

CHAPTER II

Blanca

Blanca was completely and unmistakably her father's daughter, and any reserve that might exist between them was more of the quality of mutual respect than anything else. Blanca had regard for success, and her father, Samuel Dervin, was a successful business man in the produce line. Blanca felt a sense of fealty towards her father in return for his devotion to her, but even she could not always penetrate his harsh and hard exterior. He could tame his fervid, scorching words when addressing his daughter, but not enough to break through that wall of reserve between them. Not quite; especially evenings at home, when his wife was present.

There was a chill of enmity, if not hatred, blowing across the table from Mr. Dervin where he sat at his dinner, usually by himself, toward his wife, who might be sitting at a respectful distance anywhere in the room. This was the only time the family was together. For even though her father never ate before nine (his business most often being open until eight) Blanca always managed to be present, hoping that somehow, somewhere she might say the right word or perform the right deed that would ^{placate him and} create a more congenial climate between her parents.

Mrs. Dervin on her part tried her best skills to make a comfortable, even pleasant home for her husband, and served his only meal home with the elaborate care and embellishment of a feast. She made it the most important event in her daily living. But it had very little if any effect on him, as far as she was concerned. All through the meal she sat in the shadow of his scowling mood, which was brightened on occasion when his daughter spoke to him. The best she could hope for was

that he like his food and eat in silence, for more than anything else she feared her husband's tongue-lashings. She dared hardly ~~to~~ glance in his direction, apprehens^{ive} that a meeting of eyes might provoke a verbal eruption.

A furious and pitiful discrepancy existed between husband and wife. He wa^s slim, trim and sinewy - tiger like; while she was obese, loose and ^{of} a ponderous belly, which only a well constructed and tight-laced corset could tame. The fact that she had beauty and grace when she had married him, and that she had ^cacquired the loose proportions and pendulous dimensions after miscarriages and the last successful bearing of their daughter, was not a matter of concern to him. Not to Samuel Dervin. For the nature of his harpings and temperament were of the present, and concerned themselves not with past or future.

Samuel Dervin could display on occasion his good side, even a sunny disposition, to others beside his daughter, especially his brother-in-law, Dr. Sheraton. He had ... a healthy respect for his brother-in-law, and had sought his company frequently. The only flaw in their relationship had been the refusal by the Doctor to accept his gift-offerings. It irked Samuel no end to find his fruit baskets returned with the same full content as when delivered to the minister's home. Though he well knew that the minister never accepted gifts from anybody, he nevertheless took it as a personal insult, an affront to his ego, in which his wife was somehow mixed up.

Blanca kept her vigil throughout her father's meal, making a pretense at some preoccupation. Her presence gave zest to his appetite and made the meal festive. He might not once raise his eyes from his food, yet let Blanca be away for a short few minutes and he'll soon make his displeasure known. First there would be a series of low grunts, like the rootings of an animal, which served like the warning rumble of an on-coming storm. Whether the storm would break in all its fury or stumble and die depended on how quickly Blanca, ^{had} answered the call. All would be serene and balmy again as soon as she appeared on the horizon of his vision or awareness. He would resume his meal as if nothing had happened, and smile with an inner satisfaction knowing that she was ^e there in the room.

"Blanca," he ^{would} mumble under his thick, drooping moustache, drenched at the bottom from a recent long draught, "bring some cold water. Water that is cold, not that damn..."

No, no. No profanity in his daughter's presence.

The water in the pitcher might be ice cold, but still he'd insist on colder water. He must have "value" received. The business instinct in him. Hadn't he given his daughter his full indulgence? Well, love also, as much as ^{he} could appreciate that tender feeling. He would give her everything her heart desires. She must give him something in return. At least make a show at it. He wanted something from her, something she herself would bring to him. Her presence near him. He would scent the smell of his own blood, the perfume ^{essence} of her body. They would mingle.

Blanca would get up and whirl about as if to do his bidding. But it was her mother who ^{had} brought the water. Blanca was back at her seat, sitting as primly as ever. At all costs her father must learn to depend entirely on her mother for his food. In the future maybe she could reach him through his stomach. No objection, and no display of anger on his face. The meal would proceed in silence.

"Blanca," his eyes still bent down, "the paper!"

There was a slight chill in his voice, to let her know that he wasn't unaware of her maneuver. Well, a child can't help loving her mother, that's her inner soft core. But she can be as tough as he, and that's his share in her.

"Blanca, the evening paper."

O, yes, she was quite happy to oblige him. There was something she'd do for him, and it had nothing to do with food

"Here, Daddy, the Eventide." He loved her the more intrinsically, deeply when she said "Daddy". It sounded so authentic, yet so mild, so soft and pretty in her mouth. Like a yearning in her voice. Maybe it was the echo of his own yearning, but it made him happy. "There is quite a story in it, Daddy, about Mr. Black marrying the Barbour girl."

"What, the old fool...!" His gruffness came back in full force, as he snarled the words.

"His daughter is quite upset about it, mother."

"Can't blame her," her mother said, happy to break out of her solemn silence. "He more than twice her age. What would she be marrying him for if not his money!"

"If it's money, Blanca," her father said with animation in his voice, "there would be plenty left on her share. The man is lousy with it."

Blanca thought.

The, uh, old bear was loosening up, He hadn't uttered so many words at one time since she could remember. Was it jealousy of his next door neighbor Black winning such a prize in the beautiful Barbour girl, or just plain spiteful contentment in seeing the old boy fry in his own fat. The fat fool! "That's going to be a funny one," he said further, emitting a hoarse squeal which was meant to be a guffaw, "to watch that old bloater putting the ring on her finger, and, and..."

"Say, 'I do,'" Blanca prompted him.

"Yes, yes," he chuckled. And that was no phony chuckle. He was beside himself at the news. Or outside of his old self. His wife was quite

cheered by the new turn of events. She was encouraged even to speak in his presence without being spoken to.

"Did George put it in the paper?" she ^sasked.

Out of the whole thing what concerned ^{her} most, was her nephew. Was it George who wrote the piece? He was so brilliant and so young to be on the paper. She was proud of him.

"I don't think so, mother, but he was assigned to cover the affair. And quite an affair it will be. Best hotel at Old Orchard. And,..." Suddenly she turned to her father: "What say, Dad, we take a ride and get in on the fun. Last Sunday of the pre-season- week-ends when you can have your fun at the beach without being jostled by big crowds at every turn."

"Not a bad idea at all," her father admitted. He didn't want to appear too exuberant; just to show his daughter he was doing it entirely for her. But in his heart, really, he was glad to try out and show off the used-Franklin he had recently acquired. He would show all and sundry, even his wife, his skill in the new "art" of driving that horseless buggy - the automobile. ~~He recently had acquired~~ "You know Blanca," he purred, his voice tingling with emotion, "you know the old car (old, in term of fealty and fondness) hasn't had a long run since I got her. It'll be good for her. Just the right distance for the old girl."

In those pioneering days of automobiling a short trip (fourteen miles) to Old Orchard, especially in an old car, was quite an adventure. There was a response in his heart to his daughter's daring suggestion. She had confidence in him that he would accomplish the trip. Deep in her heart she must be proud of him. He was proud of her, and he was profoundly thankful to her.

Any reference to his Franklin would in itself shed the light of enchantment and rapture on his countenance, like the sight of a feast to the eyes of a hungry beggar. But the more so his cheerful mood was

heightened by the very thought and expectancy of preparations leading up to the great event. He'd wear his new cream-colored duster, with cap to match. And the dark goggles! In the secrecy of his chamber he had donned the regalia and primmed in the mirror. And what a sight it had been! But to parade the outfit before his daughter in the public eye, that was quite another matter. Even his wife; she could be reckoned and counted in the admiring audience. A priest performing the "Rites of Spring" at the altar of an old Franklin!

"Daddy, we'll take George along. He has to be there for the paper, you know."

The minx, he thought. She well knew he wouldn't refuse her anything, especially in his present mood. Left to himself he would leave George to his own devices to get to Old Orchard, he tried to persuade himself. Never cared much for his highbrow stuff. Or was it jealousy of his daughter's attention to his nephew! Or the fact that his wife showed so much fondness for him. Jealous of his own nephew, hum! The fact that his wife loves him is no reason that he should hate him.

"Sure, sure, Blanca," he burred with a slight growl under his breath. The mirth in his eyes told Blanca that the growl was merely the purr of a contented cat - a big cat no less. "Sure, the four of us. Two in front and two in back. Makes it even." Letting his heart overflow with the goodness that seemed to be flooding all around he added, "You know, Blanca, let's make a day of it. Sort of celebrating. We'll drive right up to a hotel and let ourselves be their guests for the day. Meals and everything. Tell that, that... George he'll have his meals with us at the hotel. Big day, eh?"

Blanca was familiar with the expansive nature of her father. He could be very generous when in that mood. Even delightful. She said: "That would be ^{sumptuous,} Daddy," and she pecked him on the cheek. "Thanks!"

She glanced ruefully to where her mother sat in the shadow of gloomy

silence. If only there were a bond of tenderness between them. Any kind, even the slimmest, the most tenuous. That would crown the happy day. Who could tell (giving her thoughts a more cheerful turn) what possibilities, destinies, fortunes a day like that may hold?

A day not at all foreboding.

A day to look forward to.

And so did George, after he had accepted the assignment to cover the Black affair.

It was an affair with quiet inuendos and loud rumblings of gossip. Sides were being quickly formed: those who condemned the wedding, and those who saw merit in it. There was the neutral element who viewed the business as a spectacle to be watched and enjoyed from the sidelines. One of the important events of the year in Portgrave, it seemed at first strange to George he should be assigned to it instead of Ace-reporter, Jack. But he soon was set right on that score. It was too controversial...; Jack! An important cog in the wheel that is the Eventide. He has a family to support. Yeh! What about his mother? Oh, but the name Sheraton would stand for a lot of abuse. And wasn't he born fearless, and a crusader! The feud - old - between Black and Forrest! He could manage, somehow, to sail in peace between the two; or attack one or the other, or both. He accepted the assignment.

Once settled down to his fate he rather enjoyed the anticipation of a trip to Old Orchard with Elanca in the Franklin.

Rolling down Congress street from Magnum hill on a Sunday morning was good sport even with an old Franklin with a wheeze. If luck was good and the rolling kept up you'd climb the promontory at the other ^{end} of town - Western Promenade, astride the O.O. highway, without a hitch. But it could happen, and often did, that on such a climb the wheeze of the delinquent motor would turn into a sputter and then a cough, and then a

shuddering which would bring it finally to a halt. A deserving rest for an old motor after a long laboring climb, but the bane of every motorist. For it has to be cranked to be resuscitated; and in the process, if there is a backfire, the kuckback on the crank handle is a hundred-times the power of a mule, which may well bring a broken wrist. Not so with tube-patching after a "blowout"; and the jacking-up of the car, the pumping and priming of the deflated tire with enough pressure to give the car its fourth leg. It's love's labor to any automobilist, deserving of the name. You'd see them sprinkled on the highways, proud in their dusters and caps, jacking and pumping away. They would greet you as you passed them as an old friend, knowing full well that in another mile or two the same would happen to you, and they'd wheeze by (or is it whiz by?) and greet you with compassion while you are doing the sweet-sweating.

Drive on and patch, drive and pump,
 What if the motor does a halt:
 Jack up your spirit, and don't slump,
 You know you are not at fault.

Chorus: So take out your kit, pepper and salt,
 Sit by the road and cheer up-up, up;
 You knew for a while you'd be stalled,
 This is the way of a car and a blowup.

The air was exhilarating under scintillating skies, and Samuel sat behind the wheel proud and stiff as the trees were slipping by. The breezes caressed him wherever they could reach him, under the dustless duster, the cap, and the dark, dark goggles. "Rolling along, rolling along, rolling....." they sang sweetly in his ear, as he watched the long ribbon of road winding and unwinding before his eyes under the Franklin. Pilot of the ship, pilot ship, pilot, ship, ship, ssssss! Rolling along, rolling along. Flying along, flying along - on the magic carpet!

Sing birds, for my heart is gay,
 Whisper breezes, for I am fancy-free;
 A day like this is the day,
 For God and man to watch and see.

Samuel was in^{an} expansive mood, free of all worldly cares. A new world, and new skies. His goodwill extended, reached out to his wife who was huddled in (~~the~~) the corner of the back seat. No longer was there the deadly hiatus of silence between her queries and his answers, if indeed there were any. Nothing was ominous, not even his brow skulkin^g under his cap, nor his eyes behind the goggles. There was no scorn in his voice when he spoke to her. It was high-noted with cheerfulness, as of the singing of the birds.

He felt for the hand-pump at his side, to make sure it was there. An instrument of prime importance. Not a tool! A delicate and proper instrument for the priming of tires, ~~and compressed tires.~~ With the innovation of the garage just on the horizon, and still a novelty, this was preeminent an instrument, and sacrosanct. Sweet is the sweat of the road; and all the work pertaining^g your car is love's labor not lost. But all roads lead nowhere without a pump. And the pump was there at his fingers' reach.

A finger of cloud appeared on the northwestern horizon. Samuel, careful and responsible pilot that he was, was first to see it. It was his business to scan the skies, as would the captain of a ship; but he kept the knowledge to himself. And as long as possible he'd continue to do so. He was responsible for the safety and happiness of his people, and he would keep them so. He knows his Franklin, and he knows it doesn't like dampness; and he knows that Blanca knows it too.

If only the finger would dissolve in thin air, and the air would dry! Could hap^pen, couldn't it?

But it wasn't long before Blanca saw it too. Assuming now the shape and form of a huge monster, it swooped down on them with terrifying speed.

"Father, look!" she pointed to the sky.

"Yes, a cloud. So what?" His voice was ^abit tremulous, with the righteous anger of a menace to him - uncalculated, and unwarranted - which threatened to spoil for him this sweet adventure.

George who was sitting in the back with his aunt - Mr. Dervin had insisted that Blanca sit with him in front - had noticed the hunching of his uncle's shoulders, like an animal at bay, with the first appearance of the cloud; but kept his silence. He anticipated the slow ebbing of Samuel's good humor with the increasing size of the cloud. Samuel continued, as if to justify himself and the cloud: "It's a cloud at that, isn't it?" he said with sarcasm. "But you have seen clouds before, haven't you? Well, this one may evaporate before it reaches us."

"Oh, not this one," Blanca stood up for the right of her opinion. She was the only one who dared do so, in such a situation; like bearing the bear in his lair. "And you well know what I mean. Last time in Wood^{lands}land, a mile or two from home, we were stalled two hours. And it wasn't a cold rain either."

"Well, it won't this time," he scowled.

The top went up. And when the rain came suddenly in a deluge of gray sheets the side-flaps, with the eisenglass windows, began to ship water like a lurching leaking hull. The only thing to do was to huddle in the center to avoid being ^pcompletely drenched. Bravely the pilot kept to his course, hoping to ride out the squall. But blinded by the shroud of rain he was forced to a slow crawl which was objected to by the motor. It began shivering. hadn't the guts and heat of youth to keep warm in the sluggish motion and the flood.

First there was a low rumble in the motor's throat, then a short

... a small jerk - like a shudder - followed by a violence that threw them all on their necks. Then, as if catching its second wind it galloped forward with a new lease of life, only to settle down again to a shuddering and coughing - a convulsive and spasmodic coughing. Hissing its last gasp the Franklin stood still and cold. As if it never had been. A pile of cold damp junk, with never a spark of animation!

On the whole the canvas-top held, and as the center of the squall had passed over their heads they found themselves more comfortable inside. A tight little isle in the midst of a stormy sea.

The woods were still misty in the now distant downpour.

As they watched the receding curtain of rain, suddenly the woods stood clear - a striking dark-green relief, vital against the still threatening black sky.

Now there was a patch of blue where the cloud first had appeared, and the sunrays glistened in the rain drops on the tree-tops. A large sickle of a bow in all its majesty of color and shadings was growing before their very eyes. A sparkling world of laughter and gaiety out of the mysterious womb of rain and darkness. And there was peace between heaven and earth. A brooding, germinating and humid world - with the warmth of a womb.

Thus in the very span of a lifetime - or seconds - worlds die and are created again.

Mr. Drvin's foresight covering the hood with tarpaulin paid dividends when it was time to start the motor up. "All set?" he directed a general remark. Then, as if to show his goodwill, he did the unusual thing: he asked his wife directly whether she was comfortable.

His wife, shocked out of her somnolence at the unbelievable that her husband concern himself with her comfort, quickly nodded in the affirmative. Then gathering her wits in that swift moment, she found her voice.

"Thank you," she said with a slight tremolo in her voice.

With the deliberateness of one who knows the importance of his performance, the sacrificial act that might bring broken bones to his wrist, Dervin gathered his duster about him, pulled down his cap and set about cranking the motor. There was a whirr as the flywheel spun around. With the first cough of the motor, more like a belch, Samuel's eye lighted up. There was life in the old girl still. A few more belches and she would start whirring on her merry way. He knew his car. She comes to life the way she gets ready to die, only in the reverse. The wheezings fade away, the coughing more frequent, metallic, as her throat clears.

There was a quick sequence of explosions now, finally trailing off into a series of sputterings. A stream of sparks spewed from the exhaust. There was a rattling which shook her passengers with some violence. And then, as if in a last protest, a sharp explosion, followed by a trail of sharp-ringing pings, and a purring. Sweet music to Samuel's ears, for he knew she had caught and was ready to move on.

The explosive shots cleared her innards; the air was clean and fresh, she breathed easily and trundled along at a merry pace.

Suddenly you are at Old Orchard beach. Out of the twisted avenues of pine, grass and garden you drop into an open wide short avenue, flush with the roar and smell of the ocean. A light screening of traffic and traffickers - even this early in the season - their petty haggings, their little swarms, their little pleasures, blot out the view of the ocean itself. But over all, covering them like a canopy, is the brooding presence - like a great beast - of the ocean. A huge canvas, strung before the famous old pier, proudly proclaims:

OLD ORCHARD: THE FINEST BEACH IN THE WORLD

surely you are over-whelmed, and you must believe it to be the truth. And who is there to deny it?

Surely, the structural engulfment of this great and undulant stretch of pearly shore did not add to, set off or even enhance its shimmering radiance as would the crown of an artist's frame to a great painting. This fabled primitive shore in its pristine habitat, set off and enshrined by great vistas of packed, table-surfaced white sand -shimmering silver under the moon and gold under the sun; enclosed in a background of greensward, stout shrubbery and evergreens- had long been hallowed and sanctified into Holiest of Holy of the Creator's own Temple, where only angels trod and sang their hallelujahs to the tune of the murmured prayer of the sea and the wafted incense of the dark woods.

You stand alone and face the vast stretches of water wastes. From the horizon, where the sunrays meet the sea, a golden path reaches directly toward you, touched with the sparkle of sapphires and diamonds. At night your soul is stirred by a misty phosphorescence in the dappling wake of the moon moored in the sea. You glide on the moon's rays, and where they arch into the sea you slide down as on the railing of a balustrade.

The heat and welter of smells and odors: the sweet of the sweetgrass, the sharp saltiness of the ocean, the overall prevailing smell of frying food - sharp and harsh in its stupefying heavy beefy odor; the sizzle and nausea of frying fat used over and over, and the spiciness of piny woods, - that's Old Orchard on the Pier.

Released from the cramped position in the Franklin, where you scarcely moved for fear of upsetting the Franklin's delicate balance and your uncle's powerful temper, you were now on your own, George. A free agent. Your aunt, out of delicacy, perhaps to impress you as well as those surrounding, in puzzled wonderment of the vehicle - which after a few hesi-

tating jarric came to a final halt - invited you to come in with ^{them} and have dinner at the hotel. Even your uncle was in an uplifted, though somewhat condescending, mood as he turned to you: "Sure, come with us."

But George was not to be patronized. "Thanks," he said firmly, "in my throat is still the taste of the big breakfast I had..."

"Nah, na, sheer bosh and nonsense. You come with us."

Samuel Dervin never thought much of the financial status of the Sheratons, especially after the minister's death. He also knew that there was nothing he could do about it. Beyond some fruit and vegetables he had instructed his team drivers to leave at the widow's home, with or without her consent - sometime under cover of darkness, sometime surreptitiously when she was known ^{to be} ~~to be~~ not at home - there was nothing she would accept. Even for that little he had been obliged to take some payment in return, in one form or another. He really wished this strange nephew of his to have a good meal at his expense. Then, too, the idea of presiding over a feast which only a hotel could provide, appealed to his vanity.

The taste and the potency of George's ^S ~~lat~~ meal had long evaporated ~~ated~~ from his throat, and little was left in his stomach, yet he stood adamant and defiant. He would accept a ride but not food.

George was neither hermit, nor cultist, to deny himself the pleasure of an excellent meal at a hotel. It would do justice to his strong wiry body, just above six feet, hungry for just such an appetizing treat. But he'd resign himself to a meagre meal of pop-corn and pop, rather than be under obligation to his uncle - especially his uncle.

"Come, come, young fellow," his uncle was now impatient, "aren't we good enough to sit at the same table?" What arrogant cynism!

Indeed, how dare he refuse an invitation-half command- from his uncle, who just now was in the mood of conferring a gratuity on him?

Now Blanca stood before him in her youthful dark slenderness, her eyes flashing. Standing erect, her head upthrust, her dark-blue coat wrapped tightly about her, she was a masterpiece in sculpture of living vibrant statuary. Their eyes met. One would forego lots of things to have her in one's arms, he thought. As if divining his thoughts she dropped her eyes, her oval, olive-dark face crimsoning in a blush. But soon her lips parted in a smile, flashing a white contrast to her skin. She was fond of George even though he was not the dashing type. In her simple way she somehow understood, felt, that deep down in George's makeup there was something of greater worth than all the fine clothes and dash and strut of the gallants she knew. George was far from being gallant. He could be rude on occasion, and one was uncertain as to what he'd say or do next. But there was strength in it, in this attitude of his. What it was she didn't know. But certainly it was something different and something new. There was power in his frown. And his lowered eyelids and the corrugations in his forehead, and the contracted folds above the root of his nose could be quite devastating. There was unearthly strength in his taut arms, and in his lean torso, which was boardlike. She feared him, yet was attracted to him, like the grip of a great star on its satellite. She was in his orbit. Her young mind wondered in true perspective whether after all there might not be something of great quality brewing under George's seeming crude exterior and brooding moodiness, which would take shape and grow into greatness at some future time. In nothing else was Blanca capable of such deep analysis, but it was perhaps her constant nearness to him and her fondness of him that drove her out of her depth, spewed up by the whirlpool he had created about and in her. And thus wondering and in bewilderment she would lie awake during the quiet night-hours and think upon the things he had said that day—
casualness,
their unusualness, their piquancy. But what of a place like O. O.

where one comes but for things of pleasure that can be tasted and skimmed from the surface, and are but of the moment --- are of the madness and swirl and the tumultuous multitude! That are of mere show and pretense; of the shallow, the imitation and the bluff; the supercilious, the idiot's delight, the flapper, the flare, the flapdoodle; the mawkish, the muck, the spew!

Would George do here?

But you know he would, Blanca.

You knew and felt his sinews when they entwined you. Quite a guy! Versatile and adaptable. Quite a protector from the prowlers of the night and the bleary-eyed leers of the day. You have seen him in his vicious moments, when he whirled and flailed and struck with the suddenness of a rattler, and as deadly. Oh, how the anonymous annoyers cowered and crawled like crabs! You knew the violent moments of his passion, --- but he never degrading. He knew how to compromise.

"Well, George, are you coming with us?"

Just like her, sharp and direct. You either come or go.

"I am not coming, Blanca. That is not now. But I shall come for you later."

"Maybe I have other plans."

"Then change them."

"My lord commands, so be it. Or shall so be it?"

There was more gaiety in her voice than rebuke.

For an answer there was silence, and by the time Blanca looked around George had completed the short distance to the avenue and was turning left toward the pier.

On the way to the pier he picked up a bag of popcorn fresh from the roaster. They were buttered and warm and had a keen satisfying taste, the sweet warmth of its freshness refreshing. When his throat became parched and ticklish from the dry prickly kernels a bottle of cold "pop" proved a distinct benevolence to his scratchy gullet.

A lordly repast for ~~the~~ ~~guests~~.

You are in the thick of things where the swarm is.

There is ancient Noah's Ark before you, tossed on the flood of forty days rain. A giraffe sticks out a long neck through a window and winks at Noah, whose white flowing beard waves through another window. Meantime clowns help along in the mirth by taking advantage of Noah's dumb animals to play pranks on them. The boat, the gangways, and the bridge ^{at} ~~on~~ the boat are all in an uproar of rickety sounds and waves of motion. Nothing stands still; and the paying customers fall one upon the other, and stumble against the denizens of the boat. Hilarity of motion and cracking noise - and George watches the great spectacle without spending a penny. The mysterious cave next to it, with its subterranean circling Styx, is out of the question since he is alone. Too lonesome to ride the boat on the black waters alone. But it's fun to look in the funny mirrors fronting the cave. In one of them he is a midget, with a barrel-like mid-section, rotund belly, thick hips; and a pancake head, and cheeks that flow into a protuberance of bulbous nose. In the other he assumes the shape of a beanstock, with spindly legs and a long pointed head, and a nose that reaches down to his toes. The smile of a hyena in one and the devil's grin in the other.

The row of Japanese gambling stalls on the ^a Causeway before you reach the pier, where you may lose a lot and get nothing for your effort. But you try your skill. It may prevail. You throw dirks, knives, rings and balls at some object or other, and you hit or miss. Mostly you miss.

Into the gulf and surge of polyglot masses - the great pier. It extends far into the ocean, with its rows of stalls crowding both sides, displaying a glittering assortment of ornaments, cheap custom jewelry and the varied appurtenances of gaudy wearing apparel; pancakes, fritters, fried potatoes, hot dogs, cold and hot drinks of all colors, icecream and frozen custards. The stalls are bulging with customers or just plain onlookers.

... busy stall where mothers wait to have profiles of their precious offspring cut into the contour and permanence of black carbon paper. At fifty cents a piece it is beyond ²pr~~e~~adventure a most valuable possession, even though the resemblance to the original is strikingly distant. Here, another booth is selling baskets woven of sweetgrass; small pillows, with a canoeing-Indian in native garb for cover; or of the Indian-Head of the White Mountains, or the famed Great Profile - for decorative purposes.

The hucksters on the pier, their shrill cries a cacophonous and constant accompaniment to the resonance of the hard stepping click of ladies' heels on the booming pier-boards. Another silhouette artist, cutting profiles in black. Further up are rows of kinescopes, like soldiers at muster, where for one penny one may regale himself with all forms and poses of female nudity. You crank a handle and regulate the speed of your own show to your heart's lingering desire.

Your shrinking budget protests the temptings of the sizzling hot-dogs, the French-fries, the ices and the custards, but you let the nickles fly and take their destined course, and let the devil....

You have a sense of well-being, and the gumption is up in you, the muscles straining to grapple with that electric monster which seems to be challenging you. You are quite sure your staying power will hold you up against him until the penny's worth of electric life in him dies. You insert the coin and grip the metal handles. There is a terrific and shuddering pull; hot needle-prick currents run up and down your arms, your shoulders, and down to the very tip of your toes, and you are all tied up in knots and wire loops. But you won't let go. Then you feel tingling and shooting heat waves, as if a million gnats were gnawing at you. Your hands are glued to the infernal machine by thousand fiery sparks, but you are equal to the occasion. Are you pale? What are those beads of moisture on your frowning brow? and the knotted veins? But you win.

monster is cold dead, and you hold his tail ends in your grip. And
will you hold. And as long as you want. It's your victory.

Not with the exciting exertion and the spicy food you head ^{back} toward
the free uncanopied part of the pier, where the cool ocean breezes have
free play. Over the railing you look into the foaming blue of a seething
cauldron of the swirling cool waves of the sea. Somewhat dizzy, you
sway with the rhythm of the breakers. You feel an uncommon pull and
are fascinated by the cadence of movement down below. Instinctively you
tear yourself away from the railing not to be enticed into the whirlpool
of the siren-like pounding of the surf.

Retracing your steps further, you find yourself now going down the
ramp. Once more you are on solid ground. The Merry-go-round, its pran-
cing steeds, the whorling and steam-squalling of its calliope, call
for a bit of your attention. There is a fellow on a steed riding high
and mighty, his head in a cloud of illusion, a knight of the age of
chivalry - of King Arthur's Round Table - for with a mighty arm he
is holding gingerly up a giggling little sprite of a girl, who, because
of the vertigin ^{ous} circling speed, is feigning faints between gigglings. She

leans rather heavily on him. Is she scared of the lion she is on, or is the whirling motion too much for her? Or is the swain at her side too much for her? A show and pretense of the frailty and weakness of the weaker sex in obsequious deference^s and allure to the stronger sex.

The whirligigging Whip is still worse. The motion is more precipitous, violent. A female was in the clutch of a male. The terror was in her pale face. Even this they would endure for their male-mate. Suddenly at a sudden jerk on a sharp turn her skirt swishes up and she falls in a swoon in her swain's arms. She walks off the contraction^o, when it comes to rest, quite steady on her own power, though leaning heavily on her companion. She refuses a ride on the Roller Coaster. She is sure she can't take it even for him, after this. She remembers the bitter violence of the sudden plunging descent into the pit, the sinking feeling and the wrenching intolerable nausea, when all the insides revolt and come through your mouth.

The hotel lobby is mostly deserted. A few old cronies in the hidden corners of the afternoon shadows are either talking in whispers or dozing. The interlude between the high noon festivities, set aside for the gourmets, and the evening celebrations, mostly for the young. An hour of hesitation and dormancy. The sun having lost its power and on the wane struggles on dozedly with the last accumulated heat and power of the noon and early afternoon till it'll give up its ghost to the night. An hour of indecision, of forgetfulness, of quiet activity, of inactivity; hour of lassitude, of purposeful indolence; an hour of meditation upon nothing.

An hour of warm subconscious and not unhappy brooding.

George went out onto the veranda. The promonaders were there on the white sands of the beach, and they outnumbered in their multitudes the few bathers, straggling in their wet bathing suits. Blanca and his aunt were not to be seen in either group. George was sure that Blanca didn't go in much for swimming, at least not this early in the season.

Maybe they had gone to the pier? It would have been fun if he had met them. Would have Blanca taken a turn with him on the merry-go-round like that pair, or the whirlgig? He didn't think so. Blanca has somehow grown up too fast in the last year, or maybe two years, since she has been taking an active interest in her father's business. She had become world-wise, and has wrapped herself around with an air of independence, and a superior outlook on life. Not girlish like. Oh, but she had not lost her femininity. Nothing spurious about that. Powerful as the electricity he had tackled this afternoon, and as magnetic, though the rip-roaring quality may supersede the tenderness in her.

You look for your uncle. You want to see what a merchant, a prosperous one, an inelegant one, a scowling one, ^{might} ~~would~~ be doing after an elegant meal in an elegant hotel at an elegant time of ~~the~~ year. Surely, his vanity must have swelled in inverse ratio to the thinning of his sternness. With a belly full of the best victuals and viands, his patronizing condescensions must have gone up with his inflated ego. What sort of a look would his uncle level at him, he of the House of Sheraton, which had never produced a flesh-and-blood business baron with sound hard dollars in his pocket, but a bunch of empty dilettantes and people of the Word! Oh, where was their reward? In heaven? Business doesn't give ^{? just want to} ~~him~~ time to think of heaven. The give and take of his life, the manifold maneuverings of his daily existence take up all his time, with hardly a thought of heaven. On his day of rest he wants to garner the fruits of the six-day toil. Now, after the adventure with the Franklin and his repast—over which he presided with the ease, the dignity and consciousness that he could afford a feast like that repeated a hundred-fold without causing the slightest crimp in his accounts—it probably was his pleasure to blow away the time, the most brilliant part of the day, by the puffing out of bloated cheeks and the ingathering of swollen lips,

and the rattle of an edematous glottis in the somnolent repose of his spirit.

What you see is not the dynamic human machine that you have known but a

prostrate inert form; eyes bulging with the vapors of food, viands and vintage. The cheeks puff and sink, and so do the lips as the whistle - the groan of pleasure - issues. A perfectly innocuous body, harmless; lying there sprawled out on a couch in the semi-darkness of a late June afternoon, his bristling grey-streaked moustache rising and falling with the pant and grunt of his lips. Thoroughly relaxed, he was sleeping the sleep of the just and untroubled.

His right hand was at his trouser pocket, while his left was dangling loose and limp down the couch. There was a bulge in that trouser pocket, and George knew what it was. His uncle had often boasted that on Sundays he carries a roll of "greens" enough to choke a horse. He wouldn't trust the Saturday take, the biggest of the week, anywhere else but his own pocket. That roll, George thought, what he could do with it! What couldn't he? The glitter of money, its power! The siren-call of something mysterious and overwhelming, something dazzling to blind your eyes and stifle your conscience. The blue of heaven and the sun in it, and the dark horrors of hell! An unknown power, because he had never experienced it before. It would pay his career in college. His energies wouldn't be scattered on the seven seas to make ends meet. Maybe he could never make it. He could never take money from his mother, if she had any. What would she do if anything happened to him! She a pale frail woman, with only haphazard support, working and scrimping - for him! The paper. But how much would he earn away from Portgrave? Mr. Barton's kind offer to put him on a weekly salary, even away from Portgrave! Very kind, but he doesn't want to live on kindness. Even the kindest kindness will evaporate in the end if he doesn't produce. The protective hand, was it put there by a ⁿconscious act ^ebefore he fell asleep, or was it a subconscious sensing at his entrance? But even if his sleep is light the hand has little protective value. The hand could ^{be}moved ever so lightly - two or three inches away. Or if... if he wakes! Oh, horrible thought. But,

oh, horrible temptation! How can one stop a mind from thinking? But it's below the surface thinking. Subconscious! Instinctivism - a protective mechanism, a spontaneous response to an inner demand, stimulating suggestion. But not with him. He controls his thinking. He can enjoy the scenery and be entirely objective; he can toy with the idea and even derive pleasure from it, like watching a scene in which he is not directly involved. What would happen to the business with the money gone? Could one imagine Blanca's ^{proud} head bowed in poverty? A ghastly image to conjure up. But his uncle, his self-assurance, his swollen ego! He is too whole, had never thought of anything but himself. Even his pretense of respect and consideration for his father had been amply paid for by his repeated boastings that the learned reverend was his brother-in-law, and that he could visit as often as it suited him. His love for his daughter, his kindnesses, were well compensated for by the pleasure he derived from them. Everybody must suffer some damage to his person. Let him lose his money, and the damage would prick the balloon of his ruthless egotism and teach him humility and repentance. Suddenly his eyes fell on a truss suspended from a bracket, in a semi-darkened corner of the room. Pretty well hidden from view. Prompted by the secrecy and shame of his hidden damage. He had never suspected his uncle's rupture in all the years he had known him. So the strong man wasn't so strong; the inevitable and infallible was fallible, and the weakness already might have started him on the trail downward. Like Lot he is lying in his drunken stupor, only he is drunk with food and weariness. His is a limited world, a pig's sty, let him wallow in it. A very charitable thought, George, for you can control your thoughts.

Blanca was confronting him in the cool air of the veranda, where George stood blinking his eyes from the reflected afternoon sunrays off the white sands on the beach.

"Are you here to stay," her voice was mocking him, "or will you disappear again? It seems but a moment ago that I caught a glimpse of you, then you were gone again. Where on earth...?"

"Wanted to see how a rich uncle sleeps."

She had to smile in spite of herself: "More of your ⁿ nonsense. God knows why I put up with you."

"Never saw him in that state before. A sleeping person has a personality different from his waking state. It's all his own, and he is all himself. One can see much watching one unguarded by his conscious self."

"And what did you see in father?"

"Just a blank blubber of sleep."

"Not very interesting, is it?" Then looking up sharply at him: "Was that meant as an insult? Or shouldn't I be insulted by what you say?"

He smiled. "I had it coming." He took her arm. She didn't draw away. "There was one point of interest, that right hand in his trouser pocket. The unslackening and unfailing subconscious guarding his money even in the unconsciousness of sleep."

"It's quite the natural thing for one to guard his money," she was indignant.

"How much instinct and how much awareness, that's the point."

"Another one of your so-called 'psychologicals', or shall I say - stupidities...? I am sorry... But say!" she turned on him, "how do you know all this, his carrying money with him?"

"He doesn't trust anybody or any place on Sunday but his own pocket."

"Clever deduction. You'd make good in casing a bank."

"One of my better qualities. You'd never ^{guess} what close analysis..."

"Say, you...!"

"Just a thought, just a thought. If I had that bankroll, what I'd do with it."

"You a bank robber, bah!" And the perversity of the very thought

called her to laugh out aloud, as she patted his cheek. "A bank robber! You are getting crazier by the moment. We better get out of here."

"I said I'd come back for you, and I did."

"So you came back and watched my father's bank roll."

"While I was waiting for you."

"Very worthy of you. All right, where do we go?"

"The skating rink."

The scrape and swish of the rollers became increasingly louder as they approached the rink. Through a small window-like aperture they saw the rhythmic, graceful sway of the couples as in step with the music they swept round and round the wide-circling polished hardwood flooring.

"How thrilling, George! I am scared. I could never fall in line."

"Just hang on to me."

"How come you are such an expert at this? I thought..."

"I know what you think of me - blowing hot air. Isn't it?"

"Well..."

"Exactly. Am I or am I not athletic?"

"But roller skating. Like little boys in the street."

"Wish I could keep them company. But the restricting conventions. I'd love it. Imagine rolling down Magnum Hill on a fine Sunday morning when every one is in church and the streets are in their best holiday repose. Quite a change from the bicycle."

"Is that what you do Sunday morning, bicycling?"

"It's a ritual with me. First I roll down Magnum Hill, then down Western Promenade to the road leading to O.O. Then I visit the churches. I like to worship from different faiths, from all angles. A snatch here and a snatch there. What a beautiful whole it makes!"

"Stop. I get exhausted just listening to you."

"Thanks for nothing. Now let's get going."

"You won't let me fall!"

"Not as long as I am in a vertical position."

They were off with the music in harmony with the swirling crowd. Faster and faster they went, harder and harder she leaned against George. There was admiration in her eyes as she looked up to him, wondering at his steadiness which took her along in almost a smooth gliding motion. And then a little harder pressure and tightening of two bodies. Looking into her eyes he wondered at the dark depths of a young woman's mind, the multiplicity of their deceptive intricacies and intimacies. But it was heart warming to know that she cared, no matter how much, or how long.

But are you completely happy, George? Could you be? Is it, like the curse of Cain, inevitable that you couldn't be? Look at yourself. Look at Blanca. No more beautiful womanhood ever was on your arm, yet there is something gnawing at you. Some doubt in your mind. Her inner self - does she measure up...? And you bring her up for comparison with Cynthia. Are you prig or purist, George?

He finds praise for her as he nuzzles in the fragrance of her massive black hair: "You are doing fine."

"Oh, but I am all out of breath."

He took her on a fast and vicious turn.

"My head is reeling and I feel faint," she complained.

"Just the humidity," he reassured her.

"You are cruel...!" she gasped.

"You must gain your sea legs, my darling. I learned through hard knocks with my head on the hard floor. But I spared ^{you} all this. You'll ^{learn} how to breathe and keep your brain in balance. After a while."

Was ^{it} sadism that he swooped her along at an even dizzier pace, until she almost fainted in his arms? But as suddenly he came to a halt at one of the exits, where a light breeze was fanning them.

stroking her hair.
"You are an apt pupil," he said, He took her outside.

She said nothing.

Back at the hotel Mr. Dervin had had his Sunday rest and his supper, and was ready to shove off with a full measure of restored energy for the week. He was becoming impatient at the lateness of his daughter. As usual his wife was a silent witness to his fumings. Suddenly his fury vanished - the volcano swallowing its own lava - at the first glimpse of his daughter. It was not adoration alone, but a predominant, all pervasive fear of the slightest frown of disapproval from her that actuated and influenced his every act in her presence. The physiognomy of his being underwent a drastic change at her approach. The furrowed brow straightened and smoothed as with the plasticity of plaster, the fire-shooting eyes took on the aspect of limpid pools after a spring shower, the tightly knitted hell-bent bushy eyebrows took on a relaxed and rakish angle, and the snarling mouth and the downcurve of his drooping thick moustaches straightened with the even sharpness and slant of a shooting ray of sunshine through the black of a cloud.

But the quick change to pacific placidity, moving across her father's face like a blotch of sunshine chasing a cloud, was not fast enough for Blanca's quick eye, who caught the residual afterglow of the live embers of the recent blast.

Smouldering embers, where to hide them! How to conceal those little tell-tale muscles of the face that make up the contents, the film, the texture of the brain and the thought behind it!

Where hide the face?

"Anything wrong, father?"

It was a cynicism more than a question. For she knew that more often than not something went wrong with her father when she was not around. If more evidence were needed, the profundity of silence and the comp-

lete inability of facial expression in her mother were proof enough.

"Aw, nothing, nothing at all."

"Aw, nothing..." she began a mimic of his tone, showing a temper of her own. "You are always furious about something!"

"Why weren't you here for supper?" he blustered out.

"Simply," in her own little fury, "because I wasn't hungry. Or must I be hungry when you are?"

George enjoyed the spectacle of the grappling titans. He knew who would be the victor. But not yet. For he came back strong. Maybe a last thrust of the powerful paw, a last agonizing stab, but there still was a painful sting to it.

"Probably ate slop on the pier."

But it was his last struggle for supremacy. Immediately he realized the daring challenge of his words. He wished he hadn't uttered it. He looked so crestfallen and contrite that ^{Bianca} she had immediate compassion for him, realizing anew, for the thousandth time, the depth of his feeling for her, the salvation she was to him; how he must have missed her at the meal, how it was turned into drab misery, instead of a festive occasion, merely because he missed her presence! How he resented the missed opportunity!

"All right, Dad, I am sorry," she smiled. She kissed him. Then to show her impartiality she went over and kissed her mother. Perhaps also she wanted to impress on her father her complete filial devotion to her mother.

Mr. Dervin quickly quenched his rising ire when his daughter refused to go along on the return trip home. The tussel between father and daughter was sharp and brief. She won again. The Franklin cranked up furiously, as if in protest of its own. She watched the quick turn about, facing homeward, almost tilting the car into a spill in the process, and felt the tug of compunction for her mother at the prospect of a lugubrious journey alone with him in the Franklin. But she was sure no harm

would come to either one. Her last look in her father's eyes told her that. Or was it the last ^{stern} look he saw in her eyes which reassured her?

CHAPTER III

Dancing at the Grave?

George sits by the sea. Blanca is huddling close to him in the chill of the evening of early spring. His arm around her, George sits alone. So is the buffeting ocean left alone to its foaming and roaring at the miles of sunbleached hard-packed sandy beach. Deserted early in the evening at this time of the summer season, the beach is enormous and overpowering in its loneliness. It is the bewitching hour, when the last monster-wave of violence clashes with the immense silence of the sea. A thunderous clap, a million-volt discharge, and all again is silent mystery in the quiet darkness of the night.

George sits by the sea. A distant vessel echoes a blast on the undulant surface of the water, blinking distant lights on the horizon. Through the thin night mist he makes out a dim whiteness - the night boat on its merry way to Boston. In the focus of his intense gaze he sees the brilliant lights of the candelabra inside, twinkling to him in the white swath of water. He remembers the time he was on the boat, looking out from its decks onto water and shore. He is nostalgic for the wide sweep of the ship's wake, the thrust and weave of the wave at its side, the pitch and the roll; the swirling foaming white; the shudder of the downthrust to the bottom of a rocky wave; the smell of the boat, and the penetrating but unoffending odor of disinfectant and sea peculiar to,