

# DEATH POEM SCREENPLAY

BY

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Patrick Brennan, a handsome man in his mid-30's, retreated from the confessional. He had just divulged this latest adulterous deed to the monotone priest who'd waited anonymously on the other side of the velvet confessional.

PATRICK

(muttering to himself)

Did I really think that goddamn  
priest would help me feel better?

Patrick ambled down the 22 steps that graced the entrance to the cathedral and eyed an elderly man sitting on a marble bench. The stranger's head rested in his age-spotted hands.

The oldster scowled at the unwanted intrusion. He had just left the confessional but had bolted after blurting out that familiar, "Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned."

Patrick noticed the helpless pain lurking behind the stranger's blue eyes. The character before him was debonair. He sported a black cashmere overcoat with a red tie peeking through the opening. He was about 6' and 180 pounds. His thick hair was silver and tailored to absolute perfection. He was also strikingly handsome, with a rugged, square jaw, full, sensuous lips, and surprisingly few wrinkles.

The old man grinned wolfishly, displaying natural teeth.

OLD MAN (V.O)

No one could ever understand my  
misery. This is the ideal solution.

Patrick watched the old man walk briskly down the path and cross the busy boulevard. The stranger stopped and glanced toward a dilapidated liquor store. A long-legged brunette in a tight beige skirt wiggled up the steps and into the cathedral. Patrick groaned and mentally penetrated her.

Patrick began the four-block walk home just as the old man exited the liquor store. The stranger pivoted down Ferry Street. Impetuously, Patrick overtook him and squinted inside the bag. The bottle was top-shelf Jameson Irish.

PATRICK

That's a mighty fine blend, mister.

The ancient figure was lost in the eddies of yesteryear, recalling her fragrance and visualizing those hypnotizing eyes. He flinched at the unwanted intimacy.

OLD MAN

The Jameson is a tribute to those I  
loved and to lives I ruined. Today,  
I'll join them in the hereafter.

The old-timer accelerated his pace for home.

PATRICK

Let's walk together.

5 EXT. SENIOR CITIZENS' HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

5

They tramped along in silence before arriving at a senior  
citizens' complex. Patrick clutched the stranger's overcoat.

OLD MAN

(pushing the arm gently)

I suspect I'm secure enough now.

PATRICK

You can't be serious about suicide.  
Somebody must care about you?

The old man shook his head.

PATRICK

Can we at least talk about it?

The old man inserted his key and entered the building.  
Patrick caught the door and squeezed through.

PATRICK

(muttering to himself)

He must be pulling my leg.

6 INT. SENIOR CITIZENS' COMPLEX LOBBY - DAY

6

The reticent stranger made his way into a lobby filled with  
decrepit, bent figures who appeared to be patiently passing  
the hours in death's waiting room. As they witnessed a new  
visitor, sagging mouths and clicking teeth began muttering  
bitter comments about not having visitors of their own.

ELDERLY IN LOBBY

Must be sales. Can't be a relative;  
they don't know we're alive.

Patrick's tour guide paused and adjusted Mr. Abe Lueker's  
twisted double Windsor. Patrick smiled at a hastily  
scrawled sign, "No spitting of tobacco, Bert!"

7 INT. SEAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

7

Patrick's host entered a studio apartment and hurried over  
to a corner table. He tenderly turned all the photographs  
face down. He also removed two framed portraits from the  
wall and set them alongside an easy chair. His associate  
then removed his overcoat. Patrick, a fitness buff, nodded  
in appreciation of the old man's superb sloping shoulders.

His host entered a small kitchen.

OLD MAN

You are persistent. Ice and water?

Patrick nodded and settled into a blue easy chair. He turned his attention to the neat but Spartan surroundings. There was no TV or radio. There was, however, a substantial library of religious books, bestsellers, and an impressive collection of American military. There were rosary beads.

The returning bartender placed a tray of cheese, crackers, and drinks on the oak coffee table.

PATRICK

I'm Patrick Brennan.

OLD MAN

Sean Devaney. Salute!

Patrick sipped his drink and strategized a strategy to break the ice with this inattentive stranger.

PATRICK

The elderly have always intrigued me. They have stories we never know about. While at the store, I'll imagine what that shapeless old lady with the beet red hair looked like when she was twenty. She might have been a real beauty. She wants to live one more day, but she already has one foot in the coffin.

SEAN

Most quit because they have no one to love, or no one who needs them.

PATRICK

You can't be serious about joining your loved ones in the hereafter. Surely, your life has meaning.

Sean shook his head and looked away. He studied the younger man, assessing the integrity of his previous comments.

SEAN

Patrick, I value the sanctity of God's gift of life as much as anyone - perhaps more than most. My decision is personal. You have one refill, and then you must leave.

He collected Patrick's empty glass and returned to the kitchen. His own glass hadn't been touched.

PATRICK

I had just left confession. My wife is wonderful, yet I'm unfaithful. I also quit a good job today.

Sean's eyes clouded over with what seemed to be compassion and, oddly, understanding. Scenes from those he had hurt flashed before him like a movie. He, too, had brought a lot of misery into the lives of many good people.

PATRICK

My father died recently. I wrote a poem to ease my pain. That death poem was my feeble attempt to say our loved ones leave an imprint on our lives. We lose those we love but don't learn from it.

SEAN

I'd like to hear that death poem.

PATRICK

How do you cope with the loss of a loved one? You think you can't. You feel you won't. You say you never will. You hurt. You ache. You regret the words you never said. The things you never did. You tell yourself you'll never make that mistake again. You will reciprocate the love given you. You will make yourself vulnerable. Then, somehow, time passes. Things change. Promises fade. You don't.

Sean ambled over to the table in the corner and turned the photographs upright. Then he rehung the two framed portraits in their former location and stared. Finally, he faced Patrick. Tears cascaded down his cheeks.

SEAN

(quiet surrender)

All right, Patrick. You've revealed your death poem. I'll confess mine. First a brief background.

He began his incredible story.

8

INT. CHILDHOOD CAPSULE - FARM IN UPSTATE NY - 1895-1912

8

SEAN

I was born in 1895. My parents were tenant farmers outside Goshen, NY. They worked for a wage, a modest but comfortable cottage, and a share of the beef and pork when it came time to butcher. Everyone admired my parents because of their  
(MORE)

SEAN (cont'd)

deserved reputations for being hard workers. They were devout Catholics and read the Bible faithfully. I was loved, a good student, and excelled at sports. My mother started taking a rich widow, Marie Moore, to the doctors and she permanently invited me along. When I was fourteen, Mrs. Moore suffered a stroke, leaving her paralyzed and unable to speak. Throughout my teenage years, I had plans to go to Columbia University and study journalism. I would work my way through and attend one semester a year. After high school, I worked in a lumber yard and planned to go to college in the fall of 1913. Mrs. Moore died that August and left me \$4,000 for college. I'd just experienced the Lord's hand. His special touch lingered there throughout my life.

9 INT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY/VETTER'S BOARDING HOUSE - 1913

9

I found lodging in the more reasonably priced areas near the university. Fate directed me to Mabel Vetter's rooming house. I met the three friends who were to later experience the heights and the depths of my death poem. My best friend was Gus McCracken. He was a giant for that era, standing at least 6'5". At the most, he weighed 150 pounds. He had a freckled, homely face, framed by a shock of rust-colored hair. His Adam's apple was his most distinguishing feature.

The circle also included Dick Moyers. He was handsome. This natural Adonis sported flashing hazel eyes, thick eyebrows, wavy black hair, sparkling teeth, a complexion that had never been marred by pimples, and a winning "cat that ate the canary" smile. He was about 5'10" and 170 pounds. Dick, a business major, had superior aptitude but he just wasn't academically motivated. He majored in female physiology. Dick really enjoyed teasing Gus.

DICK

Gus, I'd bet you've never had a blowjob! I know a gal who'd gobble the freckles off every inch of your dick. You'd shrink by three inches.

Gus turned three shades redder and guffawed at the thought about shrinking by three inches. Gus was a character and very naive. Our innocence was complicated by the fact that 20th century women had already gained a worldly reputation.

Herbert Schmidt was the fourth member of our closely knit group. He was a first-generation American whose German parents operated a bakery upstate. During this era,

anti-German attitudes were rife. Herb was a stocky 5'8" and weighed 180 pounds. A mane of thick blond hair and expressive blue eyes complemented a rather ruddy complexion. A law student, Herb was serious and academically gifted.

10 INT. ATTENDING MOVIES AND PLAYS - NIGHT 10

We attended at least one major Broadway production every month. We also frequented the cinema and ignored the experts who raked them for sexual license and antisocial behaviors.

During the final week of that first semester, Dick abstained from his evening charades in a last-ditch effort to raise his failing grades. We tutored him intensely. His talents came to the forefront, and he passed with flying colors.

DICK

I am thrilled about my grades.  
Tonight will be my special treat.

11 INT. DINNER AT THE ROYAL OAK - EVENING 11

Our celebration began with dinner at the Royal Oak. Dick freely poured the wines he'd ordered and remarked as he refilled our glasses that he'd taken the liberty of reserving accommodations at the King Edward Hotel. Relieved at not having to challenge the Vetter sobriety checkpoint, our protesting hands retreated and encircled the glasses.

12 EXT. VICTORIAN MANSION - NIGHT 12

After the meal, Dick commandeered a taxi and gave directions to an unfamiliar location in uptown Manhattan.

DICK

Inside awaits the evening's special  
dessert. Welcome, my tyros, to Mrs.  
Jenkins' House of Pleasure.

Even we innocent lambs knew where the shepherd was leading us. I blushed at the sudden stirring in my groin.

GUS

(gulping)

Wait. I can't. I told mother that  
I'd never do this sort of thing.

HERB

What about those rubber things?

DICK

The ladies are carefully screened.  
They have those rubber products.

Dick stabbed the doorbell. Not one of us seriously considered leaving. We lambs wanted this shearing.

13 INT. INSIDE WHOREHOUSE - NIGHT

13

A black butler with a tux and a top hat opened the door and bowed. He pulled a cord that activated a tinkling bell.

A stunning brunette in a silver gown and long silver earrings entered the vestibule. She was probably about 35 and her 120 pounds were perfectly distributed.

MRS. JENKINS

Good evening, gentlemen. I'm Mrs. Jenkins. You are most welcome.

Gus was mesmerized. Herb's normally controlled countenance now revealed his open-eyed astonishment.

DICK

Good evening, Mrs. Jenkins. May I introduce my companions: Gus, Herb, and Sean - first-time customers.

MRS. JENKINS

Ahead awaits the most memorable night in a young man's life.

We trailed her into the adjoining chamber as if we were a provocative litter of frightened puppies. Gus, gulping frantically, brought up the rear.

14 INT. MEETING THEIR "HOSTS" - NIGHT

14

Five very beautiful women encased in extremely, provocative evening gowns sat perched upon a spacious red velvet sofa.

MRS. JENKINS

Gentlemen, may I introduce Iris, Margaret, Anne, Deidra, and Smythe.

Gus and Herb stood there, frozen and tongue-tied. Dick selected a girl for us and gave Mrs. Jenkins a wad of bills.

15 INT. IRIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

15

We three tyros stumbled up the winding maple staircase to where the mysteries of female flesh awaited. My escort, Iris, led me into a small but tastefully decorated room. Iris went behind a shuttered screen and removed her green silk gown. She smiled, her blue eyes sparkling in amusement. Her blond hair was long, nearly approaching her slim hips.

IRIS

(laughing softly)

My bashful, beautiful boy needs Iris to give him a helping hand.

She reached for my belt, swiftly and aptly removed it, and, with a practiced hand, began unbuttoning my trousers.

IRIS

I will take care of everything.

MARGARET

(a soft giggle)

Land sakes, that must be the biggest, most beautiful John Henry I've ever worked with! Let me just see if you're a pile-driving man!

The springs in the next room began pounding madly. Gus became caught up in the strenuous action of his thrusts, and, he realized his first female sponsored orgasm.

MARGARET

Oh, leave it there! It's still so big and hard, and I'm almost there!

GUS

(puzzled)

Almost where?

IRIS

(laughing)

You boys are precious.

Her unfettered breasts swayed gently as she brushed her hair. After stripping off my remaining clothing, she moved to the wash stand and prepared a steaming towel. Iris ignored my embarrassment and captured my organ in her hand. She inspected it before applying the steaming towel.

IRIS

(purring)

You'll do rather nicely!

She turned down the lamp. Then she took my hand and guided my trembling fingers to caress her down below. Raising her hips so that my fingers withdrew from her wetness, she poised and slowly impaled herself on my tensely erect shaft. The sensation was incredible. Her eyes remained open; a half smile appeared as she studied my reactions. It was even more extraordinary than Dick had ever portrayed.

16 EXT. ON THE STREET - NIGHT

16

We strolled down the deserted streets, too energized to signal a taxi, and grateful to Dick for the baptism he had just administered. Our bond had now grown ever more lasting.

17 INT. MRS.VETTER'S BOARDING HOUSE - 1913-1916

17

Our time at the university sped by. The European war continued unabated and became the source of many heated discussions. The Germans torpedoed and sank the Lusitania in May, 1915. Like most of us, Dick had mixed emotions.

DICK

I support the allies, but we have many reasons to back Germany.

GUS

Eventually, America will join. Our heritage is British and so is our language and financial interests.

SEAN

I'm enlisting after graduation.

Our conversation switched to sports, another favorite topic. I was a light heavyweight on the university boxing team and was challenging for the Ivy League crown. Dick and Gus were on the varsity rowing team, and Herb was a hard-nosed football halfback.

18 EXT. OUTSIDE THE THEATER - 1916 - NIGHT

18

It was a sultry September evening, and the city's streets were nearly deserted. Gus, habitually famished, had just suggested a detour to Brady's for coffee and a sandwich.

Suddenly, about 100 yards up the boulevard, we saw a man slapping a young girl. Her small body buckled but she defiantly refused to beg him to stop. The man was tall and well dressed. He had a three piece gray suit with wide lapels and sharply creased trousers.

LOUT

Holding out on me, was you!

He reached inside her skimpy yellow cotton dress and pawed her breasts. The girl was perhaps fourteen or fifteen, painfully thin and with a smudged and dirty face. Her long auburn hair was curly and unruly. Her green eyes glistened with unshed tears of humiliation. Probably under different circumstances, and with a bath so that light painting of freckles on her nose would resurface, she would've been extremely pretty. With a fine dress, hair stylist, makeup, and jewelry, she would be rated as just short of beautiful.

DICK

That is enough of that behavior!

LOUT

Fuck off! She owes me money.

Everything about him betrayed his guttersnipe lineage. We'd already surmised that his major source of income was pimping young girls. He massaged her breast to emphasize the total impunity in which he could enforce his will. I moved behind and locked his chest, shoulders, and the back of his neck in a full nelson. He started to struggle but stopped. I twisted him sideways and increased the pressure just to send a message that I had far more in reserve.

GUS

We'll keep him under control until you go. Did he take your money?

GIRL

That last guy ran off with me earnings. I ain't got none.

DICK.

She deserves an apology.

LOUT

Ya don't apologize to whores. Me boys are gonna be looking for ya.

Suddenly, his foot lashed out, just missing Dick's groin, and he twisted to evade my clutches. I was startled by this unexpected reaction, and he broke free and reached inside his pocket. The girl took the initiative. She snatched a heavy piece of fire wood lying in the gutter and smashed it onto her "boss's" skull. He fell like a logged tree.

GIRL

(astonished)

Why did I do that? He's gonna beat the crap out of me. It's early. I I'll screw all of you for a buck.

Gus coughed out that she was only a little girl. She squinted at us again, as if she were afraid to permit four men, potential customers, out of her grasp.

GIRL

Don't be so goddamned tight with your money. I'm good with me mouth.

DICK

We're going to Brady's, and you're coming along as our guest.

He began guiding her down the street.

19 INT. BRADY'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

19

We entered the up-scale restaurant. Gus suggested that she tidy up and hesitantly handed her his comb. She returned shortly with a clean face, clean hands, and at least an effort had been made to control her curly red hair.

The customers started whispering the second they noticed our companion. Several "ladies" frowned their unmistakable displeasure at having their intimate atmosphere ruined by an obvious prostitute and apparent clients. Herb introduced us.

GIRL

Katie Shannon. Nice to meet ya.

Katie gazed around the room and studied the well-dressed ladies as if she were memorizing every detail.

KATIE

(remarking slyly)

Tell you what. I'll pleasure all of you for nothin'. You don't got to give me nothin' unless you want to.

DICK

Katie, you don't owe us anything.

The portly waiter, Hank, glanced around the room before approaching with the first course. He served Katie the French onion soup and the warm rolls and butter. His expression was thinly disguised when Katie snatched a spoon and began greedily slurping. I took him aside and made it clear he was to treat her with respect.

KATIE

These rolls and butter is tasty.

She wiped the back of her hand across the melted butter now dripping from her chin. She swiped two rolls and deftly crammed them into the pockets of her ragged dress. We were both appalled and amused by her apparent lack of the social graces; however, she was charming and earthy.

KATIE

This rug is so grand. I just want to wiggle my feet in it.

I didn't look down, certain her feet were blacker than the ace of spades. Her pork chops arrived. She seized one.

DICK

Katie, this restaurant expects everyone to use a knife and fork.

The evening progressed with Katie receiving one basic course in table etiquette after another. Gus leaned forward.

GUS

Katie, why do you do what you do?

KATIE

Why? Cause I gots to live and eat.

Katie explained how she'd ended up on the streets. She had been 12 when her parents booked steerage. Both had died from a flu epidemic. Katie arrived at Ellis Island penniless. An immigration official promised help but raped her that night.

Our thoughts were identical. Under no circumstances could we let this pitiful orphan return to her soiled life on the streets. As we left, we asked her to return to her room and collect her belongings. She was to have a new beginning.

- 20 EXT. ON THEIR WAY TO KATIE'S LODGING - NIGHT 20
- She led us through a maze of shortcuts that took us over fences, into vacant buildings, and past the snoring drunks. Finally she pointed to a dilapidated building that had not known a coat of paint since the Civil War. Shortly, she returned carrying just a few items of clothing.
- 21 INT. KATIE'S TRANSFORMATION - 1916-1917 21
- We located a rooming house and enrolled her in school. Katie changed both as a student and as a young lady. She gained weight, her figure became curvaceous, and her dormant beauty blossomed. Gus was in love with her. She never offered her sexual favors, and naturally, none of us ever approached her that way. She was to have a major impact on my death poem.
- 22 INT. MRS. VETTER'S - NIGHT - 1916 22
- Shortly after meeting Katie, Dick stumbled into the flat. He'd been brutally beaten. His left eye was swollen shut and badly discolored, blood oozed from his mouth, and nose.
- 23 EXT. ON THEIR WAY TO THE CAMPUS CLINIC - NIGHT 23
- He agreed to allow us to take him over the campus doctor. On the way, Dick briefed us on the incident.
- DICK
- Remember that jerk we met harassing Katie? I was walking down that area when he and four others threw me into an alley and started beating me. A cop stepped in. Thank God!
- SEAN
- I'll make amends one by one.
- GUS
- No. We'll do this together. You're the best boxer in the Ivy League. Herb is strong and in exceptional condition. Dick is nobody to fool with, and I can hold my own.
- I grinned affectionately. Gus couldn't squash a fly.
- GUS
- What it amounts to is when one is wronged, the rest must help make it right. That is our code of honor.
- Dick's resistance crumbled.
- 24 EXT. STREETS OF NY - TWO WEEKS LATER - NIGHT 24
- We entered the area where we'd first met Katie and Arnold. Prostitutes hawked their wares.

DICK

There's one of them. Follow him.

Another joined the first, then a third and finally the fourth. Arnold swaggered down the street about midnight.

DICK

It's still too crowded. Let's wait.

His gang counted out the money. Arnold slipped some into his vest pocket and returned the rest to a big guy.

DICK

That big bastard must be going to stash the loot. I'll be right back.

Dick closed the gap. He slammed the man's head into a brick building. The man slumped. Dick spotted housewives sitting on the front steps of a tenement building. He rifled through the unconscious man's pockets and removed a wad of bills and gave the money to the needy women.

The four hadn't gone far. I'd already determined my target, a beefy fellow who towered above the rest.

SEAN

The second one is mine. Gus, you've got the fellow in the plaid. Herb, the guy in the green knickers. Dick, Arnold is yours.

Dick spotted an apple in a nearby gutter and hurled a fast ball that smacked into the back of Arnold's head. Enraged, Arnold whirled around and stared in astonishment.

ARNOLD

What the fuck? Oh, I remember this bunch of whore-saving cocksuckers.

They charged. My training with the university boxing team had given me superb conditioning. My opponent was a beefy 220 pounds. I felt that I could knock any man out with one punch if I threw it perfectly. A roundhouse haymaker streaked toward me, but I moved just a fraction and slipped the punch. A follow-up left brushed my ear. My foe's momentum carried him forward, stumbling directly into my right uppercut. The impact sent shock waves traveling up my shoulder. The punch had been devastating. As he wobbled, I buried a left hook into the pit of his fleshy stomach. I uncorked perhaps the best right cross I'd ever thrown. Down he toppled, out like the proverbial light. The sound of heavy breathing cut the air like a scythe. Thumping punches landed, eliciting painful grunts. I cringed when Gus took a blow to the abdomen. His tongue flailed.

It was impossible to just stand by and watch my friend absorb a thrashing. My fist found its home deep in the kidney of Gus's foe. As he reeled from this incapacitating blow, I whirled behind him, forcing my arms under his

armpits, interlocking my hands behind his head.

SEAN

Gus, to his stomach! Hard! Again!

Gus unleashed what for him were two relatively powerful punches to my captive's belly. Vomit spewed. Gus yelled, jumping up and down from the pain in his knuckles. I turned back to my first opponent who was struggling to stand up.

SEAN

If you get up, you are going down  
for a nice long nap.

He nodded. My rage continued, frightening me. I knew it didn't take much for me to cross the line. When violence came knocking, I ran to open the door. I moved forward.

ARNOLD

That cocksucker is nuts! Run!

They started running. A hand grabbed me.

GUS

Don't, Sean. It's over.

His concerned eyes asked me who I was. The rage simmered, cooled, and then subsided completely.

25 EXT. LEAVING FIGHT SCENE - EVENING

25

We shuffled away from that depressing scene. The misguided awe on a little boy's face troubled me.

SEAN

My crazy behavior needs an apology.  
The worst side of me came out.

GUS

Your aggression tipped the balance.  
We were out of our league, and you  
knew it.

DICK

They won't bother Katie or Dick  
again. This calls for some wine..

SEAN

I'm treating.

26 INT. MRS. VETTER'S - 1917

26

Our victory cemented our friendship. We couldn't possibly know, but that incident established the one-for-all precedent that later was to later have tragic implications.

We watched America teeter on the periphery of the European war. The President asked Congress to declare war on April 2nd. In May, the day after our graduation, we

marched to the Marine Corps recruiting station.

27 INT. MARINE RECRUITING CENTER - MAY, 1917 - DAY

27

We waited for our interviews in a stifling, crowded recruiting office and observed, with some humor and considerable trepidation, the rejection of one splendid specimen who was perhaps six feet and a muscular 200 pounds.

RECRUITER  
(clearly bored)  
Not fit.

ASTONISHED APPLICANT  
What do you mean I'm not fit? No one has ever whipped me tugging arms. I can hand milk 20 cows!

RECRUITER  
(smirking)  
When was the last time you seen water and soap? You stink of cow shit, bull shit, and pig shit!

ASTONISHED APPLICANT  
I don't know. Baths make you weak.

RECRUITER  
You're not fit to be a marine. You might try the Navy. Those sissy bastards will take anybody, even if you don't like being around water.

It was critical that we all pass the recruiting sergeant's scrutiny. The insolent rooster finally focused on us.

RECRUITER  
You're ok, but I don't think the skinny guy can carry a field pack.

SEAN  
He's stronger than he looks. The last time he had a fight, he took the guy out with three punches.

The sergeant studied Gus with a sudden gleam of respect. My friend broke out into a toothy grin.

RECRUITER  
Yeah, what the hell. The Corps will put some meat on him.

He motioned Gus aside and into the queue for physicals. We passed, signed papers, and recited the oath of allegiance.

28 EXT. PARRIS ISLAND RECRUIT TRAINING CENTER - JUNE 1917

28

Our train arrived at Parris Island, a new recruit training center. There to accost us at the depot was our drill

instructor, Sergeant Jonathan Q. Henry.

SGT. HENRY

Git the fuck off that train, you mangy bastards! You like sitting there on your asses, do you. Well I'm paid to see that your sitting days are history! Git off that frigging train, right now!

The arrogant creature standing before us was a merciless psychopath. Cruelty abscessed his face and permeated every pore of his swarthy complexion. Some alien source surely generated that paralyzing, gleaming stare. His lips were almost nonexistent, and each guttural filth pronouncement reverberated in agonizing quarter second monosyllables. He was immaculate in his sharply pressed uniform and gleaming boon-dockers. He stood ramrod straight and his 185 pound frame would have made the ideal recruiting poster were it not for those eyes. During the weeks that were to come, we never saw those eyes reflect respect, approval, forgiveness, empathy, or joy. He hated the world and everyone in it.

Somehow, we all survived the psychopathic Sgt. Henry. We steamed for France in December. None, other than the old veterans, could begin to imagine the horrors that awaited.

29 EXT. FRANCE - TRAINING FOR COMBAT DEC. 1917-MARCH 1918 29

The troop transport docked at St. Nazaire, France. We boarded blood-spattered French army vehicles that trucked us to Bourmont, a small village near Paris. Under the guidance of instructors from the famed French Chasseurs Alpains, we began intensified training.

We suffered terribly during the twenty-mile field marches, weighted down by our '03s, 55-pound field packs, and pummeled by blinding blizzards. March brought heavy rain.

30 INT. DIVERSION FROM TRAINING - MARCH, 1918 - NIGHT 30

One rainy night Dick popped into our tent. He signaled for silence. He motioned us to come outside.

DICK

You three need to get laid. I've arranged a session with a widow who lives nearby. We can do our deed and catch some sleep before reveille. This basket has items she wants. You need to add \$3.

GUS

I told Katie that I'd be true blue.

HERB

You might be dead by April. Your sperm saving won't matter then.

Gus's crooked teeth flashed. How could anyone debate such sensible logic? Gus asked if she would service all of us.

DICK

Yes. Her husband died at Verdun.  
She knows we expect sex. She's not  
pretty, but she has a good body.

31 EXT. ON THEIR WAY TO THE FRENCH LADY - NIGHT 31

We slogged down the muddy road. The continuous stream of men and vehicular traffic on route to the front had created deep ruts. Earthen coffins awaited the world's young men.

We arrived at a small farmhouse. A face cautiously peered out. Recognizing Dick, she hesitantly gestured us inside. She examined us and frowned. I suppose we were a questionable bunch with the mud plastered all over us.

32 INT. NICOLE'S COTTAGE - NIGHT 32

Dick introduced us and handed her the basket. She lifted the covering and glowed happily. He told her the wine was ours. Nicole snatched the money. After placing the basket in a corner, she sighed with undisguised trepidation and motioned for Dick to follow her up the ladder to the loft.

The furnishings were few, consisting of a plank table, two straight-back chairs, a chest, and an unlit gas lamp. A faded photograph of a mustached man in military uniform rested on a homemade oak chest. Rain dripped through a ceiling crack. A bucket caught most of the drops.

33 INT. WAITING OUR TURN - NIGHT 33

We eyed that darkened loft anxiously. The pinging of the bucket was intermittently interrupted by the grunting, inviting sounds emanating from above. Herb made room for two wine bottles. He uncorked one and raised it.

HERB

A toast. May she not be our last.

GUS

Promise me Katie will never know.

We watched his adam's apple, bobbing fiercely with the rapidly disappearing liquid. Gus liked his booze, but he couldn't handle it. It was impossible not to hear the grunting above. Gus uncorked a second bottle.

GUS

(slurring)

Let's do this orgy logically  
and be fair about the pecker order.

I just loved Gus.

SEAN

You are shit-faced. You can't write  
a happy tune with a dull pencil.

GUS

Don't worry. My pencil will write  
some happy chapters.

Our adrenaline skyrocketed when Dick descended the ladder.

DICK

I've had better, but not lately.

Herb cashiered his straw and returned in ten minutes. Dick teased him, saying that he'd finished nine and half minutes earlier. I made it to the top and heard her breathing in the shadows. Nicole sighed and dropped back on the pallet and guided me into her center. She lay passively, whimpering softly, yet I knew she felt no pleasure. I finished and climbed down, motioning for the last "straw."

Gus, who was by now very inebriated, bowed to Dick and placed his oversized foot on the first rung of the ladder.

GUS

(slurring badly)

My organ is grateful for the  
opportunity I'm about to have.

We laughed as he ascended the ladder and landed with a thud. We thought he would pass out, but we underestimated him.

NICOLE

(moaning and screaming)

C'est grand! Tres bon! Bon!

DICK

(chuckling)

It means big or good. She likes it.

We returned safely to our billets, although it was necessary to carry a muzzled, passed out Gus around the sentries.

34 EXT. FRONT LINES - MARCH-MID-APRIL - 1918

34

In mid-March our division moved to a quiet sector at the front. Bitching sergeants marched us to a delousing station. The Corps splurged and outfitted us with fresh uniforms and, to our delight, issued a two-day leave.

35 EXT. PARIS - DAY

35

Soldiers representing all allied armies crowded the Parisian streets. These teenage warriors looked at least forty. French lorries, crammed with exhausted, frightened troops, hastened through the streets on their way to the front. Our lusty pals promised to meet us by 1600 at the Eiffel Tower.

We began strolling down the Champs-Elysees. We took a sidewalk along the Seine River, had lunch, and walked to the beautiful Cathedral of Notre Dame. We requisitioned a taxi. Our excitement peaked as we chugged up to the Eiffel Tower. A throng of soldiers posed jauntily while shutters popped.

36 EXT. EIFFEL TOWER - DAY

36

We'd just approached the stairs when three Red Cross nurses descended. I moved aside and stared directly into the eyes of a smashing, beautiful woman. Her hair was the deepest ebony. Her green eyes and long eyelashes glistened with gaiety. Her flawless, pale skin blushed with spots of color that highlighted her classic bone structure. Her figure was slim, legs long and shapely, breasts high, and firm. She wore the Red Cross uniform consisting of a gray wash dress, white apron, white cap with a small Red Cross emblem, soft collar, and a scarlet-lined blue cape over her shoulder.

My fixation on this incredible creature soon became obvious. She finally noticed, blushed, and lowered those smashing eyes demurely. Her friends giggled at my audacity, captured her arm, and tugged my dream away.

NURSE FRIEND

Lynn, we only have two hours.

A gust of wind lifted her white cap and blew it back in my direction. I groped around before it mercifully rebounded off an elm. Retrieving it, I bowed and extended the cap. Her lovely eyes glistened, and she whispered a thank you. Lynn turned to rejoin her friends. I spotted a young boy hawking flowers. I thrust a bill into his hand and gestured to the retreating lady and pantomimed for him to deliver a bouquet. He sped off. Following the boy's finger, she flashed a dazzling smile. Then she disappeared into the crowd.

GUS

She is one gorgeous woman.

SEAN

Yes. She certainly is.

37 EXT. GERMAN OFFENSIVE - MARCH - MAY 1918

37

The German High Command kicked off a massive offensive intending to end the stalemate before we brought our growing power to bear. Our brigade met terrified French soldiers streaming toward the rear. They screamed that the war was over and that we wouldn't be able to stop the Germans.

The roads made progress difficult. We fought for space among French civilians fleeing the advancing Germans. Carts of every description were piled high with family possessions.

We finally reached Nesles, a small village about a mile south of Chateau Thierry. The sounds of heavy artillery and the stink of cordite scorched the air. We were sent with a company of marines to provide support to French engineers

who had been ordered to blow an important bridge.

38 EXT. FOXHOLES FACING RIVER - EARLY EVENING 38

Just across the bridge, a battalion of French troops sprinted toward us. Behind them, blue-gray uniforms closed the gap. Prolonged machine gun bursts chased the Poilus, and one by one, they fell, twitching as bullets raked them.

Sobbing engineers detonated the bridge, trapping their few surviving comrades. We watched helplessly as the Germans began bayoneting the survivors. Herb occupied my pit. Dick and Gus were off to the right. At 2200, Sergeant Wallers jumped into our foxhole. He checked our ammo and said to shovel deeper. Then he spat a stream of tobacco juice. He told us to squeeze off our rounds and aim low.

39 EXT. WAITING FOR THE ATTACK - NIGHT 39

German artillery began firing sporadically at 2300. The ground above us heaved as the explosives canvassed indiscriminately for corpses to maintain the Grim Reaper's quota. Direct hits blew body parts in all directions and left rivets of blood drenching those who had survived. Dawn greeted us with a renewed torrent of heavy artillery. Concussion waves rippled the ground. One poor soul who suddenly lost an arm screamed incessantly before corpsmen dragged him back into his hole and administered morphine.

40 EXT. GERMANS ATTACK ACROSS THE RIVER - DAWN 40

Suddenly, out of the eerie stillness, that dreadful whistle shrieked. At least a 1,000 Germans dashed forward carrying canoes, rafts, and rubber dinghies. Successive machine gun bursts streaked the silence as German covering fire hit us.

The enemy were now halfway across the Marne. German dead and wounded tumbled out of their capsizing boats and were sucked away by the river's strong current. Still on they came. A machine gun stenciled the front of my foxhole. Germans were scaling the bank. I shot several and lobbed grenades delighting in the screams we'd orchestrated.

I slammed in a new clip and peeked over the mound of dirt to see what hell now awaited us. A bullet sprayed the earth an inch to my right. A German officer and two squads puffed straight for our foxhole. He raised his rifle. My trigger finger reacted unconsciously. His uniform turned crimson and, as if a great gust of wind had suddenly manifested itself, he stumbled backward and fell twitching.

41 EXT. BATTLE AFTERMATH - DAY 41

Suddenly, our firing stopped. The German dead were piled in heaps. The moans of the German wounded were pitiful. One wounded soul who had been shot through the legs shrugged off help, crawled slowly toward the water, and started swimming, mostly with his arms, toward safety.

42 EXT. WITHDRAWING FROM THE LINE - DAY 42

At 0900, French colonials relieved us. We marched west to rejoin our outfit and rushed forward as we spotted Gus and Dick. Their familiar faces created moistened tears of love.

GUS

(rare profanity)

Jesus H. Christ! I've never been  
so God-damned scared in my life!

43 EXT. DEATH IN THE WHEATFIELD - DAY 43

Our rest was short-lived. French convoys transported us to yet another destination to attack and hold the village of Bouresches. We spotted the wheatfields, hedges, an orchard, and the village. Our officers signaled us forward.

All hell broke loose as soon as the entire company had entered the wheat field. A withering blast of heavy machine gun fire raked the lead units, decimating them in clumps. Men fell, writhing from the heavy slugs that tore off arms, amputated legs, smashed genitals, and removed heads.

PLATOON LEADER

Follow me! We can't stay here...!

NEW PLATOON LEADER

Don't stop for anyone who falls.

I jumped up and churned forward. Men began dying - some falling silently as bullets hit vital spots. Others screaming as they fell headlong over others. I emptied another clip. I spotted a machine gun. I reached the copse of trees and must have tripped for suddenly I stumbled and fell. Two marines came abreast and then tumbled over backward as if they were rag dolls. The fact that I had stumbled had probably saved my life, or I would have been the third rag doll. For some astonishing reason, getting to my feet became extremely hard. My three friends swept on by.

The firing abated. Of the 200 or so marines who'd entered that wheat field, only twenty survived. We kept hearing calls for the corpsman. Others wept for dead buddies.

44 EXT. AFTERMATH OF THE BATTLE - DAY 44

My legs seemed to be acting strangely. I fell to the ground.

HERB

How in the hell did we survive  
that?

For the first time, I noticed the blood seeping from a hole in my uniform. That explained why my leg just didn't work properly. Gus examined the wound and said it wasn't serious.

SEAN

I'm a little sleepy. Wake me when  
it is time to move out.

45 EXT. WOUNDED - AWAITING TREATMENT - DAY

45

I awoke in an unfamiliar setting lying on a stretcher carried by a pair of exhausted and perspiring corpsmen. Fearfully, I glanced below and sighed in relief. The leg remained intact, the wound covered by a crude bandage. The panting corpsmen struggled up a small knoll and deposited me at a regimental aid post. Marines, sorted according to wound type or severity, lay or sat around a large staging area.

An hour later, a doctor approached and changed my dressing and efficiently diagnosed the wound. Later, I awoke to the movement of my stretcher being loaded aboard an ambulance.

46 EXT. ARRIVING AT THE EMERGENCY BASE HOSPITAL - DAY

46

The lorry arrived at the Auteuil racetrack, an emergency center near Paris that could hold 2,500. A surgeon inspected the wound and said I would miss 5-6 weeks of combat.

47 INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

47

The man next to me had had his left leg amputated. I'd just finished my tasteless supper when a nurse entered the ward. He whispered something about her beauty. She laughed and leaned over and pinched his cheek in rebuttal. She updated the chart and began walking down the aisle in my direction.

Was it possible that my morphine-distorted imagination had created the girl I'd seen at the Eiffel Tower? I bumped my leg and groaned. The beautiful nurse glanced up at the cause of this sudden interruption and began heading down the corridor. She removed the medical chart and studied it.

RED CROSS NURSE - LYNN

Are you in pain, Private Devaney?

SEAN

No, I'm fine. Others need you more.

LYNN

It's no trouble, but I'll need to check your wound for bleeding.

She swept back the covers and lifted my hospital gown and carefully examined the dressing. Her scent was intoxicating.

SEAN

Is it all right, Lynn?

LYNN

How do you know my name, Private?  
You arrived recently, didn't you?

SEAN

Yes, but we met at the Eiffel Tower  
two months ago. Your hat blew off.

LYNN

Yes! You were the gallant gentleman  
who retrieved it. And you honored  
me with that beautiful bouquet.

She approached another patient. I called after her.

SEAN

I've never forgotten - March 16th.

She whirled around and acknowledged me with a nod of her  
lovely head before continuing down the aisle. Lynn visited  
the ward several times daily but avoided me as much as  
possible - or so it seemed. She would check my dressings,  
but her conversations with me appeared abrupt and formal.

48 EXT. VERANDA - DAY

48

Within a week, the wound had healed sufficiently to sanction  
a wheelchair and periodic tours of the veranda. The patient  
next to me was drafting a letter. A broad grin broke across  
his homely face. He began chuckling.

PATIENT

I've just finished a letter to my  
wife. I told her to fix the roof  
leak and plan to spend a lotta time  
concentrating on the floor.

SEAN

On the floor?

PATIENT

(grinning)

When I gets home, all she's gonna  
see for days is our bedroom  
ceiling. Tell me, what's that word,  
amtrove amtroph - well, what I'm  
trying to say is will my cock  
dwindle away from lack of use? I  
think it's getting smaller.

SEAN

(trying not to laugh)

The word is atrophy. Don't worry.  
once it is grown, it stays grown.

Her scent told me she was close by. I turned and noticed her  
becoming beet-red from embarrassment. She stalked off.

That evening, I learned that the marine with the amputated  
leg had died. He'd lost his will to live. Lynn entered the  
ward carrying a change of sheets. A pained expression  
creased her lovely face as she began removing the linen.

SEAN

That marine's death removes my inhibitions. I'm awfully naive when it comes to love. I want to hold you so badly. I want to kiss you.

She slumped onto the dead man's bed with a sigh. Then she composed herself, and her expression became gentle and kind.

LYNN

Your words are those of a lonely marine. Many patients believe they're in love with me, even those who are married or have fiancées. This hospital is a revolving door. Soon you will return to the front. I cannot become involved with you.

SEAN

War makes it so important for us to realize that when love happens, it must be fulfilled. Men and women meet but never fall in love. They don't, because that necessary spark is missing. Each knows it.

LYNN

No more. You must stop this.

SEAN

I can't. Your spark is burning.

49 EXT. VERANDA - DAY

49

A week later, I was on the veranda when she approached carrying a pair of crutches. Lynn avoided eye contact and placed the crutches against my wheelchair.

LYNN

The doctor wants you to resume walking. I've been reassigned.

God is great. Not only would I be alone with her, but I would find a way to lose my balance and brush against her.

50 EXT. BENCH IN PARK - DAY

50

She fitted them beneath my arms and directed me outside. We followed a sidewalk into a small park. Lynn sensed me tiring and pointed toward a wooden bench beneath an oak tree.

LYNN

I failed miserably in my efforts to avoid this assignment.

Lynn had stationed herself at the far end of the bench. Her left hand was balled into a fist, and she rubbed it in her right palm. My mouth opened.

LYNN

I don't want to hear about how you may think you're in love with me.

SEAN

This war has taught me that what is felt must be said. Each marine is on borrowed time. My knees turn to jelly, such is my need to kiss you.

LYNN

I've made clear that I can not be involved with servicemen.

Five doctors approached. I decided to gamble the limit.

SEAN

(grinning manically)

If you don't promise that you'll go to Paris with me, I will scream like a madman that I'm in love with my nurse. Won't you be embarrassed?

LYNN

You wouldn't dare! Why, that's blackmail! You are despicable!

She set her jaw, stubborn and ready for round 2. I cupped my hand around my mouth to convince her that I meant business. One of the approaching doctors looked at me quizzically.

LYNN

(whispering quickly)

OK. You are contemptible! I'll accede to one date in Paris.

I nodded my perjury. Surely, I'd kiss her on that date.

51 INT. HOSPITAL - WEEK LATER - DAY

51

My wound healed rapidly, and except for rehab, the surgeons sanctioned absolute freedom of the grounds. Lynn continued to give me a wide berth. Occasionally, she'd succumb to an uncontrolled glimpse out of the corners of her dazzling eyes. I'd grin my victory. She'd stalk off fuming.

52 INT. NURSES' STATION - DAY

52

I progressed from the crutches to the cane within a week. I limped over to the nursing station. She was seated in conference. I cleared my throat. Lynn and associates turned to determine the source of this sudden interruption.

SEAN

(smiling facetiously)

Excuse me, but I am lost. Could you direct me to the front? I am Europe's only hope to end the war.

Lynn blushed red at this audacious nonsense and shuffled the report. My theatrics had obviously entertained the others.

53 INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

53

Lynn marched into the ward. She intended to scold me. I yanked the covers over my head and peeked out sheepishly.

LYNN

Your primary goal is to embarrass me at every opportunity until I fulfill my promise. Whenever your name is mentioned in the nursing quarters, I describe you as being a spoiled brat. They think you are good looking and charming. All right! Your leg is nearly healed, and you are ambulatory with the cane. By Saturday, you'll be ready to leave. Therefore, I'll make arrangements for a six-hour pass.

Lynn started to walk away but turned and added.

LYNN

You are no gentleman. I am not 100% certain that you will not succumb to your wicked ways and try to kiss me. I have already talked with my best friend about how to keep you under control. You are a womanizer, and I will be on guard.

SEAN

I am not a womanizer or a wicked boy. I am just madly in love.

54 INT. GETTING READY FOR THE DATE - DAY

54

Saturday morning finally arrived. I bathed in the luxury of American soap, purchased from a nurse who claimed it was Ivory. I shaved with the precision of a barber, clipped my hair and combed my wayward mane until it submitted to my control. I even bartered with a sly marine for some cologne after hearing his pitch about French men's success with it.

55 INT. ON THE WAY TO PARIS - DAY

55

My reluctant escort met me outside the ward at 1400. Lynn had loosened her hair and tied it in a blue ribbon. Those classic cheekbones had also been enhanced by just a brush of rouge. She was smashing! I visualized her lips on mine.

We jumped aboard a Paris-bound lorry. As we rounded a corner, her thigh touched mine, sending shivers coursing through me. Purposely, I spread my legs wider than necessary in the hopes that we'd touch again. Lynn's sidewise glance told me that my blatant, conniving maneuver had not gone unnoticed. She continued that "I'm waiting" stare until I

closed my knees. She had just a hint of a smile. We arrived.

56 EXT. STREETS OF PARIS - DAY

56

I caned over to the curb where Lynn waited. She was so exquisite. Even in that normally drab uniform, it was as if she'd just promenaded out of a fashion display. I asked Lynn to tell me about herself and learned that she was from Salem, Massachusetts. Her father operated a shoe factory producing boon-dockers for the military. I was surprised to learn that she was twenty-six. Lynn had volunteered for the Red Cross in 1917 and had been stationed in France since last August. She had previously been a nurse in Boston.

I related my childhood, parents, Mrs. Moore, Columbia, and my three best friends. Her self-imposed barrier crumbled as we rambled through the colorful open markets of Paris.

57 INT. PARIS RESTAURANT - DAY

57

We discovered a quaint-looking restaurant and peeked through the dusty windows at the bustling activity. Harried waiters, all middle-aged or older, balanced trays, set tables, and recorded orders. Soldiers in their various national uniforms comprised the vast majority of the patrons.

MAITRE D'

(excellent English)

I have an intimate table with a charming view. You are fortunate.

He escorted us to the table, which was indeed exceptional, and discreetly awaited the expected tip. I palmed him a dollar. He stared at the coins as if I'd made some phenomenal mistake. Finally, he strutted away, muttering in French. Lynn laughed and said that I'd been very generous.

We could see the Eiffel Tower a short distance away. I told her I would never forget the moment I first saw her. The waiter served the wine I'd requested.

LYNN

(blushing)

I'm a Mad Hatter when I have wine.

Our waiter filled our glasses. Her fingers traced the top.

SEAN

A toast? May God bless our love.

Obviously, my toast had flustered her, but she glowed prettily. Several minutes later, I tilted the decanter to refill our empty wine glasses. A rosy flush spread throughout her face, and her eyes danced merrily.

LYNN

Only half a glass, please. I've already exceeded my limit, and I am  
(MORE)

LYNN (cont'd)  
 convinced that I'll have to remain  
 on guard. You're a rogue.

Lynn's swordfish and my broiled scallops were delicious. Convincing her to accept another glass of wine was wickedly easy. I exceeded her half glass request by at least two fingers. I sat back and waited for it to take effect.

SEAN  
 Can't you care for me just a  
 little, and please call me Sean?

LYNN  
 I will confess, Sean, that I enjoy  
 your company. Yes, I do like you -  
 just a little. However, you know my  
 feelings involving servicemen.

I asked if there were anyone waiting for her. There was not.

58 EXT. NEXT TO EIFFEL TOWER - DAY

58

We chatted amiably throughout our dessert and coffee. I suggested we take a taxi to the Eiffel Tower. We sat on a bench and contentedly observed the passing throng. I spotted the same vendor where I'd previously purchased Lynn's bouquet and excused myself to do business with him again. Four British soldiers staggered down the steps that exited from the Tower. One Tommy circulated a whiskey flask among his pals. Seeing the lovely, unescorted Lynn, he pointed her out. Collectively, they began ogling her boldly.

Their opening comments could now be overheard clearly as I paid the florist and collected my cane.

BRITISH SOLDIER  
 Don't be coy. You are sitting  
 alone because you want some cock!

THIRD BRITISH SOLDIER  
 Do you jerk off patients?

Throughout this unpleasant situation, she'd ignored their crude, insulting remarks by turning angrily away. That familiar rage skyrocketed through me. I dropped the bouquet and half ran, half limped toward them. They stared in surprise just as I barreled into them. I caned the closest one, smashing him to the ground. I hit the second knocking him backward. A pair of powerful arms hurled me over the bench and onto the pavement. I began climbing to my knees. Two British MPs must have seen the incident and came running. The four snapped to attention.

BRITISH MP  
 Are these blokes bothering you?

SEAN  
 They were deliberately obscene.

MP

Hand over your passes. We have privates: Barney Walters, Jonas Downey, Ian Masterson, and Donald Taggart, the Weald Regiment, which you have abashed to say the least.

The four scowled their resentment and hatred of authority. Nevertheless, they stood at rigid attention.

BRITISH MP 2

What's that object poking through your blouse? The King's Regulations do not permit alcohol in public.

One of the four captives arrogantly wiggled his tongue at Lynn. The smaller MP saw and lashed out with his Billy club.

BRITISH MP 2

Apparently, you are so thick-headed you forgot why you are in custody.

The MPs demanded an apology. The captives provided one, but it was clearly without sincerity. The MPs marched them away.

SEAN

I should have been with you.

LYNN

Sean. I do believe that you were ready to clash with all of them.

SEAN

(laughing)

I'd have scuffled with the entire Weald Regiment to rescue you.

59 INT. OUTSIDE HOSPITAL - DAY

59

A taxi took us back to the hospital. Lynn accompanied me to the ward. Shyly, she took my hand.

LYNN

Thank you for the lovely day. I'll have to admit, you made it special.

Encouraged by her touch and intimacy, I gathered her into my arms and kissed her soft, moist lips. She pushed lightly at first. Then she reacted passionately, kissing me hungrily.

LYNN

(gasping, scolding)

Inside with you now, Sean. You are no gentleman after all.

Lynn skipped down the path. Then she stopped and turned.

LYNN  
 (smiling coquettishly)  
 You're no gentleman, but you are  
 somewhat handsome and very dashing!

I smiled. Now, she is mine!

60 INT. VERANDA COUCH - DAY

60

I heard the appreciative male catcalls. She was nearby.  
 Lynn hesitated and signaled me over.

LYNN  
 (uncertainty)  
 Sunday, I'm not scheduled for duty.  
 Please don't think I'm too bold,  
 but I'd like to spend it with you.

SEAN  
 I am thrilled. I've thought of  
 nothing day and night but that  
 incredible kiss. Do you really  
 think that I am somewhat handsome?  
 Does this mean that I will get to  
 have a second or third kiss?

LYNN  
 (smiling coyly)  
 You are a wicked, bad boy, and I  
 already know that I must watch all  
 of your Marine flanking maneuvers  
 closely. Yes, you are slightly  
 better than somewhat good looking.  
 As for another kiss, that will have  
 to be a maybe, and will be totally  
 dependent upon your behavior.

SEAN  
 Just when can I expect that kiss?

LYNN  
 I suspect that if I choose to give  
 that kiss at any other time than  
 the end of our outing, you will be  
 pestering me like the bad boy you  
 are throughout the whole afternoon.

I'd planted the seed and knew I had at least one coming.

SEAN  
 What would you like to do?

LYNN  
 We can stroll down the Seine,  
 watch sailboats, look at artists  
 paintings, and have some wine.

After she left, familiar voices interrupted my speculations.  
 My buddies were standing before me. It was apparent that the

war had taken its toll. Gus, in particular, had aged. He'd lost weight, and he displayed an anxious, flighty manner.

I spent the next half hour explaining my rehabilitation and the corresponding levities and sorrows of the hospital. I also gave a detailed account of my love for Lynn. Gus confirmed my zealous description of her beauty. I wanted to introduce them to Lynn and see if she could arrange a ride.

61 INT. NURSES' QUARTERS - DAY

61

Lynn was cheerful and warm. She studied my friends.

DICK

Nurse Hamilton, how much longer are you going to keep this warrior out of the line? He's bound to lose his fighting edge if he remains here surrounded as he is by such beauty.

LYNN

(blushing)

Sean said you are a charming rascal. He'll be back in two weeks.

Altogether too quickly, my friends left. Lynn arranged a ride in an ambulance driven by a smashing blond. Dick waved from the front seat as they chugged away. I told Lynn that he'd have that girl's name added to his black book shortly.

62 EXT. SECOND DATE IN PARIS - DAY

62

The weather was just perfect, although we scarcely noticed anything but each other. We strolled along the riverbank, arm in arm. Sailboats drifted by, people picnicked, and children darted about chasing soccer balls. I tired and suggested that we sit on the grass and observe an artist while he sketched an overturned sailboat. Two laughing people struggled to upright their craft and provided the artist with a terrific setting and us onlookers with both comedy and suspense. We commissioned one of the many freelance artists to sketch our portrait in charcoal. Later, I insisted that Lynn take the portrait. We had wine.

63 INT. HORSE DRAWN TAXI - DAY

63

We prolonged our intimacy by taking a slow, horse-drawn taxi back to the ward. The driver ignored us while we embraced and kissed passionately. I lost track of how many kisses happened after I met and exceeded my initial goal of three.

64 INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

64

The week raced by. The highlight was the Thursday, when I tossed the cane aside. We talked about every topic, from Lynn's favorite doll to her tastes in music, literature, and fashion. We shared the same favorite poet, Lord Byron. On Thursday, I could tell that something was wrong. A torrent of tears streamed from those exquisite green eyes.

LYNN

Bertha just told me they're releasing you tomorrow. I'll find a way for us to be alone tonight.

Lynn finally appeared at 2330. Except for the snores of the patients, the ward was quiet. Lynn gestured for me to follow. I jumped out of bed fully dressed.

65 EXT. OUTSIDE PARK AND SMALL SUPPLY SHED - NIGHT

65

Lynn guided me through the park and down a path to a small shed hidden in a copse of elms. She explained that it housed extra surgical supplies, and it was unlikely that anyone would intrude upon us at night.

Immediately, she fell into my arms and returned my demanding kisses. Against my will, I became aroused. Lynn, evidencing no embarrassment, pulled me closer as if to become familiar with the sensation of our bodies melting together.

LYNN

(eyes ablaze with love)

Please make love to me.

SEAN

You can't risk becoming pregnant.

LYNN

I have loved you from the first day we met. I need you inside me.

I gathered her in her my arms and tenderly kissed her.

SEAN

No. We are stopping right now. I am returning to the front.

LYNN

I know you are right.

We fell asleep in each other's arms until dawn began to lighten our dirt-floored bridal den. I woke up first and stared at her incredulously and wondered how in God's name any force could ever make me leave her. I removed my Columbia University ring and placed it on her finger.

SEAN

Please wear this until I can officially replace it.

We embraced one last time before Lynn left reluctantly for her 0800 meeting with the head nurse. I reported to the motor pool, where an ambulance bound for the front waited.

66 EXT. THE FRONT - SOISSONS AREA - DAY

66

On July 18th, we launched our counterattack in the Soissons area. It began raining torrents. The mud-drenched fields

turned into a quagmire, rendering trucks useless and walking next to impossible, Finally, our sergeant mercifully ordered a halt. We collapsed onto the wet ground and slept. We reached the forest perimeter at 0555. For five minutes, every battery rained explosives on the entrenched Germans. Cursing sergeants moved us forward, hoping to maintain a reasonable semblance of order. Once we entered that blackness, our company immediately became disoriented. Sudden outbreaks of rifle and machine gun fire told us that considerable numbers of the enemy had survived the shelling.

Herb stumbled over the remains of a German squad caught by the earlier barrage and swore softly. Grotesque pieces of human flesh, twisted gun barrels, and supply boxes littered our path. The staccato of machine gun fire broke the silence. Screams echoed through the air as some of our men were torn apart from the withering blast. Sergeant Brewer signaled for five men to join him in a left flanking movement. Two marines remained with the BAR to provide cover. The second squad began a right flanking. Somehow I was up and charging forward, firing my 03 and hurling grenades. A marine tumbled forward, a bloody stump remained somehow attached to his boon-dockers.

My 03 clicked on empty, and there wasn't time to reload. I dispatched a terrified teenager by smashing his face with the butt of my rifle. My mind's camera snapped the scene before me. There, lying on the ground, was Gus. He must have fallen for he was struggling to rise. The shutters in my eyes also focused on the other subject. Above Gus, and gripping his Mauser by the barrel preparing to brain my helpless friend, was a wild-eyed German boy.

Gus reacted instinctively by raising his own rifle and plunging forward just before the Hun began his downswing. Gus's bayonet pierced the belly of the surprised would-be assassin. The German's knees buckled from the now horrific pain and shock of the stabbing. Gus pushed forward in his effort to stand up. The thrusting movement forced the German backward, slamming him into a tree. Tug as he might, Gus couldn't dislodge the bayonet from the boy's ribcage.

Sobbing hysterically, Gus dropped his rifle and scratched wildly at his eyes, as if to block out the pitiful sight before him. Gus swatted at his shoulder. Another German had just shot him; tossing aside his now-empty rifle, the attacker reached for his pistol. I charged forward and bowled the German over. I ripped the pistol from his hand and emptied the entire clip into his chest.

The killing stopped. I knelt and picked up the weeping, broken Gus. My sergeant nodded. Cradling him in my arms as I would a baby, I carried him through the forest. This Ichabod Crane whimpered softly with the horror of the last few minutes still bombarding his psyche. There was no power that could have stopped me. My best friend needed me.

67 INT. USMC AID STATION - DAY 67

We arrived safely at the aid station, where the corpsmen carefully examined Gus's wound and assured me it was superficial. He'd be recuperating for five to six weeks.

68 EXT. FOREST BOOZE PARTY - DAY 68

I rejoined the squad in the midst of a joyous celebration. The German machine gun nest we'd captured contained a cache of premium wine, undoubtedly lifted from the French. We settled down in a safe location, broke out the cards, and began sampling the vintage wine. Once our tongues had loosened, automatically, the sexual braggadocio began. Arnold Jackson tendered the first bravado routine.

ARNOLD JACKSON

I'm the unofficial world's champ in the length and velocity of my come spurt. I can shoot it out there more than two feet. Witnesses swear on the Bible to this feat, which is truly the eighth wonder of this here world. It's kinda like an oil well gushing.

He looked around for the expected howls and hoots. Smirks of disbelief traversed our wine-glazed faces. The congregation guffawed. I suggested we deal the cards. I wrote Lynn and asked her to check on Gus. Scuttlebutt had it that he'd been transferred to Auteul. Decimated and in need of refitting, we withdrew to a quiet sector. We drilled endlessly in storming pillboxes and house-to-house fighting.

69 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY 69

Units in rotation received 36-hour passes, and eventually, our turn arrived. Dick, Herb, and I headed for the hospital to visit Gus, and of course, Lynn. We located Gus's ward, and with cheery expressions, strode into his room.

GUS

It is good to see you guys. I guess I might be here a while.

We made light of his report, but we knew he wasn't fit for combat anytime in the near future. He simply wasn't the old, familiar Gus. The bayonetting incident had lingered.

Lynn was thrilled by my unexpected appearance. Tears flowed down her cheeks, Lynn was ecstatic to learn of my overnight pass and the 0900 deadline for reporting back. She whispered she'd exchange duty - even if it meant sacrificing her cap.

70 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY 70

We met with Gus' doctor. Dick related Gus's earlier reactions to combat and the recent bayonetting incident.

DOCTOR

Unfortunately, we have precious little knowledge in this field. I'm a surgeon. But unless the situation at the front changes, this war can do without him for a while.

I returned to find Lynn smiling. She had switched duty with a friend and didn't have to report until morning.

71 EXT. ON THE WAY TO PARIS - DAY 71

We began walking toward Paris. Every quarter of a mile or less, we'd pause and kiss. On the outskirts of Paris, an army vehicle stopped and told us to get in.

72 EXT. PARISIAN RESTAURANT- DAY 72

We discovered an out-of-the-way restaurant with an intimate, cozy atmosphere. A violinist sat in a darkened corner and played haunting, tragic melodies. We enjoyed a delicious meal and became slightly giddy from a liter of Chablis wine. Our hands hotly gripped in the dark, communicating our aching, mutual urgency. Lynn suggested that we leave.

73 INT. PARISIAN HOTEL - DAY/NIGHT 73

We located a hotel off the main thoroughfare. The half-asleep, middle-aged desk clerk seemed surprised by our sudden entrance. I requested two rooms. He smiled slyly and explained in heavily accented English that he'd booked every room. Almost all of the keys were still on their hooks. I understood his subtle message, though, and slipped him a dollar, suggesting that he reexamine the roster. He went through the cursory motions of checking the guest register.

HOTEL DESK CLERK

(mild surprise)

Oh, oui, monsieur. It seems we had a last-minute cancellation. It is a suite and very expensive.

LYNN

That will be perfect.

Our eyes locked, and without speaking, I asked if she was certain. Her green eyes glowed. That weasel-faced clerk grinned knowingly before handing over the key.

The hotel's exterior and lobby had once been ornate. The room itself, however, was unpretentious, with only the fancy, out-of-date, peeling wallpaper to imply the elegance it once had. I was drawn instantly to the center of the where the oak bed awaited. Lynn locked the door.

LYNN

Sean, I've never been intimate.  
Tonight, I want you to make love to  
(MORE)

LYNN (cont'd)

me over and over. I want to leave here with your baby inside me. Every woman waits for the moment when she wants to give herself to the man she loves. From the time we're little, we know our instincts will tell us when he's the right one. It is you.

She fell into my arms. Lynn pressed her warm body closer. We tumbled onto the bed and began caressing the instant our bodies touched the mattress. She traced the erection now straining against my trousers, and I eagerly opened her dress to liberate her sensuous, beautiful breasts. Lynn stood up and let her underclothes drop to the floor. Her trembling fingers, unbuttoned my trousers.

Our passion soared. Moaning with hunger, she positioned my throbbing manhood against her downy hair. Her tiny hand directed me toward her very core. I hesitated and focused on gentleness. Lynn wanted no such consideration. With both hands clutching my buttocks, she pulled downward sharply, voiding the maidenhead and making us one. She raised her hips, and I buried myself fully into her. There was a sudden, sharp intake of her breath. Then her arms encircled my neck, and she kissed me with a wild abandon. Lynn gazed into my eyes and smiled before her flickering eyelids closed.

LYNN

(moaning, gasping)

Oh, yes, It's unbearable... I'm...

Throughout the evening, we catnapped, woke, and suffered until we became one again. Too soon, morning dawned. We walked out into the bright sunshine and were rudely brought back into reality when a truckload of French reservists raced by. I commandeered a taxi and just stared into her eyes all the way back. I wanted her so badly.

74 EXT. QUIET SECTOR - REFITTING - JULY 1918 - DAY

74

Following the Soissons campaign, we relocated to a quiet sector in the Marbache region. At the first opportunity, I followed the chain of command and wove my way through the endless maze before reaching the last hurdle - Colonel Packard. The Colonel skimmed through my personnel jacket and suddenly pumped my hand to congratulate me for earning the Bronze Star during the recent fighting. I had been promoted to Corporal. As a result, I escaped the usual harangue.

COLONEL PACKARD

The hardest fighting is ahead, I will process the application, but know that it may get bogged down.

75 EXT. HOSPITAL GROUNDS - AUGUST 1918 - DAY

75

Although our brigade maintained its reserve status, furloughs for anything other than an eight-hour pass were next to impossible. Our squad finally got its turn. Lynn and I remained on the hospital grounds and sat on a garden bench holding hands and chatting about our futures. The need to be intimate became overwhelming, aroused and stimulated as we were by the memories of our lovemaking.

Lynn suddenly rose from her seat and whispered softly that she'd return shortly. Blushing profusely, she came back with a wool blanket and covered our laps. She reached under the blanket, unbuttoned my trousers, fondled my testicles, and began stroking the quickly growing shaft. After our very special time, we visited Gus. He was healing on schedule.

76 EXT. FRONT - ST. MIHIEL SECTOR - SEPTEMBER 12, 1918 - DAY

76

A large American offensive was scheduled in the St. Mihiel sector on September 12th. Throughout the rainy night of the 11th, we filed into our supporting positions. At 0100, a thunderous artillery barrage awakened us and plastered the Germans for the next four hours. An army brigade kicked off at 0500. We followed behind, mopping up bypassed pillboxes.

77 EXT. MONT BLANC - SEPTEMBER 1918 - DAY

77

The bloody Grim Reaper saved his best for last - Mont Blanc. The seizure of this mountain fortress was the most murderous engagement of the entire war. We had 7,800 casualties taking it. The French had tried for years without success. I earned a second Bronze Star for knocking out three machine guns.

Justifiably, Pershing pulled our brigade from the line. Headquarters notified me that they'd processed the marriage application, but had denied the furlough request. I had also received another promotion to sergeant.

Lynn's welcome response arrived during the second week of October. Her letter read as follows:

LYNN

11 October 1918 My Dearest Sean,  
Whenever your letters arrive, my eyes just fill with tears of joy that you're alive and well. I love you so much! I want that incredible body just as I remember it, and believe me, I remember it well. There just isn't enough space for the wounded, so those who are at the last stages of recovery are being reassigned to local cottages. Gus has been put under my care. His wound is healing, and the effects of his trauma have subsided noticeably. I expect he'll be back

(MORE)

LYNN (cont'd)

to your unit within two weeks. The British Weald regiment has been relocated close to the hospital. Remember those four we met on our first date at the Eiffel Tower? They were from that unit. Soon the war will be over. Then we can settle down to raise the son that I know I'm carrying. Yes, my darling, you read correctly. I want your baby and can't wait until we've created a houseful of Devaneys. I feel your touch. I love you.

78 EXT. MEUSE ARGONNE - OCT.24 - DAY

78

We moved back into the line. Lynn's letters stopped abruptly. I wasn't concerned, since mail often became lost or rerouted. On October 24th, we smashed into the German lines at Meuse-Argonne. The Germans were unpredictable; some surrendered quickly, others fought fanatically to the death. The intense combat and the resulting casualties reduced our effectiveness. Pershing moved us into reserve and approved 48-hour passes. I rushed to division headquarters and picked up my precious papers. We walked to the nearby village, where we pooled funds for a gold wedding band and flowers.

We went straight to the nurses' station. The head nurse, Bertha, recognized me immediately. She was in her mid 40's, chunky, short brown hair, and rather plain. Normally, she had a beaming smile. Her body language suddenly turned evasive, her chest began heaving, and her body trembled.

SEAN

What's wrong, Bertha? Where's Lynn?

Bertha turned and wiped her eyes, now flooded with tears.

BERTHA

I'm so sorry. I knew someday you'd come. I don't know how to say it. Lynn is no longer here. She's..

SEAN

What do you mean she's no longer here? Is this some joke?

BERTHA

I'm sorry, Sean, but Lynn is dead!

Bertha started weeping uncontrollably. I almost fainted and slumped against the counter. Bertha finally gained control and went to the pump and primed a glass of water for me.

BERTHA

I'll tell you what I know. We think Lynn has been dead for a couple of

(MORE)

BERTHA (cont'd)  
 weeks. The French found her nude body in the woods. They never made the connection that she was one of ours. With no means of identifying her, they buried her. She'd been brutally raped and strangled. The coroner found large deposits of semen in her vagina and anus. I covered thinking she might have been with you. I examined the photo and verified her. She is being exhumed and sent to her home.

I wept throughout Bertha's terrible description. I bolted through the open door and vomited. Dick and Herb brought a steaming towel. Bertha came outside.

BERTHA  
 I felt it was best to inform you in person. She loved you and told me about her pregnancy. Something very bad has happened to Gus.

Numbly, I sat there on the hard, cold cement hospital step. Herb lifted my protesting body and suggested softly that we journey into the village and further question the police.

79 INT. FRENCH POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

79

My friends led me into the police headquarters. A tiny man with graying hair and a walrus mustache sat facing the outside window. A wooden nameplate indicated that he was Chief Inspector LeClair. He swiveled around and examined us carefully. He spoke nasal English.

INSPECTOR LECLAIR  
 I've very little information to give you other than it is still under investigation. She had been assaulted and then strangled. It's not likely her attacker will ever be found, not with all the soldiers passing through. C'est dommage.

SEAN  
 May I examine the photograph?

The inspector went to the file cabinet, pulled out a folder, and handed me a photograph. It was Lynn. The photo drifted from my paralyzed hands onto the floor.

DICK  
 Do you have her belongings here?

INSPECTOR LECLAIR  
 What belongings? She was totally naked. There was nothing on her.

SEAN

What about my gold university ring.

INSPECTOR LECLAIR

There was no ring. Perhaps the person who raped and killed her has it. We might be able to trace it. Do you wish to visit the cemetery? One of my officers can take you. We are returning her body to America.

DICK

Herb and I will go back to the hospital. We'll visit Gus and ask him about what may have happened.

80 EXT. LYNN'S BURIAL SITE

80

My escort directed me through the gateway of the ancient cemetery and pointed to a far corner. Simple graves were overgrown with weeds, except for a fresh one that clearly had recently been patted down. I stared at the crude lettering on the stone. I fell to the ground and wept. I remained a very long time, possibly hours, talking to her. Finally, I stood to leave and clenched my fists.

SEAN

I will avenge your death, Lynn.

81 EXT. HOSPITAL - DUSK

81

The sun was setting by the time I entered the hospital grounds. Dick greeted me, wearing the noticeable strain of what he'd endured this horrendous day.

DICK

Gus is here. He's in a bad way. He's not the Gus we remember!

SEAN

Jesus H. Christ! What else could go wrong today? Lynn wrote in her last letter that he'd recovered.

DICK

You'll have to see for yourself.

Nothing that he could have said would have ever prepared me. The room was filled with men whose expressions were vague, their gazes vacant. Others crouched apart from the rest, solitary beings. The most wrenching sight was Gus. He sat in a corner with his mouth slobbering and his hands clutching. His wild, crazed eyes focused on me.

GUS

Lynn! Lynn!

My already frazzled nerves could not stand that madhouse, and I shrank back and brushed against a doctor who had just

entered the ward. He pushed me aside, but I grabbed his arm.

SEAN

My God, Doctor, what in the hell happened to Private McCracken?

DOCTOR

I don't have much time as my caseload is extreme. He had recovered and was scheduled for release. We discovered him in this condition outside a peasant's cottage. Slackers think they can avoid combat by faking shellshock.

SEAN

How do you plan to treat him?

DOCTOR

We have two treatments for combat neurosis. Did you finish high school? Most treat this disorder by electric shock. We administer pain in increasing levels until he can no longer endure it. The other treatment is hypnosis. We're done.

82 INT. NURSES' QUARTERS - DAY

82

I went to the nurses' quarters and asked about my ring. Bertha returned carrying the treasured framed sketch from that day when we'd posed near the Seine. I tucked the portrait under my arm without looking at it.

BERTHA

There is no ring.

83 INT. TAVERN IN VILLAGE - NIGHT

83

In a small tavern that served only wine, away from the usual traffic of soldiers on leave, my friends maintained a steady stream. I drank myself into absolute oblivion.

84 EXT. FRONT - FINAL OFFENSIVE - DAY

84

Our offensive kicked off on November 1st. My temperament was murderous and suicidal. Our platoon bogged down immediately after the opening assault. Heavy machine gun fire blistered us from a fortified pillbox approximately one hundred yards ahead. Men piled into a shell-sculptured foxhole and refused to face that murderous spray. I began streaking toward the pillbox. A trail of bullets peppered the ground ahead. I ignored them and ripped off the pins from two grenades and hurled them toward the blazing gun slot. I didn't bother to assess the damage but continued racing toward the bunker.

I jammed my rifle barrel into the slot and emptied two clips. I kicked in the bunker door and peered inside. Pimple-faced boys and old men lay sprawled in every possible

gymnastic contortion. A hand suddenly pinched my shoulder. I whirled around to find Sergeant Klymer casually spitting a stream of tobacco juice into a dead German's open mouth.

SERGEANT KLYMER

You can stop. You got them all.

God have mercy on my soul. I even executed beardless boys who whimpered for their lives as urine ran down their legs.

85 EXT. ARMISTICE - NOV. 11, 1918 - DAY 85

An uncanny silence fell like a blanket over the Western Front that morning at 11 AM. Exhausted marines collected in small groups and built fires. They talked of friends who'd died and of the other unfortunates who had just now perished senselessly while assaulting some now meaningless objective. They keeled over into a comatose sleep, their bodies instinctively knowing they'd not have to stir to the sounds of battle ever again. I wandered off weeping bitterly.

86 EXT. OCCUPATION OF GERMANY AND RETURNING HOME - DAY 86

We occupied German territory before finally boarding a transport in July of 1919 and steaming for home. During the occupation, we had often contacted the Auteuil Hospital and had monitored Gus's progress. He had since been transferred to a veteran's hospital in New York City. I stared out the window as our train chugged over the tracks and isolated myself from the parties that sprang up throughout the train.

Dick and Herb understood my disposition and considerately left me alone. They exited the train in New York, making promises about being together and offering assurances that things would be normal once again. I went on to Boston.

87 EXT. LYNN'S HOMETOWN - DAY 87

I took a taxi to Lynn's hometown. I stared at the house that once had been home to my beautiful Lynn. The red door of Lynn's quiet country home swung open. My tears erupted freely, for before me was her mother, an older version of the girl I'd loved. Mrs. Hamilton tried to smile but began weeping. She needed no introduction.

MRS. HAMILTON

You'll want to see her room and visit her grave. Please come in.

88 INT. LYNN'S BEDROOM - DAY 88

There, resting on a pine bureau, was a photograph of Lynn as a young girl of twelve or thirteen. She sat on a rope swing, her head thrown back and those gorgeous eyes smiling at the photographer. Her hair was braided, and her beautiful, long legs were evident even then. Lynn's small room was bright and colorfully decorated with china dolls, college banners, and a large map of Australia. I began sobbing bitterly.

Her father suddenly appeared in the doorway and offered to drive me to the cemetery. He was a large man with dark, thinning hair parted razor straight right down the middle, adjoining eyebrows, and pink, ruddy cheeks.

89 EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

89

He remained silent during the two-mile journey. He dropped me off at the grave and promised to return shortly. I knelt at her headstone and encircled its rigid coldness. Time passed. My elbow hit against a lump in my trouser pocket, and in a flash, the solution became evident. The jackknife molded into my palm. The blade approached the skin. A powerful hand flashed out and encircled my wrist, stopping the downward thrust in midair. What? A second hand joined the other. I stared up at this unwanted intruder

MR. HAMILTON

We loved her, too. Lynn was wild crazy about you. She would want you to carry on with your life.

SEAN

But my life is so damned empty without her. She was carrying our baby. Oh, God! I loved her so much!

He embraced me tenderly, and we sat there by Lynn's grave, wracked by our mutual devastation. He placed a new spray of red roses and white baby's breath next to her grave stone and removed the bouquet that had already wilted. He directed me toward his black Maxwell. We headed toward Boston.

90 INT. CAR - NIGHT

90

MR. HAMILTON

Don't come back. Had Lynn died under less horrible circumstances, you might have been able to cope with it. You must forget!

SEAN

No, I'm never going to forget. Someday, I will avenge her.

He shook his head with a saddened expression.

91 EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - DAY

91

I took the train back to Greenwich Village and began searching for a suitable boarding house. I located a room in the attic of an ancient brick house.

92 INT. VETERANS' HOSPITAL - DAY

92

I arose early the next morning and walked to the veterans' hospital, where I assumed Gus was committed. The clerk at the front desk was very helpful and directed me to his room. Gus was sitting in a rocking chair. His eyes flickered in

recognition the very second I entered the ward.

GUS

Lynn! Lynn!

The light of intelligence dimmed. He retreated within. I pulled my chair closer and made futile efforts to communicate about the armistice, Dick's and Herb's plans, and about my own meaningless existence. Sadly, I left.

93 INT. MAIN OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

93

I asked the head nurse about the possibility of meeting Gus's doctor. Two hours passed before he appeared. His expression indicated complete boredom with the necessity of meeting someone for a medical review. He ignored my effort to shake his hand. He sat down at his desk, drumming his fingers impatiently. His arrogance was blatant.

SEAN

Dr. Whitney, I'm Sean Devaney, Gus is my buddy. We served in France. He bayoneted a young German, and the bayoneted embedded. He suffered terribly from the agony of doing this. Seconds later, he was shot and hospitalized under the care of my beloved, Lynn. Some maniac raped and strangled her. Gus was about to be released. I think he witnessed Lynn's attack.

DOCTOR WHITNEY

It could be that he observed the assault but was powerless. Perhaps he feared for his own life or that of the woman if he intervened.

SEAN

There are two treatment options for shellshock. Which is yours?

Something told me that he wouldn't have the patient, caring demeanor to heal emotional distress slowly and gently.

DOCTOR WHITNEY

Disciplinary therapy.

SEAN

The bottom line is that you torture the man to change behavior.

DOCTOR WHITNEY

I don't know if I like your attitude. I increased the electric charge at each session until his will broke. Gus is very stubborn.

SEAN

You are a fucking psychopath.

I stretched across the desk, snatched his shirt, and yanked him forward to within an inch of my nose.

SEAN

Remember this. You're to transfer his care to someone else today. If you ever lay hands on him again, I'm going to find you and shove that electric prod up your ass!

I emphasized my point by shoving him backward violently.

DOCTOR

(red-faced)

You're lucky I haven't called for help. I could have you arrested.

SEAN

(seething)

You're lucky you still have teeth. Hurt him again, and you won't!

I'd visit Katie and solicit her cooperation. Her old landlord informed she had left a forwarding address.

94 INT. AT KATIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

94

I barely recognized the woman who opened the door. She'd grown into an extremely attractive and poised young lady. She rushed forward into my arms, kissing me on both cheeks.

KATIE

(slight Irish lilt)

How delightful to see you. How is Gus? I haven't heard from him.

SEAN

He's alive, but he's not well. I just came from the veterans' hospital. We need to talk.

I related our experiences at the front, Lynn, the bayoneting incident, Gus's illness, Lynn's death, and my theory about Gus as a witness. Katie listened intently, for once saying little while I talked on and on.

SEAN

Katie, I think there's an excellent chance Gus will recover if we arrange the right type of therapy. Visit him and tell him you love him. You do, don't you?

KATIE

I'm crazy about him. I'll help.

During those early days in Greenwich, I'd perch before my typewriter and try to punch out a literary masterpiece. Gradually, even this naive optimism faded. I began drinking. I avoided Dick and Herb for weeks on end. They still dropped by on one or another social mission. They typically found me unconscious on the floor. After they left, invariably I'd find that they'd cleaned up the messes, washed the dirty dishes, and restocked the cupboards. I rarely visited Gus.

On those few occasions when Dick and Herb discovered me partially lucid, they briefed me on Gus's progress. Katie came only once and left dsgrusted.

KATIE

You're a frigging mess! Your whole life revolves around self-pity. Your buddy is in the hospital, and you don't even visit! It's high time you picked yourself up by your suspenders. Face it! She is dead.

The pompous bitch! I glared at her, belched loudly, and reached for the bottle she'd so boldly kicked aside.

A few days later, Dick and Herb appeared. Not their propaganda again, I thought. Their beaming smiles chronicled their good news. I uncorked a new bottle and waited. Dick moved the bottle aside.

DICK

The new doctor is supposed to be one of the best in the country.

SEAN

What makes you think that anything good is going to come from this?

HERB

Gus is improving. Katie told him about the new doctor, and hypnosis. Katie told Gus she loved him. You'll be there, won't you?

SEAN

No! I hope his therapy works. Even if he tells what happened, what good will that do? I can't fulfill my promise to find her killer.

Disgrusted, they jumped up and collected their coats.

DICK

(eyes filled with pity)  
You're not the Sean I know!

I drained the bottle. I needed more booze.

96 EXT. ON THE STREET HEADING TO SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

96

I teetered toward Doyers Street, a neighborhood well known by everyone. The police were on the payroll of the speakeasy owners, and Doyers Street deserved its reputation for being one of the "wettest. Along the way, I was stopped by a cop who conducted a routine search for flasks. I palmed him a buck and made a mental note to take an alternate route home.

97 INT. TONY'S SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

97

I reached Tony's, my favorite speakeasy. The building sported a sign on its brick exterior that read, "Building for Lease - contact RB Tabbin, Inc." I made my way down the dimly lit hallway until I came to a telephone booth. I closed the door, and glanced around carefully, knocked three times on the right side of the paneled door, counted to two, and knocked twice more. A small peephole opened.

BORED VOICE

Yeah. What do you want?.

SEAN

Sean Devaney here. I am a regular.

BORED VOICE

Yeah, isn't everybody. Come on in.

The innocent-appearing wall suddenly opened. The man who had let me through extended his palm for the expected two-bit tip, and upon receipt, pressed a button. A second character emerged and ushered me down still another hallway. I drank myself into a halfway decent drunk. I purchased a bottle and staggered out, my precious bundle carefully hidden inside my coat. Suddenly, severe stomach cramps wracked me.

98 EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT AND OFF TO MONTICELLO - DAY

98

The liquor must have been bad. I teetered into an alley and vomited. Weakened from the exertion, I blacked out. I awoke to find a rat crawling boldly on my chest. My shoes and wallet were gone, and my rent was overdue. I slipped into my flat and grabbed a few prized possessions but left my typewriter behind as collateral. I headed for Monticello. The mill foreman hired me. The pay was \$13 per week, plus room and board. I learned to make and sell corn whiskey. This kept me supplied for my own evening binges, and a profitable side income among the lumberjacks.

99 EXT. RETURN TO GREENWICH VILLAGE - DAY

99

Over a six month period, I'd replenished my savings and was ready to return to the Village. Sheepishly, I knocked on the landlord's door. He accepted the back rent but refused to give me the room key. He'd deposited my typewriter at the local pawnshop. I found another flat and decided to pay Gus a visit. I was shocked to learn he'd been discharged several months earlier. He returned bi-weekly for outpatient counseling. I phoned Dick to find about Gus's whereabouts.

DICK

Where have you been? Gus is fine. He and Katie are married and live at 49 Foss Acres. We'll meet you there. We know who killed Lynn!

SEAN

(astonished - shouting)  
Who? Who killed Lynn?

DICK

You'll know soon. I'll phone ahead.

The phone fell silent. I literally ran to the address Dick had provided, sped up the three flights of stairs, and pounded madly on the door. I heard Gus's familiar voice yelling that he would get the door. The door swung open.

100 INT. GUS AND KATIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

100

Without a word, we wrapped our arms around each other. Tears filled my eyes, and I felt human emotions for the first time in two years. Her face flushed, and wiping her hands on an apron, Katie came from the kitchen.

KATIE

Sean. I see that you've returned to this world. Welcome home.

SEAN

It's so good to see you. Forgive me. I was bitter, lost and confused. I just talked with Dick. He and Herb will be here shortly. Dick told me about the fantastic news about Gus and who killed Lynn.

We sat at the table and held hands. I mumbled grace for the first time in years. Gus revealed that he would be teaching history in the fall. Katie was a secretary for a prominent merchant. Dick and Herb arrived and settled on the couch.

SEAN

I want to hear every last detail!

KATIE

Calm down. Your agitation more than replicates Gus when he's in a rutting mood, which I must say, amounts to every waking hour.

Gus turned beet red and then grinned.

KATIE

At the first session, the doctor explained that he was going to direct Gus to relax and stare at a black dot on the ceiling. He eased

(MORE)

KATIE (cont'd)  
 my darling into a sleeping state.  
 Gus now avows that he's been so  
 conditioned that he can't sleep  
 unless he's given a little help.

Gus grinned broadly. What a delightful, wonderful guy.

KATIE  
 The doctor then put Gus through a  
 series of exercises with the goal  
 of getting him to speak. On the 6th  
 session he put Gus into a deep  
 trance and regressed him back to  
 his early childhood, Columbia, the  
 whorehouse, God-damn you, boot  
 camp, and finally to France.

Katie winked at me, and faced Gus, feigning anger.

KATIE  
 By the way, speaking of France; who  
 was that God-damned Nicole?

Gus squirmed. The freckles on his face danced as his color  
 changed to chameleon red, Adam's apple bobbing like crazy.

KATIE  
 Never mind trying to compose some  
 lame-brained excuse. We'll talk  
 later, but not on my side of the  
 bed. You won't see that tonight.

Red blotches the size of dimes popped up all over Gus's  
 face. He gulped. We tried to maintain a straight face. She  
 turned away - toying with him. Katie served coffee and cake.

KATIE  
 The next day, Dr. Stein placed Gus  
 into a heavy trance and regressed  
 him to his first combat exposure.

It was then, as she lifted the tray to carry it to the  
 kitchen that I noticed a slight bulge around her waist.

SEAN  
 Is Katie putting on weight, or am I  
 seeing the result of Gus's lust?

GUS  
 That indicates my pleasurable  
 creation of Fergus II or Augusta.

KATIE  
 I am still churning about Nicole. I  
 should cut you off for a week. The  
 next time he put Gus under, he  
 regressed him to the bayonetting  
 (MORE)

KATIE (cont'd)

and wounding. At the next session he was to reveal everything that happened and have no qualms about doing so. I recorded the following:

GUS UNDER HYPNOSIS

It's almost sundown. I'm alone. I hear a loud commotion and see Lynn about 300 yards down the lane. Four men are hassling her. Suddenly, one throws her to the ground. I search for a weapon. I grab a fireplace log and run toward them. The four are British, and wear the Weald Regiment insignia. They're laughing and passing whiskey. One of them says, Barney, remember her from Paris when the fuckin' MPs booked us. Barney shreds Lynn's uniform. They tackle me easily and hurl me into a ditch. They are laughing because I am no threat. He wrenches the wood from my grasp and strikes my head. They carry Lynn to the cottage. I crawl up the path. I hear Lynn screaming. I know they are raping her, and I have to stop it! I make it to the doorstep. Lynn cries and pleads with him to stop, telling him she's pregnant. The rapist slaps her viciously. Each takes his turn, and then they begin again. My legs just don't seem to function properly. Somehow, I find the strength to crawl toward them. They shred my trousers. Now one of them is inside my anus. It hurts. My mind whirls, and I feel myself losing my grip on reality. I begin babbling crazy stuff that makes no sense. They've finished with Lynn. Barney tells the others that they are now going to have to kill us. One reasons that I'm crazy, and the "cunt" would be too ashamed to ever notify British authorities. Barney says that they have to kill her. He said when they decided to start fuckin' her the ultimate step became non debatable. She would go to the authorities, and she would identify them from the arrest last spring. As for the guy, he is off somewhere in crazy land like a lot of the soldiers we know. His mind has snapped. They don't recover. We'll kill her, drag

(MORE)

GUS UNDER HYPNOSIS (cont'd)  
 her down the road and leave her  
 body. Wipe the come off his ass,  
 and leave him inside the cottage.

Throughout Katie's chilling discourse on Lynn and Gus's  
 horrible ordeal, I'd sat with my hands covering my face.

SEAN  
 (wiping back the tears)  
 I know who they are. The bastards!

GUS  
 We're going to kill them!

SEAN  
 You're going to be a father.

GUS  
 Yes, but I owe them.

SEAN  
 We met them at the Eiffel Tower.  
 Their behavior was obscene. MPs  
 arrested them. How will we find  
 them? It's possible that they  
 didn't survive the war.

DICK  
 My father's detectives learned that  
 the Weald Regiment will have a  
 reunion in November. I'll be there.

Dick departed for England on October 28th.

101 EXT. NY PIER - DAY

101

Dick returned on December 2, 1920. We waited anxiously for  
 him to disembark. Dick sauntered down the gangplank,  
 arm-in-arm with a smashing blond. He signaled thumbs-up  
 after spotting us. Our questions erupted the second his feet  
 hit dry land. He grinned and raised his hands in surrender.

DICK  
 Hold on. Has Katie baked a cake?

KATIE  
 No cake. It's impossible to hide  
 dessert around Gus. Sean is buying.

102 INT. MCCrackEN RESIDENCE - NIGHT,

102

We finally settled down on the McCracken's couch, sipping  
 our coffee and feasting on the goodies, Dick milked our  
 suspense a while longer before beginning.

DICK

Upon arrival, I found the regiment's CO, and posing as a reporter, I said that I wrote for a renowned American magazine. I hoped to cover the exploits of one of the most famous British regiments. I said that my editor had authorized a scholarship fund of two hundred pounds for the children of the regiment's deceased officers and enlisted. He gave me a pass. All had name tags, so it was a matter of reading tags and faces. When I asked if any knew Barney and Ian, one pointed to four men in the corner. I ordered five mugs of ale and carried a tray toward them while introducing myself and explaining my purpose. I said that if they'd do the talking, I'd keep the ale flowing and add a few pounds for their time. They were delighted with the idea of an endless source of ale. I asked first about their combat details and then what they did for rest and fun. Barney said they fucked and drank. I asked if the French women were better in the sack. Jonas answered the only difference between women is that some suck dick and some don't. I asked if perhaps they had bedded some of the Belgian whores. Ian replied that they couldn't get at them, but they did get a Yank who was great fucking and that they all screwed her over and over. It was now just a matter of leading them on. I asked if she was part of a team that went to Germany to help with the starving children. Ian said she'd been a nurse near Paris. That prick was wearing your missing ring. I ordered another round and asked about their hobbies. Barney said that every March, they take the first week off and hunt grouse in the Englewood Forest. Once I knew that, I felt I'd gotten all the useful information and left.

SEAN

I'll be waiting for them in March.

GUS

You'll have company.

Katie winced. Her hands moved protectively to cover her extended belly. I looked at Gus straight in the eyes.

SEAN

A baby is coming. You're staying.

GUS

I am going. I must have my revenge.

Katie slumped. Gus was a mule once he had made up his mind.

KATIE

Sean, you couldn't possibly kill them in cold blood, could you?

SEAN

My stomach turns at the thought of what Lynn and Gus endured. I'll find some way to provide each a reasonable chance at self-defense.

KATIE

That settles it. You need Gus. This occasion requires a toast.

Sensitive Katie loved Gus too much to fool anyone. I saw her tears forming again. On her way to the kitchen, her eyes bored into mine, extracting a promise. They also clearly communicated a threat.

HERB

We'll need rifles and ammo.

DICK

The war just ended. England is flooded with black market guns.

HERB

Alibis. We need to keep this mission a secret from our families.

Herb's comments jolted us. There was the strong possibility that one or more might not survive. Katie returned carrying a tray with five glasses and a bottle of wine.

Dick had been eyeballing me for the past several moments.

DICK

We know what you're thinking. You'll skip town. We're a brotherhood. We all go.

Dick then raised his glass, and the others followed. We clicked glasses and pledged ourselves to the cursed scheme we'd plotted. Katie drank none of the wine.

104 EXT. ENGLAND - MARCH - 1921 - DAY

104

We docked. As Dick had predicted, finding our weapons was simple. In England, if you want to talk freely and expect anonymity, you go to a pub. We headed for London's seedier neighborhoods. Gus would chat with a character at the bar. Then I'd step in and ask if he'd served in the war. The chance for a positive response was high, since from 1916 on, England had literally shanghaied men off the streets.

CHARLIE FENNIMORE

I was in the Royal Engineers.  
Charlie Fennimore is me name.

He was perfect. Probably the only connection he had with the Royal Engineers was to be given a pick and shovel and told to dig trenches. He was rail thin, had scraggly hair, only a few teeth, and filthy clothes. I introduced Charlie to my friends, now known by aliases, and divulged that we'd served in the Marine Corps. Dick remarked that we wanted to purchase some military rifles for target shooting. He asked Charlie if he knew where we might find surplus rifles. He tapped his now empty beer mug.

CHARLIE FENNIMORE

I might.

DICK

Actually, we want Springfield '03s or the Enfield. You see, we've got this bet which of us can hit an Ace of Hearts at 200 yards. We think that our Springfields are superior.

CHARLIE FENNIMORE

Heard you marines was good. I know a guy who can 'elp. I'll take you.

105 EXT. ON A POOR STREET IN LONDON - DAY

105

Charlie took us down a bustling cobblestone street. He grumbled about the unemployment facing the workers and the forgotten veterans. We entered a side street and noticed the buildings were in a major state of disrepair. Every indigent, or so it seemed, lounged on front steps, munching on pieces of bread and moldy sausage. The female tribe eyed us curiously, and more than a few hoisted long skirts to expose their naked charms. Shifty-eyed men sized us up.

Charlie charged up the creaky stairs of a foul smelling flat and pounded on the door. The door screeched open, and standing there was a weasel-faced, round-shouldered guy wearing stained long johns. A week's growth of food-caked black-gray whiskers did little to improve his pockmarked face. Greasy hair fell across his watery gray eyes.

BLACK TOOTHED STRANGER

Where in the fuck have you been? I thought you'd died of VD. You've been fucking so many whores it's a wonder you still can fuck, even though your missus says you can't.

CHARLIE FENNIMORE

Hey, 'orace. I met these Yanks at the pub. They want to get some rifles and 'ave a shooting competition. Seems they're willing to part with some good money.

I slipped Charlie a one-pound note for his assistance. He grinned, looking blissfully at the money.

CHARLIE FENNIMORE

Maybe I'll go back to the pub.

We noticed the greed registering in Horace's sneaky eyes as he assessed the commission he might make. He didn't bother to invite us in. From the stench that reached us through the open door, we weren't the least bit offended. His breath was nothing to write home about either. Horace rubbed his hand across his tobacco-stained stubble to augment the drama.

HORACE

Guns are gonna cost you plenty.

GUS

We understand. We'd like four Springfields and four Enfields, with sixty rounds of ammunition for each rifle in five-round clips.

HORACE

I don't sell 'em, but I know who do. For five pounds, I'd be glad to introduce you to him.

DICK

Three pounds, and that's it!

HORACE

(begging)

Four.

SEAN

All right. You're a tough man.

HORACE

(greedy eyes glinting)

Stop by me flat about 10 AM. How about a few bob to tide me over?

DICK

You'll get your commission when we see the rifles, and not before.

- 106 INT. SHOPPING FOR SUPPLIES - DAY 106
- Horace scratched his balls and then nodded in surrender. We exhausted the rest of the day preparing for the trip north. We rented a vehicle for a two-week period and purchased food, a tent, and miscellaneous camping gear.
- 107 INT. BACK WITH HORACE - DAY 107
- We arrived the next morning promptly at ten. He wasn't up, and didn't answer the door until we pounded fifteen or twenty times. Horace finally staggered through the doorway.
- 108 INT. CAR ON THE WAY TO GET GUNS - DAY 108
- Horace parked himself in the back seat with Dick. Gus, Herb, and I jockeyed for position closer to the dash. None could endure the smell, and even Gus, the designated driver, remained hunched over the wheel to put as much distance as possible between himself and this slovenly creature. Whenever he leaned closer to provide directions, we'd scoot forward even further to escape the pending halitosis.
- 109 INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY 109
- Horace directed us to a dockside warehouse and through a maze of doorways that finally led into a small office. The owner's "clerks" checked us over thoroughly before admitting us into a large room that was crammed to the ceiling. They pried open several crates to reveal a huge arsenal We haggled over prices before agreeing upon fifty pounds for the four '03s and four Enfields, plus ammo. We paid Horace his finder's fee and taxi to his flat, or whichever pub was his destination. We sighed with relief as he shuffled off.
- 110 EXT. INGLEWOOD FOREST - DAY 110
- We lugged our hardware back to the automobile and concealed it under piles of blankets and inaugurated our journey north. We carried our gear into the forest and set up camp. We tested all the rifles, sighting them at 70 yards. Afterward, we returned to the edge of the forest and followed a former logging trail for about a mile before finally pulling off to the side. We spent the next hour carefully camouflaging the car with various flora.
- 111 EXT. ADVERSARY CABIN - DAY 111
- We failed to find our adversaries' cabin that first morning. The next day we spread out at 100 yard intervals. Dick found the cabin nestled deep in the center of the forest, near a small stream. The shanty was constructed of roughly hewn timber and was sorely in need of repair.
- 112 EXT. FINDING THEIR ENCAMPMENT - DAY 112
- We moved deeper into the forest. The enemy encampment was about a half a mile from our original bivouac, and that was too close. Herb checked daily to determine if our quarry had

arrived. He was careful not to leave any trace. We spent the remaining time reading, talking, and planning our assault. We felt it ill-advised to make a fire but had purchased warm clothing, heavy blankets, and nonperishable food.

On the morning of the fourth day, we awoke to the sounds of gunfire. The shots came from the northeast, probably two miles away. I bolted from my sleeping bag, groped for a pencil and notepad, and quickly wrote out the following:

SEAN'S MESSAGE

Consider yourselves dead men. Four Marines have come to avenge the nurse you raped and killed in 1918. You also murdered her unborn child. One of us is the marine you beat and sodomized in that cottage. He spent eighteen months in a hospital after enduring your inhumanity. He is not really a killer, but I am. Outside your cabin, you'll find a sack holding four Enfields and ammo. You'll be allowed to pick up that sack and head for cover. You have one alternative. You will write a confession of what happened that night in 1918. It must meet my standards for a confession. Each must admit culpability. You'll then be taken to the police. If you choose this option, you will not be shot. You must finish the task in an hour. There is no negotiation.

Later that evening, I pinned the note to the door. I gathered the group and told them about the note.

SEAN

They are vets. This is my fight. One of you could be maimed or killed. I couldn't live with that.

GUS

Nobody wants to die. I couldn't live with myself if I didn't support you. I saw what they did to Lynn, and you know what they did to me. We are here, because we love you. They'd kill you if you fought honorably, and you would.

SEAN

We have two options. We could go down there and fight them with our fists. Second, we could take them at gunpoint without a signed confession to the local police and contact the French where they'd be tried in a court of law.

DICK

Neither is feasible. Knowing you, a fistfight wouldn't suffice. You'd end up killing one of them. Then you'd have three survivors who'd take you to court, and us along with you. On what charge could we bring them to trial? Rape? Murder? Any sharp attorney would argue that the witness was neurotic at the time and in an acute state of shell shock for several years. My chat at the reunion wouldn't hold water. It would be my word versus theirs.

HERB

Mankind enjoys killing. It has always been his favorite sport. We are giddy about the prospect of killing them and getting away with it. We can say that we abhor violence and that we have second thoughts, but truthfully, we're more alive tonight than we've ever been. During the war, the killing wasn't on our terms. Now it's war with eight soldiers. Even Gus looks forward to tomorrow. If we survive, we'll howl at the moon like wolves. Our victory moment will equal that of any caveman who ever brained his neighbor in order to capture his cave, woman, or slab of meat.

Realizing the absolute truth in what he'd uttered, we concluded our discussion and rolled over to sleep.

113 EXT. OUTSIDE ADVERSARY CABIN - DAY

113

We arose at dawn and took our positions near our foe's cottage. At 7:15, Ian stepped out carrying a bucket that he probably intended to fill in the small stream that trickled nearby. Just as the door closed behind, he spotted the note.

IAN

What the fuck?

He edged closer to the door and stared. Ian nervously scratched his head in bewilderment as he mouthed the note's contents. Then he viciously ripped it from the door before whirling around and sweeping the horizon for any sign of movement. Frantically, he pushed at the door and stumbled inside. A loud stir came from within almost immediately. As Herb had so correctly prophesied, I was primeval man, and the booty I sought was the lives of the men in that cave.

BRIT

We can parley our differences. We didn't mean to 'arm that girl. We'd gone too far and had to choke her.

SECOND BRIT VOICE

Shut up, Ian, you stupid bastard! How do we know you won't shoot us the instant we walk out the cabin?

SEAN

We could have drilled all of you the second you came out. You're getting a sporting chance. If you stay in that cabin and assume we'll just leave, we won't. We'll torch it and give you a head start on hell. You also have the alternative to write a signed confession. You have 5-round clips, and do we. All are sighted at 70 yards.

THIRD BRIT VOICE

Fuck you! I'll take my chances.

114 EXT. BATTLE IN THE FOREST - DAY

114

Collectively, they made a deranged rush outside. They frantically looked around in a desperate effort to discover our positions. Jonas picked up the sack, while the remainder raced for the safety of the woods beyond. We clicked off the safeties and began a flanking movement toward the copse of trees where they'd just disappeared. We intended to rely upon the Marine Corps tradition of marksmanship.

Gus and I would function as one team and flank to the left, while Dick and Herb wheeled to the right. A loud commotion emanated from the copse. Apparently, the Brits had elected to skedaddle rather than engage us. Branches cracked and birds screeched, betraying their escape route.

DICK

After them! They're getting away.

SEAN

No, Dick, no!

Dick hadn't listened. He raced into the open. Herb bolted up to follow but tripped over an exposed tree root. A barrage of bullets rang out from the brush ahead. It had been a clever ruse. More than likely, only one or two were responsible for the diversion. The others had waited. Seven or eight rounds hit him. We stared in horror at our friend's blood-smearred body. Then came their devious laughter.

BRIT

Fuckin' Yanks, we suckered you.

Enraged, Gus and I automatically emptied our clips in the direction of the voice, according to our plan of a concentrated attack. I spotted a head poking out from behind a tree. His forehead exploded as my slug found its way.

BRIT

They killed Barney!

I glanced toward Herb's last position. He'd dropped his rifle and was dragging Dick toward a log that would provide temporary protection. He was vulnerable. I began streaking toward him. Move, legs! Too late. Slugs blew into Herb, knocking him somersaulting until his bloody body came to a halt in a bed of leaves. I pulled him behind a fallen log.

Blood ebbed from my friend's open mouth. Those eyes, with which I'd shared emotions for approximately a third of my life, would never again glow with love or humor. A bullet slammed into the trunk not more than an inch from my head. I remembered Gus. He was the only survivor.

SEAN

Lord please, Gus must go home.

I crawled back to where Gus lay squeezing off rounds. I spotted a darting movement in the bushes off to the left. Apparently, one of the Brits was attempting to flank us. I emptied a clip in the direction of the wavering bush and signaled Gus that I was moving closer and to stay put! He nodded. I concentrated on the bush where I thought I'd last seen the Brit. A bullet whipped into a pine tree to my left and another skipped to the right just in front of my head.

My training said that the rifles were about ten feet apart. Those sly bastards; there were two. Quickly, I rolled toward a foot-and-a-half-wide elm that was about a yard ahead. I swiveled to the side. Christ, they had me trapped! The tree provided only temporary sanctuary. Eventually, my opponents would outflank me and drill me at their leisure. Gus understood my predicament, for the covering fire picked up noticeably. It would just be a matter of time now before the second sniper moved into position. The nearest sanctuary loomed eight feet away. I'd never make it. Where in the hell was that third Brit? He probably also had me in his sights. A bullet smacked into the tree an inch from my supposedly hidden shoulder. He was already in place.

I heard a commotion behind me and was astounded to see Gus racing toward a clump of bushes off toward the left. He was just screaming. A figure lifted up from behind an oak tree and fired. Gus stumbled, but he kept going forward. I'd already rolled left and began running after Gus, who was just ahead. A second shot rang out. Even from the distance of twenty five yards, I heard the heavy grunt as Gus absorbed the terrible impact in his belly. His rifle flew from his hands. Then he was on top of the astonished Brit and had wrapped his fingers around the man's throat.

The man underneath Gus began kicking and churning wildly to escape the clutches of the madman who was now squeezing the life from him. By the time I arrived, Gus had already collapsed on top of the now motionless Brit. I could see the blood stains through the back of his coat. I pulled him behind cover. I crouched over this wonderful, courageous man and turned him on his back. His dilated eyes tried to focus. His breath was ragged. A grin creased his bloody mouth.

SEAN

(weeping)

Why did you do such a crazy thing?

GUS

Somebody had to look out for you, Sean. Not for naught!

SEAN

What do you mean, not for naught?

GUS

I got my revenge. You must now end it for all of us. If they live and we all die, it was for naught.

His eyes flickered, and he began slipping away into that other world. His bony fingers clutched me weakly.

GUS

(dying)

Not for naught.

My spirit cracked and broke as I heard that deep sigh. I knew! I bent down and kissed his lifeless lips.

SEAN

Not for naught. I understand.

I snatched my rifle and prepared to encounter the two remaining assassins. I hadn't gone but ten yards when I spotted one weaving his way up the trail. The other was five yards to his right. You cocksuckers! I squeezed the trigger. My target spouted blood. Then I emptied the clip in the general direction of the other man, who'd disappeared into the brush. Buoyed by a murderous rage, I crawled forward to kill the remaining Brit. I charged. The sound of muffled pain was music to my ears. The wounded bastard struggled to sit up, pointed his rifle, and yanked the trigger. The expected clicking sound followed, but with no explosion. He hurled the empty rifle aside in frustration and clutched at the bloody mass of intestines that spilled from his body. I poised the Springfield to bludgeon him to death and then stopped abruptly. Let the bastard suffer!

BRIT

For God's sake, man, Shoot me!

His pain-tortured eyes pleaded for me to do what was expected. But I was void of humane emotions.

SEAN

No. You haven't suffered enough.

I gloated. Each moan of pain fed my ravenous appetite. Suddenly, the hate drained from me, and in its place arose a frantic need to save the life of the Brit who now lay dying.

SEAN

Oh, Jesus Christ, what have I done?  
Everyone's dead, and for what?

I propped him up against a log and began shredding my shirt for bandages. A knowing smile gathered on his blood-speckled face. I began binding Ian's bulging intestines. He surveyed me with what was either pity or hate, coughed blood onto my face, shuddered, and looked around desperately, as if he were searching for someone else to help him live. There was a gurgle in his chest, and then he died. As his soul left his body, mine surely rose with it. I no longer had a human presence. How could I? I was the executioner of seven men.

I fell to the ground and wept. I don't remember how long I lay there before rising slowly and stumbling back to camp. I collected a shovel and returned to the horrible carnage.

115 EXT. BURIAL OF THE BODIES - DAY

115

I found a peaceful spot in a nearby clearing and began digging a giant grave. I gently deposited my friends into their earthen coffins. I removed the Brits clothing and shoes and laid them in their impromptu caskets. I had not removed my friends' clothing. I lined up the seven with precisely one yard between them. Then I gathered the rifles and placed the '03s next to my friends and the Enfields next to Englishmen. I covered their bodies. Now finished with the ghastly task, I collapsed there and wept and grieved.

I entered the Brits' cabin, collected all the now very personal belongings, placed them in a blanket and carried them to my camp. I tore down the tent, packed up the supplies, buried my friends' possessions, with the exception of Gus's wallet, and hauled everything back to the hidden car. I threw the supplies from our encampment into the back seat, picked up the blanket containing the Brits' belongings, and walked along the edge of the forest until I located their car. The key was there. I motored for six or seven miles before arriving at the seashore. I carried the bundle containing the dead men's possessions and set the packet down about 75 yards from shore. This was just beyond the point where I thought the high tide would reach.

I deposited the shoes, wallets, and the empty whiskey bottles where I'd first placed the bundle and waited until the sun was setting. I watched as the waves lapped against the shore and I was certain that the contents wouldn't be disturbed.

Hopefully, whoever discovered my discards would assume that the owners had foolishly become intoxicated and had gone

swimming in the freezing water. I left the car on the beach and then walked back to my vehicle Gus, Dick, and Herb had literally sacrificed their lives for me. I now had a final obligation to them. Finally, I found an ounce of backbone and drove away from that most horrible setting.

116 INT. KATIE'S APARTMENT - DAY - MARCH 1921

116

I climbed the stairs to Katie's apartment on leaden feet. I could remember no previous deed, other than burying Gus, Dick, and Herb, that required as much courage comparable to that monumental act of knocking on Katie's door. Her soft, approaching footsteps nearly caused me to bolt down the stairs, and it required an iron will to coerce my eyes down to her five-foot-two level. A beaming smile flashed across that attractive face as she greeted me joyfully while nestling a tiny, red haired baby in her arms. Suddenly, Katie's disposition transformed when she perceived that I was alone. Apprehensively, she glanced over my shoulder to see if Gus was playing one of his usual tricks. Her lips quivered, and her normally rosy complexion turned stark white. Acknowledging the unsaid, her body swayed. Her eyelids fluttered, and she crumbled slowly toward the floor.

I caught her and the now startled child, carried them into the living room, and laid them upon the chesterfield. I pried her babe loose and set the crying tot in the crib. Fortunately, I found a warm bottle of milk lying beneath a green cotton blanket. The babe began sucking greedily.

Katie's vacant eyes brimmed with tears when they finally opened. I sensed her need for space and moved toward a chair in the opposite corner of the room. After a few moments, she pulled herself to an upright position.

KATIE

(whispering, eyes boring)

Gus is dead, isn't he?

Again it took more fortitude than this Devaney had ever before possessed to confront them. I reached deep within and somehow found the strength to clear my throat.

SEAN

Yes. They all died and are buried over there. I loved Gus. He died saving me. I am heartbroken!

Katie sobbed and shook in her pain. I rose to comfort her, but her stabbing finger stopped me in my tracks.

KATIE

Don't bullshit me! Did he suffer?

SEAN

(lying for her sake)

No. He died instantly and didn't know what hit him. I'm so sorry.

(MORE)

SEAN (cont'd)

Never did I imagine this horrific ending would happen to any of them.

I remembered every second, every frame of that slow motion movie. Gus's face would forever be etched in my memory.

KATIE

You're sorry! Do you think that bullshit apology is going to bring Gus and the rest of them back? I have no husband, and Augusta has no father. You've realized your fucking revenge. But did you? Your Lynn would turn over in her grave.

SEAN

Please, forgive me. I'll devote my life trying to make amends to you and the baby.

KATIE

(eyes demonic)

Her name, damn you, is Augusta. Do you really think I'd ever accept one dime? I'd work the streets again and consider myself lucky before I'd ever allow you near me. If you tell the parents the truth, that will kill them. They're better off never knowing. Tell them you went fishing in the ocean, and the boat overturned. Make up some cock-and-bull story, and then live with it. You can't bring Gus back, but you can suffer. How I hope you do! Your life is finished, as is mine, but not Augusta's. I won't ever get over the loss of Gus, but what wrenches my heart is the reality that she'll never know him. Do I tell her that he died saving the life of some asshole? Get out!

Displaying graceful dignity, she walked into the kitchen and closed the door. No door could have muffled the hysterical, heart wrenching sobs that came pouring from the other side.

117 INT. SPEAKEASY - DAY

117

I followed the familiar path to Tony's. The bartender took one look at my empty expression and placed a full bottle on the counter. I consumed shot after shot, but the hooch had no effect. I twirled the bottle around. The solution came. Once I walked back out into the street, it didn't take long to locate my quest. I defiantly ambled toward a tough character who leaned against a streetlight, a cigar dangling from his thick lips. I bumped into him deliberately and then thumbed my nose. He knotted his meaty fists and charged. I

didn't resist while he proceeded to pummel me brutally.

118 INT. FRIENDS' PARENTS' HOMES - DAY 118

I met with my friends' parents. The truth would have been much harder for them to bear than accepting an ocean boating accident. Completing these betrayals of my friends and their sacrifices destroyed any last vestige of my self-worth.

119 INT. JOINING BUMS IN DESERTED WAREHOUSE - DAY 1922-1924 119

Rarely did I experience a sober moment. I was evicted for overdue rent and the vomit spewed on the carpets. I drifted aimlessly along before joining up with several other bums who resided in a deserted factory warehouse. I spent the majority of my lucid minutes toiling over a home distillery. It needed no more than a teakettle, corn mash, and a towel.

The bouncer at Tony's had barred my admittance long ago, for not only did the manager consider me a credit risk, but as he said bluntly, my appearance drove away the better clientèle. The bartender provided leads for part-time jobs. A shady local hired me, along with dozens of Italians to operate production stills in deserted warehouses. Rival gangs and the police wanted a piece of the action, and more than one unlucky soul floated down the East River. I resorted to the only proven release and succeeded in arranging a broken nose, loosened teeth, and cracked ribs.

120 INT. CHURCH PARISH - DAY - 1924 120

After one such episode, I was shocked to wake up on an unsullied, comfortable cot and warmed by a wool blanket. I struggled to my feet only to discover that my old, soiled clothes had been removed. On the small oak table next to the cot were clean but obviously threadbare second-hand cotton shirt, trousers, and two black shoes of differing design but with laces and heels. I stared into the cracked but serviceable mirror that hung over the table. Someone had trimmed my hair and bandaged my left cheek and brow. My naked body had also been washed clear of the encrusted dirt of the streets. I dressed and prepared for a swift exit.

BLACK ROBED FIGURE

(Irish brogue)

I see you returned to the living.

He turned and hurried off. I glanced around for anything that subsequently could be pawned. The robed figure was too quick and returned in a moment, carrying a steaming bowl of porridge. He set it down with a flourish.

BLACK ROBED FIGURE

Eat. You could use some warm food.

I snatched up the bowl without bothering to answer and spooned the contents greedily. The oatmeal was heavily sprinkled with brown sugar and laced with thick cream.

PRIEST

I'm Father McMahon. I found you in an alley last night and carried you here. You'd been into the sauce.

SEAN

Forgive me, Father, I have sinned.

FATHER MCMAHON

Yes, my son, I suspect you have. I'll fetch us some coffee. Then we'll hear your confession. You won't vanish?

I shook my head and sat back on the cot. Father McMahon appeared shortly, carrying two beer steins filled with steaming coffee. A huge grin spread across his ruddy face.

FATHER MCHANON

Coffee is my weakness. Wine is a distant second. The good Lord recognizes I consume far more of both than is friendly for the soul.

He remained standing and paced, all the while sipping his coffee. Father McMahon was a portly man in his mid 50's. Unrestrained and bushy black eyebrows grew together above kind brown eyes, and a nose that was not only enormous but red-veined as well, perhaps the consequence of his second weakness. His fleshy cheeks were pink and warmed the effect of his jovial expression. He weighed two hundred pounds. He now sported a violet confessional stole.

FATHER MCHANON

Are you Roman Catholic, my son?

SEAN

Yes, Father.

FATHER MCMAHON

Are you regretful for your sins? Have you resolved to sin no more? Are you willing to confess your total sin? Will you perform the penance given? No matter how wicked a person has been, if he repents and makes a good confession, he'll be forgiven.

SEAN

It's a very terrible confession. Could I confess my sins here.

Father McMahon squeezed my shoulder gently and nodded.

It took more than an hour to accurately paint a portrait of my failures, weaknesses, guilt, and my terrible sins. I spared nothing, including Katie's rejection and my two-year descent into hell. He listened patiently.

FATHER MCMAHON

I absolve thee of thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

His massive arms cradled me while I wept. He straightened my shoulders and said that he would be back with more coffee.

FATHER MCMAHON

Sean, I assume this is the first time since all this happened that you've visited the Lord's house. Your sins now demand satisfaction. You've taken the precious lives of others. You must attend Mass, partake of the Holy Eucharist, read your Bible, come to Confession, and say the eight Beatitudes daily.

SEAN

Father, am I truly forgiven?

FATHER MCMAHON

Yes, my son, you are.

He opened the drawer of the bedside table and withdrew a Bible that lay there. He placed it into my open hands.

FATHER MCMAHON

I must leave you now and prepare for Mass. You'll attend, of course.

SEAN

Absolutely, Father McMahan.

I wept silently throughout the beautiful ritual. I partook of the Communion and remained long after. I returned to the litter-strewn hovel and gave my whiskey still to the poorest hobo there. I located a flophouse near the church and paid one dollar for a week's lodging. I entered a large room filled to the ceiling with semen and urine stained blankets and selected the least offensive. The following morning, I shaved, combed my wayward hair, and washed in the small communal washroom. I bought a newspaper and spent the next hour skimming the ads. Father McMahan saw me at the early mass and smiled. I found work as an editor for an ad agency.

I vacated the flophouse and moved into an inexpensive but clean boarding house nearer to my work and church. I stopped drinking, attended Mass daily, gave my best literary energies to the new position, and practiced the habit of nightly Bible readings. Father McMahan had issued me an open invitation to prattle with him at the rectory on Saturdays.

121 INT. CHURCH PARISH - DAY

121

During one such occasion, he extended the usual oversized mug of coffee, sighed deeply, and began to speak the words that would haunt me throughout the rest of my life.

FATHER MCMAHON

I have seen the range of human suffering. Thoreau wrote that 'The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.' Men jump onto a treadmill in their search for worldly goods. Greed, lust, selfishness, and other ungodly affairs keep them there. God wants mankind to be selfless.

122 INT. PARISH - 1926 - DAY

122

Becoming a Christian in thought, word, and deed was not easy. In late fall of 1926, I was surprised when Father McMahan verbalized my very own aspirations.

FATHER MCMAHON

I have followed you for more than a year. You now truly love your brother and ache to serve God. You wish you were wearing this robe.

SEAN

Yes, but the thought is absurd. No seminary would accept me.

FATHER MCMAHON

They might if you kept your secret shrouded and revealed it to no one. I'm certain you could be honest about yourself while remaining truthfully obscure. Why don't you sleep on it.

SEAN

Father, if only it were possible.

Slyly, he reached inside his robe and extracted a set of folded papers. I stared. He leaned over and handed me a pen.

123 INT. CATHOLIC SEMINARY - 1926-1932

123

In spite of the need for increasing seminary recruits to accommodate the flood of European Catholics, completing the hurdles and gaining acceptance into a seminary required the patience of Job. This culminated in final acceptance at St. Joseph's, a seminary in the Dunwoodie section of Yonkers. I spent the next six years in this peaceful setting.

I finally reached the long-awaited goal. At the ceremony, the bishop called me forward. I gladly answered, "Adsum," which means, "Here I am." before falling prostrate on the floor. I was now an ordained priest. I closed my eyes with the wonderment of it all. The ghosts of Lynn, Gus, Dick, Herb, and the four Brits flashed before my eyes.

After being ordained, I anxiously awaited my assignment. I was thrilled to learn that I'd been chosen to assist Father

McMahon. At last, I'd discovered my niche in life.

124 INT. CHURCH CONFSSIONAL - DAY

124

A mysterious note appeared at the bottom of the mail drop. At 10:10, I awaited for the familiar introductory phrase. It came with an English accent.

VOICE

Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. I must go back to 1918. I was a British soldier in France and in love with a British nurse. My beloved was brutally raped by four American marines and died from the hemorrhaging and strangulation.

I bolted upright. The hair on the back of my neck stood on end. Finally, I sighed. I'd been discovered.

SEAN

(wearily)

You needn't continue this charade. I presume you're here to arrest me. Let's move to the rectory.

VOICE

I apologize for the unnecessary theatrics in the confessional.

125 EXT. ON THE WAY TO THE CHURCH RECTORY - DAY

125

The man who greeted me outside the confessional presented an imposing figure. He was tall, perhaps 6'3", and his broad-shouldered frame easily bore tasteful and expensive clothes. Under his brown tweed sports coat was a yellow, woolen V-neck vest, tan shirt, and gray tie. His trousers were gray, with a razor-sharp crease that led down to highly polished brown brogues. There was a slight gap in his front teeth as he smiled. His steel-blue eyes were all business.

VOICE

I am Chief Inspector Peter Petri of the Birmingham Regional Police.

I sensed Inspector Petri sizing me up as well. Then he smiled and offered his hand. The grip was bone-crushing. Concurrently, I was curious about him but also disgusted by his tasteless utility of the sacred confessional. Inspector Petri's physique was instantly compelling. Silver-gray hair, large, darting, intelligent blue eyes, a hooked nose, full lips, and a ruddy complexion fashioned the features of this attractive stranger. Inspector Petri marched alongside of me with his shoulders thrown back, as if he were a grenadier on parade. I had no doubt he had seen action in the Great War.

We reached the rectory, where I offered him a chair and inquired if he'd like some coffee. I needed some space.

INSPECTOR PETRI

(toothy grin)

Actually, I would prefer some tea.  
That is, if you Americans stock it.  
I like mine quite resolute.

After returning with the tray bearing his order, I settled behind my desk and awaited his comments.

INSPECTOR PETRI

I am here, Father, about the matter of several bodies that we uncovered in the Inglewood Forest. This tea is excellent, but would you happen to have some lemon in your icebox?

I signaled no, irritated by his spurious request and knowing that he was toying with me. I was anxious to find out just how the bodies had been discovered in such a remote area. He explained that the skeletons had been unearthed in 1933 by a bulldozer operator. Apparently, the British Society of Ornithologists had selected that particular site to erect a museum. There were few forests remaining in England, and the Inglewood contained a significant number of birds of differing species. The operator had also found the rifles that I'd arranged adjacent to the skeletons. He notified the authorities, who contacted the regional police. Inspector Petri had been tasked with the investigation.

INSPECTOR PETRI

At the scene, I noted there were seven bodies, eight military rifles: four Springfields and four Enfields; British and American origin; survivor is undoubtedly British or American; conduct an autopsy to determine nationalities.

SEAN

Just how could you determine the nationalities through an autopsy?

INSPECTOR PETRI

The dental work. There is a difference in the prosthetics. We concluded that four were British and three were American. There was evidence of fluoridation on three. The survivor was most likely American. I reasoned that this incident had been an even battle, four on four, because of the the two types of distinctive military

(MORE)

INSPECTOR PETRI (cont'd)  
weapons. I then put in a check on missing persons to see if we had any matches. Next was to attempt to rationalize a motive behind the homicides. There were fragments of clothing left on the remains of the Americans, but none on the English. Another clue was the fact that three of the trousers had zippers. We typically wore buttons and do so even now. Americans started in the 20's. I found this very puzzling, but I assumed that whoever had buried the Englishmen had also removed their clothing. I'll explain later. I had staff draw dental charts of all seven and distribute them throughout England.

Nervously, I interrupted and asked if he wanted more tea.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
Might you have some biscuits?

SEAN  
Maybe some chocolate chip cookies.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
My favorite! May I smoke?

The latter was said as he concurrently removed a pipe and tobacco from his other jacket pocket. He wasn't asking permission - he was informing me of his intent. I brought him the cookies and an ashtray. He watched me closely.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
The victims had been dead for about ten years. This would mean that they were buried in 1921 or 1922. Since the Great War had just ended it was my hypothesis that the battle in the forest was directly related. I asked myself what would cause men, soldiers of different nations to scuffle to the death. A woman was the logical conclusion.

He said that he was aware that Americans had been transported directly to France in 1917 and 1918 for further combat seasoning. He was convinced that the incident that caused the animosity had occurred in France.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
I asked myself repeatedly, Why hadn't the ruckus occurred in France instead of in that remote sector of the Inglewood. And why  
(MORE)

INSPECTOR PETRI (cont'd)  
did it take several years for it to happen? That one had me stumped.

SEAN  
And what was your final conclusion?

INSPECTOR PETRI  
Circumstances did not permit it. Since the battle took place in England, it stood to reason that the Americans had been the wronged party during the war. This led me to two other conclusions. First, the triggering incident had occurred toward the end of the war, and the Yanks had no way to get to the Englishmen. Or second, the Yanks didn't know who committed the crime. I pondered the issues: woman, probably American, raped or killed by British soldiers.

He paused for effect and puffed on his pipe. He wore an odd expression of extreme satisfaction. Breaking a case and informing the culprit of exactly how he did it was probably akin to the cat playing with the mouse. I didn't think he was cruel; rather, he enjoyed the chase and capture.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
The assault must have been extremely violent. Otherwise, the injured parties would not have been willing to risk their lives in a donnybrook, nor would they have been motivated to kill someone else. As for her nationality, well, let's call that a hunch on my part.

His next step was to contact authorities across the channel to determine if they had records of any known violent episodes between British and Americans during 1917 to 1919. He had also requested information involving acts of rape or murder specifically involving an American or British woman.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
It was also possible that the incident had occurred in Germany. So I reviewed dispatches from HQ. There were a number of scraps between the two allies. I got a response from Inspector LeClair. Inspector LeClair did have an unsolved case involving an American nurse who had been raped and strangled in 1918. He gave me her name and her parents' address. LeClair also reported that a young  
(MORE)

INSPECTOR PETRI (cont'd)  
marine sergeant, Sean Devaney, and two friends had visited his office after the discovery of her body. He had mail from Mr. Devaney asking if the attackers had been prosecuted.

I signaled for him to wait, collected the teapot, and ventured on shaking legs into the kitchen. He had me cold. He poured another cup of tea and plucked two more cookies.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
Why did the battle take place in such a remote forest? How did the Yanks know that the Englishmen would be there? It occurred to me that an American probably attended a Weald Regiment reunion. Then he made connections with the four and supplied them with limitless mugs of ale. During conversations, he learned of the hunting trip in the Inglewood and when it typically took place. Meanwhile, staff reported that four persons had apparently vanished off the coast in 1921. At the time, they assumed the four had drowned because their shoes, clothing, and identification had been left on the beach. That was, incidentally, fiendishly clever. Once we had names, we were able to find the dental charts that matched the bodies. The case began to unravel. Which American was in love with Lynn and was the father of her unborn child? The answer, of course, was you. The identities of your three friends' dental records matched the three Americans buried at Inglewood. Supposedly, the three disappeared off the English coast in 1921, and their bodies never were found. You were the survivor.

SEAN  
Brilliant! I'm ready to confess.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
Not so fast. I made inquiries about your background. I know that you're a highly decorated marine with two bronze stars. I have been shadowing you for over a week. Included within my discreet talks was a certain Father McMahon. He thinks awfully well of you. I know that you entered the seminary  
(MORE)

INSPECTOR PETRI (cont'd)  
 several years after the Inglewood  
 Forest incident and have been a  
 priest for the past three years.  
 You've been exemplary. I respect  
 you for this. I'm not about to  
 extradite you to England.

I slumped back in my chair. I stared at the man before me  
 with genuine awe, or could my astonishment be a most sincere  
 piety for a God who had now chosen me as being one of His.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
 The investigation is closed.

SEAN  
 You have the facts to convict me.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
 I shall report that the trail has  
 ended. The old Sean Devaney is  
 dead. This decision came about  
 only after I had uncovered the type  
 of man the new Sean really is.

He held up the last cookie on the tray and stared at it.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
 Background checks revealed that the  
 Englishmen were rotten to the core.  
 Lynn was not the last woman they  
 raped. Father McMahon told me  
 about Gus, and the bestial acts  
 they performed on him. You did not  
 murder them in cold blood. You gave  
 them rifles and a fighting chance.  
 While I could not possibly know, I  
 would even bet that you gave them  
 the option to write a confession  
 and go with you to the police.

I nodded. He smiled as if he knew this were the case.

INSPECTOR PETRI  
 There was one final factor. I  
 served in the war. More than once I  
 prayed to God to let me survive. I  
 promised if I did, I would somehow  
 make amends. You cancel my debt.

Inspector Petri extended his hand. I shook it firmly. Once  
 more, God had chosen to breathe new life into me.

127 INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY - 1936

127

Out of gratitude for His merciful love, I began visiting  
 hospitals whenever I had free time. It was during one such  
 crusade that the long-overdue meeting finally occurred. I  
 was visiting the terminally ill when suddenly my mouth flew

open in astonishment. I recognized the woman lying in the adjoining bed. Her eyes were closed in sleep, and the once lively and comely face was ashen gray. In the space of fifteen years, she had aged thirty. I edged closer and began a silent prayer. Blinking back the tears, I petitioned the Lord to heal her. She moved restlessly. I wasn't prepared for a confrontation, and fearing that she'd awaken, I quickly ended my prayer and hurried out. I went to the nurses' station and asked to see Katie's doctor.

SEAN

Doctor, I am Father Devaney, an old friend of Mrs. McCracken. Could you update me on her condition?

DR. KALIAN

Father, I'm afraid that Katie's condition is terminal. Her lungs have been cancerous for some time. My best guess is that she has three weeks left. I see flashes of spark, but somehow it dims, not because of pain, but rather some thing else. I'll tell her you stopped by.

SEAN

Please don't let her know that I was here or aware of her condition. Katie has good reason to loathe me.

DR. KALIAN

I am surprised, but as you wish.

I wanted to see her again before leaving, so I peeked in on the still sleeping Katie. I tiptoed closer and stood there. I began to sob from all the memories of our happier days. The noise I made was slight, but it must have startled her. Her eyelids fluttered and opened. Katie stared.

KATIE

(sleepy Irish lilt)

If this doesn't beat all! You, a priest. The next thing you know, our churches will have Hitler's Brown Shirts serving the communion. And I thought I'd seen everything!

Katie laughed caustically, and her once attractive face twisted in a grimace of pain. A fit of coughing wracked her.

KATIE

On second thought, you must make one hell of a priest. You're experienced at burying people.

SEAN

Katie, I...

KATIE

Shut up, Sean! You're a mockery to everything that I've ever thought was sacred. Any hope I might have had about life in heaven has been blown to hell. I'd rather end up in hell fucking the Devil if you are serving the Lord down here.

I wanted to leave to end her misery, but I knew that I had to endure what she needed to say. I changed the subject.

SEAN

Katie, how is Augusta? She must be quite the young lady now.

KATIE

(eyes blazing)

Augusta, goddamn you, died fourteen years ago from the flu. You bastard, I couldn't afford the necessary medical care. Augusta choked to death in her crib.

SEAN

May God forgive me, Katie.

KATIE

Don't ever mention God or anything having to do with the church. I'm going to die shortly, and I want you to promise that you'll not come to my wake or funeral. You owe me.

I understood. Reluctantly, I nodded.

KATIE

(smiling slyly)

In fact, I'll go one step further. I think I understand your miserable soul well enough. I'll forgive you, Sean, on one condition.

SEAN

Yes, Katie, I'll do anything.

KATIE

You must leave the church. I suspect you've survived the last years by wearing that collar. I had these visions of you starving or freezing to death on skid row. You can't suffer properly if you're hiding behind that hypocritical uniform. Promise me that Sean, or I'll go to my grave cursing you.

SEAN

Katie, but the church is my life!

KATIE

I expected as much. Now get out!

128 EXT. THE CHURCH RECTORY - DAY

128

That conversation disturbed me. I loved the church, and it provided me with a way of making amends. My life was linked to hers, and I was responsible for the deaths of her husband and child. I owed her a debt. I sought out Father McMahon.

FATHER MCMAHON

Aye, a blind man could read the great suffering written on your face. Our parishioners love you for your goodness and compassion. Katie wants to strip you of the cloth and have you destroyed in the process, and surely it would do so. You think you owe her, but you don't. You have a greater accountability to your Lord, to this parish, and most of all, to yourself.

I drifted into the kitchen and returned with his coffee mug and a plate filled with the ginger cookies he always craved. He must have been upset, for he consumed only four.

FATHER MCMAHON

What will you do? If she is dying soon, you need only to wait.

SEAN

I don't know. I haven't decided.

My dilemma became even more complex when the next morning, a young man delivered a letter. I read the scrawled words:

KATIE'S WORDS - 3/29/36

I am dying a bitter woman. I died that horrible day you returned from England and told me that my darling had perished. The rest of me withered when your Lord took Augusta. There has been nothing but emptiness since. During the last fifteen years, I survived only because I thought you loved Gus enough to continue suffering as much as I. Then you come in here in that collar. That robbed me of my last vestige of hope. I abhor you, damn you, because Gus loved you enough to give his life for you. I am tempted to write your bishop and reveal everything. You owe me!

I folded the note with trembling hands and went over to the church. I spent the next two hours staring at the Cross. I finally left and made my way to the hospital.

129 INT. HOSPITAL WARD - NIGHT

129

The head nurse blocked my passage into Katie's ward saying that Katie had left word that under no circumstances was I to be admitted to her room.

SEAN

You must have gotten the wrong message. She is expecting me.

Katie had been drugged heavily and could no longer feel the pain. Her sagging, glazed eyes battled to focus. I took her hand, squeezed it, and nodded. With the other hand I reached up, unsnapped my white collar, and removed it.

Tears sprang forth from her rapidly blinking eyes.

KATIE

As hard as it is for me to say, I forgive you. I can die in peace.

A slight smile formed at the edges of her parched lips. Her eyelids closed and the pressure on my hand ebbed. The dam burst, and the flood came forth. I sobbed for Lynn, Katie, Gus, Dick, Herb, and now for the former Father Devaney.

130 INT. CHURCH RECTORY - NIGHT

130

I walked slowly back to the rectory. He was waiting and instantly noticed that my collar was missing. He jumped up.

FATHER MCMAHON

Don't do this, Father Devaney.

SEAN

I had no alternative - none at all.

FATHER MCMAHON

You have a choice. Don't do this,

I opened the desk drawer and removed a sheet of paper. I sat down at the ancient typewriter, and banged out a letter of dispensation. I handed the envelope to Father McMahon.

FATHER MCMAHON

I won't take it. You must mail it.

I went up to my room, gathered my few possessions, and came downstairs. My friend was on bended knees, praying.

FATHER MCMAHON

May God give you peace. My life will be empty without you here.

I embraced his shaking body and kissed his bald head. I headed for the exit. I stopped and faced my dear friend.

SEAN

I'll never be what I was before you found me. But how can I ever find again what I've just lost?

On feet of lead, I walked out into the night.

131 EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP IN NORTHERN NH - DAY

131

Sitting near the pinnacle of the mountain, I gazed down upon the beautiful valley, appreciating the wonder of God's incredible artistry. A small stream meandered its way through the lush greenery as if the Master had sensed that the setting would not have been complete without a brushstroke of blue. Tall pine trees fought for space, and oaks and elms had dressed up in a myriad of autumn finery.

In the distance, I could clearly distinguish the tiny hamlet of Stewartstown Hollow. Perhaps twelve or thirteen homes and one general store, had induced the folks who design maps to give it a small dot. Sweeping my eyes back to the valley, I proudly located the cabin that I'd built during the summer. I trekked to the hamlet monthly to purchase coffee, flour, canned goods, bacon, and corn mash to supplement the produce of my garden and few animals. The former grudgingly yielded a dwarfed supply of potatoes, tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, and corn. A few chickens, somewhat under my control, a pig, and a cow provided eggs, milk, butter, and companionship.

INT. SEAN'S CABIN - DAY

I entered my cabin and smiled. One large room housed all the furniture I'd constructed. A large stone fireplace would probably be the first creation to capture a visitor's eye, that is, if guests ever visited, which they didn't. I'd situated a small wood-burning stove in the center of the ten-by-twelve room. The twenty-dollar purchase had proven to be a prudent investment, and it managed to neutralize the chill. The remaining collection included a slat bed, a large plank table, two chairs, shelves for a small but growing library, and a pine cabinet that contained my food supplies. I hoisted the old typewriter that I'd left on the table and placed it on the floor, which was, at this point, dirt.

I had begun serious writing and had sold several magazine articles. I'd learned to subsist frugally.

132 INT. CABIN FINISHING NOVEL - DAY

132

I abandoned my wood-splitting for the next several days and focused my energies on completing the last chapter of the novel. I wanted to mail it before winter arrived. I compiled a long list of needed supplies to see me through the next several months. Determining the amount of corn mash I'd likely consume was the most perplexing calculation. Bottled liquor was available, since prohibition had become history.

I wandered into the store and handed Oliver the manuscript and paid the postage. I began tossing items into a large burlap bag. The prices were not always clearly marked, and I knew they were subject to immediate change at the cash register. Oliver shuffled alongside, bitching about the high cost of freight. The jingling of the doorbell alerted him that a new customer had entered. A chorus of laughter suddenly sprang up from the corner table next to the potbellied stove, where two young men were playing checkers.

MAN

Whoeee, look at what just came in.  
The masked, big titted woman.

SECOND CHARACTER

I kinda like that mask. It lets you use your imagination. You could think that you're banging Jean Harlow. She must get lonely with only a corncob to keep her happy.

I glanced around the corner of the aisle to discover the source of this disturbance. Ignoring the hooting laughter that trailed her was a young woman. A shapely form in a green homespun dress was at the bottom, and flowing blonde hair was at the top. In between, where the face should be, was a mask in the form of a green bandanna with oval slits cut for the mouth and the right eye. That mask covered the right side of her face, beginning with the jawline. The left side was uncovered and presented a woman of exquisite beauty. She had high cheekbones, a peaches and cream complexion, and smashing deep blue eyes that were bordered by long, curly lashes. Somehow, the mask was fitted perfectly. The mask had been tied behind her long blond tresses which had been tied into a pony tail.

WOMAN

Excuse me, sir, may I pass by?

Through the slit in the mask, I saw her full lips and white, perfect teeth. I apologized for blocking her path. One of the young men who had been taunting her arose from his chair and sauntered down the aisle. He was dressed in blue bib overalls, brown work boots, a filthy white wool sweater, and a red mackinaw. His burly form insinuated that he was a man of substantial physical strength. His eyes were crossed. Yellow teeth worked on tobacco. His unwashed odor followed as he elbowed past. She was now inspecting canned goods.

CHARACTER

How about it, Addie? I've always wanted to squeeze those nice tits of yours. You won't be a chance to have a man milk you until spring.

Suddenly, he fondled her ample breasts. The woman, whom he'd referred to as Addie, slapped him with a potent backhand.

ADDIE

(fuming)

How dare you, Teddy Howard!

Teddy glared at me and then at his snickering friend. He was a mean-looking character. He was at least six feet tall, and easily weighed 220 pounds. You look at some men and they promote fear. I wanted to knock him silly but went back to my business of finding supplies and finishing my order. He spat a stream of tobacco juice on Addie's boots. Then he massaged her breasts again. Addie swung to slap him again. He laughed, easily parrying her efforts. Throughout this sudden battle, she was silent. Teddy's crony came running down the aisle, massaging his crotch obscenely.

BOOTH

I wanna feel those knockers too.

I moved into the middle of the narrow aisle, blocking his access. My anger starting to boil.

SEAN

Please leave her alone!

Startled, Teddy released his grip on the woman and turned to face the sudden interruption. His expression indicated surprise and curiosity by my unexpected intrusion.

TEDDY

Now what do we have here, Booth?  
It's Prince Charming coming to  
rescue this fair maiden. You'd  
better ride back to your castle.

He dismissed me and returned his attention to the woman.

TEDDY

Now that I know your nipples are  
the size of my thumbnail, Addie,  
I'm curious to see if you're  
sporting anything beneath that  
dress. First, I wanna find out what  
you look like underneath that mask.

He snatched her bandanna mask off. I stared. She'd evidently been involved in a terrible accident, for the right side of her face was horribly scarred from the edge of her eye down to her jaw. She turned her head in shame. Her left side was an extraordinary contrast - she was movie star gorgeous. Even Lynn, as beautiful as she had been, could not quite compare to this stunning woman. Addie stared defiantly Teddy before yanking the scarf from him and rewrapping it.

SEAN

I certainly didn't mean to stare.

ADDIE  
 (cultured voice)  
 I've learned to disregard such  
 reactions whenever my scarf slips.

TEDDY  
 Prince Charming, if you put a bag  
 over her head, you could fuck that  
 body all night long.

SEAN  
 You know each other. Neighbors  
 would not treat another like this.

A thick finger stabbed my chest.

TEDDY  
 Who in the hell do you think you're  
 talking to? Is this ugly bitch  
 worth getting a beating?

SEAN  
 No challenge meant. Surely you know  
 that no woman should be subjected  
 to such obscenities. Let's put an  
 end to this and go on shopping.

Teddy pushed hard, causing me to tumble into some store  
 shelving, spilling sacks of flour and sending cans wobbling  
 down the aisle. The clatter brought the proprietor running.

PROPRIETOR  
 Stop right now! Teddy, if you want  
 to fight, go outside.

I apologized and began picking up the articles that  
 littered the floor. Teddy bent down.

TEDDY  
 Wanna finish this outside?

SEAN  
 I could have been more tactful.

His companion, Booth, bent over and whispered something.  
 Teddy nodded and then lewdly looked Addie up and down. Then,  
 amazingly, he left quietly and sauntered back to the table.

Addie and I finished reshelving the strewn items. Then I  
 resumed shopping. Booth and Teddy quietly continued their  
 game of checkers. Addie said goodbye and left.

134 EXT. ON THE TRAIL TO HOME - DAY

134

Addie was several hundred yards ahead and seemed to be  
 heading down the path I would use. The store's doorbell  
 jingled. Addie glanced over her shoulder, and noticing me,  
 she stopped and waved before continuing. She carried a large  
 sack, but she seemed capable of bearing its weight. My

stride was longer. Soon, we were walking side by side.

SEAN

Addie, I am Sean Devaney. Please accept my apologies. I don't often get into into such confrontations.

Addie continued her purposeful pace. She was tall, perhaps 5'9". I had no doubt she could maintain this fast pace, even through the passages that loomed on the horizon.

ADDIE

Teddy and Booth are behind us, and they'll undoubtedly badger me. I'll tolerate whatever they say. Don't interfere. They are violent men.

TEDDY

Well lookie here. If it ain't Prince Charming and Maiden Ugly. Don't you suppose we oughta finish what we started back in yon castle?

ADDIE

Please stop this Prince Charming nonsense, The only thing you know about medieval history is that it happened the day before yesterday. You have no argument with this man.

Teddy grinned and worked at his tobacco. Suddenly, he wrenched one of the burlap bags from my shoulder and meticulously dumped its contents onto the ground. He bent down and collected a handful of flour from the broken sack and smeared it over my face. Although I was seething inside, I quietly tolerated this humiliation.

TEDDY

Do you want to protect your honor now, White Knight? Don't worry about Booth. He ain't worth a damn in a fight anyway. It'll just be the two of us in this here joust.

Tobacco juice splashed on my boots. I bore that humiliation.

TEDDY

You had a lot of mouth back in the store. Where is it now?

BOOTH

Maybe he can't fight unless he's rescuing a fair maiden. If that's the case, I think I'll fuck her.

Addie gasped, dropped her sack, and began running toward the mountains. She hadn't made it more than 30 yards before he tackled her. He scrambled on top of the squirming woman and began ripping her clothes. His intentions were clear.

SEAN  
Stop! I'll fight.

Booth panted and unbuttoned his trousers.

BOOTH  
I don't care if you fight. I've  
wanted this pussy for a long time.

Addie fought desperately, her nails raking his face. He wiped at the blood and laughed before doubling up his fist and smashing downward, hard. Addie lay there, stunned. Addie lashed out her long legs. Booth spat on the erection that now popped through his trousers. He lowered himself and prepared for entry. I arrived just in time and yanked his skinny body off. I hit him with a blistering right, His eyes closed into unconsciousness.

TEDDY  
You throw a pretty good punch.  
You're about to learn that I'm a  
little different. I'm gonna beat  
the piss out of you. I'll finish  
what Booth started and fuck her.

SEAN  
Regardless of what happens to me,  
think of the consequences if you  
molest her. I only hit him to  
prevent rape. You certainly don't  
want a prison sentence. You've done  
nothing yet. Please reconsider.

Teddy grinned yellow teeth and then swung a haymaker that landed flush on my jaw. My legs felt paralyzed. He grabbed a handful of hair and pulled downward while simultaneously lifting his knee upward. Everything became hazy, and I fell backward onto the ground. He straddled my chest and began smashing me with half punches, deliberately holding back a bit in order to prolong the punishment he was inflicting. Blood flowed from my mouth. My right eye began closing.

ADDIE  
(screaming, pleading)  
Fight back. Please fight back. He's  
going to beat you to death. He'll  
probably rape and kill me and bury  
the both of us in the mountains.

Just then, he connected with a blistering shot to the jaw. That blow stunned me. Once again, I drifted to the brink of unconsciousness. Somewhere off in the distance I heard a scream. Somehow I forced my wayward eyes open and rolled over. Teddy had shredded Addie's dress and was slobbering on her nipples. I crawled to my feet and staggered toward them. I must have shouted something, for he turned and grinned mockingly. Then he turned back to the terrified woman and reached down to pull out a huge, thick erection.

TEDDY

In a second or so, I'm gonna put my fist through the back of your skull. First, I'm gonna ream this pussy a few times, so it'll slip in easier when I get back.

That forgotten rage of yesteryear returned. My head cleared. There was no way that I was going to let him do to Addie what the other rapists had done to Lynn. I grabbed a handful of his hair and pulled viciously. He howled and rolled off.

TEDDY

I guess you're gonna have to wait. The Prince is attempting a rescue. I'm gonna have to kill him, fuck you, and bury him afterward. I am gonna fuck you all winter long.

I still weighed 180 and was in excellent shape from wood chopping. I had to take him out. He bunched up his ham like fists and started forward. I let go with a straight right with everything behind it I could muster. He stopped for a second, wobbled, blinked, and came on. In rapid succession, I replied with three perfect left jabs. A wild roundhouse right whistled past my jaw as I slipped the punch. I saw the opening and moved inside, driving a right cross straight into his mouth. Teeth crumbled. He staggered and almost went down. He spit out the blood and came forward again. I had to end this quickly as there would be no second chance. I saw the opening and drove that right cross straight into his windpipe. This is the most vicious punch possible. No man can withstand this. I hit him with a right upper cut. He fell unconscious. In thirty second or so, I revived him by slapping his face. As he worked to get his bearings, I hit him again and knocked him out a second time. I repeated this process. I removed their belts and bound their hands

I shoved them off in the direction of the general store, which I knew functioned as the region's temporary stockade. Addie straightened her clothes, put on Booth's coat, and raced to catch up with us. She carried a thick branch.

ADDIE

I can see why you don't like to fight. You're capable of extreme violence. I suspect that you could have taken him out any time that you wanted. Why did you wait?

SEAN

I am indeed brutal when it comes to fisticuffs, but for your sake, I felt that he intended to do what he said he would do. I had no choice,

135 INT. BACK AT GENERAL STORE - DAY

135

The store owner didn't appear surprised by our account of the incident on the mountain. Addie confirmed that the two had tried to assault her. The wheezing old man nodded, took the silent pair into the back room, and locked them inside.

PROPRIATOR

That oughta hold them. The regional sheriff comes through in two weeks. I am the appointed judge up here and will try them for attempted rape. I'd say they'll likely spend much of this winter pounding rocks.

I returned to the shelves and replenished my flour supply. I rushed out of the store. I needed to get home and brew a batch to erase the memories of this explosive afternoon.

136 INT. SEAN'S CABIN - DAY

136

I waited for the teakettle to begin howling and then tossed a towel over the spout. Once again I'd succumbed to my vicious nature, and was now accepting the reality that I was a savage person. Those years as a priest had only been a camouflaged deception. I thought back to that night so many years ago when my friends and I had fought against Katie's tormentor and cronies, what I had done to young German boys who begged to live, and to the Englishmen. The towel became thoroughly drenched. I wrung it out. The procedure had produced enough to guarantee a happy night. I finished my chores and carried the milk and eggs into the root cellar. I returned to the table and prepared my psyche for the easily attainable hate and self-loathing that would soon surface. As was the norm, my concoction was horrible. I remembered Katie and sipped again. It slid down more easily, warming the cockles of my drunken soul. Soon, I blacked out.

Ralph, the rooster's, crowing awoke me the next morning. I staggered, shivering from the cold. Although it was only late September, evening temperatures often fell into the low twenties. Washing the dishes couldn't be delayed. I picked up the bucket and walked two hundred yards to the stream.

I stepped out the front door and stared. A wicker basket covered by a blue towel rested on the front step. I peered inside to find a loaf of fresh bread and a dozen cinnamon cookies. I scanned the horizon but saw no one. I carried the basket inside and emptied its contents. I placed it back on the front step and continued on down to the stream. Emma spotted me and leisurely began swishing her way toward the small barn and the special scoop of grain she knew would be waiting if she didn't suddenly take off for the mountains. Emma was an unpredictable old soul, but she seemed to tolerate human companionship, if only for the time that it took to release her milk.

I milked the gypsy cow, fed the chickens, that dastardly rooster, and slopped the pig, Hamlet. Afterwards, I

collected the ax and proceeded to the upper slopes, where I began trimming some fallen timber. I returned at noon to the cabin for a lunch of eggs and bread and noticed that the basket had disappeared from the doorstep.

137 EXT. SEAN'S CABIN - DAY

137

The mystery, deliciously, continued. During the subsequent week, every other day I found that basket filled with vegetables, bread, pies, cakes, or cookies. I knew that Addie was the secret caterer. I was splitting wood one afternoon when I experienced that certain sensation that someone was watching me. I glanced up and saw her sitting on a small knoll, several hundred yards away. I began approaching but she jumped up and bolted through the trees.

My recent drinking binges had severely eroded my supply of corn mash. I made the ten-mile journey to Stewartstown Hollow. It was evening by the time I saw the familiar outline of the cabin. I carried the goods inside and stared. Addie's feminine touch was clear. The interior was now spotless. She'd scrubbed the dishes and pots that I'd left on the fireplace hearth. The floor had been swept and the tiny food crumbs had been picked up. A red linen tablecloth adorned the plank table, and a bouquet of wild flowers now suggested a homey atmosphere. Lynn's portrait had been lowered to eye level to be more appropriately seen when sitting. The library collection was now dust free.

138 EXT. LOOKING FOR THE COW, EMMA - DAY

138

I searched for Emma and found her munching contentedly on a swath of freshly cut grass. Her bag was empty. Immediately, I inspected the root cellar. Sure enough, the bucket of cool milk was there, as was a freshly plucked pheasant. By now, my curiosity had reached the scratching point. I had to discover where Addie lived and personally thank her.

139 EXT. LOOKING FOR AND FINDING ADDIE'S CABIN - DAY

139

I found her cabin in the afternoon. It was well situated, nestled between tall pine trees on a small knoll. The knoll was sheltered by a bank, which undoubtedly helped keep most of the cold west wind from whistling through the cabin cracks. A large fireplace chimney poked through the east side of the tar-papered roof, while a metal pipe on the west side, indicated that she also had a wood burning stove for its intense heat and cooking. A sizable woodpile stood within one hundred yards of her front door. The wood seemed very dry, having aged at least three years. Another pile of stacked green wood was situated closer to the cabin. A small outhouse and a shed comprised her remaining property. It was likely that she had a cow, chickens, and a pig. I knocked.

SEAN

It's Sean Devaney. I've come to thank you for the food baskets and your appreciated housecleaning.

ADDIE

I prefer that you stay outside. The fact that I must wear a mask in the company of people is difficult for me and for them. You may open the door and sit on the threshold. I'll pull a chair over so we can chat. I do take pleasure from your visit.

SEAN

What is your last name, Addie, and how long have you lived up here? Your accent suggests that you spent most of your life somewhere else.

ADDIE

St. John. I've been here for nine years. I was born in Massachusetts and moved to Keene, New Hampshire at age twelve. Why do you drink?

SEAN

I drink because it helps erase unbearable memories. I assume that you saw the empty bottle.

ADDIEES

Yes and the reek of the teakettle. Do you indulge because of that lovely woman in the portrait? Did something terrible happen to her?

SEAN

I fell in love with Lynn during the war. An unspeakable incident caused her death in 1918. Yes, that's one reason why I drink. I can see that you come right to the point. Since we are being so candid, what caused your accident, Miss St. John?

ADDIE

Before I respond, I'd like to show you something. I'll be right back.

Shortly, her green flannel-sleeved arm extended through the doorway. I grasped the photograph and stared. Lynn had been a consummate beauty, but I had to concede that the picture of the youthful Addie outclassed even her. In Addie's instance, one can only say that the bone structure, eyes, lips, eyebrows, nose, chin, and the animation of her features blended together in absolute synchronization. It was the Addie of perhaps eighteen years that smiled back from the picture. She looked so pure and yet so feminine in a frilly white dress. She was breathtaking. Addie would have won any beauty contest she entered - no question about it.

SEAN

My gosh, you were very beautiful.

ADDIE

Thank you. I was a freshman at Boston College. I'd returned home for Thanksgiving. The accident occurred one night while I was in the basement doing a chemistry experiment. My parents were sleeping. I must have combined the wrong chemicals, and there was an explosion. Suddenly, the right side of my face began burning. The pain was excruciating. I ran screaming upstairs, and on the way, I crashed into the stovepipe that led to my parents' room. I was knocked off balance and hit my head on the stove, rendering me groggy. When I recovered, smoke was everywhere, and the house was on fire. It was too late by the time I got to my mom and dad. They'd perished from smoke inhalation. I couldn't stand the thought of them burning. The stairway was in flames, and so  
(sobbing)

I broke the window and tossed them out. Then I jumped. Fortunately, there had been a heavy snowfall that week which helped break the fall. I am responsible for my parents' deaths, and I cry about it all the time.

SEAN

What a tragedy to have lost your parents that way. The Lord takes us when it is our time. But why do you remain here? Surely you could have been examined by burn specialists?

ADDIE

I was insolvent. Although my father was fairly affluent, he was one of those who never believed in banks, and consequently secreted his money in a wooden box beneath their bed. Our home burned to the foundation. Afterward, I sold the land and cashed in the small insurance policy, but there wasn't much left other than enough to supply my basic needs. I moved north because I love this part of the state, and because my face is less important than is my need for space and privacy. Please return my photograph?

I glanced at it one more time before handing it through the doorway. Gosh, what a striking young lady. She was stunning!

ADDIE

I saw your typewriter while I cleaned your cabin. Are you a writer, and how does a writer learn to throw such devastating punches?

SEAN

I've had several occupations, some of which I'm not especially proud of. One in particular was wonderful and so fulfilling, but situations led me to leave. For the time being, I write. Finally, I was on the boxing team at Columbia.

I choked back tears as flashbacks of Lynn, Gus, Dick, and Herb raced through me. They were always below the surface.

ADDIE

You're running away from something.

SEAN

I suspect I am.

ADDIE

I want you to be honest. Were you shocked that day when Teddy ripped off my mask? Was I hideous?

SEAN

I saw two different women. One side was very beautiful; the other, I must admit wasn't because of the accident. What I observed was breeding, character, and decency. In my opinion, that's far more important than a person's appearance. The fact that your face is scarred is of no significance. I'd like to be your friend.

ADDIE

It's very significant to me. No woman, even one with no interest in romantic relationships, could ever permit herself to be humiliated by exposing a face like mine to another man, even in friendship. I'm not vain, but I am proud enough to avoid pity. I'd prefer to continue our friendship at a distance. I enjoyed our chat and getting to know you better.

140 EXT. SEAN'S CABIN - DAY

140

On the morning of the eighteenth anniversary of Lynn's death, I decided not to work after tending to the animals. Instead, I toiled throughout the morning, brewing mash in preparation for an afternoon and evening wake in memory of that extraordinary woman. Those memories were painful, and before long, I became thoroughly depressed. Lynn's memories also provoked those of Gus, Dick, Herb, and Katie. I began gulping the brew by noon. I moved the table and chair closer to the fireplace. Recollections of those saddest moments in my life kept resurfacing. The first bottle only wet my whistle, but the buzz was no mirage. I started sipping from the second. I didn't care that lately my drinking caused blackouts, and I chugged some more. I began to drift off.

ADDIE

(pleading)

Wake up! Your cabin is on fire!

I made a halfhearted effort to focus on the source just as a bucket of cold water came cascading down. My throbbing head suddenly became conscious of a tremendous surge of heat. Smoke swirled inside my nostrils. I smiled, thinking that Hell had finally cashed in its long-overdue chips.

EXT. LAWN OUTSIDE CABIN - DAY

I opened my eyes and recognized the familiar landscape of the north lawn outside my cabin. What was I doing out here? Surrounding me were personal belongings: the typewriter, a few books, the portrait of Lynn and me at the Seine, photographs of my deceased friends, and a heavy red mackinaw. Addie St. John squatted beside me and pointed in the direction of the cabin. It was ablaze.

SEAN

What happened, Addie?

ADDIE

I'm not sure, but I didn't notice you working today and came down to investigate. I assumed that perhaps you were ill or had somehow injured yourself. I spotted the smoke. I'd bet that your table was too close to the fireplace. You were obviously too smashed to notice, or you'd passed out.

SEAN

For what it is worth, and I mean it sincerely, you're quite a woman. You risked your life to rescue what hell would have rejected.

ADDIE

I'm sorry I didn't salvage other valuables, but there just wasn't enough time. After I dragged you out, the next thing that I gathered was Lynn's portrait. Then I grabbed a few of the other things I thought you'd want. I'll help you rebuild, but it's doubtful that it could be completed before bad weather. Once the snow is waist deep, it will be impossible to move the logs.

SEAN

I'm not leaving. I'll sleep in my barn with the animals and work day and night if necessary. My animals!

I glanced toward the barn. I too was on fire.

SEAN

Emma, I've got to get her out!

141 INT. SHED CONTAINING EMMA THE COW - DAY

141

She was still tied up. I began racing toward the shed. Emma moaned pathetically as I bolted through the door. The flames consumed fodder, timber, and my life of fragile peace and secularity. I untied the kicking, frightened beast and watched with glee as she crashed through the open door. I'd be fortunate if I saw her within a fortnight. Then I heard a noise above. I looked up just as a section of the roof caved in. I covered my head. Stars began sparkling.

142 INT. ADDIE'S CABIN - DAY

142

My nose began involuntary sniffing even before my eyes opened. The irresistible aroma of apple pie with plenty of cinnamon drew my honey-bee proboscis toward the center of the nectar. Addie was bent over the fireplace hearth, busy checking the crust. Apparently satisfied that the pie had sufficiently browned, she grabbed a long wooden bread paddle and carried the pie into the kitchen.

Any home decorator would have surveyed the room and nodded in respect. Addie was a virtuoso in transforming simplicity into a work of art. Assorted needlepoint and crewel productions hung strategically on the wooden plank walls. A large, framed oil painting of her cottage, as seen from the top of a mountain, suggested additional talents in that medium. A rocking chair was stationed near the stone fireplace. Nearby stood a hutch containing at least a four piece setting of fine china and assorted silver bowls. Several small tables were situated throughout and were covered by lace doilies and topped with blue hurricane lamps. There was an easy chair of pale blue topped by a folded afghan. The couch upon which I was lying featured the same blue material.

The room was colorful and very cozy. To the left of the fireplace, and jaunting out for perhaps six feet, was a loft. A ladder led up to the edge of a brass bed. Directly facing the north wall was a small room that apparently served as her sewing and craft center.

Addie parted the yellow curtains above the kitchen window and placed the apple pie there to cool. Her kitchen contained a water pump, a metal vat for dishes and laundry, an icebox, a homemade plank table, two chairs, a small stove, a spice rack, and a cabinet that housed an assortment of canned goods. A vase of dried flowers graced the table. I shifted and winced with pain. I yanked the multicolored quilt aside and, not surprisingly, discovered both hands wrapped in gauze. My left arm was positioned in a sling. Addie had apparently rescued me a second time.

I returned my attention to the kitchen and watched her reach into the spice rack and remove a small vial. This she carried over to the open window and sprinkled on the cooling pie - ah, cinnamon. Addie was fashionable in her red gingham outfit highlighted by tiny blue flowers. A matching bandanna was fitted snugly around her head. Her feet sported a pair of soft, leather, homemade moccasins. She must have sensed my appraisal, for she turned and came into the main room. The red bandanna provided a certain exotic style to her outfit. It appeared almost chic, as if it were nothing out of the ordinary for a woman to have her head covered by a mask. Addie greeted me warmly and inspected my sling. She smiled with satisfaction and flashed those perfect teeth.

ADDIE

(laughing softly)

How are you feeling, Mr. Devaney?  
I thought you understood my fear of  
being around fire. Yet twice now  
I've been forced to enter a burning  
building. If there is a third time,  
I might let the Devil capture you.

SEAN

Hell is too good for the likes of  
me. I see that you've made some  
makeshift repairs on me. Once more  
I must thank you. I'm curious. How  
did you manage to get me here? My  
cabin is at least five miles away,  
and I weigh around 180 pounds.

ADDIE

You rode across your cow's back. I  
chased her down after I hauled you  
out of the fire, found a vine, tied  
it around the critter's neck,  
tossed you on, and led her with one  
hand while toting a few belongings.  
Your typewriter is there under  
cover. I'd imagine that you're

(MORE)

ADDIE (cont'd)

hungry. Supper will be served in a half hour. Might I suggest you get some fresh air. The privy is near the shed. Your coat is behind you.

A light snow was falling. The temperature had dropped to the low teens, and a blustery wind of fifteen or twenty knots added a sharper bite to the air. I didn't linger any longer than necessary. Unbuttoning my corduroy trousers was difficult due to my bandaged hands. Dinner was not quite ready when I returned, so I sat down in the easy chair and selected a book from her library. From the description on the inside cover, "Gone with the Wind" looked very promising. Addie noticed that I had selected this book. She told me that it was new, having been released only a few months ago. She had picked it up in Concord on a shopping trip. She had read it and just loved the story.

Soon Addie called me to the table, which was now covered with a white tablecloth. She had been right. My appetite was ravenous. The menu included boiled carrots, baked potatoes, squirrel, biscuits, and plenty of thick gravy. Two cups of steaming tea and a small pitcher of wild honey completed the fare. Addie bowed her head, folded her hands, and said grace. Finishing, she studied me carefully.

ADDIE

Are you religious, Mr. Devaney?

SEAN

I try to be a Christian, Miss St. John, but I have failed miserably.

The food was delicious, as expected. Addie acknowledged that she enjoyed cooking but rarely ever had a guest other than an occasional friend from college. Through the window, I noticed that the light snow had increased to a raging blizzard. The wind had also picked up considerably. The tall pine trees swayed under its force.

SEAN

I expect to leave early in the morning to return to my property and build a temporary shelter. I'm very grateful for your hospitality.

ADDIE

I hate to dash your hopes, but I'm afraid the weather isn't going to be the least cooperative. I'd say from your accent that you're not a native New Englander. Believe me, the snow comes early and hard. Your progress with only the one arm will be limited, and you'll scream with agony if you try to grip an ax. If the bad weather diminishes, perhaps

(MORE)

ADDIE (cont'd)

the two of us can cut up enough logs to build you a functional cabin. I doubt it, though. We'll travel to your property and see if anything salvageable survived.

Addie cleared the table and began cutting huge slabs of the apple pie. She watched me devour the first piece and automatically refilled the plate. It was a bit tart, but that had always been my preference.

After Addie scrubbed the dishes, she retired to her rocking chair and knitted. I became captivated with the Margaret Mitchell novel. Addie's presence was comforting, and the hours flew by. About nine o'clock, she bundled up and went outside. Shortly, she returned carrying an armful of wood. She crammed several chunks into the fireplace and the kitchen stove. Then she climbed the ladder to the loft and retrieved an extra blanket and a goose-down pillow. She unwrapped my bandages and tenderly applied some ointment. Then she went out into the kitchen and brushed her teeth.

ADDIE

I'm exhausted. You'll find an extra toothbrush and some baking soda in the kitchen cabinet. Good night.

SEAN

Thank you. I'm so very grateful.

Addie scratching the fireplace coals woke me. It wasn't long before the cabin was toasty. Her outfit was a pair of men's blue jeans and a gray wool sweater. The trousers molded tightly to her long legs and shapely hips, and her large, full breasts stretched her sweater. Addie was one of those women who was very sexy without making any conscious effort. Her mask was yellow gingham. She wore men's work boots.

Addie scrubbed her teeth. After a trip to the outside privy, she washed and began preparing breakfast. I watched in fascination as she efficiently did things the old-fashioned way. There was no electricity. Eggs were cracked and cooked on the griddle over the wood stove. She put me to work toasting bread attached to two long forks. I daydreamed before the fireplace, sniffing the brewing coffee until Addie laughed and shouted that the toast was burning.

Sure enough. They were blacker than the ace of spades. She laughed and gave me another chance. After we'd eaten and cleaned up, we tended the animals. Emma was not overjoyed to see me. She did, however, in her own way, seem to appreciate sharing the company of Addie's cow, Swisher. I made myself useful by feeding the chickens and slopping the pig. Addie packed thick cheese sandwiches. We began our journey. Addie wore a Navy pea coat. Addie shouldered a double-edged ax and a large gunny sack.

143 EXT. OUTSIDE SEAN'S BURNED CABIN - DAY

143

We arrived at eleven o'clock and began poking through the still-smoldering ruins. Addie uncovered an iron skillet, doused it in the stream, and tossed it into the sack. In the root cellar she also unearthed some meat and grain that had escaped the fire. A,B,C, and Ralph had perished. Addie felled two large oak trees and expertly lopped off the branches. I watched in admiration, for she swung the ax tirelessly. She was definitely no soft woman and yet she was very feminine. I was powerless to help because of my burned hands and broken arm, but I pitched in by kicking the small branches aside. Addie glanced at the sun and announced that it was three o'clock - time to head for home. My watch read 2:57. She tied the sack containing the food and skillet over my good shoulder. She carried the typewriter. We probably hadn't spoken more than ten sentences since we'd arrived, yet I had felt contented and very much at peace.

144 EXT. WORKING FALLING TIMBER - DAY

144

Every day for the next week, we trekked over the mountain and worked feverishly to section up logs from the three large trees she had toppled. We couldn't move the logs to the site of my previous cabin, but we could build on the spot where the logs now rested. By this point, my hands had sufficiently healed to be able to collect and carry off small branches. I'd also begun assuming more of the mundane chores around her home, such as clearing the table, tending to the fires, carrying in the wood, and feeding the animals.

145 INT. - LIFE IN ADDIE'S CABIN - DAY

145

During those early days and weeks, Addie and I constantly discovered interesting trivia about each other. We also learned to respect our differences and moods. It was probably around the third evening we were together when Addie asked me to say grace, but tactfully said it herself when I didn't respond. She didn't bring the matter up again.

Our conversations ranged from the Depression, President Roosevelt, the New Deal, Adolph Hitler, writers, movies, unionism, and the like. Addie had a limited exposure to some of these topics due to her long period of isolation on the mountain, but she was highly intelligent and asked probing questions. She was extremely logical in defending those positions in which she was learned. She had a photographic memory and, I must admit, a vocabulary superior to mine.

After I'd been there about ten days, she announced one morning that she wouldn't be going over to my site. Instead, she planned to shop in Stewartstown Hollow. Her staples, especially flour for my pies, were dwindling. She suggested that I stay home and move dry wood closer to the cabin.

I watched her stroll briskly off toward the horizon, dragging a sled. I began toiling on the woodpile and kept studying the horizon, checking my watch every half hour. She returned with the overflowing sled just as I finished baking

bread for our supper. I carried the supplies into the kitchen and began placing them on the shelf; suddenly, I stopped and stared at her in amazement. Nestled inside the box was a teakettle and a bag of corn mash.

ADDIE

I am not encouraging drinking, but you may partake of the mash under two stipulations: your drinking is to be restricted to one night per week, and you may participate only after I've retired for the evening.

I nodded, deciding that I would start tonight. The next morning, I awoke to a splitting headache. I was lying on the floor without remembering how I got there. Addie had already gotten out of bed and, as I knew by now, had just begun her routine of brushing her long hair. I stumbled over to the couch and pretended to sleep. Addie only had to take one look at my bloodshot eyes to know that I'd indulged, but she graciously said nothing and poured my coffee.

146 EXT. RETURNING HOME IN A BLIZZARD - DAY

146

By ten o'clock, we were rolling logs down the hill to the site of my new cabin. Addie kept glancing at the dark clouds on the horizon. About noon, she told me that a major storm was brewing. We trudged back, straight into the teeth of a sleet blizzard. We were both covered with ice and aching from the cold by the time we reached home.

147 INT. ADDIE'S CABIN - NIGHT

147

That evening, Addie looked up from her knitting.

ADDIE

(rasping voice)

I am afraid that the storm will interrupt our work. By dawn, the snow will have covered our logs, making it impossible to move them. As you know, we have not managed to finish the outside frame. Unless the snow melts, which I doubt, we won't resume until spring. You're welcome to stay here. I've enough provisions to see us through, especially if we hunt deer.

SEAN

I already owe you a debt I can never repay. I hate to admit it, but you're probably right. The cabin will have to wait. I'll leave in the morning. I cannot continue to eat your food and live off your hospitality. I'll be able to find some lodging in St. Johnsbury.

ADDIE

(coughing heavily)

Don't you think it's time we stopped being so formal and used each others first names? I'd like you to stay, Sean, for selfish reasons. There is a great deal of work that needs to be done around here, especially splitting wood. splitting. It is so good to have company. The winter passes by slowly up here. You will earn your keep. And to be honest, Booth will be released in the spring and won't bother me if you are here.

SEAN

I'll consider your offer, Addie.

I was unwilling to relinquish my pride, but inwardly, I was smiling. The decision was settled that night. Addie's cough worsened, and she was unable to leave her bed in the morning. I was concerned that her illness could turn into pneumonia, for she'd spent a great deal of time perspiring in the damp, cold weather. She remained in her bed coughing and did not come down to breakfast. I called up to ask if she'd like some hot tea and whiskey. Addie managed to hack down that tea would taste good and asked that I also bring up some Vicks. I began searching for the latter and heard her get out of bed and shuffle over toward her dresser. Addie had returned to her bed by the time I found the Vicks and brought it and the tea up to the loft. She had donned her mask. That explained why she'd gotten up a few seconds ago. It was extremely cold in the loft, with several noticeable drafts. It certainly was no place to be when one was fighting an illness. Despite her weak protests, I lifted her out of bed with my good arm. Addie's soft, full breasts brushed against my chest as she gave in to the transfer and wrapped her arms around my neck. I carried her down the ladder to the couch, dragged the chesterfield closer to the fireplace, covered her, and tossed more logs on the fire.

148 INT. ADDIE'S LOFT - DAY

148

Then I returned to the loft and began searching for another warm blanket. Other than just a few minutes ago, this was the first time I'd seen Addie's loft. The slanting ceiling dictated that the brass bed be centered, as mobility everywhere else would otherwise be restricted. The remaining furniture was positioned under the slopes of the roof and included a foot locker, a hope chest, a dresser, and a small table, upon which rested an oil lamp and a leather-covered Bible. I made Addie's bed and located an extra quilt.

149 INT. FIRST FLOOR - ADDIE'S CABIN - DAY

149

Addie was sleeping by the time I descended. There was no smell of the potent Vicks. She had probably dozed off before applying it. I opened the jar and dabbed some behind

her ears, forehead, and just above her upper lip. I did not remove her mask. I unbuttoned the top two buttons of her flannel nightgown and smeared some of the Vicks on her neck and at the beginning of her cleavage. It was impossible not to notice the swell of her perfectly shaped breasts. Her nipples were taunt against her nightgown fabric. I felt ashamed of the sudden swelling taking place in my groin.

Addie slept throughout the morning. In the afternoon, she gave instructions on how to make chicken soup, and I managed to produce a watery broth. She seemed to be feeling better the next day, and by lunchtime, she came to the table. We'd both agreed that her sudden illness wasn't pneumonia. It was more likely the flu or simply a bad cold. By the end of the week, she was well again and had returned to her loft.

The setting here in the snow peaked mountains was so peaceful and beautiful that I decided to stay. December arrived. My arm healed quickly. I kept myself busy during the mornings, splitting and stacking wood. I'd also accepted the responsibility for plastering the cracks in the loft to minimize the heat loss, and I assumed total care of the animals. Emma had managed to chew her way through Addie's original grain and hay supply. I went down to the general store and purchased an extra three bags of grain. I loaded them on the sled and lugged them back over the mountain.

I slept through the night as if I were dead. My afternoon schedule included a disciplined two hours of work on my second novel. Addie took considerable interest in reviewing and critiquing each chapter draft, and the book soon became a common discussion point. She always seemed to find small improvements. Each day also provided time for my second hobby - woodworking. I'd already fashioned several small items for the cabin, including a basket for Addie's knitting materials, a sewing box, and a chandelier. The latter became a centerpiece for the living room. Woodworking was good therapy, and I was extremely proud of my accomplishments.

I followed Addie's instructions concerning alcohol. I didn't miss it, and when I did partake, I actually found myself making smaller and smaller portions. I had gone fifteen years or so without drinking, but I had to face the fact that whenever I was deeply disturbed, it seemed I always sought the bottle. Addie surprised me one day at lunch.

ADDIE

Sean, you are a normal, healthy man. I know that men have sexual needs that must be satisfied. I am not physically attractive, but why is it that you've never tried to come to me in the night? Is it because I'm so repulsive?

SEAN

Gosh, no, Addie. I've not made love to a woman in many, many years, and  
(MORE)

SEAN (cont'd)

I expect to never touch another.  
You are anything but repulsive.  
That has nothing to do with it. You  
were, and are, without exception,  
one of the most beautiful women on  
earth. You definitely are the  
kindest and the most thoughtful.  
And from a male perspective, I must  
compliment you. Your figure is  
absolutely smashing. And you are  
very sexy without trying to be so.

ADDIE

Is the reason you'll never make  
love again because there can be no  
one else in your life after Lynn?

SEAN

No, Addie, Lynn isn't the only  
reason. There is another reason,  
much more meaningful, but it's  
rather personal and something I  
just can't discuss at this time  
Addie, have you ever been in love?  
Surely your beauty attracted men.

ADDIE

Oh, when I was younger there were  
courtiers, but I never found anyone  
then I could truly love. I have  
never been intimate. I don't even  
know what it's like to be kissed.  
Now I imagine it often and wish I  
could experience the sensation.  
Sean, please don't think I'm bold,  
but would you kiss me, so I'd know?

What a predicament! How could I refuse her after all that  
she had done for me throughout the past several weeks? I  
really liked this woman, but...

SEAN

I can't, Addie. You must understand  
that my reluctance has absolutely  
nothing to do with you, or with  
Lynn's memories. There is a  
compelling reason why I can't allow  
myself to have anything more than a  
fraternal relationship with any  
woman. I hope you understand.

But Addie was hurt. Through the slit in her mask, I saw a  
tear form, then two. She began clearing the table.

150 INT CABIN - CHRISTMAS EVE - NIGHT

150

Christmas Eve arrived, and our cabin just radiated with the  
spirit. I'd chopped down a small pine, and Addie was now in

the midst of decorating it with her assortment of homemade ornaments. She selected a beaded bulb and searched for the ideal place to set it. Addie began humming "Silent Night."

I stepped outside and smiled at the Master's own special decorating skills. Tall pines were robed in white snow as if they, too, were dressing up for a joyous event. The moon cast a soft glow, making the icy branches glisten. We had been extravagant with our wood in firing up the cabin. It was cozy and warm. Our Christmas tree had become transformed into a living witness. Addie selected a wooden elf with little red boots and a suit of castoff material and stepped onto the chair to place it near the top. Small strips of red and white yarn were tied here and there. That afternoon, I'd strung popcorn, managing to consume a bit more than my share. I'd also contributed to the decor by carving a reindeer ornament and a corpulent Santa. Addie had painted them. The boy in me kept glancing over at my creation contentedly and with very little humility.

I hinted that she could transfer them to an even better location where they could be seen. Finally, I placed the tinsel star on the peak of the tree and bowed with a flourish. Addie skipped merrily into the kitchen and fiddled with last-minute preparations for the wild turkey dinner we'd eat tomorrow. By now, Addie was mindful that I had a weakness for pies. I grinned happily as she rolled the dough and began shaping the shell. Soon, the aroma of pumpkin permeated the air. I started for the kitchen, but Addie stopped me at the door and shooed me away.

I waited patiently, and as expected, she came into the living room a minute later, toting a huge wedge she'd sliced from the earlier batch. Later, Addie said good night and began climbing to her loft. She stopped on the third rung.

ADDIE

You are on your honor to stay out of the kitchen tonight. I know you have a passion for your pie, but you've had your limit. What's left is for tomorrow. Do you promise?

I was stuffed anyway and nodded, grinning. The lamp in the loft had remained on for hours every evening during the previous two weeks. Something mysterious was happening up there, and I was certain that the secret production involved my Christmas gift. I'd been tempted to sneak a peek. The light was finally extinguished about ten-thirty.

ADDIE

Good night, Sean. That was the best Christmas Eve I can remember.

SEAN

My sentiments exactly.

I waited for her soft, regular breathing to begin and then grappled under the couch and brought out my own Christmas

project. I toiled well into the night before it was completed. Smiling with satisfaction, I held the creation before me. I fell into a deep sleep almost instantly.

I awoke to the sound of Addie humming "Deck the Halls."

SEAN

Merry Christmas, Addie.

ADDIE

Merry Christmas! I'm so excited!  
Please close your eyes until I  
reach the bottom.

I obeyed and opened them on cue. A heavenly mirage was standing before me. Surely, I was still dreaming. Addie wore a full-length dress of white lace. Around her small waist was a sash of green silk. Bright green ribbons were tied to her blonde hair, which had been fashioned into the old Gibson girl style. On her feet were white slippers. Long, dangling earrings of silver and a pearl necklace further enhanced this beautiful Christmas effect. Even Addie's mask had been specially designed, having been fashioned from the same green silk as her sash. The top of her dress draped across her milky shoulders and swooped down to display the beginning of her deep cleavage. I stared at her outfit again. It just clung to that splendid body.

SEAN

Addie, my God you are gorgeous!  
Your outfit is smashing, beautiful,  
and sexy. There just aren't enough  
words to describe it adequately.

I couldn't see her face, but I could tell she was bursting with joy. Addie curtsied before climbing back up the ladder. In a minute, she returned carrying her Bible and a wrapped gift. The latter was placed under the tree. I waited until she had gone into the kitchen before bundling, sloppily I must admit, my gift in fabric I'd borrowed from her sewing room. I placed it next to hers and went out and tended to the critters. The cows received an extra scoop of grain in celebration of the occasion. I brought wood in, washed, brushed my teeth, and smiled happily as the bacon sizzled.

Addie poured coffee and dished out the usual three eggs and bacon. She opened up the leather Bible and began reading the Christmas story from Luke. I knew those verses by heart. Tears welled up as she read, "And by the end of eight days, when he was circumcised he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb."

My emotional response hadn't gone unnoticed. She touched my shoulder as she walked past to set the Bible on the couch. Addie opened my gift. I was touched when tears poured from her eyes as she studied it and turned it over. I'd given her an ornate, wooden friendship bracelet and had carved the inscription, "Addie and Sean - best friends forever."

ADDIE

This friendship bracelet can't become an official gift of brotherhood until you've fulfilled one special prerequisite, Sean.

SEAN

And what might that be, Addie?

ADDIE

You must kiss your friend!

She leaned forward and closed her eyes. This special moment could not be denied. My intention of kissing her chastely was altered the instant our lips touched. Trembling, she returned the kiss with a passionate intensity. They were so soft, so delicious. I broke it off, stunned by her ardor and by my own surge of desire.

ADDIE

Now I know what it is to be kissed, and I really liked it. My bracelet is now official. It shall never leave my person. Thank you, Sean.

ADDIE

I can't wait another moment either. Let's go open your present!

I laughed, set down the coffee cup that was halfway to my lips, and sprinted into the living room. But Addie got there first, snatched her gift, and held it toward me. Like the child I suppose I was, I eagerly ripped open the plain brown wrapping paper. I was staring at a framed oil painting of Addie in her Christmas dress. The Addie in the picture had the unblemished face of her youth. In the background was a smaller image of me whittling in the easy chair.

SEAN

Oh, Addie, it's impossible to find the words to thank you. This truly is a beautiful gift, and one I'll treasure always. You've been a great friend. This Christmas Day has been made even more special.

We sat down at the table for Christmas dinner at three o'clock. Addie waited until I was settled before asking me to say grace.

SEAN

Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Amen.

ADDIE

(eyes wide with astonishment)  
 You said grace as if it were the  
 most natural thing in the world.

Addie was a fantastic cook, and this superb meal was no exception. Afterward, as we sipped our second cup of coffee, Addie asked if I'd like to finish the last piece of pie. Of course I consented. As she placed the refilled plate before me, the front of that low-cut dress flowed with her, exposing her full breasts almost to the nipples. At that very moment, the water in the teakettle for our dishes began howling and diverted Addie's attention. I managed to pull my focus away and said a silent prayer of contrition.

What an awful, lustful way to think and act with my special friend. I had once again responded to female flesh. The memory of those creamy breasts kept flashing before me. My manhood throbbed obscenely. Addie noticed my discomfort.

ADDIE

Is something wrong? Are you ok?

SEAN

I'm fine, Addie. It's nothing.

Here I was in this incredible Christmas setting, with a beautiful woman who had made this day so special, and I had become aroused by her innocent serving of coffee.

December turned into January. The snow drifted waist high more and more time with my new hobby and writing. One day toward the end of January, Addie posed a startling question.

ADDIE

Sean, when do you next expect to  
 make another batch of your alcohol?

SEAN

I haven't given it much thought.  
 Maybe Friday night. Why do you ask?

ADDIE

I'm twenty-seven years old and have  
 never swallowed a drop of liquor.  
 I'd like to try it at least once.  
 Do you suppose I could share some  
 of yours Friday night?

SEAN

Of course, but you won't like it.

Addie was school girl giddy all day Thursday, and especially so as we sat in the kitchen waiting for the teakettle to begin its famous howl. She grinned through her mask and rubbed her hands together nervously while I explained the whole brewing process. We produced several batches before I determined that we had a sufficient quantity for some serious drinking. We took our booze into the living room and

sat down next to the fireplace. Addie had dressed for the occasion by wearing a man's shirt and a pair of trousers.

ADDIE

(grinning)

Just in case I keel over. If so, I can sprawl out in a ladylike fashion. Salute! To us bootleggers!

SEAN

Prohibition ended in 1933, Addie.

Addie giggled and lifted the cup to her mouth.

ADDIE

Well, let's pretend that it's still illegal. It'll be more exciting if we sail under false colors.

I wish I could've captured the total facial expression when she took that first sip. The mask, of course, covered most of her reaction, but I could still tell that the taste had been every bit as disappointing to her as I'd predicted.

SEAN

I told you so.

Addie took a second sip. She was a real trooper.

ADDIE

You should know that I'm a very frugal woman. I waste nothing, nor shall I fail to drink my share of this illegal moonshine. How anybody would dare arrest people for making this concoction is beyond me. They ought to get a commendation for having the gumption to drink it.

I swallowed my first gulp and screwed up my eyes as I adjusted to the wicked bite.

SEAN

This is even worse than usual, but it does have one devil of a kick. Just sip. You definitely will have no tolerance for the stuff.

Although it was warm sitting next to the blazing fireplace, I wasn't certain whether it was the heat or the alcohol that suddenly caused little beads of perspiration to break out along Addie's neck. Minutes later, she absentmindedly undid the second button of her shirt. I could see through the slits in her mask that Addie's eyes were glazed from the alcohol. She finished her first cup and requested a second. I hesitated but gave in to the spirit of our booze party.

Within a half hour, Addie had unbuttoned a third button. I knew that she wasn't purposely trying to be seductive, but

her full, lush breasts were easily discernible. By this point, I was as plastered as she and gave up trying to avert my eyes. The thought of her rosy nipples created a throbbing erection. It wasn't long before Addie and I began slurring along. "It's Three O'clock in the Morning" and "Does Eat Oats." Our harmony was dreadful. Addie requested a third cup. I refused. She poured another anyway and chugged it.

ADDIE

(trembling)

Sean. I am in love with you?

SEAN

I know that you care and that I am special. You have had too much to drink. You should go to bed.

ADDIE

(giggling, slurring)

I don't think that I can make it up the ladder. You'd better carry me. Wait - can you make it up there?

SEAN

Absolutely!

151 INT. ADDIE'S LOFT - NIGHT

151

I gathered her into my arms. Addie snuggled closer. Her soft breasts cradled my chin. The situation was ludicrous, and we roared as I staggered toward my challenge. I slowly accomplished the top rung and teetered toward her bed. Suddenly, Addie squirmed, pulled my head down, and kissed me passionately. Surprised, I responded, and in that euphoric state, forgot my priestly avocation. I forgot about being sworn to celibacy. I forgot everything but the moment.

Somehow, we collapsed onto the bed and began kissing hungrily. Underneath, Addie arched upward. I pressed my huge erection into her groin, wanting to be on the other side of that fabric. Addie guided my hand inside her shirt. I caressed her full breasts, touched the hard, pointed nipples, and became lost. Feverishly, I began tugging at her clothing. Meanwhile, Addie unbuckled my belt and began removing my trousers. Groaning with desire, my other hand wandered down and touched her moist, heated core. We were both panting and in a frenzy to be joined. Addie gripped my swollen organ. She instinctively opened her legs wide and guided me into her slickness. Still kissing me, she flinched once as I hit the tissue barrier but pushed upward forcefully until I broke through and buried myself in her moist tightness. Then she began a slow movement of her hips.

ADDIE

(murmuring over and over)

I love you so! I love you so! Oh!

I was oblivious to her words or to the wind howling outside the small loft window. I could only react to the incredible

sensation of her liquid center. She brought her trembling lips to mine as her body continued its spasms. The whirlpool of her internal pulsations drew my liquid into her eddy, and I joined her in that shattering moment of ecstasy. Reality returned. I quickly withdrew and sat on the edge of the bed.

SEA

Forgive me, Addie. I took advantage of you. I cannot love you, Addie, ever! I was, am, a priest, and I've just broken the vows of celibacy. May God forgive my lustful soul.

ADDIE

Oh my God! It is I who should be apologizing. Forgive me. It never occurred to me that you were a priest. I desperately wanted you to make love to me. I love you so much that I had to have you inside me. Our making love was the most wonderful experience of my life. Stay. It won't happen again. If I'd known that you were a priest, I'd have asked you to carry me up that ladder. I wouldn't have kissed you. I wasn't drunk on alcohol, I was intoxicated by my love for you. Why didn't you tell me?

That morning over breakfast, I told her everything. I couldn't tell if her tears were from my suffering or hers.

Our relationship remained strained during the next several days, and we avoided direct contact whenever possible. My guilt was overwhelming, for even though I'd submitted that letter of dispensation and had committed that vow to Katie, I still had a material connection to the robe. I was also sensitive to Addie's emotional turmoil. I was certain that she was in considerable turbulence over her joy for having expressed her love for me in the most intimate way possible, while being further grieved for having contributed to what may or may not have been my cardinal sin. She probably assumed that I'd considered our lovemaking to be nothing more than an animal deed of lust and pleasure.

Five days later, I awoke to muffled noises in the kitchen. The rooster hadn't crowed yet, so I knew it was earlier than usual. I jumped off the couch, folded my blanket, and went out to the kitchen to have an early breakfast. Addie was seated, her back toward me, at the kitchen table with folded hands. I heard her quiet sobbing.

SEAN

Good morning, Addie.

I stopped in my tracks and weakly collapsed into the opposite chair. Addie had removed her mask and waited in vulnerable, stony silence, unsure of my next reaction. A

tear dribbled down her scarred cheek. My fingertip caught it. Suddenly, her tears became a torrent. Her body shook. Reality hit me like the fallen timbers in my burned cabin.

SEAN

Addie, I'm so touched that you've made this decision. You have nothing to be ashamed of. I wanted that intimacy, too. Making yourself vulnerable like this requires love and courage. You assumed that I would see those scars, and all of my temptations would disappear. You are wrong. I have never spent any time other than hours with another woman. I have lived with you night and day for months. This has been the happiest time of my life. You have opened my eyes. I'll never be a priest again. It would be impossible to return to that life now. I think I know why you would make yourself so vulnerable, so open, but please tell me what were you thinking?

ADDIE

(voice cracking)

I've been so miserable these past few days. I love you madly. It was breaking my heart to want you so much and to think of nothing but making love. You could never love me. It's impossible to look at me and desire me. I thought that by removing my mask, the sight alone would be enough to keep you away. I must be totally honest, you touched me where no man ever has, and no other ever will. Here I was, hiding behind a mask, and that's phony, camouflaged, conditional love. If you ever were to love me, you would have to look at this face and still want me. So I removed it. I'm taking a chance that you'll find me hideous, yet I'm risking nothing. I love you enough to accept your commitment to God.

My eyes filled, and my breathing was labored. In spite of our close confinement for all of those months, I'd never quite seen Addie as I saw her now. Those scars no longer mattered. Her beauty was far more than superficial. Her soul was beautiful. Her disposition was so sweet. She was the most desirable and attractive woman I'd ever known. This was the woman who'd just crawled to the depths of vulnerability because she loved me unconditionally. This was the woman who'd risked her life twice to save mine. This

was the woman who'd made me a complete man again.

My body shook and trembled in that moment of exorcism, and in those few seconds, it all became released. Gone were the bad memories of that terrible guilt I'd carried over the years. Gone was the guilt over shattering my oath of celibacy. The only emotion was my need and love for Addie.

I scrambled around the table and gathered Addie into my arms. I kissed her as I'd never kissed Lynn. That kiss was from the depths of my soul. My lips broke away to kiss her scarred cheek, her eyes, and her throat. The ghost of Lynn evaporated into that skin.

SEAN

I love you, forever. Addie.

I carried her up the ladder to our bed and shredded her dress in one swoop. Meanwhile, her fingers flew to release my buttons. Finally, we were naked and clinging to each other, each literally crying out in love. I kissed those perfectly shaped breasts, her belly, her thighs, and her moist cleft before returning to her honeydew mouth.

ADDIE

Now! Now!

Addie frantically guided me into her center. The sheer pleasure of this union caused my eyes to flicker in wonder. When they reopened, Addie was gazing at me with an expression of love that can never be described. It was a combination of complete love, absolute trust, total submission, gratitude, victory, carnality, wantonness, and need. A few seconds later, Addie started climaxing. Her back arched, and she shivered with the unbearable ecstasy of it. Moments later, she began another ascension.

ADDIE

My darling! What are you doing to me? I can't stand it any longer!

I understood what she was experiencing and started to withdraw. Another wave swept over her. She clasped my buttocks and pulled me back deep inside. She moaned and panted in that whirlpool of pleasure and pain.

ADDIE

I love you so. If you don't take it out, it's going to start again.

I eased out and collapsed onto my back. Addie moved into my arms, and we cradled and kissed. She cupped my testicles gently and absently stroked my still-rigid manhood.

SEAN

I feel so complete. I am committing my life to you. How is it possible this this miserable sinner has been  
(MORE)

SEAN (cont'd)

given this gift? This woman, Lord, is Thy creation and is the love of my life. Bless You for the winding road that brought me to her.

ADDIE

Has any woman ever been so blessed to hear her lover say such beautiful words? Has any woman who ever lived felt as loved as I feel right now. Surely the Lord has sanctioned our union and has created life within me.

Addie moved her body and positioned me inside. This time, I didn't move more than an inch, nor did she. A thousand muscles worked separately on my organ. We stared into each other's fluttering eyes. Addie wrapped her legs around my back, urging me even deeper. She moaned and then giggled.

I couldn't help but laugh too at this unexpected reaction.

SEAN

(groaning)

What's so funny?

ADDIE

Let's get rid of the cows, pigs, and chickens. That way... oh.. we'd never have to... Lord, that's so good...never have to leave this bed! It's happening.

Throughout the following months, it seemed that every time Addie and I consummated our love, it surpassed the previous time. I felt the same way about my love for her. Our days and nights were filled with love. Even the infrequent disagreement was quickly forgotten. We communicated, compromised, forgave, and tossed away our egos. I'd never known such contentment and harmony.

One April morning, Addie radiantly announced her prophesized pregnancy. The animals waited while we brewed a second pot of coffee and sat around the table, planning our future. I'd start building another room immediately and craft a crib and bassinet. Addie dreamily announced that she'd knit outfits for both sexes. Then too, it might be fun to write a series of children's books for bedtime stories. Addie would draw and color the pictures. We agreed that we'd probably leave our mountain paradise and move to suburb in order to expose our child to a public school and the culture of the learned. Summers, we compromised would always be spent in our cabin.

The sound of Emma's pitiful mooing for grain finally forced me to my feet and reluctantly outside. Addie remained seated with a far-off expression on her beautiful face. I rushed through my chores and came in to find that my beloved was still sitting at the table. Now she had a pencil and paper

and she'd written a long list of possible names. We finally determined that our child would be either Jimmy or Carrie.

152 EXT. TRIP TO THE GENERAL STORE - DAY

152

The weather cleared sufficiently by mid April for us to consider a trek to the general store. We developed a long list of the supplies that we'd need, and the baby items we'd order through the Montgomery Ward catalog. We walked happily down the mountain, stopping now and then to admire the gorgeous scenery and to embrace. Addie and I had a wager about who'd spot the first robin. The winner would get to choose a favorite lovemaking position that evening. Just before Stewartstown Hollow poked into view, Addie agreed that the black crow I said was a robin was indeed one. I didn't really have a favorite position. I'd pick one I knew she liked, but then, she liked them all.

153 INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

153

The old proprietor handed me an envelope dated last January. It had my publishing company's return address. This was the news I'd been waiting for. I opened it and handed it to Addie. A broad grin broke over her maskless face as she skimmed down the page. The letter contained a a contract.

I signed the contract and placed it in a hastily scrawled envelope. I handed it and two other letters to the proprietor. One of the letters was to the bishop, advising him of my irrevocable decision to leave the priesthood; the second letter was to Father McMahon, briefing him on the events in my life during the past year and telling him of my love for Addie. I asked if priests visited the area to serve Catholic residents, marry couples, perform baptisms, hear confessions, and serve Mass. I learned that one did in the second week of October. My newfound wealth meant that I could carry through with my plans for Addie. Foing home, I told her that we'd go to Boston for facial surgery next spring and told her about the October date for our wedding.

SEAN

We don't have to wait until then.  
We could always travel to Berlin.

ADDIE

I don't want to be married in a  
church I'll never see again.

SEAN

Then I'll go to Berlin and bring a  
priest back here. Still, it's not  
right that you should be pregnant  
and a new bride at the same time.

ADDIE

A marriage certificate isn't needed  
to tell me that I'm your wife.  
However, if you insist, get in

(MORE)

ADDIE (cont'd)  
 touch with Father McMahon and ask  
 him to come up to marry us.

I told Addie that I'd get a letter off to him next week. I returned to the store weekly to check on Father McMahon's reply. It didn't come, and I sent another letter in case the first had gotten lost. I kept busy all summer, tending to our garden, splitting wood, fishing, and completing the addition to our cabin. That summer was the best of my life, just as the previous spring and winter had been.

Life with Addie was so complete. Addie was a radiant expectant mother. She bloomed with good health, and her sweet temperament became even more personable. She was giddy with the excitement of her pending marriage and motherhood.

I finally received a letter in mid-July from Sister Mary, who communicated that my old friend had retired from the cloth during the spring and was now in Ireland visiting relatives. I was dismayed by this news but was buoyed by a second letter from my publisher, which contained an advance for \$750.00. I showed the store owner the check and was able to use it as credit to buy all kinds of presents for Addie.

Loaded down with these goodies, I struggled back home. Addie was tickled with the presents and wasn't in the least upset by the delay to our marriage plans. October wasn't far away, she explained, and the itinerant priest would do nicely.

154 EXT. ADDIE'S CABIN - NIGHT

154

Addie woke me up early one night toward the end of September to tell me that her water had broken and that she was beginning labor. She grinned from ear to ear in excitement.

SEAN

But it can't be! Our baby isn't due  
 for another month!

ADDIE

You're supposed to be a calming  
 influence. Just imagine, in a few  
 hours, we'll be parents. Now go out  
 and heat some water and let me get  
 on with my appointment. I love you,  
 Sean Devaney, father of my child.

But the baby didn't come easily. Addie remained in labor for thirty-seven hours before his tiny head finally appeared. I'd spent every minute watching this blessed event and was in awe of the magnificence of the moment. I wept at the power, courage, determination, and sacrifice of this magnificent woman, the love of my life.

Addie bled heavily afterward, and the blood soaked through the sheets and mattress cover. I cut the umbilical cord and washed this tiny love being, and then I carried mother and child down to the couch so I could change the bedding. Addie

glowed with love as she held the babe to her breast.

Addie and the baby slept, I sponged off her legs and battled to arrest the flow of blood that oozed from her. I didn't have any idea of what constituted a normal flow, but I was positive she was bleeding more heavily than should be expected. I touched her brow and found it ice cold. Everywhere it seemed that her body temperature was low. I pulled the couch closer to the fireplace and covered her with extra blankets. I moved Jimmy to the crib. I put some water into a bottle and gave it to him. Addie watched with a face that had now turned deathly pale.

ADDIE

How's our baby, Sean?

SEAN

He's fine. How are you feeling?

I was afraid of the answer. Her beautiful face was ashen.

ADDIE

I feel awfully weak.

The thought of losing her was terrifying. She wasn't recovering. The bleeding continued. For the next 48 hours, I never left her side other than to feed Jimmy with milk from her breasts and race through my chores in the barn. Her condition deteriorated, but I couldn't risk going to the hamlet for a doctor. The round trip was ten hours, and there was no telling where the itinerant doctor would be.

On the morning of the third day, Addie feebly clutched my hand and brushed it lightly. Her voice was barely a whisper.

ADDIE

My darling, I love you and want to be with you and Jimmy forever. You must know that I'm dying. It's too late for a doctor, even if you knew where to find him. You can't leave the baby, and I can't tend to him without you. I've just experienced the most wonderful year of my life and have loved and been loved by the most wonderful man on earth. Promise me that you'll bring him here every summer as we had planned.

SEAN

(sobbing, choking voice)

I promise, but you can't leave me!

ADDIE

I am dying, and you know that I am. I so much wanted to be your wife. You are, were, a priest. You can

(MORE)

ADDIE (cont'd)  
marry us, and you can baptize  
Jimmy. Please go up and get my  
Christmas outfit. Hurry!

It took every ounce of courage to maintain my composure as I dressed Addie and brushed her long blonde hair. She was so brave. I was the weak child. My tears fell when she pinched her cheeks in a futile effort to give them some color.

Clutching her hands for support, I gazed deep into her eyes and recited the marriage vows I'd performed on so many occasions in that other life. My heart was breaking, but somehow, somehow, I got through it. Surely God in heaven recognized the holiness and sanctity of our bond. Then Addie watched as I proudly baptized our son.

In the middle of the night, as I sat watching, Addie died in her sleep. As I rocked her lifeless body in my arms, I thought back over the painful times in my life, and there had been many, but nothing approached the anguish I endured now. My life had been such a pendulum of misery and joy.

The cries of my hungry son brought me back to reality. After he was fed and sleeping again, I built a coffin for my beloved and went outside to prepare her grave. After I had lowered her coffin into the hole, I opened our Bible to the Twenty-Third Psalm. With shaking hands and a strained, hollow voice, I read the verse: "The Lord is my shepherd...

Life without Addie would've had no purpose or direction if it hadn't been for an unceasing endearment to my little man. It was through Jimmy that I became capable of loving again and discovered some definition to my existence. Thus, I cemented that mother's bond and learned to transpose it into the father image throughout the remainder of his life

From the beginning, it was painfully clear that Jimmy was not normal. His face was flat, and his nose stubby and small. His eyes slanted upward slightly, and his irises were set apart and featured tiny speckles. The inside of his mouth was small and often open, affecting a protruded tongue. His chest was abnormally large.

That initial winter, I grieved over the crushing loss of Addie. There were the haunting memories of that first Christmas as I recalled our exchange of gifts and our kiss of friendship. There was the anniversary of that night when we'd first consummated our love, and the morning of the unmasking. There was the memory of the day that Addie had first told me she was pregnant. There were many apparitions.

I coped with my loneliness by focusing on Jimmy. That first year he must have convinced me a thousand times that the Lord had blessed me by sending a special needs son. Looking into his stubby little face, my heart would leave my body and enter his, so overwhelming was my love. Even by eight months, Jimmy had accomplished only a few of the maturation stages that physicians expect. He could not roll over, sit

alone, or even push himself up. Aware of his unique problems, I spent a lot of time talking and carrying him around the cabin to expose him to his world.

155 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - BOSTON - DAY

155

As soon as the weather cleared and the roads became passable, we traveled to Boston for an opinion from a specialist. I was quite certain that Jimmy was a mongoloid.

DOCTOR

It pains me to tell you your child displays many of the markers of children who are born with Down's Syndrome, or mongolism as it is often called. This condition occurs once in every seven to eight hundred births. There isn't reliable data as to its cause, but it has some correlation with chromosomal issues during conception. We know the condition is irreversible. His learning abilities will be impeded, and his maturation level will never exceed that of a young child. It's almost certain that he will die young from respiratory issues. You've adjusted to his limitations better than most. If you were a typical parent, I might say that your son would be better off in an institution. Most think that this condition might upset siblings or disturb their community status. But from what you've stated and shown, I don't believe that fits you. What your son needs, as do all children, is love, stimulation, discipline, and a lot of care. Satisfy those needs, and your son's life will be as complete as possible.

156 INT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

156

Because our home in a northern New Hampshire was isolated, Jimmy and I relocated to New York City when he was three. I resumed writing, and we lived a modest but comfortable life. Jimmy stayed home until he was old enough to be enrolled in a special school. We'd take our daily walks around the city, visit playgrounds, the zoo, and watch movie cartoons. He loved ice cream, and it served as my dangling carrot to promote the behavioral changes I sought. When he was twenty-one, I registered him in a sheltered workshop and taught him to commute by bus to his job. He packed egg cartons. I'd started his training at home. He didn't need to count to twelve as much as recognize that the carton was filled when no egg would fit. I used the reward system for the first few cartons before I weaned him from candy to an

occasional pat on the back. The most difficult problem Jimmy experienced, from his perspective, was getting out of bed in the morning, for my little man loved to sleep. Once he was up, his happy little spirit would begin radiating, for he loved joining his workshop buddies. Off he'd bounce, dressed in his standard white shirt and tie. My heart would burst with pride as I watched his fat legs churn down the street.

157 EXT. SUMMERS WITH JIMMY IN NH - DAY 157

Every summer, we returned to our cabin and hiked, fished, camped, and generally roughed it. Here too, he'd plant trees and flowers around his mother's grave, and we'd habitually purchase a special pet from one of the area farmers. The chicken or pig would then be his responsibility during this vacation period. Of course, I supervised this task carefully. The pet was always donated to some needy family.

158 EXT. YANKEE BASEBALL GAMES - DAY 158

Jimmy's favorite entertainment was attending Yankee baseball games. He didn't understand these contests, but he thoroughly loved hearing the crowd roar, watching other kids, eating hot dogs and ice cream, and, most important, waiting for home runs. These, he understood, were the big surprises of baseball. He'd imitate the crowd and jump up and down in excitement whenever Mickey Mantle was at bat.

I'd known that Jimmy's season with me was but temporary, and in 1961, at a Yankee ball game, he stopped following the event and laid his head on my shoulder. Roger Maris was at bat and hit a ball deep into right field and over the fence. I glanced down to await the expected celebration. His eyes were closed and his chest was still. I knew. Tears streamed as I gathered him to my heaving chest and carried him out of the stadium. My heart was breaking, but it also pounded with joy and love for having had him all those years.

159 EXT -NH CABIN - DAY 159

I buried Jimmy next to his mother and moved back to the cabin, where I'd be with them every day. There never was another woman. The memories of our love were more than enough to endure a lifetime. I remained there for twelve years. Existence in northern New Hampshire can be lonely.

160 EXT. RETURN TO NEW YORK CITY - 1973 - DAY 160

The bottle once again became my soul's nourishment until 1973, when I returned to New York City to see if that bustling life provided some definition. It didn't. New York disregards its elderly. As time slowly ticked by, my need to find some link with the past became a narcotic addiction. Nostalgic feelings caused me to undertake a pilgrimage.

161 EXT. RETURN TO INGLEWOOD FOREST - DAY 161

The Inglewood Forest was my first stop. The bird watchers' museum seemed out of place. My friends' remains had been

relocated, but their ghosts still hovered in those bloody woods. I sat there next to the old site of their graves, aching for their incomplete lives and the tragedy of it all.

162 EXT. RETURN TOP FRANCE - DAY 162

France was next. The hospital where I'd loved Lynn had been renovated and catered to the race track gamblers. I spent hours at the hotel where we had expressed our love so intimately. The hotel was even seedier than I'd remembered. At the Eiffel Tower, I kept reliving that scene when she first came down the stairs and into my life. I walked to the cottage where she and Gus had suffered their night of terror, and my own horrors began anew.

163 EXT. LYNN'S GRAVE - SALEM, MA - DAY 163

Next was Salem, Massachusetts and Lynn's grave. The words, "You are no gentleman, Sean, but you are somewhat handsome and very dashing" kept reverberating through my tortured mind. Of all her comments, why did that echo in my memory?

164 EXT. NY CITY - KATIE'S GRAVESTONE - DAY - 1974 164

I returned to New York and took a taxi to the cemetery where Katie had been buried. I had promised, but I was making my final farewells to my past, and Katie had been a key character. I finally found her headstone and knelt there and once again prayed for her forgiveness. Katie responded as only she could. As I glanced toward the heavens and begged for her answer, a pigeon flew over and unleashed a mass of white liquid on the center of my uplifted head. She always managed to get in the last word. Gosh, what a delightful spirit. She must be causing the supervising angels fits. I wiped up the mess and laughed uproariously.

165 EXT. RETURN TO OLD CHURCH - SAME DAY 165

I left for my old church. Perhaps there I could say my penitence and carry out the idea that had begun building.

166 INT. SEAN'S APARTMENT - SAME DAY 166

Sean's drink still sat untouched on the marred and battered coffee table. Patrick glanced at the wall clock. Shortly, Linda would have dinner on the table. He now knew why Sean was preparing for his death. But this was the last chance that anyone would ever have to talk him into reconsidering in spite of the pain he had suffered. Patrick was exhausted from reliving Sean's life through the afternoon of story telling. How implausible it seemed that this old fellow had led a life filled with such adventure and trial.

Sean excused himself and headed for the bathroom. Patrick wandered over to the table where the photographs stood. He picked up a faded brown picture of four young men, their arms casually draped over each other's shoulders. Gus was the tall, gangly fellow whose awkwardness lent him an air of innocence. Dick was the handsome character with the winning

smile, and Herb matched his solemn and intent description. Sean was easy to place, for in spite of the years, his features remained unchanged. Propped against the wall was the charcoal sketch of Lynn and Sean that had been drawn that day near the Seine River. She truly had been a classic beauty. Patrick was attracted to the softness of her features. The eyes of the two lovers reflected the joy they were experiencing during that passionate summer of 1918. Then Patrick studied the portrait that Addie had painted as Sean's Christmas gift. Here, also, was a stunning woman, different from Lynn in her coloring and unique beauty. Sean had been loved by two magnificent women.

Several photographs were of a boy in various stages of growth. The most touching was one of Jimmy, wearing a baseball cap and a huge lopsided grin, his arms lovingly encircling his father's neck.

SEAN

(voice cracking)

I want you to take them all. Yes, the photograph and portraits are yours. I have no one else to leave them with. Only you know my story. Otherwise, they will end up with the trash and these wonderful people forgotten as if they had never existed. I won't need them.

Patrick now understood how precious each painting and photograph was. Yes, he would take them. Patrick knew that Sean intended to end his life that night. But he was now a friend; someone he cared deeply about.

PATRICK

Can't I talk you out of this?

SEAN

No. I intend to do it tonight.

SEAN

Patrick, I've just spent the afternoon unveiling my death poem. Surely by now you can see that I've lost every person I've ever loved. I wish to join them. I believe that God has guided my life and is leading me now in this direction. I understand that He is merciful, and He would not want me to continue suffering as I have since Jimmy's death. God will see to it that I'm reunited with those you see in the photos and portraits.

PATRICK

Sean, I must ask the question. If you could do it all over again, would it have been any different?

Sean immediately glanced at the pictures before answering.

SEAN

I'm not sure. I wonder about that. I regret the senseless deaths and. Katie's empty life without Gus. Those years as an alcoholic and skid-row bum I'd rather forget. My life as a priest provided total fulfillment. Yet I understand now that a force directed my whole life and led me to Gus, Dick, Herb, Mrs. Moore, Lynn, Father McMahan, Addie, and Jimmy. If the agony and pain hadn't happened, the worthwhile could never have been. I truly wanted to be a good man, but as you know, I was not. I could not make right the many wrongs of my life. I did not pay fully for my sins, but my choices gave me Addie and Jimmy. For that, I am grateful.

His eyes clouded over and tears spilled down his cracked cheeks. Patrick's eyes filled with tears as he watched the anguish and suffering of his new friend.

SEAN

(tears falling in torrents)  
But when I look at the photograph of Gus, Dick, and Herb, those magnificent men, I'm reminded of my selfish forfeit of their lives. My wound never heals.

PATRICK

I now see why you've made this decision. Before I go, let me do something. There is no one else.

SEAN

There's one thing you can do for which I'd be most grateful.

Sean actually looked happy for the first time since their meeting at the church

SEAN

I have money that I'll leave behind with a note. There is an attorney in this complex. I need your social security number and address. I will meet with him after you leave. It's my wish that you see to it that I'm buried outside my cabin with Addie and Jimmy. Ownership will be transferred to you after the legal matters have been settled. I am

(MORE)

SEAN (cont'd)

leaving you my entire estate. The Catholic Church is to receive 10%.

PATRICK

I'll gladly effect your final wishes. I'll come by tomorrow and make sure your wishes are followed.

SEAN

Thank you, Patrick. Now get your life together, my son.

Patrick stood up. It was hard to begin the good-bye.

PATRICK

I should go home to my wife. I've got a lot of life corrections to make. Your story has opened my eyes and given my life perspective.

Sean shook Patrick's hand and guided him toward the door. Patrick turned. Tears were streaming down his cheeks. He impulsively embraced the man, and left him to his self-imposed fate. He wept all the way home.

167 EXT. SEAN'S CABIN - DAY

167

Linda Leslie stood shivering in the dampness and cold. Before them were three graves. Two of the graves were marked and the grass had grown over the mounds. The other was still unmarked, and the fresh sod covering it revealed the fact that this was a recent burial.

LINDA

I don't understand why we're here.

PATRICK

Come into our cabin. We'll build a blazing fire, and I'll try to explain why we're here. Just know this - my purpose in life is to love you and bring you happiness.

Patrick piled firewood into the stone fireplace and began explaining that it was important to journey here this weekend just before he began his new job with a major accounting firm. He settled her onto the soft, blue couch, kissed her tenderly, took a deep sigh, and began the story.

PATRICK

Nestled in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains, about sixty or so miles north of New York City, is the town of Goshen. Sean evaney was born in the year 1895..."