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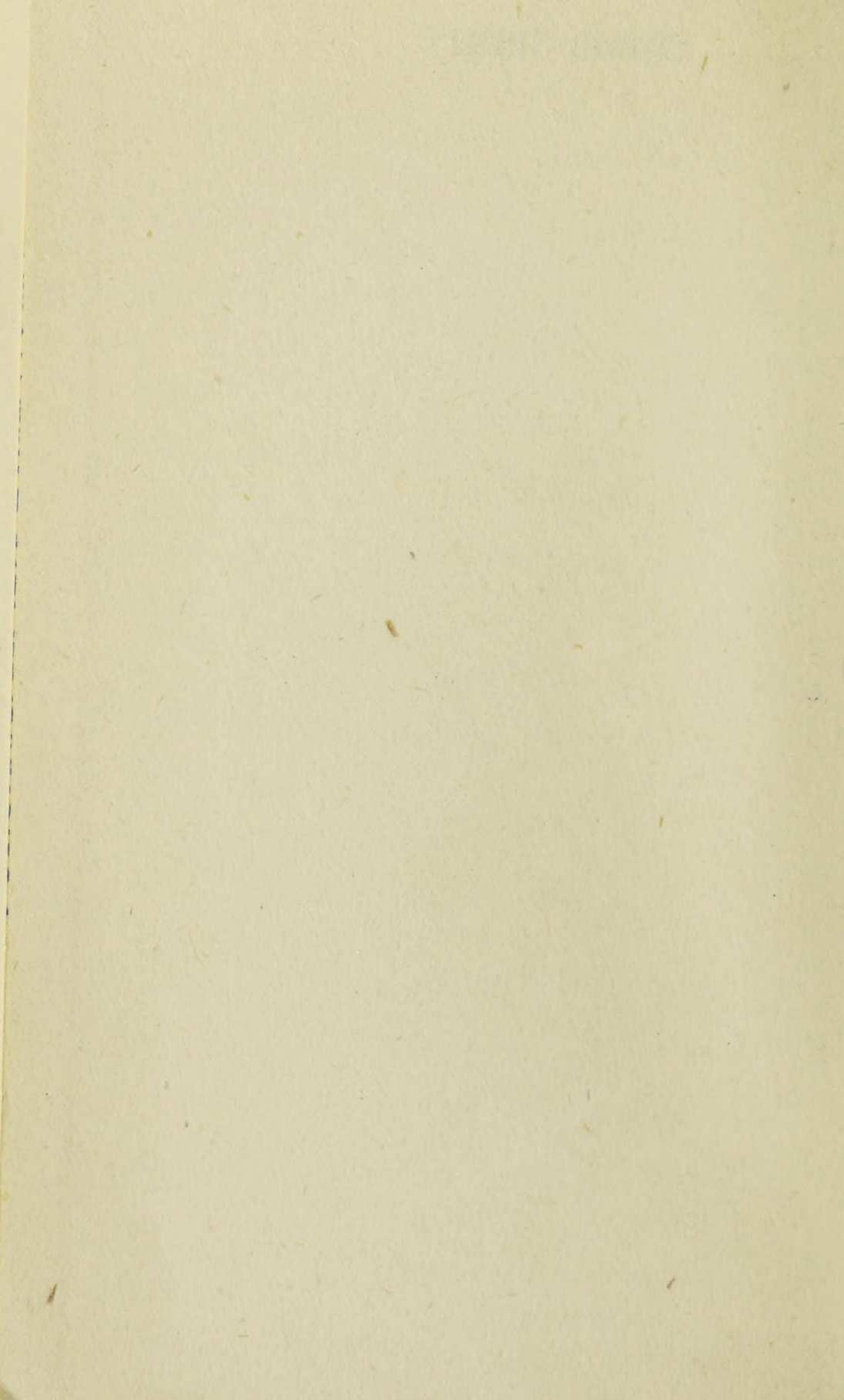
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# DUMB SPIRIT



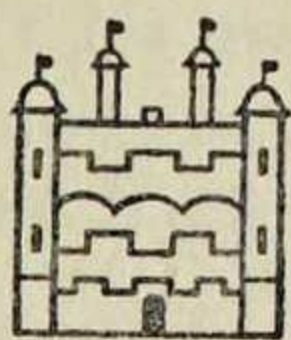
# DUMB SPIRIT

*A Novel of Montreal*

BY

DORIS HEDGES

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORP.  
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## Chapter I

WALDO was very observant. Only yesterday Hilda Minson had said to her husband, "You know, Curtis, it embarrasses me, the way he sits and stares at my legs."

This was at breakfast. Curtis Minson flipped at the morning paper in an irritated way familiar to his wife. He disliked her worst when she became coy, as she was now. He thought, "She does say the damndest things sometimes."

Waldo heard Hilda's remark without any chagrin whatever. But he got up and walked slowly out of the room and into the hall. He never could get used to the way these people talked about him as though he wasn't there. It was one of the things he would have to learn, he supposed. His memories of better times were very clear, and he could not help comparing; and then sometimes he wondered if those times had been so much better, after all.

The present way of living had much more comfort, really, and much less responsibility. Waldo walked to the half-open front door and looked out. It wasn't his own door, and he wasn't his own master any more, but there was a sort of restfulness in this, although he wished unhappily that he did not have to remember the past so vividly.

He gazed pensively out of the door, and smelled the fresh nip of the Canadian autumn coming through the falling leaves. A faint scent of burning wafted in with the air. He liked the smell. He always had. During the war, in that long, difficult time in England of waiting, he

had gone through two autumns, feeling homesick for that smell of scorching leaves and the blue and purple smoke.

But now as he sniffed it, he was not thinking of the homesickness he had felt in England. Somehow, he was reminded instead of a certain autumn day over there, in 1941, in Sussex. The leaves burning brought dynamically to his mind Effie's scent, and the hayrick, and the hot midday sun. Heavens, would he never forget these rather shameful moments of his past? Effie had been part of the war, something he had taken in his stride; yet now, she haunted him. She had said, so often, "'Ow, Nucky, let's get married, eh?" Nucky was her way of saying "Canuck."

Effie had had her physical desires and wordly ambitions badly mixed. Never, for one instant, had Waldo felt that he would have to marry her. Poor Effie. He wondered where she was now. Probably married another Nucky after he himself went to Africa. Perhaps she was in Canada! Perhaps he might run into her! At this thought, which he found distressing for several reasons, he got up and wandered into the doorway of the dining-room and looked at the Minsons, who were finishing breakfast.

The Minsons were just, in fact, rising from the table, Curtis with an air of hurry and tenseness, anxious to get away to town and business before he had to have more of his wife. Hilda wore her usual baffled expression, flat with the unexpressed disappointment which had been her daily companion since the moment she stepped into bed with Curtis for the first time after their wedding, twenty-five years ago.

Waldo felt this disappointment, this bafflement, in Hilda. That was one of the awful things about being as he was now. He felt everyone's reactions all the time, in a peculiar place. In his tail. That was another thing.

His tail. He loathed it. It was far too eager and too friendly. He had no control over it whatever.

Curtis Minson said, "Well, old fellow, getting to like us a little, eh?"

He held out his hand, and in spite of everything he could do to resist this gesture, a feeling of joy and adoration came over Waldo, so that he leaped forward. The adoration was like some quite false emotion, pasted on his consciousness, which he could not get off. He had tried. He had even run panting round the garden, trying to sweat it out of him. But this only made his tongue leak. And that he loathed as much as all the rest. He found it undignified. But not as undignified, as beastly, as this desire to lick Curtis Minson's hand. It was as though Curtis' friendship and protection were irresistibly necessary to him.

In the past, Waldo had done his fair share of boot-licking. A man in his position had been forced to fawn, in order to get on. Now, looking at Curtis Minson's outstretched hand, fighting this overwhelming desire to lick it, and with his beastly tail wagging and his tongue dripping, Waldo put up the best defence he could. He stopped short and glared in revolt and anger. He growled.

Hilda screamed. She said, "Oh, Curtis, he growled, and the man said he was so sweet-tempered."

She said to Waldo, reproachfully, "Darling Waldo, you shouldn't growl at mummie, you know. It isn't nice."

She was being coy again. Waldo remembered what she had said about his staring at her legs. Well, they were nice legs, and they reminded him—oh, damn and blast. They reminded him. . . . He stopped and looked at Hilda's legs again, trying to be derisive.

Curtis put out his hand again. He said, "I think I'll take him downtown with me to day, get him used to me.

I'll get Sturt to run him round Dominion Square during the morning."

Waldo glared even more fiercely, and his tail, thank goodness, stopped wagging. Be taken for a run in Dominion Square? Be treated like an animal, in fact? Waldo thought, "I won't, I won't!"

He put his head down between his paws, his nice black curly paws. And *they* reminded him. His hands had had a faint down of dark hairs on them. Women had been fascinated, so they said. Waldo groaned.

Hilda said, "You know, Curtis, really, that dog seems almost human. I mean, I have a feeling—when he looks at me—I feel——"

Curtis said, "Oh, my god, Hilda, *please*. Back at that old stuff again, reincarnation or some fool thing or other? Been going to those meetings again?"

Waldo waited anxiously for her to answer. Perhaps, if she took him to some meetings on reincarnation or something like that, he might find out how to get out of this awful mess he was in.

But Curtis didn't wait for his wife to answer. He was putting on his coat and hat, pulling the hat down from behind in a way that Waldo disliked. It looked foppish. He knew, however, that Curtis Minson, if a fop, was nobody's fool in business. In fact he was a very important man. He was one of Montreal's most substantial financial men—an investment broker with a reputation for smartness, for which he was respected. Or was the word "feared" more descriptive? Waldo intended to find this out.

He followed Curtis out of the door and into the garage. He had successfully prevented himself from licking his master's hand, this time anyhow. Waldo's whole being felt happier. He had stood up to it; and this was a sensation he remembered too, a long time ago, in his

early youth, when he had put up a fight against some injustice to which he had been subjected in his first job. That had been knocked out of him soon enough, however.

He stood a little uncertainly in the doorway of the garage as Curtis drove the car out. Curtis held the door open and in a kind voice said, "Come on, old boy, come on with me."

If he had been speaking to a woman he couldn't have been nicer. Oh well, perhaps there were going to be some compensations. Waldo hopped into the front seat beside Curtis. He was sweating again, and tried to stop it by keeping his mouth shut, but he couldn't. He panted and dripped. He could see it, and hear himself! Oh, damn and blast!

But he felt better as the car moved down the drive, and onto the main highway. This might be fun, sitting under the desks of the great. He himself had often stood, trembling, before those desks, afraid to open his mouth except to say, "Yes, sir," or "No, sir." Now, he wouldn't have to say anything. He could just listen; more, he might even growl or snarl, and he could certainly drip on their boots.

Oh yes, life might be quite interesting this way, for a while anyhow. And he could always watch out for a chance to get out of it again, and back—back to what? Back to that old struggle and frustration? A chilled feeling, a sense of fear, swept over Waldo and he shivered and shivered and whined. Curtis Minson put out his hand and caressed Waldo's jowl. The feeling was disgustingly pleasant to Waldo. That was new. But the whine had sounded hatefully like—like himself. Oh, damn and blast!

## Chapter 2

IT was not until this fellow Sturt, about whom Mr. Minson had spoken, called to Waldo that he realized another extraordinary thing about himself. Sturt was young and rather resentful. He did not like being asked to take Waldo for a walk, and signalled to him in an irritated way, "Come on then, pup, come for your cursed walk."

Pup! Waldo stopped short, looking at Paul Sturt with his paws outstretched in front of him. A pup, was he? Then he thought, "Yes, by Jove, I *am* a puppy." He remembered the mistiness of the shop where Hilda Minson had first seen him, and the way he had shivered when they took him from his basket. His mind had been more or less of a blank then. It was not until recently that he had begun to recollect things, about Effie, for instance.

Paul Sturt was glaring at him. He stooped down and snapped his fingers at Waldo, his expression changing to one of reluctant friendliness. As he stroked Waldo's back he muttered under his breath, "It's not your fault, is it, old boy? It's not your goddam fault that you're a puppy and out of this goddam mess the rest of us are in."

Waldo squirmed away from Paul's hand. He was trying to calculate how old he was, feeling more and more humiliated all the time. Yes, he must be about a year old, maybe less, even. Heavens, when he had been a baby he hadn't remembered anything at all. Not a thing. He had been, he supposed, exactly like those ghastly pictures his mother used to show to his girlfriends when he was in the pimply stage and shattered

by the embarrassment of it all. The photographs showed him as a brat, in white lacy dresses, posed with a Victorian chair under one elbow, and a coy expression. Here he was now, a dog, one year old, and remembering clearly everything in the past. He thought disgustedly, "Why do I have to be the only dog in the world with a perfect memory?" And then he thought, uneasily, "How do we know all dogs don't remember everything? How do we know all dogs weren't human once? How do we know anything? God," he thought, "I used to be smug and sure—too blasted sure."

He looked squarely at Paul Sturt, his eyes, he felt, exuding firmness. Paul laughed, and stood up. He said, "Well, O.K. *Be* snobbish! You wouldn't be C. M.'s pup if you were a friendly cuss."

Waldo opened his mouth and said clearly, "Oh, don't get a chip on your shoulder about Curtis Minson. He's a nice enough fellow, if you get to know him as I do."

But all that happened was this awful whining sound. It brought Waldo back to earth with a bang. He would simply have to find other signals. He would simply have to. This way of speaking like a man, and having it come out in a whine or a bark, wouldn't do. It wouldn't do at all. He must get smart and think out something. There was that collie he had had in his boyhood who had said things by putting his paw on one's knee. He must find some way of showing Paul Sturt that even though he was young he was old.

He started to sing, absent-mindedly, "They're either too young or too old," and barked instead, feebly, like a puppy. Paul picked him up in his arms and they got into the elevator which had swung smoothly open before them. The elevator boy said, "Atta boy, beginning to talk, eh?"

Waldo hung his head. The elevator was full of people

and it filled him with shame that they should hear him being addressed in this asinine way. He buried his head under Paul's elbow. He knew he was acting for all the world like a child when it is asked to recite poetry at one of its mother's bridge parties, but he couldn't help it.

One of the passengers tweaked his ear and said, "Isn't he cute?"

Waldo jerked his head out from under Paul's arm in fury and almost fell onto the floor. Everything was going to be such a struggle.

Paul said, "Hey there, stay quiet, will you?" in almost an affectionate way. He tucked Waldo more firmly under his arm. Waldo decided, definitely, to curb all his reactions. He would make no effort to communicate with Paul Sturt or anyone until he could work out some signals of a more dignified kind. He would not bark or whine. That was certain. He simply would control that much. Also, he would try not to pant or let his backside wag even if something terribly pleasing to him, as a dog, happened.

This Sturt fellow (a veteran of the war—he could see that by the button, which had been cold on his nose in the elevator), this Sturt guy, with a chip on his shoulder about Curtis Minson, calling him unfriendly. Why, that wasn't so. He was a very friendly, nice man doing his best to like a wife who was really rather awful except for her legs. He thought, "Funny, I would have hated his guts before." Being a dog gave you a new viewpoint from which to survey human nature.

"I must have been quite a guy, come to think of it," Waldo thought with sudden complacency. And then Effie came to his mind and he shivered. What if she did come to Canada? What if she had been hit by a bomb, as he had been hit by a shell in Africa?

At the frightful thought of Effie as a lady-dog Waldo

got into a frenzy. He struggled to get out of Paul's arms. He fought to get out, his whole body wriggling and squirming. He forgot his recent resolution not to react like a dog.

Paul said indulgently, "O.K., get down if you want to. But you'll have to wear this if you're going to act like a puppy."

It was what Waldo's mother used to say when he cried if something hurt, like barking his knee. She used to say, "Now don't behave like a baby ; you're mummie's big grown-up mannie."

Waldo stood limply while the leash was attached to his collar. It felt rather good. He liked it. The thought of Effie being in Montreal, or its disturbing possibility, had made him feel alone, even frightened. He started to look adoringly at Paul Sturt, and stopped.

Paul said quizzically, "What's the matter with you, sonny, got worms? You act like a psychopath to me, sort of jittery ; like I was when I first got back."

That was it exactly ! Waldo leapt up in the air and embraced Paul's trousered leg in a sudden abandonment of joy at hearing something he could agree with concerning himself. Kind of jittery? Like Paul was when he first got back? Well, Waldo couldn't tell Paul this, but he had just got back himself, and how !

Paul extricated his leg from Waldo's frantic embrace. He did it gently.

"I know what's the matter with you, you're lonesome. Want to play with other dogs? Let's go find some, eh?"

Other dogs ! Oh, my god, what next? Waldo leapt into the air straining at the leash and went into a series of short puppy barks. He hated and loathed them, and stopped as soon as he could. Oh, well, some kids wet their beds, didn't they? They had no control. So what?

He was a puppy, wasn't he? Well, he had no control, so what?

Paul said musingly, "All dogs are the same, I guess. Sometimes they're almost human. Now *you*, the very idea of other dogs excites you. I believe you understood me perfectly. I believe you're a wolf, you old schemer! Thinking of the nice lady-dogs already?"

Waldo broke into a sweat and as they entered Dominion Square he was panting and dripping like nobody's business. He resented Paul's laughter, and the implication left him utterly limp and scared again. He could not stop panting and dripping because of this fear of other dogs and especially of Effie. One thing, however. He prevented himself from whining. It gave him a small sense of dignity.

They walked slowly around Dominion Square once, and then again. The pigeons scuttled out of their way, but Waldo was not in the least interested. They looked a little dangerous, he thought, so fat in the chest, like some old gals he had known, like committee women with strong voices and equally strong ambitions to get out of the hard work and sit at head tables. The pigeons had a melancholy effect on Waldo. He looked at their sticks of legs, deploring the fact that his own still wobbled a little. Paul looked down, and walked more slowly, because he saw the puppy weakness in Waldo's short legs. Waldo knew he was doing it. He was a nice guy. If only he didn't have this chip on his shoulder against men like Curtis Minson. He had had the same chip himself once. He knew how it was. But he could see now that millionaires, in their homes, were O.K. Very ordinary. With the same kind of troubles and the same inability to satisfy their desires as other folks. Now himself, in his other life as—

As who?

Waldo stopped. Paul tugged at the leash, but Waldo sat down heavily.

It had just occurred to him that although he could remember everything else he could not recall his own name. What a mess. How could he ever get back if he couldn't remember who he was? It wasn't that he wanted to be the same kind of guy again. Heavens, no. Too much hard work for rich men who didn't appreciate it. Too much goddam bowing and scraping. Too many plans never coming off. Frustration. That was what his life had been, just one long frustration, until a war had come along and shaken him free ; at least freer than he had been in his job as a civilian.

Paul had picked him up, pulling Waldo to him by the leash. He said, "O.K., then, we'll sit down for a while. Kinda nice out here after all, in the sun. Maybe I'm going to like being a valet to C. M's dog, at that, although it's characteristic of Minson and his type to treat a rising young executive like this." He gave a little laugh. It sounded cynical rather than bitter. Waldo's backside hurt a little from being dragged over the pebbles, but it was warm on Paul's knee, and the sun felt good.

Paul said, "Yep. That's the way it is. They sit there and get things into a mess, and we go over and get them out of it, and lose a leg or a life or two, and what do they care? And, by god, we come back again, and there they are still, sitting there, making more goddam messes, heading into another war. And who do they think will fight the next one for them? Not me. Ha ! ha ! Oh, no, not this lad ! Anyhow, if only they had the brains to see it, death is going to finish the next war for them. Yes, Waldo, old boy, it'll be curtains for all of us, next time."

Waldo looked up at the young thin face. It was a nice face, but drawn and unhappy. Waldo struggled

awake and sat up. He nudged Paul in the chest and kept on nudging him until he looked down. Waldo thought he had very fine eyes, full of fight, not like his mouth.

Waldo said urgently, "I know. I felt that way myself. But I went. Oh yes, perhaps I was a fool, but I went. And so will you. Even if it is curtains for everybody. You're that kind of a fellow me lad."

Paul said, "Oh, so you don't agree with me?"

He spoke directly to Waldo. He was smiling, and the smile made his whole face look different. Waldo nudged Paul again in the chest, deliriously happy to have found a signal that was neither a bark nor a whine nor yet a wag. He did the signal again. He liked Paul. He knew he had to help him to get a better perspective. He felt strongly that they were buddies, and that old soldiers knew more of the answers than other people.

Paul put his arm around Waldo. "Well, perhaps you're right. There may be a way to stop it, at that. I'd like to do my bit to find it. Might as well finish the job. If only we would get wise to ourselves!"

The low murmur of his voice soothed Waldo. Between them, he felt, they'd get after all this mess. Meanwhile, he was sleepy, and the sun felt swell. He snuggled lower and slept. He looked cute that way.

Paul glanced down at him. His face, when relaxed, had an expression of sweetness and strength. He was the sort of man who would excite women. There was a yumph about him, a vitality of spirit. That something.

He did not see the girl, although she had been there for ten minutes, sitting on a bench behind them. She had been walking across the Square, noticed them, and stopped. She was a charming looking girl, with brown hair done up on top of her head in curls, and the sort of skin they try to make you want on the radio. Her long lashes made her seem demure, but she wasn't.

She was clever and alert, and she loved Paul Sturt very much.

Finally, she got up. She thought, "You wait and wait, and then you suddenly decide." She walked slowly over to the bench where the man and the adorable black puppy were sitting.

"Hello, Paul. He's cute. Is he yours?"

It wasn't that she couldn't have thought of smarter things to say, but words often come out before thoughts. At least she had managed the casual tone. Paul looked up at her with the lingering expression of niceness that Waldo had awakened in him. He did not smile at the girl, but when she made a move to sit down beside him and Waldo he moved along the bench.

She didn't ask him. She didn't ask him anything. He hadn't had a job for a long time and she wondered what he was doing out here, in the middle of the morning, with a puppy. But she didn't ask.

Paul said in a casual voice, "I'm with Minson and Jives. This is Minson's pup." She couldn't tell at all if he was on the defensive.

She said, "He's darling." The way her voice lingered on the "darling" made them both shy away. Hastily she added, "I'm so glad, Paul. About Minson's."

Benny Warren didn't agree with Paul's male pride. In fact it had bust them up months ago because he wouldn't ask her to marry him without a job. But she understood it. That was the kind of girl she was. Paul stared at the Windsor Hotel, remembering. His arm was tense around Waldo, squeezing him. Waldo woke up. He fought. He struggled and writhed. He had been dreaming about Effie. It hadn't been too bad a dream, in fact rather—well—he felt quite smug at the moment. Men and girls seemed young and silly, with their frustrations and inability to get closer.

The girl said, "Let him get down. He doesn't want to be bothered."

There was more than a little sharpness in her voice. After all, she had made this gesture. He might be a little decent about it. She started to get up, but then she felt Paul's hand on her arm. She turned her head, the lashes doing things to her eyes. Waldo, on the ground, yawned and stretched. He wanted a drink of water. That stuff Millie left for him in the hall smelt and tasted of disinfectant. That was what he hated most, being treated like an animal. He had a sudden stabbing itch somewhere behind, and sat down chubbily. He started to scratch himself furiously.

Oh, damn and blast ! Now, it was fleas !

## Chapter 3

WALDO walked out from under the long table and went as far as his leash would let him. The leash was wound round the leg of the table, locked with the catch which Waldo could not quite bite off. Paul Sturt had tied him there hastily when the call had come from the boss.

“Be a good fellow,” he had said to Waldo, “I’ll be back in a jiffy to take you out for a walk.”

But the jiffy had stretched to two hours or more, and Waldo had not been able to wait. He looked at the damp spot on the lush green carpet and felt silly about it, and then he felt resentful. After all, they had trained him and he remembered that part of it. But could he help it if they left him tied up? Control was all very well, but these things happened to everyone at times. He stepped on a piece of paper which had fallen from the table. “A report of some sort,” he thought, and started to read it. Names of firms which had been invited to join a merger, some accepting, some refusing. The name Buck & Ligne caught his eye. He read the figures and some of the data, but they made him feel sleepy. He sighed and stopped reading. These things were hard to take in.

He skirted the damp spot and was about to try once more to chew off the catch of his leash when he heard voices outside the door; he leapt hastily under the table again. He simply could not get over this doggy feeling of constant guilt about one thing or another. His heart hammered in his curly breast. He lay down and put his nose on his paws, his eyes peering out at the two pairs of shoes as they approached the table.

“ Good god ! ” said Curtis Minson. The feet stopped ominously at the damp spot and there was an awful silence.

Curtis Minson said heavily, “ I thought they said he was house-trained ! ” His voice sounded outraged. Waldo cowered under the table. Perhaps he should have been able to wait. He remembered one time in the war—but that was different. Then, it meant life or death to a whole platoon, to keep absolutely still.

Paul Sturt said, “ I’m sorry, sir. I’m afraid it’s my fault. He went out of my mind entirely when you called me about those proxies.”

“ Humph ! Well. Get him out of there. Get him out. And send someone to wipe up that mess. And hurry ! The shareholders will be here any moment ! ”

“ I’ll do it myself. Quicker that way,” Paul said. He was already bending down to untie the leash. He pulled Waldo out from under the table impatiently, dragging Waldo’s backside on the rug. Waldo had been feeling older and wiser during the past few days but now he found himself behaving like a puppy again. He resisted Paul, with his paws straight out in front of him. Paul sighed. He said, “ Never mind, old boy. I know how it was. I apologize.”

He left Waldo in the middle of the floor and disappeared. Waldo supposed he had gone to get a wet rag or someone to clean up the carpet. Curtis Minson glared down at Waldo and Waldo glared back. Paul’s apology had made him feel more like a man, and equal to Curtis. The long room was very quiet, with the draped feeling of air conditioning. If you stayed in a room like it long enough you got claustrophobia. That is if you were in the least sensitive. Curtis Minson had started business at a rickety desk in an office shared with three others. This room gave him the willies, frankly. But it also gave

him a nice sensation of ownership, of power. He strode over to the head of the table and pressed the bell embedded in it. Almost at once a young man appeared. Before Curtis could ask, he said, "Sorry, sir, the proxies haven't arrived yet."

Curtis Minson frowned. For a moment he looked worried, but then his frown cleared away. He said, "Ah well, ah well," in the pontifical voice he used to his private employees. It was calculated to inspire confidence, and often it did.

The young man disappeared. Waldo, whose senses were keener than they had been when he was a man, felt rather than heard the approach of footsteps, so he wasn't surprised when a voice said, "Is this board-room number four?"

"Come in, come right in," Curtis Minson said in the booming hearty voice he kept on ice for shareholders. He waved his hand at the empty table and the long row of swivel chairs cushioned luxuriously in mauve leather. Waldo watched the shareholder take one of the chairs and sink back in it uneasily. "One of the little guys," thought Waldo, "one of the small fry who only come because they want to say they know Curtis Minson."

Paul Sturt came in with a wet towel. He looked at Waldo and winked. He was about to kneel down to wipe the damp spot when a mass of feet appeared at the door and several people came into the board-room. Curtis Minson became aware of the damp spot again. He hustled forward, trying to stop Paul from cleaning up the floor, but Paul was already doing it, so all Curtis could say was, "My little dog, caught a bit off trail I am afraid. Dogs will be dogs, ha, ha!"

He went back to the head of the table, as though he was afraid one of the shareholders might sit there by mistake. He kept on waving his hand at the empty chairs,

and the shareholders slid uneasily into them, one by one. Waldo took advantage of the activity to walk under the table. He wasn't going to miss this if he could help it. Paul saw him do it. He stretched his hand toward Waldo, but just then Curtis Minson touched him on the shoulder and asked him a question. Paul withdrew his hand. He went out of the room. Waldo moved away from the head of the table and slyly crept down towards its foot, hoping no one would look for him there. There was plenty of room between the rows of feet. He lay down contentedly. This was going to be fun. Paul came in and whispered something to Curtis Minson, who coughed in an annoyed way and rose to his feet. He said, "Gentlemen, we might as well begin this meeting, which I shall make as brief as possible. I know you are all extremely busy men."

There was a gratified rustle of movement in the chairs and a shuffle of feet around Waldo. One of the brown shoes shot out and nearly got Waldo in the chin. It was a well shined, prosperous shoe, but it had the itch or something. Waldo got up and moved to a safer place, between the feet of an older shareholder and the brogues of a young man who smelt of lavender.

"You all know," Curtis Minson said, "the purpose of our coming here today. A mere formality, of course, but it has always been the policy of this corporation to follow all rules and regulations with the most meticulous attention and correctness." He made rather a mess of the word "meticulous," to Waldo's amusement.

"You have already received our prepared statement outlining the proposed deal," Curtis Minson went on, "so all you have to do is vote on it."

Waldo, listening with keen attention, thought he caught a certain note of nervousness in the president's voice. There was a small silence and Waldo saw Paul

Sturt's shoes move swiftly toward the table. He said, "The proxies have not come yet, sir."

"Very unusual," Curtis Minson said in a calm voice, "most unusual. Well, gentlemen, this refers to the proxies of our largest shareholder, Mrs. Ploto Greene. For some reason our letter to her must have gone astray. Her proxies always arrive in plenty of time, but it does not matter in any case, harrumph, Mrs. Greene has every confidence in us. We can, I am sure, proceed as though she were here."

The door opened. Waldo could see it. He could see Paul Sturt's feet move aside to make way for a pair of high-heeled lizard pumps with rather lumpy ankles above them. There was an appalled silence.

Waldo thought, "Now what's up, I wonder?"

Then Curtis Minson's booming shareholder voice filled the echoes with, "Well, well, well, Mrs. Greene, this is a surprise, and very pleasant, I assure you. It is not often that we are honoured——"

"No," said Mrs. Ploto Greene in a firm high voice, "not often. In fact——" There was a pause while Waldo peeked out from under the table and saw Mrs. Greene standing there, looking determinedly at the row of faces. "In fact," she continued, "this is the first time I have ever been to a shareholders' meeting."

She ended this speech triumphantly. Curtis Minson was waving one of the shareholders out of his chair and installing Mrs. Greene in it. Waldo wasn't certain, but he thought Curtis Minson looked worried.

He said, "We are somewhat anxious, dear lady, somewhat perturbed not to have received your signed proxies in the usual way. But this is more—er—more pleasurable I am sure we all agree?"

Not knowing how to reply to this some of the shareholders clapped their hands together feebly. The feet

settled back again in rows and Waldo lay down. He thought it quite safe now to return to the head of the table where he would be better able to hear everything, so he installed himself in front of Mrs. Greene's lumpy ankles. The lizard shoes smelt pleasant and cigarette smoke began to sift under the table. He heard someone pour himself out a glass of water and cough portentously.

A secretary began to drone out a long report, reading it in a blurred hasty way born of long practice in lulling enquiring minds into a state of coma. Some of the knees were now crossed under the table. Even the feet looked sleepy and inattentive. The secretary came to the end of the report amid increasing coughing. Curtis Minson rose to his feet. Waldo could definitely feel the nervousness now. Mrs. Greene's presence was worrying Curtis Minson, worrying him a lot.

"The old boy isn't used to it," Waldo thought, "he's not as hard-boiled as some."

The president was saying, "so, gentlemen—er—and our charming lady shareholder—er—if you are agreeable, we will now vote the proposed measures into effect, without further ado."

"Gentlemen!" Mrs. Greene's ankles were bulging over the lizard shoes now as she got to her feet. Waldo sat up suddenly, his nose quivering. "Gentlemen, I believe I hold the majority vote here. The original division of shares, made when my father died, left the control of this business to his estate. I represent that estate. Well, I have heard that what you propose to do is wrong. It would ruin quite a lot of nice small people, or at least it would make them poorer than they are already. That wouldn't have pleased my father. Therefore I do not agree to what you want me to vote for."

There was an appalled silence. Curtis Minson's feet curled around the rungs of his chair like a schoolboy

when in a fuss. Then he rose. He was going to keep his temper, Waldo could feel that. He said, "Mrs. Greene, my dear lady, I fear you have been listening to uninformed persons regarding this matter. It has come to my attention that you have of late supported by your presence certain meetings which have taken place in this city of a group of worthy people who have set themselves up as moral arbiters of public policies and of business affairs. Perhaps this—er—group have had undue influence——"

The ankles were bulging over the shoes again. Mrs. Greene's voice interrupted Curtis Minson. She was losing her aplomb and sounded hysterical.

"You have no right," she said in a squeak, "to throw mud on people trying to do good. Wars have come and gone and we are all a mass of evil thought and wrong attitudes. We should open our hearts and confess, and stop pressing the faces of the poor to the millstone. If we are sinners we should say so. If we commit adultery——"

"Mrs. Greene!" It was Curtis Minson on his feet again. This had put him back into control. This idiotic woman! "*Mrs. Greene.* Let us not digress from the matter in hand. Adultery, ahem, is hardly on the agenda." He paused and received, in gratified complacency, the expected titter. Waldo's little snuffle of amusement went unnoticed.

"But, Mr. Minson!" Mrs. Greene was not to be beaten down. She had come here in a missionary spirit, and besides, they had impressed it on her that she had the power, the control. However, she had reckoned without the business acumen, training, and hardness, of Curtis Minson and the small group whose mouthpiece he was.

"Mrs. Greene," Curtis Minson was saying pontifically,

“really, my dear lady, it is hardly necessary for you to study these matters. They are somewhat—er—technical for pretty heads like yours. You receive thirty thousand a year from this company, do you not?”

Mrs. Greene shrank back a little. Waldo could feel her defiance ebbing. The titter had shattered her confidence. She put up an uneasy hand to her hair. “May I ask,” went on Curtis Minson in a calmer tone, “if you have consulted the other members of your family about this extraordinary *volte-face*?” He pronounced it vaulty-face and, as no one knew quite what he meant, it sounded well. Mrs. Greene was thinking worriedly now of Albert, her brother-in-law, to whom she usually went for advice in money matters. Albert had built up her income through clever investment during the past four years, one-third at least more than it had been in the beginning. Albert had disapproved of the group and their meetings. “Damned undignified nonsense,” he had called it. “Have your fun with it but don’t for god’s sake listen to them when it comes to anything practical.”

She had said piteously, “But, Albert, we have to practise what we preach, don’t we?”

Albert had laughed callously. “O.K.,” he had said, “take the eight thousand I made for you on TNT, the trip-money for Mexico, and give it to them.”

He had watched with cynical amusement as she had blushed and stammered, and finally laughed. She had later spent the money in Mexico as she had planned. “Well, I needed the holiday,” she told herself.

So now she looked piteously at Curtis Minson, feeling all kinds of a fool. The true altruism with which she had come to this meeting had vanished. She felt as though she were alone on an island facing a ring of cannibals. Albert had looked over the prepared statement she had received about this meeting and had

laughed. The company of investment brokers over whom Curtis Minson presided were making a smart move in amalgamating three small lumber companies. Albert noted that the names of two other companies were absent from the list. Wouldn't toe the line, probably. Especially Buck & Ligne. Old Buck had made his own money, and his own business. He had done more to build up the lumber business in Canada than any one person ; progressive and humanitarian. But he was getting old and power was probably slipping into new hands. Albert wondered how he would take this. It would ruin him eventually, but he probably preferred that to losing control of his own company.

Mrs. Green was still standing. Waldo saw her ankles straining with the effort. He felt her indecision, and suddenly a violent sympathy took hold of him. He did not know the details of this deal but he had read about such meetings before and heard of the frustrations involved. There had been an atmosphere of uneasiness, of guilt. And afterwards, everyone at the meeting had slunk home, richer and no wiser, but knowing that the guilt feeling would fade with time. If you couldn't stick your toes under the larger board tables and keep them there, it was just too bad.

Waldo decided it was time he spoke up. The figures he had read on the report came back to him. The time comes when a fellow must support what is right. He rushed out from under the table, stood to his full height, and said loudly, "I agree with Mrs. Greene entirely. Buck & Ligne deserve better terms and more consideration, in deference to their contribution to this particular industry. We should have offered them a better proposition."

He was prepared to go further, but his thoughts trailed off into confusion as he heard the series of short angry

puppy barks which emanated from his throat. His stomach suddenly trailed on the ground and he put his nose between unhappy paws, his bark ending in a small whine which was meant to convey, "oh damn and blast!"

There was a burst of relieved laughter and necks craned round at him. Paul Sturt appeared, large and amused, above him. He reached out a hand to Waldo's collar. Curtis Minson was bellowing, "Take that dog out! I thought I gave orders to have him removed long ago! Gentlemen! Please! Let us get this deal—er—this transaction through as quickly as possible. I know you are all busy men—harrumph!"

But Waldo had done something to them. The young veteran with the brogues was on his feet. Waldo could smell the lavender more clearly from where he was cowering away from Paul Sturt. He wanted very much to stay and listen. He wanted very much to help Mrs. Greene, who was now leaning forward with a bright flush on her face and more courage in her eyes.

The man with the brogues was saying, "As it happens, gentlemen, I was overseas with Hank Buck. He told me a lot about his father. He admired him very much. He believes in honesty and fair play. He has built up his business that way and has made it a success too. In a country like Canada we should surely be able to run our business affairs successfully and still be decent about it?"

The room was silent now. Even Curtis Minson glared without interrupting. All faces were turned towards the young man. Waldo looked from face to face and to his astonishment he saw resentment on most of them, resentment that the responsibility was being thrown on them. He saw resistance to what the young man was saying. They *wanted* Curtis Minson to push this deal through. Waldo opened his mouth to speak and his breath came

out in a big yawn of nervousness. Paul Sturt picked him up and started for the door.

The young man had seen the antagonism too. He went pale and his lips tensed. He said lamely, "Hank Buck was killed, right beside me, at Nijmegen. At least I have said the sort of thing he would have said, even if it does no good——"

"Oh go *on*," Waldo thought miserably. "Fight it. Fight them. What did Hank die for anyway?" And then he remembered the times he had stood trembling before such men as Curtis Minson, and felt a big cold inferiority complex send shivers of depressed hopelessness all through him. He knew the young man with the brogues was feeling that way now. Yes, the young man was saying, "Of course, I don't know much about big business, but——"

Curtis Minson boomed out genially, "Now, my dear fellow, not at all, we oldsters *want* to bring young blood into things. We honour you boys, we do indeed. Yes, yes, we owe it to the—ah—civilization you saved for us to listen to your views and to—ah—guide you in the intricacies of what is, after all, a very great responsibility. Business. The affairs of a great and growing country."

"Oh *blah*!" screamed Waldo. He struggled suddenly and fiercely to get out of Paul Sturt's arms, and nearly succeeded in falling on to the floor. He could feel Paul's hand tugging at his neck.

"Steady, old man," Paul said gently. He opened the door with his free hand. Curtis Minson was glaring at them.

"Please," he said with great self-control, in a congested voice, "please, Mr. Sturt, take that pup out. And keep him out."

Mrs. Greene said helplessly, "Oh, isn't he cute?"

She was looking at Waldo with appreciation. He had

done a lot for her. Interrupted, when things were going against her.

Perhaps God was, after all, going to win out. The group had said He would, eventually. Well, perhaps now . . .

She turned to the table again. The young man with the brogues had sat down. He was still very pale, and he leaned on the table now, his eyes covered with his hand. Someone had got up at Curtis Minson's right and was speaking in a soothing voice, the sort of tone that has concealed power and firmness in it like the beginning of a snarl. He looked like a snarl too, all smoothed down and slicked up.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "as you say, we are all busy men, and these charming digressions, although entertaining," here he bowed ironically to Mrs. Greene and waved his hand to the young veteran and at Waldo in the doorway, "are hardly relevant to the importance of this meeting and its decision. We appreciate the interest, the personal interest," another bow to Mrs. Greene, and a smile like a slit in a grey rock, "shown by our charming co-shareholder, but we can hardly endorse her objections to the carrying out of our carefully prepared and, I assure you, madam, perfectly ethical plan for amalgamation of four of Canada's most progressive lumber businesses in one company, to be known as the Big Crackle Company and Subsidiaries.

"And I might add," he said impressively, "that we have every reason to believe that a certain tender which we have already offered, may result in what may well be a lucrative contract." He paused and put the tips of his fingers together as though in prayer—"Very lucrative indeed, if I may say so, dealing as it does with housing, and backed by our government."

He slowly looked around from face to face. Waldo

felt rather than saw the smiling slit of mouth. Then he said, "I must ask you gentlemen, without further delay, to get down to the business at hand."

He looked furtively at Curtis Minson. Their eyes met and Curtis Minson nodded almost imperceptively.

"I move, therefore," said the shareholder at Curtis' right, "that we vote on this measure now."

"I second that," said someone in a high, flat voice that sent shivers down Waldo's spine. It all fitted in so nicely with the rest.

There was a silence, and Curtis Minson opened his mouth to say, "And now, gentlemen, for the vote."

But another voice was speaking. It came from the radio in the corridor, which could be heard in the room when the door was open. Paul Sturt gripped Waldo tighter. His hand was on the door to close it on himself and Waldo, but Curtis Minson stopped him, his eyes staring in surprise.

The radio voice was saying, "Mr. Hanson Buck, of Buck & Ligne, lumber merchants, has announced the closing of a contract which will give Buck & Ligne control over the supplying of lumber to the government in its new enlarged housing programme. This deal, we are informed, has been under consideration for some time, and is now a fact." The voice went on to give further market news. As the door closed behind Paul Sturt and Waldo the young veteran lifted his head and looked at Mrs. Ploto Greene. They smiled at each other as though the row of blanched, appalled faces did not exist.

Waldo lifted his head from Paul's arm. He was panting. He felt jubilation and excitement. He put out his tongue and touched Paul's chin with it, trying not to slobber. Paul did not flinch away. He looked down at Waldo.

"One win our side," he said, "good old Hanson Buck,

whoever he is. And perhaps there is something to be said for private enterprise after all." He looked thoughtful. The meeting he had just witnessed had disgusted him. His sympathy was with old Hanson B.

"People like Hanson Buck built up this country," Waldo said sleepily, "and don't you forget it." He fell asleep as Paul deposited him in the armchair in Curtis Minson's private office.

## Chapter 4

BENNY WARREN walked up Windsor Street slowly towards Dominion Square. She had been all morning at the Settlement where she was a voluntary worker, and she was thinking about it now. The children were so thin, and so tough. Their manners were so rude and unhappy. They were so resentful and so ungrateful. They treated Benny and her co-worker as though they were dirt. They yelled and squalled and made a dreadful fuss about the examination of their teeth. Today was dental clinic morning. Benny had been assisting the Settlement dentist since eight o'clock.

She was tired but she needed the walk. It was pleasant to feel the sun on one's back, even though it got paler and more reluctant every day. November could be a nice month, when it was like this. The trees still had the sap in them, and in the evenings it was fun to see the lights in the windows, like a necklace pulled tight around the throat of a grey old woman. The city streets were mysterious in November. Summer had gone. The red and copper leaves had all been scooped up and burned in the sweet incense of autumn fires. Now it was a time of waiting, of interval. The first snow would dispel the inactivity, but interval is always relaxing, and Benny was a child of nature and enjoyed these things, with a conscious delight in them.

It was eleven o'clock, and she noticed that the men wore their coats open and that the women's powder looked moist on their faces. Indian summer. She thought of the coming week-end in the country, at Lac Beaugard in the Laurentians. Paul would be there.

Jerry had said so. And, to chaperone, Mrs. Ferrow, Jerry's mother and another girl, Mrs. Hibberd, the famous Nancy, from Cartierville. She should be looking forward to it, but somehow it was not as simple as that. She and Paul were still—well, what were they still? Enemies? Oh no, never that. Not friends anyhow. They had parted in anger and misunderstanding and she had not seen him since, until Monday in Dominion Square, when she had run into him with that cute puppy he was giving an airing to.

Perhaps he would be in the Square today. There was no reason why he should be ; but perhaps . . . unconsciously, her feet quickened.

Those kids at the Settlement, all of them with a chip on their shoulders. Well, she could understand it but, at the same time, why vent it on the people who *were* helping? She and the other Junior League member who helped the dentist every Friday morning ; why should the children look at them with eyes full of mistrust? Benny's greeny eyes were greener with the effort of concentrating. She had been brought up by nice parents to believe that public service was part of life, to give it unselfishly. Her father had been the dean of his profession, and during his life had given many evenings to the Medical Association. Her mother was regent of a chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire. Both parents read the newspapers carefully and followed the trend of world events. Her father had been a doctor in the army overseas in world war one. Her mother had been a V.A.D. Her brother had been killed in world war two. Yes, they had given a great deal to their country and to their community. And where was the country heading? And look at the discontent, even hatred, on the faces of the kids at the Settlement. And look at the state of the world.

Always building up, always palliating, always trying to cure after the disease had taken hold. Benny walked more slowly. She was passing the new Laurentian Hotel now, and she stopped to look into the windows of the shops. There was nothing there to tempt her, even remotely. When she was a child shop windows had been a lure, but not now. Things did not seem to be important any more. What her father had laughingly called her Want-it-Awfully moods had grown fewer and fewer. She wondered why.

She wanted a camera, for instance. Benny stopped and gazed into a shop window, saw the camera she would buy, made a mental note to ask her mother for an advance on her allowance to cover the purchase, and walked on. Her reflection in the windows showed a slim girl in a well-cut suit with beautiful legs and small feet in plain, handsome pumps. She wore no hat, and her hair was softly waved in the new close silhouette. It suited her. People looked closely as they passed, interested by something vital and "different." She had travelled and had been abroad. She knew the United States as well as she knew Canada, and England better than either. She knew how to go about in a strange country, and how to meet strange people with grace and interest. Her mouth, however, did not show happiness or poise. It looked patient rather than young. It had the expression one saw on so many mouths of her generation, a waiting expression with a little hope in it, but no certainty or gaiety.

Always binding up, always fixing previously committed mistakes. Just now, weren't they admitting mistakes all over the place? Why had we allowed Russia to take Berlin? Why were we disarming? Why had we not taken a firmer tone with Russia from the start? Why had we allowed inertia to creep into our souls in such a way that children of eleven were committing crimes which

raised the hair on one's head? Was it because it was actually a fact that there was no moral backbone any more? That the bottom had dropped out of man's resistance to evil?

As for all this lying propaganda about her own kind of people, that was poppycock, and had to be stopped. Benny's eyes turned from green to grey as she thought about it. These books written by people who did not know what they were talking about, books describing what the writers called "society," in Montreal and elsewhere, jabbing at a group of people because they had more—well—more elegance and better manners than the rest. Jabbing at the men of big business in a snarling way which was ineffectual because it was done so ineptly. Benny had read some of these books, so popular with the masses of people. The aura of wealth and ease and calm acceptance of the possession of more beauty than some others, all this seemed to turn hell loose in the minds of those who saw it. But why shout and rave about socialism and its principles, when what they really wanted, if they were honest enough to admit it, was the same sort of life themselves! The innate hypocrisy of it was so tiresome.

But how to stop the poppycock? It was well on the rails now and had to ride out the storm. Benny knew that there was plenty of basis for unrest, a long unedifying history of too much for too few, but that wasn't the entire cause of all this mess. Not entirely. At the back of her mind Benny had always had the idea that she "stood" for something important in the community, that her group "stood" for something solid and a little better. She had not taken the trouble to define it. Now, when she tried to work it out, the thing escaped her. The pattern she had thought she represented in society was a blur. Values had changed so imperceptibly and so swiftly that the shift had dropped

a whole generation into limbo and left them hanging without roots or label.

Anyhow, Westmount wasn't at all as it was being painted by the writers who were being read by so many people all over the country. Men like her father had worked hard, were working hard, for the fulfilment of their dream of how to surround themselves with the things they wanted before they were too old to enjoy them. And Tom, her brother, had died to preserve just that kind of life. A good life, Benny thought. With niceness and give-and-take in it, and holidays in the country, and music and the theatre, and people with soft voices and trained minds and a deep, if somewhat narrow, ideal of right and wrong.

What was wrong with it? Anyhow, she proposed to stick to it and to defend it.

All this dabbling with ideas foreign to everything she believed in! At McGill, where she had majored in Arts, she had held herself aloof from the group which dabbled. She went to one or two of their meetings, but their speeches were so ill-informed and so uncomfortably emotional that she soon stopped going.

Dominion Square looked deserted. From the street opposite Benny studied the benches and saw the usual old men sitting hunched up and a few people just resting; but no small dog and a man. The thin shadows of the November sun made pencilled lines on the grass and on the paths. The air had a soupy effect caused by the heat rising from the pavements. There was a laziness over the scene. Even the street-cars seemed to be moving more slowly and with less noise. Benny crossed the street and walked up the path nearest her to the centre of the Square. No, Paul wasn't there, definitely. Benny was not sure if she was sorry or glad. Perhaps the week-end at the lake would be better. It would be quieter there.

But at the same time there would be more people, and perhaps she wouldn't get a chance to talk to Paul, to try to force an understanding of what had happened to them.

She bent her head and took out her compact, then looked around for a bench and sat down and powdered her face. She rubbed at the side of her nose where the dust of the Settlement rooms had made a grimy streak. Lucky she had seen it, just in case Paul should come. She had never taken so much trouble about any man as she had always done for Paul.

She gazed at her face in the small mirror. It looked odd, with the minute background of the sky and the thin branch of a tree showing behind the tiny square of skin. She thought, "My lashes *are* nice, anyhow," without realizing the wistful significance of that "anyhow." She was a very pretty girl, with what is known as "everything." She had looks and brains, and "advantages" such as travel and clothes and plenty of time to enjoy herself. She had an entrée into Society, and pleasant friends and fun and lots of boy-friends.

Benny sighed. She closed the compact with a small snap of distaste. Her face looked flat, it looked uninteresting. She didn't feel thrilled at all about the way it looked. And then, thinking these things consciously, she laughed suddenly, aloud. It was a low ripple of laughter, but it was vital and alive. It startled an old man awake on the next bench and he turned slowly and rheumatically to gaze at Benny. His toothless lips grinned at her. Benny looked at him with the beginnings of distaste, but then she saw his age and general decreptitude and her warm reaction towards anything helpless made her smile back at him. She got up. Here was another one of those things that simply should not be. Age all abandoned on a public bench in

a city park. Age in tatters and unshaven. Age leering at young girls.

And yet the feeling in her was stronger than ever, the knowledge that she did not want to go on fixing already committed mistakes. No more amelioration. No more palliatives. No more curing after the disease. Prevention ! That was it ! Prevention. But how ?

“ Hello,” said Paul, behind her, “ if you’re not careful, you’ll have the morality squad after you.”

He was looking with amusement at the leering old man on the next bench. “ Move along, lady, move along,” he said. “ And you from Westmount too ! ”

Before Benny could make the irritated retort that rose to her lips he began singing : “ Belinda was an awful tart.” He took Benny’s arm and steered her firmly away to the other side of the Square. As they sat down on an empty bench, he finished the song : “ So they bought her an expensive beat, on the sunny side of Stanley Street ! ”

“ And kept Westmount pure,” he added smiling.

“ Paul, you’re not funny, not a bit.” Her lips were angry but her eyes couldn’t help smiling at him. She felt quite different.

She felt light, as though she had had an injection of some drug with happiness in it. Seeing Paul was so good, so very good. It was right for her, anyway. It was at that very moment that she decided. This was for her. This was what she wanted. Before, she hadn’t been quite sure.

She couldn’t look at him because she was so terribly aware of his nearness. The rumbling sweetness of his voice in the ribald song went through her. She could smell the faint perfume of cigarette tobacco on his clothes. Without looking, she knew the way he was sitting, with easy grace. She remembered the dancing they had done, he better than she, and teaching her new

steps. There had been a thrill in it, in being so close ; but she had been afraid, she supposed now, afraid to enjoy it. Silly. And how had all this so suddenly changed ? There wasn't time to think it out now.

She said, " Paul ! I get this Westmount stuff from lesser folk all the time ; it isn't worthy of you. Honestly. You ought to know better."

" Little Junior Leaguer ! " Paul said. But there was laughter in all of him. Something had evidently pleased him. He, too, seemed different from the other day. Benny turned and looked at him shyly. Her breath came unevenly, and because this embarrassed her she said quickly, " Where's the puppy ? "

Paul put back his head and laughed. It was heavenly to hear it, Benny thought. He hadn't laughed for so long, not with her, anyhow.

" He's in disgrace," he said, wiping his eyes free of laughter tears. " He interfered in a big way this morning with big business."

He started to tell Benny about it, leaving out all the business details. They sat there on the bench and roared with laughter as Paul etched in the story for Benny to see. The first misdemeanour of the wet patch on the rug, and then the final eruption from under the table, the furious puppy barks and struggles.

" That dog," Paul said, suddenly sobering, " amazes me sometimes. I've had dogs who seemed human before, but not one quite like Waldo. He's—" He stopped and looked thoughtful. " You know, Benny, sometimes——"

In his voice was the same note of bewilderment that had been in Hilda Minson's when she had said, " The way he just sits and stares at my legs. It embarrasses me."

Paul turned and looked down into Benny's green eyes. " Do you think it could be possible ? "

Benny's lashes went down a little, because she was all in a turmoil and Paul's eyes were seeing right into her too far and too quickly. "You mean that Waldo could have been a man once?"

"Or even a woman."

"Reincarnation, you mean?" Benny said thoughtfully. "Well, I'm not sure. I've read books on it. But I always hated the way they were written. I think writers are awful the way they project their own prejudices into what they write. In the books I read about theosophy, the writers always made it seem the only way."

She clasped her hands together nervously. "There must be many ways, mustn't there, Paul?"

Her eyes were dark with the intensity of her feeling. Both of them had forgotten Waldo. Neither of them saw Johnson slide the big limousine out of the line in front of the Sun Life Building and drive it away, with Waldo sitting excitedly on the front seat, his nose resting on his two paws which clutched the bottom of the window for support. Waldo was being sent home. Waldo was in disgrace.

## Chapter 5

THIS was the day Hilda Minson liked the most, with both the maids out. She could wander about her own house and feel that it belonged to her. She never got accustomed to giving orders to servants. She never managed to feel easy about having a car with a chauffeur waiting at the front door. Helen, her daughter, now married, would say impatiently, "Well, he's paid to wait, isn't he?"

Helen had never fussed if Johnson sat for hours out there, reading his eternal detective magazines, hunched over the wheel of the big limousine. Helen could always think up things for Johnson to do. "Let's send Johnson to buy the stuff for the curtains," or "Make Johnson take the dress back to Madame Eloise and tell her you don't like it."

Johnson was paid to do the driving, and sometimes he wondered why he let himself be an errand boy, but it was in his blood to fetch and carry and to him it did not seem in any way undignified. He had been a coachman in his early days, in England. Curtis Minson's was a comfortable post as chauffeur. As employers went, both Mr. and Mrs. Minson were considerate. So he did Helen's messages with good grace, and only muttered "Sow's ear" once or twice. He admired the power which had brought Curtis Minson so far by his own efforts. It surprised him at first that Curtis Minson could belong to the Mount Royal Club. After all, his father had been a grocer; but Johnson got over that. In America (and to Johnson Canada and the United States were "America") "clawss" meant only money standards. One man was richer than another. That was the only "clawss" distinction. Why, he had seen gentlemen, "wot would never 'ave gone up any steps

leading to a toffs' club in London," mounting the long grey stairway to the Mount Royal Club in Montreal, "gentlemen oo weren't quite the gentlemen, if you know wot I mean." And Johnson would add, "still—" with a rising inflection and a philosophical shrug. His own son and daughter were both at McGill. Tom had gone overseas, and come safely back, and Ellie was studying to be a lawyer. Be a good one too, bless her. Mind like a steel trap. And no nonsense. Had her eye on young Henson too; nice lad, took Ellie out to dances and brought her home properly early, like a gentleman. Nice young fellow. If Johnson sometimes broke into a cold sweat at the thought of his daughter marrying the son of Professor Henson he never let his family see it. Yes, this was America, and a man had to fit in. The air was clearer here, if a trifle blue with hurry and rush.

Hilda Minson looked uneasily out of the kitchen window, and then she remembered that Curtis had taken Johnson this morning, to drive him down to the docks to meet some important person arriving from England. Hilda sighed with relief. Keeping Johnson busy was a chore since Helen had got married.

She went to the electric refrigerator and opened it. This was a luxury she could never permit herself on other days, under the cold and reproachful eye of her cook. She had been Lady Hood's cook and highly recommended. Hilda had not dared refuse to hire her when Lady Hood had so kindly called her up and practically forced the woman on her. Lady Hood had said, "Just what you want, my dear Hilda. Perfect for you. Knows all the ropes."

There was no patronage in the voice, only in the words, and Hilda had no words to reply with. Mary was a good cook, and she certainly "knew all the ropes," whatever that meant. She was never satisfied. "At Lady Hood's, madam, we did it this way."

Only once had Hilda rebelled against any of Lady Hood's "ropes." That was the time when Mary had tried to make her get a butler. "Gives a place style, madam, if you know what I mean."

But Hilda had said no, and said it firmly. Johnson was bad enough, but one of those long-legged powdered fellows hanging round inside the house as well would have driven her crazy. No.

She peered inside the door of the refrigerator now noticing, with her usual rising sense of annoyance, how bare it seemed. Her monthly bills were dreadful, she thought, and yet when she tried to find some food in the ice-box at odd times there was never anything. Where was the remains of the nice leg of lamb they had had last night, for instance? She bent lower, looking. Her skirt lifted up at the back and Waldo, lying in the middle of the kitchen floor, cocked one eye.

Hilda tut-tutted, and withdrew from the refrigerator. She had extracted a jam tart from a plate in front, and started to nibble at it, her guilty expression deepening. It never occurred to her to make a definite effort to assume the reins of control of her own house and become its mistress in fact. She was rather a stupid woman, but nice. She hated fights, and to feel at home in her home would have meant fights, constant and unremitting, with the servants.

It was in small self-indulgences, like the tart she was now eating, that she undermined her chances of getting control, even in her own department. She knew she should not eat fattening cakes at any time, much less in the morning practically right after breakfast. She knew her waist line was increasing rapidly. She traced every night, and with regret, the small roll of new flesh under her chin. She contemplated Waldo now, and blushed a trifle. He was staring at the piece of remaining tart with, she thought, reproof. She said, "Now, Waldo, now, Waldo."

Waldo moved uneasily. When she became kittenish with him it always made him uncomfortable. It reminded him so much of Effie.

Hilda stood stock still in the middle of the kitchen. It was beautifully quiet. The kitchen gleamed with white and chromium. The taps shone like two jewels in the sunshine from the window, and prisms of coloured light shot their glitter from the front of the stove on to the pale green linoleum. Hilda looked round at the kitchen and then at Waldo again. He had put his head down between his paws, but his eyes were open and he seemed to be staring at her legs. She put the remaining piece of tart into her mouth with a little plop of pleasure and reached inside the refrigerator for another.

“You can have half this one,” she said, and bit three-quarters of the tart off. She held the remaining quarter out to Waldo. She said, “Good doggie, come get it.”

“Oh phooey,” Waldo said, and rose. In spite of himself his nose quivered with eagerness. The tart smelled sweet even from that distance. He strolled nearer.

“Now sit up,” Hilda said. She held the tart high in the air.

Waldo stopped short. His tail had begun to wag, but that stopped too. He looked at Hilda reproachfully.

“You know I can’t sit up. No one taught me to,” he said, but she giggled. “Oh yes you can. Now try. And do stop that silly whining.”

Whining indeed. Waldo thought, “I’d like to teach you a thing or two. I’d like to take a nice bite out of that fat calf of yours. It’s a nice calf too, not bad at all.”

He stopped, and stared at her legs again. She screamed lightly with laughter. “You naughty dog,” she said. “I declare you do make me feel funny. You’re almost human the way you—the way you ogle me. That’s it, you *ogle*. Why, you ol’ wolf, you.”

“Oh cut it out,” Waldo said shortly. He barked.

But he got the scent of the tart fully now, and he suddenly craved it. He walked forward with dignity and lifted his head in what he imagined was a commanding gesture. She bent down and gave him the piece. "Well, there you are," she said. "I don't like begging for things either."

That surprised Waldo. He licked the charming crumbs from his lips, and thought it over. He wondered if she had to beg from Curtis. And what did she beg for? He looked at her, and then he knew at once. It embarrassed him. "I'll bet the old boy horses round with someone," he thought. "She looks as though she hadn't had it for months, years probably." The thought sobered him. He went a little way across the room and lay down to think it over more clearly. His mind processes were not dependable. At times they worked perfectly clearly, and at other times there was a blur and horrid merging with a dark something which he suspected was the puppyiness in him. He had not had time yet to work out why he was a dog, or what he ought to do about it, or if all dogs were the same. Yet he felt he must tackle it. He could not remain this way. Something had to be done about it. There was, at the back of his mind, an intuition about its being temporary, or at least having some meaning.

Hilda Minson had closed the refrigerator now. She was standing before the mirror looking at herself. Waldo saw her run her tongue round her lips carefully to get the crumbs off, much as he had done himself. As she did so, he saw the mesh. It was the first time he had seen it, and it startled him. His ears rose in horror. Standing there in front of the kitchen mirror, Hilda Minson's form was completely encased in a sort of wire cage. It moved with her, moulding itself into her figure. Yet it was always there, a shadow about her, shutting her off from

all contact. Staring at it, Waldo could not decide if it was like a meshed wire, or merely a shadow, like a darkness. When she stared at herself it grew blacker, stronger. She was sinking into it, into herself so to speak.

When she turned away from the mirror it went with her as she moved across the room to the door. Her face was closed up too, in her own private unhappiness, and it showed clearly on her mouth and in the blankness of her eyes. Here was a whole day, and Hilda Minson had nothing, absolutely nothing to do !

“ I’ll call up Elaine,” she said to Waldo, and walked uncertainly to the telephone room, where the phone sat fatly on a shining table surrounded by a red and gold lacquer telephone set of pad, pencil and address-book. The whole thing made a picture, but neither Waldo nor Hilda saw it as such.

Waldo was fascinated by the cage around Hilda. It waved about her, veil-like, yet he knew it was stronger than any veil. He knew it would prevent anyone approaching her, getting really close. Hilda put out her hand and started to dial. Then she withdrew it. Her face crinkled up in an awful way and she suddenly burst into tears. She put her hands up over her face and rocked back and forth. Words poured from her in a dreadful sobbing whisper that sizzled on Waldo’s sensitive nerves like cold water on a hot iron. “ Lonely, I’m so lonely. Lonely. Lonely. I hate him ! D’you hear me ? I *hate* him. And he hates me. And that woman ! ”

The sobs petered out into a hissing sound of weeping.

“ Ah, ha, what I thought ! ” Waldo stood in the doorway, uncertain what to do. He felt sorry for Hilda Minson, but her ineffectualness bothered him. Funny he had never noticed people’s instinctive recoil from reality before, the withdrawal under fire, the acceptance of misery. There was no fight in Hilda Minson at all.

Perhaps there had been resistance in her once, but not now. She just sat there accepting her lot, making no effort whatever to change it into what she wanted. All she would do would be to fill her special void with secondary things, tarts stolen with delicious effrontery from her own ice-box in the servants' absence, surreptitious buying of a box of chocolates, and eating them after lunch in her room when no one was looking, and what else did she do in her room when she was alone? Waldo remembered what a doctor had once told him, "Eighty per cent. of married women do not know what an orgasm is, sixty per cent. never achieve one. Masturbation is practised by fifty per cent. of married women today."

Hilda reached for the phone. "I'll call Elaine," she said again, swallowing violently to get the weeping out of her voice, "I'll call Elaine and get her to go to the movies." And then her hand slowed up on the dial. A speculative expression came to her face. The mouth seemed fuller, drooping, a little moist. As she rose there was an urgency in her movements. Waldo saw that her eyes had gone dark, almost beautiful. He had never seen them like that before. The strange wavy-cage effect covered her so completely that he could hardly see her through it. Something, some instinct, made him recoil from her. He backed into the hall and towards the front door. But Hilda was not going out. She passed Waldo without looking, and went upstairs like a sleep-walker. He heard the door of her room close. The house was very silent. Waldo shivered inside his sleek black coat, but the shiver was not from cold. He felt a passionate sympathy for Hilda Minson, and this was something new. In that other life he had never tried to see inside people, never wanted to share their troubles. He knew now what had been his great fault, his lack. He had been a coward, like Hilda.

## Chapter 6

WALDO lay where Mrs. Minson had left him, on the kitchen floor. One ear was still cocked and remained so for a moment or two after hearing her door close upstairs. He felt nervous and lonely. The shining surroundings of the imposing kitchen awed him. He had never seen such a grand one before. His own past had served up a series of kitchen-memories, but they were mostly other people's kitchens and not very tidy at that.

Waldo's one cocked ear gradually dropped to the floor and he closed his eyes. The sunshine shone pleasantly on his back, and it was very quiet, except for the ticking of the inevitable kitchen clock on the wall. He looked like a pool of ink as he lay there, startingly black against the green linoleum.

He did not hear the whispering outside the window, nor did he see the two faces pressed against the glass outside. As he slept uneasily the two figures slunk around the house at their ease, gazing in at the ground floor windows, open but neatly screened, the two pairs of eyes making mental notes.

Upstairs, Hilda Minson, absorbed, did not hear anything.

After a while, their survey made, the figures slipped away through a fence behind the garage from which one of the palings had been neatly removed by a small saw. As they replaced it carefully and without noise, one of them said, "Cinch! I know where the old girl keeps her jewellery. Upstairs in a box, a small box too. We can get it easy."

"How'd you know?"

“Saw her put it away.” He nodded to a tree standing close to the house.

His companion looked at him admiringly. This was big-shot stuff. Mangle was sure a smart operator!  
“When?”

“Let ya know.”

“Well, so long.”

They separated, one going straight along the road, the other slipping through a second fence farther up, and traversing a field. They were never seen together.

Waldo slept. A single house-fly buzzed self-importantly at the window and then flew around experimentally and landed on Waldo's nose. In his sleep he put one paw up and covered his nose. He looked cute, as usual, but there was no one now to see him. He had not heard one of them say, “The pup?”

“Rub him out.”

And the sinister hand go to the pocket where the blackjack lay.

Waldo never imagined himself as a watch-dog. In fact, at the moment, he was dreaming of himself as he had been.

When was it? How could he tell? And did it matter? The pictures that rolled through his mind were clear and murky at the same time. Clear as to detail and murky at the edges; also they ran into each other in an odd and confusing way. In his dream he knew who he was, knew his name, his height, his age. But afterwards he could not remember these things. His name was John Barton.

He started off O.K. He had a nice home in a small town, and his mother pampered him. His father was a meek little fellow with a small black moustache which he unconsciously relied upon as his only symbol of belief in himself and a growing bald patch on the back of his

head which was at constant war with the self-confidence engendered by the moustache. He worked as clerk at a dry-goods store. He left home at seven-thirty in the morning, ate sandwiches sitting at his desk at noon, and returned home at six-thirty. After doing this for thirty years he suddenly dropped dead one day of apoplexy. It was the very last disease one would have expected of him, the very last way to die. Waldo, or John Barton, was fifteen when this happened. Up to then he had had a simple and uncomplicated life. He went to school, learned the usual nothing, and got himself into the usual drab little scrapes with the lads on Saturdays. There was a gang, but he was only a humble member, without initiative. He followed and did not lead. When he wanted anything, he did little to achieve it. For instance, it never occurred to him to do odd jobs in order to earn the bicycle he craved. He waited for two years, and finally his father gave him a bicycle for Christmas. He did not appreciate in the least the fact that his father postponed the check-up with the doctor, which might have saved his life if he had had it, in order to buy the bicycle for his son.

Waldo was back now at the day when his mother had suddenly arrived home one day with a second husband. His nose twitched now, remembering. Johnny Barton had a step-father. That was the turning point in his life, when decisions should have been made. Johnny Barton, however, made none. He merely endured the step-father's brutality to himself and to his mother. When Mr. Humphrey came home at night drunk, and beat her, Johnny cowered in bed and wept. When the same thing happened to himself he endured the blows silently, ashamed to let the neighbours know what was happening. Such is pride, and where it comes from no one knows. Certainly it had no place in his life until now. There

had been no need for pride, or shame, or in fact, for any emotion except the elementary transmutations of growth.

He had no one to go to for help. They had never been church-goers, and the school teacher was a mere child engrossed, moreover, with her own affairs with the local young men, amongst whom she was determined to find a husband. Anything to get her away from school teaching.

No, there was no one to whom Johnny Barton could go for help or advice. Once, he almost ran away. He got as far as the corner. It was ten o'clock at night, and he felt the sudden plop of a big raindrop on his hand, and stopped. He had a small bundle under his arm, containing his best suit and two shirts, and four dollars in silver. A second big raindrop fell and he could hear thunder rolling up in the distance. More and more drops ! Wetting the bundle, hurtling coldly on his neck and hands. Better postpone it. Better wait until a fine night.

He never ran away. Perhaps if the attempt had been discovered, and he had been whipped for it, things might have been different. But he got upstairs undisturbed, creeping to the accompaniment of the stertorous breathing of his step-father from the bedroom, and the muted sobbing to which he had become accustomed. There was no interrupted romantic effluvia about the attempt ; there was nothing but a sense of increased frustration and fear.

Very soon after that, he got up enough courage to go with the fellows on one of the picnics with Gertie Green and Susie Sampson. After three bottles of beer it wasn't so bad. It was his first time, and there was nothing in him of sufficient importance to shock, so Gertie and Susie became part of the pattern. Until fear seared him again, fear and the doctor to whom he went in secret. For some time he eschewed Gertie and Susie. And then

he met Lotty. She was from Montreal, the cousin of one of his mother's neighbours. He and Lotty fell violently in love. She was willing to marry him, but how would he support her?

Johnny Barton approached the second big decision of his life. And again he was unable to make it. Either he took a chance and went to Montreal to find a job (Lotty's father told him he would help him to do so) or he continued to work at the drug store and hope for a raise. At the rate he was now going he ought to be able to save enough to get married in about five years.

Lotty said she would wait, but of course she didn't. She wrote him a polite letter at the end of the second year and said she thought it had been a mistake and that she was going to marry someone else, a law student who still had two years to go but who showed more practically that he loved her.

John Barton never knew what it cost Lotty to write that letter. The student kept her waiting too, for one year, but in the end he made good. He went through college and got safely through the war. Lotty got a progressive life out of it, with two fine children and a nice home. Her husband was a success in a small way. Johnny Barton, she had felt, would never be a success. How right she was!

"Success," Waldo was dreaming he said to himself, "success is part of life. It only remains to choose what success means. It's a lousy word, really. Too many people think one kind of success is the only one. Money. Being important in a community. Being important. Being impor——" It was odd how these things slipped away, when one was dreaming. Something else kept on impinging. Anyhow, John Barton let Lotty go. He had to, perhaps. And then his mother died. After that the drugstore manager died and John Barton was out of a

job. He read an advertisement about learning to be a mechanic in double-quick time, in order to get a job in a truck factory. It sounded O.K. He was, by now, as nearly desperate in a quiet way as he had ever been. He had honestly loved Lotty.

So he pulled himself together enough to pack up his belongings and get ready to combat the objections of his step-father, who by now was incapacitated by drink and in a wheel-chair with "pains all over him." Fortunately for John Barton the step-father died in his sleep one night just as John was getting ready to take the bull by the horns and vamoose.

All the changes in John Barton's life happened without his volition. They happened from the outside, through pressure of events. It was the year 1936. John Barton was 23. He now found himself learning to be a mechanic in a truck factory. To his constant and unremitting surprise he was good at it. The work did something to him. It woke him up. He was smart and quick, and in time he worked up quite high in the factory and at last he was foreman with men under him.

He was not a good foreman. Not firm enough. The responsibility worried him, and when things went wrong he was hopelessly lacking in control over anything.

One day he stumbled into a meeting. It was being held in a disused shed behind the main building, and Johnny fell into it because his duties as foreman obsessed him, and he was being thorough. He felt that he should inspect everything pertaining to his job, and he was planning to suggest to his bosses that more space was needed for the installing of a new lathe and that the old shed should be repaired for this purpose.

He noticed a light coming from under the door and, approaching without much immediate curiosity, was flabbergasted to hear voices and smell cigarette smoke.

It sounded to him like a lot of voices. He stopped short. He had a good mind but its sluggishness, which up to now had been allowed to gather force in habit, prevented him from thinking rapidly or making quick decisions. Almost consciously he was cursing himself for this now. He stood outside the propped-up door, listening, and wondering what to do. He might have gone away without doing anything about it, but just as he was deciding to turn away, he heard this : " We can wait. After the war will be the time."

John Barton recognized the voice. It belonged to the new hand on shift six. He had only been with Simpson's for about a month, but an uneasiness seemed to follow him wherever he went. Johnny had noticed groups forming behind trees at lunch-time, and men walking around absent-mindedly. Pieces of work had unexpectedly been left undone, and when he had admonished the worker at fault he had been met with either a blank stare or a new unfriendliness. He had of course thought it originated in some mistake of his own in handling the men, something he had done or said to anger them. He had not taken any definite line.

Slowly, he started picking up the tiny threads of memory and putting them together. It wasn't difficult. It had all been so recent. Yes, he was right, definitely. There was something sinister going on, something not quite right. And what did the fellow mean by " We can wait."

John Barton put out his hand to push the door open, and let it fall again. Perhaps—better wait. Perhaps—it might be dangerous. Perhaps—think things over a bit first. He looked down at his hand. Something cold had fallen on it. A raindrop ! And another on the lapel of his light brown after-work suit. The drop made a dark stain. Johnny stared down at it. A drop fell on

his neck, like a prick from a blunt pin. Queer how it reminded him of a time before, a moment in his life he hated to think about. That time when he almost got away, and then turned back again. He could hear now the stealthy creaking of his own footsteps, going past his mother's room, hesitating a moment as he caught the heavy snoring of his step-father, and his mother's quiet sobs. He had felt like a louse, but later he had said to himself, "Well, I woulda bin a heel to of left her." He knew this was in no way true. He knew she was past helping, and did not want his help.

Another raindrop on his lapel ; two dark stains. His suit would be ruined if he stayed here like a goop. Recklessly he put his hand on the door, not having decided whether or not to enter, and it swung open under his horrified eyes. Fate again, fate taking charge.

## Chapter 7

THE eyes that turned on John Barton from inside the shed were varied in expression. If he had had time to study them he would have noticed the relief in many of them. There was old Barnum, for one. He was sitting with his stiff leg up on a barrel, smoking his eternal pipe. It must have been the smoke from the pipe that had seeped through the door. Filthy pipe-smoke that would go through almost anything. How many times had he commanded, cajoled, begged Barnum not to smoke in the plant, and how many times had he accepted defeat? Barnum was far too valuable to lose and he knew it. One of these English guys who knew his work, father to son, and proud of it. Proud to work, actually. And proud of the fact that he had been with Simpson's for twenty years, since the first war where he had got the bad leg. Worked like a demon too, when necessary, or when a special job had to be done. No one could match him for knowledge or skill. Barnum was staring at John like the rest, with a quizzical look. He always looked at John Barton like that, as though measuring him. It wasn't unkind, only critical, and full of gentle contempt. Johnny rather liked old Barnum. He took a step farther into the smoke-filled room. There was a respectful murmur of greetings and some of the men rose from their chairs.

“Having a meeting?”

His question fell into the silence like a feather. It floated in the air and no one took it up. Well, if they were going to be like that—— His jaw tightened a little. He was foreman, wasn't he? And he could see several of his

own boys here. There was Jimmy Blynn, and Karl Minos and Oky Black. And over in the corner, sitting by himself in a crutch of the wall, was young Horner, the kid from the Boys' Home. John Barton had not been sure it was a good thing to hire a fellow who had a record, but the boss had brought young Horner down to the shop himself, to introduce him to John.

"Here's a young fellow I want you to find a place for," he had said, and later, he had told John about the kid.

"Needs a firm hand, I imagine," he had said, giving Johnny a look, "good for him to do a job of work—been playing round the streets, drunken father, no mother, that sort of thing, never had a chance, good record at the Home, one of my own specials."

"Yes, Mr. Simpson," Johnny had said. He had heard about F. M.'s "specials" before. The men respected F. M. for his social work.

"More like F. M. and the world'd be a better place," they said over and over. But, come to think of it, it was the men who had been with Simpson's longest who felt that way. Some of the others were inclined to sneer at F. M. for his public spirit. "Whatinhell's he know about us guys. Lettim lay off the holy stuff."

But there was the kid now, leaning with that insolent slant of his, against the wall, not even looking at John Barton standing there, blinking in the lamp-light. However, he had touched his finger to his left eye, in polite salute as John came in.

Finally, someone said, "Well, hello, pal. Workin' night shift?"

It was up to John to take that right, or to make it into a fight. He smiled. The speaker had not been one of his own men.

"I don't want to interrupt, boys," he said, "not at all. I was only looking round, thought I might take a gander

at this shed. It's gonna be repaired for a lathe shop, you know."

There was another silence. He looked in the direction of the last speaker. It was this new hand from shift six. Not in his own group. Nothing to do with him at all. He felt a sense of relief, remembering this. He smiled again, round at everyone.

"He's O.K. My foreman—an all-right guy," young Horner said.

His voice had everything in it that John dreaded, brains, resentment and a sort of bitter humour. The boy moved restlessly, changing position.

"Wanta join?" The new hand of shift six had risen, and now he came forward. He pushed an upturned barrel an inch or two towards John.

It looked inviting, cosy, out of the line of fire, away from trouble. John sank on to it with the grin still on his lips. Might as well. Might as well join. Join what? Well, wait and see.

Evidently nothing more was required of him. No one asked him anything. He took out his plated silver cigarette case and opened it.

"Care to smoke?" He offered it to the new hand, stretching out to do it, and almost upsetting himself on the barrel.

The new hand put out a steady arm. "Have a care," he said. There was nothing in the words, exactly, but a prickle of warning went through John. "Haf u ca-areh." That wasn't English! That wasn't good Canadian lingo. The fellow was a bloody foreigner! Funny he hadn't noticed it before.

He sat firmly into the barrel, pushing his backside hard down. There had been a small titter when he slipped. Must keep them in their place. Foreman, wasn't he? Must hold up the position.

Barnum was leaning forward, knocking out his pipe. His thin mouth looked positively slit-like. John stared at him, wondering what he was thinking, but as usual it was impossible to tell. His hatred of "foreigners" burned up strong in him. It never occurred to him to question it, to enquire within himself where he had got it. These things seem to come into the blood like a germ, creeping unseen. He stiffened on his barrel, and lit a cigarette with hands he kept steady, and breath that came evenly.

They looked at him sitting there. No one disliked him. There was not enough in him to dislike. A good foreman when it comes to the job. Knew what he was talking about. A hard worker too. Never asked a guy to do anything he couldn't do himself. But a no-good chap when it came to fraternizing. Stuck up. Too much education. High-hat. A natty dresser. Bath every day, probably, never came to work unshaven. All those things that made for uneasiness.

However, he was in now. DeKoffe had invited him. DeKoffe knew his onions. They settled back on their barrels and their teetery wooden chairs. The interruption had cleared the air anyhow. It had tended to get too emotional, too keyed-up. What deKoffe said was O.K. in the main, but there was always a bit too much of it, and some of it sounded dangerous too, when he got going. This war he said was coming. One or two of them had been in the first war, and one war was enough! Good times were supposed to have come out of it, but they hadn't. And now, another war? Ridiculous. How was deKoffe to be so sure? Who would want to be ass enough to start another when everyone knew it meant discomfort for everyone?

But deKoffe was saying, "In Russia every man is free. He is not a wage-slave. Every man shares equally with

his neighbour. In Russia there are no filthy rich men with automobiles and diamonds for their women while we starve."

John Barton looked up from his cigarette. Starve? He glanced around. Barnum was tamping down his tobacco, his face inscrutable. In the background, Jimmy Blyn the Irishman was scratching behind one ear, and his lips were turned up in a funny way. John Barton wondered if he was supposed to be smiling or if he had a pain somewhere. The Swede, Karl Minos, was listening intently with that meat-axe of a face of his that showed nothing at any time, and Oky Black was sitting there with his black brows creased in the effort of concentration. He looked eager, as though what deKoffe was saying had cast a spell over him. Oky Black was one of Simpson's best workmen, a mechanic with a flair for small invention. He had made a gadget which he had turned over to Mr. Simpson, and which had saved the firm a lot of money.

DeKoffe was saying, "In Russia, the working man shares equally with the master. There are no masters. All benefit from all work. If a man benefits the work, he receives honour."

"What about some dough? Who cares a bloody damn for honour?"

It was young Horner. His eyes were flashing with fury. He slid down from his place in the crotch of the building. He pushed his way through hurriedly, his face red.

"You talk a hell of a lot of poppycock," he said, "and anyhow this isn't Russia. This is Canada. We have laws here. There's laws against guys like you spouting stuff like that."

Surprise kept them silent. John stared at young Horner, his mouth open and the cigarette hanging loosely from relaxed jaws. He never would have expected this from the lad. Done time for stealing. Beaten up

by a drunken father. All that. You would have thought he would have a scunner against society. And here he was speaking up for it. Bully boy !

DeKoffe was angry, but he wasn't showing it. He was quite pale, and his cheek-bones stood out. But training told in the end. He had been taught carefully and well. The guy wasn't for them. O.K. Out. Let him go. There were plenty of others.

He smiled at Horner placatingly. "You are rather young to know how these things are." He spoke quietly, gently, as though to a child.

Horner said heatedly, "I know plenty." No one contradicted, or laughed. They knew he knew plenty.

"But Mr. Simpson put me wise. I got books he gave me to read. I never knew all that before. I never knew anything. I gotta long ways to go now ; but this stuff is tripe. Russia ! Give me Canada ! If you guys listen to this stuff you're nuts."

He was at the door now, his eyes blazing. He glared at deKoffe, ignoring his smile and his careful control. As he pushed the door open, it fell out with a small thud. He stepped over it, and was off before anyone spoke. Then there was a short bark of a laugh from Barnum. His pipe had gone out and he held it in the palm of a huge horny hand.

"Well, well," said Oky Black, "our little convict's lousy with education is he ? I know how to can that." He slid down from his seat, and started for the door ; but deKoffe stopped him.

"Please !" he said. It sounded like "pliss."

"We do not wish to coerce anyone," he said in a soft voice, "we are not here to fight among ourselves but to further the cause of brotherhood. We must not be impatient. We can wait."

"That's what you said before."

Without his volition, John Barton had spoken up. As he did so he caught old Barnum's eye and something flashed between them. Barnum was looking at him warmly, with friendliness. There was no trace of that quizzical, critical expression which had made John squirm all along, ever since he had met the man.

Barnum was getting up stiffly, flexing his leg.

"I've 'ad abaht enough for one time," he said, "good night, all."

He started for the door. There was a restless movement, and deKoffe sensed it. He turned deferentially to Barnum.

"Yes, you are right. It is after ten-thirty. We will meet again next week. I will notify you all where we will go, if this building is not available."

"I'll jolly well see it isn't," thought John grimly. "And no other place in this works either."

Something had jelled in his mind; and Barnum's approval was like a warm douche. It made him glow with happiness. He would talk it over with Barnum later on, maybe. Discuss things. He looked shyly in Barnum's direction, but he was already going out of the doorway without a backward glance. His neck looked stiff and uncompromising as usual. John sighed, and rose. "Well, boys, good night. Thanks for letting me join you."

There was a small chorus of acknowledgement. One of them said, "*Good* night, Mister Barton."

The night air was cool on his face, but the earth felt warm and smelled of sawdust. It was August 1939.

## Chapter 8

THE sense of urgency which had started unexpectedly, persisted. Waldo's breathing became laboured, heavy. Sweat dripped through his glands and into his tongue. Saliva slobbered on to the clean floor of the kitchen, and still the excitement laboured in him.

Then his mind cleared. He heard the bell ringing, and his head went up. He barked furiously, sleepily at first, and as the bell continued to ring, with more determination. He ran out into the hall and stood barking and barking. The front door bell went on ringing and ringing. The house reverberated with the desire of whoever it was outside, to come in, to make a mark on the silence.

Hilda Minson's door opened and she started down the stairs.

She said, "Hush, Waldo, what a noise, what a bad doggie."

"Oh, red ants!" Waldo said huffily. He turned his back and started to go into the kitchen again, through the swing door. And then he stopped. Curiosity got him. Who was it at the door? Not that it mattered, but since he had become a dog he was much more curious that he had been before.

Hilda was still clucking admonitorily at Waldo as she opened the door. Waldo squirmed happily as he saw who it was standing there. It was Benny Warren. She had on a new wine-coloured coat with a soft grey fur collar, and a small toque of the fur under which her hair looked brighter than it had seemed before. She was looking at Hilda Minson enquiringly with a formal smile.

“Welfare Federation,” she said. “May I collect your subscription? I wrote you a letter——”

“Oh, my *dear*,” said Hilda with a small giggle, “I’m so sorry. I forgot. I absolutely forgot. It just went out of my mind completely.”

“What exaggeration!” Waldo thought. “What blithering dither.”

He looked closely at Hilda, and noticed that she was flushed, and that her eyes shone. “Well, well,” thought Waldo, “poor girl, she certainly looks all brightened up.”

He came forward eagerly, wanting to be noticed by Benny and she said suddenly, seeing him, “Why, that’s—why, it’s the cute puppy that Paul——”

She turned her big eyes on Hilda, with surprise in them.

“Of course! Minson & Jives! That’s where Paul works. I didn’t connect it until now.”

“Do come in,” said Hilda, fluttering her hands towards the living-room. She shivered prettily, “Boo, it’s getting cold. Winter again. I always dread it, don’t you?”

“Well, pup, and how are things?”

Benny was holding out a small hand in a grey suède glove to Waldo. But Waldo was learning. He came forward slowly. His tail wagged, true, but otherwise he was very sedate. He was proud of himself. He sniffed at Benny’s hand in the glove, but did not slobber on it. He followed the two women into the living-room as sedately as he had come forward. He noticed as he did so, that Benny wore seamless nylons, and that Hilda’s were seamed, and crooked, very crooked. But the legs gave Waldo a thrill, as always. Yes, the woman had the gams, all right.

“Now where did I get that expression?” Waldo was ruminating, as he turned round a couple of times on the white hearth-rug before settling down to listen. “And why are her seams so crooked?”

He grinned to himself, thinking of the closed door upstairs.

Hilda was saying, "I'll get my cheque-book. It's in the desk. I'm dreadfully sorry to make you come all this way. Now let me see, what did I give last year?"

"Ah ha," thought Waldo, "vague about most things, but knows how to think O.K. when it comes to the cheque-book. Well, well."

Hilda was fiddling in a cluttered desk at the side of the room, chattering on about it, while Benny sat quietly. She had thrown back the collar of the coat and Waldo could see the lines of a very nice figure in a grey woollen dress underneath. He lifted one ear, and Benny saw him. She smiled at him.

"You're cute," she said again.

"I do wish——" said Waldo, smiling back.

Hilda Minson had found her cheque-book. She came back to the sofa with it, glancing at a paper she held in her hand.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars. And Curtis gave one thousand dollars I see. Well, I think he will give the same this year, but I can't be sure."

"Mr. Minson is on another list."

Benny was studying the names on the paper in her hand. She looked very pretty, and determined. It suited her. Waldo felt that she wouldn't let Hilda off with less, and would try to get more.

He was sleepy again, and their voices soothed him. He drooped his ears against the rug and his eyes closed. When he was half-asleep, he remembered things more clearly. He was remembering a time when he had been asked to contribute to the ski-club fund, and had had to give them his last dollar. It was when he had first come to Montreal, after his step-father's death. He had a good job, but it was hard to make ends meet in a big city, and

he thought he had to join the ski-club. Besides, he needed the exercise on holidays and week-ends in winter. He had gone without food for two days, in order to keep in the ski-club.

He looked at the two women sitting there, and wondered rather bitterly if they knew anything at all about the people they were collecting for.

"At the Settlement, where I've been working for some time," Benny was saying, "we see the need right under our eyes."

"O.K. I'm wrong again," Waldo thought. He looked at the girl with growing interest. "So she pitches in where she sees the need. Good for her!" he thought with a new respect for her.

He looked at the two women, and now he could see the faint tracery of the wire webbing around them both. Hilda's had got very strong again, and Benny's was clear too. He hadn't noticed hers before now. But there it was. "It's when people disagree," he decided, "it comes when people aren't thinking together."

He heard the small hard note in Benny's voice as she said, "We feel that the need is greater this year and that people should increase their subscriptions."

She was looking directly at Hilda Minson as she said this. Hilda stared down uncertainly at her cheque-book. She had a pen in her hand now, and was biting her lip. Finally, as Benny did nothing to break a silence Hilda found embarrassing, she said, "Oh well, I'll give ten dollars more then."

"Oh, Mrs. Minson, ten dollars? *Ten* dollars?"

Hilda giggled. "Yes, ten dollars," she said regaining her poise, "yes indeed, that's enough, all we can afford. We cannot continue to support these charities as we have in the past, you know, when the government takes away so much in taxes. Why, do you know—" she paused to

make it effective, and looked up at Benny, "do you know how much mink has gone up? And I simply must have my coat done over this year. It hasn't been touched for five years, and it looks a sight. In fact, I may have to get a new coat."

"I see," said Benny. She did not raise her eyebrows or her voice. She watched Hilda's hand tracing two hundred and sixty dollars on the blue paper, and Waldo could not read her expression. Hilda's hand was quite firm, writing the two hundred and sixty dollars. She brought out the extra ten, the sixty, with a flourish of her pen.

"She thinks she's being goddam generous to add the ten," Waldo thought, lifting his head. Benny's was still lowered. She showed no emotion; she accepted the blue paper from Hilda with gravity, folded it and tucked it inside a sheaf of cheques held together with a wide elastic band. She had intended to obtain a pledge from Mrs. Minson for much more, but with some people, it was safer to take the money while one could get it. She rose, pulling the collar of her coat closer to her throat.

There was a grinding of gears outside, and someone blew a fancy klaxon twice in a determined manner. Hilda Minson rushed to the window, fluttering with excitement.

"It's Nancy," she said to the room at large, as though both Waldo and Benny knew who Nancy was without asking. "It's darling Nancy, back from abroad. Oh, how exciting!"

Before Benny could get herself outside the room the front door was pushed open and a woman came into the hall. She wore a tight copper-coloured tweed suit, with a tiny waist and a long slim skirt that clung to her thighs as she walked. The shoulders were much narrower than Waldo had seen before on women's suits, and she wore

long narrow leather pumps, with a curved heel, like the ones his mother used to wear years ago. Looking at her from the shoes up, one might have made the mistake of thinking her old-fashioned, but one glance at Nancy Hibberd from hat downward would have quickly dispelled any impression of old-world. She was neat and lacquered from hair to pumps, and she brought a whiff of expensive perfume into the house that made the occupants feel gay and wanton at once. Even Benny, who disliked Nancy on sight, could not help brightening when she saw her clothes.

“Feminine, darlings, very, very feminine,” Nancy Hibberd said, nodding to them both, seeing their attention on her. “The latest, definitely, just off Dior’s ice-box, fresh as lettuce.”

She laughed, crinkling up her nose in a way people had told her was fascinating. She had a row of dazzling teeth, and a large thin heavily rouged mouth that looked avid and dangerous. As she spoke, she slung her hand-bag on to the hall bench with a soft clatter, and it fell to the floor just under Waldo’s nose. He moved forward an inch, gingerly, and was about to touch it with his paw, when Hilda gave a shriek, and sprang at him.

“Naughty, naughty, don’t touch,” she cried, and stooped to snatch the bag from him.

He backed away in irritation, growling. “Aw foo, I was only trying to recapture—” he said. He went on backing. The perfume was reminding him of something, but what it was eluded him. Nancy let out a laugh that seemed surprisingly hearty, and did not match the rest of her. Waldo looked up in astonishment and relief.

“Why, you nice fellow,” Nancy said, seeing Waldo for the first time. “Why, you’re a swell dog. Come and make friends.”

“Thanks,” Waldo said, “you’re the first person I’ve met who hasn’t drooled and called me cute. Thanks.”

He came eagerly over to Nancy, and sniffed at her hand. She wore a large ring on her second finger. Waldo had always disliked women who wore rings on their second fingers, but this time he was mollified. Nancy scratched him behind his ears, and he could tell that she knew dogs. It was a relief. He smiled broadly.

Hilda was looking at the hand-bag with reverence. “Nancy, what a beauty,” she said enviously. It was real envy, without malice in it, but to Benny, who was standing impatiently at one side waiting to get away, it sounded exaggeratedly awe-struck. There was real desire in Hilda’s voice, a desire that was open and unself-conscious. Benny thought, “She *wants* it. I bet she wants that bag more than she ever wanted anything in her life, even her husband.” Scorn was in her, and a feeling of impatience. The bag was beautiful, yes, and opulent, but to Benny it was not a symbol of anything in particular. She did not wait to remember that it had not always been this way, that once she had had her own Want-it-Awfully stage, and had outgrown it.

She moved to the door, brushing against Nancy’s shoulder as she did so. Waldo was still preening himself under Nancy’s scented hand, and did not pay any attention.

“Good-bye, Mrs. Minson, and thank you,” said Benny.

Hilda fluttered forward and stepped neatly and plunk on Waldo’s tail. He howled in fury.

“Oh dear, poor little doggie,” she said flustered, waving her hands about between Benny and Nancy.

“Oh god, Hilda, don’t call him doggie, they hate it,” Nancy said. She stooped and picked Waldo up and nearly asphyxiated him with the perfume. Hilda said to Benny :

“ May I introduce my friend, my great friend, Mrs. Hibberd.” It was obvious to Benny that she was inordinately proud of knowing Nancy. She added, “ We went to school together, didn’t we, darling ? ”

Nancy said, “ Oh, Miss Warren and I are old friends.” She wasn’t too pleased at Hilda’s remark. After all, Hilda Minson was several years older than she, and looked fifteen more. Waldo felt her arms tighten in distaste. “ Vain is it ? ” Waldo thought, “ and with that nose too.” He looked up into Nancy’s face, and away again quickly. And why in Polly did women have to daub themselves with perfume so strong it made a fellow actually faint ?

He suddenly started struggling to get down ; but Nancy did not respond. It irked her that he should want to leave her. She clung to him more tenaciously, and her hand which had been caressing, became almost cruel. Hilda was showing Benny out of the door. She had quite a different manner towards her now that she knew Nancy had met her before.

Benny went down the steps quickly. The interview had annoyed her, and she was very disappointed not to have got more than ten dollars extra out of Hilda. Hilda had turned back into the hall, leaving the door not quite closed. She almost ran into the living-room, rushed at Nancy and embraced her with gusto.

“ Darling, you look super,” she said, copying youthful vernacular. It sounded false and coy, but her eyes were full of excitement and pleasure. It gave her an immense satisfaction to entertain Nancy Hibberd, to call her Nancy like an intimate, to pretend that she moved in the same circles as her friend. She saw Waldo struggling to get out of Nancy’s arms, and said with a little laugh, “ Now, Waldo, you lucky, lucky doggie, you don’t *know* how many boys would give their all to be where you are.”

Nancy let Waldo drop with a flop onto the sofa. His feet squished into the soft cushion and he leapt to the floor with a visible loss of dignity. He had forgotten his first liking for Nancy Hibberd. Now he was beginning to loathe her. Without a backward glance he went into the hall and to the door. He pushed it farther open with his nose and slipped out into the cool autumn air.

Inside the room, Nancy Hibberd was acceding to Hilda's almost fervent invitation to take off her coat. It gave Hilda more sense of belonging to Nancy's place in Society, when she had her coat off, and was eating or drinking her salt and liquor.

"Thanks, darling," Nancy was saying languidly, "any decent wine in the house? I'm off hard liquor. I haven't had a drop of anything but wine since I left."

"Oh *dear*," Hilda said in dismay, her elation vanishing, "I don't believe—I don't think Curtis—oh dear, would some sherry do?"

"Oh, I'll have a rye," Nancy said and laughed. "Don't get so worked up. I'll have to get used to it again, I suppose."

She moved her hands down her figure voluptuously. "I've lost pounds," she said, and looked slyly at Hilda's waist.

Hilda flushed. "I have too," she said quickly, eagerly. "I took the clockwork diet and I lost at least fifteen pounds."

"What about the rye, darling?" Nancy said.

Hilda looked as though she was going to cry. She had looked forward to hearing Nancy say, "Why, Hilda, my sweet, you're thinner. Honest to god."

But Nancy never did what was expected of her. In fact, Hilda had to admit she was forced to put up with a great deal to remain friends with her. But it was worth it. The rare occasions when Nancy invited her to lunch,

the rarer ones when she accepted invitations to come to Hilda's house, where she could be shown off. All this was well worth the somewhat caustic nature of her friendship for Hilda.

Hilda took her flustered finger off the bell. "Oh goodness, I forgot," she said, "the maids are out."

"O.K. I'll pour my own," Nancy said. She got up and followed Hilda out of the room. Hilda had a very rudimentary idea of drinks, and Nancy liked hers strong.

"What's Europe like?" Hilda said as she opened the wine cupboard door. "Tell me all."

Nancy was eyeing the full bottle of rye with an expression that was almost voracious. Wine was all very well, but sometimes a gal needs a drink of something stronger. This was one of the times. She had hoped to bring Jerry to heel by going away for two months, but it had evidently had the opposite effect. She had called him twice and each time he had been evasive. Thinking of Jerry, Nancy's jaw was working, and her nose looked larger than ever under the small cloche she wore.

"It's exactly what I imagined it was going to be," she said. "I only went to London and Paris, but it was painfully corroborative."

Hilda stared at her. Nancy became like this sometimes, after trips. Spruced up, and using long words. Hilda would simply have to wait until the mood passed and Nancy got more human again.

She started to say meditatively, "painfully corrob—" and then with one of her shrewd flashes of insight, she thought it might be a good idea to create a diversion, so she started back into the hall. The front door stood wide open. Hilda gave a shriek. "He's gone! Waldo's gone."

It was true. Waldo was nowhere to be seen.

## Chapter 9

WALDO was getting tired. A shadow of grey dust lay softly on his black coat, and his paws hurt from walking so far on the hard pavements. It had been easy at first to follow Benny's steps by this new thing he had to cope with, his nose. Scent. The emotional feeling of it. Now, however, he had lost her scent and was merely walking on aimlessly, by instinct heading towards the downtown district, and he had no sensation of being lost, no fear of that, but he was really very weary and he wanted a drink badly.

He had followed Benny's scent quite a long way but, in crossing a street at a crowded corner, something had distracted him from his pursuit of her and he had definitely lost her. Then there was the man to get away from.

The man was a bad lot. He wore a good suit, unpressed (probably stolen, Waldo thought, studying it) and a flashy tie. His hands were small and they twitched (probably drugs, Waldo thought). He had spots of colour on his cheek-bones (probably rouge, one of *those* Waldo thought) and his eyes shifted from side to side, never quite focusing. But Waldo knew he had spotted him by the way he started to follow him.

The green light gave Waldo a lead on the man and he thought he had lost him, but no, there he was behind him again, walking fast to keep up with Waldo and whistling under his breath. His hands were in his pockets but Waldo could see the twitching from where he stood, which was in the doorway of a shop. Waldo looked longingly into the shop, thinking he might take shelter there, but a woman came out in a hurry and

nearly tripped over Waldo. She said, "Damn, why in hell can't people shop without taking their puppies and kids along!"

Waldo had begun to be accustomed to being admired, so this annoyed him a little. Besides he had always had a penchant for women to whom children and dogs went trustingly. He slithered quickly out of the way of her too-narrow shoes, and noticed that the man was gaining on him, so he ran out into the street and darted in among the feet, casting a wary glance behind him to see if the man were still there. He was. He saw Waldo's manoeuvre and hastened his steps.

So, he was a quarry now! A fellow couldn't even take a stroll on a free street without being in danger! Being a dog was not pleasant at certain times, and this was one of them. Waldo was conscious of his smallness. A man passed with a large dog on a leash and Waldo did not like the leering expression in the dog's eyes as they passed. Effie! Good lord, perhaps—he began to run in earnest. He heard drifts of conversation, "Cute, cute, cute, look at him run, poor little tyke, cute, gee, someone's lost him, atta boy, beat it for home, the cops are after you," laughter, kindness, meanness, niceness, cruelty. The voices raced passed him.

He came to the corner of Peel and St. Catherine Streets, and just as the man was about to catch up with him, Waldo smelt something. He smelled a good scent, and stopped.

Paul Sturt said, "Well, I'll be doggoned!"

Waldo went wild with joy. He leapt up on Paul's leg, his tongue fairly slathering. Over his shoulder he saw the man stop and turn away. The crowd milled about them, and Paul picked Waldo up and held him affectionately. "It's not smart, it's not smart at all. I thought better of you," Paul said, but his voice was kind.

Waldo said, "Well, I could not stand Hilda Minson and that Nancy woman another minute. And besides, I knew you'd be around here somewhere."

Paul laughed at Waldo's little barks. He said, "O.K. O.K. I know how it is. But the question is now what do I do with you? I have to drive to Ottawa. I'm late now, and tomorrow night I've got an important date with a lovely lady in the country, a date that is very much looked forward to by me."

He looked down in perplexity at Waldo, and Waldo said eagerly, "Take me along. I like the country and I like the girls."

"That's all very well, but you'd be one Polly of a nuisance."

"Oh, I would not!" Waldo said. The whole idea excited him. He said, "I'm bored stiff by the Minsons, and I wanna go with you."

Paul looked grave. He was late. Curtis Minson had kept him with some of the endless details which he thought it necessary to take out of the hands of the subordinates. This was an important trip he had given Paul to make—he wished he could make it himself. However, a big deal in Toronto was in the offing, so he delegated Paul to go into the Buck & Ligne matter with his friend in the government in Ottawa.

Paul said worriedly, "I won't have time to drive you all the way home first. How the devil you found your way down to Peel Street I wouldn't know. But I'm damn glad you didn't get lost or stolen."

He held Waldo tighter and went into a cigar store to telephone. Curtis Minson was on a plane going to Toronto. There was no one in the Minson house. Hilda had gone out, probably looking for Waldo.

Paul put another nickel in the phone and called Curtis Minson's secretary. He told her to be sure to let Hilda

Minson know where Waldo was. After ringing off he looked down at Waldo. "Well, I shall just have to take you."

Waldo leapt up and down in Paul's arms with excitement. "Let's have a drink, like a good fellow," he said, his ears drooping, "and I'm ravenous. I haven't had anything to eat since eight o'clock this morning, when that cook of theirs gave me a lump of dog-food." His tongue went out farther in pleading.

"You're beguiling, but a nuisance," Paul said. "I suppose this melting expression means you're hungry." He sighed, but Waldo's response to his suggestion was unmistakable, so he walked across the street to Child's. The café was almost empty; Paul walked over to a small table at the side, and sat down with Waldo on his lap.

A waitress sauntered over and looked disapprovingly at them. "We don't——" she began.

"Feed dogs," Paul finished for her. "But this once, please, just a saucer of water and some sort of biscuit."

Waldo smiled at the girl. She was a blonde and pretty, and Waldo looked small and adorable. Also Paul was very handsome, and the waitress's boy-friend had started going with another girl. She smiled with a row of blackened teeth.

"I haven't the faintest idea what you'll get, but you'll take it and like it," Paul said, smiling. He put Waldo down on another chair. Waldo lay down, his ears drooping over the chair edge. As usual, he looked cute. The hostess sauntered near but the place was almost empty, and after all Paul was a handsome guy, and a man with his dog always got her somehow. Reminded her of something, a movie maybe, anyhow it went deep into her. She was about to approach Paul and Waldo but the waitress was hurrying along with a tray, so the

hostess moved off in a dignified, even haughty, way. She thought she looked right, doing it like that, but why she must look haughty she had not the least idea. Got it in a movie, maybe, or from a woman's magazine. Anyhow, she was quite sure she looked right being haughty.

The waitress set the tray down on a small table behind Paul, and Waldo suddenly sat up and sniffed. She had brought a basin of warm milk with some arrowroot biscuits soaked in it. There was also a soup bowl of clear cold water, without any disinfectant in it.

Waldo lapped the water eagerly. The girl said tentatively, "Kinda thirsty, aren't you, fella? Some folks don't understand how dogs are. Some folks would let a dog get thirsty without knowing."

Paul looked up at her, relieved that Waldo was being looked after without any trouble. He put his hand on Waldo's head lightly. "He got away from me," he said. "He's had a long walk, all the way from Lavenue Road in Westmount."

The girl's cheeks turned a little pink. She busied herself with the tray and some dishes on the shelf under it.

"Lavenue Road! Jeez. Well, he doesn't look it. He looks kinda nice and ordinary. Well, you never can tell. Oh well, I guess he thinks he's too good for a girl like me." Her thoughts were unspoken.

But Paul's nice grey eyes were smiling up into hers, and when he smiled there was this compelling charm of his that did things to people. "You see, he's not my dog," Paul said. "He belongs to my boss."

"Oh," said the waitress relieved. She flashed her teeth at him again, and Waldo looked up and saw the smile.

"Why doesn't she go to the dentist?" he thought impatiently. He was remembering Effie again. But in the war, in England, it was very difficult to get the

attention of a dentist. He looked away from the girl's mouth in distaste. There were a few drops of the milk and biscuit left, so he cleaned the dish carefully with his tongue.

Paul was thinking, "Poor gal, needs a dentist, be much better-looking with good teeth, quite pretty in fact." He said, "Thank you very much indeed," and picked Waldo up, tucking the check into his collar as he did so. He left a quarter on the table for the waitress.

"Well, maybe he'll be back," the waitress thought, watching his broad shoulders recede. Hope springs eternal ; that is the only way to keep going. And on her hours off, she listened to Life Can Be Beautiful. It kept up her spirits. She was a nice girl, and her next boyfriend would be just the same as her first and walk out on her. But she did not know this. She looked at her watch and walked determinedly over to the head waitress, her lips set in firmness.

"O.K. with you? I'm off," she said.

The head waitress nodded in the professionally reluctant way she had learned in the hostess school. "Never let anyone get the better of you, keep 'em in their place, staff and clients, don't take back-chat from anyone and no plugged nickels either."

Her face looked like that.

Paul set Waldo down on the cash desk and put the required change under his nose. "Must learn to pay your own way," he said. Waldo nosed the coins, and in doing so pushed them closer to the rubber mat near the cashier's hand.

"My, isn't he cute, well trained too."

She gave Paul his change with a wide smile. Nice guy, with a dog. Always liked a man who liked dogs. Did something to her. And a man who smoked a pipe too. Same thing, kinda. Went together. Real gentle-

men smoked pipes and wore rings on their little fingers. And the dog's tongue was black, a thoroughbred too. Oh well, I suppose he thinks he's too good for a girl like me.

But Paul's smile lingered with her together with the small wag of his tail that Waldo gave her as Paul picked him up from the counter.

"People like that," Waldo thought, "small fry." Unlike Paul he had little patience with small fry. He felt that they wouldn't be where they were if they had what it takes to step higher. He forgot his own experience.

Paul stopped outside the door to take a pull on his pipe.

"That's a nice ring you got," Waldo said.

Paul said, "Well, come along. I'll get my car." He sounded excited and happy. They turned the corner of Peel Street and walked along St. Catherine. At the corner of Drummond, the man suddenly appeared at his elbow.

"Got a dime for a veteran?"

Waldo, from the safe shelter of Paul's arms, gave an angry bark. He made a babylike leap towards the man in mock attack. The man's hands were out of his pockets and they were still twitching in a nasty way. Paul stopped and looked at him. He saw the row of ribbons on his lapel and said casually, "What was your outfit?" His voice sounded stiff. He felt bad about the man. But after the man had answered two questions incorrectly, he said sternly, "Run along and peddle somewhere else. I would suggest another beat."

Waldo started to sing, "It nearly broke the family's heart, when Mary Jane——"

"Shut up, Waldo," Paul said. He turned away from the man and put one foot off the pavement, watching the yellow light.

“ Show you some places you never been in Montreal. A lotta nice places, show ya a good time.”

The green light flashed on and Paul started to cross the street. Waldo settled cosily into his arm and winked back at the man.

“ When Mary Jane became a tart,” he finished triumphantly.

“ Listen, you,” Paul said firmly, “ no barking. I mean it.”

Barking indeed ! But it was barking all the same. Oh damn and blast. He sang the rest of the song under his breath, breathing heavily and snorting. “ So they bought her an expensive beat—” he muttered, and then he saw the man standing at the edge of the curb they had left. He had his head down and his face was tragic. Waldo stopped singing and sighed.

“ Montreal’s getting to be a bold bad place,” Paul said. “ It used to be a small town with small-town vices. Now it’s all grown up.”

“ It happened during the war,” Waldo said, wondering how he knew this. He had left Montreal to go overseas in 1939. It bothered him not to remember.

Paul was at the wicket, giving the number of his car to the man in the garage. He set Waldo down on the counter, and the man behind the window leaned forward.

“ Yes, I’m cute, damn cute, very cute, terribly cute ! ” Waldo was angry, and he was tired too, and the biscuits were coming up in his mouth. Baby food ; and he was still hungry. He dared the man to say anything, standing on the counter on his still slightly wobbly paws, his nose pointed upward belligerently.

“ Waldo ! ” Paul said admonishingly. “ What’s got into you, you used to be friendly. What’s the matter ? ”

“ They grow up like humans,” the man said. “ Things happen to ’em. Embitter ’em. Like love, or housing.”

Paul laughed. "Well, I don't think he's suffered much of life's sorrow yet," he said, "he's just a pup. But I imagine you're right."

"Damn tooting," said Waldo with a snuffing and scowling. He turned his back on the window, realizing that he had been very unfair. The man hadn't said a word to him, after all. He felt a fool, and when Paul put him down on the seat of the car he sat himself down with a disgruntled thump, swallowing. "If it was any other guy, I'd throw it up," he thought, "but you're my pal." He swallowed heavily, and the bile went shudderingly down again into his stomach.

"I hope you won't be car-sick," Paul said as they drove smoothly out into the lane.

Waldo looked up at him adoringly. "For you," he was thinking sleepily, "for you, I'd go and kick a greyhound in its ugly pointy teeth."

It was so easy, thinking bravely, all sheltered and safe like this. Greyhounds and men with twitching hands faded into a blue haze.

"Lemme tell you," he started to say, and stopped. When he had been a man he had been a bit of a boaster, a braggart. Now, something stopped him from going on with what he had been about to relate to Paul. It was an incident in the war, not too creditable. He had told it over to himself once or twice, in an instinctive desire to put out a better picture of himself, even to himself. Given a chance he would have told the story that way many times, gradually forgetting how it had really been in the beginning. "We have to falsify everything," he thought. "I wonder we haven't grown out of that."

Paul put his hand gently on his head. "Sleepy, old fellow?"

The car sped quickly towards Ottawa, Paul and Waldo saying nothing, Paul concentrating on the driving. It

was important to reach Ottawa in time to get hold of this man whom he must interview for Curtis Minson. It was important to see him tonight ; then he could get away early tomorrow, get going on the way to Lac Beau regard in the mountains, where he was to meet Benny and the house party. As they swung on to the broad highway Paul started driving faster. He settled into it rhythmically.

“ Let me tell you how I feel about it, Waldo,” he said. He started telling Waldo. Waldo slept peacefully, lulled by the deep, pleasant drone of Paul’s voice, and the hum of the car.

## Chapter 10

THE car gave a small lurch and Waldo shot upright, his ears lifting. Paul had swung out widely to avoid a car which refused to move over to the side of the road. As he passed it, the car's left-hand wheels were well over the painted line. Paul was going a nice sixty. Waldo gave him a reproachful glance as he leaned on the window and saw that their car slithered past the other with only a narrow margin to spare. He stretched up and yelled to the driver : " Yah, get over on your own side if you can't keep up with the traffic ! " His furious barks were drowned in the roar of the wind whistling through the windows.

Paul Sturt turned his head. " Well, well, we are awake, are we ? " he said benevolently.

The drive was calming him. It always did. There was something strangely restful about the constant rhythmic alertness of conducting a car through traffic in the country on these straight ribbons of highways. It took all one had of concentration, and left something over for thinking.

The offending car was soon left far behind. Waldo still leant on the window, gazing threateningly back at the driver. He dropped down on to the seat and looked at Paul. As he did so, he noticed that the web was clearing, the web that had enveloped Paul as they were passing the car. He remembered vaguely that Paul's voice had been going on and on ruminatingly as Waldo dozed.

Paul said now : " A girl has the right to expect a man to support her. She has the right to a comfortable home

and enough money to keep it nicely. She should have a quiet calm life in which to bring up her children and make a home for her husband. Yes, a girl has a right to expect protection as well as love from her husband."

Waldo turned his head. He said: "Good god, man, you're not talking about *girls*, you're talking about the ladies, bless 'em!" He laughed, a hearty guffaw. It came out in a tiny screaming whine which stopped him up short. It was the first time he had actually laughed out loud since he had become a dog. It sounded ghastly. But when Paul chuckled and said, "What's eating you now?" Waldo thought huffily, "Nothing's eating *me*. But you've got the damndest old-fashioned ideas about women, my lad, and one of these days you will have to change them."

Protection, phooey. Women didn't want to be protected at all. They wanted independence, freedom, a lazy romantic life with no responsibilities, as few children as possible without deflating an ancient egoistic urge, and a male around the house when needed. And not too often, at that! Especially when a new boy-friend loomed up.

Waldo yawned. It tired him not to be able to talk to Paul. It frustrated him terribly. He felt that Paul should know a thing or two which had obviously been left out of his education. Waldo had noticed this about Canadian men. They were lousy with women. They knew so little about the fine art of handling them, mentally or physically. Still, Paul had been overseas in the war, so presumably he had learned. You would never know it, to listen. Protection! A quiet life at home!

"Say, fella, somehow I've got to make you hear this somehow. Women—women don't——"

Paul was saying, "At heart, Benny is like that too. She wants all the things a woman should have. That's

why I hurt her so much by not letting myself go and marrying her when I had no job. I *know* Benny. She's adorable and mannered and sophisticated but, underneath, she wants the fundamental things."

"And the fundamentals cost plenty!" Waldo said. "You've got something there, boy. Week-end trips! And face-creams by the barrel. And smelly bubbles in the bath. And mink. Don't forget the mink."

He looked out at the whirling landscape reminiscently. Not that he had ever been able to afford to give a woman mink. But Effie had accepted quite a lot of pretty decent gifts, such as his cap badge set in real, if small, diamonds for a pin, and once he had bought her an evening dress for a special occasion in London when he and a pal had thrown a party at a swank pub there. Yes, it took dough all right to have women. And it seemed to him there had been another girl—hadn't he gone off the rails once and bought a girl a ring? He couldn't quite remember. It fogged out in his brain. Damn and blast.

The car slowed down. They were approaching Ottawa; they could see the towers of Parliament Hill. It was a lovely day, warm for November, and Paul and Waldo felt happy.

"This man I've got to see, for Curtis," Paul was saying, "it's about the Buck & Ligne business. Old Buck gave them a jolt, a big jolt, by copping that contract. Curtis' precious ego is badly shaken. He thought he had it all in the basket. I shall have to go carefully, snooping around. This fellow I'm to see today is pretty high up, a big bug. It's important to me to do this well." He put his hand on Waldo's neck. "Understand, old boy? It's important to me. I must keep Curtis interested in me. I must pull off what he wants me to pull off. I must collect a position and safety, for Benny."

The way he said "Benny" made Waldo squirm. He had never had that particular note in his voice when speaking of any woman. He had never met any women he could feel that way about. But Paul was a gentleman, a Canadian gentleman; maybe that was why he had these romantic beruffled ideas. Waldo had merely been a Canadian, not a Canadian gentleman! He hadn't known any ladies, only gals.

He had always wanted to be a gentleman but, somehow, he had just missed it. He had had the sense to know it too. He remembered how he felt the first time he had had to go into the officers' mess, just after he had got his commission, in 1943. He had stood in the doorway in a sweat, looking into the smoke-filled room and feeling terrified, actually terrified. Afterwards, after their welcome and casualness, he could see that half of them were like himself, not any more gentleman than he was, just missing it. But in a war it didn't matter.

In a war very little matters except getting through. He had got through. He had got— Waldo whimpered. Something that was always with him, a memory he hated, was struggling to come clear. It was like a cold black thing, hanging over him; a sense of guilt, or fear. He whimpered.

Paul said gently: "Hungry, boy? Well, we'll soon be there, and you can have another biscuit and some more milk."

Biscuit! Milk! Bah! The hateful half-memory vanished. Waldo realized that he was very hungry, and tired too. All this concentrated thinking about women was exhausting. Women were always exhausting. In or out of bed. Women! Why did a man have to be always fussing about women? Effie had been exciting, and life had taken on a new colour after he met her, but worry! Christ, how she had worried him! It was

funny, come to think of it, how clearly he could remember Effie, when other things had faded half or completely.

He stretched and yawned. Protection. There was something in it, after all. He was a puppy, was he? Well, so that called for warmth and a soft bed, and people patting him tenderly on the head as Paul was now doing. Pampering. That was it; women should be pampered. He tucked his nose under Paul's arm as he carried him from the garage. "You gotta get a perspective about gals," he murmured. "Give 'em the illusion of spoiling 'em, but handle 'em firmly. Don't let a woman ever get the upper hand, ever boss you round."

Paul's hand was still gentle and friendly on his head.

"Sorry, sir, but you can't take your dog to the room." The voice sounded adamant, from over the hotel counter.

Paul was saying, "Oh, come now, he's not a dog, he's only a small puppy, he'll stay quiet."

"Sorry, sir, you can't leave him in the room."

"Well, all right then. I shall have to take him along to the Minister."

There was a visible change in the clerk's face. "Well, perhaps—if you were to put your puppy under your coat—but, sir, if he barks—you understand? It would mean my job."

"Bark? Like to hear it? He makes about as much noise as a cricket."

Both men laughed, and Waldo burrowed sensitively farther under Paul's arm. Paul said, "He's intelligent, almost human, aren't you, Waldo, old boy?"

"He's cute," the clerk said. "Well, here's your key, sir. Boy!"

The bellboy was picking up Paul's suitcase. He looked sideways at Waldo and Waldo did not like the

expression in his eyes, didn't like it at all. He looked as though he would be the kind of boy who would tie tin cans to a dog's tail. There was a web around him as thick as the one he had seen around Hilda Minson when she started upstairs to go to her bedroom that time.

Paul had seen the boy's expression too. He said soothingly, to Waldo, "You can have a nap and your milk, and by that time I hope I shall have the appointment. Then you can come with me."

Waldo's tongue went out in a small lick on Paul's hand. He *was* a nice guy, this Paul Sturt; he was the sort of guy a woman—oh damn and blast, there he was starting about women again! He was asleep when Paul deposited him on the bed in the room and sent down to room service for milk and toast. He started to telephone. Waldo slept peacefully, hearing Paul's voice through it. As the waiter came into the room with the milk, a bottle of ginger ale and a sandwich, Paul was saying: "Why, you old son-of-a-gun, what a piece of luck for me, you being his nibs's secretary, confidential at that! You can see me in half an hour? Fine! I'll feed my puppy and have a quick one myself, and be there on the dot. G'bye. God bless."

He tipped the waiter, and said to Waldo, who opened one eye reluctantly, "That was old Hampshire. Confidential Sec. to the Minister I have to see. What do you know about that for luck!"

The waiter went respectfully out of the room, with Paul's eyes on his back. "You know, Waldo," Paul said as he poured the warm milk over the toast and set the dish on the floor, "this Minister stuff is new to me. I forgot about it over there. But here they've been all this time, warming their chairs with their backsides while we mucked it in France and Africa. Sitting at their nice shiny desks, writing our names on casualty lists with

regretful expressions in their great blue eyes, pinning posthumous medals on the chests of wives and mothers, making rousing speeches about the splendid fellows we were."

But Waldo was guzzling his milk and toast. It was good, too good to bother about Ministers and their desks and vague resentments. When he had finished he licked the bowl very, very clean with his tongue. He did it daintily, much more daintily than he had ever managed to eat corn on the cob when he had been a man. He looked up at Paul. "No time," Paul said firmly; "you had enough anyhow. Must keep your figure, you know. You don't want to have a pot at your age, do you?" He picked Waldo up. He looked at the bed. "I wonder——"

But Waldo was remembering the bellboy. He whined loudly and wriggled. "I wanna go with ya," he said unmistakably.

Paul laughed. "He had a wicked look in his eye, you're right," he said. "Well, O.K. Come along."

They walked to the office of the Minister, along the broad pavement skirting the Parliament Buildings. There was a feeling of evening already in the light.

Paul and Waldo had to wait ten minutes in an outer office before a tall thin young man came out and greeted them. He had a bad limp. He and Paul seemed very glad to see each other.

"Let's go in here," he said, and led them into an inner office. It was stuffy and small, and rather uncomfortable, but the young man seemed proud to be there. He had a very firm and discernible web wrapped closely around all of him. Paul sensed it after a while. Old Hampshire was different somehow—too much officialdom perhaps. But he was accommodating with Paul, if a trifle condescending.

“ I’ll see what I can do,” he kept on saying. He made no move towards the door, however, to make an appointment for Paul with the Minister. After a while, Paul saw that he would have to get the information some other way. He started to pump old Hampshire, and old Hampshire, his thin face flushed with his own importance and the pleasure of showing off to Paul, expanded.

“ Mr. Buck told me,” he said, finally, “ that he could produce what we wanted at the price we wanted to pay.”

“ He told *you* ? ” Paul asked, with a slight rising inflection.

“ Well, he told the Minister, and I was present,” Hampshire said.

It was easy to see that he did not like being pushed into straight simple answers. Yes or No seemed to twist and writhe on his tongue. Waldo grunted once when he said both Yes and No in one sentence. It was fascinating. Training, he supposed. Training for what? Damned useful, he supposed, but useful for what?

Anyhow, Hampshire was being helpful to Paul. Buddies, you know. He was feeling an exquisite pleasure in being able to grant favours, someone else’s favours, without any trouble to himself.

Waldo had a thought. He sat up straight, feeling the hardness of the chair under him. He said, “ It’s the country’s favours you are playing about with, my boy, and don’t you forget it.”

Hampshire turned his head toward Waldo. For a moment he looked as he might have done once, just a nice boy with ideas of getting along, ideas which included hard work, and the desire to make something out of life other than money and power, with ideas of making life fun and harmony and, if lucky, love.

Waldo and Hampshire stared at each other. “ You heard me ! ” Waldo said firmly. “ You heard what I

said about the country. You're supposed to think about that from time to time, you know."

Hampshire smiled kindly at Waldo. "A cute little dog," he said. "Breathes rather heavily. Something wrong with his lungs?"

With a great effort Waldo stopped talking. He had forgotten that everyone was not like Paul, understanding dog language. He could hear his own noises now, just a series of puppy breathings. He drew in his breath, and dripped on the chair instead.

Hampshire looked with some distaste at Waldo. He said to Paul: "The Buck & Ligne offer was satisfactory in every way. It came in well ahead of the others and of course received somewhat special consideration in view of the fact that Mrs. Buck and the Minister's wife are sisters." He laughed.

"So that's how it's done," Paul said a little stiffly.

Hampshire became sober at once, his expression unctuous. "Now, don't get this wrong," he said. "Mr. Buck's relationship to the Minister had nothing to do with it. I only mentioned it as an interesting fact. No, the contract was given to Mr. Buck because he got his offer in first and because his figures were perfectly acceptable."

Paul was thinking, "Well, I'd better thank him. It will save me having to see the Minister. I've got the information Curtis wanted anyhow." He smiled warmly at Hampshire.

"Women!" Waldo said. "Sisters! World'd be a safer place if these high muckamucks ran their affairs by themselves without letting their women push them about."

Paul looked reproachfully at him. He picked him out of the chair.

"Thanks," Paul was saying, "thanks a lot, old boy.

I'll be up to see the Minister another time, when he isn't so busy."

He parried Hampshire's insistence. He felt that old Hampshire would cheerfully keep him waiting round in Ottawa for a week, just in order to impress him, Paul, with his authority and importance. He picked Waldo up, and started for the door. Now he would be able to have the week-end clear. Now he could make his report for Minson and start for the Laurentians early in the morning. Next week he would go to Three Rivers and get that information Curtis wanted, and make a good job of it. And one of these days he would be Curtis Minson's confidential figure-man, on the upgrade towards Vice-President.

Meanwhile, the week-end! Benny would be there, Benny with her green eyes and lips turning up at the corners.

"Ouch! You're squeezing me!" Waldo said. Paul laughed and put the key into the door of the hotel bedroom.

## Chapter II

**B**OWLING along the highway next morning, both Waldo and Paul were in high spirits. "If Curtis wanted to test me out, find out whether I knew my way round Ottawa, this will do something for me. Personally, I can't imagine why he wanted to know where Buck & Ligne got ahead of him, on that deal, but I suppose he felt that the Minister had let him down."

"Old Buck has been going in business in this country for one hell of a longer time than Curtis Minson," Waldo said.

"Of course, Buck & Ligne have connections," Paul said. "They are an old family firm and, besides that, the Bucks have a good record of public service. There have been Bucks in both wars, and Mr. Buck has a fine reputation for generosity when appeals get going."

"Minson only gave one thousand dollars to the Welfare Drive," Waldo said. "I was there when your Benny was trying to collect from Hilda. That was why I ran away. Blather, blather! And that Nancy woman! Thought she was a good egg at first, and then she went high-hat and snobbish on me."

"I thought I said no barking." Paul put out his hand and twisted the button for the cigarette lighter on the dashboard. He looked down at Waldo.

Waldo looked abashed. "Oh gee, was I barking?"

"I know you're only trying to talk to me," Paul said, lighting his cigarette dexterously as they passed a truck, "and it's O.K. as long as you keep it for me only. But when you're out in society, you've got to keep quiet."

"O.K., mum's the word," Waldo muttered, snuffling.

The car sped on quickly, and man and dog were silent. They went through St. Jerome, and past Shawbridge and Ste. Adele. It was a glorious day, with a nip in the air. The quaintly rounded contours of the hills showed themselves nakedly as though proud to be seen in virgin beauty, unadorned with the greens and golds and coppers of the summer and autumn, or by the white majestic mantle of the winter snows. The trees stood quietly, stripped of their foliage, waiting patiently for the sap to drain away into the ground at their roots and freeze deep under the first frosts.

“Looks kinda different,” Waldo said. “I’ve never been up here except for ski-ing. Never seen the mountains except under snow, all white and purple.”

“Here is the turn,” Paul said, making a wide sweep as he guided the car into a side road. “Last time I was here, we came by train, and did this road in a snowmobile.”

The road was bumpy and Waldo had to brace himself on the seat to prevent himself from lurching against Paul. They passed small farms, with unpainted houses and barns, set down for the most part in fields which had yielded their productivity with obvious reluctance. Great boulders stuck starkly up from the earth, and the loam looked dark and uninviting. One could imagine the long white pall of winter, the withdrawal of the people into the houses for the five months of waiting for the spring.

“In Belgium and France and Holland,” Paul said, “you never see a house anywhere without a garden.”

There were none here, no patches of waiting earth, beds ready for flowers. Life is too hard in this Province for flowers. Winter hits hard. It looked dreary, except for the smiling faces and bright sweaters of the people along the way. Smoke drifted into the tree-tops. It was the hour of midday dinner. The strong characteristic

smell of French-Canadian pea soup and cabbage was apparent even to the two in the swiftly moving car.

“ I’m hungry,” Waldo said. He did not mean to make it plaintive, but it was a small whine.

“ All right, we’re almost there. Hold your horses. Here’s a bump ! ”

They lurched into a small driveway, and along the border of a private lake. The leaves were thick on the road, still gold and red, untouched by traffic, and unsullied. The car moved silently over them, caressingly, as though it loved them.

Waldo heard Paul say, “ Benny ! ”

Benny and several others were grouped before the long low house, drinking from tall glasses, and laughing. They wore bright-coloured clothes which looked right against the scene. The house was painted white, with brown outlines around the many windows. In the background, the lake glittered in the sunshine, and Waldo could see a boathouse and a smart jetty with a diving-board. At one side of the house a tennis court lay like a rusty carpet, dusted with drifting leaves.

“ Filthy rich,” Waldo muttered, and Paul gave him a warning squeeze to remind him. Waldo said, grumbly, “ O.K., O.K. No barking.” He subsided into a brief and sulky silence.

They had seen Paul and the car, and were clustering round. Waldo thought they seemed very casual and quiet about it, nothing boisterous or especially glad. However, their eyes were pleased, and a lady with grey hair whom Paul called Mrs. Ferrow took Paul’s hand affectionately and kissed him.

“ Paul, we’re *delighted*,” she said in a soft voice. “ We didn’t hope for you until tonight, really.”

She linked her arm in his, and drew him towards the terrace.

“Hello, Paul, glad you came.” Jerry Ferrow was offering him a glass.

“Help yourself,” he said jovially, pointing to a table set with drinks of all kinds. He was a tall florid man, in a hunting jacket which Waldo saw was badly worn at the collar and cuffs.

“Fellow who can afford a house like this, with a coat full of holes!” Waldo was still sulky; and then he caught sight of a woman in a green suit, narrow at the shoulders, long in the skirt, with diamonds that flashed as she moved. Good god! The Nancy woman! Nancy Hibberd! Waldo ducked his head, but Nancy had seen him too. She came floating forward on a trail of her famous *Mention de Péché*.

“The pooch,” she said, “the unfriendly pooch.”

She put out a long-nailed hand but, as Waldo wriggled under Paul’s arm to avoid her, Paul protected him by tucking him more firmly against him.

“Cute, *cute*!” “He’s not mine, he’s Minson’s.” “What a darling!” “Oh, Paul, so adorable!” Then Benny and Paul were shaking hands and Waldo knew at once that he would be forgotten, so he squirmed down out of Paul’s arms and started for the door of the house which was open. “I wanta see,” he said, and looked up pleadingly at Mrs. Ferrow who was coming out with a bowl of ice that shone in the sun, matching Nancy’s diamond earrings. “Can I have a drink, too?” Waldo said.

She laughed. “Come along,” she said, and led him inside the house and along a small corridor to the kitchen. There were two maids and a butler in the kitchen, sitting at a table having their lunch.

“Will one of you give this darling puppy something to eat?” Mrs. Ferrow said in her soft, warm voice.

Waldo was left. He stopped uneasily, not advancing;

then one of the maids said in a high excitable voice :  
“ Ah, he is so sweet, come, Pitou, come wit' Marie and we fin' some milk maybe, and also a leetle piece rosbif, hein? ”

“ Rosbif ! For a pup that age ? ” The chauffeur was grinning.

“ Oh, phooey, ” Waldo said, his tongue hanging out in eagerness. After eating, he went immediately to sleep in the butler's pantry in a patch of sunlight.

In the afternoon, everyone went hunting in the woods according to their various desires, some with guns, some without. Only Nancy stayed in the house, reading a lurid book she had brought from Paris.

“ I'll be fine, ” she said, “ I've a bit of a snuffle. ”

She was disappointed that Jerry went with the others. It was all she could do to conceal it. He had been casual about it too, and fear gripped her.

Waldo slept for a long time. He stayed close to the fire in the living-room, after Nancy went upstairs. Dinner was late, because the hunters did not return until after dark, jubilant and red-faced from the air and exercise. It was all very jolly, if decorous.

After dinner, there were two tables of bridge, but Paul and Benny drove to Ste. Agathe to the movies. They left Waldo behind. He listened to the voices in a daze of pleasure. They had given him more milk, and in secret, in reply to his pleading, the girl Marie had slipped him a sliver of the “ rosbif. ” Waldo had had some difficulty chewing it, but he adored the taste, even if it gave him gas in his tummy afterwards.

At about ten-thirty the bridge began to break up. Everyone was sleepy. One by one they went up, Nancy the last, trailing her silver slacks and a long mink stole behind her on the stairs. Waldo was alone. He fell asleep and did not hear the car. They came in quietly, trying not to wake him, but he jumped up and ran to Paul.

“ Well, what went on? Everything fixed up between you two? ”

Then he saw that nothing had happened. Nothing at all. They had been to the movies, and that was all. They sat on the chesterfield with Waldo between them, and discussed the picture. Waldo dozed. And then he heard her say, “ But, Paul, you don't understand. ”

It was the third time Benny had said this and it was beginning to worry Waldo. They were sitting close together on the sofa, with Waldo between them as though to protect one against the other. He lay restlessly, his tongue out, trying not to feel like a man between two forest fires.

“ I understand one thing, ” Paul said. His voice sounded different and Waldo looked up at him hopefully. Paul was leaning forward, his eyes on Benny. Waldo slowly turned his head, admiring Benny's white throat inside the blue satin shirt she wore, and her trim waist with the studded belt. “ Slacks certainly go well on you, ” he was thinking, and then he saw his chance to slip away from them, so he rose shakily and slid to the floor.

“ Well, go to it, go to it, you've been slow as molasses. ” He felt embarrassed. The strength of feeling between these two was so intense it bothered him. They were obviously very much in love, but they never seemed to be able to get together. Words, words, words, talk, talk, talk, theory, theory, theory. “ Life ain't like that, kids, ” Waldo was thinking. He walked over to the fireplace where it was warmer, and found a nice place to sit, on one of the small woven rugs. The fire flickered fitfully, making shadows on the painted floor. It was a large room, built for country living, without ornament, but homey. Paul had put out one of the two lamps, and the light was soft and cosy. Everyone else had gone to bed,

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but still Paul and Benny sat there talking. Waldo was bored with it. He lay down with his back to the sofa, feeling that there was not much hope for either of them, as lovers. He was disappointed in them, but especially in Paul. He had thought Paul might be quite a ball of fire as a lover, the dark silent type that women went for.

Paul was still looking down at Benny. After he had said, "I understand one thing," there had been a silence. Benny was sitting farther away from him in her corner, unconsciously missing the protection of the dog between them. Could it be that she was afraid? Of Paul? Of herself? Waldo wondered. He was sleepy, and yawned. But before the yawn was finished, Benny gave a small cry, muffled and delighted. Paul had her in his arms, expertly, had turned her face up with the palm of one hand, and was kissing her.

Waldo's yawn stopped in the middle, and one ear cocked up. He turned half round, not wishing to appear to snoop; but nothing he did or did not do would have mattered. They were too engrossed. Benny's arms went slowly up round Paul's neck in the end, and Waldo breathed a sigh of relief. Well, that was that, anyhow. They had sex on their side, the old seducer, the reliable painter of pink glasses. With sex between them the rest would take care of itself.

Waldo watched them kissing, and sighed again. It reminded him of Effie, yet it was so different. Effie had wriggled and clung and slobbered. Neither Paul nor Benny slobbered. No, nothing so human. Both of them were silent and intense and tied up in it. They kissed beautifully, like ladies and gentlemen. "I hope it tastes as good as it looks. Enjoy it," Waldo thought cynically.

Benny's arms began to slip away from Paul's neck in remonstrance and resistance. He let her go. "Oh

dang it, man," Waldo thought. However, the look on Benny's face was worth it. She was flushed and looked like a small child. Her hair was in disorder, and somehow it suited her better than the gleaming roll she habitually wore.

She put her hands up to her cheeks. "Oh, *Paul*." It was a cry and a whisper, an appeal. But when he made a move to take her back into his arms, she drew back. "Oh, darling, no more, not now, not—now."

Paul lifted her hands to his lips and kissed the palms, and Waldo snuffled to himself. Very charming, very sweet, but was it effective? Did he want the girl or didn't he? Was it wise to let it cool half-way through like this?

Paul said, "It will be the way you want it, dearest, always."

Waldo could see the show was over for the time being. He felt a warm benevolence towards them, but disappointment was still with him. He had hoped, as men always hope, to learn something new, something dashing, something modern. And here they were looking—except for the slacks on Benny's slim hips, and Paul's bright checked shirt—exactly like one of those mild English prints you see on dining-room walls in manor houses, the sort of picture that does nothing to warm you when your back is freezing and the butler passes you what he calls an "ice."

"Will you have an ice, sir?" And what ices! Mildly chilled custardy mixture, sitting in a yellowy sauce. Remembering scenes he had read about, Waldo laughed aloud. Both of them turned towards him, it seemed to him in relief. But they still made a chromo-  
esque picture of the past, reminiscent of a gentler day. It was not gusty enough, for Waldo. He knew beyond a doubt now, that they would go upstairs to their beds and toss about, disturbed and uneasy, and alone.

“A bit of fun’d do you good, kids,” he said with a certain acerbity. “Settle things for you. Drive you to a decision about yourselves.” He rose on his two front paws, gazing at them with affection and regret. They were going to be *so* slow getting going. But Paul surprised him. He held out his hand to Waldo, and said: “Come here and meet your new missus.”

Well! Just one kiss, and plop! Marriage. Babies’ bottles to heat in the middle of the night. Worry about money. Worry about the rent. Worry, worry, worry. And no fun first? Waldo got up and came to Paul. He laid his nose in Paul’s hand gently, and Paul stroked him. And then Waldo remembered his manners. He slid under Paul’s foot and put one paw on Benny’s trousered knee.

He said, “Well, anyhow, I liked the way you handled Hilda Minson that day, about the money, and you’re a damn good-looking gal, so here’s to you!”

Benny picked Waldo up in her arms and held him close to her breast. Her heart was beating very fast, and Waldo could smell the delicate scent she wore. It wasn’t as strong as Nancy Hibberd’s but now that he was close to her, Waldo felt Benny’s sweetness, and a sort of femininity that Nancy had lacked entirely. Here was a woman, with curves, and hidden reactions, all of them female. Here was a girl who would try to think things out, but it would always depend on her emotions how she would work out her problems. Perhaps Paul had been right when he said, “I know Benny. She may seem to be sophisticated but, underneath, she is all woman, needing love and protection.”

Yes, perhaps Paul was right. Anyhow, Benny was holding Waldo, with her chin on the top of his head, and Waldo could feel the curve of her breast under his paw. He moved his paw downward, over her nipple, wondering

why he had no sensation whatever, except one of mild nostalgia. A sudden sensation of fear came over him. It would be hell if he never got back to earth, as a man. It was entertaining, watching other people making love and all that, and there was a faint excitement in being able to snuggle down under the breasts of a pretty girl without causing a ripple of resentment ; but was it any good to him ? Waldo started to cry. After all, he was only a puppy, and he wanted to feel like a man. Then Paul was sweeping them both into his arms with fierceness, holding Benny and Waldo together in a breathless hug that squashed Waldo's nose even more closely against Benny's pretty breast.

“ Ouch ! ” Waldo said. “ Hey ! It's your girl, not mine. Lemme go ! ”

He squirmed his way out of their entwined arms and slid to the floor. The fire had died, and the floor felt cold. He wanted to go to bed, even if they did not. And further palaver, he felt, was a pure waste of time. He heard Paul say : “ And you will marry me, darling ? When I get that raise ? ”

There was a silence. Benny was looking at the fireplace, and her eyes were blank again. She had told Paul over and over that there was no need to wait until he got the raise. She had a small income of her own, and her mother would help. If necessary, she could take a job. After all, neither of them was so young that they could afford to wait forever ; and she had waited for this moment for a long time.

Paul's kisses had transported her into a dream world, and now his mention of money brought her down to earth too abruptly. She had, a few moments before, been ready for anything he would ask of her, anything. If he had pushed her a little harder. . . .

But they were right back where they had started.

Paul would not understand, would not give up one jot of his pride.

“Benny, you haven’t answered me.” Paul’s charming voice was disturbed. He was sorry he had mentioned the raise. Better to have left it until later. His eyes were anxious, and Waldo thought, “You see? Like I said, worry right away, worry and responsibility and all that. You’re a couple of saps, not having your fun tonight, and let the devil take the hindmost.”

As they kissed at the foot of the stairway, on their way to bed, Waldo could see nothing of regret in their eyes. They had a bemused happy look, a warm and lovely closeness. Waldo could see that neither of them had been even faintly tempted to do anything out of order. It wasn’t that kind of love, evidently. Waldo felt left out and a little lonely. He felt a difference between them and him. Perhaps they had something he had never imagined could exist. Perhaps there was a solidity to these marriages that he had not known about, that had never come his way. Yet, until now, he had imagined that his life had been perfectly ordered and respectable.

“You thought you were a pillar of society, did you, me lad?” he said to himself, snuffling gently as he turned round three times at the foot of Paul’s bed. “Well, live and learn.”

Paul said, “Go to sleep, like a good pup.”

Waldo took his third turn, and settled down. “Now, why in hell did I do that?” he thought, and was asleep before he knew it.

## Chapter 12

JOHN BARTON was uneasy. The new lathe was now installed in the barn behind the factory, but he knew that meetings took place just the same, in other spots not far away from the plant. He knew that deKoffe was still making trouble, and that something ought to be done, but he did not know how to handle it.

Everything in him, in his training, suggested doing nothing. If you wait, things straighten out. However, the men were still going about with tight lips, and some of them had become quite ugly in their manner to him. He felt that he ought to see Mr. Simpson about it, but Mr. Simpson had a gruff way that made John's spine crumple. There was also the matter of Gladys. He and Glad had been spiffed that night, and Mr. Simpson had not looked pleased. It was none of his business, of course, what his employees did in their time off, but it had been unfortunate that F. M. had seen them rolling along St. Catherine Street that night, singing and noisy.

Gladys was a card, all right, tough as they come. He was rather proud that she had taken up with him. Gave a fellow something, knowing that a girl like Glad liked him. She was so popular, and always going out with someone. Yet she seemed to like going out with John Barton all the same.

He didn't like it that she used to be deKoffe's girl, but they never saw each other now. DeKoffe was too busy holding his infernal meetings. It never occurred to John Barton that he was being made a sucker and that Gladys was the bait used to take him off the beat where he wasn't wanted.

John walked over to the notice board to see if there was anything special going on tonight. F. M. took a lot of trouble to see to it that the hands had entertainment. There was a ping-pong table in one corner of the club-room, and card tables piled behind the doors. Every week, they had a sing-song, and sometimes movies. They were at liberty to bring their wives or girl-friends to the club evenings.

Lately, the parties had not been well attended, and John could see that F. M. was worried about it. He had not mentioned it, however, and John felt that it was best to let well alone.

He picked up a magazine, and sat down in an easy chair to read. There was no one there. The midday shift had not yet come out on the whistle, and the night workers had gone home. It was quiet in the room, cheerful and cosy. Yet somehow, John felt uneasy, restless. He kept on looking round, feeling that someone was watching.

The door opened, and young Horner came in. He saw John Barton and almost stopped, but then he came forward, with his hands in his pockets and his head down.

“ Mind if I put the radio on ? ”

John nodded pleasantly, and the dial turned in young Horner's big fingers. There was silence, and then a tense voice said : “ Mr. Chamberlain smiled as he descended from the plane. He seemed pleased with his mission, and said that peace in our time was assured.”

“ Damned fool ! ” Young Horner had flushed. He sat down closer to the radio, dragging a chair over the floor with a rasping sound. “ Can't they see it's going to be war ? ” His voice sounded fierce, resentful, as though he was alone in a room full of enemies already. His life had been like that, until F. M. had taken him under his wing, removed him from the Boys' Home, and

given him a job, and books to read, and made him feel human for the first time in his whole existence. Suddenly, he looked across at John. "What're you going to do if there's war?"

War! John shifted uncomfortably in his chair. Why should there be war? Chamberlain said there wouldn't be, and everyone was doing his best to avoid it. Gladys always laughed it off if he got serious about anything.

He coughed. "Oh, I don't see there's any chance of war," he said placatingly. Young Horner's eyes were still hot and almost accusing. He was like that half the time.

In spite of himself, Horner's sureness about war made him begin to think. He started calculating his age. Let's see, he was twenty-six. Maybe that was too old—but no——

The announcer on the radio was saying: "War seems a possibility, nevertheless."

The door opened again, and deKoffe came into the room. He seldom joined the men openly, and so his entrance was a surprise to both Horner and John. They looked up, nodded, and went back to their occupations, John to his magazine and young Horner to the radio. DeKoffe was unpopular with the more serious elements in the plant and Horner had more than once crossed verbal swords with him since the night of the first meeting, when he had flung himself out with fury on his lips and in his heart.

DeKoffe hesitated a moment, then crossed the room and sat down near John Barton. He took out a flashy cigarette case. John did not want to accept a cigarette, but there seemed to be no way to avoid it. He took one with a brief word of thanks. The man frightened him. There was something sinister in the set way he moved about, in the purpose in his eyes and the ready change of mood to match whoever he was with. No doubt about it,

the time had come to go to Mr. Simpson about the man; but there was little to say about him. Nothing to go on; only one meeting, and what had been said there after all? The only wrong that had been done, was using the old barn, and that might easily have been explained. John took an uneasy puff at the cigarette.

“You. . . .” There was a pause, while deKoffe drew on his own cigarette. Then he smiled at John. “It is time you join with us,” he said. “We have nice times, we like our meetings. I am asked to invite you.”

Before John could answer, deKoffe turned towards the radio, and spoke to young Horner’s back. His voice changed in a subtle way. It sounded threatening.

“And you also,” he said. “You must join too. All the workers will soon belong, especially the young workers. You will join?”

John was unprepared for what followed. Young Horner got up, walked over to where deKoffe was sitting, pulled him on to his feet and hit him a hard blow in the face.

Here it was, the thing that John Barton had always dreaded. A fight, something he would have to take part in. In the past he had always managed to get out of fighting, always worked it so that he was the bystander. But now two of his fellow-employees were in a fight in the club-room, and he was a foreman. His job was to stop it. He stepped forward.

DeKoffe had retreated a little, but his eyes were wicked. He put a beringed hand up to his chin where the blow had landed.

Young Horner stood there, his fists clenched, waiting. “Well, come on,” he said, “hit me back. I won’t join your rotten Communist Club, and I won’t stand by any more and watch it go on right under my nose. It’s you or me.”

Something in what he said struck deKoffe. His eyes

cleared of anger and became wary and calculating. He grinned. "It is a mistake," he said. "We should be friends. I have no quarrel with you. I only invite you to join. You are not forced."

"Damn tootin' I'm not forced." Horner saw that the man would not fight, so he moved away impatiently. Then he turned again, and said, "And I'm going to do something about it, if no one else will." His eyes were on John Barton, hard and accusingly.

"Now, now," John said, his voice, even to himself, sounding weak and ineffectual.

"You're no foreman," Horner said scathingly; "you're soft, you're a coward, a moral coward. You may be smart as an engineer, but as a man——"

"Now mind what you say," John said. He started to walk over to young Horner, his own hands clenching in temper, and then he stopped. Horner was standing there with a faint smile on his lips. He stared into John's eyes for a moment and then he turned and walked out of the room. In his eyes there had been such contempt that John felt struck down and shamed.

DeKoffe shrugged. "A jailbird," he said, "why do you not find something wrong, and have him fired?"

Find something wrong? There was nothing wrong with Horner. He was smart, quick and conscientious. John Barton looked at deKoffe and saw in his eyes the same contempt that had stared out at him from Horner's. It was quickly snuffed out, but he saw it. He cringed under it. He felt like crying. No one liked him here, and things were getting difficult, too difficult. All he asked was a peaceful life, and to go on with a job he liked and could do well. All he asked was security and a bit of fun with a girl like Gladys in his off time. All he asked was that he might go along quietly as he was going now, and have no upsets with anyone.

“ I don't want any trouble here,” he said.

DeKoffe said, “ You need have no trouble. But if you were to find something gone one day? Stolen. Just anything, a fountain pen, or maybe a camera? Something small. You could then report it to Mr. Simpson, and Horner would be fired, no? ”

“ No.”

John's sluggish mind had come alive as it had a habit of doing under stress. He had thought of a better way. No need to sacrifice young Horner. Besides, he liked him. He said : “ Well, I must be going.” As he said it the noon whistle blew outside and men started streaming out of the doors into the yard. The door opened wide, and a group came into the room, talking noisily. Under cover of the crowd, John went out quickly.

He had decided what to do. He would ask Mr. Simpson to move him to another part of the factory, to the east side. It was time he asked for a change, a raise too. He would do it now. Then he would be far from this trouble-making of deKoffe's and from the responsibility of it. He could not get to F. M.'s office quickly enough. He almost ran up the flight of stairs leading to it.

Mr. Simpson was in. He was sitting at his desk, looking grim. As John came in, he said, “ Sit down, Barton. I'm glad you came, because I was just going to send for you. What is all this I hear about trouble going on under your nose in the plant ; Communists. Why haven't you come to me with it long ago? ”

It was a thunderbolt. Young Horner must have gone straight to F. M. from the club-room. John flushed. He said : “ Well, sir, I didn't want any trouble.”

F. M. banged his hand down on his desk. He said : “ I have noticed that you are a good workman, a smart engineer, and conscientious. But you are not foreman

calibre, I am afraid. I made a mistake in giving you the responsibility. I do not think you fit in here. I want men who will do their duty in the jobs they hold. It was your duty to tackle this sedition. You did not do it. You will call for your pay cheque on your way out."

Nothing John said made any impression. F. M.'s eyes had gone opaque. He had not built up his business on indecisiveness. He was disappointed in John Barton ; so he fired him. That was how young Horner got the job as foreman.

John went out of the office in a daze, his life in ribbons. As he passed the open door of the club-room he heard the radio going. There was a curious silence in the room and, glancing furtively inside, he saw that everyone was clustered round the radio, listening. Their backs looked stiff, like puppets. He could hear the word "war" over and over. Poland. Hitler's armies. People massed before No. 10 Downing Street. Poland was overrun.

John Barton did not get new work easily and, when he did, it didn't last. He had several jobs, and failed at them, before he was driven into joining up. The actual fighting seemed far away, and the uniform was swell. So was the life. He had no difficulty in learning army routine, and the fellows were fine to him. The responsibilities were nil, the food was good, and he had time off for fun.

One night, he saw Gladys and deKoffe walking along Berri Street where deKoffe's apartment was. They were arm-in-arm. He was talking earnestly to her and she was listening. Something clicked in John Barton's quick mind. So that was it ! Oh, well, he was out of all that, thank goodness. Hats off to war ! He was going overseas, going to travel at the government's expense ! It was a swell life meanwhile. Everything was fine.

## Chapter 13

“WE will use the gold plates,” Hanson Buck said firmly. He looked the parlourmaid in the eye, and she quailed. She thought the gold service somewhat vulgar, even though she envied the Bucks the money which had made it possible to own such a thing. In spite of this, she had been in the Bucks’ employ for years.

Hanson Buck laid the paper on which he had been making notes on the dining-room table, and pushed it in the maid’s direction. There were a number of entries. From where she stood, the woman could see : “caviar—remind me to order some at Forsyth’s,” and “those special hot bacon things with French truffles inside.”

Imagine him remembering ! Why, it must be all of three years since they gave a party. But she eyed him with respect all the same. She came forward with outward disapproval and picked up the paper. She gave one of her half-sniffs, to which Hanson Buck had become accustomed but which always made his wife cringe. She said : “Well, if I have to do all that, I’d better get on with it. I suppose you’ll want extra help.”

But Hanson Buck was half out of the door, his mind already on other things. He said, impatiently : “Mrs. Buck will attend to that, and to the—er—doodabs.” He waved his hand round the room expansively. The parlourmaid knew he meant the flowers, and perhaps some new candles in the heavy silver sconces, and a hesitant order or two to the servants about towels in the cloak-rooms and so on. Mrs. Buck had no knack for these things. Parties to her had always meant torture and a hidden feeling of nightmare. In the beginning of her

marriage, forty years before, she had been equal to the strain of the small entertainments they had given, but since Hanson had become one of Canada's richest men, and they had built this huge house in Cartierville, she had been lost and, in a mild way, unhappy.

She was upstairs now waiting for her husband to come and break the news to her about the party. She had felt it in the air all week. It was because of the government contract Hanson had been so clever about. Everyone was talking about it, and congratulating her. Something to do with housing. She knew little about Hanson's business now, although once she had been intensely interested in it. Her father had been a small lumberman with a great deal of forestry lore and experience. She had always loved trees and talk of forests and the outdoors. When Hanson had been in the business actively, he had studied trees and conservation and the elements of nature that affected the forests. Now he only swung big deals and played golf for his figure, and was nervous and increasingly impatient of her. She had long ago stopped telling him anything that caused her any emotion or real feeling.

She could hear him coming upstairs whistling under his breath. The heavy carpets concealed the noise of his footsteps. When they bought the carpets, she had said in remonstrance: "But, Hanson, the cleaning they'll need——" But he had cut her short.

"My dear Erminie," he said, "it is time we had a serious talk about money and position. You don't seem to realize that we are perfectly able to hire sufficient help to take care of any amount of broadloom!" He smiled at her; but she had not returned it. Panic was in her, searing and awful. It was at that moment that the cleavage between them became apparent and unbridgeable.

It was he who hired the servants to take care of the "broadloom," and afterwards, gradually, the gardeners, the butlers, the two chauffeurs, and even her own personal maid.

As he came up the stairs, whistling, Hanson was thinking with some satisfaction of the scene in his library some months ago, when Erminie had come to him in disappointment about a dinner-party. She was always helpless when things went wrong, bless her. She had almost wrung her hands as she spoke to him.

"It's the third time at least," she said in a small wail, "that Clay has put us off. Meg's very upset about it, but what can she do?"

Hanson had looked up from the paper. He was not particularly fond of his brother-in-law, so the prospect of still another reprieve in having the Blacks to dinner did not dismay him. He said: "Well, it doesn't matter, does it? We can ask them the next time they come down from Ottawa."

"He's always having to meet that man," Erminie said.

Hanson always tried to be polite and listen when she wanted to talk, so he put the paper down.

"What man?" he said, not prepared to remember the name or care very much. It was of little interest to him what Clay Black did, even if he was a Minister of the Crown and full of his own importance.

Erminie waved her hands about in an effort to remember the man's name, and then she said brightly, "Oh, yes, Joe Broughton."

Hanson did not move, but his eyes were suddenly bright and alert. Joe Broughton, the chairman of the housing committee of the House of Commons. Why was Clay seeing him so often and so much that he had broken three dinner engagements with the Bucks? And quite

recently too. Clay and Joe Broughton. There must be something doing in housing. His trained business mind was working hard, and at the base of his spine he felt a tiny quiver. It was a familiar feeling, one he trusted. They said that artists and poets were the only creative people in the world, but at times he had something, call it flair or a hunch, that was as creative as any artist. It had put him where he was, a warning touch that gave him a sort of inside track in events and men's thoughts and plans.

"Hank, you're not listening to me." Erminie stopped chattering on about the week-end and her sister's apologies at inconveniencing them again by falling down at the last minute.

Her husband smiled at her more warmly than usual, and she flushed a little and looked prettier, even though she was a very pretty woman and dressed becomingly in soft colours and feminine hats.

Hanson did not say anything to Erminie, but he drove to Ottawa the next morning. Just a hunch, but you never know. And things had been irritating him of late. There had been a modicum of defeat to himself in the rumour of this merger which was being handled by Curtis Minson and his cohorts. He had heard that he would be approached, and that the offer would be almost insulting. They thought he was getting old, and they knew he had no one coming up. Since his son, Hank, had been killed, he hadn't been bothering about Buck & Ligne so much. Young Ligne was a fine fellow, a veteran too, and although Hanson Buck would never have permitted a Ligne to take hold if Hank had been alive, now he felt that perhaps it would be a good thing if a French-Canadian were to handle the business. He had always felt a warm and keen desire to see the two nationalities working together in business, and socially.

However, on his way to Ottawa some of the old fire came back and by the time he arrived at his brother-in-law's offices, he was in a fighting mood, all his forces keyed up and ready.

He had not had to do much probing to find out what he wanted to know. Clay thought he was damn smart to put two and two together like that, on a word from his wife. He had said : " By jove, what a queer thing. I never said one word to Meg about the housing, naturally. I never tell her anything about these things, wouldn't do, you know." He had looked at Hanson over his bifocals. He had always wanted to do old Hank a favour, but he had never had the opportunity. He had been wanting, for a long time, to put Hank in his debt. His brother-in-law was a bit of a curmudgeon, and stand-offish. Now he could edge into his good books.

" Of course you don't tell your wife about the country's business." Hanson was laughing. He was in high good humour. He slapped Clay jovially on the back as he went out. His office staff worked all that night. By ten o'clock the following day, the tender was on Clay's desk and, although the usual legal formalities were observed, and other offers made, it was a foregone conclusion from the start who would get the contract. Besides, Buck & Ligne were a good firm, the best, and their tender was reasonable, and would be honestly fulfilled.

It had interested him very much to hear later about the shareholders' meeting at which the news had reached the Minson interests. There had been something about a black puppy causing some sort of a commotion. He forgot the actual story though he had thought it amusing. He found a lot of things amusing these days. The government contract had put new life into the business and brought Hanson Buck to his desk and to his old interest in the name and in its significance. He was

thinking of this now, as he went whistling upstairs, after speaking to the parlourmaid.

He went into his wife's room, knocking gently on the door as he did so. Erminie was sitting up in bed in a lavender satin jacket, edged with pink feathers. It suited her. He liked the blue colour she had been persuaded to put on her white hair, and her complexion was as clear as it had always been. She pleased him much as he would have appreciated possession of a delicate and valuable china statuette which he knew to be genuine. One could not get hot and bothered emotionally about a china statuette, but it gave him a certain amount of satisfaction to own it, and to play with it occasionally in his fingers. It was smooth and attractive, and never bit back.

She smiled to see him coming in now. He was still a handsome man, and she had always loved him. He dressed well and he had taken some pains to avoid losing his figure. His heavy mass of grey hair was still streaked with black, and the fun he had had from life in a carnal way, showed in the lines at the side of his mouth. He had always protected Erminie from his extramarital activities.

He sat down on the side of the bed and patted her hand. He knew she would be inefficient about the party and would much rather not have one, but he felt that the new contract needed celebration, and he had a restless feeling that he wanted to regain some of the lost youth that Hank's death had robbed him of.

"We need some young people about," he said; "we're going to give a party, a big one, a cocktail party with supper afterwards for a few, and dancing in the drawing-room."

She started to say, "Oh dear, must we?" but something stopped her. It would have been futile, anyhow. She knew she was in for it, and she did understand about

the young people. She missed young Hank terribly. She had never been able to speak to Hanson about his death, because Hanson always closed up when she tried. Now she put her hand timidly over his, and felt happy when his strong fingers closed over hers for a moment. He stooped and kissed her affectionately.

“And you get yourself a new dress,” he said, “something gorgeous. I want my wife to be the prettiest woman there.”

The glow of happiness stayed with Erminie all day.

## Chapter 14

“**P**ROWING into quite a dog, aren't you, old boy?”

Curtis Minson held out his hand, and Waldo got up and went over to it slowly. Curtis used perfumed soap, and Waldo disliked it. However, something made him give in to a feeling of strange joy as Curtis stroked his neck. Waldo knew this joy was only in his dog make-up, but it worried him.

Curtis said: “Yes, you're growing. Getting to be bigger every day.”

Waldo's breath stopped in his throat. He had not noticed this, but he supposed it had to be true. He *was* getting older every day, and bigger. He turned his head and scratched himself behind the ear tentatively, noticing that his back was longer and that his paw reached farther. Good heavens, what would this mean? One thing, certainly, that time was moving on rapidly, and there was no sign of his turning back into a man. Sudden panic made him yawn, just as Hilda Minson came into the room.

“Well, is that nice, is it polite?” she said archly.

Waldo's yawn stopped in the middle. “Oh Ch-rrist,” he said loudly.

Hilda screamed gently. “Well, I thought you rather loved your mummy,” she said, “but first you yawn and now you bark at me.”

She went over to the sofa and sat down, taking up a piece of coloured brocade upon which she was sewing. Outside the windows snow drifted lazily down, making a thin white dust on the lawn, through which the last

grass showed in emerald streaks. It was pretty, Waldo thought. He got away from Curtis' caressing hand, and went to the long window. He felt restless, he did not know why. Restless, and a little unhappy. This was one of the days when his man-mind seemed clearer. He was terribly aware of the Minsons, their humanness as against his queer half-state. They seemed very large and obstructive somehow. "And besides, they are awfully dull," he thought, and yawned again, more from nervousness than boredom.

Hilda looked up. "We shall have to find him a lady-friend," she said.

Effie! Or some other girl. Oh no! Waldo's mind was suddenly in dreadful confusion. Female faces and forms whirled about before his eyes, women with dogs' tails, and flat black hairy chests. He could see backsides and breasts, but these were topped by long pink tongues and panting breath. Oh damn and blast.

He jumped up against the long window, and barked, asking to be let out into the fresh air. The feeling of panic was familiar. "I was often like this when I was a man," he thought, and realized that he would never have admitted it before. He stopped barking, and looked thoughtful.

"Want out?" Curtis said. "Want out for a run? Well, all right. I'll get my windbreaker and we'll go for a breather."

"Well, that's nice of you, old dear," Waldo thought. He looked across affectionately at Curtis. The telephone was ringing, but no one answered. Curtis rose from his armchair quickly. "Why in tarnation doesn't someone attend to these things?" he said.

The maid came in hurriedly, and said: "A lady wants to speak to you, sir."

Hilda's hands became still, on the brocade. Waldo

thought, "So she's actually jealous. Well, of all things! Jealous of Curtis!"

With a small flush on his cheek-bones, Curtis went out of the room, closing the door after him, but not quickly enough to prevent Waldo rushing out with him. "I wouldn't miss this," Waldo thought. He slid quietly into the hall, outside the telephone room, where he knew he would be able to listen and keep his dignity at the same time.

Curtis was speaking very quietly into the phone, but he sounded fussed. Waldo got this clearly through the half-open door.

Curtis was saying: "I have asked you *not* to call me at home, Miss Bray."

Waldo's ears pricked up. "So! Well, you old wolf, you," he thought, but it gave him a new understanding of Curtis, and one he felt at home with.

"You know I do," Curtis said, "but on Sundays I am not at liberty."

The girl evidently had a hold on Curtis, because she kept him uneasily at the phone for some minutes. When he came out, there was a faint dampness on his upper lip. He said to Waldo: "Women. Damn nuisance."

"Damned attractive and hot too," Waldo said.

Hilda came out of the living-room. "Who was it, dear?" Her voice sounded flat, but determined.

"My secretary. I have told her many times not to disturb me—er—us on Sundays, but something came up that bothered her."

He bustled into the cloak cupboard and made a great fuss of choosing a jacket. Hats fell on top of him from the shelf, and he picked them up, grunting to himself.

Hilda still stood there silently, with a blank expression. "Was it that Mary Bray?" she said.

Neither of them looked at each other, and Curtis went

to the front door and opened it. "I said it was my secretary," he said with dignity, "a very efficient girl as a rule, but I shall insist in future that she comply with my request not to call me on Sundays."

"And you dined with her last night too," Hilda said.

Curtis turned, flustered.

Hilda said: "I know, because Phyllis Turner told me she saw you."

"Damn tattling nonsense. I was late at the office and it was necessary to attend to some details before leaving for home. Miss Bray had been working hard all day——"

"And had to be given dinner," finished Hilda in a flatter voice than ever. She leaned her hand on a small table and it trembled under the weight. Without looking up, she said: "You had better be careful, Curtis. This time I may make trouble for you. I may want a divorce this time."

Waldo stared at her in surprise. He would never have thought she had the strength of character to talk to Curtis this way. He was hideously embarrassed about it too. He hated the way they were sparring, without vitality, just like fencers trying for position, with the buttons firmly on their rapiers. He felt that neither of them would, in the end, draw blood, or remove the foils. It was like something on the stage.

"My dear," Curtis was saying, "you would have no grounds for divorce. I rather resent what you have just said, not for myself, but because it casts a slur upon an innocent girl."

"Oh, bah!" Hilda said rudely. She went back into the living-room and slammed the door shut in their faces.

"What an exhibition of futile human emotion without any guts to it," Waldo thought. He walked out of the open door, and drew great breaths of the nippy air into

his lungs. The snowflakes rested lightly on his fur, not melting. He sat down in order to watch them gather on his black paws, which he stuck out in front of him.

“Well, come along. You wanted a walk. Come along.”

Curtis sounded irritated. The scene he had just taken part in did not seem to have made much impression on him. It had not given him any harder outlines or changed him in any way, even emotionally. It was evident to Waldo that he and Hilda had often spoken to each other like this and that there had been several Mary Brays in his life. “I wonder if he gets to first base with these gals,” Waldo thought idly. It was difficult to take an interest in Curtis Minson’s love-life. But he could see the meshy web tightly drawn around Curtis as they walked along the road outside the garden wall. Curtis had certainly withdrawn into himself.

“You know, she’s quite a hot number,” Curtis said suddenly, making Waldo jump. “Quite a hot number indeed. In fact, I believe I am getting too old for these things.” There was a faint regret in his voice.

Waldo stopped and looked at him. “You old fraud,” he said, “you know perfectly well you’ve always been too old for it. I bet you never gave a woman an honestly thick night in her life.”

“Yes, a man gets tired, slaving in an office year after year. No thanks. No fun. I’ve a good mind——”

“What about all the dough you make? A guy like you gets his fun out of that. Making more dough and more dough.”

A girl was coming along the road that led to the row of houses they had just left. The sun made a halo around her through which an iridescent ray of small whirling snowflakes pierced. Waldo was entranced by the effect. He stared at it, and then he saw that she had shapely legs,

so he stopped in his tracks, wanting her to catch up to them so that he could see her better.

She said : " Good morning, Mr. Minson," in a hearty voice that dispelled all Waldo's dreams. It was a thoroughly Canadian voice, somewhat flat and a little rasping. It came out of her chic and charm with an incongruity that Waldo deplored. " Now you'd be *so* much more seductive if you could talk like some of the English gals I met."

" Oh, what a sweet little dog," she said. She stooped and patted Waldo in a friendly way, with a small grey glove. She wore an expensive perfume, and her clothes were perfect. Looking up into her face, glowing with the cold, Waldo thought her very pretty. " But wouldn't do in a hayrick," he thought, with a sudden pang of nostalgic memory. Effie had been awful in many ways, but, by god, she was a woman. Knew her way round. Funny thing, these Canadians and their sex repressions.

He started trying to think this out, but his mind was foggy again. The thought of Effie had clouded it.

" Ladies and gentlemen, that's the trouble," he thought, " and no sensible advice at the right time from mammy and pappy. Yep. I guess that's it, that's why the Poles were so popular in the war. Woke 'em up, made women out of them."

The girl and Curtis were making ordinary conversation about the weather, and discussing some concert. Waldo ran ahead, having fun catching the snow in his mouth, letting it tickle his nose. The maple trees bordering the short road stood up bare and lonely, with snow gathering in the tiny crotches of their trunks. One could almost see the sap drawing away into the ground, to freeze. Waldo had never liked winter much. He had not been good on skis, and there had been the difficulty of money. Winter sports are expensive. You need equipment, and

cash for trips North. No, winter made him feel depressed, especially in the beginning. It was so long and white and still. And cold as hell.

A priest came along the street. His black skirts brushed along the snow and his enormous feet made tracks of black on the pavement.

Curtis said to the girl : " Well, we are going along this way. Good morning, Miss Perry. And give my respects to your mother."

The priest's skirts fascinated Waldo. He stopped and stared ; and then he noticed the priest looking at the girl. His eyes flickered over her boldly, and away again. But desire was there, openly. It flowed from the priest to Waldo in a thick cloud. As he passed her the priest hastily took out his breviary and started reading in it. He went quickly along the street towards the entrance of his monastery at the corner. The snow flicked up under his black boots in an angry series of fluffs. A car hid him from Waldo's view.

' Well, I'll be——' Waldo snuffled softly, thinking of the priest's black eyes as they had covered the girl and then been withdrawn with violence. Miss Perry also disappeared around the turn and Curtis and Waldo were left alone, strolling slowly along in the softly falling snow. They were both thoughtful. The encounter had done something to them. Curtis was thinking gloomily about Miss Perry, feeling older than ever, and more depressed. Waldo wanted to chase a rabbit, or do something natural and gay. He took little running voyages into the side of the street, up strange front walks, and around bushes. But it did not help. He was acting like a dog, but somehow the feel of it wasn't there.

When they returned to the house Paul was there, in the living-room, talking to Hilda. Waldo did not wait for Curtis to take his coat off but rushed into the room at

the sound of Paul's voice. He stood looking at Paul, both ears cocked and his eyes bright with loving welcome. Paul and Hilda had been sitting like two puppets, facing each other across the embers of the fire. Hilda's cheeks were faintly flushed. She was being extremely charming to Paul, not because he was her husband's confidential secretary, but because he was so handsome and she was feeling *tête montée* after the small scene she had made with Curtis. It always did her good to make a scene with her husband, even though she knew it was unlikely to change anything, either in him or in herself.

Paul's eyes lighted up when he saw Waldo. Without speaking, he held out his hand. Waldo went across quite slowly and put his paw up on Paul's knee.

Paul said : " You're getting bigger, my lad. Growing up."

" So, it's going to be that now," Waldo said. " Instead of the everlasting ' cute,' now I'm going to get ' biggerand-bigger.' "

He laughed up at Paul, thinking he did not blame Hilda in the least for finding him extremely handsome and attractive. He noticed, however, that Paul seemed to be distrait, a little worried. The web was strongly woven around him at the moment.

He rose when Curtis came bustling into the room, hand outstretched. He was so glad to be spared any more of Hilda alone that he was almost effusive. He shook Paul's hand warmly.

Paul said, " I'm sorry to break in on you on Sunday, sir, but I go to Detroit tomorrow, if you remember, and I thought you would like me to bring you the report on the Three Rivers matter at once."

" Of course, my boy, of course, always glad to see you, anyway."

" But I thought you did not like to be interrupted on

business on Sundays.” It was Hilda, with that flat determined voice again. Evidently she had not finished with him.

Curtis groaned inwardly, and said apologetically, stumbling a trifle: “Not at all, not at *all*, my boy, quite a different matter—er—from the other. Quite different. The Three Rivers matter—er—very true. Important. Most. Glad you came.”

Hilda opened her mouth to speak, but she had disliked the sound of her own voice in that last speech and wanted to make an impression on Curtis’ good-looking secretary. She said instead: “I hope you will stay to lunch, Paul?”

Paul smiled at her, and Waldo thought, “Ladies and gentlemen! They can turn manners on and off like taps. But it’s pleasant. I wish I had had some of that ease.”

He could see that Paul’s smile had come only from his lips. His eyes remained sombre. He wondered what was the matter.

Paul said: “It’s very nice of you, Mrs. Minson, but I’m afraid I have an engagement. I only dropped in to give your husband this.” He stooped to his dispatch case which he had put on the floor beside his chair. He fished out a sheaf of papers and handed them to Curtis, saying, “I believe you will find everything you asked for there, sir.”

There was a certain pride and satisfaction in his voice. He had worked like a demon at Three Rivers, and somehow the figures had seemed to flow neatly and comprehensively, and the various accountants he had worked with had been accommodating and efficient. It was a good report. He turned to go.

Waldo rubbed his nose against his leg. “I wanna go with you. I’m bored here,” he said audibly.

Hilda squealed, "Now there he goes again, growling."

Waldo turned on her. "Growling! Next time I'll bite you, if you go on boring me!"

Curtis tutted. "I do hope the little dog is not going to turn out to be vicious," he said, and looked down disapprovingly at Waldo.

Waldo said, "You wouldn't know about that! And you bore me too, so there!" He felt a little ashamed of his slip in control. He was behaving like a dog again. He could hear himself.

Paul and Curtis were in the hall now, making conversation that they both hoped would take them away from Hilda.

Paul said: "I have been invited, second hand, to a big 'do' at the Bucks, sir. Think I should go?" He laughed, and Curtis joined in somewhat dubiously. Paul was a bit subtle at times, and this left Curtis with a feeling of inadequacy. A big "do" at the Bucks indeed! To celebrate that government deal, he supposed. Damned impertinence!

He started to help Paul on with his coat, and Paul went on, "I have been invited by a lady, Miss Benny Warren, to escort her. I'm not keen on it, but she insists. I wonder if it would be a good thing?"

He was deferring nicely to Curtis as the older man, asking his advice. Curtis visibly inflated under it. He beamed at Paul. "Why not go?" he said jovially. "Do you good. I've been keeping your nose to the grindstone too much lately. And you deserve some pleasure. Why not go? Put a spoke in old Buck's wheel, what?"

He laughed, and Waldo jumped. He had not heard Curtis laugh before. It sounded queer, like a child blowing on a huge cornet.

Paul looked down at Waldo. "Aren't you getting a bit jittery, these days?"

He always felt at a loss to get away from Curtis. There was so little ease of manner in the man. Just to say something, anything, he added: "My car's out of commission. The steering went wrong on the way back from Three Rivers."

"My dear boy, I'm sorry, perhaps you will use my car to go to the Buck party. Take Miss Warren properly, in style, with a chauffeur. I'll tell Johnson. Where will he pick you up?"

"Thank you very much," Paul said, a little stiffly, "but it won't be necessary. I can get a taxi."

"But Cartierville is quite a distance out of town, my boy, waste of money, extravagance, no indeed. Just call the garage and tell Johnson when you want him."

Curtis was beaming with benevolence. The idea of Paul being at the Buck party was growing on him. He patted Paul on the back and opened the front door, shooing him out before he could refuse the offer of the car. Waldo rushed out onto the steps. An idea had come to him, a delightful and compelling idea. He said to Paul, as loudly as he could without barking: "Go on! Benny'd like it! Go on, be a sport, say yes!"

"Well, thank you very much, then," Paul said. He sounded a little weary, as though he did not care very much whether or not he went in Curtis Minson's car to the Buck party. Benny and he had had another wrangle, this time about the party. She wanted him to go with her, but he had felt he did not belong, especially as he was a minion of the Minsons'. It seemed that he and Benny were always disagreeing about something. There was a conflict between them, and for the life of him he could not see where it lay at bottom. When they were in harmony, it was perfect; and then some little thing would come up, and bang! something flared up, and

they were at loggerheads. She thought he had old-fashioned ideas about women. She wanted them to marry at once, get a job while he climbed up. Not wait. But he disliked the thought of Benny in a job.

Waldo accompanied him to the gate, but he felt rather than saw that Curtis was waiting at the door for him to return. He gave Paul a polite little farewell bark and trotted obediently up the path again towards the house. After all, wasn't life delightful? By hook or by crook he would persuade Johnson to take him to the Buck party with Paul and Benny.

## Chapter 15

PAUL found himself walking slowly. He was due at the Chateau Apartments, where Benny and her mother lived, at one-thirty, but even though he might be a little late, he did not hurry. He felt reluctance in going there. He turned down the curved road leading to Atwater Avenue, his footsteps echoing in the Sunday quiet.

He noticed the handsomeness of the houses, set in their small neat open plots of grass. Here gardeners had been at work preparing the properties for the coming winter, covering the flower-beds with manure and branches of fir trees for protection. Paul eyed the houses and their wealthy appearance with some of his old bitterness. He had thought he had overcome it, but something deep in him resented what he thought was smug opulence in the district. What right had these people to own such houses? Such security?

And then he caught himself up with a wry smile. What right had he to judge them? Or to be so stupid as to envy? "Oh rot," Paul thought, admonishing himself, "where did you get such ideas anyhow? Not in your youth. Not from your parents." At the war, from the men he had associated with, he supposed. He had seen such misery everywhere, in Europe, in Africa, even at home, poverty and despair he had not known existed.

"But why get bitter about it?" he thought, "bitterness leads nowhere." He thought of Benny with a little rush of tenderness. She was always trying to make him think more gently, more intelligently.

Since he had come home from war, however, Paul

had had this streak of sourness in him, something he had never had before because he had never thought much about it, and had led a protected youth's life in a small Ontario town, the son of the town's doctor. His family had been respected and looked up to.

"Better hurry," he thought. He looked hastily at his watch, and strode on more quickly. It seemed odd not having his car. The whole route looked different with the soles of his feet on the pavement. The houses were larger, more imposing, the view more beautiful. He had time to admire it, as he turned into Sherbrooke Street. The city vista of river and bridges and distant towers vanished in a smooth stream of shining automobiles and a thinner stream of pedestrians in their Sunday clothes. From a car, one had no time to see these things, or to analyze them. Paul became pensive about this. He imagined all the people who rode in the buses and street-cars every day of their lives, who climbed on the Mountain on holidays, and returned by public vehicle. They had plenty of time to see the richness of the city, and to envy it, to be proud of it when a Torontonion came along.

Paul put his hand into his pocket to find a cigarette and his gloved fingers touched the box with Benny's ring in it. He had been carrying the ring around for two days. Yesterday he had meant to give it to Benny but they had had the quarrel about the Buck party and the box had remained unopened.

Also, they had had a stiffness about the ring itself. When Paul asked her if she had any preference, Benny had said quickly : " Oh, let's choose it together ! "

In spite of himself, Paul had been unable to conceal his sense of bafflement and recoil. It was a man's job, choosing his girl's ring. He hated these modern ways of what seemed to him to be a somewhat brutish partner-

ship acceptance, the discussion of all aspects of marriage beforehand, the brushing off of the gloss, with a stiff practicality.

Benny had not known what she had done wrong. She flushed angrily at his manner, and said nothing further. She had thought, "He never takes me into his confidence. How am I to know what he feels if he never tells me? I suppose he thinks I will want a more expensive ring than he can afford, and that rotten pride of his comes first, as usual."

So Benny had seemed chill and remote, and no further discussion of the ring had ensued. "With each one of these misunderstandings something gets chipped off," Paul was thinking. He was almost in front of the apartment house now, and he stopped. His hand was clenched around the box in his pocket. Then he shrugged, and went in.

As he rang the bell at Mrs. Warren's front door, he was tense and full of emotion. All his being was alive with longing for Benny, and cold with fear about what might happen. The door opened suddenly and Benny stood there. She had on a red woollen dress, over which she had slung a pale green cellophane apron with a frill under her chin. Her hair shone bright in the sunlight coming from the big room behind her. Paul hesitated a moment, and then Benny's arms were around him, and her cheek against his, hard and compelling.

Her voice said in a whisper: "*Paul!* Angel. Oh, I've been so sorry we spoiled our last time together, oh, darling, let's never do it again, ever."

The delicate perfume she wore, and the softness of her body under his hands, the small tickle of her lashes on the corner of his mouth, the strength of her emotion, all seemed to melt Paul and his indecision into a delicious haze. Instead of feeling unhappy and afraid, he was now

utterly delighted and bemused with joy. Something leapt up in him, and a warmth like quicksilver flowed through all his veins from his heart and along his arms and into the tips of his fingers. He let his mouth respond to her eager lips, and they clung together with their bodies pressed close. At that moment, Paul knew that this was what mattered, this and nothing else. It was worth any amount of trouble and pain and uneasiness. He said nothing, only held her hard against him for a long moment of silence.

Then, laughing, she slipped away from him, straightening her hair. The light from behind her threw her face into shadow, but her hands were outlined and luminous. Paul could see their slim beauty and their grace as she tucked a stray strand of hair into place into its roll behind her ear. He took her hand away firmly and tore off his gloves. He plunged his hand into his pocket. There was a sense of great urgency about it. The ring must go on to her finger at once, the moment must continue forever. This moment of sweetness and nearness.

Benny became very still and quiet. She went a little pale, as Paul opened the box and took the ring from its holder in the satin lining. She closed her eyes. "Don't let me be stupid and not like it," she thought, praying; "oh please, angels, let me love it and show him I do. Please, please let it be beautiful and right."

The ring slid on to her finger, crushed there by Paul's hand. And then she could feel his lips on her finger, all her fingers, the palm of her hand. She opened her eyes, but she could only see his black hair, with the streak of the brush in it, and the shape of his fingers, and feel the wildness of her heart beating.

The ring was beautiful. It was a traditional diamond, but the setting had been done by an artist friend of Paul's, who had drawn a delicate tracery of roses in tiny

rubies and emeralds at the side of the stone. The stems were of pale gold, and two lovely little golden hands clasped the band to her finger. Benny's eyes filled with tears. She couldn't speak. There was no need to speak. Paul's eyes were so near, and he looked so utterly happy and relaxed. They held hands gently as though in a pact which was more than they could possibly attempt to maintain or understand. Yet both of them felt certain that the pact was made and the die cast. It was the first time they had been sure of this.

Mrs. Warren's voice sounded ghostlike from the living-room as she called to them. It sounded benevolent and sweet, and quite unreal. No relationship, no pull of life could ever seem quite as real as this. Mrs. Warren was saying a little plaintively : " Special cocktails Paul likes, and they are getting hot."

Their laughter went with them into the room.

Mrs. Warren was standing at a tea-table, looking despairingly at the cocktails, poured and ready with lights in their amber depths. She turned and smiled at them. She had not been quite satisfied with Benny's engagement to Paul Sturt. After all, he was a nobody, a nice young man, but a nobody. However, a mother has little say in her children's lives these days. She had been nice enough to Paul because Benny wanted him. And lately this new job of his with the Minson interests had changed her attitude towards him considerably. Perhaps, after all, Paul would amount to something, in spite of his artistic looks and his queer way of becoming moody and gloomy, like all the veterans she had known.

Her eyes went to the ring, which Benny was holding out. She thought the diamond rather small, but the setting was pretty and in good taste, even unusual. She said : " Paul, how sweet. So simple and in such good taste."

She kept anything disparaging out of her voice, and even if she had not appreciated the ring, nothing would have made any impression on them. They were outside her, outside everything, except themselves.

“Now we’ll be married right away,” Benny was thinking, planning it already. “We’ll be married right away, and not waste any more time. If there’s going to be another war, he’ll be married and safe. We’ll have a baby, perhaps two!” She stopped, and laughed aloud, basking in her own secret plans, and in their eyes of love turned upon her.

“This is glorious,” Paul was thinking. “What fools we were not to do something about all that bickering; it was my fault. I should have taken charge, prevented it from happening. A man should know how to handle these things, protect both of us from being stupid.”

After lunch, Mrs. Warren went to lie down. “Benny will never have cause to accuse her mother of lack of tact,” Mrs. Warren thought, leaving them alone reluctantly. They seemed somewhat, well, a trifle emotional, to be safe. But she imagined she could trust any daughter of hers to be circumspect. She tried not to listen to the hum of their voices, and especially to the silences. She had closed her door firmly, but she found it impossible to sleep. The traditional and destructive sex fears which had tortured her generation, and through it, their children, were strong in Mrs. Warren’s mound of repressions, as she tossed on her chaise-longue and imagined what Benny and Paul were doing.

It was all Benny could do to hold on to the glory of the day when Paul suddenly put her away from him, and said: “I must go now, dearest, we mustn’t be greedy.”

He took his hand from her breast, which he had been stroking softly through the dress. He had not responded

to her gesture towards opening her dress. Her mouth was bruised by his kisses, and her mind in a divine turmoil. She felt like a goddess and quite, quite invincible.

She said breathlessly : " Oh, Paul, don't go now, why you've only been here a minute. I want—oh, Paul, don't go."

She did not feel in the least what he called " greedy." It was a horrid word, and untrue anyhow. Surely there couldn't be enough or too much of love, ever. And this was the first time she had loved. She watched him dazedly as he straightened his tie in the mirror over the mantelpiece at a safe distance from her. His eyes looked at her in the mirror. His lips were smiling tenderly.

" You look like a wood nymph, a naughty little wood nymph," he said. There was no reproof in his voice, but Benny felt rebuffed, like a child. The goddess feeling began to fade and she clutched at it.

" These things," she began, " these things are so precious. Moments like this should never stop, never."

He went on with his tie, looking thoughtful. Benny looked down at herself, and saw the disorder of her dress. She flushed hotly. But she said nothing, and held on, hard, to what remained of the goddess feeling. She kissed him at the door with no trace of abandon or lack of poise. Where a moment before she had been a nymph, now she was a dryad, a cool water dryad with the madness draining out of her eyes in a dryad's pebble-coloured tears.

" Tomorrow ? " Paul whispered, holding her closely in a last fierceness. He waited, and Benny said in a low voice : " Tomorrow, yes, and we'll discuss the wedding, won't we ? "

Paul hesitated. Between them once again was this basic something that would not quite melt in the heat of loving. Between them was the wall which exists

between all people, however close they may manage to come to each other, that strange web that Waldo could see because he was no longer purely human.

Benny's thought and Paul's thought were heavy with excitement and emotion, but they twisted away from each other in separate streams. "I won't, I simply *won't* think he's reluctant, being cautious now, after today," Benny was thinking. Paul said to himself, "I'll speak to Curtis about it, tell him I want to get married, perhaps in the spring. Yes, I'll have to push him a bit." "If we get married right away, we could make Christmas our honeymoon," Benny was thinking. They were as far apart as that.

## Chapter 16

WALDO saw the angry young man coming from away off. His anger sprayed in front of him and rayed out at all his sides like a reddish mist. Waldo saw the young man coming through the big turning doors of the Sun Life Building as he stood with the elevator boy just outside one of the cars.

It was a comparatively quiet moment, about eleven o'clock, and only two of the opulent cars were in use. The second one had just gone up full. Waldo had been bored in Curtis Minson's office and had managed to wander out of the Minson suite without being stopped. Curtis had just finished a conference, during which he had been overbearing. "It doesn't suit you, old boy," Waldo thought. "It'd become you more being backward and shy and decent." He yawned and got down from the chair which had gradually come to be accepted as his own.

Curtis was saying, "My dear fellow, it is a perfectly reasonable suggestion. Business is business. And in these days, we must be careful."

Waldo had listened to many of these conferences, sitting on his chair or under Curtis Minson's desk. He had imagined it would be instructive and interesting, if not amusing, but he had got over being dizzy at the sound of ten millions and four hundred thousands tossed about like balls at a circus. Yet he knew it was not a circus but the country's business, making it or breaking it in the world's markets. And the complications involved in Big Business, as opposed to the world he had known, staggered and appalled him.

The man with whom Curtis had been having the conference this particular morning looked fed up. He felt that Minson was only putting on the act for which he was noted. "Minson's a hard man to deal with, never misses a trick, don't try to put anything over."

It was not noticeable, except to Waldo, that Curtis' decisions were slow and almost awkward, that his mind took in the details but was sluggish in seeing the underlying facts. He had learned to confuse his competitors by befogging the basic issues and overstressing the details. Days, even weeks later, he would thrash out the main points or have them thrashed out for him by others. That was why Paul Sturt was so indispensable to him. Both he and Paul knew it. That was why Paul would climb up under Curtis. From the start both of them had known that fundamentally Curtis was a stupid man, with limited imagination, and that his strength lay in a knowledge of his own stupidity and the weaknesses of others. These he could sum up with remarkable shrewdness. In addition he had a sort of flair, a nose, for money, and a bulldog tenacity.

Waldo slipped out of the door of Minson's private office, not waiting to hear the end of the negotiation. He knew from experience of Curtis' methods that it would end in the defeat of the competitor.

No one noticed him go out. The staff had become used to seeing him coming and going. "Independent little cuss," was their affectionate appellation for him, one he vastly preferred to the usual "cute."

The long corridor echoed with the footsteps of people rushing along. "All this hurry, and for what?" Waldo thought scornfully, forgetting that once he had done the same. "Blood pressure. Arthritis. Thrombosis. Apoplexy. Nervous breakdowns. That's what you're getting!" Waldo said this loudly as he walked along.

He reached the elevator doors, and waited for it to stop. He knew the elevator boys well by now, and rather liked the attention they gave him. "Nervous breakdown, that's you," he said to the anaemic young man standing waiting and twisting his fingers nervously. "Calm down, nothing's worth that much jitter," he said.

The elevator door opened noiselessly and the boy's head popped out. He saw Waldo and smiled. "Hey, fella, want a ride?" he said hopefully. It was tiresome running this de luxe automatic number and anything that turned up to relieve the monotony met with his approval. Waldo did not reply, but followed the Nervous Breakdown into the lift. All the way down the man shifted his feet, and his hands were never still. He kept on taking his cigarette out of his mouth and putting it back without pulling on it.

"Oh, for Pete's sake," Waldo said. The man got out and rushed away towards the big door. That was when Waldo saw the angry man coming in their direction. They almost collided. "No sense of direction. Rush, rush, hurry, hurry, bump, bump," Waldo said.

The elevator boy said: "Quite a conversationalist, aren't you?"

"Oh, was I barking?"

"I suppose that snuffle means you're trying to say something."

"I'm *not* snuffling!"

"Funny thing about dogs. I bet you could tell a mouthful if they let you speak up. Tell a thing or two what goes on round here in these offices, eh, boy?"

"Potential Communist," Waldo said, "and by the time you make up your mind the war'll be over and there'll be no band-wagon at all." Waldo turned all his attention on the boy. The angry man was almost upon them, so all he had time to add was: "Better stick

to what you're used to, fella. Better be an elevator boy, a better elevator boy, better mouse-traps, you know? World'll neat a path to your door and all that sort of thing."

His own good advice startled him. It was exactly what he had never done himself in his past life. He had always been restless and had dissipated his training and advantages.

"Buck and Ligne," the angry man said in a repressed voice. He pronounced Ligne "Leen." Waldo had only heard it called "Line," by Curtis and Paul. He had thought it appropriate, sounding like "buck the line."

"The dix-neuvieme étage," he added.

"That means the nineteenth floor," Waldo said.

He determined to follow the young man and see what went on in Buck & Ligne's offices. It was time he met old Buck anyhow; heard so much about it he felt he almost knew him.

The elevator mounted silently and the door slid open. As the young man got out Waldo ran forward and, before the elevator boy could speak, vanished round the corner. He waited until the door of the lift shut, then he ran to the turn and looked around it. The young man's back, stiffer than ever and angrier, was disappearing through a door with large gold lettering on it. "Buck & Ligne. Lumber Merchants."

In one bound Waldo shot through the door, which almost closed on his hindquarters. The young man was too wrought up to notice Waldo. He had walked up to the round desk at which sat a gorgeous female with black hair and pearls, and said: "Please announce me to Mr. Buck."

His English accent was perfect. In fact, one would hardly have known it was not his natural language

The girl smiled at him. He was extremely good-looking, with long black lashes and a long thin nose. He wore a dark blue overcoat and a black fedora and a hint of sideburns. His gloves were grey suède, and Waldo thought, "Where's your cane?" He looked like that sort of young man. Waldo watched all this with fascination, meanwhile keeping out of sight of the girl at the round desk and shooting a wary eye about him for signs of old Buck's private office.

"What name shall I say?" the girl gurgled at the young man, her eyes glittering. "I'll bet that girly-girly stuff comes high," Waldo thought, "new kind of thrower-out, female ejector."

The silence that had fallen was beginning to scare Waldo. The young man's reddish mist had deepened to a bright purple. He seemed unable to speak. Finally he said in a voice congested with fury: "So much goes on here that I am not informed about. Even now I am not known here! What next, may I ask?"

"Yes, you may ask," the girl said pertly, "but I cannot say if you will receive an answer. Now would you please tell me who I may say you are to Mr. Buck's secretary?"

Waldo thought the man would burst. His neck, from the back, became red, and his hands were clenched on the grey gloves. He turned suddenly away from the girl and walked swiftly towards the heavy portieres at the left, concealing what Waldo imagined was the door of Mr. Buck's office.

"So he knows his way round here," Waldo thought. "I wonder who he is."

The young man ripped open the curtains and revealed a corridor with doors at each side. Waldo was close on his heels and was nearly trodden on as a breathless youth came hastily out of one of the doors. He looked

across the lobby at the black-haired receptionist, whose finger was still on the emergency bell. Then, seeing the young man, his face broke into a conciliatory smile. "Why, Mr. Ligne, this is a surprise, I'm sure. May I let Mr. Buck know that you have returned?"

"So that's who he is," said Waldo to himself, "young Ligne, the son of old Ligne." He remembered the young man's war record, must have seen it somewhere. Excellent stuff, Military Cross, wounds, all that. He looked at him now with increasing respect. No one noticed Waldo. He hid himself behind the curtains as the secretary, with a reproachful look at the receptionist, waved young Ligne to one of the easy chairs lined up against the pale green wall of the corridor.

"I will tell Mr. Buck you are here, Mr. Ligne," he said. Yes indeed, I will let him know at once, and the moment he is free, I am sure, he will see you."

Somewhat to Waldo's surprise the young man took the indicated chair and sat stiffly in it waiting for the secretary to fulfil his promise. He fixed him with an eagle eye, watching as the man went obsequiously to a heavy maghogany door, knocked very softly and disappeared. Waldo kept carefully behind the curtains. He saw the young Ligne fellow take out a folded handkerchief, look around him, and then pass it lightly over his forehead and replace it in his breast pocket. Sitting there in the lonely corridor, Waldo thought he had a lost look. He seemed to have become deflated. Now, instead of anger, Waldo saw only nervousness in his attitude.

The secretary came out beaming. "Mr. Buck will see you at once. His appointment has been delayed. Please go right in."

He escorted young Ligne towards the door. Now was Waldo's big risk, and he took it. He came forward

boldly and walked calmly through the door to Mr. Buck's office in young Ligne's wake. No one prevented him. The secretary thought he was Ligne's dog and Mr. Buck did not see him at all because, the moment he got inside the door, he went quickly under the desk. Young Ligne was far too preoccupied and upset to bother about a black spaniel.

"Well, good work, Waldo," said Waldo to himself. He lay down panting, all ears. He could see old Buck's large polished shoes resting firmly and easily before his chair, and then young Ligne's feet came into sight. The toes of his shoes were a trifle too pointed for Waldo's taste and the socks under them were silk. Yet Waldo knew there was nothing in the least effeminate about him.

"Monsieur," young Ligne said with visible effort to keep calm and respectful, "I hope you are well."

Hanson Buck got up from his chair. He was still lithe and limber so this operation did not bother him. He could see that Armand Ligne was very upset. He had no idea what it was, but he thought it had something to do with Buck & Ligne and with himself. He had not seen Armand for more than two months, as the young man had been to South America to study a certain forestation experiment. In fact, Hanson Buck had subconsciously been glad to have the boy out of the way for the moment, and had not been informed of his return.

He held out a firm hand. "Delighted to see you back safe and sound, my boy," he said, with just the right accent of warmth and welcome. Waldo, under the desk, could feel their eyes meet in sudden fierce clash. Armand's connection with Buck & Ligne had been somewhat unfortunate. Before the war he had been too young to take much interest in what might turn out to be his future work. His education had been like that of most of his French-Canadian compatriots, in a

Roman Catholic Seminary where he had learned more about classical culture and religion than about business or the history of the world and his country, especially the political history. He had been taught that the English were aggressors, that the Protestants were infidels, and that the world was a remotely evil place where young French-Canadians must rustle their way without material benefit from outside pressures which affected them in a geographical sense. The closeness of the United States and the thousand ramifications of that influence on Canadian business and life in general, he had been told, were vaguely destructive to the Catholic tradition ; and the partnership in the British Commonwealth he had learned to mistrust with the fierceness born of biased history teaching.

Now he faced Hanson Buck across the desk with all this false impingement uppermost. He was pale with it, pale and damp. And yet, looking at Hanson Buck from close up, he could not help liking him. He had known him always as a kind and genial man, who used to bring him presents at Christmas and candy whenever he came to see his father. Always, his father had spoken of Mr. Buck as a fine man, a man with whom he was proud to be in partnership. The business had prospered and gone ahead ; but Georges Ligne had not reaped its greatest harvests. He had died of cancer at the age of fifty, before the partners had been able to achieve one-half of their later prosperity. However, he had given Armand the best education possible for a boy of his background and religion. His fine home had always been open to more than the usual number of English-speaking Canadians, and Armand had very early learned that there is little difference between people if you like them enough to get to know them in their homes and hearts.

His eyes flickered away from Hanson Buck's now, because the older man's gaze dissipated his anger and reminded him of the past, and of the happy times he had spent at the Buck house with young Hank and his parents after his own had died. His well-shaped mouth tried to be set and angry but, in spite of himself, he kept on remembering a wooden clown that Mr. Buck had once brought him for his birthday, and which he had treasured for a long time.

Hanson Buck said, "Sit down, Armand, and tell me about your trip. It's been quite a long time since we have seen you."

Armand had not meant to sit down, but Waldo saw the legs of a chair coming nearer, then one of Armand's shoes disappeared in the air as he crossed his legs. But his hands were tight on the arms of the chair.

"Cigarette?"

Hanson was holding out his case for Armand to take a smoke from it. He shook his head.

"Thank you, no," he said, "and perhaps I had better say what is on my mind."

Hanson sat down again in his chair behind the desk and leaned back comfortably. Something was eating Armand, he could see that. The boy had always been high-strung and a bit temperamental. Wrong sort of education. Too much church stuff and not enough hard-headed business training. The boy had talents but, in Hanson's opinion, they had not been exploited in the right way. He should have gone to McGill and taken a professional course of some kind, probably chemical engineering. He remembered the lad had been clever at inventions when he was a boy, always tinkering with "stinks" and concocting gadgets. Too bad none of it seemed to have developed. Could have been used to advantage in Buck & Ligne. New ideas. Always wel-

come. He sighed, and folded his hands on the desk, waiting for Armand to speak. He lit a cigarette and made rings with the smoke, looking at the boy through them.

Armand's eyes went round the room and noted something that brought a spot of colour quickly to his cheekbones.

"I notice that the name has been taken from my father's office door," he said. His voice once more sounded unfriendly and hard.

He was staring at the door leading to another office at the right of the window. It had been his father's, with a second door opening into the larger offices of the staff at the other corner of the building. The door was closed. Armand saw the lettering on it, still not quite obliterated. Hanson Buck had had the name rubbed off at the time he had been considering taking young Ligne into the partnership, after Hank's death. He had half planned to put Armand's name on the door as a welcome back from the war. And then an inner sense of caution had stopped him and he had left the lettering half rubbed away.

He was not nearly so sure now about the partnership. The government housing contract had put new life into him and had seemed to rouse him into a different attitude towards his own powers, which he could see were by no means depleted or lessened. For a while he had lost all sense of life's meaning, after his son had been killed, but vitality was coming back again, and with it the old shrewdness and clarity of vision. He could judge young Ligne better. He would have liked to take him into partnership but he would not consider it unless Armand proved himself to be up to it and unless he could be certain that Armand would be able to carry on the name and the prestige of the business in the fullest way.

He tried to sum up Armand now, but affection blurred

the picture. He would wait and see what the boy was getting at. He could see him struggling with anger and a strong resentment.

Finally Armand said : " You have not explained why the name has been removed from my father's door."

The accusation annoyed Hanson Buck. He uncrossed his knees slowly.

" Armand, don't take that tone with me," he said quietly. " There is a perfectly good explanation for it but, at the moment, I prefer to hear what you have to say. What's eating you ? "

He half smiled. Waldo could hear the smile. Waldo thought, " You like the boy, but you look down on him too. You wouldn't take this tone if it had been young Hank, would you ? "

Armand said, " Sir, I returned home last week, when you were away in New York." Hanson nodded. That explained why Armand had not come to him immediately.

" And then I went away for the week-end to some friends who were giving a hunting party at their lodge on the Gatineau. Yesterday, Monday, I left the lodge early in my car and drove north as far as Omwada."

He stopped and looked up. Hanson's eyes were on him, keen and kind, not in the least embarrassed or guilty. Armand's tongue faltered. He had come here in a whirlwind of anger and resentment because what he had seen at Omwada had seemed to him to be the basest betrayal, an overreaching of power on Hanson Buck's part.

He said, a little more slowly, " I have seen the factory on our timber limits, the American factory which they said was being built there with your permission, in fact that you had leased them the land and sold them the lumber to build it."

He paused. Hanson Buck had got the drift now of Armand's feeling. So the boy was angry about the factory. He remembered he had always been resentful of the United States. The actual operations had taken place while he was in South America, although the deal had been put through almost a year before. Hanson had seen no reason to inform Armand about it. After all, the boy was not a partner, in fact he was merely going through Buck & Ligne from the ground up in order to find out if he wished to go on with the business. He had spent a few months in the accounting department, where he had not shown any great aptitude. But that might have been caused by the war, and his wound which refused to heal. In fact the poor lad had been in hospital, on and off, for several months, and this interrupted both his and Hanson Buck's sense of continuity or their trust in Armand's interest in Buck & Ligne.

After that, he had expressed a desire to go into it from the chemical end ; but here his faulty education had been a handicap. He was keen, but a thorough knowledge of the life and philosophy of St. Ignatius Loyola was a poor substitute for knowledge of physics.

That was the reason Hanson had suggested the trip to South America, more to give them both a chance to realign their ideas on the subject of Armand's future than for any other reason.

"Well now, the factory," Hanson said. He wanted to make it clear to young Armand how he felt about him. He did not want to say too much or too little. The boy had fought gallantly and well for Canada. He was a fine boy. It was a duty to help him and encourage him. But the business came first and must not be sacrificed to a sentimental or misguided sense of affection.

He leaned forward and put his hand on Armand's arm. "I can see you are not pleased about it," he said,

“but that, I think, is because you do not get the picture. Your father would have been delighted. Will you let me tell you how it came about?”

Armand looked down for a moment at Hanson's hand on his sleeve, and again that warm realization of affection weakened his anger. He remembered how fatherly and kind Hanson had been to him since Georges Ligne's death, how he had advised, and well advised, his mother about her affairs, giving time and trouble to do it.

He said slowly: “It is possible I have been mistaken. Please tell me and I will try to be sensible. It was a great shock to me to see a building going up in our limits.”

“That's fine of you!” Hanson was smiling. All the old trust had come back again. Waldo shifted his position and thought, “Well, how it comes and goes, anger at boiling point one minute and all love and sweetness the next.” It came to him that he could discern these shifts in emotion now much more clearly than he had seen them when he was a man. The webs that enclosed people, when they were afraid or angry, kept on lifting with tremendous rapidity and then closing down again before you knew it. No steadiness of emotion, no great surge that carried everything before it, just a mass of shifting feelings and errant thoughts dictating and swaying to action. “If I could think this out,” Waldo mused, “I might be able to get out of the dog mess I'm in.”

“I leased International Prad the land for a factory,” Hanson was saying, “because it was a smart thing to do. We are ahead of our competitors in the move. The factory will manufacture talloel.”

He stopped and looked at Armand. To his surprise, Armand nodded. “From dissolved wood pulp. Yes, it is a wonderful advance.”

“ Well,” said Hanson in a pleased tone, “ learn about it on your trip south ? ”

“ Oh no, I am always interested in these things.”

He opened his coat, took out a wallet from the pocket, and started turning the leaves. Finally, he handed it to Hanson at an open page. It showed a series of rough drawings of a tree, and the various processes it goes through after it is felled. The drawings were small but, to Hanson Buck, perfectly clear and intelligible. The figures that Armand had scrawled at the bottom of the page amused Hanson, being of grandiose sums of money which, he supposed, Armand had worked out as potential profits for Buck & Ligne. They were out of line, but Hanson was surprised and delighted all the same. He kept any criticism out of his voice.

“ Advances every day,” he said, “ advances and improvements. The forests are getting a new look.” He laughed.

“ And waste will soon be no longer possible,” Armand said. “ That would have pleased my father. He loved the forests. He always felt they should be cared for like a crop, any crop, not as so much money in the pocket never to be used again, but to be used over and over.”

There was a challenge in what he was saying. Hanson felt it and rose to it. Young Ligne might after all be the one to carry on the tradition and the name. It gave him a new confidence and sense of happiness to sense this. He had felt that things had led him to a dead end, and now he saw light ahead, and a turning, a fork marked “ From here on.” He was grateful to Armand for making him think quickly and for giving him hope.

“ It’s a wonderful world, you know, my boy, if we can keep the peace,” he said.

“ Oh that,” Armand lifted his hands and let them fall. There was a fatalism in the gesture. He shrugged.

“ Might it not be the right thing to do, that we proceed in any case,” he said, “ as though there would not be another interruption.”

“ Grand idea. Sure thing. Glad you want to do that.” The words came out of Hanson jerkily. He was thinking rapidly now, fitting Armand into his scheme.

“ International Prad is only the beginning,” he said. “ We’ve done a smart deal with them on the factory at Omwada, and there’s no reason why we shouldn’t do our own processing, in a small way, if it succeeds as an experiment.”

He looked suddenly and keenly at Armand. It was extraordinary how different the boy looked, completely changed from what he was when he first came into the room. His shoulders were back and his eyes more clear, his mouth firm. One thing about the lad, he had always been a straight shooter, like his father. The best French-Canadian stock was as good as any in the world. A pride in Armand, a true Canadian pride, swept through Hanson Buck as he looked at the son of his dead partner. He had no son of his own, and that was a small piece of death, but Armand might do the trick, he might be trained to take hold after all.

Waldo felt stiff. He got up slowly. Things had not turned out as he had half hoped they would. There had been no fireworks, no high words, no temper, nothing exciting in fact. He was a little disappointed ; but at the same time, he was glad to have listened to Hanson Buck. Once again, Big Business seemed not to be what he had thought it. Curtis Minson had disillusioned him, and here was Hanson Buck acting like a Horatio Alger hero ! You never could tell !

“ I like the old boy, I actually like him,” Waldo thought. He did not add, even to himself, “ And I admire him too,” although deep inside him he felt a

reluctant respect and a real sense of security which Hanson Buck had engendered by his handling of Armand and by his obvious sureness in the matter of the new factory.

“I think I became excited for nothing,” Armand was saying. “I might have known that you would not do anything my father would not have approved.” He was flushed, and his voice sounded emotional.

“Now, now, that’s all right,” Hanson said, embarrassed. He hated being apologized to. “I guess you thought I was putting one over on you, and all that, about the factory ; making a mistake. Well, we all make mistakes my lad, but this isn’t one.”

With these words he waved Armand’s apologies aside, but nicely.

“Come in one morning this week,” he said, “and we’ll talk things over. It’s time you made up your mind about what you want to do.”

“I think I know.”

Armand had risen. Both pairs of eyes went to the door with the half-obliterated name on it. Both of them were thinking of the dead man.

Hanson smiled. He said : “We’ll keep it that way until we have our talk.” Both men had a strong and good feeling of closeness, as though the door had opened and Georges Ligne stood there smiling at them in trust.

It was at that moment that Waldo chose to come out from under the desk. He expected to surprise them, but again he was disappointed. Neither of them seemed astonished to see a black dog suddenly appear under their feet.

“A nice pup, that,” Hanson said. “I like dogs myself.”

There was a brief silence, and Armand said, “But he is not mine. I thought when he came in with me that he was your dog.”

Now they were staring at Waldo in amusement. He looked up and said : " Oh well, I've got to get around a bit. Minson bores me, and I want to find out how Big Business works while I have the chance. Probably never get another."

" I guess he's hungry," Hanson said. " Makes quite a noise, doesn't he, for his size ! "

But Waldo merely turned on his furry heels, and walked calmly out of the door and along the corridor until he came to the outside office and the girl at the round desk. He passed her without a glance and slipped through the door on the heels of a messenger boy.

## Chapter 17

WALDO'S paws were cold. It was his first experience of snow getting between his toes and balling into icy pebbles that hurt him when he walked. He whined about it and felt sorry for himself. Twice he stopped and tried to lick the pellets away from under his right paw, which pained him most. But they resisted him. Otherwise he thought the snow fun. It tickled his nose and made him laugh.

He looked back at the house, considering whether or not to give up his walk, but decided to go on with it. Through the window of the living-room he had seen a movement behind this part of the fence and had barked and barked until the maid had let him out. Now he was a little regretful that he had not remained beside the fire, watching the maid do the vacuum cleaning. That amused him too. He loved the way the blue bag bellied out with the incoming dust.

He approached the place in the fence where he had imagined he could see someone moving about. "Perhaps it was a rabbit," he thought hopefully, although he had not the remotest idea what he should do if he saw one. Bite it, he supposed, in repugnance. He remembered shooting a hare once, in the North woods. It had screamed; and when he retrieved it from the bushes where it had fled, there it was lying, all bloody and helpless. He had hated the whole thing.

He lay down on the snow, feeling the stubbly grass, half-covered with the flaky substance, rough on his belly. There had been a snow-storm two days ago, and the ground had changed in texture under it. Waldo was

terribly sensitive to all these things now. His nerves were constantly reacting to sounds and smells and odd reverberations in the atmosphere.

It was very quiet in the garden, and grey with storm clouds above. A grocer's truck went by, changing gears to take the slippery little hill that suddenly lifted the road after the Minsons' house had been passed. The sound of the truck drowned the slight rustle at the other side of the fence, but Waldo's sensitive nose told him that someone was there. He felt danger. The feeling went through him and down into the man-part of him, into his memory.

Danger! He could only remember bits and pieces of his life as a man, but he knew that he had not been good at facing peril, not good at all. "A lousy coward, that's what I was," he was thinking uneasily, wondering if he would still be a coward if something materialized from behind the fence. Nothing in his brain could tell him this.

He could hear whispering now, and then a paling was softly removed from the fence and he could see beyond into the empty lot that bordered the Minson property. He backed away from two pairs of eyes that stared through the slender opening. He could only see part of their faces and the ends of their fingers that gripped the fence through the hole. The faces were white, even in the frosty air, and looked unhealthy. They were smooth and fair and young. "Kids. Only kids, not more than fifteen or so," he thought. Nothing to be afraid of.

Nevertheless, he backed away from the hole, dragging on his stomach, and making a dark path through the new snow. He kept on backing away under the baleful stare of their eyes until he felt that he was at a safer distance. He wanted to bark, to warn someone. There

was something wrong about all this, about the loose paling and the marauding fingers and eyes. These kids were up to no good, he felt, yet it seemed silly to take it seriously.

“That’s the pup we saw before.”

“Yeh, that’s him all right.”

“Little bastard’s too goddam noseey.”

“Yeh, noseey all right.”

Waldo stopped backing away. He got to his feet slowly, his hackles rising. He was definitely scared now, scared pink. The threat in their tones was very evident, although they made no move towards him.

“A week tamorra?”

“Yeh, a week tamorra.”

“O.K. Let’s scam now in case he barks.”

“Goddam bugger, you’ll bark once too often!”

Waldo turned and ran. He knew his tail was between his legs and, for the first time in his life, he could feel it that way, although he knew that many times in his man-life he had run away like this without actually feeling that his tail was a give-away. At what he considered a safe distance, he stopped and turned. The paling was once more in place and there was no sign of what he had seen and heard. The dark streak he had made in withdrawal was already obliterated by falling snow.

“I’ve gotta tell Curtis,” he thought in panic, “I’ve gotta.”

He rushed up the steps, noticing that his legs were truly getting strong and fine now. They no longer wobbled when he took steps quickly. He jumped up on the front door, barking and barking. However, the door remained closed because the maid was still running the vacuum cleaner in the living-room and the cook was in the deep freezer, ostensibly choosing a roast for

dinner, but mentally taking notes about the next package of bacon she intended to slip into her hand-bag on her day off. Upstairs, a new parlour-maid was being belatedly instructed in her duties by Hilda Minson who had no idea of these duties herself. For the two days that the girl had been in the house, Hilda had shirked tackling it. She disliked the cynical expression in the girl's eyes but did not know what to do about it. Nancy Hibberd had practically insisted that she hire another maid. Nancy had said, "My dear Hilda, don't tell me you actually wash your own nylons!" She had eyed the row of stockings hanging on the rail in the bathroom with such amusement that Hilda had gone red all over with embarrassment.

She had said to Curtis that evening: "We should have an upstairs maid, dear. It is ridiculous that a woman in my position should have to wash her own nylons."

Her tone was so exactly a replica of Nancy Hibberd's that even Curtis noticed it and laughed. He said nothing, however, only grunted amiably.

The girl said suddenly now, interrupting Hilda's rambling and inefficient description of the work: "Which afternoon do I get off, madam? I presume you would wish me to remain in when the other girls go out?"

An expression of utter confusion came over Hilda's pink and white face, an expression almost of horror.

The maid stared at her curiously. "Now what?" she thought scornfully, "the boy-friend, I suppose. She never thought of it. I can see that!" Her lips curled in respectful amusement and she coughed to bring Hilda to herself.

The cough made Hilda even more upset. To have someone in the house *all* the time? Not to have one day to herself? No, she hadn't thought of it! She said:

“ Oh well, I thought—all of you could go together, couldn't you, I mean it would be nice——”

“ Oh no, madam, that would never do.” The girl's eyes were definitely malicious now. So it was a boyfriend all right, the old girl was a scream, trying to cover up.

The sound of Waldo's barking came to them through the closed front door downstairs. They could also hear his nails scratching on the paint.

“ Oh, you have a dog, madam? Usually, I do not accept positions with dogs in the house.”

Hilda gave a little gasp of relief. “ Oh, then you wouldn't want——”

But the girl cut her short. “ In this case, madam, with a large house, and a garden and all, I'm sure it will be all right.” She had no intention of letting the Minson position slip through her fingers. Top wages, and the lady of the house not knowing what went on. Swell ! Much too good to lose ! She smirked firmly at Hilda, taking a mean sort of pleasure in Hilda's obvious helplessness and inability to cope with the situation.

“ Well, very well then,” Hilda said faintly. Tomorrow was the day the other two maids went off duty. Tomorrow, the day she loved best, alone in the house, able to do what she pleased. Even though it was lonely, still—there were compensations. She must think of something, some way to get this dreadful girl out of the house, some pretext. Her brain went whirling round and round. Take Waldo for a walk perhaps? Or run short of groceries and have to send her for them? No, that would be too short a time.

The vacuum cleaner suddenly stopped, and the housemaid below said audibly, “ Drat the dog,” and went to the front door.

Waldo rushed into the house. “ Curtis ! ” he screamed,

“Curtis, there’s a coupla juvenile delinquents out there going to burn the house down or something terrible ! Curtis ! Where in hell are you ? ”

He went running into Curtis’ study, and when he saw that Curtis wasn’t there, he ran out again in a panic.

Hilda started down the stairs, relieved to have something to do that would take her away from the new parlour-maid’s stare and half-smile.

“Waldo, what on earth ? ” Hilda’s voice was more than usually affectionate. She was grateful to Waldo for getting her downstairs.

Waldo rushed up to her and said urgently : “Lookit, Hilda, my girl, no nonsense about this dog business ! I’m serious. Something’s got to be done. You don’t know these kids like I do. They’ll do anything these days. They read these comics and they go to the movies. They know all the dodges and more. Say, Hilda, are you listening ? ”

But Hilda merely cluck-clucked at him, and said : “See a wabbit or something, or maybe a lady-dog ? Why, he’s all excited, isn’t he ? ” She stooped to pat him.

“Oh, blast and damn ! ” Waldo said angrily. This was getting to be no joke, this being a dog when things needed him as a man, when he knew he *ought* to be a man. He stopped, and backed away from Hilda, with horror in his eyes. “Why aren’t I a man ? ” His growl was fierce.

Hilda screamed. “Oh dear, Waldo, you naughty dog, to growl at me ! And the man said you were a nice gentle puppy ! Oh dear, I do hope we shall not have to get rid of you ! ”

Waldo’s lips dropped back again over his teeth. He hadn’t meant to growl at Hilda at all. “You idiot,”

he thought, "can't you see when a man is in a tizzy? Can't you see I'm serious about this? Oh, damn and blast, I've simply got to make Curtis understand."

But his hopelessness was growing, that and a sneaking feeling that perhaps here was a job he would have to do himself, without help from anyone, without support. A cold shiver went over him, and suddenly he yawned right in Hilda's face, from nervousness.

Hilda laughed in relief. "Of course, you're only a puppy, after all," she said archly. "I was a silly to think you growled at mummy. You were only playing, weren't you? Just playing with mummy."

She stooped and picked Waldo up in her arms in a surprise move that took him completely off guard. He could feel her soft curves and could smell the Attitudes du Corps she wore behind her ears and between her breasts. He put his nose down and sniffed at her voluptuously.

"Maybe you're right, maybe I'm only a puppy, maybe I imagined it." He continued to sniff between Hilda's breasts, breathing heavily and trying not to drip on her dress.

But he could still see the dark slit in the fence, and hear the whispers, and sense the evil in the two pairs of eyes. At the centre of his being he still quivered with fear and a premonition of disaster.

"Do you wish me to answer the door, madam; it seems to be ringing?" It was the new maid, coming downstairs without making a sound.

Waldo stopped and stared at her. He had not seen her before. "Ooh," he thought, "a hot baby this one, not Hilda's style at all." His fears dissipated vaguely as he watched the girl walk on high-heeled pumps across the shining floor to the door. As she walked, she minced. She opened the door as though it were made of glass,

almost with her little fingers raised and crooked. "Like they do in England, when they drink tea," Waldo thought. He turned and almost ran into the kitchen with the girl, when he saw that the visitor was Nancy Hibberd. He could hear Hilda's excited welcome as the door shut behind him.

Nancy swept up to Hilda on a stronger whiff of her perfume than even Hilda could stand. She said: "Oof, Nancy *darling*, you smell like a—" She had been going to say "a drugstore," but felt that the term was far too common for Nancy, and anyhow, Nancy's perfume came from Paris and cost thirty dollars a drop. She changed it to "a lovely, lovely garden."

Nancy laughed. Today, she wore a new fur coat from Reveillon Frères in Paris. It was of a soft fur with a deep pelt, dyed a dark green. Her hat was of the green fur, made like a devil's cap. Under her arm she carried the famous lizard bag that Hilda had so much admired. "Funny, she never brings me any presents," Hilda thought, suddenly resentful.

"D'you mind, darling, if I use your phone? I just stopped in to say hello on my way downtown, I haven't a minute."

"Of course, darling. But won't you stay for a drink, just a teeny weeny glass of Burgundy? I got some specially for you."

The look Nancy gave her would not have been lost on Waldo, but Hilda did not see it. Nancy had come into Montreal from Cartierville on an impulse. She would call on Jerry Ferrow at his office and make him take her to lunch. She was sure he was in love with her and only needed a little pushing. She had meant to call him from her own home but at the last minute had lost her nerve. Jerry was the one person who could prick through Nancy's armour and hurt her. "Damn him,"

she thought ; but to women like Nancy, resistance was an attraction. She had pointed her sights at Jerry from the beginning, because he had always taken her lightly and casually and had been able to give her back as many and as passionate kisses as she gave, and be perfectly imperturbable about it afterwards. In fact, he had a nasty habit of smiling at her when it was all over, with lips crinkled up in what looked too much like cynicism.

“ Thanks, darling, I will have a wee drappie,” she said, as she let the coat fall on to the bench in the hall, “ but please, not Burgundy.”

“ Oh,” Hilda said, disappointed again. Nancy always did or said something to make her feel small. She had gone to endless trouble to buy the Burgundy.

“ It’s real Burgundy, darling, from Venice, the man said so,” she said disconsolately as Nancy trailed into the telephone room and started to shut the door.

Even in her absorption with what she was going to say to Jerry, Nancy laughed. It was a cruel little laugh, but again Hilda did not sense it. Nancy said : “ Burgundy, darling, does not come from Venice. All they have there is sand and smelly water and glass factories ! ”

Her long shining nails gleamed against the door as she shut it firmly in Hilda’s face. Hilda could hear the dial turning in impatience. It sounded feverish. That was Nancy’s charm, the dash and *élan* with which she imbued life. Hilda longed and longed for some of it. She went into the hall that led to the kitchen quarters, forgetting, as she inevitably did, to ring the bell for the maid. She bumped into the new maid in the hallway.

“ Oh,” Hilda said, “ oh, I was going—oh, would you mind bringing two glasses with ice and some soda and, oh yes, the rye.”

“ Certainly, madam,” the maid said. Hilda saw

that her eyes were on the hall clock, which said eleven-thirty. Her tone implied, "At this hour. Already?"

Hilda straightened. She was not going to like this new girl, and Nancy or no Nancy. . . . She swept through the door again, seeing that the telephone room was still occupied by Nancy, and that the lizard bag had fallen to the floor as usual. She stooped to pick it up as Waldo pushed through the door with his nose and ambled forward.

"The bag again," he thought, sniffing at it gently as Hilda held it dangling.

She drew it away. "Now, Waldo, don't touch," she said.

"Oh phooey," he said huffily, and walked into the living-room.

The maid was putting the tray with the glasses on the table, very softly and deftly. She stood back a little to study the effect, flicked a corner of the brocade cloth with her finger, and withdrew. Waldo made a few sideways steps in a dancing motion. "Hoity-toity," he said.

The girl turned. "Don't you snarl at me, you nasty little puppy," she said. There was something in her eye that reminded Waldo of the bellboy in the hotel in Ottawa. Sweat broke out on him, and dripped from his tongue.

"Look at you, making a mess on the clean carpet." She moved towards him, but Hilda came into the room and Waldo made a leap at her, fawning. The girl went out of the room with a swish of starch.

"He's busy on the other phone. They always say that."

It was Nancy, coming in slowly, fiddling in the lizard bag for her compact. She sat down, accepted the glass that Hilda offered, and put it on the floor beside her. That was also one of Nancy's charms for Hilda. She did everything so unconventionally. She never put

tumblers where they were meant to go, on the neat little glass plates Hilda had bought so carefully, she ate her salad with a knife and fork and, if she felt like it, she dunked her toast in mushroom sauce to the horror of Hilda's friends. "Much too good to waste, darling," she had said on one occasion. Another time, when she had condescended to come to one of Hilda's lunches, she had turned up in a pair of pyjamas.

"Had an awfully thick night, darling," she had said, "slumming; went to all the lousy Montreal night-clubs, and then we drove out to some ghastly place on the Quebec road. I didn't get home until an hour ago."

Hilda had been dreadfully embarrassed until she saw that her friends were excited and intrigued by Nancy, as she herself was. She became arch, and tried to keep up with Nancy until Nancy had said: "Hilda's so sweet, isn't she? Just like a little white mouse."

There had been a silence which no one had tried to interpret.

The telephone bell rang shrilly, and Nancy jumped up, dropping her bag and its contents on the polished floor and overturning her glass. Waldo got up and sniffed at the pool of rye and water. "Gee," he thought, "I haven't had a swig of rye for a dog's age." He stopped in horror. "Oh, damn and blast," he said, "this dog business is getting me down."

He started to lap up the rye in a hurry before Hilda could see that it had spilled. After all, he had had quite a morning, what with the hole in the fence and the horrid whispering and threats. The rye tasted swell. Hilda had poured Nancy her usual strong snifter and it had not had time to become diluted. The liquor went down Waldo's throat like fire. "Must be getting a softie," he thought, choking, and then Hilda discovered what he was doing.

“Waldo, you naughty dog,” she cried, and swooped down on him, yanking him away from the damp spot on the floor which had been a pool of rye. Most of the rye had gone inside Waldo. He looked up at Hilda. Her outlines had become huge, amusingly huge. Waldo started to roar with laughter. He could hear himself, but for once it sounded O.K. and not so much like a half-snuffle, half-snarl.

Hilda was pulling at the bell-cord, remembering the new maid. As she did this, the front door bell rang, and the maid whisked through the hall to open the door, almost colliding with Nancy, who swung out of the telephone room in a temper.

“Still at the other phone, dammit,” Nancy said. She sounded shrewish, but her voice changed immediately she saw who was at the door. Her hands went to her hair.

“Paul! It’s Paul!” Waldo yelled. He rushed out of the room and into the hall. He had heard Paul say: “I wonder if you would mind looking on Mr. Minson’s desk for a dispatch case. He left it there this morning by mistake.”

Outside the door, Paul’s little car was still chugging, making small dots of steam on the air as the exhaust puffed the engine fumes out at the back.

“No, I won’t come in, thanks,” he said to Hilda Minson who came hurriedly from the living-room to greet him. “Thanks all the same, no, not at this hour in the morning.” He smiled at the drink in Hilda’s hand, and she wondered if he was being polite or rude about it. Paul stooped to pat Waldo.

Nancy said, “Why the handsome Mr. Sturt. Remember me? We met at Jerry Ferrow’s house party.”

“Of course, good morning,” Paul said, still smiling. The maid had found the dispatch case. She came

forward and was about to hand it to Paul, when Waldo lurched to one side and almost tripped her. He leered up at her in a jeering way. "You! Out of my way. Paul's here! I love Paul! He's my pal! You're my pal, aren't you, Paul, old boy?" He leaped crookedly up on Paul's leg, and fell down with a smack on to the carpet and lay there, looking out of one eye at Paul.

The maid said something under her breath and went primly into the living-room. Waldo lay there, feeling wonderful. Paul was here, and that lovely, *lovely* bitch Nancy, and ol' Hilda. What more could a fellow ask? All his pals together. "All my ol' pals together, all, all, all, together," sang Waldo. He tried to get up, and fell plunk down again.

"What on earth?" Paul had stooped and was looking worriedly at Waldo. He picked him up. "What's the matter, fella? Sick?" Paul's hand was feeling Waldo's nose anxiously.

"Why, he was perfectly all right a moment ago." It was Hilda. She came closer to Waldo, and then both Hilda and Paul smelled something. They both leaned down and sniffed. Paul broke into a roar of laughter. "Well, well, soused to the gills, why you old toper!"

He looked quizzically at Hilda. "Really, Mrs. Minson."

His eyes were full of laughter, and she thought he had the nicest way of speaking, so sort of deep and thrilling. He really was a handsome young man. But she did not think it was funny about Waldo.

The maid was coming out of the living-room. She had mopped up the mess on the floor and she said to Hilda as she passed, "I'm afraid, madam, that the liquor has taken the polish off the floor. I shall have to ask the housemaid to do it over again."

She held the empty glass in her hand. Paul went on laughing.

“Hey, that’s my drink !” Nancy said.

“I will bring you another glass, madam.” The maid went hurriedly into the hallway to the kitchen.

Waldo sang, “Goody, goody, goody, more, more, more lovely rye, more lovely rye.”

Paul said, “No more for you, fella, you’ve had enough already !” He started for the open door of Curtis Minson’s study. “I’ll put him in here,” he said ; “he can sleep it off.”

He dumped Waldo gently down on Curtis Minson’s desk, and looked around for somewhere suitable to park a drunken puppy. “Here we are,” he said, and started to pick Waldo up.

“Now what ?” he said. He followed Waldo’s staring eyes, as they were glued to the mirror at the side of Curtis’ desk. Waldo’s tail stood out at an angle, an angle of complete horror. His ears were half-lifted and he had pulled himself backward as far as he could on his wobbly paws without falling off the desk. He was staring at himself in the mirror.

“First time you’ve seen yourself, boy ?”

But for once, Paul’s voice did not help Waldo. He did not hear it, nor could he see Paul’s reflection in the mirror. What he saw in the mirror was the faint outline of a man. His own black shape was completely obliterated in it. The man was slight, and not very tall. He was staring back at Waldo in derision. Waldo recognized him at once, although he could not remember the man’s name.

“I know you,” Waldo whispered in horror, “I know you. Go away ! You’re a louse and a coward. You did something to me—something. . . .”

Waldo put back his head and a long terrified howl came out of his throat. He fell back into Paul’s protecting arms shuddering. Paul held him. He was no

longer laughing. He said soothingly : " Well now, take it easy, boy, take it easy. It's your first look at yourself. Maybe a dog doesn't like what he sees when he sees himself. Perhaps there is something queer about it, who knows ? "

He held Waldo close to him, putting his hand over Waldo's eyes so that he could no longer see into the glass. He put Waldo down in an easy chair, noticing that his body was limp with fright and that he was trembling and whimpering. " Sleep it off, you'll be O.K.," he said gently.

He gestured to Hilda to go away. Nancy had gone into the living-room again, and was drinking her second rye, with a pinched look around her mouth. Jerry was just making excuses. Well, he would see ! No man was going to do that to her !

Paul said, " I must run. I am due in Sherbrooke at three, with these papers."

He picked up the dispatch case, and opened the door. It closed behind him, and Hilda could hear him drive away. She went back into the living-room, rather dreading that expression on Nancy's face. It always meant trouble.

On the cushions of the easy chair, Waldo had fallen asleep, haunted by dreams and fancies. He could still see John Barton's face staring at him from the mirror.

## Chapter 18

WALDO lay like a pool of ink in the big chair. He was asleep. He had slept reluctantly, resisting it ; nevertheless he slept. Images, forms, shadows chased themselves round and round in his brain, enslaving him to their movements and desires. The man in the mirror came closer and closer. . . .

The morning of the attack, John Barton decided to shave. He stood now in his tent peering into the small mirror and grimacing at what he saw. For days they had not done much but lie around trying to escape the heat or make it more bearable. No one had bothered to make himself pretty. The desert lay all around them like a sea of glittering oil, reflecting the heat like a sheet of glass. Inside the tents the men sweltered behind the netting which protected them against the sand-flies and scorpions.

“ This desert fighting,” said John Barton, “ is plain hell and no mistake about it.”

Young Horner moved lazily on his cot at the other side of the tent. “ Um, you said it,” he said, without taking his eyes from the tattered mystery magazine he was reading.

John Barton could see part of his tent-mate through the mirror. He looked at him with affection, thinking this very odd. He would never have imagined himself actually liking young Horner after what had happened at the plant, his dismissal and replacement by Horner. Still, you never can tell, he supposed.

He went to the flap in the tent and poked his head out. Stooping, he retrieved the mug he had placed outside the tent half an hour before. He brought it carefully through the flap.

“ Holy Jeez,” he said, “ it’s boiling ! Feel it ! ”

Grinning, he carried the cup over to Horner and poked it under his nose. Horner took one hand from the magazine and stuck a dirty finger into the water. He smiled.

“Well, I’d hardly say it was Ritzy hot,” he said, “but it’s damn nearly at shaving point at that.”

John Barton went back to the mirror and started lathering his face again, the side of it which he had not yet shaved. It was a painful process because, in spite of everything he did, he sunburned badly, went all red and peeling.

“Golly, will I enjoy that beer they’ve been talking about !”

A consignment of Canadian beer in cans had arrived at the line and had been promised to them for distribution that morning. Up to then water had been at a premium and had been saved to the last drop. The men had gone about unshaven and practically unwashed. Even the officers had begun to grow beards.

“The boys up front,” young Horner said suddenly, “I wonder if they’ll get any.”

“Plenty !” said John. He hated to be reminded of “up front,” about ten miles ahead where they would be sent very soon to relieve.

“I meant any beer, dunkhead,” Horner said. He yawned, and rose.

“I can’t stand you being so dolled up,” he said, “make with the extra water like a good guy, will you ?”

“It’s in the can over there.”

John Barton’s face was not quite done. There was still a line of dark growth around the ends of his chin. He had left it till the last, because the sunburn hurt most on the bony parts of his face.

When young Horner had turned up at his outfit in England, just before they had been shipped to Africa,

he had been disgusted. He had avoided him carefully. He would not let Horner open up any question that might make trouble. Then, one day, Horner had searched him out at his quarters. " Might as well decide whether we'll be enemies or friends, it's entirely up to you," he had said.

John Barton was grateful to him for that gesture, and for his subsequent friendliness. They had never discussed the affair of deKoffe, or John's dismissal. They had taken up from where they became buddies in the war. It was a fine thing, John found, to have a friend. He had never had one before, not in such a good sense. And war threw men together more closely than they were likely to be in ordinary city life. John Barton was enjoying the war, until they came to Africa.

The tent flap opened, and a head appeared.

" Sir, the men are waiting for you to O.K. the beer ration."

The sergeant was speaking to both of them, and Horner said from the corner where he was stooping to pour out a little of the spare water into his mug : " O.K., Sarg. I'll be along."

It was then that they heard it, the drone. It was faint, but intense, like a million insects approaching. The sergeant's head disappeared. They could hear him yelling : " It's here, get under cover ! Get going !"

The camp suddenly disrupted outside the tent. Men were running and shouting. Orders began to be barked from all directions. The drone got louder.

John Barton's hand was frozen on his razor. He had not been in action yet. This was it ! This was what was not so nice about war. The Germans were attacking the second line. And he was part of the second line of reinforcements. Panic seared into him. He knew exactly what he ought to do ; get his men under cover, order them into the foxholes. They were only fifty

yards away. He knew he must put his razor down and go out into the glare and under the menacing drone of the enemy planes.

He turned to see what Horner was doing. He had risen from his cot and was standing in the middle of the tent, hastily strapping on his belt. His movements were not panicky, only hurried and urgent. He said : " Get a wiggle on, John. We've got to get the men under cover."

Outside, the noise had become deafening. Men running and shouting, ack-acks being sent into action, trucks starting up.

The bomb dropped quite near the tent, John Barton thought. As it happened, it was at the outside edge of the encampment, but the repercussion was terrible. John had been in air raids in England, but it had always been possible to get quickly into shelter, sound-proof and bomb-proof. This was different. This was awful.

He tried to collect himself. Above the din, he heard Horner shout at him impatiently : " Hurry up, John, for God's sake ! " He felt Horner's eyes on him.

The second bomb dropped nearer. The tent flap was blown away and something dark and hard came hurtling through open space, narrowly missing John Barton. He cowered away from the spot of sky and sand that he could now see through the tent door. Then he heard a groan and saw that young Horner had fallen to the floor with blood spouting from his leg.

Horner said, gasping : " Hoist me up, will you, quick ! We've got to get out of this ! "

He was making feeble efforts to drag himself towards the opening in the tent. John Barton tried to make a move in Horner's direction but the tent was rocking on its slender foundation and his limbs refused to obey him.

From the floor, Horner yelled : " John ! Are you crazy ? What in hell's the matter with you ? Get me

up, will you ! It's only a few yards to the foxhole. We can make it !”

He was twisted round, staring at John Barton. His face was absolutely white, and the blood was in a pool around him. His leg was bent to one side in a horrible way. But his eyes were calm. They looked at John Barton without distrust. There was no fear in them, only impatience and command.

John stooped. He fumbled with icy hands behind Horner's shoulder, trying to raise him. There was a deathly stillness outside. The camp must be under cover, in the foxholes by now ; and here he was in a flimsy tent, with no protection at all ! John Barton tugged weakly at Horner's body but he could not lift him. He felt as though he were doing it in slow-motion, like the movies. His face felt frozen like the rest of his body. He wanted to say something to Horner, anything, but he could not speak. He wanted to say : “ I can't, can't you see I can't !”

A third bomb dropped with a scream and a crunch, and the tent bellied out. John Barton's hands fell away from Horner's body. He rose and plunged out of the tent. Every drop of blood in him cried out for safety ; his brain felt stiff ; his head was heavy, as though it were too big to carry. The foxholes lay ahead, just a series of slits in the ground, but heavenly safe. A great crater, which had once been the mess tent, made a dark stain on the sand between John Barton and the shelters. Bodies were strewn about, and wounded men cried out. Men kept on rushing out of the foxholes, dragging in as many of their comrades as they could. Overhead, two remaining planes still circled like vultures, dipping and wheeling. Behind him, John Barton heard Horner cry out, in fury and unbelief : “ Why, you bloody bastard !”

“ I’m going back. I’m going back,” John Barton said. He sounded shrill, like a crazy man. He put his hands up to shut out the sound of Horner’s voice, and started toward the foxholes in a run.

The last bomb dropped in front of him, bursting in his face, making a deep, small crater, and carrying away the tent behind him.

The soul of John Barton went, cringing, to meet its god.

Waldo was twisting and turning in the big chair. He was whimpering, crying out, panting, struggling. But the door was closed and no one heard him. He waked slowly, the nightmare shaking itself away in a series of horrible jerking memories, each one worse than the last. He rose to his feet, his back arched in horror. The room—it was a room, with windows. It was a large room, with a desk and a mirror over it. The chair was soft with cushions. He looked down at his hands. Black ! Black hairy paws ! His tongue dripped saliva on them. He leaped down to the floor, his head clearing.

“ Jiminy, I guess I had a nightmare,” Waldo said loudly. He ran to the closed door, and said again : “ Well, hurry up ! I want to go out for a walk. I’ve got one hell of a head. Hilda’s rye’s lousy. Lemme out ! ”

The door opened and the new maid stood there with a grim look on her face.

“ Nasty little dog ! Barking and disturbing everyone ! ”

She made a swoop at him, but he was too quick for her and darted between her legs and out of the room. Hilda was about to go up the stairs and Waldo ran to her.

“ Oh, please, lemme go out,” he begged.

She laughed. "You've been asleep for ten minutes," she said. "Feel better?"

She opened the front door and let him out.

He ran out, and rushed down the steps into the garden, barking loudly and drawing great gulps of fresh air into him.

"Golly, I had a dream. Golly, I had a bad dream!"

He made a little song out of it. He could remember nothing; but he wanted to get rid of that old, dark thing that was forever haunting him, a feeling of fear, a sense of doom.

"I guess we're our own worst enemies," Waldo said to himself. "Now I must have read that somewhere."

He stopped in the gateway, looking down the road and wondering what he should do next to amuse himself, to take his mind off the nightmare. But the trees looked drab, with recent rain dripping from their branches; and the sky was grey. A single plane was flying across the city, a dark speck high up above him. He could hear the faint drone it made, like an insect caught in a web.

"Damn and blast," Waldo said, "I'll never drink Hilda's rye again as long as I live. I've gotta head like a horse's tooth."

He shook his head violently, trying to get free of what remained of the nightmare, but something stuck there at the back of his mind, something significant, something not good.

He started to sing, "St. Peter met him in the clover, and said 'Go back and do it over!'"

Go back and do it over! "Gee, now where in hell did I hear that one?" he said gloomily to himself. He turned and walked slowly towards the garage. He thought he would go and talk to Johnson, the chauffeur. He was a sympathetic fellow.

## Chapter 19

TO Armand Ligne it was only the stupid faces that looked serene. He walked slowly along St. Catherine Street, watching the eyes and lips pass him in a steady stream, in a blur. It was the first time he had studied people like this since his return from the war. All those months in hospital, two operations on his wounded arm, the retreat into the country to visit friends who lived near the Buck & Ligne timber limits at Omwada. The time had stretched out into almost three years without noticing, broken briefly by the trip to South America.

He had been self-absorbed, worried about what he ought to do with himself. There had been a feeling of constraint between him and Mr. Buck, one that had not existed before he went overseas. It did not occur to Armand that this might be caused by Hank's death and Hanson Buck's nagging sorrow.

The faces continued to pass him on the street. He saw tired eyes with dark shadows under them. He saw bitterness on most of the lips, and resentments written large for anyone to see. The faces were uneasy, unhappy, for the most part. The eyes that met his own shifted away quickly, seeking withdrawal.

Only the stupid faces had poise, sureness. He heard snatches of talk. "That new pattern with the back-interest . . . my dear, it does something for you." Armand stared frankly at the woman speaking. She was pretty and empty-looking. He could easily imagine her home, her husband, her unfortunate children, listening, taking in, being taught nothing but triviality. "Eh bien, pour moi, c'est la vie, on ne peut faire autre chose!" A

young lad speaking in a tone of fatalism, of acceptance of some condition or other that he disliked. On his face there was an expression of helpless vacuum. Armand turned aside and walked over to a shop window, keeping his back to the passing crowd. He had seen enough. Why was it the stupid faces that showed the only sign of happiness? He felt it was because the owners of the faces did not probe deeply into life but accepted ideas and action second hand. He disliked the thought.

Behind him the stream of people passed and repassed while Armand stared at a wax model in an evening gown and tried to think. He was, in any case, wrought up a bit. The talk with Hanson Buck had made him feel emotional, although it had given him new hope and purpose. He had hated mistrusting Hanson Buck—now he did so no longer. But the empty feeling that he had had ever since his return from the war persisted, in spite of Hanson Buck's solid comfort and promising words.

When a female voice said, "Do you like the gold one, or would you rather see her in the green?" he jumped.

Benny Warren was standing beside him, laughing. He could see her face very clearly because she had come close to him in order to get out of the way of the crowd. Her face was framed in a cloche of black felt with a small diamond pin on it. Under her pointed chin, she wore a scarf of some printed silk material that tucked into the grey curly fur of her coat collar. Her small hand in a well-cut glove was holding her bag high under her arm, just at the curve of her breast.

Armand's heart jumped. He put his hand to his hat and raised it. Benny thought he looked pale and handsome and interesting. She liked the way he moved his hand to his hat, and she liked his slow and appreciative smile. There was something about Armand that made

women feel human and responsive at once. She pointed to the window. "I expect you would rather buy her the green one because she would have red hair."

"Benny, it is so long since we met, but you look as lovely as before." Armand's smile deepened. He was full of memories, and they were charming, if somewhat painful. He pushed them away, and with some determination. "Shall we stand here to renew our memory or would you like to have a drink with me at the Ritz?"

"It's pretty early for a drink, only noon," Benny said. But when Armand touched her arm she turned obediently with him and they moved slowly through the crowd and up Mountain Street. She did not know what she felt about this meeting. She had seen Armand standing staring into the window, and noticed the droop of his fine shoulders. There was something discouraged about him, she thought. She remembered that he had been badly wounded and in hospital for a long time after the war.

"Benny, it is true," he was saying, looking down at her, "you have not changed at all. Except perhaps——"

She looked at him out of her wide eyes, guileless and waiting.

"Perhaps you are more mature," he said; "more woman. It gives you a look of queenliness."

"Oh, Armand, you always said these things, you always made me feel—well—" Her voice was drowned as they became separated from each other for a moment.

"Unfortunately, I never managed to make you feel anything at all," he said, catching up with her. "That was my trouble. I expect that it is my trouble in any case. Women do not become affected by anything I do or say. They merely treat me with indulgence and a sisterly regard."

His voice was smiling if his lips were not. Under his

humour Benny sensed his depression more keenly than when she had first seen him staring into the shop window. She tucked her hand under his arm as they crossed the top of Mountain Street at Sherbrooke, and felt his arm tighten, pressing her hand to his side.

She thought, "Oh dear, I must be careful," but she was also thinking with some pleasure of their relationship of the past, which had been romantic and sweet. She said gaily, as they went into the hotel: "It's taken on considerable French-Canadian colour, as you can see. Pretty crude, some of us think."

At once she could have bitten the words from her tongue, but they had been said. It was funny, but Armand had never seemed French-Canadian particularly. He had mixed with Benny's friends, and when his parents were alive the old house had been open to both groups equally. The Ligne New Year's Eve parties had been famous with her crowd. It was a traditional thing in French Canada to celebrate New Year's Eve rather than Christmas.

Benny looked quickly at Armand, but he had not taken offence. He was gazing round him at the new décor of the Ritz-Carlton and his lips were smiling amusedly.

"Bad type French provincial," he said finally, relieving Benny's mind, "not French-Canadian. This is the first time I have seen it. How did it happen? It seems to me to be quite out of place."

Benny laughed. "Hush, they'll hear you."

They went into the cocktail lounge, and Armand stopped short. "Oh, mon Dieu," he said, "and are we to be blamed for this too?"

Benny looked at him quickly. "Oh, Armand, you *were* angry at me for saying what I did." Her tone was full of contrition. She put back her coat collar, watching him as he gave an order to the waiter. He had the ease

of manner of a man who has travelled and seen all types of people doing all kinds of things. His way of speaking to the waiter pleased Benny. It was friendly and pleasant. No one would have dreamed of taking advantage of it. "We are alike, very alike," she thought, remembering that this had occurred to her before.

She started slowly to pull off her gloves. Consciously, she had postponed it. Although her engagement to Paul Sturt had recently been announced in the English language press, she felt that Armand would not have seen it. The ring caught on one finger of the glove and she tugged at it reluctantly. She would not have been able to explain, even to herself, why she was feeling this way about meeting Armand Ligne again, or why she did not want to tell him that she was not free.

It was exactly at that moment that Hilda Minson and Waldo appeared in the doorway of the cocktail lounge. Waldo was on a leash and it irritated him. "Can't trust a guy to walk like a gentleman," he thought resentfully. "Go out with a dame and not behave? Nuts!"

All the same, he strained at the cord, pushing past Hilda into the room. As they'd left the house an hour ago, he had said to her, "If we're to be pals, you and I, old girl, you'll give up the New Look and wear shorter skirts. This one's lousy. The one thing you've got is good gams. Why cover 'em up?"

But all Hilda had replied was, "Now, Waldo, I do hope you are in a good humour this morning. Lately, you've been moody and bad-tempered. Now be a good dog and come along."

"Well, all the same, I'm right, and old Curtis would be the first to say so, I bet."

He climbed into the car sulkily, and sat sulkily all the way into town, where Hilda had an appointment at the dressmaker's. Even the compliments he received at

the dressmaker's did nothing to appease him. "Now it's 'beautiful,' is it?" he thought. "Well, I liked 'cute' better."

He had gone through the ordeal of being specially washed and brushed before leaving with Hilda for her shopping. He loathed the whole business. They pulled out handfuls of hair, and they clucked at him. "Now, do stand still. Now do turn round. Now do stop scratching." Oh, phooey!

But he was not thinking of all this now, as he stood rooted to the spot at the door of the Ritz lounge. He strained forward at the leash as he saw Benny remove her glove. She was facing him and he could see that she was interested and, to his mind, far too much absorbed in the man opposite her. Waldo's eyes swept Armand's back. Even from behind, he recognized it.

He said, "Hey, you! That's Paul's girl. Hey, Benny, what goes on here?"

Hilda said in an embarrassed way, "Waldo! I told you I could not bring you in here unless you were very quiet."

She was thinking, "There's that snooty Mrs. Grey over there, and, yes, it is, the pretty Miss Warren who's engaged to my husband's handsome secretary."

She made a vague gesture towards Benny, but Benny was far too involved with Armand's reaction to her ring to notice anyone. She was saying: "It's been in the papers, Armand." Her voice sounded almost pleading.

"They look like china figures," Waldo was thinking, trying to keep quiet and not be forced to leave. He wanted to figure this out. Both of them were sitting so still, as though some shock bound them in a trance. Waldo noticed that there was no web around either of them. Their figures stood out clearly, making one single group. "Paul and Benny never get so close,"

Waldo thought uneasily. All his loyalty for Paul was uppermost.

Armand was saying, "It is a very beautiful ring. He must have excellent taste."

Both heads were bent over Benny's hand with the ring on it. And then Waldo heard Benny say, very slowly: "He is a darling, and I am very much in love."

Waldo let out a long breath of relief, feeling Hilda jerk at the leash in warning.

He looked up at her. "It's O.K., everything's fine," he said. "Benny doesn't know what love is, but she's going to be loyal to my Paul and that's all I wanted to know."

He walked in a dignified way out into the lobby again, keeping close to Hilda. He was enjoying himself now. "And neither does Paul know what love is," he thought, "but a bit of conflict's a good thing in a marriage."

He stared round him at the terra-cotta and black and gold, seeing it for the first time. "Crumps!" he said. "Just lookit! Times certainly change round here!"

"I wonder who the man is?" Hilda said to Waldo. "That was Miss Warren, with someone else, not her fiancé." She pronounced it "fianncee."

Waldo said: "Oh now, Hilda, don't go using stuff you can't handle." He added: "And the man's name is Armand Ligne—Line to you."

They went towards the elevator. Hilda had an appointment with the hairdresser. She looked at her watch, and hurried.

Waldo said, "But it was funny all the same, how sort of harmonious they were, no web, nothing."

He was not there to see the web around Armand now. It had come down around him quickly as he looked at Paul's ring on Benny's finger. Much can happen in half an hour, and Armand's heart had done its usual

painful twisting and turning at sight of Benny and at the sound of her voice, which he loved so much.

“It is very suitable,” he was thinking, all the old bitterness strong in him. “He is probably very charming and one of her own kind, and certainly not a Catholic.”

At the thought of everything that separated him from Benny the web became heavier around Armand. It covered him completely, so that even Benny felt it.

She remembered that she had said to him, long ago : “But, Armand, it wouldn’t work. It never does. You’re a French-Canadian, and a Catholic. We can never marry.”

He had said, “If you loved me, nothing would matter.”

He had believed it, then. Now, he wondered. Men had managed to get themselves into a hopeless mess of misunderstandings and inharmonies, even hatreds. Barriers which once might have been surmounted, between man and man, seemed higher than ever.

His father had been a good Catholic, but he had said : “My son, if you love her, and she is a good girl, and loves you, that is all that matters.”

But Armand had withdrawn from his courtship of Benny because it seemed too hopeless, and because of pride, and fear too, fear of tackling a problem so old and so entangled in the life of his country. Why, only the other day, on November eleventh, the Remembrance Day parade had separated, the Protestants to hold a service in their own church to honour their dead, the Catholics to kneel separately in their cathedral for the same purpose. Yet the dead had been buddies and had given their lives for Canada, not for French Canada, or English Canada. Whose fault was it?

Armand was smiling now, with stiff lips. Benny rose, gathering her coat and bag and gloves hurriedly. The look on Armand’s face made her want to cry. Both of

them felt not only a personal sorrow and loss, but something deeper and more painful, a dark schism at the base of life, a lack and a waste, something gone wrong that should have been better planned. Benny watched Armand raise his hat and stride away, her heart contracting with pain. She was thinking, " *Our* roots go down deep, 'way back to England and Scotland. *They* don't seem to have any roots, except in the Church. France doesn't mean a thing to them." And then she thought, with compunction, " I shouldn't be thinking of French-Canadians as 'they.' It's so important to come closer. But how ? "

Armand's back was out of sight now, and Benny started across Sherbrooke Street to go to the Chateau Apartments. She was in a pleasant glow, a woman-glow, blown half into flame by Armand's charm and the nostalgic memory of their romance. But before she had pushed open the heavy door into the apartment house she had started thinking about the evening ahead.

She and Paul were going to the Buck party. Upstairs on her bed, the maid would have laid out her new dress, with the slip she wanted to try with it. There was a slender brocaded bag and slippers to match, and Paul had already sent her a gorgeous corsage of orchids. Excitement lent more colour to Benny's cheeks than usual.

On the first floor of the Ritz Waldo snuggled down in the chair outside the swing door leading into Hilda's cubicle. He could hear her little cry of almost obsequious pleasure.

" Oh, Charles, here I am again ! "

The famous Charles made no reply that Waldo could hear. There was only the soothing sound of bottles moving on marble tables, and the scent of lotions and dyes. Waldo half-dozed, and then he sat up hurriedly.

“Gee! I mustn’t fall asleep!” he thought. “I don’t want to have another nightmare and see that man in the mirror again!”

He started thinking about Benny and the man whose handsome back he had mistrusted until he had heard what Benny said to him about loving Paul. “All this business of love and sex,” he ruminated, “it’s been going on millions of years, and still we don’t know all the tricks. Why, we don’t even know how to arrange it how to have a girl or a boy. Dimwits, that’s what we are!”

He sighed deeply, trying to keep awake.

## Chapter 20

THE invitations were hardly out before Hanson Buck began to regret having decided to give the party. The government contract was absorbing more and more of his time and his brother-in-law had sent for him twice already to go to Ottawa to discuss it. In addition he had young Ligne to think about and to plan for. The two problems were quite dissimilar, but in some ways they intermingled.

Since he had pulled off that contract, he was conscious of the old vitality and flair growing and swelling in him. He felt younger and he looked younger. Just that morning Erminie had said : "Hank, you look extremely well these days, just the way you used to."

Her flattery was pleasant, especially since he knew it was sincere. His response was to ask her to get out his dress clothes and have them pressed.

"Everything in hand for the party?" he asked absently.

She nodded. "I saw Armand today," she said. "He seemed a little upset. In fact he looked quite angry. He did not see me ; I was going into Simpson's and he was just going to cross St. Catherine Street. I wondered if he was on his way to see you. I didn't know he was back from South America."

"Evidently he returned two weeks or so ago. Yes, he must have been on his way to my office. I had quite a difficult interview with him."

"Poor boy, I've always felt sorry for him somehow."

Hanson had a small crease between his eyebrows. He said : "I don't know why, but he seems to affect everyone like that. No reason for it, none at all. Always

lived on the fat of the land ; had a grand pair of parents. Georges was the best, the very best there is." His eyes clouded. He missed his partner in many ways, and kept his memory green with the staff. The half rubbed away letters on the door to Georges Ligne's office bore mute testimony to the void he had left in Hanson's life. "Also," he said slowly, "he's alive, isn't that something?"

Erminie looked across at him and her face was tender. "Yes, I know how you feel," she said. She got up, crossed to her husband's chair, and put her hand gently on his shoulder. "But, my dear, being alive might not be wonderful at all, just being alive I mean. And I think Armand always was in love with Benny Warren, you know. Her engagement to a Mr. Sturt has just been announced. That may be what was upsetting him."

"I don't think it was that." Hanson patted his wife's hand, and she withdrew it. He watched the swirl of her housecoat as she crossed the room to her chair. He liked the softness of the satin, and the way her hair was done at the back.

"You are a very attractive woman, Erminie," he said. He smiled at her, as she settled herself in her chair and put out her hand to turn on the radio. It was a quarter to seven, time for the B.B.C. news, and both of them liked to listen to it. Erminie's hand, slender and weighted down with her diamonds, hovered over the controls. She was thinking, "I'm so lucky to be married to him ; it hasn't all been easy, but it's nice to have a husband who takes the trouble to say appreciative things."

Hanson said, "Have you bought your dress for the party?"

The announcer said, ". . . poor reception, we are bringing you a concert of recordings."

“Oh hang it,” Erminie said. She snapped off the radio. “And I wanted especially to hear how the Princess is, and the baby.”

“Poor kid,” Hanson said. “Poor little devil, what a complicated life he’s heading into, and what times he will have to face !”

Erminie’s heart gave a stab of fear. “Hank, d’you think—d’you think we’re going to have another war ?”

Hanson sighed deeply and put his head back against the chair. He looked handsome and distinguished, not a bit tired. Erminie said, “I’m not very religious, Hank, but I do wonder about Hank, why he died, and for what.”

“My dear, you mustn’t, it does no good. That’s what’s the matter with Armand, he has a sense of waste. It’s natural. The youngsters haven’t been given a chance to express what they can do, except by violence, in a war. Now all their values are out of gear. They aren’t integrated, as persons, haven’t found out what they’re good for in business, whether they’ll stand the gaff. It’s disrupting to them. One time or another in one’s life, Erminie, a man has got to be sure he can stand the gaff. That’s the main answer to success, to be able to trust oneself.”

It wasn’t often that Hanson talked to her like this. Erminie blessed the “poor reception” on the radio.

Hanson said slowly : “I’m a bit worried about Armand, as a matter of fact, on just that count. If he is to come into the business as a partner, I’ve got to be sure he can take it. Georges could. But Georges was unusual, for a French-Canadian. He had been educated partly in France, as you know, and he travelled a lot. Armand has missed all that, missed his European heritage. All he knows is Canada, and war—is that enough ?”

There was a silence. Erminie was thinking, “Poor

Armand. I wonder what he will do now? I am sure he is upset about Benny and that Mr. Sturt."

"You wouldn't approve of luring away another woman's cook, would you?" Hanson was looking directly at her, his eyes open again. He seemed to want her to answer.

She laughed. "What a funny question."

"Well, answer it. I want to know your opinion."

She hesitated. "I've had it done to *me*," she said.

"There was that time, you remember——"

"Yes, I remember," he said, not remembering at all.

"Well, are you going to tell me or not?"

"Oh dear," she thought, "now he's getting impatient again." She said, "I might, if I disliked the other woman enough."

He laughed aloud. What a woman's answer! Trust Erminie to be female when he wanted her to give him an abstract reply. However, it didn't matter really. He would sound out young Sturt anyhow, see how he felt about working for Minson. From what he heard, Sturt was a smart young man, mighty smart. That job he had done for the Minson interests in Three Rivers had been good, and handled with brains too. The report he had made on it had given Minson an advantage in a big deal. Yes, Sturt was just the kind of young fellow he wanted in the business now. Hank was dead, and Armand Ligne . . . well, he wasn't sure, wasn't sure at all. His mind was busy now with the figure he thought he might tentatively offer to Paul Sturt, as a starter. Suddenly his mind went to his office, and the letters on the door of his partner's room, half obliterated. He had visualized Hank's name on that door, "Hanson Buck, Jr."

Erminie had turned on the radio now for the commentary, which they had managed to get through.

“Sympathy for France,” the commentator was saying, “and understanding of what she has suffered from German aggression in the past, is affecting the negotiations about Berlin and the immobilizing of German industry. France feels very strongly indeed that German industry should not be permitted to become again a threat as a war potential. France feels that with a strong Germany in the hands of Russia, the world would be in a very parlous state.”

Erminie turned off the radio again. Hank wasn't listening, and she found it difficult to understand all these complications. In the old days, it had seemed simpler.

“I wish Georges was here tonight to advise me about his son,” Hanson said. “I feel responsible for the boy, responsible not only for his business life but for his life in general. He seems to have no roots, no particular faith or desire.”

“I think he loves Benny,” Erminie said firmly. “I think he is a man who needs love. He isn't at all like you.”

She caught her breath. That wasn't a very nice thing to have said and she hadn't meant it like that. Hanson had lifted his head from the chair back and was looking at her gravely. He didn't look irritated or impatient. She could not read his expression, but his eyes were dark with feeling. He rose and stood for a moment looking up at the portrait of young Hank hanging over the mantelpiece, Hank in uniform, painted by a well-known Canadian portrait painter.

It seemed to Erminie that he stood there for a long time looking at their son. Then he came over to her chair and put his hand on her hair gently.

“I'm sorry you feel like that about me, Erminie,” he said. “I suppose I must admit I've not been a very

good husband to you. But we have shared a great deal of life, lived it together somehow, and we have reached old age with a measure of harmony in each other's company, and, in my case anyhow, a tremendous respect and affection."

He waited, almost awkwardly, for her reply.

She took his hand and held it to her cheek. She said: "Darling, I've always loved you more than you loved me, but if you still respect me in spite of it, and still like being with me like this, it's been the most perfect marriage, and no one could ask for more."

Both of them were looking now at the portrait of young Hank. Even in death he seemed to be there in the room with them, saying firmly: "That's right. You taught me to have faith and to do what one could as decently as possible. Nothing else matters, it seems to me, and nothing is wasted either, if you give it wholly."

"I'm glad I have had a hand in helping to make this country what it is," Hanson said. His voice was husky. He straightened. "I'm going to ring for Burroughs," he said; "we're both going to have a drink."

His mind was busy once more, working out the figure he would offer to Paul Sturt. A fellow as smart as that shouldn't waste himself on an outfit like Minson's. No roots, no background. A young fellow like Sturt ought to get into something stable. Yes, he would definitely approach him with an offer.

"You rang, sir?"

"Bring the Scotch, Burroughs," Hanson said, "and, oh yes, some of those doodabs with the hot cheese. Mrs. Buck likes them."

He looked at Erminie again with appreciation. Good figure, exactly the same as when he married her. He slanted his eyes down over his own. No pot. No bulge. Very nice, very nice indeed.

## Chapter 21

WALDO was suffocating under the rug in the back of the car, but it had been necessary to hide in it. Otherwise, Johnson would certainly have brought him back forcibly to the house, and he did not intend to be left behind. He was determined to go to the Buck party. He burrowed his nose up a little, so that he could breathe.

The car swung to the left and on to the Boulevard. It was far enough away from the house now, he thought. He pushed the rug aside and said : " Peekaboo ! Look who's here ! "

Johnson's hand tightened on the wheel. He said : " Cripes ! 'Ow on earth did you get in that rug ? "

Waldo slid down to the floor of the car, and leaned his paws up on the back of the driver's seat. He said : " I get bored. I hafta get away sometimes, and I specially wanted to go to the Buck party. Old Buck interests me, since I sat in on the interview with him and young Ligne."

" Well, you're here now, never mind all the excuses," Johnson said benevolently. " Only tyke my advice, young fellow, and don't go barking, or interrupting. We've got love's young dream on our 'ands, from all accounts."

" Oh, them ! " Waldo said. " I'm afraid they'll disappoint you if you're looking for anything unrestrained. They're awfully dignified, you know. Ladies and gentlemen and all that sort of thing. Not like you an' me. I'll bet you were a hellion when you were young."

" In my young dye," Johnson said regretfully, " we

uster drive be'ind a spankin' pair of 'osses. Plenty of time for sparkin'. Get to a party wiv' everything set, so to speak, not wait until the end."

"I'll bet!" Waldo said.

"Now, tyke my daughter," Johnson was saying, "Ellie, 'er nyme is, smart as a steel trap, is Ellie, at McGill and all, going to be a lawyer." He stopped to change gears, but none of the pride in his voice had evaporated as he added: "*And* engaged to young Mr. Henson, Professor Henson's son, is my Ellie."

"Going all high-hat, is she?" Waldo sounded disapproving.

Johnson clucked at him. "None o' that!" he said. "Land of h'opportunity this is, land of 'ope and glory, for folks like me, and others like us." But he sounded a little dubious.

Waldo laughed. "I bet you're scared pink of the prof."

"Gorblimey, if I don't think you sound more like a 'uman than any dorg I've seen afore," Johnson said, wonderingly. "Or p'raps it's 'cause most Canadian dorgs don't seem right, like most Canadian things."

"Lissen, you!" Waldo was screaming mad. "Canadian things are swell! The English gals thought us Canucks were O.K., didn't they?" He was remembering Effie again and, when he did, he got gooseflesh all over him. He added in a more subdued tone, "Yup. The Canucks were a bit of orlright, orlright, so don't you go getting British and tiresome about Canada."

He started to sing, "They taught us how and taught us when, and made us bigger, better men."

His legs hurt from standing up, so he dropped down on the floor of the car again. "And that's a fact," he said, "the English lassies may be bitches, but they can show Canadian girls a thing or two."

He stopped short, not quite liking the sound of the word "bitch."

"It's a funny thing," Johnson was saying, "I dunno, but that professor, 'e mykes me feel like an 'ole in the ground, if you know what I mean, fair looks right through you, 'e does. Oh, 'e's nice and friendly, but 'e isn't 'uman, if you know what I mean."

"Thanks," Waldo said, "thanks a lot."

"Now, tyke 'is son, Malcolm, engyged to my Ellie, 'e's a nice chap, overseas and all, a pleasant chap, full of fun too, 'e's what *this* calls 'just folks.'"

He jerked his head at the dashboard of the car, and turned on the radio as he spoke. It gave out a series of statics and blurs.

"Drat the thing," he said, "modern h'inventions! Never where you wants 'em! Noise here, noise there, ice-cubes morning and night and no log fires."

He turned off the radio, and gave his attention to the traffic. They were on Atwater Avenue, just above Sherbrooke Street, and Johnson pulled the car up at the block of apartments where Paul lived. "'Ere we are. Now you be'ave," he said. "And remember you're a watchdog!" He got out of the car and started up the pathway leading to the imposing entrance.

Waldo called after him, "'Urry up, old toff, we mustn't be lyte!" He liked Johnson, but he was eager to get to the party. He was wondering how his Cockney sounded in "dorg"-language. The idea made him giggle. He was practising Cockney when they came back, Johnson and Paul.

Johnson was saying: "I'm sorry, sir, but the dog got into the car some'ow. We've got to tyke 'im along, I'm afraid."

"I'm not a tyke!" Waldo said indignantly. He leaped happily into Paul's arms and snuggled against

him. He *was* a nice guy, this Paul Sturt, and it was swell to meet a pal going to the same party. When Paul went into the Chateau to call for Benny, Waldo had a nap. He pretended to be asleep all the way to Cartierville, but they only made conversation in an artificial sort of way, for Johnson's benefit.

They could see the Buck house ablaze with lights, from a long way off. The lights were reflected in the river. As they turned into the long drive their faces were illuminated by the torches that Hanson Buck had set, flaming, on posts all the way to his doorway. He had stationed men in his dark green livery under the torches, and they waved the line of cars forward in a welcoming manner. It was almost foreign, and certainly very grand and effective. The guests immediately began to feel in a party mood.

Paul said, "Whew! One can almost smell the moth-balls!" He laughed.

The lights waked Waldo from his doze, and he looked up. He could see Paul's face from where he sat on his haunches behind Benny. Paul was leaning forward, looking at Benny, and Waldo felt embarrassed, as he had once before, at the expression in his eyes. He realized again, with a pang of envy, that he had never looked like that at a woman in the whole of his life.

Benny had just said: "I ran into an old beau today, Paul, and he took me to the Ritz for a drink."

Paul's expression did not change. He was looking at Benny possessively, smiling. He leaned down and kissed her neck, under her ear, lifting her hair with his hand to do it. "And did you tell him that you are no longer free, that you are bound to me, now, and forever?"

"Oh, Paul," Benny said softly. In her voice there was warm acceptance, a voluptuous yielding, a delicious fear. The flickering light from the torches welded their

figures together as Paul took Benny into his arms, and they kissed, almost wildly.

"Golly," Waldo thought, trying to look away, but fascinated. Benny's mouth was open under Paul's, her body strained towards him.

"Gee, look out! We're almost there!"

Waldo could feel Johnson's astonishment. "What was that you said about a spanking pair of 'osses and love's young dream?" Waldo said.

Johnson was so taken up with what was happening on his back seat that he overshot the front entrance, and almost ran into the car ahead of him. He drew up with an unaccustomed jerk, and one of the men in green livery sprang forward to open the door.

"Now's my time!" Waldo thought. "Now or never."

He did not wait to see how Paul and Benny straightened themselves out. He slid carefully out of the open door, and darted around the side of the house away from the lights. Benny's wide shimmering skirt helped him. No one tried to stop him.

"Better make it by the back entrance," he was thinking, as he walked sedately along the side of the huge house, towards the kitchen doors. His heart was beating with excitement, partly because of this adventure, partly because of Paul and Benny.

"I'll admit, Paul surprised me," he thought. "Good for Paul! There's more to him maybe than meets the eye at first. I hope he got the lipstick off before they went into the house." He chuckled. "Yep, that was some kiss," he thought a little disconsolately.

He continued to walk along the side of the house, thinking that it was much larger than he had imagined. "Some dump," he thought, "must cost plenty to keep up." He could hear music and voices from open win-

dows above him, and patches of light twinkled on the ground as he passed through them carefully, trying to keep out of sight. He was a little worried about getting into the house, but he had no difficulty whatever, in the end. The main door to the kitchens was wide open! Inside, he could see servants scurrying about, carrying huge trays of food. There was an appetizing smell of coffee, and a pleasant air of bustle and gaiety. The servants seemed to be enjoying it.

Waldo made a quick dart up the steps and walked quietly around the room at its outside edge until he reached a swing door. He pushed it with his nose and went through into the dining-room. He stopped short, staring. Never before had he seen such magnificence. The gold service reflected the flashing light of cut glass sconces in the middle of the table. Great dishes of purple and yellow and scarlet fruit gleamed between the sconces like jewels in a precious setting. At the far end of the table a huge gold punch bowl with a long ladle sticking out of it held a steaming drink that perfumed the air.

Waldo did what he had become accustomed to do by now. He got hastily under the table to collect himself and make his plan. The scent from the punch made his senses swim, and hunger pangs assailed him as he smelt the steam from the mushrooms and lobsters that the maids were preparing in the kitchen.

A strident voice said suddenly, "Get the hell outta here! What in hell are you doing? Get going, bos'n!"

Waldo froze, his paws stuck out in front of him like sticks. He waited, but nothing happened. No hand appeared to pull him out of his hiding-place.

The voice said again, loudly, "Get going, I said, what in hell!"

“There’s that bird again! Language isn’t fit for civilized houses! Watch out! When he starts talking, he bites!”

Waldo could see two pairs of feet, and the hem of two maids’ dresses. He let out his breath in a sigh of relief. A parrot, only a stupid parrot. Well, that was better. He lay down for a moment. The two maids went out of the dining-room into the kitchen again, and Waldo stuck his head from under the cloth. The room was deserted, as the guests were gathering in the big hall and wandering into the reception rooms where the orchestra was tuning up for the dancing. Waldo looked longingly at the table. Right over his head he could see the edge of a dish and smell the mushroom patties on it. He looked around carefully, then he climbed up on one of the chairs and delicately helped himself to three of the patties. With them still in his mouth, he leapt down from the chair, and ate them with gusto. No one bothered him and no one came into the room.

The patties were delicious. He considered making another try, but decided against it. He walked sedately through the large doors of the room into the great hall and started through the crowd of guests towards a small room he had noticed at the side of one of the reception rooms. It looked like a library. The door was half open and he could see crimson leather chairs and the shining brass of andirons before a fire. It looked cosy.

He paused for a moment before going through the door, but again, there was no one here, so he slipped into the room quickly, and went immediately to the far side of the desk. The noise of talk and the smell of the food and drink was fainter in here. The freshly made fire was cheerful and homey. “I’d better stay in here for a while,” he thought. “Maybe I can go out later, when things get humming.”

But he had no time to plan anything further. The door was pushed open and he only just managed to slip behind the desk when there was a flurry of feet, the swish of a skirt, then he heard Nancy Hibberd say in her best throaty manner: "Let's get away, Jerry darling. Let's go somewhere more amusing. There's a new club on Berri Street, with a divine Chinese singer."

"I've only just arrived," Jerry Ferrow said. He sounded blurred. Waldo thought, "Whatho, me lad, a bun already!"

Nancy said: "Oh, I've been here since seven. Came for cocktails."

Her voice was bland, but Waldo could hear the note of tension in it, almost of desperation.

"Come here, beautiful," Jerry said.

There was a long, long silence. "The gal's willing," Waldo thought, holding back a chuckle with difficulty. The silence continued.

"Your hands tear me in pieces," Nancy said. There was a small rustle of her skirts, and a sigh.

"Any more of these?" Jerry Ferrow's voice sounded even more blurred.

"Come home with me, darling, and I'll show you."

Waldo could hear a sound that reminded him of Effie. "I thought ladies and gentlemen were more, well, more careful," he was thinking when Nancy gave a gasp of warning.

"Someone's coming," she said.

When the door opened, she was standing at the mirror over the mantelpiece, patting her hair. Waldo, peeking out from behind the desk, could see that Jerry Ferrow looked silly, swaying on his feet and flexing his hands nervously. Hanson Buck was coming into the room with Benny Warren. Paul Sturt was behind them. Hanson's glance swept the couple in the room with

some amusement and understanding. He knew Nancy of old. Everyone knew Nancy and her tricks with men, and especially with Jerry Ferrow. It made her slightly ridiculous.

Hanson Buck said jovially : " Well, Nancy, looking lovelier than ever. New look and everything, I see. And Jerry, my boy, glad to see you."

" Sorry not to have found you before, sir," Jerry Ferrow said, regaining his poise. His voice sounded easy. Waldo thought, " He's quite a hard one, is our Jerry. Poor old Nancy ! "

Hanson Buck laughed. " Oh, the host is always the last person one finds," he said. Benny and Paul were making polite conversation with Nancy, who had pulled herself together and was once more her suave self. They came dangerously close to Waldo's hiding-place, and he shifted an inch or so out of the way. It would never do to be caught now and ejected. Things were beginning to be exciting.

" Come along, sonny," Nancy said to Jerry in a possessive way that sounded forced, as though she did not believe in it herself. They went out of the room and left the door open. The orchestra started up a slow dreamy waltz and the strains of it drifted into the small room, making a pleasant pattern. Outside the room, couples were finding each other and pairing off for dancing. There was laughter and chatter, and the scent of flowers.

" Well now, what is this I hear about you two ? "

" I want you to know Paul, Uncle Hank," Benny said. " It was nice of you to let me bring him to this lovely party."

Hanson Buck put his hand on Paul's shoulder. " You are a very fortunate fellow. We've known Benny since she was a small fry."

“He’s not really my uncle,” Benny said gaily, “but I’ve always called him that, I don’t know why.”

Hanson Buck was looking keenly at Paul, watching him carefully. He liked his looks, liked the control he saw on his mouth.

“I hear you are with the Minsons,” he said. “A good outfit, very sound indeed. Minson’s a clever promoter; a bit mean with money, but smart.”

The way he said “promoter” made Waldo whistle under his breath. Hanson managed to get a wealth of belittling into it. “I’ll bet he’s after Paul,” Waldo said to himself. “Well, perhaps it’d be a step up.” The idea intrigued him.

“Hey, Benny, dance?”

A man stood in the doorway, beckoning to Benny. She looked a little uncertainly at Paul, but Hanson Buck said quickly: “Yes, run along, I want to have a chat with your young man.”

“Do you mind?” Benny asked Paul in a sweet way, unlike herself. The memory of their kiss was stronger than anything she was experiencing at the moment.

“I’ll come and cut in,” Paul said. He was smiling at Benny and at Hanson Buck. Waldo, watching it, thought, “That smile, me lad, is worth a million, and I hope you make one.”

He could hear the effect of it on Hanson Buck, as he said: “Shall we sit down for a moment, and have a smoke? Will you have one of these?”

Somewhat to Waldo’s surprise, Paul took one of the cigars Hanson was offering him. He accepted the light too. The cigar suited him, and Waldo thought, “H’m. Does that well too. Yes, he’ll go places. I thought he was a bit sticky, a bit inelastic, but I can see he’s got a quick way of shifting his gears.”

“I hope Minson pays you well.” Hanson said it lightly. He sat down on the edge of the desk, blocking Paul from Waldo’s view.

“I could use a man like you with Buck & Ligne. That report you made at the H. & H. meeting last week was a smart piece of work.”

“Thank you, sir, thank you very much,” Paul said. He sounded surprised and pleased. It was a feather in his cap that Mr. Buck had noticed the Three Rivers report, and what it had done for Curtis Minson.

“Yes, I could use an up-and-coming fellow like you,” Hanson was saying thoughtfully, almost casually. “I think I could better Minson’s price, whatever it is. Think it over, will you?”

Paul’s silence was caused by sheer astonishment. It was the first time in his life that anyone had approached him with a suggestion that he might be of value, and that this might bring in money, real money. He realized at once what it meant but, at the moment, he found it difficult to believe.

Finally, he said slowly: “Honestly, Mr. Buck, I hardly know what to say. Naturally, an offer like yours, to come in with you—well—it—”

He paused, and Hanson took him up quickly.

“Think it over, my boy, take your time. I need young blood in Buck & Ligne, and—”

He looked up at a sound, and saw Armand Ligne standing in the open door. Armand was glaring at them, his face pale with emotion and anger. He came into the room and closed the door firmly behind him.

“This must be said in private,” he said. He made no effort to conceal his feeling, his anger. He faced them with flashing eyes.

“Armand, now don’t go off the deep end,” Hanson Buck said quietly. “You are much too hasty, these

days. It is possible you may be misconstruing what you have just heard."

Paul Sturt was thinking quickly, trying to size Armand up. He had never met him, but he knew his war record and respected him for it. Also he rather liked the guy, and he saw his point. He didn't blame him for being angry. But he did not lower his eyes before Armand's congested stare. All three men stood there for a moment, and Waldo shifted uneasily. His ears pricked up, and he risked coming out a trifle from behind the desk in order to see what was happening.

"Stick to it, Paul, old boy," he said.

Paul saw him. He gave Waldo a look, and made a small move in his direction, but Waldo said: "Leave it lay, Paul. I wanta listen."

Neither Hanson Buck nor Armand Ligne had heard Waldo's little snuffle, nor his movement. They were too absorbed.

Armand said, "Very well, perhaps it is so, that once again, like in the matter of the factory, I am making a false deduction. But this time I must ask you to explain very clearly. Am I not to understand then, that you are putting out a feeler to a stranger, because you need someone young in the business, and you think I am not capable?"

"Atta boy, Armand! That's putting it up to him!" Waldo did not speak aloud, but merely breathed heavily under his paws. He liked Armand more and more.

Hanson Buck did not show any sign of embarrassment, although he had been taken a little off guard and did not know exactly how to handle the situation. Then he thought, "I will leave it to them, they are both young men, and in this interview, I think, they will show their mettle." He said nothing, so Paul intervened.

"Mr. Buck has asked me to consider the possibility

of giving up my job and coming in with Buck & Ligne, Mr. Ligne," he said. "I hope you would have no objection to that, although I think it is unlikely that I will decide to do it." He said it nicely, deferring to Armand, as to someone in authority in Buck & Ligne.

Armand's expression changed, his eyes clearing of anger. He smiled politely, realizing that Paul was behaving well, and that he also might be feeling awkward. He said : "Ah, of course, Mr.—er——?"

Hanson Buck made a quick movement with his hand, smiling. "Armand, this is Paul Sturt. He is with the Minson interests, but I think he might be wasted there ; I have invited him to consider coming in with us."

He would have said more, but he was not prepared for the peculiar expression on Armand's face. He had gone paler than ever, and was biting his lip. His hands were clenched on the back of the chair he was leaning on. He stared at Paul with a new expression of dislike.

Waldo said : "Gee, be careful, you guys ! He's in love with Benny. He didn't know Paul before !"

Hanson Buck said, turning, "Is there a dog in here ?"

Waldo walked out from behind the desk. He thought, "Well, I'll probably be sent home and miss the rest of the party, but old Paul needs help, so I'll sacrifice myself."

He said all this quietly, to the room at large. Hanson Buck looked at him, smiling in spite of himself.

"Now, who do you belong to, old fellow, and how did you get in here ?"

"Wouldn't you like to know," Waldo said, "and Jeez, wouldn't you throw a fit if you knew I belonged to Curtis Minson !"

The same thought struck Paul, and he laughed. Waldo had created the diversion necessary to relieve the tension. Paul said : "I'm afraid he got in with us. I must apologize for him. I'll take him out at once."

“ Oh hell and damnation ! ” Waldo said. “ Now did you hafta go and be so drastic ? ”

He lay down, panting. Armand Ligne was once again getting control of his feelings. After all, Sturt could not be blamed because Benny was in love with him and going to marry him. With a strong effort, he turned to Paul and held out his hand.

“ I have learned of your engagement to Miss Warren, ” he said, formally. “ Benny is a dear friend of mine. May I congratulate you most heartily. You are very lucky. ”

“ Good God ! ” Hanson Buck thought. “ Of course ! Erminie told me that Armand had been in love with Benny for a long time. ” He put his hand on Armand’s arm in a gesture of affection. He liked the way the boy had pulled himself together, and he liked his manners and good sense in a bad situation. As he looked at Armand now, he saw behind his head the door at the side of his own office, and the new gold lettering on it, “ Armand Ligne. ” He said : “ I am trying to persuade Mr. Sturt to accept the post of superintendent of our new experimental works at Omwada. ”

The idea had just come to him, and Hanson Buck was not the man to be cautious when the time called for decision. He could feel Armand’s muscles relax under his hand, could feel the emotion run through Armand’s whole body. As he looked at him, he could see Georges Ligne’s face smiling at him and hear his partner’s voice saying, “ Thank you, Hank. That is like you ; and I do not think you will regret it. ”

He turned his eyes away from the happiness and relief in Armand’s face. “ I never knew the boy felt so strongly about Buck & Ligne, ” he was thinking uncomfortably. “ Well, anyhow, it’s settled now. I think Georges is right. I think it’ll work out. ”

He turned to look at Waldo again, but Waldo had

vanished through the door, which was opening under an impatient hand. It was Nancy Hibberd. She stood there, swaying on her high heels, her face flushed.

"Oh, sorry," she said, her voice unusually high and thin, "I thought there was a telephone in here. I wanted to call the garage."

Hanson smiled, and came forward. "Not leaving so early, Nancy?"

But she was at the telephone already, speaking rapidly, asking to have her car sent round immediately.

"I'm not well," she said perfunctorily. "Jerry Ferrow's taking me home."

It sounded lame. It also sounded impolite; but she was past caring. Jerry was being horrible again, and unless she got him away from the party now, he would get too drunk to be manageable. They left her still talking into the receiver, her silver skirt stretched tightly across her thigh, her thin foot swinging impatiently, and ash dropping on to the rug from her long jade holder.

Paul found Benny at once. She was still dancing, but she had manoeuvred her partner near the entrance to the ballroom and her eyes were searching for Paul. When she saw him come out of the small library, her face lighted up. The music stopped at that moment and Paul took her arm.

"I need a drink," he said. "Let's find one, shall we?"

Benny looked at him anxiously, but he was smiling. There was a little flush on his cheek-bones. She wondered what on earth could have made him look so excited. They went into the dining-room.

Waldo was under the table again, waiting for them. He edged up close to their feet as they stood near the punch bowl.

Benny said : " Hanson knows how to do things well, certainly, even if we do laugh at it a little."

There was a gurgle of liquid as Paul ladled some punch into their glasses. " We've been coming to his parties as long as we can remember," she said, " calling them quaint, but enjoying them all the same."

" Who do you mean by ' we ' ? " Paul asked. He sounded distrait.

Benny said lightly, matching his mood, " Oh, it's hard to describe ; I suppose I mean what you call so sneeringly, ' Junior League.' The old Montreal families. Snobs, like me, for instance."

" Oh, come now," Paul said, " I didn't mean to sneer ; and I think, too, that if I seemed to sneer, it was because I didn't know what I was talking about."

" We're not as useless or as ineffectual as we're painted by certain groups, and especially certain flunkey-minded writers."

Waldo put out a tentative paw and laid it on Paul's shoe. He said, " I'm thirsty. What about slipping me a bowl of that punch ? "

" Oh Lord, I forgot him," Paul said. He stooped and pulled Waldo out from under the table. " You know, you're old enough now to behave better," he said.

" Oh, don't be stuffy ! " Waldo said angrily. " And after what I did for you in there too ! "

" You did me a good turn in that room, however, you little rascal," Paul said affectionately. " If it hadn't been for you appearing like that, I think young Ligne would have slugged me, for some reason."

Benny's breath caught in her throat. " Slugged you ? Armand ? "

" Was he the boy-friend you were telling me about ? " Paul's hand on his glass of punch hesitated on its way to his mouth.

Benny nodded.

"Well, he behaved damned well," Paul said. "He's a nice guy."

Paul's deep laugh sounded happy and relaxed. Both Benny and Waldo felt warmed by it. He added, "I can afford to like him. D'you know, Benny, sweet, I think maybe you're marrying a man who's going places."

But he did not tell her at once about Hanson Buck's offer. It was too wonderful, too new, too private even to share with Benny.

"Hey, you!" Waldo said. "What about that punch, or at least hand me down some grub. I'm exhausted."

The music had stopped again at the end of a dance and people began to wander into the dining-room. There was the sound of gay voices and the rustle of soft gowns all around Waldo, where he stood, half covered by the tablecloth. Paul stooped and slid a plate of sandwiches under the cloth, pushing Waldo with his foot gently.

"O.K., fella, you stay under there quietly. We'll collect you later. Now, be good."

Waldo nudged the plate farther under cover, and started eating the sandwiches. He felt disgruntled. The mushrooms had been more succulent, and also he was appallingly thirsty. Some people were dashed selfish. After a while, he slipped out from the table and went into the kitchen. The cook had left a bowl of milk for the cat, standing beside the back door, so Waldo lapped it up hurriedly and slipped out of the door into the fresh night air. He wandered down a path towards a lighted building, and went in.

It was the garage, a huge affair, with room for several cars, and a nice big comfortable lounge for the chauffeurs. They were sitting round, drinking beer. Waldo saw

Johnson and edged towards him. He was getting sleepy and wanted to go to bed in the car.

Outside there was the sound of grinding gears, driven into place by a reckless and unheeding hand.

One of the chauffeurs laughed. He said : " That's Mr. Ferrow. He's soused to the gills. I wouldn't be in his Cadillac now for a million. He's a bum driver at the best of times, raises hell with his tyres."

" The Hibberd gal is with him."

There were shrugs, but it was wiser not to gossip, not with so many families represented by their chauffeurs ! No one said anything more about Nancy Hibberd and Jerry Ferrow.

Johnson picked Waldo up gently and put him back in his rug on the car seat. The smoke from their pipes and cigarettes lulled him to sleep.

## Chapter 22

**H**ILDA MINSON was up early this morning. She came downstairs looking pretty in a fresh housecoat, with her hair newly waved. Waldo cocked an eye at her from where he lay on the rug in the middle of the hall waiting for the household to get into the day's action. He felt tired. The party had gone on until quite late, and then Johnson had taken Benny and Paul home, so Waldo had not been able to settle down in his box until four o'clock.

Hilda stooped and patted him on the head. Her hand smelled of perfume.

He said : " I like the snappy dress, Hilda, but you shouldn't cover up your gams. How many times have I got to tell you that ? "

Hilda said, " I'm so glad I got rid of that awful girl. "

Waldo nodded. He was grateful to Hilda for that. The thing had happened yesterday, when Hilda had rescued Waldo from the new maid's clutches. She had always hated Waldo, and been mean to him in many ways ; but, until then, she had not actually hurt him. However, yesterday, she had been in a temper and had kicked Waldo in the side. " Nasty, horrid little cur, " she said.

Waldo landed with a grunt, against the door leading to the kitchen. He snarled at the girl and started to rush at her but, to his surprise, a hand restrained him. Hilda said angrily, from above him : " That does it ! You will go at once ! You're fired ! "

Even in his pain and fury Waldo had to laugh. He could not imagine Mrs. Warren, or even Nancy Hibberd, saying, " You're fired ! " to a maid. He said gently

to Hilda, who still held him firmly by his collar :  
“ Proper way to do it would be, ‘ I shall require your services no longer. Get ! ’ ”

The girl had bridled, and tried to bully Hilda, but Hilda wasn't having any. Finally, she had held Hilda up for a fat amount of pay for “ notice,” but Hilda had sent her packing nevertheless.

“ It is kinda nice, not having that she-devil around at that ! ”

Waldo watched Hilda as she opened the front door and stooped to pick up the *Gazette*, which lay on the porch outside the door. It had lately been the duty of the new maid to do this. Hilda looked idly at the front page of the paper and started to move with it across the hall into the dining-room, where breakfast was already being put on the table. Then Hilda gave a shriek. Her eyes stared wildly at the newspaper.

Curtis Minson appeared at the top of the stairs, hair-brush in hand. “ For heaven's sake, Hilda, what's the matter ? ”

But Hilda continued to moan and shriek, pointing to the paper. Curtis ran down the stairs and took it from her, but not before Waldo had seen the headline :  
“ Socialites die in car crash ! Cartierville residents involved in accident coming from Buck dance. Nancy Hibberd and Gerald Ferrow killed while driving along Gouin Boulevard at five a.m. today.”

“ Holy Gee,” Waldo said. He sat down suddenly on his haunches, staring at Hilda and Curtis as they agitatedly read the account of the accident. Hilda's face was mottled with emotion and tears poured down her cheeks.

“ Now, my dear, now, my dear,” Curtis kept on saying, trying to soothe her. He patted her shoulder awkwardly and made her sit down at the table in the dining-room. He called loudly for coffee.

The newspaper had not spared anyone, or glossed it over. Nancy Hibberd and Jerry Ferrow had been coming out of Nancy's house, which stood about half a mile from the Buck estate, when they had run into a truck. It was a dangerous turn out of the Hibberd driveway, with a curve at the top, a blind turn. Jerry Ferrow had been under the influence of liquor and had been unable to control his car. Mrs. Hibberd, when found, was attired in night clothes and was barefoot. Mr. Ferrow was clothed. The car had been completely wrecked. The truck driver insisted that the car had headed straight for him and that he was unable to avoid it. He said that the car had come out of the driveway at a speed of fifty miles an hour.

"Whew!" Waldo said. He looked at Hilda in concern. She had gone white with emotion. She still sobbed and moaned, but Curtis had not made any comments whatever about the affair. Waldo, looking at him as he drank his coffee with the paper propped up in front of him, said: "You look pretty goldarn smug. If you had your way, you'd describe it as 'high-hat Hittites get their just deserts.'"

But Curtis did not pay any attention to Waldo. He went on reading silently, with a flat expression of concealed pleasure on his face. He had always loathed the Hibberd woman; she had always managed to make him feel small-town and inferior. Serve her right, and serve Hanson Buck right too, for having such people at his house.

Hilda said suddenly, "I always hated her, really. She made me feel like the dirt under her feet. She never brought me any presents either."

"Why, Hilda!" said Curtis in surprised reproof.

He put down the paper and looked at his wife. Her eyes shifted away. "Well, it's true," she said. "She was always poking at me, saying snippy things about the

Burgundy, and my clothes." She paused, and a look of regret came into her face.

"I'll never get so close. . . ." She stopped. She had been going to say "to Society again." But she was afraid of Curtis' reaction. So she kept quiet.

"Well, that's that!" Waldo said. He got up and yawned. He was still tired from the late hours of the party and from all the excitement. He said, "I'll bet you two would've loved to see that gold punch bowl!"

He went into the hall again and lay down. After a while Curtis came out of the dining-room, put on his overcoat and hat, and departed for his office. He did not invite Waldo to accompany him, and Waldo was glad. He wanted to lie around and look after Hilda. There was something pathetic about her this morning. Besides, he had a reluctant but growing loyalty towards her, especially since the episode of the maid yesterday. That had been really decent of Hilda, to protect him, and to get mad about having him mistreated. Hilda was a nice gal in a sad sort of way, he thought. The sadness bothered Waldo. He smiled at her as she came out of the dining-room, and she clucked at him as she went upstairs.

Waldo lay dozing. It was damn funny about that nightgown of Nancy's. Certainly looked terrible, dying in a nightgown in public that way. That Ferrow chap, didn't even have the manners to take his clothes off! Waldo could imagine the scene, knowing both of them, could almost see Nancy's efforts to make Jerry stay to watch the sun rise romantically over the Back River. After all, Nancy had been crazy in love with Ferrow. It was too bad, really.

Waldo thought he heard a sound, got up lazily, and wandered through the door that Hilda had left open into the kitchen quarters. He jumped on the chair under one of the windows, and yes, there were the two

maids walking sedately down the path, going "off" for the day. Waldo watched their receding backs with a small pang of something queerly resembling uneasiness. It was awfully quiet round here, especially after the activity of last night. He returned to the hall and lay down again. He felt restless.

"And then I guess the Ferrow guy got nasty, and had another few snifters, and said he was going back to the Buck party, or something like that, and she ran after him in her nightie and bare feet, and he would say, 'Sure, why not? Come the way you are,' in his own particularly hurting way, and by this time he would be quite soused, dangerously so, so she would have flung herself into his car kinda reckless, and there would be another grinding of gears, and more abuse of his tyres, and up the drive at high speed, Jerry laughing in a nasty drunk sort of way and Nancy crying and hysterical."

Waldo shifted his position. Once more he thought he heard a sound outside. "Yup, yup," he thought, "that must have been the way it was, something like it, anyhow."

It made him uncomfortable to think about it, so he went upstairs in search of Hilda. He could hear her moving around in the room she called her "boodoor," so he poked his head in the open door. Hilda was surrounded by red ribbons and silver pine cones. Piles of boxes with all sorts of presents were littered around. Waldo eyed them. They were pretty and gay, dispelling some of the strange gloom that had hovered over him all morning. He said benevolently, "The kind of woman who likes giving presents, childish, but pleasant."

Yes, Hilda would be like that. Love-starved, and wanting to give out. "Now I do wonder how in heck I know these things," Waldo thought. "I'm damn sure I didn't find it out when I was a man. Maybe there's compensation somewhere."

He sat down to watch Hilda. Her hands were different when they were actually working at something. They seemed less stubby and ineffectual. "You'd look swell in one of these peasant kerchiefs, tossing hay or something out under a bright blue sky." Waldo laughed at the thought, and Hilda looked up.

"Pretty, aren't they?" she said cheerfully, "I'm glad you like them. Look, this is for Paul Sturt. I bought it specially."

She held up a smoking jacket of dark blue velveteen, with lapels of what looked like suède. It was handsome, a little fussy, but Paul would look grand in it, Waldo thought. Hilda seemed to have recovered entirely from her hysterics at the news of Nancy's untimely death. "You're a funny girl," Waldo said, "a mixture, like the rest of us."

After a while he became bored with the Christmas wrapping and went out into the hall. As he did so, the phone rang, and he could hear Hilda saying, "Oh, that's too bad. I had fixed a special supper, your favourite wiener schnitzel and everything."

"Poor old Curtis! She has no respect for his shape!"

Waldo was grinning at her as she came back into the hall from her room, where the phone sat under a doll with brocade skirts.

She said, "Well, I guess I'll go downtown and get the last of the presents. The stores are awful now, so crowded, but I'll have plenty of time because I won't make the meringue. Curtis won't be here to eat it. I'll just have the rest of the maple mousse."

Waldo's eyes ran down her figure slowly. He said, "My dear girl . . ." and then he stopped. What was the use? Hilda would continue to over-eat, slowly, and slowly, she would get fatter and fatter. He sighed, his eyes on her legs. Oh, well. . . .

She went back into the "boodoor" and Waldo

heard her putting things away. Part of the fun, to Hilda, was the surprise element.

“We’re all goldarn childish, if you think about it.”

Waldo was sleepy again. After a while Hilda came downstairs, dressed to go out. She didn’t ask him to go with her, and again he was glad. He didn’t feel like being clucked over, and chivvied about in the stores.

When she said, as she closed the door, “Now, be a good doggie, I’ve left your water and a biscuit in the kitchen, and I’ll be home soon after lunch,” he merely smiled at her. Really, this night-life got a fellow down! When he was a man, he thought, he remembered being able to take it better. He slept heavily.

It was five o’clock before Hilda came home, laden down with more parcels, and beaming with pleasure.

“It was fun,” she said, “I wish you had come along. Been good?”

“Oh sure,” he said grumpily, “leaving me alone here all day in a dark house, and cold too.”

This was true. The thermostat wasn’t working, or something, and the house was chilly. Hilda went about turning on lights and heat. Then she went upstairs again.

“I’ll be down in a jiffy to get supper for both of us,” she said gaily, staggering up on her high heels, her arms full of the new Christmas presents.

It was quieter than ever in the house. Waldo shivered a little. He was no longer sleepy, and he disliked the creepy silence. He heard a small scratching sound and went to investigate. He imagined it came from the kitchen, but there was nothing to be seen. This watchdog business, this feeling of responsibility, it weighed him down. And, in addition, he was uneasy. His brain, too, was playing tricks. Bits and pieces of man-memory plagued him. He thought he remembered something about a tent, but what in the dickens it was

exactly he did not know. And he felt hot now, as though he had a fever. Perhaps he had.

“Say, Hilda, I’m sick!” he called, but she did not hear. He put his paw up over his nose in a sudden panic. “My nose is hot, it’s burning!”

But Hilda did not hear him this time either. She had gone into the bathroom to fuss with her complexion like she always did. The house seemed full of silence and heavy with it in a horrid way. Suddenly Waldo knew what was bothering him. There was danger! It was near! A prescience of it swept through him in a searing wave. He rose to his feet, his hackles up and his teeth bared.

He saw the dark figure standing in the kitchen door before the thief saw him. The door was open, It had been simpler than they thought; the catch was easy to jemmy. The figure said in a whisper, “Get going! The old girl’s alone in the house. We’ll fix her easy.”

A second figure appeared at the door and a hand closed it gently. Waldo stood in the shadow of the pantry, quivering and icy cold with fear. The two figures moved towards him and he backed away noiselessly. Everything in him was in conflict. He could see whirling shapes, a man called Horner was calling him. There was a buzzing in his head, like bombs falling. Someone was calling out.

But it was only Hilda. She was coming downstairs! She was humming as she came, easily and happily. Waldo glanced around him, but he could see nothing to help him, nothing but the pantry shelves high above him, retreating as he retreated into the hall. And the two figures came darkly on, silent, and intent.

“It’s the dame. She’s coming!”

There was a gleam of light on a hard shining object. “A gun! Kids with a gun!” Waldo could see them now as the hall light struck them. He knew it was the

pair who had skulked behind the loose paling in the fence. He had meant to warn Curtis, but with the dance at the Bucks' and so on, he had forgotten. How could he have done it anyhow? This being a dog—this being a watch-dog—a watch-dog!

Hilda was coming nearer. The figure in the lead had his finger to his lips, cautioning his companion's silence. Waldo tried to call out to Hilda to go back, to go right back upstairs. Maybe, if she did, he could distract them, make a noise, get help. Get help. Get help. Always, he had wanted to get help, never to do it himself. Always, he had avoided physical danger. Always, he had been a coward. He retreated again. Hilda was almost on them. She was not going back upstairs. She was going on into the kitchen!

Waldo was in the hall now. He gave one terrified glance over his shoulder, and he saw himself reflected in the mirror over the hall table. He looked like a small black spot, and standing over it, was the looming and clear figure of a man. It was the same man who had stared at him out of Curtis Minson's mirror! It was a man he recognized. It was a man whose name had been John Barton, and the man was his enemy, his deadly enemy!

The man's arm was raised. It was pointing to the dark doorway where the two figures lurked, waiting with death in their hands, death and pain and fear. Waldo heard the voice quite clearly now. It was John Barton's voice and he was saying, "Watch-dog? You're no bloody watch-dog! You're a coward, a beastly, rotten little bugger of a coward!"

The voice was teeming with shrill anger and smallness. It was the voice of a weakling crying out in complete defeat. Waldo took a deep sudden breath. He threw his head back. Hilda was in the opening of the doorway now, and Waldo could see the hand raised.

“ Better stop right where you are.” The voice sounded ludicrous. Young and bitter and all wrong. Hilda stopped incredulously. Her eyes travelled from the hand that held the gun to the masked face. She opened her mouth, but no sound came.

“ O.K., Hilda ! Out of the way, I’m here, I won’t let them hurt you ! ”

It was Waldo. He leapt for the hand with the gun, but he fell short. The arm wavered and Waldo was up again, snarling, his teeth this time finding flesh. It was only the boy’s left arm, however, and the boy yelled out in pain and fury. He tried to shake Waldo off, but Waldo clung hard. The blood beat in his head and his breath came in panting jerks.

“ Jimmy, get the pooch ! ”

The second figure came into the struggle. Waldo could feel cruel fingers on his tail, twisting and pulling. Then the second thief kicked him heavily in his side. The blow made him loosen his grip on the first one’s arm. He fell to the floor ; but before either of them could attack him he had leaped again from his short legs and had buried his teeth in the second boy’s thigh.

Hilda screamed. She turned and ran for the phone, screaming and screaming. The phone fell to the floor and Hilda reached for it. As the shot reverberated through the hall, the front door swung open, and Paul Sturt stood there, staring.

Waldo’s limp form lay in the middle of the hall, where the thief had kicked him, trying to get the body out of his way. He had intended to fire at Hilda in the telephone room, but Paul Sturt’s entrance stopped him up. He lifted the revolver, but Paul had not been in the army for nothing. Before the hand could get into position he had plunged forward in a tackle that he had effected with much success in a certain battle at night, in Holland.

The gun went off again, harmlessly, the bullet narrowly missing Curtis Minson who was coming in the front door at a run.

“Stop the other one! Quick! I’ve got the gun!”

Paul was mishandling the youth he had tackled. He had twisted his arms behind him, reaching for the curtain cord as he did it. Curtis wasn’t much use. He made a brave but ineffectual dash at the second figure, but it had vanished through the kitchen and out of the open door to safety. He followed it down the steps, then thought he had better return to the house, and came back, running.

Waldo lay where he had been kicked, in the middle of the hall, the blood seeping through his fur on to the rug. His eyes were closed. Paul saw him, and his mouth tightened grimly.

“You rotten little bastard!” he said through clenched teeth. He wound the curtain cord tightly around the boy’s wrists, twisting his arms upward. The boy cried out in pain, muttering under his breath. Paul saw Hilda come swiftly out of the telephone room and kneel beside Waldo and gather his limp form into her arms. Her face was dead white and tears poured down her cheeks onto Waldo’s fur.

“Oh, Curtis, get the doctor, get the doctor, Waldo’s hurt, he’s killed. Oh, Waldo, you saved my life!”

Curtis Minson had returned. He turned to Paul and said, “You’re the boss, my boy. What’s the best thing to do now?”

There would be many times in the future, when both of them would remember that surprising remark, Paul with frustration, and Curtis with annoyance. It epitomized Curtis’ dependence on Paul.

Paul threw the boy roughly on the settee and pushed his face into the cushion. He turned at once and ran

over to where Hilda crouched with Waldo in her arms. Waldo made no sound or sign of life.

Hilda was crying out, "I looked, and I saw a man reflected in the mirror. I thought—I thought he was in the hall, behind me. I don't understand it at all. And Waldo saw him too! He did! I saw him look! The man was in the mirror!"

"You're hysterical, Hilda. Do pull yourself together!" Curtis spoke sharply. He knelt down by her side and tried to take Waldo from her. Paul had gone to the telephone and called the police. He put the phone down. Hilda was pointing with a shaking hand to the mirror.

"I'm not! I swear I saw the man! Up there, in the mirror, and Waldo saw him too. He ran at the thieves right away after he saw him. It was just as if the man ordered him to. I——"

Paul said sharply, "Never mind that now, Mrs. Minson! Give him to me! Mr. Minson, may I tell Johnson to drive me at once into town? I want to get him to the vet as soon as possible."

"Of course, my boy, naturally! I'll call him. He's probably putting the car away."

He rushed to the door, calling for Johnson.

Behind them the young thief rolled himself free of the settee and slid to the floor. He began to edge toward the kitchen door. Curtis walked slowly towards him. He said to Paul, "You get along at once with Waldo. I stopped Johnson, he's at the door. Thank God we did not hold that Board meeting after all. It was Providence, pure Providence, that we returned so unexpectedly."

He turned and put his arm around Hilda. It was so surprising that she burst into tears and buried her head in his chest.

"Oh, he was so sweet all day, so *sweet*," she said,

“playing watch-dog so beautifully, and watching over me. Oh, Waldo!”

Curtis patted her back awkwardly. He said, “Telephone at once, my boy, when you hear what the vet says. We shall be waiting anxiously to hear, very anxiously. I would go with you, but the police will be here, and there is this young devil to attend to.”

They both looked at the thief, struggling to free himself. Hilda said faintly, “Don’t hurt him, Curtis, he’s so young.”

“Humph,” Curtis grunted, but her words made him feel ashamed all the same. Why, the boy couldn’t be more than fifteen years old!

In Paul’s gentle arms Waldo stirred feebly. The car was going at a mad clip, with Johnson bent down over the wheel.

“If we get a ticket, never mind,” Paul said, and Johnson nodded.

“I ’ope the little fellow’s not hurt too bad,” he said.

Waldo’s breathing was laboured. Pain seared him through and through, and he moaned. He could feel life in him, but very faintly. He could hear wings and rushing sounds, pleasantly, as though a great orchestra was in process of tuning up. His body felt light but his head was heavy. Memory had gone, but with it had gone the heavy feeling of defeat and despair that had haunted him all along. There had been a debt and he had paid it, paid it well and fully. His heart was light as his body. Feebly, he tried to wag his tail, to speak to Paul.

Paul felt the slight movement and shifted Waldo very tenderly in his arms. He bent down and whispered, “We’ll get you through, old boy. We’ll be at the vet’s in no time. Just hold on, will you, like a good fellow?”

His voice was husky with feeling.





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