would, with a flash of her hands, hoist her skirts to the waist in the back. My father was left speechless with rage. There seemed no answer to such an insult!

We were now city people. Trinidad had fully five thousand inhabitants, but claimed ten. It had a grade school building, and a high school building reared its head among trees on the hill across the river; over there rich people lived. The high school and riches seemed to go together. Anyway we, who lived beyond the tracks, knew that we could never dream of going to high school.

The grade school building stood on the other side of the town, on a hill directly facing the old historic Santa Fé Trail that had first been travelled by the Indians, then by the early Spaniards, and later by the white pioneers to the great Southwest. It wound near the foot of a jutting peak on top of which slept one of the earliest pioneers of the West. The school was the first grade school I had ever seen. Each day I took my little brother George by the hand and guided him there and we knew that we were treading holy ground, for my mother constantly spoke of it as such. The teachers were clean and seemed smoothly ironed; they wore tailored suits and white waists and spoke a language that I could at first hardly understand. My mother had explained to some of them on the first day that I was near ten years old and had been in the 'third reader' in my last school. The teacher had gazed at her for a long time, her eyes travelling down over the calico dress, over the hands so big-veined and worn that they were almost black, and then to the wasteful, tired face lit up by the beautiful blue-black eyes. The eyes were young — but the hands might have belonged to a scrubwoman of fifty.

'Yes,' the teacher had remarked at last, 'I understand.'

She was a kind, young teacher. When I read before her in a trembling voice she smiled encouragingly at my eagerness and at my attempt to forget the room filled with well-dressed little boys and girls. Then she sent me to the board and dictated figures. The fear of being sent to a lower grade drove me forward. Yet I was terror-stricken. Figures always were my enemies. I put down numbers at random . . . a certain native cunning coming to my aid — I knew she would think I had only made a mistake. And so it was.

'How can you make such a mistake!' she protested. I gazed at her blankly but did not reply. She took the chalk and worked out the simple problem. I watched her hand so intently that even now, nearly twenty years later, I see exactly the figures she wrote and her long white hand with a gold ring on the third finger.

For weeks she continued this method. I memorized what she said and wrote, but I never understood. A row of figures held before my eyes was, and remains, like a row of soldiers standing before me ready to shoot when the top one gives the command, 'Fire!'

I felt very shy and humble in that school. In the front seat on the outside row sat a little girl. Her skin was white, her hair was thick and nearly white, and her dresses, shoes and stockings were always white. When the teacher had asked about her father, she had replied, 'My father is a doctor!' and I had stared at her fascinated. She sat very straight in her seat and the teacher always took her copy book and held it up for the class to see. The handwriting was as prim and clean as she was; the margins were broad and even; there was not one mistake. One day after school my fascination led me to follow her home; she lived in a large, low brick bungalow surrounded by a lawn with many flowers. The grass was cut as smooth as a window pane, everything was peaceful, orderly and quiet. Even the fence and gate were painted white.

On Mother's Day the white girl's mother came and sat near the teacher and didn't associate with the other women. My mother had put on a new calico dress with a belt, and I had walked proudly by her side to the school. She stood in the back of the room, apart from the well-dressed women, and her frightened eyes watched as they talked so easily with each other. After that she never went again. Yet to her the school remained a sacred place to which it was an honour to send her children.

One day our teacher stepped aside while another one entered and read to us from a book on Manners. I learned about eating with a fork and keeping the mouth closed when you chew. Then she read something about washing the teeth, but I had never heard of that before except that my mother sometimes put yellow soap on her finger and washed her teeth with it. But I would have been ashamed to ask her to actually buy a brush for me to use only on my teeth! The teacher read about bathing daily. How that could be done I could not imagine. For my mother washed clothes only on Monday and we children had to bathe in the last, clean rinsing water; the
oldest one bathed first and the youngest one last.

Then the teacher read a chapter about sleeplessness. If unable to
sleep, one should get up and take a walk; or one should have two
beds in a room and change from one to the other; the fresh sheets
produced sleep! I had never seen sheets on a bed; we used only
blankets. And to what bed I should change was a puzzle! For we
only had four beds for eight people. Of course, I reflected, rich
people like the little white girl did that. I pictured her arising in the
middle of the night and crawling into another bed. Rich people
perhaps could not sleep at night; it was aristocratic to be unable to
sleep. I watched the little white girl, and she seemed to understand
everything that was read.

But for all her perfection, victory was mine that year. The school
year was not half finished before I sat in the back seat on the far
outside row—and she only sat in the front seat. The back seat was
the seat of honour! The child who sat there was the best in the room
and needed little help or correction from the teacher. When all other
children failed to answer a question the teacher would turn with
confidence to the seat of honour with the word—

'Marie?'

With eyes that never left her face I arose and answered. The whole
schoolroom watched and listened, waiting for a mistake. I, for all
my faded dresses and stringy ugly hair, who had never seen a tooth-
brush or a bathtub, who had never slept between sheets or in a
nightgown, stood with my hands glued to my sides and replied with-
out one falter or one mistake! And the little white girl whose father
was a doctor had to listen! Then it was that the little white girl invited
me to her birthday party. My mother objected to buying bananas
as a present, but after I had cried and said everyone else was taking
things, she grudgingly bought three.

'They are rich people,' she protested bitterly, looking at the pre-
cious bananas, 'an' there's no use givin' 'em any more.'

When I arrived at the little girl's home I saw that other children
had brought presents of books, silver pieces, handkerchiefs and lovely
things such as I had never seen in my life. Fairy tales mentioned them
but I never thought they really existed. They were all laid out on a
table covered with a cloth shot through with gold. I had to walk up
before them all and place my three bananas there, covertly touching
the cloth shot through with gold. Then I made my way to a chair
against the wall and sat down, trying to hide my feet and wishing
that I had never come.

The other little girls and boys were quite at ease—they had been at
parties before. They were not afraid to talk or laugh and their throats
didn't become whispy and hoarse when anyone asked them a
question. I became more and more miserable with each passing
moment. In my own world I could reply and even lead, and down
beyond the tracks no boy dared touch me or my brother George. If
he did he faced me with a jimpson weed as a weapon. But this
was a new kind of hurt. In school I had not felt like this before the
little white girl: there I had learned an invaluable lesson—that
she was clean and orderly, but that I could do and learn things that
she couldn't. Because of that and because of my teacher's protect-

attitude toward me, she had been ashamed not to invite me to her

party.

'Of course, if you're too busy to come, you must not feel that you
ought, just because I've invited you,' she had said. She was not much
over ten, yet she had been well trained. I felt vaguely that something
was wrong, yet I looked gratefully at her and replied:

'I'll come. I ain't got nothin' to do!'

Now here I was in a gorgeous party where I wasn't wanted. I had
brought three bananas at a great sacrifice only to find that no other
child would have dreamed of such a cheap present. My dress, that
seemed so elegant when I left home, was shamefully shabby here. I
was disturbed in my isolation by a number of mothers who called us
into another room and seated us at a long table covered with a white
tablecloth, marvellous cakes and fruit such as made my heart sink
when I compared them with my three bananas. Only my desire to
tell my mother all about it, and my desire to know everything in the
world even if it hurt, kept me from slipping out of the door when no
one was looking, and rushing home. I was seated next to a little boy
at the table.

'What street do you live on?' he asked, trying to start a polite
conversation.

'Beyond th' tracks.'

He looked at me in surprise. 'Beyond the tracks! Only tough kids
live there!'

I stared back trying to think of something to say, but failed. He
sought other avenues of conversation.
'My papa's a lawyer — what's yours?'

'Hauls bricks.'

He again stared at me. That made me long to get him over beyond the tracks — he with his eye-glasses and store-made clothes! We used our sling-shots on such sissies. He was stuck-up, that was what he was! But what about I couldn't see.

'My papa don't haul bricks!' he informed me, as if to rub it in. Wherein the insult lay I couldn't see, yet I knew one was meant. So I insulted back.

'My papa can lick your papa I bet!' I informed him, just as a pleasant elegant mother bent over us with huge plates of yellow ice cream in her hands.

'Well, Clarence, and what are you talking about?' she asked affectionately.

'Her father hauls bricks and she lives beyond the tracks and she says her father can lick my father!' Clarence piped.

'Happy! That doesn't matter, dear, that doesn't matter! Now, now, just eat your ice cream.' But I saw her eyes rest disapprovingly on me and I knew it did matter.

Clarence plunged his spoon into his ice cream and henceforth ignored me. I picked up my spoon, but it clattered against the plate. A dainty little girl in blue, with flaring white silk ribbons on her braid of hair, glanced at me primly. I did not touch the spoon again, but sat with my hands under me watching the others eating in perfect self-possession and without noise. I knew I could never eat like that and if I tried to swallow, the whole table would hear. The mother returned and urged me to eat, but I said I didn't like ice cream or cake! She offered me fruit and I took it, thinking I could eat it at home. But when the children left the table I saw that they carried no fruit. So I left mine beside the precious ice cream and cake.

In the next room little boys and girls were choosing partners for a game, and the little white girl was actually sitting at the piano ready to play. My eyes were glued on her — to think of being able to play the piano! Everyone was chosen for the game but me. No little boy bowed to me and asked:

'Will you be my partner, please?' I saw them avoid me deliberately ... some of them the same little boys who were so stupid in school!

The mother of my little hostess tried to be kind:

'Are you sick, Marie?' she asked. 'Would you like to go home?'

'Yes, mam.' My voice was hoarse and whispery.

She took me to the door and smiled kindly, saying she hoped I had had a nice time.

'Yes, mam,' my hoarse voice replied.

The door closed behind me. The game had started inside and the voices of the children were shouting in laughter. In case anyone should be looking out of the window and think I cared, I turned my head and gazed sternly at a house across the street as I walked rapidly away.

And in case anyone I knew saw me with tears in my eyes I would say . . .

The springtime came, first to the plains and foothills and then up to the mountain snows. In Trinidad the cottonwood trees put on a fuzzy greenness and the Purgatory River rose higher and higher, swelled by the melting snows. Each day we stood on its banks and watched it eat nearer to the row of little houses in front of our tent. It rushed against the iron and cement piling of the railroad bridge and people fearfully recalled the time ten years before when spring floods had torn out the great steel structure and cut a new riverbed through the town. Each night we went to bed with the roar of the rushing water in our ears and at intervals throughout the night men arose to listen; they wandered restlessly to and fro near the river bank, talking in low tones.

It was in the grey of an early morning that my mother's terrified voice awoke us. My father insisted that there was time to dress, but when he looked out once more his voice was filled with fear.

'Grab yer things an' come,' he commanded. Trembling with the cold, we followed him out of the tent and along a ridge between two ditches leading toward the railway tracks. The river had broken its banks and was filling ditches and all low places, rushing through weeds and willows with a sound of danger. It was a terrible sound . . . mad waters rushing and rising . . . elemental forces speaking in a voice of finality.

Through the semi-darkness we heard the screaming and shouting of men and women escaping from the little houses. We reached a ditch between us and the railway tracks. It was already filled with water . . . we were hemmed in!

'It's not deep, Elly,' I heard my father say, 'don't git scared.'
DAUGHTER OF EARTH

He reached down, picked up George and Dan, one under each arm, and waded into the flood. I cried out... how could he take George and leave me here... George could not be alone over there! We saw his dim figure struggling to reach the other bank, then scrambling up the slag embankment. He was back again and carried Annie across; once more he returned and each time the water crept nearer his hips. I felt him feel with his feet and fight the pushing waters with his legs as he carried me and Beatrice. I ran to George and his little hands clung to mine.

Voices came across from the ditch.

'You go first, Helen,' my mother was saying, and Helen was replying:

'No, Elly, you go and leave me; I'd just as soon stay!... Just as if it were a Sunday afternoon walk she was talking about! And not a rising flood that might wash her away any minute.

My father's voice boomed. 'Don't argy!'

He lifted my mother in his arms and stumbled with her across the flood. Helen was now a dark, slender outline on a little piece of dry land across the waters. Then in a minute she also stood by us on the railroad track, with my father soaked to the waist.

Down the tracks on higher land stood the big house of the section-master. There lights were burning; everybody was up; everybody was listening to the voice in the flood. We hurried toward the light. Yes, the section-master said, we could stay on the front porch. His wife came out; we need not be frightened, she assured us, for although the water was rising, yet the section-house was built on high ground and would not be swept away. Even if the water surrounded it, still it would stand. She was a pious Catholic and had been praying all night and she put her faith in God against the might of the flood. She smiled continually, as one sometimes whistles when walking up a dark canyon at night. We ought to pray also, she suggested; at such a time as this one should not hesitate. My mother drew back; something in her was hostile to Catholics, as to foreigners. My father did not reply; he would have prayed, still unbelieving, for the picturesque effect of it... a warm room, burning candles, a lighted shrine, perhaps incense, the sound of sweeping waters carrying danger on their bosom. Only something hard and cold in my mother's manner prevented him from taking advantage of such a dramatic situation.

The pious woman smiled and when she walked it was softly and languidly, like an animal that has eaten until sated. Occasionally she would come out to say a few words to us, then retire to her bedroom to pray. Her whole manner showed that although God had permitted the river to surround all the other houses on this side of the tracks, He was protecting the section-house.

My mother and Helen resented the woman's manner; the night air was cold on the verandah, my father was wet to the waist, and we were all but half dressed. Yet the woman did not ask us into the warm house. She asked us to pray - but my mother was not a person to pray under compulsion; she was too honest for that.

The water continued to rise with the growing dawn and from the end of the verandah my mother and Helen watched the now dim outline of our tent. It was half covered with water.

'The machine is ruined, an' the featherbeds!' they told each other in voices burdened with despair.

'John, John! It's goin'! It's goin'!'

We all ran to the edge of the verandah. Across the seething, rolling waters was the dim outline of the tent, swaying from side to side, turning half round and slowly sailing away. The wooden poles and the board floor to which it was nailed kept it upright. It caught on the willow trees and hung for a moment, sailed further, caught again, careened around and then sailed out of sight. My mother watched it, with a face of desperation, until the corner of the section-house hid it from view.

'Everythin' we've got in the world is gone... my featherbeds, th' machine, th' clock, Helen's clothes... we've got nothin' but th' clothes on our backs!'

My father put his arm around her shoulder. 'Don't take on like that, Elly! I'll catch in th' willows an' we'll find it in th' mornin'.'

But his voice was also heavy with dull hopelessness. She leaned limply against him. No tears came, for she had long since lost the ability to weep.

The morning came. Then the pious woman came from the house and smiled reassuringly at us shivering on the verandah. The flood was rapidly receding, she announced. The mercy of God and the power of prayer were proved - God had saved the section-house.

Today is Sunday, and my mind once more recalls those who were of my flesh and blood, and once more I live through the little drama
at first and then he brought others... I can't have a baby any more... you're a nosy thing, Marie!... What business is that of yours? Why, I can't have a baby because I've had two operations... I have to go down to the Springs ever' year fer treatment. Now, in God's name, are you satisfied?

At that time I was still a bit blind. I thought of the Springs as a fine summer resort where rich people went. Helen certainly dressed like a rich woman at that time. Later I learned why she went to the Springs, and what the disease was that she tried to cure. I am sorry that I knew so much... a young tree can not grow tall and straight and beautiful if its roots are always watered with acids.

Sam and Annie went down into western Oklahoma and took up a homestead, built a house and worked on the land that stretched desolate and dreary, to the horizon. Annie was of the clay of which good wives are made: a physical animal who would quarrel violently with her husband, but submit to superior force in the end. Such women follow their husbands to the grave, untroubled by ideas or principles. She was too physical for ideas or principles. Sam took her from her numerous girl friends, from the streets and dance halls and the bright parties, where she had dressed as well as the rest, and made of her a pioneer woman who wore loose calico wrappers, went barefoot and rolled her hair into a little knot at the back of her head. She endured the life for two years and then went into silence where all pioneer women have gone before her. As she died she expressed the regret that I had always seemed to hate her. My mother repeated those words to me and watched me longingly, her eyes searching my face for a glimmer of tenderness. Tenderness did not come. I was a savage beast and I harboured injuries and hatreds in my heart. Right or wrong, it is true. It is. The ways of life had taught me no tenderness.

So went my sister into the darkness. And I remained behind in what is called light.

When Annie and Sam left Trinidad for their homestead, we remained in the city to wait for the conclusion of one of the first strikes in the coal fields of the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company. For three weeks the town of Trinidad had been occupied by the state militia. They 'kept order.' Camped on the sloping hill on the other side of the Purgatory River opposite our house, they drank, and settled their quarrels with guns. Flying bullets struck terror into the hearts of the mothers on our side of the river. Children had to play in the back yards behind the houses. With each setting sun fathers began to look for their daughters. If a girl worked in the laundry, as did many from beyond the tracks, someone waited to bring her home. Once the news spread like wildfire that a girl had been beaten half to death by her father who had found her talking with a soldier along the railroad track. The soldier had smirked and swaggered off - he wore the uniform of the United States and no father dared touch him. A few days later a man two doors from our house had not come for his daughter, and when she did not return home as usual he set out in search or her. He found her in the possession of two soldiers, away down between piles of lumber in the lumber yard. One standing on watch had warned the other and the shouts of the father had not led to their capture. The lumber yard was isolated and; anyway, no one would have dared touch a 'uniform of the United States.'

News travels by air beyond the tracks, and before the father and his daughter had passed a dozen houses along the street, men and women emerged from their doors or stood in groups watching. It was a silent march those two made, with heads bent and eyes that did not see, the girl's blouse torn from her and her eyes red and swollen from weeping. The man walked with a slouch, his fingers moving stiffly and then closing into a hard fist. Had there been a murder of a soldier, and had the jury been chosen from our side of the tracks, no father would have been convicted, and no man or woman would have appeared as a witness against him. When at last 'order' was restored, the miners forced back to their holes in the ground, and the blue-uniformed guardians of the law removed, the town beyond the tracks drew a deep sigh of relief.

When the air was still thick with hostility, we reached the mining town of Delagua. This was one of the larger camps, lying at the junction of three or four canyons, barren and stony. The black mouths of mines, with tipples thrust far out over slag dumps, choked the canyons. A long, long row of coke ovens, glowing dull red at night, lay back of a line of miner's houses, and a network of narrow railway lines connected it with the mines.

The Company owned all the mines and all the country for miles about. We rented our house from the Company - there were no other
he does not understand are dangerous.

‘Pay or get out’ was the motto of the Company store. The miners paid. To leave the town meant money. To go to another meant going to the same conditions; even if they left and went to another town, they found their names on the black list and they could get no work. They were tied hand and foot. In all directions lay the lands and the towns of the Company, and to the north lay other towns of other Companies with conditions just the same.

I walked fearfully along the dirty winding streets and looked in the homes of the miners. Bare little rooms with a table, a chair or two, a few pots and pans – and a musical instrument. Sometimes books. In the evening many of them sat outside their houses and played melancholy folk music. As I passed, they greeted me courteously in a foreign tongue; for I did not belong to a family of the official class, although we were native Americans. There were times when no woman dared go on the streets. Outbursts threatened when men were killed in the mines and their bodies were carried through the streets. They would pass our house, carrying their wounded or dead on a board, and a crowd would gather and follow. Insufficient props in the mines, I learned, time and again; or gas explosions from the open lamps.

When a man took his pick and shovel and disappeared into the blackness of the mine, neither he nor his family knew if he would come out dead or alive. All native American working men feared the mines. When my father contemplated martyrdom because my mother, as he said, treated him badly, he threatened to become a miner. My mother's silence would drive him into the mines yet, he let us all know. I came to fear the mines and all American working men feared that one day they would be in such desperate straits that they would have to put on a cap with an open lamp and take their places on the cars that hauled the miners into the darkness.

Native American men worked for my father, for his work was in the open. He now had eight or ten teams of horses and wagons. How he came into possession of such property is a mystery. Some twenty men were working for him dynamiting and shovelling earth away for the construction of new buildings for the Company. They came pouring into our house for their meals and my mother and I worked ceaselessly. When the dishes were washed we began preparing for another meal. My mother's hopes were again soaring.
and she forced her frail body without stint. I think she once had hopes of some comfort for herself while her youth lasted, she was still young in years, but old in body and spirit and her teeth were almost gone. She now dreamed about me - I was to learn to play the piano; for didn’t I try to play every musical instrument I could get my hands on? A piano meant an ‘edication’ to her and I was to have it. She urged me to coax my father for a piano; he could afford it, she argued, for he bought fine harness for his horses and everything he needed outside in his work. But when I coaxed him, he laughed at my wild ideas. Instead, he put up what he called a ‘proposal’ to me. He was making money now and he was going to ‘keep books.’ He would see this time that nobody cheated him ‘as that son of a bitch Turner did.’ . . . He would just write everything down in a book and if there was ever any dispute, he would just show the ‘figgers’ His confidence in ‘figgers’ and books was remarkable, for all his scorn of education. One day he brought home a ledger and a day book and placed them before me on the kitchen table.

‘You’ve got an edication; now, open the books!’ he commanded.

I glanced at him, then reached down and lay the books open before him.

He became very sarcastic: ‘You’ve got to the eighth grade, but yer Dad knows mor’n you! When you open books you have to write in ‘em! Here, now, set down an’ take that there pencil.’

He began to dictate figures and I made a long row on one side of the ledger.

‘Now add ‘em up!’

I added and re-added . . . but got a different total each time.

He stood smiling down at me . . . me with an ‘edication’ and unable to add figures! With a flourish to shame me he took the book and pencil and started to add. He got a different result still; he added again, moving his lips, mumbling and making dots on the page - a different number still was the result! He was angry that I stood watching, but for the sake of his own dignity he dared not send me away; and for the sake of mine I wouldn’t go. ‘Elly!’ he bawled into the kitchen, ‘come here an’ add this. Here you’ve got a datter that’s been to the eighth grade an’ can’t add.’ He called me her daughter now; when I did something he liked, he generally said I was a ‘datter of her old dad.’

That was a proud moment for my mother! She just wiped her hands on her apron and sat down. She added aloud so that we could hear: ‘two an’ five’s seven, seven an’ eight’s fifteen, fifteen an’ eight’s twenty-three, twenty-three an’ nine’s thirty-two’ . . . and then finally the result. My father stood above her, listening and watching, his eyes filled with the unwavering faith and confidence of a child. From that moment onward his intellectual life lay in my mother’s hands. I have seen that look in other eyes - my brother George always looked at me like that; the man I loved and who loved me gazed at me like that, and I knew that to him I could do no wrong. It is a terrible thing, that expression; for it means that the individual is lost, submerged in another, whether he wills it or not.

When mother had finished the column of figures, she arose and stood looking at my father. He was just very humble.

‘I’d like you t’do the books ever’ night, Elly. I want it so’s if there’s trouble like with that Turner dog, I can show the figgers.’

Each night thereafter they sat over the table, he dictating items and figures, she writing. He would bring out a book from his pocket with long rows of awkward figures that no one but himself could read. They were his daily expenditure and his estimates - he used the word ‘estimates’ and glanced at me without explaining its meaning. How he arrived at any estimates is a secret of the gods. When contracting for work he would look at a piece of ground, think and mumble to himself, scratch his ear, and scribble in his book. Then he would go before the Company officials in the town and bid for the job against other contractors. Some of the others turned in typewritten offers, but my father stood in his shirt sleeves and high-laced boots and bid verbally. He had a bit of contempt for men who could not do anything without paper and a typewriter. He would contract to excavate, furnish the cement and stone foundations, workmen, teams, wagons and tools. He mentioned a round sum, he to be paid in two instalments, one at the beginning of the job, the other when it was finished.

The officials would look at him standing in his shirt sleeves, bidding against the offers of other men. In the end they often gave him the job. It must have been his personality, the way he talked that convinced them, for he had a way with him, and his speech and his manner were colourful. He could barely write, and I never saw him read a line of printed matter in his life. His work lay not within the two covers of a book, but within himself and the world about
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him. There was nothing in a book for him; but even a hole in the ground became filled with romance. He kept his eyes, not upon the stars, but upon the earth; he was of the earth and it of him. He dug in the earth, he hugged the earth, he thought in terms of the earth.

I would often stand on the edge of an excavation and watch him through the cloud of dust below. He was deaf to all things but this work; had I gone close to him, he would not have seen me. His mind was working in great circles—I knew that back deep it was sweeping over the horizon of his life, far beyond... He was digging not just a hole in the ground, but uncovering marvellous things, all that lies in the earth. That I knew because I knew him, for I was my father's daughter.

He was a lean, lanky cowboy of twenty-eight and he worked for my father. He had left his ranch in New Mexico for a time to go out and see the world. He, like many of the men who worked for my father, tired of one place or one kind of work and then moved on to the next. They were men who as a rule carried all their worldly possessions with them: a gun or two, a fine belt, a pair of marvellous spurs and boots, perhaps an unusual hat band, a Mexican quilt and gloves. They nearly always owned a horse, a saddle that was far from ordinary, and sometimes a bit and bridle to match, and that set them apart as men of taste. They came from the cattle ranches beyond the Divide. They were silent, picturesque men, much mixed with the clay. Courageous, kindly, trusting—and foul-mouthed. When they received their wages they spent it in one night in Trinidad, 'on the hill' where women sold themselves to men's desires. When they married, which was indeed rare, they married only virgins. Women had nothing but virginity to trade for a bed and food for the rest of their days. Fathers protected the virginity of their daughters as men guard their bank accounts; with a gun slung at the hips and a gleam of warning in the eye. But now I was growing up and my father let all men know that I was not to be trifled with.

Yet I was a friend of all the men. I admired and envied them. Many of them lived about us for years, and in the end I knew as little of their intimate lives as when they came. They perhaps knew as little of each other. Anything stirring the emotions was never touched upon. They alone knew if they had mothers or sisters. If they had ever loved was a secret locked in their own breasts. If the majesty of

PART THREE

the mountains or the dark starry nights left their hearts lonely and their souls humble before Infinity, it was a secret shared by them with no man.

The lean, lanky cowboy who worked for my father was one of these. Jim was his name and, like the other men, the only one he gave. But a day came when he gave my father his last name—Watson. That was becoming intimate and the other men exchanged glances. Big Buck, who always sat at the end of the table at dinner, glanced from Jim to me and his eyes, often filled with suspicious humour, gleamed with some hidden Merriment.

'Please pass 'Mr Watson' the spuds, Marie,' Big Buck remarked, and the table stirred with smothered laughter. For women were scarce in the West even in those days and it wasn't an easy thing to get a wife. Jim Watson had a ranch, and a ranch needed a female on it. I was a female.

Jim next presented me with a gold chain that made my neck black if I wore it too long at a time; he rode with me to dances, and I slipped the chain in my pocket until I reached the dance-hall. Big Buck, nearly thrice my age and size, laughed to himself, and one day gave me a revolver—it might come in handy, he said. He wasn't the sort of man to give dinky little chains and things!

One Sunday afternoon I borrowed Big Buck's pony to ride up a canyon for squirrels. Jim called to me; he would go along. Big Buck was leaning against the fence resting his head on his arm, and he laughed under his breath. Jim had decked himself out in a white shirt. About his waist was a broad, silver-inlay belt and his great grey hat was decorated with a hat-band quite as fine as his belt. He wasn't handsome, but he was elegant, and it wasn't every man that wore a white shirt. He rode in an easy, slouching gallop just as if it didn't matter much to him which way the horse went or what it did. We passed through a canyon filled with goldenrod, quaking aspen and pines. Jim swung one long leg over his saddle-horn and rolled a cigarette while he told me about his cattle ranch in New Mexico.

'Whatdye think of it?' he asked at last.

'It sounds great.'

'Whatdye think about gettin' married to me... then it would be half yours; and you can have this horse I'm ridin' and I'll give you a .45 instead of that play-thing you're carryin' around your waist now.'
as I was doing, year in and year out taking down the thoughts of men and then typing them on pages. Why could I not be happy and contented with such an existence - why did I resent girls who accepted it - why did I wish the Book Review Editor would suddenly fall dead in his office?

From my work I went to Karin's apartment on Washington Square, where I slept on a couch in her large, studio-like living room. There was a grand piano in the room and on it was a large bowl of yellow flowers. Frequently they were narcissus blossoms - Karin was like a narcissus herself, tall, golden, her head slightly bent. She was delicate and ethereal. She was like her house - the grand piano, the bowl of blossoms, the plain dark blue carpet, the delicate water-colours in narrow frames. I felt the beauty that belonged to her and her home, but it was not a part of me. It was years before I could understand or appreciate such beauty. I could not appreciate paintings that seemed to have no meaning. A picture that showed a man or woman actively doing something, I could understand. So it was with literature or music: folk songs told a story, but classical music, such as Karin played in the evenings, was beyond my comprehension. From her I learned that there had been European composers named Chopin, Beethoven, Mozart and others. She often played their compositions that I might learn the difference. They all sounded alike to me. She often played one composition of Chopin and I gradually came to recognize it and to love it. As with music, so with literature: I read for the story, knowing nothing of style, of form or of authors. Poetry had always been foreign to me, for I could not understand why people did not write as they spoke, naturally, and not in verse. Karin had books of verse and, sometimes, standing near her piano on which some of them lay, she read from them. I simply could not appreciate them. Only if they told a story of endeavor, of struggle, could I understand their purpose.

It was in this world of good taste, and often of abstract thought and beauty, that I went when my office closed at five o'clock. Yet it contained more than abstraction. Karin was not only a teacher interested in modern education; she was also a Socialist. There were many people who climbed the long flights of stairs to her apartment in the evenings. They lay on the broad couch, sat on the floor about the room or occupied the chairs, as pleased their fancy, smoking and discussing the life of New York City: the theatre, Socialism,
He had written the letter from jail. It was an appeal for help. He didn’t explain why he had stolen a horse, nor did he say how or when; he did not try to excuse himself, nor did he express a word of regret. He merely wrote that he had stolen a horse, that he was in jail awaiting trial, and that he needed help.

His letter tortured me. I thought of when I last saw him — he was a little boy holding Dan by the hand on the station platform, his eyes filled with tears, watching me go away. I recalled the room when I had found the two of them with my father that early grey morning in Trinidad — and the gaping cracks in the floor filled with the dust of years. I recalled the cry of appeal in his letter when Dan had been beaten until the blood ran from his back. Since then I had not heard from him — and it had been years. What grew in his child heart, what developed in his young life through those years, I do not know. But life out there was hard and merciless and there was little chance of anything beautiful growing there. And so he grew up, without the tenderness of mother or sister, without education or training, in poverty, and from the moment he could use his childish hands he had laboured for his bread. At what I did not know — but first surely at, the unskilled work a child can do, then that a boy can do, and then all that an unskilled labourer can turn his hand to. What went on within his spirit, what sort of creature he would be when he became a man, no one knew or cared. Perhaps my father — yes, but he himself was a victim. When I think of my brother’s life I think of stretching grey plains, without trees, with but rough clumps of prairie grass here and there.

He stole a horse. Why should he not have stolen a horse, I ask myself now. He needed it to make a living with. He was perhaps like me — filled with too much energy and too much resentment to tolerate without revolt the poverty and hopelessness of his existence.

All of this I realized later, and I realize it now. But with George’s letter before me then I did not. It was a blow. With the shock fresh in my mind, I wrote him a letter. Could he not have waited, I wrote, until Beatrice had finished her with school, that I might have had enough money to help him? didn’t he know I wanted to send him somewhere to study some trade or help him as I could; didn’t he know that life was hard for me, too, and still I did not steal; didn’t he wish for something else but the kind of life he lived there and couldn’t he have the strength to work, or starve, as I had done — for a