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PART TWO

Shadow and Substance

CHAPTER I

The Old Tower

George opened his eyes to the slanting sunbeams of a gold spring morning. A light breeze was ballooning out the curtain at the open window, projecting a stream of cool fresh air. He sniffed at the air, detecting an acridness of fumes that brought back the still incandescent memory of Lucifer's perpetrations of the night before; last night's remnant, quintessence of the last smoking ruin. A captious piquant piquancy that added exhilarating zest to the air. He leaned out the window and inhaled the air.

It was after seven, less than three hours to his appointment with the editor of the Eventide. He remembered his promise to Cynthia, to meet her at the Old Tower on Magnum Hill and view the town from the topmost vestibule. To look down into the valley where the school had been, to locate the emptiness where the fire had burned out. To view the Forest City this time of year, the house-punctate-dots amongst the ripening foliage of the forest of trees.

"Would a bald spot show through the thatch of trees where the fire burned through?" Cynthia had said.

Poor Cynthia! (It was thus, poor Cynthia. Cynthia the lovely, the loved, the noble. But poor Cynthia! What foreknowledge, or knowledge-<sup>e</sup>ableness, was there about Cynthia to single her out - to be put in that cell of loneliness, alone - as poor Cynthia? Was it an anticipation, a love dementia to be doomed, unfulfilled? What tragedy lies ahead in the near or distant future? For Cynthia, or for both!) He could almost see the delicate crimson mount on the clear pale cheeks, brushed by the fresh, gentle breezes of spring on the top of the tower, and the reflection of the azureous brilliant sky in her smiling eyes.

Dear Cynthia!

He stands alone under the vast dome of the blazing sky. After a while the breezes that ruffled his hair bring him the sound of footsteps, then her fragrance, as she came to stand by his side. Her nearness made him feel more acutely his aloneness. In the vast expanse of silence and golden light he stands with her on a mountain peak - alone. Alone, with her, he could punctuate the highest peaks under this great vault of undefined, unblemished sky. He could look into man's heart, and forgive all his evils.

He grasps her hand, clutching his fingers around it, and looks down upon the sheen of her hair, glinting gold and purple: reflecting the sun and an evanescent cloud, phosphorescent in the eastern sky. He bends over her, inhaling the sweet sacredness of her young breasts, revealed through the ballooning of her blouse by a prankish venturesome zephyr. His gaze caresses her flesh and warms her blood. She looks up into his eyes, her face flushing with the pleasureableness of it. The joy of desire is in him; also a sadness. He is violating her purity, a sacred trust, with his carnality of thought - his very joy of her!

Must she (will she?) always remain an idyl, a dream, an illusion, to be worshipped from a distance?

He drops her hand.

"What is it, George?" she cries out. A sadness veils her eyes, though a hint of a smile still wreathes her <sup>lips</sup> mouth. She takes his hand. Her touch both soothe and alarm his aroused emotions.

"Forgive me, Cynthia." He squeezes hard her hand. She lets out a little cry, as of pain. "Seems I do nothing but hurt you," he says as he smooths her hair. It cannot, it must not be, she is Foster's. His body is rigid as he stands erect, defying all.

"Is it loyalty to a friend?" she asks with a bit of irony in her voice. The irony of one being importuned with rumors and hints of rumors she had no knowledge of, of things being imputed to her that had no foundation in fact. She puts her arms around George's neck, playfully she forces his head down and kisses him full on the lips. "I am bound to no one, so you are not disloyal." Dismayed by her action and her own words she looks at George distractedly. But love overcomes her doubts, and she persists: "Our attachment for each other may not be clear or definable, or even understandable. But who wants to understand everything!"

"A babe in the woods," he says as he clasps her to him, "yet with the tenderness and intuition that becomes a clearness of vision of a much older woman." He holds her fast to him, her young breasts thrusting against his chest, the warm softness of her body kindling fire in his loins. No, not now. No lustful thoughts in this holy hour of the blazing sun and the clear burnished sky. God's hour! Not now, not ever.

She breaks away as easily as she had come to him. A child's innocent play, sanguine but not <sup>of</sup> awareness. But not without awareness of the phanerogamous engine generated in her - its whine and power, though, throttled by her will. "What a perfectly clear sky," she sings out, "like sapphire tinted with freshly minted silver. A definitive sky."

"A definitive sky! Who ever heard of a definitive sky," he wonders

as he looks at her to discover her secret. "Seems all wrong, yet I can see it if I think hard <sup>u</sup>enough. It explains so much the better what the Psalmist said when he declared:

'The heavens declare the glory of God:  
And the firmament showeth His handiwork,  
Day unto day uttereth speech,  
And night revealeth knowledge.'

## CHAPTER II

Wallace Barton, Editor

Through the great stone face shone a smile,  
That invited one to tarry a while;  
Through the lion's roar a voice so soft,  
That it inspired one to soar aloft.

The inevitable little (between-the-acts) cigar in his mouth Wallace Barton, Editor-in-chief of the Eventide, sat tilted back in his oaken chair, seemingly preoccupied in what he could observe side-glancing through the window at his immediate right, which gave on Memorial Square. His was the frontmost office on the second floor of the building that housed Maine's most influential newspaper. From this office, heart and nerve center, emanated the heavy cables of command, to be divided and subdivided, its filaments reaching every knot and ganglion that lined and wormed through the whole structure of newspaper making. There he sat with quiet and easy composure, enjoying what his right eye could see in the Square, in the heart of Portgrave. The