function of his city much more clearly now, "puttin' on the style" for the next thousand years. His elation could not have sustained itself, but the worst of it was that in the plane, flying back, he got out a pen and paper and answered Professor Brough's last letter.

> Sadly, I agree with you that the human release of atomic energy on the scale of Einstein's equation is inevitable. I doubt that we will be technically capable of it by the time our next World War may come about, but by the time of a Third World War, if we cannot begin now to prevent such a war, it will be used.
>
> War is the worst of our magic. It provides such terrible meaning for us, such compelling release from the boredom of absent or worn meaning. That is how, in their last days, all the ancient cultures turned into empires and killed their way across the land . . .

Colin wrote on for several pages, and thus he prepared his own illness.

17

Love for the City

". . . the only possible chance to save the city lay in effort to check the flames by use of dynamite. During the day a blast could be heard in any section at intervals of only a few minutes. . . . The work was continued with a desperation that will live as one of the features of the terrible disaster. Men worked like fiends . . ."

The Call–Chronicle–Examiner, San Francisco, Thursday, April 19, 1906

It was now already March in 1931, and they had enjoyed each other throughout the winter months in this beautiful, storied city of the bay. Even with his Mediterranean background, Boris found the beauty of San Francisco a delight. Each morning, after making love and having breakfast, they took a different walk or cable-car ride and watched the warm city spread itself like quiet jewelry over its hills.

The urgency in Boris lulled in this pleasant interlude as if it rested for its last great assaults on him. He ceased to think at all about mathematics and simply enjoyed the beauty of Gloria and the city.

Gloria was not at all serious about him, which was a great relief to Boris, who had for a long time been deeply disturbed over the touching offer Laura Brough had made him. Gloria was, in fact, serious about only one thing in life—her father's money and the thrilling game it made possible—courting the disaster of being cut off.

Of course they were staying at the Saint Francis. ("I promised to drop you off here, didn't I?") They were registered as Mr. and Mrs. under her name.

"Father is having apoplexy over the bills. 'Mr. and

Mrs. Boris Fastenberg!' Boris *is* a Russian name, isn't it? He's right, isn't he?"

From where he lay in gigantic nudity on the bed, Boris nodded, relishing with his eyes her nudity exposed at their window to both the setting sun and the sitting people in Union Square.

"You *are* a Communist agitator, aren't you? Please be a Communist agitator!"

Boris laughed and agreed as she turned, swinging her breasts to him. "Daddy will be in ecstasy when I write him about it."

She came from the window in graceful fun and jumped astraddle his hips with crushing force. Boris half sat up with an explosive groan and then fell back. She ground herself around on his mashed penis.

"Oh, Boris, you really ought to squirt a baby into me so we would have some reason to get married. But, I understand now, you *are* a genius. Daddy would eventually get used to a Communist agitator, but not to a genius. He'd cut us out of his will and die of shame, the poor man."

Boris began to thrust his hips, bouncing her up and down playfully. "I couldn't marry you, beautiful, even if we got all his money. I have a destiny to fulfill, and soon I'm going to get dressed and hike out of town."

She stopped her reciprocal bouncing, and he saw that she was hurt at his bluntness. She climbed off him and stood looking down on him with a troubled face.

"I wish I belonged to something great the way you do. Surely, you can stay tonight."

He sat up heavily, swung his feet to the floor, and asked her help in rising. Then he looked down on her and was shamed by her hurt.

"I didn't mean that to be so rude and ungrateful as it sounded. Of course, we will have a lovely night together."

He bent down and kissed her mouth and then, ever so gently, her eyes. He walked to the windows and looked out over the date palms of the square, hearing the rustle of the cable under the street.

San Francisco! How could you compare this city

with any other? The filth and vulgarity of Paris? The brutality of New York? Are these comparable to this city of jeweled hills, clean and desirable as a bathed woman? They have come from many lands to live in her warmth, to watch the gentle sheets of fog that clothe her lovingly and the shafts of sunlight that dazzle in her eyes . . . majesty risen from disaster.

Suddenly the memory of the disaster jolted Boris's imagination. It was as if he actually saw the city before him shiver and shrivel like Lisbon so long ago and Tokyo so recently. The street before him was rent, and buildings slid into it. For a moment cries of terror were everywhere.

As quickly as it had come upon him the imagining passed, and he was again back in the present with only the whispering of the cable under the street. As Gloria came and put her arm about him, Boris shuddered.

"What is it, Boris?"

"I know a secret."

"Tell me."

"You won't tell anyone?"

"I won't if you ask me not to."

"On second thought, I ask you to. Yes, shout it."

"What?"

"*E* equals *mc* squared."

"What does that mean?"

Boris leaned down and lifted a half-glass of water from their night table. He held it before them solemnly. "It means that the energy in the atoms of this glass is enough to blow this city to dust."

Gloria turned from looking at the fantastic glass of water and looked into his face for some time.

At last, she spoke softly. "I see that you do have a destiny. I will kiss you a grateful good-bye tomorrow."

18

The Giant

"Strangely, Professor Brough had nothing to do with it. We were brought together, the giant and I, as if vast forces moved us. We realized very soon that his mathematical mind could put 'Man, the inventor of meaning' into equations."

The Diary of the Equations

Colin's elation over his plans for the city had reached such intensity there was bound to be a reaction. So it was that, as Mr. McCord dropped the plane down the Cajon Pass and out over San Bernardino at the end of the return trip, Colin imagined that he saw a set of bombs drop from the plane.

This imagining was like a trigger. Suddenly, the sky about him was shaken by a thousand planes, and shivering roses bloomed across the city before it disappeared in a shroud of agony.

"I'm in the great war that is to come," Colin thought. "This is what lies next to the breast of Man, and nothing can stop it."

While tens of millions of corpses rained before his eyes like the foraminifera of a sea in hell, the voice of his destiny confirmed him. "Nothing can stop it. It must be because it is inevitable in the heart of Man. But you can prevent the war after that. That *must* be prevented."

Colin was in such dismay over his visioning of the war that he hardly heard, and certainly gave no thought to, this astonishing pronouncement of his destiny.

For seven days after this, Colin was in the blackest despair. With his eyes open he saw the piles of cadavers, the mutilated children, and the glaring eyes. When

he closed his eyes human torches raced through his dark, and he heard again the guns that had welcomed his birth.

Colin did not work on the plan for his city, and he did not seek Pretty Quinlan. He stayed in his room, paralyzed with horror of himself and his kind.

From his window he watched his mother preparing the soil for her garden.

"Oh, how I wish that I had merely planted corn like Abel."

He saw that there were people who loved life, that is, living things, and who existed very much alone in this love of living things . . . peasants and scientists. For many of the rest, and for most of the rest part of the time, there was boredom and anxiety that sought the distraction of death.

"Our leaders to this doom are not real leaders. *We* are pushing *them*."

Deep in the night of his seventh day, the voice of his destiny spoke.

"Go to the sea. Walk north along the shore, and I will bring you to a giant. He is the one who will save you from yourselves. With a manipulation, as one produces the most elusive of thoughts, he will save you all from the human heart."

Colin got up and dressed. He left a note for his folks and one for Rappa, and slipped out of the house wearing a warm jacket.

It took Colin four days to get to Ventura because of the complexity of watching the beaches in the Los Angeles area. From then on he could watch the beaches with relative ease most of the time. Sometimes, right along the coast, he could even accept rides. Two days later, having bought a knapsack of provisions and a blanket, he walked into the wild coastal region at the feet of the Santa Lucia Mountains. He passed San Simeon on the morning of his eighth day. After that the pounding of the sea was far below at the feet of rugged cliffs, and the mountains rose abruptly above the lonely road. Eagles soared here.

The next day about noon, Colin rounded a bend high above the sea and heard a great sound composed of a multitude of voices. Waves of this sound rose up the cliffs from the sea. It was a sound of wildness and filled Colin with thrilling mystification.

Then Colin found that a giant stood at the very edge of the cliff, looking down on the origin of the vast chorus. He seemed to become aware of Colin without surprise. Giving Colin only a glance, he called to him.

"Come here and see."

Colin actually was a little intimidated by the size of him. He stood well over seven feet with arms that looked like they could crack a tree trunk against the huge chest. He seemed a very young person, but it was impossible to judge his age, so strange were his features.

Colin stepped up beside the giant and looked down the cliff. Far below, completely isolated from landward access by cliffs, there lay a semicircular beach. On this and in its waters were hundreds and hundreds of seals. It was their barking that rose in the updrafts.

The giant turned to Colin. "That's a wonderful, wild sight, isn't it? And what a chorus!"

His jaw was so huge and protruding it made his rather generous nose look flattened. The eyes were huge and brown like those of an ungulate, yet they were made to seem moderate in size because over them hung brows so large in bone they made the forehead seem to recede. This great head sat very nearly on the chest because of a humping in the broad shoulders.

The monstrous man extended his enormous hand shyly. "My name is Boris Boritzsch. That's rather silly, but mother wanted it that way."

"I am Colin Collins, which is surely a remarkable coincidence."

The giant nodded with interest. "That name is familiar. Where have I seen it?"

The big head hung even lower on the chest as he stared at the ground. "Ah, yes! Haven't you written

some papers on Boolean algebra that Brough showed me?"

Colin nodded with proper modesty, remembering in a surge of pride his correspondence with the great Professor Brough.

Boris Bortizsch nodded matter-of-factly. He said, as if in passing, "Those were some clever little things you did there."

Colin was stunned and turned red in the face.

The giant went on without heed. "As you can see, I have got into my pubescent growth in the last two years. Nobody knows when it will stop. Meanwhile, I have aches and pains about which I try not to complain."

"Pubescent? How old are you, Boris?"

"I was born on February first, 1914."

Colin was astonished, and his heart raced. "Why, that is also my birthday."

Boris Boritzsch stared at Colin Collins for a long time. Finally, he said very seriously, "I think I should tell you that I have a destiny and that it speaks in me with a voice. Last year it commanded me to interrupt my studies in England where I was with Professor Brough and come to America. A few days ago, up in San Francisco, just when I had finally found a girl big enough for me to get the feel of, it commanded me to hike down here."

The mountainside seemed to move under Colin, so great was the mystery of this meeting. He stared back at Boris with wide, blue eyes while his words issued from him very nearly in a whisper.

"I, too, have a voice, and it commanded me to hike up here from Los Angeles."

The two boys were subdued by the size of the mystery in their meeting. They stood for some time without saying anything, while the barking of the seals filled their heads with a chorus from beyond the ice ages.

Then Boris spoke. "You will be surprised at how little I eat, but suddenly I am very, very hungry." He sat down on the ground with ponderous awkwardness and

leaned back against the knapsack he had dropped there. "And, too, I am very weak, suddenly."

As quickly as possible, Colin built a fire at the cliff edge. He got two bricks of Triple-X Chili from his knapsack and broke them up in water in a skillet. They ate the hot chili with hunks from an Italian loaf, and afterward Colin opened a can of peaches for each of them.

As they were slurping the last juice from the cans, Colin asked, "Can you come back to Southern California with me? I have an important friend for you to meet."

"I have nothing so important as meeting your friend."

During the long hike south in the afternoon, they said very little to each other. Colin found that, in silence, they were beginning to enjoy deeply the pleasure of being with one another.

In the late afternoon, just as it became clear that Boris's big, clumsy feet were torturing him, they came upon a pretty stream somewhere north of San Simeon. The clear water rushed from a swale and sparpled out across gravel into the booming Pacific.

"We're going to camp here," Colin declared and watched blessed relief settle on the giant's face.

That night they sat before a bright fire with the salty Pacific blowing in their faces, and Boris told Colin the story of his life.

"We are of Greek Orthodox origin, but my father was never a religious man. He loved the antiquities instead. He loved Greek culture especially, and he used to say that Zeus was the best father of gods."

Boris talked for some time about trips with his father to study ancient ruins and temple sites. Then he launched into another aspect of his education. "I was precocious in mathematics, and naturally my father cultivated me in this as far as he could. You will find that I think better mathematically than in words."

"Yes. You said you were studying with Brough."

"Not really. Please don't think it is conceit when I say so, but I am working in areas quite beyond Brough's comprehension . . . in fact, beyond anything in texts of today. I seek algebras for classes in which the

functions or other nature of the class change with time."

Boris again raised his monstrous head to listen to the sea. "I think I am almost there. In the last few months, whenever I am feeling well, my thoughts soar across mountain peaks."

Colin asked, "Where do you suppose the voice of your destiny comes from?"

"I have been thinking," Boris mused, "that there may be other worlds in other space-times paralleling ours. Of which, naturally, we are unaware."

"One is enough for me."

"You don't know. Maybe thought . . . crosses from one space-time to another. Maybe some of our best thoughts . . . come from another space-time."

"I think my voice just comes from within me."

"I entertain all possibilities. I have been thinking a lot lately about other space-times and how they might function."

Colin's heart thudded, but he asked for no more that night.

The next morning was entirely different for the two friends. Now, they talked without ceasing. Colin told Boris about himself and about Rappa. Then Colin told about Collins, Colorado, and in doing so, he returned easily to the excitement that had preceded his depression.

Finally, Colin told Boris that he and Rappa were working on a word portrait of "Man, the inventor of meaning." Boris, stumbling along the road with his great brown eyes wide on the horizon, grew agitated.

"Now," he declared, "that is the talk I would like to hear."

So Colin described their discovery of the meaningful nature world of magic created by the tribal mothers, and then the meaningful society of gods created by the magician-kings.

The giant's clumsy strides had quickened unconsciously, and they were of such length that agile Colin found it hard to keep up.

"This is marvelous," Boris announced. "Now pro-

ceed to the next step. I assume you have already located the next area of necessary thinking?"

Colin admitted he had hardly had time to give it thought.

"Well, it is clear to me," shouted Boris as if he had left Colin some distance behind, "it is clear to me that some symmetry is emerging here . . . invention of a *world* of magic meaning, then of a society of social meaning . . . surely the next segment of your portrait must be the invention of a man with individual meaning . . . the next step in the sequence?"

Colin stopped dead in the road.

Boris stopped, too, and turned to harangue Colin. "My dear Colin, the individual with his own meaning has been our goal at least since the Renaissance. I admit we don't show such conviction in our wars . . . but our courts of law . . . our democratic governments . . . there is certainly a belief today that the individual has great meaning. How did that come about?"

"Yes! Yes, Boris. It's just that I am so startled by the simplicity of the progression . . . from world, to society, to man."

Colin laughed with glee, and at the same time a perplexity hit him. The meaning of the magic world and of the city culture had been clear to everyone. But who found a single man to have meaning? Certainly, he himself. Anyone else? That depended. If he was the king, then certainly. The baron, undoubtedly. The knave?

Their portrait had become immensely more difficult to pursue. Then Colin laughed again. Nevertheless, it had become far simpler to see. He stepped forward and reached up and grasped Boris's hamlike biceps.

"Great wizard, you are right, and we must hurry to Rappa with the news."

Less than an hour later, when Colin could see that Boris's feet were about to give out again—miracle of miracles, Colin heard an old truck chugging down on them from the north. There was a large rock beside the road. With inspired alacrity Colin commanded Boris.

"Sit on that rock and rest your head in your hands. I'll hitch us a ride."

Boris did as requested just before the truck came around the bend behind them. Colin assumed the most wholesome, young, American look he could muster, smiling with what he hoped was straightforward sincerity. He held his hand out, not with the cocky thumb gesture, but with the humble palm open like a saint displaying his stigmata.

Churning internally, the truck came to a halt. The driver was dressed as a farmer in blue shirt and blue denim overalls with an old straw sunhat over his grizzled head. Colin couldn't imagine what he was doing up in these wilds.

"Can we ride back on the wagon bed?"

"Ya kin ride up here in the cab."

Boris rose gratefully from the rock. Colin watched the farmer's pale blue eyes widen. Then his Adam's apple bobbed. Sure enough, the presence of Mr. Boris Boritzsch would scare a lot of people.

"How far are you going?" Colin asked.

The driver stammered. "Jist to Morro Bay."

Somehow, Colin knew the man was lying. "Oh, you're turning off there for San Luis Obispo?"

"Well . . . yes."

"If you don't mind, we'll go with you there and catch a bus."

"Second thought, maybe you better ride on the wagon bed."

So they rode in noisy, jarring comfort down to Morro Bay, and then east up through the lovely hills with their forests of live oaks and presently they were in San Luis Obispo.

They stayed that night in a small hotel where they could have baths and dinner and sleep on twin beds between clean sheets with Boris drawn up in his bed like the reluctant fetus of a Titan.

The next afternoon, from a restaurant in Pasadena, Colin called Rappa at Cal. Tech. Now that he had quit the hospital, Rappa roomed during the week near his campus and weekended with the Collinses.

While they waited for him, Colin enjoyed watching the attention Boris drew in the restaurant, especially from an impeccably dressed little man wearing a blond, wavy wig, who had a very pretty Mexican boy with him. The little man couldn't keep his hand off his catamite, and yet his fascinated attention kept wandering to the giant. Colin would have sworn that he shuddered now and then.

Over the phone, with Boris unavoidably beside him, Colin had not been able to prepare Rappa for the giant's presence. When Boris stood up to shake hands with the compact Rappa, the whole restaurant turned. Colin was immediately proud of his Mexican-Jewish friend because Rappa reached up and shook hands as if people approaching eight feet were becoming commonplace.

Then Colin saw something much more subtle. He saw Rappa, without any outward sign, accept Boris with the same compassionate sympathy he had lavished on his patients in the hospital. It caused a premonition to touch Colin.

Rappa and Boris talked for a while, and gradually Colin saw that Rappa, too, was becoming amused at the attention Boris drew. He, too, had noticed the little man and his Mexican gunsel.

Colin nudged Rappa and muttered, "You had better watch out, my friend. That man has long ago given up God."

Rappa chuckled. "Do you suppose he also wears a merkin of that color?"

Colin laughed in his turn, that Rappa should know the old word.

Boris had turned for a questioning appraisal of the room when they laughed. He was completely unconscious of the fact that he was a cynosure. They didn't explain anything to him, but instead Colin described to Rappa the remarkable way in which Boris had deduced the next step in their portrait of "Man, the inventor of meaning"—the invention of the meaningful man.

Rappa was astonished and pleased with the simplicity of Boris's scheme, and at first he did not see what a quandry it presented.

19

The Prophets

"European nationalism was always contra-Christian, a return to the old meaning of the culture-city and the warrior-king. After nationalism everyone had trouble with the simple directive, 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel.'

"One was no longer simply a Christian. One was an English Christian, or a German Christian perhaps, but not a simple Christian. Such a person would have been an enemy of the state."

The Diary of the Equations

In the April days that followed, Colin found that urgency had welled up in their lives. The giant was contagious with urgency.

He took a room in the town, but he spent much of his time at the Collinses. Out of respect for the faith of Colin's parents, the three boys did not discuss in their presence the portrait of "Man, the inventor of meaning." But when the three of them were alone, the giant always seemed to be shouting for action.

"It makes me furious to hear godless men cursing 'God' because life has no meaning. They are like pigs that have gone crazy and gathered on a mudbank to squeal at the stars for food. They should be out foraging for meaning like the ancient Jews, or the Christian saints, or the Elizabethans."

Mr. and Mrs. Collins took to the giant like he was a hulk of love. But again, there was something in Mrs. Collins's attitude that disturbed Colin. She had steady eyes for Boris, and frequently she went up to him when he entered a room and comforted his arms with little strokes.

One Friday evening Colin came downstairs from his room, and there were seven places set for dinner.

He went back to the kitchen. "Who's the seventh at dinner?" he asked his mother.

"Judith Oliphant is coming. Your father drove over to pick her up. We didn't want to disturb you while you were working on your city."

Colin hadn't been working on his city. He was harassed by the question of the meaningful man—the invention of him.

"How did you happen to invite Judith?"

"She's a friend of mine."

"She's a friend of mine, too."

"I wanted Boris to meet her."

"Ah, ha!"

"I thought of inviting your girlfriend."

"What girlfriend?"

"I think her name is Pretty Quinlan. You've never bothered introducing her . . . or even mentioning her, so I didn't invite her."

Colin muttered, "Good Lord!" Then he said aloud, "Well I—I—" and stammered to a halt.

"Don't bother to explain. Whatever you're up to explains itself."

"Now, mother, it's not that at all. Why . . . Pretty is studying Chaucer."

"A full knowledge . . ."—Mrs. Collins straightened from putting the vegetables around a pot roast and closed the oven door—". . . of Chaucer is no antidote. The girl should be reading her Bible."

Mrs. Collins turned past him with the look of the martyred matriarch—*good* womanhood in monogamy.

Colin vowed to bring Pretty home and introduce her. Just because the girl was studying to be a prostitute was no reason to bar her from the affection of his family.

Meanwhile, Colin observed, any criticism he might have had of introducing Boris and Judith had been passed up by default.

And well he might have had concern. From the first moment, there was no question about the aura of inev-

itability that enveloped Judith Oliphant and Boris Boritzsch. The reaction between these two was so complete, instantaneous, and convincing that everyone at the table, including Mr. Colin Collins, was pretty much awed by it. Conversation was continuous, but subdued.

By the time Colleen poured coffee, Colin knew that Boris was holding that work-roughened little hand of Judith's under the table.

His mother was looking at him from a position of pleased social command.

The interjection of this new love did nothing to relieve the sense of urgency. Boris saw plenty of Judith. He was at her home every day, but only when it was impossible for him to be after Colin or Rappa.

"I want the rest of that portrait. And I want it now."

Colin knew better than to beat his brain in a standing position. He saw plenty of Pretty Quinlan in the next week and worked on his city, confident that the invention of the meaningful man would reveal itself.

Then one night he awoke toward morning, and it came to him to ask, "Am I looking in the wrong place in history? Who is to find a *meaningful man* in an age of wars where all men stand before the guns equally meaningless?"

Colin lay staring into the dark. Maybe the invention of the meaningful man was related, not to our time, but to the end of the cultures?

He sat upright in his bed. That was it.

He was experiencing a great thrill. "Dad has been right all along," he declared into the dark in a jubilant whisper. "Christianity is not a religion like the old culture religions. That alone makes Spengler wrong about the West being a culture."

Colin leaped from the bed and started feeling for his clothes. He was equating Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius. "Those were men inventing a new thing just when an old culture was dying. They invented prophet religions and . . . the new, meaningful man, the believer, the *convert.*"

Colin dressed in such excitement that he caught his

foot in his trousers and fell with a bump. In her room next to his, Colleen sat up and turned on a light.

It was Friday night and Rappa was home. Colin tiptoed up the stairs and wakened him. "Rappa, come on! I have found the meaningful man. We must go tell Boris."

Colleen was waiting for them at the foot of the stairs dressed in her pretty robe and with her hair perfect.

"What is all the excitement? Come on, I'll fix you some coffee."

"We haven't time. We have to see Boris," Colin declared.

"I have to have some coffee," Rappa said stubbornly.

In the kitchen Colleen asked Colin again, "What is it all about?"

"Rappa can tell you about it some other time. Right now, just let me talk to him."

Rappa had stepped into the little lavatory off the kitchen and was washing up.

Colleen put the pot on the stove. "What on earth was that banging in your room?"

"I caught my foot in my trousers and fell on my ass."

"What language, Colin! Why don't you try to grow up a gentleman like Rappa?"

"Oh, good Lord!"

When they were seated at the kitchen table, Rappa asked, "Well?"

"I have discovered a new classification of religions . . . firstly, culture religions like the Egyptian that began in prehistory . . . you know? The kind of religious magic a man didn't question, it was so much a part of life. Some of those old culture religions were succeeded, in historic times, by a prophet religion . . . like Buddhism, a new kind of religion in which you had to *believe*.

"Don't you see? The prophet is the Man of meaning, and all his converts become men of individual meaning."

Colin became aware that Rappa and his sister were holding hands under the table, something that was getting to be quite a sport around here.

"That is very interesting," Rappa agreed. "Go on."

"What did these prophets ask of their converts?

They asked for a *new man,* didn't they? They asked for a man carrying *goodness* in himself without regard to the values of the old culture which was losing its meaning."

Rappa's eyes had narrowed to glinty slits. Suddenly, right there in front of Colin, he leaned toward Colleen and kissed her cheek.

"I'll see you later today," he whispered.

Colleen's eyes dreamed modestly at the table top.

Outside the house they decided not to awaken the neighborhood by starting Rappa's old coupé.

Rappa said, "Colin, you really ought to get yourself a new car."

"I know. I'll speak to my father about it." In the darkness Colin grinned, conscious of the incongruity of owning his father's company and asking him if he could buy a car. Yet if his father said "no," that would be it.

They set out on foot for Boris's rooming house. The streets were empty and silent except that every half-mile or so a mockingbird was singing in the carob trees.

Boris came awake as slowly as his ponderous motions. He, too, started coffee on a little plate in his room. Then he went down the hall to a lavatory. By the time he was back, he was clearly more alert and the coffee was ready.

After Boris had sipped a cup of coffee in great concentration, he looked at them in anticipation and straightened on the groaning bed.

He demanded, "All right. Tell me about it."

Stumbling over each other's words to get it all out, they told him.

Boris became joyfully agitated. "I see! I see! At the same time they create a new unit, the meaningful man, the prophet religions introduce a new class, Mankind, the source of converts."

Boris was nodding his ponderous head. "Yes! Yes! These things can be expressed mathematically. We can have equations of meaning that can be tested against situations of this sort and will then predict future meaning.

"I must work on this. Yes! We now have three lev-

els of meaning. In each level there will be classes of meaning.

"Oh, yes! You've done it! But one set of errors we must avoid. Errors of identification. We must not identify anything resembling a prophet religion as a nation . . . no! And we must avoid giving nations identification outside our trichotomy . . . yes that's it . . . we will classify nations simply as culture cities . . . you see, they are a return to the meaning of the culture city because the prophet religion had failed! Oh, I must work on this!"

Boris went on exploring the permutations of the new discovery. Daylight grew outside the window, and Rappa fell asleep in his chair.

"Oh, I must work on this. I have an algebra for this!"

Suddenly, Boris exclaimed in pain and threw his hands to his head.

"What's the matter, Boris?" Colin had leaped up and was standing beside the seated giant.

Rappa had sat up abruptly when Boris gave the sharp, alarming cry.

Anxiously, Colin repeated, "What's the matter, Boris? Can I help you?"

Boris replied at last in muffled gasps. "It's just one of my headaches. Your mother invited me to dinner again tonight, and I want to be well for that. I will lie down now. It will take several hours for this to wear off."

Colin hardly heard what Boris was saying. He was staring in horror at his new friend's hands spread out over his head.

Colin had once attended an art class for almost two months before he noticed that the teacher wore an artificial hand. He had said truly of himself that he had a habit of assuming rather than seeing what was going on.

Yet, he could not imagine how he had failed to notice these hands, especially since they were in medical text completeness with the jutting jaw, massive brow, and the hump in the spine over the shoulders.

The fingers of these hands were all of the same length, broad and flat fingers with the nails stretched

flat—"spade hand," it was called in medicine. His poor friend's hugeness was not just gigantism. It was a kind called acromegalic gigantism. Colin remembered from Dr. Ordway's library that acromegaly was an overgrowth of bony tissue caused sometimes by a tumor of the pituitary gland at the base of the brain.

And Boris had these terrible headaches.

Colin felt faint. All the joy of their discoveries washed out of him in the fear for his friend. It was not the least of his dismay that he suspected he and Rappa were going to have to face a decision of moral magnitude.

Boris assured them this had happened many times before, that he had been to a prominent doctor with it, and that he would be all right. "I'll just have to lie down till it goes away. I wish so much to be well for your mother's dinner."

Rappa had to get back to his car and leave for a special Saturday lab at Cal. Tech. Outside, he asked, "What do you suppose is the matter with him?"

Colin knew at once, from Rappa's heavily disguised tone, that Rappa knew. Colin did not want to talk about it yet.

"I don't know," he lied.

They were separated in gloom when they parted.

Colin walked out into hills beyond town. The long-dormant sage was alive as he climbed into the hills. Endless overcast had spread over the valleys.

Did Boris know? Should he tell his father? He must get hold of a medical text and read more thoroughly about acromegaly. Dr. Thurston could help him.

It began to sprinkle rain as Colin climbed into the gap between two great hills. The slopes down into this saddle were littered with house-sized boulders. Colin found that many vultures, retreated from the slight rain, were roosting on the boulders everywhere above him. Their heads turned to watch him.

Did Boris know? The presence of the great, black birds was so like a straightforward, Gothic answer that Colin almost turned and ran back when he thought of Boris lying there in pain knowing he was going to die.

The thought of being with Boris, if both knew the other knew, made his skin crawl. Yet it was not this that caused him not to return. He did not return because of the remembrance of great calm in Boris's reassurance that he would be all right because he wanted Mrs. Collins's dinner.

The sprinkling grew heavier, and after he had cleared the pass, Colin struck off up to a further height where there was a small shack.

If Boris knew, then his determination to work out the equations of human meaning was doubly awesome. It had not escaped Colin that Boris had not even bothered trying to explain to him the algebras that were beyond the comprehension of Professor Brough.

Boris had a destiny. He alone could evolve the algebra of human meaning, a fact which must be so obvious to him as to be a very part of his reality. If on top of this he knew death was with him, his aloneness was appalling.

If Boris did not know, was it right to bring him to a doctor who could tell him of his chances? Surely, vast forces had operated to bring the three of them together. Would the intent of these forces be thwarted if Boris knew and became too depressed to work out the equations?

Was the tumor operable? Possibly . . . but he might die in surgery without having worked out the equations.

Then a terrible alternative struck Colin. Suppose the tumor were operable, but Boris's flights of genius were dependent on the tides of hormone the burgeoning gland pumped into his blood? Suppose the only way to obtain the equations was to allow Boris his death?

Colin sat in the open doorway of the shack for an hour while it rained. Then abruptly the storm was rent and was being sucked in shreds up the canyons and passes of the mountains that were now blanketed in new snows. The mountains reappeared in towering array all about Colin's height.

20

The Meaning of Meaning

"When humanity has invented its next meaning, completely unsuspected human capacities will be released. See how this happened with the invention of the magic world, and again with the culture cities, and again with the invention of the prophet religions. Even a small change in meaning can evoke great events. Protestantism, pronounced Rappa's way, added four hundred years of new meaning to Christianity and begot the sciences."

The Diary of the Equations

This time, Colin went to pick up Judith Oliphant. Mrs. Collins now had a car to replace the one that had been repossessed early in the depression, and she asked Colin to take it and pick up Judith early because she wanted the girl with her while she was preparing the dinner. Later Colin would go pick up Boris and Pretty Quinlan. But about four in the afternoon he did as his mother asked and went for Judith.

Mrs. Garcia was to take care of both families of little ones as had been arranged last week, and Colin had along a large bag of produce "for all those kids."

Judith came out to the car before he could get the bag of groceries out. "Let me carry that in, Colin. I just want us to get away as fast as possible."

She was prettied up in her one good dress. She had recently given up the tight little curls that had been in memory of her mother. Today her beautiful auburn hair definitely reflected the bobbed fashion of the day.

When they were in the car she sighed heavily, "I love children, but . . ." Then she requested, "Drive down along the lake, Colin, before we go to your home. I want to talk with you."

Colin drove down to the city park and out around

the little lake. He pulled in and parked facing the water. Judith sat straightly, staring ahead with calm acceptance of the blinding light. Colin did not like the light, but there was no escaping it here because it was the bright reflection of another sky-wide overcast.

"I have some bits of news for you," Judith said. "First, my father is getting married."

Colin was almost unbelieving. "Some woman loves children almost more than you do."

"She has three of her own. She is the widow of the brother of the Italian farmer my father has been working for to earn his atheist wine. Now he is going to convert to Catholicism."

Judith sighed again. "Except for that, it is a very good thing because she has a big ranch that will support them all very well. She needs a husband to run the ranch, and she wants more children. My father has a good record in both activities."

Judith sighed again into the blinding light. Then she declared, "Well, it is over. They are betrothed, and he is being very stubborn about the Church. I think his time of wine and atheism frightened him."

They were silent for a long time. In fact, Colin was about to suggest that they drive on home, when Judith spoke again.

"Then, there is the second thing I wanted to talk to you about before we get to your home."

Presently, she continued in a very small voice. "I am going to Greece with Boris . . . where we will be married in the home of his parents."

Colin was speechless. Finally he stammered, "But . . . Judith . . . you and Boris . . . are only sixteen!"

"That is quite acceptable in his father's house, and my father raises no objection. Boris has explained to me that, after we are married we will go live in Communist Russia where his parents have relatives highly placed."

Judith expressed the phrase "Communist Russia" as if speaking of a den of snakes.

Colin was in alarm for the two innocent lovers. Now

it was clear that Boris did not know of his disease and would have to be told about it.

"Russia? Good heavens, Judith! Why Russia?"

"I don't know. It is something about some equations he is working on . . . the equations of meaning?"

"But, he doesn't even have them yet. Only this morning he thought for the first time that he saw his way clear to writing them."

Judith shook her head. "There is something he has understood about the equations even before writing . . . they have something he calls conservation of destiny . . . it's related to conservation of mass and energy. He said he would tell you about it when the time comes. Anyway, the equations must be published simultaneously in Russian by him, and in English by you."

"But why? He has never mentioned any of this to me." Colin was hurt, and he saw that he had betrayed this to Judith.

She put out her hand and took his. "Colin, I love Boris and he loves me. We are going to be married as soon as possible. Naturally, he tells me things he hasn't yet spoken of to you. But he will, dear friend."

She seemed to change the subject, and then he found she had not changed it. There was something in this whole conversation that was squeezing his chest.

"Colin, you have offered me money for my education. Later, when I return, I would like to accept that offer."

"When you return?" Colin spoke straight ahead into the blinding light.

"I hope to return bringing Boris's child."

"Bringing . . . ?"

"Colin, surely you have looked at Boris. Surely you know . . . Boris is dying."

Colin began to weep. He found that Judith had pulled his head down to her breast and was murmuring comfort to him.

Later, when he went to pick up Boris, Colin found himself calmed somewhat by knowing that Boris knew.

He found Boris alert and refreshed after a long sleep that had followed the terrible headache.

As if the conversation at dawn had not even been interrupted, the giant declared, "What we need now, Colin . . . is a new level of meaning that will release new potential in us . . . you know, maybe a new definition of the individual . . . an earthly definition, instead of a 'hereafter' definition . . . I don't know . . . a relativity definition, perhaps. What do you think?"

"You mean, I am relative to my mother as Colin-*a*, relative to Boris as Colin-*b* . . ."

"Yes. Like that. Perhaps the real human unit is never less than two. Anyway, when you start working with the new mathematics you will learn all this."

The phrase, "when *you* start working" did not escape Colin, and he saw that Boris recognized this.

"Come on," the giant requested, "let's go see your mother. On the way I want to tell you about Judith and me."

"I think she has already told me. You are going to be married at your parents' home in Greece." Colin was starting down the stairs of the rooming house, and he turned. "You didn't shut the door."

The giant returned and shut the door. Then he loomed above Colin in the dark of the stairway, grinning amiably. "Later I will explain to you why we have to go to Russia, but it is fortunate we will be there. Up there, I understand, those people bury their pet bears with great ceremony. It is probably the only place in the world where I can have a coffin to fit me."

Colin found that the giant's lighthearted resignation was at least partially infectious, and he was able to chuckle with Boris. At the same time, his heart ached because this poor friend was trying to put him at ease.

"Come on," he said in his turn, "I have to pick up a girlfriend my mother invited."

Everyone was back in the kitchen when they got home. Colin introduced Pretty around. She took the company with a minimum of shyness, even the hastily

affectionate arm Mr. Collins threw about her in welcome.

That girl sure was going to be a success.

Colin was surprised to see how little along the dinner was. The huge pork roast wasn't even in the oven. Then it became clear that Judith had announced her intention.

Mrs. Collins threw her arms as far as they would go around Boris, reaching up a little above the height of his elbows. She exclaimed, "Oh, Boris, we're all so happy for you!"

Then Mr. Collins and Rappa were shaking hands with Boris, and Colin realized with a tingling scalp of shame that he himself had neglected to do this there on the stairwell. Instead, he had told Boris to go back and close the door. Colin shook hands with Boris, too, and he felt tears of shame in his eyes.

Colin turned to his mother with a touch of anger in his heart. "What on earth is holding up the dinner?"

"Oh, Colin, that can wait. Boris, come with me to the den. I want to talk with you."

Colin found Rappa's eyes on Judith. It was clear that Jesu Rappaport y Casafuerte was proud of Judith Oliphant—proud of her as a human being, and loving her as a human being.

It had not occurred to Colin to feel this. With a little alarm, he thought, "What is the matter with me?"

It was obvious now that he had been the only person of this company blind to the truth about Boris. These people didn't need medical textbooks for such a prognosis, and they were spontaneous in this proximity of death.

"What on earth is the matter with me?"

Mrs. Collins and Boris returned to the kitchen.

"Boris has accepted grandmother Collins's wedding ring," she announced. "I have called Reverend Douglas and explained things to him. He is coming right over."

Colin gasped, "What is this all about?"

"A wedding, my son. A wedding. How wasteful for two young people who are in love to travel halfway around the world and not be married!"

There was a murmur of approval throughout the kitchen. Standing between his mistress and his father to keep the man from further gestures of welcome, Colin found himself in the ridiculous position of being the only prude in the room.

"But, mother, they are under age, and they have to have a license."

Colleen exclaimed, "Oh, for heaven's sake, Colin! If they're married in the presence of God and this company, they are married."

"They can have the legal marriage in Greece," Mrs. Collins added conclusively.

Boy! When a matriarch decided to dispense sex, the law could go hang. "What if Boris's landlord decides to break into his room tonight? He'll need that little sheet of paper, won't he?"

Colin was feeling like a fool, especially since Pretty was looking at him with new eyes.

Mrs. Collins turned to Boris. "You're rooming with Mrs. Hathaway, aren't you? Good. She's a member of the congregation. I'll call her right now. She can pretty up the room for you and put in some flowers and little presents.

"Judith, dear, you're sure you don't want your father here to give you away?"

Firmly and without any meanness, Judith shook her head. "No, that isn't necessary."

Reverend Douglas was a tall, ruggedly handsome man with a leonine head of silver hair that he kept beautifully combed. His very presence made the ceremony awesome.

Not only Mrs. Collins, but everyone else cried. Colin did not weep, but he thought he would choke over the pain in his throat. The sight of the giant and the straight-shouldered girl in a white dress borrowed from Colleen, standing before "God and this company," was so touching he could hardly bear it.

The familiar living room seemed to expand and contract, and his heart was pounding mercilessly. As soon

as it was over and everyone else was rejoicing with the couple, he slipped from the room and raced upstairs.

He closed the door of his room behind him and fell, not on the comfort of the bed, but to the floor. Great, dry sobs burst from him, racking his chest. Then came the tears, not just the little flow that had dampened Judith's breast, but a torrent.

Behind his sobs his mind was shrieking, "God, please help us! Please, God, help Boris and Judith!" And Colin knew with certainty that he was alone in this little room that sheltered him from the breath of the standing cold.

Presently, he found that his mother was kneeling on the floor beside him. She lifted his head into her warm lap, and after a while his sobs began to subside. She was holding his head and rocking slowly back and forth and humming.

Colin fell into a deep sleep with his chest spasming only occasionally, and he hardly came to consciousness when she substituted a pillow for her lap.

Colin awakened in disorientation from a long, deep sleep. His mother had returned. She helped him to sit up on the edge of his bed and sat beside him holding his hands cupped in hers.

"You feel better, don't you, son?"

He nodded his head in confusion, gradually remembering his sobs, and then the wedding, and Boris's plight. Then it all came back clearly in a rush, and he found that he was completely changed.

His mother was saying, "Son, I know you don't have faith. Your father and I have searched our hearts, but I don't see what we have done to have caused this in you."

"You have done nothing to cause it, mother. You are the best parents in the world."

"I don't know how you are going to manage life without faith, Colin. Life is very hard sometimes. I just don't know how you are going to manage."

"I don't know either, mother. I'll just have to do the best I can."

Colin was staring at the floor, now, thinking of Boris and Judith loving each other on the train through the desert night, loving each other on all the trains across America, loving each other on the boat to France and on all the trains of Europe.

A great joy suffused him. Surely they had a year. Surely time for Boris to see his baby. What had made Colin so mean about this wonderful wedding? Grief and fear had made him mean—grief for Boris and fear for dear Judith—these had made him mean. Maybe some of the meanest people in the world were just grieving like that.

When Colin and his mother came downstairs, no one paid attention to his swollen eyes, except that once when they were alone together in the den, Pretty Quinlan kissed them solemnly.

Mr. Collins had brought out some of the grandmother Collins-style blackberry wine which he started each fall out in a prohibition-style corner of the garage. He and Rappa were about half-snockered. Colin had a glass of it himself and felt great.

Boris couldn't partake of the wine because it might set off one of his headaches. This didn't matter at all. The giant was so happy it hurt. The way he touched that girl with those big, ugly hands was a thing to behold.

They ate the wonderful dinner with more blackberry wine in the spicy fragrance of a cherry cobbler bubbling in the oven in the kitchen.

Mrs. Collins had engaged Pretty Quinlan with frankness and hospitality as a visiting courtesan. They were tossing back and forth quotations for the occasion from their favorite authors—Shakespeare and Chaucer.

Colin overflowed in pride when the dear little harlot came up with a verse which fit the occasion of a wedding and the borning of the algebra of meanings as a portmanteau of which she was unaware.

For out of olde feldes, as men seyth,

Cometh all this newe corn from yer to yere,
And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.

Shyly, Pretty explained to Mrs. Collins, "*Lere* means learn."

Colin spent Saturday morning at the travel agency in the Mission Inn in Riverside working out an itinerary for the newlyweds and checking on passport routines for Judith. He got them a bedroom on the Santa Fe to Chicago Sunday morning.

In mid-afternoon the agent still had not heard from the New York Central or the steamship line, and Colin braved a visit to the bridal chamber at Mrs. Hathaway's rooming house.

Mrs. Collins had fixed for Judith a little bag of night things lavishly contributed from the feminine household of Collins. So Judith met Colin at the door to their room clad in the pretty dressing robe with which Colleen had been wont to thrill Rappa these last weeks. Well, now that Rappa was so much in love with her, Colleen could go back to her old robe and natural, high-grade, latrine mop hair.

Judith put her finger to her lips and stepped out into the hall closing the door softly behind her.

"He's working on the equations. Colin, all day he's only done two things, and the second one is work on those equations. What are you three trying to do . . . save the world? Colin, I'm famished, but I don't dare say anything to him about a little thing like that."

Colin doubled up, spluttering on the hallway wall to muffle his laughter. He grabbed Judith to him and hugged her and kissed her cheek.

"What would you like? I'll bring you anything you want."

"Oh, Colin, chicken! Fried chicken! And a whole quart of milk."

"And apple pie?"

"Oh yes, Colin! Apple pie! Oh, Colin, you angel of mercy!"

"I'll bring it for both of you. He's famished too and just doesn't know it yet."

Colin returned thirty minutes later with the food. In the meantime the agent had obtained the New York Central reservations. So when Judith slipped out into the hall, Colin was able to give her tickets all the way to New York.

"What is he doing?"

"He's sitting stark naked like a beast, mumbling and mumbling and writing equations."

Judith shoved her hand down into the bag, fumbled frantically, and brought out a chicken wing. "Oh, dear Lord! Food! I was so excited last night I didn't eat at all."

Presently she mumbled through her stuffed mouth. "Mumbling and mumbling and writing equations. Suddenly he gets a jubilation. 'That's it,' he shouts jumping up from the equations, 'That's the next step.' Then, you know what? He wants to do it with me again. He's like the goat we had only seven times bigger. Oh, dear Lord! Food!"

There was suddenly a shout from the bedroom. "Judith! I'm hungry. Where are you, Judith? I'm hungry!"

The next morning, in Mr. Collins's car on the way to the station, Boris fell asleep. Mrs. Collins looked back at Judith quizzically.

Judith sighed and smiled tolerantly as if she had been married twenty years. "Our second night of marriage, and he wrote equations till dawn."

All of the Oliphants were on the station platform in their Sunday best, and Rappa and Colleen had brought Pretty with them in Rappa's old coupé.

Boris came awake in gigantic confusion when Mrs. Collins parked. "You, Colin! Yes, you . . . and Rappa . . . where is Rappa? I must talk with you two alone. Oh, yes! Judith, dear. You are here, too. Of course! We're leaving on our honeymoon, aren't we? There are your little brothers and sisters to see us off. How pretty they are. Colin! I must speak with you and Rappa. Where is Rappa?"

"He's over there. See him? He's with Colleen and Pretty."

Boris opened the door and after a struggle practically fell out of the car. In fact, he landed on his hands and knees in extricating himself from the confines. Then he helped Judith out whole-part and opened the front door for Mrs. Collins.

Naturally, all attention focused on the bride. Boris lumbered aside, drawing Rappa and Colin with him. From his inside jacket pocket he drew a fat envelope and handed it to Colin.

"I have my own copy . . . also sealed. Keep it sealed until you start writing it up for publication. It must not get into the wrong minds until the right time. It is the fundamentals of the algebra of meanings and the manner of applying it to your portrait. . . . Man, the inventor of meaning."

Now Boris stared down at them grinning for so long that Rappa finally spoke a little testily.

"All right, Boris, what the hell is it?"

"Oh, are you two in for a surprise! Now I must tell you something I have known for some time. Using quite different mathematics, I have determined that there is a conservation of destiny . . . do you understand me?"

"No," Colin and Rappa submitted.

"At certain points in history . . . it comes about that there are two opposed directions possible in human destiny . . . each strongly determined in history. My calculations indicate that in such crises of meaning both directions are fulfilled."

Colin and Rappa glanced at each other. Boris went right on. "Now is such a time . . . you see . . . one direction in human destiny is straight from here through a Second World War to a Third World War that will be the end of humanity. The other direction probably doesn't avoid the Second World War . . . but with this algebra and the new level of human meaning it makes possible . . . I don't think there could be a Third World War in that direction.

"And I tell you with great certainty . . . both these destinies for humanity will be fulfilled."

"But that's impossible," Rappa stated.

Colin, however, was remembering Boris's talk about other worlds in other space-times, and he was silent.

Boris was shaking his ponderous head at Rappa. "It is not only possible . . . with publication of these equations in two widely read scientific languages . . . it is inevitable."

Boris spread his great arms. "This whole world will be duplicated into another space-time . . . and mind you, with conservation of mass and energy, though I don't yet understand how that is possible . . . and both destinies will proceed.

"Just think! For one instant there will be two identical worlds in two different space-times except that one will contain the equations of human meaning and the people who are thinking about them, and the other world will not. From then on they will diverge rapidly into their two so different destinies."

Boris put both massive hands on Colin's shoulders. "The trigger that will cause the duplication of the world will be our simultaneous publication of the equations. We need a critical mass of minds. From these notes you can write an expansive paper for English-language publication. I will do the same in Russian. That will get a sufficient mass of minds thinking in the new directions of human meaning to make the good human destiny inevitable.

"I know mathematical journals are slow, but maybe a donation in the right place will help you hold publication space in October—don't you think?"

Colin nodded.

"Good. My father's people in Russia, were Czar haters like him and have influence. I, too, will publish in October. Sometime that month belief in the new human destiny will reach a critical mass, and the world will be duplicated. Then, you and Rappa can build your city."

Colin was filled with questions, but further talk be-

came impossible as the train rolled with slow, hissing thunder into the station.

Boris threw an arm about each of his friends and crushed them to him, shouting down into their ears. "Good-bye, my friends. From now until fall I will do nothing but make love to my dear girl."

The girls and Mrs. Collins were crying. Little Cindy Oliphant was crying, and therefore her inseparable, the little Garcia boy, was crying. Judith hugged her father many times, and Colin saw that they had made up a quarrel. The two older Oliphant boys stood over the brood in their Sunday suits like marines.

Finally the brave couple was on the train waving in silence from behind a window. Then the train was moving, and finally it was out of sight, leaving a strange flatness in the hour ahead.

Rappa said to Colin. "Do you want to ride back with me?"

Colin shook his head. "I would like to walk back alone, my friend. You please take Pretty back for me."

It took some doing for Colin to convince everyone that he wanted to walk back alone. Mr. Collins especially wanted him to drive back with them.

Mrs. Collins settled it. "Colin has just parted from two dear friends, and he knows what is best for him. Come, let's all the rest of us go back home and have some cake. I made two of them. Mr. Oliphant, you please follow Mr. Collins in your car."

Holding the algebra of meanings in both hands as a sacred object, Colin walked back through streets scented by the carob tree. It was a beautiful spring morning, a Sunday morning, and the churchgoers were out in their new Sunday clothes.

Colin lifted his face to the cloud-splattered sky of California. He looked out past these lustful stallions into the standing cold.

"We are coming out there," he promised. "We will be there soon. Mr. McCord will build us ships."

EPILOGUE

Collins, Colorado

As it has for billions of years, the Earth turns in the presence of its star. Each dawn this light glares across the snowfields of the Rockies and flashes down into the desert upon the city of Collins, Colorado. It sets glowing the red bluffs down which tumble the waterfalls. There beneath one of the falls it reveals the austere red sandstones of the Boritzsch monument.

Below these bluffs the elegantly spaced towers of the city gleam, a thousand fountains sparkle, and lakes and streams reflect the lush trees and towers of the valley. In that commanding penthouse there, high over the lakeshore, the former Miss McAllister entertains lavishly as Mrs. "Old Ferg."

Out beyond the last reaches of meandering Lake Colleen, our city drops away over the lovely wooded hills of Rappaport Park. Through this gentle expanse flow three streams. By chance, or perhaps by contrivance, each stream makes its way past the life work of a different woman.

On the east side of the park, Aspen Brook winds past the graceful buildings of the Institute for Interracial Studies directed by Doctor Celeste Holcomb. A half-mile to the west, Boulder Creek forms a pool before the great Temple of All Faith presided over by the Reverend Doctor Judith Boritzsch. A mile beyond there, the foaming, splashing Wildbuck River races its way through the intimate gardens, pavilions, and patios of Delectable Groves which is operated by the lovely, mature and accomplished Pretty Quinlan.

In the mountain college towns, on the upland farms, in the city proper, and out on the desert shores, seven million of us live here today supported by the industries of the future which Colin Collins and Charlie Fer-

guson began to bring in here before World War II. We feel a vibrancy in our city that goes to the heart, a vibrancy in our print and films and television that is beginning to stir the heart of watching Mankind.

There is another thing that sets apart the citizens of this city. Out there in another space-time there is a twin to this world on which Collins, Colorado, does not exist, a world on which each of us has a twin. A man on a farm in Indiana in this world may be able to assume that his twin on that other world will be doing pretty much what he himself is doing on this world right up until the moment of atomic holocaust there. But, we of Collins, Colorado can clearly assume no such thing.

We sometimes experience a moment of wistful wonder. "Where am I now on that other world where there is no city of Collins, Colorado and no equations of human meaning? Am I carefully stepping around in the dog-droppings of Manhattan? Choking on the wind-driven dirt of Michigan Avenue? Or do I await the atomic holocaust in lovely San Francisco?"

Yes, we sometimes experience such a sentimental awareness of our doomed twin on that other world, but really not often. Our attention is too profoundly focused on the meaning of Collins, Colorado. It focuses concretely on that meaning every time we look south and see the monument to Friedrich Nietzsche which Colin Collins has had placed there.

He chose the tallest of the columnar mountains there, the highest of the red stone pillars, and had the whole face of it shaved to a flat surface, a stone tablet standing in the sky. On this he had them carve the gigantic words of his tribute to the philosopher.

In his romantic way, he invented the next meaning for humanity, human evolution. What he said was, "Wreck all things that stand in the way of evolution to higher states of being, of our evolution to superhumanities!"

Each in his own way, just catch hold of that vision and savor the new meaning. Suddenly, each child is a fresh hope, and death once more has the dignity of a contribution.

COLIN STANDS TALL

Colin Collins only looks like a boy. His mind, however, could only be matched by the greatest thinkers in history.

Using strange forces, he is creating an entirely new world from the scarred landscape of the American depression. His major findings are in the brave new world of California, and his greatest accomplishment in a place which may or may not exist.

Colin launches his life-consuming inquiry with a bizarre and engaging band of friends: A pioneering pilot, Marty McCord; the lusty Madame Bovary; his passionate companion Jesus Rappaport y Casafuerte; the beautiful but very different girls Judith Oliphant and Pretty Quinlan; his confused parents; and especially with the giant Boris, his cerebral twin who would one day share his destiny.

THE STANDING JOY

is joyous, moving,
delightful, sexual, adventurous,
colorful, wild, fantastic
—and nearly defies description.

Printed in U.S.A.