

brew a storm and wreck the boat."

"Rather clever."

"For me, you mean. Of course you are superior."

"Let's not get into personalities. You know me better."

"I suppose you'd account for love of parents or country."

"You had the chance to know your parents and your country. But even there one is apt to overdo and become hysterical."

"You mean rationalize or analyze...?"

"Why not? One wouldn't be so apt to condemn another country, or another people, or think one's father or mother are the only ones...."

"You want justification?"

"Why not?"

"Nuts! That cranium of yours is full of it."

"Thank you, Foster. It's good to be a little less than sane sometime. As long as you don't think me queer." Foster smiled and said nothing. "We are buddies."

"Guess we are both nuts."

"Only in different ways and in different things."

## CHAPTER II.

Let these moments flourish in one's life like shining stars, and let them remain as signposts on the long tortuous road. Let them remain far apart so as not to distract us; for we have much road ahead, and much striving.

The last of the season's games had been played, the Maine championship had been won, and Thanksgiving was close upon. The day before the holiday the campus was deserted. Foster and Cynthia had gone home, but George remained behind. It was not an easy decision for George, and not being able quite to make up his mind he let himself stay behind by simple expedient of letting things take their own course. It was a very simple and convenient

way ~~lead~~ to assume the mantle of indolence and inactivity and sink into the morass and swamp of lethargy, thus serving to solve, at least temporarily, a problem, which <sup>had</sup> somehow become, otherwise insoluble, and also to serve the good and beneficial purpose of relax<sup>ing</sup>, taut and frayed nerves.

As much as he tried to tell himself that Blanca was no problem, the problem that was Blanca grew bigger. And now that the rush of preholiday exams was over he had more time to think. Even in the small hours of the morning he'd wake up with a slight shiver to ponder the problem of Blanca. If he doesn't go home, he or she will be estranged more and more. Could he really be at peace with himself; or would he, if Blanca <sup>had</sup> left him and gone to someone else? Harold, for instance, would he be jealous and resentful? What had occurred in the few months of his absence, <sup>from home</sup> to have brought up the problem so suddenly and so sharply? Otherwise he'd be satisfied with his lot. College is quite an improvement over the drugery of high-school. You are more on your own, you are grown up, you are your own supervisor, and attend classes if and when you will. Your teachers are professors, assistant professors, or at least lecturers, not just teachers. You have hours, not a daily routine in which every day is the same. You gather in the halls and dormitory rooms and discuss adult subjects with adults. You are an adult. Or you go to your own room and wash your socks and shirts, or take a shower and put on your bathrobe and light up your pipe, or your cigarette, or just lie down on the couch and feel comfortable, and maybe important.

You are on your own.

Otherwise you think you are the same.

But not so Blanca. And she is your problem, and you are not going home for the weekend holiday.

On the eve of the holiday he strode in the wilderness of the back-campus. He was alone, and he was lonely. A hellish wind was blowing, full of chill and dampness. The moon was hidden, or there was no moon, and the stars were

urtained by thick scudding clouds, and the mist rose high in the sky. It was like being on a lonely stormy island, cut off from civilization; <sup>he</sup> felt self-pity creeping <sup>over</sup> ~~on~~ him, thus destined to be alone and away from home on the holiday. He had never been away before. He thought of his mother, her face wreathed in smiles at the sight of him, and how she was bent with cares and worry and longing after her husband, especially on the holiday. And he would have been the vehicle, the source, the spirit of cheer for her! Was it a myth, a fantasy that built for him a barrier-wall?

The wind now was blowing harder and roughened the Kennebec's surface under the pall of mist into scurrying babbling whitecaps. He could only imagine them, but he surely could hear their own ceaseless murmuring talk. They were reaching out and lapping at the toes of his shoes, and finally he began to feel a creeping chilliness in his feet.

Abruptly he turned. He climbed the steep incline back to his dormitory and put in a call to his mother.

At least he'll talk to her. She would understand.

Mrs. Berely was a past master at browning a turkey to its crispest and most succulent morsel. As to the garnishings and other prerequisites for the holiday table there was no more lavish hand. There was plenty of herself everywhere in the house, for she hovered over all with the ubiquity of her large body and spirit; and, as if by magic, wherever her hand touched there sprang up delectables, delicacies, viands and the richest and strangest of feeds. And all marshaled in order of their appointed places like a well trained army. Easy to reach, and easy <sup>on</sup> ~~to~~ the taste. It was a warm and cheerful occasion, that Thanksgiving Day in the year of the Lord, 1914, in the Berely household. Even Mr. Berely was ripe for the occasion, having been assured by now that Mr. Wilson would not do a somersault to upset the business applecart. Betty was her little smiling self, the rich, soft chestnut tresses netting in abundance on her white shoulders, even reaching down to the

delicate curves of her waist-line. She had a palish and delectable look about her rounded and perfectly molded face; and the rose-like budding of her lips. She was not the least, nor the smallest treasure in the Berely household, to cheer one's heart, and make one forget his anxieties. Betty was a brave lass of sixteen, and though born and brought up in a college town, this was the first time she <sup>had</sup> ever come close to these immortal heroes who have business within the sacred portals of Beely. Why, they were the very ones who created so much rumor and talk, who performed Homeric (she had read the Iliad) and the heroic deeds of Lancelot and the other braves <sup>(Champions)</sup> of King Arthur's Round Table) feats on the field of college sports. The whole town lived with them, and by them, and died without them. When they played their antics on the town it was taken with good grace, and perhaps with a "thank you". For Gods can do no wrong. Here she was at table with one of them! The pale dimples in her cheeks were the best she ever produced, and the well-shaped full lips opened <sup>with</sup> the sweetest smile to anything George had deigned to utter; the shadow of her long eyelashes dipping down over her deep gray eyes in self effacement and complete acquiescence to George's pronouncements. Her parents had put George on a high pedestal, and even if she was not up to reaching it she could glorify him, and encircle <sup>her</sup> him in the hale-frame of her loving and adoring youth; the young dreams of love, and shouting crowds and cheering, and rah, rah, rah's, and victories of the teams; and their heavy foot-falls that reverberated to her very home, to her very heart; their seven-league strides that reached over the roof of her house, the faces above these striding legs that reached into the clouds, and even up to the sun, moon and stars. These faces she could not see, but must for sure belong to her legendary heroes, who, if not Gods, must at least be like angels -- in her own heaven.

And in the warmth of heart and hearth of the family, and in the adoration,

of little Bepty, George's afternoon wore on through the short twilight and into the lights of the darkening evening, when festivities started anew.

The house was filled with guests. There was small talk, they gathered in groups, they danced, they played bridge. George was a poor fourth hand at a bridge table. Mrs. Berely, who was his partner, took care that he wasn't too embarrassed when he made an error. Like a good general she would anticipate his moves and cover them up with the adroitness of her maneuvers. If, in spite of her clever moves, he would throw a king or a queen instead of an ace, thereby losing a trick or even the game, she'd smile encouragingly over the bridge table at him, which meant: "Don't mind the kibitzers. You are doing all right for a beginner. You'll learn soon enough." And when the game was over she would take him away on the pretext that she wanted him to meet one of the guests and would talk to him. "Really, you did better than I ever expected! The main thing, you must enjoy yourself. The second time you'll like it better." All evening she'd keep a vigil <sup>eye</sup> on him, and see to it that he was not left to himself, alone. Somehow she had discovered that trait of brooding in him, which lurked under the surface of jollity, and his gift of sharing in the game of life. She read it in his eyes in the brief moments when he stood alone, when his attention was not distracted from himself. And under certain circumstances, occasions, and even in association with certain people, she observed <sup>which</sup> this meadiness would seize and engulf him. It <sup>was</sup> (were) as if his inner soul was the core within a massive substance which did not permit of blending or suffusing with certain other souls. Of a sudden, and without warning it would shut itself into seclusion, and wander off into another world. In the few months of her acquaintance and proximity to him she had learned to divine these symptoms. And as her guest of the evening she re-  
solved that never must she allow him to encrust himself into that shell. George missed these momentary aberrations in which he could see things clear as crystal, as through a transillumination of <sup>a</sup> heavenly offulgence and brilliance. Maybe these brief psychic moments were good for that struggling ghost

of his soul, which, freeing itself from earthly encumbrances, would take flight into the upper and rarer atmosphere of distant space, where past, present and future aren't, and the aim is aimless. The soul's holiday! But with Mrs. Bereløy in constant attendance there was little chance for that subliminal self. Still, there were other compensations and distractions which claimed complete indulgence, and subsidence, to the exclusion of anything else, of all other emotions and passions. The self become immeresed in the immediate.

And so it happened with two tall young twin-sisters, who created new whirlpools of excitement wherever they happened to be. Had they been hired entertainers they couldn't have come at a more auspicious time: when talents and spirits begin to dip and washt<sup>o</sup> their lowest ebb. True, the evening had progressed quite far toward the fateful midnight hour, when guest ~~and~~ host have a right to look into each other's eye and say: "Well, the evening has worn on quite well, and you and I have had hours of entertainment and fun, and now it's time for a fade-out, and a bit of dulness, even boredom." Just a bit. But who can tell the end, once boredom begins? and the grand finale of an evening might prove a dismal failure. It had <sup>was</sup> now been ~~close to~~ <sup>heavily</sup> two hours, (since) before midnight, when a guest <sup>has</sup> (had had) the legitimate right to put a had before his mouth to squelch an incipient yawn and say goodnight to his hosts. What indeed to do to revive a drooping spirit and make it bubble again? Mrs. Bereløy was searching her head for the source of this early dissipation of energy. To be sure the evening began early, the small talk and the big talk had had their turn; then the games, and witticisms, which were mostly dull wits; the well rehearsed dances now done for and threadbare; and now she admitted to herself that this must continue as a long drawn out tedium with tired ghastly pale face. A humdrum end that would condemn the beginning. If God would only hurry the hour of departure. She stole a glance at the clock,

and was struck with dumb fear at the augury of <sup>an</sup> <sup>ed</sup> prolong agony for the rest of the evening. And then, just then, the sisters breezed in.

Two girls of the neighborhood, little older than George, but young, much too young for their aging parents. The shrivelled little father, the never-do-well; and the elongated mother, sparse in flesh and health, with bony, gnarled hands, "Worked to the bone", to bring up the twins who <sup>had</sup> come late in their ~~lives~~. And a happy bringing up it was, not through the efforts of the parents, though the mother did her level best, but because of the sisters' sunny disposition and their zest for life. Out of high school, they soon got identical secretarial positions, and in unison they put the household on a happier and sounder foundation. Now the old man no longer had to make <sup>a</sup> pretenses of looking for work, and the ~~the~~ mother no longer had to scrape and worry how to put food on the table, or pay bills. Often the mother had been heard in her tragic voice: "Blooming girls and bitter poverty. The greater the poverty, the more they ate, and the more they bloomed." ~~But~~ What she had not said was that the more the girls ate the more she hungered. But ~~now~~ grumbling <sup>though now</sup> poverty <sup>A</sup> long forgotten, had not failed to leave their <sup>its</sup> linear tracings on their mother's face. Tragedy peered through the facade of happiness, it lurked through the corner of her eyes. And she was always afraid lest the old nightmare ~~would~~ return! Her hair pure white now, the blue in her eyes shone with greater lustre and the skin <sup>of her</sup> <sup>had</sup> ~~of the~~ face <sup>had</sup> lost its translucent paleness. In comparison with the whiteness of her hair, and in contrast to it, the face had a crimson tinge <sup>to</sup> it. And she was beautiful - the well deserved serenity of old age.

Their appearance brought new life to the assembled, whose morale was beginning to <sup>languish</sup> for want of something new and fresh. A new breath of air into the stultified and stifling atmosphere. This new and fresh current let itself be felt immediately, as it became a factor in filling every empty space and turgid void. As it circulated through the house, and as the records on the phonograph began whirling anew, little circles of enthusiastic

dancers, like small whirlpools began to form on the floor, all gravitating as if by centripetal force toward the main vertex, the twin sisters. Among the few left out of the whirlgig was Mrs. Berely, excusing herself on the ground of her duties as a hostess, which were manifold and exacting, (~~requiring every minute of her time~~). Mr. Berely, ~~who was~~ a peer dancer anyway, found it convenient to beg off, ~~he had to follow~~ and to remain as an aide to his spouse. Betty stayed out too, but for a different reason. She was a graceful and accomplished dancer, but she had hardly left George's side all evening. She would have loved to have George as her partner, especially in the new dance they were doing now, the tango, but she well knew that dancing was not one of George's accomplishments. She had <sup>had</sup> proof of it, when in the privacy of their home her mother had desperately tried to tutor him in that art; and it had proved a painful task to him. No, he wasn't ready yet, not for public display. But she found it not unpleasant, and even profitable, just to be outside of it and ~~be~~ at his side. Just talk. He could be so interesting and entertaining.

There was a momentary pause to the flying shawls and skirts, as a new record was being placed on the machine. During the interval <sup>of</sup> calm, the buzz, which had previously <sup>been</sup> drowned out by the shuffling of feet and swishing of silk and satin, came <sup>on</sup> now with the force of thunder. And out of the violence, the sisters appeared before George and Betty. They each wanted at least one dance with George. No amount of pleading would divert them from their avowed purpose. There was simply no refusing them. They were the twin-queens of the evening. It was a command performance. And so George found himself engulfed in the lovely arms of one of them, inhaling the sweetness of her willywilly body, and floating in space with the ease and grace of any dancer on the floor. No, what was it, how was it! Were his clay feet in the hands of a Creator, was he the marble statue <sup>under</sup> (in) the hypnotic <sup>power</sup> (genius) of the sculptor who breathed life into its stone-cold body! Indeed, it must be so. It seemed the grace and skill of his partners were transfused into his very



being by their magic touch and sinuous movement of their bodies, and the intricacies of the tango <sup>had</sup> become the simple and charming lines of a beautiful poem.

Then the sisters flung him away, and he was thrust out of the whirlpool as if by centrifugal force. He was on the outside again looking on. Moments of vision as if floating in the air, George thought.

"Life is by moments, and in between we just struggle," he observed to Betty.

Betty thought that such moments needn't be rare as he assessed them, that perhaps they could be multiplied at will. But George didn't think so. "It just doesn't lie within the province of our will," he said. "And so these moments must remain no more than rare. And maybe it's better so—er-dained by a higher power. Let these moments flourish in one's life like shining stars, and let them remain signposts on the long tortuous road. And let them remain far apart not to distract us much. For we have much road ahead, and much striving."

### Chapter III

- A. Revelation of Nothingness
- B. Hermann "Dutchy" Kennard
- C. There are moments that are like years...

They were three lonely days that followed the Thanksgiving festival at the Berelys. There was bliss and there was blight. The bliss was the blandness and <sup>insensibility</sup> (unfeeling) of mind and body, the lassitude that brings relaxation and deserved numbness to the cells in the muscles and the brain. It's a good feeling. You coil up on your cot like a cat, and close up like a clam, and crawl into your corpse and let the corpuscles take their own course. Your