

# SUPERIOR HERITAGE



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*a novel*

Tyler R. Tichelaar



Marquette Fiction  
Marquette, Michigan

## **SUPERIOR HERITAGE**

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To Mom and Dad





“Solitary women like me, old men like Cousin Tune: in every day and time there have been many of us, clinging with all the strength of our memories to the old ways--old men and old maids who eye each other on meeting, and in that silent interchange promise to hold fast, by their futile stubbornness, in their own minds--who when they see the life they know not only doomed, but dead and very nearly forgotten, sit down alone to write the elegies.”

– Helen Hooven Santmyer, *Farewell to Summer*





## PRINCIPAL FAMILIES IN SUPERIOR HERITAGE

Note: some characters are not included so as not to give away the plots

### **The Whitmans**

Margaret Whitman – Family matriarch, maiden name Dalrymple, widow of Will Whitman, mother of Henry, Roy, and Bill Whitman, Ada Lowell, and Eleanor Goldman

Henry Whitman – son of Margaret Whitman, husband of Beth, father of Jim and Ellen

Beth Whitman – Henry Whitman's wife, maiden name McCarey, mother of Jim and Ellen, sister to Monsignor Michael McCarey

Jim Whitman – son of Henry and Beth

Ellen Whitman – daughter of Henry and Beth

Roy Whitman – son of Margaret and Will Whitman

Eleanor Goldman – divorced daughter of Margaret and Will Whitman, mother of Lucy and Maud Goldman

Lucy Goldman – Eleanor's daughter

Maud Goldman – Eleanor's daughter

Ada Lowell – married daughter of Margaret and Will Whitman, who lives in Louisiana with her husband and children

Bill Whitman – son of Margaret and Will Whitman

### **The Dalrymples**

Charles Dalrymple – brother to Margaret Dalrymple Whitman

Harriet Dalrymple – Charles's wife

Joseph Dalrymple – son of Charles and Harriet

Randy and Tim Dalrymple – twins, the children of Joseph

Sarah Rodman – sister to Margaret Whitman and Charles Dalrymple

Joseph Rodman – her husband, a former U.S. Senator

Theodore Dalrymple Blackmore Rodman – son of Sarah Dalrymple Rodman and the late Lysander Blackmore, an illegitimate child adopted by his step-father, Joseph Rodman

### **The McCareys & Bergmanns**

Michael McCarey – a Monsignor in the Catholic Church, brother to Beth McCarey Whitman

Thelma Bergmann – cousin to Beth and Michael McCarey

Jessie Hopewell – Thelma's adopted daughter

Lyla Hopewell – Jessie's sister, whom Thelma did not adopt

### **Other Principal Characters**

Scofield Blackmore – half-brother to Theodore Rodman, illegitimate son of the late Lysander Blackmore

Robert O’Neill – famous local novelist

Eliza Graham O’Neill – wife of Robert O’Neill

Bernie O’Neill – Robert and Eliza’s son, friend of Jim Whitman

Helen O’Neill – daughter of Robert and Eliza O’Neill

Tom Vandelaare – a young man stationed at K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base

### **Historical People Mentioned in Superior Heritage**

Eve Arden – movie star in *Anatomy of a Murder*

Memo Beyers – a piano teacher in Marquette

Arthur Bourgeois – editor of Chief Kawbawgam’s *Ojibwa Narratives*

Monsignor Casanova – a pastor of St. Michael’s Catholic Church

Mike Chenoweth – owner of the Lumberjack Tavern in Big Bay

Monsignor Joseph Dunleavy – a pastor of St. Michael’s Catholic Church

Mary Dwyer – devoted church lady at St. Peter’s Cathedral

Paul Florence – owner of the Delft Theatre

Ben Gazzara – movie star in *Anatomy of a Murder*

Paul Gerard – murder victim

Dominic Jacobetti – longtime Upper Michigan politician

Sadie Johnson – church clerk at First Baptist Church

Ernestine Latour – proprietor of the Bavarian Inn

Ruth Lill – author of Marquette history, and descendant of city founders

Amos and Olive Harlow

Maggie – manager of Bookbinders

Lieutenant Peterson – murderer of Mike Chenoweth

Mrs. Peterson – his wife, raped by Mike Chenoweth

Otto Preminger – movie director of *Anatomy of a Murder*

Lee Remick – movie star in *Anatomy of a Murder*

Max Reynolds – grandson of Peter White

George C. Scott – movie star in *Anatomy of a Murder*

Barbara Specker – Marquette resident

Clyde Steele – author of Marquette history

James Stewart – movie star in *Anatomy of a Murder*

John Voelker – Lieutenant Peterson’s lawyer; author of *Anatomy of a Murder*

# 1952

Beth Whitman was attending St. Peter's Cathedral this Sunday morning because her brother, Monsignor McCarey, had been invited by the bishop to say Mass. Beth was accompanied by her children, Jim and Ellen, her cousin, Thelma Bergmann, and Thelma's adopted daughter, Jessie. Beth's husband, Henry, did not join his family because he was one of those Baptists; his marriage to a Catholic had caused such trouble with his parents that he only attended church with his wife and children on holidays. As on every Sunday morning, Jim had grumbled about going to church. He was sixteen and felt he should not have to go anymore, but his mother insisted he go until he was eighteen, and his father supported his mother's decision. Because his parents' marriage had caused family religious strife, Jim had not been baptized or attended church until he was twelve. By then, so his sister thought, Satan had already gotten her brother's soul, and no number of Masses could save him. Being five years younger, Ellen had been baptized at age seven while still highly impressionable; ever since, she had believed and feared every word of catechism she was taught. She had already swallowed several doses of good Catholic guilt, and her artistic temperament found all that guilt dramatically appealing.

Ellen had never been in the cathedral before. She knew it was the church her mother had been raised in, but because the Whitmans lived in North Marquette, they attended nearby St. Michael's. Her mother had often told her how beautiful the cathedral was and that someday they would go there, but Ellen had never dreamt her first visit would include her own uncle saying the Mass. She was always quiet and attentive during church, fearful of doing anything that would increase her years in Purgatory. But today it was hard to be attentive because St. Peter's Cathedral was the most splendid building she had ever seen. She tried hard to concentrate on the homily, but her mind soon wandered into marveling over the pillars and stained glass windows. Paying

attention was even more difficult when she noticed her brother's eyes were closed.

Ellen tried to focus on the giant mosaic above the altar where Christ was depicted as ascending toward Heaven. An angel on Christ's right held St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, while an angel on Christ's left held St. Peter's Cathedral in Marquette; both buildings bore the namesake of the first pope of the Catholic Church. Kneeling before Christ was St. Peter himself, while looking on were the other eleven apostles holding various books, crosses, and swords. Below the apostles were several sheep, but Ellen was not sure why. She leaned over and whispered to Jessie, who was twenty-four and a teacher, "What does that Latin mean below the picture?"

"You are Peter, the Rock," said Jessie, while Beth and Thelma frowned at her, "and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the powers of Hell will not prevail against it, and I will give to you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Alleluia."

Ellen nodded in understanding. Christ was holding keys in his hand and giving them to St. Peter to designate him as head of the church. That must be why the cathedral was named for St. Peter, because it was the seat of the bishop, the head of all the other Catholic churches in Upper Michigan. Ellen loved that the mosaic was so symbolic, elevating it beyond being a pretty picture into a true piece of art. She hoped one day she could create such magnificent art.

Then Ellen realized her uncle's homily was over, and she felt guilty that she had not listened. Now the Eucharistic prayers began. She knelt, listening to the rhythmic Latin and staring at Monsignor McCarey's back as he prayed, but she was also daydreaming of someday painting pictures as beautiful as the cathedral's stained glass windows; she loved the windows, but she thought it unclear which saints were depicted other than St. Patrick because of the snakes in his window. Ellen thought people would like the windows more if they understood the windows told stories. She wanted to paint pictures that told stories; perhaps she would be an illustrator, like N.C. Wyeth, who had wonderfully illustrated so many of her favorite books.

When Communion came, Ellen walked down the aisle with her family. Monsignor presented her with the body and blood of Christ. As she received it into her mouth, she wished it would make her feel different, better; she believed it could if she were good enough and learned to pay attention in church. As she knelt after Communion, she prayed the Eucharist would transform her so she would always be good, or at least quit losing her temper with Jimmy. But she

felt God must understand when she lost her temper since her brother would purposely irritate her when he knew she was trying extra hard to be good.

Before Monsignor rose to give the final blessing, the bishop stepped onto the altar to speak. "I'm sure we are all pleased to see Monsignor McCarey, who was raised in this very parish, back among us to celebrate Mass this weekend. You'll all be happy to hear that the Holy Father has invited Monsignor to Rome to teach at the North American College for priests. It is a great honor for him, our parish, and our entire diocese, and I for one am very proud of him."

The church erupted into clapping hands. But Ellen noticed her mother did not clap. Instead, Beth looked over at Thelma and raised her eyes.

"Why didn't Michael tell me?" Beth asked, but Thelma was herself too surprised to answer.

The final blessing was said and the Mass concluded. Monsignor McCarey followed the crucifix down the aisle, then waited outside the front door to greet the parishioners.

"We'll see you later, Thelma," said Beth, heading for a side door.

"Aren't you going to see your brother?" asked Thelma.

"No, I'll talk to him when he comes over for dinner. I'm too upset now."

Ellen and Jim followed their mother down the side aisle. "Beth, that's wonderful about your brother," said a well-wisher. "I wouldn't be surprised if someday he were pope himself," said another. "You must be very proud," said a third.

"Yes," Beth replied. "I am proud of him."

She pushed her way to the door, wishing to escape the crowd. She might be proud, but she was not happy.

"Jim, quit dawdling," she said, although less annoyed with her son's lazy gait than that her husband and the car were nowhere in sight. Ever since she had run into a tree her first time behind the wheel, Beth had refused to drive, but today she wished it were otherwise; Henry never was on time to pick her up. But there was the car now.

"Hurry up, Jimmy," Ellen said, following on her mother's heels.

"How was church?" asked Henry as his family climbed into the car.

"Fine," said Beth, screwing up her lips, unwilling to discuss the topic until she reached home.

"Uncle Michael's moving to Rome," said Ellen, enjoying the drama of the surprise. "The bishop announced it in church."

"Rome!" said Henry.

“He’s been invited by the Pope,” said Ellen. “He’s going to teach new priests.”

Henry turned to Beth. “You never mentioned that Michael was – ”

“He never told me,” Beth said.

Her tone warned Henry to say no more. Ellen now realized just how upset her mother was. Jim closed his eyes and lay his head back on the seat, trying to endure his family until he got home and could escape from them for an hour until dinner. He hated Sundays. Spending the whole day with his parents was almost enough to make him run away from home.

When they reached the house, Ellen went to read in her bedroom while Jim walked up the street to hang out with his friends until dinnertime. Seeing Beth needed time alone, Henry disappeared into his woodshop. He did not come back inside the house until Beth started fixing dinner.

“I imagine Michael must be excited,” said Henry, deciding it best to broach the subject before his brother-in-law arrived.

“Yes, it’s a great honor for him,” she said. “But why didn’t he tell me?”

“He probably meant to tell you when he came over. The bishop just beat him to it.”

“How can he go? He’s the only family I have left except for Thelma.”

“You have me and the kids,” said Henry.

“That’s not what I mean and you know it,” said Beth.

“Well, it’s not as if we see him that often,” Henry said. “Except for that year he was stationed in Ishpeming, he’s always been at some distant end of the U.P.”

“He was still within a day’s drive,” said Beth. “Now he’ll be in a foreign country.”

“Well,” Henry rubbed her shoulders as she mashed the potatoes, “it’s his choice. He did give his life to God, you know.”

“I know,” Beth grunted, not willing to be consoled.

“Can I do anything to help you?” Henry asked.

“The roast will be done in a few minutes. You can slice it for me.”

“What should I do until then?”

“Tell Ellen to come set the table,” said Beth. “Michael will be here any minute.”

“I’ll set the table,” said Henry.

“No, you won’t. It’s Ellen’s job. She can do it.”

The back door opened. They heard Henry’s brother Roy shout, “Hello!”

“I just came into town for the afternoon,” said Roy when he entered the kitchen. “I thought I’d see whether you wanted to go ice fishing.”

"I don't understand how you men can go fishing in the middle of winter," Beth said. She also could not understand why Roy did not get a telephone; then he could have called rather than come into town only to learn Henry could not go with him. She did not know what to think of Roy; how could he live as a hermit in the woods in that little cabin without running water, electricity, or a telephone?

"I can't go today," said Henry. "Beth's brother is coming for dinner."

"You can go if you want," said Beth in a tone that warned Henry he better not.

"No," said Henry. "Not when we have company."

"Hi, Uncle Roy," Ellen said. Her uncle's presence made her feel safe enough to emerge from her bedroom. She had always thought her uncle odd, especially now that the bushy beard he sported had started to turn gray. But he was kind, and less intimidating to be around than her uncle the monsignor. "Are you staying for dinner?"

Roy had not expected the offer, but he was lonely today; he did not want to go ice fishing alone. He looked askance at Beth, but she had turned away toward the stove. "No, I can't. I -" he began, but Beth said, "You're welcome to stay, Roy. I'm sure Michael will be happy to see you."

"Thank you," Roy said.

"Uncle Roy, Uncle Michael's moving to Rome," said Ellen.

"He is?"

"Ellen, go set the table," said Beth.

Roy sat down, feeling uncomfortable, while Beth took the roast from the oven and let Henry slice it. Then Michael arrived.

He shook hands with Roy and let Henry take his coat. "It looks as if it's going to snow this afternoon," he said.

"Seems as if it snows every afternoon," said Beth. "Easter's almost here, but you would never know it in Upper Michigan."

Henry scrambled for a topic to discuss. He dared not bring up the subject of Michael moving to Rome; Beth would mention it when she was ready. Michael, who was constantly in demand to console people, had mastered the art of small talk so he began to praise Henry and Beth's home, lightening the awkward moment.

"This is the first time I've been here since you moved in," he said. "It's a beautiful house." He had come into the kitchen by the back door. Now he stood staring into the open dining and living rooms.

"We've been here almost two years now," said Henry. "I'd forgotten you've never been here."

“I apologize,” said Michael. “I’m so busy I don’t get to see my family like I want to, and remember, we had Christmas at your mother’s house.”

Henry and Beth had built their current home in the summer of 1950 after a year of living with Henry’s recently widowed mother, Margaret. The winter prior to that, they had moved to California, but with the death of Henry’s father, they had felt homesick and returned to Marquette and their family. Margaret had been unhappy when Beth married her oldest son, but when she learned Beth had convinced Henry to move home, she had finally softened toward her daughter-in-law. The new house Henry built for his family was only two blocks down the street from Margaret’s house; far enough away that Beth did not have to worry about her mother-in-law popping in at any moment, while close enough to Henry’s family to keep him satisfied.

On the outside, the house resembled its neighbors in this growing little area of North Marquette, but inside, Henry had displayed his artistic nature. He and Beth had spent their childhood in Victorian homes with numerous tiny cramped rooms, but in California, Henry had discovered space. There he had seen many homes with Mexican or Southwest flavor – homes with arched doorways and rooms that would open into other rooms rather than be separated by doors. The public rooms of his new home – living room, dining room, and kitchen – were built in a straight line so you could see completely from one end of the house to the other. He placed a Dutch half-door between the kitchen and the hall to the bedrooms and another half-door between the dining room and kitchen, but even with the half-doors shut, the other rooms were visible. Beth had insisted on these half-doors so the dog would not track its wet feet on the carpets. The house was “California style” as Henry explained to everyone; even the bedroom windows were large enough to let in the California sun; Henry had not considered how little use windows are in Upper Michigan during long dark winters.

“Let me show you around,” Henry told Michael. Roy followed the other men about the house rather than remain with a sister-in-law in no mood to talk with him.

Beth listened to the men’s feet shuffling down the hall to the bedrooms; she was annoyed that Henry would let their brothers see her private room. She was even more annoyed by the dirt tracked across her clean floor because Roy had not removed his shoes. She told herself Roy had never been thoughtful, but when she went to get the broom by the back door, she noticed his shoes were next to Henry’s. Michael was the guilty tracker of mud. She quickly swept up



the dirt before the men returned. As she emptied the dustpan, Jim came through the back door.

“Take off your shoes,” she told him.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Beth,” said Michael. He was standing in the kitchen doorway, having just returned down the hall.

“It’s all right,” she said, embarrassed.

“No, it was thoughtless of me.” He sat down in a kitchen chair to remove the offending footwear.

“We can eat now,” said Beth. She told the men where to sit at the table, then ordered Ellen to help her carry in the food. Jim slumped into a chair, scowling at the disgusting peas and carrots he would be forced to eat and the stringy roast that would stick in his teeth.

Bowls were passed around, and food was dolloped onto plates. Jim lifted his knife to slice his meat when Michael said, “May I say the blessing?”

“Yes, please,” said Beth, afraid he would guess they never said a blessing. Roy raised his eyebrows. He was an avowed atheist, but he politely kept his mouth shut. He had kept quiet at his mother’s table during many a prayer.

“Amen,” said Michael when he finished thanking the Lord.

“Pass the potatoes,” Henry said to Roy.

“I don’t believe in God,” said Jim.

No one said anything. They pretended not to have heard. To keep from grinning, Roy said, “Beth, everything looks delicious.”

“God didn’t make people,” Jim said. “We evolved from apes.”

Ellen had never heard this before. How silly to think people evolved from apes. Why did Jimmy say such stupid things?

“Jim, that’s enough,” said Henry.

“It’s true. There’s scientific proof to support it up.”

“It’s not an appropriate subject for the dinner table,” said Henry.

“If Uncle Michael can talk about God at the table, I can talk about evolution.”

“Not at my table, you can’t,” said Beth, afraid Michael would think her a bad mother.

“My teacher in school told us about it. Haven’t you ever heard of Darwin? He proved we’re descended from apes.”

“Jim,” his father warned.

“It’s okay,” said Michael. “Everyone has a right to his own beliefs. Jim, can I ask you one question?”

“What?” Jim asked.

“You believe that people evolved from apes? That God didn’t create us?”

“Right. I don’t even believe in God. You can’t prove He exists.”

“Can you prove He doesn’t?” asked Michael.

“That’s not a fair question.”

“Still, you have no answer for it, but let me ask you this: if God did not create everything, how did it happen?”

“It’s science. The Big Bang theory.”

“What caused that big bang?”

“Dust floating around and combusting,” Jim smirked.

“What put the dust there?”

Jim did not know; he struggled for an answer. Roy recalled having this same discussion many times with different people. He no longer cared whether God existed or whether the big bang theory could be proven. He simply did not believe in God. Ellen stared at her plate, ashamed of her brother. Now she knew Jimmy would go to Hell. And he would deserve it too, after ruining Sunday dinner.

“You still can’t prove God exists!” Jim retorted.

“All right,” said Michael. “To each his own. But isn’t the idea that there is no God rather frightening? It means we are completely alone in a meaningless world. Do you want to live in a world without hope?”

“Hope in what? That I get to sit on a cloud and sing praises to God for all eternity. If that’s what God considers hope, he must be selfish.”

Roy frowned. He did not believe in Michael’s God, but neither did he disrespect others’ beliefs. As a disciple of existentialism, Roy did not live in a world without hope – he believed life had the meaning each individual placed upon it, based upon the individual’s experiences.

Beth felt a scratching at her leg.

“Oh, Henry, you forgot to shut the half-door,” she said. “Now you’ve got Bandit in here.”

“It’s all right,” said Henry, trying to calm his wife who was already upset by the conversation.

“No, it’s not. He’s such a beggar. Don’t you give him any scraps.”

“He’s a fine dog,” said Michael, when Bandit settled between him and Beth. “I wish I had such a nice one.”

“Why would you want to be a priest if you can’t even have a dog?” asked Jim, determined to win the argument by being obnoxious since he could not win by logic.

“Young man,” said Henry. “You are excused from the table. You can take your plate with you if you want, but you’re not welcome to eat with us anymore.”

Jim picked up his plate, tossed his silverware onto it, grabbed his glass of milk, and stomped into the kitchen.

Beth, the dog forgotten, apologized profusely to her brother. “I’m so sorry. Henry will have to go have a talk with that teacher. We should have sent Jim to Catholic school. I can’t believe anyone would tell a child something so awful.”

“He’s not a child anymore,” said Michael. “He’s almost sixteen and at a rebellious age.” He laughed and added, “I was rebellious too at his age, only I rebelled against the evils of the world by entering the seminary.”

“Still,” said Henry, “we raised him to have better manners.”

Silence followed as everyone intently chewed the roast beef.

“I hear, Michael,” said Roy to ease the tension, “that you’re moving to Rome.”

Henry, glancing at Beth, felt this moment the worst to bring up the subject.

“Yes,” said Michael. “I go where God leads me.”

“It must be exciting for you,” said Roy. “I’ve never been to Italy, but what I saw of Europe during the war was beautiful. Even with so much destroyed, I thought the French countryside and Rhine River Valley among the most beautiful places I’ve ever seen – even comparable to Lake Superior’s beaches and the Huron Mountains.”

“Michael, we’ll miss you,” said Beth.

“I know,” said Michael, “but we can always write. I expect many letters from my family.”

Roy looked down at his plate, feeling this private family moment did not include him, but Michael touched his forearm and said, “Roy, you must promise to write me. I’ll be thirsty for good conversation that isn’t only about theology, and I haven’t yet given up trying to convert you.”

“I’ll write,” said Roy, “but I can’t promise I’ll be any less adamant than Jim about my beliefs.”

“Fair enough,” Michael smiled.

“What exactly will you do in Rome?” asked Henry. Michael explained how he would teach new seminarians at the North American College for priests. Roy listened intently, almost with jealousy. Here was a man who wanted to be his friend – a man who had received great respect in the world’s eyes yet managed to forsake materialism. Over the years, Michael had been pastor to numerous parishes, had helped further the goals of the diocese, had learned multiple languages, his French and German being far better than Roy’s own, and in

addition, he could speak Italian and Latin. He was well versed in history and theology, while Roy knew himself to be only an armchair philosopher. Roy had also forsaken the world's honors, but Michael remained honored because he had not forsaken other people.

The day ended emotionally for everyone. Jim would fume all evening before he got over being bested by his uncle of the cloth. Ellen's respect for priests only increased by her uncle's presence. Beth mourned her brother's departure and would not let Henry comfort her. Michael would remember the day as a pleasant farewell, the afternoon winter sun bathing the room with a warmth reflected in the presence of those he loved. And Roy went home, feeling life was futile; he believed priests were deluded by religion, yet he envied Michael the comfort of that delusion.



All winter, Roy had almost hibernated in his little cabin deep in the woods of the Huron Mountains, reading and rereading books until he had nearly memorized them. Almost daily, he had gone ice fishing or snowshoed through the forest until the late afternoon sunsets proclaimed the end of day. In the forest, he read the seasons in maples, pines, evergreens, oaks, and birches. He knew the different tracks of the squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, and deer. He read the landscape like a storybook of the forest's events. His keen eyes could tell how many inches of snow had fallen simply by marking the trunk of a tree. The clouds never failed to predict for him the next day's weather. He found in Nature a knowledge as great as in any book. He had read that the Druids had known all the secret paths of the forest, and he strove to acquire such knowledge for himself. Roy also read books to understand human nature; he tried to read himself, to obey the great internal sermon, "Know thyself."

Then, with the coming of spring, he emerged from his winter of isolated meditation into active work at the Huron Mountain Club. Yet even there, he was a silent man, often found tucked away in a corner of a crowded room, listening, reading his fellow men's countenances, learning from the inflection of their voices to read their hearts. He flattered himself that he understood human nature; sometimes, he felt superior over others' shallow words and lives.

Roy knew only one man who might understand Nature as well as himself – not the mere nature of trees and squirrels, but the larger meanings. That man was the only one he could not read; whenever he tried to understand that man, he realized his interpretations were simplistic, unfair, even degrading to that

man's intelligence. He admired that man, yet detested that the man made him feel so fully his own shortcomings. That man was constantly in Roy's thoughts as spring broke.

On this spring afternoon just days before Easter, Roy returned home from the Huron Mountain Club to find his older brother's car parked before his cabin. He saw Henry standing on his doorstep, laboriously trying to scribble a note on a scrap of paper he pressed against the cabin wall.

Roy whistled to announce his presence.

Henry turned around, smiled, then shoved the note in his pocket.

"What are you doing here?" asked Roy.

"Just stopped by to say hello," said Henry, "and to let you know about Easter. Ma says we'll have dinner at noon."

Roy opened his cabin door without replying. "You could have come in and waited," he said. "I never lock the door. There's nothing to steal except a few dishes, my books, and that old Victrola."

Henry followed his brother inside, noting the cabin's musty smell from the damp winter. He glanced at the wash basin, filled with dishes and dirty water. If he were a bachelor, Henry thought he might also be a bit lazy about his housekeeping, but he could never live like this, in a little shack where even the mice must freeze in winter and bake in summer.

"Have a seat," said Roy. Henry glanced at the bed, the room's only comfortable piece of furniture. The bed quilt was filthy, as if the mice had slept on it. He opted instead for one of the hard dusty chairs.

"Your bookcase looks as if it's overflowing," said Henry. "I could build you a couple more – enough to fill this whole wall if you want."

"No," said Roy. "Some of those books I'll never read again, especially the novels, which are mostly useless with a few exceptions."

"I didn't think you ever parted with your books."

"You can have too much of anything, even books," said Roy. "I don't want my possessions to possess me."

"Your place would look really nice with a whole wall of books," Henry said.

"No," said Roy.

"It wouldn't be any trouble. I could make some shelves in a day or two."

"No," said Roy. "I like it the way it is."

"I don't know how you'll ever find yourself a woman living in a place like this."

Henry regretted the comment the moment he said it. For years he had wondered why his brother was such a hermit; he had tried to avoid asking

intrusive questions so as not to aggravate Roy; Henry had enough family cares without worrying about his brother. But the sight of Roy's dilapidated life was more than he could take today.

"Who says I want a woman?" Roy asked.

"What do you mean? Every man does."

"No," said Roy. "That's what's the matter with the world. Everyone assumes men and women have to marry and raise children, instead of having their own lives. This is an awful world to raise kids in, and most love is really just lust in disguise. I'm not going to conform to some mindless social pattern based on sexual urges rather than logic."

"You never will marry with that attitude."

Roy knew it was pointless to explain his feelings to his brother, but he continued anyway. "Two people can never really become one; they're never fully compatible. And to have children is only to be selfish, thinking about the joy children might bring you, but not the troubles and miseries they'll have to face."

"That's silly," said Henry. "If everyone felt that way, humanity would end."

"Would that be such a great loss?" Roy asked. "All people do is make life miserable for the other creatures on this planet."

"That's not true. We do lots of good things, like conservation for instance."

"Conservation is just preserving the world from human exploitation. Think about it. Every time you see a dead animal lying along the road, run down by a car, whose fault is that? What kind of ridiculous, selfish, pomposity makes humans believe we have the right to drive fifty miles an hour, threatening other creatures, as if there is anything so important we have to do, as if our every second is so precious that all other forms of life are expendable. Human extinction would be the best thing that ever happened to this planet."

Henry could see Roy was, as their mother said, 'in one of his moods'. Further discussion would be pointless. Geez, all he had suggested was that he might build his brother a bookshelf.

"Anyway," said Henry, "the reason I came out was to tell you that Ma wants you to come for Easter dinner."

"That's another example of selfishness," said Roy. "I don't want to come for Easter dinner, but just because everyone else celebrates Easter, it's expected that I will. You should know better by now than to think I'll come."

"We always have Easter dinner together."

"I haven't come to Easter dinner for years," said Roy. "I wouldn't even come for Christmas except to make Ma happy. I'll come any other time for dinner, but not for Easter."

“Why ever not?” asked Henry, thinking his brother had become loopy from living alone so long.

“Because I refuse to celebrate the lie of Christianity that has caused so much trouble in the world.”

Henry had long ago learned to avoid religious arguments with his brother. Roy was ridiculously atheistic, yet Henry was no match for him when his brother began to quote the Bible, John Milton, Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Upanishads, the Koran, and Jean-Paul Sartre to show what was wrong with religion. Henry did not even know who or what most of those things were. He had enough trouble trying to remember all Ten Commandments. But Henry had faith that only God could have created a world so full of infinite splendor and variety. What use were the arguments of all Roy’s books next to the beauty of a tree, a sunset, or a newborn baby?

“I don’t know what happened to you,” said Henry. “We grew up in the same house yet we ended up so different. We all want to see you, and Ma will be hurt if you don’t come for Easter.”

“We can love each other yet still disagree,” said Roy. “Tell Ma I’ll come for supper the Sunday after Easter.”

“All right,” Henry sighed. He felt claustrophobic in this narrow little box of a shack. He got up, muttered, “Goodbye,” and went out to his car.

“Goodbye,” said Roy. He stared out the window until his brother had driven out of sight. He suddenly felt a lonely urge to go to Easter dinner, but out of principle, he would not give in. When he turned from the window, he went to his coat and dug out the two letters he had picked up that afternoon at the post office; until now he had not dared to look and see whom they were from. He felt hopeful that she had written to him – Chloe, the only woman he had ever loved. But the first letter was from his sister, Ada, in Louisiana. The second letter had no return address, but the postage stamps revealed it was from the man whose approval he craved.



“Mom, can I bring my tablet and pens to Grandma’s house?”

“No, it won’t hurt you to talk to your aunts and uncles or play with Lucy and Maud.”

Ellen sulked but said nothing. Henry came inside from his woodshop. “I’ll be ready to go in a minute,” he said.

“Daddy, do you want to look at my picture?”

Ellen jumped up from the table where she had been meticulously drawing for the last hour with extraordinary focus for her age. She took the tablet into the kitchen and placed it before her father.

Henry looked at it, not quite knowing what to say.

"It's different than what you usually draw," he said, "but it's very nice."

It was different. Ellen loved to draw the insides of houses, as if they were dollhouses displaying each floor, each room, all the furniture, and the people inside. Henry and Beth thought the pictures reflected their daughter's sense of family security.

But today, Ellen had drawn a giant cathedral, complete with towers and pillars; its surrounding gardens were filled with statues of saints, while nuns walked along the paths.

"Can I bring my tablet to Grandma's house?" Ellen asked her father.

"Ellen, I already told you no," Beth said. "Now go get ready and tell Jim to do the same. Grandma worked hard on Easter dinner so we shouldn't keep her waiting."

Ellen went down the hall to find her brother. Beth looked at Henry, who was still staring at the drawing left on the table.

"Your mother would have a fit if she saw that picture," Beth said.

"I guess so," he replied. A staunch Baptist, Margaret still hoped her Catholic daughter-in-law and grandchildren would someday turn away from idolatry. Henry set down the picture and went into the bathroom to wash his hands and comb his hair.

"Dad," said Jim, stepping into the bathroom doorway, "after dinner, can I leave? Bernie invited me to come over this afternoon."

"I suppose," said Henry, understanding how difficult it was for a sixteen year old boy to be stuck at a family gathering. "As long as you use your best manners at dinner."

"Thanks Dad," said Jim, knowing full well if he had asked his mother, he would have gotten a different answer.

"Let's walk over," said Henry, returning to the kitchen. "It's a nice day."

"Oh, well, I have these pies to bring," said Beth as an excuse. She had grown quite fat in recent years and did not like to be seen in public. If she walked the couple blocks to Margaret's house, the neighbors might think she was trying to reduce her weight. That would be embarrassing.

"I'll carry them," said Henry.

"All right," Beth gave in, then fetched her coat – even though it was a warm day – to hide her fat rolls.



They started down the driveway, then turned down the street toward Henry's mother's house. Jim shuffled his feet along the road, embarrassed that his friends might see him with his parents and little sister. Beth glanced about, equally self-conscious, and constantly eyeing Henry to make sure he did not tilt the pies. Ellen chatted about the houses they passed, why she liked this one, why that one should be painted a different color, what kind of house she would have when she was older. Beth told herself they were now halfway – only one more block to go and she would be safe from being seen.

Henry waved his hand. Beth turned to see Mrs. King, that old snob; Beth smiled politely, hating that the wannabe makeup poster woman with her tiny little waist had seen her. Beth resolved she would not have any pie today. Just because it was Easter did not mean she should break her diet. She always broke her diet, but this time she was determined to keep at it.

They were the last to arrive except for Henry's sister, Eleanor. Beth never understood why Eleanor could never come early to help her own mother. But Margaret was never in the least worried about the meal. It would be ready when it was ready; she had never been much of a housekeeper or a cook, and punctuality was not a word in her vocabulary. Beth immediately delegated to herself the task of seeing everything was finished in a timely manner. Holidays only meant extra work for her because she had to help take care of Henry's family.

And the family was a large one. Over the years, Margaret's home had become the gathering place for every shirttail relation. Ellen knew them all as a group, few of them as individuals, yet she was fond of them, tolerating even their faults as part of the color of family life. Her grandmother, Margaret Whitman, was matriarch of the family. Then came Margaret's brother, Charles Dalrymple and his wife, Harriet. Uncle Charles was quiet, while Aunt Harriet was a shrewish opinionated woman. Their son Joseph was there today with his wife and his twin boys. The twins were only in kindergarten, and usually acted like brats, but Ellen tried to be nice to them because her grandmother had mournfully told her, "They are the only ones to carry on the Dalrymple name." Also present was Ellen's late grandfather's sister, eighty year old Aunt Sylvia. Sylvia's son, Harry Cumming, was present with his wife, Jean, and their two grown sons. Rumor had it that cousin Harry had been quite reckless in his youth, but now he seemed the perfect husband and father. His sons had already graduated from high school, and whenever Jim was around them, he listened to their exploits with girls until he came to idolize them. Then there were Margaret's children: Roy had refused to come, and Ada lived in Louisiana with

her husband and children, but three remained to fill the house. Henry was the oldest, and the most responsible of them all. Then there was Aunt Eleanor, whose husband had divorced her, leaving her with two daughters, Ellen's cousins, Lucy and Maud; Great-Aunt Sylvia had moved in with Aunt Eleanor to help her raise the girls. The youngest of Margaret's children was Bill, who at thirty-two, had still not settled down, having a half-dozen girlfriends each year, perhaps more, but the family usually lost count after five or six. Of course, Bill's latest lady-friend was with him today. Also present were Margaret's neighbors, the Rushmores, and Beth's cousin, Thelma Bergmann, who had been adopted as part of the family since Beth was her only relative in town. Thelma was an eccentric spinster, pushing fifty. She was comfortable from a fortune her father had made in the logging industry, and she could play the piano with expertise, but she also suffered from multiple sclerosis. Years before, she had adopted a young girl, Jessie Hopewell, who now at twenty-four, had blossomed into a beautiful young woman. According to Beth, it was a shame "Jessie didn't marry rather than waste her youth taking care of Thelma," yet Beth was also glad her cousin had someone so devoted to her. Surrounded by all these family members, even though some could at times be annoying, Ellen felt safe and loved.

When Lucy and Maud arrived, they immediately attached themselves to Ellen. Maud and Ellen were the same age and in the same class at school. They were best friends and spent much of their free time together playing with their dolls, reading books, and riding their bicycles around Marquette. Today, the girls started to talk about movies, and then which movie star boys they would like to kiss. Lucy had initiated the subject, but Maud, from being around her older sister, had a few ideas of her own. Ellen was surprised by the conversation; she had never yet thought about kissing a boy.

"We can eat," Margaret called to everyone.

"Don't we have to wait for Roy?" asked Harriet.

"No, he won't be coming."

"Did he get an invite somewhere else?" Harriet asked. "Did some woman invite him to her place?"

"I don't think Roy is interested in any woman," Eleanor said.

"At his age, he should have been married years ago," said Harriet.

"Why? Most marriages aren't happy anyway," said Eleanor. "You don't see me trying to find another husband."

"All men aren't like Ronald," Harriet said.

"There's nothing wrong with marriage," said Margaret, "if you find the right person. Will and I were always happy."

“And I found the right one,” said Beth, taking Henry’s hand.

“Roy just isn’t the marrying kind,” said Henry. “He’s happiest with his nose stuck in a book, and I don’t know any woman who would want to live in that cabin of his.”

“But who wants to spend their life alone?” asked Lucy, who was experiencing her first schoolgirl crush and dreaming of the husband to come.

Ellen was younger than Lucy, perhaps too young to think about love, but she did not think she wanted to marry either; she liked to be left alone to think, to create pictures and make up stories, without anyone intruding on her. She would rather create beautiful art than spend her time picking up after a husband or raising bratty boys like the Dalrymple twins. Creating art to inspire people seemed more important than being a wife and mother.

“Beth,” Thelma asked, “have you heard from Michael since he left?”

“Yes, I just got a letter from him a couple days ago.”

“He wrote one to Roy too,” said Henry.

“To Roy?” said Harriet. “Why? Roy’s not Catholic.”

“Beth’s brother is a monsignor,” Margaret told Bill’s new girlfriend, Priscilla, so she would be properly impressed. “The Pope has called him to Rome.”

Beth smiled; having a monsignor in the family had softened Margaret, even though Henry had married a Catholic girl.

“I imagine,” said Harry Cumming, “that Roy and Monsignor McCarey enjoy each other’s company. They’re both very intellectual.”

“I imagine,” said Margaret, “that it’s time we eat Sylvia’s birthday cake.”

Sylvia’s eightieth birthday was tomorrow; Margaret had baked a cake so Easter dinner would also be a birthday celebration.

Margaret went to fetch the cake she had baked for her favorite sister-in-law – Harriet being her other sister-in-law.

Sylvia had been estranged from the family for so many years during her unhappy marriage that now she greeted all family gatherings enthusiastically. Clapping her hands at the sight of the cake, she thanked Margaret, then blew out her candles in one breath.

“I never thought I would live to see eighty,” she said. “Now if I can just live long enough to see my grandsons married, I’ll die content.”

Ellen wondered how Aunt Sylvia, after such an unhappy marriage, could wish marriage upon her grandchildren? Ellen’s parents were happily married, but they were so boring; in the evenings, they just sat in the living room, listening to the radio and reading the newspaper; when they talked, it was always about Dad’s work or someone her mother had met out shopping. Ellen

did not want to waste time listening to a husband when she had so many ideas for pictures to draw. She thought she would like to draw a picture of a woman like Aunt Sylvia, who only found happiness after being freed from her marriage.

Birthday cake was passed around. Jim gobbled his down, then took off to his friend's house. Sylvia's grandsons kissed their grandmother goodbye, then went to meet their girlfriends. The rest of the men moved into the living room. Priscilla followed the men; she would have preferred to be with the women, but she did not know any of them well enough to leave Bill's protection; the women knew they would probably never see Priscilla again so they made no effort to include her beyond being polite.

Ellen felt sorry for Priscilla, but that was what happened when you went out with a man; you got stuck with his relatives. Ellen had enough relatives of her own; she loved them, but they could be very dull; she did not need a husband's family to contend with as well. Ellen sat and listened to the women gossiping about who was getting married, what was wrong with the neighbor's children, and best of all, stories about the past – Aunt Eleanor recalled what she had worn at her first dance; Aunt Sylvia remembered the dress she wore on her wedding day – Ellen imagined the poor woman had had no idea what she was getting herself into that day – Grandma said that if she had not married, she would have been an opera singer; Cousin Thelma was asked to play the piano, and Grandma sang, although no one requested her performance. The men talked through the music; Ellen thought them ignorant; they expected women to cook and clean, without appreciating that women had other talents.

On the way home, Ellen asked her mother what she would have done had she not married.

"I don't know," said Beth. "I never thought about it. I always wanted to be a wife and mother."

"Didn't you ever work at all?"

"I worked in the diet kitchen at the hospital until I got married."

"Since you worked at the hospital, did you ever want to be a nurse?"

"No, I had only worked there a short time when I met your father, and then the rest of the time I worked there, I was just waiting to be married."

Ellen wondered how her mother could be so dull. Why did people always get married? Didn't they ever think there might be something else to do? Look at Aunt Sylvia and Aunt Eleanor – they would have been better off if they had never married. Cousin Thelma was a spinster, and she was more interesting than either of them; she loved music and taught the piano. And Grandma – she could have been an opera star, but instead, she had been stuck plucking chick-

ens on a farm. Of course, Ellen knew if Grandma had not married Grandpa, or if her mother had not met her father, she would not be here today, but she wanted more than to wait on a man; she wanted to make a difference in the world, and she thought her art would achieve that goal.



Whenever Roy got a letter from Monsignor McCarey, he did not open it until the next morning. His letters came to the Big Bay Post Office, and he would stop to pick them up in the afternoon after working at the Club, but he knew if he read them before bed, he would not be able to sleep. Instead, he would wake up early, make himself a cup of coffee with sugar – one of the few luxuries his stoicism allowed because he had inherited the Whitman sweet tooth – then tremble as he slowly ripped open the envelope.

After the first paragraph or two, he would sip his coffee. He would read each letter three or four times until he had memorized large chunks of it. The letters were not typical ones, full of gossip and boring comments about the weather just to fill the blank page. Michael's letters always said something. Once Michael's words were in his head, Roy would go fishing or chop his firewood or work at the Club, all the while contemplating his friend's message and composing a reply in his head. Then, after the words had consumed him all day, he would come home to write a response.

Michael had begun the correspondence; despite his orthodox beliefs, Michael thought Roy such an interesting man that he shared with him his deepest thoughts; Roy reciprocated by putting down on paper what he could not have said to anyone else. The two men shared a mutual respect for each other as kindred seekers of truth. Their correspondence was private, but a few glimpses of it may be allowed the reader.

Dear Roy,

I had forgotten what a warm country Italy is. The heat of Michigan's Upper Peninsula is rarely over eighty even in summer, but here the country is basked in sunlight, the land seems baked, and the humidity is intense. The Vatican is so full of cement and stone that the heat sores up from it. Sometimes I feel dizzy from the scorching sun. I believe the Lord sent me here – I know you will not believe that, but we can be friends without sharing the same beliefs – still I wish the Lord had sent a younger man. I enjoyed Italy when I first came here to study for the priesthood, but now I feel too old to

be away from my humble U.P. parishes. The young are able to travel about with enthusiasm, but at nearly fifty, a man should not have to leave what is familiar to him. I wrote to Beth and told her I was well, that I felt honored to be here – and that is true, but I am also terribly homesick. What I wouldn't give to hear the unique accents of my fellow Upper Michigan natives over these rich Italian voices. I don't know that too many people other than you would understand . . .



Dear Michael,

I think you misunderstand me when you say you know I do not believe in God. I do not believe in Christianity or for that matter any organized religion. I do not deny some Force or Being created the universe, but I think that if such happened, it is still meaningless, and that your Supreme Being takes no interest in our lives, so no, I do not believe God or whatever force it is intentionally sent you to Italy. As you know, I have read widely about existentialism; its tenets make far more sense to me than those of Christianity, but perhaps agnosticism is what best describes my beliefs. I feel the greatest wisdom we can admit to is that we cannot know. If man is alone in the universe, then he must act in his own interest. If there is a God above watching our deeds, then all the better, but we should try to do what is best for ourselves rather than depend on a god we can't be sure exists. I find it hard to believe that God has led you to Rome or to anywhere. You would not have gone to Rome if it were not for your own natural inclinations to teach there. You may be homesick, but you also know you are sacrificing yourself for something you believe is more valuable than individual happiness. In other words, priests are not without their advantages to humanity, and you are helping to train future priests, and I am sure you will help them be good ones, in which case they will be much needed, and they will do good – as I know you do. They just cannot claim, as they falsely do, to know the truth.



Dear Roy,

You understand me far better than anyone, despite our theological differences. I believe in Jesus Christ and the Father and the Holy Spirit. That said, I do not know that any of it is true. I choose to believe in it out of Faith. . . . You wrote in your last letter of the meaninglessness of life and how the only meaning is what we make of it. You tell me you have found great meaning in your life. I believe

everyone's life is worthy of examination. But please explain to me more what is the meaning you have found. Most people find meaning in a family, but you have apparently chosen not to follow that route. I find meaning by giving of myself to others. But I do not see you active in charity or the consolation of your fellow human beings. I do not wish to cast aspersions upon you, simply to understand you better. I have often thought you lived like a monk, but perhaps you are more like those hermits who lived in the woods alone in ancient times when Christianity was only beginning its hold in Europe. Holy men in those days lived and walked in oneness with God and Nature in a way I do not think our modern world can understand . . . .

Roy had especially enjoyed the images in this last letter. To walk in oneness with God and Nature. Was that not what he had been trying to do all these years? He just did not feel that God, if He existed, wanted to walk with him. What meaning was there in his own life? He pondered the question as he sipped his coffee, but eventually, he looked at his watch and saw it was time for him to leave. He had plenty of work to do at the Club. It was the first of August, the height of the summer season. He would not have much time today to think about what he would write back to Michael. He was looking forward to autumn when he could be alone again with his thoughts.

Hearing from Michael always cheered him, no matter how they might disagree, so Roy whistled with pleasure as he walked to the Club through the beautiful forest. When he came in view of the gate, the keeper hurried out.

"Did you hear the news?"

"What news?" asked Roy, surprised by the man's pale expression.

"About the murder. Mike Chenoweth was shot."

"Shot?" Roy was astonished.

"By one of those hotheaded soldiers at the army encampment."

"Why?" asked Roy, unable to articulate any other word.

"I'm not sure. It's all just rumor at this point, but - " The gatekeeper said more, but Roy was too stunned to hear it. Mike Chenoweth was the proprietor of the Lumberjack Tavern in Big Bay. Roy had known him for years. Mike had always been so friendly that even Roy, who was no great socializer, had willingly spent an occasional evening drinking in the bar and enjoying his company. Mike was known throughout the area for having been in the Marine Corps and as a former Marquette policeman. He was widely respected as one of the best shots in Marquette County. Thanks to Mike's successful proprietorship, the Lumberjack Tavern had become a gathering place for the Big Bay locals. When

the U.S. Army had recently established a firing point near the Big Bay Lighthouse, Mike's personality had caused the soldiers to flock to his tavern. Roy could not fathom why anyone would wish Mike harm, much less want to kill him.

By afternoon, Roy had heard many true details and even more gossip about the murder. The story was repeated a hundred thousand times that day first in Big Bay, then at the Huron Mountain Club, and soon in Marquette, Ishpeming, Negaunee, all Marquette County, and finally, the entire Upper Peninsula. Murders were a rare occurrence in the great North Woods where people felt so safe they did not lock their doors, and they feared assault from a bear more than from a fellow human being. The story stunned everyone; the whispers regarding the murderer's motivation caused a sensation. Soon the story would be told in court, then in the newspapers, and then a bestselling novel and a Hollywood blockbuster film would capitalize upon it. Men would become famous from this murder, but for the moment, the sordid details were hard for anyone to believe.

Wild stories circulated, but the facts were that Mike Chenoweth had been killed by an army lieutenant named Peterson. The lieutenant and his wife lived in the trailer park down the road from the tavern. The night before, the auburn-haired, highly attractive Charlotte Peterson had walked down to the bar with her dog George to pick up a six-pack of beer for her husband. She remained at the bar for most of the evening, playing shuffleboard and having several drinks with Mike.

When she left the bar shortly after midnight, Mike offered to give her a ride home. It was a dark night, and there was always the fear of bears in Big Bay. Charlotte accepted Mike's offer, and she and her dog climbed into Mike's car. He drove her to the trailer park, but when they reached it, the gate was locked. Mike told her he would take her around another road to get her into the trailer park. At this point, he grabbed her arm to keep her from getting out of the car. He then drove her down a lonely road that led nowhere. Mike threw the dog out of the car, then attacked and raped Mrs. Peterson. Then Mike allowed the dog back in the car and drove his victim to the trailer park.

Mrs. Peterson stumbled out of the car, climbed through a hole in the gate, and found her way back to her trailer. She arrived, screaming and crying, and told her husband what had happened. The lieutenant made his wife swear on her rosary that she was telling the truth. Then he lost his mind. He went down to the Lumberjack Tavern and shot Mike Chenoweth dead. Lieutenant Peterson then walked back to the trailer park and turned himself into the caretaker,



who was a U.S. Marshal. He handed over his gun and stated, "I just shot Mike Chenoweth."

Many believed Mike would not rape a woman, but others noted he had always had an eye for the girls, and he was a muscular man, easily capable of overpowering Mrs. Peterson. Many wanted to believe the lieutenant had murdered Mike in a fit of jealousy without an actual rape having taken place, but Roy understood how sinister men can be, and how lust can master a person's mind and soul. Roy knew any man could perpetrate such a crime if not in the right frame of mind; he feared even he might behave in such a manner if his self-restraint gave way.

He pitied Mrs. Peterson because Chloe, the woman Roy loved, had also been raped – by her own husband; at the same time, Roy compared himself to Mike because he had also committed adultery with a married woman. Only, Roy had loved Chloe and wanted to protect her against her abusive husband. Roy wondered whether he deserved to be dead, like Mike Chenoweth, because he had committed adultery, even if Chloe had willingly slept with him. Roy did not know whether Chloe's husband, Lex, ever knew they had slept together, but Lex had caught them together once, and had Lex had a gun then, Roy knew he would now be dead; as it was, Lex had nearly beat Roy senseless, and Roy suspected, Lex had often treated Chloe the same.

Roy had tried to drive Chloe from his mind; so many years had passed since he had become infatuated with her, and although he had written to her a few times in the years since the war, he no longer felt a great passion for her. Now this murder had stirred up in him all kinds of repressed and unresolved emotions. He found he rather admired the lieutenant; he wished he had been man enough to kill Lex. Then with Lex gone, he and Chloe might have been together. Instead he had been a coward; he had let her go away with her abusive husband, then spent years trying to accept that he could not be with her because she had to do her duty by her husband and children. He had spent years telling himself how foolish he had been to love her; he would tell himself he was over her and not think about her for weeks. Then the old feeling would swell up in him again, and he knew he had lied to himself that he had gotten over her, and he felt almost unable to endure their separation.

When he returned to his shack, Roy brewed some tea to settle his nerves; he told himself he was just worked up because of the murder, but before the tea cooled enough to drink, he gave in to despair. Collapsing on the bed, he called out Chloe's name and sobbed, "I love you! I love you!" into his pillow. His arms ached to hold her, to taste her lips, her breasts. He indulged in fantasies until he

almost believed he was possessing her again, only to hurt more because he lied to himself. He felt he was dying inside because he was separated from her. He told himself elaborate stories of how he would find her and make her be with him. He raged at the God he was unsure even existed; how could he believe in God when he could not be with Chloe, and when it had been in God's own house that he had first seen and begun to burn with lust for her?

Only when his throat ached from sobbing and he could no longer tolerate the snot running from his nose, did Roy sit up and search for his handkerchief. Then he went to the kitchen pump, washed his hands, and drank the now cold tea. He was leaning against the sink, trying to calm himself, when his eye caught Michael's letter laying on the table where he had left it that morning.

"Maybe," he thought. "But – No. He's a priest. He couldn't understand, not when he's never – but maybe. I need to talk to someone. I can't go on like this – but it would almost be like going to confession."

He blew his nose again. Then he went outside to relieve himself, wishing he could overcome his lust. He felt violently ill. He thought for a moment he would vomit or faint. He came inside and washed his hands again. Then he made another cup of tea and tried to talk himself out of writing the letter.

But he hurt so much he had to take up his pen.

Dear Michael,

I never told anyone this, but since you are a priest, I know you will keep it in confidence. Many years ago, I fell in love and what happened as a result I have never known whether I should regret, yet I feel the need to confess it. Perhaps confess is not the right word. I just want to tell someone what happened, and then you may tell me, to the best of your ability, whether I were wrong in what I did.



Aunt Ada's summer visits were always special. Ellen loved her other aunts and uncles, but she saw them all the time. Aunt Ada only came to visit one week out of the year. Other adults were always busy, but when Aunt Ada came, she was on vacation so she could spend all her time enjoying her family. Her children, Judy and Brad, accompanied her; they looked forward to seeing their aunts, uncles, and grandmother as much as Ellen looked forward to seeing her favorite aunt. Ellen's Louisiana cousins would end up at Uncle Henry or Aunt Eleanor's house, while Ellen found herself at Grandma's house, spending the day with Aunt Ada, being taught all the wonderful things only Aunt Ada knew. Aunt Ada owned a doll shop; she made her own dolls, and their clothes, and

even furniture and houses for them. Aunt Ada was a marvel in Ellen's eyes. Grandpa Whitman had built Ellen a dollhouse before he died, but Aunt Ada had taught Ellen how to furnish it properly.

Today the two made mattresses out of sponges, sewed little pillows stuffed with cotton balls, and used thread spools to make end tables. Aunt Ada gave the initial lessons, then Ellen impressed her with her own innovative ways of decorating.

"Ellen, what are you going to be when you grow up?" asked Aunt Ada one happy afternoon.

"I don't know," said Ellen. People asked her that question all the time, but she was afraid to answer it truthfully.

"I think," said Aunt Ada, "that you should be an artist. I wish I'd had your talent when I was your age."

Ellen smiled, but "Maybe" was the most courageous reply she could make to acknowledge her dream.

"Ellen, Ada, would you clean off the table now?" asked Ellen's grandmother. "Bill will be here any minute with Fredrica."

Ellen rolled her eyes when Grandma disappeared back into the kitchen.

"How can anyone marry someone named Fredrica?" she asked her aunt.

"What I don't understand," said Aunt Ada, "is why any girl would want to marry your Uncle Bill."

"Let's just be glad," said Grandma, coming back into the room, and having overheard the exchange, "that Bill is finally settling down."

Fredrica was the girl who had finally manipulated Bill into making a commitment. As he came in the door, he was smooching Fredrica's cheek. Signs of affection disgusted Ellen, and she was further annoyed when Fredrica, glancing at Ellen's miniature furniture, said, "There are more educational things a young lady could do during her summer vacation." Ellen wanted to reply, "There are more educational things you could do than marry Uncle Bill," but she felt it would sound stupid, and she could think of nothing better to say. And if Aunt Ada thought she should be an artist, who cared what Fredrica thought?

"Have you set a date yet?" Aunt Ada asked the newly engaged couple.

"Valentine's Day," said Fredrica. "I think that's romantic; don't you?"

"Oh yes, very," said Margaret.

Uncle Bill and Fredrica kissed again. Then Fredrica began to discuss her wedding plans.

Ellen ate the cake Grandma set before her while trying to block Fredrica's voice from her thoughts. She would be an artist; that was more productive than being Uncle Bill's wife.



By September, everyone in Marquette County was speculating over what would happen with the Big Bay Murder Trial. Would Lieutenant Peterson be charged with murder? Would he get a reduced sentence because his wife had been raped? Would the rape be proven? Then, after ten days of trial and the jury's five hour deliberation, on September 25th, Lieutenant Peterson was declared not guilty by reason of insanity, yet he was now sane and no threat to the public. Lieutenant Peterson was a free man.

Ellen knew nothing about the trial; her parents did not want her to hear the sordid details of a rape and murder, so they hid the newspapers, only reading them and discussing the case after the children were in bed.

Ellen would not have cared about the murder trial even if she knew about it. She was more excited about the new student teacher for her art class at school. The teacher constantly encouraged her, and Ellen believed every compliment about her artistic talents. That autumn, Ellen lived for art class. In her spare time, she drew pictures, trying to do her best so she could bring them to school and have Miss Kendall say in front of all the other students, "Well done, Ellen. You draw so well."

One day Ellen came home from school to find Cousin Thelma visiting her mother.

"Mom, I want to show you the picture I drew in school," said Ellen, fishing her drawing out of her schoolbag. Beth glanced at it, said, "It's very good," then passed it to Thelma.

"Very nice, Ellen," said Thelma, impressed by how well the girl drew intricate churches with statues of the Virgin Mary outside them. "Someday, you'll make a fine nun."

Ellen looked startled. Was it not clear from how well she drew that she wanted to be an artist? She was relieved when her mother said, "Oh, I hope not. I don't want to lose my daughter to the church like I did my brother."

"What do you think you'll be then, Ellen?" asked Thelma.

"I think," Beth answered for her daughter, "that someday Ellen will make a good wife and mother like most girls."

Ellen wanted to shout, “I’m not like most girls!” but she only said, “I’ll go put my pictures in my room.”

She had been annoyed by Thelma’s remark, but she was repulsed by her mother’s. She saw little difference between being locked up in a convent and being stuck in the house all day with a bunch of screaming babies.

Just before Christmas, Ellen brought home a painting she had done in school. Miss Kendall had written on the back of it, “Dear Mr. and Mrs. Whitman, Ellen is a very good artist and should be encouraged to pursue her talents.”

Ellen beamed with pride when she showed the picture and the comments to her parents. When Jim looked at the picture, he said, “Your trees look like broccoli.”

Ellen grabbed the picture and stormed into her room. Her mother was too busy fixing supper to worry over her children’s little spats.

Ellen lay on her bed, hurt and angry, until she realized Jimmy had never even tried to draw a tree, so why should she listen to him? She was going to be an artist, and she didn’t care what anyone said. She knew there would always be stupid people in the world who would be jealous of her; she would learn to ignore them. Nothing would stop her, certainly not Jimmy.



Dear Michael,

Thank you for the letter. I knew you would understand the anguish I felt and how hard it was for me to write to you of my love for Chloe. It has been fourteen years now, and most days I am fine, but every few months, the pain boils up all over again, just as it did the day I learned she was moving away, and even though I cannot blame her, and I no longer hate Lex, I still feel an anger toward the world and toward myself for what happened . . . .

. . . . I once knew a boy who tore the wings off a butterfly and kept the poor creature in a jar. I hated him for it, and after a couple days, I managed to steal the jar from him and set his prisoner free. I placed the butterfly on a tree where I thought it would be safe, but it climbed from the trunk onto a branch and then stood there at the end of it, looking out at the world, wanting to fly, but knowing it was as much a captive then as when it had been in the jar. I often feel I am a prisoner like that butterfly, except I am a prisoner of my own making; I cannot escape from myself. Sartre says that “Hell is other people” but I think Milton was closer to the truth when he described Satan as having “Hell within him.”

I feel I am my own Hell. Hell is within me, in my memories and in the longings I cannot overcome. I am haunted by my memories of how others have wronged me, and even more, how I have let those wrongs lead to my wronging myself . . .

Your sincere friend, Roy