

Chapter 1

Farewell, My Lovely Bernardine

Bernadmi was restless and kept glancing at the door.
Paul paid the last check and he and Bernardine were ready to leave the hotel tap-room about eleven o'clock. Paul was glad to leave. The place was like a morgue. There were only a couple of drunken young sailors up at the bar--town boys home on leave--full of loud, swaggering, newly-learned Davey Jones talk; and a disconsolate hoisery salesman in the next booth getting confidential with Martha, the big, roomy, blonde salesgirl from over at Hornstein's. Martha was a smart girl: she somehow managed the neat trick of living at the hotel on the glittering salary of twenty-one dollars a week. Paul knew what she made because he did Hornstein's income tax work. Paul overheard the salesman saying to Martha, "Look, Honey. Everytime I give you a box of these lovely, shear nylons, Dove, I'm that much closer to being out of a goddam job. That's how much I really loves/ you, Honey! Anyway, I'll be in the Army in another month." Martha wasn't a bad sort, Paul remembered. Of course, unless she was well plied with ^{strong} drink and heavy compliments she was apt to be sort of sleepy and lazy and generally uncooperative; but otherwise she really wasn't bad for a one night stand...

Paul wondered what was wrong with Bernardine. She sat stiff and unyielding as he tucked the car robe about her legs. She had been silent and restrained all evening. She had only smiled faintly at his latest Finnish dialect story, the one about Toivo and his girl friend Impi. He had thought it was a honey. "Impi was bawling out Toivo for his attentions to her rival, Aili," Paul gleefully explained. "Here's what she said: 'Vy is it, Toivo, you all time take Aili to da 'rug store for Cokey-Colas an' me on'y to da 'ravel pit?'" ^{Drug store and gravel} Gravel pit, indeed! But Bernardine had merely ^{MM}shugged politely and added another broken wooden mixing stick to the growing pile. Yes, she was nervous, all right. Her thin face, framed by her highswept

dark hair, looked white and drawn. Being white and drawn only made her dark eyes seem larger and more luminous. Paul ruefully wondered whether it was the wrong time of the month. She had that Look-of-the-Month-Club shadow. Let's see, he hadn't seen her for nearly two weeks. "But, no, it can't be," he remembered. *Bernardine was a regular gal...*

They drove in Paul's roadster, following the familiar route they had taken so often when Paul used to call for Bernardine when she was done with her night-nursing duty at the Iron Cliffs Ore Company's hospital. That was before her mother had died, while Paul was still in law school; before she had quit ~~regular~~ nursing to keep house for her father, Bernard Tobin, the round-house foreman, and her four ^{younger} brothers.

Paul and Bernardine drove silently past the towering, pyramid-shaped shaft houses of the Delaware Mine, lit since the War by tall sweeping searchlights. "I wonder how many Jap and German spies they expect to catch 'way up here by cold Lake Superior?" Paul said. They he recalled that he had said the same thing the last time they had been together--the night when it really had been the wrong time of the month...

The little roadster bounced along past the ore-stained dry house, its ugly brick sides exposed now by the naked and serpentine vine-stalks. This was the place where the miners changed and showered. Paul sounded his horn in greeting ^{to} two young miners. He waved at them. "The tall one's Eino Millimaki, the ski jumper," Paul said. "We played basketball together in high school. Remember?" Bernardine remained silent. The car skirted Chippewa Lake, its glistening shield of new autumn ice reflecting the lights from the rows of "company" houses across the lake.

"Are you warm enough, Bernie?" Paul asked with elaborate concern. He always got thoughtful and paternal as hell at about this stage.

He manipulated the car heater and a sudden draft of cold air smote his legs. "Damn!" he said, turning the heater off. "Thermostat's still haywire.

you simply
^ Can't get a thing fixed or replaced since this goddam war."

Bernardine spoke for the first time since they had left the hotel. Paul was relieved to hear the same old chuckling, dry Irish humor in her voice. "Be brave, Paul," she said. "Carry on. A struggling young mining-company lawyer must remember those stirring words: 'I am sorry that I have but one draft deferment given me by my company!'"

Paul was still laughing over that one as he unlocked the Company's gate-- the Company had gates everywhere in the town of Chippewa--and drove the jolting

roadster up the narrow, steep, winding rocky road to the top ^{of} Chippewa Bluff.

The children of the mining company officials had picnics up there in the summer...
^ As the car labored over the rocky crest of the bluff they could see the full

moon emerging from behind a jagged dark cliff of cloud; and then they saw the moon's gleaming trail on the frozen lake below them; and then there was the

valley of the
^ town of Chippewa beyond; the dull face of the town clock and the myriad ^{small} blinking lights. On the hilly outskirts of the town they saw the ^{sweeping} searchlights

from the mines lighting up the shaft-houses. The scene had a frosty, suspended,

It reminded Paul of the fairy tales he used to read when he was a kid.
^ stereopticon sort of stillness and clarity. They sat there silently watching,

and then they heard the far away rumbling sound of newly-mined iron ore falling into the tram cars--"Bundles for Berlin," Paul thought--and they heard, too, the insistent jungle throbbing of the giant air-compressors that caught and forced great gobs of fresh air down to the toiling miners who were even then burrowing so far beneath them.

* * *

The town clock was striking twelve as Paul lit his third cigarette.

This silence was getting him down. He didn't want to be brusque, but perhaps it would be easier to say his piece and get it over with. "Paul Biegler's

farewell address," Paul thought. And anyway, he had a contested hearing in a workmen's compensation case the next morning down at Iron Bay, the county seat. He'd have to get a little sleep. It was an important case, one involving a claim of total disability. His boss, Walter Holbrook, certainly wouldn't want him to muff it. ^{And} The mining company's home office lawyers, [^] 'way out in Delaware, had been raising genteel hell lately. Those Harvard law school boys ^{out in Wilmington} had a sort of refined and dreary aptitude for freezing one with a phrase. ^{They loved to open a letter thus:} Maybe it was the salt air. [^] "Although it cannot have escaped your attention, may we again remind our local attorneys..." No, it wouldn't pay to lose tomorrow's case. Paul crushed out his fresh cigarette and turned to Bernardine.

She sat with her hands folded in her lap, her head resting against the rear cushion, looking up at the moon. "Shistler's bewitched and lovely daughter," Paul thought. She sat so still that ^{at first Paul thought} she looked as though she might be sleeping. Then ~~Paul~~ ^{he} saw that her eyes were open, wide and unblinking. There were tears slowly coursing down her white cheeks. Just like in the movies.. "O Lord!" ^{Paul} ~~he~~ [^] thought. "If only she weren't go goddam beautiful."

"Bernardine," Paul doggedly began. This was it. "Bernardine, there's something I've got to tell you. It's about us--about the way things have been drifting between us."

Bernardine turned slowly and looked at Paul, her head still reclining on the rear cushion. She had a dreamy, faraway look. Paul fumbled to light another cigarette. Paul ~~wondered~~ wondered if she knew, if she really suspected, that this was to be the end. The end? Ah, yes--this was to be the end. Fini. He also wondered why people in the clinches always thought and spoke in soap opera cliches. He'd try again. The business-like, leave-us-face-it approach was the thing. Off with the cliches...

"Look, Bernardine," He began again. "Let's be sensible about this thing. Now about us--about our getting married--"

Bernardine was laughing at him! With tears running down her cheeks, she was laughing at him. It wasn't a particularly rollicking or mirthful laugh: just ^a quietly chuckling laugh, as though she were enjoying some sort of private joke.

"Bernardine," he began again, lamely.

Quickly she placed two chilly fingers over his lips; fleetingly, as a mother might ^{do to} silence a naughty, talkative child. Then she began to speak, in a low voice, quietly, almost musingly. She was again looking up at the moon.

"I suppose I should really hear it from your own lips, Paul," she said. "But I'll save you all the floundering and the embarrassment." She turned toward him briefly. "I guess I'm doing that because I'm so proud of you ~~and~~ ^{And too, I just} can't bear to watch you suffer. I guess it's because I'm so fond of you. Yes, I think that's it."

She paused and went on, still staring pensively at the moon. "Ever since you got out of law school, I've felt that things were over between us. That's what you're trying to tell me, isn't it, Paul dear? Yes, even when you first started out three years ago, in that little office above your dad's old saloon, I sensed that things had somehow changed between us."

Paul had a strange sense of shock, a wry feeling of dismay. It was all true, what she was saying, but he had been going to say it, and now she was saying it, she was stealing his thunder. Somehow it gave him a curiously defensive feeling; one of loneliness and guilt.

"When Walter Holbrook took you into the Company's law office I was proud of you, as you know. As you told me then, never before had a Chippewa boy

admitted ^{legal} the rarified atmosphere of
been taken into that office. The Company's lawyers had always come from the East. They were all Harvard men. Yes, it was your grand opportunity... But somehow, after that, the feeling that we were losing each other grew much stronger. Then, with Walter sponsoring you, the mining crowd took you up; you were taken into the country club and the Chippewa Club; you went to their house parties and camping parties. You even began to play bridge, and I knew how you despised the game. ^{Bernardine passed.} "You still despise it, don't you?" Paul grunted and Bernardine laughed ^{her low, chuckling laugh.} "I guess the thing that really made me realize the extent of the change between us was when you gave up our trout fishing trips. I knew how you loved to fish... You remember the little ~~three-rod~~ fly rod you gave me? I still have it. You bought it with the money you made on your first case... Defending a drunk driver, wasn't it?" Paul glumly nodded.

"Please light me a cigarette, Paul," Bernardine said. Paul lit two cigarettes at one time. He had ^{once} recently seen Paul Henried do the same thing for Bette Davis. "Thank you," Bernardine said. She rarely smoked and she didn't do it very well. Paul saw that her eyes were dry now. She was even half smiling. She went on, speaking slowly.

"Then, just a year ago--it was just before Thanksgiving, remember?--Maida Holbrook arrived from the East on a short visit to her father." Paul felt himself flushing, and he didn't want to flush. Why was she bringing Maida ^{into} ~~in~~ on this? And what the hell, even if he and Bernardine had known each other since they were kids, they weren't engaged, this was a free country.

"Listen," Paul cut in hotly. "Maida Holbrook's got nothing to do with anything between us. Hell, Bernardine, you just said yourself you sensed a change long before Maida ever showed up. Not that there was any change," Paul hastily added. "Not on my part, at least, It--it's just..."

"Now don't flounder, Paul," Bernardine said. "It's really not becoming."

"Look Bernardine, it's just that I feel it isn't right for me to be taking up all your time. You're too swell a girl to be wasting your time on me." That was always good. "Maybe I'm not the marrying sort. Anyway, Bern, it'll be a hell of a long time before I could marry anyone. Don't you see-- the truth is I'm still just a ^{miserable} law clerk down in Walter Holbrook's office. And my mother's all alone now since the old man died. It wouldn't be right for me to leave her now. ^{You know she's not well...} Maida's got nothing to do with it. Where'd you ever get such a silly notion? ^{Paul was on the offensive now.} "Woman's trained intuition, no doubt."

"Maida Holbrook is still here," Bernardine said simply. "She tells her friends she's going to marry you. Some of them have delighted in passing the word along to me." She turned to Paul, smiling. "So I guess that's what she's going to do. You see, Paul, girls like Maida usually get what they want in this world. It's a funny thing!.. Girls like Maida never have to sit and wait and dream. They're sure of themselves. They're always so right and so sure. Nothing ever happens to make them unsure. They are never afraid of competition because they ignore it. ^{They devote their lives to looking their best for men...} They never smell of cholofom or starched nurses uniforms. They're never weary from all night ^{They're never sickened} ^{nursing} duty, ~~and~~ from looking at pain and watching tired old people yawn and die. They've never had to keep house for a hard-drinking father and four wild brothers. They've never tried to look nonchalant while carrying a bed-pan--"

"Bernardine!" Paul said. "That's not fair. That's got nothing to do with it. Of all the--You're as fine as any goddam girl in the whole--"

"Paul, please let me finish," Bernardine said. "I am so sure of this, now, that I've decided to go away. I'm going to leave Chippewa. Exit Bernardine. Easy, like that. I thought you'd like to know."

Why ~~must~~ ^{should} a man ^{always} be ^{speculating} ^{their} ^{or they wouldn't play?}

"Leave Chippewa?" Paul echoed. Why, oh why, did women always have to bring everything to a crisis? Their appetite for heavy melodrama was insatiable. *The soap opera was here to stay...*

"Yes, Paul. I'm leaving home. I've joined the WAGs and I'm leaving tomorrow. I--I was supposed to have left tonight--but I wired them for more time today--after you 'phoned me this morning for a date. You see, I did so want to see you ~~once more~~ before I left."

Paul could hear the giant gasps of the air compressors from the mines. "Bundles for Berlin, Bundles for Berlin!" *they seemed to say.* "Bernardine," ^{Paul} he said. "Bernardine," he dully repeated.

Bernardine spoke softly. "So good luck, Paul. Always, good luck. And goodbye."

"Goodbye?" Paul said. He felt miserable. Wretchedly he turned toward her. Bernardine quickly put her arms about Paul. She ~~embraced~~ ^{hugged} him until she was hurting him. God, what a ^{slender} tigress. Then she was tenderly patting his hair, comforting him. Why did she always pat his head like that, as though he were a goddam child? Didn't she know a man couldn't be a competent male when he was patted into purring adolescence? She was whispering to him. "So goodbye, Paul dear... Let's say goodbye in the only way that lovers can, dear... Even former lovers... I can be brazen now, can't I?... It's our last night... Let's say goodbye in our old way on our lovely old bluff... Never take her here, Paul... Promise me that, please... Oh, Paul dear..."

The moon had nearly set when Paul ^{entered the back door of the old frame house on Magnetic Street and} creaked up the darkened back ~~stairs~~ ^{stairway} to his bedroom. He hoped that his mother wouldn't hear him. She knew he had to get up early on that goddam compensation case. She'd only fret and fume and try to talk without her teeth... ^{Yes,} tomorrow he must try a case. What

a bleak prospect that was... Christ, Bernardine was going away! "She's going away. She's going away. I've lost her. She's going away." Paul brushed his teeth so savagely that he drew blood. Fumbling in the dark for the mouth wash, he brushed the bottle ^{from} of the glass shelf. It fell with the ^{crash} ~~knell~~ of a temple gong. Cursing silently, ~~and~~ Paul stood waiting for the inevitable reaction.

"Is that you, Paul?" a woman's muffled voice called anxiously from the front bedroom. It was Belle, his mother, of course, and indeed, her dentures were elsewhere. "Are you all right?"

"Yes, Mother," Paul replied in a sprightly voice, almost gaily. He sounded like one of ^{those} ~~those~~ bright, ^{monstrous children} ~~naughty kids~~ on the ^{radio} ~~radio~~ ^{family} ~~programs~~. "It's just me." Who in hell else did she think it ^{might} ~~would~~ be? The ghost of his old man, Oliver Biegler? Heaven forbid.

"Are you sure you're all right, dear?" Belle called back. Why did she keep trying to talk?

"Yes, Mother," Paul replied, fumbling desperately for the lostt bottle. "A mere bagatelle. I just dropped my false teeth, was all. The new ^{porc} ~~proclaim~~ job. Really nothing at all, dear." Pause. "Good night."

Paul could hear his mother's trilling ^{peals} of laughter as he glumly fell into bed without putting on his pajamas. "Yes, Sir," Paul bitterly thought. "Always the card, always the wag. I'm like the little guy who made all the whores holler: ~~He~~ didn't pay. Yes, sir, there's never a dry seat in the house when Polly Biegler's around... Christ! I've lost her. What's happening to me? Damn it, that's what you wanted, isn't it? What's happening to you, Polly boy?... What was it she said when I drove her home? She was standing in the open door looking so Christly beautiful. I could hear her old man snoring

from upstairs. Good old Barney Tobin; so full of peace and so full of whiskey...
I was going to kiss her just once more. She held up her hand. How had the
little imp said it? Oh, yes, and in such ^a quick Irish brogue, too. 'Shure,
an' why is it, Pawl, me bye, yer always after takin' that swell Maida Holbrook
out to dance at the country club--an' the poor likes of ~~me~~ ^{me} out to lay
on the bluff!"

Then: "Goodnight, Paul dear," ^{she had touched his cheek with her cold hand and then} ~~and~~ she was gone. Barney Tobin's snores
were blotted out...

Paul buried his head in the pillow.

"Goodnight, Bernardine darling," ^{he whispered.} "Oh, goodnight, my love..."

Chapter 2

Paul scanned the headlines and drank his orange juice and coffee as he sat crouched in Belle's new ivory-colored breakfast nook. She had adorned it with extravagantly gay and colorful transfers which she had found advertized in one of the many ladies' magazines to which she subscribed. ^{For years} Belle had always wanted a breakfast nook, but Oliver Biegler, Paul's father, would never hear of it while he was living.

"You might as well hogtie a man in a bloody outhouse an' feed him with a tin spoon," Oliver used to declaim. "Even the goddam saloons is goin' crazy these days--installin' these two-by-four squirrel booths! When I sit at a table I want room to range around in. Breakfast nook hell!" So, until Oliver's death, there had been no breakfast nook in the Biegler home.

Paul idly watched Belle busily hovering and peering over the new electric range he had bought her a few months after Oliver's death. Oliver had stubbornly clung to the old wood-burning kitchen range to the bitter end. His resistance to modern sales pressure had been enormous... Paul had gotten the new stove wholesale through the Company, just after Pearl Harbor, acting on a tip from Walter Holbrook. A good tip it was, too. You couldn't beg, borrow or steal an electric range now.

"I see by the morning's paper that the draft boards are getting harder on these deferments." Belle said. "It's right there on the front page, next to that article about that awful old man who married the thirteen-year-old girl. My, my. What's the world coming to? She should be home playing with her dollies." Paul idly scanned the article as Belle ran on about the horrors of child marriages.

Belle's biggest concern these days was that "they" would come and take her baby away, that Paul would have to go to War, that she might lose him as she had lost her boy, Lincoln, Paul's oldest brother, following the first World War. Paul could ^{lately} read the fear of Death in Belle's eyes. ^{His death...} Paul remembered the morning that brother Link had died. Paul hadn't thought of it in a long time. But there it was, ^{at the back of his mind, just as it happened on that dreary} ~~just like on that~~ November morning years ago...

Belle hurried over to the table in her floppy slippers and squeezed her short, plump body into the seat opposite Paul. ^{Paul wondered why} ~~Why~~ did she insist on wearing those flapping slippers? ^{since Olive's death.} Despite her easy life ^{these} days, Belle always got up early, and nothing Paul could say or do would make her abandon the floppy sheepskin slippers she wore in the mornings. Belle's slippers made quite a combination with the expensive flowered quilted robe he had given her ^{The} ~~last~~ Christmas. ^{before} She had always worn sheepskin slippers when all the boys were home, before the furnace was installed, when the kitchen floor was icy cold when she came down in the winter mornings to start the kitchen range. So what was wrong with them now?

"Where were you last night?" Belle said. Paul inwardly winced as Belle's gray eyes peered at him through ^{her glasses,} the blurred pinch glasses that always needed cleaning. "It must have been awfully late when you got in. It felt late."

"With Bernardine Tobin," Paul casually answered. Belle's eyes lit up. She always seemed glad when Paul went out with Bernardine. "Such a splendid, capable young woman," she always said. "She'd make any man a wonderful wife. And a trained nurse, too..."

"Good," Belle said, not failing Bernardine. "She's such a grand girl—such a—wifely young woman."

"She's going away," Paul said. ^{Yes,} He might as well tell her. She'd find out anyway. "She's joined the WACs. She's leaving today."

Belle removed her glasses and held them pinched to one finger. "My, my, Paul," she said, shaking her head regretfully. "Now that's too bad. Did you?—did you have an under-standing? I mean last night? I mean—"

"Look, Mom, the toast is burning. I've got to get going to court."
Belle hurried to the smoking toast. "We had an understanding, all right.
Everything's all off."

"My, my," Belle repeated, ^{shaking her head, vigorously} scraping the toast. "Such a fine wifely
girl too... This awful war." Paul gulped his coffee and then ~~glumly~~ read
about the honeymoon of the man who had married the 13-year-old girl. ^{He glumly wondered}
^{why ~~and~~ just for once, some 13-year old boy didn't marry some}
^{be whiskered old haridan.} SPACE ↓ SPACE

Paul thought of Bernardine all that morning. The dreary compensation
^{hearings}
~~cases~~ dragged interminably. There was one endless case which had gone
over from the day before, made static by the shrill petifogging and endless
posturing of the opposing lawyers. They were a couple of professional comp
case lawyers, and Paul yearned to pull the cord on an ambulance gong just
to see them run... It was almost noon before Paul's case was called. He
and Gundry scarcely had time to arrange their pleadings and outline the
usual admissions and denials when the Deputy Commissioner declared a noon
recess.

Gundry was the claimant's attorney, a stocky, pleasant young ~~down~~
downstate lawyer, a bachelor, who had come to Iron Cliffs County during
the depression on the legal staff of one of the New Deal agencies. Gundry
had liked the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and had remained, settling in
Chippewa. Lately he had been doing considerable legal work for the local
C.I.O. Steelworkers' Union. Paul met him frequently in court on comp
cases and again over the conference table, hashing over the various grie-
vances of the miners and haggling over the interpretations of various clauses
of the union's contract with the Iron Cliffs Ore Company, Walter Holbrook's
main client.

Paul regarded Pete Gundry as a smart and able lawyer. In fact he was inclined to like him, despite the dark warnings of his boss, Walter Holbrook. "Paul, all these goddam shyster labor lawyers are alike. All of them, mind you. They'll smile you to death when things are going their way, but when the squeeze is on, once the chips are down"—Walter scowled with dark foreboding—"then watch out!" Despite his Harvard education, Walter was a great one for using colorful, man-to-man phrases like that. He prided himself on possessing the common touch... The picture of someone selling someone else "down the river" was also one of his favorites. "Those labor bastards'll sell you down the river, Paul, quicker'n you can say John L. Lewis! Mark my word."

"The hearing in the case of Bruno Belpedio versus Iron Cliffs Ore Company is adjourned until 1:30," the Deputy Commissioner glumly announced, wearily reaching for a cigarette.

Peter Gundry walked over to Paul's table. "How about our having lunch together, Biegler?" he said to Paul, holding out his hand. "Perhaps we can work out a settlement and save everyone a ^{wasted} ~~dreary~~ afternoon. I've got your company over a barrel, you know, so why not relax and enjoy it? What do you say, Paul?"

Paul stood listlessly shaking Gundry's hand and wanting to telephone Bernardine. He'd have to stop her somehow. What in hell had he been dreaming of to let her go for Maida Holbrook? Why, Christ, man, he couldn't keep Maida in nylons and cigarettes—even if she'd have him. Maida, Maida, that lovely, slow, honey-colored blonde bitch. What was she doing to him? He must have been bewitched. And he had a date with Maida that night.

"I say, Biegler, can you eat with me?" Gundry was repeating.

Paul fumbled for an excuse. He had to make some 'phone calls and check some comp decisions in the library. "Sorry, Pete. It'll have to be some other time. Thanks a lot."

"O. K., Paul," Gundry said, smiling his white, strong-toothed smile. "Now don't say I didn't warn you."

Paul drove rapidly over to the Iron Bay Club and hurried to the telephone booth. "Members will please use pay 'phone for out-of-town calls," the little sign warned.

"Chippewa 664," Paul told the operator. "Hurry, please, operator. It's urgent." He dully wondered why he'd sat on his prat in court all morning, ~~xxx~~ being bored to death, and now found it so goddam urgent to call Bernardine.

"Fifteen cents please," the operator was saying. "Please confine your call to three minutes. Thank you, Sir."

"Hello! Is this Tobins'?" Paul eagerly asked. "Is Bernardine there? Oh, hello, Justin, this is Polly Biegler. Is Bernie there?... Gone! Oh yes, on the Chicago train this morning!... Oh Lord... No, it's nothing, Justin. Nothing at all... Just wanted--just wanted--say goodbye... Yes, sure... Goodbye, Justin."

Paul walked slowly downstairs to the club bar. "Hello, Polly," someone said. It was Scheffler, the banker, turned furtively from his favorite quarter slot machine. He didn't want any of the bank's directors to discover him. Reassured that it was ^{merely} Paul, he was back pulling the lever, closing his eyes tightly and putting his plump hands over the whirling cherries and assorted

fruit symbols for a nice big surprise which, it shortly developed, was not there. Paul dully wondered why so many small-town bankers loved to play slot machines; and again, why so many of them managed to look like a sort of composite photograph of the ideal embezzler. "Hi, Mr. Scheffler, Paul said, brightly, but Mr. Scheffler was back again with his eyes shut, anticipating ^{still} another surprise.

Pinky was at the bar. "Hello, Mr. Biegler," Pinky said. Pinky was always so humorous and pleasant: a good boy. "We got some of your favorite ale today. It's getting awful hard to get."

"Thanks, Pinky. Not today. I'll take a double scotch."

"What'll it be? Black and White? Haig on a Hag? Vat 69? There's the drink. The salesman said after three drinks you can leap clear into Vat 73, no hands! Ah, that's it." Yes Pinky was a wag, all right.

Mr. Scheffler wanted twenty more quarters. He was in a dignified hurry. From the perspiring reddish glow of his bald spot Paul estimated that he must have lost about ~~fifteen~~ ^{twelve - no fifteen - -} dollars that noon. "Someone must have been tinkering with the machine," Mr. Scheffler petulantly remarked. Pinky assured Mr. Scheffler that the machine had not been violated. "It's simply the nature of the beast," Pinky added, winking at Paul.

"Make up another doubler, Pinky," Paul said, smiling. ^{He dropped his voice.} "How much is old Scheffler down this noon?"

"That's his fourth fiver, Mr. Biegler, But he's a sticker. Like he always tells me: Sick-to-it-tiveness always gets you there." Pinky shrugged. "So I've been a bartender for thirteen years... Thank you, Sir."

Paul finished his drink. He found a copy of the New Yorker and went into the dining room to have lunch. They had oyster stew that noon. Paul sat by him-

~~self~~ and ordered a large bowl. Oyster stew was one of his favorite dishes. Paul felt better than he had all morning... If only he didn't have the trial of that stupid case that afternoon. If only Bernardine hadn't acted so hastily and gone and joined those goddam WACs... Imagine hiding all that dark beauty in a drab and ill-fitting olive uniform...

Chapter 3

When Paul got back to Chippewa that evening, shortly before six, he went directly to his office to leave off his brief case and read his mail. He parked his car in the city square and walked across the deserted square to the office. He climbed the clattering wooden stairs and unlocked his office door from the outside hallway. Paul unconsciously straightened as he read the gold-leaf sign on his frosted glass door: "Mr. Paul Biegler." He glanced down the corridor and was relieved to see that Walter Holbrook's office was darkened. Thank goodness he wouldn't have to break the bad news now...

Paul hurriedly looked through his mail for a letter from Bernardine. Of ~~course~~ course there was none--she had just left that morning. Paul laughed and lit a cigarette. What a business! Here he'd virtually ignored the poor girl for the past year, giving Maida Holbrook the grand rush, and then the first day Bernardine left town he was feverishly searching the mail for word from her. "I crave but for some sign from thee," Paul recalled that some lovelorn poet had said. This Romance stuff was really very curious, indeed...

Paul found a letter from a former room-mate at Ann Arbor: Sleepy Moore. Sleepy was one of those big, kindly, dreamy, handsome, fellows--the waitress's dream of how a college boy should really look--who should have been a channel swimmer or gentleman farmer or something, but who had managed to graduate from law school by some minor miracle. Since graduation Sleepy had been quietly starving in a small lower Michigan farming community. Sleepy had gone to the War, of course. Enlisted, and loved it, too. Then there was a note to call Mr. Williams, the Company's assistant paymaster, at the first opportunity. "Urgent," it said. Probably another goddam garnishment suit against a miner. Mr. Williams had only been handling these cases for twenty-seven years. He was one of the Company's timid and obscure corporate ^{moles,} ~~sales,~~ the kind who somehow always looked naked and Mr. Williams actually did wear an eyeshade, Paul recalled. faintly immoral when caught without their glasses and eyeshades. Paul wondered

who Mr. Williams consulted when he felt impelled to visit the bathroom... Paul opened another letter: an engraved announcement from a Grand Rapids law firm. The firm's partners consisted of a long series of muscular and guttural Dutch names. Yes, announcing that another classmate of Paul's was in the Navy; Lieutenant, Junior Grade. Paul thought that by this time half of his law school graduating class must be in the service.

No space.

^{He} ^{Paul} opened another letter: a dark and subtly-worded warning from some law book company pointing out the depth of the ignorance any poor lawyer would ~~wallow~~ in if he did not immediately fill in the enclosed order blank for their latest definitive work on the law of Marriage and Divorce. Paul crushed the ad and distastefully flung it in his wastebasket. Then ~~there~~ there were some bills which he threw unopened into his bill drawer... Ah, there on the bottom was a note from Maida. Unstamped, too; She must have delivered it at the office that day. Paul hastily tore open the envelope. Yes, that was Maida's perfume; her disturbing aroma ~~even~~ ^{even} permeated her writing paper. Paul closed his eyes. It made a man sort of dizzy. God, when would he ever capture that luscious prize?

"Paul dear,

I'm dreadfully sorry, but I really can't see you tonight. You see, I promised Mark Roberts I'd give him a date before he left for the service. Then Mark 'phoned me today out of a clear sky and said he's leaving tomorrow. Just like that! He'd just got his commission and word of some important technical assignment. It all sounded so secret! Mark's simply thrilled about it all, but he refused to discuss it over the 'phone. ("There we go again," Paul thought. "Every bastard and his little brother with a rating above a buck private is diving into this glorious War bound on some dark and oh so *romantic* secret mission...)

"I didn't dream Mark would be leaving so soon. He told me Mr. Blair simply begged him to stay, the company needs him so badly. (Waldo Blair was the austere manager of all of the Iron Cliffs Ore Company's properties in Michigan, // Paul would have liked to have been present to witness Waldo Blair begging any man for anything.)

"Isn't it perfectly dreadful the way all the young crowd is breaking up? If they ever take you ^{away!} Paul dear, I'll just die, I know I shall!" ("Now there's a discerning girl," Paul thought.)

"I'm sure you won't really mind, dear. About tonight, I mean. It's the least we mere females can do for you poor boys who must go into this horrible war. By the way, even some of us girls seem to be doing our part. A little bird just told me that an old flame of yours left today for the WACs. Bear up, Paul. Ces't le guerre!

"I'll 'phone you tomorrow, dear.

Love,
Maida."

Paul felt a quick pang of jealousy. And why had the little mixx made that nasty crack about Bernardine? He restrained a hot impulse to 'phone Maida and demand that she break her date with Mark. Then he felt ashamed of himself for thinking of it. Only a heel would do that. And besides, knowing Maida as he did, Paul wasn't too sure she'd change her mind. She had a hell of a stubborn streak in her. What a wilful, headstrong girl--like a blooded racing filly. He'd have to break her like--well, like his dad, Oláver Biegler, used to break his colts...

~~Mark Roberts!~~ Mark Roberts was a young geologist for the Company. For some vague reason Paul didn't like Mark very much. Perhaps it was his tall, dark, good looks--he was even taller than Paul--of which Mark seemed all too abundantly aware. Or maybe it was his elaborate Eastern accent which nettled Paul so unaccountably. Or perhaps it was the fact that Mark was Paul's closest rival for Maida's favor. But hell, he could afford to be magnanimous--Mark had lately fallen rather badly behind in the race for

Maida. And, after all, he'd have Maida all to himself now, with Mark going off on his secret mission to win the goddam war single-handed...

Ah, but just suppose that the draft board caught up with Mister Paul Biegler? Hadn't Belle's newspaper article--the one she had showed him that morning[^] said that the selective service people were getting plenty tough on draft deferments? Why bother with all the worrying and wonder? Anyway, all the fellows his own age were digging out. It was even getting hard to pick up a handball team over at the Club. Christ, wouldn't it be easier to just up and enlist and have it over with? It'd be tough on Belle, of course, but wasn't it tough on lots of other mothers? Hadn't word arrived just last week that Kenneth Mitchell had got his on one of those lousy Jap infested islands? Poor Kenny not only had a mother but a wife and a kid, too. Hell, if Belle raised too much fuss he ought to be able to get a nice commission, with his connections, and sweat it out amidst the ^{grim} war clouds hanging over Great Lakes or some such place? He still had some good Chicago telephone numbers... Yes, the Navy was the place. And hadn't Paul, with his tall, slender figure and blue-gray eyes, always looked rather nice in blue? Yes, the Navy certainly had the plushiest uniforms. The Navy it was...

Paul suddenly reached for the 'phone and asked for his mother's number. He might as well tell her now... He could hear the number ^{buzzing} and he could visualize Belle running to the 'phone. She always ran to the telephone, like ^{an eager and little} a little plump girl. She'd have forsaken those floppy sheepskin slippers, this late in the day. Wasn't it remarkable how active she was for a woman of her years, and being the mother of ~~of~~ five sons, too? And it ~~was~~ ^{had} certainly been no bed of roses for her, considering her tumultous life with Oliver Biegler. There was a wild and wilful German, if ever one breathed... And poor Belle, giving all those piano lessons ^{for} so long to help keep Paul in law school. She'd probably take it hard at first, his going to war, but then she'd get-- --

"Biegler's residence," Paul heard Belle saying. She always said that when she answered the 'phone. ~~She was a great stickler for the proprieties.~~ Paul swallowed and then spoke rapidly.

"Look, Mom, this is Paul. I've been thinking ^{about} ~~over~~ that article you showed me today and--No, no, I don't mean about the ^{old} man that married the little girl, I mean about--No, I'm not calling about the compensation case--I lost the damn thing. One of our witnesses went back on us. The old double cross... What? You've been in bed all day? Got another attack right after I left? Oh Lord... Look, I'll come right home... I'm glad Mrs. McGinty is there with you. Doctor Dishno just left? Well, I'm glad the pain's gone away. That's fine...Yes, I'll eat downtown. Now you get right back to bed and be sure to take your pills. I'm glad Mrs. McGinty ^{should've} can stay. You ~~shouldn't~~ let her answer the 'phone. Now don't worry about me, Mom... Everything's perfectly O. K... It's you that counts... I love you, too... Goodnight, Mom."

Paul slowly returned the receiver to the 'phone. Then he packed and lit his pipe. He sat for a moment staring across the room at his framed turned off the florescent desk light and diploma. Then he pulled his swivel chair over by the darkened window. He put his feet upon the low steam radiator and sat looking down across the city square. He blew the smoke at the window and watched the heat from the radiator slowly waft the smoke up past the gold letters of the ^{window} sign:

"LAW OFFICES

WALTER HOLBROOK"

Just last month Paul's name had been added, in smaller letters, down on the left of Walter's name. Walter had really been pretty ~~grand~~ grand to him, Paul reflected. Wouldn't it be ungrateful of Paul to just up and leave him? Young lawyers to run errands and the like were hard to get,

now, with the war on. Of course, if he were drafted that would be a different story. And then there was always Belle. Paul was sure now that it would just about finish Belle if he went to War. Her heart just wouldn't stand it... And finally there was Maida Holbrook. Maida Holbrook was definitely unfinished business, a mission unaccomplished, as the war correspondents might say. But he'd get her yet, by God--even if he had to marry her to do it...

Paul looked across the town square at the upstairs lights of the Chippewa Club. A couple of good slugs of whiskey wouldn't go bad, he thought. Paul ^{smiled when he} saw that Cecil Phelps was ~~just~~ coming out the front door of the club, walking as uncertainly as usual. You could set your watch by Cecil leaving the Club at this hour. He whiled away the afternoon there, drinking choice whiskey and ^{then} emerged each evening for his nightly prowling of the town's taverns. Paul watched Cecil lurch in his oddly dignified way across the town square and enter Louie's Bar. He would get on a leather bar stool, near a juke box station, order a dollar's worth of nickels, and then sit there drinking until the nickels were gone. Then he'd move on to the next ^{and the next} place until someone ^{eventually} called a cab for him.

Paul concluded that Cecil must be about his age--just over thirty. Paul had heard at the Club that Cecil had been rejected by every branch of the armed forces. That was Cecil's sorrow this year: "They didn't want wealthy rumpots in this man's war... Before that ^{"they" had unfeelingly} it was being tossed ^{him} out of nearly half of the larger Eastern colleges. Paul thought of the things he might do if he had Cecil's dough. ^{Yes, even -> just half of his dough.} The tables might well have ^{some of}

been turned, too. If Paul's German grandfather hadn't wasted his time
pissing around with a one-horse brewery and a miners' saloon, and had
instead bought some mineral lands, like Cecil's cagey grandfather, ~~had~~
sitting around collected royalties on iron ore and
maybe Paul would be [^] ordering his suits from Brook Brothers', too. But
one thing was sure: he wouldn't be sitting around in ^{this} ~~^~~ bleak mining
camp drinking himself to death... Paul shook his head and sat staring
down at the ^{empty} ~~^~~ square, slowly puffing his pipe.

A half-dozen narrow streets converged leisurely into the Chippewa
city square. In the center of the square stood a cast-iron drinking
fountain. On top of the fountain stood a statute of an austere Chippewa
Indian chief. This Indian had a wonderfully unpronounceable name which ~~the~~
tourists and summer visitors
curious [^] might read on the neat bronze plate which some W.P.A. art project
had installed at the base of the fountain during the depression. This
plate also ^{gently} ~~^~~ reminded the beholder that both the fountain and the Indian
were the gifts of the Iron Cliffs Ore Company.

It did not seem to matter much what the chief's real name was.
All the townspeople called him Chief Boogie-in-the-Face. The good Chief
stood through snow and rain, heat and blizzards, year after year; clutching
his bow with one bronzed hand and shading his brow with the other, peering
lean-faced and gaunt, as the W.P.A. plate poetically explained, "as though
seeking for the lost members of his tribe who had faded and fell away
before the avid digging and restless prying of the ^{old-crazed} ~~^~~ whites."

Paul Biegler had always privately felt that Chief Boogie-in-the-Face
was merely peering across the square into the offices of the Acme Loan

Company with its inviting neon-lit advice: "Miners! Why Wait for Payday?"

That was before the wild Saturday night, ^{however,} when some drunk in a Chevrolet had collided with the fountain and had toppled Chief Booze-in-the-Face down upon Main Street. A squad of city employees had rushed to the Chief's rescue with their wooden scaffolding and paint pots. ^{A welder was hastily summoned.} When their job was

done the Chief looked better than ever. As usual Paul's father, Oliver Biegler, had hit the nail on the head. "They ^{finally} got him lookin' like a pimp all dressed up for a ^{double} wedding," Oliver declared. What's more, he had been turned on his pedestal so that now he peered wistfully into the front door of Luigi Purgatorio's saloon. Paul was sure that he detected, ^{at last} ~~at last~~ a slow smile of contentment on the old chief's ^{weathered} ~~face~~ ^{countenance...}

The Five-and-Ten store stood on one corner; the new city hall on another; the J. C. Penny Company store ^{occupied} ~~on~~ the third corner; and the Miners' State Bank ^{filled} ~~on~~ the fourth corner. The entire upstairs of the bank building was occupied by Walter Holbrook's law offices. Paul's office was the last one at the back, at the top of the entrance stairs. Next there was the filing room, then the law library, then the stenographer's room, and then a large conference room. In the very front, shaded against the sun by Venetian blinds, Walter Holbrook had his private office.

Chapter 5

About ten o'clock ~~from~~ after side trip to Luigi's bar, Paul carefully strolled up to the hotel bar. By then he thought it was best not to drive his car. He went in the side door of the bar, not the hotel entrance. He wasn't looking for Maida, of course. Perish the thought... No, he just wanted to see what was cooking, was all. But nothing was cooking. The same travelling salesman was still there, putting the same half-hearted make on Martha. Paul thought that a twenty-four hour session of drinking was a pretty hard price to pay for any gal, let alone for Martha. Ah, the sailors were missing! They must be lurking in the men's washroom.

"Hi, Martha," Paul said pleasantly, as he passed the booth occupied by blonde Martha and her salesman.

"Hi, Polly," Martha said, giving Paul a secret, inviting and heavy-lidded wink. "She's still laboring under the spell of Mae West," Paul

thought. Paul was often amused and a little saddened over girls ^{the} in Chippewa ^{who} patterned themselves after some Hollywood movie star, ^{he knew} until, by ^{carefully acting out the part} and by the pattern had frozen and set, and became an integral part of their appearance and personality, though the star might long since have vanished and been forgotten. ^{He had grown up with a lot of such girls.} America must be full of languid and obscure ^{middle-aged replicas of} Greta Garbo...

Paul did not pause at Martha's booth. He had work to do. A man who was about to become an officer in the U.S. Navy must see what skullduggery these two young sailors were up to in the men's washroom. Duty called. After all, no war could be won in a man's can, could it? But wait! There was the distracted employee in Washington's fabulous Pentagon building who had moved his desk into the men's washroom. Why? Because it was the only place in the joint where the occupants seemed to know what they were doing... That one had

been Walter Holbrook's favorite ~~xxx~~ story lately. Walter had a great collection of stories about the bonndoggling and incredible mismanagement in wartime Washington. But this was his current favorite. Paul knew it was because Walter laugh~~ed~~^{ed} harder in telling that one than ~~at~~^{over} any of his vast fund of F.D.R. and New Deal stories...

But the two young sailors were not in the washroom. Only Kilroy had been there... The sailors were deserters, no doubt! Paul philosophically paused at the bar and order another scotch. As he picked up his change he spoke to pretty Bertha, the smiling blonde Finnish barmaid. Bertha's husband was in the Marines. The regular bartender had been drafted, of course... "Have you seen Miss Holbrook around this eveing, Bertha?" Paul casually asked.

"No, Polly," Bertha answered. "Her father was in ^{before dinner} with some Company big shots ~~before dinner~~ but no Maida. Can I give her a message if she comes in, Polly?"

"No, thanks, Bertha," Paul said. Bertha was a trifle familiar, but she was a good bartender and a good kid. And she certainly possessed a beautiful pair of lungs... At least Bertha didn't try to look like ^{Hedy Lamarr} Greer Garson and she seemed to know enough to keep her pretty trap shut about the things that really counted. Paul had never heard any kickback ^{about} that night, a month or so ago, when he had so obviously taken Martha upstairs for a prolonged romp in the hay. That was another night when he had been full of high spirits and low purpose...

At midnight Paul ~~found himself~~ slowly ^{climbed} climbing the stairs to Doc Dishno's office over the Rexall Drug Store. Paul had seen Doc's light burning while he

was making his way over to the White Coffee Pot to have a sandwich. ^{Paul} ~~He~~ was immediately filled with concern for Belle. Why hadn't he gone home that evening? Why hadn't he at least 'phoned to learn how she was?

The doctor's bare waiting room was empty, the three naked light bulbs beating down mercilessly on the worn rug, on the straight backed chairs, and on the plain wooden table with its dog-eared back issued of Esquire and the National ~~Geographic~~ Geographic. The door to the doctor's private office was closed. There ~~was~~ ^{was} a dim light showing ^{through the frosted glass door.} Paul softly knocked. He could hear the sound of heavy, regular breathing. Was ^{Doc} on one, too? He listened and then knocked again. He heard a sound of heavy stirring.

"It's Paul Biegler," Paul said. "It's Polly--Oliver's boy."

"Come in," Dr. Dishno said in his harsh, hoarse, Canadian -French ~~naive~~ voice.

Dr. Darius Dishno was sitting at his desk with his thick hands folded and locked across his paunchy stomach. There was a quart whiskey bottle on the desk. His large shaggy head was sagging on his chest and his lower lip, partially hidden by his thick ^{hairy and} moustache, trembled and pattered as he heavily breathed. ^{He looked like a kind of later Charles Laughton. His} He veinous dark eyes wearily regarded Paul from beneath his bushy dark eyebrows. Paul thought that at that moment he looked like all ^{of} the cynical and disillusioned elder statesmen of fallen France rolled ^{into} ~~in~~ one.

"Hello, Doc," Paul said. "I saw your light. Thought I'd just drop up and say hello, was all."

"Ello, Paul," Doc said. Doc's French-Canadian accent was always much more pronounced when he ~~had~~ been drinking heavily. It was scarcely noticeable when he was sober. He motioned Paul to take a vacant chair. "'Ave a drink, Polly! It's ten year ole stuff. I make heem myself, las' night."

"I don't mind if I do," Paul said, laughing and reaching for the bottle. Oliver had always said that to Doc when the two were on one of their endless hunting or fishing trips, when Paul was a kid. They occasionally took Paul along, when Belle would permit, to carry water and ^{firewood} ~~wood~~ and ^{to} make up the bunks. "I don't mind if I do." It was a kind of formula, like the old one about the governor of North Carolina...

"Here's to your good health, Doctor," Paul said. "May you be in Heaven four days before the Devil knows you're dead!" That was another old one of Doc's and Oliver's. It seemed good to be sitting there with his father's old friend ^{that had been} surely a curious, ill-assorted friendship, but one that had lasted since old Doc Dishno had landed as a young man in the bustling mining camp of Chippewa, fresh from Canada, nearly forty years before...

"Now about Mother---this heart condition ^{of hers ---} Paul began. "How did you leave her today?"

Doc held up his hand. He was never a man to mince or waste words-- especially when there was drinking to be done.

"Polly," he said, pulling at one end of his moustache. "Polly, listen, my boy--dere's notting wrong with your mother's heart dat another draft deferment won't feex. ^{The las't time I examine her I remember} I wish my goddam ticker were half so good..."

"You saw her today, didn't you?" Paul said.

Doc paused for ^{flickering} a moment, Then: "Polly, I haven't seen your ^{mother} in over a month..."

There it was. That was old Doc Dishno every time. "Right from the shoulder. Let the chips fall where they may. So Belle had been playing possum again?-- she had sensed what he had been about to say when he had ^{about insisting} 'phoned her from ~~the~~ the office that night. ^{she had headed him off.} Why, she had even lied to him!

"But don' tell her I tole you, Polly," Doc added, "else dat little Belle Biegler eat ol' Doc Dishno all up! 'Ave anudder drink."

"I don't mind if I do," Paul automatically answered.

Paul ~~dully~~ got more water and ^{dully} poured the drinks. So Belle had deliberately lied to him? She must be desperate... Paul sat there watching the old Doctor. It was funny how much he felt at home with old Doc Dishno--old Doc, the maverick, the ~~pariah~~ pariah among the local doctors, most of whom worked at the Company hospital. ^{People} They said all sorts of things about old Doc: that he was a drunkard, ^{that he seduced women,} that he took dope, that he aborted pregnant ^{ladies...} women. But when the slick young Company doctors really got a tough case, when it was a case of life and death, Paul had noticed that old Doc Dishno was usually called in. Good old Doc. Yes, it was a nice feeling to be sitting having a quiet drink with old Doc... In fact, come to think of it, he was about the only person Paul knew that he could really confide in. Well, Bernardine, ^{perhaps} ~~maybe~~ but then there were certain things a man couldn't tell a womah--especially a woman that had meant so much, that had been so close to one, as Bernardine... Doc spoke. He seemed to be reading Paul's ^{very} thoughts.

"How's everyt'ing between you an' Bernardine? W'en you goin' marry dat lovely girl?" He looked reproachfully at Paul. "You 'aven't been to see me one-two month, now. It's getting so bad on'y time da young fellow come see ol' Doc ^{any more is when} ~~is when~~ dey 'ave a dose... But come, how's my dark, ^{my} lovely Bernardine? "

Paul stared at the old doctor. Doc's pouched and baggy eyes looked back at Paul, bland and unwinking.

~~For a moment Paul felt that he was almost~~

Paul closed his eyes. For a moment he thought he was going to faint,

Then: "Oh, God, Doc!" Paul said. "Oh God, oh God."

"W'at's dat?" Doc said, leaning forward, letting his hands fall open and his ~~hand~~ ^{hand} on his lap.

Paul began to talk. He talked to Doc, good old Doc, rambling on just as he used to out in the woods when he was a little boy--when Doc was an active, striding, husky bear of a man. He told him about Bernardine, about Maida, about Walter Holbrook and the office. He told him about his draft deferment. He told him about all his classmates that had gone to war; about Belle's fear that he would have to go; about his determination that afternoon to enlist; about Belle's feigned illness. He told him all about the ^{astounding} confession of that miserable bartender ^{over} at the Club who had feigned epilepsy to ^{keep} stay out of the goddam War...

~~War...~~

"Doc," Paul dully went on, "I--I feel like a goddam heel--a prime horse's ass. ^{It's all mixed up...} I know I should be in this goddam war as much as any of us should. I'm not entitled to any draft deferment. I know that and it makes me feel guilty as hell. I know I should go. I really know that, Doc... But, Doc, look Doc--it's just--"

"Yes?" Doc Dishno said softly.

Paul glanced wildly about the drab little room; he seemed to see all of it at once; the littered desk, Doc's stained diploma from the Canadian medical school, the stethoscope protruding from his pocket, the dusty old medical books, the fly-specked light bulb, the curious ^{intent} look in Doc's eyes... Paul felt trapped. He needed a drink. He reached for the bottle on the desk. Doc laid a restraining hand on Paul's arm.

"Yes?" Doc Dishno softly repeated. "Wat is it, Polly?"

^{Paul looked at old Doc and then spoke.}

"Oh, Doc, I don't want to go to war!" Paul was nearly wailing. "Oh, Doc--I--I'm afraid! I'm afraid to go!"

~~There~~

There, he'd finally said it. He'd never ever thought it before, but now he'd blurted it out! And Christ, it was true... He, the great Paul Biegler, Oliver's boy, was afraid to go to War! Now he knew he'd always been afraid of war--ever since he'd watched his brother Link die from the effects of shell shock after World War I... What would Doc think of him now? Doc was Oliver's and his oldest and best friend, wasn't he? What would he think of Oliver's boy now? Why didn't he say something? Christ, was he falling asleep? Why did he close his eyes like that? He shouldn't do that. He looked like that bastard Pierre Laval when he did that...

"Hm," Doc Dishno said. His eyes were open. He didn't look like Pierre Laval anymore. "Hm," he repeated. Then he smiled at Paul, and Paul saw that there were tears in his eyes. "Let's 'ave anudder drink, Polly. It's time for anudder drink--right now."

Paul repeated the old formula. "I don't mind if I do," he said.

Doc ~~heavily~~ ^{heavily} leaned forward and touched his glass to Paul's. "Polly," he said. "You remember the time out South Camp you fin' da big black bear onder the white-pine stomp?"

"Yes," Polly eagerly said. Did he remember it! "Yes, I see all, just as though it happened yesterday."

6.

The morning following his visit with old Doc Dishno, Paul found himself in the grip of a profound hangover. He sat at his desk trying to work out a ground lease of a gravel pit from the Company to the City of Chippewa. Like Walton's complete angler, Chippewa was completely a Company town. The Company not only owned most of the land in Chippewa, but for miles around it. Accordingly, complicated ground leases were not an unusual order in the law offices of Walter Holbrook. Paul had worked on scores of them. But today Paul was having trouble adapting the Company's cagey mineral reservations to this particular deal. He'd have to get it right, because the damned thing had to be approved by those legal ravens who sat out in Delaware. But it was no go... Paul stared out of the window at Chief Booze-in-the-Face and thought of his father...

On those days which he devoted to the celebration of the unofficial American holiday, the hangover, Paul found himself frequently thinking of old Oliver. Today he was thinking of the advice Oliver had given him when he had first left to go away to law school. ~~xxxx~~ Paul had taken his pre-law work in a teachers' college in the Peninsula. Oliver had driven Paul and Belle to the Chippewa depot in the old Model T. Ford he had purchased from Ed Weiler. Just before the train had left Oliver had drawn Paul aside. The old man was embarrassed. He cleared his throat and said, "Christ!" Paul wondered wildly if Oliver was going to tell him about the birds and the bees... Although Paul was then nearly a gangling six feet tall, Oliver had to stoop to whisper his parting advice in his son's ear. As he spoke he thumped Paul's clavicle with his big middle finger.

"Listen, boy, mebbe when you get down there at this Ann Arbor place there'll be times when there'll be some drinkin' to do--" thump, thump"--an" it's a lead ~~xxx~~ pipe cinch that when you get dry behind the ears an'

an' get to be a real lawyer, there'll be lotsa drinkin' to do. But mark my words--" thump "--if you ever fall in with a hard-drinkin' crowd, remember this--" thump, thump "--always drink whiskey," thump "drink the best you can lay hold of, drink it straight--" thump "--an' don't toss nothin' after it but water!"

"Thanks, Dad," Paul had said, *rubbing his collar-bone.*

Paul ruefully tried to recall the various alcoholic concoctions he had consumed the night before. The effort made him involuntarily shudder. Let's see. There had been scotch at the Club, good scotch, then a mild flood of some sort of rank rye blend at Luigi's, during a knuckle-pounding smear game, then back to scotch at the hotel bar, then that raw bourbon up at Doc's. After he had finally broken away from old Doc, there was a depressing interlude of beer over at the White Coffee Pat. Then he had gone to the hotel again, vainly looking for Maida, of course. The place was deserted, so he had courageously started drinking stingers. That had been the pay-off. He must have gone all to pieces after that. He remembered Bertha trying to get him to go home--Bertha, the barmaid ^{whose} ~~with the~~ husband in the Marines, the girl who possessed the beautiful lungs.

"Please, Polly--I mean Mr. Biegler--you must go home. I've got to lock up... No, I can't serve you another drink? Why? Because it's too late and I'll lose my job if I do... Please, Polly, don't you dare drive your car... Oh, Lord, I'll drive it for you, thn... Certainly not... I'll take a cab home."

So that was how it had happened. But Bertha had not driven his car. Paul had roughly pushed her over and taken the wheel himself. And he had not

gone home. Wasn't he supposed to be full of high spirits and low purpose? So he had driven Bertha out past the Delaware Mine, past the lake and up the rocky road to the top of Chippewa Bluff. Quick, like a bunny he had shut off the motor. The drinks must have fouled up his technique pretty badly. He had proceeded with all the subtlety of a bulldozer on the new Alaskan highway he had been reading about.

"Well?" he had said, making a lunge at the girl.

Bertha had slapped his face. She wanted to leave. She shouldn't be there, she said. She shouldn't be out with any man, with her poor husband-- Arthur was his name--so many thousand of miles away, fighting in some steaming jungle. No, she didn't know where he was. All she knew is that she wrote him every day in care of the postmaster at San Francisco. And what could one write about every day? She hadn't heard from him in nearly a month. Sometimes she thought she was losing her mind. No, they didn't have any children. They had been married only a year when he had enlisted.

"Did he really want to go?" Paul asked.

Yes Arthur had wanted to go. He'd always admired the Marines and he'd said that if he had to go to war and get his, he'd rather die a Marine than anything else. Of course, she'd begged him not to go, but he had insisted. She was living with a married sister. No, her sister's husband wasn't in the service, he was a miner. Anyway, her sister's husband was too old to go to War. "He's a lot older than you, Polly," Bertha had said. Paul quickly lit a cigarette after that one.

"It must get pretty lonely," Paul had finally said.

Bertha had started to cry. No, not cried, just plain bawled. Paul had often heard Oliver tell old Doc that a woman in tears was ready for almost anything. "She's got two strikes on her," Oliver had wisely said. So what could a man do? Naturally, there was nothing for Paul to do but to try to

comfort her, this poor lovely, prostrated, lonely young war widow. In fact it was a man's plain duty--those marooned on the home front, those who couldn't be in there pitching--to comfort the brave little women whose husbands and sweethearts were out there so many miles away--yeah, some of them out there, you could bet, busily comforting some of those dusky native women. Paul had lately seen some pretty rugged photographs of G.I.'s and Marines desperately pawing over that dark island stuff... There'd be some fine blue-eyed Zulus inhabiting those islands in years to come.

"It must get pretty lonely," Paul repeated. It was an old formula, like one of Belle's household remedies, but a tried and true one.

Paul had very gently put his arm around Bertha. He'd patted her shoulder and almost said "There, there." It was just a fatherly gesture. Well, perhaps he wasn't quite that old--maybe it was just a big brother. The fierceness and hunger of her response had sobered him slightly. Big brother, hell! "Oh God, Polly, you'll never know, you'll never know," she had sobbed... Then she was suddenly swarming all over him. Paul fought his way out of the clinch. He sighed and guessed he'd started something he'd better finish... Yes, that Bertha was a genuine American girl, Paul discovered. Genuine all over. Even those firm, beautiful lungs were more genuine than he could have possibly dreamed. Those Pacific island lassies had nothing on little Bertha. It all went to show that the boys on the homefront had their problems, too...