

ty, a little world in itself. A wondrous little world!

All right you, who are still namless, all right, one more belch. Make a clean sweep of it. That bit of meconium, remnant and reminder of another world - the womb world - get rid of it; for the cord that tied you to the other world has long been severed. Now you are screaming because you want to go back to the cozy warmth of that other world, where your mother did the breathing and everything else for you. Being born is an achievement, even if the new world is cold and raw, and you feel so distressfully naked. You are doubtful of the achievement, and you resent the mighty Hand that gathered the elements of your previous existence, fashioned you and forced you into this inimical world! But soon sleep will overtake you, and the old world you'll forget, before you learn to know the new one.

## CHAPTER V

### Clara

In his hour of success Dr. Capen had not forgotten his friends of the past - those that <sup>had</sup> spread his fame as a healer of the social diseases. A dubious honor to have become known as a "clap" specialist, perhaps, but not a detriment to one's soul if one is honest and not unscrupulous. It gave him his start to reach the status of a prominent surgeon; and in fond memory and gratefulness he had taken off time from his busy schedule - between <sup>the hours of</sup> four and five, afternoons - to devote to those unfortunates afflicted with venereal disease. An hour when the poor were more welcome than those that could afford to pay. A dedicated hour, an hour almost sacred to him.

One afternoon, during the hour, the nurse informed him that a la-

dy was on the phone.

"Well, take a message," he called out impatiently through the closed door of the treatment room.

"She would only speak to you," came back the muffled voice.

Impetuous with petulance: "Tell her to hold the line - if she wants to wait."

When the patient was discharged he lifted the receiver: "Dr. Capen speaking. Sorry to keep you waiting, but -"

"I well understand, doctor," came a weak, hesitating voice. "Sorry to intrude on your busy hour, but it's urgent that I see you. And privately."

One of those "fine" ladies, Dr. Capen reflected. Well, she is entitled to his services out of the "hour" as well as those within the hour.

Clara was a divinely perfumed fine lady of the finest section in town - up the hill, in the western part, in one of those stately mahogany-brown houses; sixteen rooms, sunk deep in a forest of shrubbery, and cone-shaped pine trees. The still, still street - whispering of the majestic dignity and elegance of Portgrave's most elegant clan; the straight evenly blocked sidewalk, fronting a colorful landscaping, equally blocked with beds of flowers of vivid freshness and hue that immediately caught the eye and held it focused on the scene. Dr. Capen well remembered it from his boyhood days when occasionally he had wandered away from the depths of Portgrave slums to one of the prominences, which like the humps on the camel's back shaped the eastern and western borders of the town. The western height <sup>had</sup> the air of seclusion and retirement of the hermitage - for meditation in the spring twilight; while at dawn on the eastern-promontory one <sup>REFLECTED</sup> (puzzled together) with the rising sun at the almost obscene exposure of the birth of a new day by the union of the sun with <sup>the</sup> sparkle of the sea which touched the re-

fulgent purple-green of the declivity. As a boy and man he had never envied the dwellers of those sanctified regions. Enough it was for him that he roamed them at will, and could imagine for himself what those within<sup>the</sup> houses were like. In young manhood he saw a breed of super-beings housed in those mansions, a family going along happily, solidly: A tall, stout tree, with sturdy roots striking deep in the compact fertile soil; its branches wholesome, thick and well nourished, bearing healthy fruit. But in later<sup>years</sup> ~~years~~ could see the mould, the<sup>stultifying</sup> blight, the rot set in, and what was life and "whole" wither into scatted nothingness of decay - lost in the winds of the earth; what was once home and light and cheer and warmth become a bleakness, a black void, where the desert sands blow in ruckles and furrows to cover the bleaching bones of a past that could no more banish the cold of winter nor the heat of the summer --- a house stark and deserted in the stabbing rays of the sun. A symbol of a lost moment in eternity - a waste of what was once a part of Life!

Dr. Capen was shaken ~~and~~ mildly when he learned that his patient<sup>second</sup> was the Mrs. Foster Forrest. He knew that old Forrest had married not long after his first wife<sup>had</sup> died, about a dozen years before, but he had never met her; and now she stood before him. Presumably in the late thirties, she still cut a handsome figure, her eyes still retaining the<sup>s and curve</sup> lustre of youth. She had come from the house with the sixteen rooms that had become a sealed tomb to the first Mrs. Forrest who<sup>had</sup> followed her son not long after he died. The rumors and condemnations by the town's people, and the quiet, and calmer attitude that folowed, and the forgiveness! For Mr. Forrest was a stanch pillar of Portgrave's civic life. That Clara was too young and vivacious to make a proper mate for the thin little aging man was hardly anybody's concern. The doctor sat, rooted in his chair as he listened to the

story and circumstance that brought her here. Was she the symbol of the last moment in a lost generation? "And I will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation!" Has Jehovah's curse come first to rest on the thin shoulders of the father?

Clara was the symbol of a last hope to old Forrest to pluck the last fruit of sweetness of life, a life destitute and cold in the sixteen-room house on the hill. It was to form the new kinship, with a young and pretty woman, to replace the love and lost kinship of his grandson who had turned more and more to his mother after his grandmother's death. But what he found was emptiness. After Lena's marriage to the strange man of a foreign land a hope had brightened in him that his grandson would turn to him again, but the brightness dulled when his new wife turned from him more and more, for a year and longer, in what seemed to him a bitterness - and even hatred.

His wife, his grandson, and Lena - a three pronged formidable devil's hoof. And the last, the finger of contempt that burned in him like a curse - Solomon Dreen and his girl show.

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Clara brought with her body her unguents and delicately scented waters when she entered Dr. Capen's office. It was like a breeze of the first flowering of spring. The fragrance clung to the doctor's nostrils long, until the disrobing in the treatment room challenged it. There was a malodorous source, from a vital spot, that rivaled with uncouthness the delicacy of flavor from the supple, beautiful forty year female body. It conquered all her balms and pomades until it alone predominated, once the wraps were off.

It was a whirlwind courtship (like the blinding flash of lightning, blinding Forrest) that had swept Clara into old Forrest's faltering

arms, aided and abetted by all the glitter invested in him and the promise of a richer future. Living in the big house, surrounded by wealth, she could indulge her slightest whim.

Poverty stricken youth longing for the gilded glamour of inherited wealth! A fair exchange. The world of the strong, of the happy. The world of wealth and light!

Came the connubial nights when she lay in his arms and let herself be fondled by him. But the man of strong wealth turned out to be of weak loins, and the succession of tortured nights continued, every sunset foreboded an oncoming nightmare; and what had been dormant in her for these many years had been kindled to flaming heat to cause her to lie in a sweat of torment until the cool of dawn.

after the years,  
She sought the retreat of the tavern and the man of strong loins.  
The Styx, the stink, the svelte sailor! The drooling, drunken mouth!  
The ogling, winking wooing eye!

But she had forgotten or did not know what else may issue from these same strong loins, other than the essence and elixir of love's making. Or if she hadn't forgotten she didn't care, for she remembered the honeymoon nights with a cold frog - a shriveled old frog.

They drank - she and the sailor. She had never drunk before to excess. They drank and whored - and the old fossil was sunk into oblivion. She and the sailor alone. The convulsive ecstasy! The exquisite pain. The nightmare of erotic waves, undulations, and the excitement of the hold and the movement! The succubus of the burning light, and the confusion of the stinging darkness of the night.

The rolling and hurling of the flesh, the outburst and spilling of all emotions to the last dregs. The stab and the hot flash in the dark confusion, and the turbulence in the cramping shivering limbs.

Untrammelled, untamed passion!

The pollution and bilge of old and young unrestrained drunken pas-

sion! Unwarranted and dirty, unwashed passion, bitch-and-dog passion, the serpent passion, passion for the sake of passion - unprovoked and improper passion. Passion of the moron and idiot!

But, o, passion of the gurgling Sunnybrook stream! Clear and cool in the meadows, in the sight of God. (~~God's bed, and the embrace of the lips!~~)

The morning passion of the dew on the petals of the gently nodding, blushing, bride-flower! The first kiss on the hilltop. The savor of the dew of the beloved. And the clear-eyed conscious yearning. The semi-somnolence and the quiet embrace of the aftermath. And the peace of soul and body. For thus was the world created - and the heavens and the stars!

She thinks now: The stinking swine, the stench from his loins. The nausea from his unwashed body. The leering face in the shadows. Through all this she gave herself to him. Was she committing adultery? she asked herself in her drunken stupor. Her body was aching and in the grip of strong drink. It was all twilight and darkness and desire. And the suns and the stars came down upon her as he took her. The obnoxiousness of his sweat was perfume in her nostrils. Risen from the purity and fragrance of her own chamber and the delicate scent of her sheets, she lying here in the offal of the crumpled gray bedding - in a room cluttered with decay, darkened with the dust and scum of human dereliction!

Had she sunk so low?

And again she thinks: Is it worse than to yield to the embrace of a man, whose touch of the jerky limb is a stab in the flesh? Or the fine lady who succumbs to the old eunuch for gold and silver? What is it to be true to the nature of your body? Contemptible! But a world arid without it? Irrepressible nature - the give and take and no quarters asked.

The last hour, she thinks again lying with her husband. The ago-

But it's damn't it?

ny/of joy and the quintessence of the last thrill. The last breath of life in the sulphurous storm of Sodom and Gomorrah!

The let down. To live for a moment and die an eternity!

The terrible itch and the burning of the parts, made worse by the heat of the blanket and her husband's nearness. If it hadn't been for his, his... and implacable explorings.

She finds comfort in the thought that maybe the burning is due to the fondling of her husband....Be all right in the morning.

Nothing, nothing at all.

But in the morning there was a scald - like hot water or the burn of acid.

A cold. Maybe a cold. Should have warm underwear. She was reassured and almost happy.

Next night again, only worse. A smell going up her nose from under the coverlet.

Her husband is snoring.

She turns to him and smells his back.

Clean and sweet-smelling, like a freshlybathed baby. That's one thing about him - clean, and smells good.

Her husband wakes up. What the...! He never wakes up after he goes into a snore.

Smell wake him?

He turns to her, his groping hand on her.

The smell of desire, the desire of smell!

He dsires her under cover, a husband assets<sup>r</sup> his rights.

What to do, and what not to do.

"Got a headache," she murmurs, as she turns half away from him.

"The fish!"

"Yes, the fish," she grabs for the straw, "I wonder if it was fresh."

"Always has the best," he wonders

"Trout once gave me a belly ache," she says sleepily.

"Come to think of it," he agrees agreeably, "was kind of loose myself." Sniffing. "Swear, I smell... Clara, is the garbage in the house?"

"The maid must have forgotten, I'll go and see."

"No, I'll go."

But she is up already. She grits her teeth. The old punk - a Sir Galahad! Lie there. "Be back in a minute," she says, "you are tired." Bitch, suddenly she is concerned for his comfort and welfare.

She was back in five minutes.

"All clean," she whispers softly. She was chilled and appreciated the body that kept the bed warm for her.

But that was a mistake. She shouldn't have cuddled up against him. There he was again, a husband's privilege.

Why doesn't he go to sleep? What's keeping him awake?

Desire, my fine lady.

While you were douching and applying the carbol - "throwing the garbage away" - he was prompting, priming himself how he'd embrace your luscious body. He was priding himself on the welling up of virility in him. The silhouette of your sensual curves, pink through the sheer gown in the pink light of the night, <sup>Fanned</sup> upped the flame in the dying embers. He'll curse you for ever if you deny him this one precious moment.

"Odor gone," and he presses himself hard against her. "Nice carbol smell. Put some on garbage?"

She clamps a hand on his nose. "Like carbol, choke on it, you old..." she almost hissed aloud. Get your fill on it, maybe you'll leave me alone. Want to get what I have?

"Blurb, blurb," the fool chokes, "you gone crazy?"

Fool, a woman will do lots of crazy things when desperate. She says, "No, dear, I was just loving you. Pressing your head against my breast."



"Didn't have to choke off my breath."

"Did I, darling? I must have been half asleep with tiredness, and the headache. Go to sleep, dear. Tomorrow night."

Tomorrow night is another night - the minx. There'll be no odor to wake him from his night-long snoring.

She will see Dr. Capen.

She did next morning.

She was circumspect as she entered the vicinity of the doctor's office. Not a soul she knew. If anyone had seen her! She had a special appointment, and she was to be alone in the office.

Her heart was heavy with foreboding as she stealthily entered the office. Her unguents and delicately scented body was like a breeze of the first flowering of spring. The fragrance clung to the doctor's nostrils (long), until the disrobing in the treatment room challenged it. A malodorous (source, <sup>scent</sup>) from a vital spot, rivaled with uncouthness the delicate flavor of the supple, beautiful forty year old female body. It conquered all her balms and pomades until it alone predominated, once the wraps were off.

She bared her tortured soul to the doctor; all her suffering and agonies. Dr. Capen nodded understanding, and smiled assurance.

"But suppose, suppose," she hesitated, "suppose I am, er..... caught," she finally blurted out, her face rising in flame.

"Not much danger from a guy like him. But don't let your husband touch you, until... well, until you are well."

She smiled up to him: "Until he gives the signal that all is well", --- she reflected <sup>upon</sup> the phrase with amusement.

There was a revulsion in her to the whole dirty mess. The dirt of living in desire. She was cured.