

A new novel by

Sinclair
Lewis
WORLD
SO WIDE

This, his twenty-second novel,
was completed shortly before Mr.
Lewis' death on January 10, 1951

A RANDOM HOUSE BOOK



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World So Wide

(1951)

Sinclair Lewis



To the Donna Caterina, Alec, John, Tish, Victor, Margherita,
Tina, Claude and so many other memories of Italy.

The traffic policemen and the two detectives from the homicide squad examined the tracks of the car and were convinced that a soft shoulder of the road had given way.

They had been returning from Bison Park, after midnight but quite sober. Hayden Chart was driving the convertible and hating his wife, Caprice, and hating himself for hating her. He was not given to grudges and, despite her glitter of pale-green dinner dress and her glitter of derisive gossip, Caprice was a simpleton who no more deserved hatred than did a noisy child. But she did chatter so. It wore Hayden down like a telephone bell ringing incessantly in an empty house.

She gabbled, "Jesse Bradbin is so dumb! He's an absolute hick, and he's about as much of an architect as my left foot. Why couldn't you get a smarter partner? And IS he a lousy bridge player! Is he ever!"

"He's not bad."

"No, it's his cluck of a wife that really gets me down. In my candid opinion, Mary Eliza Bradbin is the worst dose of vinegar in Newlife; the most hypocritical combination of piousness and secret drinking I ever ran into. And always criticizing some poor bunny. You pretend like you like everybody, but even you got to admit Mary Eliza is a pain in the neck. Isn't she, huh? Isn't she?"

"Yes. Stupid. But means well," said Hayden Chart.

"She means poison, that's what she means!"

The scolding did not become Caprice, thought Hayden. She was

elfin, tiny and quick and rose and pale gold, given to affectionate giggles in between her miaows. If she would only shut up, he sighed, he could go on loving her like a dutiful husband--perhaps.

He longed for silence. Especially on a moony night like this, driving on smooth cement with this suave engine, he liked to look up at the mountains against the moon-pale sky, to look with satisfaction at the houses he himself had planned in these comely new suburbs of Newlife, "the fastest-growing city in Colorado"-- Newlife, with its skyscrapers set among flat one-story supply- houses for silver miners and sheep-ranchers; Newlife and its symphony orchestra, with a Spanish conductor, playing in a Renaissance temple where a fiery dance-hall had stood but twenty years before. Newlife had swollen from 30,000 to 300,000 in thirty years, and it expected a million in another thirty.

And in Newlife no firm was more enterprising than Chart, Bradbin & Chart, architects: the heavy-handed Jesse Bradbin, aged sixty, and the thirty-five-year-old Hayden, who was slim and compact and patient, and given to playing tennis and reading biography.

He did not know Caprice. It would always be his fault with women that his imagination darted into their inner minds, thought with and through their minds. He took their side even against himself, and saw to it, thus, that he invariably lost in the war against women.

He could not even be thunderous with a woman client guilty of the most sickening of crimes (except for not paying the bill): wanting what she wanted in a house and not what the architect knew was good for her. He was both maddened and sympathetic now when Caprice, exasperated at not having made him pay more attention to her, started all her little tricks of propaganda, which mutely shrieked, "Notice me--notice me!"

Holding it visibly high, from her lizard-skin evening bag she took out her gold-link purse; out of the purse she took a package in silver paper; out of the silver paper she took the prize she had just won at bridge: a brooch of imitation jade. Then she wrapped up the brooch, put the silver paper in her purse, put the purse in the bag, loudly clicked the bag shut, loudly clicked it open again, took out the purse, took out the silver paper...

She was capable of doing this over and over until he testified to her powers of torture by scolding her.

But tonight his anger at her petty bullying was lost in pity that, at slightly over thirty, she should still have the mind of a child delighted by any sort of gift. He made himself say to her, civilly, "That's a nice jade charm. I'm glad you won it."

Now that she had made him recognize her presence, she returned to her gabbing, but more spitefully; she did what she gleefully called "needling him a little."

"But you, big boy, were YOU ever terrible tonight! You played worse than Mary Eliza. You got no more card sense than a zebra. But what amused me, when it didn't get me sore--oh, you didn't think I noticed; you think you're such a smoothie about covering up your sniffing around after women--what had me sunk was the way you kept sneaking in a look at Roxanna's ankles and Alice's buz-ZOOM and Jane's god-awful lipstick. You'd be THE most ridiculous tail-waving cat out on the tiles, if it wasn't that you're such a coward!"

His irritation, sparking into wrath at this injustice, may have made his hand twitch on the steering wheel, or it may have been entirely the soft shoulder of the highway caving in. Whichever, the car was suddenly and appallingly shooting off the embanked road, and as he protested, "This can't be happening to me!" they were turning over

and over in air.

There was something comic in that grotesque horror. The roof was below him, then the car upended like a rearing horse, then his head had struck the roof and afterward the windshield, then the whirling cosmos banged down, and the side window was below him, on the earth, then up beside him again, and they were still. The huge noise dissolved into a huge blank silence, and the car shook like a panting animal. They were tilted, but nearly right-side-up.

He thought that his head was bleeding and both his arms broken and he knew that he was very sick and that Caprice was not there beside him.

"Where are you? Darling!" he was screaming—he was trying to scream, while he realized that his voice was choked. He thought he could hear a small shaky answer from her, but he was so dazed that he could not be sure whether it was a moan or a sneer. With agony he managed to turn his head enough to make out their situation. With a freakishness like that of a tornado, Caprice seemed to have been thrown into the shallow back seat, and the light fabric top of the convertible had been so deeply dented that she was imprisoned there, with only an aperture between the two seats large enough for him to hear her sobbing; not large enough for either of them to pass. In any case, he could not move far. He was jammed between the seat and the twisted steering post. The glass had been ripped clear out of the windshield; it seemed to have slashed his scalp.

"Caprice!"

"Ohhhhhh..."

"Can you move? Can you reach me?"

"Ohhhhhh..."

"Are you hurt badly?"

"I don't know.... Oh, yes, my neck--hurts dreadfully."

More than the pain which beat in a steady rhythm of agony in an arc that traversed his head, he felt anxiety for her--with her poor, pretty jade charm. For perhaps the first time this past year or so, he felt not just a resigned endurance of her malice, but an active affection, a desire to sacrifice himself to help her.

He was trying to shout for help, expecting to be rescued, to have aid at once. But his voice was a parched trickle, weak as that of an ailing baby. He struggled to raise his head from the cool upholstery against which his cheek rested, and look through the empty windshield frame. He perceived, in a dull, sick way, that they were in a brush-thick hollow far down below the level of the highway, hidden from it. Even were it not night, they would not be seen, be heard, from any of the rushing automobiles whose lights, innumerable and swift, level comet-tracks, were darting above them, with the steady swish of tires on cement.

Caprice and he might lie here, bleeding, stranglingly thirsty, for many nights and days.

He could hear Caprice's voice, in a tiny angry scolding:

"Inexcusable carelessness, and you always claim to be such a good driver and then practically killing me!"

He agreed with her. He did love her so much! If he had of late thought himself indifferent to her, it had been only the self-absorbed busyness of a craftsman, he told himself.

He was not sure just how conscious she was, back there, as she prattled away more and more spitefully:

"Why don't you DO something? Get out and get some help, not sit there and wait for somebody to find us! Always so helpless and never, never think about what I may want or need or anything!"

A snigger then of dainty malice, the cat sniggering as it patted the dying mouse:

"Oh, not you! Always so high-and-mighty and cultured, telling everybody about these big thick history books you're always reading, and you never really finish any of 'em! Ridiculous spectacle of yourself, and everybody laughing at you. Pretending you're so hot and bothered about classical music and oh yes, of course, just have to have it on the radio when you're reading, and never hear one note! Oh, I've proved it! I've switched it to jazz and you never even noticed. Not mind your being so phony if you weren't so clumsy about it and everybody gets onto you--what a goat!"

In his mind he pleaded with her, "Don't, oh, please don't, not now when I've turned back to you. Let me go on loving you!"

His head seemed to have stopped bleeding but it was all a thick mass of aching, his throat was dry as a desert water-hole, and he could not make out a word now as she cackled on, delirious and incomprehensible. He was losing account of time. Had he passed out, had he been unconscious?

They could both die here before they were found. Was this the end of everything?

"Is this all I'm going to get from life? I've done so little and seen so little out of all I wanted. In college, that Kipling thing, 'For to admire

and for to see, I've wandered o'er the world so wide.' I was going to see everything, everywhere."

He made a monstrous list of the things he had wanted, now that it was, no doubt, too late ever to do them. To be state tennis champion. To camp in British Columbia and have a winter in the Caribbean. To speak French and live in Paris and know wines and meet dashing actresses and wise old men with spade beards. To live for months overlooking a monastery garden, mystic and contemplative.

(It would have to be an Episcopal monastery, though, wouldn't it? His great-great-grandfather had been Church of England Bishop of North Carolina.)

And--a familiar dream which he had illustrated with drawings on stray envelopes--now he would never build that prairie village which was to have been all housed in one skyscraper: the first solution in history of rural isolation and loneliness. He could have done it, too! He was amazed that these hands, this aching brain, so hotly alive now, might at a moment crumble in dissolution.

Too late? But if he did get free from this prison, he would renounce his routine provincial life and follow every one of his fantasies.

Surely Caprice would come with him--PERHAPS she would. There were no children to consider, even after their eight years of marriage, nor did Caprice really want any. At thirty-five, with enough money earned by himself or inherited from his father, who had founded their architectural firm, he was freer than at eighteen.

With his even tan, his small mustache, his erect slenderness, Hayden Chart might have been a Scotch major or a Yorkshire man. His face was thin, and people said that his eyes were kind. In a business world where so many hustlers like Jesse Bradbin were inclined to be

damply enthusiastic and clammy to the handshake, there was a fine, dry, hard quality about Hayden, the quality of a polished dagger.

The dagger had been too long sheathed.

Caprice was still muttering on, scarcely heard, with a sound like dry leaves shifting in an autumn breeze. His pity for her grew more passionate. She was so youthful, at thirty-one; she had so loved this new automobile and everything in their new Georgian brick house, from the deep-freeze and the red-and-black tiled rumpus-room to her dressing room, all crystal and frilly curtains. With a heartier, blunter, more alcoholic husband, she would have exulted in a life of dancing and risky gambling. He had always hurt her, Hayden sighed, and he hadn't meant to, he never had meant to.

He was keeping up, this while, an effort to shout which mangled his throat yet seemed no louder than a moan. But he may have been heard.

Near them, a match was lighted and held up, revealing the twisted hood of the car and a scared, bearded, rustic face peering in through the windshield frame. Hayden managed a gasp of "Get help!" The match went out, and his battered consciousness went out with it.

In a shaky dream he saw or thought he saw the car flooded with light from a wrecker, felt himself being eased out from behind the steering wheel and lifted from the car, and swift surgical fingers about his scalp and his arms. His mind faded again, complete, and he never knew whether he had seen or merely thought he had seen the broken, still body of Caprice. For years he seemed to have been protesting, "Such a pretty toy and so frail; they shouldn't have hurt her."

He came clearly to in a hospital, with his head bandaged and Dr. Crittenham, their mild indecisive family physician, by the bed. He felt

miraculously safe, and not for two days did he know that Caprice had been buried the day before, and that he was desolatingly free to wander in a world too bleakly, too intimidatingly wide.

2

He could feel the strength flowing back into him, like a slow and steady sea tide, and that flowing life, that mysterious busy workmanship of nature, was repairing his broken arms, his contused skull, though it could not yet repair the bruised mind in which, incessantly, he agonized that he had killed his helpless child, Caprice, and with her killed the right to love.

He feebly wanted to get out of this, away from clucking nurses and Dr. Crittenham's owlish peering and the horrible scrambled eggs and cold toast. He wanted to be working, to be taken seriously again as part of the cheerful world that goes daily to its work. But, hazily forming, more and more resentful, was a realization that for a long while yet he could not endure fussy clients: well-to-do women demanding tiled baths, an assembly-line kitchen, a forty-by- thirty living room and innumerable cedar closets, for the price of a four-room bungalow.

As indignant as though he were still in his office arguing with them, he remembered the mean and cheating determination not to be cheated which was characteristic of women who had never been in business: those tight lips, that smell of rotten carnations, that snarling, "Well, I must SAY, I thought a' architect was supposed to look after folks' interests, not try and rob them!"

He recalled whole families of clients: Father standing back, looking anxious, hoping that The Wife wouldn't run him into too much money. Father himself would be satisfied with anything from a domestic tomb

made of cement blocks to a Samoan grass hut, provided they got a good heating plant, but Sistie kept repeating that they must have a place to dance, and Junior had incessant new ideas: a closet for skis, a bowling alley, a swimming pool and, while they were about it, why not a four-car garage instead of a two-car shanty?

"I can't take it! What they all demand! Now I know how the doctor feels when I complain about the diet here, and the injections!"

Nor could he take the demands of the unions, nor the shiftiness of tough contractors, nor the delays in bank loans nor, least of all, the violently active idleness of his older partner.

Jesse objected to the wages of the draftsmen, to time spent on twice-daily inspections of operations; he tried to wiggle into every new building job in town; and he repeated everything he said to you, repeated it with emphasis, as though—even when he had nothing weightier to communicate than the chance of rain today—he were revealing a message from Heaven.

Between the two sections of his thundering verbal trains, Jesse always put in a "See whatta mean?" He ruled, "Dead certain to be a cold fall, this fall, see whatta mean? Dead certain--whatta mean-- a cold fall!"

Life could have been tremulous with noble emotions and cultivated senses—or so the poets informed him, Hayden sighed—and was he to spend its swift flicker in listening to an old miser bellowing, "See whatta mean"? Whenever Hayden had a notion for a warehouse that should be something more than a prison, Jesse protested, "You long-haired artists give me a pain. I'm a practical man!"

It was painful that while Jesse regarded him as an anarchist, the local Modernist and Functionalist and general Impossibilist, Mr. Kivi from

Finland--DOCTOR Kivi--considered Hayden "a nize fella personal, but yoost anudder old-fashion architectural tailor, giffing the dumb bourgeois whateffer kind suitings dey tink dey vant."

"I need, in fact, a year off," reflected Hayden, "and I'm going to take that year off, and find out whether I can do anything more amusing than being batted over the net by Jesse and batted back by Kivi. I think that I would like to be a self-respecting human being, and even learn to read!"

He could amply afford the year off. As a young architect he had, on speculation, planned a large Merchandise Mart, and his share in that alone would give him a rather tight living. He renewed now his regret, in the prison of the wrecked car, that he had missed so many treasures of learning. Compared with Jesse Bradbin, he was an encyclopedia but, lying in bed, annoyed when the day nurse tried to entertain him with what she thought she remembered of a radio skit, he made lists of the things he did not know.

He knew nothing, very nearly, of Byzantine or Egyptian, Chinese or Hindu architecture. He spoke no foreign language--should not an educated man be able to speak French and German, along with Italian or Spanish? He had only a mail-order smattering of music, painting; he had never read Dante or Goethe nor anything of Shakespeare except the plays on which he had been spoon-fed at Amherst; he was innocent of chemistry and astronomy; and of history before 1776 he was certain only that there had been Gothic and Renaissance churches and that America had been discovered, from time to time, by a lot of Scandinavians and by a gentleman called Christopher Columbus, who had trained for it by continually standing eggs on end.

He had assumed that he would be classed as a Civilized Man. He wondered now if he was not a jungle-dwelling cannibal without even

an expert knowledge of how to catch and cook prime human beings. How proud he had been that--to Caprice's rage--on many evenings, instead of highball parties, he had gone to bed at nine-thirty and "got ten good hours of sleep." Now he speculated that he had probably been wasting three hours a day of this too-brief life in snoozing like a hobo by the railroad tracks.

Could he make up for all that?

As a starter, he longed for first-hand sight of the Europe which is the mother of most Americans as it is of the Mongolian-Chaldaic-Saracen-Slav races who call themselves European. His nearest step to it had been a wander-month in England with a couple of classmates after their graduation from Amherst. The glory of the English cathedrals had decided him to be an architect, like his father. Before he could go on to the Continent, he had been called home by the illness of his mother. He had gone to a New York school of architecture, and that was the end of Romany Rye.

In World War II, he had been a major, but he had been kept in the United States, constructing miles of huts and warehouses. Before it, he had sat in on the designing of banks, office buildings, churches, but he had become a specialist in "medium-priced housing," along with an occasional Labrador-Spanish palace for a stockman, or this very hospital that was his detention camp.

He loved Litchfield, Sharon, Williamsburg; he preferred the Georgian, and he had theories about developing a truly American style. He was called a plodder by all the Kivis, and in turn he disliked their bleak blocks of Modernist cement, their glass-fronted hen-houses, their architectural spiders with cantilever claws.

Yet now he wanted to desert his solid American brick and timber and flee to the stone and thatch of the heathen gods of Europe.

With all his dismaying thoughts, he excitedly worked out a philosophy of hope which he called the Doctrine of Recovered Youth.

He meditated upon it through the motionless hours when he awoke at three in the morning and could not sleep again till after breakfast. He heard the small derisive night noises: a policeman plodding down the street, a drunk singing, a wild ambulance screaming, a woman crying, then the banging of the ash cans. He looked for hours at the plaster walls and wished that instead of making this hospital crisp and hygienic, he had created an orgy of Alhambra harem decoration, to entertain sleepless patients suffering through the gray hours. Over and over he sighed about the lost wisdoms he had missed, till from nowhere, sharp, exhilarating, came the faith that he had not missed them, that they could be ahead of him.

The Doctrine of Recovered Youth. He was to spend no time in regretting failures but to concentrate on what he could do in a future that was ready to his hand.

He was not to think back fifteen years to the time when he was twenty, credulous and enthusiastic, when he was strong for walking, for singing, for making love. He was to look fifteen years ahead to the time when he would be fifty--and a fine, sound, competent age that was, too, when he ought to be able to eat and laugh and make love as well as ever. Compared with fifty, he still WAS young, he HAD recovered youth. Ah, the blazing wonders he was going to experience in these fifteen years ahead, with perhaps another twenty-five years on top of that! He was going to see all of the world so wide.

His acquaintances were presently allowed to call on him, and the strange thing, in his fast-recovering strength, was that he did not want to see many of them. He was impatient with the tedious past which these fellow-clansmen so tenderly dragged in, certain that he would

be delighted to hear how everything had been going with Dear Old Bill Smith, the celebrated fisherman and drunk, delighted to get all the shivery details of the membership drive of the Bison Park Country Club.

It had been assumed, he himself had half assumed, that he was gregarious, fond of being yelled at by a dozen people in a small room, for this was expected of any competent professional man in Newlife. He discovered in this, his first pious retreat since college, that it had been an enforced habit, and that he preferred the sweetness of silence to even the newest smutty story.

But such treachery to American good-fellowship he kept concealed. He tried to be grateful to all the kind men who, at such inconvenience, during busy days, took off an hour to "run in and cheer up good ole Hay," by bellowing at him, "Well, well, well, well, you certainly look fine today, you certainly do, you look well on the way to recovery, so take good care yourself, be sure and take care yourself now, and let me know anything I can do for you."

They would have been shocked, Civic Virtue in Newlife would have rocked, if he had said, "There is one thing you can do: go away and don't come back."

The agonizing crisis of these visitations was when they stopped mid-sentence and he knew that, with obscene tact, they were avoiding even a natural mention of the dead Caprice, or when, instead, they dragged in her poor remains and overpraised her. He told himself that the profoundest reason why he wished they would forget Caprice was that he was in love with his purified memory of her. All round her shrine was a cloister where no heathen were allowed to tread.

He felt wan and reedy as he sat up in bed in his coarse hospital nightgown, while Jesse Bradbin, tilting back and forth, back and forth,

in a straight chair, looked like a fly-blown leg of beef. Jesse held out his whisky flask with a roar of, "Try a nip of this-- Mother's Knee Bourbon. Your doc would throw a fit, but it's time for you to get back in harness again, see whatta mean, get back in shape and have a little fun, see whatta mean?"

"Thanks, no. Uh--Jesse, I may take some time off when I'm out of the hospital."

"What d' you think you want to do?"

"I might skip out to California--try loafing in the sun, maybe catch up on my reading."

"Well, I suppose a month of that wouldn't hurt you, though it'll be blame inconvenient."

"Not a month. Maybe I'll take a year off."

"A--a YEAR? Great good suffering catfish! That accident knocked all the whatever sense you've got clean out of your head, see whatta mean, knocked out all what sense you got! You're crazy as a loon! A YEAR? With a bunch of new contracts in sight?"

"I'll find you a good substitute."

"If you went and found me a Cass Gilbert--at thirty bucks a week-- I'd still be dodging my duty toward you, as a partner, as an intimate friend, as a fellow-Coloradan, see whatta mean--dodging my duty. I got a moral responsibility toward you, now that Caprice has passed on. Got to be somebody to take care of you and get you straightened out and direct you and try to put some common sense and dependability into that damn-fool poetical brain of yours. No, sir-ee! The way to forget that poor girl and your own shaking up is to hustle

and get back on the job and work harder than ever. You'll be surprised how you'll enjoy it, getting away from all this unhealthy THINKING! Back into the fray! You'll enjoy it, see whatta mean--enjoy it. You always did like chatting and chinning and visiting with the lady clients, you old rogue! Heh, heh?"

"Got to have some sleep now," muttered Hayden wearily.

But that missionary of manly enterprise, Mr. Bradbin, had not been entirely without moral effect. Hayden reflected, "To go back to the office now would be the most horrible punishment I can think of, and perhaps that's why I must do it. I must endure a heavy penance to make up, in some tiny degree, for killing Caprice. Oh, she only wanted to dance in the sun! I murdered her, and her revenge is that I have never been so bound to her as now.

"I shall not look at another woman, all my life. I shall never be that romantic wanderer, that troubadour in a ribbon-tied jeep singing through Provence, that I dreamed of. Suffering has made me prosaic. I may just as well go back to the office and sell everybody on attic-insulation. I'm finished. If I were only twenty again, and strong and unafraid..."

3

The day nurse, who considered Mr. Hayden Chart an edifying but somewhat depressing model of dignity who "will never give any skirt a tumble since his wife had passed away," was surprised by the vigor with which he demanded, "Show her right in!" when she announced Miss Roxanna Eldritch.

Roxanna Eldritch--Roxy--had been a friend of Caprice, as fond as she of gin-rummy and skiing and aquaplaning, but three or four years

younger and altogether a more solid and good-tempered citizeness. She was a reporter on the Newlife Evening Telescope, and she wrote not only of Society and its fabulous orange-flavored weddings (or Nuptials, if the groom made over ten thousand a year) but capably handled general assignments: interviews with lecturers and with remarkably intelligent horses, hardware-association dinners, and even such big news as an alderman's explanation of how he had just happened to pick up on the street the marked bills found in his desk.

Roxy came in like a shy mouse, but a mouse that will immediately start waltzing if the cat is asleep. She was a smallish, blue-eyed redhead, with the richest deep-copper hair, and the fair skin and jaunty freckles of the redhead. She was not plump, and her ankles were fine-drawn, but she was rounded and appetizing. Even old friends of her father, an unimportant beet-sugar broker, though they feared that Roxy would laugh at them, found it hard to keep their hands off her.

Sometimes, in white flannel at ten in the morning, she looked twenty-two and ready for tennis; sometimes, late in the evening, she looked an old, old, haggard twenty-nine, a veteran who has met too many public men and heard them boasting, for the benefit of Press & Public, of how many extraordinary things they were going to do as soon as this astonishing grand-jury indictment was quashed.

She stood in the doorway, glancing sharply at Hayden as he yanked a red-and-yellow Navajo blanket about his shoulders and smoothed his hair.

"My gracious, you look like a lily!" said Roxy. "How's everything in Astolat? Elaine back from Camelot yet? But honestly, Hay, you're in wonderful shape. I am so glad!"

Her voice was warm and kind, though it did have a bit of western

flatness, the voice of a bird flying at dun twilight over the western plains.

"I'm getting all right, Roxy. Nice you came."

"Sit down a minute? Really came to ask you whether you'd like cigarettes or candy or detective stories. I'm sure you've had too many flowers."

"Enough so that they rather horribly suggested a funeral. The steamfitters' union sent me about half a mile of forget-me-nots. I thought that was rather sinister."

"When do you think you'll be ready for some tennis, Hay? I'm your man. You'll have to be careful, and of course I gambol around the court like a furniture truck, but you're so much neater than I am that you'll still lick me every set."

He had been thinking that she was very like Caprice, that essentially she WAS Caprice, was every dance-mad, cocktail-gulping young female in Newlife, but he reflected that, no, Roxanna had more humor, sympathy, industry than the Caprices. But he was jarred to find, in the zest with which he looked at Roxy's luscious throat and breast, that he had fallen with ludicrous haste from his mystic worship of Caprice's wistful and shadowy image.

Roxanna could not have noticed any ruefulness in him. She was too excited about making her announcement:

"I just wanted to say, if we do get in any tennis, it will have to be quick, because as soon as I get my passport and learn how to say 'Where's the depot?' in English English, I'm going to Europe. By myself!"

"No!"

"My managing editor--next year there'll be a lot of pilgrims from here going to Rome and so on for the Holy Year, and he allowed it might be a good idea to get the lowdown on what makes there now, all over Europe. I'm to do a series for the Telescope and outlying sheets on how you eat and sleep and per combien on good American dollars--or is it par combien?--in the Old Country. Oh, Hay, I try to be flippant about it, but I'm awed to death and scared to death! Think, pal, I'll be seeing English rose gardens and the midnight sun in Sweden and Paris cafés and the Colosseum!"

It was at that moment that, without knowing it, Hayden started for Europe.

There were hesitations, worries, preparations to be got through. Dr. and Mrs. Windelbank called on him. He was a dentist with a taste for attending lectures, about which he discoursed to patients when he had them racked in the chair with cotton rolls in their mouths, and his lady gave talks on gardening. They came in now to boast that they too were going to Europe, and not on one of your ridiculous three-week tours. No, they would fly across and have an entire month just for sightseeing, with two entire days in Venice, two in Florence, and three in Rome!

For years the Windelbanks had gloried in their annual adventures: their journeys to Mexico, to Alaska, and the Famous Homes of New England, including Coolidge's, and they implied that Hayden was a stick-in-the-mud, without imagination.

Clearly, he had to go and spend a couple of months abroad in revenge upon these loving neighbors. Yet even this natural human spite may have moved him less than the superiority of Dr. Kivi.

That priest of Modernism in Architecture came in as condescendingly

as a duke or a headwaiter, and when Hayden fretted. "Do you think I would get much out of seeing Europe as it is now, Maestro?" the Finnish orchid seemed amused.

He was made up to look the great artist, with bushy hair, bushy mustache, black bow tie with bushy canary-colored waistcoat—a squat man, full of salt herring and energy. He hated his titanic rivals, Gropius and Frank Lloyd Wright and Neutra and Saarinen and Van der Rohe; he said "efen a gang of carpenters like Chart-Bradbin are better dan dose swindlers dat mess on de sacred name off Modarnism." He looked at Hayden not with loathing but with such fondness as one might give to a silky Pekingese—if it stayed out of your armchair. He said blandly, "Vy not go? Even an American bourgeois can look on naked beauty vidout much injury, as my friend Sibelius iss often saying to me. But as you don't know de t'ree t'ousand years of history, as you neffer had a Kinderstube, don't expect too much or you vill be ferry lonely and disappointet."

Afterwards, Hayden grumbled to himself. He recalled rumors that Dr. Kivi had no bracing Finnish blood in him at all, but was actually a German named Hans Schmuck. But to Hayden he was formidable. He had seen Kivi beat the local chess champion who, being named Perkins, could not conceivably rival a master who smelled of beer and gherkins. In Denver, Hayden had heard Kivi publicly affirm his faith:

"I am not going to let my clients haf all the pingpong tables and leetle antique furniture they vant, efen if I go broke and take to honest farming." That Augustinian creed had set all the Rocky Mountain architects debating, and enabled Kivi to charge an extra thousand dollars on every house.

But Kivi's discouragement built up in Hayden a stubborn Western-Yankee resentment. Probably, he admitted, he was nearer to the

capering Kivi than to the mulish Jess Bradbin. He vowed, "All right, I WILL go abroad! I'll learn at least one language, and I'll bring back more of the genius of Rome than this bounding baboon Kivi could ever understand!"

The news enlivened Newlife that Hayden Chart was going abroad. Himself, he was not yet quite sure, and he did not remember having told any one definitely, but in that ardent community, so proud of having transcended the village and become urban and urbane, every one knew your affairs better than you did. His neighbors came to the hospital to give him advice based on affection and a superb ignorance of both Europe and Hayden. In World War II, some hundreds of local young people had campaigned in Italy and France, and the general city belief was now, and for another ten years probably would be, that all through Europe "conditions" were exactly what they had been in a bombed city in 1944.

"Be sure and take along plenty of soap," they urged him, "and toothbrushes and sugar and toilet paper and aspirin and razor blades, and you better carry plenty of food. I'd advise your taking some nice boxes of crackers and a few cans of pork and beans. And HUNDREDS of rolls of film for your camera."

"I'm not going to take a camera--if I decide to go at all," said Hayden.

"You're--not--going--to take a--CAMERA?" they howled. "Then what are you going to Europe for?"

"Post-card photographs would be better than anything I could take."

"Good Lord, Hay, I shudder to think what's going to happen to a poor innocent like you among them pirates! I never been in Europe--PERSONALLY--but I been reading where right in Paris you got to bring your own bed sheets, even in the best hotels!"

Often in any country of Europe, months later, when he stood admiring show windows that were positively a Versailles of soap and toothbrushes and inconceivable millions of razor blades, he sighed to think how unknown this frontier wilderness called Europe was to that ancient home of decorum and conservatism, America, so hoary with outdated wisdom that it could not appreciate the venturesome young barbarians of Rome and London.

Many among these valued neighborhood counselors begged him not to go at all. "Or if for some fool reason you feel you simply got to, don't go making a fool of yourself blundering around alone," they implored. "Join some nice conducted tourist party of twenty or thirty, and they'll tell you what to see and just when to see it, and what hotels to stay at, and you'll always have some folks from home to visit with, wherever you are, and not go crazy with loneliness, or have to depend on natives with their queer ideas!"

The chief among his guardians was Jesse Bradbin.

"I guess the Old Country was all right in its day, but now we got the world by the tail; we got the bulge on Europe not only in banking and university work and the soft-drink business, but in architecture and even in music and story-writing and all that guff. A European guy that wants to make good in any high-class artistic racket today has got to come to America--hat in hand. But then, you and I are alike. We don't fall for the arty pose. We know that it's just another way of making a living and cashing in big-- like the chain-grocery game. No, no. Come to your senses and have a nice sensible rest, playing golf in Florida for maybe couple weeks, and get back to work. Then you'll thank me for having steered you away from your schoolboy notions about going off half-cocked to the Old Country. Yes-sir-ee! You'll thank me big!"

Hayden lay fuming that Bradbin, after knowing him for thirty-five

years--ever since his first day in this surprising and slightly unsatisfactory world--should not know him at all, and yet should often dare to explain him to others. He reflected that he was like Bradbin in being industrious and in always paying his bills on the second of the month, but that otherwise he was less like Bradbin than like the clammiest, dirty-haired Left Bank female pseudo- painter whose only completed designs, year after year, were patterns of wet rings on smoke-dizzy café tables.

He sighed, "And I wonder if Caprice knew me any better? Or anybody else in this town, except maybe Roxy Eldritch? The rest of them think I'm a steady, contented, home-loving man of business. And I'm a tramp that only wants to see new towns and learn to read Plato in the Greek. Or I think I am!

"Do I know myself any better than they do? I must voyage away from everybody who is familiar with the shape of my nose and the contents of my checkbook, find a world where I've never seen a soul, and so find some one who knows what I'm really like--and who will tell ME, because I'd be interested to learn!

"What I want is less to voyage in any geographical land than travel in my own self. I may be shocked by what I find there. Maybe I'm not the master of my fate and the captain of my soul. Maybe the real captain is a foul-minded sadist and I'm his scared cabin boy. All right! That'll be no worse than being the safe and busy Young Mr. Chart, whom you can always count on for a subscription!"

He was, then, planning to take abroad with him something even more important than his folding slippers or a dependable can of pork and beans. In accordance with his own Doctrine of Recovered Youth, he was going to take a defiant young man who was willing to burn his own house, destroy his own city, so that he might in fiery freedom see all of this world so wide.

In college days, the art of reading had given to Hayden prospects of a richer universe but, like most of his classmates thirteen years later, he was sometimes inclined to consider books a genteel way of getting through the desert hours between dictating business letters and playing bridge. But he had not quite lost them; he had followed the novels of Hemingway and Steinbeck and Willa Cather, he had read at history, mostly the history of America since 1776, according to Van Doren, De Voto, Durant, Holbrook--scholars who believed that the purpose of scholarship is to nourish human beings, not professors of pedagogy.

Jesse Bradbin read only an architectural magazine which dealt pontifically with Costs and Accounting and in the newspapers read the murder trials and the national weather reports. Jesse could, and firmly did, tell you what the temperature was yesterday in Abilene, Texas, Butte, Montana, and Trenton, New Jersey, and the comparative snowfall in Devil's Lake, North Dakota, on this same date in 1944, 1934, 1924 and 1870. Caprice had read only the society page, the fashion notes, and those same murder trials. Both of them regarded Hayden as a Francis Bacon, and he had been tempted to that thought himself till now when, in growing horror, he decided that he was an unlettered hillbilly.

"We'll repair some of that, as soon as we make the voyage and look into who this zero, Chart, really is and whether, with his miraculous new youth, he is worth saving!"

He leapt into an orgy of books, most of them obligingly fetched to him by his friend, the city librarian: Walter Pater, Jacob Burckhardt, Thompson and Johnson's epic Introduction to Medieval Europe, and the good red guidebooks of the good gray master, Herr Baedeker. Europe came to him not as a heap of abraded stones stenciled with

dates, but as a dome filled with the softest chanting, broken by the shout of young warriors.

Before he left the hospital for good, he was able to take a few drives. He avoided even a sight of his own house, but he was in the gang which saw Roxanna Eldritch off for New York and Europe: Miss Roxanna in a flying, mouse-gray cloak, holding a bunch of red roses, herself a red rose, a flushed and rosy American missionary to the gloom of Europe. She waved to them and then her face puckered and she was crying—not the dashing lady journalist, but an affectionate child.

His dreaming in the hospital seemed to him the only reality, and reality an uncomfortable dream, when he unlocked his wide white front door and walked into the hallway with its pictorial wallpaper of beaux and ladies in victorias. He stared at the living room: the chintz chairs, the tall white fireplace, the ruby and emerald and apricot of liqueur bottles pyramided behind his mahogany bar.

He looked at their bedroom: the chaise longue, the tapestry wallpaper, the black and silver desk. Though he had designed it all himself, it seemed to him a dream of luxury fabulous and wasteful and a little vulgar.

The whole house was a dead thing now that it was deserted by Caprice's yelling and flouncing and running up- and downstairs and telephoning violently and for hours. A dream and a languid, draining dream then was his hasty giving-away of Caprice's clothes and her poor treasures: the silver-gilt vanity case, the onyx desk- set, her stout little ski boots, the flimsy bathing suits that she had loved. It was a dream of a life in which he had been busy and important and well-bedded and well-fed and had glowingly possessed everything except friends and contentment and any reason for living: a dream, a fable, a caricature of grandeur.

He first awoke from dreaming when he found himself telephoning to a travel agency about sailings for England, and awoke again when he stood on the promenade deck of the steamer, in October, looking wonderingly down at the horde of two classmates who were seeing him off. He tried to remember where he was going and just why he was going there.

4

He stared at the gangplank, that awning-covered bridge between the vast black wall of the ship and the surly black wall of the deckhouse. There was time; he could still go back and be a sensible architect, and not go off to a hostile camp where he knew no language, where he had no friends, no way of earning a living.

He watched the gangplank with apprehension. He saw the pier crew at the ropes, and he did not stir. And now the plank was drawn in, and his link to land, to America, to Newlife, to Hayden Chart of Chart, Bradbin & Chart, was cut, and he was in for it--an exile. And he did not feel that he had recovered youth at all. He was a tired man; too tired, surely, to make a new life or do anything but regret the old life that he had known as safe and profitable.

He had seen no one whom he knew coming aboard. The intolerably long lines of the deck planks belonged to a prison corridor. He drifted to his stateroom, but for all its pertness of cretonne bedcover and varnished wardrobe and a mechanical bunch of flowers, it was no place to live in; just big enough to contain him impatiently until it flung him out again, six days from now.

Already he knew what every exile before Dante or since has had to learn: that in the whole world only a few neighborly streets are

interested in letting you live, and if you challenge strangers, "But I have the high purpose of exploring and conquering and colonizing my soul," they yawn, "Oh, yes? But why do it here?"

So this was the joyous venture into the unknown that the novelists loved to talk about!

At the head steward's window he asked for a table by himself in the dining salon. There, he dabbled at cavalcades of hors d'oeuvres and duck reeking with orange sauce, and went up to the Corinthian Smoking Room and was just as solitary and unspeaking as he had been below. It seemed to him that his fellow passengers were all a vast nonsense, and he could not see why any of them should go abroad.

Except for his hospital sentence, it was the first time in years when he had been alone, day after day, and for four days he felt abused and more misunderstood than ever. He suddenly found that he was enjoying it; that he had resented being alone here on shipboard only because for years all his acquaintances had believed that a man was not successful or even decent unless six people an hour were exulting, "Fine day, isn't!" and sixteen were telephoning, "Well, we got a fine day all right! May I bother you for a couple minutes?"

It was a luxury more difficult than a great wine vintage to appreciate, to be able, hour by hour, to sit still and not try to sell himself and his charms to anybody--not even to himself. He decided, "I'll get something out of this trip even if I never see a cathedral but learn to sit still in a café and not feel guilty at not jumping up and rushing around to save America."

The life that had been flowing back into him became a full, sun-warmed tide; he became so sure of himself and his ability to do anything he wanted that he did not have to do anything to prove it. He

spent hours walking the deck, contented with the companionship of beckoning waves and, as they approached land, of the gulls that were less birds than flashes of light.

He discovered that a ship is always the center of the enormous round of sea, the center and purpose of the universe, man's justification of his skinny insignificance, and he landed at Southampton and climbed up into a compartment of the boat train with the holy peace of the hermit upon him.

He did most of the proper tourist things in London.

He ate roast beef and saw the guard-mounting at Buckingham Palace and viewed the crown jewels in the Tower—he agreed that they really did sparkle more importantly than even a windowful of costume jewelry in a five-and-ten-cent store. He drank bitter beer and admired all the tombs of all the kings in the Abbey. He liked the rows of houses, frowning and supercilious but somberly enduring, indifferent to publicity and the stare of strangers.

He supposed that he ought to be lively here where, any moment on any street, he might encounter Mr. Pickwick or David Copperfield or Sherlock Holmes or Sir John Falstaff or even Winston Churchill, those triumphs of the imagination, more fabulous than Lord Beaverbrook yet more real. But incessantly he remembered how, with his classmates thirteen years ago, he had experimented with these same omnibuses, listened to Cockneys in these same Whitechapel pubs, coursed through Hampstead Heath half the night, singing; and in contrast his solitude made him melancholy. Was it not sacrilegious for an old tragedian of thirty-five to thrust his lumbering gloom into the gay ghost company of two-and-twenty?

He did not consider himself particularly good company for anybody and, as on the steamer, he walked alone and silent. He used none of

the letters of introduction which the magnates at home had heaped on him, urging, "Now be sure and look up my friend Bill Brown-Potts; swell guy--for an Englishman; just like you and me, Hay--plain as an old shoe, but a very important guy in the coke business, a good golfer with a lovely wife and kiddies."

Hayden did not feel that even the most dependable old-shoe-ishness would raise his spirits. He was comfortable in London, particularly well fed, but he planlessly hired a car to go out and search for a flowery England of Anne Hathaway cottages. But he was broodingly unable to see even the most ivied tower as anything but a pile of stones till, inexplicably, the miracle of recovered hope and courage transformed him.

He was on the Cornish coast, looking from the mainland at St. Michael's Mount: the castled isle, the cherubic little clouds, the gulls, the fishing boats drawn up on the flashing wet sand and, beyond them, in the sun, the sea that rolled down to Spain and Africa. Instantly, on his road to Damascus, the world so wide turned beautiful and free. It was worth taking, and it was his to take. There was no longer a pall of futility between him and the sun; he had truly recovered his youth; he was back in the magic and breathlessness of youth. He cried to himself, "Oh, LET yourself be happy!"

His soul lifted above all the several Hayden Charts that had hitherto trudged the road of indecision, dusty and self-doubting. That crustiest of taskmasters, himself, did let himself be happy.

Again he had that lift, definite as sudden music, on the steamer to Calais when first he left the England on which his other youth had staked out too many claims, and for the first time ventured on the new land that was so old beneath the towers of Eldorado.

At the American Express in Paris, there was a note from Roxanna

Eldritch of Newlife:

"Dear Hay, welcome to our instructive little continent. I've been working hard, my editor seems to like my pieces explaining how Trouville, Montreux, etc. almost as good as Colorado Sprgs. Going to stay w. old sidekicks Mr & Mrs Solly Evans of Denver--oodles of money (inherited a railroad). They've taken a show-place villa at Cannes rite on the shore. They know yr cousin Edgar & heard all about you & be tickled pink if you joined house-party for few days, do come. Your friend, Roxy."

Northern France was brown and drawn-in with late autumn, and when he descended from his train at Cannes, it was like the surprise of Pasadena: roses and palms and oranges and bamboo after the desert. There was a light, gay quality in the air. It seemed to have a sparkle of its own, and seemingly no one strolling in the streets of the old provincial town had any care more serious than the design to have another apéritif. And out on the Mediterranean, so ancient, so sacred, now first seen by Hayden, there were colored sails.

The Solly Evans villa was a rickety collection of terraces, yellow plaster walls, an old stone tower to which had been tacked a flimsy barracks of bedrooms, and a garden for oleanders and mammoth grape vines, all on the edge of the sea, with a rock-edged inlet for a swimming pool, and airy diving boards and scarlet-cushioned lounge chairs under orange-and-black sunshades. When Hayden crossed the terrace, ushered by a butler like a Chicago undertaker, he first saw his host, a thin, browned young man in a tattered rag for bathing suit, standing out on a diving raft, bouncing a chrome-and-glass cocktail shaker.

"You're Hay, aren't you? Hi! I'm Solly!"

And on a rock bench beside the pool Hay saw Roxanna Eldritch, in a

French bathing suit which had, by the most skilled hands in Paris, been thoughtfully made to look twice as nude as any American bathing dress of one-half the dimensions. And when she ran to kiss him, though her kiss was a light tap on his cheek, rustic and innocent as Roxy herself had been on the train platform in Newlife, yet he had a dismaying urge to curl his hand about her bare waist.

"Good gracious!" thought the pious hermit.

He was introduced to fellow guests: an American miss with jolly eyes, hard mouth and hair like glass fiber, who had something to do with the radio in Paris, a young Brazilian who seemed to have no identity beyond owning a country house in Switzerland, an Irish aviator, a young man who was something important in an American bank in Brussels but who was English, real or synthetic, an excessively gloomy but rich older American manufacturer, a Spanish countess and a Swedish baron.

Among them the only one whose speech Hay could understand was the Swede, so feverishly did the others scream. When lunch came out from the main house, on wheeled wagons with things in aspic and two-litre flasks of wine, the guests and the host and lean, cheery hostess went off in shrieks in which Hayden could make out only such indigestible bits as, "Actually, it was too, too amusing," and, "Actually, it was too unutterably foul."

And with them, as passionately pointless as any of them, chattered Roxanna Eldritch, once of Colorado.

After lunch they all had a siesta which, they said languidly, was enforced by their admirable activity in dancing and gambling till three in the morning. Hayden could not settle down to a siesta. He sat grousing in his bedchamber, in which the white bed and the white wardrobe doors were adorned with carved garlands and indiscreet

angels thickly gilded. He thought of Roxy as a dear daughter gone regrettably mad, and then as a very undaughterly girl with silky bare legs.

For the tennis hour, Roxy came out in a thin sweater and the shortest shorts Hayden had ever seen; and for eight-thirty dinner, she had a simple dress which, even to Hayden's eye, had the simplicity of a masterful Parisian dressmaker; one which, as a cub journalist and daughter of a small beet-sugar exploiter, she certainly could not afford. It was of rather violent green, and could not possibly have gone with her red hair, and did.

He contrived to segregate her from the backgammon players for a talk, and it seemed to him that her slippery new slickness was not borne easily, but was a little defiant and head-tossing, as though she were saying, "I dare you to go back to that supid old Newlife and say that I've turned fast!"

The note she had written to him had been full of the colloquialisms of a soda fountain in Newlife, but her speech as she lolled, neat knees showing, among scarlet cushions on the gigantic eight-place davenport, was mostly a rattling imitation of the English bright young things.

"I can see you're having a good time," he said paternally.

"I've been up to my eyebrows in the most amusing madnesses! My new young man is the most appallingly brilliant young Hungarian writer. He writes plays, verses, novels, criticism, everything. I don't think any of it has been published yet, but he'll be another Evelyn Waugh. Actually. And the Baronessa Gabinettaccio, who is THE most beautiful and most immoral femme in Europe. Oh, SAY it, Uncle Hay! But don't you think Baby has improved over here?"

"No."

"You don't?"

"No."

"You might sugar it a little! Don't you think these people are frightfully amusing?"

"No. And I liked you natural."

"My dear man, I am natural now! It was when I thought porridge was something to eat that I wasn't natural. Besides! As Dicky Floriat says, the post-war gen is too weary to live up to the ardors of being their simple selves.... Oh, don't look so glum, Grampa Hay! You're so middle-class. You dislike gaiety not because it's immoral but because it's gay."

"I know. I've read some Oscar Wilde myself. But isn't he slightly old-fashioned now? Sixty years ago!"

Solly Evans insisted that the gambling rooms at the Casino, over at Monte Carlo, were "great fun," and Hayden went to them expecting a cinema circus of exiled grand dukes, with broad ribbons of honor across their shirt fronts, quaffing champagne from goblets and escorting ladies with tiaras and ermine, and, with the barbaric splendid laughter of the steppes, winning and losing millions of roubles. He expected, as guaranteed to him by Hollywood, Greek millionaires and Argentine cattle-kings and ruined princesses, in a somber magnificence rather like the new D. and R. G. Depot, and caviar handed about like paper napkins, and at least one suicide, nightly, at 11:17, of a young Englishman of high family.

He found plenty of magnificence at the Casino, but it was a

magnificence in which large plaster lady roustabouts supported baroque pillars, and chilly young women were depicted walking through dewy meadows. Even in the inner gambling room, at the roulette tables there was not so much as one obvious duke, grand or Class B, but only faceless men in unpressed business suits and yellowing-skinned old women of a dozen nationalities, quietly hysterical as they risked, and so often lost, another fifty cents. One of them half rose from her chair each time she wagered, clutching her baggy throat as though she were very sensibly choking herself to death here and now.

These disinterred witches were either frowsy or too elaborately shingled and weather-sheathed; they were either twitchingly agitated or dreadfully still, so intent on play that nothing else existed for them. They were like corpses as the croupier swiftly and callously paid out or raked in the bone chips--dead men's bones.

As Roxanna looked at these derelict remittance-women she shuddered. "I get what you mean, Hay! Yes. Let's go have a wholesome banana split and then stay home and see a basketball epic on the television. I'm having a frightful vision! I'm married to a rich old monster over here and he dies and I'm so bored with all the other sensations that I come here to play, every evening. I live in a flat, like these old bags, and I don't do anything till late afternoon, when it's time to come and start gambling. Hay! Is Europe all played out?"

"No, no, no! You'd find just as dreary dope-fiends shooting crap in New York or Nevada--I guess. There is a great, stately Europe-- I think. I want to find it, to know it, to KNOW!"

"Okay. I'll go back to Paris and swap my commutation ticket at the Joujou Bar for a library card."

But Roxanna's estimable resolutions were sunk next day, when they

came on a Sadie Lurcher Big-Name party at the Hotel Concilier, on Cap Attente.

The Concilier is so fashionable and international that it is not merely a luxury hotel--an inn, a boarding-house, though it is that, too, no doubt, with a vulgar balance-sheet and dividends--but a purpose in life. The bath towels are nine feet long, its food is as good as the average village inn, with more parsley, and all the clerks speak six languages, not so much to assist the accepted guests as to keep unwanted applicants away; to snub undesirable persons like American millionaires who cannot read French menus and even earls and countesses if they have been suspected of voting Labor.

To a small rich man like Solly Evans, when he dares to sneak in and buy a drink even in the larger and less exclusive Bayeux Bar of the Concilier, the waiter says "Yes?" as if Solly's intrusion is an astonishing mistake and, unless he tips three times the amount of his bill, every waiter in the place turns into a revolving electric refrigerator, wheeling toward him and emitting a refreshing blizzard.

Sadie Lurcher was as fin de tout as the Concilier itself. She was a stringy lady, immensely tall and virginal, whose super-ambassadorial function was introducing munition magnates, minor royalty and theatrical comets to one another. She gave the most photographed luncheons in France, and nobody ever quite seemed to know how she financed them. As to her origin, there were different schools. She was variously reported as having been born in America, Scotland, Russia and Smyrna.

She owned a modest castle above Cannes, fifty-six rooms with fourteen habitable, but, for the greater convenience of the press photographers, she gave her more intimate luncheons at the Hotel Concilier pool, with its Petit Trianon Snack Bar, its vast rock-pool of lofty diving boards and a raft made of balsa wood and glass, and the

world-renowned Picnic Plateau, up on a sea-fronting cliff, where lunches were served outdoors by a diplomatic corps of waiters in wigs and gold-laced mauve tail-coats. This was to distinguish them from the guests, for the richer, more notorious, oftener-divorced and wittier a male guest was, the more likely he was to wear, at Sadie's repasts, nothing but shorts, sandals, a revoltingly hairy chest, and a toupée.

Today, Sadie Lurcher was giving one of her nobler luncheons on the Plateau. Her troupe included several ladies, beautiful or titled or rich, and among the men, all in the uniform of hairy chest and the light, easy friendliness that marks the more perfected snob, were some of the world's most notorious names: an ex-king, an ex-commanding general, an English author so proud of everything British that he lived entirely in France, and two of the most titanic of the Hollywood hierarchy, freshly flown in to make a picture in Italy: a ducal producer, and a movie actor twenty-six times as famous as the President of the United States. You may see him scowling at you from posters startlingly encountered in back alleys in Greece or China, and his brilliant changes from barefacedness to wearing a ferocious beard are pictured in the newspapers of thirty-nine countries.

From their humble distance Roxy looked adoringly up at this Olympus, and snapped at Hayden, "It's all very well to talk, but actually now, ACTUALLY, the international set like that has a wonderful life!"

"I know," mused Hayden. "Yes. It was to transfer power from the munition-sellers and the old aristocracy to the airlines and the movies and the radio and oil, from the eugenic to the photogenic, that the young men died in the war and I heroically built a billion cubic feet of hutments. When I look up there at Rupert Osgoswold's Hemingwayesque bosom in person, I feel rewarded. Roxy! Not so cheap!"

She looked at him irritably, and went off to get a cocktail.

He was to leave for Italy. Probably Roxy would be taking her newly excavated European glitter back to New York and become a streamlined career woman, lively and expensive and elegant, slippery as quicksilver and as hard. Himself, he would have a few weeks in Florence and Rome and Naples, and go home. He thought that now he could endure Jesse Bradbin and the querulous clients who wanted Louis Seize redwood.

He would be missing nothing in Europe. He had not made one friend here, and in Roxanna he had lost the one friend he had.

At the Cannes station, in a limp dawn when the palm trees were too damp to clatter and the sunshine-yellow awnings of the cafés were pulled up and dripping, he said good-bye to Roxanna and Solly Evans, who were mechanical and regretful and very sleepy.

5



The railway station at Florence had a fine, flaring Mussolini touch, very spacious and inclined to marble and wood panels, but the piazza in front of it was of a suburban drabness, and the back of the church of S. Maria Novella was a mud-colored bareness, sullen with evening. He would not be staying here long! His taxi- driver was learning English, and was willing to make it a bi- lingual party, but as Hayden's Italian was limited to bravo, spaghetti, zabaglione and the notations on sheet music, this promising friendship did not get far, and he went to bed blankly at the admirable Hotel Excelsior.

But in the bright morning of late autumn he looked from his hotel and

began to fall in love with a city.

He saw the Arno, in full brown tide after recent mountain rains, with old palaces along it and cypress-waving hills beyond. On one side was the tower of Bellosguardo and a fragment of the old city wall, and on the other the marvel of the church of San Miniato, white striped with a dark green that seemed black from afar. Hayden saw a city of ancient reticences and modern energy, with old passageways, crooked and mysterious, arched over with stone that bore carven heraldic shields.

"I like this! Maybe I'll stay out the week."

There was then living in Florence a friend and classmate of Hayden's father: a retired American automobile-manufacturer, competent engineer and man of business, aged seventy-five or so, named Samuel Dodsworth. Hayden sent a letter up to him by hand at his Villa Canterbury on Torre del Gallo Hill, and the Dodsworth chauffeur brought down a note inviting Hayden to cocktails that afternoon.

In between, he trudged the erratic streets of Florence, so unchanged from medieval days that from a secret courtyard you expected to see emerge a lady with peaked headdress and a gallant in satin with a falcon perched on his wrist, and he came full on the Piazza della Signoria, where Savonarola was martyred, where rears the Palazzo Vecchio, with its heaven-high tower.

He was deeply contented as he was driven up the hill to Samuel Dodsworth's.

Unlike most Italian villas, which show to the passer-by only a plastered wall flush with the street and a small door that opens on the delights of garden and terrace within, the Dodsworths' Villa Canterbury, which had been built for Lord Chevanier in 1880, was set

back from the street, with a lawn and an ilex alley. It was a timbered manor house, half-English and half-Yonkers. The interior was chintz and willow plate and Jacobean oak, and the chief change from his Lordship's day was that the Paris Herald Tribune had ousted the London Times, and the Yale Alumni Magazine the Fortnightly Review.

Not even yet was Hayden up to an eight-thirty-dinner schedule and, arriving at six, he was half an hour early for cocktails, which gave him a chance to study his hosts. Dodsworth was a tall, portly, gray-mustached man, given to quiet listening, and his wife, to whom he referred as Edith, looked somewhat Italian, though Hayden thought that she might have been born in Canada or Massachusetts.

Dodsworth, in his armchair, was a largeness and a solidity; he looked as though he would not willingly move from it. He asked of Hayden, amiably, "Let's see: how long is it now since Monty--your father--died?"

"Ten years ago, and my mother just afterward."

"They were mighty good Americans. Did you know your father used to make applejack in college? Once he gave a party that started at three A.M. and lasted till noon. I lost eleven dollars and a photograph of Sarah Bernhardt, playing penny ante."

"No! Why, he was a crank, though very gentle about it, on the evils of booze and gambling!"

"Well, he ought to have known! How long you staying in Italy, Hayden?"

"I can't tell yet. I had a motor smash, and I'm taking a few months off. I may stay in Florence for--for a fortnight."

"Don't stay in Italy too long--or anywhere else abroad. It gets you. Since I was fool enough to sell the Revelation Motor Company, Edith and I have drifted through India and China and Austria and God knows where all, and this time, we've been back in Italy for three years--course, Edith's been coming here off and on for many years. Well, we tried to go back and live in the States, in Zenith, but we're kind of spoiled for it. Everybody is so damn busy making money there that you can't find anybody to talk with, unless you're willing to pay for it by busting a gut playing golf. And I got to dislike servants that hate you and hate every part of their job except drawing their pay. I like having the girl here bring me my slippers without feeling so doggone humiliated that she rushes out and joins the Communist Party!

"And back home, this last time, I was bored listening to all the men I used to know talking about hunting and fishing and baseball and same old golf. Fishing! Hell, I used to skip down to Florida, one time, and enjoy yanking in a mean tarpon as much as anybody, but when you hear most of those old, gray-haired galoots, the way they talk about catching a vest-pocket black bass, you'd think the man was a ten-year-old brat that had just hooked his first crappie. Kind of immature, they struck me--even fellows that could swing a big traction deal and skin a board of directors that had cut their first teeth on broken bottles.

"And--when I was still in harness in Zenith, I never was the skittish kind, much. I never did like our brand of humor any too well. I always got kind of sour when a smart banker that was a good friend of mine, nice fellow, too, but he always had to yell at you, 'Well, you old horse thief!' After the first twenty-thirty thousand times, I thought that got less original--and every time he saw you, he tried to tickle you. I can get along with awful little tickling! And now I cotton to hearty humor even less than I used to.

"And then I like these hills in Tuscany and the monasteries and villas and the variety of it--get in your car and in an hour or so you're in San Gimignano, looking at those old towers. Starts your imagination working about the old wars and battles right there where you're standing. Or you're in Siena and have lunch out in that old square there and look at that big slender tower and wonder how the devil those old fellows managed to raise those enormous blocks of stone without any of our machinery.

"Afraid I'm not putting up any very good argument about chasing you back home, but I mean--that's what's so dangerous here; you do get to like it and hesitate to go back and face responsibilities, and that would be bad for a young fellow like you. Me--I never can learn this cursed Italian language; Edith has an awful time getting me to say *acqua fresca* when I want a glass of water. But I do like to have food that you can eat and wine that you can drink without paying four and a half bucks at a restaurant for a burnt steak and some fried spuds flavored with penicillin!

"Still, I do get homesick, and I never miss my class reunion in New Haven, never!

"Edith, you better shut me up! I haven't gassed this long for a year. It's having Hayden here, and get in the first crack at him and tell him to beat it, go right home and stay there--and then go downtown and sign another two-year lease on this house. In which, Hayden, we may have Italian servants, but you bet your life we got first-class American central heating!"

Guests were beginning to chatter in, but before the cocktails came, Mrs. Dodsworth led Hayden out on the terrace for the View which, by Florence custom, is advertised along with laundry equipment, garage, cost of upkeep and distance from Leland's Bar.

Although it was masked by the early darkness, Hayden was conscious of power in the aspect of Florence below them in its golden basket, between this hill range of Arcetri and, far across, the Fiesole Hill. Mrs. Dodsworth could point out the scarcely seen tower of the Bargello, Giotto's bell tower, the spire of Santa Croce while, flaunting, soaring, even more whelming than by day in the floodlights which the mists turned to wreaths of floating rose, the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio dominated the world more than any bullying skyscraper of a hundred steel-strapped stories.

As an architect, as a tongueless poet, Hayden was uplifted; as a lonely man on a voyage to find himself, he wondered if down there, in that pattern of sunken stars, he might not find a clue to his lost highway. He was in love, and if only with a city, he knew that he could still move to the magic of love for something.

And then he went in to say Yes, he thought an olive in his dry martini would be fine.

The guests were most of them from the Florentine Anglo-American Colony, which is united only in a firm avoidance of their beloved native lands. There were a few of the scholarly eccentrics for whom Florence has been renowned ever since Dante, but the rest were of the active militia of card players.

Of high rank among the bridge-brigade was Mrs. Orlando Weepswell, a sixty-year-old widow, very rich. She had lived in the handsome Villa Portogallo for twenty years now, and had learned forty-seven words of Italian, most of them meaning "too much" or "too late." She was the daughter of a country pastor and, as a girl, had in a surprised and doubtful way become the bride of a banker and shipowner who was occasionally a congressman, often a Sunday-school teacher, and always a crook. Her Florentine villa had wine-red

brocaded walls and hypothetically antique chairs with tooled- leather seats, but in her bedroom, safe from the jeers of the Colonists, she kept the Hon. Mr. Weepswell's favorite Morris chair.

She was the first person except the amiable Dodsworths to make Hayden feel so warmly at home that he believed he could live as securely and as naturally in Florence as in Newlife.

When you looked at Tessie Weepswell you did not see a woman of sixty but the glove-soft credulous girl who had been sandbagged by the Honorable Orlando. You saw her pretty fleetness and innocence all unchanged, and her eyes undimmed. Her voice was still quivery with enthusiasms about ice cream and kittens and James Whitcomb Riley. It was just that over her face was a dusty veil of many years' weaving which, surely, she could twitch away whenever she chose.

"Now you MUST rent a villa and live here, Mr. Chart," she panted "Honestly, we need you!" (One likes to hear that, especially a shy and warm-hearted man like Hayden.) "The minute I spotted you here I said to myself, 'Now there's a man with sensitive feelings, that ain't a lotus-eater like the rest of us gilded snobs, and that would be real nice to sit and visit with!' And I'll bet you'll learn Italian like a house afire! Do you know any yet?"

"Well, today I've picked up the Italian for 'where is?' and 'veal' and 'consommé with noodles.'"

"My, that's wonderful! In one day! You're a real linguist! But how well do you know your Ely Culbertson?"

"Perfectly."

"I KNEW you were a scholar, minute I laid eyes on you. You're invited to tea at my little shack whenever you feel the least mite lonely."

Hayden was pounced upon then by Augusta Terby--Gus--a fine, flushed, tennis-leaping English girl of thirty, who looked like a roan horse and who was attended by a mamma who looked like a suspicious pony. Augusta believed that all American males were rich, and willing to be espoused and have some one to send out the laundry. She invited Hayden to play tennis and have a nice cup of tea at their villa. He felt more than ever a citizen of this generous frontier village, the Colony, and Augusta felt, as she had not for nearly a week now, that this time she really had solved her matrimonial puzzle, while Augusta's mother asked Hayden how he liked London--a sign of recognition with which she favored very few of these strange, loud American Cousins.

With these pawns there were larger chessmen on the Dodsworths' black-and-white checkered-marble music-room floor. Hayden was privileged to see Sir Henry Belfont, Bart., that mossiest and most moated of British historical monuments, an outsize donjon-tower in morning clothes, with a deerpark of eyebrows, and Lady Belfont, a small and silent American heiress.

Sir Henry welcomed Hayden with what he considered absolute folksiness:

"Ah. An American!"

"Yes."

"Ah! You are staying for some time?"

"I hope so."

"I am afraid you will find our Florentia very provincial, after your resplendent Hollywood and New York!"

Nevertheless, Sir Henry had apparently let him in.

Hayden was most taken with a Santa Claus of a man, beard and round belly and kind, discriminating eyes: Professor Nathaniel Friar, who had come here from Boston almost half a century ago. Friar was talking with his friend Prince Ugo Tramontana, shaven and tall and lean, the last of a fabulous but decayed Tuscan family. Mrs. Dodsworth whispered that these two men were the only near-rivals in Florence of Bernard Berenson in knowledge of early Italian art and love for it. They attended the Dodsworths' clinics because they liked the host and hostess, and because the food was rich and piled high, and neither of them got very much of it at home. They bowed to Hayden amiably, and he felt that he would like such men as neighbors. They were the keepers of the learning that he desired.

All this while, even when he was being bright about backhand shots with Gus Terby, he had been looking past the others at a young woman of twenty-seven or -eight who seemed as out of place as Hayden himself. He thought of ivory as he noted the curious Mediterranean pale-dark hue of her oval face, of her competent hands, which would be smooth to the touch: her cheeks and brow and hands smooth as a horn spoon, as a tortoise-shell box, as an ivory crucifix. Her black hair was parted above the oval ivory face; over her head was a gold-threaded ivory-colored scarf, and her dress was of pure cream-colored wool with no adornment except a broad belt of golden fabric. There was something Latin, something royal in her, something almost holy, free from human vulgarity and all desire except for the perfection of sainthood.

When this paragon joined Professor Friar and Prince Ugo, with whom she seemed to be on terms of familiarity and respect, Hayden asked Mrs. Dodsworth, "Is that girl talking to Mr. Friar an Italian? She could be a principessa."

"No, she's a plain Miss, and she's an American, but she does speak Italian almost well enough for a native. Her name is Olivia Lomond--Dr. Lomond, I suppose it is. She's a professor, or assistant professor or something, in the history department at the State University of Winnemac, of which my Sam is a trustee. That's how we happen to know her, because I imagine she looks down on us bridge maniacs. She's doing research on some manuscript records in the Laurentian Library for a year or so. Would you like to meet her?"

He earnestly would.

Olivia Lomond, when he talked with her, was a little blank; civil enough but not interested. Yes, she was collating some Machiavelli and Guicciardini manuscripts with early official records of Florence; a dusty job, not very rewarding. Yes, she taught at Winnemac: Early European History, especially the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Italy.

Hayden tried, "That's a period that, just now, I'd like to know more than anything in the world, and I'm as ignorant of it as a Colorado sheepherder. It must have so much more than just sword- and-roses romance."

She nodded and she said nothing, but her expression said clearly enough, "Yes, of course you would be ignorant of it; you, the American businessman, the tourist!"

He was piqued, and he boasted, "Naturally, as an architect, I suppose I could draw from memory the floor plans of the Riccardi-Medici palace."

"Oh! Oh, you're an architect? In the States?"

"Out West. Newlife. Do you know it?"

"I'm afraid not--afraid not." Nor did she seem very much to want to know it. She was merely paying a conversational rent on her cocktail. "Do you speak any Italian?"

"I'm afraid not--no." He was determined to be as lofty as this goddess whose ivory veins were filled with ice-cold ink.

"You should speak it."

"Why?"

"If you ask that, you answer me."

"It's not a very important commodity in Newlife. But then, you probably don't think much of Newlife."

"How could I? It just hasn't entered my philosophy of life. I have no doubt it's a very friendly community, with lovely shade trees--one of the most enterprising spots in Nebraska."

He let it go. He disliked her; perhaps, with a little attention to it, he could hate her. She seemed indifferent not only to him but, as she glanced about while they talked, to all males. Only when it fell on old Professor Friar, in his shabby sack suit and ill-regimented beard, was her look kindly. She had bartered her soul for trifles of learning that were no more important, in the atomic age, than a list of Assyrian kings. Suave as ivory, passionless as ivory, Olivia Lomond made him suddenly prize the file-rasping fussing of Mary Eliza Bradbin--about bidding and rubber overshoes and sandwich fillings--as fecund and womanly.

Uninterestedly continuing her social duty, Dr. Lomond droned at Hayden, "Are you staying here for some days?"

Astounded by his own news, he heard himself asserting, "I may stay here for some years!"

"No! Really?"

He had aroused her--to at least as much attention as she would give to a donkey cart in the street, and, as she said "Really?" he had perceived that her voice was beautiful: melodious, rather grave, suitable to a woman all of ivory.

She sounded almost half-interested with, "Are you to have an official position here?"

"No. No job. I shall just be studying--go back to school in my senility. I want to master your blasted Italian speech and history."

But there never was anything so cold as her, "I'm sure that will be amusing," and she turned to talk to Augusta Terby.

He had meant it--for that moment he had. He would set up shop as a scholar; he would be an Erasmus, a Grosseteste, an Albertus Magnus, if only to SHOW this intellectual snob of a lady professor.

But he did not like her enough to hate her; to want to hurt her. Dr. Lomond fascinated him like a rattlesnake on a putting green. He kept looking at her for the rest of the cocktail hour, while she talked, seemingly on level terms, with that great gentleman, that superior historian, Prince Ugo Tramontana. Her voice came across the room to him like the flowing of small waters, not the flat, provincial quacking of so many vigorous young women at home. Whether or not he would attain it, Dr. Lomond was worthy of a good healthy hating.

He would SHOW her, and in her show the whole wide world.

His good-night from Dr. Lomond was as curt as though she did not remember ever having seen him. Her eyes were beautiful, and so unmoved, so superior to all the angry, corrupting temptations of life, he reflected, because she did not know that there were any temptations. He thought rudely, "I'm going to get a D Minus in her class and there is no use trying to bluff her. She wouldn't be angry. She'd just efficiently flunk me."

But the Dodsworths so warmly invited him to return that he still felt at home in Florence.

He planned to walk down the hill to his hotel, and considered himself rather heroic over a foot journey of half an hour. In Newlife a man, unless he be strengthened by carrying a golf club, has to take out his car for any distance of more than three blocks. He found Professor Nathaniel Friar also intending to walk. Apparently to him, walking was not a new invention, startling and rather risky, but a normal means of getting places. So old-fashioned had this Bostonian become in his four decades abroad. They jogged downhill together, looking at the light-pricked city below and at the road lamps looping up the hill to Fiesole, miles away.

"You had an agreeable time, talking to Miss Lomond?" said Professor Friar.

"She seems intelligent. But a little distant."

"She's cool. Women scholars occasionally get like that. They're dedicated. Frequently they aren't certain to what they're dedicated, but clearly it can't be to such wingless objects in trousers as you and I. This Lomond girl is a really competent and accurate compiler of

quite useless facts, so naturally she seems a bit suspect to most men--and to all women. You can't ask females to 'burn with a hard, gemlike flame' and still be obliging about waffles at midnight. Here we are. This is my place. Do come in and see it."

"Professor" Friar, oftener known as Nat, had never been a regularly enlisted professor of anything beyond Veronese wines and the more acceptable sorts of Italian sausages, nor had he ever written anything more popular than articles in journals of art criticism so learned that just the look of the gray, close pages made your eyes ache. But he had explored every Tuscan and Umbrian church and village, and he could tell you the name and dates of every third- cousin of Domenico Ghirlandaio.

For twenty years he had lived in this five-room wing of the massive Palazzo Gilbercini, sharing the geometric gardens and their cypress alleys ending at coy nude statues. He had never been rich, but the securities left to him by his mother, a Trenchard of Braintree, had provided him with a few casks of wine, a great many books in eight languages, a Perugian altar cloth of 1235, half a dozen chairs, a canister of Earl Grey's Mixture tea for his friends, and one noble picture: an Annunciation by Getto di Jacopo, a picture reverent and softly human, soft blues and grays against lambent gold, the kneeling angel so exalted, the Madonna so timidly proud, her head bent over the lily in her fragile hand.

As Hayden stared at the Getto, hung against a faded Egyptian rug above a table bristly with old pipes, he began to take hold of the medieval passion for identification with the divine spirit and its longing for authority, earthly and heavenly. He drank his vermouth and lemon juice--Nat Friar considered cocktails as he would a griffin: exciting but not practical--and he looked at the comfortable frowsiness of Nat and felt at home as he never had felt at home at

home.

Nat Friar was large and fat and thick-bearded and his eyes were cheerful. There always was pipe-ash on his vest; his rather small living room smelled of tobacco and brandy; and he loved to sit up all night and talk about immortality and Baron Corvo and the Lucca Cathedral.

"Why have you lived here so long?" demanded Hayden. "Or is that impertinent?"

"No, nothing more pertinent. In my case, it might seem to be a self-indulgent escape from reality and the dry-goods business, of which my paternal grandfather was a ferocious pioneer armed with a yardstick. But I think my life has been devoted to proving that one can be just as smugly self-righteous and still do no honest work.

"My occupation and my vice are hoarding useless knowledge, I know more about the history of the Palazzo dei Consoli at Gubbio than any other living man, and nobody cares, including myself. And I like to go on sprees of something new: biology or Sanskrit. Learning, for its own winsome, perverse self—hug it to you but keep a club handy. It is the most entertaining of all mistresses, and the least to be trusted.

"Particularly must one avoid the superstition that there is some mystical virtue in erudition. We all feel that some day we shall be sought after by the pretty girls for our spoken Arabic, our kindness to Cousin Mimosa, or the neatness in which we keep our medicine cabinets. We shan't! These virtuous doings should be cultivated for their own sake alone.

"I have of late been peeping into the history of the Baglioni family of Perugia, a charming chronicle, all iron and gold clotted with fraternal blood and the tears of ardent young widows. What subject could be

more beautiful and useless? Guard your idleness. You are surrounded by barbarians armored with sobriety and punctuality and the Book of 1001 Useful Facts. Be ye watchful in sloth, lest ye be corrupted into industriousness and become a Public Figure, a supporter of all worthy causes, a member of the Elks Club and the Légion d'Honneur, and have five hundred citizens enjoy your funeral--at fifty."

"I'm safe," insisted Hayden. "My partner--I'm an architect--thinks I'm poetically impractical. Tell me: how shall I go about learning Italian?"

"Look over the several accredited springs of Tuscan undefiled: the university, the commercial language schools, the highly educated decayed professors who combine Italian grammar with voice-culture and the black-market exchange of dollars. Then forget all of them and get a girl."

"I might!"

"I don't mean one like Miss Lomond, who would teach you Dante's directions to Hell, but one who will teach you IMPORTANT things, like 'These pair of socks by favor to darn' and, 'Bring to me suddenly a plate of anchovies.'"

"Are Dante and anchovies incompatible?"

"Linguistically. I speak an Italian which would thrill the archbishop by its accuracy; I can address a learned academy on the Battle of Cortenuova in Italian, and they will wail with admiration, but when I ask for a pair of shoelaces, the clerk answers me in bad English, and wants to know whether I'm staying in Florence overnight.... By the way, if you'd like, I'll invite you to tea with Miss Lomond. You may find her admirable."

"Well, she might introduce me to some American students more nearly my own mental age--sixteen!"

He sat in what was to become his favorite room in Florence, the bar of the Hotel Excelsior with its dark mirroring wood and its two bartenders, Enrico and Raffaele, the men in town most worth cultivating, and he contentedly planned to stay in Florence for a week, a month, a season. He would pray for a Biblical miracle: to become again as a little child, and go back to school.

Next morning he again climbed the Torre del Gallo Hill, to have by clear light the view he had seen in twilight enchantment. Below him he saw the bronze-red majesty of the cathedral dome, and Giotto's tower--as ivory as Olivia Lomond. Fiesole, across the valley, was sharply defined on a hill silver-gray with olive trees. Florence is a thousand years less old than Rome, yet in its medieval reds and yellows and dark passageways, it seems older, as in New England a moldering gingerbread mansion of 1875 seems more venerable than a severe white parsonage of 1675.

"I'll do it. I'll stay. I'll hunt for Michelozzos, not mallards!" said Hayden.

Dr. Olivia Lomond was at Nat Friar's modest tea, frowning and duskiy beautiful in her plain brown dress--that is, all of her was there except her heart and soul and manners. But Hayden was diverted by the presence of Nat's prim and aged sweetheart, Mrs. Shaliston Baker, whose unubbling fount had been Boston. She was as small and quiet as a sparrow that has been discreetly reared in the Harvard Yard, and she wore her grandmother's cameo brooch. She spoke exquisite Italian, even if her English did smack a little of flapping codfish tails and the clatter of lead-foil in chests for China tea. She belonged to the Dante Society, which meets to discuss the longing of Florence to get Dante's poor exiled corpse back from stubborn Ravenna. It is an up-to-date topic, and has been so since 1320.

Every Sunday for a fifth of a century, these reserved lovers, Ada Baker and Nat, had had tea together.

Nat gave them food as noble as the Samuel Dodsworths', and Hayden guessed that he would by considerable omission in his own meals make up for this fedora cake, which is the Florentine specialty, with chocolate and whipped cream on it, and for the hot American toast, the honey from Monte Rosa, the tea and blackberry jam and ginger from London.

There were peacefulness and chatter. Nat chronicled his search for a lost altarpiece of Guiduccio Palmerucci through lofty, wind-raked hill towns of Umbria; a tale of sleeping on stone floors, living on bread and olives, and finding that one village was gaily planning to beat him to death as a tax-spy from Rome. Hayden suspected that Nat's confession of being unable to buy shoelaces in Italian had been a great and gentlemanly lie, and that the old fraud could actually speak an Italian as colloquial, bloodthirsty and beautiful as a Neapolitan taxi-driver's.

As the talk passed to Dr. Lomond, hers was no glimpse of romantic espionage in mountain passes at twilight, but a complaint about the dusty-eyed, head-cracking drudgery of pawing over a thousand papers in her present investigation of the maternal source of Duke Alessandro de' Medici—the one who was so wholesomely murdered in 1537. The Duke's mother, sighed Dr. Lomond, did not seem to have been a lady of doubtful virtue. She just didn't have any virtue to be doubtful about.

From both of these hygienic ghouls Hayden had clues to an erudition which should not be a smart assemblage of facts to equip a man who should have been an auctioneer or a train-caller to "get a Ph.D.", nor a putting on of spangled intellectual costumes to impress the

dullards, nor a job, nor a gentlemanly way of passing the time, but a gently ruthless, secretly panting, rival-murdering hunt for the facts which are the bones of truth; an unremitting war in which your quick and sympathetic allies are men and women who have themselves been historic facts for five hundred years.

Such scholarship he had never beheld in Newlife, and even in Amherst College and in his school of architecture, it had been rare, and not considered quite well bred, nor useful for grabbing a Full Professorship.

When Jesse Bradbin went in his swift automobile on a sightseeing tour, Jesse explained, "Ah, what the hell, you don't want to learn too doggone much about all these Beauty Spots and Points of Interest. Just give 'em the once-over and see what they're like and be able to say you've been there. When I'm on a tower, if I can't kill five hundred miles a day, I figure I'm wasting my time, and if my wife hollers about missing the scenery, I tell her, 'Oh, we'll catch that on the way back--maybe!'"

That philosophy of Bradbin, pompously offered at the country-club bar as something new and valuable, caused no riots or harsh cries of offended dignity. "Yuh, that's so," agreed the president of the Ranchers and Silver National Bank.

The tyro Hayden was as moved. It was not with hostility or with a flirtatiousness that winked to itself that he petitioned Dr. Lomond, as they tramped together from Nat's down to the tramline, "I wish you'd do me the favor of having dinner with me this evening, if you are free."

"I don't know--uh--Mister--Chart? I'm not sure I can...."

He was sick of all his meekness. "Then you know damn well you can! Come on!"

"But I would prefer..."

"If you're one of these independent females that insist on paying their own share, I don't mind. We can go dutch."

"I don't insist on anything of the kind! I'm delighted to find a man who will buy me a dinner! I'm lucky when I'm out with some wistful young male student--SO sensitive and clever--and don't have to buy HIS! Italy may be the home of gallantry, but lone lady grinds don't often get invited to dinner."

"Not even when they're beautiful?"

"Not even when they're VERY beautiful!"

With that, she surprisingly smiled at him, and looked nearly human.

"Where shall we go?" he asked.

"Let's see--maybe Oliviero's or the Paoli or Nandina's. Nandina's is light and bright and quiet and great food. Usually, when I don't mournfully stay at my pensione for dinner, I get taken to one of these frantic student hang-outs, the kind they call 'Bohemian,' which means noisy and not very clean, tables elbow-to-elbow, filled with American G.I. graduate students and Belgian painters and White Russians whose only profession is being White Russians and English ladies whose only profession is living in small villas back of other villas. They're all so poor. I hate poor people! I'm so poor myself!"

"Those--uh--Bohemian restaurants sound pretty interesting, though," confessed the tourist. "But we'll go to Nandina's tonight."

He so far reverted to the meekness which he had sworn to forswear as to chuck masculine pride and ask her to do the ordering of dinner.

While she rattled the menu, he was fixed on Dr. Olivia Lomond; he saw that at her neck and the wrists of her sexless workaday brown dress were little edgings of fine Burano lace, somehow touching. Her hands were not small. They had the untiring competence of a workman, of a peasant, but they were extraordinarily smooth, and there was an anxious gesture toward feminineness in the two small ruby rings that betrayed her strong fingers. And he noticed that her nails were slightly tinted now. They had not been so at the Dodsworths'. Had she put this on for the tea-party--for him?

But his feeling that there might be ardor buried in her was killed by her mechanical questions, neither liking him enough to rejoice in his presence nor yet fearing him enough to be at all wary with him.

"I suppose you have made some progress in your plan to study Florence?"

"No--just wandered around, you know, walked 'round."

"Anything you've especially liked?"

"No--oh, lot of different things."

And they fell silent and looked at a family birthday party at a table across the room. There was about the family nothing of the faded gold of aristocracy nor yet of the "quaint and picturesque natives" for whom the three-day tripper seeks. They were all volubly Italian, but in look and dress the father might have been a businessman of London or Glasgow or Pittsburgh. He was the type of tall, busy and competent engineer or salesman who was trying to rebuild Italy after two wars and two million foreign tourists. His wife would have seemed normal in Stockholm or Des Moines. But in their exuberant family affection they did differ from the couples whom Hayden knew. And the grandmother laughed in secret intimacy with the youngest

child; the middle-sized small boy burlesqued his bachelor uncle's flourishing way of eating an artichoke, and the uncle laughed loudest of them all.

"Families! They seem to exist here, still," wondered Hayden.

"And they did all through Italian history. A brother would either murder his brother--which, I suppose, may be one way of showing keen domestic interest--or else he would go out to a neighboring tower and murder a rival family there, to keep his brother in the Council. All Italian history is made up of layers of families."

Hayden complained, "Seems to me that at home the children consider the house just a free inn and rental garage. And we older deserters: I have two sisters and a brother who live in four different states and don't see one another twice in a decade, and I have three nephews--no, four it is now, I guess--that I've never seen at all!"

Dr. Lomond sounded regretful, her cold independence betrayed by memory. "Sometimes I've thought I'd like to be the founder of a family, like those grand old American women who went West in a Conestoga wagon. Then, maybe, one would never be lonely."

"Ah! You get lonely here, too!"

She abruptly cloaked her wistfulness again, and said sharply, "Never! Not now, I mean."

"Didn't you a little when you first came to Europe?"

She studied her forkful of long ivory-colored strands of tagliatelli; she seemed shyly to be remembering the girl student that had been, and she answered with some March-morning warmth in her voice:

"I'm afraid I was, first. I would tell myself that I was a trained traveler. Hadn't I gone way off to graduate school at Columbia, with mother's lunch, deviled-ham sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs, in a shoebox? And in EUROPE--oh, I COULDN'T get lonely, all this to see, and I had plenty of resources in myself; I could read and think, couldn't I? Not like girls who had to have flattery from slobbering men all the while. Besides, I scolded myself, I had been adequately conditioned to loneliness in my first year of teaching at Winnemac; I just corrected papers there and took long walks.

"So I surely couldn't be anything but cheerful in the panorama of Europe. But I was lonely in Paris, I was lonely in Rome, and when I first came to Florence, nearly two years ago... I'm not impressed by these celebrated lonely prisoners who made a pet of a rat. I made a pet of a housefly."

"But you can't!"

"I did!"

"How could you tell... ?"

"There was only one in my room--winter it was, too cold for flies, but this one, really, he was the bravest, most clever little fly. His name was Nicky."

"How did you know?"

"He told me so."

"Of course."

"The minute I'd come back to my room from the library and take off my jacket, he'd be there lighting on it--perhaps barking a welcome in

some infinitesimal way. Nights, he slept on the hot-water tap, always. He never touched my breakfast till I had finished it; just walk on the rim of the tray and look at the pot of honey. He would take walks on my hand without tickling me--quite the most refined fly in Florence--and the only person here that I knew well, till I met Professor Friar. Don't you call that a loneliness of distinction--to be ecstatic over a housefly?"

"Yes, that's big league. What happened to Nicky?"

"He passed away. From pneumonia. He is now buried, though without a tombstone, in a volume of Mirandola manuscript letters in the Laurentian Library."

"I understand him, slightly," said Hayden. "When I first went off to college, there was an imitation oriental rug in my room, and because I was too scared to find one single happy thing to do, the first four-five days, I sat mooning over that rug till it occurred to me that one of the figures in it was like a dancing girl, young and gay, with whirling ballet skirts and gold stockings--darling, rather small face, excited and innocent."

"Her imaginary smile kept me alive all that first week in college. The next fall, she had vanished, sold along with her rug, to some sordid flesh-dealer. But last night, here at my hotel, when I was drearily thinking that, after all, I might drift on to Rome, I saw her again in my bedroom rug: dancing in a different show now, very different costume, silly costume, feather boa and a huge muff and a lively little pillbox cap, but there she was, cheering me again, bidding me stay here, for she would comfort me.... Seventeen years later!"

"I would not have supposed you were so imaginative, Mr. Chart."

"Why not?" (A little huffily.)

"No reason. Just my stupidity. I'm a hermit, in a cell roofed over with books, looking for gallantry in the trecento, and so I miss it when it stands right in front of my cell, I suppose."

"What did you think I'd be like--Olivia?"

"Oh--efficient, clean, kind, devoted to your wife and children and your friends and your favorite daily paper--though I'm sure you have risen from the sports page to the editorial."

"Is that a rise? Well, my wife is dead, I have no children, and only very casual friends, and my partner in architecture--at least by preference he would not be an architect at all but a salesman and a penny-grinder: Jesse Bradbin--he's an illiterate, and yet I like him and admire him and his wife, Mary Eliza, better than anybody else in Newlife. I was as lonely as I am here--only busier there."

"Oh."

"But I don't know that your diagnosis of me as a page with nothing printed on it except dollar signs is so far wrong. I think most of us are simply patterns of clothes and habits of work and the same way of saying good morning, invariably. 'Mornin', mornin', mornin', well, how are you, this fine beautiful morning!' Jesse screams, every day, rain, shine, or snow, and then I feel so superior to him, but I'm no better.... I just glare, and probably it's always the same glare. That must be one of the great pleas of religion: that if a man hasn't a precious soul behind all this unchanging blankness, then he's a pretty shabby animal!

"I've always been busy; busy as a son, busy as a college brat. My specialties then were tennis (gone rusty) and history (forgotten) and draftsmanship (good). Afterwards I was busy as an architect. And as

the husband of my popular wife... I don't know that I have any personality at all, really. (Not that you have ever asked me about it!) Maybe I'll find a personality here."

"I think you're probably hard on yourself, Mr. Chart."

"No. Let's face it--as people say when they want to be unpleasant."

"But you seem to be unusually kind and fair--for a MAN!"

"You don't like men much?"

"Why should I? From my university president, that back-slapping, endowment-hounding old fraud, looking for generals and judges to whom he can give honorary degrees in return for publicity, from him or from the head of my department, that dyspeptic old phonograph--and he thinks Cesare Borgia should have been a Y.M.C.A. secretary--from them to the dumbest young man in my classes--who's only a bit younger than me, really, and not as good a dancer, but he says he hates being taught by a stringy old maid like me--oh, the whole lot of males that I know best have very successfully combined to keep me an apologetic schoolteacher instead of a hard-boiled scholar who would slap down my academic betters when they're my worse."

"But isn't there--isn't there something else, some resentment, something personal..."

"We won't go into that!"

"I'm sorry, Olivia--honestly. It was just the intrusion of a lonely pilgrim who considers you splendid and somewhat intimidating. You'll forgive me, Olivia? I'm so harmless--disgustingly so!"

"It's all right. Let's forget it--Hayden."

"Okay. Olivia, do you plan to stay very long in Italy?"

"Just as long as I can manage it, by swindling or armed robbery."

"What is your home—I mean, what do you think of as your home? Zenith, like Mr. Dodsworth?"

"Never!"

"Where then? In America, I mean."

"Nowhere in America! My real home is anywhere, anywhere at all, on the Continent of Europe—except maybe Russia; any place where they drink wine instead of ice water and tomato juice, and where they don't consider the World's Series and madam's new vanity case the most exalted topic of conversation."

"So you're that famous scoundrel, the escapist, the expatriate."

"Escape? Why not escape from a world of gas pumps and canned soup to a world where 'the wind sets in with the autumn that blows from the region of stories'?"

"Yes. I still like Swinburne."

"Oh."

He could but grin at her slight inflation, and something resembling a smile warmed her face, like the sun after cold dawning. She demanded, "You read poetry?"

"Not much. I used to. But there are men who do read it."

"Oh--MEN! Lumbering, lecherous, jocular animals! But they don't smell clean, like the animals; they smell of pipes and pork chops and

onions and shaving cream. With their grimaces that are supposed to delight a maiden's heart and that just give away their itch for sly conquest. Men! My dear Mr. Chart! My innocent Hayden!"

No. She was detestable.

7

No. She was little likely to be an intimate of his, he thought as they finished dinner. He had that chilled feeling, familiar even to so unflirtatious a man, of finding a pretty girl at a party, finding her warm and fetching, then having her, for no evident reason, turn into a stranger.

But he still admired Olivia's assured tautness and a moving strength in her that was fantastically different from the swishing excitements of an Art Appreciation Class. When he was with her he felt that it would not be an effeminate hobby but solid work for a man to stay here--for a while--and labor to understand the strangely flowering beauty of the Middle Ages. He would bathe in the magic and perilous waters of medieval history: proud-colored, hot, heroic, vicious knights in armor that had been decorated by voluptuous goldsmiths, dungeons and silent convents, exiles on Venetian galleys standing east for Cyprus. He was lost in an enchantment of which he did not understand even the vocabulary.

If only he could be guided through this wizardry by Olivia, whose hands lay still on the table, hands not thin and meanly desirous but arrogant, ivory in every line carved to loveliness. The hollow between her thumb and forefinger was a polished curve. They were hands that could grasp and hold, and they excited him even while he was talking prosily:

"If I stay here, I'd like to get a sort of permanent place cheaper than the big hotels. Have you any ideas?"

"The pensione I'm living in, the Tre Corone, is all right. The furniture is simple and the food is good and--this interests a professional romanticist like myself--it occupies two floors of one of the oldest Florentine houses, the Palazzo Spizzi."

To invite him, or at least permit him, to be near to her, near to her ivory hands, her lips that were dark-red in a lovely and tragic ivory mask--that stirred him, till he reflected that she was probably so indifferent to him that she did not care whether he lived next door or in Novaya Zemlya.

Nor did she mention the pensione again, as they finished dinner and tramped to the Spizzi. But next day he was busily inspecting it.

A palazzo in Italy signifies only a large house, usually of stone, built a few hundred years ago for a very rich and very noble family who became very rich and noble by conducting a war, with a large cut in the pillage, or by lending money to popes and kings and dukes who conducted wars. These houses are lordly, rivaled today only by movie theaters. In Florence, the Palazzo Spizzi, on the Lungarno not far from the Ponte Vecchio, is one of the lordliest, with granite walls in rough rustica.

There are surly, prison-barred windows on the ground floor, but on the four floors above, elegant Gothic windows with stone tracery. Along the street are bronze torch-holders, and rings for tethering the horses of knights dead these five hundred years, with a long stone bench on which once lounged the armed servants of the magnate, waiting for commands which might mean fun or death, and probably both.

You go through an arched gateway into an arcaded central court, with

high-colored heraldic shields and one sacred fresco on the smooth stone walls. The court and its little statues of lyric fauns are dominated by a vast stone stairway. Here, the Medici hurried, and the Pazzi, Bardi, Rucellai, Cavalcanti. One of them, one day, walked in white carnival satin that suddenly, here on this green-molded spot, became streakily variegated with red, as the expert assassin from Forlì slid in his dagger. And over there, most briefly afterward, the assassin had his toes lightly toasted before his head was jaggedly hacked off.

In this niche of crimson and gold and crocus-colored mosaic, a Spizzi garroted his ardent bride. It is now a rented storage space for bicycles.

Since 1550, even Florence has changed. Today, the doors along the arcade give on the office of a Polish refugee specialist in radiotherapy, a tearoom kept by an old English lady, an embroidery shop kept by an even older Scotch lady, and a ferocious left-wing book shop kept by two young Welsh ladies who play piano duets and admire Jacob Epstein and drink nothing but vodka and diuretic mineral water.

You pant up the stairs to the offices of machinery agents and of buyers representing stores in Dallas, Montreal and Oslo. The two floors above these constitute the Pensione Tre Corone, and up to it climbed Hayden Chart. It was a racking ascension, but Hayden felt strong and fresh, his accident healed over.

In a standard pensione hallway of green rep walls, a reed chair and a mummied palm, a door painted with ferocious roses was opened for him by an extremely handsome Italian young man wearing the man-about-Florence standard uniform of wavy black hair, cigarette, checkered brown-and-gray sports jacket and gray slacks. Hayden did not at all care for the thought of this jazz satyr living in the house

with Olivia, and he was relieved at the coming of Mrs. Manse, the manager.

She was a small, active Italian widow who had married a Birmingham traveling salesman and lived for years in England. She spoke English like an A.B.C. teashop waitress, a refined duchess, a Cardiff coal miner and a Tuscan peasant, all at once.

"Oh, yes, we have a very nice room with a love-ely view of the Duomo and the Santa Annunziata and Fiesole and EVERYTHING and a private bath--ooh, just like home. But you're not English, are you?"

"I'm an American."

"Ow... Well, we quite like Americans here--the better class. You are not married?"

"No."

"But then, you're not the wild sort that would want to be entertaining--uh--PEOPLE in your room, and I'm sure you will want full pensione."

"What is that?"

"Both luncheon and dinner here daily. It's so much more satisfactory, you know, to have your meals here, ALL of them, and not go risking your digestion at these restaurants. Res-tau-rants! And not knowing what you're getting and the pasta stale and the veal tough and no pure Chianti, such as we serve. Mrs. Engineer Purdy, one of our very oldest guests, often says to me, 'Signora, I simply do not understand how you can afford to serve such love-ely pure unmixed Chianti at the shockingly low price we pay here!' And of course she KNOWS! So shall we say full pensione?"

"No, I plan to take at least one meal a day out."

"It's a mistake, but of course I never even give advice to my gentlemen but it's a mistake and quite hard on me, with such lovely clean rooms and serving such a variety of food and the butter always fresh, at such shockingly low prices as you pay, but shall we say half-pensione then?"

They would say that, yes, with luncheon taken here, Hayden agreed, proud of being so businesslike in securing his first Italian home and forgetting only to ask the amount of those shockingly low prices. He was dazed by the Anglo-Italian verbal hemorrhage and yet he felt secure. He had lived with Mrs. Manse, under different names and accents, in Newlife, Amherst, Denver, New York, London, and he knew that he would be cheated only the correct proportion.

"And when you are not able to be here for colazione, will you kindly let me know twenty-four hours beforehand? So many gentlemen are thoughtless about that," said Mrs. Manse.

She introduced him to a bedroom, smallish, square, with blank plaster walls, which yet delighted him, for the one window was Gothic-pointed and the ceiling was groined. It had surely been part of some greater salon in the early palace, or perhaps of a chapel, and the clean bareness of it was proper for the studious monk he meant to become.

The varnished yellow pine bed was narrow, not bad; there was a large white wardrobe for clothes, a large white table for the notes on Italian history that he would certainly be making and for the profound books that he would certainly buy and possibly even read.

There was a hideous but comfortable yellow-velvet armchair with a fiddle-shaped back, a straight chair, a pinched radiator, and a

composition stone floor, with a rug beside the bed.... But he looked unsuccessfully for his dancing girl in the rug.

The bathroom was little larger than the ancient tub, but it was adequate, and even contained articles which seemed to Hayden somewhat perplexing and certainly of great superfluosness. One of these was a bootjack. He had ridden horses in the Berkshire Hills, on dude ranches, on the cheery camping journeys through the Rockies on which Caprice had been both at her most complaining and her most recklessly gay, but he did not think it likely that he would ride a Western pony up to the Palazzo Spizzi and tether it to one of the great bronze rings below.

The place seemed to him almost voluptuous when Mrs. Manse explained that only one bedroom in three at the Tre Corone had its private bath.

What starred his room and filled it with light and stimulation for the daytime was the window and the vista of towers and fourteenth-century battlements and, down below, the humbler roofs of tiles, cherry-colored, soft rose, violent crimson or pale orange, above yellow-plaster walls. A top-floor tenement down there—it was, he learned afterwards, above a ground-floor leather shop full of gold-tooled purses and small jewel boxes—had an open loggia and a terrace with geraniums and with goldfinches in cages, and a broad-sterned woman was hanging out a hot red shirt to dry. He would be seeing real Florentines, and not just palace walls, spacious but decaying.

Mrs. Manse, that unlaureated mistress of psychology, knew that he would take this room. She knew! When he did, at last, remember to confer delicately about the price, he was so under the spell that she overcharged him grossly: she charged him at least one-half as much as such a cell would have cost in America.

He did not quite dare to ask how near to his own door was that of Dr. Olivia Lomond. He found later that it was eight from his, round a corner of the matting-covered stone corridor.

All this was on the upper floor of the pensione. On the floor below were still more bedrooms--there were twenty-eight in all-- with the office, the dining room, the lounge. The dining room was simple and white and cheerful, with white-clothed tables for one or two or four, each of them with coquettish napkin rings and a tight bouquet of asters and, usually, a Chianti bottle. The serving- table--the credenza--had once been an over-gorgeous drawing-room table of marquetry with gilded metal edges.

The lounge must have been a great salon of the ferocious and devoutly pious Spizzi family: lofty, vaulted, cold. Around somewhat dreary damask-covered tables, displaying Italian motoring magazines, were modern chairs artfully but unhappily devised of twisted red-stained wood, or aged refugee chairs from destroyed parlors, resembling indigent gentlewomen. There was a case of novels and travel books which fleeing guests had intelligently left behind: a French guidebook to Sicily dated 1899 and such romances as *Lively Lassie o' London Town*, by Mrs. Beth Levinson Knibbs-Crochet.

In this clean shabbiness you could rest familiarly enough, and the lounge windows looked down on the Ponte Vecchio, that venerable bridge of shops devoted now to sellers of artificial pearls and not to Donati defending the crossing with loud swords.

Late that afternoon, with small trunk and ill-assorted bags and a hastily purchased new blue-silk cravat, Hayden moved into his cell at the Tre Corone.

He met his floor maid, Perpetua a smiling, black-eyed, powerful woman of fifty, only just slightly felonious, who would also be his waitress, valet, chamberlain, social arbiter, and chief professor in the Italian tongue: a low-built peasant in black dress and white apron who seemed to be on duty from five A.M. to midnight.

Shyly, not knowing how he should dress, he went down to his first dinner, at eight, to risotto and boiled beef, and met most of the Tre Corone guests. They too were in lounge clothes. In treachery to all tradition, there was no retired British colonel with lady, nor even a British major or vicar.

He encountered, instead, a Hungarian widow of fifty and her daughter, highly polylingual and undevoted to Bolsheviks, a round-faced American graduate student who listened to and sometimes understood lectures on Italian art at the university, an out-of-favor Italian ex-diplomat, a Dutch baron devoted to cameos, to Americans and other novelties, an Italian lawyer with three daughters, a soured French silk-buyer, and an Italo-American agent for documentary films, who wanted to discuss trout-fishing in Maine with Hayden.

Dr. Lomond--Olivia--sat by herself at a small table and read the air-mail continental Time. She looked at Hayden twice before she remembered him (that is what she thought he would think) and she nodded and said nothing and went back to reading about Congressman Marcantonio, the latest biography of Susan B. Anthony, murder by a balding man late at night in a rubber-boot warehouse, revolution in the Celebes, the mortality rate in successor-disease affecting former confidants of Stalin, chemobiologimicrophotography in the University of Leyden, and the other brighter topics of the day. Olivia's compressed lips were hidden from him by the Time cover, portraying, in color, a fabulous chain-store organizer, with a background of prunes, motorcycles, cash

registers and bathing caps, and instead of Olivia's glass-smooth cheeks or hostile, inquiring eyes, Hayden studied only his plate of saffron-yellow rice.

8

Out of his plastered cell, Hayden made a cluttered and familiar home. It was, possibly, the first home he had ever had. In boyhood, "home" had been aggressively his father's house, and in his marriage, their three successive houses had been saturated with Caprice and her clamorous friends.

In a second-hand shop he bought a couple of low tables, a small rosy armchair and a shaky set of bookshelves that had been used for bottles. At Alinari's he got color prints of the Primavera and Angelico's Great Crucifixion and the fairyland of Benozzo Gozzoli's gold and crimson courtier pilgrims.

In the book shops he went on a spree. He bought histories of Florence in English, English-Italian grammars and dictionaries, a Cambridge history of the Renaissance, and in Italian he had books which he certainly would not be able to tackle for two years: Dante and Petrarch, Manzoni's classic *I Promessi Sposi*, which is written in hedgerows and not in lines, Machiavelli's *Prince*, and a volume of Giovanni Villani's Florentine history--a brand-new edition, dated 1650.

He had, in fact, all of a university except the yell and the bursar's office.

His exploration of Florence, begun immediately, was not altogether that of the enraptured and credulous tourist, for Hayden Chart was an architect, a good one, not unlearned, and he saw the purposes of

arches and buttresses; his eye picked up ornamental iron balconies and in apparent mere gaps between buildings he detected minute streets leading to some lost square with a little church, an old, very old, very holy church sheltering the tomb of a spacious Platonist who in 1492 was discovering the old world as dangerously as Columbus was finding the new.

He went graspingly at learning Italian, a tongue reputed among the untutored to be all melody and tra-la-la's and mobile dames and ice-cream cries, but actually so thorny with perverse irregular verbs and pronouns that have more exceptions than rules and suffixes meaning Big, Pretty Big, Very Big, Enormously Big, Little, Delightfully Little, Nasty, or Perfectly Horrible that most tenderfoot students give it up, moaning, after learning how to make love and order a meal.

He looked into the official Italian Language course at the University, but it was all in Italian from the first, too much for the halting brain of thirty-five. He tried a School of Languages, but he did not feel stimulated by his fellow-students: Anglo-American women who, after housekeeping in Florence for a decade, had decided that it was time to find out what they had really been eating all these years, or English businessmen who wanted to sell British machinery, or the aunts of American European Relief Program officials, all of whom interrupted the lessons to explain what they thought about Italy, with an urgency which indicated that they believed the natives, from dope-runners to the President, were pantingly waiting for their verdicts.

Hayden found, through Mrs. Dodsworth, a Signora Pendola, an oldish fat widow with an umbrella and elastic-sided shoes, afflicted with bronchitis and sadness of the heart, tired, so poor and tired, but a patient teacher, with a voice like Eleonora Duse. Hayden was fond of her and treated her as though she were his mother. Before each lesson, down in the salon, he had the waiter bring the Signora a cup

of tea, and she announced that he was the kindest American since that born Yankee hustler, Julius Caesar.

Along with her instruction, he daily studied his book of grammar, but this seemed to be another Italian. Rarely did any of the words which he painfully drilled into himself from the printed lists slip over into normal conversation.

As he learned each phrase from the Signora, Hayden tried it out on the maid, Perpetua, who, being Italian and generous, did not find it funny when he meant to ask her to sew on a button, but gravely made it, "By favor, I pray of cook those stick on my shirtmakeress." He tried his new words in shops, in small restaurants. The friendly Florentines were pleased that the stranger should want to know their tongue, and he began to love the gently grave men, the flexibly moving women.

He had thought, at first, that the Italian women had noses too long--from the nasal standard of American magazine-cover girls--but presently he was convinced that these ALMOST long noses were part of a medieval grace and long flying lines that ought to be seen not in the chopped-off smart New York styles which prosperous Italian women wear today, but in a fluency of trailing silk, soft green trimmed with silver and rare furs. He noted with comfort that Olivia Lomond's nose was one one-hundredth of an inch longer than the severe Colorado norm, and he felt that if he should ever see Roxanna Eldritch's pert snub nose again he would consider it truncated and vulgar.

As rudely as though he were flagrantly picking her up at a railroad station, he tackled Olivia at her icy island table and insisted that she go on a walk with him. She consented indifferently, and as they tramped together, squeezed close by the exigency of a two-man-wide alley, they still seemed as far apart as at the pensione. He worked hard then, as young men of thirty-five or eighty-five do, to

convince her that he was a devilish clever fellow. She might know all about the bellicose families who once had fought from these rough towers, but he could tell her what foundation a tower must have and how much it tapered and what the square holes in the walls were for.

She came to treat him as being almost as decent and capable a human being as Perpetua. She did not mock him--much.

With Olivia or by himself he looked at the great churches--Or San Michele, Miniato, Santa Croce, Maria Novella, San Marco, the Battistero--and at the galleries till he understood how a Giotto differed from a Spinello Aretino. He began, a little, to follow the symbolism whereby a pictured saint portrayed both the saint and a Medici, and a red star marked St. Dominic; to see that a picture in which the misdrawn toes were as long as fingers and the children were only dwarf grown-ups could yet in the whole composition hold ecstasy and delight.

But he also discovered that the one place colder than his own room at two A. M. was any Italian church, north of Naples, at ten A. M. on a February day. The rosiest Madonna looked blue-frozen as the malicious air crept up from a crypt that had grown colder, winter by winter, for centuries. He admired the fortitude of the Italians: beardster and babies cheerful at Mass while he fled outdoors to get warm.

And he found the smoochers--he worked out the Doctrine of Smoochers.

Smoochers--the word was Hayden's own; first blooming of his Florentine poetic revelations--are those shaggy and lumbering men who in a church or a ruined palace or a public square pop out of a vacuum, guides and sextons and loafers and plain floor-sweepers, who with hazy but persistent firmness wreck and ruin and shatter the

still raptness in which you have been contemplating a facade or, say, a Ghirlandaio by telling you that, remarkably enough, it IS a church or a Ghirlandaio. You knew it already. That is why you went there.

The English spoken by smoochers lacks not only verbs but adjectives and they good-naturedly date Simone Martini as anywhere from 1140 to 1760. But if you are sorry for them as being needy, you can usually persuade them to let you alone by instantly insulting them with a fifty-lire note.

Subdivisions of the smoochers, indoors and out, include insistent post-card sellers, sellers of bead necklaces and of fountain pens, and would-be changers of dollar bills.

In the great churches, he thought often of how Jesse Bradbin would have snorted, "But what's the PRACTICAL use of all this old art?" And in imaginary answer he insisted that it seemed to him improbable that one who had much contemplated Or San Michele or a Botticelli would willingly allow himself or any one else to become just a file number in a bureaucracy such as Russia now is and America and Great Britain threaten to be.

Along with the English Cemetery, where rests Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and such little-altered medieval quarters as the toy Piazzetta Elisabetta, he paid suit to modern Florence: to some dozen restaurants, to shops for silver and china and lace and gold-embossed leather, and to the county-family pleasantness of the Anglo-American Pharmacy, and he studied the tribal rites of the resident Americans at Doney's and Leland's, the tearoom bars, to which go equally the more dependable drunks and the crisp American girls being finished off in finishing schools, who believe that to see Inside Italy means to go downtown and have pastry with whipped cream.

The American Colony is divided into three parts: those who have their cocktails at Leland's or Doney's, a small sect who have them at home, either with firelight and old silver and a butler and many guests or, by the good tradition of Bohemian poverty, with boxes to sit on round the kitchen stove and the drinks mixed in a broken-nosed pitcher, and the third part, a tiny and suspect group, which does not have cocktails.

Hayden himself—he had daily only an Americano, that mixture of vermouth and kindness of which no American ever hears till he comes to Italy.

A Florentine might have pointed out to Hayden that in defining a city of palaces and paintings and bars, he was missing nine-tenths of the living community: a post-war world of workers jobless or anxious in hospitals, small officials with meat once a month and wine at Christmas, repressed but angry citizens hating the well-fed foreigners who came brightly to gloat over a Filippo Lippi Madonna and never learned that a descendant of Filippo was hauling garbage. But Hayden understood all of this. Even in new Newlife he had built tenements. He was more moved by poverty among American students here.

He met American girl students whose life here was a storm of frustration, between a passion to stay in Florence and apprehension that it would keep them from going on to see the rest of Italy— Rome, Milan, Turin; a passion to remain in Italy and fear that they were becoming unfitted for the ways, the friends, back home. Half their anxieties, thought Hayden, would be soothed if they only had enough money to move flexibly, and he a little despised such burghers as himself and the Dodsworths, who were so amiably and pointlessly advisory to the shabby students.

The most exhilarating part of his new life was in his quiet room at the

Tre Corone, finding himself.

It was a secret life, a life that he hugged to him. In studious solitude he saw winter pass like blown smoke. Half the night he sat up trying to read medieval history in the Italian of Villani, of Guicciardini, and meditating upon the meaning, to himself and to his day, of that world of authority, ceremony, color, and enchanting but just slightly cockeyed fables. To rest his eyes he had, on his portable radio, Mozart from Milan.

He read on nightly, till he felt uncomfortable and was dismayed to find that his room was slush-cold. The Florentine winter lasts only from mid-December to March, and in that season there are luminous days, but there are also jeeringly cold nights and days together when the tramontana wind comes devastatingly down from the Alps three pinched days at a spell, blowing pitilessly, playing rowdy with the tiles and shutters, chasing the night policemen down the streets and into bicycle-storage alcoves, marching through Hayden's northward-facing window as though it were a paper screen.

In the tramontana's shriek of an ice-tortured fiend, Hayden thought he could catch a stated tune: rising, rising, rising to a scream, a sullen sinking down again, and rising, rising.

By day, he could see the olive tree on a terrace below him turn altogether silver, with its sheet of leaves so lifted by the gale that he saw only the undersides, while a cypress tree bent over in twisting pain. The tempest seemed worst during the fits of grudging sunshine when, afar, he could see the aloof and whitened peaks of the Pistoia Mountains coldly leering at this uncouth stranger who once had talked of "sunny Italy."

Mrs. Manse let her radiators go cold before midnight, and at one in the morning the cold in Hayden's room seemed visible, a part of the

pallid walls and glistening stone floor. Cold was in his eyeballs, in his chest, and his breath was coldly vaporous. He understood why beggars, hopeless at night on winter doorsteps, crouched themselves together.

He had had words with Mrs. Manse about an electric heater, and had bought one for himself: a good little Italian electric stove composed of two sheets of glass with wires between. It glowed obedience to its scholar-master, but it could not do much more than keep itself warm and, impatiently determined to go on reading, Hayden huddled his overcoat and scarf over his woolen dressing-gown and, to crown this costume of a lone miser, he put on his polite brown hat.

His immensest luxury was a cup-size Italian aluminum stove with sticks of Meta compound for fuel, and pulverized instant coffee. Nearly warmed by his coffee, he thought of what he had been reading: Lodovico il Moro, taking his nephew's throne in Milan, playing gaudy host and patron to religious painters and dying a flea-tortured prisoner in France.... Pico della Mirandola, fairest and most febrile youth of the Renaissance, learning Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, challenging the College of Cardinals, and dying at thirty-one, to be buried over here in the cold gloom of San Marco.

It was all magic. With pleasant recognition he found himself and his vigils in Il Penseroso when he picked up some English poetry on a book barrow on the Piazza D'Avanzati. The night-bewitched scholar, timeless and immortal, from a Colorado boomtown of 1950 or from the Florence of 1490, Hayden or Count Pico, all of them in all their shabby majesty he found as he read Milton's "lamp at midnight hour, seen in some high lonely tower," where the hermit sought "forests and enchantments drear, where more is meant than meets the ear."

Mrs. Dodsworth examined him, woman-wise, when he went to the Villa Canterbury to play bridge.

"Have you got yourself a girl yet?"

"None in sight."

"What about Miss Lomond--this professoressa?"

"She'd be interested only in Professor Santayana."

"What do you do with yourself? You can't spend all your time sightseeing."

"I tinker with Italian maps--try to find the best route to forests and enchantments drear."

"You're very young, Hayden--pleasantly so."

"OR very old, and repentant of a wasted life in which the only poetry I ever learned was 'Yes, we have no bananas.' I think I ought to tell the press services to send out a story that a man can read poetry without getting kicked out of the Athletic Club."

"I doubt that! I've been in Zenith!"

With the other guests--but privately he thought of them as "the boarders"--at the Tre Corone, he had after-dinner coffee, and they all asked "Have you seen the Bargello?" He went to Nat Friar's again and found him reading an Eric Ambler thriller. Nat said he was rather off Great Books, since the University of Chicago had taken a lease on them and was now sponsoring Great Books for Juveniles 7-11, Great Book neckties and Great Book Bran Brainfood for Breakfast.

And he had a night-club evening with Vito Zenzero, the wavy-black-haired dancing man, nephew of Mrs. Manse, who was the pensione's desk-clerk, head waiter and entertainer of spinsters. Vito spoke

energetic English, learned from the less refined members of the American Expeditionary Forces, and he took Hayden to a hot spot in a thick-walled basement under an old palace. Hayden had noted that Olivia was blank to Vito when, looking like the best of B films in his yellow-green jacket and brown slacks, he teetered and tittered about the dining room, encouraging the guests to buy Frascati wines.

"Why are you so cranky? Poor Vito, he flowers in the sunshine." Hayden desired to know of Olivia.

"Poor Vito flowers in manure! He sells black-market cigarettes and gets a commission on all the guests whom he coaxes to take him to night clubs...."

"Oh!"

"... and he's seduced every girl in this district."

"That's what I said. He's a real medieval character. You like them only in books, Olivia. If you'd been in Italy in 1400, you'd have fled to Ireland and a nunnery."

"Oh, pooh!" she said, not very convincingly.

This evening, Hayden had, without any noticeable invitation, firmly sat down at her table for coffee. Her manner toward him still had the persistent grayness of a tramontana, and this admirably strong-willed woman was apparently able to keep it up forever. More with a collector's curiosity than with any sympathy she asked, "What are you 'studying' now, Hayden?"

"I'm trying to get into Dante, with a trot."

"You really are naive!"

"It's you that are naive, in not understanding that I'm having an adventure. For me it's as novel to try to wallow through Dante as it would be for you to plan a modern low-price bathroom with compartments--plastic and stainless steel--green and silver."

"But I shouldn't CARE to plan a green bathroom--with compartments - nor to use one, either!"

He thought about slapping her. He told himself that, with this conceited grind, there was no merit in even a boarding-house courtesy. He left her gruffly, and it was an astonishment to him, a week later, when she invited him to take her to the Camillo for dinner.

That brisk restaurant, across the river in the Oltrarno quarter, on the Borgo San Jacopo with its ancient walls, is a favorite of the scores of American students in Florence, and of students German, French, Swedish, Burmese. A few of them had learned Italian and had actually met an Italian, but most of them were as innocently detached from the local life as were their financial betters, the Colonists. They met nightly in zealously argumentative groups devoted to the prose of Henry Miller and the pastoral delights of Marxism, while they let down their fettuccine noodles and drank carafes of vino rosso sciolto.

At most Florentine restaurants, eight o'clock is a charming hour in the early dawn, but at the Camillo every table is full by a quarter to eight, and by eight-fifteen, Picasso and Existentialism have already been mentioned, which means another regrettable night up till two-thirty, at Danny's or Rachel's "studio," and the head like a tornado in the morning and the Sforzas not yet studied.

Olivia had always the art of making Hayden feel wizened and uncertain, but she had never been so authoritative as at the Camillo, where all the students recognized her, perhaps feared her a little, and

called her "Doctor" or "Professor." They wanted to know what she thought of the Delia Robbias, and she told them.... And with considerable comfort Hayden perceived that she had the three Robbias all mixed up, and that both she and the convivial students supposed that because she knew the legal and political history of the fifteenth century, she must be a sound taster of its art.

Her insufficiency did not keep her from being confident or the students from noting down what she said, to be repeated for decades afterward to the unfortunate future students of these students, in far-flung crepuscular colleges on the plains or in the hills--colleges where "far-flung" is considered a novel and forceful adjective.

When he had been permitted to take Olivia home, even that friendly pup Hayden had had enough, and he did not speak to her again for a week. Then, shatteringly, came the embarrassment in the hall.

9

Hayden, in respectable hat and brown topcoat, had respectably come in from seeing an American film and he was thinking how odd it was to hear an actor from Ohio making love with Neapolitan ardor. He was whistling softly and unaware, and he stopped with a jar as he came full on Olivia, a negligee lacy about her breast, carrying under her silk-draped arm the intimacies of sponge-bag, soap, towel, fresh nightgown.

She was astonishingly embarrassed about it. She trembled a little as she quavered, "Have to use bathroom down here--somebody in the other one that I often use--I DO have a private bath but it's out of order. REALLY not accustomed to parading naked in the hall! I--oh, excuse me--Mr. Chart!"

He attacked: "What's the trouble? What bothers you so about the nearness of a male lout? Why are you so sufferingly virginal, Olivia?"

"I am not!" But she was deep-flushed, and panting.

"You're abnormally so!"

"That's silly! I'm not.... Oh, I suppose I do get startled- faunish, leading such a cloistral life here."

The superior Dr. Lomond was defenseless. He felt brutal and bad-mannered, but she had been so stonily lofty on their evening at the Camillo that he was not particularly kind. And in soft oriental silk she was interesting--at least.

"Olivia, my dear, you often give me good advice about not being an amateur scholar. I can't resist advising you to taste a little more salty life. Come out to a night club with me. Dance. Even laugh a little. Don't be an amateur saint!"

"Perhaps I--well, I must get on with..."

Down the hall they heard the door of Bathroom 2 closing and the running of water. He laughed. "Cut off on all sides! Forest fire back of us, mountain lions in front! Come sit in my room till that swine there has finished his dip.... It will be perfectly proper. I'll leave my door open. Don't be scared."

"I could not conceivably be scared by you or anybody else!" But the hot flash of blood under her Syrian skin had faded to a rare paleness, and her voice was uneven. "I think I'd better wait in my own room, though, thank you."

Her look had such appeal as he would never have expected from her-

- appealing, a girl, a woman--and she begged, "Please! It's kind of you, but I think Mrs. Manse still tries to convince us she's a born Lancashire woman, with all the proprieties, and she might not care for our dormitory chat."

"Good night, my dear. Sorry the enemy captured all the baths. Goodnight!"

He sat thinking that she was as feminine, in a betraying cloudiness of silk, as Caprice had been; as much the forest nymph white in the woodland twilight. But there was something wrong; some nameless injury that she had taken. He was sorry for the lofty Dr. Lomond, and with his pity came fondness for her.

Next evening, at dinner, she looked at him with a trace of intimacy, of pleading, yet by after-dinner-coffee time she was as self-sufficient as ever, and she was noticeably rude to his friend Vito Zenzero when Vito came pussycatting around to ask, Had the professoressa enjoyed the beautiful artichokes?

Nothing seemed to have happened, nothing did happen, and Hayden was again drawn into a hobo life in the jungles of the American Colony, trying to find out how innocent these Innocents Abroad were, and why they were abroad at all.

He saw less of the American students or the Italo-American businessmen than of the golden loafers of the Colony, the Dodsworth set with their Louis Seize cabinets and chauffeurs and hospitality to poor Colonists who were pitiful martyrs in not having chauffeurs.

Many of these Colonists were content, month on month, to go to cocktail parties with amiable friends, to play a little bridge, to dine out, to read the latest books sent over from Home, to look once a month at a gallery or a church and, all in all, unknowing all, do nothing

but wait for death. Hayden was not going to wait for death. He had, and not long since, been through most of its agonies, and he was going to use every energy and inspired curiosity in him to keep himself consciously living, to find and cherish life in his new career, in a dozen new careers.

He believed that Americans could do that, as the Founding Fathers had. In even the most languid and habitual of the Florentine Colonists, in even the most fluttering pansy, he discerned American ore.

Mr. Henry James was breathless over the spectacle of Americans living abroad and how very queer they are, in English country houses or Tuscan villas or flats in Rome, and how touchy they become as they contemplate the correctness of Europeans.

But just how queer they are, Mr. James never knew. He never saw a radio reporter, never talked to an American Oil Company proconsul gossiping in the Via Veneto about his native Texas. Americans are electric with curiosity, and this curiosity has misled foreigners and Mr. James into crediting them with a provincial reverence which they do not possess; a reverence which their ancestors got rid of along with their native costumes, one month after Ellis Island or after Plymouth Rock.

If a queen comes to America, crowds fill the station squares, and attendant British journalists rejoice, "You see: the American Cousins are as respectful to Royalty as we are."

But the Americans have read of queens since babyhood. They want to see one queen, once, and if another came to town next week, with twice as handsome a crown, she would not draw more than two small boys and an Anglophile.

Americans want to see one movie star, one giraffe, one jet plane,

one murder, but only one. They run up a skyscraper or the fame of generals and evangelists and playwrights in one week and tear them all down in an hour, and the mark of excellence everywhere is "under new management."

Nor are they so different when they are expatriates. After years of Europe, Sam Dodsworth was unalterably midwestern in his quick humorous glance, his scorn for social climbers, his monotonous voice, his liking for dry cereals, his belief that if he met a stranger and took to him, they were friends from that hour. He had the result of the annual Yale-Princeton football game cabled to him, and he amused his more Italianized wife by sometimes addressing a countess as "Missus."

And the much-younger Hayden Chart, listening to the music of ancient zithers in yellow-spotted books, planning to go on to the Spice Islands and the red-enameled gates of China, was yet cynically hard about female compatriots who were too gushingly reverent toward gray eminences or gray towers. Like Dodsworth, he thought well of American hospitals and streamlined trains and the reluctance of Democrats to behead all Republicans.

Mr. James's simple miss has become the young lady at the Ritz Bar, and his young American suitor, apologetic for having been reared in the rustic innocence of Harvard instead of the Byzantine courtliness of a bed-sitting-room at Oxford, has been replaced by the American flying major who in Africa, Arabia, China, Paris is used to being courted as the new Milord.

Hayden found that the Florentine American Colony considered itself a community sufficient and significant. The Colonists who had been here for forty years looked down on the settlers of ten years standing who looked down on the one-year squatters who looked down on the newcomers of one month who were extremely lofty and informative

with the one-week horrors. Altogether, the Colony made up one-tenth of one per cent of the population of Florence.

And the claims of none of these reversed patriots so much interested Hayden as his own secret life.

As an Italian gentleman of Hayden's age might develop a quite new personality among the ranches and mines of Colorado, so Hayden was developing a new personality in an equally perilous Italian world of disjunctive pronouns, Gothic triforiums, and the mystery of Olivia down the hall. As the mercenary Colleoni once attacked the fortress of a girl's heart, so Hayden attacked the history of Colleoni and all that insane medieval jumble of wars and dynasties.

He loved this Italy precisely because it was strange to him. In his restricted cell of a bedroom here he had but little of an exile's longing for the luxury and space of his house in Newlife; for the chaise longue and the shelves of detective stories and the heated garage, and the breakfast table, of glass and flowery ironwork, on the sunporch. They were overbalanced by Florence and its memory of banners and slow deep bells, of towers and swords and torture.

He believed that he could go beyond the futility of merely piling up historical timber. It was easy enough for even a guidebook-tripper to learn a catalogue of the names of painters and battles, but Hayden wanted out of his scant erudition to make a solid structure to rest in, to make a signboard that would point out on what road mankind had marched.

With Henry Adams, he tried to see the same ornament and soaring ambition in Gothic cathedrals and Gothic hymns, the same grace and light in Renaissance palaces and villas and sculpture and song. He sought the relationship of all his new visions to his own profession.

In Florence, his favorite Newlife brick Georgian houses, with delicate fanlights and wide windows which promised welcome and wreaths and Christmas candles (but strictly with movable partitions and oil-heating and insulated roofs!), still seemed fitting and dear, though he did not want them in Italy. And equally from the integrity of old stone walls and from Roman classic columns he was refreshed in his belief that in no time or land have there been more imperially beautiful buildings than the towers of Rockefeller Center, in New York.

In Newlife he had needed some unfamiliarity, some strangeness, and had needed conversation that should not always be in the same platitudes, so that from the first two words he could predict everything else that the oracle was about to thunder. How great those needs had been he knew when he was called to the pensione office to answer the telephone, and heard a heavy American masculine chuckle:

"I'll bet you'll never in the world guess who this is!"

"No, I'm afraid I can't."

"Well, try and make a guess now."

"It isn't Mr. Dodsworth?"

"No, no, no no! I ought to needle you a little and punish you for forgetting your old friends so easy, but I'll put you out of your misery. It's Bill Windelbank, from Home!"

It was indeed that excellent and intellectual dentist who, as much as Roxanna Eldritch, had summoned him to the asphodels of Europe. But Hayden thought, and was ashamed to be caught thinking it, that he did not desire to see Dr. William Windelbank at all, nor his nimble lady. Would he have to introduce them to Olivia, to Nat Friar, to the Dodsworths?

He disliked his own snobbishness and disloyalty, but he did not think he could ever stand hearing the Windelbanks explain to Sir Henry Belfont, self-importantly and in detail, how barbaric Italy was in not serving flapjacks and doughnuts, and insisting upon giving Belfont's cordon bleu the recipes. Or jocularly saying to Nat Friar, "Prof, I hope you folks here don't let Hay put it over on you about what a highbrow he is. Home, he just reads the comic strips and goes to bed at nine-thirty like the rest of us, but he always was a great guy for trying to show off and make like a deep reader--don't you now, Hay?"

But Hayden was cordial.

"Well! Thought Jean and you were only going to stay abroad for five weeks, and here it must be over four months. Golly!"

One magic touch of Home and he was already back in its good-fellowship, its sterling virtues and its lack of vocabulary.

"Yes-sir-ee, it certainly is!" boasted Windelbank. "Four months, seventeen days and nine and a half hours since we sailed from little ole New York! But right off the bat, we started seeing so doggone much and we like it, and I said to Jean, 'We only live once, and the food is a lot better and tastier in Europe than we expected, and we'll never come back here--too many more important points of interest to cover, like Brazil and Nova Scotia. So,' I said, 'let's go hog-wild and have four-five months here.'

"But now we've had enough--plenty. The food may be delicious, but it don't stay by you and nourish the maxillary blood supply like a good Colorado beefsteak. So we're finishing up the tower with two days in Florence and three in Rome, just like we originally planned. We did our two days in Venice, but don't think too much of it: real picturesque, but awful rundown and shabby. Where we've put in most

of our time was Scandinavia and a lovely little lake resort we found in Northern England--just like home. And now--only two days here, Hay! What do we do?"

In terror Hayden perceived that he was expected to spend all of those two days with the Windelbanks, providing meals, transportation, interpretage, and learned artistic guidance, answering rapidly and with apparent accuracy all questions about the weight of the Duomo cupola, the biographies, with dates, of all the more important inhabitants of all tombs in all churches, and the number of members in all political parties in Tuscany.

"Well, why not?" he rebuked himself. "They'd do the same for me, even if--especially if!--I didn't want them to!"

Anyway, they were too kind and loyal for him to think of dodging them, and he trumpeted, "How about my picking you up and taking you to dinner tonight?"

"Well now, that's real nice of you. Be glad to. Jean--you know how finicking and suspicious women are--she said, 'Maybe Hay's gone and gotten in with a lot of snobs here and won't care to see plain folks like us,' but I says to her, 'Not on your life! I know Hay's character like I know his bicuspid! He may talk fancy and highfalutin, but at heart he'll always be just a plain, back- slappin' Western boy, like all the rest of us!'"

As punishment for his sin of alienation, Hayden found, at dinner, that Dr. Windelbank had noticed many things that he, in the same islands of bliss, had never marked: the routes of the Paris Metro, the wages of bellboys in Belgium, the horsepower of London taxicabs. The doctor was buoyant about his discoveries; he made Hayden feel aged and juiceless, as Sam Dodsworth made him feel credulous and boisterous and infantile.

Dinner was comfortable--and Jean Windelbank's new gray dinner dress was excellent. Hayden was surprised to find with what excitement he learned from the Windelbanks, who had assiduously corresponded with everybody back home, the more salient items of news: that Mary Eliza Bradbin's new upper plate took all the wrinkles away from around her mouth, that Dr. Crittenham had bought a "new Chewy, a swell two-tone-color job," that Bobby Tregusis, the nephew of Chan Millward's first wife's first husband, had a lovely job with the Cripple Creek telephone company.

And in Paris the Windelbanks had seen Roxanna Eldritch.

"I phoned her--she couldn't guess who it was, at first, but then she was real glad to hear my voice--I'll bet she was; kid like that so far away from home among these queer foreigners and all these moral pitfalls. She bought us a real nice dinner at a real Parisian restaurant that all these tourists and all never get to hear about--kidneys, their specialty was. Personally, I never did care too much for kidneys at home, but the way they did them there, they was real nice.

"There was a mighty smart lady running the place. She said to me--she spoke English real good--she said, 'You're Americans, aren't you?' and I said, 'Yes--how can you tell?' and she just laughed and she said, 'Oh, I can tell!' and then I said to her, 'But I'm willing to go on record as saying that never even in America have I tasted a nicer kidney!'

"Well, sir, I said to Roxy, 'I hope you're the same sweet, fresh, unspoiled young lady you always was at home, even among all those reporters and politicians,' and she said to me, 'Dr. Bill, no girl can ever go wrong if she's been brought up to understand the moral standards of Colorado, and I hope I'm still the mountainside daisy and not the rank orchid! Yes-sir-ree!'"

(That sly little devil. I shall send her a volume of Machiavelli! Hayden privately admired.)

But this conviviality was presently marred by rivalry. There is, Hayden found, something like a system of credits for sightseeing: doing a cathedral thoroughly counts, let us say, eleven points-- exterior only, five; looking for not less than one second at every single picture in a large gallery comes to thirteen, inspecting a mountain village rarely beheld by tourists is seventeen, dining at a celebrated restaurant is six, but if you found it all by yourself, the credit is nine.

By this most reasonable standard for computing good works, the Windelbanks had acquired at least four times as many points of merit as Hayden.

They were pained by his evident sloth, and fretted out a number of queries. Had he seen Madame Tussaud's Waxworks in London? In Paris, had he done Napoleon's Tomb and had fish at Prunier's? At his No's the doctor mourned, "Well, I must say! What have you DONE with your time over here? How a man could have this wonderful chance and come all the way to England and not see Madame Tussaud's is beyond me!"

Hayden childishly reached for equality, tried to show off, tried to show what an utterly changed and Europeanized and generally improved edition he had become. He spoke in Italian to the waiter (who seemed to understand parts of what he said) but it was no go. The Windelbanks had definitely taken the lead in culture now, and they brought out a few scientific conclusions with an air of authority.

The citizens of Bologna (where they had spent three hours) were definitely more cheerful than the citizens of Padua (two hours). Throughout France, the sale of American soft drinks (thanks to the

purity of our soldiers who had served in that untutored land) was practically wiping out the sale of wine. In Cannes (twenty-two hours) there is always rain, at all seasons of the year, and the Windelbanks had warned the hotel clerk there that he was a very silly fellow to remain. He ought to see the climate in Newlife, Colorado.

But they so far forgave Hayden as to promise to send his address and telephone number here back to all the human catandogs whom they had picked up along their way and who might be arriving here soon: to that delightful young American couple they met in Glasgow--the husband owned a brickyard, so Hayden and he would have a lot of professional interests in common, and his little wife was such a dear little woman; she liked to read the guidebook aloud, and Hayden would enjoy them both so much, and enjoy showing them around Florence. And the splendid Holland Dutchman who was so amusing about salmon-fishing in Scotland, and the wonderful Baptist pulpit- orator from Chicago, who would enjoy showing Hayden around Florence and explaining the Catholic Church to him.

Hayden had not meant to call for help, but later in the evening he petitioned Olivia to help him have lunch with the Windelbanks next day. Once, he knew, she would have refused, but ever since he had met her, silken and defenseless, in the hall, she had shown him a shade of pleading humility that almost slipped into obedience. She accepted, with only a few scurrilous observations on the sort of people he seemed to know at home.

He put in the morning before lunch in helping the Windelbanks exchange their dollars and in leading them through pages 400-426 of the tenth edition of Baedeker's Northern Italy, along with the compulsory daily shopping: the kodak films, the lace collars and sweater for Jean Jr., their married daughter. It would not be accurate to say that they had bought a sweater for Jean Jr. in every country in

Europe. They had never been in Albania.

Hayden also advised them in the daily choice of three plain and four colored post cards to send home.

"How many folks do you send souvenir cards to regularly, Hay?" nosed the doctor.

"Why, not any--regularly," admitted Hayden, and then, guiltily, "or irregularly either!"

"You don't? Why, you're missing half the fun of travel, to say nothing of the pleasure you might be bringing into people's drab lives!" From a waistcoat pocket the doctor whipped out a thin gilt-and-mauve notebook. "I've got the names and addresses here of my forty-seven very closest friends, relatives and patients that are prompt pay, and every single week I send each of 'em a card from somewhere in Europe, always with some cheering message or interesting piece of information--say, like total population of Italy. And this treasure-house book, as I call it, also contains my birthday list for use at home, with folks' names under the dates of their birthdays AND wedding anniversaries. How many cards do you send out on birthdays and Easter and Christmas?"

"Maybe not as many as I ought to," said the abashed liar, who darkly detested all standard greeting cards depicting two sparrows and an antelope, with the apostrophe, "Where'er you are or go or do, this festal day we think of you!"

"Now, Hay, you mustn't go and make the fatal error of thinking just because you're getting so much smarter out of all this classy travel, you can afford to neglect your friends. I may be a good practitioner--I'll match my bridgework against anybody's--but even so, I bet I wouldn't get ANYWHERE, I wouldn't make three thousand bucks a year,

without the love and loyalty of my friends.

"THEY'RE the guys that understand and support and recommend you! Don't forget that, among all these snooty foreigners that they simply don't or won't understand what a real friend is like! And, mind you, I don't just mean the good old gang that you see every week at the Kiwanis or at church or the country-club bar, and that pay their dentist right on the dot, but the dear and tender chums of the magic bygone days, long severed but forgotten ne'er, that if they happen to be in your town for a convention or on a motor tour will honor you by phoning you first thing and coming right out to the house to take potluck with you and cheer up the wife by kidding her along. You're damn tootin'! You may find a lot of stuck-up highbrows here, always gassing their heads off and talking so much while guys like us prefer to remain silent and not show off our ignorance, but you're not going to find the old deep friends like we know at home! Hm. Home! You know..."

Bill Windelbank was dreaming. When he spoke, all the brag and bumptiousness were for a moment gone from him, and he looked at Hayden appealingly:

"You know, Jean and me are awful seasoned tourists and we always make out like we never get homesick, not even for Jean Junior or her two babies or for the cottonwoods along the crick just below our house. But one time, this trip, we were in a Paris joint, real gay but high-toned, and suddenly, with no warning, the band strikes up Home on the Range--'where never is heard a discouraging word.' Well, sir, I looked at Jean and Jean looked at me, and suddenly I could just SEE those cottonwoods, and God, how I did long to be back there, safe! I could have cried! And Jean--she did!"

How good they were, thought Hayden, and how kind--as the Dodsworths were kind, as Sir Henry Belfont was not, as Olivia was

not.

Olivia met them at the Baglioni roof garden for lunch, and horror struck immediately.

Hayden could not stop Dr. Windelbank who, to Olivia's small leering delight, referred to him as Haysy-Daisy, and who chronicled the one episode of which Hayden was most ashamed, for its cheap bullying and hysterical loss of temper: the time when he had threatened a tough sub-contractor with an empty revolver and the man had caved in, all two hundred and forty hairy pounds of him.

"Hay was a major in the last war, and a champ pistol shot!" crowed Dr. Windelbank.

"And Hay was also nothing but a boss draftsman in that crusade and never heard a shot fired in anger!" glared Hayden.

But it seemed to him that Olivia looked at him almost affectionately, and on their way back to the pensione she said, "I like you much better as a competent rowdy than as a polite dilettante. But how those people hated me! They are very brave and charitable, but they feel entirely competent to tell me what to teach--to tell Italy and France what to teach--to tell the bishop how to pray and God how to listen to the teaching and the prayer."

10

On the northern rim of Florence, toward the mutely watching mountains, Fiesole perches on its hilltop like a monstrous eagle, with its bell-tower for upstretched neck. It looks down on the flood plain of the Arno, which is Florence, and remembers that it was a ponderous-walled Etruscan city twenty-five hundred years ago, when Florence

was a nameless huddle of mud huts. Up here, Boccaccio's maidens stayed the plague with song and most improper story.

Half a mile from the Fiesole piazza, on the northern edge of the cliff, is the small Raspanti Inn. The window-side tables look into the sweetly climbing Mugnone Valley, where the river runs through vineyards and barley fields, past farmhouses of plaster, red-tiled and yellow-walled, with airy loggias for the summer.

Hayden had bought a tiny Italian car--a topolino, people called it: a "little mouse." To get into it you had to hoist your knees up to the level of your forehead, but it had a gallant motor for hill-climbing, and it hugged the corkscrew curves of the Italian mountains, or went happily cantering past the enormous blue omnibuses. In it he had flashed to Arezzo, and to the old walled town of Lucca, now that, in mid-February, spring was imminent, the grass between the olive trees was tinsel-green and mimosa was displaying its canary-colored showers. Olivia had gone with him once or twice, her obedience still astonishing him, and today, at the Raspanti, she was seemingly contented to be with him.

"One of those old farmhouses down there," he said, as they finished their fedora cake and ordered coffee and Strega, "a man, a family, could live quietly there."

"For a while."

"For keeps!"

"If there's a good bus, so you could go to the Laurentian Library and the Uffizi," granted Olivia.

"A lazy spring day like this, I can't imagine going on anywhere else, not even to Egypt."

"But I'm not lazy. Industry is my one poor virtue."

"Olivia! Let's talk--really talk!"

"Must we?"

"Yes. We are two lone ships in a waste of the South Pacific, the days so empty and the nights so long under the stars. Why can't we sail together?"

"Maybe the ships are going in opposite directions."

"Can't they stop a moment and get closer together?"

"Your poetic inquiry sounds very much like what my vulgar students at Winnemac would call 'propositioning me.'"

"Olivia, you say things that shock me! You chatter about ancient Greek tarts so frankly that it's embarrassing, and yet you seem afraid of any natural, friendly contact--like this." He took her hand, across the table, and she flinched. "What makes you so abnormal?"

She said irritably, "Abnormal! My dear young man! You know nothing about me. I may have ties that are entirely unknown to you."

"I doubt it. I look at your mail on the hall table--shamelessly. If you have some magnet, he's probably imaginary. Like my own obsession with... Olivia, I never have talked to you about my wife; haven't talked to anybody much, I guess. I just told you she was killed in a motor accident. The way she died is important, because sometimes I feel I murdered her by my careless driving, and start brooding. Now, I make myself come out of it, and realize I've just been wallowing in a melodrama of regret, like a child scaring itself by drawing spiders. I'm trying, at least, to look at her death the way a good doctor would.

"I do honor her memory. She was extraordinarily plucky and quick-witted, even if she wasn't kind-hearted like those people you met--the Windelbanks. (Caprice always thought they were a pair of stuffed shirts, by the way, with minds that weren't so much photographic as phonographic.) She was a bluebird. But she only liked the accidental things about me: my tennis and swimming, and I used to be not so bad a dancer till I got tired of the highballs and the shrieking and the swapping of wives. But she never liked any of my virtues."

"Have you many?"

"Yes. I have. As you know. I'm dependable and punctual and a fine designer of unfine houses. Those tedious virtues. But I also have a fighting conviction that men can be more than trout-fishermen; that there must have been human beings who could build San Miniato. I have much more imagination about possible ways of living than you have, of course."

"Oh! HAVE you!"

"Much. You tackle the Middle Ages to get them down in figures, as a job, but I take a chance on making myself ridiculous by feeling them as life, visibly around us still. You--this continual aversion of yours to the normal male..."

"Oh, quit it! Don't try to show off your knowledge of psychoanalysis as well as of Lucrezia Borgia!"

"Olivia, you've never let yourself live. Lucrezia--they didn't hate her because she did any poisoning, but because she could handle so many lovers. Why don't you imitate her, not just dig her poor lovely bones out of their paper grave? You could be adorable, but you're nothing but an expert in pedagogy researching in the quickest

methods of teaching knitting."

"Oh, pooh!"

"There's an American girl wandering around Europe somewhere, Roxanna, a redhead, that I despair of because she's gone native with a gang of artistic heels. She's rackety and undisciplined, and she doesn't know whether Borgia was a duke or a suburb, and yet I give her more chance to get the sinful, glorious human heart of Europe than you'll ever have. Oh, try living! It was quite well thought of by Titian!"

"You are so breezy and Western and uninhibited. You are so naive."

"You've called me that before."

"Naturally! So naive in believing that every woman ought to be a college-campus petter!" She added, with spite and something not unlike jealousy, "As your redheaded Miss Roxanna apparently is!"

"She is no friend of petting. She doesn't need to be! Yes, I am Western. I won't eat my breakfast unless I can lasso it. And yet in my attitude toward self-repressing women, I am exactly like Nat Friar or Ugo Tramontana. We consider them monstrosities."

"You don't know what you're talking about. You're babbling--oh, not so much coarse as boyish nonsense! I'd rather you WERE coarse."

She arose, erect and angry in her blue nylon dress. He said to himself, "She wants me to be coarse? I will be. She's so armored that a bowman has to try a shot at her. Let's see if she's human." He slipped his arm round her, his hand over her shoulder, a sweet slim curve that contented his palm.

She seemed not rigid and prudish but still with terror. She whimpered, like a bewildered girl shocked by a trusted old friend, "Oh, don't--oh, don't--oh, please!"

He had quick pity for her. He released her, and she dropped into her chair at the table again, her face all one raddled blur of emotion, and as he sat down, she spoke tremblingly:

"Yes, there is.... It is true. I'm not quite natural toward any man younger than Professor Friar. But there is a reason. It's not me. I was turned so.

"I was twenty--so young and undeveloped but so sure I was wise. I was a prodigy; I got my bachelor's degree at eighteen and my master's at nineteen. At a big state university, this was. I was working for my doctor's degree and teaching a couple of classes and reading Professor Vintner's themes for him. I thought I knew all about vices and seductions and the elegant wiles of gallants in the Middle Ages, but I had never taken time to study them first-hand, on the U campus in this Middling Age. Though plenty of invitations! I knew all about Cellini but nothing about the local quarterback.

"Leslie Vintner, DEAR Professor Vintner, my faculty preceptor. European History from 450 to 1750. Tall and gray-eyed and a little rustic in his looks, but Heavens, so slick and cosmopolitan in his talk! He was very, very learned and clever; he had studied at Montpellier and Rome and Berne and the Sorbonne; he used to read Provencal poetry aloud, delightful lyrics about roses and Maytime meadows and sighing lovers. But he knew about all up-to-date diversions in modern Paris, too--he SAID: vintages and baronesses and baccarat and Josephine Baker singing.... Of course he had a cautious wife, with a small income of her own. Dreary and getting plump.

"He encouraged me--so fatuously, I see now. We used to sit side by

side on the greasy leatherette couch in his office, under the reproduction of Fra Angelico saints, and smoke cigarettes and drink tea with gin in it, and he'd tell me I was going to be another Madame de Sévigné. I was going to be poet, scholar, court beauty, and Gabriele D'Annunzio would come back from his private perfumed hell to worship me.

"Leslie and I were most superior to that hustling campus. We were pagans, we were winged spirits from the High Renaissance, only (and honestly, he could do the most convincing repressed sob) just now his wings were being clipped by his nasty big-foot wife, and only in my sweet, languorous presence could he put on his rainbow-colored plumes.

"I really worshipped him. I was an innocent, healthy, eager kid, so devoted, so proud, but it wasn't just lambkin love. I would have done murder for him, or sung over washing his undershirts. I wrote sonnets about him that I was too humble to show him, and I went out of my way to walk past his house (that nasty gingerbread cake!) late at night, and if there was a party and they were laughing, I was so jealous that my stomach quivered. I used to keep a silk-tipped French cigarette butt of his in my purse, and take it out and kiss it.

"So of course I fell for him completely whenever it amused him to finish up the torture. Honestly, he shouldn't have killed anything as young and loyal as I was!

"Then he got impatient. I forgot everything I had learned from history—I thought he really meant his promises! I thought we would be found out and both of us fired from the university, of COURSE, and I was all ready to live in a shack with him and do the cooking and keep chickens and love it, and then some day he would be divorced and marry me and Yale or California would understand what valorous medieval souls we were and give him a call, and we'd live in a tower

of glory and... You know.

"What's worse, I suppose I girlishly trilled all this to him, and too often. He must have become pretty bored and impatient, because I certainly wasn't so anesthetic and sneering then that I chilled demanding gentlemen like Mr. Hayden Chart--OR Prince Ugo! I was recklessly passionate--panting. Poor Leslie! He did a magnificent job of kicking me out. He really made it all quite clear--though he must have been irritated by the way I sobbed.

"He told me that he had never thought of me as anything but a sentimental fool, very bad at exact dates, very confused in my literary style, and a perfect pest about telephoning him at home. And a skinny, ugly untouchable. The way I lavished all the passion in me, he said, made it seem cheap.

"Even before I had quit sobbing, while I was still wiping my nose with my coarse little cotton handkerchief--it was all I could afford but I did like it; it had such a nice rose stamped in one corner--before I had finished crying I had determined that I would never again betray passion--or feel any. I never have. I've ruled my feelings like mutinous soldiers. And so--and now--that frigidity has become natural. For all my life!"

She rose slowly, and he with her.

He kissed her cheek, very lightly, and sighed, "Poor darling. Dreadful!" Not till they were packed together in the topolino did he go on: "It would not be too ridiculous to think of us as married. We're both lost orphans. We might seek the City of Peace together."

For a second he took his right hand from the steering wheel to grip hers; for a second she returned the pressure. But she answered resolutely:

"Hayden, I wouldn't trust myself to marry anybody. I think I've controlled my natural storminess, but as a wife I would be too attentive and absorbing. And I'm ambitious; I want high academic rank, but that I could moderate. The trouble is that if I gave it up for marriage, I'd be ambitious then for my poor, driven husband. I'd push him into absurdly big undertakings--influential people and get in on all the gaudiest shows. I've become a cool scholar, not bad, and that's how I want to stay. Though if I did go native and fall for anybody--it conceivably could be you, Mr. Chart!"

"Good!"

"You're gentle, but you aren't obsequious. And you're so young and credulous. You actually believe that Bertran de Born was a gorgeous figure of living tapestry, and not Question III, Section 2--if you pass him, you can teach Advanced Principles of Medieval Mysticism and Chivalry to the hockey team. As I shall. That makes being your wife sound attractive. But I'm a dynamo; I'm not safe. Guard yourself!"

When they parted, in the hall of the Tre Corone, he kissed her cheek again. She clutched his arm, turning her face of an ivory saint toward him with a sharp breath, and then she fled.

11

Spring came in with the almonds and cherries and plum trees blossoming in early March, and Olivia and Hayden wandered through Florence. The American Colony delightedly recognized them as potential recruits to matrimony and to the Colony.

From Sir Henry Belfont, whom he had vaguely met at teas, Hayden had a stiff note informing him, somewhat in the manner of a court

summons, that Sir Henry had a nephew with Shell Oil who, years ago, had met Hayden in London. The baronet was pleased to command Hayden to luncheon, and would he care to bring some young lady of his acquaintance?

He took Olivia. In the topolino. To the disapproval of the Scotch butler, who preferred a Rolls-Royce.

Sir Henry marched them through his house. Leniently, not expecting them to appreciate such treasures, he showed off his paintings. His Villa Satiro had started out, as a fortified manor house, in 1301. It had three-hundred-year-old dwarf lemon trees, and Dante slept here.

The handsomest room in the villa--it had been the bed chamber of a grand duchess--was Sir Henry's study. The walls were bookcases of English oak, with a royal ransom in folios and illuminated choir books. The ceiling was a fantasy of little nymphs beckoning to satyrs of no strong moral character, and under this mocking rout, at an oak desk which had belonged to William of Orange, Sir Henry wrote his letters. But his desk chair had nothing of the royal touch about it. It was of the latest ingenuity, with a sponge-rubber cushion, for while Sir Henry's rear elevation was imposing, it was not suited to oaken hardness. Too many tons of cream sauces had gone to the construction of it.

He was a tall man and portly, and when he was surrounded by women who admired him, or at least listened to him, he would stand with his great head slightly on one side, with a fixed and somewhat silly smile, as though he were shy of his own bulky splendor. In his black jacket and linen collar--"no gentleman makes a racetrack spectacle of himself in soft colored shirts"--Sir Henry's resemblance to the Rock of Gibraltar would have been remarkable, if it had not been for his untrimmed eyebrows.

These eyebrows drooped in monumental triangles, like the manes of little lions. He had a mustache and a precise small beard as well, but they seemed to be only drippings from the eyebrows. Sometimes, rather wistfully, he experimented with a monocle, but it was lost under an eyebrow and left him looking as nearly foolish as a man so much in love with his own nobility, so admittedly representative of all that was best in the English county families, could ever look.

But his wife was an American.

But his wife was rich.

At the luncheon were the Belfonts, Hayden and Olivia, Prince Ugo Tramontana, and the Marchesa Valdarno, who discomfited the host by snatching the conversation away from him. She was a thin scabbard in her fawn suit and tight white turban. She was American-born, swift, flashing, detestable. Rustically watching her, Hayden comprehended the ageless elegance which Roxanna Eldritch envied, but poor Roxy was an acolyte beside the Marchesa, who suavely jeered not only at America but at Parisian drunkards, English watering-places, old Roman society, and the Sadie Lurcher Riviera set, of which Valdarno was herself a member. Hayden sought the eye of Olivia, shadowed by the snowy peak of Mt. Sir Henry, and they mutely confided that they didn't like this.

They said practically nothing at lunch. Prince Ugo--fine, lean, courteous--said only that Dr. Lomond was much honored at the Laurentian Library. Olivia glowed, and Sir Henry looked at her for the first time. The Marchesa Valdarno also looked at her--with contempt.

Throughout luncheon, Hayden had his usual discomfort over the European trick of speaking in four languages at once, switching from English to Italian in the one same sentence, with the next in French. He longed for the roar and whattameaning of Jesse Bradbin.

But the soup was good.

But after lunch, as they rode home in the humble topolino, Olivia yelled with unacademic vigor that she hated Sir Henry and his mob and wanted never to meet any of them again.

"I would like to see him again, though," said Hayden, "because I'd like to get to the bottom of why so many Americans and well-heeled Britishers live permanently in Italy. Most of the Italians don't much like us. They consider our drinkers too wet and our hermits too chilly and our outmarrying girls, like that Valdarno woman, disloyal to their husbands--some of them, I mean. Yet we cling to this country. Why? I'll go to the Villa Satiro again, if I get invited, which is not too likely. I don't think Belfont considers me one of the more tinkling talkers."

"Me neither. And no more villa. It's too Satiro!"

At night he was conscious of Olivia, down the hall, and wondered whether he would again meet her in feminine mufti, free of her hard uniform of professorial brown serge. But their next jaunt was considerably less abandoned. In the fashion of Newlife in his father's era, he took her to church; not to a resounding Roman basilica but to a home-town church, a Main-Street church, in English Gothic but flavored, too, with prairie wild roses.

The St. James American Episcopal Church in Florence has no more Episcopalians than Methodists or Unitarians or plain indifferentists. In the bright stone chancel, the American flag hangs along with the Italian, and for an hour every Sunday morning even the Colonists who seem almost alienated from Home are betrayed into being American again. Social climbing is halted, and girl students kneel beside florid gentlemen who have superbly been in steel.

Most of the Colonists are given to complaining at dinner parties that America has gone to hell, along with lazy and overpaid servants, impertinent children, tasteless food and fiendish labor leaders who will soon be purging all responsible citizens. Yet at St. James's, as they unite in the old hymns, there rises in them something primitive.

Colonists who have been asserting that they would as soon die as go back to the States and see executives being obsequious to bellboys and subway conductors and their own cooks, now hear through the music at St. James's the heavy shoes on Plymouth Rock, the barefoot Confederates marching in the wintry Tennessee mountains, the plodding of moccasins on the Oregon Trail. In their flippant unfaith to their lean and bitter mother, America, there is yet more faith than in their zest for Europe, their opulent mistress.

Hayden came in Sabbatically double-breasted blue, with a black Homburg hat, and he was proud of Olivia's blue silk and her resolutely white gloves and the unexpected prayer-book of celluloid cover painted with forget-me-nots which she must have borrowed at the pensione. Through service, he was content to see how properly she rose and knelt. He remembered the spires of Newlife, and was faintly lonely for home. He knew then that he was unalterably an American; he knew what a special and mystical experience it is, for the American never really emigrates but only travels; perhaps travels for two or three generations but at the end is still marked with the gaunt image of Tecumseh.

After church, they had lunch amid the fine linen of the Hotel Excelsior, and Hayden boasted:

"You did well in church today--for a heathen. I am a correct Episcopalian, and my firm built Holy Cross Pro-cathedral."

"Not me! I was brought up a Primitive Baptist. It's the old-time

religion!" How American I still am, even when I pretend to have covered it over with Venetian velvet!"

"It's a perfect spring day. Let's wander all afternoon."

"Not me. I have a lot to read," said the sturdy girl from Professor Vintner's class.

So they wandered all afternoon, through the spring-emblazoned city, through dark courtyards lighted up equally by gold-decked shrines to the Virgin and by plaid work-shirts hung up to dry before a fifth-story window, past the Cerchi tower, among the Sunday crowd oozing along the Arno, with a Punch and Judy show in the Piazza Ognissanti. For tea they went not to a bar favored by the Colony but were so bold as to sit out in the Square of the Republic, in front of Gilli's.

They climbed up the winding driveway of the Viale dei Colli and felt not the grandeur of Florence but its simple pleasantness, under the trees, like the pleasantness of Newlife in June. For dinner, Olivia guided him to a little basement trattoria.

They went down slippery marble stairs into a cellar with small tables of transparent oilcloth over green-and-white table-covers. On the rough walls were very bad landscapes with which art students had paid their board-bills: landscapes with cow and river and a mountain composed of cake icing. The one waiter was guiltless of a white jacket; he wore a sweater and screamed amiably at the patrons and sometimes sat down with them. The room was full of cheerfulness: clerks and shopkeepers and soldiers whirled their strings of spaghetti and acrobatically ate fried potatoes with their knives.

Olivia was an intimate of the place. The waiter beamed and led them through a more solemn dining room where, with white tablecloths, dined the few tourists, on to the delights of the kitchen, and that was a

kitchen out of a Christmas story.

The floor was of red tiles and the charcoal broiler lighted up a string of copper stewpans. It glared on the swarthy face of the fat woman cook so that she looked like a lady fiend. But beside the broiler was a modern electric range, crimson enamel and cool steel. On a table ready to be cooked, were all the varieties of pasta: fat tagliatelli noodles, thin and writhing taglierini, tortellini like snug little white doughnuts, and the sage green of lasagne verdi, made with spinach.

On benches at the long central table five hardy taxi-drivers were dredging their grassy soup, and they looked up to salute Olivia with "Ecco! La Dottoressa!"

"It's an honor to be allowed to eat in the kitchen," Olivia explained, as they took places on a bench. "I ate in the outside room for a long while before the Signora would let me join them here. Now I'm part of the family, and you will be."

"I appreciate it." And indeed when the drivers nodded to him as though he were not a Foreigner and a Fare but a man, he felt more honored than in any toleration by Sir Henry Belfont. Olivia was hearty with a plate of giant ribbed maccheroni with meaty Bolognese sauce, and they drank red table wine poured out of what looked like a Newlife pop bottle.

Roaring with friendliness, the drivers wanted to know how stood the Dottoressa, and had she dug out of the library any scandals more recent than 1600? She fenced with them in colloquial Italian, and they cackled. Though the sharp career woman is new in Italy, there has always been a tradition of the Learned Lady, like Camilla Rucellai, like Romola, a tradition of honor, and Olivia seemed to wear the laurel crown with ease. Hayden studied her with fond pride. Was he movingly in love with her, a thing to last? With a throb, with sorrow for

the shallowness of his tribute to Caprice, he wondered if his heart had forgotten her complete, and her faded little ghost was wandering now forlorn in the Colorado winter, shelterless.

The restaurant was conducted by a family of whom the grandmother was chieftain and chef, the youngish father was the outside waiter in the sweater, his wife was assistant chef, their two small sons were dishwashers and bus boys, and the baby, with its dark eyes and humorous mouth, was the most expansive customer. All evening, it seemed to Hayden, that baby was eating, eating everything, ham and breast of chicken and peas cooked with bacon and rather more red wine than strictly modern mothers give to the hygienic infants of America.

The baby and Olivia found each other delightful and slightly funny. They winked at each other, and the baby went to sleep with its head against Olivia's arm. She flushed then; her lips were tight and she breathed quickly. Hayden could not tell whether this contact with the flesh of a baby was gratifying or distressing. She fell altogether silent and stared at the baby with a sun-and-shadow alternation of frown and tenderness. He guessed that she was thinking of Professor Leslie Vintner.

When the drivers had gone and the kitchen was somewhat more quiet, Olivia said carelessly, "I'll have to be leaving Florence this coming week."

"WHAT?"

"Oh, only for three-four days, and not till Tuesday. I have to go to Venice, which it happens I have never seen, to look up some records in the State Archives."

"I've never been in Venice, either. I'll drive you up there."

"Oh, I don't think we could do that. No, I'm quite sure we couldn't. Thank you, though."

"Who's going to mind? It would be only too innocent. Who would be shocked? Mrs. Manse?"

"I would be!"

"What?"

"I mean... We've had a lovely day, and I've enjoyed it, and all the more reason why I must remember my resolution not to be dominated by any male."

"Who's trying to dominate you? Just friends."

"Not even too lively a friendship with a man, if it could possibly grow into too much importance. I've been slack in regard to you. Spring! I must put on my armor again. There! I have! You're just an amiable gentleman who lives in my pensione."

He was irritated to ruthlessness by her undependability. She was being a tease, flirtatious and bogus, encouraging him and then drawing back. He expected that of a campus hoyden, not of a devoted scholar. She could, it seemed, be just as phony as Caprice--in the opposite direction: the Caprice who pretended, like a man, to be only a breezy companion, uninterested in love-making, when she was thinking of nothing else.

"So," he said treacherously, "we're just amiable acquaintances again; very polite."

"That seems to be it."

"With no silly sentiment between us."

"None whatever."

"Two careless laddy-boys together. So we CAN go to Venice, without any compromise!"

"Oh, stop it!"

"I won't argue, but that's the logic of it."

He thought she looked disappointed when he talked vigorously, and only, of the Dodsworths' new car. They returned to the Tre Corone rather silently and, for once, he accompanied her down the hall to her room and, as she opened the door, for the first time he saw the interior.

It was decidedly not dusty and doctoral. Her bed was covered with a fluffy white spread and over it was a cast of smiling little angels. He seized her hand, and urged, "Olivia! Let's both go to Venice! Let's not be skittish ingénues. We don't have too many live joys. Let's discover the wonder of Venice together!"

"But if we should go--oh then, PLEASE!"

12

Olivia was youthful in white linen. "For a scholar, she spends quite a lot on clothes," he reflected. Like a girl back home, she was not wearing stockings, and there was a glow of bare ivory knees as she tucked herself into the topolino.

"Is it possible that she has chucked her aloofness, that she likes me a good deal?" he wondered.

They were close together in the tiny car on this, their first mammoth excursion. Wisteria was beginning to paint the walls, the mimosa bush was in yellow cataracts, and the daffodils were like shy English visitors. The Tuscan spring was sweet with the smell of plowed fields among the vine rows, where gentle oxen moved in leisure, great white oxen against the brown earth, and the liberated lovers were bound for Venice, city to them enchanted but unknown. They sang together as they crawled, spiraled, sped up on the road across the Apennines that is the highway to Bologna and Venice.

After the Futa Pass, before the high notch of Raticosa, there was a long upland ridge with valleys like unknown kingdoms castle-starred below them. It was flying. The sheep pastures, the pocket vineyards, the dumpy plaster farmhouses, and lone monasteries which were high above the valley floor and yet hundreds of feet below the car could be comfortably reached, said Hayden, by a jump and then a good deal of quiet falling. It was a twisted trail for eagles.

Olivia looked out of the car and directly down. "I'm not much used to mountain driving. Are you good at it?"

"Used to it, at least."

"You sound confident. Then I am."

Before Raticosa they were in a mountain-top barren of stunted pine and heather. Up here, it was still late winter, and patches of sandy snow were dark along the road as they went back in time two months behind Florence. The higher peaks beyond them were solid snow.

"This must be frightening, in January. Like your Rockies. I'm a plodding plainsman and marsh-jumper. A lot of my childhood in Southern New Jersey," said Olivia.

The Italians have been admirable road-engineers since centuries before Julius Caesar, and the car came down fast but securely on the corkscrew road that drops from the pass to Bologna in its valley, brisk red Bologna with its arcades. Then it was all flat land across Emilia and the Veneto, and eight hours from Florence, they left the car at the Piazzale Roma and magically took a gondola up the canals of Venice, past palaces whose doorsteps were washed by the sea channels.

Venice, on the map, resembles one large island (which is really a group of small ones) curved like a heavy thumb and hand, grasping at the head of another island like a timid animal with agitated pointed paws. When Hayden pointed this out, rattling a map in the breeze, Olivia cried, "An architect does get to have an eye! My poet!"

For propriety, they stayed at two different pensioni near the Piazza Morosini. They had cocktails at the Palazzo Gritti, the most luxurious hotel in Italy, and dined at the Colombo on tiny shrimps fresh from the Adriatic, listening to the Venetian citizens standing at the wine counter and peacefully quarreling. Then they walked through Venice till midnight, getting lost and found and more lost than ever among streets that changed their names every two blocks and after eight or ten, ended slap in a courtyard with an ancient wellhead and no exit or else crept up on a bridge over a canal and down under the bulk of a palace, in darkness, to emerge on an astonishing square, vast, empty, palace-walled. They saw arches reflected in the small interior canals and the more exuberant illumination mirrored flickeringly in the wide Grand Canal, caught through alleys that were only three-foot slits between six-story warrens.

Here is the only city without wheeled traffic, the only city dedicated to human beings and not to dictatorial automobiles, and over all of it is unreality. They walked with stilled reverence through the small

crowds, free of the horrors of motorcycles and of the bicycles that elsewhere in Italy stalk pedestrians and bring them down.

Venice is not a city. It is one colossal palace on a low rock in the sea. These are not squares and courtyards but roofless halls, and if the stone is worn and the plaster blotched, there is gaudy Renaissance history in balconies and Gothic windows.

These are not streets but corridors of the palace, and these bright bazaars, heaped with figured satin and ivory triptychs and spun iridescent glass, are not shops but the ancient loot of the doges, and this is not stone pavement but the palace floor, polished by centuries of feet that first skipped here, then strode, then shuffled till they were borne to the funeral gondola by sturdier feet; a floor so polished thus that by night light all the granite roughnesses vanish in an even glow.

All round the palace a breeze flickers in from Ragusa and Albania and the Adriatic isles. Fishing smacks with colored lateen sails come in with cargoes of devilfish, and disdainful steamers fresh from Egypt and its musky airs, and the gondolas, with their small prow lights, lurch over the Grand Canal, the gondoliers swinging on the poop.

Here and not elsewhere live Neptune and his daughters, whose hair is spray. They were visible that night to Hayden and his girl, pacing through hollow-sounding piazzas, their arms round each other. He had little to say but "To find all this with YOU!" and reluctantly he kissed her good night at her door.

By working late, Olivia finished her research the next day, and they dined in grandeur at the Gritti and again walked the night half out. All the morning after they spent in the Piazza San Marco.

They sat, in an idleness and contentment so profound that they amounted to activity, at a table outside the Lavena, and watched the

operetta of the crowd: the tourists feeding the pigeons which, at the bang of the clock struck by the bronze giants, rose together in a tide of wings; the smoochers--sellers of post cards and coral necklaces and the guide with the red scarf who was always saying hopefully, "Guide? Me spik gud English."

An American destroyer was in harbor, and the crew and officers had flooded ashore, each with a camera, from executive officer to mess boy. San Marco cathedral must that day have exceeded its quota of being photographed fifty times an hour.

Of these rangy American boys, with the freshness of Salem Harbor or the Iowa hills under their salt glaze, Hayden was proud. "Look at them! And next week, in Greece or Smyrna or Spain! They've brought back the tradition of the clipper days when Yankee faces (including a great-something-grandfather of mine) were seen in every port of China and Africa and the Spice Islands!"

He was incredibly contented with the friendly presence of Olivia, the magnificence of the hour and place, where he could see Byzantine and Gothic and Renaissance all together, in a tremendous harmony. He thought that Olivia looked almost like a fond wife when he passed on to her, as a lover's gift, all the architectural lore he was harvesting.

He dutifully inquired, "But do you think we'd better be starting? It's going to cloud over."

"Not yet. I've forgotten the responsible Dr. Lomond. Let's drown in this sun while it lasts. Americans are always so restless to be off; they follow some mental timetable that they'll probably take with them to Heaven, to the considerable annoyance of the timeless angels, who don't mind a bit if you're a couple of thousand years late for choir practice!"

Her complaint was generously illustrated by an American tourist couple at a table near.

They were people of sixty, and prosperous; they looked as though they had retired from the woes of golf and children and could be at leisure now. But while the wife bent her neck forward, enraptured by the glow of the San Marco mosaics, the husband showed his frustration by jiggling his feet, tapping on the table, violently trying to catch flies, looking at his watch, clearing his throat, yawning, and making a sporadic sound halfway between a hum and a band-saw. He blurted at last, "Well, come on, come on, Heaven's sake, let's get going!"

"Going WHERE?" his wife sighed. "We're here!"

"I know, but good God, you can't just sit around all DAY! Let's-- we can go back to the hotel and write some more letters, can't we?"

When the man of affairs and efficiency and death was gone, Hayden sighed, "I've said that a lot of the Colonists in Florence are too idle, but that's incomparably better than the restless-footed sightseers like that man. Yes, you and I'll sit here for seven years."

But the clouds were coming now, were darkening, and he was dependable enough to make Olivia go.

When they had reached their topolino and started southward, rain was already scouting in a sulky afternoon sky. Olivia looked tired; her youthful white linen, unsuited to motoring, was somewhat mussed; she was half yawning.

He ordered, "Go to sleep. The late hours these two evenings have been too much for you. I'll drive fast, but with the care due to my learned passenger."

She dozed off, with that ivory cheek, that sleek blackness of hair, near his shoulder. He wanted to touch her, but in his rigid creed nothing was more enduring than his father's croaking injunction, "Both hands on the wheel, Son, ESPECIALLY when you're out with the girls." And he had a memory of a car whirling off the Bison Park highway, turning over. He remembered, too, that once before, when they had been coming down from Fiesole, he had for a second touched her hand in the car. Out of all this he had now a quite satisfactory nervousness and worry till he made himself forget it.

It was raining before they reached Bologna, and from her quivering he knew that Olivia had awakened and was stiffly uncomfortable.

"It's all right. Pavement not very slippery. Relax, darling," he clucked, and he was surprised at the kindness in his own voice.

He made a business of getting them home. They did not talk, and she must again have slid into sleep. As they swung up the steep climb beyond Bologna, up into the mountains, snowflakes began shivering down in front of them; tentative wisps of down, then large, solid-looking flakes against which, he began to imagine, they might bump and be smashed.

Olivia awoke with a nervous "Oh!"

"I'm used to winter driving. And good road. Don't worry."

But it was hard to see clearly through the windshield. The blades of the wiper could not do much against the thick grease of wet snow; the glass was streaky and clouded, and on the sharp mounting curves he had to slacken speed, waste the momentum he needed, to see which way the curves were turning.

As she leaned to a curve, Olivia's shoulder touched his, and he found

that she was rigid.

At just over two thousand feet of altitude, they came instantly, without warning, into a belt of fog. He was blind in the fog, and he had to keep going or slide back. It was impossible to see the sides of the road. He opened the window beside him and drove with his head thrust outside, the snow licking his forehead and cheeks and chilled nose, the fog soaking his hair. But moving slowly, sometimes at five miles an hour, he could make out thus the boulder-marked boundaries of the highway.

For all the fog, the wind was loud enough so that not till she had repeated it did he hear Olivia's distressed, "What would happen if we shot off the road here?"

He drew his head far enough into the car to answer, "Probably wouldn't hurt a thing. We'd just drop onto a meadow slope and be stopped by the rocks and brush."

So? To run off the road--again? Was he to crush Olivia as he had crushed Caprice? Was that his ever-revolving fate?

She went on, "And then again we might keep on going--five hundred feet?"

"Could be."

She laughed. "Oh, its all right. I'm getting used to it. You aren't scared?"

"This is just routine fog driving. Bus drivers do this regularly, and never even notice it."

"But you're not a routine bus driver. You have no idea how I admire

your competence. But think of all the fine scenery that must be lavishing itself unnoticed, straight down below us there-- on both sides of this ridge. I'm glad I can't see how far down!"

He was too absorbed to comment. He had never driven in a worse fog, and with a road so steep, so curving, so slippery with snow, he could not save their lives if the car skidded and took charge.

He was back below the Bison Park highway, imprisoned, too late to begin living again--and then he would not let himself be there. He bleakly forced himself to be only here, single-minded. He methodically considered stopping in one of the turnouts, but with boundary lines so blurred by the fog, he might be hit there by another car. It was safer to go on.

He was startled when two sickly car lights were conjured up just in front of him, and he had to swerve, to take the chance of going off the road and down, bottomlessly down.

She shuddered, "Oh! Shouldn't we stop?"

"We shall, the minute we hit a place, a village or something where there is room for safe parking, and we can get out and have a drink. I remember one or two inns up along here. And we've got to begin thinking about holing up for the night. This fog may keep up till morning, and if we stayed in the car, we'd about freeze. But we may find a country inn."

"You mean we may have to sleep there tonight?"

"Probably."

"All right."

He was pleased that she should agree, and a little dubious about his own pleasure in it.

They had now a month, a year, of agony. Snow slid maliciously through the open window beside Hayden, and he could feel Olivia's shoulder shaking convulsively as she became more wet and chilled. The stone markers were only darker blurs in a general dark drifting gray. But they had to go on.

They were penned in a moving prison for a lifetime sentence, to be ended, perhaps, by sudden and shocking death. But they had to go on.

Only with a tired incredulity did he see and lose and see again a fabulous glow in the smear ahead, and then a cluster of fog-wrapped lights. "Golly!" he said, and not very logically wanted to kiss Olivia but, busy with the clammy wheel, did nothing so reasonable.

They had reached some kind of a fair-sized building, with a blessed wide parking space. He bade her, "Wait in the car till I size the place up." Both of them breathed long and sighingly with the relief of being, for a moment, safe.

Their refuge, he found, was a mountain-country combination of hotel, grocery shop, wine shop, bar, billiard room and restaurant. At the counter a dozen young mountaineers were drinking, tough but not unfriendly, and they nodded to his greeting. The landlady, in her cascade of striped apron, was a woman of character and considerable poundage. The walls were roughcast, and the three dining tables had cloths worn and darned, but it was all clean enough, and there was a pink terra-cotta stove that shouted warmth.

Yes, the landlady said, she had three bedrooms for rent, two still unoccupied; yes, he could have a fine supper here, with the choicest

of veal.

It was toward seven now, with no chance of the fog clearing. He hurried out to assure Olivia, "Warm! Clean! Two rooms! Grub! We'll stay the night."

"Yes." She crawled out of the topolino, a comic figure in the laprobe heaped over her white linen. She tottered with stiffness-- wavering, sobbing. He held her to him, not kissing her but laying his warmed cheek against her ghostly cheek, and she clung to him, hands tight about his shoulders, whimpering, "So childish, nothing but a little cold on a good road, fine main highway, and me frightened like that! But I was so lost and scared. But I'm so glad I'm with you!"

"Want a brandy?"

"Si, si, certo! And a room that doesn't keep sliding over into an abyss!"

"Can do."

"My mountaineer! My valiant major!"

"Come on."

In the crowded barroom-restaurant the drinkers looked at Olivia with relish. Her color was Calabrian, but her unmelting eyes convinced them that she was not Italian but English, and from their fathers, who had known the spacious days when all of the English milords took walking trips in the mountains, they had heard that all Englishwomen are beautiful and mad.

The landlady showed them the bedrooms: narrow, stone-floored, cold as outdoors. On each of the narrow beds was one of those Italian

country quilts evidently stuffed with steel-filings and geology, which, though they are very heavy, on the other hand induce no warmth at all.

But Olivia said gaily, "You would have your adventure! You'll have it tonight, sleeping in this Greenland igloo. But there's a very nice sacred oleograph in each room. Bene!"

As they went back downstairs, through the partly open door of the third bedroom peered an old man with a fall of despondent mustache and an ancient cape gone gray-green.

"Our fellow guest. He looks all right," Hayden muttered.

(He was in Europe, he actually was in Italy, at an inn, at night, with his girl, with a man of cloaked mystery down the hall, and he was not making it all up in his hospital bed in Newlife, sleepless, looking at the radium dial of his bedside clock!)

Olivia insisted, "Oh, the old man is fine. Possibly just a little homicidal--believes that he is a soldier of Garibaldi and we are Austrians.... Of course you noticed that there are no locks on our bedroom doors."

"You can wedge a chair under the knob."

"Don't be silly. I shall depend on you."

They had with them their bags, packed for Venice, but of any washing save with a can of hot water there was no prospect. In their glaring hunger, they did not care. "I never allow myself bath salts nor a bath thermometer, not even since I inherited the ten million," she said cheerfully; then: "But if we HAD gone off the road..."

He stroked her cheek, and hastened to get into her the spiritual

solace of hot noodle soup. The mountaineers had gone home, and the common room became a private dining room and the landlady their private chef. They had spaghetti, veal cooked with mozzarella cheese, pink cake and pink local wine. By moving their table next to the pink terra-cotta stove, into which the landlady kept stuffing brush roots, they were not cold--not intolerably cold-- just shivering a little.

The mystery man in the cape came down to have his spaghetti, but he did not seem to be looking at them. He read in a small old leather-bound book.

The dining room was also the lounge, and they sat at their table long after dinner.

"Comfortable?" Hayden said. He meant his voice to be only placid and encouraging, but it sounded tender.

"Very! You know, this place isn't really strange to me. It's homelike--something warm and littered and casual about it. Sometimes I get tired of the cold chastity of my room at the Tre Corone. It's just a hygienic waiting room for tired souls. Your room is better, a bit more disordered and bachelor-slatternly, and yet it's almost as bitterly neat as mine."

"What do you know about my room?"

"Oh, I look in every time I pass it. You have a neighborly wild- western way of leaving your door open."

"I suppose I do." He laughed at himself. "My pose is the solitary scholar--the devout hermit--Marsilio Ficino--mustn't be disturbed by anything--chase out the dog and strangle the children. And all the while I guess I want to hear those cheerful domestic noises: the cook smashing dishes and Vito Zenzero bawling out Perpetua for stealing

the guests' perfume and not saving any of it for him. And hoping that you WILL give me a Hello and come in. Why don't you?"

"I do sometimes--in spirit--and have long grave talks with you."

"What do we say in those grave talks?"

"I ask your opinion, as an architect, on the merits of fan- vaulting."

"I see!"

"And sometimes I feel like reading to you my sister's latest letter--evenings when I'm a little homesick."

"Why don't you?"

"I never get THAT homesick! Oh, darling..."

"Yes?"

"Let's not waste this one completely quiet evening--maybe the only one we'll ever have--waste it in being chatty," said Olivia. "I get worried about you. It's impersonal, really, but it rises from such a liking for you, and respect."

"As I heard Mr. Dodsworth say to you once, why do you let Europe get you? For us Americans it's a drug, a sleeping-draught, all made of poppies and the wonder of old, old civilizations and religions and dreams, so lulling after our brisk, raw climate at home, where we have to face the blizzard, fight through it or freeze. Go home, my dear!"

"Would you go back with me?"

"I can't. Europe HAS got me. I'm an exile here, but back in America I'll

always be an exile double-distilled."

The old man in the faded cape sighed to himself, "There is an American couple who are not glib and hustling, but true tender lovers. Darling forgotten, we were like that, THEN!"

He rose, bowed good-night, and left them.

"But you," Olivia was urging Hayden, "can still go back to America uninfected."

"I'm not so sure. I love Florence. It's very much like you. I wonder sometimes if I'll ever go home. With Caprice gone, I'd be lonely there."

He realized with a jar that he ought never to speak of Caprice to Olivia. He hastened to cover it with a false-hearty, "In Florence there's a kind of perpetual excitement; not football-game excitement but a blissful stir. I look in at some new church, or call on Nat Friar and listen to his newest lies about Sir Henry Belfont. He swears that for twenty-two years Belfont was butler for the Duke of Nottingham and sold the household wine and invested the swag in gambling houses. Or I go to the Dodsworths' for bridge. But most of all, I can talk to you, after dinner--when you're not being cold and repulsive."

"Am I cold sometimes?"

"And repulsive."

"Wonderful! I try to be, so that I won't get found out as the embarrassed village tomboy I am at heart. And you're still the village high-school hero: the basketball captain and tenor in your Episcopal choir and valedictorian, with such a thoughtful Commencement essay comparing Columbus and General Grant. That was a good life we

knew as kids--so much more than the surface Florence that we see. It was as real as this mountain wind. Go back to it while you can."

"Would you mind if I left you?"

She looked at him full, ivory softly flushing, and murmured, "It would be very much safer for me if you left me!"

She became warmly sleepy, in relaxation from the cold, the danger. She stretched her arms out on the table and dropped her head on them. She turned her pure, shadowy face toward him for a moment, with a funny, babyish smile, a defenseless smile all unlike her normal dignity, and went confidently off to sleep.

He passed his hand over her head, her shoulders, her good arms, not actually touching them but seeming to follow a delicate invisible integument that sheathed her and kept her inviolate. Then, unmoving, he watched her. Time was abolished, time and space were only in her. And the landlady came heavily clumping and Olivia awoke.

Hayden rather thought that, in her mountain accent, the landlady was saying, "Good night. When you get ready to go to bed, put out the lights in this room. Sleep well." She leered at Hayden and thumped away and upstairs.

"Uuuuuuuh," yawned Olivia.

"What did our hostess say?"

Olivia slowly sat straight, murmured slowly, "She said that all pleasant things must come to an end and that it's time for us to say good-night."

Suddenly it all came over him.

He bluntly moved his chair toward hers, put his arm round her, pulled her toward him.

"Olivia! I had been planning to make love to you--not planning it all day, not all our journey, but tonight, when you were soft and warm and near me. But something has hit me hard, something too basic to allow any experimental love-making. I don't know--I think I may be desperately in love with you. And when I think of the dreadful thing I might have done in trying to tempt you, I'm aghast! I'm not fit to love you. I'm a murderer! I murdered Caprice by my carelessness. I AM NOT FIT!"

She sprang up and he agitatedly rose to face her. Her voice was strained and fierce, with not one evasive civilized qualm in it.

"You did not murder her! You're a fool to say it! You told me about her--you've told me much more than you knew--about her and about you. But if you had meant to kill her, I'd be glad!"

"No!"

"I'm glad you did! I hate your damn, curly-headed, curly-minded leech, Caprice! Sucking your blood--living on your kindness and your gentleness!"

"That's not true! She was plucky and gay...."

"She was a sneak thief of life!"

"Olivia!"

"O-liv-ia! Professoressa Dottoressa Olivia! That frump! That good, safe, cautious doctor of frigidity! She's dead, too, and you murdered her, too--thank God! The wild highlander in me has come to life

again, in this wild, windy highland--thank God. Dearest Hayden, quit blaming yourself, quit smothering yourself! I love you!"

Her arms were round his neck and she was pressed against him before his hands locked behind her shoulders. When he could look at her, all the restraints in her face were loosened, and she was as abandoned as the most feckless highland lass, and breathed as hard.

She said nothing more, and they did not remember to turn off the lights in the dining room.

13

The morning sun was warm and shameless, and their eggs, consumed to a view of snowy Apennine peaks absurdly like piles of the best peach ice cream, had ozone in them--so Hayden asserted. They were chatty and they were smiling somewhat smugly, and did not even see an old man with a cape and a small Elzevir.

"Looks as though we are to be beautifully married," said Hayden.

"Astonishingly enough, it does! My lord and master, may I go on studying?"

"You are graciously permitted. Do you want to stay on in Italy, and maybe France and Holland and so on, for a few years?"

"Oh, a couple of years or so, if you can stick it. But I do want to see your Newlife--your house--our house! I want to find out whether I've learned so much about the terror and splendor of the Middle Ages that now I can become a halfway decent commonplace wife and do the job as well as Catherine Sforza would. Oh, yes, I shall love

Newlife--in a controlled way!"

"We'll build a Renaissance church there."

"What do you mean WE will? YOU will! I'm a simple, admiring wife now. I shan't even give you any advice, ever. Whatever you do will seem wonderful to me.... Except just this. You are not to build any Renaissance churches or Gothic churches or Romanesque or anything else imitative of Europe. Go ahead and develop the American Georgian, as you planned. Stand for something; don't just copy."

He said meekly, "Yes, that might be--yes."

All the way to Florence, she sang Neapolitan lyrics and smoothed his sleeve.

With a not very-well-defined feeling that now they should march out from solitude and take their civic place, Olivia and Hayden were presently seen flauntingly together everywhere in Florence, at church, at the bars, walking on the Tornabuoni and the Lungarno. In the tight environment of their pensione, which was as close to them and sometimes as itchily intrusive as a hair shirt, they had not announced any engagement and they kept their separate tables, but their attachment must have been clear.

Certainly it was to Vito Zenzero, clerk, headwaiter, and authority on which countesses in town were authentic. Vito looked confidently at Olivia as he took her dinner order, and she seemed contented now to be accepted as merely a woman, betrayed and lost to scholarship and generally happy. Every time Hayden looked from his table to hers, he smiled and Olivia smiled and Vito smiled with them both, and Olivia was not offended.

As a child, Hayden had devotedly trusted in his sturdy father, his fragile and fanciful mother. But from this serenity the neighborhood bully, a foul brat, had first startled him. With Caprice and Jesse Bradbin he had been distrustful, constantly vigilant. Now, first since the dawn years, he felt, with Olivia, not only an arousing tension but a secure faith, in which his mind flowed smooth and full.

He was proud of escorting this young woman, so wise, so warmly beautiful, so affectionate--but only to him. Her brown dress, which formerly had seemed merely serviceable and neat, was to him now a garment of singular gracefulness and fine fabric, and its choice showed his lady's knowledge of the smart world. It seemed to him that her darkly pallid face was richer now with new fast blood. It must have seemed so to every one, for Mrs. Dodsworth observed, "You're getting out more now, Olivia. You look much livelier for it."

And said Sam Dodsworth, "I used to be embarrassed with you two young highbrows, but you've become as simple-hearted a couple as I ever saw. Glad of it. Edith claims that we old married exhibits get what she calls vicarious pleasure out of young love. Don't you two let me down, like a lot of undependable young pups these days-- eight different engagements and two divorces in five years. You two stick!"

"We'll stick!" proclaimed Hayden, and Olivia looked complaisant--though, to be precise, their betrothal was most undefined, with such unromantic business as deciding when and where they would be married scarcely discussed. But the ardor between them certainly had not lessened and, in the pallid cautiousness of the Tre Corone boarding house as in the wild inn, they roused each other to an ardor that sometimes frightened Hayden.

"You seem changed, somehow," they all said to Olivia--Tessie Weepswell, the prima donna of bridge, Mrs. Manse, Prince Ugo Tramontana, and if Vito Zenzero did not say it, his eyes said it for

him. Most of them all, Hayden was startled by it.

Olivia was a good workman; she was as steadily about her subway labors at the libraries as ever, but she mocked her own laboriousness now; she was occasionally willing to sit long over red Chianti at lunch, and in every inch of her, as Hayden lovingly surveyed her, he found her blood more torrential--in moving lips, in hot cheeks, in firmly grasping hands.

It was particularly at Nat Friar's house that they were accepted as a Young Couple. Not for many years had the once-gallant young Nathaniel Greenleaf Friar of Boston been an adventurous amorist. Nowadays he looked upon passion as he looked upon assassination: as a diversion that had been fashionable in the Middle Ages, and very useful, but of which, surely, there had been enough by 1600.

At supper for the Young Couple, served on his living-room table cleared of books and pipes, with a noble San Daniele ham, Nat smiled and teased his beard, and addressed Hayden: "I suppose I must give my sanction to the dangerous exploit that Dr. Lomond and you are contemplating. People still do get married, do they? I thought they all got tired of it about twenty-five years ago.

"Well, marriage is an excellent and almost tolerable institution for groundlings who have nothing else to keep them annoyed and occupied in the long evenings, but I have never commended it for scholars. All through my life I have had acquaintances who dashed in howling, 'Nat, you need some one to take care of you, and I've found just the woman for you!' Then they drag in some weedy virgin or unwieldy widow whose ambition is to be supported in return for such caretaking as hiding my slippers where I can never find them, or quarreling with my maid, whom I have cherished for fifteen years, and

replacing her with a fancy male who cooks with butter and collects even more than the legal illegal commission of ten per cent on all shopping. These solitary animals who call themselves 'scholars'--they should never marry. And Ada will agree."

"You," said Mrs. Shaliston Baker, gently, "are the most selfish, loquacious and untidy old barbarian living."

"Uncle Nat," said Olivia, "I could kill you with pleasure. I used to be cynical, too, but now I can see that there may be a better reason for living than just a knowledge of Etruscan tombs."

"If you two women really believed any of that, you would really kill me and not just babble about it, when I make so basic an attack on your sex, when I judiciously point out that a wife's notion of being a faithful helpmate is to be willing to wait while you are paying the bill for the mink coat she has swindled out of you. But no woman believes in Women. When I attack your faction, you both gloat."

"Oh, pooh!" said Olivia.

"And you, Hayden, you agree with me, or presently will."

Startled, Hayden wondered about that. He admitted to himself that he was sometimes a little edgy over the panting watchfulness which the changed Olivia now kept over him. He had been so free!

Among the yodeling witnesses to their bliss, none was more fervid than those new pensione boarders, the Grenadiers.

The Grenadiers, as Vito Zenzero had named them, were middle-aged twin American ladies. They had been well paid for divorcing uncouth husbands who were in trade--shoes and wholesale plumbing; who were not, in short, "creative." CREATIVE was the

Grenadiers' favorite word. It was CREATIVE to sell antiques but not plumbing.

The Grenadiers came from Pennsylvania, but they had lived long in England, in Bloomsbury boarding houses, and they said "lift"--when they remembered it--and hoped to be taken for English.

They took photographs all day long.

They had also lived in Carmel, Taos, Taxco, Greenwich Village and Montparnasse, tracking down not so much Culture as the creative and romantic dealers in Culture: ballet-dancers, summer-theater directors, fiddlers. They had now moved their field station to Florence.

They took photographs all day long and showed them to you all evening long.

They were unbeatable at coursing through churches, galleries, art shops, and they took buses out to Prato and the Certosa. They had picked up a young male slut who was supposed to be an American student but whose studies were only of bars. They introduced him as "such an ardent, creative talent--he speaks seven languages--he just HATES America!"

Whichever the seven languages may have been, they did not include any Italian, nor much English beyond, "Actually," "Amusing" and "Oh, my dears."

The Grenadiers' burlesque of his own Culture-stalking made Hayden want to go home, where he would cultivate not this quarter-knowledge of history but his full and accurate knowledge of Newlife; where he could tell you, offhand, just how much 12,758 Schuyler Boulevard would bring per front foot, and who was the father of the

wife of the third baseman of the Newlife team. He denied his own denial; he insisted that his white nights of outwatching the Bear had been fruitful, but he was learning what older and wearier practitioners of scholarship and the arts all learn: that their worst enemy is the rich female amateur.

Hayden could endure the winter cold of his room, the contempt of Jesse Bradbin, but he could not endure the approval of the Grenadier Sisters when they bubbled to him, "We do think that your engagement to Dr. Olivia is THE most romantic thing we ever saw. It's truly creative: an architect who APPRECIATES how vulgar most Americans are marrying a woman scholar who knows how many gardeners Lorenzo Mag-nifico kept at his villa!"

Put that way, Hayden saw his interest in Olivia as fairly sickening.

"BUT, Mr. Chart," croaked the Grenadiers, "you'll have to watch your step. Very few of you men have the chance to be the consort of Dr. Olivia--such a rare woman and she can put it over any of you men, and you got to admit it, when it comes to creative ability. You may be so efficient and all that, but here you have to take a back seat. We'll bet a cookie, if Olivia quits her teaching job when you get married, she'll step right out on the lecture platform, and my! think how proud you'll be, with thousands of people listening to her, hundreds anyway, when she explains what St. Catherine and St. Francis and Boccaccio and all those deep thinkers were thinking! You let us tell you, Mister Man, you'll have to be content to share her with the world!"

He brooded to himself, "Perhaps an uninspired routine draftsman like me would feel more secure with a woman who isn't in danger of being intoxicated by the limelight and the microphone and fools like these sisters. No! Nonsense! That's half treachery and half idiocy. Dear Olivia, she would never ride a sound-truck in the public square!"

And Olivia joined him in ridiculing the Grenadiers' proprietorship of the good, the true and the beautiful, but one evening she listened unsnickering when they gushed, "Oh, Dr. Olivia, you've got to excuse us if we bore you by raving so about you. We do love Culture, oh, we think it's simply wonderful, and so much needed, but we're just amateurs compared with a wonderful, wonderful trained expert like you!"

Olivia murmured, "Me? I'm a schoolma'am who was lucky in having hardboiled teachers."

But she did listen while the Grenadiers gave her the useful information that she was a mistress of medieval law and as beautiful as Clarice Orsini.

Hayden noted that the Olivia who once, after the pensione dinner, had taken coffee alone at her table and then flitted off to her barricaded cell, was staying on for coffee in the lounge, and now and then holding forth to eye-brightened circles on what was really worth seeing in Florence. When the North Italy agent for the Little Dandy Tractors of Moline said to her admiringly, "Say, Doctor, there's one thing I never could get straight about these doggone Middle Ages--maybe you can tell me," then Olivia did tell him, and she did not look at an impatient Mr. Hayden Chart off in a corner.

14

Somewhat less than four weeks after their mountain inn, four weeks during which Hayden had tried to march on in Italian history, Olivia demanded, while they dined at Paoli's, in their familiar escutcheon-brightened corner, "Darling, there's one quite important thing you might do for me."

"It's done."

"I want to go to lunch at Sir Henry Belfont's some more."

"That pompous old fake? You said you never wanted to see him again. You disliked him even more than I did."

"I have reasons."

"But how could I arrange it? I can't phone him and say we want a change from the Tre Corone boiled tongue and spinach, and how much does he charge?"

"No! Don't try that. He might take you seriously and take us as boarders and he'd charge enough to ruin us. Whatever the old pot may be, I'm sure he knows how to make it pay.... As you'll make it pay, my ardent young architect, when I've looked over your setup in Newlife and probably fired your partner, Bradbin or whatever his silly name is, for cheating you! With Henry, it will be extremely easy. Call him up and invite him and Lady Belfont to lunch at some cheap trattoria--be sure and give him the name of the place. He'd hate it. So he'll haw a little and then ask if he can't invite you and Dr. Lomond--you know that lovely Livy?--to his place instead."

"Do you really want to go there and listen to him tell how well he knows the Queen of Saxony and His Serene Grace, the Sixteenth Duke of Brabant?"

"Well now, Henry knows a lot about Italian painting, at least a quarter as much as Prince Ugo. And he's very rich and vain. If I could get him interested in our art gallery at my university--I have a not entirely silly hope that when we're married and I break my university connections, they may make a new post for me: lecturer on history and only have to go there a month or so out of every year, but keep in touch. And they

might name the lecturership after me."

"You'd be away from Newlife that long?"

"You could come along and listen, if you wanted to."

"Yes--yes..."

"Anyway, there's no sense in your inverted snobbery about Sir Henry. He may come in very useful. Imagine him coming to visit at the university while I'm there, and me introducing the old windbag to the president and the students. They'd be so impressed by his tenth-rate title. And then maybe he'll give us the art gallery. So run along now and do as I tell you, and don't argue."

"Have you such a definite expectation of being bored in Newlife--or rather, with me--that you're already sketching an emergency exit?"

"I'll adore every minute with you, and I expect to run our servants like a sergeant major. But you know that with the academic work I've done, I do have other interests. After ALL!"

"But Olivia, suppose we don't have any servants to run and we have to do our own housework, you and I together? You've urged me to freelance, and that may not mean much money for quite a while."

"Then you'll need my help more than ever, need me making a little money, too. Darling, why are you so difficult today, so argumentative? You aren't usually."

"This whole business of catering to a poop like Belfont revolts me. A little while ago you would have scorned the thought of toadying to him. You would have slapped down anybody who suggested that you would ever be willing to introduce him to your president--whom you

also despise!"

"My dear, that scrupulous Dr. Lomond--the chilly, opinionated old prig!--is gone, and I'm another woman. You ought to know. You certainly contributed enough to the change. And you can't have me both the shrinking virgin and the bold earthy lover--you can't have anything both ways. Now skip in and phone!"

The telephonic swindling worked out as the shrewd new Olivia had planned. Sir Henry shuddered at the thought of meeting normal Italians at a restaurant, and he lavishly invited Hayden and Olivia to the Villa Satiro.

They drove up in the topolino, which again caused an aggravated spasm of agony in the butler, who was a cheap reprint of Sir Henry, not bound in the original eyebrows.

As they descended, out from a taxicab just arrived frisked a stalwart and handsome young man over whom Olivia fluttered, "What a beautiful animal HE is! A Lombard knight, without fear and splendidly without brains. I can place him within a decade or two: 875 A.D., I think."

He was almost certainly an American, with a look about him of Scandinavian ancestry: an extremely large young man in his early thirties. Over his fresh-looking tweeds a light topcoat was slung from his shoulders like a cape. He was hatless, with an exuberance of flaxen hair. Hayden, who looked upon the fellow with much less exuberance than Olivia, thought that with a show of knighthood he combined a suggestion of a college football star, of a vacuum-cleaner salesman, and of a popular singing evangelist shouting jazz piety.

The stranger waved his wide hand to them and entered the villa after

them, in the manner of royalty standing aside for aged peasants.

Sir Henry met them in the hall and said to Olivia, as though nobly amused, "I seem to be specializing today in you streamlined Yankee scholars. You are all so very brisk about cartelizing facts and diagrams that you make a shy old British putterer like me seem incorrigibly provincial.

"This young gentleman who has charged in with you is Professor Lundsgard--Professor LORENZO Lundsgard--till recently the French and Spanish don at Huguenot University, which is somewhere in your Southern states.

"He has resigned, and I understand that he is to devote himself to the study of our wistful Italian culture, which nowadays is so unused to being wooed by anyone so resolute and twittering with dawn as you two acolytes--you three. In his letter introducing Professor Lundsgard a man who calls himself President Sleman of Huguenot informs me that our youthful friend is a 'stimulating teacher and an accomplished scholar, who will stir up the sleeping Tuscan lions.' That is a spectacle that I shall very much enjoy.... Dr. Lundsgard, this your rival lion-stirrer, Dr. Olivia Lomond of the University of--Winnemac, I believe it is called. Oh. And Mr. Chart."

Then he let them go in to lunch. Lady Belfont was also there, though this is noted, like the day's temperature, only as a matter of record.

As they wavered in to face the butler and the footman, standing like the Sphinx and the largest pyramid, Hayden noted how gallantly Lundsgard smiled at Olivia, and how sharply he sized her up. Her smile in return was warmed by a flirtatiousness which six weeks ago she would have denounced as cheap. He saw, too, how the beige vicuna sweater which Lundsgard wore for waistcoat managed on his hearty torso to get itself to look like chain mail, and how the sun

through the lofty windows brought out metallic lights in his rough, corn-colored hair.

The five of them, plus the inescapable Marchesa Valdarno, sat prim about the refectory table of Irish oak, eating their molds of rice with duck livers served on English plates with views of Kent, while Belfont with what he felt to be gentlemanly but learned humor, pumped Lundsgard, who answered with good-hearted simplicity.

"I'm afraid I can't claim to be any kind of a real scholar, Sir Henry. Fact, in college, I was more devoted to football, but I had a sneaking worship for learning, especially old history. Like a dumb farmer seeing a vision of chariots in the August sky, and not daring to even try and explain them. Oh, I did get my Phi Beta Kappa key, along with my letter in two sports, but that was an accident."

("This fellow is probably my own age, but he seems much fresher and younger," thought Hayden, and looked anxiously at Olivia, who was fixed on Lundsgard, her lips open.)

"In the War I served in North Africa; a very high-ranking corporal I was, till they demoted me to second looe, and I got laid up with nothing more than a fool machine-gun wound in one foot. While I was convalescing, I got acquainted with French café society there and learned a little of the lingo. Then I got hit again, really awful light, but they invalided me out and I went home and got my Ph.D. in Romance languages--never very good at them, either! But I got a job teaching in that little university and, by coaching football and taking the president's son out duck-hunting, I got by.

"Then a sort of ridiculous thing happened. I was spending a Christmas vacation with a friend, and right out of the blue, a movie producer offered me a job acting--as a young cop in a Big City picture, and then couple of Westerns. Seemed like preposterously

big salary: three-fifty a week. Dollars, not cents! Now here's the funny thing. It wasn't at any college but on the lot in Hollywood that I first heard the Gospel of Beauty, from a grand old script writer who had been a playwright in Hungary.

"I started reading about the Middle Ages, and then by chance, which is sometimes so kind to a heavy-handed duffer like me, I was in a Middle Ages costume play, and I was sold on history complete. The actor and halfback scholar!"

Lundsgard thundered with laughter, in which they vaguely joined.

("Olivia is looking at him like a Fond Mother.")

"Oh, I'm a fighting fool for study. Sir Henry, I've read all your essays on Tuscan Art, and personally I think they're much more profound than Bernard Berenson. Much!"

Sir Henry looked lavish. That made two people who thought so.

"I have a pretty definite idea in coming here. I want to prepare myself to give the undisciplined people of the United States a Message of the sublime importance of authority, and I want to hand on to them at the same time the lofty philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, the magnificence of Lorenzo, the reverence of Savonarola, and through it all, the superworldly quality of Leadership."

"Ah," condescended Sir Henry.

"And in America, where any garageman thinks himself just as good as a bank president, we so lack the phenomenon of sanctified and yet forceful Leadership. And as a pioneer, I may do something to create it."

("The man is a fool. But Olivia looks as if she likes him. But cannibal sandwich with laurel trimmings is not my meat.")

"All of you clever people," said Lundsgard, "will think I am a ridiculous bumpkin, but I do have some plans that are awfully exciting. My agent is planning a huge lecture tour for me, on six subjects, including Mysticism and Leadership and--and this is something new--the lectures are to be tied in with a feature movie, which I am to script, about the Medicis, with the lead played by Rupert Osgoswold--or possibly by your humble servant!"

Olivia muttered, so softly that it was heard only by Hayden, "Very exciting!"

Lundsgard caroled on, "The president of Cornucopia Films--do you know that outfit, Sir Henry?"

"My boy, I am much too secluded and timid to understand the neologies of the cinema, but it does happen that my Man of Business, in London, has invested some small sums for me in Cornucopia."

"Well, that's dandy. Maybe you'll be interested in the fact that the president of Cornucopia is going to town on this, and he's advanced a big wad to finance my work here. Being such a stupid guy and having so little time, I have to depend on assistants-- photographers and secretaries and researchers and so on. But Cornucopia agrees with me that we must not think of this as a money-making project--though I got to admit that it'll probably bring me in several thousand bucks a week! But we think of it as a public service, to improve the mental stamina and subtlety of America. A great friend of my father and, I am honored to say, of mine, a United States Senator who carries a lot of weight on the Foreign Relations Committee, believes that my crusade for more authority and leadership might both elevate

our restless American morals and improve our standing everywhere abroad. That goes to show there are people who see our crying need!

"Sir Henry, I realize how fortunate I am to be allowed to see the Villa Satiro. I have read a little of its history as well as the book of its present owner. I am honored!"

Lundsgard turned on Sir Henry, on the Marchesa Valdarno, on Olivia a smile full of soul and sunshine, the smile of a brave young ambassador who loves battle and smitings, but also loves little children and quotations from Alice in Wonderland. He chanted, "By myself, I never could learn much of the Middle Ages. I am too much the energetic outdoor man. What I'd like to do, Sir Henry, is to ask an occasional question of a veteran like you, and perhaps of Dr. Lomond, of whose accomplishments I have heard."

In a quarter-hour of well-padded if not particularly well-turned sentences, Sir Henry said, Yes, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance make clear the horrors of this so-called Democracy. Civilization ended with the Fall of the Bastille. Aristocracy means the Rule of the Best, and how sadly we need that amid the clamorous and greedy herd of Britain, and no doubt of your America.

To all this delirium Lundsgard listened with attention, and Hayden reflected that good listeners are to good talkers as one to ten.

His Olivia listened also.

Hayden had heard her hold forth on the wickedness of the popularizers who condense a five-hundred-page book on Einstein into a two-page article including three racy anecdotes and a thumb-nail drawing of a relativitized cow. She liked her books thick and close-printed and accurate about their geography, and she had

demanded that everybody else like them the hard way, too. And she was now looking tenderly at a man who was going to lecture on philosophy in the Rose Bowl.

Sir Henry was bestowing on Lundsgard an invitation to frequent his villa, use his books, come and have lunch with Prince Ugo. "And I shall write to the president of Cornucopia," said Sir Henry, "my approval of your Crusade."

Running over with gratitude, Lundsgard took leave. Olivia burst out, "Have you a taxi coming, Mr. Lundsgard? I'm sure Mr. Chart would be glad to give you a lift in his funny little flivver."

"Splendid, Doctor; much obliged," said Lundsgard.

But Hayden was thinking, "It isn't funny and it isn't a flivver. It has a powerful motor and sweet steering, and how you're going to get your fat carcass into it, Lundsgard, I don't know." But aloud, "Surely. Of course. Thank you for a beautiful lunch--Lady Belfont."

He remembered how generous to guests Caprice had been with HIS cigarettes, his Scotch, even his fine large linen handkerchiefs; how she would insist to a guest after a party, at three on a winter morning, "Oh, don't phone--Hay will be GLAD to drive you home!"

15

By sitting sidewise in the back of the topolino and not daring to breathe, Lundsgard was perilously carted down into town. Olivia turned her head to discourse with him most of the way, while Hay drove and sulked. She commented:

"I do think your plan is a little wild, Mr. Lundsgard, but..."

Lundsgard shouted, "Listen, baby, I hate this formality among us Yanks, even when we're in Europe. I wish you'd call me Lorenzo, or maybe Lorry. I'm certainly going to call you Livy, even if you are a top-flight history shark, and if your boy friend don't slap me down for it, I'll call him Hay. Okay, Doc? Be friendly to the poor cowboy minnesinger."

She giggled. She said, "Very well."

Never had Hayden called her anything more loose than Olivia; never, he remembered, even in tenderness, had she called him anything but Mr. Chart and then Hayden.

"But Lorry," she burst out, "do you actually think you can make ecclesiastical art and thought as simple to Main Street as the rules of croquet?"

"Maybe not, but it's worth taking a shot. Holy smoke, don't you think all this deep stuff, even in my bum version of it, will be better for the American hoi pollois than a lot of crime and sex stories? Huh, darling?"

And to Hay's profound gloom, the tawny lily, the one-time nun of learning, answered, "Yes, I do."

"Say, folks," Mr. Lundsgard gurgled, "from all I can learn, the average age of the Anglo-American Colony here must be about sixty- five. Kick me out if I get intrusive, but I do hope I'm going to be friendly with you young brats.

"Say, come see my office at the Excelsior. Maybe it'll hand you a good laugh. It's pretty commercial for a highbrow crusader, but if I'm going to collect as many facts about Florence in couple months as that old gasbag, Belfont, has in maybe twenty years, I've got to have a

regular assembly-belt. I've got Rome down cold in my notes and snapshots, and some Venice and Ravenna, and now it's Florry's turn.... Listen, I sound brash, but I'm awful in earnest. Come on!"

Mr. Lundsgard was extremely appealing, yet all the while his sun-shot basso was extremely dominating. He leaned forward to pat Olivia's shoulder, and the priestess of the chill twilight let his hand lie there for a minute.

From a second bedroom in Lundsgard's large suite at the Excelsior, all bedroom furniture had been removed, and he had turned it into one of the briskest offices Hayden had ever seen.

At a typewriter on the newest thing in extra-sized green steel typists' desks, with a dictation phonograph beside her, a young woman secretary was working. On an oak table in the center were at least fifty books on Italian history, with quarterly reviews in four languages--not looking much perused. An enormous filing-cabinet had on its various drawers such tasty but unexpected labels as "Anecdotes of Famous Dukes," "Clothing, Houses & Dec.," "Jewels & Furs," "Manners, Morals in Med. Courts," "Beautiful Bits from Poets, Philosophers," "Hunting Leopards, Falcons, Methods of Execution," "Horses, Heroism."

On one wall was a bulletin board to which a youngish Italian with dark hair and a wise, thin face was pinning snapshots of Florentine palaces, city walls, armor from the museums. He looked like an educated cousin of Vito Zenzero, a cousin who could read the telephone book without moving his lips.

"This is Angelo Gazza, my photographer--best photographer in Italy," said Lundsgard. "Born here in Florry, but lived in England, and chummed with the Yankee troops here. Speaks English by the book. He saves my life. I see a historic bit, or quaint, beautiful or native. I

always have Angelo following me and Snap! and he gets the local color for me even better than my notes.... Angelo, this is Dr. Lomond and Mr. Chart. They'll give us a lot of pointers about what to see in Florry. We'll be plenty grateful to 'em."

Gazza nodded. If he was grateful now, he did not show it.

Nor was the secretary, when Lundsgard introduced her, particularly cordial. She had a fine face, but it was too varnished, too reminiscent of the Marchesa Valdarno, and her hair was a slide of smooth ash-blond. She seemed hard and competent, but the near-green eyes which sized up Olivia had in them resentment and suffering.

"This is Miss Hoxler, Evelyn Hoxler, or Mrs. Baccio, if you prefer. She's true-blue American, but she's lived here for years; married to a fine young Italian businessman, friend of mine, Art Baccio; lives in Rome. She just loves this art work. Hey, Evelyn?"

"Yes," said Miss Hoxler, and it was as sullen a sound as the cry of a marsh bird.

"She's unquestionably the finest stenog in Italy, in both Italian and English. She never forgets an engagement—or lets me forget one. Hey, Evelyn?"

"Yes?" said Miss Hoxler, and went back to typing, and the machine sounded profane.

"Well, children, we'll go in and have a drink."

Mr. Lundsgard markedly did not include Gazza or Miss Hoxler in his invitation.

He shut the door between the office and his living room. A portable

bar had been set up; one rich in bourbon, rye and French brandy. As he mixed a highball, Lundsgard snarled, "That confounded Hoxler woman is a good machine-pounder, but she's getting altogether too independent for my taste. I guess she misses her husband, though he's the most wishy-washy excuse for a man you ever saw. I found a job for him, in an office, but do you think he appreciates it? Well, a man who tries to do something for mankind gets to expect ingratitude. The real trouble with most folks is that they haven't got any insight."

And Olivia apparently agreed.

Lundsgard was bountiful in suggestions for things they three could do together: excursions to near-by villages; and if Hayden was not enthusiastic about the implication that he and his good little topolino would be at their constant service, Olivia was. None of Lundsgard's jolly objectives was new to her but she greeted them with apparent surprise and delight.

That night, late, in Hayden's room, he was as harsh with her as his tenderness would permit. She was tired, her eyes were print-tired, and she stretched out in his deepest chair, relaxed, while he sat primly straight and interrogated her, with an ugly memory of a time when he had investigated a wartime carpenter suspected of sabotage.

"You like this fellow, Lundsgard?"

"Like him, dear? How do you mean? He has so much buoyancy and freshness. They're really charming to a tired old lady like me, and even his amusing ignorances. He's so naive."

"That's your favorite word."

"Well, it's the favorite quality among the few men who are attracted by a dried-up old maid like me."

"Not noticeably dried-up now!"

They smiled together.

"'Livvy!' This fellow is a clinker. We may see too much of him," protested Hayden.

Clinker was one of their private words. It had been an invention of Hayden, along with smoocher, and he had worked out a Doctrine of Clinkers. He may have been thinking of pre-oil-heating days and how hard it was to get a burnt-out coal, a clinker, out of a furnace grate.

Clinkers are those newly arrived persons, not friends or their close kin or people likely to become friends, but acquaintances of twenty years back, or friends of friends of friends, or complete strangers, who come bounding into your particular Florence or your Newlife with letters of introduction, or merely with a telephone call or a note on hotel stationery, announcing, "You've probably never heard of me but I know the sister-in-law of the nephew of a GREAT friend of yours. I'm here only for three days, but I thought I might have the pleasure of shaking your hand and buying you a cocktail."

Which, in Florence, meant that they expected a free cocktail, a free meal, an escorted tour of the city, and perhaps introductions to Prince Ugo and Sam Dodsworth. They would also accept a trip to Siena and your assistance in all their shopping. As many clinkers came to Newlife as to Florence, but there, at least, they could speak the language and buy their own cigarettes.

It is the supposition of all clinkers that the chief purpose of any Americans in coming all the way to Florence is to spend all his time

there with fellow Americans.

In the Doctrine of Clinkers there is no implication that clinkers are persons of low manners. They may be virtuous lodge-members and favorite honorary pall-bearers, soft-voiced and informed about astronomy and the history of West Point. But in quantities of more than one a season, they are appalling nuisances.

Frequently they believe that they are being benefactors to what they call "lonely exiles." One of them clacked to Hayden on the telephone, "Course I've never met you, but I said to myself, 'What the hell! Hay'll be tickled to death to see an American face, I guess!'"

Olivia sat up to protest, "That's unfair. Lorry isn't a clinker. He's going to stay here and be one of us--whatever that means-- delicate connoisseurs, I suppose!"

"There is nothing delicate about your 'Lorry.' Playful he is, powerful he is, and a good drinking-man. He'll die of apoplexy at fifty. But delicate? No!"

"So much the better! He won't just dabble in art criticism. He's going at it with an earnestness and yet a humility that may take him far. He's really touching. And he doesn't take himself too seriously; he has a divine, rough humor about his own deficiencies. He may become quite a fair scholar."

"Maybe--if he isn't entirely a charlatan."

"Why are you so intolerant?"

"With this fellow, frankly, I'm a little jealous of him. I didn't expect you--oh, you say you're changed, but it wasn't so long ago that you were the coolest judge of bumptiousness I ever met, and I didn't expect you

to get so girlish over a ham actor playing a professor. A real crush!"

"Oh, pooh!"

"I agree."

"Honestly, Hayden, you astonish me, being jealous when I'm merely amused by the antics of a good-hearted climber. I take Lorry about as seriously as I do that cocker spaniel we always meet on the Tornabuoni. I probably wouldn't recognize Lorry if I saw him tomorrow."

She did protest too much, thought Hayden. Was there a faint stink of treachery? He urged:

"I'd better get my patent on you filed, quick."

"What am I? An invention?"

"Of the devil! There is a sort of theory that we are engaged to be married, which seems to me a surprisingly good idea, but we have never much discussed when or what afterward. Can't we be married this summer, and take a look at the Alps and maybe Austria, and then in the fall we'll decide whether we want to go home or stay on in Europe? What about it?"

"I'm willing, though I do think one of the charms of our friendship has been that we haven't had a lot of family around to drive us into a marital schedule, so they can order their wedding garments early. Can't we still just drift, for a while yet?"

"Possibly."

It was not her evasiveness which dismayed him but the discovery in himself of relief that she was evading fixed terms, and that he was not

yet going to be tied down to definiteness.

If it had not been for the threat to Olivia's unstable emotions, he might have liked Lundsgard for his backwoods humor. The three had comfortable outings at the enticing country restaurants at Maiano and Pratolino and St. Casciano and sat there on outdoor terraces for hours. Olivia mockingly called Lundsgard the "Dazzling Dane" and explained to him that it is not enough to qualify as an authority to know that Italy is a peninsula and that the Medicis were bankers. Lundsgard took it affably, and he danced with Olivia in arbors to the melody of accordions.

He was taken up by the peerage of the American Colony with unexpected speed. He had a way of telling retired gentlemen whose only vocabularies were of the Stock Exchange how profound they were about international politics, and of looking at their wives with reverence and surprise. He had a competent game of bridge, a neatness in mixing drinks, a skill in listening to symptoms, which caused Hayden to wonder if his story of untutored country boyhood was quite truthful.

On his own, Lundsgard gave a party which marked him as not just an acceptable eighth for dinner, but as a social factor of merit. He hired three suites at the Excelsior for the evening; in one, he had the bridge-players, in one the more thoughtful boozers, in the third there was dancing to a Swiss orchestra in Bulgarian costumes playing Brazilian tunes. Even the testiest Colonists advanced from bridge to the bar and a few even to the samba, and Lundsgard was considered a man of the rarest parts.

Thereafter, the juicy seventeen-year-old granddaughters of the exiled bankers, who now and then visited Florence, clamored for the presence of Lundsgard.

Along with the pillars, Lundsgard got in with the dubious and unexplained who make up an interesting part of all the foreign colonies in Florence and of the Italians who are close to them: mysterious owners of villas gorgeous but secluded; ex-officials of the Allied Military Government who had been minor clerks before War II and millionaires afterward; royalty in exile; Italians in whose presence it was not considered tactful to mention dope-running; men sometimes grave and solid seen usually with men young and pretty.

In Florence, even the patently proper British and Americans are often inexplicable. With so many demure ladies you never quite know whether they are widows, divorced or still married and of what sort their husbands' grandparents had been. And with all these (since he did not, like Hayden, have to stay home evenings and study, having his Miss Evelyn Hoxler to do that for him) Lundsgard cruised, blithe and free, generally popular, and Hayden reflected that there is no more useful pose than that of the honest yokel of whom it would be a shame to take advantage.

However much Hayden doubted Lundsgard, it was a season when clinkers were trooping into town, and any tested permanent acquaintance was a refuge. Olivia and Hayden and Lundsgard escaped from tourists on frequent mountain picnics, and it was on one of these that Hayden's suspicions of Olivia and Lundsgard forced him to recognize them.

16

Lundsgard was a skilled picnic guest. He scrupulously fetched his share of the lunch, paid for his share of the gasoline, and once, when there was a tire to be changed, he pushed Hayden aside and did all the changing.... Hayden ungratefully thought that their family Tristan was somewhat too buoyant and powerful about it. Though probably a

year older than Hayden, he contrived to look more youthful.

Nowadays he usually called Olivia "Sister," "Cookie" or "Helena Troy."

They picknicked today up above Settignano in a grove of olive and apple trees, with a venerable castle nearby, and the towers and low houses of Florence far below. Throughout lunch--cold duck and bread and butter and red wine and cheese with dates and raisins--Lundsgard was jovially teasing Olivia about her feebleness. He insisted that she had studied so much that she was unable now to walk two blocks. She lost all detachment and shouted at Lundsgard, as though he were some one whom it was important to impress, that in college she could have been woman track champion if she had taken the time for training.

"Okay, let's see how good you are, Cutie!" bellowed Lundsgard. "I'll race you down to that old olive tree with the trunk rotted through."

It is not at all certain that Lundsgard let her win the race; he was a little cumbersome and wavering, while the Diana of the Laurentian Library was astonishingly fleet. She did win, and they came back up the hillside laughing, innocently swinging hand in hand. But the uncomfortable Hayden wondered whether it WAS so innocent. There are things other than purloined letters that are most artfully concealed by exposing them. But the two returned to him so clear-eyed and so candidly laughing that he felt rebuked.

He and his suspicions had it out at three o'clock that night. He had awakened in the darkness to a memory which tore at him, of Olivia's eyes utterly fixed on this lout, the tip of her tongue moving against her upper lip.

He could not sleep again. Could he ever sleep again?

In his old dressing-gown and soft worn Pullman slippers he padded over to the marble-topped table and, with his little Meta stove, he made coffee, served with condensed milk.

No, he thought calmly, he was not the typical suspicious husband, with a vanity which made him surprised that his wife could like any other male at all, when she was so blessed as to have HIS divine favor. There was no suspicion about it; he was coldly and wretchedly sure that Olivia could surrender to this lusty Lundsgard animal; the question was whether she had done so now, and whether she would now go on succumbing to a dreary line of sneak thieves afterward.

"I coaxed her out of the cold tomb and warmed her. Did I do that only for the benefit of Lundsgard and his successors?"

Then, "Oh, what nonsense! To be so sick-jealous you can't stand her even laughing with a lively acquaintance! She's as single- minded in love as...

"She's a reckless fool, she's uncontrollable when she takes a fancy to a man. I'd like to hear Professor Leslie Vintner's version of their affair! At least, Caprice was dependable that way. She never more than flirted at a dance.... I don't think she did.... Of course there are some flabby, whimpering individuals who were born to be cuckolded.... Oh, go back to bed, Chart! Can't you get enough torture without making a hobby of it?"

When the three lunched next, Hayden could not resist probing the campus Casanova about his opinion of this recently discovered world-menace, Sex.

Lundsgard had often confided that he had never been married, and now he was frank and unsparing of himself. He had been fervently

engaged, he said, to a "cute little chick and awful smart" at Huguenot University, but he admitted that in his ruthless youth he had been cruel to this young lady. He had scolded her for not rising to the splendor of his ambition to be a lord of learning--at several thousand dollars a week.

"I was kind of raw and unsympathetic, I reckon. I wasn't a big enough, rich enough soul then to appreciate a gentle little saint like Bessie and be patient with her."

But his humility quickly ran out, and he hinted that in Hollywood and Rome he had been favored by the handsomest and most befurred women. And Olivia, Hayden marked, was not angered by this rakishness. She listened to Lundsgard's advertising without one of the crisp comments, flavored with mustard and pepper and ice, for which she had once been dreaded. "I'd better get her out to Newlife quick!" thought Hayden.

At the Tre Corone, now, she did not merely tolerate Vito's insinuating croons. Hayden heard Vito mutter that they might go out to a night club, and though she refused, she was not haughty.

Even at the Villa Satiro, to which they were often invited for lunch now, along with Lundsgard, she was not above a sly confidence with Sir Henry, who wagged his fat back and leaned over her with the coyness of a distinguished circus elephant.

Hayden was bored by Belfont's ponderous way of being salacious by referring to the reprehensible doings of the less respectable Grecian gods. Hayden wondered whether Olivia would be spiritually advancing or declining if she switched from Lundsgard's boisterous salesmanship to Sir Henry's soggy glory. Yet now, when he was most distressed by her base transmutation, Hayden was most held by her ardent love, and the once simple Tre Corone boarding-house had

become for him a splendor of heaven edged with infernal gloom.

Then the cable from his partner, Jesse Bradbin, from Newlife:

"Big deal pending you required stop. Big dough quit being irresponsible come home next boat."

It tempted him to think of leaving paradise and all the heavy proprieties demanded in an angel, and of being busy and important in Newlife again; of not having to remember historical dates or impress the Dodsworthe or shepherd his ewe lamb lest she fall over the most obvious cliffs. He could smell the Rocky Mountain air, heady with sage instead of olives. And he owed something to his fatuous yet devoted partner. But to love Olivia was more important even than to snatch contracts from his worthy rivals in business.

He refreshed his love by reviewing the virtues of Olivia. Remember, he coached himself, what unexampled beauty and courage and knowledge she has. You must be patient while she is getting over her first real fling, which she takes so much the worse because, at nearly thirty, she's new to it.

Would Jesse Bradbin ever give up anything he greatly wanted for him?

His cabled lie was warm and polite.

It was harder for him to snub Lundsgard because the man, with a breezy humbleness, was always turning to him for advice. And once he said, "I wish you'd get in on some of this movie dough, Hay, by doing a little research for me, in your spare time."

It was amiably said and amiably refused.

They were dining, Hayden and Olivia, with Nat Friar and his love, Mrs. Shalston Baker. The dinner, served on Nat's living-room table imperfectly cleared of books and the chess set, was as good as ever, with curried shrimp and tiny strawberries, but Nat was less bland. He was restless, he spilled the wine, and Ada Baker watched him nervously, like a little old cat watching its good but alarming friend, the woolly setter. Their example made Hayden and Olivia unusually gentle with each other. When Nat said, "After you two young people are married, as Ada and I have never had the courage to be, you mustn't stay in the cautious splendor of Florence but try the world," then Olivia put out her hand, to let it lie relaxed in Hayden's.

Hayden explained the tidal phenomenon of Lorenzo Lundsgard, whom Nat had never seen. "He has depressing energy and touching reverence. It might interest you to meet him, Nat."

"So that I may then re-enact the very sensible and enjoyable egotism of the Pharisee in gloating, 'Thank God I am not as these tourists'?"

"Why not? By the way, Lundsgard sounded me out about making some money on the side as part-time researcher for him. I turned it down."

"What," wondered Nat, "is a researcher?"

"You are."

"Young gentleman, I am a frowsty old bachelor. I am also a lie- abed and a secret drinker. I know what research is: something unpleasant that men in white jackets, like barbers, do to dogs in dungeon laboratories. But I don't know what a researcher is."

"He goes out and does the marketing."

"You say that this Dr. Lundsgard," fretted Nat, "would like a researcher in medieval folkways?"

"Yes. Bring him in two facts and he'll cook them into a whole lecture."

"Do you suppose he could use me, Hayden?"

"Could a village bank 'use' J. Pierpont Morgan? Could a popular preacher 'use' an archangel?"

"The answer is not necessarily 'yes' in either case. Their methods might be different. But the fact is..."

Nat spoke heavily, looking down into his beard.

"This may be the last dinner I shall ever give. My cable has finally come, refusing reprieve: the company to which I so cannily switched all my funds, not long ago, has failed. My income is finished. I need a job. This is the first time I have ever said, 'I need a job.'"

Mrs. Baker cried out and she, the fragile and prudent, ran to Nat and shamelessly sat on his knee, her head against his shoulder.

"I have been too cowardly to tell Ada till I should be fortified by the presence of you strong barbarians. Yes, with considerable ingenuity, I have managed to lose every cent I had."

Mrs. Baker said harshly, "Nonsense! You have all that I have."

"But you haven't anything, my beloved; just enough to exist on. It doesn't matter. For some time I have been preparing for this. I haven't paid my rent for six months, and my poor servant, I haven't paid her now for two months and two days, and this past week she has been

bringing me in vegetables from her brother, who is a market-gardener and a reader of Petrarch. He is really our host, this evening, but this is the last time I shall impose on him. By the way, he speaks with an interesting Livornese accent with a word, now and then, that I cannot spot except as a Greek survival.... Oh, Ada, Ada, don't, my dear!"

Mrs. Baker was sobbing, close against him, all her pride and frail austerity gone.

"It's not so bad, Ada. It's a new adventure. I shall now work according to other people's notions of what my usefulness may be, instead of my own. If there is anything here, or even back in the States, that I can do that is not too honest or too cultural, I shall do it gladly. Meantime, Hayden, do you think this Dr. Lundsgard might hire me for a season? I am very punctual and tidy-- well, reasonably. And at my age, I shall come very cheap."

Hayden telephoned to Lundsgard that there was a chance he might be able to get the renowned Professor Friar to give him some "material," and of course Dr. Friar was one of only eleven men living who knew European History minute by minute, acre by acre, from 400 A.D. to 1800.

Lundsgard was excited. "I have some of Dr. Friar's articles cut out. You honestly think he might brief me? How would I get to meet him? Should I go and call on him at his home? Would you be willing to take me there?"

Hayden reflected that the shabbiness of Nat's living room would cut a hundred dollars a week off his market value, and he said hastily, "No, I think that as you would be his superior officer, it would be protocol for him to call on you."

"I don't insist on form, with a big shot like him, though of course good form--well, you know how it is. Good form is one of the things that I intend to take back to the States, along with philosophy; I mean the super-high-tone good form, like Ugo's. So maybe... But ask the Prof to pick his own hour to come here. Does he ever sneak in a drink?"

"If you had some very dry sherry for him, I think he might take a sip."

"I'll have some so dry he'll think it's from Kansas."

Nat Friar put on his one good gray suit, he washed and combed his beard, he had a hefty glass of cognac at home, he looked Olympian and felt even better. But in Lundsgard's suite he spoke with mild delicacy and only touched the glass of offertory sherry.

Hayden fretted to himself, "Nat and I are selling the most honest goods on the market, and yet we're somehow being fakes. I don't like selling one's own self--for Nat or for Olivia or for me."

Encouraged by Lundsgard, Nat started on long tales of the old Italy: Amadeo the Green Count; Pope Anacletus II, who was of the great Jewish family of the Pierleoni; that poet and gallant, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who was to become Pope Pius II, to build the mountain village of Pienza as his monument and to lead a crusade; the Wolf of Gubbio, a beast wolf not a human one, who was converted and became a practising Christian; Clarice Strozzi, who cursed the tyrants out of the Medici Palace. The stories were as full of gaiety as they were of erudition, and Lundsgard was in ecstasy. He humbly addressed Nat as "sir," and he kept ejaculating over the chronicles, "Why, that's corking, sir, that's superb, that's just what I need!"

Hayden wondered why Lundsgard did not take notes, till he discovered that the door to the office was part open and that in there Evelyn Hoxler was thriftily getting it all down in shorthand.

Lundsgard hesitated, "I know of course, sir, that if you cared to give me your invaluable aid for a month or so, I couldn't even begin to pay you what such priceless learning is worth. But would a hundred and fifty dollars a week somewhat compensate you?"

Hayden was certain that Nat would not know whether that was fabulously large or pitifully small, and he stepped in with, "Why Lundsgard, you ought certainly to pay him at least two hundred a week!"

Lundsgard's glance was very sharp, somewhat resentful, and he said curtly, "We'll make it one-seventy-five."

"That sounds very nice," beamed Nat.

With no further "sirs," Lundsgard ordered, "Professor, you start in here next Monday morning, nine o'clock."

"Nine? Nine in the MORNING? Very well," said Nat disconsolately.

All day long--that is, from nine-thirty or ten or eleven, when he arrived, and leaving out the hour that he took off now and then when he went out for a drink--in an old velvet jacket and an antique straw gardening hat with which he shaded his eyes, Nat sat happily dictating anecdotes out of the most unhackneyed (though reasonably accurate) history.

He thought the dictation machine was the most patient ear he had ever found. He sat with the mouthpiece tucked into his beard, smiling at the machine and making explanatory gestures in its direction, telling it about kings and cardinals as though it was likely already to have heard a great deal about them. Nat paid no attention at all to Lundsgard's visitors, such as smoochers who came in to sell

Lundsgard original Botticellis for twenty-five dollars.

Translated into lire, which just now were about six hundred to the dollar, Nat's hundred and seventy-five dollars a week seemed to him like Babylonian wealth. He paid his debts to his servant and her brother, he gave a little something to his landlord, and he bought for himself a fine purple corduroy smoking-jacket with pockets large enough to carry books. For Hayden he bought an Aldine Aristophanes and for Mrs. Shalston Baker, a silver tea-caddy.

Lundsgard never criticized Nat for unpunctuality. He just read page on page of medieval oddities transcribed by Evelyn Hoxler from Nat's recorded prattle, and chuckled, "My dear Professor Friar, you come awful dear, but you sure are a treasure!"

"Dr. Lundsgard is a very kind man," said Nat to Hayden.

"I suppose he is."

"I just wonder why he took up the crabbed calling of being a medievalist. He would have been so useful as a singing cowboy--if he can sing."

"If he can punch cattle."

"Exactly. But always very kind."

"Oh, yes--yes, certainly--very kind."

18

In the late afternoon, after office hours, Hayden went to see Lundsgard. He thought he heard "Avanti," when he tapped at the outer door of the suite; he opened, and stood aghast. Beyond the

living room, in the office, Lundsgard could be heard talking to Evelyn Hoxler:

"I've had enough of your bellyaching. Go on! Bawl! I like to hear it, Eve. It makes you even homelier than when you put on the white enamel and look like a madam. Lissen. You got no kick coming at all. You knew what would happen just as well as I did. In fact, you planned it. You hoped to get a wad of--well, call it severance money out of me."

"Lorry, I didn't! I wanted to help Arturo. You made me feel that anything I did for you, when you were so friendly with him, was really for him."

"The loving Mrs. Baccio! The innocent Miss Hoxler! Just a country babe! Say, I'd hate to write to the registrar in whatever hayseed county you really come from and ask him your real birth date!"

"Don't. Please, Lorry! I won't be angry any more."

"You're damn right you won't. Not around here you won't. And I don't think you'll be around here at all, much longer."

Hayden hastened away, down the hotel corridor, more sick than furious. There are maggots too vile to touch. And for tomorrow there was to have been a giddy lunch with Lundsgard and Olivia.

At the Tre Corone he found her, very cheerful, and he cried, "Sweet, I want to call off tomorrow's lunch with Lundsgard."

"Why?" Her disappointment was clear.

"He isn't as decent a fellow as you thought. I've just heard him talking to Eve Hoxler, viciously."

"I'm glad to hear it. At last! That woman has been trying to nab him. She takes advantage of his good nature and his quite charming reverence for women."

"Rev--Oh, good God!"

"Don't you ever have any argument but 'Good God'? Aside from the blasphemy, it's a little undetailed."

"All right. We'll HAVE our lunch with that felthead, and I'll try to get him to show just how much reverence he really has for your frail, cast-iron sex!"

At their lunch, at Paoli's, with what he felt to be silken cunning, not looking at Olivia but being as cunning as a dove and as innocent as a serpent, he challenged Lundsgard:

"You're always saying that women inspire you, and yet I wonder what you really think about the ones like Olivia, who are so independent?"

He wondered if the fault could have been Evelyn Hoxler's, when he saw how grave and mature Lundsgard became:

"You won't like my sure-enough attitude, Hay, and Livy won't."

"Oh?" said Hayden, and Olivia said, "Oh!"

"I'll have to give you my whole philosophy, and I'm not very articulate, you might say. As I see it, the world has been going through what you might call a multiple revolution, and the uppity girl who thinks her whole family are dubs and the left-wing agitator and the psychoanalyst and all these smeary modern painters belong right together--all anarchists. But I figure their seven-story revolution is over, all but the shouting. The whole world wants authority and, you

might call it, tradition. New world coming!

"It'll first of all want HEROES and not a gang of statisticians and wisecracking critics. Unluckily for me, I'm not big enough, or I'm too early, to be one of the star magnificoes, but I can help clear the way for them--yes, and you just watch 'em ride in on a golden highway, with flags and trumpets!

"These guys that'll be the leaders, they'll have to have power and responsibility. They'll want their orders obeyed on the jump, though they'll be darned generous to their mob in return. They may not wear any ten-ton armor, but they'll make my ancestor Lorry the Magnificent, Serial One, look like a ribbon clerk. They'll use chemistry and jet planes and atomic power, and their slogan will be that only the best is good enough, and I guess they'll be willing to get killed for it--and to kill!"

To all this souvenir-post-card Nietzsche, this 1905 pre-Hitlerism, Olivia was listening, with no hostility but with fond amusement at her Lorry's enthusiasm. Encouraged by her if not by Hayden, he boomed on:

"But all these high duties for the men leaders mean there's got to be even higher duties for the women. A guy can't lead an army and still stay at home and teach the Little Woman golf. Nowadays the career woman, who was the big news even five years ago, is as old-fashioned as a buggy whip. Now she's got a better goal: to be loyal to men that got to be big enough to be loyal to; to give herself in a real blazing devotion to helping carry on her man's battle for supremacy; to lead the Leader. Can't you SEE it, Livy? She won't get a professor's chair or a slick, leather-covered desk in an advertising agency, but she'll share a throne--and believe me, there's going to be thrones to share! You bet! To be queen in her home isn't old-fashioned but the most ultramodern, up-to-the- split-second, re-

revolutionary ideal there is!

"So go ahead and shoot me, both of you. Hay, you can report me to all your revolutionary little friends for wanting to march all the poor farmboys (like you and me both!) right back to their peasant huts, unless they can get the Vision of Leadership and obey it. Okay! I'm ready!"

Afterward, Hayden avoided discussing with Olivia this scarlet-and-pea-green vision of Lundsgard, the view of the noblest man as the mining-camp bully. If she had been unhappy about it, he wanted to spare her; if she had liked it, he wanted to spare himself.

And that same afternoon, Evelyn Hoxler, who had never talked to Hayden by himself, telephoned asking him, and anxiously, to meet her at Gilli's for a drink.

When he met her, there was something rigid and frightening about Miss Hoxler. He had the impression of a rattlesnake in ambush, and indeed there was a good deal of hiss in all her S's, as she rapidly drank down Italian cognacs:

"Lundsgard is sending me sobbing back to Rome, and I asked to see you, Mr. Chart, so I could try and do the stinker a little harm before I go skipping back to commit suicide."

She did not strike Hayden as notably benevolent, and he listened not too willingly to her hatred.

"I gave Lorry the best clerical assistance HE'LL ever get and you've probably guessed—I never tried to hide it especially—I gave him a lot more. He's a quick worker. When you first meet him, if you can be useful, he'll love you, but the moment he can get more out of sponging on somebody else's brains, out you go, without even a handshake.

When he gets to be a dictator, he'll pull off some of the finest purges in history, and then sleep like a baby.

"By the way, his first name isn't Lorenzo. His fond mother named her golden-haired Viking rosebud Oley, and in college he changed that to Lawrence, and he put on the Lorenzo, along with a shot at English accent (when he remembers it) in Hollywood.

"I want to warn you, with the most evil intentions, that while I don't think he's had much chance to fool with this conceited young woman of yours, Miss Lomond, he's certainly licking his chops."

"I think Dr. Lomond can take care of herself!"

"I KNOW I can take care of MYSELF! That don't do you much good when the car hits a patch of grease like Lundsgard and skids." The appositeness of it jarred Hayden and frightened him. "Mr. Chart, I have a feeling you plan to get out of this combination cocktail party and mental sanitarium they call the American Colony and go home. Home! Beat it, fast, and take that high-falutin sweetheart of yours along with you. So long. No flowers!"

He met Angelo Gazza, Lundsgard's photographer, on the street, and invited him to coffee. He blurted, "What sort of a chap is this Lundsgard, really?"

"Oh, Lorenzaccio is all right. He's a pusher. Pays pretty good but gets his money's worth and then some.... Say, you're fond of Dr. Lomond, aren't you?"

"Very. Why?"

"Oh, she comes in to see Professor Friar and maybe Lundsgard now and then and... She's trained too good, for OUR shop. She wants us

to get our facts--we do an import and export business in historical facts--she wants 'em catalogued like a history book, but Lundsgard tells her, 'Never mind the efficiency stuff. This isn't a factory; this is a solar center for radiating inspiration.' Dr. Lomond is very well informed--for an American."

"You don't like us Americans, do you?"

"No, that's the hell of it. I love you. Best chum I ever had was a master-sergeant from Brooklyn, half-Wop and half-Mick. I'd like to live in America. That's why I keep panning you--to keep safe from you hundred-and-eighty pound babies! Why are so many Americans immature? Why don't you grow up? Half of you pulling polysyllables, when 'I don't know' would do, and the other half-- medical majors and chaplains and flying colonels--talking like high-school boys, 'Oh, Boy!' and 'Watch my smoke' and not enthusiastic about anything except baseball and women.

"And the American woman is the only one I know of whose heart and brain stay cold and indifferent to you while all the rest of her body pretends to catch fire. An Italian or French woman either loves you or she doesn't, but the American lady--she kisses you hot at eight-thirty and looks at you cold at eleven--or anyway at eight-thirty next morning. And yet I do admire so your American enterprise. I am so sick of all the Memorable Ruins in Italy.

"That's what has turned so many of us into guides and postcard sellers. We could build the best ships and automobiles and electrical equipment in the world, but our medieval gateways and palazzi municipali gum up our city planning.

"I'd like to blow up every building in Italy older than 1890. All you tourists shrieking that it's so cute of us to have three-foot alleys for thoroughfares and yelling your heads off when we put in broad

boulevards like you all do at home. Oh, it's probably real quaint in me to be descended from some Etruscan gangster.... And I'll watch Dr. Lomond for you like a sister-in-law."

"You think she needs it?"

"Lundsgard is one of these Leaders, and all Leaders think that all the votes and the applause and the money and the women belong to them.... Good luck! Ciao!"

Olivia was absent-minded at dinner and it was only after a quarter-hour of mere thermometric conversation that she said, "Lorry is going to fire that Hoxler woman."

"Yes."

"In fact he has."

"I see."

"He wants me to come in and help him out, three or four hours a day, till he finds a new secretary."

"You can't do it! You absolutely can't!"

"I'm going to."

"You, the independent, and you want to be that fellow's copyist!"

"I shall be nothing of the sort. I'll really be a fellow- researcher with Uncle Nat, and I'll put the office files in order-- they need it. Or do you INSIST on my spending all the rest of my life in libraries where nobody ever comes, except displaced mice? Or perhaps you prefer to take advantage of my extreme fondness for you by ordering me to go home!"

"I love you, and when you turn beastly, when you use arguments that you know are crooked, I am helpless, Olivia--the only person in the world that I am helpless with."

"I know. Forgive me. And honestly, you can just forget it. It'll only be a few hours a day with Lorry for a few weeks."

"That seems to me too much, with HIM!"

"But I need the money, Hay--Hayden. Maybe with your sharp eyes, that can look right through a fat woman and see a ducky bungalow and a two-thousand-dollar fee, you noticed, when you first arrived here, that I hadn't many clothes, and most of them kind of shabby. Well, I haven't a very large scholarship, and I've been buying quite a wardrobe, entirely for you, and I am busted."

"Then you must let me..."

"No! That much independence I'll still keep. No!"

19

When the wildfire news ran round the hills that Signore il Professor Friar was paying his debts, he was assaulted by bills a year old, five years old, most of which he had forgotten and some of which he did not owe. In particular, his landlord, long a tolerant friend, once he saw the sheen of ten-thousand-lire notes wanted to be paid to date, and his former intimates, the book-sellers, threatened to cart off his library, beloved and a quarter unpaid-for.

Nat refused to take even a loan from Mrs. Baker, who was little more affluent than himself. He became grim. Now that he had started, he would be businesslike.

He said to Hayden, "I would prefer, of course, to desert Lundsgard, now that the adventure is rusty. I have no complaint about him; he treats me well. He is the only man living who thinks my information about Gubbio and Spoleto is worth listening to, and that, to me, is grateful. Like many people weary with knowledge, I have perhaps unduly esteemed the fresher wisdoms of younger people, but this mental passion has rarely been reciprocated—perhaps only by you and Olivia and Lundsgard. But I have some difficulty in liking the fact that I am now part of a cultural swindle.

"I'm not sure but that Dr. Lundsgard is a very bad man. He is nimble at making historical parallels to prove that the rule of plain unlettered men has always been disastrous, to prove that we need louder-voiced millionaires to guide us. But to prove it, he adulterates all the facts that I go down into the coal pit and shovel up to him.

"I'm not sure but that it's what you call a racket, I'm not sure but that he is in the soundest tradition of treason—treason to love, to friendship, to patriotism, to religion, for the most sensitive blessings are also the most interesting to betray. In his case, he is making a cheerful activity of treason to learning, like the journalists who trap invalids by praising fraudulent medical discoveries.

"He is even developing prophetic illusions: that all history has been moving toward a moral goal according to a discernible scheme, and that he is the only man who can discern it. I have studied a number of skilled methods of assassination which I might use with him, but otherwise, what am I to do? Place your charming girl, Olivia, under my arm and take to the Abruzzi caves to escape my remaining creditors?

"I can see now where all my quandary started: paying my servant, who is a true Italian peasant and never expected such an insult from

an illustrissimo!"

But Nat did nothing. And Hayden did nothing, and suddenly he was sick of Lundsgard and Florence and Europe. It can happen so with exiles. One moment he loved Italy; the next, its ways seemed antiquated and a little silly. He could not even hear the language clearly. It was all an unaccented gabble. When he walked in the evening, a group of sharp young loafers in front of a movie theater--as dangerous as a like group in Concord, Massachusetts-- seemed to be his enemies, whispering, "Let's stab that foreigner or chase him out of the country!"

That week, letters from home, from Jesse and Mary Eliza Bradbin, from classmates whom he had not seen for ten years, letters which had recently bored him by their weather reports and the gossip about people whom he did not remember, were suddenly precious salvation. When he had first come to Florence he had gratefully used the hospitality of the governmental American Library in the Palazzo Strozzi and read the American magazines, the newspapers. He had later become almost indifferent to their bulletins of a land so far off, but now he hastened back to them, and they promised him the refuge of home.

That promised refuge he needed the more because daily he less liked the relationship between Lundsgard and Olivia.

Rich now in what he considered knowledge, in Nat's anecdotes and Gazza's photographs, strong in the approval of Sir Henry Belfont and the toleration of Sam Dodsworth, Mr. Lundsgard still considered Hayden a decent fellow, but he no longer considered his counsel of any merit, and when Hayden had an idea, Lundsgard's attitude was "Yes, yes." He preferred to see Hayden only in bars but, grimly risking snubs, Hayden frequently marched into the wolf's den to find out how much of his lamb had been devoured now.

He warned himself that Lundsgard's office was a busy place, that he had no more right to intrude there than to stroll into an operating-room and suggest having a cigarette with a performing surgeon. They were not snubbing him--no, they were just busy. But all he knew was that he got snubbed.

Nat beamed at him, but even the friendly Gazza seemed annoyed, Lundsgard looked impatient, and Olivia, busy with lists of Umbrian painters, snapped, "Oh, MUST you leave that door open, Hayden dear?"

How patronizing and unlovely was her "Hayden dear" compared with her tender "Dear Hayden"!

But he bullied Lundsgard and her into coming out to tea with him. They were in the Piazza della Repubblica, outside of Donnini's at a small table among Italian families prosperous and voluble.

The researchers did not look at Hayden. Olivia was competently answering Lundsgard's equally competent questions about the wool-carders guild in ancient Florence. Hayden felt like a tolerated younger brother, listening to his betters. And when the interrogation was over--he could imagine it, gilded and magnified and made to sound learned and important, bestowed on a respectful lecture audience in a municipal arena dedicated to wrestling, political conventions, roller skating and Shakespeare--the two of them apparently believed that they were alone in the Forest of Arden, no melancholy Mr. Chart within ten leagues. They creaked happily in their wicker chairs as they teased each other--about punctuality! One would not have chosen that topic as a beguiling link between illicit lovers, and yet Lundsgard and the girl were lyric as he cloyingly bickered, "And you were ten minutes late--you were, you WERE," and the female conspirator murmured, "Oh, pooh, I-- was--NOT!"

It seemed to Hayden that an appalling softness had come over her in her manner toward Lundsgard. When that bounding animal touched her bare elbow, which he did oftener than was quite necessary for emphasis, she, the late inviolable, did not seem annoyed, and she had for him a smile which went beyond the pleased obedience which custom expects from a female office-hand.

Lundsgard was startled to discover some one much like Hayden Chart still with them, and he went out of his way to get in, "You certainly have a grand effect on your girl friend here, Hay. When you aren't around, she treats me like dirt, but when you're here, she tries to make you jealous by treating me fairly good. I wish I had your neat touch with the women!" And looked, then, at Olivia in a proprietorial pride which was more betraying than any yelp of passion.

No.

Hayden was coldly certain that this pair of profit-hunting pedants, of ranging sensationalists, were lovers now, beyond charity. Then they deserved each other!

But the stubbornness that had always marched with him, most relentless when it was most quiet, the stubbornness that had fortified him to endure Caprice's clownish demands and Jesse Bradbin's witless jesting, rose in Hayden now, and he was the more resolved to save Olivia.

No one else could do it--certainly not the moist-eyed young woman herself, now yearning toward Lundsgard's ten-bushel of manly beauty. And, reflected Hayden, he himself had guiltily broken through her poor wall of defense. She was "worth saving"--this trained and honest woman, even now when she was demonstrating that she was not in all things so edifyingly honest.

He would save her--if. He had nothing of more importance to do, now.... And, with a fascination apparently undiminished by her idiocy, he happened to love her.

Lundsgard was giving himself, and apparently he felt that he was giving them, considerable gratification in letting them know that he now moved on a charming social plane, jammed with Gracious Living. Prince Ugo Tramontana had invited him to come for tea and see some Second Century Roman cameos.... He referred to the learned relic as Ugo, and before he rose he lighted a tremendous American cigar, with the Lorenzan band still on it, and extinguished the match with an archducal flourish.

When Lundsgard was gone, Olivia said briskly, "Well, have to start home and wash my face."

"Sit down again, Olivia. I want to do some scolding. I want you to quit your job with Lundsgard...."

"I shouldn't think of it."

"... and at once. You can call him up this evening."

"Ri-dic-ulous!" She sat down firmly.

"And tell him to hurry up and find that new stenographer--whom he had no intention of finding."

"Why, I've never heard..."

"And then, without any tapering off or artful use of drugs, I want you to kick that fellow out, complete."

"Ab-surd!"

"I don't know precisely where you stand with Lundsgard now, but I do know it's just a matter of whether you will or whether you have. WHAT?" She jumped at the unexampled force and roughness of his "What?" He jumped himself.

"What WHAT?"

"Are you two lovers now?"

She quieted down. She looked at him without fear. "Well, we could be, and that's all I shall tell you."

"It's enough. Do you want to get rid of me?"

"No, really, Hay--Hayden, I don't. I am enormously fond of you. It's so happy and easy to be with you, and I admire your decency and calm. I would like to hold you, always--no, I INTEND to hold you! And I agree with you that Lorry is a misguided and misguiding truck-driver--in fact, I know it much better than you do! But he is also a knight, a blithe and unconquerable knight. After all, Giovanni delle Bande Nere wasn't distinguished for his accurate knowledge of dates or his fidelity to the sweet girl at home. Lorry is a fake--good Heavens, don't you suppose I'm well trained enough to know that! But he is extremely charming in a nasty way. Besides, what could either you or I do to head him off?"

"You really are satisfied to let yourself be tied and hogtied by this gorilla?"

"You still do get very American, don't you, dear!"

"I hope so! Answer me! You're satisfied?"

"Maybe not. But what can I do?"

"Do you happen to know that your golden Lorenzo's real first name is Oley?"

"Is it? That's good. It sounds strong and honest and yet not puritanical; positively debonair. I was afraid--of course I was reasonably sure that he wasn't a geborener Lorenzo--I thought probably he was a Hiram or a Jabez."

"Olivia, I don't think this hour calls for humor. You must have some notion of how serious it is for me. Leave out jealousy and hurt pride: I can choke those, but you can guess what it means to me to see a well-bred woman in the red hands of that butcher--that cigar-waving fancy gent!"

"That is my battle, or as Lorry AND you would say, 'That's MY lookout!'" Olivia was so defiant that she did not even trouble herself to stress it greatly.

"Yes. It isn't easy. I couldn't slug that football hero--I would get killed. There's no use my exposing him as a charlatan-- everybody with any scholarship guesses that already. But still, I certainly do not intend to be the complaisant husband. I demand as strict a fidelity of you as I do of myself. And I can't do the most natural and convenient thing of all: tell you that I am disgusted, that I am not standing any more, that I am through; because I am still almost completely hypnotized by you--just ALMOST, mind you! I don't know what to do."

Softly, but with the slippery softness of a false woman, she urged, "Oh, forget it, my dear. It's the sort of thing that can't last."

"Not last--no, merely in the heart and brain and devoted faith, that's all! Frankly, Olivia, I am trying to coach myself to feel easy in cutting you out as I would any other vice that hurt me too much, and I can't--

not yet!"

With flippant impatience, she piped, "Have you finished now with your fussing and clucking and general sad bewilderment over something that ought to be obvious--that, as I keep telling you but you won't listen, a flirtation like this just can't last? Or matter!"

"I've given you my warning."

"And I my warning that you will be extremely sorry, not for any crime I am committing but for your own subhuman, dry-as-dust, school-principal nagging--with no heart in it and no humor. Oh, Hayden, you admire our medieval gallants so much, you say, and then the minute anything touches YOU, you flee from them back to your dry-codfish Maine ancestors!" She was working herself up to the outraged and innocent wrath that is nowhere so splendidly found as among the guilty. "I have never lied to you or about you. Well, I am going now, and you may do exactly whatever you please! Arrivederci!"

She flounced away and, without explanations, she did not come to dinner that evening at the pensione.

So he cut and ran.

20

He cut and ran. It was absurd not to have seen Rome; it was intolerable to sit and twiddle his fingers and watch Olivia chase the dragon and be only very annoyed by a St. George.

He drove to Rome through the pleasant hills and, as always, fell in love with Siena almost as with Florence: the square, the cathedral, the Palazzo Chigi. But Rome he found too buxom, too busy, too

operatically regal for love, and only fit for wonder, from the Vatican's sanctuary to the Palatine Hill where he walked through 100 B.C.

He did perceive how grandly Rome was marching back to her ancient throne as Queen of the World. Hard by an arch of the emperors he saw the jeeps parked between the Rolls-Royces and Cadillacs; the traffic was more alarming than Michigan Avenue, overhead were the airplanes which rarely teased demure Florence; and in new and haughty cement buildings breathlessly telephoning were California oilmen, Persian oilmen, British airplane agents, Hungarian cinema producers, French television engineers, Egyptian steamship agents, quiet Russians who loved an evening alone with their pipes and books and one small atomic bomb, Brazilian vendors of coffee and jazz symphonies, and Croat spies spying on Bulgar spies spying on Turkish spies spying on Rome.

Not even the massive haughtiness of the antique temples and the imperial baths more lightened Hayden's technical eye than the urbanity of avenues like Via Veneto. Yet he was not annoyed that in Rome, with all the Holy Year pilgrims, he had been unable to find a satisfactory hotel room, and had gone with his topolino out to a village inn. After supper there he sat on a bench in an arbor and looked at the green evening sky of Latium and was homesick for the warm buoyancy of a new and terrible Olivia.

He returned to Florence and the Tre Corone late in the afternoon and Olivia was there and unexpectedly welcoming. She tightened her arms round him, she muttered, "So much, missed you so much."

He shakily tried to be carefree in a cheerful, "Let's go out and have dinner this evening."

"Oh, darling, I am so, SO sorry, but I have an invitation to dinner--didn't know when you were coming back--might have sent a girl a

post card."

He did not ask, she did not say, from whom was her invitation. "I'll make it up to you later!" she chirruped, with needless sweetness.

He dined alone, except for the table-to-table yells of the newest generation of boarding-house pests, who were not, this time, large like the Grenadier Sisters and were not females and were not American, but three diminutive and aged males from Luxembourg. But it was all the same thing, and they entertained him at dinner by yelping "Haf you seen the Cenacolo in the convent of Sant' Onofrio? NO?" and "Haf you seen the tomb of Oddo Altoviti by Rovezzano? NO?"

Olivia returned very late, still with no information volunteered about her evening entertainment, and she was not so affectionate in saying good-night to him as she had promised; she was mechanical about it and slightly annoyed; and he went to sleep in a trance of emptiness and futility.

Hayden had been going to one Dr. Stretti to keep watch on the headaches he still had, now and then, from his motor smash, and had become admiring and fond of that round, dumpy, very learned and skillful physician with his mouse of a mustache. He was not only Hayden's friend and his doctor but, Italian-wise, his doctor BECAUSE he was a subtle and understanding friend. On the morning after his return from Rome, Hayden's head was one round pain held together by his skull, and he hastened to Stretti, who assured him that this was but eyestrain from the glare of the road from Rome. He bathed Hayden's eyes and laughed at his tension and generally did medical magic on him.

Said Dr. Stretti, "My brother, who is also an architect, in Turin, and who is very curious about American methods, will be in Florence just

for today. Could you come to a very plain supper at my flat this evening and meet him?"

Hayden had made no definite plan with Olivia for dinner this coming evening, and indignantly, with the injustice typical of all particularly fond lovers, he thought, "I'll teach that young woman a lesson--leaving me flat last evening, my first evening back in Florence," and he said to the doctor heartily, "Shall be very happy to."

Dr. Stretti's apartment was in one of the long, newish, solemn, residence streets out near the Cascine; on a fourth floor reached by a particularly adventurous self-service elevator in which you felt, when you pressed the button for your floor, that the cage would fly to pieces instantly. But the apartment itself was like that of any well-to-do doctor in Newlife or in New York, except that there were rather more upholstered chairs around small tables in the living room, and more poison-green upholstered armchairs with doilies, and books in three languages, and far more paintings by contemporaries.

The architect-brother, whose English was as struggling as Hayden's Italian, gave him a small homesickness by confessing exactly such struggles with clients and contractors and unions and politicians as Hayden knew at home: the same newly rich who wanted marble bathrooms for the price of tile, and tile bathrooms for the price of linoleum. He glowed at Hayden and took him in. So did the doctor; so did Mrs. Stretti, though she spoke no English at all. But she assured Hayden, with more kindness than strict factualness, that he was now speaking Italian like a professore.

The whole family took him in. In their cordiality and ease with a stranger, they seemed to him more like Americans than any nationals he had met since he had sailed. He felt at home, as after dinner he drank small glasses of vino santo and agreed with them that, yes, they would indeed like Hollywood and the Grand Canyon.

But of them all, one had more importance than just well-mannered amiability, and that was the daughter, Tosca Stretti, a girl of twenty who was all eyes and shine of dark hair and slimness and youth and trustfulness. She was constantly turning to her uncle, her parents, with affection and admiration; she loved life and loved her family. And without having any English, she could say to Hayden that she looked upon him as a man and a remarkable one.

An aggressive American woman would have jeered of Tosca, "Sure, you men like 'em submissive, like 'em as slaves. This little Italian would clean your shoes and you'd love it!" Yes, Tosca probably WOULD clean them, if there should be need, but devotedly, with dignity, not submissively. Without discussion she would expect to love and ardently to be loved.

That night, abed, Hayden did not think of his colleague, the architect, but of Tosca. It would be fun to be with her, to teach her English, to show her his America. Why hadn't he such a girl, soft and trusting and yet as sharply capable as her mother, and not an inspiring heartache like Olivia?

Why not? By coaxing Tosca to come home with him, he would have in the stability of home that strangeness and flavor which he had needed in Newlife. All next day he thought of Tosca and the thought was to him a soft comfort which he needed after reading a note which Olivia had left for him when she went off, early, to the Laurentian Library--or to Lundsgard's boudoir office:

I had assumed we would be having dinner together last evening but you skipped off with no explanations. That is too bad because THIS evening / have a date & shall not see you.

O. L.

His inward comment had all of lovers' logic. "But you can't blame her. But I'm not going to stand for being stood up but SHE--oh yes, SHE is to desert me whenever she feels like it but I'm to stand by all the time. But naturally she was miffed--you can't blame her."

Olivia and he had, without any special agreement, built up a habit of festival evening together each Saturday, with restaurant dinner and a movie or a concert, but on this warm, resonant Saturday evening in the Italian late spring, he dined drearily, alone, at the Tre Corone, cheered only by the thought of how trustingly Tosca Stretti had smiled at him. He was at his coffee when Perpetua came to inform him that a "Signorina Altici" was there to see him, waiting in the salotto.

Tosca? Why?

He went hurriedly and on a couch, her hat put aside, in a fawn suit that seemed much worn and leather sandals that certainly were worn, tired, defiant, appealing, forlorn, familiar, stranger than any Calabria peasant, pert-nosed and freckled and red-headed, was Miss Roxanna Eldritch of Newlife, Colorado.

But mostly, she was very quiet.

She had sprung up to greet him; he had galloped forward and kissed her. She was a chunk of Home miraculously set down before him: the cheerful, overcrowded streets; cottonwoods and willows by the river bank; swiftly grown skyscrapers; the office and the club where he was not a bookish nonentity studying in an alien and indifferent land, but a man, a boss, a friend, a citizen, a person of heart and welcome, and in it all a jolliness that could never warm an Olivia in her delicate savor of life--nor even a Tosca conceivably so dear. And this home soil was his own, without explanations or working at it. In a jungle he had seen, startling, his own familiar flag, and Roxy and he yelled at

each other with fond tribal cries.

The more he looked at her, the more she seemed changed. She was as fetching as ever but she looked down at the floor more than at him, and there was dejection in her shoulders. And, "Might as well get it over," said Roxy. "I've plumb flopped. Been fired."

"How come?"

"Oh, partly loafing and dissipation, I guess, though I did a lot of work, too. But it has slowly been borne in on me that the bright kid from the home town, who thinks it would just be too cute if she could be the big noise as an authority on Europe and tell the home folks all about the hobbies of the dethroned kings and interview a few prime ministers, and throw in a few explanations of the devaluation of the pound--she isn't so hot when she gets into competition with the veterans that have been here, off and on, twenty years and speak five languages and actually read a book once.

"Funny but they simply won't see the light and obligingly hand over their prestige to me and go to work in the jute factory--along with their wives and kids. The old meanies! I sent home oceans of copy and first my managing editor used a lot and even got a few pieces syndicated, but I guess the novelty went bump, and little while ago, he tactfully wrote canning me, with a warm-hearted suggestion-- the old sweetheart--that I MIGHT get my old job back if I hustled to Newlife, but quick!

"But now I'm here, I want to see more of Europe, maybe Greece and Spain, and then Israel and Egypt. And I AM going to work--work like a worker and not like a Bohemian amateur lady journalist who gets busy only when the bars are closed and the handsome young vice-consul won't answer his phone.

"Honestly! Getting bounced was an awful shock to me. I guess most American women, even SOME of those that have been quite a long time on a real job, still think that their sacred womanhood entitles them to do anything they want to, arrive late and loaf on the job they're paid for, and any boss that kicks is no gentleman--never was brought up at anybody's mother's knee. Shock? I'll say! It made me think 'Rox, my man, maybe that managing editor wants to print written writings and not your charming intentions and your sorrel hair!'

"And I guess, even before the assassination, I'd had about enough of the bar-to-bar girlish lady tourists of fifty, the students of singing who never sing anything but 'Just pickle my bones in alcohol,' and all the artistic young men from Wyoming and the Bronnix that wear nasty little beards as sandwich boards to advertise their otherwise imperceptible talents, beards like young alley goats and flannel shirts like zoot-suiters.

"While I'm over here, if it's not too inconvenient, I would still like to meet one French Frenchman and one Italian Italian. You know--quaint but almost as interesting as the sixteenth young American this month to found a Little Magazine dedicated to freedom, the new arts and gin.

"I admit I've had me quite a time with these drunks, but still and all, I guess, along with my Uncle Joe, who was the prize drunk in Butte, I've got something in me of Gramma O'Larrick, who ran a boarding house and sent seven sons to study for the ministry.

"So I've come down here to Florence, partly because it's not too noisy and partly, I'll admit, because you were here, and you always were kind. But I don't intend to sponge on you in any way, Hay, get that clear, money or time or anything. I just want your assurance that I'm still potentially human, even if I am a flop!"

He cried, "HOW human! Now, right away, I'll take you out for a dinner that would make Reverend Gowell--remember the Prohibition raider, back home?--throw up his dusty hat and kiss the bartender."

"Thanks--some night--tomorrow if you'd like--but I've had a rick of spaghetti already tonight."

"Tomorrow we'll look for a room for you, Roxy--maybe here in this refined junction depot."

"Thanks, I've already found a room in a dump across the river. I asked a tourist agency. Iron cot and a kitchen chair and a nice calico curtain for wardrobe; 327 yards from the bathroom. Honestly, I won't bother you...."

"You couldn't, my dear!"

"Oh, couldn't !! Give me credit! No, all I want is some advice about getting a job here, for a girl that speaks no known language...."

If Hayden was, a moment, inattentive, it was because he knew that Olivia might come in and find him affectionately seated on the couch beside the not inconspicuous charms of Roxy. Would it not be discreet to explain Roxy before Olivia should see her--to take her out, now, to the security of a café? But he turned defiant; he rebuked himself for his sour timidity. Roxy was beyond debate a tempting wench, but he was doing nothing of which to be ashamed-- not like Olivia and her bounding Lorry.

"Let's see, Roxy. There's a Mrs. Dodsworth here, important in the Colony, and I remember her saying something about being a trustee of an American school for girls that's just being organized. I'll phone her this evening. And now--more of you, my dear! Have you lost your heart to any of your young geniuses with the tarred-and- feathered

chins?"

"No, not much. A young female wandering around Europe alone learns to be pretty glacial when she gets picked up."

"That happen often?"

"Continuously! French drugstore-cowboys and Norwegian artists and Swiss professors and American G. I.'s and American lieutenant colonels. You do get tired of their 'How about it?' smirk. We all used to think that it was the funniest thing in the world that our great-grandmas, if they could afford it, couldn't travel without a chaperone in black sateen, but how I would have loved a chaperone, mitts and evil mind and all, in Europe!"

"Why don't you go home, Roxy?"

"Why should I?"

"It seems natural to be home, where you understand people by instinct, understand why they do the particular things they do do and do say--dumb or dreary or noble and silly."

"Then why don't you go, Hay?"

"Oh, I've really settled down contentedly to study. And, uh, I have a girl I'm somewhat interested in..."

"Oh!"

"Two, in fact: a splendid American scholar, and an adorable Italian girl."

"Two? Then it's all right."

"I want you to..."

"Yes, yes, yes, yes, Mr. Chart, and me too, I'm just dying to meet them, both of them, all sixteen of them--there's nothing I enjoy more than meeting my gemmun-friends' lovely girl friends, except hearing you rave about them.... Over my dead body, Chart!"

"You still haven't given me much reason for your staying on in Europe."

"Oh, I'm just another of these American girl sparrows you see hopefully hopping along every road in Europe, afraid to chirp. We don't know what we want but we all believe that, without doing any special work to get it, we'll be smitten with glory and suddenly find some romantic peak where we'll shine. Get on the stage or be what the beginners call 'penwomen' or ballet dancers or art-photographers. Or get married, but only to a tall, gently tragic, gray-eyed painter, with black hair gone faintly gray--guy named Peter or Michael or..."

"Or Lorenzo?"

"You guessed it. And I suppose I'm typical of all those young women, who won't be patient, who find it easier to jump on a train and skip on to some new capital than to stick in one place and make solid friends."

"I don't think you are, Roxy. You've had a fling, but I know you'll get set. Sufficiently."

"Thank you, dear. I like to have your approval, more than anybody's, even if it is a little qualified and stingy."

He felt that he must go on admitting that he carried an Olivian

passport. He was not going to sneak across the frontiers. He did his duty by a pleasantly argumentative, "But I know that not all you American girls in Europe are the vacuous kind you take so much sadistic trouble in beating up. You aren't. Neither is my--young woman living here at the Tre Corone, a professional historical scholar--Dr. Lomond, Dr. Olivia Lomond."

Roxy burst. "Dr. Olivia Lomond! Oh, my foot to Dr. Lomond! A vinegary, sexless, flat-chested old maid carting you around to tearooms and reading Ruskin aloud! I knew I should never have let you come to Europe alone! You were quite a lad in Newlife, whenever you got sore on the tennis court. A plague of bot flies and Texas jiggers on Doc-tor Lomond! That dried up arroyo!"

"No, not exactly dried up!" He tenderly took Roxy's hand; the hand of his dear little sister, his chronic niece, his oldtime enduring friend. "I very much want you to meet her and appreciate her...."

"Neither do I!"

He was stroking her hand, feeling slightly more than avuncular, when a menace trembled in the air and made him look up. Olivia was just inside the room, watching them, and as Hayden saw her Borgia eyes, they said, almost audibly, "Ah, I SEE! And you the species of camel who has been demanding that I give up my innocent colleague, Professor Lundsgard!"

He did have sense enough not to throw Roxy's hand at Olivia and jump up guiltily; he did have the genius to go on holding that hand comfortably and to purr, "So glad you came, Olivia. This is none other than Roxanna Eldritch that I've told you so much about--great friend of Caprice, and I've known her, bless her dear neighborly heart, since she was a baby."

Before Roxy could even get started, Olivia fired:

"That does make quite a long, LONG period of knowing Miss Uh, DOESN'T it!"

But there proved, then, to be nothing wrong with Roxy's artillery.

21

They were both rare, thought Hayden: Olivia, crystal framed in ivory and silver; Roxanna, rose-crystal rimmed with burnished copper. If they could be friends! He blundered--but perhaps no cardinal secretary of state could have been altogether diplomatic in this crisis: "I hope you two charmers are going to be close friends. You're certainly the best friends I have!"

Olivia said to him sweetly, "Are we also to be close friends with your dear Tosca Stretti?"

"Now what the devil do you know about Tosca? A delightful girl but HOW..."

"You forget Florence is a small town. Lorry Lundsgard went in to see Dr. Stretti today about a lame wrist--he strained it years ago in a great football battle, and the doctor told him that you and his daughter had hit it off wonderfully--I think he is quite hopeful of her having an escorted tour to the wonders of Colorado, some day before long! Congratulations--to you, I mean, not to the poor young lady!"

Just when Hayden was bewildered by this foul attack, Olivia was temporarily reinforced by the enemy, Roxanna, who tittered, "Who is this little number you've been keeping up your sleeve, without letting Mother know, Hay? Doing the young Italian wrecks along with the old

Italian ruins, are you?"

He stated, with just the ludicrous touchy dignity that both Olivia and Roxy had meant to stir up in him, "Miss Stretti is a young girl I met casually at dinner. She doesn't even speak English."

"I SEE!" said Olivia and "/ see!" said Roxy, with feminine derision that wiped him out. And so, having punished him for introducing them to each other, the two puritanical and jeeringly righteous ladies turned murderously upon each other.

"You're not staying long in Florence are you, Miss Eldritch?" Olivia said caressingly.

("And she pretended first not to remember Roxy's name!")

But Roxy snatched off the first skirmish. She put on, not the damning, insinuating cordiality of Olivia but the more dangerous pose of never posing; she was as simple and frank as Satan. "I really don't know how long I'll be here, Dr. Lomond. Oh, yes, I know your name so well. Hay was telling me what a fine scholar you are, and how you've helped him, the poor darling, helpless amateur, understand something of Florence. But me, I'm simply a sketchy newspaper hack, and I reckon I'll be lucky if I ever as much as learn Florence's last name."

"Last...? Oh, yes--yes... You'll be going on to Rome, no doubt. I'm sure you'll want to take maybe four or five days in Rome. It's an extremely important focal point."

"Yes, I think I read that somewhere," said Roxy, most plain-faced and obedient. "You feel so, too? Then I'll have to take a quick look at the place, I guess."

More sweetly than ever, from Olivia: "I suppose you're staying at the Grand or the Excelsior, here in Florence? A poor student on a scholarship, like me--I confess I do envy you rich journalists."

Roxy didn't take it; she didn't blurt that she was poor and jobless; she said rustically, "I guess I'm just a lucky girl. But I don't know as I'll stay on at the Excelsior. My private bathroom is pretty fair there--black marble and a crocus-yellow tub, but I don't know--they couldn't give me a dressing-room with a big-enough toilet table to set out all my cosmetic bottles--you do get into such a naughty habit of buying cut-glass flasks in Paris, so amusing to amble along the Rue de la Paix and the dear old Champs and pick up exclusive perfumes. Of course, in my profession, having to meet prime ministers and generals and atomic scientists and handsome movie stars so intimately, and REALLY important historians, I have to have a decent place to chat with them."

Olivia was not routed. "Naturally, my dear. Such interesting, important work. And you shouldn't feel especially inferior with them, or so humble."

"I-DON'T!"

("Are two women who like the same man, or who have opposite political faiths, always bitches to each other when they meet? Or merely usually?")

"Quite right, quite right, Miss Eldritch. Perhaps these dignitaries get something of a fresh, breezy point of view from meeting you. And now, Hayden, I must trot off to my room. The Ministry of Education, in Rome, has asked for my opinion on some secret documents about Charles VIII that have just been discovered. I'll leave you and Miss Eldritch to enjoy talking about your neighbors in Newlife. If I don't see you again, Miss Eldritch, I hope you will have a very enjoyable journey

to Rome. Good night!"

"That woman," said Roxanna, "that woman--that woman is--she's a knockout. She knows how to make up that mahogany skin of hers so it looks slick. Even with a crooked nose and too small a mouth and a wrinkly forehead and ears like a rabbit, she manages to look quite beautiful."

"Now you..."

"And without any training except bossing a schoolroom for years and years, she makes like real royalty. The boarding-house queen! What a lucky boy you are! When she gets you back home, the Bradbins will take to her like a duck to water. She has their same stunt of making you feel that if you disagree with them, you're not only a fool--you ought to see a doctor."

Hayden was tired of their war; he had seen only too much of such delightful business in Caprice's opinion of every pretty woman newly arrived in Newlife. He said, affectionately, "Roxy, I appeal to you as an old friend and neighbor..."

"Yes?"

"To shut up."

"Oh!"

"I'm extraordinarily fond of you, and always have been, and I hope to give you a good time seeing Florence--with the assistance of Olivia, who knows more about it than sixteen tourists like you and me put together. So when you and she get the posing and prancing and pawing the earth over, we'll all be happy and almost grown-up."

"Okay, Chief!"

"And I'll introduce you to her friend, and mine, Lorenzo Lundsgard, who's a scholar and a smart lecturer and a football hero and a Hollywood actor and a big handsome brute and a sophisticated European and a friendly Yankee all put together--and he loves redheads."

"That vision," stated Roxanna, "you got out of a book. He's Abelard and Heloise, that's who he is, and he's dead. I've seen his tomb in Père-Lachaise." She rose.

"I'll take you home, Roxy. I have a little car."

"No, honestly, sweetie; I told you! I'm not going to sponge on you. I want to walk home and begin to learn this town. All I want is a tip on a job. Will you ask Mrs. What's-her-name about it tomorrow?"

"Dodsworth? I certainly shall. Roxy, it's nice to have you here! Extremely!"

"Thanks, dear. And I'll quit picking on your Mexican sugar pie."

"Splendid."

"It was too easy! Good night, Wonderful!"

Olivia came to his room that evening and attacked at once.

"Who is this little fly-by-night Eldritch piece, REALLY, aside from your having known her--as a clerk in the Five-and-Ten, I imagine-- in your Colorado wilderness?"

"You know perfectly that she was a friend of my wife and myself, just a little younger, and she is a newspaperman of standing."

"Have you been keeping her up your sleeve all the time you've been in Europe?"

"You know I haven't." He was grave, unsquabbling. "I have always liked her and honored her. She is gallant and a little touching in her ambition to be something more than a jolly pirate. No, I do not plan to flirt with her. No, I have not done so in the past-- except in that she is so radiant and well rounded and highly touchable that NO normal man could look at her without being a little fatuous and lively.... Oh, Olivia, it's hard enough for us to stay infatuated without asking some outsider to come in and think up good ways of making us miserable!"

"That's what I SAY! This Eldritch number!"

"I didn't mean her. I meant Lorenzo--Lancelot. I do worship you-- I think. Don't let's let ANYBODY come between us! Let's quit this childish, 'You broke that engagement so I'll break this one and teach you a lesson.' Both of us! Let's be content with love. Let's not tamper with the gift of God!"

Instantly she rose to her passionate affection of the past, crying, "No! We mustn't! We've been so close! Oh, people always become traitors to love. It's so simple and tremendous that their mean little minnows of souls can't stand the glory!"

Despite the danger of the practically ubiquitous Mrs. Manse, despite the charms of Roxanna and the manly Mr. Lundsgard and Tosca Stretti, they embraced each other with hungry sighing, almost weeping over the perils they had now conquered.

Next morning, less shining of wing and slightly irritable when Perpetua was late bringing in his coffee and rolls and marmalade, Hayden wondered why it might not be an inspired notion to get--to try

to get--Olivia to hand over her job in Lundsgard's office to Roxanna, together with all her rights, privileges and interests in the said Lundsgard.

But that would be a dirty trick to play on Roxy, aside from the fact that Olivia would see them both damned first. So he telephoned to Mrs. Samuel Dodsworth.

22

Mrs. Dodsworth was a woman equally kind and efficient. For Roxanna she could find no school post but she did ferret out a position as chauffeur, reader, masseuse, servant-firer and listener to anecdotes about deceased spouse and successful nephews, to the rich Mrs. Orlando Weepswell, and there Roxanna had a suite and a maid and a slight paralysis of the auditory nerves.

Roxy, with Hayden, met Nat Friar, at a bar, and the two missionaries of American irreverence formed a pious alliance. As Roxy expressed it, "Uncle Nat and I sure clicked."

To Nat, beauty was a dynamic force, culture was more revolutionary than war, the product of the artist (though not the artist himself and his mistresses and bank account) was to be studied with reverence, and the more he held this gospel, the more impatiently did Nat hear the adorers who gabbled or gurgled or wheezed about the arts; who capitalized Beauty and Culture along with their social positions.

If Roxanna could never have Nat Friar's knowledge nor his gruff reverences, she had even more horrible synonyms for the word "fake," and Nat was grateful. When Hayden went by himself to Nat's villa, he often found Roxanna perched there, cross-legged on the couch, being cheery with Nat and Ada Baker.

In Florence, Roxanna, being in a state of repentance and poverty, did not see any of Sadie Lurcher's international set, glittering like broken glass edges, sharp as broken glass, unpleasant under the teeth as broken glass. They do not find Florence "smart," nor do they often remain. For the most part, Hayden judged, Roxanna associated with that borderline assortment, the "American Students," of whom some were frugal and studious, and some were shaggy, drunken, late-walking and floridly abnormal or given to a confusion about private interests in wives.

In general they were less noisy and self-advertising than their cousins in Paris, and Hayden felt that Roxanna was a colt now broken of loco-weed.

His introduction of his quasi-cousin, Roxy, to Lundsgard was operative and a success.

He had invited Roxy, Lundsgard and Olivia to dine with him at the Cantina de' Pazzi (you will not find it under that name), in the basement of the venerable Palazzo Suoli. Under massive arches, the basement, clattery with dishes and the delighted chatter of tourists, wanders off into circular stone cubicles which hint of ancient tortures. The walls, scurfy with old blood, are coy now with travel posters, bull-fighter costumes from London sweatshops and paintings of carnivals in Venice--you were never quite sure whether it was Venice, California, or its bawdy older sister. To complete the Cantina's charm for tourists, the management had ordered that bread sticks and free colored post cards be displayed on the tables nightly before the guests arrived.

As Hayden and Roxanna waited there--she had refused more than one cocktail--they saw Olivia and Lundsgard, coming in from their office work. Roxy's lips lifted in an arch of delight at Lundsgard, and

she crooned, "Oh, buy him for me, will you, Cousin Hay?"

And truly this Viking Lorenzo was something to enchant a maiden: broad-shouldered and his face all one beam of loving intelligence and conscious power and masculine resolution. He was hatless, his heroic head well back and his flaxen hair a coronet. With his sports jacket and gray open shirt, he had a purple and yellow Florentine silk scarf and, as he came near, on one masterful hand Roxy must have seen a vast opal ring.

"Golly, that's a lot of man in one consignment," sighed Roxanna.

Olivia was determined to be agreeable. She gurgled to her enemy, "How's the job going?" and even called her "Roxanna." And Lundsgard as boisterously greeted her, "Welcome to our nice little city, Miss Eldritch and, speaking as a veteran here, may I announce that it hasn't seen anything cuter than you since Dante tried to make Be-AT-triss. Roxanna, we moriturus, salute thee!"

("Olivia is right; he really will popularize learning in the States, though of course he'll kill it on the way.")

Roxanna was gushing to Lundsgard, "You don't look as if Culture and Florence have stunted your boyish growth!"

He smiled on her as though she were a poor but worthy woman to whom he was giving thousands of dollars, dollar by dollar. "Roxy, the sneaking fact is that I'm not cultured. I can teach that stuff, because I like college youngsters and I realize that all they want, or ever need, is to get a smattering of art and history, so when they become docs or lawyers or manufacturers, they won't look ignorant. But I'm just a funnel, and with all your interviews, you've probably got ten times as much real inside dope on these flyblown European countries as I'll ever get."

Roxanna answered as benevolently as he.

"Olivia was only too darn kind. I've never really done any big interviews--just real-life stories like interviews with Paris bartenders on do Yankee tourists prefer vol au vent or pickled pigs' feet. No, you're the goods on the culture--apparently."

Till now Roxy had been a true woman canvasser for the Lorry Party, and Olivia had difficulty in looking companionable when Lundsgard turned a shoulder on her and leaned into Roxanna. But with noticeably less reverence, Roxanna went on and Hayden thought he smelled malice:

"But you haven't been a professor all the time, have you, Lorenzo?"

"No, no. Lotta strings to my bow."

"You were in Hollywood?"

"Don't know as the L. A. papers raved much about it, but yes, I did a little ham acting."

"I'll bet all the girls hounded you for autographs."

This was pleasing to the great Lorenzo and astonishing to Hayden. He had never thought of that. He had never known any one whose autograph was sought after, who was so beautiful or clever that those fetish-seekers and magnified clinkers and general nuisances called autograph-hounds would ever course after him. But Lorenzo took his own tremendousness for granted, and with genial democracy he admitted:

"Oh, they used to ask for my fist now and then."

"LITTLE girls, I meant--junior misses' size--twelve to fourteen."

Lorenzo was huffy. "No, not just junior misses! I've had some doggone beautiful, rich women ask me for an autograph!"

"I'll bet. Seriously, Lorenzo, I was going to ask you for one myself and please, pretty please, give me one now before I forget it! If it wouldn't bore you? I want to keep it with Gene Tunney's and André Gide's and all those."

Hayden noted that the sheet which Roxy managed to find in her handbag and present to Lundsgard for his signature was a bill which did not look receipted. Lundsgard signed it with large, rolling L's and looked delighted. Roxy purred. Olivia looked sour, then tried to look amused, and in a great-lady manner she chuckled "Lorry, I'm afraid I missed something. It never occurred to me to ask for your autograph--except as I do have your initials signed to so many gay little notes."

"I'll bet you have!" snarled Roxanna and went over to Lundsgard complete.

They agreed that they were shrewd, generous, swift-moving Americans, with no nonsense. When Olivia tried to be lofty with their lowness and, to keep the debate fair, Hayden joined Olivia, the two hard-riding highwaymen teased them for the "solemncholy way you listen to a lot of snooty French and English and German cranks and fall for it when they claim you can write better with a pen than you can with a typewriter."

Lundsgard seemed to be expanding with appreciation, and he had a good deal of buoyant hydrogen in his chest to expand. Roxy was his pal. Perhaps he had been bored by Olivia's elegance of old ivory, and bored even by the fierce, channeled ardor with which she could vary her level coldness; perhaps, for a time, he might find the tartness

of the rosy apple that was Roxanna spicier than the richness of Olivia's pear. So Hayden meditated, but he himself found Roxy's generous enthusiasm of voice somewhat flat and loud and quacking in competition with Olivia's deep melodies.

It was when Lundsgard was most admiring himself in Roxy's mirror and most enjoying an advertisement of his friendliness with Prince Ugo Tramontana that the slippery minx twisted away.

"Oh, yes," confided Lundsgard, "I've become quite a buddy of His Highness and I like..."

"A non-royal prince is not a Highness," Roxy cackled. "Don't be like that, and let 'em see the patched overalls you still wear under the luscious doctoral robe, dear."

"Why, you little stinker! Me--overalls? Lissen! I don't want to boast, but I pay my tailor in Hollywood two hundred and seventeen bucks a suit!" roared the outraged Lorenzo. "And--you and your alleged knowledge of protocol and titles and that junk! Let me tell you Ugo is a mighty good intimate of mine and I hang around that grand old palazzo of his like I would around the Faculty Club and--everything's worn out and the velvet worn and those gilt mirrors got liver patches on 'em, but he's got more doggone medieval paintings and manuscripts by Poliziano (I guess it is) and old swords than you can shake a stick at, but he thinks I'm swell, and he says I got what he calls a new vision, and he likes to try his theories out on me. He SAID so!"

Roxanna restored amity and even increased their alliance by bubbling, "And I'll bet that's true. He knows you aren't tied by a lot of bum traditions. Sure. He's glad to have a smart scholar that at the same time's husky and HUMAN like you around."

Nobly pleased, Professor Lundsgard said modestly, "It seems like he does."

Roxanna did not strike again till after dinner, when Lundsgard flamboyantly lighted a huge Havana, and she muttered, "My, my, what a big man that cigar is smoking! I'll bet Prince Ugo gets to panting when you smoke those El Imperiales around the palace!"

For once, Olivia giggled and Lundsgard looked wounded, but again it did not take much of Roxy's gamine art to restore him to self-admiration, to delight in his little pal.

Hayden thought, "What a stupid, humorless, touchy oaf that man is! Once Olivia's fling is over--and I think perhaps it is now, when she's seen him tossed around by a crazy juggler like Roxy--I'll be able to snatch Olivia back from him, and I can hold her--for always? I suppose so."

He was sorry for Lundsgard, driven in Roxanna's tinsel reins. Perhaps Olivia could not avenge Evelyn Hoxler, but Roxanna would do so, blithely and tenderly and viciously. Poor Lorenzo, shaking a sceptre hung with jester's bells!

"I think we should all be going home," said Olivia, tightly.

"See you to your bachelor digs, Rox?" said Lundsgard, the deft man of the world.

"Uh-huh," said Roxy.

"HAY-den! Let's go!" said Olivia.

Hayden, especially loaned by kindness of Dr. Olivia Lomond for one evening, was dining with Roxanna among the students at Camillo's. He was not pleased by the contemptuous hardness which Roxanna seemed again to be putting on. She was slightly too showy, in her old green dress with a white turban possibly modeled on the streamlined yet haremlike Marchesa Valdarno and a string of jade beads; she was slightly too harsh and ambition-vaunting as she rattled, "I'm getting my second wind. I think before long I'll feel like leaving your nice little Florence."

"What do you mean by 'little'! It's even bigger than St. Paul, Minnesota, or Omaha, Nebraska. Why, it's about as big as Denver!"

"Our Nathan Hale! I am sorry I have but one life to give for studying the predella on the right of the third picture of the altar piece in the third chapel of the left aisle of the sixty- seventh most important ecclesiastical structure in our sacred Flow- rence! You're as bad a faker as Lorry Lundsgard!"

"Oh. How are you and your Dr. Tarzan progressing?"

"I may give him a tumble, if I don't get the hell out of this backwater. But as I was saying, pretty soon I may get going now and leave my set of nursing-bottles for Mother Weepswell, and do a lot of freelance stories. Have I got ideas now! A piece about young Italian noblemen, like Roberto Tramontana, who're busted and who've cheerfully gone to work in garages or any other honest labor. Heh? Heh? How about it, Uncle Hayden?"

"Roxy darling, don't get too enterprising again. I like you more when you're gentle."

("Is this young woman nothing more than Caprice with a passport?")

"And I like you better when you're more brash and neighborly, Hay. You're in danger of becoming another of these erudite old gentlemen living lonely in a villino, so dreadfully mild and well-washed and reticent, knowing all about some old hellhound like Malatesta Baglioni and nothing about President Truman; a reservoir that has all the facts and don't know what any of them signify. Uncle Nat Friar but wrapped in oiled silk. And worse, you could lose all your democracy here. Oh, you never were a guy to run out and kiss the postman or make the hired girl have her supper with the folks, but you did think the postman and hired girl might get married and have a kid who'd be a better lawyer than YOUR kid--if you'd only had one, you and Caprice, poor darling!

"But here, you talk of contadini, of farmers, as if they couldn't ever be educated like you and me. And like all Americans, you always overdo. Talk about me overdoing the hustle! You feel you can't monkey with Italian history at all unless you become a professor of it, which Gott soll behuten, you never will. If you were building bungalows with sweetie-pie yellow bathrooms, you'd dream about waffles. If you're learning Italian, you try to talk same to Heinie tourists and Svensk trippers. Okay--but don't overdo your underdoing our ole American democracy, pal!

"You're in MUCH more peril than I am with my play at dissipation, which I can chuck so easy. YOUR danger is virtuous prissiness, and that's a nastier vice than double martinis. Pete's sake, Hay, don't listen to your old Italian gorillas roaring so you can't hear the big, sweet hell of a roar our Americans have always put up, too:

"Casey Jones at the throttle and the old engine moanin'! Bound away for the Wide Missourai! Banjo on my knee. Frankie and Johnny root-a-toot-tootin'! In the evening by the moonlight, the old folks singing! Boy! Am I proud of our own troubadours! And you forgetting them for

English skylarks and some dinky little thin song by Petrarch about a girl he never even made!"

Vigorously, from Hay, "I don't forget them! Never! Sitting in San Miniato, looking at the altar-screen, I caught myself humming Casey Jones! Besides, you're a true Westerner; you've heard some Old Timers sing hallelujahs. But most American kids today have only learned our ballads, rejoiced in our own tradition, when they've heard 'em--if they COULD hear 'em over the smack of their chewing gum, on the radio, rollicked out by some ferocious Nevada thousand-dollar-a-week singing cowboy who was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and learned his Native Western American melodies in the glee club at the Southern New Jersey School of Accountancy. Or the fat man who gets up and sings 'em with the soloist at a New York night club--he's a Native Cal-y-for-ny-an born in Lithuania!

"Besides--now, for the first time, America belongs to the world, not just to America, and Casey Jones has to take his chance against the skylark and Laura and Roland and Nicolette and all of them, and not complain, as you do FOR him, if Francois Villon drowns him out! Casey's been a sensitive plant too long--sheltered by the Wide Missouri!"

"Okay, okay! Slap Walt Whitman up against Gilbert and Sullivan and see if he's so cute. But if you're going to be so darned world-conscious, Hay, you got to get out of Florence--I mean, the Limey-Yankee Florence. It's such a hick village! It gossips worse than Bison Park ever thought of! Tessie Weepswell and Sam Dodsworth and even Mrs. D. gossip about you all day long. Will you marry Olivia? (And may she develop the bots!) If you stop on the Tornabuoni and talk to some old rabbit for two minutes at noon, the Colony has complete details by one-thirty and talks about your new romance all afternoon.

"And then that ratty bunch of American pansies that sit at the same bar, every afternoon, out on the sidewalk, exhibiting their beauties to any visiting firemen fairies that may happen to hit town. Provincial? Good Lord, those serious young men of talent are so busy, just like the gang at the Newlife Bonanza Poolroom, talking all day, that they don't even get around to see the Uffizi Gallery once a month.

"No, my boy. You either disappear into ITALIAN Florence--I've heard there used to be one--or else go on to Paris or Zurich or Newlife, Colorado, or one of those universal cities. And take your O-ly-vya with you. And TRY not to push her off an Alp on the way!"

Hayden said, "Well..."

Roxanna might, he thought uncomfortably, be right. He might drift here into a negligent snobbishness in which only persons with art-vocabularies or titles or official posts would seem to master. He ought, he thought, to see more of Roxy and get more actively into soul-saving; save hers from the suave brutality of female careerism--save himself from the fussy brutality of damning Perpetua every time she moved a book on his reading table.

To an ironic Olivia, late that evening, after a good-natured but uncompromising parting with Roxanna, he explained that he really had to be neighborly with his old friend Roxy and not let the poor waif stumble into alien pitfalls alone.

"You mean she'll land softer if you stumble with her?" said Olivia. "Go ahead.... Heavens, Hayden! Do you suppose for one moment I could be jealous of a street Arab like your Roxanna? Don't insult me! Spend ALL your evenings--and nights, too--with her, if it amuses you."

Olivia was too willing. He wondered, a thousand times, if the high

spirits of Roxanna had not already enticed Lundsgard away from Olivia; if that lady, born to Byzantine courts and trafficking for Hellenic manuscripts in Cyprus, was becoming silkenly double-faced.

As a matter of fact his two or three dinners alone with Roxanna were but mildly devoted to her endangered morals. It proved that Roxy had as most diners-out had not, as Olivia sniffily had not, his own trick of telling himself exclamatory stories about all of his fellow diners at a restaurant, and that was a trick well shared and inducing common excitement. At the Oliviero, most cosmopolitan restaurant in town, they picked out a French diplomat (he was probably a Milanese manufacturer), a Chinese general (probably Burmese). They looked sidewise, inconspicuously but intensely, at a quarreling young couple, and speculated, "I wonder if we hadn't better go over and tell him that his girl has too rocky a jaw, for all her funny nose, and he'd better duck before she shackles him for life?"

Always it was what Roxanna called "good fun." And then she would infuriate him by returning to the charge that he was becoming a frail old scholar-hermit, and she would defend Lorenzo as a good fellow who had antagonized Hayden only by being his own honest, rollicking self.

At the next dinner out of the three, Roxanna said to Lundsgard, derisively, "How's all your lovely wives keeping, Loraccio?"

"You mean my girl friends here? Why, sweetness, I haven't got any except you and Livy, who're both gone on that frozen-faced hermit, Hay."

"No, Professor, I don't mean us. WIVES, I said!"

Lundsgard's "I dunno whacha talking about" was blurred and most unprofessional.

"It's none of my business and I don't care a hoot, but I'm a reporter, and don't ever let them tell you I'm not a good one. Anyway, a busy one. You're always explaining to everybody that you've never slipped into wedlock. You were just mean, when you were a rosy-cheeked young instructor with goldie tresses, to some juicy little cricket named Bessie, and she canned you for your he- man tyranny.

"But I've been snooping--pumping some of the American students here that you've been chummy with. And I wrote a few letters to a script-writer that I know in Hollywood. And I am now able to inform you--it may be no news to you, Lorry, but it will interest Livy: you were married, bell, book and neon lights, to two different cuties and got divorced by one after two years and by 'tother after eighteen months--grounds, in both cases, amnesia about who you were really married to. Oh, it's okay, but I just feel we'll all be happier, as simple, trusting American girls, if we could expect a consignment of home truth now and then!"

Olivia was rigidly furious.

"I'm sure I don't know why we should hear all this. Mr. Lundsgard is my employer, and nothing else. I have no slightest interest in his private affairs of any sort!"

It was Lundsgard who was surprisingly undisturbed.

He snorted, "So you took enough interest in poor old Lorry to really get busy and find out about him, heh? Yuh, I guess your yarn is more or less true, Rox. I never could see why I should bother you folks with my troubles, but believe me, I could a tale unfold of a couple of the nastiest little tramps you ever heard of, if I hadn't made it an iron-clad rule to never yap about my wounds but just bear 'em in silence. But I will say," and he looked at Roxanna and then at Olivia as fondly as

though they were two lovely little breakfast sausages and he a hungry hero, "that an awful lot of women hung around hoping to comfort me, after the obsequies."

"DID they, big boy!" slashed Roxanna.

"Do you mind if we forget all of this and talk about something more interesting?" grated Olivia.

Curiously, during the rest of that meal, Lundsgard looked most fondly upon Roxanna, and argued down Olivia's evasive doubts when Roxy announced that the one thing in the world she wanted to do was to get invited to lunch with Sir Henry Belfont.

They all did go, as arranged and tourist-guided by Mr. Hayden Chart.

24

They were only six at lunch: Sir Henry and Lady Belfont, Olivia and Roxanna, Hayden and Lundsgard, who had brought Roxanna in a taxicab and who seemed, on landing, to be more gurglingly intimate with Roxy than before her revelations of his multiple marriages.

When Sir Henry found that Roxy was esteemed not only by the unimportant onlooker, Hayden, but by the favorite courtier, Professor Lundsgard, he was markedly attentive to her, and honored her with a portentous discourse on American Womanhood. You gather that he did not think much of it.

Roxy listened pertly; Lady Belfont pointedly did not listen at all but, with small sharp eyes, examined Roxy and apparently passed her.

Yet after Sir Henry had accepted her and she should have put on the manners of a Belgravia governess, Roxanna was very naughty. Sir

Henry belched at her, "Gracious little lady, you are fortunate in being able to tarry for a while in the City of the Lilies. Most of your dreadful American females who come here, so uninvited--gauche schoolteachers and librarians and the like--remain only twelve hours or a day or two, and scamper on to Rome."

But Roxanna was not grateful for this implication of her superiority.

She took from an overdecorated spectacle case of Florentine leather-work, with golden scrolls on blue and sealbrown, and put on a pair of Hollywoodized tinted sun-glasses, huge and aggressive affairs with harlequin frames of pink plastic. Through these insulting portholes she stared at Sir Henry, and blatted, "Maybe the poor darlings of teachers haven't enough cash to stick it out here any longer, and they got to 'scamper.' Maybe they'd stay here for years, too, if they'd inherited a wad of money."

Every one, but especially Sir Henry and perhaps Roxanna herself, seemed to consider her tone offensive. He gulped; he tried to forgive this curious campfollower of his favorite Lorenzo; and he sailed on:

"Conceivably that may be their melancholy plight, though I cannot understand why middle-class persons, particularly your Americans, should be privileged to come to our Florence at all. Such ecstasy, Miss Eldritch, is no part of our common rights, like bread and beer; it is a delightful good fortune which the prankish gods may bestow or deny at their will, quite unaccountably.

"But all of your vast, marvelous country, Miss Eldritch, is full of false claims and assertions and astounding optimism. Children over there invariably address their fathers not with obedient reverence but--I shudder--'Hya, Pop!' And THEM, I fancy, even your kind heart could scarcely categorize as 'poor darlings!' Eh?"

Said Roxy, "In the first place, mostly they don't say it, and if they did, it would just show they liked their dads enough to want to be chummy with them."

For a time, then, Roxanna was not offensive. But when Sir Henry had rambled, "When we consider that there once existed a Raphael, the insanities of these contemporary artists become not merely mawkish but blasphemous," then Roxy struck again. She turned her impertinent Hollywood sun-glasses on Belfont, and she piped, "Maybe that's what the old boys said about Rafe, too, when he was beginning."

Sir Henry looked stricken. Lady Belfont, behind the mild harem bars of a tiny lace handkerchief, seemed to be giggling. Hayden was definitely impatient with Roxy for her pointless rudeness; he was definitely sorry for Sir Henry, whom he could see now as a pathetic old actor getting his first hisses and trying to take them gallantly.

Hayden thought, "The man is a bore and a snob. He's built up a social position to which he has to sacrifice everything. He has built a jail and shut himself up in it. He can never have any fun at all--never can laugh or talk easily or be flippant or go to a movie and dine with poor people, lest he be seen. Poor, timid, wheezing Pekingese in the body of a mastiff! I am extremely annoyed with Roxanna, as much for her pretentious spectacles as for her sauciness--which certainly does no credit to the good manners that we do have in Newlife. A splendid missionary of hate she is! Mark Twain's bumptious rustic, his Innocent Abroad. Still with us!"

Sir Henry was not enfeebled by Roxy's impertinence, but angered. It was a long time since any one had dared to make small of such a formidable monument of guineas capped with a baronetcy. This was indeed his notion of blasphemy. But he counterattacked Roxy with stately tolerance for such small female bugs:

"My dear young lady, I agree that had he existed in your America, Raffaello would have been denounced in his own day. I quite understand that--quite. I am not shocked but only grieved by the irreverence and boorishness that is, perhaps, to be expected from such a lusty young giant of a country. For, indeed, some of my own relatives belong to you good American people."

Then, to the horror of everybody except Lady Belfont, whose lips danced, and of the butler, who slapped a napkin over his mouth and fled from the room, Roxy demanded, "Sir Henry, don't all of your own relatives belong to us good American people?"

"I beg your pardon!"

"Including your father and mother?"

"I beg your pardon!"

"I heard so many interesting things about you from a newspaperman who used to be your secretary. You fired him--remember?--for laughing when a dinky gilt chair busted under you. He was left stranded--bad. This fellow, the rat, he told me that you never saw England or the Continent till you were fourteen. You were born in Ohio and your Grampa Belfont--if that was the name--started the family fortunes during our American Civil War by selling adulterated drugs and shoddy uniforms to the North and South equally."

Sir Henry was paralyzed. The thing was so monstrous that even the competent Hayden, the managerial Lundsgard were paralyzed, as Roxy went smilingly on:

"This ex-secretary said it cost you sixteen years of living in Kent and London and getting snubbed practically every hour, and then forty-five

thousand pounds in cash, to buy a seat in Parliament and finally an unpaid job as a baronet. But he said, this beast, that he guessed that to the miners who work in your Kentucky coal mines it was worth every shilling. But this tattle-tale couldn't possibly have been right, now could he!"

Sir Henry with his death pangs just slightly eased, croaked, "He certainly could not."

"No, indeed. For instance: how could he know exactly how much you paid for your title? Maybe they stuck you much more than forty- five thousand pounds. And I do want to say how wise I think you were to move on to Italy. In England, you must have found it so hard to get away with the pose of being English."

Sir Henry rose, but it was not Roxanna whom he was denouncing; it was astonishingly his admirer and fellow fraud, Professor Lorenzo Lundsgard:

"Lundsgard, you plotted this outrage, sir. You brought in this woman, whom I shall certainly have the police investigate. And as for YOU, sir, I shall write this very afternoon to the president of Cornucopia Films-- of which I happen to own fifty-seven percent-- recommending that they give up their plan to make a Medici picture, or any other amateurish nonsense that you may plan, ever, and denounce you to your lecture agents as a half-witted booby. Good day, ladies and gentlemen."

He marched out, followed by a cattishly smiling Lady Belfont. The butler hurried back in, to take the better silver out with him for safeguarding.

Lundsgard screamed, "My God, we got to do something!"

Roxy said comfortably, "Not me! I've always been hankering to blow up that pompous old shyster, after what this kid, my friend, told me about him in London."

"Be quiet, Roxanna," Hayden said sharply.

Olivia, with unexpected independence, stated, "Roxanna was inexcusably rude and vulgar, but it is our fault for bringing her here. We should have understood that she would not know even the first duties of being a decent guest."

Roxanna cried, "Hey, now look here, you!" but Olivia iced her out with, "Although I am quite indifferent to what Mr. Belfont thinks of me. In my group, we consider him an incompetent dilettante."

Lundsgard was raging, "You've all got to put your heads together and help me--and you, Roxy, I'm certainly going to throttle you! I'm ruined, if Cornucopia Films welch on me. Didn't you realize that, Roxy, you dangerous little fool?"

"Oh yes, Lor-en-zo, I had some idea of it. I've just sort of been resenting your idea I would be an easy conquest. I'm not a round-heel like Livy."

Olivia was a leopard leaping. "You little vixen! And I am not a... I don't even know what the vile word means!"

"How come it makes you so sore then?"

Hayden gravely interposed--though he too was being forced up to a plane of screaming: "I think you've done enough harm, Roxanna--and don't be so smug about your efficiency as a guttersnipe. We are justifying Sir Henry in his hatred of us Americans--of his own countrymen! We must leave this house."

"You simply got to come to my office and help me fix this thing up," besought Lundsgard. "You can't see me busted like this. We'll all tell Sir Henry that Roxanna is hysterical. We just learned it--we've thrown her right smack out on her back, bang, for keeps...."

To point it all up, the butler came back to inform Lundsgard that his taxicab (which Lundsgard had never ordered) was waiting.

As he drove Olivia to Lundsgard's office in the small car, Hayden imagined from blocks away that he could hear Roxy and Lundsgard quarreling in their cab, but he had little time for imaginings. He was occupied with listening to Olivia, and Olivia had an eloquence she never got out of Machiavelli.

"This whole boresome incident has been a revelation to me, Hayden. I saw what a cowering coward Lorry is--or Lawrence or Oley or whatever he is. I'm not sure but that he's even worse than your shrieking, hair-pulling young fishwife, Roxanna."

"Now, now, she isn't a..."

"She is too, and you know it! And I want you to be as honest about this as I am; I want you to admit your blindness, as I certainly admit mine, now. The veil of sensuality has been lifted from before my eyes; that horrible, sooty veil. I see now--I was a fool and an ingrate not to see it before. It's you, not I, who are the artist-scholar. Hayden dear, you, not Lorry, who are the true Magnificent, without flashy banners.

"For a while I fell into an illusion--it doubtless came from overmuch reading of medieval chronicles and ballads, but still, it was childish and inexcusable--an illusion that a man ought to be obviously splendid: the knight crusader, daring and poetic, the Duke of Urbino, the battle-breaker, the patron of poets and artists; powerful, cloaked in brocade, belted with a great sword, surrounded by medieval color

and all the respect of a medieval court.

"I dreamed, in this schoolgirl dream, that he should travel wide and swiftly, have his commands obeyed swiftly; be extravagant and sometimes ruthless, and forever uplift the whole groveling world by his gorgeous example.

"What a sentimental fool I was! I see that that kind of an idea is more likely to produce a pompous fraud like Belfont or a pilfering clown like Lundsgard than a man like YOU, who is strong enough to be willing to be quiet!"

She kissed him tremendously, to his considerable discomfiture while tacking in the topolino among the trucks, cars, motorcycles, vespas--motorcycles with platforms and tin aprons--bicycles, scooters, pedestrians reading the newspapers while suicidally strolling, which so interestingly complicate the traffic of Florence. But these dangers did not dismay him so much as the thought that he was caught for good, and that the world which Olivia would now permit him to see would not be very wide.

"You know, I'm not always so quiet," he fretted. "And I'm not sure I can ever do much with the Magnificence role, with or without banners. Olivia, I wonder--does it ever occur to you that maybe we're making a mistake? Perhaps we're both too stubborn to be married."

"Nonsense! We'll both learn."

"But can we? Just because you ARE so capable, you'll always be pretty independent."

"I suppose our hoyden friend Roxanna is your idea of pliability!"

"Oh, she's a pirate, but same time, she never fools herself, as you

and I do. I admire her a lot. Olivia! Let's not be too sure about our marriage. It scares me a little."

"Not me. You just do what I tell you to, and you'll be happy."

"Maybe!"

25

They parked the topolino at the Excelsior just as Roxanna and Lundsgard were leaving their taxicab. They four went up in the elevator, but there were two English ladies in it, making that apartment unsuitable for expert quarreling. Not till they had entered Lundsgard's office, where Nat Friar sat with his large, dusty boots up on a desk, his rustic straw hat over his eyes, alternately reading a Dorothy Sayers thriller and Monnier's *Le Quattrocento*, was Lundsgard able to attack:

"I don't know which of you two women is the worst slut and the most ungrateful!"

Hayden had achieved only a sharp, "We'll have no more of..." when he was interrupted by Uncle Nat. As his boots banged down on the floor, Nat fussily poked his straw hat into a wastebasket and spoke:

"Lundsgard, I don't like your manner. Remember there are gentlemen present. By the way, before you discharge me, may I say that I am leaving you for a job in a travel agency? I shall be paid only one-fifth as much, but there I shall be doing nothing more evil than to direct homeless travelers to corrugated beds. It may be that after a month I shall feel somewhat cleansed from the sin of having helped you to corrupt that great lady, Learning."

Angelo Gazza, the photographer, was just coming in and at him Lundsgard shrieked, "YOU, anyway--you're FIRED!"

"Oh, no, I'm not! Professor Friar told me his plan to quit, and I'm rat number two. You, the big athlete, that thought he could kick history around like a football! You're going to feel funny when you get back to teaching schoolboys and tell 'em what a hit you were in Italy with all the princes and the cardinals--and see that not one of your students believes you--ever. Blackboards again, and chalkdust and weekly themes! Addio, tutti! Ciao, Oley!"

The stricken Lundsgard pressed his eyes with his large, beringed hands and stood shaking, and from this spectacle of doom they crept out in pity.

"I hate these renegades like ourselves," Nat Friar said to Hayden, Olivia, Roxy, Angelo, "who triumph over less virtuous scoundrels like Lundsgard. We are so much less colorful. May I buy you all a last cognac? We shall toast the fallen idol. It will probably be the last toast that anybody will ever drink to Mr. Lundsgard."

In the Piazza della Repubblica, shabby small boys were begging and the old scavengers were picking up cigarette butts. All the umbrellas over the outdoor café tables had blossomed in front of Gilli's; the gentle violet-seller circulated and girls laughed in peace.

"Can Olivia and I EVER leave Florence?" Hayden wondered.

From the café, Hayden and Olivia and Roxanna walked away, but with Roxy only tagging.

Olivia was holding Hayden's arm. She sighed, "Ohhhh!"--a hungry sound. She mourned, "I don't know how many kinds of a fool and bully I've been, but I think I've paid for all of them. Lorry looks at me now

with such hatred; he makes me feel loose and compromised. But you, my good angel, you'll never be treacherous as Lorry is--as I've been! You'll never take your obligations lightly. In your presence, I feel absolved and secure."

She held his arm the more tightly and as he managed an embarrassed glance at her, he saw that her forehead was serene, her eyes were clear and tender; she was angelic again and splendid and desirable.

He felt manacled by her lovely ivory hand. How could he desert this passionate woman whom he had helped to destroy, whom he must help to restore to her principalities?

But he ached for his solitary room and the sweet drudgery of books and, after certain years of them, to venture onward to the brazen sea of Arabia, the West Indian islands shining at dawn, the high lone whistling passes of the Himalayas. On such unscheduled wandering, Olivia would never accompany him. Her love would encompass him, but bind him.

They were at the Palazzo Spizzi.

Roxanna caught up with them and proposed, "How about a dish of tea?"

With a remarkably chilly, "Not for me, thanks--perhaps Hayden will care for one," Olivia curtly left them, went into the Palazzo.

"How about you?" Roxy hesitated.

"I'd love some," said Hayden, and they strolled on to a small tea-shop off the Tornabuoni. As they sat down, Roxy sighed:

"I know I've already talked too much today, but one more thing. I used to respect you so, Hay, for your dignity and honesty. Now it kills me to see you turned into Livy's stooge."

Hayden was working up to a denial, but Roxy clattered on:

"I loathe seeing you get all silent and intense again the way you used to be with Caprice. But I guess you must have it--you bleating MARTYR! When I get back to Newlife and the mountains-- that big, huge place where you look up to the horizon, where there's freedom to be ignorant of the ruling dynasty of Piacenza, I'll think of you solemnly grinding away here, trying to satisfy Professor Olivia! But I hope I'll have your forgiveness for having plagued you, and for having been a pest today."

Roxy, on the wall-bench beside him, was suddenly crying, a defenseless and bewildered child. She spoke through sobs like the sobs of a child, hurt, broken, bewildered:

"Oh, darling Hay, I thought you'd all be delighted to have me show up that old sergeant-major, Harry Belfont, today, and get him off your necks!"

Hayden was trembling, but he tried to be hard-hearted. "It was needless and cruel of you. The old comedian is perfectly harmless."

He was glad that a serving-table concealed them from the rest of the tea-shop.

Roxy was still broken with sobbing as she stammered, "Maybe he's harmless but you all talk so's you'll impress him. I wanted to help you, even Livy. But then I saw you all hated me and despised me for bawling him out--shanty Irish, flannel-mouth, nuisance!"

Roxy was crying hard now. He touched her shoulder and she melted against him, she seemed to melt into him, to be one with him. She was a familiar part of him and his own land. There was a sweet wild smell about her, like sagebrush. He cried, "Why, I'm in love with you, Roxy, and I always have been!"

"Didn't you know that? Did you have to go to Italy and read all about arquebuses and apses, to find that out?"

"Will you go with me to Burma and Brazil and Damascus?"

"Sure!"

He kissed Roxanna, very happily.

It was later, as tea prolonged into dinner, that he said sadly, "But Roxy, I'm no good. I seem to honor women, and yet I help to destroy them--Caprice and now Olivia."

"Sure you do. You let them use you and tyrannize over you. No woman that ever lived can stand that much privilege. I'm likely to try it on, too, but maybe not, because I've been in love with you too many years. You know something? Here's the real secret of my life:

"When you were an old man of eighteen, very handsome and dignified, like a secretary of state, you were rehearsing your salutorian's essay for Commencement exercises, in the empty auditorium of the Kit Carson High School, all by yourself--you thought you were. But I was curled up behind a row of seats in the balcony, making myself very small and silent, sucking my lollypop in the utmost silence. I was an earnest young lady of ten, then. I meant to be a United States Senator, and you were my model. (You were to be President.)

"You carried on something wonderful; all about the International Court and how nice it would be if all the nations would listen to you and learn about justice. It sounded swell! I just knelt there and said to myself, 'Some day I'm going to marry that man, even if I have to follow him to Denver or even Minneapolis.' I didn't count on Italy. That's how you slipped me! Dear Hay!"

"Dear Roxy!" he said earnestly.

But he had a worry.

"Now, I have to go tell Olivia, I suppose!"

Roxy said brightly, "Want me to do it for you?"

"Oh, no, I THINK I can manage it," groaned Hayden.

The wedding of Hayden and Roxanna--the civil service in the office of the kindly American Consul, and the religious service at St. James's church--was an Event, attended by all the Anglo-American Colony except Sir Henry Belfont.

Dr. Olivia Lomond was at the church, looking contented and superior. She was warmly on the arm of the chief foreign official then to be found in Florence: the newly appointed First Assistant American Cultural Commissioner to Peru, a confident, beaming, success-radiating magnifico in morning clothes and Ascot tie. His name was Professor the Hon. Lorenzo O. Lundsgard, Ph. D.

They were in Rapallo.

"All right, we'll do that then, unless we want to change our minds," said Roxanna. "Go home by way of Ceylon and India and Japan, if they'll let us in. Home! But if I ever catch you getting to be successful,

I'll snatch you back here, for a course in humility. Maybe we came to Italy too late. We'll never speak the lingo so naturally that we won't even notice we're speaking it. But there is something great here for us--so great because it is so quiet. The American Colonists in Florence are richer in their hearts than the Men of Distinction back home that take themselves so seriously selling whisky or lawsuits or college-alumni enthusiasm. Oh, darling, am I holding forth?"

"Yes--yes," amiably.

"Oh, dear! But you never help me. I suppose you have to be born to it, to know how to beat women, and you weren't."

"I'll try."

"Look. When we get to Rome, are there any more presents we'll have to buy? Last minute in Florence, I got a leather box for Aunt Tib, and the rosary for Lizzie Edison and the linen luncheon-set for Mrs. Dr. Crittenham and a souvenir deck of cards for Bill and Jean Windelbank (won't we enjoy talking over Europe with THEM!) and the Venetian glass and the blue-and-gold spectacle case for Mary Eliza Bradbin. It'll be such fun to see her when she gets it!"

"Such fun"--he realized how often Roxanna said it, as hand in hand they walked through Ravenna. Even King Theodoric's Arian cathedral and the tomb of the Empress Honoria she found "such fun," and he wondered if their sculptors had not also considered them "fun."

"Dear Roxy," he said, even in the sanctity of Dante's tomb.

Far up in the mountains behind Salerno, one light persisted while their steamer plodded southward from Naples, bound out for Smyrna and Alexandria.

Was it a light in the hut of a peasant or of some studious hermit-priest, a priest in that sacred land where Hayden had known defeat and glory, where he had begun to know himself?

"Do you think we might have one modest drink before we turn in?" said Roxanna.

"I think that might be possible, if the bartender is kind-hearted."

"The bartender is Italian," said Roxy, "and he speaks English, French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Polish, Croatian and some Arabic. His name is Fortunato, and he was born in Reggio Emilia, but his wife was born in Bari. He has two children, a girl of seven and a son, six, and he likes Italian crossword-puzzles--he is such fun. He has a cousin in San Jose, California--Giuseppina Vespi of 1127 Citrus Court. She is married to an upholsterer named Joe Murphy and they have two children. I am to send her a picture post card from Palermo. I'm sleepy. Let's have that drink and then turn in."

"Splendid!" said Hayden.

THE END