

Blanca eagerly grasping the extended hand, rescuing her from her nightmarish dream, responded at once. "Oh, yes, tickets for the show!" And smiling at her aunt a bit ruefully, "Forgot all about it. You'll excuse us, Auntie, if we hurry along. Anyway you two have lots to talk about." Then mockingly, "haven't you, George?" With a light toss of her head, echoing her own words: "Bet you have. Lots and lots." With undue formality she extended her hand, which George pressed only lightly and briefly. He said nothing of a return visit to her house, nor had he asked her to come again, when he took them to the door.

The brief dramatic scene was swift and racking, and left George's mother exhausted, and a bit baffled. The dishes, knives and forks were still on the table in a cold state of existence, a reminder of what might have been and wasn't. The gelid remains of food coating them was not patina of ancient bronzes to delight the eye. It was depressing. She looked at George in a silent breathless way, as if fearful to give expression to the dark question that was tormenting her.

CHAPTER III

And It Came To Pass

And it came to pass at eventide, that David arose from his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.... And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her.... And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said: "I am with child."

..... And the Lord struck the child that Urian's wife bore to David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child: And David fasted, and as often as he went in, he lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and stood beside him, to raise him up from the earth; but he would not, neither would he eat bread with them..... And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died.....

(Emporium)

The auditorium of the Emporium theatre was dark when George entered. The only light that came from the stage, where some action was taking place, blinded him, ~~take as if~~. Groping his way along he discovered the bulky figure of Solomon, whose ^{dark} silhouette he recognized from the back, slumped in a seat about five rows from the stage. He took a seat not far from him, and settled down to watch with the others. There was David, mighty king of Israel, prostrate, groveling in the dust, imploring his God for his sick child, begotten in sin. Sense as the scene was, he hadn't failed to glance at his friend to his left. His eyes were more accustomed now to the dimness of the house, and the light from the stage. Solomon's face was bent down and drawn, his hair disheveled, and his whole appearance seemed cluttered like everything else around him. George realized that Solomon was going through the last of the harrowing pangs of labor. Perhaps at this moment worrying and wondering when he, George, would show up.

When the lights ^{had} finally gone up, ^{and} it took a moment or two to be recalled from antiquity, when the actors started leaving the stage. Now the props were being hurried along, to be set up for the next scene. Solomon was still in silence, still ruffled up within himself. George wondered how much of the physical that goes into the making of skill and talent can go on taking punishment day after day, and how long? How much gruelling concentration, and intensity of emotion!

George shifted about in his chair, made a soft clatter with his right foot on the floor, hoping to call Solomon's attention to himself. He was afraid of the suddenness of shock, of the immediate impact of his presence upon Solomon. Hadn't the actors themselves chosen to leave the stage in quiet unobtrusiveness? A frozen body must needs be thawed out by degrees, why not a frozen mind?

When finally Solomon turned his head toward the source of the noise, his eyes rested for a flicker of a moment on George in unrecognition. Then jumping to his feet he stumbled and almost fell on the seats between himself and George.

"George! At last!" he cried, his voice ringing through the stillness of the hall.

"Good to see you, Solomon," George smiled easily, as he stood up to take Solomon's proffered hand.

"Been here long, George?"

"Through most of Episode David."

"You mean the biblical phrasing?"

"Your comments in keeping with the biblical phrasing."

"David always fascinated you, George."

"I think he is the most heroic figure in history. Hope someday to do a play on him, alone!"

"Well, maybe the most fascinating, George." ~~For a moment~~ There was the pause of silence. "The opening is set for New Year's Eve, it's so?" said George.

"With Episode Christ it would have been better closer to Christmas, but..."

"If it's my ^elatness I am sorry. But couldn't make ^{it} sooner."

"May ^{be} it's for the good. It'll give us more time."

"Haven't seen much in the press."

"Jack Gardner refuses to tackle it further. Said it's your baby, etc."

"Stubborn red-head."

"In a way he is right. Biblical Spectaculars are strangers to him, and

the handling of the press counts you know."

"All right, old warrior, we'll do," said George and turned to go. "Perhaps I shall start handling the press right now," he smiled.

"They are just about ready for Episode Christ, won't you stay through it?" They sat down to watch. Just then Lena appeared in the half-light of the stage. She was crisp and bright as the wintry morning sunshine. Sidelong up to her husband she pecked him on the cheek. "Just dropped in a sec..." Then suddenly seeing George materialize in the dimness next to her husband, she cried out, "It's you, George darling, at last you are here!"

"Lena, for heaven's sake!" George came over and stood before her, taking her hand. "Now what would you be doing in this dim dungeon this time of day?"

"Just tagging along with Cynthia and Foster on their shopping tour for their New York visit. Dropped in to say hello."

"So Cynthia and Foster going to New York... already?" George tried to hide his embarrassment, not unmingled with a resentful note in the tone of his voice. "Already on a honeymoon?" he joked bravely.

"Not quite as serious as that," Lena laughed. "You'd be the best man when Foster marries." Then as if in doubt: "If he does. This is ~~an~~ old ^{you know,} Forrest's idea. The Forrests have gone to New York before for the holidays. They have invited Cynthia to come along."

"And she is going," George said, a worried look on his face.

"Why shouldn't she?"

George shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

"If they knew you were here," Lena said, "they would have come in. Well, I better run along. You two must have plenty to talk about."

"Cynthia would come in anyway, if it weren't for Foster... wouldn't she?" The question came so sharp and sudden that perhaps Solomon hadn't realized himself its deep implication. As for Lena and George, they were stunned for a moment.

"Don't be such a touchy old bear where Foster is concerned," Lena said.

She took his hand and slapped his wrist playfully. "Don't forget to bring George to ^{the} house - tonight if possible."

"You are a little minx," he smiled fondly as he patted her head. "A happy quirk, George, or was it a symphony, the Fates played when they found Lena for me!" But she hadn't heard her husband's last words, she had vanished in ^{to} the semi-darkness as she had appeared from it.

They sat down to watch the stage.

"Still wrapped up in the boy?" George said.

"Can't explain it to myself," Solomon said without turning his head, "the more he ignores me - and he does - the more I care for him."

"Inverse ratio, sort of," George grinned.

"You can't figure this thing with mathematics," Solomon turned to him smiling. "Anyway, I am no good at it."

"Neither am I. But I think I understand."

"An equation in the reverse, is it?" Solomon laughed.

"As good as anything," George was guessing.

"Maybe it isn't as mysterious as I am trying to make out," Solomon was serious. "After all he is the only child of the woman I love. Shouldn't that be sufficient? The great and overwhelming factor in our human relations. Whatever that means, and whichever way you may interpret it. My relationship with Foster, that is."

"That's a thing one feels but doesn't explain," George explained in his own way.

"Life is a dream, and isn't; life is a great vista, and isn't; life's distance can be measured by the stars, or by the step of the caterpillar; empty as the dark night, or full as the noonday sun; the blast of the thunder, and the stillness of the dusk of summer in the cool meadow."

Solomon was seeing the old scenes of the years of his youth. Suddenly the welling up of thoughts within him were too strong to be contained, and he spoke again, rapidly and with a breathlessness as if he feared that

the words would escape him or the breath of life would fail him. ~~not~~
~~His thoughts~~ His thoughts tumbled out through his lips from an
inner self, that was almost a stranger to him, from a depth of subconscious-
ness hitherto unplumbed. He was a youth again¹reiving the old days,
but with a difference. There is a strange consciousness and a knowledge
that wasn't there before. The whole thing is strange, and isn't strange. And
that in itself is strange. Like a dream. "Not long after my mother's death
my father passed away. There is your human relationship, ^{kinship if you will-} an inner sensi-
tivity between one human and another, more refined and deeper than animal
relationship. Especially between husband and wife. Is such a union between
humans divine? Surely it was between Father and Mother. Maybe he wanted to
die. It may be argued that that other relationship, ^{or kinship} to me - should have
put the urge and fight in him to live on. And indeed that may have been
the ~~raison-~~ ^{de-}etre of his short existence after mother's death. He devo-
ted almost all his time to me to the neglect of ^{his} the community. He was
grasping for all the available time to impress his ways on me, so I would
follow in his footsteps, and to impart as much as possible to me from his
great store of learning. The pressures were great. But at least it was an
anchor which held me in balance. But his sudden death ^{scared} me from the
moorings, and I was left to float in a wilderness that was strange and
confusing. It was a going hither and yon, not knowing where to find a res-
ting place. Of course I could ^{have} been ^rodained in the rabbinate, or maybe taken
a post in a rabbinical college, for I was quite apt and ready, but that was
not in my horizon. I regretted what I thought was a failing and a disregard of
my father's wishes, but I knew that never would I walk in that path. And it
was at that time that my anchor sank completely out of sight under me. And
I was without zeal and without aim. Then a star beckoned to me, and somehow
I made the shores of this blessed land. How I made it, and the struggle,
is quite another story. But here I was, and here I met Lena. And here was the
opportunity and the reality. And here I am doing what I always wanted to do.

To bring to life the great heroes of the spirit of the past - and the future! And Foster was that link of the present, that solid base, that gave stability and reassurance, enabling me to operate with confidence. He gave back the past to me, for in him the past and the present, and even the immediate future were united. He was a point in space I have chosen, a particular point, a definite entity, ^{in which I identified my own self;} so much of flesh and blood, and material quality that my roaming ship had ^{more ballast,} more weight, added to its anchor. I was now established in space. He represented everything I had missed in my youth. A handsome vigorous youth with a ^{normal} mind - minus that ^psuper-intellectuality, which I came to despise. Also he represented to me the perfect product of the new world, my newly adopted home, the new freedom. I almost worshipped him for that, and I loved him through my wife."

There was a pause of silence as the curtain went up on the scene of Episode Christ. The two sat still, watching the action on the stage. Then Solomon said, "I think we better go back stage. Two things to be straightened out. I took upon myself to call it Revolt Of The Angels instead of Great Moments In History as you had suggested, and then..." There was a hasty consultation with Solomon from the stage, "And then the Epilogue. As a matter of fact I hesitated about the title because it practically leaves out the epilogue, while yours is all embracing. Yet, the Revolt Of The Angels seems to me more poignant and more to the point since the play begins with that important part, ~~the~~ the revolt of the angels. If it hadn't been for some of the ^Achangelms there mightn't have been an Earth."

"All right. But what's wrong with the Epilogue?"

"The title limits the scope of the play, and ^{had} had to cut..."

"You cut the epilogue?"

"Parts..." They were ^{now} in Solomon's office, backstage. From a portfolio Solomon took out two copies and handed one to George. George glanced at

the flyleaf and quickly riffled through the epilogue. "I see what you mean - 'parts'. Underscored parts, and question-marked other parts. Seems a lot bothered you."

"Frankly, yes. People's reaction! So amazing and radical in concept." He looked up and saw George smiling. "Something amusing, George?"

"What? O yes. The title to the epilogue - fetching: 'A billion Years Hence!'"

"Thought it'd be better with a title, and kept by itself. Still needs touching up. But I need a better grasp of the theme, - as a whole."

"Well, in my high school junior year I wrote an inexcusable syllogism on two words: Something and Nothing. I think the idea was that there is very little difference between the two. Rather a whimsical proposition only a junior could comprehend and bring forth. But now with the Epilogue and all, it seems to have more merit. Nothing ever actually becomes nothing. Indestructibility of matter, and such. Or the great Creating Force - Energy - about which we know so little; or nothing, which creates something out of seemingly nothing. Energy! What is there to preclude, or contradict the ~~the~~ theory that this same force, this Energy, actually had created several Earths, and that each of them had gained in experience and had progressed further on the ladder of Evolution. We have been, and we are,

ephemeral;
a disease-ridden lot, very imperfect, a root to be blown ~~away~~ by every wind of chance. But this ^{is} only a step in Nature's laboratory of trial and error. Creation, and with it the human species, will improve with each try. Because energy will have learned from experience."

"How do you conceive of the human race in that future, a billion or more years hence? That is, if there'll be a species human-like."

"I conceive of them as spirits, less corporeality, nearer to God: our own world, which is our planet, and the others, as a part of a great universe - a Union of Planets, with intercommunicating spirits. The new Earth will have learned, and the other planets and the stars, through Energy - the ultimate in the force of creation: The Godhead."

"How about the propagation of the race, with mostly spirit and very little body in that phantasmal world of the future?"

"Like the flowering of Spring. Eternal spring!"

"Then you conceive of no conception as we know it?" Solomon said with a hint of satire in his voice. "There is no conceiving in flowers or plants, as we know ^{it} in the animal kingdom," Solomon continued in a more sober tone, "but a transference of the seed by an outside agent - the bees and the breezes. An innocuous conception and birth."

"That and more," George said nonchalantly.

"Instead, then, of becoming more complex the genesis of the higher species will be simplified. Now, isn't this contrary to the accepted fact that life becomes more complex the greater the diversification of the species, the higher the steps on the ladder of evolution?"

"To a certain degree, yes. But even that depends on the degree of evolution. The fact that birth and growth and death are ever in the process of being more complex, and the fact of death - that is the very existence of death - is proof enough that evolution is far from its peak. What an imperfect creature, man, the very top of creation! Riddled with innumerable im-

perfections and diseases, his very existence in balance and at the mercy of armies of microscopic invaders from within and without, more perfect than he. His life to be snuffed out by incident and coincident as swiftly as the breeze that passeth over him: 'As for man, his days are as grass; as the flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.' Complexity is perplexity. Creation is still in perplexity how to create the perfect, the ultimate in life: that species which will endure, and truly be in dominion over land and sea. It had a good start in Genesis when the Lord blessed the species in His first and most significant Commandment: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.' The goal still lies far ahead. Likewise it was a good start to have had man created in the image of God, but so far we have attained very little of the essence of the Godhead. When we do we won't necessarily be like gods, but we'll truly be in the image of God for having attained some of His attributes. It'll be in a sense then that we created Him as truly as He created us. We'll be on the top rung of evolution. One may visualize the ultimate Soul from which all life will spring. A pool, vast and unlimited, of Soul, or spirit-like energy, requiring divine designation ~~to~~ to perpetuate an individual soul, and cloak it with a body, tenuous, but so perfect to be long enduring and completely subdued to the soul."

"Life will spring from Life by the mere touch of a magic wand!"

"Quite so, Solomon, no mere jest."

"I don't believe it was meant as a jest. But who is to wave the wand?"

Spontaneity,
"The Creative Force, and the laws within it that govern the Universe.

And the natural laws that are yet beyond us. The old forces of crystallization, colloidallization, adhesion, cohesion, moisture, air, sunlight, fusions, fission - the old tricks; and the new laws and knowledge gained through experience by a new earth, ^{They} will build a new race with a super-

refined intelligence. A true Civilization!"

"But eventually, in the ultimate of the ultimate, wouldn't the Creative Force, or Energy, out-create itself, so to speak, exhaust itself into a void and darkness?"

"Darkness, void, are not negations in themselves, or proof of non-existence. For there can be no darkness or void without someone to perceive them, or something within which void and darkness can take place. 'How the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.' You see, there had to be an earth to have a void, and there had to be a deep to have darkness..... This, in brief, is the kernel, the formula of the Epilogue."

"Not so brief I fear. Few people have a long eye for such a distant and fantastic future."

"The more fantastic the better. I wouldn't put it past you not to accomplish it in visual effect to delight even the most ordinary flesh-and-blood eye." A pause of silence as the two friends faced one another.

"Yes, as to the visual effect," Solomon quipped, "is the reason Robert, Bob Black to you, isn't here..."

"Yes, where is Bob? About time we got around to him."

"Doing quite well. Managing, and taking small parts...." Solomon paused and went over to his desk. He picked up a few miniature props and held them up to George. "These he carved himself. For the stage models he went to New York."

"Rather an expensive proposition!"

"Money at a discount, where the Black brothers are concerned," Solomon laughed. "Wait till you see the rest...."