

to admit to himself with a smile that Blanca would make a poor editor even under George. Perhaps things are not as topsy-turvy as they seemed. He was proud of his Cynthia, acknowledging to himself that after all she was the best for that spot. He gave George a smile of approval. A little bland, but a smile nevertheless. A smile of confusion and also regret that he should have had any resentment, and also astonishment at the idea that he had had any thoughts of priority over Cynthia's intentions and wishes.

PART IX

CHAPTER I

And It Is Spring Again

The Face the Facade the Epic,  
The Look the Glory (if any) of it.

What is it to graduate? You toil, you sweat, you pray and hope, and you live in a certain stratum in a certain land; you see a light far away, suddenly it is close to you - and you take flight into another stratum, of another land. The Land of the Graduate! A new land with more light and less darkness? The new Land. . . , "unto the land I will show thee."

You toil, you sweat, you pray, and suddenly it's finished. You are glad. You are sad. The old grooves, the old track, the old roadbed. A straight line. And you moved along easily softly and cozily. Then suddenly you have to tear up the old roadbed, track and all, and skip to a new one.

You are sad, you are glad.

In twos you march in the central aisle to be gawked at by the

multitudes, who are on the sidelines. You play your role in the arena, and they look down upon you from the balconies. A grateful, a sympathetic look! No one to greet your eyes. Only your mother. And she is hidden somewhere in the great mob. Why doesn't she show her face? You know why, George. She must hide her face, or her tears will storm you. She must forever remain hidden in your hour of "glory." The strain! The strain for both of you, who are so dependent on each other, and who are so alone in the world. O, mother, you don't know, you don't understand. This is no hour of glory. You may show your face. See my mates preening their feathers, the glory is all for them. It should be for me too. At least some of it. All right then, mother, keep your face hidden. I can see you better hidden. My mind sees better than my eyes. Good. You want to see me with your mind. But it's different with you, mother. Your mind will always hold me, and often your eyes will pick me out. But I will have to hold you in my mind alone. And that is as it should be. But our thoughts will remain in the same groove, on the same track. And through all this silliness they'll communicate. But remember not to be jealous that my classmates receive the highest honors, and not I. And you always thought I was so smart. Now you know. Not at least that sort of cleverness. Maybe I am not smart at all, might just as well know it now. Well, then, remain where you are, hidden from view. Wait till they dole out the honors: The "magna's", the "lauda's", and the "summa's". Most of them come from sitting long on their bottoms, cramming, remembering an assortment of silly detail you can find in any text book, while my efforts must come sharp and quick from the top, not from the bottom. O, I should have liked to toss an honor or two in your lap, mother, but I just wasn't equal to the task. Just couldn't chain myself down to it. So forgive me, mother. In time, maybe, you'll see what I see. Maybe you do now. But how can I tell if you face is hidden?

There is the whitish-blue nose of my uncle, and behind it the sagging,

stern face, and the staring eyes that don't say anything. And at his side, my aunt with a merry wink and twinkle in her eye, and heavy jaw and triple sagging chin, but otherwise with bland expression. Well, their eyes are not for me. They sit on feathers and glare at Blanca. Although Blanca doesn't give one damn. She didn't apply for honors, and wouldn't receive them. And glad she is too. The quicker the thing is over the better she'd like it. She fidgets in this hot inferno, and casts a baleful eye at her parents: "What are they so elated about?"

Then you see, rather suddenly, Dr. Capen's face, the bronze mustache bristling and stabbing at your eyes. What the h- is he here for? And you catch his look directly at you. O, you, bas-, but you hold your breath as you see him veer his glance toward Cynthia. Could it be that the busy man had taken of his time to see his little Cynthia get her honors? It must be so. For he always took pride in her. He claimed a right to her. The right of one who brought her into the world, and who looked after her physical and spiritual welfare. Cynthia was carrying off everything it seemed. And it seemed unwittingly to George. For had she aimed and prodded for it, he could have never forgiven her. But in her <sup>d</sup> tiny self was that spark of female genius for the particular, the practical, though unmarked and untarnished by the shove and push of egotistic and foul ambitions, that must show on the surface. She was non-plussed when it was let known of the great harvest she was going to reap at the graduation. She blushed, and shook her head and kept silent. She didn't know how to take it, she didn't expect it, and she didn't quite know what to say about it. How really could it come to her? Her eyes didn't pop with glee.

Your eyes are speaking to me, Cynthia. The smiling relenting eyes. The eyes that spoke to me that autumn in The Oaks, under the moon and stars. On the soft green turf. It was <sup>The</sup> still summer in The Oaks, and the greenness <sup>e</sup> was still in full-vestments for the anxious soul. I know you have forgiven the night, the zeal in me. But it is simpler to live with Foster - in the

comfort of Foster's solid protection, in the integrity of his mighty arm. I can never be a steady influence in your life. I am like a composite puzzle of no solution, evn to myself. A maze where there is ~~no entrance~~ ~~and~~ no exit, once you get into it. So remain where you are, my little Cynthia.

As to the future, who can tell? It's like a mist in the valleys, or the milky cloud that shrouds the mountain peaks. You have got to stay with it until you find your way. I haven't found mine. Not yet. The fog of confusion that surrounds me is heavy and oppressive, it sits like a heaviness on my chest, and makes me stumble. It'll clear in the future, of that I am sure, but when and where no one may know. In that future we'll meet again. But future is time, and Time is unpredictable. It doesn't know itself - its own goodness, its own cruelty; how long, how short it can be. Time is both responsible and irresponsible, changeable and unchangeable. Time is a phony, with a phony smiling and unsmiling face. Time is a mystery to itself, for it knows not its own time: the time of its birth or death. How can I tell what Time holds for us in the future?

You are not alone, Cynthia. You may safely dwell in that smile of joy of his. You see him there, Cynthia, the man with the clipped bronze moustache. The intent look of pride as he glances your way. His claim on you justifies that joy of happiness he finds in you. He was first to glimpse you when you came into this world, although to you he was a shadow in the darkness. And he carried on since.... You are his adopted daughter, the same as I am his adopted son. Let's give him that pleasure for he has none of his own. "Brother and sister!" he smiled to himself. Funny thought. A spiritual unity: you, Dr. Capen and I. A triple friendship that must not be torn asunder.

In the center tier of seats in the orchestra, five or six rows back of the stage, the tranquil, smiling face of Mrs. Foster Forrest blossomed out in a beam of fluorescence, which high-lighted even more the

fresh brightness of her well groomed person. To George she presented a study in contrast. He remembered the anxiety and look of frustration in her eyes when she <sup>had</sup> appeared for a brief moment in Dr. Capen's office the night of the fire. What a change time has wrought in the brief space of a year! Now he could read the contentment of joy in those eyes, as of something newly found - something rediscovered, once held as a priceless treasure. As if after a long tortuous journey she had returned home, assured of a haven of safety.

George couldn't help but think that he had found the same quality of a future promise in Bob Black in his assiduous devotion to the task of arranging all the details in the establishment of the Emporium theatre, as well as in the genuine cooperation he gave him in the skeleton building of the play to be given during the Christmas holiday season. It was a down-to-earth quality in him, a denial of his previous existence in limbo. The shimmer of the golden glory of a haphazard life, confined to one bright beam of a definite, purposeful goal in the future.

*of lines* → At Clara's right, a disgruntled little figure of a man, eyes down-cast, sat ~~an~~ old Forrest. He was so sunk back in the dark penumbra of his wife's shining glory that at first George couldn't be sure. But certain familiar fidgety little movements, resentful, belligerent, almost completely blasted him out from obscurity. It were as if his presence here was against his better judgment and had tried his best to remain in the shadow of inconspicuousness. Especially since the threat to the Emporium <sup>been</sup> had obviated, and was now being completely rehabilitated. He had long remained in the anonymity of silence, George thought, how long before he'll erupt again.

George glanced at Solomon and Lena, not more than half a dozen seats away to the left of Mr. Forrest, their common enemy. George smiled dryly to himself; a weakened enemy, but a formidable one nevertheless. Who

can tell what goes on in that cranium of his in this ominous silence? But he found comfort in the benign complacency and thorough enjoyment of the scene of Lena and Solomon. What a blessing these two, so cool in the enchantment of their happiness!

You look at Solomon, George, and your impatience to have done with this graduating business floats away from you. You desire to accept Solomon's placid moodiness and acquiescence with a detachment and inner enjoyment, but <sup>it</sup> isn't quite that simple with you. You haven't attained that sense of balance and equilibrium <sup>and mastery</sup> that goes with the maturity of Solomon's years. Ten years makes a difference when you are under twenty. With the ten years Solomon might have attained the wisdom of King Solomon. Then, too, Solomon has Lena at his side - a mighty bulwark. Then, Solomon is not in the center of things like you are, - in the fog of turmoil and confusion. Well, maybe not so much of the latter, rather a mixture of impatience, reticence and a peculiar sense of values. You are neither proud nor aloof, but somewhere in your makeup there was interjected a deviation, a twist, a motivation, making for hesitancy and retrospect. Things never looked simple to you, as they may <sup>seem</sup> on the surface, or as they do to most of your classmates. And it isn't asceticism, because you love life, like the next fellow, in all its pleasant intricacies. Just that you have to dig under surface, delve into the depths for the <sup>The</sup> Why's, Wherefore's.

But after your digging and submergence you have the capacity to rise to the surface - the common level. You quite enjoyed the step by step forward march with your mates to the tune of martial music. You were even thrilled that this is the old Empire <sup>orium</sup>. Refurbished and polished for the occasion, but the Empire <sup>orium</sup> just the same. Risen from fire and flame, it stands as a monument of endurance and dedication, of the fact that you and your friends hold the line. You are inspired! That marching, and martial music, stepping in unison with the multitude! The unison of multitude.

The step and the heartbeat in unison. The flush on the face. And the incessant rhythmic beat in your temples. <sup>And the interlude.</sup> There is heat developing in you and enveloping you. It's a comfortable warmth. You are in everybody, and everybody is in you. You are at one with everybody, a unit, a part of this whole, wholesome young student body. A heaving up of the tidal force that makes up young life, and young hope and ambition, and the shining horizon, and you can't help but being swept by and into it. And you want to belong, to be a part of the whole, and not a separate segment floating in limbo. You are a part of the graduating class of 1912; and so, destined to receive your diploma, or certificate of having completed a number of prescribed courses satisfactorily. You tell yourself that it's good to be proscribed and to do proscribed work. Sort of chisels things in you, and hammers out the rough spots. (And at the same time maybe the nice delicate points.) You are disciplined. And while too much discipline curbs and even stifles inherent abilities, no discipline makes for amorphousness and dilettantism, a sheer blindness that leads nowhere.

The heat is stifling and presses you with physical arms around your chest. Your face is pale and somewhat gaunt. But at last you have your diploma. You endure a bit more of ceremony and a few more exhortations, banalities, and then you make your escape.

You go into the world of light and free men. The world of air and sunshine and doing. And you wonder how you'd fit into this world with this white piece of parchment, tied neatly with a ribbon, in your hand. In this world of hustle and hurry you feel as helpless as a babe. Could this world fit into the one you had just come from? Or could matter-of-factness and the realism of bright daylight be a continuance of and flow from the somberness of the classroom and the mould of books and ancient ideas?

That certificate in your grip certifies nothing in this world!

You want to live and be absorbed in this new world. Think its thoughts and do its doings. Just walk and delight in the whole circumstance of

living in this world, of relishing people. Just people, any people! Walk and look at people walking toward you or passing by. People can be enchanting, inspiring and exhilarating - especially people walking in the sunshine and spring of this world. People who work with their brain and brawn. Who are here for a definite purpose. They glow with the health of doing. The head is well set, and the shoulders fairly bulge in their jackets. And the women are a breed of their own in this world. You see it in their bright eyes and in the pose of their heads, proud and beautiful.

And the strange desire was strong in George to linger in this world, to spend his allotted days in the sunshine and life and doings of these people: For there is no epic, no glory in the face, the facade of the world of Graduation!

But Kinships...? There are, aren't there?

## CHAPTER II

### The Woe, the Ritual of Parting

Saturday morning, the last day for George at the Eventide. The annoyance of saying goodbye. Not that it is so tragic, but that it smacks of ceremony and ritual. The manner of saying it, the expression of it - as well as the expressionlessness of it - carry within them the challenge, the gamut of human emotion and behavior. Should you or should you not shed a tear when you embrace a long-standing friend like Jack Gardner? How can you part with a guy like him and not feel a strong emotion boiling up