

Dr. Finlay Sees It Through



ALAN HART



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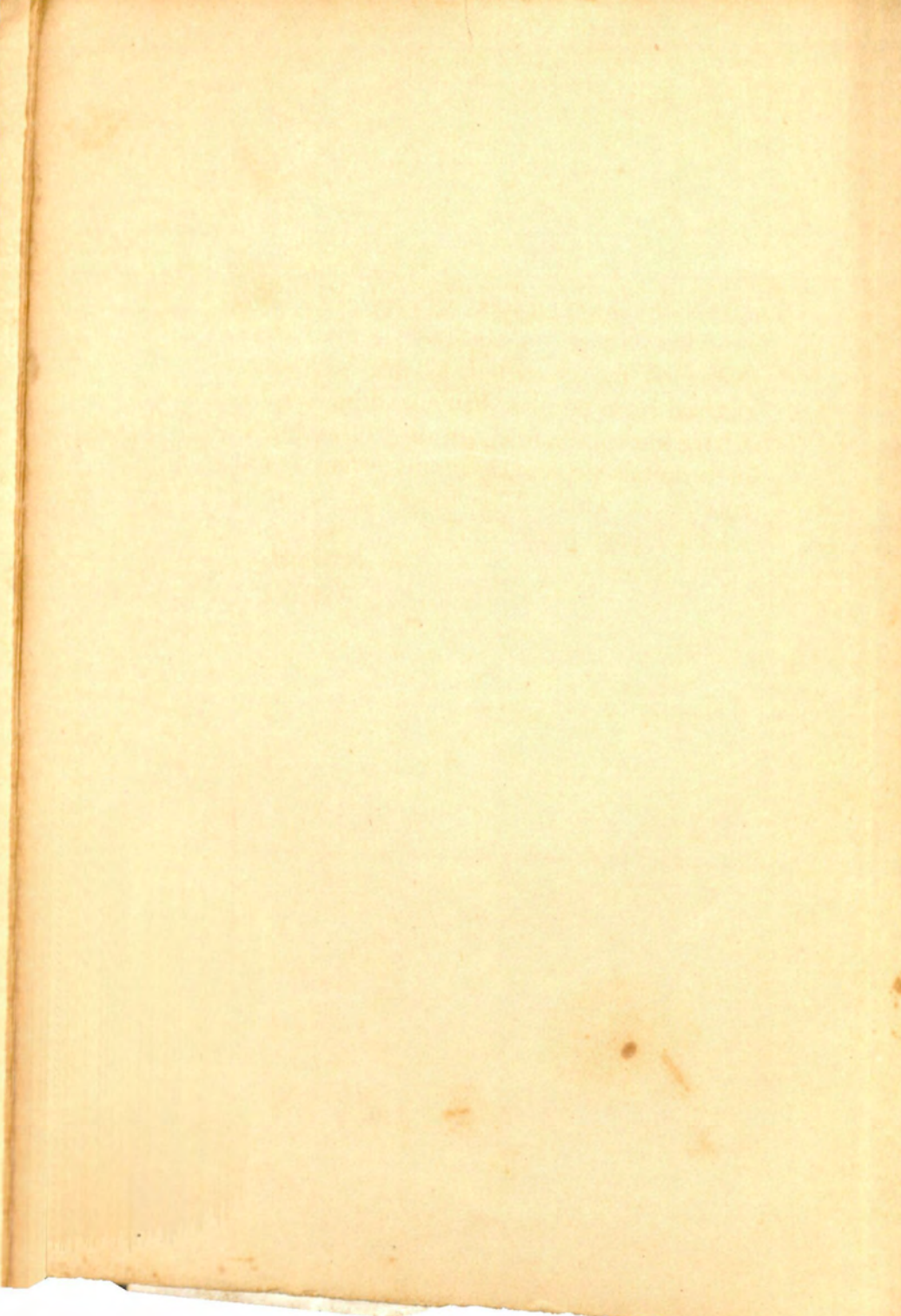
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FIRST EDITION

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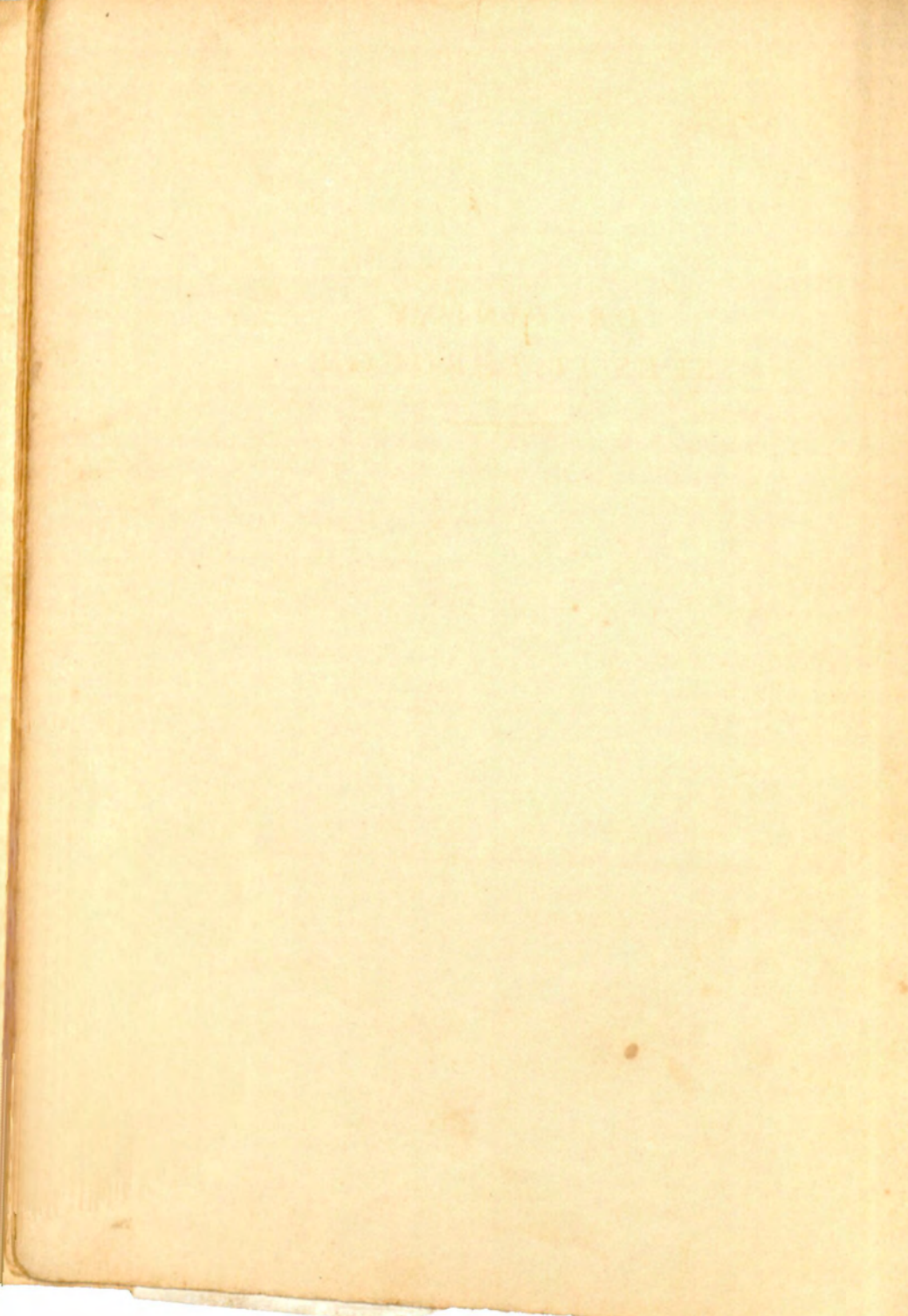
For two of the best friends a man ever had—
MRS. OVINGTON and MR. POTTER



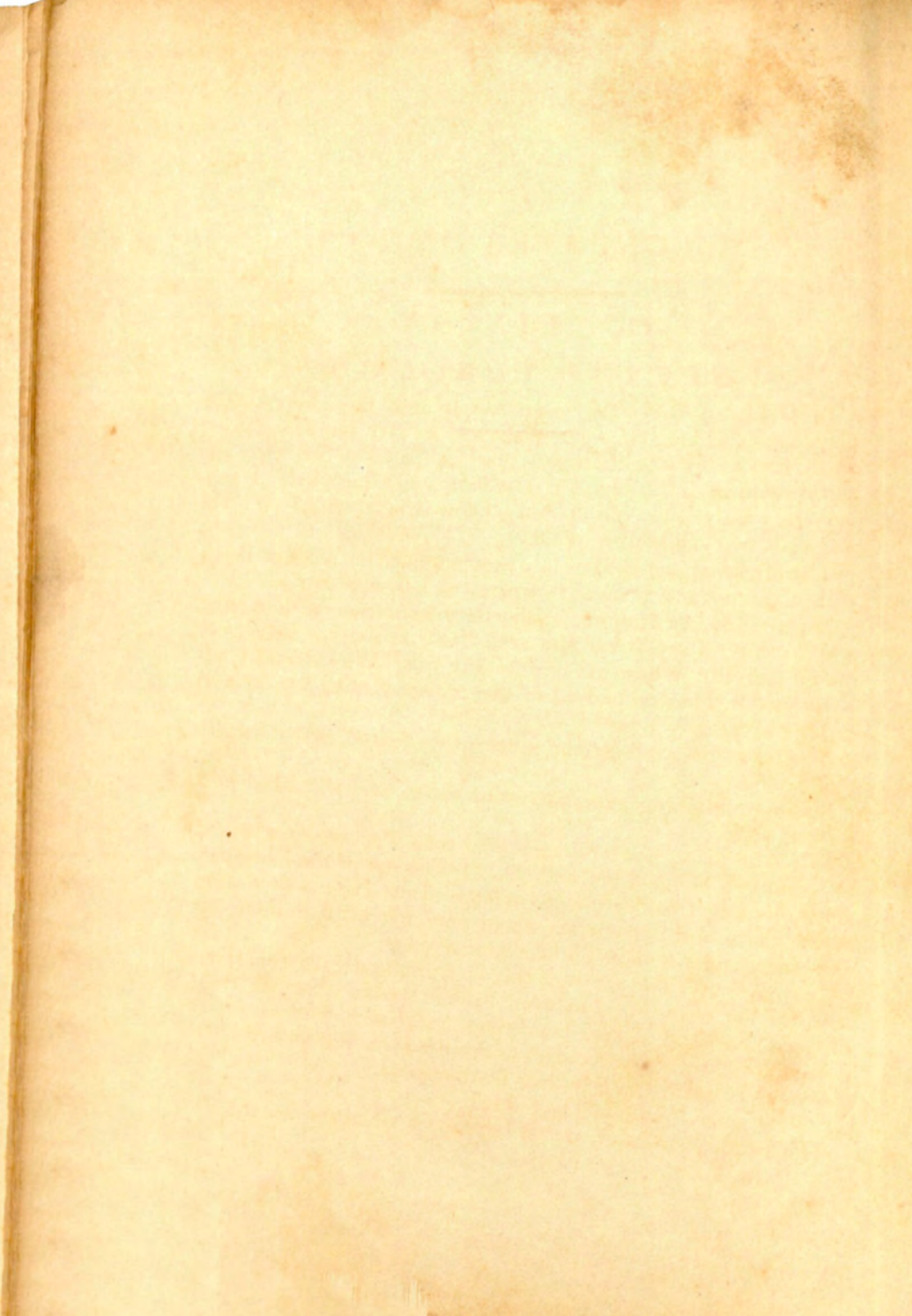
AUTHOR'S NOTE

None of the characters in this book was derived from persons, living or dead, whom I have known. Neither are any of the clinics or hospitals depicted portraits of any institutions in which I have worked or with which I have been familiar.

ALAN HART



DR. FINLAY
SEES IT THROUGH



CHAPTER ONE

PRISCILLA GRAHAM spoke crisply into the phone. "Employees of the hospital are not allowed to give out information about patients. I would suggest that you call Dr. Schuyler, the superintendent. . . . No, Dr. Dryden is not here. . . . I suppose he's busy. . . . No, I don't know where he is. . . . I'm sorry but that's impossible. Good-by."

The slight brown-eyed young woman put the receiver down with a thump and turned, frowning, to her assistant.

"Apparently my duties as a laboratory technician include lying and beating off reporters," she said. "This fellow has been after me all day. But it hasn't done him any good. Why should I tell him that Dr. Howard is dead or that we are waiting for them to finish the autopsy now?"

The other girl, younger and more inexperienced, smiled timidly at Priscilla.

"Is there anything more you want me to do?" she asked in a hushed voice.

"No, run along now and keep your date. I'm sorry you've had to work on a holiday, but with Dr. Dryden out of the laboratory since morning I couldn't quite manage alone. Have a good time at the party and don't worry about anything here. If there are any emergencies tonight I'll take care of them."

"Thank you." The assistant smiled again, gratefully this time, and fled the room. For a moment Priscilla looked after her, then dropped down on a stool beside her workbench. Her face was pale and there were dark circles under her eyes. She pushed back the wave of soft dark hair over her forehead.

"What a day!" she said half-aloud.

The words were barely out of her mouth when she heard foot-

steps in the corridor outside the laboratory, and the door was pushed open to admit a stocky young man slightly above average height whose corn-colored hair stood up in a disorderly shock. He wore a surgical gown splotted with reddish-brown stains and in his hands he carried a tray full of small enamelware pans.

Priscilla sprang to her feet. "Let me have that," she said.

Dennis Dryden gave her the tray and drew a long breath. His blond face was drawn and tired and his luminous blue eyes were somber.

"There you are," he said. "I'm glad that's over. I've got the jitters, I guess."

The girl looked at him compassionately and nodded. "You'll want routine sections, I suppose."

"Yes. The prosecuting attorney was interested only in the gross findings. Just put this stuff through as usual."

Dennis sat down on the edge of the workbench, pulled a package of cigarettes from his breast pocket, lighted one and inhaled it gratefully. The room became very still except for the small sounds of Priscilla's quick skillful movements. The late afternoon sunshine spilled through the west windows to trace a pattern on the gray cement floor across which the girl walked quietly as she worked. Dryden smoked in silence, staring intently at the wall above Priscilla's head; he was apparently unaware of her and presently he threw down the stub of his cigarette, set a foot on it, and stretched his arms full-length above his head.

"Swell way to spend Labor Day, Priscilla—waiting for a man to die so you can do an autopsy on him."

The girl looked up quickly, her dark eyes full of distress.

"But . . ." she began.

"Oh, sure. It was my duty. I know. The ends of justice must be served. I've heard all that before. And it's all hooey! Howard is dead. So what? Why not let it go at that? He's well out of his troubles, you and I know that. And his wife will take his insurance and carry on till she meets a man her own age and remarries."

"Don't!" exclaimed Priscilla. "You sound so cynical. And you aren't, really."

"Sorry," mumbled Dryden. He stood up and moved about restlessly as though in search of something. Then he pointed to one of the specimens still on the tray.

"I forgot to tell you I want to inject that heart so I can demon-

strate the coronary circulation to the internes. We don't often get a perfectly normal heart down here."

He pulled off his blood-stained gown and flung it into the laundry bag, thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and began to pace up and down with quick nervous strides.

"I don't mind admitting to you, Priscilla, that what upsets me most about this whole affair is not Howard being killed but the fact that John Finlay's hospital burned. Howard had never been able to pay much on his contract and now, after three years, John has Sun Mount back on his hands—in ruins."

"I can't realize yet what's happened," replied the girl. "Sun Mount was so solid and substantial looking. I couldn't believe it this morning when that reporter called to tell you that it was burning and that someone had shot Dr. Howard."

"Well, the building is gutted. Parts of the walls are still standing but the roof is gone over both wings, and smoke and water got everything the fire left. It's a total loss, no question about that. The wonder is that they got the patients out and saved most of the records and some of the furniture."

Priscilla smiled faintly. "Miss Rodney, I suppose, was responsible for that. She's a marvelous person, isn't she?"

"I'll tell the world she is," answered Dennis, swinging around abruptly. "Why, when I got there the first thing I saw was a row of cots off on one side of the lawn, out of the way of the firemen. The nurses tell me she ran back and forth between the wards and Howard's office, bossing the job of getting the patients out as coolly as though she didn't have a dying man on her hands and a building burning down over her head. That woman has more brains in the soles of her feet than most people have in their skulls."

Dryden turned back to stare out the window at the cool green grass on the lawn. "John could never have made Sun Mount the place it was without her. He often told me so. And he'd have been proud of her today. She called an ambulance and sent Howard off in it before I got there. I found her arguing with the fire chief about trying to save John's things out of his old rooms in the south wing. She was scorched a little here and there and a bit red in the face and she had a few locks of hair flying loose, but she had everything under control."

Priscilla sighed. "Some people are like that," she said a little

enviously. "Now if I had found Dr. Howard I'd have been in a panic."

"So would I, I'm afraid," admitted Dennis. "Even Grace Rodney found it a jolt."

"Just what did happen, do you know?" asked Priscilla hesitantly.

Dryden sat down on the edge of the workbench again and jingled the keys in his pocket. Watching his face the girl was sure he would find it a relief to talk; she waited quietly.

"Well, this is the story as I get it," he began. "Some time back a human varmint named Hank Connolly got an infection in his hand while Howard was treating him for something else and eventually lost a couple of fingers from it. He blamed Howard and seems to have spent most of his time afterward gabbling about it to anyone who would listen. Then a pal of his—Mesner by name—had a nasty compound fracture this spring and had to stay in Sun Mount quite a while. He's still on crutches and evidently Connolly persuaded him that Howard was responsible for that too.

"This morning Mesner came into the hospital for a dressing and Connolly came with him in an old rattletrap Ford. Miss Rodney says they must have brought a can of gasoline along, and she thinks that while Dr. Howard was busy with Mesner Hank Connolly sneaked down and emptied the tin into a linen closet in the north wing. Anyhow one of the nurses saw Hank running along the hall toward Howard's office yelling 'Fire,' and when Howard rushed out of the room one or the other of these two thugs shot him.

"Of course Miss Rodney heard the shot. She also saw Connolly half-dragging Mesner down the front steps, but she couldn't go after them. Howard was lying in a heap on the floor and she had to call a surgeon and the fire department. Then she got Howard on a table, gave him a hypo, and raced out to marshal the nurses and the kitchen help to rescue the patients. Once she had them going, she went back to call an ambulance and stay with Howard until Dr. Elliston arrived."

Mechanically Dennis fished out another cigarette and lighted it.

"If she hadn't had so many things to do," he said, smiling crookedly, "I suppose she would have put out the fire single-

handed, before it got a good start. But arson and murder combined were temporarily a bit too much for her."

Again silence fell upon the room. Dryden stared at the wisp of smoke curling up from his cigarette and the girl studied the slowly shifting pattern of autumn sunlight on the floor, her red-lipped face very serious.

"Where is Dr. Finlay now?" she inquired at last.

"Still in London so far as I know. But I'm not sure. I haven't had a letter from him for nearly three months."

"Have you sent him word of what's happened?"

"Mr. Wharton promised to cable him this afternoon."

"Mr. Wharton?" said the girl blankly.

"Yes. Don't you remember? That banker pal of John's from Newland. He was at the fire too. But he thinks I should write a detailed letter as soon as he gets an answer to his cable." Dennis shifted his position nervously. "That won't be easy. In fact I'd almost rather be shot than do it. Sun Mount was John Finlay's life, his substitute for a family, the thing he lived for. And now it's gone."

"I always felt that Sun Mount meant a lot to him too," said Priscilla thoughtfully. "But after he sold out in 1929 and went away I wasn't sure. Especially when he never said a word all this time about coming back."

"Nonsense, woman. Use your head. How could he come back as long as Howard hung on at Sun Mount? He sold out to the man in good faith and the fact that Howard couldn't make a go of it didn't change things much. If John had returned he would've had to do one of two things—take the hospital back or go into competition with Howard. Either way that poor devil would've got it in the neck. He couldn't afford to lose his investment in Sun Mount but he wouldn't have had the ghost of a chance to hold his practice with John in the same town. Don't you see what I mean?"

Priscilla nodded but her brown eyes were still perplexed. "Why did Dr. Finlay sell out and go away in the first place?" she asked.

Dennis drew up his knees and clasped his hands around them.

"I can tell you that too," he said. "John used to talk to me a good deal. I know how he felt about things. I never believed that stuff he told everyone before he left Newland, about having earned a rest and wanting to be a playboy in his middle age. I

thought all along that was just a smoke screen to cover up what was really in his mind.

"You've been working around doctors long enough, Priscilla, to know that we finally get sick of the worm's-eye view of humanity a man gets practicing medicine. There comes a time when we can't take an interest any longer in people's aches and pains. John was simply fed up, temporarily, when he pulled out three years ago."

Dryden rocked slowly back and forth. A new note of earnestness crept into his voice.

"Put yourself in his place, Priscilla. He was in his late forties. His wife and child died years ago when he was just getting started. He'd been practicing in Queen County for eighteen years, partly out in Newland and partly here in Seaforth. He knew all the hypocrisy and scandals of both towns—who slept where, how everyone who had money had come by it, who was whose father.

"And then his age began to bother him. He came in here one day and told me so. He'd just realized that he was nearly fifty and he had never thought about getting old. It wasn't that he minded having gray hair or wearing reading glasses—nothing silly like that. But he said there were lots of things he wanted to do, a lot of places he hadn't seen yet, and he'd suddenly realized that he couldn't count on living indefinitely.

"I knew what was wrong, Priscilla. And I told him so. He'd simply been looking at sick people and listening to their complaints too long. Too many varicose veins, too much gas on the stomach, too many scared patients to be told they had diabetes or TB or cancer. It had got him down at last. He'd passed too many death sentences, stood beside too many autopsy tables, faced too many families to explain that he had done his best but it hadn't been enough.

"He needed to see something besides Newland and Seaforth. He had to have time to think. He had to get away so he could orient himself again, for the years he had left. Don't you understand?"

Dennis paused and once again the room was very still. Priscilla watched the young man with glowing eyes, her cheeks bright and her delicate heart-shaped face full of pride. She had always been proud of Dryden's ability and now she found herself proud of something else about him. It was good to hear a man defend

his absent friend so fervently. It was good to know that loyalty could survive the frictions and jealousies of a big hospital like Seacliff.

"You really love Dr. Finlay, don't you?" she exclaimed. The instant she had spoken confusion fell upon her and she flushed painfully. But Dennis did not seem to notice.

"Of course I do," he cried. "I'd be an ingrate if I didn't. Who got me my job here at Seacliff? Who but John Finlay has stood by me ever since, defended me against highbinders on the staff like Arnold and Baldwin, stuck up for you and me both against our efficient but loathsome superintendent, George Schuyler? Not to mention the fact that John is one of the finest men who ever lived or . . . or . . ."

"Enjoyed a highball," interjected Priscilla a little breathlessly.

Dennis glanced at her quickly, then grinned as he so often did.

"Enjoyed a highball or smoked a pipe," he agreed. "He's been my friend ever since I came to Seaforth and I'm his, believe you me!"

Slowly the smile died from Dryden's full curved lips. "I hate like hell to write and tell him about Sun Mount and poor old Howard. But it's got to be done and the sooner I get at it the better." He looked down at his wrist watch and started. "Good Lord, it's six o'clock. I'd no idea it was so late. I had a dinner date too, up the Mountain road."

He slid down off the workbench and hurried into his little private office. He did not close the door and Priscilla heard him pick up the phone. She knew the number he called: she had heard it many times before. The flush ebbed away from her cheeks, her brown eyes dulled. Mechanically she closed the refrigerator, checked the thermostat on the incubator, took off her apron and hung it up neatly in its cubbyhole. She could see Dennis leaning against the wall beside his door, hear every word he was saying.

"How long ago did Miss Mainwaring leave the house? . . . Oh, I see. She went in the other car. . . . Well, thank you very much. 'By."

Priscilla was hovering over some things on her desk. Dryden turned around and stood watching her absent-mindedly as though her quick graceful movements were too familiar to register in his consciousness.

"A bunch of us were going up toward the Mountain and have dinner at Canyon Lodge," he said slowly. "I was supposed to show up with my car at five o'clock. They waited half an hour and then went on without me."

The girl hesitated as if she felt inclined to say something but shrank from possible rebuff.

"Aren't you going out for anything to eat then?" she finally asked.

"No," replied Dennis. "I don't think so. Food doesn't seem to appeal to me just now. Perhaps I'll go downtown a little later, after I get this letter to John off my chest. I might as well write it and have it over with. But you clear out, Priscilla. You've had a hard day. I'll lock up here before I leave and I'll tell them upstairs not to call you tonight for any of these crackpot emergencies."

"You don't need to do that. I'm all right," said the girl with a flash of spirit.

"You look like you'd been seeing things," retorted Dennis. "You'd better get to bed early and put this nightmare out of your mind."

He ran his hands over his head, ruffling up his thick fair hair. Then he gave a short sharp bark of laughter.

"I bet George is in a dither about this affair. He'll be sure his precious Seacliff will get some unfavorable notoriety from Howard dying here, or maybe he's beginning to wonder when some of our disgruntled patients will come back and shoot up the place. If you see him as you go out, take a good look at him, Priscilla. He'll be the epitome of all worried hospital superintendents."

But Dryden need not have laid this injunction on the girl, for she had not been gone over five minutes and Dennis himself had barely settled down in front of his portable typewriter when the laboratory door opened quietly and a shortish heavy-set man with a round fat face oozed through it noiselessly.

Dennis did not rise, he did not lift his eyes from the paper he was threading into the machine, but he saw the intruder's feet in the margin of his field of vision.

The fat man coughed nervously. "I just wanted to ask what you found at the post. I meant to come down but I couldn't get away from the office."

"Seven perforations. Immediate cause of death shock and loss of blood."

George Schuyler's small pale eyes seemed to recede further behind his thickened eyelids.

"I hope the prosecuting attorney was satisfied," he said fretfully. "I still think we should have allowed them to try at least to get a dying statement."

Once more Dennis answered without looking up. "You heard what Dr. Elliston said about that, didn't you?"

"Yes, yes. I know," replied Schuyler querulously. "But the man died anyhow. It wouldn't have made any difference."

A tinge of red crept over Dryden's face. "I have the impression somehow that Walter Elliston doesn't want his dying patients tormented."

The younger man spoke slowly and as he finished he finally raised his eyes and stared coldly at the superintendent.

Schuyler blew out his breath with a grunt and opened his mouth as though to retort, then seemed to think better of it. For a moment longer he stood looking down at Dryden with an enigmatic expression on his round smooth-skinned face. Then he turned on his heel and went out of the room as noiselessly as he had come.

"Old gum-shoe Al," muttered Dennis. For a minute or two he stared at the door through which Schuyler had disappeared, then dropped his fingers to the keyboard of his typewriter.

SEACLIFF GENERAL HOSPITAL

SEAFORTH

GEORGE SCHUYLER, M.D.

Superintendent

DENNIS DRYDEN, M.D., M.S.

Director of Laboratories

September 5, 1932

DEAR JOHN:

I hate to write this letter. I know Sun Mount always meant a great deal more to you than most people realized, and I had hoped ever since you went away three years ago that it would one day pull you back. Of course Mr. Wharton has cabled you the bare facts already. But he asked me to give you the details.

You may as well know the worst, John. Sun Mount is in ruins tonight—a total loss. And here's the story as I piece it together.

It was about ten o'clock this morning when . . .

CHAPTER TWO

JOHN FINLAY got to his feet and braced himself against the side sway of the Pullman car. For nearly an hour now he had been staring at the dismal gray landscape sweeping past, trying to ignore the fatuous babbling of the other occupant of the smoking room. Indeed he had been trying to escape the man ever since the two had found themselves the only passengers in the Minneapolis-Seaforth car that morning. But there were only sixteen people in the Pullmans on the North Coast Limited and John had been unable to evade the garrulous real estate broker from the Twin Cities. In the parlor car the fellow sat and gabbled at his financial losses; in the smoking room he settled down to abuse Hoover and curse the depression and vilify his fellow businessmen.

"Why, every damned banker in town told me we were on the verge of the biggest boom the Northwest had ever seen. They all urged me to buy more land and start new subdivisions. They were still talking that way two days before the crash came. Can you beat that, I ask you?"

John smiled absently. He could remember the spring day in 1929 when his friend Charles Wharton had sat in the First National Bank in Newland and called him a fool to sell his hospital and get out of practice. Charlie too had been sure that the country was on the eve of the greatest prosperity ever known by modern man. Charlie had said that he was opinionated, stubborn, utterly blind when he doubted this. Charlie had talked about mass production and high wages and the disseminated ownership of industry—those bulwarks of the American way of life.

John wondered what Charles Wharton thought about these things today. October 1932 was vastly different from May 1929.

But of one point Finlay was sure: whatever Wharton's attitude, it would not resemble that of this whining real estate operator. Charlie had certainly been wrong, he had even been pig-headed in his optimism, but he was honest and he was not a bellyacher. He had always been a good friend; the cable and the letters he had written since the catastrophe at Sun Mount proved that he had not changed in that respect. The real estate man was still talking:

"... Now, the way it seems to me, that was a dirty trick if ever there was one. Why, before I got through I was damned near cleaned out. What d'you think of a guy who'd pull a thing like that—and me an old friend of his?"

John scowled at the malcontent. He was sick of listening to complaints and self-pity. Clearly the fellow was full enough of pent-up resentment to keep going until the train reached the Coast. It was no use looking out the window and trying to stop one's ears: the man simply droned on and on his litany of hate. It was then that Finlay lurched to his feet.

"Excuse me," he mumbled and stepped out into the narrow passageway beside the washroom. At the water-cooler he paused to get a drink and consider his getaway. It was no good going into the observation car again: the fellow would follow him there. The Seaforth coach was empty and if he sat down alone in his own section the pest would soon be with him again.

The porter came along the aisle. His black face was anxious. "Can I do anything for you, sir?" he asked nervously.

"Yes," said John quickly. "I want a compartment. I've got work to do."

Once established behind the privacy of a locked door, Finlay lit his pipe and opened his brief case. Perhaps after all it was a good thing that the weather had turned threatening and kept him from flying west of Chicago. This would be his last opportunity to think over all that had happened and consider what he should do when he reached Newland. Even though he had weathered the first shock of the disaster to Sun Mount it was high time—now that he was actually on the way home—to assess his circumstances carefully and make some definite plans.

He could not help recalling how he had first approached the Puget Sound country twenty-two years ago. He had come from the west, across the Pacific. And he had been very nearly broke. John smiled at the recollection he had of himself then—a thin

dark gawky young man of twenty-eight filled with energy and determination. He leaned forward and looked at his image in the mirror on the wall. His skin was still brown, it was still taut under his chin; his eyes were still their clear dark gray; but otherwise he would scarcely have known this face for his own—with its high-colored weather-beaten cheeks, its wide thin-lipped mouth, the small clipped gray mustache and the carelessly brushed-back gray hair. Running down beside the mouth were deep lines which had not been even foreshadowed twenty-two years ago, and about the set of the chin there was a trace of grimness which he had never noticed before.

He frowned thoughtfully at his reflection. Perhaps he should consider first of all himself rather than the situation awaiting him in Newland. Was it possible—barely possible—that he didn't have what it would take to realize the dream that had formed in his mind since Charlie's cable last month? He had had what it took—and a good deal more—when he left medical school. But that was twenty-nine years ago.

Twenty-nine years! He ran his hands over his thatch of gray hair. A long long time. But it had not been long enough to make him forget the slender fair-haired girl he had met in the hospital and, with the rashness of youth, married out of hand, or to wipe out the memory of his first practice in a country town in northern Illinois and the little squat yellow cottage in which he and Nancy had set up housekeeping. Over the cold gray winter morning when Nancy and their baby had died there lingered even now the corrosion of regret, although the bitterness of grief had gradually worn away. They had all of them—Nancy and he and the baby—been so young.

But he had always been a little proud that he had stuck to his post. Left a widower almost before he had learned to be a husband, he had stayed on in that town until word reached him months later of his uncle's legacy. His mother's only brother had been a legend in the Finlay household when John was a boy. He had gone to Australia as a youth and made and lost a fortune. He had gone to South Africa and then to the Klondike and made another. He had never settled down, never married, never come home on a visit. And then suddenly he had died and left to John—one of the nephews he had never seen—a sizable bequest.

Those next two years abroad had long ago come to be for

Finlay a blurred succession of crowded foreign cities and magnificent cathedrals and lovely rivers and mountains, set off by surgeries and laboratories and dead-houses in London and the Rhineland and Vienna. This in turn merged into another blur of tropical forests and sweltering towns and strange diseases seen in India and the Malay Peninsula and China and the Philippines on the way back to America. When he landed in Seaforth the legacy was gone, and instead of going on to Alaska as he had planned he took the few dollars he had left and opened an office in Newland, a thriving town twenty-five miles south of Seaforth which fancied itself destined to surpass its larger and older rival on the Sound. And there he had stayed for more than eighteen years.

At first it had been hard going, but by 1912 Newland had proved itself pay dirt and in 1916 he had built his own small hospital—nucleus of the later Sun Mount. In 1917 he had been put on the staff of the Queen County Hospital and in 1918 on the staff of Seacliff, the largest and most up-to-date hospital in Seaforth. After that he often had as many patients there as in Sun Mount: there were always those who preferred the more pretentious institution and as roads were paved twenty-five miles came to mean no more than three or four in horse-and-buggy days.

There had been "war babies" in 1915 and 1916; later there had been other shrewd investments suggested by Charles Wharton. Wartime shipbuilding brought a boom to the Puget Sound country and after 1919 there were contracts with sawmills and sash-and-door factories and pulpmills. He rebuilt Sun Mount, added a wing. His contract work kept the hospital going and he saved the income from his private work. By 1925 he had a tidy fortune; he saw his way clear to carefree middle age and comfortable senescence.

With the years Sun Mount came to be the focus of his life. He built it as truly as though he had laid it up in mortar with his own hands. He made it of dark red brick, facing the Sound and the mountains beyond; he put in plenty of windows and kept it broad and low. He could remember exactly how it had looked the last time he saw it—the night before he left Newland in 1929. In the moonlight it had seemed to sprawl closer to the ground than in the daytime. It was dark and solid, but it was not the barracks so many hospitals were. It had seemed to him, he

recalled, like something grown out of the earth—something that breathed and was alive, as though there remained in it a bit of all the lives that had come into being or gone out in its rooms.

His remembrance shifted to Grace Rodney—the young determined Grace Rodney who had come to apply for work in 1916, the Grace Rodney he had left in Newland thirteen years later a spinster not so young, with time going away from her, not toward her any longer. Like him she had built her youth into the walls and floors of Sun Mount and left it there. Birth and death and the struggle to live had done as much to Grace Rodney as to him; perhaps they would have done as much to Sun Mount.

But at the thought John started. Sun Mount was gone, destroyed by a lunatic malcontent. The realization shattered his mood of reminiscence, brought him rudely back to the present. The train was hurtling forward, wheels clicking on the rails. The next morning but one he would be in Seaforth and then in Newland. He must decide what to do first. Of course much would depend on local conditions which he could not foresee, he would have to size things up carefully after he arrived, but still . . .

He opened his brief case and took out a packet of letters. It was not his habit to save correspondence and more than once in the last three years he had wondered what impulse bade him preserve these letters. But now he was thankful he had done so, even though he still did not understand what had moved him, for here was information he needed badly.

He pulled off the rubber band and sorted out the envelopes on the seat in front of him. Dryden's letters of course would be the most valuable. They would give him the low-down on medical affairs in both Seaforth and Newland and all the new developments at Seacliff. D.D. was shrewd for his age—much shrewder than John had been in his early thirties. Perhaps that was why he had always been so frank with the younger man, told him so much of his own plans and feelings and reactions. And certainly there was no question of Dryden's loyalty.

Finlay looked out of the window. It all came back to him so clearly how he had driven into Seaforth the afternoon before he left, to see Dennis and Priscilla, tell them good-by. The country had been at its best that day—fresh, green, sparkling in soft sunlight, full of the odors of spring. Dennis had been bent over his microscope and Priscilla had been gay and flashing-eyed. John could remember thinking that D.D. was as stupid as the heroes

of romantic magazine stories who never knew when girls were in love with them, but he had comforted himself at the time with the thought that no sane man could work forever with Priscilla and not one day waken to her vivacious charm.

And then, instead of doing this, the fellow had been captivated by Eleanor Mainwaring. Here in a letter written January 1, 1930, was his first mention of her. "The woman underestimates my sterling qualities and with you away there's no one here who can set her straight. She doesn't believe anything I tell her about me. No fooling, John, she's a darl!" And a few months later came another comment: "Miss Mainwaring is inclined to be what old ladies once called 'puny'; she looks as if her hemoglobin isn't what it ought to be."

Over the postscript of still another letter Finlay lingered a little. "Eleanor Mainwaring has gone to Boston to visit an aunt and uncle. She writes that she may go to Europe with her aunt later in the spring. For Heaven's sake let me know where you will be in May and June so I can make sure she meets at least one decent man while she's over there. D.D."

John put his head back against the seat and closed his eyes. This had been his introduction to Eleanor. Dutifully he had escorted her and her aunt through Edinburgh and southern Scotland; later in the summer he had gone to visit them in Brittany—but not from a sense of duty. Why criticize Dennis when he too had come under the spell of the girl's languid dark beauty and sophisticated charm?

But he could never reconcile himself to D.D.'s infatuation. He could not picture Dennis and Eleanor together as he had so long pictured Dennis and Priscilla. He had been glad when Dryden wrote complaining that Eleanor was "a hard person to catch up with" and that his pursuit of her "might perhaps do credit to an inchworm but gets me no 'forarder' as my grandmother used to say. Evidently something is wrong with my sex appeal." Over and over he had told himself it was a calamity that Dennis had ever met the girl, and at the same time he was honest enough to admit the fascination he himself had found in her. He disliked to have Dennis hurt; it was worse for Priscilla to be rebuffed and hurt. And yet Eleanor . . . John remembered how an English friend of his had called her "a bit of all right, you know."

Finlay opened his eyes again. The whole thing was a mixed-up

mess and the less he concerned himself with it the better. There was nothing reasonable about love—and nothing anyone could alter by taking thought. He began to run through the remainder of Dryden's letters in quest of useful information.

"You'd be surprised at the fellows who got caught with their pants down on the twenty-ninth of October. The whole week of the big wind George Schuyler scuttled around getting pastier and more scared every day. The roll of fat that hangs over his collar in the back shrank perceptibly. But lately he seems to have his nerve back a bit. Maybe he takes Hoover seriously. 'Hell,' says Hoover, 'there ain't no panic, and there ain't goin' to be none—not while I'm President.'

"You'll be pleased to learn that our friend, the eminent orthopedic surgeon Warren Arnold, got pretty well trimmed. He hasn't lost weight like Georgie Schuyler, but he bellows less than he used to. In fact when he bawls me out now, I'm sure you couldn't hear him more than a mile.

"What befell your chum, Herbert W. Baldwin, F.A.C.S., I don't know. He looks the same as ever and he keeps his mouth shut. Just the other day I caught a rear view of him in the surgery corridor. His arms are so long and his legs so bowed and he looks so much like a gorilla in his operating pants and gown that it's hard to account for his appeal to the women.

"But you must remember, John, that this crash hasn't really struck the Pacific Coast yet. Last week a friend of mine in New York blew out his brains in the washroom of some office building—if he'd blown them out sooner his wife would've been better fixed—while the worst that has so far happened to me is that some filthy stock I was finagled into buying at 225 is now quoted at 26. Little things like this made Christmas 1929 memorable and merry for all of us of course. But you, my dear John, are a prophet with great honor in his own country. Every day some of the boys stop bleating long enough to lament their failure to follow your example and get out from under before the landslide."

Finlay put down the pages he had just read and looked out of the window. The land itself seemed to be under a blight: mile after mile it slipped past—barren, gray, desolate. It was hard to imagine what had lured the pioneers across this forbidding country where man still seemed a hated intruder. Perhaps it was something within these men and women of an earlier day that drove

them ahead through every obstacle—something inside them, not anything they dreamed of beyond them.

Not until after Decoration Day 1930 had Dennis written again. That holiday he had spent with Eleanor Mainwaring and as a consequence perhaps had been in a better mood. There was about his account of his friend, Walter Elliston, who had come to Seaforth to practice surgery, a trace of sardonic humor.

"You remember, John, that I spoke to you once about Walter. He's a damn good surgeon and I urged him to come out here. He'd had three years at the Clinic and used all the money he saved in a decade of hard work up in the Iron Range country. But after he got to Seaforth I almost wished he hadn't come.

"Walter is too honest for his own good, he's about forty years old but looks more, he's not very tall and not at all imposing, he has no bedside manner and no way with the women. To cap it all he's preternaturally conscientious. He has a wife and a set of triplets—all girls and all as homely as he is. He used all the cash he had left when he got to Seaforth furnishing a house and getting settled.

"Then it turned out that Baldwin didn't think he should be ranked as a major surgeon at Seacliff, and it was quite a while before that could be straightened out. Indeed Baldwin still glares at him whenever they meet each other. But in spite of everything Walter has picked up a few good cases this winter and spring. The climax so far came last month when some patients of Baldwin's actually asked for him in consultation.

"In one instance Walter didn't agree with the Great White Hope of surgery and after a few days the patient's husband went around, paid Baldwin off, and turned his wife over to Elliston. Whereupon Baldwin prophesied publicly that the woman would die. But Walter operated, proved his diagnosis, and sent her home almost well last week. I understand that Baldwin had some choice comments to make but Walter is still on the list of major surgeons and just lately several other men on the staff have been edging around to ask his opinion about this and that.

"That's where Elliston has had a bit of good luck, but your successor at Sun Mount has had his comeuppance so far as Seacliff is concerned. After much yammering George Schuyler has taken his name off the staff list on the ground that he is doing an unethical contract practice. I wonder what George calls the contract work Baldwin and Arnold bring into Seacliff.

"I hesitate to mention this unimportant item, John, but the fact is that the filthy stock I spoke of in my last letter, having already slid from 225 to 26, has now completed its descent and is quoted at three cents with no takers.

"Furthermore, Schuyler—damn his eyes!—has cut McBride in the Xray department and me here in the lab fifty bucks a month each. He cut the girls in both departments too. Of course Mac and I were furious, but what could we do? Georgie made a great show of offering the girls living quarters in the nurses' home to make up for the cut, but that means getting in at ten o'clock every week night but one, and free souls like Priscilla are irked by such regulations.

"This is of course merely a corollary to the fact that Seaclyff's volume of work has shrunk slowly but steadily all year while collections have simply gone to hell. We're less than two-thirds full and the County Hospital has to put cots in the corridors. The world is cockeyed. Or maybe I am."

There was nothing more from Dennis until St. Patrick's Day 1931. When he read again the opening paragraphs of that letter John grinned.

"If you were a clam, Dr. Finlay, I couldn't get less out of you about yourself. You write me wholesome truths about health insurance and the good qualities of the Swedes, Danes, Finns, Lapps, Esthonians, Lithuanians and whatnots—none of which interests me in the least, although perhaps it should. You haven't even told me enough about the British Isles for me to figure out why my mother was so enamored of all things Irish that she named me Dennis.

"I was as a matter of fact getting quite annoyed with you when out of a clear sky at Christmas came the most wonderful 'scope ever built in Germany. The profane hands of ordinary men are not allowed to touch it. I cabled you my passionate thanks but God only knows whether you ever got the message.

"And now this morning, on the day that would be sacred to me if I were as Irish as my name, comes this bundle of Harris tweed. How did you know I've always yearned for a genuine Harris tweed?

"I may have to keep the cloth and feel of it now and then and think what a swell suit it would make if I had the price of the making. But I thank you, John. And I'd give you back both the 'scope and the tweed for one real letter about yourself.

"Not long ago I saw Grace Rodney driving a brand-new dark red Chev coupé. Did you send that too—from Finland, or the Hebrides, or some other seaport? They tell me that Grace was fit to be tied when she found that you had eluded her and gone by plane from Seaforth to San Francisco on the first lap of your getaway in '29. I also hear that your rooms at Sun Mount are kept locked and that she won't let poor old Howard go near them. I remember that you once told me I didn't understand women. Well, my dear pooh-bah, I sometimes wonder if you understand them any better."

Finlay recalled that he had read this letter more than once when it first came, assaying the implications in the last paragraph. He reminded himself now that Dennis had asked him in 1929 what Miss Rodney would do after he had gone. At the time the question had seemed strange: Sun Mount had been husband and children, brothers and sisters, all rolled into one for Grace Rodney for thirteen years. Why should she leave when Dr. Howard took over?

So far as his flying was concerned John could remember vividly the agitation with which he had unlocked his closet on his last night in Sun Mount to make sure that his bags were really there undisturbed. Only the bustle and confusion of turning things over to Howard could have kept her from discovering that he had already packed and bought an airplane ticket for the first part of his journey. Before that he had flown but once—up into the Cascade Mountains on a cloudy day when there was no ceiling, to look after a man too badly crushed in a mine cave-in to be brought out over the trail. And when after sixteen hours' absence and a night without sleep he had finally materialized out of the fog on the steps of Sun Mount again he had met there a tall woman with stern worried dark eyes waiting to wring from him a promise never to do the like again. Naturally he had concealed from her his intention to travel by air when he left Newland.

There was something queer about all Dennis wrote of her. Why shouldn't she have a new car if she liked? She must have a tidy fund of savings tucked away. And so far as his rooms were concerned he had it from Miss Rodney herself that she had always until very recently expected him to return to Newland some day.

Somewhat impatiently John brushed away these subtleties.

There were in this letter from D.D. things of importance that made sense. The report, for instance, that Warren Arnold could collect barely enough to cover office expenses. If a fellow like Arnold couldn't screw money out of people they simply must not have any. There was also the information that both Dennis and Priscilla had had another salary cut. "Before long I expect Schuyler to begin weighing out the food he allots each employee who eats in the Seaciff dining room and charging us so much per ounce for everything above 1500 calories a day. You should be thankful, John Finlay, that you don't have to keep a respectful tongue in your head before swine like Schuyler and Baldwin and Arnold in order to hold a job."

There was another paragraph which Finlay had never been able to forget because D.D.'s tone was not naturally cynical.

"Last week I went upstairs to see about a basal metabolism on one of Baldwin's patients and as I approached the room I heard Herbert W.'s own bass voice rumbling softly, 'Now, dear lady, just leave everything to me. I'll take all responsibility. And you relax and rest.' The door was open a crack and when I knocked I got a glimpse of his big hairy paw petting a thin white hand on the coverlet. I gagged but I went on in—we don't get many basals these days at fifteen dollars per."

And the conclusion of the letter was uncharacteristically bitter.

"The 'phone just rang. They want me to go out to the County Hospital and do a post on a poor beggar found dead this morning in a rooming house on the Skid Road. Why is it considered necessary to cut him open to find out what killed him? He's dead and out of his misery. Why not leave well enough alone?"

There was a much more entertaining missive in which Dennis described the various reactions to a letter John had written to be read to the Queen County Medical Society. Baldwin had expressed himself as not at all surprised to hear that Finlay approved of certain European systems of health insurance, Schuyler had said that this was not to be wondered at since John had not been "sound" in his views for a long while, and Warren Arnold had bellowed out forthrightly that Finlay had always been a Bolshevik. Whereupon the rank and file had hastened to disavow all interest in the comments of an on-the-spot observer and any concern with such monstrous notions as medical insurance.

"I think you'd be surprised, John, to know how many of the doctors here distrust you. Walter and I were talking about it just

the other evening. We think it's not because of anything you ever actually did but because they have a hunch that you would be capable of doing almost anything if the notion took you. Then of course there's the little matter of your having made money and built your own hospital. You were always pretty independent and not too respectful to Baldwin in his capacity as chief of staff or to the Seaclyff trustees. And knowing that you didn't drop anything much in the big bull market of '29 hasn't made them like you any better either.

"Then I suspect I'm another item against you. You got me my job here in the hospital and some of the lads on the staff haven't ever forgiven me for breaking up their profitable abortion combine by reporting 'normal products of conception' on the material sent down from surgery on those midnight emergencies we used to have so often when I first came to Seaclyff. So you and I are both objects of suspicion to the organized profession in these parts."

Dryden's comments on the business situation in Seaforth later in 1931 were enlightening.

"The hospital is slipping all the while. It begins to have an indefinitely sloppy look as though Schuyler were trying to sweep the dirt under the rugs and into the corners, out of sight. I never know what my check will be. I only hope that—come the end of the month—there will be one. Priscilla the fastidious is positively shabby, at what cost to her proud beauty-loving soul only God knows. I keep telling myself how fortunate a man is to be unmarried.

"McBride sits around in the Xray department across the hall, wearing out his hinder, while he waits for a patient to wander in. Schuyler has fired one of Mac's technicians, so I took the hint and keep all my girls on the run. The same urine may be boiled and the same blood counted a dozen times a day but what the hell? It does the patients no harm and it's good practice for the girls.

"My stock—how important those words once sounded to me!—has fallen to the point where even the 'scope you sent me can discern no value in it. I wonder whether it will go down, like the thermometer, to below zero?

"I suppose you don't miss Newland or Seaforth or Seaclyff—or even Sun Mount—now that things are as they are, but I can tell you it would be a bonny sight to see you come stumping in some

morning and fling down that incredibly disreputable brown hat you used to wear on the side of your head and throw your legs across the arm of a chair and begin to talk. I like you, John Finlay, whether you write to me or not. I always have and I always shall."

SEACLIFF GENERAL HOSPITAL

SEAFORTH

GEORGE SCHUYLER, M.D.

Superintendent

DENNIS DRYDEN, M.D., M.S.

Director of Laboratories

Feb. 14, 1932

DEAR JOHN:

The last year can only be described, so far as Seaclyff and I are concerned, as a gradual—all too gradual—descent into Avernus. The gloom around here has the consistency of the stale bread pudding which is now the featured dessert in the hospital dining room. Georgie is no thinner I think, but he is paler and pastier and his eyes have the look of a disappointed codfish. Every now and then I see a trustee creeping out of his office with a crestfallen air.

Even the drug salesmen and detail men have a haggard badgered look, and the other night as I was going out I saw a man at the cashier's desk burst into tears. The poor devil has had his wife in here for weeks with a streptococcus infection that got into her bloodstream—I've typed blood for fifteen transfusions for her—and he hated the idea of moving her to the County Hospital now that his money had run out. You can hardly get through the halls at the County for the cots against the walls, and the only chance to get into a regular ward or semi-private room is for someone to die.

Last week, attracted by the roar of the treatment machine—which we don't hear often any more—I went over to the Xray department and caught Mac treating a cancer patient who hasn't any money. Mac's been coming down at night to treat the fellow: George doesn't stick around much at night. And that day he was out of town. Of course Mac will eventually get caught at this but he doesn't give a damn if he is. It would only hasten a disaster that is inevitable and put a stop to his suspense.

But there has been one bright spot for yours truly recently. Eleanor Mainwaring reappeared in Seaforth last month. We've been up the Mountain skiing several times since. Don't ask me how I got the money.

Mostly she talks about you and the wonderful time she and her aunt had with you last summer. Now and then I try to call her

attention to my own good points and I have even taken to greasing my hair so it will lie down and look less like a bushman's. But I don't seem to get very far.

I am, literally, amazed at myself. No female ever buffaloes me before. Daily I resolve to treat this woman rough but my resolutions always ooze away at sight of her. I begin to understand your wholesome respect for Miss Rodney. But I don't understand myself. There is nothing alarming about Eleanor. I could pick her up in one arm. But I don't.

I guess the Depression has got me down for sure. I *would* fall for a girl with money, at a time when I do well to eat!

What the devil is to become of us, John? What's going to happen to the medical profession? And how is a man to marry and then either starve or live off his wife?

The Committee on the Costs of Medical Care are publishing some interesting stuff now. Walter and I argue heatedly over their findings. Having been recently in a factory for the mass production of medical care, he is all for private practice. I don't know *what* I think. Is the answer public medicine and hospitals? I go out to the County Hospital and listen to what Garfield says about his struggles with the county commissioners and I think not. Then I come back here and realize that George Schuyler is no better than the county commissioners.

But sometimes, do you know, I have a twinge of pity for George? What with a payroll to meet and supplies to buy and a nurses' training school to feed besides employees and technicians, and a steadily dwindling income, I don't envy him.

A few weeks ago in a moment of rashness I took the Harris tweed you sent me down to a tailor. I suspect I had a notion that a snappy new brown suit would bring out the color of my hair and eyes and uncover a few charms in me that might rival yours in the eyes of a young lady. But now I won't be surprised if they eventually bury me in the tweed. Schuyler has been looking at me sourly, thinking visibly that if I can afford a swanky new suit I can also afford to take another cut. Priscilla who knows the source of the material suggests with her usual sweetness that I attach to the seat of the pants a placard saying "The gift of John Finlay, M.D."

Don't bother to remember my address any longer. Probably I won't be here any longer when your quarterly letter reaches Seaforth.

As always—

D.D.

Not until after Sun Mount burned had Dennis written again. John put down this letter slowly.

Beneath it was one from Grace Rodney dated May 1, 1932. It

began, "For nearly three years I have held my peace but now I can keep silent no longer." Its arguments, excoriating as they might be, were few and simple. John remembered them perfectly.

First of all, he had had no business to retire in 1929. He had been too young to live in idleness and too old to learn new ways. Besides, he owed something to the community in which he had made his money.

In the second place, Dr. Howard was not the man to take over Sun Mount. Eastern born and bred, he did not get on well with the other doctors in Seaforth or Newland. His wife, much younger than he, was constantly homesick. He was inexperienced in industrial work and the contract patients from the mills soon became dissatisfied.

Then he had had a run of bad luck. Unavoidable delay in getting a consultant out from Seaforth resulted in the death of a ten-year-old child. A little later a young man with a minor leg injury developed gas gangrene and died. Then Schuyler cut Howard off the Seacliff staff and after that various firms began to cancel their contracts for the medical care of their employees.

Finally a conspiracy, headed in Miss Rodney's opinion by Baldwin and Arnold, had culminated in the opening of a new clinic in Newland. Patrick Boyd, an unscrupulous physician of whom she and Finlay knew only evil, operated this clinic and undercut Howard's prices until he was left with but one contract and the scant remnant of Finlay's private practice.

"This time next year," concluded Grace Rodney, "there won't be any Sun Mount. There will be only a deserted building full of empty beds, its windows broken because boys have thrown stones and people who were cold or hungry or merely rebellious have broken in and taken what they wanted. . . . This is the first time I have written you since you left Newland and I expect it to be the last time. I have spoken my mind and told you the truth. It remains to be seen whether it will do any good."

Only a few days after this, John recalled, there had come a note from Charles Wharton with the warning that Howard was really in desperate straits. Characteristically Miss Rodney had omitted any mention of the sight drafts she had met herself because Dr. Howard did not have the money. Even now Finlay found some comfort in remembering that he had cabled funds to Wharton at once. "I want you to hold this deposit for Sun Mount or Miss Rodney or Dr. Howard, jointly or individually

whichever is best. I leave all details to you, Charlie. Only be sure they get it when they need it."

But of course that had done no good. Nothing could have done any good then. Howard was washed up, done for. He had got himself into a blind alley from which there was only one exit—and at last he had found that exit. What was it Charlie had written about the insurance? Finlay fingered through the last letters in the pile.

"You'll be relieved to know that Howard had a double-indemnity policy in one of the old-line companies. The money was paid over to his widow today, here in the bank. She told me she plans to return east at once."

John looked up from the typed page for a moment. The Sun Mount tragedy had certainly gotten under Wharton's skin. A little farther on he had written, "Connolly and Mesner are in jail charged with murder. It occurs to me that it would save trouble and time all around if someone went down and put a bullet into each of them. Poor Howard was a pathetic figure. I saw him on the street a couple of days before he was killed. He had the look of a man who is beaten and knows it."

Finlay sat gazing out of the window at the racing landscape. He was trying to visualize the situation he would find in Newland the day after tomorrow. None of the mills were running to capacity, more were closing down every week. Even the pulp-mills were on part time. It would seem strange to look across the tideflats and see no smoke coming out of the tall smokestacks.

Then there was this new clinic Pat Boyd was running. Miss Rodney said he had a Neon sign in front of the entrance. That, John reflected, would be a characteristic touch. Boyd had always been a flamboyant creature—too tall, too well groomed, too sleekly brushed—with a hatchet face and a taste for loud colors. But he would be a stiff competitor. He had weathered a storm of criticism for incompetence during the War, he had gone into bankruptcy in 1921 and got rid of his debts, now he had opened his new clinic and stolen most of Dr. Howard's contracts. Grace Rodney wrote that she was convinced Arnold and Baldwin were backing him and Charlie had something to say about him too.

"I detest the fellow but when he came into the bank to open an account I had to shake hands and pretend I was glad to see him. There are certain things my directors and stockholders ex-

pect of me, and 'cash money' will cover more sins than ever today."

"Cash money." Finlay said the words aloud. He leaned forward with his elbows on his knees, running his hands through his hair and staring at the little stack of letters lying on the seat. With every mile clicked off westward he was coming to realize more and more clearly that this second entrance of his into the life of Newland and Seaforth would not be as simple or as easy as the first had been.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN FINLAY paced up and down the soggy turf that had once been the smooth green lawn of Sun Mount. A wind from the southwest flapped the tails of his raincoat around his mud-splattered trouser legs and a monotonous drizzle soaked the crown of his shapeless brown felt hat and dripped off the brim. Now and then he sat down on a heap of rubble for an instant but always he sprang up again the next moment and resumed his dogged beat across the sodden ground, and always his eyes were fastened to the jagged red walls that had once marked his own place in the world.

He brushed up the drooping hat brim and wiped his face impatiently.

"The damn wind," he muttered. "Got to get used to it again—and the rain too—if I stick around here."

He fumbled in his pocket and pulled out a pipe and oilskin pouch. But exploring fingers soon showed him that there was no tobacco in the pouch. He grunted and shoved it back into his pocket, then went on prowling about the grounds of his one-time hospital.

The dark red walls still stood but the windows were blank holes open to wind and rain and the roof lay in heaps of debris. The flower beds were gray-black patches of mud, the grass had been trampled into the earth. Only the garage behind the building, the drive leading to it, and the view over the Sound seemed the same. And even the view today was nothing to inspire a man—low gray sky; rough lead-colored water; a tug or two dragging scows laden with sawdust; and near the shore a handful of rowboats with gray figures huddled in them.

Fishing for supper, reflected Finlay, in a November downpour

must get monotonous and eating the fish must in time get monotonous too. He walked over to the edge of the bluff and looked down at the little boats and the men in them. Why don't you get together, he thought, and tell the bankers and the politicians where to get off? There's enough of you to get away with it.

John's mouth seemed to widen, his lips drew into a thin line under the small gray mustache, the creases running down across his cheeks toward his jaw deepened into narrow grooves.

"Yeah, why?" he said half-aloud. "And why don't I make up my mind and either start something or get out of here? Maybe I've got soft, maybe I've lost my nerve, maybe I haven't got what it takes. Maybe . . . Oh, hell, how would I know what's wrong with me?"

Quickly he swung around with his back to the water and stood staring at the wreck of Sun Mount. He was still standing there when around the corner swung into view a dingy tan Model A Ford. It clattered up to the curb and stopped, the door burst open and a stocky figure jumped out.

"Hi, John," shouted Dennis Dryden walking across the disheveled lawn. "What are you up to, mooning around out here alone?"

"Only the Lord knows," answered Finlay. "Probably just a matter of habit—like the hog in the Bible who returned to his wallowing in the mire." But the light that shone in the dark gray eyes belied these words. Between squinted lids John Finlay gazed with affection on the broad stubborn chin, the full curving mouth, and the clean sweep of cheek he could see between Dryden's upturned raincoat collar and his snapped-down hat brim.

"Well, come away from the edge anyhow," ordered Dennis abruptly. "About fifty feet of your real estate fell off into the Sound right about here last winter and I don't want to be diving after your corpse tonight. Come on, you. It's going to be dark pretty soon."

Together the two men walked slowly back toward the ruined building.

"It looks like hell," said Finlay after a moment.

"Yes, it does, John. But now that you're back I've quit thinking so much about Sun Mount. Having you around again is just like having someone come back from the dead. You don't look a day older than you did in 1929 and you're the same stubborn

opinionated bossy guy you always were in the old days. You know what I mean: B.D. not B.C. For before the depression."

Finlay grinned and laid an arm across Dryden's shoulder.

"I pull out the gray hairs every morning, D.D., and I long since stopped eating lunch. That's how I keep down the middle-aged bulge." He rubbed his stomach with his free hand. "And, you know, I've got so I enjoy feeling a bit lank and empty, as though I had room to spare in my clothes. Too bad our friend George doesn't feel the same way."

A scowl settled quickly over Dryden's blond face.

"Let's not talk about that bastard tonight. I've lost the capacity to make fun of him."

"That's bad, D.D. As long as you can laugh at a fellow he can't get you down. And besides, George is funny, you know."

"Not when he's got the whip hand, he isn't. Not when he can set you out in the street without a job." Dennis stopped in his tracks. "It isn't right for any man to have power like that, over other people. Despotism, tyranny—they're only politics. But this is bread and butter—life itself. . . . Oh hell, what's the use? I didn't mean to sound off. Forget it, John."

"What's happened since I saw you last night, D.D.?"

"Schuyler fired McBride this morning, that's all."

"I see," said John slowly. "How about him? I never knew him very well. He'd been at Seacliff only about a year when I went away. What sort of a chap is he?"

"Oh, he's long and bony, and he has big hands and feet and a temper that goes on smoldering after the fellow who steps on him has forgotten all about it. But he knows his stuff. Don't let anybody ever tell you different." Dryden spoke with a quietness that did not conceal the bitterness in his voice.

"And he hasn't got anything else lined up?"

"Who? Mac? Say, John, you don't realize what fellows like him and me are up against. We're out on the end of a limb. We can't go into general practice: the field's overcrowded already and we've been out of touch with the business of dragging babies and feeding diabetics too long. We can't set up labs of our own because we haven't got any money to start with and people haven't got the money to pay for that sort of work. The hospitals are hiring men part time, or getting young chaps fresh out of school who'll work for next to nothing or just plain technicians who make the X-ray films and boil up the urine and let the doc-

tors make whatever they can out of the results. Laboratory men are in a hell of a fix, going or coming."

"How soon will McBride be leaving Seacliff, do you know?"

"The first of the year. He's going to finish the treatment cases he's got started. He says he can't walk out and leave them in the lurch."

There was a dead quality in Dryden's voice. John looked at him sharply. What he saw was not pleasant. Now that Dennis was not smiling, his blond face was haggard and the full curving lips bitter. Finlay drew a long breath. He had seen that look on too many young faces in the last few weeks—the faces of young Americans who should have been gay and confident but instead were grim and distrustful and worn.

"I knew what had happened as soon as I saw Mac this morning."

Dryden was speaking again in that curiously flat, dead voice.

"The thing that got him worst of all was that he had crawled—to George Schuyler. Begged to stay on half-time, any way, just to hold a job. He's been engaged for two years and now he's got to tell the girl that they can't get married—got to tell her again, I mean. It did something to him, John—something horrible—to get kicked out like that. And after crawling . . ."

The two men had come to a heap of old bricks and there, unmindful of the wind and rain, they sat down together before the shattered hulk of Sun Mount.

"What's going to become of us younger fellows? How are we going to live? What can we do? And what is there to live for?"

"So it's really that bad, is it?" asked Finlay softly.

"Yes, it is," cried the other man savagely. "I've been in love with Eleanor Mainwaring for two years now, and what has it got me? I make plans and lay plots, but I don't get anywhere. I drink more than is good for me, I sleep only when I'm dog-tired. She's like the fog—elusive. And then there's this cursed money of hers. How can a fellow like me, with nothing between him and the breadline but a job that may fold up any minute, propose marriage to a woman with a fortune of her own?"

"Just how much of a fortune has she really got, D.D.?"

"Christ, how would I know? Me, with two thin dimes in my pocket!"

There was blank silence for a minute. Then Dennis stretched his stiff set lips in a synthetic smile. "Sorry, John. I didn't mean

to blow off. But Mac got me on edge today. I growled at Priscilla until she drove me out of the lab. And when I ran into Schuyler in the hall I snarled at him too—even though my job, such as it is, depends on keeping him buttered up. I'm ashamed of myself. But I can't help it."

Finlay's gray eyes continued to study the younger man. Dryden looked shabby. His raincoat was wrinkled and one pocket was torn. The brown Harris tweed underneath was threadbare. John remembered seeing the worn edges of the coat sleeves the night before and the collar worn through at the turn-over. Very likely this was the only new suit the boy had had since 1929. And Finlay resented that.

He searched for something to say, some funny story, anything that would take Dryden's mind off McBride and Eleanor Mainwaring, but he could think of nothing. For the fortieth time he wondered why Dennis had fallen in love with this particular girl. There was something incongruous between Eleanor and Dennis. Vigorous, hot-headed, gay-tongued, the boy should not have been captivated by the languid charm born of sophisticated living. Priscilla—red-lipped, vivacious, flashing-eyed, her competence in her job matched only by her insouciant attitude toward her own troubles—yes. But not the other woman about whom, for all her beauty and grace, there was a detached coolness approaching the decadent.

Exasperated by these thoughts, John shook himself back into actuality. Whenever had any man, young or old, known why he fell in love? For such things there was no explanation. Even long ago, with Nancy and himself, there had been no sensible explanation. He humped his back a little more against the wind and turned up his coat collar.

Just then a small dark red coupé glistening with rain turned the corner and stopped behind Dryden's battered tan Ford. From it emerged a woman—tall, slender, trimly swathed in a long green rain cape. John grinned to himself. Thank God for Grace Rodney! Here she was, just as she had always popped up in emergencies all the way from bursted drainpipes and premature babies to the fire that had destroyed Sun Mount a few weeks ago. What could he ever have done without her? And what hopes and ideas did she now conceal beneath the noncommittal dignity with which she had welcomed him on his return to Newland?

Swiftly and directly Miss Rodney bore down on the two men.

Her thin dark face was at first almost devoid of expression but as she came nearer it took on a cast of incredulity. A half-dozen paces distant she stopped and looked at the two figures before her with what in an ordinary woman would have been amazement.

"What on earth are you doing," she demanded, "sitting out here in the rain on a pile of bricks? You're soaked, both of you. Look at your feet!"

Habit reasserted itself; John looked as he was bid. He saw a pair of shapeless trouser legs held against his shins by the wind, and two discolored muddy shoes. He glanced quickly at Dennis. The younger man's hat dripped dismally and steadily, and he had been splashed with muddy water. Tentatively Finlay touched the front of his raincoat.

"I put on this . . ."

"Nonsense! That raincoat was worn out before you left Newland. I wish I'd sent it to the rummage sale last winter as I should have done. You'll be sick, both of you. A man your age, Dr. Finlay, should have better judgment."

Involuntarily John ducked his head. He had a mental picture of Miss Rodney dragooning both Dennis and himself to her apartment and bullying them into hot tub baths and hot tea and blankets while their clothes steamed before a radiator. His imaginings were interrupted by a suppressed chuckle from the dripping figure beside him.

"We were just going, Miss Rodney. Honestly we were. How were we to know it would rain today when we arranged to meet out here?"

The tall woman turned sharp dark eyes on Dennis. "How many days in November have you ever known it *not* to rain on the Sound, Dr. Dryden?"

Dennis raised his hands in the gesture of the stage Jew but said nothing.

"It did not occur to me that you might be here until I failed to locate you anywhere else," continued the nurse. "Miss Graham has been trying to get in touch with you, and she finally called me to ask if I'd seen you. There's a committee meeting tonight and she was afraid you'd forgotten about it. She said you'd understand."

"Oh, the devil! I intended to duck out on Gab-and-Grumble and pretend I'd forgotten. Now I'll have to go. Confound that

girl! Why can't she mind her own business?" But the words were belied by the dawning brightness in Dryden's blue eyes. "I say, John, why don't you come with me? You belonged to the outfit for years. What more natural than that you should attend the first meeting after you get home?"

Finlay's face was doubtful. One of George Schuyler's pet projects at Seacliff was the Efficiency Committee elected by the staff to meet once a month and discuss the state of the institution and back up the policies and actions of the superintendent. John could remember very clearly Schuyler's face when he found out that Dennis had christened this honorable body Gab-and-Grumble.

"I'm not sure that would be a smart thing to do, D.D."

"Pfui! Of course it would. After all, aren't you the freshly returned Prodigal Son and haven't you the right to expect a warm reception? Besides, you'll get a good meal off George. Whatever else he's done, he hasn't cut down on the dinners he serves Gab-and-Grumble."

"Well, do something, go somewhere," remarked Grace Rodney briskly. "And get out of those wet clothes," she added.

Finlay looked from her stern dark eyes to Dryden's blond face now sparkling with amusement.

"Oh, come along, John. What do you care about George? He can't throw you out. And there are some decent fellows in the bunch—like Jackson and Marlin—who will be damn glad to see your homely face again."

Finlay stole one more look at Grace Rodney's decisive face. There could be no doubt that she was making plans; another vision of himself stripped of his clothes and wrapped in a blanket in her apartment flashed into his mind.

"All right, D.D. I'll go."

At this precise moment a figure came into view sauntering around one corner of the old hospital building. The newcomer was thin and very tall, he wore his hat pushed back on his head, and his hands were deep in his trousers pockets. Like the others he dripped at every step, but seemed quite unconscious of the fact. Without quickening his steps he approached the little group beside the brick pile. Three pairs of eyes—black, blue, and gray—watched his coming.

"Hi, everybody," he drawled. There was boyish impertinence in the greeting.

Finlay noticed the narrow head and long narrow face and the pink-and-white cheeks. The lad would seem absurdly young, he told himself, if it were not for the incongruous sophistication of his seagreen eyes. These eyes were now drifting from John to Dennis and back again.

"You Dr. Finlay? Dr. John Finlay?"

"Yes. Why?"

The young man drew a card from his pocket and presented it with a flourish.

"Peter McFarlane, sir, of the *Advertiser*. How about an interview?"

Finlay frowned at the nonchalant youth before him.

"An interview? What about? I'm not news."

"On the contrary, you are news," retorted McFarlane. "The biggest news in this part of the country at the moment." He waved a hand at the crumbling walls of Sun Mount. "There are rumors that you are going to rebuild, and even a birdhouse is news these days. But maybe you didn't know that we have a Depression in the United States. Maybe you've been in your ivory tower across the water so long that you hadn't heard there are a lot of men out of work. Maybe you wouldn't know a Depression if you saw one."

"You're being impertinent, young man!" interrupted Miss Rodney. "Dr. Finlay undoubtedly knows more about the Depression than you do."

"He couldn't," cut in McFarlane. "I haven't got a dime left from last week's pay and I owe two months' back rent. It stands to reason I know more about this 'cyclic business recession' than he does."

"What do you want me to tell you?" asked Finlay curiously.

"Oh, a lot of things. How you made your money and how much of it you've got left. And what your plans are now. Whether you expect to rebuild and who's going in with you if you do. What's going to happen in Europe. What you think of Roosevelt. Anything, everything. I'm not particular."

A delicate flush crept over Grace Rodney's high-bred face. "This is absurd," she said sharply. "Doctors don't put things in the papers. It isn't ethical. You're wasting our time, Mr. . . . Mr. . . ."

"McFarlane is the name, lady. Peter McFarlane, in case you're

interested. Of the *Advertiser*. At least I was of the *Advertiser* an hour ago. But I don't think I know who you are."

The woman stiffened, her black eyes brightened.

"This is Miss Rodney," intervened John hurriedly. "My head nurse at Sun Mount from 1916 to 1929."

"Pleased to meet you." McFarlane made a gesture in the general direction of his hat. Then suddenly he had paper in his hand, apparently without reaching for it. "Did you say from 1916 to 1929? Gosh, that's a long time to hold a job! Ever get bored, Miss Rodney? . . . No, I can see you wouldn't. Stern, self-contained—not the angel of mercy type. . . . Say, weren't you here when the place burned? Sure, I remember now. You were the one who found Doc Howard. I'd 've been here myself but I was out of town that day. On a murder! Can you feature that? The paper sends me off on a wild goose chase over to Gray's Harbor and then there's a fine juicy murder right here on our doorstep practically, and I miss it! Tell me, what were your first sensations when you walked in and found the doc lying in his own blood? There *was* a pool of blood, wasn't there?"

Grace Rodney's narrow aristocratic face hardened.

"I have nothing to say. You . . . you are unspeakable!"

"Yeah, I know. Reporters are a low form of life. But believe it or not, we have to eat too and the only way we can do it is to ask questions—even when people don't like them. Don't you see the drama of it? You darting down the hall, uniform all crisp and white, and coming back with that same uniform dotted with red to pursue the murderers."

"I did nothing of the kind." Miss Rodney's voice was grim, her dark eyes outraged and indignant.

In spite of himself John Finlay grinned; then he winked at Dennis.

"Just a minute, McFarlane. Suppose you let up on the lady. Tell me this, did the *Advertiser* send you out here today?"

"Well, the city editor said dig up something good or else . . . And seeing I've stuck on this job nearly a year now I didn't like the sound of his voice. Not that moving would be anything new. You'd be surprised how much of the country I've seen—that way."

Finlay's mouth twitched under the gray mustache.

"I'm sure you'd be very good at moving on, Mr. McFarlane. But I don't see why you want to bombard me with questions. I'm

just a garden-variety doctor, I practiced here in Newland for eighteen years. I've come back from three years and half abroad to find my old hospital burned. That's nothing a city editor would want to print."

"Oh, yeah?" McFarlane's green eyes looked straight at John; they were shrewd and penetrating. "Maybe you don't know much about city editors. And maybe what you've just said is the truth. But it ain't the whole truth. I'm not as young as I look and not half as simple. Come clean, doc. Come clean."

Finlay's smile froze on his face.

"All right, I will. I don't like newspapers. I particularly dislike the *Advertiser*. I always refused to have it on the place because I didn't like its policies. It's always been a filthy sheet full of scandals and hand in glove with all the cheap politicians in Seaforth. I have nothing to say for publication in it. Do I make myself clear?"

"You do." The reporter put away his pencil and paper as quickly as he had produced them, then looked from one to another of the three persons in front of him. "But I still think you've got something up your sleeve. I'm damn sure you have. Off the record, doc, ain't I right?"

Both Finlay and Dryden laughed. John pulled his limp brown hat further down over his forehead.

"Off the record, anything might be true, Mr. McFarlane."

Grace Rodney looked up sharply; there was a trace of anxiety in her dark eyes. But Finlay went on. "Would you by any chance be interested in having dinner with me at Blanco's one night next week, McFarlane?"

"Blanco's?" The reporter's voice was expressionless.

"Yes. Is there somewhere else you'd rather go?"

"Listen, let me get this straight. You're asking me to eat dinner with you at Blanco's?"

"I am. Will you come?"

"Will I come? Dear God, did you hear the man? Me, who lives in a hall bedroom and eats buns and hot dogs when I'm in the dough and between times takes the water cure to retain my figure! Say, brother, I'll be there praying that you haven't changed your mind."

Dennis smiled at McFarlane. "Don't worry. He won't change his mind. He'll probably be late, but he won't change his mind."

"Shall we say Monday?" asked John.

Peter nodded. "Monday it is."

"All right. I'll meet you at the restaurant about six-thirty."

"O.K." McFarlane started off, then stopped and whirled around. "And you'll talk?" he asked.

"Perhaps. But not for publication."

"O.K. by me. What's a city editor to me? I'll be there, if I'm not dead and buried by that time. So long. I'll be seeing you."

Grace Rodney and the two men watched McFarlane's long legs bounding across the grass and over piles of brick until he turned the corner of the building out of sight.

"Of all the unmannerly scamps I ever saw! I can't see why you didn't put him off the place, Dr. Finlay."

John's eyes darkened as they left off following McFarlane's retreating figure and turned toward the nurse. "I've got a hunch, that's why. A hunch that this flippant high-falutin manner is all a blind. There's something about that boy . . . Didn't you notice it, Dennis?"

Dryden was buttoning his raincoat closer around his throat. He nodded abstractedly. Miss Rodney came as near snorting as possible for a woman of refinement.

"More than once, Dr. Finlay, I've known you to notice things that didn't exist." She drew her cape about her and stepped deliberately around a puddle in her path. "I'm going home, out of the rain. If you don't want to have pneumonia you'll do the same."

Having spoken her mind and thus cleared her conscience, Grace Rodney retreated to her car, climbed in, and drove away.

"You know, John, there's something in what she says. I haven't been so wet since the last time I was in swimming. Why not come over to that dump of mine? It's at least warm and dry. And we can talk and have a drink—Dryden's famous Painless Punch made with alcohol filched from under George Schuyler's nose. Besides, if we're going to Gab-and-Grumble, I've got to iron a shirt. You didn't know I was a laundress, did you? But I am. I save quite a lot of money that way, believe it or not. And I press my own pants too—on rare occasions. It means a quarter for something more essential than a crease in my breeches."

Talking brisk nonsense Dryden put an arm in Finlay's and drew him toward the dilapidated car beside the curb. But once they were on their way he looked at the older man sharply.

"Have you got something up your sleeve, John? You haven't

said a word about your plans. Will you rebuild Sun Mount? Or go into practice again?"

"Damned if I know, D.D. I'm sick of batting around at loose ends, and I don't know how to do anything except practice medicine. I thought I knew my own mind but now that I'm here I find that I don't. Then there's something else. I didn't come through the storm unscathed. I didn't drop as much as most of the fellows but the bank account isn't what it was in 1929." There was complete silence for a moment, marked only by the rattling of the Ford. Then Finlay went on slowly, "And the way things look, D.D., bank accounts won't be worth a plugged nickel this winter."

"It's election next week," said Dryden slowly. "Maybe things will be different after that."

John shook his head and frowned at the sheet of rain sliding over the windshield in front of him. "What the devil can Franklin Roosevelt do about the banks if he is elected? What can any politician do? The whole system is screwy. Here is the United States with the finest land on earth and people going hungry while the food rots on the ground and in the warehouses. And over in Europe there's a war brewing, D.D.—a war that will make the last one look like a fixed fight between two pugs who don't want their faces spoiled."

"You're a cheerful soul to have around," remarked Dennis.

"That's all right. A little while ago it was you who was the pessimist, remember? Asking me what young fellows like you and McBride were going to do, wondering whether life was worth living. Well, why ask *me*? How would I know? Perhaps there's a complete blackout coming—a blackout of medicine and civilization and decent living and all the things we've been taught to expect from the future."

Dennis shook his head and stole a look at the man beside him. The sharp-cut profile with its jutting chin and straight short nose seemed to shrink back into the shadow of the drooping hat brim.

"Now, John Finlay, for God's sake, don't you go sour on me! I've always banked on you to see a way through even when the going was tough. You wouldn't fold up on me, would you?"

But the only answer he got was an almost inaudible grunt.

CHAPTER FOUR

DR. GEORGE SCHUYLER prided himself on his Efficiency Committee.

"Any staff," he wrote in an article for *Hospital Management*, "will have a few malcontents who are bound to make trouble. As a group they are hard to handle. But even the worst of them, once placed on an Efficiency Committee, begin to feel that they are helping formulate the policies of the institution and soon become less troublesome.

"Besides one or two of the malcontents there should be on the committee several of your best producers—men who can be depended on to bring the hospital a volume of business. Then it is wise to have, in addition, the laboratory and Xray men if they are on salary, since they will be amenable to suggestions from the superintendent.

"The meetings must be made attractive. At Seacliff I make it a point to serve a good dinner with plenty of cigarettes and good cigars—and sometimes other refreshments as well. Experience has proved that such a committee is an invaluable method of managing even a recalcitrant staff."

Dennis Dryden had stumbled on this article soon after its publication and promptly christened Schuyler's cherished organization Gab-and-Grumble. Thereafter he and John Finlay had made it a habit to rehash each meeting with gleeful malice. Now, hurrying along a corridor at Seacliff to make a somewhat belated entrance at John's first session of the committee after his return, the two men could hear Schuyler's high-pitched but unctuous voice through the half-open door of the small private dining room.

"I'm not going to antagonize the man if I can help it. He had

as large a practice as anyone in Seaforth before he went away in 1929. He can easily get most of it back and I'd like him to bring his work here instead of rebuilding his own hospital. We need the business."

Finlay winked solemnly at Dennis. "Come down hard on your heels, D.D. It strikes me that they've been talking about one John Finlay."

A moment later the latecomers pushed wide the door and stood on the threshold watching twelve men around a long table eating busily. Warren Arnold was speaking in a loud ill-tempered voice.

"Christ only knows what the damned Democrats will do if they get in. And I'm sick of the Roosevelts. Look what T.R. did twenty-five years ago."

Oliver Marlin turned a pair of faded but inquiring blue eyes upon Arnold's perspiring red face. "Well, what did he do? I always thought he was mostly sound and fury."

Dr. Robert Jackson looked placatingly from one speaker to the other. He was a good-looking man of forty-odd whose dark curly hair was flecked with gray at the temples. "It hardly seems possible that the election can make things worse," he said soothingly.

"You don't know what you're talking about, Bob," retorted Arnold. "I can remember '93. Compared with that we ain't seen nothing yet."

"You should go down and explain that to the people in front of the Seaforth Savings and Loan Association," said Dr. Marlin quietly. "I'm afraid they don't see things as you do." As he spoke the white-haired old man looked up. "Oh, hello, John. Welcome home."

From his seat at the head of the table George Schuyler glanced quickly toward the door and as quickly got to his feet. His thinning hair was brushed sleekly back from a round pasty-looking face, his blue suit showed a narrow white piping along the waistcoat border, and there was a white flower in his button-hole. Involuntarily Finlay's eyes went down to Dryden's baggy tweeds and his own shapeless trousers.

"Well, well, John. We'd almost given you up. Glad to see you back at Seacliff. Come in and sit down. The girls will bring your plates right away."

There was a chorus of greetings. "Hello, Finlay." "How are you, John?" "How did you leave things on the other side?" "Nice

to see you back." "Come on and tell what you saw on your travels, John."

Finlay grinned genially at the group, nodded to Herbert Baldwin, shook hands with Robert Jackson and Oliver Marlin and sat down between them. Composedly he began to eat and between swallows looked up and down the table.

On the whole it struck him that the last three years had not been kind to these men. Hair lines were higher, eyes less confident, faces flabbier and more lined. He felt a twinge of pity. Perhaps after all they had been on the firing line while he had watched disaster from afar; very likely some of them must think that had not been quite sporting of him. But only on Warren Arnold's face could he see open dislike. The others seemed friendly although Baldwin's expression was as usual noncommittal and it had always to be remembered that George Schuyler habitually had many objectives and more than one devious path toward each of them mapped out in his mind. He and Baldwin, John reminded himself, were accustomed to fish in troubled waters to their own advantage.

The talk turned to politics and the stock market. Someone began to rib Marlin about Swedish Match and the old man rubbed his chin and smiled sheepishly.

"Investments were never my long suit, I'll admit. But who would have thought that man Krueger was a swindler?"

"Having a Swedish wife, you regard all Swedes as honest, I suppose," put in Dryden.

"Here, here, Dennis. No aspersions on us Swedes. You know my name is Nelson," the broad-shouldered fair-haired man across the table from Finlay remarked amiably.

"Now who'd take you for a Swede?" roared Warren Arnold.

"I'd put you down for a Jew."

Eric Nelson stopped laughing and glanced half-furtively at a thin-cheeked dark-eyed man at the foot of the table whom John had never met. A faint touch of red crept over this man's sallow face but he said nothing and Robert Jackson intervened nervously.

"I don't suppose any of us have reason to be proud of ourselves. I know I haven't. Everybody here burned his fingers, I think, unless it's John." He looked at Finlay.

"Well, you see, the big bull market was still booming when I left," replied Finlay.

Arnold muttered something unintelligible under his breath but Schuyler interrupted him.

"There are a good many things to come up this evening and I wonder whether John and Dennis wouldn't be willing for us to begin our discussion while they are finishing up."

"Certainly. Don't mind us," agreed Finlay heartily.

"Well, first of all," snapped Arnold, "what have your cock-eyed trustees agreed to do about paying us for the clinic work?"

Instant silence fell upon the room. The little clatter of Finlay's knife and fork seemed suddenly very loud.

Schuyler was manifestly annoyed. "Must we go through that again?" he exclaimed. "I have told you—all of you—that Seaclyff has no money to pay the staff."

"That's what you say," retorted Arnold testily. "But I say I'm sick of working for nothing. Why should I? The people I treat in the clinic could just as well come to my office and pay me for what I do."

"But, Warren," said Oliver Marlin quietly, "they can't afford to pay fees."

"Poppycock!" exclaimed Arnold. "They come up here in better cars than mine, the women wear fur coats. They go to movies and they buy patent medicine in the drug stores. Why can't they pay us too?"

"I haven't seen many Packards and Cadillacs around Seaclyff the last year or two except yours and Dr. Baldwin's," answered Marlin raising his voice a little. "And what use are fur coats? You can't eat them."

"I know some people here in town," said Eric Nelson quickly, "who are eating their jewelry. Their grocers give them credit for it."

"Isn't that hard on the grocers?" remarked Finlay. "Suppose other folks were to follow their example."

"Dr. Arnold is right, in principle." Baldwin took from his mouth the long cigar he had just chosen from the box Schuyler had passed down the table. "We doctors have been very short-sighted. We've always worked in free clinics without pay and kidded ourselves that the experience and prestige and hospital appointments we gained in this way were remuneration enough. But now we can see that we were wrong."

"The man with a large practice had little time to spend in these clinics and so the patients have always been turned over,

most of them, to interns and junior staff members. And that without proper supervision. This was not fair to anyone. The young men didn't learn all they should have and the patients didn't get the attention and skill they needed."

Baldwin paused and Finlay looked along the row of faces around the table. Several of the men nodded their agreement. Somewhat reluctantly John too admitted to himself that Baldwin was right. The man was intelligent, he made up his own mind and stood by his convictions. Furthermore he was a skillful surgeon. If only he did not do so many unnecessary operations—on the plausible theory that, since they would probably be done anyway, it was better to do them himself than to leave them to some incompetent—and if only he were not too arrogant to admit his mistakes.

But now Warren Arnold was on the verge of open revolt against Baldwin. His hazel eyes glinted an angry red like those of a canvasback. But once more Schuyler intervened.

"Gentlemen," he said as placatingly as he could, "believe me this is not the time or the place to thresh out disputes over money. My trustees simply have no funds to pay you for the clinic work. They regret this, just as I do, but they can't help it. I must ask you, Arnold, to believe me when I tell you this. You are right in principle, as Dr. Baldwin says"—the superintendent hastily qualified as Arnold glared at him belligerently—"but to do as you suggest is utterly impossible at present."

Baldwin nodded as Schuyler looked appealingly in his direction.

"Don't worry about it," he rumbled in his resonant bass voice. "It isn't your fault or ours that the clinic is crowded. We won't leave you in the lurch. We'll go on working here and in our offices without pay. When people haven't any money you simply can't collect from them." The surgeon's dark eyes focused coldly on Arnold's indignant face. "We're in a jam—all of us—and we must make the best of it."

There was a general murmur of assent in which Finlay joined, and then Robert Jackson handed the box of cigars to Arnold. After a moment's hesitation the man took a panetela and stuck it into his mouth.

Smiling to himself, John fished out his pipe and began to tamp tobacco into the bowl. But Baldwin, it now appeared, had

something more he wished to say. He looked up and down the table and cleared his throat impressively.

"The general inefficiency and shortsightedness of our profession are nothing new. Medical practice has needed reorganization for a long while. Because I hope to contribute in some small way"—the surgeon paused, then repeated as if for emphasis—"in some small way to this reorganization, I have overhauled my own office. I think I can safely say that this is going to result in a less wasteful and more satisfactory practice.

"Most of you have met my two new assistants. Both are highly trained young men. Dr. Morrison is from Johns Hopkins and Dr. Wilkins from Northwestern. I have also taken on a laboratory technician and three new office nurses. Every patient now undergoes a complete study regardless of her complaints: a careful history, blood chemistry, basal metabolism, gastric contents, stool examination, Xray. The various findings are compiled by my technicians and assistants and after the examination is finished I see the patient, explain the results of our investigation, and advise treatment."

Not to mention selling her an operation, thought John. He glanced sidelong at Dennis and was rewarded by a solemn wink.

Meanwhile Baldwin, the picture of prosperous complacency, twirled his cigar between his fingers and went on with his dissertation.

"I have been startled to find how much work I can get through this way and yet do it more thoroughly than I could when I gave more personal attention to each individual patient. It may be, of course, that this is partly due to my practice lying largely with women. The ladies have a tendency, I find, to bring up many irrelevant details in their history and symptoms." The surgeon permitted a fleeting smile to cross his face at this pleasantry. "But I can certainly recommend this system of office organization to anyone who is dissatisfied with his income or the volume of his private work."

Baldwin settled back with visible satisfaction and relighted his cigar. Finlay noticed that he looked quickly at Warren Arnold who seemed to have sunk into a sullen abstraction. There was a little flurry of mumbled discussion among the other men but Schuyler hastened to recall their attention to other hospital problems.

"That is extremely interesting, Dr. Baldwin. I'm sorry that

there isn't time to go into it more thoroughly this evening. But there are several matters I want especially to consult you about."

"Shoot!" said Eric Nelson with an air of resignation.

"Well, gentlemen, first on the list is the question of further payroll reduction. Should more cuts be made now or left until the first of the year?"

"Dear me," murmured Oliver Marlin, his voice dismayed, "I had hoped we were through with this sort of thing."

"That's impossible so long as collections continue to decline," replied Schuyler.

"Why wait until the first of the year if cuts are necessary?" asked Nelson.

George Schuyler took his time about answering and chose his words with evident care.

"At their last meeting the trustees discussed this point, Dr. Nelson. Some felt that cuts before election would increase discontent and—and throw votes to the wrong candidate."

"Meaning Roosevelt?" interjected Dennis Dryden curtly.

Schuyler frowned at Dennis. His pale eyes between their puffy eyelids glistened with dislike.

"That's as may be. But others of the board suggested that further cuts just now would hamper the Community Chest drive next month. Seaclyff has always gone over 100 per cent and we would like to maintain that record."

"But, George," said Oliver Marlin, "the poor devils have to pay their subscriptions out of 1933 income. Surely they have a right to know what that income will be before they are asked to subscribe to the Chest."

"The Community Chest," broke in Finlay, "has always struck me as a form of benevolent blackmail."

A half-dozen pairs of eyes stared at John in shocked surprise; several others were fixed on the tablecloth. Only Nelson and Marlin and Dennis were undismayed. Finlay grinned as he met their eyes.

"Well, isn't that what it amounts to? Seaclyff employees subscribe because they're afraid not to—thanks to George's admirable system of subterranean espionage. You fellows subscribe because you'd lose face if you didn't. All this trumped-up enthusiasm for the Chest is bunk, like school spirit."

Oliver Marlin's faded blue eyes flickered with amusement as he peered over his spectacles at the new disturber of the peace.

Dryden smiled at John in frank approval. Nelson frowned thoughtfully and the thin-cheeked silent young man at the foot of the table raised troubled dark eyes to search Finlay's.

John himself seemed quite unaware of the ruction he had raised; unconcernedly he began to clean the dottle out of his pipe bowl.

Baldwin was the first to speak. He turned his head, across the top of which thin strands of dark hair made a pattern of narrow stripes, and looked down the table toward Finlay.

"These remarks concerning the Community Chest seem to me ill-timed. I move that the Efficiency Committee notify the trustees that, as a body, it is willing to abide by any decision on payroll reached by the board."

Robert Jackson seconded the motion and it was quickly passed. But no sooner was this done than Dryden spoke up.

"Mrs. Corbin of the record department asked me to remind the Efficiency Committee that several of its members have uncompleted charts which she cannot file until they are finished. She would appreciate your prompt attention to this matter."

"Paper work!" snorted Arnold, coming out of his fit of abstraction. "More damned paper work! We're loaded down with it already."

"Mrs. Corbin," continued Dennis, his blue eyes shining, "gave me the names of the delinquents and the number of records each is behind. Arnold—14; Baldwin—12; Jackson—6; Marlin—4; Nelson—2; Garnell . . ."

"I don't think you need read the whole list," rumbled Baldwin hastily. "Arnold and I seem to be the chief offenders. I'll ask Dr. Morrison to attend to ours as soon as possible. And I'm sure Dr. Arnold will take care of his at once too." The surgeon glanced meaningly at his colleague.

"Damn the records!" cried Arnold. "They're all nonsense, if you want to know what I think."

"No one cares what you think!" rebuked Baldwin sharply.

"John," said Robert Jackson nervously, turning toward Finlay, "you must have seen something of health insurance in Europe. Tell us what your idea is about it. Is there more illness and time lost from work with insurance than without?"

"Of course there is!" interrupted Warren Arnold. "Whenever people see a chance to get something for nothing they're hot after it."

Seeing the quick flush spreading across Dryden's face John hurriedly laid down his pipe and set about monopolizing the stage.

"I visited England, France, Holland, Belgium, Germany, the Scandinavian countries. Extraordinarily civilized people, those Swedes and Danes and Norwegians"—he paused to smile at Eric Nelson—"and from there I went on to Finland and the Soviet Union. That's Russia, in case you don't remember." John glanced obliquely toward Arnold.

"I saw all sorts of health insurance, hospital insurance, group practice, and co-operative medicine. None of the systems were perfect, none were wholly bad, and all of them, I thought, were sometimes abused. This, it seems to me, is partly because no one can ever be wise enough to foresee and provide for all the difficulties and problems that arise in any public undertaking, and partly because, no matter how well the system is devised, men must run it."

Finlay's cool gray eyes drifted around the faces about the table, from Robert Jackson to Schuyler, to Arnold, and finally to Baldwin.

"To show what I mean, I can't conceive of Dr. Baldwin neglecting asepsis under any circumstances any more than I can imagine Oliver here ever being anything but a gentleman. But all of us aren't as skillful as Baldwin or as courteous as Oliver. If we were there wouldn't be such urgent need to raise the standards of medical care in this country. There's been some pretty putrid medicine practiced right here in Seaforth. I've seen some of it."

After that last sentence there was a tense hush. But John seemed not to notice it. After a moment he went on.

"And then there's this business of the abuse of free clinics that worries Warren Arnold so. Last month I talked to a man who had just investigated over five thousand unselected consecutive admissions to six big clinics in the Middle West. He said that only three per cent of those people could have paid ordinary fees to a private physician and only one per cent could have paid small reduced fees. If the same proportions hold out here, about twenty-five people who could afford to pay doctors' bills have been dodging them by coming to the free clinics at Seaciff. That would be about two patients apiece for each of you here."

"Now, isn't that interesting?" said Oliver Marlin. "It brings to my mind a question I'd like to ask Warren. I know a man

here in Seaforth who has lost all his savings. Not long ago his wife went to a clinic at the County Hospital. Her clothes are old but they were of fine quality to start with, and she went to the hospital in the family Packard. The car is five years old but they keep it clean and well polished and the Packard name, of course, can still be seen on it. The medical social worker quizzed my friend's wife very closely about her financial circumstances.

"Now this is what I want to ask: what should these people do? There is no market for second-hand Packards today. If they were to sell all their clothes they would realize scarcely enough to buy new cheap ones which the social worker would consider suitable for them at present. What would you do in their place, Arnold?"

Every man at the table looked at Warren Arnold. His face turned scarlet and the veins on his temples stood out under the skin.

"Trying to get me cornered, are you? Make a fool of me."

"No, not at all," answered Marlin quietly. "I merely asked you a civil question. What would you do if you were in my friend's place? Without a job and without income. Would you sell your car and your clothes for whatever they would bring, so that you could employ a private physician? Or having been a substantial citizen, a thrifty businessman and a taxpayer in Seaforth for years, would you feel that you were entitled to care from the community in your extremity?"

"Entitled!" stormed Arnold. "Anybody is entitled to whatever he can get."

"Or steal," interpolated Dryden.

"Shut up!" snarled Arnold turning a shade darker red.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" Dr. Schuyler struck the tabletop a sharp blow. "Let us have order, please. We are not barbarians."

There was an uncomfortable pause. Then Baldwin cleared his throat portentously.

"I think it is common opinion that immunization and vaccination on the scale they are needed in our large cities today belong properly to the public health agencies. And personally I believe that private physicians can never control venereal disease or tuberculosis. All these fields must, it seems to me, be turned over to the public health organizations if we are to preserve the American system of individual practice of medicine."

If Baldwin had desired to create a diversion he had succeeded.

Each man at the table was watching him and the atmosphere of the room was charged with surprise. There had been rumors afloat that the great man had become an advocate of some degree of socialization of medicine but never before had he been so outspoken. Studying the stern heavily lined face John Finlay asked himself whether by any chance Baldwin had really overcome habit and prejudice and gone over to the progressive faction in the profession. It seemed incredible, but still incredible things did sometimes come to pass.

"So you've gone daft too!" cried Arnold. "Me, I don't want the government messing in my affairs. I haven't forgotten the Shepard-Towner bill that turned loose a flock of old maids to run around and tell farmers' wives how to have babies. And this afternoon I threw a female snooper from the Internal Revenue out of my office on her backside."

No one answered this outburst. Baldwin looked at the angry man contemptuously. Schuyler shrugged his shoulders and made a show of going through the papers piled beside his plate. Arnold glared defiantly from one to the other.

"You want to make me out crazy, do you? Well, I ask you haven't I got reason to go off my head? I sit all afternoon on my rump in that office and not a God-damned patient comes in with a dime in his pockets—only this blasted stool pigeon. And expenses piling up every minute—office rent, phone, the girls, supplies—and a house to keep going, and a wife. And three kids, by God, all in school and all of 'em with the gimmies. 'I need this' and 'I got to have that.' I'm just a faucet, that's all. They turn it on and the money runs out." Arnold's bloodshot eyes blazed. "Well, I'm tired of being a faucet. I'm sick of people who want their bones nailed together for nothing. I don't care a God damn whether I'm alive tomorrow morning or not!"

Swiftly the man snatched a flask from his hip pocket and began to open it. But before he could unscrew the cap Baldwin's long arm reached out and took it from him.

"Don't be an ass, Warren. If you go on like this much longer, you won't have any practice. Pull yourself together and keep still!"

The spectacle of Arnold's tantrum embarrassed everyone and there was visible relief on a dozen faces when Schuyler said quickly, "I don't believe there is anything more that must be taken up this evening, gentlemen," and pushed back his chair.

The men got to their feet and stood about talking in little groups, while Baldwin took Arnold by the arm and marshaled him out of the room.

Finlay was promptly surrounded by friends who wanted to welcome him back or ask him questions about his long stay abroad. Dennis nudged his elbow and excused himself. "I've got a little work in the lab, John. Come down when you're through here."

When Dr. Baldwin returned, the little group around John Finlay broke up and the men drifted away.

"I'm glad you came tonight," said the surgeon. "I'm interested in health insurance. One day we must talk it over, you and I. If the profession doesn't handle the situation, control of medical practice will be taken from us. Things seem rather serious right now, here in the United States."

Speculatively Finlay watched Baldwin rub his hand across his eyes in apparent perplexity. What, he asked himself again, was actually in the man's mind?

But Baldwin had changed the subject. "Then I wanted to speak to you about an old patient of yours. A Mrs. Maitland. I brought her into the hospital yesterday. She tells me you were once their family physician."

"Yes." Curiosity flickered brightly in John's gray eyes. "The Maitlands were patients of mine off and on for a good many years. They had a knack of getting peculiar things wrong with them."

Baldwin smiled a trifle condescendingly. "I'm operating on Mrs. Maitland day after tomorrow. I'd be glad if you dropped in on her before then. I'm sure she'd enjoy seeing you again."

"What's wrong with her now?" asked John slowly.

"She has chronic disease of the gall bladder, probably gallstones. Her history and Xray findings are typical."

"May I ask if she knows what you are going to do when you operate?"

"I couldn't say exactly. My assistant, Morrison, has had charge of her up to the present."

"And you haven't examined her yourself?"

Baldwin looked sharply at his questioner. "See here, Finlay, what are you getting at?"

"Only this, Baldwin. I'd advise you to go up and take a look at Mrs. Maitland instead of relying altogether on laboratory

findings. I took out her gall bladder here in this hospital seven years ago. You'll find the scar on her abdomen, the specimen in the museum with her name on the jar, and the report of the operation filed in the record room. It might interest you also to know that she had a number of small stones and that I warned her then that she might have annoying symptoms in the future. Goodnight, doctor. I'll be going along now."

In the laboratory John found Dryden and Priscilla Graham hanging over a microscope. "What's up?" he asked, controlling his own impatience with difficulty.

The girl's cheeks were pale and there were dark circles under her eyes. She pushed the hair back from her forehead wearily. "Oh, another emergency," she said.

Dennis pointed to a sheet of paper covered with small figures.

"Look, John. An emergency appendix with a normal white count!"

"So that's how they manage it now?"

"Sure. Just one more product of the Depression. Man has stomachache in the night. If you wait until morning he may be well. So rush him to the hospital, disregard the laboratory findings, and get his appendix out as fast as God will let you. How else could a surgeon make any money these days?"

"I hate to put this on the chart," said Priscilla slowly. "It's the first for Dr. Jackson."

"Jackson?" exclaimed Dennis.

The girl nodded.

"Why didn't you tell me before? Who's the patient?"

"One of the Elder girls."

"Elder who owns the *Advertiser*?"

"Yes."

Dryden began to laugh and drew a packet of cigarettes out of the pocket of his smock.

"O.K., Priscilla. You needn't wait. I'll take care of this myself. You go and get some sleep. You look like the wrath of God. Now scram! And don't let me see you around here tomorrow before ten o'clock." Then, as the door closed after the girl, he went on, "This is the best yet. You'll get a kick out of it, John."

Finlay sat down and draped his long legs over the arm of the chair.

"Tell me the joke, D.D., so I can laugh too."

"Well, it's really very simple. You see, for quite a while there

Jackson got a lot of Baldwin's female patients away from him. Naturally that made the old boy sore. Then he streamlines his office, gets all these new assistants, and offers the fellows in the suburbs a bigger cut on the surgical fees than he used to give them. So he gets the women back and Jackson finds himself in the hole again."

Finlay swung his feet slowly back and forth. "I wouldn't 've thought it of Baldwin," he said. "At least not before tonight."

"Why not? Why should being a competent surgeon make a gentleman out of anyone? Baldwin likes money, he likes power, he craves to be in the public eye. When you come down to cases, his very competence really makes him more dangerous."

"But this . . . this horrible factory system he was talking about tonight, D.D. . . ."

"You don't get it, John. Baldwin's been converted to modern medical methods. You see, he expects to be the great leader in the Pacific Northwest. He fancies himself as a pathfinder, a blazer of new trails. One of these days he'll be stumping the state for group practice and health insurance. He's already convinced himself of his own high ethical purposes. I'm sure he believes that his patients get the best care in Seaforth. *He* passes on all of them in the end, so they *must* be getting the best there is. Don't you see?"

"I see that my hunch about the fellow was right," said John grimly. "But Jackson I could have sworn was different. Weak perhaps, but not a crook."

"Jackson is different. Yes, he is. I know. That's why I didn't send Priscilla up on the floor with that blood count. Bob Jackson needs money, he needs it desperately—right now. I happen to have found out that he has a brother in the east who was caught getting away with trust company funds. And Jackson is paying up for him, to keep him out of the pen. Don't stare at me like that, John. It sounds wild, but it happens to be true."

Dennis glanced at his wrist watch and pulled the house phone toward him.

"I've been waiting to give him time to get into the surgery. Now I'll phone the count up and the supervisor will put it on the chart, and everything will be hunky-dory. It won't hurt the Elder girl to lose her appendix and it won't hurt her father to pay the bill. And Bob Jackson needs the money. In this case I

think the end justifies the means and so I'm playing the little god in the machine."

While he waited for the floor to answer, Dryden went on talking.

"Baldwin's method is different. When he finds a normal count of 6000 on a patient's chart he simply makes a small neat '1' in front of it. No one could quarrel with a surgeon for operating when he can point to a white count of 16,000."

Finlay roused himself from his brooding silence.

"This business makes me sick at my stomach, D.D. I've always believed that a man could practice medicine decently and by God I still think so! I've got to do something about this. I don't know exactly what—just yet. But I'm going to do something, I promise you that."

Dennis looked with affection at the weather-beaten face with its deep gray eyes, its straight short nose, its wide thin-lipped mouth. Then he sprang to his feet, grinning.

"O.K., brother. I'm with you. Let's go across the street to that joint where the interns hang out, on the corner, and I'll blow you to a milkshake. Fifteen cents—that's my limit. Many a plot's been laid in a barroom. Why not at a soda fountain?"

CHAPTER FIVE

THE night before election John Finlay and Peter McFarlane ate their first meal together. As he had promised, Peter was waiting in one of the red leather-upholstered booths when John, fifteen minutes late, pushed open the door of Blanco's restaurant. A look of relief swept over the reporter's face as the older man peeled off his raincoat, shook it, and hung it up underneath his dilapidated soft brown hat.

"I'm glad to see you, Dr. Finlay. I have the reputation of being perpetually broke and head waiters watch me with a stony glare when I come in and occupy a choice seat without ordering anything or even casually displaying a wad of folding money."

Any flavor of rebuke was eliminated by the gleam in McFarlane's green eyes and the curious resemblance to an aged infant which his surprisingly bald head conferred upon him. As he sat down there was a glint of amusement in Finlay's eyes. McFarlane grinned back at him.

"I know my naked pate was a shock to you, but I can't really keep my hat on all the time. I shed bitter tears when my beautiful golden hair fell out but, believe it or not, the peculiar combination that resulted is an asset. I can get away with a lot of things now that I never could before."

"I can easily imagine that," answered John. "You have a technique all your own, that is clear, and the earmarks of youth and guilelessness are offset by your eyes and . . . shall we call it regional alopecia?"

McFarlane shrugged his shoulders. "That's as good a name as any, I guess. You got my number when I ran you down last Thursday out at Newland, didn't you? Here's hoping you haven't forgotten your promise to talk."

"No, I haven't forgotten. But I didn't say what I'd talk about. And I warned you that I wouldn't talk for publication." Finlay's voice was good-natured but firm and definite.

For a moment Peter's seagreen eyes went opaque, but only for a moment. Then he laughed, stuck his hands down into his jacket pockets, and stretched his long legs under the table.

"O.K. Let it stand that way. I'll keep my nose out of your business, but I'm still sure you've got something up your sleeve."

"I'm told that other people suspect me too. But I don't see why."

"You should see most of the people I have to deal with, Dr. Finlay. The nitwits and the morons are all very much alike. A fellow learns to know ahead of time what they're going to do and say. So it's nice to run into a man who looks as though he might do something unexpected."

"Very prettily said, young man. But now suppose we consider the matter of food. What would you like, McFarlane? Clam hash is my favorite but you're free to choose anything on the menu you think would taste better."

Thereafter talk was sketchy until the two men reached coffee and dessert. Then Peter made a gesture toward his overcoat.

"Would you care for a snifter? It's bootleg of course but the bastard I got it from hasn't poisoned anyone yet that I know of. Or aren't you supposed to bring your own to Blanco's?"

"Before I went away everyone around here obligingly looked the other way when they saw flasks, so I suppose it's still safe. Just a short one for me, please. Two fingers—no more."

McFarlane poured out this modest allowance and plashed himself a larger portion.

"I began to drink whisky in the cradle, Dr. Finlay, and I've stuck to it ever since. Whisky or milk—that's me. One's as good as the other. And you can see the result. Sound in wind and limb at thirty-two—everything there except my hair. How's that for a testimonial?"

"Excellent. When repeal goes through I'm sure you'll be able to sell it to one of the liquor firms, especially if you're willing to throw in a photograph of yourself."

"You know I think you've got something there. The legend under the picture might read 'Old in years and scalp but young in face and soul.' And the brand might be named Granddaddy's Choice or Old Grandpa's Own."

John looked at the young man and laughed; he continued to look and the amusement died out of his eyes. Across the table he saw a long narrow fair-skinned face faintly reminiscent of the actor Leslie Howard's, a pair of shrewd penetrating eyes of a strange seagreen color, and the incongruous touch afforded by the prematurely bald head fringed around with a fuzz of pale yellow. The combination though fantastic attracted rather than repelled.

"I gather from one or two of your remarks, McFarlane, that you're a radical. Tell me what's going on around here. What about the U.C.L. and this technocracy business? How popular is it?"

"Well, a lot of good folks are in the Unemployed Citizens' League and if they can keep the politicians out they might get somewhere. They've got a production-for-use slogan that's a honey—and some truth in it too. Some of the women have started a sewing room to make clothes for themselves and the kids and one bunch of men who've worked in the woods all their lives are trying to start a co-operative sawmill. But there aren't enough of them and they haven't got enough money to get very far."

The reporter tilted up his glass of bootleg whisky and over the brim studied Finlay's face. John knew that this scrutiny would determine his status so far as Peter McFarlane was concerned; he stared back at the thoughtful eyes across the table.

"The trouble is," resumed McFarlane suddenly, putting down his glass, "that these folks in the U.C.L. aren't going to be smart enough to protect themselves. The mayor has already appointed a Citizens Committee to help set up food stations for the unemployed but that is just a stalking horse, designed to inveigle the U.C.L. into supporting him for re-election next spring."

"What's on his mind after that?"

Peter smiled cynically. "He wants to build up a machine while he's mayor that will land him in the governor's chair."

"So, he figures on going places, does he? I remember Tom when he first started out—a shabby, two-bit lawyer in a cubby-hole down on First Avenue no bigger than a toilet."

"Well, I'd say his chances are pretty good even though the flavor of the backhouse still clings to him. Anyhow he's on the trail of the unemployed and, if you ask me, the U.C.L. has little chance of surviving as is. By next summer it'll either break up

into a dozen quarreling cliques or be a sweet-running machine for your old friend Tom."

"And Technocracy—how strong is it in Seaforth?"

"Noise, that's all. The impoverished intelligentsia like me, and the doctors and lawyers and other white-collar folks who're out of jobs and the guys who once ran little grocery stores and lunch counters go to the meetings and applaud furiously. There's a sprinkling of young chaps from the University and laborers and a few union men. But the whole thing will fizzle out in a year. You watch and see."

"Then you aren't expecting the revolution?"

McFarlane stared for a moment, then burst out laughing.

"Revolution, me eye! I thought for a minute you were like the fellow who does our editorials. He's in the jitters for fear Roosevelt will be elected and turn into a dictator overnight. He sheds tears every evening in the paper over 'the decline of initiative and individual enterprise and the infiltration of communism into the laboring class.' He's crazy. Go down on the Skid Road and look around. Those fellows don't know what it's all about, they're as baffled as we are. A handful of them have read Marx, just as I have, but revolution is the last thing in their heads. What they want is a job and three meals a day and a bed to sleep in and a new mackinaw or pair of overalls. Say 'dictatorship of the proletariat' to them and they think you're talking a foreign language."

John knocked the ashes out of his pipe and put it away.

"I take it that you don't talk like this in public or write this way for the *Advertiser*."

"Say, do I look like a fellow who'd put out his neck and ask for it? I have a cowardly fondness for my carcass, homely as it is. I want to stick around a while and see what happens."

"So do I, McFarlane. And I'd like to have a hand in things. Just watching doesn't appeal to me."

"Nor to me. But right now if I do more than that I lose my job. And jobs are damned hard to come by these days."

Finlay nodded. "I know," he said. After a little silence he went on in a thoughtful voice. "I have a theory about Americans. I think it explains a good many things about us. Did it ever strike you, McFarlane, that nearly all the people in the United States, or their ancestors, came here to get away from something, and that the pioneers came west for the same reason? Perhaps they'd made a mess of things back home or gotten into trouble."

Perhaps they couldn't get along with people in the community. Perhaps there was something they wanted to do that they couldn't get away with except in a new country. Perhaps they were just natural, born rebels. You see what I mean?

"I'm not saying that there weren't a lot of fine people among them. But I think there were a good many that the folks at home must 've been damned glad to see the last of."

"And so what?"

"Well, mightn't there be something in the idea that Americans long ago got the habit of running away from things instead of facing them? It seems to me we're still dodging the disagreeable facts instead of admitting them. You just said your editorial writer deplores the spread of communism among the unemployed and the 'decline of initiative and individual enterprise.' Look at Hoover insisting that there's an upturn in business just around the corner. Isn't that running away from disagreeable realities? But this is the rub: the man who ran away from home in 1832 went west into new country and became a pioneer while our mass flight from reality in 1932 makes neurotics out of us. Pioneer or neurotic, but both made on the same pattern."

McFarlane leaned toward the older man, his long thin fingers tight around his whisky glass.

"Man alive, why don't you write that up? 'Pioneer or Neurotic.' That's a swell title. You might even make the quality magazines with it. Maybe *Harper's* or the *Atlantic Monthly* would take it. They've been breaking down and letting in some hot stuff lately." But the enthusiasm that gleamed in the green eyes died quickly away. "I'm sorry. You see, I get all hopped up about writing whenever I hear a good idea or think of one myself. But I can't get anything printed. I burned a trunkful of manuscripts that had been the rounds before I came out to Seaforth. Forget it. My steers are always bum ones."

"I'm not so . . . , " began John. But before he could go on, a waiter bent over him. "Phone for you, Dr. Finlay. I'll plug you in right here, sir."

Over the wire came a woman's voice. "Seacliff Hospital calling, Dr. Finlay. Dr. McBride asks that you come to the hospital right away. Dr. Dryden has been in an accident."

"What's the matter? Is he dead? Or just hurt?"

"I really couldn't say. I believe he's in the Xray department now. Shall I connect you there?"

"Yes. . . . No. Tell McBride I'll be right over."

"Yes, Dr. Finlay. Thank you, sir. Goodnight."

"Those confounded girls," exclaimed John as he slammed down the telephone. "George has them as mealy-mouthed as he is."

Halfway out of the booth Finlay paused. "Dennis Dryden has been in an accident. I'll have to get up to Seacliff right away. Sorry to call off our party, but . . ."

"Oh, that's O.K." Peter was scrambling to his feet. "Let me know if there's a story in it, will you? I don't want to pass up anything good."

Not until he dashed into the hospital lobby, raincoat flying and battered brown hat clinging to one side of his head, and saw Priscilla Graham's small white-clad figure coming to meet him, did John remember that Dennis had had a date with Eleanor Mainwaring that evening.

"Priscilla," he cried, "what's happened? Is D.D. badly hurt? Was Miss Mainwaring with him?"

The girl's face was pale and her dark eyes feverish with excitement and fatigue.

"Dr. Dryden's arm is broken, near the elbow I believe. And Miss Mainwaring is upstairs but I don't think they know yet just what happened to her. Dr. Elliston is looking after her."

"And where's D.D.?"

"Down in the Xray department waiting for you. He wouldn't let them move him until you came."

With difficulty Priscilla kept pace with Finlay's long legs down the stairs. The lights in the Xray rooms were on and the door stood half-open. Through it came the sound of vomiting. Then a voice, half-strangled, said, "God damn it, look what I've done now!"

John drew a long breath of relief and flung down his coat and hat. Arthur McBride was leaning over the cart on which lay Dennis, gasping and retching by turns. His shirt was half off and one sleeve had been slit to the shoulder. Even at this distance Finlay could see the swelling at the elbow. He pushed the door open and walked in as though nothing had happened.

"Hello," he said. "What goes on here?"

McBride's high-cheeked bony face flushed with relief. Dennis wobbled his head back and forth on the small pillow.

"I got tangled up with a concrete lamp post. That's all, John. I'm all right except for my arm but I can't find out what happened

to Eleanor. She was all bloody when they picked her up. Walter's been upstairs an hour now. It must be something bad or he'd come down and tell me about her. I want you to . . . Oh!" Another bout of vomiting overtook him.

"It's really been only about fifteen minutes since Dr. Elliston came in," explained McBride over the head of his retching patient.

"Hold your horses, D.D. I'll go up in a minute but first I want a squint at you. It looks to me as though you went through a window or a windshield. Your forehead's cut and your chin is scratched. It was probably your blood on Miss Mainwaring. Got your films, McBride?"

The Xray man nodded. "They're in the wash," he said. "Come and have a look at them. You keep an eye on Dennis, Priscilla. There may be more supper to come up yet."

In the dark room McBride flipped on a light and held up two dripping films.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed Finlay.

"It's a nasty one all right," agreed McBride. "The lower end of the humerus is smashed to bits and the olecranon too."

"Isn't this a crack in the head of the radius?"

"I'm afraid so. The whole elbow is mincemeat. The skin isn't broken through but that's all that's lacking to make the mess complete."

"What on earth happened to them?"

"Well, Dennis was coming into town on the Newland highway—don't ask me why he took a girl driving on a night like this!—and some fellow with an umbrella down over his head was trying to cross the intersection where that big new blinker light is. Of course the guy couldn't see where he was going and in order to miss him D.D. jammed on his brakes. The car skidded and rolled over and slammed into the blinker. By the time D.D. came to someone had stopped to see what had happened but the fellow with the umbrella who caused the accident had disappeared. The police went out and picked up the girl and D.D. and brought them in here. Elliston happened in about that time so he took charge of Miss Mainwaring, and D.D. made the office call you."

McBride dipped his films into the wash water and held them up to the light again. "Maybe you think I'm not glad Warren Arnold hasn't got his hand in on this job," he murmured.

"Do you know how badly the girl is hurt?" asked Finlay.

"No, I don't exactly. She apparently hasn't any broken bones and Elliston thought it was probably just shock. He's still upstairs with her, I'm sure."

John frowned, staring at the Xray films.

"We'll have to figure out some way to get a decent joint out of that jumble of bones for D.D. He mustn't be stuck with an elbow that won't bend all the rest of his life."

"Lucky it's the left arm," said McBride.

"Yes, but D.D. does a lot of things with his left hand," objected Finlay, running his fingers through his hair abstractedly. "You get these films dry, and I'll get D.D. upstairs. In the morning Elliston and I can go into a huddle and decide what to do next."

And so two nurses wheeled the expostulating Dryden off, on his cart.

"It's no use grouching, D.D. That elbow is a hash and you're going to stay right here in the hospital where we can work on you. . . . No, you can't see the films now. I'll bring them up tomorrow and you can spend all day looking at them if you want to. Take him along, girls. And tell the intern to fix up that cut on his forehead. I'll be up directly, D.D. I want to find out something about Miss Mainwaring first."

Priscilla did not follow the cart out of the Xray department.

"It's a bad break, isn't it?" she asked. "I could tell from the way his arm was swollen."

"Come and see for yourself," replied John.

In the dark room the girl looked at the films and shivered a little.

"Can you fix it so he'll be able to use his elbow?" she asked at last.

"We can try," said Finlay briefly. "Now, you go to bed, young woman. There's nothing more you can do here tonight and you'll need your sleep. With D.D. out of the laboratory you'll be it in a big way the next few weeks."

It was some time before John could pack Priscilla off and he had only started to leave the Xray department himself when Dr. Elliston appeared. His habitually serious face was more than usually grave and his voice was full of concern.

"I'm sorry to call you out on a night like this, Dr. Finlay, but Dennis insisted. And that was that."

"Well, we've certainly got a nice one on our hands, Elliston.

That elbow is nothing but a bag of loose pieces of bone. And how about the girl?"

"I want to talk to you about her. I can't find much wrong. She hasn't any fractures and she hasn't lost any blood to speak of—just a few shallow cuts from glass. And there's no blood in her spinal fluid. But she's in a sort of collapse. I don't know what to make of it. And she has some queer hemorrhages under her skin. Would you mind having a look at her with me?"

"No, not at all. I've met her before, you know."

The two men turned to go.

"Thanks for all your trouble, McBride," said Elliston.

"No trouble at all," replied the younger man. "D.D. is a swell fellow. I'm only sorry I can't do something more for him. Good-night."

"Goodnight," said John absent-mindedly. His mind was busy with that remark of Elliston's about Eleanor's collapse and with his own recollection of the impression she had made on him when he first saw her abroad. He remembered her consistent pallor; it was not the natural sallowness of a dark skin but a sort of doughy bloodlessness. Deep within him a vague presentiment stirred. All the while he and Elliston were riding up in the elevator he struggled to rid himself of the nebulous idea that had taken possession of him, but when he approached Eleanor's room it still persisted.

Damn these crazy hunches, he thought as he went through the door. The special nurse stepped back from the bed and smiled professionally as the two doctors entered the room.

"There's been no change," she said quietly in answer to Elliston's questioning look.

Eleanor lay with her head turned away from the light. At this angle her pallor struck John more forcibly than ever. Her soft waving dark hair lay on the pillow, a background for her bloodless features. One arm was outside the coverlet; the hand seemed almost transparent. Her eyes were closed, her lips were gray and motionless, her breathing was so shallow and slow that Finlay could barely see the rhythmic movement. Suddenly a sense of her defenseless came over him and on its heels a sense of his own helplessness.

He laid his fingertips on her pulse. It was rapid, barely palpable. He stared down at his strong brown fingers against her thin white wrist, ashamed of their warmth and strength and oppressed

by the recollection that they had looked the same way years ago on Nancy's arm. He remembered how desperately he had wished that he could sit down with his warm palms upon his young wife's skin and let the vitality so abundant in his body seep into hers. And suddenly he became aware that there was something about this girl that reminded him of Nancy in the early days of her illness.

Confused by his emotional reactions to this realization, he made only a perfunctory suggestion or two for the night and nodded an abstracted good-by to Elliston when the younger man said he would look in at Dennis once more before leaving the hospital. Finlay was standing at the window in the end of the hall, staring out into the darkness where the wind from the Sound flung sheets of rain against the glass, when at last the night supervisor found him.

"I've been looking for you, doctor," said the woman. "I found this when I checked 317's clothes. Maybe I should have given it to Dr. Elliston, but . . ." The nurse held out a thick white envelope. On it in finely formed letters John saw, "For the physician who is called to care for me in an emergency."

He put out his hand.

"Was I right?" asked the supervisor.

"Yes, quite right. Dr. Dryden had them call me, you know. I'll attend to this. Thank you."

No longer was any hesitation in Finlay's movements. Demanding the key of the laboratory he went downstairs and quickly returned to the third floor with a tray of slides and small bottles. A minute or two over the unconscious figure in 317, then back to the laboratory where he took a microscope from its box and switched on the substage light.

Only a few moments now and he would know whether his premonition was true. Only one moment—he could tell as soon as he looked at her blood under the 'scope. But he could not bear to look. For burning in his mind was the memory of another day long ago when he had read his wife's doom from a slide he had made himself.

As he sat there hunched over the work counter the scene came blindingly back to him out of the past—a stifling summer evening when he had found enough free time to examine Nancy. She had been complaining of weakness and shortness of breath and he had thought perhaps she was a little anemic; a mild anemia

was not uncommon in young women during their first pregnancies, he had been taught in medical school. And so he had pricked her ear and taken a few drops of blood; he could still remember how unconcerned they had both been, how gay and carefree. And he could remember too how he had sat before his microscope with the sweat running off his body and his hands shaking for terror of what he had seen. That was twenty-seven years ago. But no one had found a cure for leukemia, that relentless disease that turned the blood into a useless fluid; the diagnosis was still a death sentence.

His fingers trembled as he slipped the slide under the lens. He looked into the eyepiece, clumsily adjusted the focus, and looked again. Then he lifted his head and stared blankly at the window in front of him. He had seen all he needed. The rest could wait. Priscilla was better than he at making exact counts. He knew. And of course Eleanor knew too. She had known all along. Dennis had called her "elusive, like the fog." She had had her reasons, good reasons. She did not mean to spoil D.D.'s life by allowing him to know what confronted her or to face it with her.

John's fingers were white at the knuckles where he clutched the edge of the counter. Why did things like this have to happen? Why was there never a time when the shadow of death did not lie upon the living? Why had this horrible thing had to come to Nancy? Why had it come now to that pallid girl alone upstairs? And why had he, of all people, had to discover it in each of them?

He knew now why from the start there had been something about Eleanor that had told him that this slender dark-eyed young woman would be more to him than a casual acquaintance. He remembered the day he had first met her. It had been a summer afternoon in Scotland, and now it seemed a long while ago. He had armed himself against her, shut her out of his thoughts. But tonight had changed all that. For the rest of her life there would be a bond between them, unacknowledged perhaps, but definite. And this bond had already brought back from the past the shadowy figure of Nancy, never forgotten but grown nebulous with the years.

For a long time John Finlay perched motionless on his stool. His face was turned toward the window but he saw nothing, heard nothing. He was thinking of Dennis, restless, in pain with his

shattered arm, unaware of the blow impending; of Eleanor drifting in her stupor farther and farther from the life that was denied her; of Nancy as he had had to watch her slip away from him taking with her all the beauty he had so far found in the world around him.

At last, thrusting one hand aimlessly into his coat pocket, he touched the envelope the supervisor had given him. He pulled it and tore it open. Inside there was a thick sheaf of thin paper closely written.

"To whatever physician attends me in an emergency," it began. "I am writing this because I realize that I may be found unconscious and hence unable to explain myself, and because I have been advised by several doctors whom I have consulted to carry a medical statement with me at all times."

Outside the wind threw itself in new fury against the window-pane. Glancing up John could see his own figure against the black background of the glass. What a night! he thought. He shook himself and turned back to the letter.

"I know that I have leukemia, that I shall die of it, that there is no treatment that can prolong my life more than a year or two. I have been examined over and over and I have been advised to do this and take that. But none of the doctors offered any real hope. No one has ever recovered from this disease and few live more than two years. This is the truth; I accept it.

"My ancestors were fearless people. I have seen their pictures—men with hard eyes and stern mouths, women with firm lips and chins, staring at me from daguerreotypes and faded photographs. They were afraid of nothing. They defied the wilderness and storms and savages and sudden death. They thrived on obstacles and wrung what they wanted from a hostile world.

"But I am not like them. Once the thought made me angry. But then one day it occurred to me that perhaps even Puritans and pioneers might have faltered before a foe as remorseless as mine. When one's own body harbors treachery, what is to be done?"

As John turned the page his remembrance caught fast the bitter winter afternoon twenty-seven years before when he had turned away from Nancy's grave. Her young body too had harbored treachery and nothing had availed against it. His eyes were wet when they went back to Eleanor Mainwaring's letter—so

impersonal, so constrained in its wording, and yet packed with desperate courage.

"Often I wonder if doctors and nurses realize the indignities they inflict upon one who is ill. I think they have distressed me more than knowing I must die. And certainly they have at times made me furious. When one has the instinct for privacy and personal dignity it is an affront to have that instinct outraged by impersonal men and women prodding one with questions and exploring hands. 'Does this hurt?' 'Did you sleep well last night?' 'Are you constipated?' 'Have you noticed soft black stools?' 'When did these discolorations first appear on your skin?' And so on and so on, until there is no nook nor cranny about one that has not been searched out.

"I know nurses and doctors are not unkind. They are not even curious. They are only doing their duty. But I shrink into myself further and further. By the time I die I feel that my soul as well as my body will have been examined and ticketed and diagnosed until every shred of individuality will be destroyed and whatever is left of me will have been spread on a medical billboard for those to read who know the language.

"Sick people are puppets shunted back and forth as though they were laboratory specimens, as though nothing about them had any significance except their Xray films, their blood counts, and such 'objective facts' as fever and loss of weight. No one seems to realize that while they wait to die they must go on living.

"I do not expect you who read this to understand. No well person could. I expect you to think I am not quite myself mentally. But having lived now for many months in the shadow of my own death, I speak for others who also are about to die. Will you spare us what you can of ourselves for the hour of our greatest need?

"For myself I ask that you resort to no vigorous methods to save my life. No Xray treatments or blood transfusions, please. If my time has come let me go. And think me lucky if I escape a lingering final stage. On the sheet of paper at the end of this letter are the names of the people I wish notified of my death. The trust company carries an account which is to be used for the necessary expenses of cremation and shipment to the mausoleum in which my father and mother's ashes are kept. Take no unnecessary trouble in the matter. There is no need."

There were the two words of her name at the bottom of the page. John turned the leaf and found the list. His eyes ran over it hastily; there was no mention of Dennis.

Quickly Finlay sprang to his feet, seized his hat and raincoat, turned out the lights and flung out of the laboratory. He had walked halfway down the hill on which Seaclyff stood before he realized that his car was standing in the parking space behind the hospital, waiting for him. And incongruously enough all he could think of as he trudged back, head down into the wind, was how Peter McFarlane would have relished the last two hours.

"A story," he mumbled to himself. "I wish to God it was a story!"



CHAPTER SIX

THEN you know." Eleanor Mainwaring's voice was low but it did not ask a question.

"Yes. I know."

"Could you tell me . . . what the count is?"

"Eighty-five thousand. Priscilla checked it this morning."

John Finlay sat in the small straight chair beside the bed, his face almost as gray as his mustache and the lips usually so firm loose and uncertain. He hooked his thumbs in his vest pockets to seem unconcerned and at ease but he knew the girl was watching him. In her bloodless face the eyes brooded darkly: they seemed to be asking him to say something. He searched for words and found none. Eleanor herself broke the silence again.

"How long do you think . . . I have left?"

Finlay reached over and took one of her thin hands between his own. It was burning hot and even thinner than he had thought. "Basal metabolism high," the professional side of him made note.

"How long?" repeated the girl. "Tell me, am I going to die now?"

"No," answered John. And was astonished at the confident tone in which his reply was automatically voiced.

"Is Dennis badly hurt?"

"No." He chose his words carefully, watching their effect. "He has a fractured elbow and was pretty well knocked out last night. But he'll be up in a few days, coming in to see you."

Eleanor gave a little muffled cry. "Oh, no, no! He mustn't. If he saw me like this he'd know."

"Then you love him?"

"Yes." The dark eyes grew luminous as though some bright

light were shining through them. "And I must be fair to him at any cost. Promise me you won't let him see me like this."

"But he wouldn't know, just coming into the room. Diagnoses aren't made that way."

"You suspected something, Dr. Finlay. Why did you take a blood count? They aren't usually done the first thing on accident cases."

Remembering his fantastic hunch of the evening before, Finlay was silent.

"You see, it is dangerous. You must keep him from seeing me until I am ready to go away."

"But you aren't fit to leave the hospital, Miss Mainwaring. I couldn't allow you to go."

The girl smiled. "You needn't allow me, doctor. I shall go without permission. Then no one can be blamed except myself."

John shook himself like a startled bear. "You can't do that, I tell you. You couldn't stand it."

But the continuing smile on the white lips silenced him.

"I have no intention of allowing Dennis to learn the truth about me, Dr. Finlay. He would insist on taking me somewhere for treatment. He would insist on our being married. He would struggle along, fighting the inevitable, until . . . the end. And it would break his heart. I can't have that happen. And you must help me plan."

"I won't!" But even to himself John's words did not carry conviction.

"Oh, yes, you will. You wouldn't refuse a lady in distress." For a moment the girl's voice was so gay, her smile so persuasive that he forgot she was ill. It was as it had been the day he first met her: an instant attraction which promised something more ahead of them. Then reality came flooding back. Here she lay, desperately ill, asking him to do a thing that appalled him.

"You haven't answered my first question yet, Dr. Finlay. How long have I left?"

He hesitated, stalled for time. "How would I know? These conditions are a law unto themselves. Some people live for eight or ten years. That's why it's so foolish for you to talk like this."

"You're evading the point. I know that the average length of life is only about three years. I was told that in Boston when the diagnosis was first made. That was two years ago last summer. So I have a year, perhaps."

"Look here, I have to tell you something. I read that letter you had in your purse—read it last night. I know you haven't had any treatment, that you think you don't want to have any. But if you are going to do the thing that's in your mind you must be treated. Most of your symptoms now are due to anemia. Your red count is down to less than three million. That's why you're so weak and short of breath. Now, whether you like it or not, you must let me do something about that. Granted that I can't touch the leukemia, I can help this other condition. I can get you on your feet again. But if you don't do as I say you'll never be able to get out of this bed."

The girl studied his face; the gray eyes looked straight back at her without a flicker. At last she closed her eyelids and sighed.

"If I must, I must. I'm trusting you not to try to deceive me or put anything over."

"Believe me, my dear, I know what's best for you just now. And I won't do anything I ought not to do. Now I'm going to order something that will make you sleep. And later today I'll see you again."

John bent over the bed, stood there until Eleanor's eyes opened again and looked up into his. Then he gently let go her hand and slipped out of the room. With the picture of her white face set in a pale, resolutely expressionless mask he hurried down to the floor below to meet Walter Elliston.

The surgeon had just left Dryden. "It's remarkable how the fellow has rebounded." For him, Elliston was almost optimistic.

Finlay looked at him sharply. His thin, prematurely gray hair was rumpled and his brown eyes were tired and anxious.

"What's the matter with you? You look as though you'd been up all night. Don't you feel well?"

Elliston smiled apologetically. "I read till six o'clock . . . about elbow injuries. You see, Finlay, Dennis was responsible for my coming to Seaforth and I should never forgive myself if he didn't get a good arm out of this."

"Now, listen to me, young man. Sticking your nose into a book all night won't do D.D. any good. What you need is a head that will work. And there's no use torturing yourself over our chances of failing to do the impossible. I know your sort, Elliston. I've no doubt you're a hair shirt so far as your wife and kids are concerned. What I want you to do is to go over McBride's films with me, study the situation calmly, and decide whether this is a job

too tough for us. If it is, we'll get a man from San Francisco. I've got a friend down there who'd be glad to come if I asked him."

Then, fearing that he had hurt Elliston's feelings, John put a hand roughly on the surgeon's shoulder. "Personally I think you can handle the thing, with what help I can give you. As soon as I've had a word with Dennis, I'll meet you downstairs."

But before either of them could move, a deep voice directly behind them startled them both. Turning quickly they saw Baldwin, tall and imposing in spite of his grotesquely long arms.

"I just wanted to say that I would be glad to see Dryden with you, if you'd care to have me. I understand he's got a nasty injury and I shouldn't care to assume full responsibility, but I'd be glad to examine him in consultation. And if you operate on him, Elliston, I would be glad to assist you if you'd care to have me. Call me whenever it's convenient for you two and I'll arrange to meet you. And please tell Dryden for me that I hope he comes out of this all right."

Both John and Elliston stared after Baldwin in amazement as he moved off down the corridor at his peculiar shambling gait.

"Well, what do you think of that?" exclaimed Finlay. But Elliston was too stupefied to reply.

Feeling that altogether too many things were happening to him John turned into Dryden's room. He found D.D. propped up among a mass of pillows with a bandage around his head and one eye swollen shut. But the other eye was blue and sane and normal.

"It's about time you showed up. I've been waiting for you since eight o'clock. How is Eleanor? I can't get a syllable out of Walter except that she has no bones broken and was in coma most of the night."

"Suppose she was! What could you expect of a woman who's had her head bashed into a concrete pillar? I just now saw her. She's all right. Bruised and pretty sore, of course, but not much the worse for her experience at that. She'll be up before you are. Now let me have a squint at this arm of yours."

While he felt the discolored swollen elbow John gave Dennis Baldwin's message. The one visible eye twinkled.

"So even Herbert sends me his regards. Ain't that something? My reward, I suppose, for sending up all those normal white counts on his emergencies. And they say 'virtue is its own re-

ward! . . . See here, John Finlay, that's my arm you're poking. Whatever may have happened to it, the nerves are still working."

"Don't yell before you're hurt, D.D. I'm through anyhow." Finlay straightened, grinned down at the tired face among the pillows. "All we need now to make everything perfect is to have Warren Arnold offer his professional services."

"No, John, you can do something better than that for me. Tell that walleyed nurse that she needn't rub my back with alcohol every thirty minutes. And write an order that I don't have to use a bedpan. Those things are an invention of the devil!"

"Wouldn't you like to take a walk? Or go downtown?" Finlay's inflection was something more than sardonic.

"Go to the devil! It's election day and I can't get out to save the country. If Hoover's re-elected I'll always think it was my fault. . . . But listen, John—all spoofing aside. I want you to get some money out of my billfold—it's in the bureau drawer over there—and buy Eleanor some flowers. Chrysanthemums, I guess. Bright colors, all mixed together. You know what I like. She'll need something besides George's damned bare walls to look at until I can get in to see her. And tell her I'll race her which one of us is up first."

CHAPTER SEVEN

UNDER the overcast November sky the election passed quietly and, in spite of the Democratic victory, the stars continued in their courses and America did not find herself at the barricades. John took a certain pleasure in pointing this out to his old friend, Charles Wharton, who although displeased with the Hoover administration was apprehensive of what the coming winter might bring with the opposition in power.

Lumber sales continued to decline catastrophically in the Puget Sound country; one after the other mills closed down, logging camps were left to the squirrels and packrats, and more and more roughly dressed men with puzzled eyes and slack faces idled on the corners and along the Skid Road in Seaforth. Whenever he could find time John went down and watched them and talked with the more loquacious. What he saw and heard he came back to report to Dennis, who was still in bed following the operation on his elbow.

"Heard a new one today, D.D. A man was out walking and he saw a fellow he knew running as fast as he could round and round a railroad roundhouse. So he asked, 'What on earth are you doing that for?' And the fellow answered, 'Oh, I'm looking around the corner for prosperity.' Pretty good, eh?"

But Dennis was not in a humorous mood.

"Damn your silly stories, John! What I want to know is when do I get up. I'm sick of this cursed bed!"

"If I don't know that it isn't because you haven't told me, that's certain. You know you can't get out until Elliston and Baldwin give the word. And they're not going to let you wreck that reconstructed elbow."

"Damn the elbow too! You're all in a conspiracy to keep me

on my back. And God knows what's going on here. Once in a blue moon Eleanor comes in for about two minutes, looking like a ghost. I know there's something wrong with her that you haven't found out. And even Priscilla is in on the deal. I never see her except when I send for her, and then she acts as if she can hardly wait to get away again. I know there's something wrong down in the lab. Priscilla never behaved like this before. Do you still swear that George hasn't fired anyone else?"

"I do. Not a living soul, D.D."

"Then what ails everybody? And what's wrong with Eleanor?"

"You're imagining things, young fellow. I see both girls every day and I'd certainly notice it if anything had gone very wrong with either of them."

But Finlay knew he had not convinced Dennis and he was worried lest Priscilla, who ran the regular blood counts on Eleanor, should inadvertently let slip the truth. Indeed it proved that Priscilla had her own ideas of what ought to be done.

"Dr. Dryden should be told," she insisted to John. "He'll never forgive you . . . or me. And I'll have to go on working with him," she added. "You all seem to forget that."

Finlay ran his fingers through his rumpled gray hair. "Listen, Priscilla. I haven't forgotten anything. I wish to God sometimes that I could. But can't you see how Miss Mainwaring feels about it?"

Priscilla turned hastily away and busied herself over the microscope. When she answered her voice was tired and strained. "Do you imagine I don't understand how she feels? When I go up there so often to take her blood counts?"

So John found himself in a situation he could not control, confronting a problem he did not know how to solve. This combined with his continued uncertainty about his own plans made him more and more nervous and irritable. He spent hours adding up his available resources and balancing them against construction costs and maintenance estimates and income possibilities, and when he had finished he was still undecided what to do.

He was in this mood of vacillation when he ran into Grace Rodney late one afternoon in the Seacliff lobby.

"Excuse me," he stammered. "I didn't see you."

"Apparently not," replied the nurse setting her hat straight again.

John smiled apologetically. "I was running in for a look at D.D. and Miss Mainwaring before dinner time," he explained.

"I have just seen both of them, Dr. Finlay. And I want to talk to you."

Vainly John made excuses: he was in a hurry, he was to meet a man at seven o'clock to talk business, he had an errand downtown that must be done before six.

"The errand can wait. You can telephone the man and put him off. Dr. Dryden is quite comfortable this afternoon, and you know how that girl is better than I do. You can eat with me in my apartment, where we will be undisturbed."

So when evening came on John found himself in a comfortable chair before a small grate fire in Grace Rodney's rooms, well fed, warm, and apprehensive. The woman did not keep him long in suspense.

"Smoke your pipe if you like," she said sitting down opposite him. "There are cigarettes in the box at your elbow. Will you hand them to me?"

Palpably surprised Finlay handed over the cigarettes. "I didn't know you smoked," he said.

"There are probably many other things about me that you don't know," replied Miss Rodney crisply. "Some of them might surprise you even more. But I think I enjoy smoking after dinner as much as you do, and for much the same reason. I find it soothing. . . . Now, tell me what you intend doing about Dr. Dryden and Miss Mainwaring."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Don't be absurd. You know perfectly well. She has leukemia and you're trying to keep him from finding it out, aren't you?"

John made very busy with his tobacco pouch and did not look up. Miss Rodney settled herself against the chairback.

"I don't want you to think I've been snooping, so I'll tell you how I found out. I've gone up several times to call on Dr. Dryden and it occurred to me that Miss Mainwaring must be lonely, so I dropped in on her too. I took a few flowers as an excuse."

"I'm sure that was very kind of you," mumbled Finlay.

"Well, I found her without any make-up and I knew as soon as I looked at her that something was seriously wrong. At first I thought it might be pernicious anemia, but she wasn't yellow enough for that. Then her dressing gown fell open and I saw a big black-and-blue splotch on her skin. Leukemia, I thought to

myself. Don't you remember that patient who died in Sun Mount just before you left? He had a lot of hemorrhages just like that."

John looked up with grudging respect. "You should have been a detective," he said wryly.

"Last Sunday I asked Priscilla Graham out to have dinner with me here and I put it up to her point-blank. She isn't a good liar. She did the best she could, but it wasn't good enough. Finally she told me all she knows. Since then I've been watching both Dr. Dryden and Miss Mainwaring. He's desperately unhappy."

"He isn't the only one who's unhappy," said John.

"Perhaps not. But what is your plan about these two young people?"

"My plan!" cried Finlay. "I haven't got any plan. It's Eleanor's plan."

Miss Rodney made no comment, merely sat quietly waiting for him to go on.

"She's had this disease, to her own knowledge, for over two years. That means that she probably hasn't more than a year to live. She knows this and she insists that D.D. must not be told about it. She thinks it would make him more unhappy than he is now, to know the truth and watch her die. And she has made me promise her that I won't tell him and that I'll help her get away from Seacliff."

"And may I ask how you mean to go about doing this?"

"Well, for one thing, I took Elliston partly into my confidence and he's kept D.D. in bed. Meantime I've been treating Eleanor—not for leukemia but for the anemia that's actually at the bottom of most of the symptoms she has now. I'm stuffing her full of iron and pig stomach and liver extract, and she's begun to pick up a little already."

The woman nodded. "That explains it. I thought she looked better today. Less ghastly anyhow. And you think Dr. Dryden suspects nothing?"

"Certainly he suspects. But he doesn't know. And as long as we can keep Priscilla from telling him anything and allow him to see Eleanor only at times of her own choosing we'll be safe."

"I give you credit for the intelligence to know that you won't be able to get away with this much longer." Miss Rodney spoke dryly but not caustically.

Finlay flung out his hands. "Don't tell me!" he exclaimed. "I

lie awake nights dreading the show-down. I don't know what I ought to do, or what I can do."

"You could tell Dr. Dryden the truth."

"But Eleanor insists that he must not know. Can't you see her side of it?"

Grace Rodney leaned forward into the glow of the fire. The light flickered gently over her black hair with its threads of white, over her thin highbridged nose, but left her eyes in the shadow. "Can't I see her side of it?" she repeated. "You ask me that, knowing that I've been seeing her for weeks? Of course I see her side of it. But I see Dr. Dryden's too. Don't forget that he loves her."

John stared at the nurse in perplexity. "Well, what would you do?" he demanded. "In my place."

"First of all I'd get the girl out of Seaclyff before Dr. Dryden gets up."

"But she isn't fit to go to a hotel. Besides she has to have her treatments and her blood counts regularly."

"That's precisely why I've invited her here," said Grace Rodney.

"Here?"

At the astonishment in Finlay's face Miss Rodney laughed quietly.

"Why not? I have an extra room. I'm not working, so I have time on my hands. And I hope you don't think me incompetent to look after her. As a matter of fact she's coming tomorrow. That's why I had to talk to you tonight."

"Thanks for the consideration!" replied John with a flash of spirit. "It would have been embarrassing to go into the hospital and find my patient gone, no one knew where." After a moment he added, "But I still don't see how this solves my problem."

"It doesn't," admitted the woman readily. "But it will give you a margin of safety and a little while to think and talk things over with her. For the moment I think that's all you can expect."

Miss Rodney leaned back in her chair with her entire face once more in the shadows. But the firelight still flickered on her hair and John found himself watching it.

It was strange, he reflected, that he had never noticed her hair before. As she sat there now, it was lovely—soft, curling, dark against the pale upholstery behind her head. The threads of white catching the gleam from the fire only added to its beauty.

He remembered how she had looked a moment before when she was speaking of Eleanor: she had been beautiful then. He looked at her more closely. Could it be that he had never really seen her until now, or had these last few years done something strange to the Grace Rodney he had known so long?

Then he heard her speaking again.

"At first I thought the girl was disagreeable. What young people nowadays call 'high hat' or 'snooty.' But soon I came to see that wasn't true. She's very reserved. I suppose most people would think her cold. But she isn't that either. It's just that she's set a watch over every word and every action lest they give her away. She means to live alone and die alone, so that she won't make anyone more unhappy than need be. She has more courage than anyone else I've ever seen. Sheer open-eyed courage—the sort that won't let her complain of even the ordinary aches and pains. And she doesn't seem to be sorry for herself. I've never heard her say one bitter word about what's ahead of her."

Miss Rodney's voice died away softly. She sat perfectly still, her hands in her lap, looking into the fire. And Finlay too sat perfectly still, with his pipe in one hand, looking at her. The longer he watched, the more he felt that he had never really seen this woman before. The silence was so deep that he started when she spoke again.

"People don't die suddenly of leukemia very often. Eleanor Mainwaring would probably live as long married as single. And then when she did go, Dr. Dryden would have had something. It wouldn't be as though they'd never been together at all. There would always be a little. . . . Oh, don't you see what I mean?"

Her voice broke and, to John's amazement, she sprang up and fled from the room. Fumbling around in the little entry for his hat and coat, he reflected that if it had been anyone else than Grace Rodney he would have been sure she was crying when she ran away.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FAMILIAR as he was with the vagaries of the human constitution sick and well, John was surprised at the steady improvement Eleanor showed after she went to stay with Miss Rodney. Her red blood cells continued their slow upward climb, her listlessness disappeared, her singular pallor decreased. Freed for a time from the threat of imminent death she reacted with something approaching gaiety and made no effort to conceal her enjoyment of the evenings when Dennis and John came to sit in Grace Rodney's apartment before the grate fire, but she took pains never to be left alone with Dryden.

Finlay found himself more and more interested in the girl's personality. He realized that she was a withdrawn introverted type and that she did not intend her relations with Dennis to go beyond a point set in her own mind, and he began to see that she wrapped her habitual aloofness around her as self-protection. But he saw too that, in spite of this, she thawed remarkably toward Miss Rodney. Both women were reserved, neither had vital family ties, both had lived much alone, and each was intensely individualistic, but for all that they frankly enjoyed this new intimacy. Watching them, John wondered why. Was it simply the sense of security for the time being that revived the girl? Was it simply having someone to take care of again that mellowed the older woman?

Then there were other questions too which beset him. How was it that, while he and Eleanor were usually in agreement, Grace Rodney was more often Dryden's champion? How long could the present unstable equilibrium endure? How long would Dennis be content to sit in a deep armchair before Miss Rodney's open fire, his arm bandaged and in splints, following with de-

vouring blue eyes the slender figure and pale face daily more familiar to him? Did he suspect the others of conspiring to keep him from being alone with Eleanor? Did he perhaps imagine that John was in love with the girl? Sometimes when he caught D.D. eying him, Finlay fancied that there was a trace of coolness in the younger man's attitude toward him.

But in any event the present situation was too unstable to last long and John realized that he was no nearer a solution of his central dilemma than he had been when Eleanor was in the hospital. He chafed at this entanglement; hesitation and inaction were foreign to him and yet he found it as hard to decide what to do about Dennis and Eleanor as to decide what to do with himself. But something must be done, and that soon. So much was clear, he admitted, even while he searched vainly for a way out of his predicament. Then, before he had made any move, something happened.

His voice speaking to Miss Rodney over the phone one afternoon in early December was edged with excitement. "D.D. has just had a wire that his mother is very ill. He's taking the night train but he wants to see Eleanor before he leaves. Will you be home after dinner?"

John added that there was much to be done and that he did not want to miss the meeting of the Queen County Medical Society scheduled for that evening but could drive Dennis out to the apartment between six and seven if that would be convenient.

When the four of them met that night emotion came very near the surface but, somewhat to Finlay's surprise, Miss Rodney's composure and her guest's self-possession were equal to the occasion. Eleanor, he thought, had never looked lovelier and never been more the master of herself.

"I'm so sorry about your bad news," she said to her undeclared lover. "But things may not be as serious as you fear. You mustn't worry too much."

Sympathy and concern colored her manner but for all that she kept the conversation on practicalities. Would Dennis, she inquired, make good connections in Chicago? Did he have something to read on the train? Could he manage with his arm still in splints? And Dryden's anxiety about her she parried with apparent candor.

"I haven't felt so well in months. And what could possibly

happen to me with a private physician and a special nurse to look after me?"

"Score for the retired country doctor," said John, forcing a laugh. "I've always maintained it took more brains to practice in the sticks than to be a high-priced specialist in the city."

While the clock inexorably ticked away his last minutes in Newland, Dennis saw his only chance for a tête-à-tête with Eleanor slip away. The talk remained general and matter-of-fact—even, at moments, banal. Grace Rodney recalled dryly John's departure in 1929.

"I was so provoked when I finally found out that he had gone by plane that I forgot the danger. I don't think I would have cared then if he had cracked up."

Finlay laughed and went on to describe the tactics necessary to circumvent Miss Rodney's watchfulness.

Dennis explained that he had considered flying to Chicago but had finally given up the idea. "But if the weather is decent when I come back," he said meaningly, "I will fly. You'll still be here, won't you, Eleanor?"

The girl smiled brightly and once more John marveled at her self-control.

"What a question! How could I escape these two dragons?"

But on the drive into Seaforth Dryden poured out his fears and uncertainty while Finlay listened.

"I've got to go of course. I want to go. Mother and I have always been close and I can make her fight this thing better than anyone else in the family, I know. I must be with her. Pneumonia at her age is tough going. But if anything happens to Eleanor while I'm away . . ."

John felt a sudden irrational annoyance sweeping over him.

"For heaven's sake, D.D., you saw yourself not an hour ago how much better she looks. Remember she isn't a child. She's looked after herself before and I promise you nothing shall happen to her that a doctor can prevent. I've never let you down yet, have I?"

"No, you haven't." The younger man laughed nervously. "I guess that accident turned me into a neuro. I keep expecting things to go wrong. Maybe I'd be disappointed if they didn't."

At the station Dennis was more like himself. "I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to act like a fool. You'll look into the lab

won't you, John, now and then and give Priscilla a hand? It's been pretty hard on her, having me laid up like this."

Finlay grinned and patted Dryden's shoulder reassuringly. "Don't you worry, D.D. I'll mount guard over both your women. And I'll keep George off Priscilla's neck until you get back."

At the door of the Pullman there was no time to spare. John handed Dryden's bags to the porter and faced his friend.

"Let me hear from you, D.D. Maybe your mother will get along better than you expect. Sometimes old people fool us, you know. And don't work yourself into a stew before you get there. That won't do any good. And look out for the elbow. Baldwin and Elliston would never forgive you if you let anything happen to their handiwork. Remember I'll be on the job out here and don't worry. Now good-by and good luck."

His hand closed warmly over Dryden's. A wan smile flickered across the young man's anxious face. "O.K., John, I'll try. And thanks a million—for everything. I'll be seeing you."

It was late when John reached the medical meeting and the auditorium was almost full. Standing at the rear door he surveyed the audience and reflected wryly that he had never known a scientific program to draw so full a house. On the platform he saw Herbert Baldwin waiting with ill-disguised impatience for the routine business to be put out of the way. It was with mixed emotions that Finlay studied the man.

There had been a time, before he left Newland in 1929, when he had simply disliked Baldwin and given the matter very little thought, but now he found himself in a different frame of mind. True there had been the affair of Mrs. Maitland's non-existent gall bladder, Baldwin's trick of changing the figures on his patients' charts, and his mercenary method of streamlining office management and the examination of patients. But there had also been his restraint of Warren Arnold at the Efficiency Committee meeting and his irreproachable attitude toward Dennis after his accident. Not content merely to offer his services Baldwin had gone out of his way to assist Walter Elliston in both the operation and aftercare with the most scrupulous courtesy and skill. He had even unbent so far as to joke with D.D. about the indignity of bedpans and to repeat stories he heard in the doctors' room at Seacliff.

How much simpler it would be, thought John as he slipped

into a seat in the back of the room, if the fellow was all black or all white and not such a confounded mixture of good and bad.

By this time Baldwin was on his feet facing his audience. The atmosphere of the meeting was tense but the surgeon did not seem to notice it. As he stood there—tall, broad, long-armed, with more than a hint about him of irresistible force—Finlay decided that he must actually be unaware of the envy, dislike, and grudging respect with which the other doctors regarded him.

Baldwin cleared his throat commandingly and began to speak.

"It is, in my opinion, gentlemen, an honor to be allowed to present to the members of this society a summary of the report of the Committee on the Costs of Medical Care. You probably all know that this Committee has been at work for nearly five years. For this reason, if for no other, their report and recommendations deserve thoughtful study and evaluation. We must all of us discard prejudices and preconceived ideas if we are to help save our profession from disaster. The work of this Committee seems to me an important step in the right direction.

"Now, first of all, gentlemen, let me call your attention to the . . ."

Having read the report which Baldwin was discussing several days before, Finlay let his attention wander from the speaker. He slid down on the small of his back and eyed the rows of men in front of him. Most of them he knew—a good many of them, well. He knew what manner of men they were. Hard-working, almost all of them—from the necessity of the case. Honest, in the accepted sense of the word. Conscientious, ordinarily—from reasons of expediency for the most part. Clever, many of them. But cultivated, intellectual, independent in thought? Only a few.

There was Oliver Marlin, up in front so he would be sure to hear all Baldwin had to say. Courtly, open-minded, honorable—Marlin was all of these. But he was also a poor surgeon, devoid of the mechanical aptitude required in that art. There was Eric Nelson—blond, blue-eyed, soft-voiced—to whom children often went more readily than to their fathers. There was Nathan Garnell—short, slight, dark-eyed, as sensitive to the covert anti-Semitism in Seaforth as to human pain. There was Arthur McBride—outspoken, stubborn, as skillful with his Xray machines as Baldwin with his knife. There was red-headed Duncan Garfield—self-appointed gadfly to all county officials in his capacity as superintendent of the Queen County Hospital. There was

Robert Jackson—handsome, peace-loving, timid at times, but careful and well meaning if not always above temptation. There was Walter Elliston—thin, worried, prematurely old, but invincibly honest.

How these men and their like would react to the report of this committee was more important to Finlay's way of thinking than anything George Schuyler or Warren Arnold or even Herbert Baldwin thought of it. And for his own future their reactions were far more important.

Why, John had often asked himself, should anyone expect doctors to be unlike other people? Some men went into store-keeping and some into medicine—all of them to make a living. A few years in medical school and hospital might make a doctor out of a man but they could not turn him into a moral or intellectual giant. Great physicians did exist; here in this very room there was a handful of men who would stand out anywhere. But great physicians were as rare as great statesmen. The rank and file exploited hospitals and the little store of learning they had accumulated and the results of other men's research—research to which they had contributed and could contribute nothing. They did this just as other men ran shoe stores—in order to achieve what economic security was possible in an uncertain world. And now that this precarious security was threatened by the Depression, they were at bay.

Like an obbligator to John's troubled thoughts Baldwin's deep voice rumbled on.

"... The recommendations of the Committee, gentlemen, fall into several classifications. Briefly they may be summarized as follows. First, the planned development of medical groups—around existing hospitals whenever possible—prepared to furnish their communities complete medical, dental, and nursing service; the number of these groups is to depend on the density of population. Second, expansion of the public health service and reform of its personnel practices. Third, payment for medical care through taxation or insurance or both."

Baldwin paused a moment. As though sensing for the first time the lack of response in his audience, he permitted himself to become slightly more conciliatory.

"My friends, we all have the interests of our profession at heart. I am sure that all clear-sighted physicians admit today that sooner or later some sort of health insurance must be worked out

for the low-income groups whose employment is irregular. But I agree with the Committee that much experimentation with voluntary health insurance will be necessary before the United States will accept the compulsory form for its working population, and I also agree with the Committee that more experience with co-operative medical groups is essential to the success of any type of health insurance in this country.

"From each and every one of you I bespeak sober thoughtful consideration of the majority report of the Committee. The men who made up the Committee were chosen with great care: they represent all parts of our nation, all sections of their respective professions, and many different viewpoints. Their conclusions are not to be brushed away lightly, for those conclusions may prove the salvation of the profession we all hold dearer than life itself."

With ponderous gravity Baldwin sat down, and his listeners began to eye one another and move restlessly in their seats. One or two rose to seek recognition from the chair and put formal queries, but many others talked to their neighbors and listened to no one. Soon the babble of voices became an uproar in which there were audible only isolated phrases or sentences. The presiding officer pounded vainly with his gavel attempting to restore order.

"... state medicine, that's all. . . . Socialism . . . might as well go to Russia and be done with it . . . it's the compulsory part of it I don't like. This is a free country, or is it? . . . it'll take a revolution I guess to get the government's nose out of things again . . ."

"Of course they say the doctors will manage the groups and set professional standards."

"Like hell they will!" exclaimed Duncan Garfield, hard-bitten superintendent of the Queen County Hospital. "Why, every time I turn around the Commissioners are on my neck. I have to buy supplies I don't like because one of them has a nephew in the surgical supply business. I can't fire a maid or an orderly without old man Davidson making an issue of it. The way to get a county job is still to sleep with the right person."

"Hear, hear!" shouted someone. "Hop to it, Duncan, old boy!"

"Speech, speech!" cried another voice. "Tell us about politics in medicine."

Garfield stood up, his unruly red hair like a flame.

"Don't get me wrong," he said. "I'm not thinking about money."

If I'd been interested in making money I'd never 've stuck to medicine for fifteen years. I hate to send out bills as much as most people hate to pay them. But to hand over control of the profession to local or state officials is asking too much." The man's words tumbled out in passionate protest. "I've been dealing with county politicians since 1917 and, by and large, there's no lower form of animal life on the planet today. I don't mean there are no exceptions. A few honest men do get into politics. But I want to say to you men here, before God, that in the last fifteen years there have been just two commissioners in this county who weren't sons of bitches and neither of them got re-elected."

There was a roar of laughter and handclaps. Garfield, who seldom spoke in public, flushed brick-red and sat down, refusing to say more. But his obvious sincerity coupled with his reputation for honesty and plain-speaking had its effect.

"That's what I dread about all this too—political control," said Oliver Marlin. "If medical care is paid for out of tax funds, government will have the whip hand over us. I hope not to live to see that time."

Again the babble of voices rose uncontrolled.

"What about the unemployed? They can't pay insurance premiums."

"Oh, damn the unemployed! Why bring them up? They're a bunch of dirty bums anyhow."

"I don't agree with you. That single men's shelter they've opened up down on lower First Avenue is cleaner than most of our cheap hotels."

"To my way of thinking the Purple Ox is a disgrace to Seaforth."

"Then you don't know anything about it."

"Do you?"

"I certainly do. I've been going down there three nights a week for months, to help in a little dispensary they've started. The shower baths are as popular there as they are at the Country Club. Nine out of every ten men who come in start scrubbing themselves and their clothes before they eat."

"If that's the way you feel, why don't you go to Russia and be done with it?"

"Because I'm an American—that's why."

"It's the salary idea that's the bunk. 'd do away with all a fellow's initiative."

"Why do you think that any man who works for a salary must be a ninny who couldn't make a living practicing?" demanded Arthur McBride hotly.

"Aw, pipe down, Mac. What do you know about practicing?"

"Plenty! Didn't I put in three years in eastern Montana, setting bones, dragging babies, fighting snow and mud? I wasn't born with an Xray tube in my hands, you know."

"Well, what of it? Keep your shirt on!"

"This is what of it," retorted McBride. "You practitioners are merely applying discoveries made in medical schools and research laboratories by men who work for salaries."

"Oh, go soak your head! You can't make me believe that."

And thus discussion turned into noise and bellowing. No one listened to anyone, no one was convinced that he was wrong and another man right. John had originally intended to say something too, but it was manifestly impossible to get the attention of the meeting and so he contented himself by scribbling a few questions on his prescription pad by way of clarifying his own thoughts.

"What is 'adequate medical care'? A doctor for every five hundred people, more general practitioners or more specialists? Does it mean taking better care of children and people with acute infections while paying less attention to older folks and chronic diseases? Does it include health education? If so, the patent-medicine makers and the manufacturers of food products will fight it.

"What is 'available medical care'? Some sort of a doctor in every hamlet or better doctors in the larger towns on all-year paved roads? And how many hospitals do we need and where?

"Would the public accept scientific medicine even if it was free? After all, millions of sick people treat themselves or go to quacks and chiropractors every day, not to mention the ones who fall for cancer paste and Christian Science."

At last Finlay was recalled to the present by the sound of Robert Jackson's voice.

"I'm not sure that this is the proper time to bring this matter up, but some of the men here have been speaking about the discussion at our last meeting of the clinics at the County Hospital and the City Health Department. Should we take some definite stand on this subject, as a society?"

"You bet we should," shouted Warren Arnold. "If we don't everybody will soon be going to these damned clinics and then where will we be?"

"Garfield," called out another man, "how about the County Commissioners? Have they changed their minds about paying for the work out at the hospital?"

"No. They insist that they have no funds for that purpose."

"And we go on like idiots, giving our time, wearing out our cars, buying our own gas—all to take care of that bunch of bums you've gathered together in that dump of yours, Garfield." Belligerency fairly oozed from every tone of Arnold's voice.

By this time even Dr. Baldwin seemed somewhat dismayed at the storm that had followed his speech. He rose ponderously and slowly to his feet.

"Perhaps you would be interested in a plan they've worked out in southern California to handle a similar situation."

"Go ahead," cried someone in the audience.

"I am told that the medical society in this county took the issue of higher taxes for free clinics to the voters and that after the election all the clinics were closed. Persons who wish to get free care now apply in a central office in the county seat where they are interviewed by a social worker. If they prove to be eligible, the social worker refers them in rotation to those members of the county society who have volunteered to do this work, and gives each of them a card good for five office visits.

"This card the patient must take to the doctor to whom he has been assigned. For each office examination or treatment the physician is paid fifty cents by the county. Extra charges for laboratory work, Xrays, and dressings are made according to a pre-arranged schedule agreed on between the society and the County Commissioners. House calls are made at the doctors' discretion and are paid for at one dollar each by the county. Emergency cases are sent directly from the central office to the County Hospital, or to some other institution if the County is full, but this action must be O.K.'ed by one of the Commissioners before the patient is admitted. Now it might be that some features of this system would be useful in Seaforth."

Before Baldwin could sit down Duncan Garfield sprang up.

"It happens that I know something about this set-up. It isn't so hot. The social worker has to sort out the cases and decide

which are emergencies and which aren't. I've heard some tall tales where her judgment wasn't too good.

"Then, in order to pass on eligibility, there have to be investigators to snoop around and find out whether people are actually down to their last cent. If they've still got a few dollars in the bank they can't get in on the free care. So what they get is a medical Gestapo, spying on folks who've had a run of bad luck. I don't like the idea myself."

Garfield looked around the room and made a sweeping gesture. "Personally I don't think you fellows are going to get anything out of the Queen County Commissioners. You're not smart enough and you haven't had enough experience in dirty politics. But I'm opposed to importing this California plan, anyhow."

"Yeah, it's your notion that we go on working for nothing in these cockeyed clinics, isn't it?" demanded Arnold.

"What do you mean by 'we'?" inquired a muffled voice from the rear of the room. "I never saw you hurting yourself out at the County Hospital, Warren."

A ripple of laughter swept through the group and several men turned to see who it was had spoken. Arnold bristled furiously. The chairman glanced up at Baldwin anxiously and pounded his desk for order.

"I merely suggested that it might be worth while to consider a system that had been adopted in a nearby state," said Baldwin with a trace of his former arrogance. "I did not mean to propose that we adopt the California plan *in toto*."

But now that this subject had been broached, there was a second spate of talk and confusion from which, in the end, there emerged three resolutions to be voted on by the membership. The first was to the effect that members of the society would no longer give their professional services in public clinics and asked the County Commissioners to pay the men on the staff of the County Hospital for the use of their cars and equipment as well as to weed out all patients except bona fide indigent residents of Queen County. The second stipulated that the City Health Department should cease giving any treatment and refer all vaccinations and immunizations to private physicians. The third stated that physicians who continued to work in the County Hospital or in the Health Department clinics, if the warning in the first two resolutions were not heeded, should automatically lose their membership in the County Medical Society.

After all these resolutions had passed, someone mentioned the fact that a few states now required three years' residence before one was eligible for medical care in public institutions. To this Oliver Marlin quickly replied that he did not expect germs would obey any residence requirements. The laugh that followed this sally cleared the air a little but not enough to prevent the near-passage of a proposed amendment to the by-laws declaring contract practice unethical.

After this there was still more talk—some of it ill-tempered, some of it serious, and some merely nostalgic for the good days of the '20's when money came easily. Through it all John sat, listening and silent. His cue just now, as he saw it, was to watch the reactions of the rank and file of his profession to the various proposals made. Sifting what he heard and moving from one group to another after the formal meeting broke up, he decided that most of the men were skeptical rather than hostile: they had their doubts about the plans described, but there were few who denied either the need of better medical care for the unemployed or the desirability of furnishing it.

In the coatroom John fell in with Arthur McBride and the two of them left the building together.

"I was sitting right behind Pat Boyd tonight," said McBride. "He got mixed up and voted for the contract practice amendment. Wouldn't he have been in a pickle if it had passed?"

McBride was lighting a cigarette and in the flare of the match his face seemed leaner than ever. John laughed quietly.

"I've known funnier things than that to happen, young man. And one of them is Herbert Baldwin touting the report of the Committee on the Costs of Medical Care. I still don't get it."

"I do," answered McBride. His voice was so venomous that Finlay looked at him startled. "Old Herbert can't bear for anything to go on without him being in the midst of it. He thinks this thing is going to sweep the country and he means to be one of the bosses if and when it does."

"Listen," said John, "have you got a little time to spare? Let's go some place where we can talk. There are one or two things I want to ask you."

"O.K. by me, Dr. Finlay. I've got more time than anything else."

Thirty minutes later, when the younger man's face was less taut and drawn and John had once more told himself that there

was nothing like food and hot coffee to soothe jangled human nerves, they reverted to the action of the medical society.

"There's an awful mixture of motives behind those resolutions," said McBride. "All the men are afraid of something. Sometimes it's just losing a little money. But some of them are old and they've had their investments wiped out and now they are facing the prospect of old age in poverty. Then a lot of them are against anything Baldwin proposes, on general principles, because they have no use for him."

Finlay nodded. "I know that. It was a tactical blunder to let Baldwin talk tonight. Anyone else could have presented the report better—except Warren Arnold. But don't overlook the fact that men like Marlin and Duncan Garfield are absolutely sincere in their dread of political control of medicine."

McBride studied the end of his cigarette thoughtfully. "What do you think about that?" he asked. "Would it make things worse than they are now—in hospitals, for instance?"

John took time to pack and light his pipe before he answered.

"I'm afraid so. With the example of George Schuyler before me all these years, I'm still afraid so."

McBride looked doubtful but did not disagree verbally.

"What are you going to do when you leave Sealiff?" asked Finlay.

The young man flushed with embarrassment; his bony high-cheeked face grew sullen and bitter.

"I'm not just asking for curiosity," continued John. "I'm interested."

"I haven't the least idea," blurted McBride. "I haven't got another job. I've applied for several, but there aren't many openings for X-ray men now."

"And I suppose you can hardly depend on Schuyler for a good recommendation."

"Not so you'd notice it." The words were packed with malice.

"What happened anyhow? Was it just one of George's spasms of economy, or did you have a row?"

"We had a row."

"Wouldn't care to tell me about it, would you?"

McBride's eyes smoldered with shame and anger. "Why not? It might make me feel better to get it out of my system."

"It might. I see that you haven't been fired very often. If you had, you wouldn't think it was such a disgrace to lose a job."

"Well, I'll tell you about it, Dr. Finlay. It began last fall when Arnold sent in a man with a bone tumor for me to Xray. His sister came in with him. She was very worried about her brother and she told me that she thought she should take him straight to Mayo's even though it took every penny they had saved. I tried to reassure her. Any decent fellow would have done the same. I remember exactly the words I used. I said, 'Oh, I think we can find as good a surgeon here in Seaforth as they have at Mayo's.'

"I suppose they went back to Arnold's office and repeated what they thought I had said to them, for the next morning he came bellowing into my department while I was going over some films with Baldwin. 'What d' you mean trying to railroad patients away from me?' he yelled.

"I didn't know what he was talking about. 'Don't you lie to me!' he roared. 'You told so-and-so yesterday afternoon to get another doctor.'

"I tried to explain but he wouldn't listen. He kept bawling louder and louder. And Baldwin stood by, looking patronizing and superior the way he does."

"Yes," said John, chuckling a little. "I've seen Herbert act like that a thousand times."

"Finally Arnold ran out of breath and stopped talking. Then Baldwin started in on me. 'I had expected a definite diagnosis,' he said. 'I'm afraid my patient wasted both his time and his money in here.'

"Well, by that time I was pretty sore, so I snapped back. 'I've tried to tell you that when a man can't stand up or even sit up, it isn't easy to be sure whether he has a cancer of the stomach or not. I want to Xray him again later in the week. It won't cost him anything extra.'

"But Baldwin said no, that wouldn't do. He had scheduled the man for operation the next day and he must have a definite report from me now. Personally he said he was sure the patient had cancer: he could see a filling defect on the stomach films whether I could or not.

"I still tried to explain to him that this might be due to the fact that the man had had to lie flat throughout the whole examination, but he didn't believe me.

"By this time Arnold had got his wind back. 'You're not a doctor,' he said to me. 'You're just a photographer, and you'd better remember that if you don't want to lose your job. You just

make your pictures and let us real doctors decide what they mean and what ought to be done. And keep your Goddamned mouth shut around my patients. I ain't sending people up here for you to Xray them and tell them they ought to let *you* pick out their doctor!

"That was the last straw, Dr. Finlay. To have that ignoramus tell me that I wasn't a doctor but just a photographer! So I told him something. I told him I'd forgotten more than he ever knew. I told him his patient had been all set to go to Mayo's and I had merely tried to say he could get as good surgery here as he could there. And while I was about it I told Baldwin that his old man couldn't stand a stomach operation, cancer or no cancer. I told him he'd better cancel the operation, have D.D. study the old fellow, and then let me re-examine him in a few days.

"And then I ordered the two of them out of my department. I said I had something else to do than take their abuse, and I told them I was willing to stand on my record as far as the quality of my work was concerned."

John grinned at the excited bony face across the table, then he beckoned to the waiter and ordered more coffee.

"And naturally Arnold and Baldwin beat it straight to George and told him the whole story. You should have known they'd do that. But tell me what had happened to Baldwin's patient—the old man?"

"Oh, he died. Baldwin opened him on schedule. He didn't have a cancer, but he died on the third day afterward."

"Did you see the operation?"

"Oh, sure. Baldwin sent for me to come up to the surgery so he could bawl me out before the whole roomful of nurses and doctors."

"Oh!" said John meditatively.

"Of course that rather backfired on the old boy," continued McBride. "For by the time I got up there he had gone far enough to know that the stomach was normal. And then I took with me a copy of my report in which I had said in so many words that I doubted the existence of a tumor. But in the end it didn't make any difference. The day the old man checked out Schuyler fired me. And here I am—no job, just about enough money to last three months if I squeeze the nickels. Nice, isn't it?"

"But not unusual. . . . I understood that you were thinking of getting married."

"I suppose D.D. told you. The fact is that I've been engaged to a girl back home for two years but I've had so many cuts that I couldn't save up enough to take a chance on it. You see, I know that two can't live as cheap as one."

"Um," murmured John, staring thoughtfully at his pipe bowl. "That's very intelligent of you. Most men don't stop to think what they're going to live on until after they're married."

"They would if they'd grown up in the poverty I did. I swore then that I'd get out of it if it took me all my life. And I guess it's going to take that long and then some."

"How would you like to go east—say, to Philadelphia—and do some more graduate work in Xray and radium?"

"How would I . . . Say, what is this?"

"Well, it seems to me that the best way for you to go about getting up the ladder would be to take some more special training."

For a moment McBride's deep-set hazel eyes went blank; then they blazed.

"I guess I'd better be going, Dr. Finlay. It's getting late."

"Sit down, young fellow. Don't look at me like that. I'm not crazy, and I'm not trying to insult you. I think we might be able to arrange this thing. If you were to leave here the first of the year and get married on your way to Philadelphia you'd still have time to register for the second term at the Graduate School of Medicine."

"For God's sake, Finlay, are you joking . . . or what?"

"No, I'm not joking. Sit down, I tell you. Don't stand there staring at me. You and I have a good many points to talk over and we haven't any time to waste. At least you haven't, if you're going to get all these things attended to next month."

CHAPTER NINE

DENNIS had been gone no more than two weeks when Finlay had good news from him and, on impulse, drove out to share it with Grace Rodney and Eleanor.

His own reaction to the letter was a mixture of relief that Dennis was not going to lose his mother and perturbation over being plunged back into the tense situation which had grown up between himself and Eleanor and D.D. and Miss Rodney. Finding that Eleanor had gone out to a movie leaving Grace alone in the apartment, he did not resist the inclination to ask her advice.

Miss Rodney paused in the act of lighting a cigarette and answered him.

"I still think it would be best for them to get married, Dr. Finlay. The girl has improved remarkably since she came out here with me. And I've been reading up on leukemia. Some patients live eight or ten years with it. And why shouldn't she live as long married as single? They would both be happier now, and it would be better for Dr. Dryden—afterward."

John peered reflectively over his pipe bowl at the nurse. "I . . .," he began, and stopped.

Grace was staring into the coal fire with a peculiar intentness, almost as though she were considering a problem in her own life. Finlay could not make up his mind what it was about her that seemed so different of late. Her curling dark hair with its striking threads of white was as smoothly and meticulously done as ever, her profile was as chiseled and aquiline. But she was friendlier, more approachable. He could not remember her eyes ever having been soft before, but at times during the last two months they had been like black velvet. And it was puzzling to

see her consistently taking D.D.'s part, saying over and over that he deserved something left him for "afterward."

Perplexed by his own uncertainties John knocked out his pipe and explored the bowl with a practiced forefinger.

"If you feel this way, why don't you talk to Eleanor? You have more opportunity than anyone else."

"I don't believe anyone could persuade her to marry Dr. Dryden now."

Grace smiled slightly, almost secretly, as she spoke.

"Then why discuss the matter with me?"

The woman smiled again. "After all, Dr. Finlay, it was you who brought the subject up this evening." She paused, then went on in a thoughtful voice which gave the impression of being directed as much to herself as to John. "But I like to think of them being happy—for a little while at least. And having lived so much of my own life alone, I know that half a loaf is better than none. But I don't expect you to understand that, Dr. Finlay."

John frowned at the smoldering coals in the grate. These constantly recurring "Dr. Finlays" annoyed him. Of course it was proper for her to speak to him as "Dr. Finlay" in public, but why should she be so formal here in her own apartment? And then he realized that he had never called her "Grace." "Miss Rodney," yes; and "Grace Rodney"; and in moments of stress merely "Rodney." But never "Grace." He grinned and began to repack his pipe. The kettle and the pot, all over again, he said to himself.

Miss Rodney did not seem to notice his abstraction. "As a matter of fact," she said calmly, "Eleanor had a letter from Dr. Dryden yesterday, and we talked all this over last night."

John stared at her, preoccupation gone. "The devil you did!" he exclaimed. "Why didn't you say so? Here I come tearing out here thinking I'm bringing you news. The joke isn't so good, if you ask me."

"I had no intention of playing a joke on you," replied Grace quietly. "Have you something better to do on a rainy winter evening like this than to sit in front of my fire!"

Finlay felt in the last sentence a trace of the critical. "I never saw a woman yet," he said irritably, "who didn't want every man she knew to work like a slave."

Miss Rodney looked up. "Isn't there any middle ground between overwork and idleness?"

"I don't know. If there is I never found it."

The two gazed steadily at each other—black eyes and gray, and neither flinching.

"You haven't come to any decision about your own plans, Dr. Finlay?"

"No. Not yet."

But Grace Rodney caught the uncertainty in his voice. A faint smile flickered on her lips. "I thought perhaps you had," she said, "by this time."

Finlay looked at her sharply. He wondered whether she had seen McBride in the last few days. "Why?" he demanded.

Miss Rodney however was leaning back, her face in the shadow of her wingchair so that he could not be sure of her expression. "No special reason," she answered softly. "I'm just interested. You see I have my living to earn and if you aren't going to need me I shall have to go back to private duty nursing, I suppose."

"Oh!" The tone was flat with surprise. It had not occurred to John that there was any hurry about Grace going to work. He had never seen her making beds or bathing patients; all her years at Sun Mount she had been more an administrator than a practicing nurse. But of course she must have done these things before she came to Sun Mount in the first place, and so it was probably natural for her to revert to them.

"Oh, I see," he finally went on. "Well, you shouldn't have any trouble getting work. Everyone in and around Newland knows you."

"I can think of circumstances in which that might be a handicap." The old tartness of speech returned for a moment. "As a matter of fact Mrs. Stockton wants me to take charge of that spastic boy of theirs."

"You might do a lot worse. That youngster will be a half-invalid as long as he lives and the Stocktons have plenty of money, lumber market or no lumber market. It would be a lifetime job for you."

"But I'm not sure I want a lifetime job!" Miss Rodney's retort was quick and pungent. Some implication about it annoyed Finlay. If she had something on her mind why didn't she come out with it? Either she had to work or she didn't; either she wanted to go to the Stocktons' or she didn't. It wasn't like her to hesitate. Only a moment ago she had been criticizing him because he hadn't decided what he was going to do. Or had she?

More than a little nettled, he relighted his pipe which had

just gone out for the third time. There was no answer he could think of offhand to that last remark. Miss Rodney would have to decide for herself what she wanted to do.

Silence overflowed the room. From the shadows of her wing-chair the woman watched John with eyes which, for all their capacity to be hard, were once more black velvet. She smiled a little wistfully. Finlay had come back to Newland a bigger man than when he left; he had really needed those three years to find himself again and set his course for the time that was left to him. But in some ways he was no less blind than he had always been.

He had been surprised to find her apartment cozy and feminine. He had been surprised that she smoked an occasional cigarette in the evenings. He had been surprised when she announced her intention of bringing Eleanor to stay with her. And now he was surprised both that she was thinking of private duty nursing and that, having considered it, she did not instantly leap at the position in the Stockton home. He did not realize how deeply she too had become a part of Sun Mount. For a man so astute in many ways he was far from clever.

And yet there was no one else she trusted so implicitly. During his absence he had grown mellowed, more tolerant. There was now a more consistent gleam of humor in his dark gray eyes, a smile crept oftener along the creases at the corners of his eyes and down the deepening grooves in his cheeks. The laughter with which he met the ridiculous was kinder, more merciful to human frailty.

And there was no one she would rather see in a time of trouble. His skin was firm and brown; his hands were steady, deft, sure of movement; he moved them quickly with casual assurance. The sight of them brought comfort. And how often she had seen them held out to people terrified of death—a link of warm human flesh that bound them to the world they knew until another world embraced them. How often she had seen him bring courage to the faltering. He had the gift of healing, and there were few like him.

Now he looked up at her, grinning apologetically as he sheltered a match between his palms. "I don't ever want one of these newfangled lighters. I prefer to scratch my matches . . . on other people's furniture."

"Yes, so I notice. You were just leaning forward to reach the bricks in the mantelpiece."

A faint flush crept over the pale olive of Grace Rodney's skin. She put up one well-kept hand to the lapis necklace she wore. John watched with dawning appreciation. She looks so different out of uniform, he thought. It's funny how clothes change a woman.

When the phone rang he was genuinely vexed. "Oh, hell!" he muttered.

"You needn't worry. It won't be for you. You aren't practicing."

But this assurance did not lessen his annoyance. Something pleasant had left the room with Grace Rodney. He fidgeted in his chair, poked at the fire, picked up a book and put it down again.

"That was another job," explained Miss Rodney when she came back. "I believe I'll take this one. They want me only a few days. It's just a convalescent appendix."

She had scarcely finished the sentence when they both heard a latchkey in the door.

"Oh, hello!" said Eleanor. "I didn't know you had company." She spoke so quietly that John found it hard to believe that she and Grace had already discussed D.D.'s return.

His eyes followed the girl. She had gained weight and she did not look as frail as she had. The pink on her cheeks was synthetic, of course, but he found it none the less pleasing for that. The greatest change which he could see was in her movements: they had lost the listlessness and languor that had characterized them before.

Having taken off her wraps she came and held her hands toward the fire.

"I always expect to find myself mildewed in the morning," she said. "How much longer do you suppose it will go on raining, Dr. Finlay?"

"Only God can answer that question," John replied. "But I know just how you feel. I was the same way in 1911."

"Everyone gets used to it after a while," said Grace Rodney cheerfully. "I never notice the rain any more." There was a pause, then Grace got to her feet. "I'm going to make some coffee. We'll drink it here, in front of the fire. No, don't bother to come with me, Eleanor. It will only take me a moment."

John knew that she had left him alone with the girl purposely and he cast about for a way to bring up the subject of Dryden's return. But Eleanor's composure made him tongue-tied. He

watched her covertly. Once more reserve and self-possession had closed an impenetrable wall around her. It seemed impossible that she had begged him only a few weeks before to help her get away before Dennis could leave his bed.

"What picture did you see?" he finally asked.

"*Farewell to Arms*. Helen Hayes did a beautiful piece of work as Catherine. You ought to plan to see it yourself, Dr. Finlay."

Into John's mind flashed the memory of a "still" he had seen in front of a theater: Frederick Henry standing before a window with the body of his dead mistress in his arms. "You ass!" he breathed to himself and sank back in his chair, his eyes on the flames in the grate. "You ass!"

The next evening he had barely finished his dinner when Miss Rodney called him on the telephone.

"Eleanor has gone," she said crisply.

"Gone?" he repeated. "Gone where?"

"I don't know. She doesn't say."

"Perhaps she went out for the evening again."

"No, no. You don't understand. I went out this morning on that appendix case—you remember they called me up last night—and when I got back to the apartment a few minutes ago she wasn't here. I think you'd better come out. She left a note."

The note was brief but explicit.

Friday afternoon

MY DEAR FRIENDS:

I hope you won't think me ungrateful for all you've done for me. But I must go. It would not do for Dennis to find me here when he comes back.

Please make no attempt to trace me, and please tell Dennis nothing of this note. It is better for him not to know my plans. Later I shall let you know how things are going with me.

This is a poor return for your kindness to me. I do appreciate what you have done for me—both of you—more than I can tell you now. I am sure you will understand and forgive me.

Faithfully yours,

ELEANOR MAINWARING

"Good Lord!" cried Finlay. "D.D. will be here in the morning. On the plane. He wired me today to meet him. What can I say to him?"

Grace Rodney reached for the note. "I'd better put it away."

She spoke calmly enough but her voice was soft with compassion. "What can you say, Dr. Finlay, except that she has gone? I felt all along that she had no intention of seeing him again. I think she was afraid to. And, after all, it is her life—what's left of it. You must make him understand that."

But after a minute, when he looked up, John saw the bright tears shimmering in her eyes.

CHAPTER TEN

PETER McFARLANE stretched his long legs to their full length and stared intently at his long narrow feet.

"Damn it all, J.F., they simply don't make cheap shoes in size 13 A. So here I am going around on my third pair of half-soles. But how else can I keep my feet off the ground?"

In McFarlane's seagreen eyes, for all their sophistication, John Finlay saw brooding perplexity. He did not answer Peter's rhetorical question but merely slid down in his seat and relighted his pipe.

"I went out this morning," resumed McFarlane presently, "to cover some foreclosures in the eastern part of the county. Had a tip-off that something might pop. Well, when I got there I found both the judge and the agent for the insurance company that holds the mortgages in the judge's office and both scared stiff. I guess they've been reading about the farmers in Iowa at foreclosure sales. There was a deputy too and he kept saying that the mob was 'out to get' all of them if any move was made about the mortgages.

"So I moseyed around to see what was actually going on. Right off I bumped into a young fellow about the build of Gene Tunney with a length of inch rope hanging over one arm. Then I noticed the mud-covered jalopies up and down both sides of the street in front of the courthouse. The parking lot back of the filling station was full of 'em too. Everywhere I looked there were men—tough customers: big, heavy-shod, with their eyes sort of grim and determined. They weren't doing anything or making any trouble—just milling around. But somehow I knew this was no monkey-business. If anybody started anything those

fellows were ready to blow. And the air was electric—just like it is before a thunderstorm."

"What happened, Peter?"

The reporter laughed. "Not a damned thing, J.F., believe it or not. You see, the deputy sheriff came out after a while and told the young fellow with the rope that there wasn't going to be any foreclosure sale and in a half-hour all the crowd and all the jalopies were gone. I brought the insurance company agent back to Seaforth with me, so he wouldn't have to wait for the bus."

"And got him talking, of course?"

"Naturally. What do you take me for?"

"What did he have to say for himself?"

"Oh, the usual. He has to do as he's told or lose his own job. But he admitted that personally he's tickled to death whenever he goes out like this and the farmers stymie him."

Finlay took the pipe out of his mouth and grinned.

"Lots of people talk that way, Peter. They don't stick their own necks out but they like to see the other fellow do it. Look at the County Commissioners. They wouldn't take the responsibility for feeding the unemployed but when the U.C.L. three thousand strong moves into the County-City building and stays there two days and two nights the Commissioners grab their alibi and, in the name of sanitation and law-and-order, they promise to keep the commissaries going."

"Sure they gave in. And why not, J.F.? They were afraid."

"Everybody's afraid—of something. Of the unemployed, or afraid they'll get another cut or lose their jobs altogether, afraid the banks will close, afraid they'll lose their little hoard of savings. It's like living in a country where some sort of epidemic paralysis is creeping from one coast to the other—so many miles a day."

"Yeah, everything is paralyzed except Huey Long's throat. Do you realize that guy has talked for nine days straight about the banking bill?"

"Maybe having to listen to that sort of thing is part of the price we pay for our half-loaf of democracy, Peter."

McFarlane's green eyes glinted in the light as he looked at the older man. "Sometimes I think there's something to be said for the dictators, J.F."

"Certainly there is. The trains in Italy run on time. Hadn't you heard?"

Peter shrugged his shoulders. "What do you think Roosevelt will do when he's inaugurated, J.F.? The big businessmen and bankers would crawl for anyone who could get them out of the mess they're in. It would be easy to grab things—railroads, factories, banks, power plants. People are so fed up with Congress gabbling while twelve million people go hungry and so tired of Hoover prophesying the return of prosperity that they would do anything." The reporter's voice suddenly grew vibrant with excitement. "Anything would be better than just sitting—like we've been doing—waiting for this thing to get us all down. The right crowd around Roosevelt could do it. I know they could, J.F."

McFarlane's face had lost all its premature disillusion and sophistication, and Finlay's was dark with thoughtfulness.

"I think they could too, Peter. But I don't believe anything of the sort will happen. Roosevelt will have to do something of course, and probably something pretty drastic. That's the only way he can stave off a complete breakdown. But don't forget that he's an aristocrat, one of the gentry, a sort of American squire. And remember that he's been in public life for years without any signs of being revolutionary. I think he'll try to save our way of life as it is, patch up the weakest places, fix some of the most glaring evils—without overturning our business system or economic organization. And I think he has his plans made, cabinet picked and primed, ready to go. I expect him to spring a lot of things on the country this spring but I certainly don't expect the revolution. Not from him."

"And how much can he get away with?"

"I don't know, Peter. At first there will be an overpowering relief that at last somebody is doing something. We'll name streets and buildings and babies after Franklin Roosevelt and everyone will make a run to get on the bandwagon. But that mood won't last."

John looked at McFarlane, whose eyes once again had grown cynical, and laughed. "That mood never lasts. Haven't I more than once saved a man's life and had him fairly worshiping me and doing whatever I told him? But let him get on his feet again and he soon forgets how grateful he was, throws away his diet list, stops his medicine, and begins to wonder if I didn't overcharge him. I know people, Peter. I've seen a lot of them get well—almost as many as I've watched die."

The reporter made a grimace.

"Here I've been trying to make myself think something big would happen on the fourth of March and you come along and puncture the little balloon of my hopes. Of course I don't know just what I'd like Roosevelt to do. That's where my Communist friends have the advantage: they know what they want. The Revolution."

"But that's just another word that means something different to everyone who uses it. Some of the radicals think it means singing the Internationale and marching in the streets and taking over the banks and railroads. Some of them think it means a dictatorship of engineers and technical experts. To some people revolution means shooting folks they don't like or who don't agree with them or get in their way. If the government were to guarantee bank deposits my friend Wharton would probably think the revolution had begun, and if we were to insist that brokers tell the truth about the stocks and bonds they try to sell us they would scream their heads off that Americanism was being destroyed."

"I suppose you're right, J.F. All that ails me is that I'm sick of squatting in the dirt doing nothing. I crave action. Even if things were no better it would be a relief to have them different."

"Well, Seaforth might give you some excitement in the spring. The unemployed say they're going to elect a mayor in spite of the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary and Kiwanis and all the kit and boiling of respectable citizens."

"I don't know about the U.C.L. I'm afraid it's going to split before then. And if it does, that is the end of it politically. Of course the unemployed can always demonstrate and help turn the heat on the legislature if it balks at state relief on a large scale. And perhaps, if Roosevelt succeeds in breaking up the log-jam in industry, labor will come into the picture more than it has before."

Finlay bent his head and began to clean out his pipe.

"What would you think of the labor unions as a nucleus for a co-operative medical set-up, Peter?"

"Where?"

"Oh, . . . here, or in Newland."

"And what sort of a set-up?"

"Well, say a clinic or a hospital with a salaried staff, offering medical care on an insurance basis to groups of employed people."

McFarlane drew back his feet and sat up, green eyes brighten-

ing. "I knew it all the time," he cried. "This is what you've had up your sleeve."

John smiled at the younger man. "I've been doing a lot of thinking since I came home," he admitted. "I'd like to work out something here along the line of voluntary health insurance."

"Well, everybody in Queen County knows you. You've got a lot of friends here on the Sound. No newcomer would have that advantage."

"There's something else too, Peter. I did contract work for years in the mills around Newland and the men know I gave them a square deal then. I should be able to get off on the right foot, it seems to me."

"What about a hospital, J.F.?"

"I'm still on the Seacliff staff. I could take my work there to start with. And by next fall I can have Sun Mount rebuilt and ready to go."

Peter surveyed Finlay with a calculating squint. "You old fox," he said. "Pretending all this time you didn't know what you were going to do. I call that strategy."

"Then you're wrong. For a long time I wasn't sure whether to risk it or not. I'm not a young fellow, you know, and an undertaking of this sort will meet plenty of opposition."

"But now you've decided definitely?"

"Yes." John's voice fell, his face grew serious, the eyes he turned on McFarlane were shadowed by fantasy. "It's the thing I've dreamed of, Peter. Before I sold out in 1929 I'd been wondering what I could do with myself. I had enough to live on the rest of my life. I didn't want to make any more money but I didn't want to quit work. So I decided to go abroad and see what was going on over there. And besides I needed a breathing spell, so I could get hold of myself. A man doesn't live the years after fifty the same way he lives those before. You'll find that out for yourself one day."

"And I came home determined to do what I could in my own profession to make things better for ordinary people. Now I've worked out my plan, Peter. I'm set and all ready to go. I've had my dream and seen my vision, and I'm going to try to translate them into everyday reality out in Newland. Perhaps I won't succeed but nobody can keep me from trying."

The reporter stared in silence at the older man: he had never

heard Finlay speak so feelingly or seen him look so moved. Then he reached out an impulsive hand.

"I'm with you, J.F. And so will be a lot of other folks as soon as they understand what you're up to. Of course you'll succeed. It may be tough going at first, but I'll bet on you to win in the end."

Slowly the glow died out of Finlay's dark gray eyes. Slowly he came back to the present. He had had it in mind to tell Peter more of what he had dreamed and hoped for this venture of his, but the habit of a lifetime prevented. He had had to depend on himself too long; it was not easy to talk about this project which all too often seemed visionary even to him.

"Whether I win or lose," he said slowly, "depends on how many people realize what I'm trying to do and how well they stand by me. It's a gamble—no use denying that."

"Listen, J.F. I know the labor crowd around here pretty well. I've got a certain amount of influence with them. I can help you, I'm sure. Now, let me think. This is all new to me of course. I wonder . . . I've got it, J.F. I know the fellow to approach. Bruce Hewitt. He's business agent for the Auto Mechanics' Union. He's shrewd and he's honest and he's been here long enough to pull weight at the Central Labor Council. How about me sounding him out and bringing him to see you if he's interested?"

"Sounds good to me, Peter. When can you get hold of him?"

"Tomorrow or the next day." McFarlane rubbed both hands over his bald young head. "I'll let you know. Say, you wouldn't let any other guy in on this, would you?"

"If you mean any other reporter, the answer is No. There isn't any story in this thing—not yet there isn't. And I dislike the *Advertiser*. The fact that you work for it is all I have against you. The less said about me and my plan in the papers the better I'll like it, Peter."

"But this is news, J.F. Local and red-hot. Doctor has faith in Puget Sound country. Builds hospital and starts new clinic. That's the angle to play up."

"Don't try to kid me, Peter. I know about newspapers. There'll be a fight about this proposition of mine—lots of opposition from the medical society. And there will be pressure brought on old man Elder. He holds the purse strings of the *Advertiser*."

"Well, if the docs turn the heat on Elder it won't be his

fault," exclaimed McFarlane hotly. "That would be some more of your crazy professional ethics."

John held up both hands, shoulder-high. "Let's not discuss ethics again," he pleaded. "I can't make you understand."

"Nobody can understand medical ethics, J.F. That's the trouble. Look at the stink that 'mercy killing' stirred up last week. It's humane to put a dog with a fatal disease out of its misery, but it's unprofessional to do as much for a helpless cripple with no means of support. Now I ask you is there a shred of sense to that?"

"As I've told you before, the cases aren't comparable. No individual should have the power of life or death over another human being. And, whether you believe it or not, our code was originally designed to protect the patient from the doctor as much as the doctor from the patient."

"Don't tell me that again. It can't be true. What possible argument is there for preserving that poor deformed brat I was talking about?"

"None. I see no more intelligence in that than I see in your paper raising a hullabaloo about the matter. What business was it of yours?"

"Why, it was news, J.F. For Christ's sake, don't you . . ."

"I know a lot of things that are news too, by that standard," said John. "Not too long ago I got a positive Wassermann on a prominent businessman here in Seaforth. And I could tell you other things about the great and the near-great in this part of the state that would make headlines in every paper on the Coast. But I won't. And why? Because it wouldn't be decent. Because all physicians promise to keep to themselves what they know about their patients. If, by and large, they didn't keep that promise no one would dare go to a doctor. But, in your code, all these things are news."

McFarlane pulled out a fresh cigarette and lit it from the butt of his old one.

"You don't understand newspaper policies very well, J.F."

"On the contrary I understand them only too well—from experience," retorted Finlay. "It's headlines for the story that blackens a man's character but the retraction is sandwiched into one of the back pages among the ads. You don't like our code, Peter, because it forbids the doctor to kill a patient he considers hopelessly ill. I

don't like your code because it permits everything except outright murder in the sacred name of the news."

McFarlane smiled appeasingly. "Oh, come off, J.F. You sound like a reformer."

"I can't help it. Medicine, thank God, isn't a business and it can't be run like a business. The man who makes a living in it and nothing else isn't a good doctor. Profit isn't the sole motive of my profession, it can't be. And that's just one of the reasons it's so infernally hard to practice medicine in a world whose laws and customs are made by businessmen for their own benefit. And don't tell me I don't know what I'm talking about. I haven't been on my job for twenty-nine years for nothing."

Peter studied the older man with skeptical green eyes. "You're nuts, J.F. But if it's any comfort to you I'll admit that I'm sure you mean all you say. But so do the folks in the asylum, for that matter."

Finlay opened his mouth and shut it again. There was no use saying anything more, he told himself. The two of them were too far apart in their ways of thinking to clear up their differences of opinion on this subject. But in spite of this rational attitude John was exasperated and there was unmistakable coolness in the dark gray eyes with which he contemplated McFarlane.

"Forgive me, J.F. I couldn't help taking that jab at you, but it was hitting below the belt and I apologize." McFarlane grinned broadly. "Let's forget it. But you get so earnest when you talk about ethics that I can't remember what a good egg you are the rest of the time." A certain strange hesitation crept into the gay young voice. "And now, just because you are a good egg and I like you, I've got to tell you something I'd rather keep to myself."

"What is it?" demanded John coldly.

"Well . . . it concerns your protégé, Dennis Dryden."

"Dennis!" The word was both exclamation and question.

"Yes. I found him making an ass of himself last night."

"And what, precisely, do you mean by that?" There was no longer any mistaking the anger in Finlay's darkening eyes.

"Well, you know I go around town looking for local color—I have to, in my job—and while I was in a joint on lower First Avenue last night Dryden came in. He wasn't alone, J.F. He had a girl with him who had no business down there."

"Who was she?" the query snapped out.

"She said her name was Priscilla Graham. It seems that Dryden had been drinking in the laboratory during the afternoon and, when he left, she persuaded him to take her along. I guess she intended to keep an eye on him and see that he didn't go too far, but she hadn't succeeded very well. Anyhow he was as drunk as a hoot owl when I saw them, and pretty unruly. But I managed to get him under control before he got into any real trouble. Maybe I'm speaking out of turn to mention it, but I thought you ought to know."

"Yes. I'm glad you told me." John's face was a compound of dismay and apprehension. "Did he get hurt? He's got a bum elbow, you know."

In spite of Finlay's concern he noticed the gleam that flickered briefly in Peter's green eyes.

"Not to amount to anything. Just a shiner. A small one, at that."

"Confound the fellow!" exclaimed John. "Why does he act like this?"

"From something he said I judge he's in love and the gal walked out on him. But what got me was how any man would pass up the girl who was with him last night. I took pains to get her name and address myself. Priscilla Graham. I liked the sound of the words and I liked her looks even better. I could go for her if I got a little encouragement."

Finlay made a gesture of disapproval. "I knew Dennis was drinking off and on, but I had no idea he was going this far."

"Well, J.F., he's getting into company too fast for him. He doesn't know his way around well enough to be horning in on that gang at Maxie's. That's no place for an amateur." McFarlane was speaking seriously now, with no trace of flippancy. "One of these nights he'll put his foot into something nasty down there. So I thought I'd better warn you."

"Thanks," said John getting slowly to his feet. Suddenly he looked older and more tired than Peter had ever seen him. "I suppose I should see him tonight, so I'd better be going along. Thanks for the meal."

"Look here, J.F. I'm sorry I blew off about things. I didn't mean to be disagreeable."

"No, of course not. I know that. It's all right. Only I'm afraid Dennis will get into trouble. I hope he had the decency to thank you for helping him last night."

With a quick impudent grin McFarlane's face resumed its usual mixture of cynicism and sophistication. "Well, no, J.F. I can't say that he did. But I wouldn't hold that against him. There's just one thing I can't understand about the fellow. Why would he pass up a girl like Priscilla Graham to go out and get his heart broken by some other wench?"

"I've asked myself that same question a hundred times," answered John. "And I don't know the answer."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE instant John opened the laboratory door he knew what had happened. Priscilla was drooping over her microscope with a sort of forlorn hopelessness and her assistant technician was handling her culture tubes with unnatural caution. At the sound of the latch Priscilla raised her head and John saw that her eyes were red.

"He knows," said the girl softly.

Finlay could barely hear the words but he felt a wave of goose flesh creep down his back. Mechanically his eyes turned toward the window and the glimpse of trees and grass and open space it afforded. The door into Dryden's office was closed, there was an ominous stillness in the room; the assistant went on with her work in silence and Priscilla fiddled aimlessly with the adjustment on her microscope. Without D.D.'s bantering presence the laboratory was an unpleasant place.

John took a step backward but checked himself. "How did it happen?" he asked, wetting his lips.

"I was here late last night," replied Priscilla lifelessly. "And so I didn't get in quite as early as usual this morning. Dr. Dryden went to look through the daybook for some information about another patient and found *her* name there."

"I see." After a moment Finlay forced himself to go on. "Don't blame yourself, my dear. This was bound to happen some day. I've always known that. It isn't your fault. It's just one of those things. I . . . I guess I'll go in and see what he's doing."

Dennis was sprawled over his desk, his arms stretched out in front of him palms down, as though he were clutching the slippery surface of the polished wood. Just beyond his fingertips John could see a torn crumpled bit of paper. Dryden's thick hands—

the hands of a self-reliant practical person—were spread flat as though the spatulate fingers were trying to lay hold of the smooth surface beneath them. His corn-colored hair was a disheveled shock, his shoulders were very still except for a long-drawn breath at intervals. Between breaths he seemed as rigid as a corpse.

John felt the sweat on his forehead. He closed the door softly. As he did so Dennis looked up. He said nothing but in his eyes shone a blue accusing flame.

"D.D.," began Finlay in a voice so hoarse that he paused an instant in surprise. "D.D.," he repeated. From where he stood he could see the freckles on the bridge of Dryden's nose; they stood out in a tawny patchwork against the pallor of the skin.

"You've known all the time," said Dennis, his voice grating with his effort to control it. "You've known all the time, and you didn't tell me."

John drew himself up to his full lanky height. His eyes were very dark, his cheeks gray. His mouth was a little open so that his white teeth showed through.

"I didn't know until November—the night you had your accident. And then she asked me not to tell you. So I did as she wanted."

Dryden rocked back as though he had taken a blow in the face.

"She asked you not to," he said in a monotone. "Asked you not to." He swung forward again. "Why?" he demanded. "Why?"

"She thought it would make you unhappy. That's why she went away, too. But I don't know where she went or where she is now." John mopped his forehead with his handkerchief. "After all," he added slowly, "she's a grown woman and it's her life—what's left of it."

A shudder crossed the young man's shoulders and he buried his head in his outflung arms again. Impulsively Finlay bent down and put a hand on his back.

"Forgive me, D.D. I didn't mean to hurt you. But I couldn't refuse her the only thing she ever asked of me." There was a space of silence before he went on. "I know what you're going through. I lost my wife—and our baby—when I was very young. There's nothing I can say now except that I'm standing by and that I have faith in you. You'll go on, D.D. We all go on—to the end of our road. Even though we must go alone. We think we can't do it, but somehow we find the strength—I don't know where or how. But it came to me, and it will come to you."

The bowed head on the desk did not move and as quietly as he had entered John slipped out of the room, closing the door noiselessly behind him.

"He'll be all right, Priscilla. But don't let anyone go in there—especially not Schuyler. I'll come back again later."

The girl smiled somberly. "Thank you, Dr. Finlay. I'll keep everyone out. Don't worry about that."

Outside, in the corridor, John very nearly ran into the bustling little man who had taken Arthur McBride's place and who always managed to convey the impression that he was desperately anxious to make good on his job and avoid trouble of any sort.

"Oh, how do you do, Dr. Finlay," he exclaimed now. "Beautiful day for this time of year, isn't it? I must say I find it quite a relief from the rain we've been having for so long."

"Huh? What? I'm in a hurry. You'll have to excuse me."

Hastening half-blindly on his way John bumped into George Schuyler in the lobby. "Sorry," he mumbled and started on again.

The superintendent looked at him curiously. "Just a moment," he said curtly. "I didn't know you were in the house. Come into my office. I want to see you."

John looked down into the fat pompous face and summoned his self-control.

"What's on your mind, George?"

"You'll find out. Come along."

As they walked side by side, Finlay scrutinized Schuyler. There must be something in the wind or he would not have spoken so rudely. When they entered the superintendent's office John was not surprised to find there Herbert Baldwin and the president of the board of trustees.

"How do you do, Mr. Matthews," said Finlay, and nodded to Baldwin who returned the greeting frigidly.

Schuyler sat down in the large armchair back of the desk and glanced around with an air of triumph.

"I met Dr. Finlay in the hall, Mr. Matthews," he explained to the trustee. "And since it was at his instance that we first employed Dryden I asked him to come in."

At the mention of Dennis John stiffened. So that was it—an official gathering with Schuyler representing the hospital, Matthews the trustees, and Baldwin the staff—and for the purpose of discussing D.D. The gray eyes hardened, the wide mouth under the small gray mustache straightened stubbornly. Finlay

looked from one to another of his companions: Baldwin was coldly aloof, Matthews impassive as became a broker, but Schuyler was patently well pleased with himself.

Baldwin glanced meaningly at his watch and the superintendent went into action.

"We've been talking about Dryden," he said. "There have been many complaints from the doctors about the laboratory since his accident, and of late his conduct has not been what we expect of our employees here at Seacliff. Perhaps you have some explanation for this." There was a perceptible sneer on Schuyler's face as he looked at Finlay.

"I should think that Dr. Baldwin might have suggested an explanation, George. He helped Walter Elliston operate on Dennis after his accident. And surely both of you know that he was later called away by the serious illness of his mother."

Matthews glanced at John, mild surprise on his habitually impassive face.

"I hadn't heard of illness in his family," said he.

Baldwin frowned portentously, but before he could reply John went on.

"Probably not, Mr. Matthews. You can't be expected to keep in touch with everything that goes on in the hospital. But the fact remains that at a time when he was still far from recovery after his operation, Dennis was put under emotional strain by his mother's illness. Not only that—he returned to Seacliff at the first possible moment and insisted, against my advice, on going to work at once."

Matthews looked from Baldwin to Schuyler questioningly. Apparently he was mulling these statements over in his mind. Then he said quickly, "Dr. Finlay, may I ask you something about this accident?"

"Certainly, Mr. Matthews."

"Is it true that Dryden was drunk at the time?"

John turned pale. He looked hard at Schuyler but that worthy was much occupied at the moment with some papers on his desk. With an effort Finlay smothered his wrath.

"He was not drunk, Mr. Matthews."

"Are you sure?"

"I am. I was called as soon as Dennis reached the hospital and I found him perfectly sober. Dr. Elliston and Dr. McBride, the

former Xray man here, both saw him at the same time and they can confirm what I have just told you."

"But he has been drinking recently," insisted the trustee.

"That is not what you asked me. I repeat that Dennis Dryden was stone sober when he met with that accident last fall."

"Perhaps you can also explain his recent plunge into the night life of Seaforth." All the petty malice of which he was capable was compressed into this spiteful remark of Schuyler's.

"I have just told you that immediately after his trip east this winter to see his mother during her illness Dryden resumed work in the laboratory against my advice. He was not physically fit to do so, but he insisted that it was his obligation. I assume that you all understand the effects of illness and emotional stress and overwork."

John confronted George Schuyler defiantly. The pale fat face turned pastier than before. After an interval of tense silence Baldwin's rumbling bass voice broke the stillness.

"I don't like Dryden, Schuyler, but I think it would be a mistake to discharge him now. He is the best laboratory man we've had in Seacliff—or in Seaforth, for that matter—in the last fifteen years. Perhaps he has been having an affair, as you intimated a few minutes ago, and perhaps he drinks more than he should. But if he does he differs very little in that respect from most of the hospital staff."

John watched Baldwin incredulously: of all men he was certainly the least predictable.

"I know that Dryden's injury was serious, Mr. Matthews. As Finlay just told you, I helped Dr. Elliston operate on him. He must still suffer more or less with his arm. Under these circumstances I insist that it would be unwise to discharge him."

John saw at once that Matthews was as much impressed by what Baldwin said as Schuyler was annoyed.

"I must say I expected more backing from you than I am getting," said the superintendent pettishly. "I don't see how I can be expected to maintain discipline in the hospital without the support of the staff and the trustees."

"I don't interfere with what you choose to call 'discipline' except when it threatens to disrupt the institution," replied Baldwin coldly. "But it is asinine to fire a man because you don't like him personally when you have no one fit to take his place. You made one mistake of that sort this winter when you let out McBride."

The fool you've got down in the Xray department now is worthless."

"But, Dr. Baldwin . . ."

The surgeon ignored the interruption. "I may have been vexed by McBride's conceit and effrontery, but I could rely on his conclusions, while this idiot who took his place is so anxious to curry favor with you by economizing that he only half-examines his patients. It was a mistake to discharge McBride. It would be a worse blunder to fire Dryden now."

Mr. Matthews turned to Baldwin. "What would you suggest, may I ask?"

"If I were running Seacliff," replied the surgeon solemnly, "I would write to some of the graduate schools—say, Mayo's and Pennsylvania and Johns Hopkins—and try to locate a man who's doing advanced work in pathology and who would be capable of taking over the laboratory here. There are plenty of young fellows finishing up their courses and pretty well strapped, who could do our work as well as Dryden and for much less than we pay him. Believe me, a job with a steady salary looks good to lots of highly trained men today. And economy is a topic of which Schuyler here is constantly prating."

When the group had finally broken up and the superintendent had been left alone in his discomfiture, John made a tentative effort to thank Baldwin for his unexpected defense of Dennis but met a rebuff more emphatic than he had anticipated.

"Don't thank me, Finlay. I don't like Dryden and I'd be glad to get rid of him, but I don't want an imbecile in the laboratory to match the one Schuyler had put into the Xray department."

"Nevertheless I am grateful that you're decent enough to keep George from throwing Dennis out with practically no notice."

But the surgeon's face did not soften. He stood in the door of the doctors' room putting on his raincoat and looking at John with unconcealed malevolence.

"Don't try to butter me up, Finlay. It won't do any good. But you might tell me why you inform my patients that I am incompetent."

John stared in amazement. "I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about, Baldwin."

"Don't play the innocent." The tall surgeon smiled superciliously. "I am referring to your former patients—the Maitlands."

Mr. Maitland repeated to me what you said to him about his wife."

"Now, Baldwin, suppose we get this thing straight. It's not that I give a damn what your opinion of me is, but I think it's better to have the record straight."

John was standing with his hat on one side of his head and his hands deep in his trousers pockets, holding back the skirts of his overcoat. He looked at Baldwin, his dark gray eyes level and unafraid.

"I've opened a sort of makeshift office out in Newland and Jim Maitland came in some time back to talk to me about his wife. I advised him to bring her back to you, in spite of the fact that I know you would have operated on her last fall for a gall bladder I took out years ago, if I hadn't stopped you. And Jim would rather have taken her to you—he seems to admire you, for some reason—but he said he simply couldn't afford to. He's always been a bookkeeper and now it's months since he had a full-time job. Besides, so he told me, Mrs. Maitland prefers me. He thought that was curious. I remember he kept saying, 'You know how women are.'

"Since it didn't occur to me that you had a leasehold on the family, I examined the woman a week or two ago."

"And you had Nathan Garnell see her in consultation," interrupted Baldwin.

John grinned and sat back on the edge of a table.

"Well, well. I see you have a good intelligence service. Suppose I did. What of it? Garnell is one of the best nose-and-throat men around here."

"He's a Jew."

"And what of that?"

"You know as well as I do."

"Yes. And I don't give a damn! I do my own thinking and I intend to call Garnell in consultation whenever I like."

"There are ways to deal with men of your type, Finlay."

"Are there?" The query was contemptuous. "May I ask if you have set up your Gestapo already?"

"Unprofessional conduct . . ." began Baldwin.

"Unprofessional conduct, my eye! Let's get back to what I was telling you. As I said, I examined Ada Maitland carefully. Then I had Garnell go over her. We agreed that she has a brain tumor; we suspected that it was in the frontal lobe. In order to make

sure, we suggested that she go to a neurologist for further study. To avoid all possibility of her falling into the hands of a quack, we suggested that she see Fredericks. I hope you have nothing against him." Finlay paused meaningly.

"Certainly not. Fredericks is thoroughly competent," said Baldwin icily.

"Then what are you beefing about?" demanded John.

"You told Maitland that I was incompetent to examine or treat his wife. You told him about that . . . misunderstanding last fall."

"I did not. And if Jim Maitland told you I did he's a liar. I'll admit that I smiled when they explained to me the excuse you gave them for your sudden decision not to operate on Mrs. Maitland after taking her into Seacliff for that express purpose. But I didn't utter a syllable about you, I didn't mention your name except to suggest in the beginning that they go back to you."

"You certainly gave Maitland to understand that I am incompetent to handle a case of this sort," insisted Baldwin, clearly infuriated at John's failure to confess his sins.

"Oh, the devil! I told both the Maitlands that I wanted a specialist in nervous diseases to examine her and confirm my diagnosis before we even talked about treatment. I hope you don't consider yourself a neurologist, Baldwin. Because you aren't, you know. If the Maitlands should come back to me for any further advice I shall tell them straight out that no general surgeon is competent to do brain work. But so far I have said nothing of the kind to them, and very likely I'll never have a chance to. So why get all hot and flustered about something that hasn't been done?"

But Baldwin was not to be placated. His deep-set eyes narrowed malignantly as he watched the carelessly clad figure in shabby brown tweeds perching on the edge of the table.

"You've always done as you chose, Finlay. But you won't be a law unto yourself much longer. We've all been hearing things lately about you and your plans. They seem to be quite extensive, if I have not been misinformed. But let me warn you. The medical society will not be disposed to let you wander off into strange bypaths without forfeiting your membership. And once that is gone, many other disagreeable things could happen—many very disagreeable things."

Baldwin half turned to leave the room, then suddenly he faced about.

"And don't be too cocky about Dryden's reprieve. It's only a question of time until he'll be out of the laboratory."

John slid down off the table. His hat was still on one side of his head, his hands were still in his pockets. There was mockery in the smile on his lips.

"How you hate to see anyone else start anything or even think of anything before you do, Baldwin! I don't want to pick a fight with you. I'd rather not fight anybody, for that matter. But you can't scare me with your bellowing. You don't own me or the Maitlands or anyone else. You don't own the Queen County Medical Society, even though you may think you do. Run along and do your dirty work if you must, but remember that I'm ready for you. Let me play the lion too; I will roar that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, "Let him roar again; let him roar again." You can't expect to be in the footlights all the time, Baldwin."

CHAPTER TWELVE

DIDN'T I tell you?" Peter McFarlane flung his long thin body down on the red leather seat of a booth in Blanco's restaurant and looked at John Finlay with an air of complacent assurance. "I knew the Big Fellow wouldn't turn that proposition down."

More slowly Finlay lowered himself to his seat.

"Yes, Peter, you were right about it. He didn't turn it down. But I like him as little as ever, in spite of that."

"No more do I like him. But that has nothing to do with it. He is, for the time being, the labor boss of Seaforth and he can throw a monkey wrench into the machinery if he feels like it. So it's better to have him on our side. And maybe you think I'm not relieved!"

"Wouldn't you be still more relieved if you had seventy-five cents' worth of clam hash inside you?" John smiled into the triumphant green eyes of his companion.

"Oh, I don't know. It does me no good to eat. My ribs always stand out like the slats in a picket fence. I guess I've all gone to length and feet."

"What, no brains?"

The two men laughed and picked up the menus.

"I'll see Bruce tomorrow," said McFarlane presently. "He'll be glad too. I think he was as uneasy about the Big Fellow as we were."

"Will you tell me why decent men put up with this dictatorship, Peter? I looked at the Big Fellow, as you call him, and wondered. He looks like a second edition of Mussolini—the same paunch, the same way of sticking out his chin, the same insolent stare. Myself I wouldn't give him houseroom."

"Maybe not. But I notice you went with me to talk to him

and took pains not to rub him the wrong way while you were there."

Finlay made a wry face. "You said I had to if I meant to approach the unions on this co-operative medical idea. So I did. But I kept my tongue in my cheek all the time."

Peter laughed. "So did the Big Fellow. He doesn't trust you any more than you trust him. But he knows he has to do business with a lot of folks he neither trusts nor likes if he is going to get anywhere. And his system works, J.F. It wasn't so many years ago that your second Mussolini was hopping a laundry wagon, and today he's the unquestioned boss of all the laundries in town and of the dry cleaners, besides his own union. His word carries weight in the Labor Temple. So we take a page from his book and play ball with the guy. See?"

"Certainly." John was nettled. "I wasn't born blind. But I still don't understand why decent fellows allow men like him to get a stranglehold on them."

"If you'd read up on the history of the labor movement here in the west you'd understand quick enough. Idealists never got anywhere, never got anything done. And the rank and file won't stick together except in a crisis and sometimes not then. It's men like the Big Fellow who step in—'practical' men who aren't too particular about methods and don't let scruples and principles stand in the way of building up an organization. They do the dirty work. And quite naturally they want to dictate the policies of the groups they build out of nothing. In their place I'd feel the same way."

"I still dislike the Big Fellow and distrust his purposes."

"So what?" demanded McFarlane. "You want to start a co-operative medical group out in Newland. You want to rebuild Sun Mount. I want you to succeed. I want to see a real labor organization in the Sound country. The Big Fellow wants to hold the power he's got and get more. He's smart enough to see that it will be good business for him to cultivate the good will of the unions. So we all stand to gain something by standing together for the present. Why not do it then without bothering ourselves about the Big Fellow's manners or morals?"

"You're a sophist, Peter, if ever there was one."

"Now, now, J.F. Don't call me names. I might get sore."

John grinned and broke another of the hard rolls for which Blanco's was famous. He reflected that he was always wondering

how thick Peter's layer of cynicism really was. Now and then it cracked—as it had done when John first broached his intention of rebuilding Sun Mount—to reveal a flaming enthusiasm underneath, but very soon afterward it always closed over again to present an unbroken surface to the world. In his own way, thought Finlay, Peter was a remarkable man—a combination of youth and mature shrewdness, of zeal and worldly wisdom.

"You've come a long way in thirty-two years, haven't you?"

"All the way from diapers. And still going."

The last word still on his lips, McFarlane leaped up and ran toward the door. In a minute or two he reappeared dragging with him a slight man of medium height in a wrinkled dark overcoat.

"I just caught sight of this fellow going past on the street," he explained.

John held out his hand. "Glad to see you, Mr. Hewitt. Sit down and have something to eat with us."

The slight man hesitated.

"Oh, come on, Bruce. If need be I'll take oath that you didn't pay the check. None of the boys can object to you sponging a free meal off a member of the bourgeoisie."

Hewitt flushed and stammered something about being in a hurry.

"Don't mind Peter. He has no respect for anyone and he likes to show off. But he doesn't mean what he says. Sit down, man. We want to tell you about our interview with the . . . Big Fellow this afternoon."

Hewitt's hesitation instantly dissolved.

"How did you come out?" he asked eagerly. "No, I wouldn't care for anything to eat. I'm just on my way home, Peter."

"The Big Fellow gave us his blessing. Are you surprised?"

Hewitt shook his head. "No, I'm not surprised. He won't do anything for you, but he wants to be sure he can take a slice of credit if you make a go of this thing."

McFarlane grinned. "J.F. was a mite disappointed in him. I believe he was expecting a noble full-browed friend of the people."

"Really?" Hewitt gazed at John in wonderment. He was a rather frail-looking man in his late thirties; his sandy hair was already thinning on the top of his head and his deep-set eyes had no very striking color. On first inspection he seemed rather lack-

luster, but Finlay had soon noticed that whenever he was interested or deeply moved his pupils dilated and his eyes became very bright and dark. His clothes were worn but always very neat, and his blue shirt cuffs had been carefully trimmed. "Really?" he repeated.

"Well, Bruce, you must admit that the Big Fellow does look more like a well-to-do prize fighter gone to seed than an apostle of justice for the working man. But he gave us the green light anyhow. The question now is, What do we do next? That's where we need your advice."

Hewitt leaned back and studied a spot on the wall above McFarlane's head. He was not a man to say what he thought without consideration. And he was always matter-of-fact. John remembered the offhand way he had described his own rise in union circles. "I worked for the Downtown Ford Garage for seven years, and then some of the fellows decided they wanted me to be business agent. So I've been at that for the last three years." Characteristically he had omitted to explain that his predecessor had run off with the union funds. Equally offhand had been the way Hewitt made it clear why he and his wife lived in a houseboat on the lake. "It's cheap and convenient. And now the kid's older there isn't much danger of him falling overboard."

"Well, Peter," said Hewitt at last, "I tell you. I've been smelling the men out whenever I got a chance this last week or two. And I think they'll go for this thing. I'm not sure, you understand. But I think so."

"Now about the approach. That's very important. I believe I'd better bring the matter up sort of casually when the officers of our union meet, just to get their reaction. If they think it's O.K., then I'd like to have you both come to our next regular meeting and put it straight up to the men themselves. I suggest that Peter come too, Dr. Finlay, because we've all known him quite a while and I think it would be better that way."

"In other words, J.F., I'm to be the Trojan horse inside which you can be safely smuggled into labor circles."

Hewitt did not seem to notice Peter's interruption. "How does that strike you?" he asked John.

"As a very sensible plan. You arrange the meetings and we'll be there."

Hewitt smiled. "All right then. I'll get in touch with the boys

and let you hear from me as soon as I can. But I've got to run along now. My wife won't know what's become of me. She's been a bit nervous lately. Seems like some of the unemployed have it in for the unions; a couple of business agents 've been knocked out the last month. Goodnight, Dr. Finlay. So long, Peter."

John watched the slight figure through the door. "Doesn't look much like a revolutionist. I like him."

"So do I. None better. But he has one awful weak point, J.F. He has no sense of humor. He never laughs at my wisecracks; he just sits and looks blank."

"He's probably thinking. That's an unusual occupation but I suspect he does a good deal of it."

"Well, it annoys me anyhow. People can hate me if they like. I don't mind that much. But to be impervious gets me down. I can't get a rise out of Bruce Hewitt any more than I can out of Priscilla Graham."

"So she doesn't appreciate you either?"

"No, she does not. Emphatically not. She's good company, she's polite, she dances like a fallen angel, she talks well. But she won't ask me in after midnight and if she lets me in earlier she puts me out at twelve. She stops at one drink. She doesn't take to necking. I don't approve of the situation. You haven't by any chance been poisoning her mind against me, have you, J.F.?"

The amusement had faded out of John's dark gray eyes while McFarlane talked. He remembered too clearly Priscilla's tired face, her air of frustration on the day Dennis had found out the truth about Eleanor.

"Listen, Peter. Take it easy with Priscilla. It happens that I know she had an unhappy experience not too long ago. That's why she's cagey. But she's a fine person and I'm asking you to give her a break."

"Give *her* a break? Say, why not ask her to give *me* one? I need it."

It was well after midnight when John reached his hotel. He took the key and the mail the clerk handed him and turned toward the elevator with the remark that, now the drug firms had once more found out where he was, samples and sales promotion letters would fill a dozen pigeonholes a day. Not until he had undressed did he look through the stack of letters. At

the bottom he came upon a thick white envelope addressed in a thin graceful script that set his pulse thumping.

Here at last was word from Eleanor—word he had waited for since Christmas. But for all that he did not open the letter at once. Instead he sat down in the one easy chair his room afforded and tried to think.

This would immediately raise a new problem—whether to tell Dennis about the letter or not. It seemed singularly unpropitious at the moment when D.D. was just beginning to get back his balance from the staggering blow dealt him by his discovery of the girl's true condition. It was not that Finlay distrusted him but that the younger man had had almost more than he could take and needed time to get firmer hold on himself. He was making no more visits to waterfront dives and he was drinking less, he kept regular hours in the laboratory and got out his reports as promptly as ever. But there was still a far-away look in his eyes and when he thought no one was looking his face grew bitter.

Uneasily John fingered the envelope, trying to think his way through his perplexities. Then he caught himself up. "I'm an old fool, sitting here afraid to read a letter! She's alive or she couldn't write." Quickly he tore open the envelope lest his resolution dwindle.

Clearwater, Florida
February 10, 1933

DEAR JOHN FINLAY:

As you will know from this letter I am alive. Sometimes I am glad, sometimes I am not. Increasingly my moods parallel my physical condition.

Since you are, after all, my physician, I will first of all report that your treatment did me more good than any other I have had. So much so that I have continued it ever since leaving Seaforth. From what you told me I gathered that no amount of stimulation of the bone marrow can possibly overcome my anemia entirely, so I have continued the iron without benefit of blood counts. The figures are too depressing—always so far from normal.

I suppose Dennis was terribly hurt when he found me gone. But I could not stay and meet him for fear I would not be able to leave later on. Early last autumn when I first returned to Seaforth I had the idea that I could be near him without giving myself away. But by the time of our accident I knew I couldn't. And the weeks I spent

with Miss Rodney, when you and Dennis dropped in so often, taught me how little I could trust myself.

I was sure you and Miss Rodney would understand why I left, and I hoped you would both forgive me. I should hate to offend either of you.

You will remember that I told you in November, while I was in the hospital, that I would not hurt Dennis. But now I see that I have already hurt him and that I shall hurt him again when I die. I wonder whether I did wrong to run away. It would have been gladness to have been his wife, if only for a few weeks or a few months. But I put that possibility behind me when I ran away from him in December.

There is one thing I must try to make clear to you. I can leave my aunt and uncle nothing they need, so I have made a will giving everything to Dennis. How much it will amount to I do not know exactly—with security values shrinking as they are. But there should be enough, I am sure, for him to live on comfortably, and I am happy as I sit here writing to know that he will be secure, that he will not need to depend on men like George Schuyler forever.

Will you please try to make him realize how glad I was to feel that I could do something for him? Please persuade him to use the money for himself. He could do big things, I know, once he was freed from worry about making a living.

I am afraid this letter sounds stilted and self-conscious. I don't mean it to be so but I suppose I cannot expect to have the knack of expressing my feelings after a life like mine. Perhaps it will be enough to say again, "Thank you, Grace Rodney and John Finlay, for all your kindness to me." Forgive me if I have meddled too much with Dennis' life or yours, and believe me when I say that I shall never forget either of you as long as I am alive.

Faithfully yours,

ELEANOR MAINWARING

For a long while John sat holding the sheets of this letter in his fingers. Before him he seemed to see the girl's figure—slim, graceful, alluring. But it was not her beauty he saluted, but her gallantry. So march the few who are valiant unto death.

Something of this mood was still with him the next evening when he entered Grace Rodney's apartment.

"This letter is from Eleanor," he said. "She meant you to read it too. And I need your advice. How much of it should we pass on to Dennis, and when?"

Miss Rodney took the envelope. It seemed that her fingers touched the white paper caressingly. This, reflected John, was

still another surprising thing about the woman. First, there had been this apartment so comfortably and tastefully furnished; then there had been her attitude toward Dennis in his love affair; now this fresh evidence of her feeling for Eleanor. Strange, he thought, how she could have kept this side of herself covered up all the years he had known her. He recalled that he had been more than half afraid of her when he went away in 1929.

He stood on the hearth looking down into the glowing coals in the grate while Grace Rodney, behind him, read the letter. He heard her muffled voice say, "Excuse me," quick footsteps, and then the closing of a door.

He filled his pipe and sat down in the corner of the davenport nearest the fire. Mechanically he lighted the tobacco. He felt the warmth of the room seeping into him. Outside the south wind blew rain in bursts against the windowpanes. He had been wet through when he came in, his shoes were soaked and muddy. He stretched his feet toward the grate and felt his whole body relax.

How comfortable this room was! Women certainly had the knack of making themselves snug. His mind drifted back over the succession of rooms he had inhabited during the last twenty-odd years. They had been nice enough—well furnished after a fashion, dry and warm—but they had never been like this. There had always been about them something dingy—a stale odor of tobacco, a sort of masculine frowsiness. He had never had an open fire, he never sat down like this to steam and dry himself. He had been physically comfortable enough, he supposed, but he had never been at home since that far-off day when he had followed Nancy's coffin out of the little squat yellow cottage in Illinois.

He could remember the living room there—a longish room with dark floor and woodwork. Nancy and he had bought oak furniture, Mission style, to go in it. He stole a look about him. That other living room would seem queer now—queer and dark. But it too had had an open fire, and Nancy and he used to sit in front of it evenings when he was not called out and plan their future. He could see Nancy now—her head covered with clusters of golden curls ("cream puffs" he had called them), her blue eyes dancing with excitement. She had always said he would be famous and they would travel and see the world, look at great pictures and great buildings and listen to great music.

He made a little involuntary movement. He was not famous, but he had traveled. He had seen great pictures and magnificent cathedrals and palaces, he had heard great music and seen great plays. But he had done all these things alone. Nancy, who had been so full of life, so gay, so eager to live, had long since moldered into dust and dry bones. And he had always been lonely. His life had been full of people, he had worked with people every day. But he had been lonely—just how lonely he had never realized till now, when he seemed to see her again in the dancing firelight.

The gleam fell gently on her golden hair and on the bit of sewing in her hands. That would be the dress she had made for John—little John they had called him. The dress he was buried in, with his mother.

The light seemed suddenly to dim. John sat motionless, his pipe between his fingers, his eyes fixed on the grate. Nancy! Where was she? Did she know that he had never forgotten her, that he could still feel the touch of her lips and hands, still hear her little gurgling laugh of delight? A lump of coal fell apart, quick small flames sprang up flickering. And the dream faded as all his dreams had faded.

He heard soft noises in the little kitchen and then the odor of coffee reached his nostrils. In another moment Miss Rodney came in.

"Shan't we put the table in front of the fireplace?" she asked. "It's so much cozier there."

Once they were settled with the percolator going and a plate of sandwiches between them, he found himself covertly studying the face opposite him. It was quiet, self-contained. Did she ever have dreams, he wondered. How little he knew of the real Grace Rodney beneath her calm composure and her professional manner.

"Well," he began, "what do you think?"

"Why say anything to Dr. Dryden for the present? He's just getting back to something approaching normal. This . . . this business of the legacy would only upset him. He might dash off to try to find her. It seems to me it would be wiser to keep the letter and wait a little before mentioning it to him at all."

There was a little pause.

"I think you're right. And may I leave the letter with you?"

"Yes. I'll keep it. One day we'll need it, you know."

Yes, one day, he thought. The day we know she is gone.
Miss Rodney leaned forward and poked the fire. The flames sprang into fresh life. She put down her cup and opened the cigarette box at her elbow.

"What do you hear from Dr. McBride?" she asked casually.

John started. "McBride! Why do you ask?"

The woman smiled, her face softened. "Because I'd like to know how he is getting along and when you expect him back."

"And how do you know that I expect him back at all?"

"Well, it seems reasonable to me under the circumstances that he should come back."

John stared at her without answering.

"Do you imagine, Dr. Finlay, that I don't know you sent him east to study? Or that he is married?"

"But how . . ."

"As I have told you before, I have my ways of finding things out. Although I don't always explain what they are."

To his surprise John found his confusion tempered with pleasure.

"Why, McBride writes that he enjoys his work, thinks he is getting his money's worth."

"And is very happy, I suppose. I'm glad."

"I didn't realize you knew McBride."

"I don't know him well. But I'm interested nevertheless."

Finlay hesitated. "And I suppose you know that I'm going back into practice too?"

"Yes, I thought you were. And Sun Mount?"

"Mark Whitney is figuring on the contract now."

Miss Rodney looked at John with amused exultant dark eyes. "I'm glad. But not surprised."

"No, I suppose not. You seem to know everything I do without me telling you."

"You must remember that I worked with you for thirteen years. I could hardly help learning many things about you."

"So I see. Then undoubtedly you know that McBride is coming back to Newland next fall to go in with me."

"I had hoped so."

"And next month I've got a young chap coming in. William Lawrence, from Pennsylvania. Mac found him for me."

Miss Rodney laughed. "I didn't know that, or even suspect it."

In spite of himself John laughed too. "Well, it's nice to know I managed to keep that one thing to myself."

"And Dr. Dryden?"

"For the present D.D. will stay where he is. That is, as long as he can hold the job. But he's going to do lab work for me evenings and Sundays when I need it."

"And will you be able to take your patients to Seacliff until Sun Mount is finished?"

"I think so," Finlay's eyes darkened. "If Schuyler's occupancy falls much lower he'll take in patients for chiropractors and faith healers. He's so far in the red now that he can't see a dollar without having heart failure."

"Well, as a matter of fact, Dr. Finlay, wouldn't it be more sensible to use the hospitals already in existence than to build more new ones? There is Seacliff not half full and the County running over." Grace Rodney's voice was once more clipped and definite.

"Sun Mount, I can promise you, won't stand half empty."

"I hope you can keep that promise."

"I can," answered the man. But as he spoke an unconfessed fear was nibbling at his confidence.

How did he know? What did anyone know of the future in February 1933, with bank holidays spreading from one state to another, with a Hooverville of oil tins and scrap lumber springing up on the waterfront and thousands of the unemployed sitting and sleeping in the County-City building in protest over their inadequate food allowances? He remembered Charles Wharton's gray face and worried eyes. He remembered the long line of people he had seen standing at the windows of the Saving and Loan. He remembered what Peter had said only yesterday: "What are we going to use for money when the rest of the banks fold up?"

But it would not do to admit these questionings of the spirit. The country was still here; all its natural resources and factories and all its people were still here; nothing had been destroyed. There was food enough for everyone, more than enough clothes. It was only the matter of distributing these things where they were needed most. One must not lose faith in the country.

And then John remembered Mark Whitney. He had met the contractor on the street and asked him up to the hotel room. Whitney, formerly so fat and cheerful, had been morose and his

clothes hung loosely over his diminished paunch. John had given him a cigar and unrolled on the bed the drawings of the new Sun Mount.

"How long will it take you to work out an estimate on these plans, Mark?"

At first it had seemed that Whitney did not understand. He sat staring vacantly at the sheets of paper. Then his eyes clouded over and he scowled at Finlay.

"What d' you mean—estimate? Who's going to build anything?"

"I am, Mark. A new hospital. Another Sun Mount. Right where the old one stood. And I'd rather have you on the job than any other contractor on the Sound."

It was still a long while before Whitney comprehended and when at last he did understand his eyes had suddenly filled with tears and he had run blindly out of the room. Because John did not like to see men cry, he had done his other business with the contractor by phone.

But it would do no good to tell all this to Miss Rodney. There was something else he must ask her. He cleared his throat and leaned toward her.

"Will you come back and take charge of the nursing and run things generally just as you used to do?"

"May I ask what you think I've been hanging around Newland all winter for? Do you suppose I've enjoyed living on my savings all this time? Did you think for a moment that I had any idea of actually going back into private duty nursing—carrying bedpans and giving alcohol rubs? And did you imagine that you could run a hospital without me? Of course I'll take charge. I don't want the new Sun Mount to be a failure."

Reassured, John sank back into his corner of the davenport. This was the Grace Rodney he had known so long—not the new, bewildering, strange Grace Rodney of whom he had had such disquieting glimpses the last few months. Even now, somehow, he felt safer.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

JOHN FINLAY pushed back his plate and grinned at the waitress.

"What would a man do for breakfast if there were no eggs?" he asked. "And isn't it nice that they are tucked away inside their shells, uncontaminated by human fingers? Even your pretty fingers, my dear."

The girl looked at him with slightly puzzled eyes. He was always saying queer things like this. But he always left a nickel and a dime under his plate. He's welcome to talk screwy, she thought, putting the coins in her pocket. Not many customers left tips any more, especially at the counter. I'd like to have another screwball like him, she reflected as she stacked the dishes.

But John was neither as gay nor as unconcerned as she thought. The mills in Newland were running at less than twenty per cent of capacity. Seaforth had fifty thousand unemployed. And there were ominous headlines in the morning paper. Maryland had just declared a banking holiday. Car loadings were down to fifty-seven per cent of normal. In Detroit men who had been getting seventeen cents an hour were on strike. Chicago owed her school teachers sixteen million dollars back pay but she was talking about a Century of Progress Exposition and the R.F.C. had loaned Charlie Dawes' bank ninety million dollars. The Treasury had refunded eight millions in income taxes, part of it to those pathetic figures, the Mellons of Pittsburgh. John found himself wondering whether the unemployed would be received with any such generosity if they staged a march on the capital.

Thinking over these things while he ate he had decided that this was the moment to call on George Schuyler. "If I wait too

long, something may happen. Perhaps Roosevelt really will do something radical as soon as he is inaugurated. But right now things are bad and it looks as though they were getting worse. So George is apt to be in a reasonable frame of mind, damn his eyes!"

When he reached Seacliff John did not follow his usual custom of going first to the laboratory. Instead he lingered in the entrance, spying out the land. The waiting room, to his right, contained exactly three persons and one of them he was sure was a salesman. The business office and telephone switchboard were conspicuously quiet. Remembering the swarm of girls who had worked and chattered there in the booming twenties, John felt that now there was no one there. But at the back of the room he could see a small figure bent diligently over a desk. He smiled to himself: he could recall a day when Miss Brown's advent, on collection bent, had been dreaded by patients and their relatives alike. He hoped that the entries she was making this morning were each in red.

Moving on he looked down the main corridor of the first floor. Here and there a rubber-heeled nurse slipped from one room to another, but there was scarcely a sound. There was no chatter from the chart room. An orderly was mopping the floor in silence.

Next John glanced into the doctors' room. At first he thought it was deserted too. But a figure came from the alcove where the medical journals were kept.

"Oh, hello, Finlay. How's tricks this morning?"

"Not too bad, Roberts. Where's everybody?"

"Everybody! Who'd you expect to see here? When there are no patients how can there be any doctors? Besides, no one knows any new smut these days. Jesus, I wish we were back in '29! Don't you?"

"No, not specially." John looked at Roberts with open coldness. He was the sort of man who wore flashy clothes and drove a flashy car but did not pay his bills too promptly and who carried in his pockets trinkets like gallstones to be exhibited to the laity when opportunity arose. Finlay had never liked him. "Why should anyone want to go back to '29?" he added as an after-thought.

Robert stopped in the act of struggling into a belted camel's hair overcoat and stared.

"God, would you listen to that? Well, there's no accounting for some people's ideas."

"You're right. There isn't," said John glancing at the camel's hair coat so unsuited to winters of wind and rain. Then he went out.

On opposite sides of the corridor were two doors: one, closed, was austere marked "Superintendent"; the other, open, led to the record department.

"How do you do, Dr. Finlay?" called out the trimly uniformed, gray-haired woman behind the desk. "Come in, won't you? I've hardly seen you to talk with since you came home."

"Thank you, Mrs. Corbin, I'd like to, but I'm looking for Dr. Schuyler. Have you see him about?"

"He just went downstairs. He'll be back soon, I'm sure. Come in and wait for him."

"Thanks. I don't mind if I do." John dropped into a chair and threw his knees across the arm of it in his favorite posture. He looked around the walls at the filing cupboards and trim pigeon-holes. "You know, Mrs. Corbin, all the while I was gone I didn't see a record department better kept than yours."

The woman's cheeks flushed with pleasure. "That's very kind of you, but really . . ."

"Not kind, Mrs. Corbin. Merely true. I believe in giving the devil his due, and you've never had yours. But you've always had plenty of handicaps—not enough help, not enough money, no backing from the office, and a staff as ornery, I suppose, as any on earth. And in spite of it you've done a swell job. By the way, I'm not back on any charts, am I?"

Mrs. Corbin laughed. "No, Dr. Finlay. Your records were always up to date. Mrs. Maitland's for instance, last fall. I got her chart out for Dr. Baldwin. He seemed quite taken aback. . . . Oh, there's Dr. Schuyler now."

John sprang to his feet. "Hello, George. Have you a minute or two to spare? I've been waiting to see you."

Schuyler's fat face had the look, Finlay thought, of a cornered animal. It was at the same time terrified and malignant. His pale eyes shifted from John to the open door of the record room.

"Sure. Lots of time. Come on in. I'm glad to see you."

But the affectation of heartiness was dropped the moment the two men were alone.

"What do you want, Finlay?" There was sullenness in Schuyler's voice.

"Nothing. I just wanted to have a chat with you, George. Mind if I smoke?"

The superintendent waved a pudgy hand and exploded.

"Well, if you don't want anything you'll be the first one I've seen in a year who didn't! What do these fellows think I am? They expect me to run this hospital half-full with collections less than fifty per cent what they were in 1930, with all the efficiency of 1929. I'm supposed to serve meals as good as a downtown hotel and furnish nursing care and maintain a laboratory and an Xray department, and do it all on forty-four per cent of the 1930 income. There's a payroll to meet every month, and all the pupil nurses and general-duty nurses to be fed and all our supplies to be paid for. And they wait for me to dig up the cash to do it. Can you imagine the nerve?"

"Yes, George, I can. Easily. You've always given us to understand that you are a superman, so now we expect you to act like one."

"Hell's fire!" cried the outraged Schuyler. "Nobody can make money out of thin air."

"That's what people say, George." Finlay paused an instant, then went on. "Just what is your occupancy running? Less than fifty per cent?"

But Schuyler was not to be caught so simply. A crafty gleam came into his eyes behind their thickened lids. "I can't say off-hand—not precisely. But Miss Brown can give us the exact figures."

"Oh, no. Don't bother. It doesn't matter."

But to himself John was saying jubilantly. "He's less than half full, then. Less than half."

"By the way, George, have you heard any rumors about the Central Bank?"

To his satisfaction John saw Schuyler jump.

"The Central? Here? What do you mean?" There was a new note of terror in Schuyler's questions.

"Oh, nothing. I just wondered. A fellow hears so many things these days, with all these bank holidays. And I thought that, being a stockholder, you'd know if anything was really wrong. Personally I think that bank is as sound as a dollar—that is, as a dollar used to be."

With mounting satisfaction Finlay baited the man. He mentioned the banking holidays again, spoke of the possibility that the United States too might soon go off the gold standard, observed that the unemployed were becoming more and more truculent in their demands, surmised that there would be trouble if the U.C.L. carried out their plan to march on the state capital, admitted that he had been astonished to read that United States Steel reported an operating deficit in 1932 of ninety-one million dollars, and ended by remarking gloomily that no one could tell what the end would be.

By this time Schuyler was so depressed and bewildered that his customary flow of words completely failed him. "I don't know what to think," he moaned. "This thing has got me down."

For another minute or two Finlay sat in silence while his dose of dark prognostications took effect. Then he said casually, "I suppose you know I've opened an office in Newland."

"Yes. So I heard."

"I'm in that building on the corner below Pat Boyd's clinic. Had to have some remodeling done of course but that was only to be expected and I was lucky to find the space I needed. Next month I've got a man coming out from the east to go in with me. I'm not as young as I once was and I'd like to get rid of the night calls and part of the obstetrics."

Half-buried though they were in rolls of puffy skin, George Schuyler's eyes became brightly watchful.

"So you're going to work again. Didn't have enough salted down to carry you through, eh?"

"Never mind about that. There's plenty salted down. I never did play the market, George." This brought a wince from Schuyler. "But I get bored sitting around, and then people began coming in—old patients, you know, and their families. So I decided I might as well have an office and get back into harness. Of course collections aren't so good. But they might be a lot worse, at that."

At the word "collections" Schuyler licked his lips in a revealing gesture.

"Eventually I want to have a clinic of my own. I can't do industrial work in Newland without one. But it wouldn't need to be as large as Sun Mount was. I thought perhaps you and I might come to an understanding about my private cases. If we

could it might make a good deal of difference when I get around to building my own place again."

Schuyler's eyes glinted with anticipation.

"Well, you had a hell of a big practice in '29, John. There's no reason why you shouldn't be just as busy again, once things begin to pick up. Let's get down to business. I'll have Miss Brown bring in her cost sheets. We know, right down to the fraction of a cent, what every patient who comes into Seacliff costs us. And for a volume of work we could afford to make concessions, especially to old friends."

Sure that if he looked up Schuyler would see the triumph in his face John kept his eyes on the pages of the memorandum book he had taken from his pocket. "I thought perhaps we could work out some such arrangement, George."

For a moment there was a trace of uneasiness in Schuyler's manner but just then a mouse-brown little woman slipped into the room, her hands full of papers.

"All right, Miss Brown, let me have them. That's all. You needn't wait. . . . Now, come around here, John, where you can see. I want to show you how we've got this all figured out. I can tell you precisely what it costs us from the instant a patient enters the front door until he's discharged. Look."

Schuyler ruffled swiftly through the sheets covered with figures and fine handwriting, explaining as he went. John watched closely, asked a question now and again, made a comment or two.

"Miss Brown knows her cost accounting, I can see."

"None better," agreed Schuyler. "And she might still be doing double-entry bookkeeping if the Depression hadn't forced me to undertake this sort of thing. You see, here are the sheets for the different departments."

"Doesn't look as if the Xray under your new man amounts to much," observed Finlay.

Schuyler looked up sharply. "The volume of Xray work has fallen steadily since 1930, it was falling long before McBride left. It wouldn't make any difference if Roentgen himself had been in that department."

"Uh-huh. I see what you mean. But from what I've heard the men saying I got the impression that they didn't think much of your new man."

"No one really crabs except Baldwin, and he's never satisfied with anything. You know that. Now here's the laboratory. You

can see for yourself how badly it slumped while Dryden was sowing his wild oats this winter."

"Well, everyone goes off on a tangent once in a while, George. Remember that. Also I see it's come back a bit the last month."

"It remains to be seen whether the improvement will last," said Schuyler, grudgingly. He turned a few more pages. "Now, here's the kitchen and dining room." The words reflected his pride in these sections of the hospital.

"You should have been a restaurant man, George. You certainly know your foods." Swiftly John went on to commend the accounting; it would not do to arouse Schuyler's slumbering uneasiness to the point of actual suspicion.

Suddenly the superintendent leaned back in his chair and folded his hands together over his stomach.

"It seems to me that you picked up ideas about other things than health insurance while you were away," he said, peering at the immobile weather-beaten face now raised from the desk.

"Rather." Finlay laughed carelessly. "I think you'd be surprised at some of the notions I brought home with me, George."

"It's a good thing you're still on the staff here, John. It gets harder every year to get an appointment at Seacliff."

"So everyone tells me. Now suppose we see what we can work out, between us."

When John left Seacliff an hour later he did not go down to the laboratory on the way out as he had half-planned to do. He had pictured Dennis and himself laughing over the fast one he had put over on Schuyler, but now he did not feel like laughing. Dabbling in the mud, he reflected as he unlocked his car, made a man want to go and wash himself.

But by the time he had covered the twenty-five miles to Newland he was in a more cheerful frame of mind. There would be a breathing spell now, so far as Seacliff was concerned. Schuyler could be depended on not to allow a man to be ousted who was bringing in any volume of work, especially when that man could prove that he was getting a rebate. So much then was sheer gain. He could take his patients to Seacliff until Sun Mount was reopened, and between February and autumn he would have time to get properly organized.

"And the rebates can be kept track of and refunded to the patients when I finally break with George. I can even write on

the face of the checks exactly what they are for and then show the bastard the canceled checks. That would set him back on his heels. I'll bet Peter will appreciate this day's work."

It was well into the afternoon when Finlay came into Charles Wharton's office at the Newland First National Bank. With a little flourish he laid a thick sheaf of papers before the banker.

"Give these the once-over, will you, Charlie? And then tell me what you think."

When Wharton looked up five minutes later there was relief on his tired strained face.

"I don't know how you did it, John. I had no idea you could get so many contracts with business as it is. And Whitney has certainly made you a rock-bottom price on the building."

Finlay smiled broadly. "Well, Charlie, as long as the mills run at all they have to provide medical care for their men, and my professional record is enough better than Pat Boyd's that I can take work away from him without more than half trying."

"It looks as though you'd done just that. And you don't know how glad I am. I didn't believe you had much chance on the contract work around Newland. But you must realize that Boyd won't take this lying down."

"Oh, no. Of course he won't. And he's got plenty of backing too. But I'll stand up to him, Charlie. When he gets through he'll know he's been in a fight."

Wharton looked across his desk at Finlay's face—at the high cheek bones, the firm thin lips, the short straight nose, the jutting chin, the furrows running down toward the jaw, the steady dark gray eyes, the rumpled thick gray hair.

"From anyone else that would sound like boasting. But from you it's merely a declaration of war. And I wish you victory. You know that, John."

The banker sighed as he watched John Finlay gathering up his papers with deft quick fingers. Involuntarily he looked down at his own hands: they were thin and white and the skin was meshed in a myriad of fine wrinkles. They were the hands of an old man, he told himself; they had become so during the last year.

"It's good to see a man our age starting something," said Wharton slowly.

John looked up sharply. "I don't feel as old today as I did four years ago," he said. "But just the same I'm going to play safe and gather a group of young fellows around me as time goes on."

Then, if anything should happen to me, Sun Mount will still be all right."

"That's a good theory, John. But so far your young men haven't been much use to you, have they? What with Dryden laid up and McBride in Philadelphia for nine or ten months at your expense, I've wondered if you weren't being taken for a ride, as the saying is."

Finlay's weather-beaten face grew very serious. "Now, see here, Charlie, don't get notions into your head. D.D. had a hell of a jolt but he's back on his feet now. And in order to make an effective bid for industrial work I need almost more than anything else a bang-up Xray man. McBride is that man."

"So you call it an investment, to finance his postgraduate work—and his marriage too?"

John wriggled impatiently. "Of course it's an investment. He'll come back full of pep and a thousand times more efficient than he was while he was eating his heart out because he couldn't marry his girl."

"That's hardly a banker's idea of investment."

"No. And the trouble with you bankers is that you think too much about the money and not enough about people. In the long run you'd get further the other way around."

"But I'm thinking about you," insisted Wharton. "You've worked hard all your life and now you're throwing your money away—or at least spending it carelessly, it seems to me."

"But I'm not, Charlie. I thought this all out—every detail of it—long ago."

"All right, John. Have it your own way. But I think you ought to know that there is gossip about your young protégés. A story that Dryden is in love with some rich married woman and that he went east in December to meet her where they wouldn't be as likely to be caught as they would in Seaforth."

Finlay stared at Wharton with darkening eyes.

"And there's another rumor that your Dr. McBride is a drug addict who had to be sent away for treatment."

"This is all a God-damned lie!" exclaimed Finlay.

"Of course I don't believe tales of this sort, and no more do many other folks. But there are always people who do swallow these stories. That's the worst of gossip. Somebody always believes part of it, but you can never lay finger on the fellow who started it. Now here, just today, I heard a wild rumor about the Central

Bank in Seaforth. The Lord knows how it began but the stockholders got the wind up pretty thoroughly before it could be stopped."

John started guiltily. He could hear himself saying to Schuyler only a few hours ago, "Have you heard anything about the Central Bank, George?" And he had considered that sly and clever. Without answering he scrunched lower in his chair.

"I'm sure these stories about Dryden and McBride were started by someone who has it in for you, John. So I thought I ought to warn you."

"Thank you, Charlie." For once Finlay was meek. "I guess I've neglected my guard, but I promise you I'll keep an ear to the ground in the future. . . . And I'm glad there was nothing to that rumor about the Central Bank."

Without looking at his friend John slipped an elastic band around his sheaf of papers and tucked the packet away in an inside pocket. Not until Wharton's continued silence caught his attention did he turn and look up. Then he was startled to see how thin and tired the man was and how white his hair. Mechanically he lifted his own hand to encounter a comfortably thick thatch. He leaned down and put an impulsive hand on the banker's shoulder.

"I'm a heel, Charlie—talking all the time about myself and my troubles, and never asking how things are with you."

"You're not a heel, John. I'm glad you've got plans to talk about, when most people are simply sitting on the boiler waiting for it to blow up under them."

"I know. The papers try to play it down but everyone suspects things—probably worse things than are actually going on."

"They can't suspect much that isn't true, John. This state, it is true, hasn't had a bank holiday yet, but all our state banks are operating under restrictions on withdrawals and by the fourth of March I don't believe there will be a bank in the country carrying on business normally."

Finlay sat down again and stared across the desk in startled silence. Wharton's cheeks had dark hollows in them. His physician's instinct told John that the man was almost at the breaking point. Suppose Charlie too was in deep water! Suppose the First National had to close! Nearly a hundred other banks had closed in the first fortnight of the new year.

Hitherto too preoccupied with his own affairs to think much

about Wharton, John was conscience-stricken. He watched his friend uneasily. Then he glanced around the room. The fir paneling he had always thought so handsome suddenly seemed dark and gloomy. The windows were wet with the unending drizzle outside. With an effort he broke the silence.

"Then things look pretty bad to you."

"The worst I've ever known them, John. Last year, for the first time in our history, the national banks—the *national* banks, mind you—showed an operating loss of 490 million dollars. Nearly five per cent of their capital and surplus. Why, even in '93, they had an operating profit of four and a half per cent."

Incredulity overlay the bleakness of the man's face as though he could not believe his own words. Finlay flung one knee over the other restlessly; it seemed indecent not to sympathize with Charlie but he did not know what to say.

Presently Wharton began to speak again.

"There's a lot that might be done. But it won't be. Everyone is taking to the storm cellar. Businessmen imploring the politicians to do something. Bankers . . . Yes, look at the bankers. A year ago they were insisting that they had everything under control and that the country would soon be on its feet again if only they were allowed to carry on in their own way. And now they whimper that the only thing that can save us is to have a dictator in Washington."

Wharton paused and sat staring blankly out into the large banking room. "Look out there!" he commanded harshly.

Before each teller's window there was a line of human figures. Their shoulders sagged, their faces looked down. Everything about them, it seemed to John, bespoke dejection and bewilderment. There was neither determination nor rebellion in their manner. They were not noisy; he could hear only a faint hum of voices. But nevertheless there was menace in the air—a subtle menace that was to be noticed only after a period of observation. Suddenly John recalled Peter McFarlane's description of the farmers waiting for the foreclosure sales to begin.

"Those people out there," said Wharton. "I've been watching them for days. They're just ordinary working people—mechanics, clerks, office employees, mill hands, school teachers. They put their money in the bank because they thought saving was the road to security and independence, and now they've found out that they were wrong. They're taking their money out again—

some of them in driblets as they have to have it to live on, and others in a lump sum or in coin, so they can take it home and hoard it.

"What I wonder is when the idea will strike them to take things to pieces. Every time any one of them sees a withdrawal entry made in his pass book he feels the security he used to dream of slipping away from him, and some day one of those men out there will go berserk and the trouble will start."

"But Roosevelt, Charlie . . . Perhaps after he's inaugurated . . ."

A strange passion flamed up in Wharton's pallid face.

"I'm sick of the name Roosevelt! My God, why must we always go on our knees to politicians in time of crisis? Why can't we get together and make a sensible plan to end this depression? What can the politicians do that we can't? They haven't got any better sense and most of them have no principles at all.

"I don't know what's going to happen, John. I don't know what *can* happen. But if there isn't some change soon I shall go crazy sitting here, waiting. Waiting—for something, God knows what. There isn't anything for me to do. The boys in the cages in the other room are paying out the money as fast as they can, and there isn't any coming in. Sometimes I wonder if I'll ever have anything to do again."

"Oh, come now, Charlie. There will have to be banks, you know, and with all your experience you wouldn't be able to stay out of business if you wanted to."

Finlay hardly recognized his own voice made so unconvincingly cheerful. And Wharton seemed not to notice what he said at all.

"People keep talking about no opportunities for young men and college graduates. I know what those boys are up against. They can't live on their parents forever, they can't find jobs, they can't marry and set up homes of their own. But what about men of our age, John? In place of youth and energy we have only skill and experience to offer. There isn't enough work to go around. And we'll be pushed out.

"I suppose we ought not to complain. We had our chance when we were young and probably we didn't do as much with it as we should. But I hate to be put on the shelf, now that I've finally learned something about my job, to make way for an ignorant younger generation."

Finlay braced his elbows on the arms of his chair, locked his

fingers together, rested his chin on his hands, and gazed at the wall above Wharton's head. There as vividly as though it had been painted on the surface of the wood he could see what had taken place in this room on the spring day in 1929 when he had come to tell Charlie good-by. He remembered his own confident plans for a life of plenty. All that had been less than four years ago—but in that four years the world had changed, life itself had changed. Nothing was the same. Today the future seemed unrelieved darkness. Humanity's fair dream had been swept away and his hope for tranquillity had been destroyed.

Suddenly the papers he had just showed Wharton seemed absurd. How could he—a man of fifty whose fortune had dwindled sadly since 1929—embark on a venture which would tax the strength and courage of a man twenty years younger? He could never organize his group of doctors, rebuild Sun Mount and set up a medical insurance system without violent opposition from Arnold and Baldwin who disliked him personally and from the medical society most of whose members would see in his project only another threat to what was left them of their shrunken private incomes. It was only sensible to assume that Schuyler would close the doors of Seacliff to him once he began to sell health insurance to the public. And, necessary as it was, rebuilding Sun Mount would consume a dangerously large share of the reserve he still had. Would it be possible for a medical group to break even with business as it was?

Nor were these all the problems that plagued him. Was it fair, he asked himself over and over, to expect Walter Elliston to jeopardize the surgical practice so hardly achieved by throwing in his lot with the Sun Mount organization? Would Dennis really settle into harness again? Would McBride's new wife approve of her husband joining a group that was sure to be banned sooner or later by the organized profession? And how much harm would be done if and when Nathan Garnell came in?

Sometimes John felt as though he were in a maze. Wherever he turned he found obstacles and uncertainty. He sensed keenly the latent hostility of the medical society toward all new forms of medical practice. He was sure he was in for a fight far more violent than any he had gone through when he was younger. And in spite of his determination misgiving assailed him.

From far away he could hear Wharton saying, "I wouldn't say this to anyone else, John. But make sure you've got something

in Postal Savings. I'd put in the limit, if I were you. Don't ask me why. Just do as I tell you."

Abashed and disconcerted Finlay eventually made his way out of the bank into the gathering dusk of late afternoon. The long lines of people had gone, the tellers' cages were empty, cleaning women were dusting desks and counters silently. In the dim light John looked around him and shivered.

He had hardly reached the street when he bumped into Peter McFarlane. The reporter fell upon him gladly and bore him off to a hole-in-the-wall lunch room.

"I hate these milk shakes, J.F. But I'm afraid of Newland bootleg. . . . I suppose you've been busy today."

Peter's green eyes were full of enthusiasm. With the zeal of a recent convert he had flung himself into the organization of co-operative groups in Queen County and he was convinced that Finlay was to be the pioneer of co-operative medicine in the Northwest. He felt no qualms, had no presentiment of disaster to come; he would not admit the possibility of failure. For the present he had forgotten cynicism and become an ardent proselyte. He talked to union members and co-operators and technocrats and radicals by the dozen and brought many of them to see John. Delay of any sort made him impatient. And so he repeated, "I suppose you've been busy today, J.F."

John looked at him blankly. "Excuse me," he said. "My mind doesn't seem to stay put lately." Then he recounted his interview with Schuyler. "You see Baldwin and Arnold both do contract work at Seacliff, so George can hardly object to my doing the same. Besides he needs patients—and how! So for the time being I think we have friend George in the bag."

"I hope you're right, J.F. I don't trust that fellow."

"Nor I. But not because he pulls for Seacliff. That's his job. But he's just a natural born son of a bitch, if you get what I mean. I ought to know: I went to medical school with him. The only way to handle him is to keep one jump ahead of him."

McFarlane laughed. "Here's hoping you've got the necessary speed to do that." He fished out a cigarette and began to blow smoke rings. But there was a false note in his nonchalance which John caught at once.

"What's wrong with you?" he inquired.

"Oh, I don't know. Everything, I guess. I've had the jitters for two or three days. Maybe I've been trying to think. That's always

bad. But it kind of floored me to find that the mills around here are averaging less than twenty per cent of normal output. There simply isn't any lumber market left and lumber is what we have to sell."

"I know that even better than you do, young man. I've lived here longer. But that can't be what's given you this attack of *Weltschmerz*."

"Well, of course, I drink too much. And I lie awake at night and see things. There's this march of the unemployed that they've got scheduled for the first of March, to put pressure on the legislature and the governor. The Vigilantes are organizing and there's a new batch of deputy sheriffs being sworn in down at the state capital. The U.C.L. is going to run into trouble, J.F. There'll be broken arms and legs and heads before the thing is over, and lucky if there's nothing worse than that."

The reporter drummed long thin fingers on the table top.

"I can see it, J.F. A long column of old broken-down cars, full of men in overalls and zipper jackets and women and kids with their hair blowing, coming down the highway around those curves along the Nisqually River. And this mob of Vigilantes and deputies with clubs and blackjacks meeting them at one of the corners, strung out across the road. The sheriff will be there and a few state cops, and they'll have guns on them. Don't you see what can happen?"

"Certainly I can see what may happen. Death for a lot of people who don't understand very well what they are doing or why they are there. But, Peter, did you ever think that it might not be much worse to be shot or clubbed to death in a march of the unemployed than to die quietly and unseen of starvation?"

"I haven't died yet. I wouldn't know." McFarlane paused but there was a tentative quality in his voice that informed Finlay there was more to come. Suddenly the younger man looked up. "I just found out this morning that Herbert Baldwin is on the state board of medical examiners."

John went on lighting the tobacco in his pipe calmly. "You should ask me about things like that. Herbert has been on the state board for years. He fancies himself in the role of a guardian of the public interest."

"And what is the board going to do to your new man from Pennsylvania when he shows up next month?"

"I don't know, but I think they'll let him through. That's one

reason I made my peace with George today. You see, Peter, he's the secretary of the board. And I hope Lawrence can get his license before open hostilities begin."

"It strikes me you've got a damned poor chance to get anybody past those examinations."

"I thought about that a long time ago, Peter. D.D. and McBride both have licenses of course, and if I need to I can simply recruit all the rest of the staff from men who have already passed the board."

McFarlane crushed out the stub of his cigarette. "You're a cool egg, John Finlay."

"I need to be cool. And I need to think. I'm going to be up against a tough situation and I must use my head for all it's worth. This is a time for brains, not for emotions, Peter."

"I guess you're right. I'd be better off if I didn't let my emotions run away with me."

"You'd be better off if you drank less, you mean. Now, don't get sore. You've been asking for this. Any man as clever as you are has no business letting alcohol get the best of him. I like a drink as well as anybody, but I hate to see a man not his own boss. And I have an idea that Priscilla doesn't approve of drinking, either."

"She doesn't."

"Then why don't you quit?"

"I don't know. I'm always thinking I will. But something always happens and I don't. You see, when I've got a story to get out before a deadline, a nip stirs me up and sets me going. I get a lot of pictures in my mind and the words run right out into the typewriter. And when I have to go out and sit in on stodgy meetings of the upper classes a drink cheers me up and helps me keep from breaking down and saying what I think of them."

"How many drinks have you had today?"

McFarlane grinned. "It isn't legal to ask a fellow to incriminate himself, J.F."

Gravely Finlay studied the long narrow face so near him.

"I'm going to ask you as a personal favor to cut down your intake," he said. "I'm counting on you to help me get things organized. Whitney starts construction next week and he says he'll have Sun Mount ready by fall. We must be ready by that time too. I need help, Peter. Need it badly. You won't let me down, will you?"

The seagreen eyes sobered; McFarlane patted the top of his bald head with a thin nervous hand.

"You're taking advantage of me, J.F., because you know I'm soft-hearted. But you know I'll do all I can for you. And the drunker I am the faster I can talk. . . . I'll be glad when the hospital starts up. That will prove that you mean business and stop part of the screwy talk."

"Screwy talk about me?"

"Sure. There's a handsome tale going the rounds that you are selling stock to get a lot of money into your hands and then run off with it, without rebuilding Sun Mount at all."

Finlay's eyes narrowed and brightened. "Are there any more fairy stories about me and my plans?"

McFarlane fiddled uneasily with the empty glass in front of him. "The only other one I've heard is that even though you do build a new hospital you'll never operate it because it won't meet the standards of the American College of Surgeons."

"Nice," observed Finlay. "Almost as tasty as the tales about D.D. and McBride."

Suddenly Peter looked up as though he had just taken a resolution.

"Why don't you come clean with me, J.F.?"

"I don't know what you're driving at, Peter."

"Oh, yes you do. There's a story—a true story—about Dryden. It began that night he was hurt last November, when you and I were at Blanco's. There's a woman in it. She left Seaforth a few weeks later, after Dryden had gone east. That much I know. Why not spill the rest of it?"

John stiffened. "It isn't my story to tell," he said. "It isn't a juicy morsel for the *Advertiser*. It concerns only the two persons you mentioned. And I can't tell you anything about it."

"Meaning you won't. . . . Are you sure it concerns only those two people, J.F.?"

Finlay looked up quickly.

"It concerns Priscilla, too, doesn't it?"

John ran his hands over his hair and frowned at the younger man.

"Perhaps it does—in a way. But I still have nothing to tell you."

"O.K. We'll leave it like that. But some day I'll find out what I want to know, in spite of you. Anything that affects Priscilla

Graham automatically becomes my business, and you can't do anything about it."

Having said this Peter retired within himself and began to brood. The conversation became more and more desultory. Finally John got to his feet.

"Well, I've got to be on my way. I've got work to do tonight. I'll be seeing you again in a day or two, I suppose?"

"Oh, sure. No hard feelings. I'll be around. Wait a minute. I've got the jalopy outside. I'll drop you at the office, if you like."

It was in the battered Ford coupé that the reporter let fall his last bit of important information for the day.

"Guess who's back in town, J.F. . . . Jim Maitland. He's been to Mayo's with his wife. They told him just what you did—that she has a brain tumor. And it's too far along now to operate on. So Jim admits that you and Garnell were right in the first place, and unless I'm off my base he's in the mood to sue Baldwin for not suspecting what was wrong long ago. A little encouragement there wouldn't be a bad idea right now. Think it over, J.F. And leave your notions of ethics outside when you do. It's going to be either Herbert Baldwin or you, one of these days. . . . Well, here you are. Look out for that door. It's about to fall off. . . . Goodnight, Sir Galahad. And don't work too hard or too late. You're going to need your brains, old boy."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WHENEVER John looked back on 1933 it seemed to him a blurred screen of recollections. Ushered in by his own return to America and Dryden's accident and the discovery of Eleanor's true condition, the first weeks of the new year were the overture for what was to come. Banking holidays, Congressional stalemate, Hoover's petulantly stubborn but ineffectual attempts to stay the tide of economic disaster, the shrill strictures of the technocrats, the noisy protests of the U.C.L., the lengthening lines of unemployed—all these led up to a full stop which marked the early morning of the fourth of March.

At breakfast that day John scanned the faces around him in the hotel coffee shop, only to find each as gloomy as the gray sky outside. Whatever confidence had remained to them hitherto had been shattered by the morning's headlines. They were all counting the cash in their pocket, wondering what they would do when it was gone. One man laid a five-dollar bill on the cashier's desk and said, "Go easy, sister. It's all I got." Under the flippancy John had heard the ring of hysteria. Almost involuntarily he felt the wallet in his vest pocket: there was well over a hundred dollars in that bill fold and there was more in Postal Savings. He had taken Charles Wharton's advice to heart.

A little later when he walked over to his office he studied the people on the street. They reminded him of panicky spectators in 1929, hanging around the brokerage houses until they could get up the courage to shoot themselves or jump out of upper-story windows.

His waiting room was empty. He had known it would be. Of course it was still early in the day but John was sure it would also be empty that afternoon. No one would be going to a doctor

today. Over the whole United States there was a hush: everyone was waiting to see what would happen in Washington. By time for the inauguration there would be a knot of frightened people around every radio, listening. Most of them would not know what they expected or hoped for. They would simply be there, waiting. There was something appalling, John told himself, about the inertia that had overwhelmed the country.

When his secretary arrived he sent her home for the day. She murmured her thanks and hurried off. John looked after her questioningly. It had just occurred to him that he knew nothing about her beyond the fact that she was tall and blonde and good at her job. What sort of girl she was underneath, what she thought of the state of the nation, what she thought of him—all were equally unknown to him. This ignorance annoyed him. There had been a time when he knew practically everyone in Newland.

But that, he reminded himself, had been a good many years ago. The Newland he had known then—the country town with one business street and one bank where berry growers and small farmers had come to trade on Saturday and to borrow money for crop-handling from a young Charles Wharton—had disappeared during the War. Automobiles materialized along the curbstones, fewer and fewer people drove into town in buggies and spring wagons. Bungalows grew up along the streets, row after row of small one-story houses with overhanging eaves and deep porches across the front.

From the window of his consulting room he could see the pavement below. As far as he could see, Main Street was lined with cars—many of them muddy Model T Fords—and the people who lounged aimlessly up and down were neither farmers nor berry growers but, for the most part, industrial workers—sawyers, machinists, mill hands, mechanics. They did not live on the land, most of them knew nothing and cared nothing for the soil. They were the proletariat—modern propertyless foot-loose workers whose fortunes were bound up with the factories and the mills on the tideflats. Mills and factories now closed or operating one or two days a week.

John did not know this Newland as he had known the Newland of an earlier time. It was still a small town—although the Commercial Club claimed a population of fifteen thousand—and now it seemed resigned, as though it had abandoned hope of becoming the metropolis of the Puget Sound country. And more-

over it was now a shabby town. The little houses of 1912 and 1915 were still there, but they were no longer new or well kept. Their paint was peeling, their front porches were dark and dirty, their windows were grimy.

And from these dispirited houses poured out every day a flood of dispirited men and women in half-soled shoes and shabby clothes, sometimes to walk the streets, sometimes to go to cheap second-run movies, sometimes to work for a few hours, sometimes to stand in line at relief stations for food orders. A few of them were Communists—modern zealots with a burning faith in the revolution they visioned just ahead—but many more called themselves “radicals.” That word, John knew, included men of every conceivable belief: old-time trade unionists, I.W.W.’s and Socialists; brand-new Townsendites, Technocrats, and apostles of Social Credit. And besides all these there were also men walking up and down on Main Street who were simply misfits and malcontents—the flotsam that always litters the harbor of human life, ready to be sucked up into any current of protest.

But the point was that all these people were poorly clad and cold, and most of them hungry. They were bewildered and resentful; they felt an urge to do something about it. And there were many voices to tell them what to do: demagogues like Huey Long, hot-tongued agitators like Father Coughlin, zealous fanatics promising that revolution would put the dock laborer and the firm of Morgan on the same level, shrill advocates of two hundred dollars a month for the old folks and compulsory spending of it all, smooth-spoken businessmen predicting prosperity as soon as “confidence” could be starched back into capitalists, voluble writers filling magazines with charts of production capacity and turgid paragraphs about “energy surveys” and factories without men.

No wonder they were bewildered and uncertain. John remembered that he himself still had qualms about breaking ground for the new Sun Mount. Perhaps that would be his first step toward bankruptcy, perhaps it would mean poverty in old age, perhaps the whole scheme was merely the pursuit of a chimera, a piece of stubbornness in a man no longer young who was not wise enough to act his age.

He could still back out, of course. He had told himself that ever since he had asked Mark Whitney for estimates on the job. He could—yes, he still could today. But in another forty-eight

hours, after Whitney began work, he wouldn't be able to quit even if he wanted to. What was ahead? Of him, of his dream, of all those people on Main Street?

Finlay laughed grimly. He was waiting, they were waiting, for a Messiah to tell them what to do—he and those mill hands and J. P. Morgan and Charles Mitchell and the Congress of the United States. What had become of the independent self-reliant citizens of Jefferson's dream? What had become of Lincoln's "government of the people, by the people, and for the people"? What had become of the earlier Roosevelt's "square deal," of the less blatant but inspiring "new freedom" of Woodrow Wilson? What had happened to "Normalcy" and Big Business and disseminated ownership—all proclaimed in the confident twenties as the bulwarks of the American way of life?

What was the American way of life anyhow? Finlay began to pace the floor with long swinging steps, asking himself how much better off the crowd on the street below was than the crowd on the street in Berlin. For the moment it was true that Americans were not being pushed around by Brown Shirts and secret police. But that was no assurance that in the future they would not be spied on by F.B.I. agents, hounded for their beliefs as the Wobblies had been hounded during the War and the Socialists and Anarchists rounded up and deported in 1919 and 1920, or confronted by the National Guard if they should get out of hand. Even now there were Vigilantes and Silver Shirts who met to discuss ways of handling mobs of hungry unarmed men who might annoy the governor or the legislature. And who knew what would happen today or tomorrow or next week?

When Dennis came in to listen to the broadcast of the inauguration he found Finlay stalking back and forth through his office, surrounded by clouds of tobacco smoke.

"Anything wrong?" he asked looking around nervously. Then suddenly his face went gray. "You haven't heard . . ."

"No, no. Not a word. I don't know where she is any more than you do. I've just been thinking, that's all. But thinking isn't good for a man these days."

"I'll say it isn't." Dryden indicated his regained self-control by lighting a cigarette. "I couldn't stick it at Seacliff this morning. One operation in all that battery of surgeries, and Schuyler fit to be tied what with two floors entirely empty and the trustees dinning into his ears their prophecies of doom as soon as Roose-

velt takes over. Priscilla said she'd rather hold down the lab alone than have me around, so I beat it. You're going to listen to the broadcast, of course?"

"I suppose so." John smiled ironically.

"I only wish I could be there to see old Sourpuss step down and out."

"Spoken like a true American, Dennis. Always against somebody. Never for anything."

Dryden stared at Finlay with startled blue eyes and ran his fingers over his thick corn-colored hair. "I didn't think you approved of Hoover," he said.

"I don't. But give the man his due for Heaven's sake. He didn't make the Depression. And smarter men than he don't know how to get rid of it."

"O.K. But I still don't like him. He looks like a sulky infant whose bottle is late."

John laughed. "Well, I won't argue with you about Hoover's features. But I might point out that he's not to blame for them either."

Dennis grinned, amiability restored. "All right, let's leave it that way. He won't be bothering us much longer anyhow. Suppose you turn on the radio. I don't want to miss anything."

And so John Finlay and Dennis Dryden joined the millions who listened to the words of a new President, spoken in a clear resonant voice without trace of hesitation.

"... The only thing we have to fear is fear itself. . . . The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. . . . Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. . . . We must act and act quickly. . . . the blessing of God. May He protect each . . . one of us! May He guide me in the days to come!"

It seemed to Finlay that there was something hysterical in the relief with which people heard these brave sentences: here at last, they seemed to feel, was someone who knew what he wanted and would tell them what to do. They were glad of specific orders, pleased not to be asked to think. After all perhaps Roosevelt could bring order out of chaos. And it was good to be doing something, even if later on that something should turn out to have been wrong.

In that general sense of relief which swept the country there were few who took note of the outcome of another election across

the Atlantic, and John kept to himself his forebodings over the Nazi triumph as well as his dismay at Roosevelt's sluggishness in setting about the primary task of putting men to work. The currency in his pocket and the Postal Savings account in his name saw him and his friends through the period while the banks remained closed, and on the morning when the shades went up again at the First National he went in to congratulate Charles Wharton.

The banker smiled wearily. His pale face bore evidence of the strain he had been under but his voice bespoke his pride.

"Thanks, John. Yes, we're still here and still solvent. Here's the certificate that proves it."

"Business as usual, I suppose."

"Just as nearly as possible, John."

"That will be good news for Mark Whitney. He's been at work every day since the sixth of March but I'm sure he thought there wouldn't be money for his payroll."

"Tell Whitney not to worry about us. The First National would never have closed if that general order hadn't gone out to all banks."

Finlay studied the lines on Wharton's face and the hollows under his eyes. "You've been on the grill too long, Charlie. Why don't you take some time off now that the worst is over?"

"I can't, John—not yet. The job isn't done and I won't leave until it is. There's new legislation coming up, and that's only the beginning. We'll all have to keep our eyes on Washington this spring."

Through April and May, while the mills of government turned out a spate of new laws and new organizations from the A.A.A. to Emergency Relief, John worked as long hours as he had ten years before. By this time he had more than a fair practice and there were always patients of his in Seacliff. Then there was the new assistant, William Lawrence, to break in and, above all, there was Sun Mount to be planned and replanned.

Dr. Lawrence proved to have an engaging personality and a handsome face. He was a tall genial-mannered young man, quick of thought and decided in his opinions but not afraid of work or responsibility. His well-pressed suits contrasted visibly with John's baggy trousers and often-tousled hair, but Finlay came to the defense of his assistant when Grace Rodney spoke of this.

"It's nothing against the boy that he cares how he looks. Appearance counts for a good deal in building up a practice."

"I know that as well as you do. I've often wished that you would have your clothes pressed more often. But for all that there are things more important than the creases in a man's trousers."

Miss Rodney did not go on to say that Priscilla too had reservations about the newcomer's staying powers. She contented herself with adding that time would show how well young Lawrence stuck things out and that she herself had her doubts.

But John had no time to ponder these matters. After a day in the office and the hospital he usually met D.D. or Walter Elliston and Miss Rodney in the frame shack which served as Whitney's headquarters on the grounds of Sun Mount, to discuss the arrangement and equipment of the new building; and the nurse felt that she must not allow her forebodings to disturb the efficiency of today. She went steadfastly about her tasks, to see that storage closets were provided, utility rooms properly placed, quarters for the nurses correctly planned, furnishings quoted at reasonable prices.

Sometimes she had other suggestions too. One evening she might be bending over the table in Whitney's shack pointing out where space could be found for recovery rooms for children whose tonsils had been taken out, and another time she might be urging that the laboratory be relocated so that it would have better light. Before construction was finished she had become an authority on hospital refrigeration.

There was something of his old light-heartedness in the way Dennis explained to her that after all it was Finlay whose hospital they were discussing and that there were both an architect and a contractor on the job. But Grace Rodney was undisturbed.

"I never saw a man yet who could build either a house or a hospital properly," she retorted. "Now, Mr. Whitney, about the height of these basins."

Another frequent visitor in the contractor's office was Peter McFarlane. Sometimes when he came late in the afternoon he would bring Priscilla with him. Although Miss Rodney was no longer convinced that Peter was a scatterbrained youth she never unbent completely in his presence and she made no effort to conceal her disapproval of his courtship of Priscilla.

"He is too unstable," she said to John more than once.

But Peter seemed to give no heed to the nurse's attitude. Long-

legged, long-faced, quick-tongued, he became a familiar figure around the grounds. He usually perched on one corner of the drafting table swinging his feet, chain-smoking cigarettes, talking to John of their plans for the autumn, apparently unaware of Grace Rodney's disapprobation. But one evening as he watched her picking her way among piles of brick and lumber he said, "You know, J.F., I'm beginning to suspect that woman doesn't care for me."

"Well, it's partly your own fault," answered Finlay. "You rubbed her the wrong way the first time you came out here, last November. You were flippant and she dislikes flippancy. Then she thinks you are a labor agitator, though I must admit that her ideas about that date back to the War and the trouble the I.W.W. made in the woods then."

Into Peter's green eyes there came an unwonted gleam of seriousness. He turned back from gazing after the nurse's trim retreating figure and said, "You big bum, you don't know how lucky you are to have Grace Rodney around here."

"Oh, I think I appreciate her ability."

Over McFarlane's face came a look of disdain. He stood up, pushed back the papers on the drafting table, and pulled his hat down over his eyes.

"The hell you do! Why, you don't know half that goes on under that cap of hers. She may never marry you but she's already married to Sun Mount and as long as there's breath in her body she'll stick to both of you. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, you knot-head!"

John stared up stupidly at the younger man and for a moment Peter stared back exasperated. Then a grin broke across his long thin face and he leaned over and thumped Finlay on the chest.

"O.K. Don't ever say I didn't warn you. And now so long as I am unbosoming myself I might as well make a good job of it. Did it ever occur to you to buy a new hat, J.F.? Or are you going to wear out all your father left you first?"

John removed the offending hat and turned it over in his hands, inspecting it from all sides. "It is a bit battered," he admitted at last.

"A bit battered"! Good Lord! It looks as though it had been out in the rain all winter and been run over by the gravel truck besides. For Heaven's sake, J.F. . . ." But confronted by the

complete bewilderment on Finlay's weather-beaten face, McFarlane stopped in mid-sentence.

"Oh, skip it, J.F. You'll never understand women if you live a thousand years. What I really came out for was to ask you to come into town some evening next week and talk to a bunch of fellows on the paper about health insurance. I think probably Wednesday would be the best night."

Having extracted the promise that John would be there, Peter was about to take himself off when he remembered something else.

"Oh say, J.F., I ran onto a guy in the advertising department who says he's for you no matter what hare-brained scheme you propose. Name's Joe Hanson. He told me you kept him from going blind a few years ago."

Finlay grasped at the change of subject. McFarlane's comments on Grace Rodney had upset him more than he cared to admit.

"Joe Hanson. Joe Hanson," he repeated vaguely. "Oh, yes, I remember. Now that was a funny thing. Hanson had a disease of the eye called keratitis. He ran around to all the eye men in Seaforth but it kept getting worse. Then one night he happened to be in Newland and wandered into my office."

"I guess it must've been about 1921. Anyhow allergy was just getting popular and I'd been reading up about it. When he told me that he was in the habit of eating salt herring every day I suggested that he cut it out for a while. To his amazement—and mine—he got well without any other treatment." John smiled reminiscently. "I'd like to see Hanson again. I suppose his eyes are all right."

"Sure. He uses them eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. And he thinks you are the best doctor in the state. He'll be on our side from the start. I wish we could find more grateful ex-patients of yours. We wouldn't have to prove anything to them; they'd come without calling. . . . Well, I've got to get going. Now don't forget about next week. I'll have the fellows all primed and ready for you. Joe wants to be chairman of the meeting and so for once I'll sit modestly in the background with my mouth shut. So long, J.F., and good hunting."

Finlay sat alone in the contractor's shack and watched McFarlane climb into his battered Ford coupé and rattle off. He had forgotten the cryptic remarks Peter had made about Miss Rodney

and the inexplicable outburst about his hat, but he had not forgotten the young man's pursuit of Priscilla.

Fond as he was of McFarlane, John had doubts about him as a husband. He seemed to lack a sense of relative values, for all his quick-wittedness and sophistication. He had been converted to the co-operative principle and had become an ardent apostle of health insurance. But as John grew fonder and fonder of him, he found himself more and more unwilling that the reporter should win Priscilla Graham. There was nothing sensible about all this, he told himself now, but that seemed to have nothing to do with the way he felt.

Nor were these all the discoveries Finlay made about himself that year. Talkies had at first imbued him with excessive dislike, but now he found himself slipping into a movie occasionally when he had an imperative need for diversion, and before long he learned to his own surprise that he could think very clearly to the accompaniment of talking pictures provided that he could find a seat remote from other spectators. He could discern no moral deterioration after he had seen Mae West in *She Done Him Wrong* and no inclination to become a gangster from seeing Edward Robinson in *Little Giant*, and from a few films he derived a robust amusement that lightened his laborious days considerably. There were belly laughs in *The Private Life of Henry VIII* and one day he came upon an old friend—*The Invisible Man*—translated most entertainingly to the screen.

But from nothing did he get the enjoyment that he found in *The Three Little Pigs*. Presently he had begun to hum *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf* whenever obstacles accumulated in his path. The fact that he could not carry a tune did not disturb him in the least.

There were rumors from Chicago which set him looking for amoebic dysentery in those patients of his who had visited the Century of Progress Exposition, and for several days after the round-the-world flight of Wiley Post he scinged whenever he heard a plane overhead. This damned world, he thought, is getting too small for comfort. But he laughed heartily when he read of the march of Chicago's school teachers on five of the leading banks of that city to demand their thirty million dollars back pay.

"I like people to take their own part and stand up for their rights," he said to Miss Rodney.

"Then I suppose you approve of these farm strikes in the Middle West and of the unions," she returned.

"Certainly. Why should a farmer sell milk for less than it costs to produce it? And why shouldn't men who earn their living get together and protect themselves? Employers have trade associations and I hope every working man on the Sound joins a union."

"So far as I am concerned," answered Miss Rodney, "I don't ever want to hear of Section 7-A again. May I ask what you would do if your employees in Sun Mount were to organize and make demands on you?"

"I'd try to convert them to my way of thinking or else I'd do as they wanted."

"I'd like to see you run a hospital on that system," said Grace Rodney crisply. "But I wouldn't want to be a patient in it. Someone in a hospital must have the authority to give orders and enforce them. I certainly wouldn't have anything to do with a nurses' union!"

"Yes. I know we've always run hospitals that way. But I've known cases where an intelligent nurse saved a patient's life by disregarding orders and doing something that hadn't been ordered at all. There are two sides to everything, and I'm not sure that blind obedience is a good quality in anyone, Miss Rodney."

It was in midsummer that McFarlane rushed into Finlay's office late one afternoon and cornered John in the little treatment room.

"Listen, J.F. You've got a break—and what a break! What do you suppose has happened now?"

John's heart skipped a beat. It's Eleanor, he thought. She's come back!

But Peter was going on breathlessly. "It's Mrs. Maitland. She got back from Mayo's today—in her coffin! Now listen, J.F." McFarlane slid off his perch on the desk and began to pace the enclosed space, hands flying to emphasize his argument.

"Baldwin didn't know what was wrong with her, passed it up altogether. If he'd made the diagnosis last fall she might have gotten well. And Baldwin is your most dangerous enemy. He is the biggest surgeon in Seaforth, he's chief of staff at Seacliff, he's on the state board of examiners. He has a lot of influence. He's got it in for you. And here he is, delivered into our hands.

"Maitland is sore. He knows you and Garnell told him the truth about his wife. Now he's got a funeral on his hands and four kids to take care of, and he hasn't any money. Don't you see what we can do, J.F.? Don't you see?"

Finlay had dropped down on a stool as he listened to Peter and had wound his legs around the rungs. He had packed his pipe and put the stem into his mouth, but now he let the match he had just struck fall from his fingers.

"Haven't I told you before . . ."

"Sh—sh. I know a malpractice suit won't stick. I spent all afternoon looking up the law and talking to the most accomplished shyster in Seaforth. It wouldn't ever come to trial, J.F. But what a lovely way to shut Herbert up! What a magnificent stink right in his own backyard! An expert couldn't figure up anything with greater nuisance value, and here it is right in your hands—practically a gift!"

"What do you mean—'practically a gift'?"

There was the barest trace of hesitation in McFarlane's answer. "Well, you see, there'd be a little expense. Not much, of course. But papers would have to be drawn up and . . ."

John got slowly to his feet. "I forbid ~~it~~—absolutely. Do you hear? And what's more I never want to hear you mention this sort of thing again. Do you understand me, or must I speak still more plainly?"

The elation died out of the thin young face. "But, J.F., listen . . ."

"No, I won't listen. I forbid you to approach Jim Maitland or any of his friends with this infamous plan of yours. I forbid you to mention it to me again. Haven't you any decency about you? Here's this poor devil left with four kids on his hands and all you can think of is to egg him on to start a malpractice suit against Baldwin."

"Don't tell me he hasn't got a kick coming, J.F."

"Suppose you tell me how you're going to prove that Baldwin wasn't perfectly honest in the opinion he gave the Maitlands. There are serious differences of opinion between doctors every day."

"Oh, yeah?" Peter's seagreen eyes, shrewd and skeptical, searched Finlay's face intently. "Let me give you a piece of advice, J.F. The basic principle in dealing with a son of a bitch is to do to him what he hopes to do to you, but do it first."

"That's as may be. But I warn you here and now that if you start anything of the sort I'll see that you regret it—bitterly. Bitterly, I said."

The reporter stared hard at Finlay. The older man was lean and tall, the muscles of his hands and neck were firm; his face was flushed and his gray eyes dark and hard.

"I believe you mean that." There was dismay in Peter's voice.

"You know damn well that I mean it."

Gray eyes met green ones without wavering. McFarlane gave a smothered laugh. "You don't seem to realize that we've got to fight fire with fire."

"And burn ourselves as well as the other fellow. No, either I play fair or I don't play. I've told you this before. I've got my code and I intend to live up to it. I don't have to make money, I don't have to earn a living, but I do have to live with myself for a while longer. If worst comes to worst I've got methods to deal with Baldwin, but I'm going to do it my way. I hope you've got that straight in your mind at last."

Peter took off the hat he had pushed to the back of his head, mopped his bald spot, looked intently into the crown of the hat for a moment, and then put it back on.

"I get you, J.F. And, just in case you're interested, I'll tell you that I think you're a damned fool. If the roles were reversed professional ethics wouldn't stop Herbert W. Baldwin for a split second. Then there's something else. Maybe Garnell wouldn't take the same lofty attitude you do."

"If he doesn't he'll have the chance to tell me so within the next five minutes. I shall phone him, tell him exactly what you have in mind and what my answer has been. If he doesn't agree he will be at liberty to get in touch with you at once."

McFarlane jingled the keys in his pocket nervously.

"Oh, hell, what's the use? You're the law and the prophets rolled into one. And Garnell is as big a fool as you are. The worst publicity material a fellow ever laid eyes on. Why should I work myself into a lather trying to figure a way out for you? You're a washout so far as I'm concerned. Good-by."

Nettled even more than he would admit to himself, Peter drove grumblingly and rapidly to the temporary headquarters of the State Emergency Relief Administration in search of human interest headlines to replace those he had fashioned to no purpose about Dr. Baldwin. Even though he was seldom able to extract

from the hard-pressed professional social workers any material sufficiently emotional for a by-line on the front page of the *Advertiser* he was almost always sure to pick up something usable among the waiting clients.

Today proved no exception. He had scarcely entered the relief headquarters when a woman stormed the counter through which all applicants had to enter for conferences with the staff. But the short red-faced man behind the counter stood his ground.

"You'll have to wait your turn, Mrs. Trampalia, like the rest," he said firmly.

"I wait no longer. I been here since eight o'clock. My baby at home she starve! I gotta get in."

"Like I said before, you got to take your turn like the others," repeated the doorman.

"You bloodsucker! You take blood money from the bosses. Before you get this job you was on the relief too. Now you hide back of counter, tell me I can't go in. For shame!"

"I got my orders," the man said doggedly. "Everybody comes in by number, in their turn. Go sit down, Mrs. Trampalia."

Before the words were well out of his mouth the woman began to scream.

"I won't! I starve! My baby starve! I have a fit!"

She fell on the floor and kicked and frothed at the mouth. One or two men in the waiting room looked at her idly and a woman sitting nearby half rose from the bench.

"Take it easy," said the doorman. "I guess you don't know Mrs. Trampalia. There ain't nothing the matter with her except she's mad. She puts soap in her mouth to make that foam. She ain't got no baby. There ain't no one in her family but her and her old man, and he's as fat as she is. She ain't been here since eight o'clock this morning either. Just let her alone and she comes out of it pretty quick. So take it easy."

"That's another good story shot to hell!" muttered Peter. "It would have made a good picture too—woman flouncing around on the floor in a seizure brought on by the refusal of a stony-hearted relief administrator to deviate from the prescribed red tape. 'Relief Refusal Brings Fit.' Nice headline too. Oh well, what's the use?" He approached the counter and, with a wary glance around the waiting room, slid a cigar across the rough boards. "How's tricks today, Mr. Dusenberg?"

Dusenberg spread his arms on the counter and leaned toward Peter.

"Everything quiet, Mr. McFarlane. There ain't anything doin' around here. Compared to them commissaries the U.C.L. used to run, this is a pink tea." He straightened up; the cigar had disappeared.

"Yeah, I bet being doorman at one of those old commissaries was no snap."

"Snap? Say, brother, I used to have a black eye or a cut lip or somethin' all the time, them days. Mrs. D., she used to say to me when I got home at night, 'Dusenberg, if I didn't know better I'd be sure you'd gone back to fightin'.' Honest she did, Mr. McFarlane. But this job—there ain't no excitement around here. Only a coupla times a week Mrs. Trampalia puts on a little show or some guy makes a pass at me. There ain't been a real fight since the S.E.R.A. took over in May."

Peter turned halfway toward the benches full of waiting clients, put his thumbs in his vest pockets, and leaned back against the counter.

"I can see what you mean all right. There isn't a fight in a carload of these folks. They haven't got what it takes, Mr. Dusenberg. But now tell me about this Mrs. Trampalia."

Mr. Dusenberg was only too glad to oblige. It was not often that he had an appreciative listener and, thus encouraged, he made various emendations to the story he was telling. It appeared, for example, that the Trampalias had had a child who died about 1931. "Starved to death, her mother says, Mr. McFarlane. Her bones stuck right out through the flesh."

"Mama's bones certainly don't come anywhere near her flesh," remarked Peter eying the fat woman who had picked herself up off the floor and was now picking at a raveling that dangled from her coat sleeve. "But there is such a thing, I understand, as war edema. In a picture no one could tell the difference probably."

"Her old man is a Communist." This information Mr. Dusenberg emitted in so guttural a voice as to be almost unintelligible.

"So? Subsidized from Moscow, I suppose?"

"I don't know about subsidies, Mr. McFarlane. But he belongs to the crowd that took over the U.C.L."

"What do you mean—'took over the U.C.L.'?"

Mr. Dusenberg looked pityingly at the reporter. He had never

known anyone else who had to ask so many questions about matters of common knowledge.

"Why, you know the U.C.L. wouldn't never stick together, Mr. McFarlane. They was like a twenty-mule team with all the mules goin' different directions. So some fellows kinda moved in before the city election last spring and took it over. There ain't so many of 'em, and they all hang together, and they know what they want." Mr. Dusenberg lowered his voice to a hoarse whisper. "'s got so now hardly nobody else goes to the meetings. Everything's cut and dried ahead of time, you see, and there ain't no chance for an argument or a fight no more. I kinda dropped out too. But Trampalia, he's one of the gang that runs the outfit. He's a Red, Mr. McFarlane."

"This is very interesting, Mr. Dusenberg. How many Communists do you think are in this crowd that's taken charge of the U.C.L.?"

"Oh, that'd be hard to say." Mr. Dusenberg rolled his eyes toward the ceiling and contorted his features. "Mebbe a hundred. Mebbe more. Mebbe less. But they're aimin' to seize power the next election."

"Are they now? Well, that's quite a way off. I guess we can rest easy at night for a while, yet. Eh, Mr. Dusenberg? Now I wonder if you happen to know the 'Trampalias' address. I'd like to call on them some day when I have time."

"I ain't got the address right here but I can get it in a minute."

In scarcely more than the stipulated minute the doorman was back with a grimy bit of paper which he handed to Peter. The reporter glanced at it hastily; as he had suspected, it was on a side street near the canal in north Seaforth. He tucked the paper away in his wallet and resumed his conversation.

"Any more of these folks here have interesting histories, Mr. Dusenberg?"

"Well now, I wouldn't know what you call interesting. But over there in the corner there's that quiet kinda mousy-lookin' fellow. He's a Finn and nobody could pronounce his name so they got to callin' him Finn and Haddie. You know, kind of a play on finnan haddie. He's a character for you, Mr. McFarlane. You'd oughta get acquainted with him some time."

"Mr. Dusenberg," an impersonal cool feminine voice called out.

The doorman started and turned around quickly. In an open doorway, back of the counter, stood a tall woman in early middle

life, dressed in a nondescript tan woolen frock. She was obviously a social worker and also obviously someone of at least local authority.

"I am sure this gentleman would not want to continue his conversation with you if you were to explain to him that it was against the rules during working hours."

Dusenberg's round red face turned still redder.

"No ma'am," he mumbled. "I'm sorry."

"You're always sorry when you do things you shouldn't," replied the social worker. "But you go right on doing them. You really make it very difficult for me."

Peter drew himself up off the counter and touched his hat brim.

"It's my fault, lady. I started it. You see, Mr. Dusenberg here is an old friend of mine and I just dropped in to pass the time of day with him. No offense intended. I'm sorry too. I didn't know it was against federal regulations."

McFarlane looked squarely at the woman and smiled beguilingly. She hesitated a moment longer, then smiled back at him.

"Mr. Dusenberg should have told you. You couldn't be expected to know our office rules. I understand that." She turned toward the door through which she had come. "Will you report to Miss Barker at once, Mr. Dusenberg? She wants to see you."

"Yes, ma'am. Right away." Dusenberg waited until the social worker had gone back to her work, then whispered, "Thanks, Mr. McFarlane. You saved my bacon. I won't forget."

"O.K., Dusey. Maybe you can do me a good turn one day."

Airily Peter cocked his hat over one eye and strolled out of the relief station. The open air was refreshing after the acrid smell of disinfectant with which the bare floors and the tables and chairs were scrubbed every day; the sunshine fell warmly on his skin as it did on the earth and the broad-leaved maples in the little park across the street.

With something less than his usual speed of motion Peter climbed into his ramshackle Ford and rattled away to take a look at the Trampalia residence. It proved to be satisfactorily sordid and tumble-down and Peter photographed it at once. There was an extremely thin and dirty cat on the porch and he took pains to get it into the picture. Upon second thought he had decided not to risk a snapshot of Mrs. Trampalia herself at the relief office: she looked more than well nourished and it seemed unwise to expect newspaper readers to digest a long legend explaining

that this apparently fat woman was really suffering from war edema and malnutrition. But the mangy half-starved cat on the porch and the slatternly house with its windows stuffed with rags would make an excellent illustration for a special Sunday edition article on the *Relief Problem in Seaforth: Have We Any Slums?*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE slower beat of autumn came on and, busy as he was, John found time to savor the soft coolness of the air, the farther blueness of the sky—to feel the lowered intensity of the beat of life in the world around him. Watching the lushness of August give way to mellow slanting sunlight on garden and orchard, he reflected that the year and he were at the same season but the approach of neither the year's autumn nor his own saddened him. This was the time of harvest but there was work to be done and there was still the energy to do it. Sometimes he stopped along the road to smell the fruitful earth or gaze at the mountain-rimmed horizon, and after these occasions he was likely to sit in his office deep in thought and so absent-minded that the secretary must see to it that he made all his calls, left all promised prescriptions at the drug store, and filled out the proper blanks in his industrial accident cases.

Finlay's preoccupation annoyed brisk young William Lawrence. Before he had been in Newland three months he began to have niggling misgivings about "the old man" but was astute enough to keep both the misgivings and that descriptive phrase to himself. However when John missed the first meeting of the County Medical Society after its summer recess Lawrence was moved to remonstrance.

"I'm sorry you weren't there," he said. "They passed resolutions condemning 'state medicine,' whatever they mean by that, and compulsory health insurance without any discussion whatever."

John's eyes twinkled as he took in the deprecatory expression on his assistant's face. "And you think I might have turned the tide if I had been there? You flatter me, my dear boy. But of

course I would have been at the meeting if I hadn't been tied up out in the country."

Finlay did not explain that this engagement had consisted of sitting first by the bank of a little river and later in his car on a lonely side road while the sun went down and the moon came up. If people had no yearning for earth and sky and water it was useless to tell them about these things or the strength and comfort they could bring to a man hard-pressed.

Despite the action of the medical society John sent out personal letters to all the physicians in Newland and the nearby towns a few days later, announcing that he hoped to make Sun Mount a community hospital and would be glad to have them all on the staff. He explained that the new hospital would have excellent laboratory and X-ray facilities and set forth the advantages of having such an institution near at hand. There always had been and always would be difficulty in transporting dangerously ill patients to Seaforth.

Having made this move Finlay sat back and waited for whatever response might come. The reply was prompt even though it came in unexpected form.

John was at Sun Mount with Miss Rodney supervising the installation of the heavy kitchen equipment when Arthur McBride came in search of him.

"Have you seen this, Dr. Finlay?" he asked holding out a copy of the Newland *Herald*.

"No, I haven't. I don't waste much time on newspapers."

"What's in it?" inquired Grace Rodney uneasily.

McBride spread the paper out on a packing case. "Look at it," he said grimly.

Across two columns at the top of the front page was a bold headline, *Local Medicos Spurn Socialized Medicine*. In the lower right-hand corner was a box with the title *A Manifesto*.

Rapidly John ran down the lines of newsprint.

"... no proof that the present system of practice is inadequate ... volume of free work done by physicians each year is enormous ... Free choice of physician is essential ... Solicitation of patients in any form is contrary to the interests of physician, patient, and public ... The undersigned, mindful of their duties as members of a great profession, cannot countenance a scheme by which the integrity of that profession is threatened. We favor orderly evolution in medical practice and oppose the

forces representing public officialdom, social theorists, and wealthy foundations as well as Communists—all of which seek to subvert American institutions and convert American citizens into slaves of the state and the politicians. . . .”

He looked up, grinning. “Well, they got in all the big words that don’t mean anything much but sound imposing.”

Miss Rodney took up the paper. McBride eyed the older man. “Did you notice the names?” he asked. “Practically every man practicing in this part of the county has signed that thing.”

“I’m only surprised that two or three fellows held out. So far as I’m concerned I’d be glad to have the fight in the open. Bush-whacking doesn’t appeal to me.”

McBride still looked disturbed. John threw an arm across the young man’s shoulders.

“Cheer up, laddie. There’s worse to come. I’m sure of that. How about it, Miss Rodney?”

The nurse laid down the paper as though she hated the touch of it.

“It would have been a pity to have had any of these men in the new hospital. I know the kind of work they do and I’m glad I won’t have to put up with it.”

John laughed and thumped Arthur’s back. “Hear that, young fellow? Miss Rodney is not dismayed by the repudiation of our eminent colleagues.”

The woman sniffed. “It will take more than them to upset me. Now, I want both you men to come across the hall with me. I’m sure that plumber is getting the dark-room connections all wrong.”

Obediently Finlay and McBride followed her.

“She takes everything in her stride,” muttered John under his breath. “Fire, murder, sudden death, battle, contractors, and building inspectors.”

Arthur glanced sideways at Finlay. “There isn’t anyone else quite like Miss Rodney,” he said. “I’m glad you don’t just take her for granted.”

Leading the way, Miss Rodney also was pursuing her own line of thought. “Well, the shooting has started. Dr. Finlay is a clever man but he is getting himself into trouble as fast as he can and he’s dragging the others with him, McBride and Elliston and Garnell and Dryden. . . . I have my doubts about that new man, Lawrence. I don’t think he’ll stick when things begin to happen. . . . And young Mrs. McBride will probably be having

a baby before long. That won't be so good. . . . I wonder what Dennis Dryden will do when Eleanor dies. She can't live forever . . .

Suddenly aware that she had been woolgathering Grace Rodney stopped short.

"I wanted to ask you about the incline too," she said as though her mind had never wandered from the immediate business in hand. "Do you think it is too steep? The girls will have to push a good many heavy carts up to the first floor, you know."

It was only a few days after this that Oliver Marlin called Finlay on the phone. "I want to see you, John. Going to be in this evening? . . . All right, I'll be around about eight, then. You're living at the hotel, aren't you?"

When Marlin appeared John recognized at once that he was disturbed about something. Although the old man tried to present an unruffled exterior he could not conceal the perplexity in his faded blue eyes. He sat down, lighted a cigarette, adjusted his spectacles, and inquired how practice was going.

"Not too bad, Oliver. Lawrence and I are both comfortably busy and McBride is just getting under way. He only just got back west you know."

"And collections?"

"Rotten. Aren't yours?"

Marlin nodded. His long upper lip twitched.

"I wonder if things are ever going to be any better, John. All these organizations to help the farmers and the unemployed, and labor and railroads and banks. The air full of General Johnson's 'dead cats' since last July, the whole country broken out with Blue Eagles. And for the life of me I don't see what it's got us! There aren't any more people at work in Seaforth than there were last spring. They say the relief money won't last through the winter. So what—as the youngsters say?"

"Don't ask me, Oliver. When Roosevelt said in his inaugural that the first thing was to set men to work I hoped that he'd be able to do it. But I guess he doesn't know how. What would you do if you were President?"

"Good heavens, John, what a question! I don't know what I'd do if I were President any more than I know what I'd do if I were King of England."

Finlay smiled. "That's the trouble, Oliver. We all sit back and criticize the fellow who's on the spot but we don't know what

we'd do in his place. There's just one thing I feel reasonably sure of—that Roosevelt is sincere and won't sell out to big business."

Marlin lit another cigarette, looked at the books on the table beside his chair, fiddled with his glasses, peering through the lenses and wiping them with meticulous care. Finlay watched him with amused gray eyes and presently got up and fetched his pipe.

"What's on your mind, Oliver? You didn't drive over here from Seaforth tonight just to ask me how collections are in Newland and tell me the country is going to the dogs."

Dr. Marlin smoothed the white hair on the crown of his head nervously, and drummed the tips of his thin white fingers on the arm of his chair.

"No, John, I didn't. I wanted to see you about that . . . thing in the paper last night."

Finlay smiled broadly across his pipe bowl. "So you saw the *Manifesto* too. Well, well! A man tipped me off that it would be in the *Advertiser* but I never read that filthy sheet. I saw it in the local paper several days ago."

"I'm sorry it came out, John. It's poor taste for doctors to be bickering publicly in times like these. Why can't we go along quietly as we used to do? There's enough work for all of us."

"Ah, but, Oliver, there isn't enough money for all of us. That's the rub."

"I'm not opposed to change simply because it's change," said Marlin slowly. "But when men go at things in a hurry, particularly if they're angry, they make mistakes and increase confusion. I'd rather go slower about remodeling the practice of medicine and have less to regret afterward perhaps."

Finlay finished lighting his pipe before he replied.

"I don't want to overturn everything all at once, Oliver. I merely want to try out some ideas I've picked up and see whether they will work. I'm trying to get a large number of people to put a little money every month into a common fund from which their doctor and hospital bills will be paid if and when such bills are incurred. That is simply life insurance applied to sickness and I ask you, is there anything revolutionary about it?"

"When you put it that way, it sounds very simple, John."

"But you know perfectly well that Baldwin and Arnold and George Schuyler intend to bulldoze the county society into block-

ing me if they possibly can. And they won't be particular about the weapons they use."

Marlin hesitated. "They don't like the idea," he admitted at last. "They say it will lead to compulsory sickness insurance run by the government, and a lot of the men have got the wind up."

"Eventually, Oliver, we are going to be forced to devise some sort of public medicine for the unemployed and the low-income groups."

"And that will be Communism," exclaimed Marlin.

Finlay laughed and blew out a great cloud of tobacco smoke. "My dear Oliver, come down to earth! You have life insurance. Are you a Communist? Great Britain has health insurance, so do Holland and Norway and Denmark and Sweden. Are these countries communistic?"

"To tell the truth, I don't know much about it, John." Marlin smiled a little.

"And so you believe what you're told. That's dangerous, Oliver. The word 'Communist' in the United States today is simply a parlor equivalent for 'son of a bitch.' People apply it to persons they don't like. Now I can assure you positively, of my own knowledge, that health insurance is not Communism."

"But it may lead to political control of our profession. That's what I'm afraid of most."

"I know, Oliver. I'm afraid of it too. And so I want to beat the politicians to it. I want to see co-operative medical groups and hospitals and voluntary health insurance develop all over the country so that people can find out what modern medicine is like. As for the unemployed and the old folks, I suppose they'll have to be cared for out of tax funds. But that's nothing new. Every county in this state has a county doctor who's hired to look after these people. Of course most of them don't make a very good job of it, but I don't think they'd do any worse if they were better paid and expected to give their full time to it, do you?"

"Well, no. I don't suppose they would. But what makes you think people would appreciate good medical care if they got it? Remember there's 360 million dollars' worth of patent medicine sold in this country every year. And look at the cancer quacks and the 'doctors for men only' that get fat on people's ignorance."

"I've hated these buzzards for years, Oliver, just as you have. And I've concluded that the only way to find out whether the

public has sense enough to accept scientific medicine is to offer it to them on terms they can afford to pay."

Marlin scratched an ear thoughtfully. "I begin to see what you mean, John. You want to try to sell co-operative medicine and see whether people will support it."

"Exactly. We're never going to get anywhere by shutting our eyes to all that's wrong and denying that anything can be changed." Finlay sprang up and began to pace the floor, his pipe forgotten in his hand. "Let me tell you about a man I know, Oliver.

"He's a part-time county doctor on a salary of \$1400 a year. In 1932 he drove 2194 miles and bought his own gas and oil. He did 72 major operations, had 55 confinements, and pulled 542 teeth.

"Now not so far from him is the Mayo Clinic. The staff there are on salary too and, for all I know, they may not average any more than he does for the operations they perform. But I don't think anyone would compare their work with that done by my friend the county doctor, although he's just as smart and as well trained as many of them.

"It isn't how a man's paid that determines whether his work will be good or bad. It's the man himself—his training and integrity. It's equipment and resources and time. And, in most places, those resources can only be accumulated by some sort of insurance, through small payments made regularly by a lot of people."

"You make it sound very plausible, John, and very simple."

"Well, it won't be as simple as it sounds. Nothing new ever turns out to be simple, especially if it's a social experiment."

Marlin studied the face of his friend. "I've got something else on my mind," he said finally.

"Spill it!" exclaimed John.

"It's about you. I'm worried. Some of the men are sore already. The county society is going to fight you. You're not a young man any more, John. You've got enough to live on. Why do you risk it all on a romantic scheme? Why don't you let the younger fellows break the way?"

Finlay swung around and faced Marlin.

"Maybe it's the drop of Irish blood in me, Oliver. Maybe it's because I'm naturally restless. And maybe it's because I've had my nose rubbed into some ugly things around here.

"Do you know what I saw yesterday, here in Newland? Two

kids—nine and twelve—who had lost all but four or five of their second teeth. Their gums oozed pus when I touched them. What was the matter? Scurvy. Those kids were half-starved. They hadn't had a vitamin since 1929."

John teetered from heel to toe, looking down at the other man.

"And who were they? Native-born Americans—children of berry pickers, folks that most people around here regard as a necessary nuisance. You have to put up with them during fruit harvest, but when that's over they're supposed to evaporate until the next year. What can we do with such kids, Oliver?"

Marlin's old blue eyes, perplexed and thoughtful, stared into the distance beyond Finlay.

"I know what you'd do," continued John. "You'd fill them with tomato juice and oranges and cabbage juice, and you'd get them some store teeth so they could chew their food. You'd try to find them a home where they'd have enough to eat and a chance to go to school. Wouldn't you?"

"Of course."

"I know you would, Oliver. And you'd pay for all of it out of your own pocket without begrudging the money. So would Nelson and Duncan Garfield and Bob Jackson and Garnell and Elliston and a lot of other doctors I could name. But that doesn't solve the problem."

Finlay made a wide-sweeping gesture with the hand that held his pipe.

"Do you know what I told those kids? I told them to steal fruit and fresh vegetables so that their younger brothers and sisters won't get into the same fix. I told them to take care not to be caught, but to go on stealing. What else is there to say to them with the cock-eyed economic system we've got?"

"I don't know, John. But surely every boy and girl should be able to start with a decent equipment, physical and mental, for a nest egg."

"Now, now, Oliver. If you say things like that in public somebody will call you a Communist."

The old man smiled; there was something wistful in his eyes.

"No. I think I'm nearer the Tom Paine school of thought. Only last week my wife told me I was at least that far behind the times. . . . Then you're going ahead with this project even if it ruins you financially?"

"It won't ruin me, Oliver. And it's better for me to work than to sit on my hinder, getting broader in the beam."

"You've always been energetic," said Dr. Marlin slowly. "Now, I would enjoy a quiet life. I've often thought I should never have gone into medicine. I've never liked the hustling a man has to do to earn a living in practice. I think I have the instincts of a scholar, perhaps. I might have done better as a teacher or a research man."

Finlay eyed the older man speculatively. Did Marlin, after all, know his limitations, realize that he was a poor surgeon? If he did not, Finlay was sure no one would ever tell him, for there was something in the kindly dignified old face with its fine wrinkles at the temples and its pale blue eyes that forbade harshness and familiarity alike. For all his slowness and general ineffectiveness John knew he would rather have Marlin pottering over him than be run through Herbert Baldwin's streamlined medical factory. Conscientiousness and personal interest overbalanced mere efficiency. In their own dim way Marlin's patients must always have realized that.

"Well, Oliver, I was lucky. I always wanted to be a doctor. I always enjoyed my work. Not that I like everything about it or all the people I have to mix up with. But I love medicine, and I always have."

"I know you do. I've often envied you. But my line was pretty well petered out before I was born, I think. I never had enough energy to feel that way about anything."

"Come off, Oliver. Come off. Raising hell isn't the most important thing in life. You've had a home and a fine family. No man in Seaforth has more devoted patients. You've got more influence and more friends than you realize. Don't try hinting to me that you think you're a failure."

Marlin shrugged his shoulders and slipped his cigarette case into his pocket.

"Maybe all you say is true, John. But it hasn't anything to do with the case. I'm an old man. There's nothing ahead of me but the downhill slope. I only thought perhaps I could persuade you not to risk everything you have in this new venture. But after all it's your own business and I've always said I attended to my own affairs and let other folks alone. I suppose I ought to practice what I preach." The man got up slowly, adjusting his spectacles mechanically. "I must be running along now. I have to

keep pretty close to a routine or I feel wretched next day. But I wanted to have a talk with you, and I'm glad I came over."

"So am I, Oliver. I don't think lightly of old friendships."

"Thanks, John. Perhaps I can help you a little if things get rough. I'm not much of a fighter but I'll do what I can for you."

"Don't get into trouble over me, Oliver. Let Baldwin and Arnold and Schuyler rant. I should worry!"

Marlin looked sharply at the stern chin and cool dark gray eyes.

"Either you've got colossal nerve or the best poker face in this state. If you could have heard some of the things that were said about you at the medical society meeting last week I don't think you'd be so unconcerned."

"I'm not unconcerned, Oliver. But I foresaw what is happening and so I wasn't surprised or shocked. And I know there is worse—much worse—to come."

The old man smiled wryly. He buttoned his jacket and picked up his overcoat and hat.

"By the way, John, there is a special meeting of the Efficiency Committee tomorrow evening. I don't believe that either Dryden or Garnell will be notified of it."

Finlay frowned and pursed his lips speculatively, but almost at once a gleam of amusement flashed into his eyes. "Thank you, Oliver. I appreciate the tip. I'll pass it on where it will do the most good."

When Marlin had gone John threw himself down in the deep armchair. A broad grin spread slowly over his high-colored face. If D.D. and Garnell stayed away from the committee meeting, as they were supposed to do, Baldwin and Schuyler would have opportunity to talk freely but there would still be a channel for information. That was good. And it was even better to know that he could count on Marlin.

When John came to go to bed he was still smiling. He stretched his legs between the cool sheets and burrowed his head into the pillow. Going to sleep, he thought drowsily, was pleasant—like sinking into a soft warm cloud or drifting over warm summer seas. Suddenly he found himself wondering how Grace Rodney went to sleep. She would think of sleeping as a duty to be got through as expeditiously and efficiently as possible. Chuckling faintly, he slid into oblivion.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

EVEN in the absence of the unnotified members, Dryden and Garnell, it proved harder than either Baldwin or Schuyler had anticipated to control the Efficiency Committee. The general dislike of Arnold's loudmouthed coarseness, the chronic envy of Baldwin in his capacity as chief of staff at Seacliff, and the instinctive suspicion of Schuyler's smooth pliancy—all of which permeated the committee—resulted in an unorganized but effective opposition. The fact that everyone present knew that Baldwin trusted neither Arnold nor Schuyler and that each of them in turn suspected and feared Baldwin added to the constraint that hung over the little gathering. Even the excellent salads and steaks, cigars and coffee which Schuyler provided lessened the awkwardness very little. The meeting turned into a long and stormy discussion of the cancellation of staff appointments and hospital privileges as disciplinary measures.

Finally Dr. Marlin got up and said the thing that had been in everyone's mind but no one had had the courage to mention openly.

"I am unalterably opposed to increasing the grounds on which a man can be dismissed from the hospital staff or deprived of the use of the institution. Two members of this committee are not here tonight and I for one do not believe their absence is accidental. I believe that each of them is under fire. I also believe that John Finlay is under attack. Dryden is in disfavor because he is a friend of Finlay's, Garnell because he is a Jew, Finlay because he favors health insurance and is rebuilding his private hospital."

The courageous old man looked around the table; his eyes

rested longest on Schuyler and Baldwin. "If I am mistaken in these conclusions I shall be happy to have my error proved to me."

The moment Marlin sat down Arnold broke into vituperation. "What's turned you into a Jew-fancier? Every one of the God-damned bastards ought to be run out of Seaforth."

"Where would they go?" asked Eric Nelson.

"For all I care they could starve or cut their throats, or the packers could render them up into lard! What's the difference to us?"

Oliver Marlin looked from Schuyler's pasty embarrassed face to Baldwin's grimly set mouth. "Don't be any more beastly than you can help, Warren," he said coldly, following George Schuyler's uneasy glance from Arnold's flushed face to Nelson's angry blue eyes.

But before anything more could be said Herbert Baldwin erased the frown from his face and attempted to draw attention away from his colleague's outburst. "Dr. Garnell's race and religion are of no personal concern to me. But I am greatly distressed to see this group divided at a time when our profession should present an unbroken front to the attacks directed against it."

"Will you tell me who is attacking the medical profession in Seaforth?" demanded Marlin.

Baldwin shook his head as though this skepticism pained him. "You know as well as I that an attempt is being made to set up a system of unethical practice in Queen County. I have it on excellent authority that Finlay employs agents on a commission to sell memberships in the hospital association he is promoting, and I need hardly inform you that this is a direct violation of the first principle laid down by the American Medical Association for the conduct of group clinics."

"Why not explain that to Pat Boyd?" retorted Marlin quickly. "He has solicitors in all the mills around Newland."

Baldwin cast a warning glance in Warren Arnold's direction.

"Boyd's name has been mentioned before tonight, but for what reason I do not know. He makes little or no use of Seacliff and he has no connection with this committee."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Eric Nelson, who had formed a habit of following Marlin's lead. "He turns over a lot of patients to you and Arnold."

"Why shouldn't he refer cases to us if he wishes to?" demanded

Baldwin coldly. "He is certainly free to choose whatever physicians he likes in consultation."

"But all his patients wind up in your hands or Arnold's," insisted Nelson.

"I am at a loss to understand you, Nelson. Are you insinuating that I am connected in some way with Boyd's clinic in Newland? If so, I would like to go on record here and now as stating that I have never been in Boyd's place. I don't even know where it is."

"That doesn't clear up the situation," objected Oliver Marlin. "Boyd knows the way to your office and Arnold's whether you have ever been in his clinic or not. I've seen him going into your rooms."

"Some circumstantial evidence," murmured Nelson, "is very strong, as Thoreau said when he found a trout in the can of milk."

This remark brought a malignant stare from Schuyler and an uneasy silence fell upon the room. Presently Robert Jackson moved that they adjourn.

But the issue had not been disposed of. It cropped up again at the next regular meeting of the committee, when Jackson with obvious reluctance read a resolution proposing that unprofessional conduct so far as Seacliff was concerned should include any violation of the American Medical Association's regulations for group and contract practice.

"Why all the fuss?" asked Oliver Marlin with unusual vehemence. "I used to do contract work, Baldwin and Arnold still do a lot of it right here in Seacliff. Are we all to be branded as unethical?"

"We've all got the jitters," said Nelson. "We've seen our incomes dwindle, we're afraid we'll lose the patients we still have. Whenever anything new or different is suggested we get scared and angry. Instead of facing the facts and figuring out a way to handle the crisis we threaten the man who has a plan he wants to try out."

Other members, not so outspoken as Marlin and Nelson, proved equally reluctant to support the resolution which Jackson had presented so half-heartedly and once more the meeting broke up in indecision.

Oliver reported the ill-tempered discussion to John one evening when he and Peter McFarlane were together.

"It was amusing. That resolution might as well have been a

time bomb: nobody would touch it. And you should have seen how subdued Arnold was; he didn't call a single person a God-damned bastard. Baldwin must have given him a real dressing down. . . . But Jackson worries me, turning into an errand boy for Schuyler and Herbert Baldwin."

"One of the things I admire about doctors," murmured McFarlane, "is their exquisite courtesy to each other. Newspapermen should adopt a code like it."

The next day Peter reported gleefully that he had called Schuyler on the phone and without identifying himself inquired whether Finlay and Garnell were members of the Seacliff staff. "I thought he'd choke. He sputtered and sizzled and tried to avoid answering, but finally he said yes. Then I said I was glad to know there were at least two doctors at his hospital whom I could trust."

Dennis too, sure that his days at Seacliff were numbered, permitted himself a sly jab at the distracted superintendent.

"I told him yesterday that I'd heard a rumor that labor conditions in all the hospitals in Seaforth were to be investigated. You should have seen his face, John."

"Why do you torment the poor devil? That won't get you anywhere."

"It relieves my feelings. And that's something."

"Yes, I suppose so." From beneath dark brows Finlay studied Dryden thoughtfully. He often wondered what was going on in the younger man's mind. Dennis had gradually reverted to his normal manner; except for a tendency to labored wisecracks and occasional fits of abstraction he showed no traces of the previous winter's emotional storm.

Eleanor's name was not mentioned between the two but John was sure that Dennis did not hear from her. He was equally certain that Miss Rodney did, but he asked no questions. He assured himself that it was none of his business, that Dennis and Eleanor were old enough to know their own minds, that he had done his duty as he saw it, that it was the sheerest nonsense to worry over the outcome. But in spite of all this Eleanor was much in his thoughts. She seemed to him a strange wistful lonely figure, possessed of a resolution which defied all efforts to break it through and a gallantry which moved him deeply. But nevertheless he still regretted that Dennis had remained oblivious to Priscilla.

Since Peter McFarlane had discovered Priscilla Graham they

had been much together and it was not unusual to find McFarlane's dilapidated Model A coupé parked in the block below Seacliff after dinner was over for the hospital employees. Of this alliance John was skeptical but at times he speculated on the powerlessness of the human being in the grip of biological forces.

"It's a good thing I'm not in love," he said to himself more than once. "Being past that sort of thing I can keep my eye on the ball."

On one of Finlay's visits to the laboratory Dennis remarked as he was leaving, "I heard a wild one today about Nathan Garnell."

"Yes? What sort of a yarn?"

"That he is a drunkard. The story is that he was sent out here in the first place by his family to get rid of him."

John shrugged his shoulders. "I heard that one long ago, D.D. According to the same authorities Arthur is a hop-head and you're tangled up with some married woman in the east and I'm an embezzler."

Dennis laughed a little. "Some folks will be awfully disappointed when you don't skip the country with the proceeds of your membership sale."

"What bothers me is their lack of imagination," commented Finlay. "Even an imbecile should be able to think up something better than these fantastic tales."

But the knowledge that these things were being said about him and his friends rankled in John's memory. From this time on he was never quite free from half-conscious resentment and it was with a certain sense of estrangement that he drove into Seaforth to attend the Seacliff staff meeting early in November.

As usual he was a little late and found the meeting already in progress. The first paper was an excellent one—a study of kidney function by Morrison, one of Baldwin's young assistants—but it would have been better suited to a group of physiologists than to a gathering of practitioners of many specialties and many varying degrees of competence. Warren Arnold yawned openly and John could see other men nodding and moving restlessly. Well to the front sat Herbert Baldwin wrapped in superb complacency: his young man might not be eloquent but he was making an impression on the staff. Whether they understood what he was saying or not, they would be convinced that he was an authority on the kidney.

When Morrison finished, Dryden reported the autopsies done

during the past month and exhibited his specimens, but Dennis was not himself and his talk was far below his usual standard.

Then one of the oldest members of the staff read a rambling paper on focal infections. He spoke in a monotone without raising his head, and as he finished each page he turned and laid it down slowly on the chairman's desk. Before long someone in the back of the room began to count the discarded sheets as they accumulated one by one and soon a suppressed laugh greeted each leaf as it was put down. When he finished there was a dead silence.

The chairman glanced around with some embarrassment.

"Is there no discussion?" he asked.

Oliver Marlin got slowly to his feet.

"Some years ago I became a convert to the theory of focal infection. I added my share to the number of appendices and gall bladders and Fallopian tubes which were removed from unsuspecting people. I also observed that the nose and throat men took out lots of tonsils and operated on many sinuses without perceptible improvement in the patients. Finally I concluded that my own teeth were infected and must come out in order to prevent arthritis. The only result was to make it impossible for me to enjoy eating nuts and to force me to give up corn on the cob altogether. Since then I search less earnestly for bad appendices and cloudy sinuses and my patients get along just as well. Focal infection I think has been run into the ground."

This brought a murmur of amusement and assent but as soon as Marlin sat down the audience relapsed into lethargy. Finally, Morrison, the young man who had spoken so learnedly of the kidney, rose and addressed the chair.

"No one should get the idea that the concept of focal infection is new. In the early 1800's Dr. Benjamin Rush observed that arthritis often improved after the extraction of sore or decayed teeth and he reported his experience along that line. The theory of focal infection is not a product of the twentieth century."

Several of Morrison's listeners glanced smilingly at each other when he sat down and there was an audible stir as others lighted cigarettes and offered them to their neighbors. But John could see on their faces little but boredom and a desire to escape. He got up quickly.

"May I have a couple of minutes, Mr. Chairman? . . . I wish to announce the formal opening of Sun Mount next week."

Men sat up and looked at each other in surprise. But Finlay took no notice of this reaction.

"We have no intention of competing with larger institutions in Seaforth. We are primarily interested in a small local hospital adapted to local needs. The same policies which were followed in the earlier Sun Mount will prevail again.

"Small hospitals must be good ones if they are to justify their existence. We have put in high-grade equipment, a good laboratory, and an excellent Xray department.

"But of course machinery does not make a hospital. And furthermore a one-man institution is a poor thing. Dr. Lawrence, who has been with me since spring, and I will form the nucleus of the staff, but Dr. McBride, formerly roentgenologist here in Seacliff, has returned from Philadelphia to do our Xray work and I have invited the other men practicing in Newland and the adjacent territory to join us. We hope to make Sun Mount a community hospital before we are through. Miss Rodney who was head nurse in my old institution will have charge of the nursing service and you know what that means for our patients.

"However a great deal depends on the consultants available to any hospital. In that respect, I think we have been very fortunate. We have an outstanding group of consultants. In surgery, Walter Elliston, major surgeon here in Seacliff. In pediatrics Eric Nelson, also a member of this staff. In ear, nose, and throat Nathan Gamell whom you all know. And Duncan Garfield of the Queen County Hospital promises his help when we need advice on bone cases. I am sure you agree with me that Sun Mount will be a good small-town hospital."

Finlay was speaking with confidence and careful informality; he stood with his hands in his pockets and one shoulder against the wall, his manner was that of taking his listeners individually into his confidence.

"I want you all to come out to Newland next Thursday afternoon. Miss Rodney tells me there will be plenty of food and I suspect there might be other refreshment available to visiting physicians. We have no patients in the house yet and you can have the place to yourselves. Come early and look over the building and the equipment. And may I add that any of you will always be sure of a welcome at Sun Mount?"

Finlay had taken great pains in the preparation of this little speech and the candor with which he smiled at the men before

him had its effect. Only Baldwin and Warren Arnold and Schuyler remained haughtily aloof. The others crowded up to exchange friendly banter with John.

"The Commercial Club ought to strike off a medal for you," said one man. "It takes more guts than I've got to build anything now."

On the outskirts of the group hovered Dryden waiting for Finlay to break away.

"You can see for yourself that those fellows haven't got anything against you," he said as they walked down the corridor toward the laboratory. "It's just that little bunch of highbinders that are laying for you. And you certainly beat them to the draw tonight. Not one of them had any notion that you were going to announce your opening or your staff this evening."

John grunted. "The first shot counts for something, of course. But what I wish I knew right now is who will get the last shot."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CONSTANCE McBRIDE looked up from the sock she was darning. Arthur was sprawling on the inadequate apartment house davenport in one corner of the small living room, his long legs stretched out in front of him and his face very serious. She could see that he was deeply disturbed. She eyed the young man who was walking the floor, and curled a little deeper into her chair.

William Lawrence having reached the end of another lap of his restless pacing whirled around and threw out his hands in protest.

"I like the old man. I hate to run out on him. But I tell you, Mac, I simply can't stay here. I can't afford to. Suppose I stick around and get kicked out of the medical society or have my license revoked, where will I be? I'm on my own, you know. Father said he'd done enough when he paid for my education. I've got to dig myself in somewhere."

Arthur McBride moved his feet uneasily and stared at the pattern in the rug unhappily.

"I see how you feel, Bill," he said slowly. "But think of John Finlay for a minute. He's sunk a lot of money in Sun Mount. He's working like a dog. And he's depending on us to stand by. You can't just walk out on him."

"It isn't that I want to go," answered Lawrence quickly. "But I have no choice. They're after everybody who's associated with Finlay, I tell you." The young man's shoulders sagged, he rubbed his fingers through his hair and threw himself down into the other corner of the davenport and put his head between his hands.

But presently he looked up again. "If you were smart, Mac, you'd clear out too."

McBride started. Over the other man's head his eyes met those of his wife. He could see that she too was taken aback.

"You don't mean that, Bill. You know I wouldn't ditch Dr. Finlay."

Constance smiled down at the work between her fingers. Arthur was like that; she always knew what to expect from him. He would never let anyone down. But he did wear amazingly large holes in the toes of his socks. She reached for another strand of yarn.

Lawrence looked covertly from one of them to the other. "You both think I'm a heel, don't you?"

"Well, I never would have persuaded you to come out here if I'd taken you for the sort that runs out at the first sign of trouble." McBride's high-boned cheeks were flushed and his voice was sharp.

Lawrence laughed shortly. "The first sign of trouble! Say, before I'd been here two weeks I knew what the old man was heading for!"

Bleak stubbornness settled over McBride's large bony face. "Don't call him 'the old man' again. I don't like it."

Once more Constance smiled to herself.

"I don't like the way you talk anyhow," continued Arthur coldly. "I've had to fight for most of the things I've got so far. It would be good for you to do a little fighting yourself, Bill."

Lawrence shrugged his shoulders and turned toward Constance.

"I didn't come here to quarrel," he said. "But someone should persuade this husband of yours that this is serious business and he ought to look out for himself."

"Arthur is the best judge of what he ought to do, Dr. Lawrence. I wouldn't dream of interfering."

McBride looked sternly at the other young man. "I never told you this. I saw no reason to. But after Schuyler kicked me out of Seacliff and I had no job and no money, Dr. Finlay came to me and offered to lend me enough to go east for graduate work if I'd come back when I finished. He told me to go ahead and get married. He promised he'd have a place for me here. Now you know why I feel the way I do about him."

Lawrence glanced calculatingly at Constance. "Was it quite

fair of Finlay, do you think, to put a man under such an obligation?" he asked.

A dull red spread swiftly over McBride's high cheekbones.

"I don't believe that Dr. Finlay had any such motive," said Constance quickly. "It just happens that things have worked out this way."

"But that isn't true. I have it from reliable sources that Finlay knew from the first exactly what the attitude of the profession would be toward this scheme of his."

"You know a lot of things," growled McBride.

There was a faint smile on the other man's face as he answered. "I make it my business to get next to the right people wherever I am. I don't like to be caught. I want to know what's going on around me so I can protect myself."

"And so you've been gumshoeing. I suppose you think well of yourself for that. But getting next to the right people has never been my line."

"So much the worse for you, Mac. A bit of diplomacy wouldn't hurt you. Just a few words or a gesture at the right time, or even a little harmless flattery now and then, makes a lot of difference."

"Thanks for the advice. I think I can manage without it."

There was no mistaking Arthur's resentment or his obduracy. William Lawrence moved his hands a little.

"I didn't mean to offend you, Mac. But I think you should realize that you're in for trouble if you stay here. It won't be pleasant to have your license rescinded."

"No. You're quite right. It wouldn't. But I don't scare worth a cent."

In the lamplight McBride's deep-set hazel eyes glowed with dull anger.

Lawrence shrugged his shoulders again. "Well, you can't say I didn't warn you. Now I shan't feel any further responsibility for you."

"That suits me fine!"

The quick retort startled Lawrence. He glanced irresolutely at Constance. She was an attractive young woman and he had enjoyed a good many evenings in this apartment since the McBrides had returned to Newland, but now her head was bent over her darning as though she did not notice him. He looked at his wrist watch.

"Perhaps I'd better be going," he said rather hesitantly. "It's late."

"Yes, it is getting late," replied Arthur promptly. "Don't let us keep you."

Lawrence got to his feet. He felt the knot of his tie self-consciously and buttoned his jacket around him.

"I wish you wouldn't take it like this, Mac. It isn't that I have anything against Finlay. He's a fine old duck but he's off on the wrong foot. Why should you go down with him? This isn't your fight."

Arthur stood up abruptly. "I guess you don't know much about loyalty . . . or gratitude, do you?"

Lawrence made a graceful gesture. "I won't argue with you, Mac. But some day you'll see that I was right." He turned toward Constance. "I'm sorry we talked shop, Mrs. McBride. I want you to know that I've enjoyed knowing you and coming here. You've always made it very pleasant."

"Thank you." Constance laid aside her work. "You'll remember us to our friends in Philadelphia, won't you? Especially Miss Winters. I had thought she might come west on a trip while you were here. It would have been nice to see her again."

A faint flush crept across Lawrence's handsome face.

"Yes, wouldn't it. But she didn't feel that she . . . could leave her family. Good-by, Mrs. McBride. Perhaps I shall see you again before I leave. But just in case I don't, my best wishes."

Lawrence shook hands with the girl rather formally and turned away.

When the door of the apartment had closed behind him Arthur came and stood over his wife. "I'm sorry if I made a scene, Connie. But I wanted to chuck that fellow out on his neck, the dirty so-and-so!"

He tramped out into the kitchenette for a drink of water and came back and threw up a window.

"Go ahead and swear if you want to," said Constance. "You needn't think I have never heard cuss words or dirty stories. After five years in an insurance office I'm not easily shocked."

She was still so new a wife as not to be sure that the temper her husband held so rigidly in leash would not break into an open tempest about her ears. She watched him as he flopped down into the one large armchair the apartment afforded.

"I'm glad you gave him that jab about Miss Winters. It hit a sore spot."

McBride flung out a long arm. Constance held her breath. His hand had missed the candy jar on the side table by a millimeter.

"He's scared, that's all that's wrong with him. And what does he care about John Finlay or Sun Mount? He's looking after Bill Lawrence, first and last. He's no good, I tell you, Connie. He hasn't any . . ."

"Guts," Constance finished the sentence. "I agree with you, my dear."

Arthur stared at her.

"I've told you before that I am not a lady, but you didn't believe me. So I thought I'd prove it." Young Mrs. McBride folded the socks she had been working on and put away her needle. Then she went to sit on the arm of her husband's chair.

"Connie," he cried, "you're a brick!" He put an arm around her and drew a long breath that seemed to reach the very bottom of his lungs. "How about a walk around the block before we turn in? We can look at that little house we like over on the next street. Do you suppose we'll ever have a house of our own?"

"Of course we will, silly!" The girl bent down and kissed him. "Come on. This place is stifling."

Three days later Arthur came home to report that Lawrence had gone, and that he himself was taking over quarters in the downtown office.

"I'm going to pitch in and work harder than ever, Connie. I used to be a pretty good general practitioner and I don't think I've forgotten all I knew. Thank the Lord, I've got that technician at Sun Mount. She can handle the run of the work up there without me. Will you come down tonight and help me clean out the mess Bill left behind him?"

Walking down the hall of the office building that evening McBride stopped suddenly and pointed to the door ahead of them. "Tomorrow that name comes off and mine goes on, right below John Finlay's. Come along, old girl. I want to get things cleaned up and fixed my way."

They were grubbing away happily in McBride's new office, Constance with a dustcloth and Arthur in his shirtsleeves with his head in the bookcase, when the outer door of the suite

opened. The girl raised her head and was about to speak when she heard Finlay's voice.

"Come on in, Roberts. We can talk in my office."

McBride sat back on his haunches and shook his head for silence. Presently they heard another door open and close.

"Henry Roberts," muttered Arthur. "I wonder what brought him here."

"Who is Henry Roberts?" asked Constance pausing in her dusting.

"Oh, just a hanger-on of the medical profession in Seaforth. More interested in auto racing than he ever was in medicine. He dabbles in aviation too. I've always hoped he'd break his neck one day in that plane of his."

Arthur did not resume his cleaning. Instead he continued to sit on his haunches in an attitude of thoughtfulness. "I bet he's got something up his sleeve. I wouldn't trust him with a counterfeit quarter. One thing sure, I won't leave this place until he does."

"I can't hear a word you say when you mumble that way," protested Constance. "Are you trying to tell me something?"

"No. Forget it. I was just thinking out loud." McBride dropped forward on his knees again and began sorting out a pile of journals on the lowest shelf of the bookcase.

But after a few minutes he got up and stole quietly over to the door. At the end of the little hallway of the suite he could see a streak of light at the threshold of Finlay's private office. He listened but could hear only a low murmur of voices. He went back to his work once more but now he was restless. Soon he rose and tiptoed to the door again and stood there listening.

"Why, Arthur," exclaimed Constance. "You're eavesdropping!"

"Sh—sh! I'll be back in a minute."

McBride crept toward the strip of light on Finlay's threshold, pausing at intervals. When he was within four or five feet of the door he caught the words, "She's a honey, I can tell you." He inched a little nearer and heard Roberts say, "Only four thousand. And cheap at the price."

Then there came rapid footsteps and Arthur fled back down the hallway. He was in his own office again, sorting journals, when he heard a loud angry voice. "You've got somebody planted here, Finlay. I won't stand for that."

A moment more and Henry Roberts thrust his head into Mc-

Bride's office. Constance looked up genuinely startled, her dustcloth dangling from one hand, and Arthur raised his eyes as though annoyed at the intrusion. Behind Roberts he could see John Finlay.

"What do you want?" asked McBride curtly.

Roberts stared at him insolently. "What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Do I have to tell you why I am in my own office, minding my own business?" retorted McBride.

Roberts fastened his eyes on Constance, then glanced over his shoulder at John. "Who's that woman? What's she doing here?"

Arthur straightened up. "Since when does a man have to account to you for his wife?"

Somewhat taken aback, the dapper little man retreated.

"What did I tell you?" asked Finlay. "You're imagining things, Roberts."

"No, I'm not. There was someone out here in this hall a minute ago."

"Then where is he now? You've looked everywhere without finding anyone. Are you suggesting that whoever it was has evaporated?"

Roberts scowled venomously first at John and then at Constance and Arthur. He hesitated as though he wanted to say something more but did not have the courage. Then he made an obscene noise and turned away.

McBride got up and watched him move away with an affectation of righteous indignation toward the waiting room. Finlay followed him closely.

"Don't forget your hat."

Roberts whirled around, snatched the black Homburg from John's fingers, and set it on his head.

"I think you've got it at the wrong angle. Shouldn't it be a little further back?"

The small man stopped in his tracks and glared. "You'll regret this, Finlay. Nobody can talk to me like that and get away with it."

"I think you take the angle of your hat too seriously," said John. Then suddenly his voice changed. "There's the door—right ahead of you. Keep on going. And don't come back."

"You . . . you . . ." spluttered Roberts.

"Easy there," interrupted Finlay. "Your arteries may not be all they should be. You might pop off one day in a fit of rage."

The furious little man jerked open the door. "I'll get you for this," he shouted, "if it's the last thing I ever do!"

John looked after him for a moment, then turned, and Arthur saw the grimness in his eyes.

"What was that fellow here for?"

"He was staging a holdup." At the look of consternation which came over the younger man's face Finlay put a hand on his shoulder. "Don't be upset, Mac. I was expecting it. Come into the office and I'll show you and Constance something interesting."

Five minutes later when he took the record off the dictaphone John was still smiling and still grim.

"Nice little scheme, wasn't it? But only a fool would give Henry Roberts four thousand dollars for his promise to keep the County Society within bounds, and I am not that fool."

Constance stared at him blankly and John's face softened.

"Don't worry, my dear. It's easy to deal with small-bore skullduggery of this sort. They'll have to do better than that to get ahead of us."

The girl laughed weakly. "I shall have to revise my ideas about doctors," she said. "I never knew they could be so . . . hard-boiled."

John brushed aside this remark for something more important.

"I want to tell you two that I've written to Chicago to my old school for a man to take Lawrence's place. I appreciate your willingness to pitch in down here, Mac, and help me out, but it's poor business to make a specialist out of a man and then set him to doing something else. As soon as we get through this emergency I want you back in your own field where you belong. Just have patience and things will work out."

And the two young people were almost convinced that things would work out as they watched John march away with his shapeless brown hat on one side of his head and heard his tuneless whistle in the corridor outside essaying *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?* But when they were going to bed that night Arthur reverted to a mood of questioning.

"It isn't going to be so easy to get a man in Bill's place. Every fellow with ambition wants a job with a future. Bill would have stayed if he hadn't been sure he had nothing but trouble to look forward to here. But getting into a scrap he hadn't started and

saw no chance to win didn't appeal to him, and it won't appeal to anyone else who's on the make. And Finlay wouldn't have a hack without energy and drive. So there we are, on the horns of a dilemma as neat as any George Bernard Shaw himself could think up!"

At first Constance could think of no reply to this except to reiterate that she approved of his standing by Sun Mount and John Finlay, but before she went to sleep she had made a tentative plan of her own of which she said nothing to her husband.

Later the same week McBride encountered Dennis Dryden coming into the hospital.

"Well, well," said Dennis. "The doughty Scot come to the rescue! When are you going to sleep now that you're holding down a job downtown and doing the Xray work up here too? And how does your wife like the new schedule?"

"I don't see you ditching John Finlay," retorted Arthur.

"Pfui! I've got lots of time on my hands and I only do the tag ends in the laboratory here."

"Oh, sure. And it must be a treat to spend your evenings and Sundays cutting sections, making blood counts, and running Wassermanns. Such a change for you!" McBride's tone was mildly sarcastic. "By the way, how is everything at dear old Seacliff?"

"Foul! Foul beyond words! George would serve sawdust and woodpulp in the dining room if he could. And he roars at that poor peewee who took your place until the wretch is afraid to use a film larger than an eight by ten for anything. I actually caught him making a lateral view of a spine fracture on a five by seven—sort of a stamp picture effect, like they had in the gay nineties."

"Did he get it?"

Dryden grinned reminiscently. "Yes, but not until he used up four films. And he was so scared Schuyler would find that out that I took the three extra films and burned them for him."

"If I'm a doughty Scot you are the Good Samaritan."

"Oh, hell, Mac. Nobody could help being sorry for the poor little guy. I think he'd die on the spot if he lost his job."

Arthur looked at his watch. "I've got to hurry," he said. "I'm due downtown right now. I don't mind telling you, D.D., that I'll be glad when we get another fellow in the office."

But day by day the prospect of finding an assistant to replace

William Lawrence receded farther and farther into the limbo of remote possibilities, and finally McBride admitted to his wife that he had given up hope of getting back into the Xray laboratory in the hospital.

"I don't believe we'll ever get a man to take Bill's place," he said dejectedly across a late supper table in the kitchenette.

"Why?" asked Constance.

Arthur paused with a spoonful of soup halfway to his mouth.

"Well, Dr. Finlay had a letter today from the chap he wrote to about getting another associate. They went to medical school together and so this big shot wrote the truth. He said that the first man he spoke to was interested in the opening but just to be sure everything was as represented he inquired about Finlay from the secretary of the Queen County Society. The answer he got queered the deal not only for him but for every other man in the school who was looking for a location."

Constance got up to take away the soup plates. "That might happen again, mightn't it?"

"Sure it might. And it will. We won't be able to get anyone from outside the state, and probably no one who belongs here either." McBride paused for a moment. "D.D. thinks he should resign from Seacliff and come right over. But what we need is not a laboratory man. There has to be somebody in the office to help with the contract work and the general practice and the surgery. That was exactly what Finlay had in mind when he got Bill Lawrence last spring. And Bill turned out to be a quitter."

Constance swallowed hard and tried to keep her hands from trembling as she put the dishes on the table. She remembered vividly the desperate letters Arthur had written her after Schuyler had discharged him; she was sick with misgiving over what he would do if this new enterprise failed. She recalled what Dr. Lawrence had said about licenses being rescinded. Suppose that should happen to Arthur!

"What does Dr. Finlay think about it, dear?"

"I don't know. He didn't say anything, just handed me the letter from Chicago to read. And after awhile I heard him whistling that cursed little pig tune about who's afraid of the big bad wolf."

Constance looked out of the dinette window. It had been raining as usual and the street lights sparkled back at her from the pools of water on the pavement.

"I like John Finlay," she said slowly. "He is a brave man and I don't believe he will ever give up."

"Who said anything about giving up?" McBride stared across the little table with startled hazel eyes. "D.D. and I will stick, no matter what happens. You know that, don't you?"

Constance smiled faintly. "You sounded awfully blue just now, dear. It made me think of the way you wrote after you lost your position at Seaciff?"

"I should think you'd know me better by this time than to think I'd walk out on a fight. I've made my own way this far and I don't intend to stop here." There was a little note of bluster in the man's voice.

At the sound of it Constance smiled openly. "No, my dear. I realize that you are a good fighter. But you always want to be sure that everyone realizes how hard the fight is and how great the odds are against you."

The bony face opposite her became puzzled and faintly reproachful.

"Now, Connie . . ."

"Please, Arthur, eat your dinner before it gets any colder. I've been trying to keep it hot for hours now."

By this time Constance herself was quite oblivious to the food she had prepared so carefully. She had begun to see plainly that life in Newland would be no easier than life anywhere else. They would have to economize rigidly, live in small shabby apartments. A home of their own would be out of the question for a long long time, she was sure.

Suddenly she found herself resenting these new difficulties, this new disappointment. But she had never been one to sit idly while others worked. There must be jobs in Newland, and if not in Newland then in Seaforth. Depression or no depression, she would find one. She could remember her father saying, "There's no need for a crack legal stenographer ever to be idle." Well, she was a crack legal stenographer and she had had insurance experience besides. Arthur might object to her going to work in an office again, but he couldn't do anything about it if she went out and found a job on her own. If he wanted to make a fuss, he would just have to make it. But it would do him no good.

With this point settled in her own mind she found that her appetite was returning.

"This stew is good, Arthur, if I do say so myself. You'd better eat the rest of it. There's no use saving little dabs of food. Now don't look so solemn. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. But you know quite well that there is a streak of the martyr complex in you."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE winter of 1934 was a strange one. Even the weather was unusual. After extraordinary downpours and floods in November and December, January was warm and balmy. Sunshine and blue skies stimulated everyone in the Sound country in spite of dark hints in the papers that the plains states would have a crop failure if moisture was not soon forthcoming, but one of John's patients expressed the feeling of some people when he said, "Did you ever figure, doc, that all this crop reduction business might not work the way it was figured to? If what we want is nothin' growin' for folks to eat I guess maybe God can manage it better than the A.A.A."

But stranger than the unseasonable weather was the sudden appearance of the C.W.A. Overnight, it seemed, the relief administrators began to talk of local quotas of men to be put to work immediately. Finding projects that could be started at once proved more difficult than might have been expected. Businessmen insisted that relief workers should keep off anything that might attract private enterprise, but when accordingly the C.W.A. was diverted to playground construction and work in the parks and along the country roads they referred scornfully to "leaf raking."

Peter reported the results with sardonic gusto.

"You see, J.F., the damned outfit is ruining every park in Seaforth. They cut down the trees and brush that hold the soil, they build silly little bridges and carry piles of little rocks to line watercourses with and set out saplings that can't possibly survive the winter. And now they're cutting down the poison oak." McFarlane glanced a bit sheepishly at John. "But what of it? They're away from home, out with other men. A couple of weeks

work and they act like different fellows. So to hell with the parks, say I."

"Oh, don't worry, Peter. The parks will come back. The grass will come up and the weeds will grow again. That isn't what worries me."

McFarlane eyed Finlay shrewdly. "Some guy drop dead on a project?"

"No. But somebody might have if it hadn't been for a foreman."

"Well, don't tantalize me. Spill it. Spill it, I tell you."

John grinned. "I don't care if I do, seeing there's a happy ending to the story. Temporarily happy, anyhow."

"I had to go out to Prospect Park yesterday. Some fellow had split his foot open. And when I got him fixed up the foreman asked me if I'd look at another man for him."

"Well, this is what I found. An old fellow who had a hernia operation last November in the County Hospital. He'd been on work relief before that and he signed up for C.W.A. without saying anything about his operation. He was sent out to Prospect Park and the foreman took one look at him and knew he wasn't fit to work. But the old chap begged to stay and finally the foreman weakened."

"At the timekeeper's shack they give out tools every morning and check them back in each evening. In the place there's one of these pot-bellied stoves nobody can keep a fire in and do anything else. So the foreman parked this old fellow beside the stove and ordered him to poke wood into it and neither let the fire go out nor leave the room on pain of instant dismissal. When I was there the old man had just tumbled out of his chair and the temperature must have been ninety at least."

"What was wrong with him—heat exhaustion?"

"No. He'd had a heart attack. I thought at first he was going to pass out right there, but after a while we got him revived."

"And what did you do with him then?"

Finlay gave a short embarrassed laugh. "Well, first I called Duncan Garfield at the County Hospital. But they have no ambulance and the Commissioners won't allow him to hire one. You have to get over there on your own power. Then I called the police but they said it would be two or three hours before they could get a prowler car out to the park. So finally I gathered the old buzzard up and brought him back here with me."

"To Sun Mount?"

"Where else?"

"And now you've got the guy on your hands. How long will he be laid up?"

"Oh, six weeks at least."

"You're going to keep him here in Sun Mount for six weeks, J.F.?"

"Why the catechism? Can't I bring in patients without your approval?"

The reporter unfolded his long legs and pulled himself up out of his chair.

"Listen, J.F. I'm not telling you how to run your hospital, but I know you can't fill it with charity cases and keep going. It may be that you had to take care of this fellow yesterday, but it would have been cheaper to hire an ambulance to take him over to the County this morning than to keep him here for six weeks. And I'll bet you put him in a private room." Peter wheeled around and poked a long thin finger at Finlay. "Didn't you?"

Taken off guard John did not answer immediately but began to rummage in the drawers of his desk. "That damned pipe!" he mumbled. "It was here a minute ago."

"Didn't you?"

"Didn't I what?"

"Stop stalling. Didn't you put this old bird in a private room?"

"Now see here, Peter. I put the man where he'd be comfortable and he's going to stay there."

McFarlane leaned down over the desk. "You're too soft to run a hospital, John Finlay. Any guy with a hard-luck story can get around you."

"Hard-luck story," repeated John. "Well, all right, call it that if you want to." He paused, seeing again the old eyes dim with tears, hearing again the tremulous old voice. "That's what I meant when I told you long ago that medicine can't be run like a business."

"But you'll go broke if you do things like this. It costs money to run a hospital."

"Are you telling me?" asked Finlay. "I write the checks. I ought to know. But one old man more or less isn't going to break me, and this fellow stays put. He has no home and he got his belly full of the County Hospital last fall. Garfield does the best he can, but the place is running over and he's had to reduce the

nursing staff and fire a lot of orderlies. I'm not going to force anyone to go out there unless I have to."

"And may I inquire how you expect to compete with Boyd if you do things like this?"

"I'm not going to compete with Boyd. Nobody could do that and be decent. I'm going to drive Boyd out of business by giving good service at fair prices—something he's never done and never will do, because he doesn't know how."

"I suppose of course you know all about this." Peter pulled a folded newspaper out of his pocket and opened it. "Tonight's *Herald*. I picked it up just now, on my way here."

A two-column headline met Finlay's eye: *Boyd Clinic To Reduce Fees.*

"You see what he's doing, J.F. Cutting prices on you. Only fifty cents it's true, but fifty cents a month is six dollars a year. And when he says a reduction of twenty-five per cent it sounds even bigger."

"At that figure he can't give decent service. Nobody can. I figured rates here at Sun Mount as close as possible, and I know."

"O.K., I'll admit your argument. But do the people in Newland, most of them, know the difference between poor medical care and good? It's all Greek to them. Boyd's place is flashy, they see the apparatus and hear the noise, and they think everything is all right. How can you convince them it isn't?"

John did not reply at once. He sat with his elbows on his desk, a hand on either side of his head.

"I've always contended that in the long run the careless incompetent man's mistakes catch up with him."

"I think you rate the average man's intelligence too high, J.F. You credit people with more sense than they have. I've been hearing complaints here and there that your charges are too high, and Bruce Hewitt called me up this morning and said he had to see me. I've got a hunch that something's gone wrong. I'll let you know if I find out anything."

When the reporter had gone John got up slowly and went to the window. The early darkness of a late winter afternoon was falling, street lights were coming on, shop windows were ablaze. A block down the street he could see a red Neon sign—Boyd Clinic. The glow from it brightened the whole front of the building.

Finlay stood staring at the sign. Professional reticence was ingrained in him; advertising was repugnant to him. And yet . . . He peered down at the crowd surging along the pavement. What did those people know of his scruples? They were accustomed to advertising—in the papers, on billboards, over the radio. It must seem perfectly natural to them.

He shrugged his shoulders and thrust his hands into his trousers pockets. Boyd's advertising was nothing new, and he had expected the price-cutting. Why should he be disturbed by these anticipated events? As for Peter, he had gone into this thing headlong and was impatient at anything that might impede their plans.

But there was something which Peter did not know—something more subtle and much more dangerous than Pat Boyd's crude price-cutting. In Finlay's desk drawer at this moment lay an announcement card sent him by Oliver Marlin. It was one of the notices George Schuyler was sending to all the physicians in Queen County. "Seacliff Hospital has always maintained the highest standards and this change in prices does not mean a change in policy. We challenge any hospital in Queen County to furnish adequate service at a figure we cannot meet or better."

Boring from within the profession was much more ominous than Boyd's crude tactics. A doctor could easily influence the choice of hospitals; often he need do no more than shrug a shoulder, elevate an eyebrow, or alter the inflection of his voice. "Sun Mount? Oh yes, of course . . . if you like. It's not that I have anything against Finlay, you understand, but . . ."

He had seen that sort of creeping attack turned against doctors who had incurred the ill will of their fellows; he had seen it used against men who were unethical or incompetent. He had seen it succeed—often when it had served the ends of justice. And now it was to be directed against him.

The counterattack required some time to launch for there was not only the price-cutting by Seacliff and the Boyd Clinic to be considered but also the grumbling which had begun among his own subscribers. This, Bruce Hewitt explained, was chiefly a matter of ignorance.

"You see, Dr. Finlay, the men don't understand this business very well. The ones of them who've had life insurance mostly had these little industrial policies, so many cents a week, and they've nearly all had to let them go by the board during the

Depression anyhow. Most of the time they fork over their two bucks a month without seeing one of your doctors. Their money's gone and so far as they can see it hasn't got them anything unless they've been sick. Then they hear things about unnecessary operations and experiments on patients, and vaccinating the kids and giving them diphtheria shots sound phoney to fellows who never saw anyone die of smallpox or choke to death with diphtheria. You get me, don't you?"

And John replied that all this was understandable enough but that a method of meeting the problem was hard to find.

"What you're talking about is health education, Hewitt. I hope you don't expect me to go out and undo all the harm that's been done by patent medicine advertising in the last forty years and the damage commercial radio is doing now, peddling bunk by short wave. I can't get these crackpot notions out of people's heads overnight."

Bruce Hewitt nodded agreement, his eyes deep set and dark in his thin face.

"I know that, Dr. Finlay. I was just giving you the men's reactions. They see doctors wearing good clothes, driving good cars, going to their offices after noon, and naturally they think the doctors have an easy life and make plenty of money. So they grouse about paying two dollars a month unless they get something tangible for their cash."

The final upshot of all this was that John decided to admit individuals and single families as well as organized groups of employed persons to membership in the insurance system now formally christened Sun Mount Associates. Furthermore, assisted by Hewitt and McFarlane, he undertook a barnstorming campaign. He spoke to unions and clubs and lodges and all manner of interested groups, and to their surprise the two younger men discovered that he was an extremely effective speaker.

"I didn't dream that J.F. could talk like this," admitted Peter. "And who would have picked him for another Will Rogers? He's so slow-spoken and quiet and so sort of rumped and guileless-looking that no one suspects how shrewd he is underneath. So he puts his stuff over. And how!"

The truth of this was proved when four more unions signed up, followed by a bloc of City Light employees and the Classroom Teachers of Newland and a large group of clerks from

shops and retail stores. Peter was openly envious of Finlay's prowess.

"I can't hold a candle to you," he said. "I guess I'd better proposition you to lick the Guild into shape for me. I'm supposed to have charge of it for Seaforth but so far I haven't been able to get the gang to agree on anything for five minutes. Newspaper-men are congenitally unruly and uproariously individualistic. Trying to get them to stick together is a job for a muleskinner."

"Or for me. Not for a man of culture and refinement like yourself. Thanks for the compliment, but my own job is all I can handle right now."

One of the other activities which consumed time and thought was the formal set-up of Sun Mount Associates. Between this professional group and the people who joined the insurance system there had to be contract relations and definite undertakings. The Associates included, to start with, Finlay, Grace Rodney and Arthur McBride, the understanding being that Dennis and Walter Elliston and Nathan Garnell were to be added when and if they chose to come in.

The dues of each person carrying insurance were set at two dollars a month. In return each member was entitled to medical examination and treatment without additional charge. Those who were hospitalized at Sun Mount were to pay one dollar a day for room and board and nursing care. In addition there were to be small fees for anesthetics and the use of surgical equipment: ten dollars for a minor operation, ten dollars for confinements, twenty dollars for major surgery. The average appendicitis case, as John took pains to point out in his public talks, would pay a total of thirty-four or thirty-five dollars for two weeks' hospital care.

Seventy-five per cent of the dues collected were to be divided among the staff, the remaining fourth would go to the hospital for its expenses and maintenance in addition to the fees coming in from patients receiving hospital treatment. Each physician in the group was to be permitted to carry on whatever private practice he could build up without neglecting his insurance work and to retain the income from this source.

The one hitch which had developed so far was the delinquent subscribers. Some of them, John knew, had lost their jobs; others had come to the end of their savings. Still others no doubt, in spite of his best efforts, still felt that the dues were too high or that they were paying out good money and getting nothing in

return. At any rate, during the month just past there had been 150 members who did not remit.

I wish they could be in my shoes for a few days, thought Finlay whenever he had time to dwell on this situation. But now that the enterprise was in full swing he spent little time worrying. For one thing, Sun Mount always cheered him up. It was as clean and attractive and smooth-running as its predecessor had been.

"That's your doing," he said appreciatively to Miss Rodney. "You should have a big hospital on your hands—a place where you could really make a showing."

"Sun Mount is quite enough for me, thank you," replied the nurse. "There are plenty of problems here. That cook, for instance, who knows nothing about buying."

Finlay smiled at her quick answer. "But what would the patients do without the food to crab about, tell me that? The food is always their ace in the hole."

"Don't I know it?" said Grace Rodney fervently. Then she went on, "By the way, I've been intending to speak to you about that old man upstairs—the one you call CWA. We're going to need someone to tend to the lawn and set out flower beds in the spring. Do you think he might be well enough by that time to do this work?"

"I'll speak to him about it the first chance I get. I suspect the prospect of a job will do him more good than any medicine we could give him. And he'll be your friend for life, Miss Rodney."

"Nonsense!" said the woman crisply. But a little flush tinged the pale olive of her skin as she spoke.

It was not so simple to face Walter Elliston the evening he came to Sun Mount pale and distraught to report that he was no longer on the Seacliff staff.

"I thought I had myself braced for this," he confessed. "God knows I've seen it coming long enough. But I suppose a man is never really prepared for that sort of thing."

"No, probably not," said John. "But the measure of the man is how soon he can get up and go on. Those fellows can throw you out of Seacliff but they can't take your practice away from you. You're already our consulting surgeon. Why don't you simply go on about your business and bring your operative cases over here to Sun Mount?"

Elliston's anxious brown eyes searched Finlay's quiet face. "Do you think I can make it?" he asked dubiously.

"Why not? You came to Seaforth and built up a practice there in spite of hell and high water. But you never remember anything like that. Only calamities stick in your mind. Of course you can make it if you can keep from falling headlong into the Slough of Despond. You're your own worst handicap, Elliston."

After this had been threshed out and Elliston formally made one of the Sun Mount Associates, still another problem confronted Finlay. Like most physicians in the west he had always had a downtown office and now he discovered the inconvenience of practicing in two places. Almost every day he or McBride had to make a quick dash to the hospital on an emergency during office hours. Furthermore it was expensive to duplicate equipment in the two locations. And finally, even in a small town, patients had difficulty finding parking space near at hand.

Pondering these things, John called in Mark Whitney.

"Why not put up a small office building alongside the hospital?" asked the contractor. "There's room to spare. It wouldn't spoil the looks of Sun Mount or obstruct the view, either one."

And so once more piles of lumber and brick and sand appeared on the Sun Mount grounds. The increased efficiency of the new arrangement recommended it to Grace Rodney no less than to Arthur McBride and Dennis Dryden and Walter Elliston, but they were all appalled at the money Finlay was spending.

"I know John's head is screwed on tight," said Dennis one night when he was visiting the McBrides in their apartment. "But it gives me the shivers when I think of all he's put into this place. If he should go broke it would be the biggest medical bust the Sound has ever seen."

Arthur nodded gloomily. "I understand how you feel. I get the gooseflesh whenever I hear him and Whitney talking—so many hundred yards of that and so many cubic feet of this, and God knows how it's to be paid for."

Constance, who had put down her book to listen to the two men, began to laugh. Both Dennis and her husband stared at her in startled surprise.

"You're so funny," she explained. Her voice was low and musical and full of genuine amusement. "I don't suppose either of you has ever had more than five hundred dollars at once and now you're appalled at Dr. Finlay's doings. But he's right, quite

right. The new arrangement will be more compact and efficient. You'll save a lot of time and energy."

"But, Connie," cried McBride. "Time isn't what we need to save. We've got plenty of time. It's money we're short of."

"If I were you, Arthur, I'd stop worrying about the money. I'd do my work and leave the rest to John Finlay. You others are good doctors but it's Finlay who has the vision and the courage to take risks with his eyes open. Without him you wouldn't get very far. And I'm not referring only to his money when I say that."

D.D.'s face had sobered while Constance talked. He watched her—a short slight young woman with soft gray-blue eyes. There was something in the way she spoke that reminded him of Eleanor. Now he turned to Arthur, who was brooding gloomily in his chair.

"The woman is right, Mac. She has told us a mouthful. And it's true. The rest of us had better settle down to be the crew and let John be the captain."

"Well, I for one can't blindfold myself and stop thinking," answered McBride somberly.

"No one wants you to stop thinking, my dear," said Constance. "But you insist on worrying yourself into a chronic state of the blues, and that does no one any good."

"That's the Scotch covenant coming out in him," exclaimed Dennis. "Didn't you know? Walter Elliston is another, just like him. We ought to get them together some evening and have a real gloom fest."

But John himself was apparently troubled with no such misgivings as had assailed his associates one after the other. He moved into a small suite of rooms in the west wing of Sun Mount which overlooked the Sound and the mountains beyond, he hounded Mark Whitney into unheard-of speed in construction and spent his nights poring over catalogues and floor plans. He even began to show an interest in Grace Rodney's designs for flower beds and shrubbery plantings on the hospital grounds. And as he became more and more absorbed in the working-out of his dreamed-of program there crept into him a sort of deep inner peace which was less and less disturbed as time went on by the changing external circumstances of his life.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

FINLAY woke with a start. Automatically his hand went toward the telephone but before he could touch it the noise came again. It was a tap on his windowpane.

"Who the hell's out there?" he called, sitting up in bed.

"It's me," came a wavering voice. "I'm locked out."

"Oh, CWA." John fumbled for his slippers. "Just a minute. . . . What the devil are you doing prowling around in the middle of the night?"

Below the window Finlay could see the figure of the old man vaguely outlined against the lawn.

"I told you I'd been locked out," came the answer now faintly tinged with displeasure. "The cook said he'd leave the door open but he never done so. And it's cold and wet out here."

John grinned. "Well, all right. Go around to the kitchen door and I'll come down and let you in. But be quiet. I don't want you waking everyone else up too."

Shuffling his feet so that his slippers would not slap the linoleum, John made his way along the corridor toward the central hall and the ramp leading down to the lower floor. Halfway he stopped suddenly, having just recalled that Grace Rodney was in the house substituting for the night supervisor who was ill with flu. When he went on again it was even more stealthily.

Around the corner he caught sight of the light in the nurses' office. 'Damn it,' he thought, she's got the place open. Then he laughed silently. 'After all I should be allowed to walk around my own hospital.' But nevertheless he gave a sigh of relief when the doors at the foot of the incline swung to behind him. More rapidly he moved toward the kitchen.

On the steps he found the old man damp and shivering.

"This here fog sure goes right through a fellow, Dr. Finlay."

"Well, come in. Don't stand out there telling me about it."

The old man obeyed. His fingers were blue and his nose looked pinched.

"You should have worn your overcoat, CWA."

"I ain't had no overcoat these three years."

"Then you shouldn't run around at night. What have you been doing anyhow?" John peered at the man. He had on a sweater underneath his coat and it was pinned close around his neck with a safety pin.

"I been to Seaforth—to a meeting," was the reply.

"What meeting?"

The old man held out a poster with a heading in bold black type.

C.W.A. PROTEST MASS MEETING MARCH 29 - 8 p.m.

John took the handbill and read for himself.

"Call of the Unemployed Citizens' League and the Relief Workers' Protective Association to take part in the nation-wide strike and demonstration, March 30. All workers still on the job to strike for one hour. All others assemble at 11 a.m. in Times Square."

"We're organizing a 'pressure group,'" explained the old man. "You can't get nowhere without one. And there's got to be plans laid ahead of time."

"But you're not on C.W.A. any more. You've got a job."

The old man drew himself up. "That's nothin' to do with it, Dr. Finlay. We got to stick together. 'Our first loyalty is to each other'—that's what Mr. Trampalia told us tonight."

John smiled a little. "So there's going to be a big demonstration tomorrow in Seaforth and you must be there. You'd better remind me in the morning to give you some money for bus fare."

Once again the old man drew back his shoulders. "I don't want nobody givin' me money," he said.

"Nonsense! This will just be an advance on your wages. I should have thought of it before, but I've been busy and it slipped my mind. . . . How would some hot coffee taste to you, CWA? Let's have a look and see what's here."

While the percolator was going and he was setting out bread and butter and jam John tried to draw the old man out. There

had been speeches that evening, CWA told him—the fieriest by the man called Trampalia—and there would be others in Times Square tomorrow.

"Folks don't realize what's goin' on. We got to make an impression on the public and the only way we can do it is to get together so people can see how many there are of us."

"What about this man you call Trampalia?"

"Oh, he runs the U.C.L. Some say he's a Communist. I wouldn't know myself, but he's sure a fine talker. He gets everybody all worked up. And that's what we need—enthusiasm and loyalty. See here what he passed out tonight."

John looked at the bit of paper between his fingers. It was the size of a dollar bill, there was a picture of Franklin Roosevelt on the face of it and beneath this the words "Dollar for Bread instead of Taxes." In each corner there was printed "One Vote."

"And what might this be, CWA?"

"Turn it over," said the old man. He smacked his lips and spread a slice of bread thick with jam.

On the reverse side of the paper John read: "This is my platform for the coming city election. Vote for a People's Mayor. I stand on my record. Tom Davidson."

"So the U.C.L. is going into politics?"

"Why not? Ain't the Chamber of Commerce in politics? I guess we're as good as they are."

"I guess you are." John laughed shortly. "At least I hope so."

The old man pushed back his chair. "I feel better," he said slowly. "There ain't nothin' like food and hot coffee when you're tired and cold."

"You didn't walk home from Seaforth, did you?"

"No. I hitch-hiked there and back. But I don't seem to have my strength back yet and it was cold ridin' in an open car tonight." The old man's eyes brightened. "When I get the rest of my first wages I aim to buy me an overcoat. I ain't had a new one since about 1925."

"You'd better get one tomorrow before you go to Seaforth. We don't want you coming down with pneumonia. Here, take this. I'll keep track of it. You know Miss Rodney has a lot of work planned for you around the hospital this spring."

"Thank you." The old man glanced up hesitantly. "Now . . . Miss Rodney . . . that's a fine woman, Dr. Finlay. She sure

knows her business. But . . . well, I'm just a mite scared of her at times."

John smiled with the side of his mouth away from CWA. "There have been others who felt the same. Perhaps you don't know that it was Miss Rodney who first suggested that we find a job for you here at Sun Mount."

The old man stared.

"Yes, CWA, she thought of it before I did. And we'd like you to know that you've got a place here as long as you want it or need it."

There was a pause. John looked up. The old man's rheumy eyes were full of tears.

"I guess there won't be no question about me wantin' it." On the last word the old voice cracked.

John spoke briskly. "O.K., then. That's settled. Now let's get to bed. Morning will be here before you know it."

His mind busy with the report of the mass meeting of the unemployed scheduled for the next day, Finlay picked his way up the incline in the dim light from the upper hall. At the top of the ramp he hesitated. The door of the nurses' office was still ajar and through it Grace Rodney's voice reached him crisp and decisive but tinged with the softer inflection he had learned to listen for at times.

"No, no. You did right to call me. I can come down without any inconvenience to anyone. . . . I'll take the train this morning and come straight to the hotel. You can expect me before three o'clock. . . . Good-by."

The click of a receiver and then silence. John took a step into the upper hall before Miss Rodney came through the lighted doorway and saw him.

"Oh, it's you."

"Yes," said Finlay awkwardly. "I've been downstairs." He found himself wondering why she did not ask what he was doing prowling about at this time of night. He edged toward the corridor leading to his rooms.

"I suppose you heard what I was saying just now."

"Well—yes. That is, a sentence or two."

"I was talking with Eleanor. She's in Portland."

"In Portland!" John fumbled at the ties on his bathrobe.

"I'm going down there in the morning. She isn't so well."

"Oh?"

"I may need you. And I think it would be wise to have Dr. Dryden within reach too." Miss Rodney turned her head. A signal lamp had just flashed on. "Number 39." She turned toward the east wing.

"The morning train goes early," said John. "I'll drive you down to the station."

"Thank you. I'll be ready by seven-thirty." The reply came over the nurse's shoulder as she walked swiftly and noiselessly away.

John stood looking after her straight white-clad back. Talk about self-control, he thought. She's been in touch with Eleanor all along. But not a word out of her! He shuffled off toward his own quarters. I may as well go to bed again—not that it will do much good, with all that coffee in me.

But nevertheless he settled himself with his pillows at a comfortable angle, glanced at his wrist watch and snapped off the light. "Only the Lord and Grace Rodney know what will happen tomorrow," he said half-aloud.

Resolutely he turned his mind to other things. There was no dearth of portentous events for him to consider. The gold content of the American dollar was down to fifty-nine cents, for example. He could remember the impassioned oratory about the gold standard which had enlivened the nineties. He could remember his own father's attitude toward "sound money." But now that the gold dollar was for all practical purposes down the drain, nothing seemed any worse than it had been. There were still three and a half million families on relief; Congress had set aside nine hundred and fifty million dollars for their care. But what were the nine million unemployed getting out of all this except the meagerest possible existence just above the starvation level?

The New Deal had not changed anything fundamental. Perhaps the acknowledgment of collective responsibility for the unemployed was a step forward, but the railroads and corporations were as water-logged with debt as ever and the administration was afraid to push them into the bankruptcy wringer for fear the whole financial structure would fall apart. From start to finish the set-up was insane: you bought a bond and called it an investment when actually it was an outward and visible evidence of debt. You bought shares of stock and called them assets when they too were really evidences of debt.

John flounced over, curled an arm behind his head, and stared

at the gray oblong of the open window. Was Dennis asleep in his dingy little apartment? Was Eleanor asleep in her hotel in Portland? Had she come back because she was worse or because she could not stay away from D.D. as the span of her life narrowed before her? What had she said to Grace Rodney tonight? How was he to make sure Dennis stayed within reach the next day or two without telling him about Eleanor's return?

Finlay sat up and wrapped his arms around his knees. Damn it, why did people fall in love in the first place? Wasn't there trouble enough at Sun Mount without this new complication?

The damp chill air felt its way down John's back. He lay down again. Why, he asked himself, was he making such a fuss over one woman who was about to die? Were there not many others who were doomed, and hadn't Eleanor had more from life until the last three years than most of them ever got?

He recalled the handbill CWA had showed him tonight. There was something appalling in the thought that four million men in the United States were planning an hour's strike on the job, in order to prove how bitterly they needed work at forty cents an hour. The American dream of security and equal opportunity had faded to forty cents an hour on the end of a C.W.A. shovel four months out of the year. Trampalia and Davidson knew what they were about when they had their fake dollar bills printed "One Vote" and "Dollars for Bread instead of Taxes." As long as the unemployed could vote, that way lay political victory. There was Davidson with his weasel tongue and foxy face. There was the Big Fellow—fat, cunning, expensively dressed—in control of organized labor in Queen County.

Disgust welled up in John Finlay. What a world! What a place to live in! How he would enjoy tearing it apart and putting it together again, differently! And as these thoughts slipped through his brain he felt the queer dullness creeping over him which meant the approach of sleep.

The next day was too crowded for thinking. From his hurried breakfast, through the dash to the station with Miss Rodney during which early morning truck traffic made conversation all but impossible, the hours fled past full of things to be done, decisions to be made, patients to be seen. The waiting room downtown was full. There were persons ill in their homes whom either John or Arthur McBride had to visit. There were rounds to be made at Sun Mount. There were two major operations in the forenoon.

But all day, whenever he heard the telephone ring, John felt a knot tightening in the pit of his stomach.

At four-thirty he stifled his conscience and slipped out of the office. Skimming the new six-lane highway to Seaforth, dodging in and out among trucks and old cars and trailers piled with firewood, he had time to sniff the air and scan the country for signs of spring. The warm dry winter with its occasional fogs from the Sound had brought up new grass and wild flowers earlier than usual. Half regretfully John remembered how, when he had first come to Newland, he had driven around in a buggy when spring came, looking in the woods for trilliums and hunting the lakes hidden in the second-growth where water lilies grew. That had been a quiet world and a pleasanter one. Nobody had known then that war was about to break that world to bits, and the future had beckoned cheerfully to young men and women.

John slid down in his seat and set a foot firmly on the throttle. Here he was, old enough to be taking things easy or planning to retire, but up to his ears in new ventures which might easily break a much younger man. And not only that; he had added to his list of responsibilities. Walter Elliston had a wife and triplets, and Nathan Garnell . . . With a start he realized that he knew nothing of Garnell's family status.

When he drove up to Seacliff John hesitated a bit. The hospital was an imposing structure. He had watched it go up and in spite of George Schuyler and Herbert Baldwin he had a certain affection for the great gray building. But Seacliff had not been itself for a long while. There were only a few cars parked outside; there was an unnatural quiet when one went in. The chart rooms were calm; a handful of nurses worked silently on patients' records and arranged medicine trays. Orderlies slipped unobtrusively about as though hoping to escape attention. Door after door stood closed with such an air of finality that one knew the rooms behind them were empty. John had a perverse impulse to drop into Schuyler's office and inquire for further discards from the Seacliff staff but second thought sent him scurrying downstairs to the laboratory. It was three minutes before closing time.

Even the laboratory had not altogether escaped the blight that had fallen on the hospital. The old air of bustle was subdued although not absent, and Priscilla had one assistant instead of two. But the place was still spick and span, still redolent of a

variety of interesting smells, and there was still an air of alertness and expectancy about shining glassware, the centrifuge squatting on its concrete base, and the gleaming brass of incubators. Just inside the door John stopped and lifted an inquisitive nose. Butyric acid. Then Priscilla was running blood chemistry.

"Hello. Anybody home?"

"Oh, Dr. Finlay! I haven't seen you for a long while." The girl stood straight and slim in her white uniform, dark hair waving smoothly along her cheeks, red lips smiling. John's heart quickened at the sight of her.

"Well, I don't feel at home in Seacliff any more. It's like running the gauntlet to get down here where you are."

Priscilla laughed, but the tinkle that had once made her laughter gay was absent.

"I don't feel at home here either, any more. But we get along somehow."

John looked at the girl sharply. She seemed thinner but her brown eyes were sparkling and her cheeks were flushed.

"I think you've lost some pounds you couldn't spare," he said quietly. "I suppose you're doing all the night work and emergencies."

"I have to do those that Dr. Dryden doesn't take, of course. The doctors don't like to have anyone else."

"Yes, I know. It would never occur to them that you need sleep or a Sunday off." He glanced around the room. "The laboratory at Sun Mount isn't neat like this. The sink is every color of the spectrum and D.D. throws stuff all over the floor. I wish you could come and keep us in order."

"I'd like to, Dr. Finlay. Seacliff isn't what it used to be."

'Damn it!' thought Finlay. 'She's unhappy.'

He smiled down at her and laid a warm hand on her arm. "Come over now and then, anyhow. You've hardly seen the place."

Priscilla's color heightened. "Peter McFarlane and I drove past the other day."

"Well, come in next time. And bring Peter in with you. He's been neglecting us lately too. Busy with the Newspaper Guild of course. By the way, what do you think of the Guild?"

"I really know very little about it. Peter is interested in a great many things, you know."

"Well, I think there should be a guild for laboratory people

and one for doctors. Eight hours a day and time-and-a-half for overtime. That would be slick, wouldn't it?"

There were footsteps outside the door and a voice boomed, "Welcome, John Finlay. We haven't seen you around here for a coon's age." Dennis came in, a syringe in one hand and a tube of blood in the other.

"I've been sticking the sheep," he explained. "Here you are, Priscilla. Oh, I almost forgot. One of the needles you gave me was plugged. Better see that the girl cleans them more thoroughly. Come on in, John. I've got something to show you."

Dryden was rummaging in his desk drawers. "I saved a reprint from the Clinic for you. It's about this acidosis treatment for kidney infections. I thought you'd be interested . . . Now, where the devil has it got to? Oh, Priscilla, that reprint I kept out for John—have you seen it anywhere?"

The girl came in quietly, went to the bookcase and pulled out a volume.

"You put it in here yesterday morning," she said.

"Thanks." Dennis spoke sheepishly. "I never can remember where I put the things I want to keep."

"I gathered as much," remarked Finlay mockingly, eying the younger man.

Dryden seemed the same and yet he was not the same. The wrinkles at the corners of his eyes were deeper, there was a new edge to his voice even when he was trying to be gay. Sixteen months ago he had been a lad with nothing more on his mind than uneasiness about his job and the desire to advance in his profession, but now he was a man who deliberately concealed both loneliness and pain under a façade of vivacity.

"This report covers 150 cases. I think they've got something there. Listen to this. It's a summary of their results so far." Dennis glanced up. "Oh, well, of course if you aren't interested . . ."

Finlay started. "I'm sorry, D.D. Certainly I'm interested. I was only thinking."

Yes, he had only been thinking—of what was happening in Portland, of what might happen tonight or tomorrow or the day after—and realizing that he could tell Dryden nothing about it after all. Whatever was to be would be. No one could prepare Dennis, no one could help him. Nobody could ever help any-

one. Life was a solitary business, almost as solitary as dying. And it was no good messing into other people's affairs.

Twenty minutes later when John left Seacliff he was so pre-occupied that he drove away without noticing Peter McFarlane's ancient Ford coupé parked a block below the hospital.

"Hi, there!" yelled the reporter, hanging his head out of the window. "I want to see you."

John drew up to the curb and stopped. McFarlane came across the street and stuck his head into the car.

"Judas Priest, J.F., you could've run a man down just now and never known it. What's eating you anyhow?"

"To borrow your elegant phraseology—nothing's eating me," answered Finlay testily. "What are you doing here?"

But Peter ignored the retort. "Look here," he said. "I got a tip today that Pat Boyd is going all out on a drive in your part of the county. He's offering premiums for people who sell the most memberships in his clinic, making free examinations of all the kids in the rural schools, planning an advertising campaign that will pander to the baser instincts of the human species to say the least."

John looked at McFarlane and grinned in hard-lipped fashion.

"Let Boyd hop to it and get it over with. I have news for you too. Elliston and Garnell are both out of Seacliff. They're coming in with us. They'll keep their offices here in Seaforth but they will have regular hours in Newland and bring their surgery to Sun Mount."

"Well, it's always good tactics to carry the fight to the enemy, J.F. I'll see it gets into the *Advertiser* that these men are going in with you. And if they rope in any big shots for operations at Sun Mount I can use that too."

John pounded the steering wheel softly with one hand. "I don't like publicity but I guess the time has come when I'll have to stomach it."

McFarlane's seagreen eyes brightened with approval. "Atta boy! I didn't think you were ever going to see it. You and your cockeyed ethics! So long, J.F. Here comes Priscilla. I'll be seeing you."

Finlay watched the young man bound across the street and snatch open the door of his battered car, then drove away down the hill. Peter paused with one foot inside the Ford and one still on the pavement.

"The old boy is certainly on the prod tonight," he said.

"Is he?" asked Priscilla in some surprise. "He was just down in the laboratory and I didn't notice anything unusual about him." But even as she said this she remembered thinking when he first came in that he had something on his mind.

McFarlane climbed into the coupé slowly, banged the door, and turned on the ignition switch.

"You certainly know how to hang the clothes on your frame," he said, eying the girl as she settled into the seat and smoothed the front of her smart fur-collared black coat.

Priscilla flushed with pleasure and glanced at Peter, about to say that it was the part of wisdom to buy clothes good enough in the first instance to stand repeated cleaning and eventual remodeling, but he was looking down the hill in the direction John Finlay's car had gone.

"It's time he got riled up good and plenty. Yeah, sister, I mean what I say. You ain't seen nothing yet."

CHAPTER TWENTY

JOHN FINLAY drove swiftly down the Seaciff hill and across town to the south-bound highway. He was both preoccupied and in haste, but when the traffic signal stopped him at Times Square corner he took note of the litter in the square where posters and handbills lay everywhere, crumpled and muddy, trampled underfoot. The U.C.L. and the relief workers evidently staged their demonstration as planned, he thought. I wonder whether CWA got back to Sun Mount all right.

The instant the light changed John flashed away. Speed seemed to soothe a little the turmoil inside him. He disliked confusion, he hated uncertainty, but he was in a situation both anomalous and unpredictable. He had many responsibilities and his resources were shrinking. Sun Mount had operated at a loss from the day it reopened; the income from office practice was never quite enough to get them out of the red. And Eleanor's reappearance would only increase his difficulties.

He fumbled for his pipe but could not light it without stopping, so drove with it unlighted biting down hard on the stem. Once outside the city limits of Seaforth he put his foot down on the gas lever. The speedometer passed 50, went to 60, to 65. But John did not notice it.

His mind was re-creating the summer three years ago when he had first seen Eleanor Mainwaring. He could remember vividly the impact her languid charm had made on him, the attraction she had for him in spite of his impression at the time that she did not belong in his class of society. He had been on guard from the first against the possibility of coming to care for her too much despite the difference in age and background, and he

had escaped that entanglement. But there was, he realized, a streak of jealousy in his mood today.

The girl had come back, he was sure, thinking only of Dennis. To her he was merely an older, dependable friend. And mixed with the jealousy was the old resentment that she should be struck down in her youth, that D.D. should care for her, that he should be made to suffer because of her.

Engrossed in self-examination John did not notice the old car entering the highway from the left and had to slam on his brakes to avoid crashing into it. Angrily he thrust his head out of the window and bawled, "Why don't you signal, you damned idiot?" The driver of the other machine stared stupidly at Finlay and continued on his slow uncertain way.

It was then that John recalled that he had not eaten since morning. A mile or two ahead there was a roadside restaurant where he had had dinner before. He pulled into it and looked for space to park. As he did so a party of five came out, laughing noisily. John glanced in their direction, then stiffened as his eyes fell upon the tall man in the middle of the group.

He had not seen Patrick Boyd at close range since he came home but now he saw that the fellow had changed but little since 1929. Boyd had always prided himself on his fine figure and no doubt he was proud to have retained it into middle life. Under the arc light his hair seemed as sleek and black as ever and his hatchet face as predatory as it had been sixteen years ago. Obviously he had had a little too much to drink: he was shouting at the other two men and had thrown an arm ostentatiously around the woman beside him.

What attracted Boyd's attention John never knew, but suddenly the man caught sight of Finlay and waved a hand in his direction.

"'s my enemy," he cried thickly. "You better watch your step, Finlay. I'm going to take you apart. Going to get you—if it breaks me—see?"

The other two men hurried Boyd toward the big black sedan standing near the entrance to the road house, and between them they got him into the back seat. One of them climbed in too, followed by the woman whom Boyd had been embracing. The other man got in front and drove away.

John sat still in his own car watching. That fellow, he re-

flected, is a member in good standing of the Queen County Medical Society. Maybe Peter is right about professional ethics!

But food dispelled a part of John's disgust and he continued on to Newland in a calmer frame of mind.

Scarcely had he set foot in Sun Mount when McBride accosted him.

"Gee, I'm glad you're back. Remember that man you saw in the office three or four days ago, with the boil in his nose?"

"Yes. I told him to go home and leave the thing alone."

"Well, he opened it and squeezed it. And now he's in here with meningitis."

"The fool! The damned fool!"

McBride laughed harshly. "The family brought him in just about an hour ago and I've got them corralled to have their blood typed."

"Good!"

"And I've done a spinal tap and a blood count and made a blood culture. The spinal fluid is a bit cloudy and the pressure is up a little. The fellow's neck is stiff and his reflexes are increased. But you'd better take a look at him yourself."

Finlay found that Arthur had not exaggerated. But the patient was not in pain and did not realize that he was seriously ill. He pointed to his swollen upper lip and grinned grotesquely.

"It's better than it was the first of the week when you saw it, doc. I stuck a knife in it myself. I know that when there's pus it's got to come out. You can't hardly feel the place now."

Gingerly John ran the tip of a finger over the thickened lip. He noted the flushed face, the brightly glistening eyes, felt the full bounding pulse, tested the reflexes. When a car in the street backfired the patient jumped.

"Noisy around here, doc. Even the nurses all holler at me and bang the doors. You'd think they'd know better."

Finlay put his stethoscope in his ears and pulled up the man's night shirt. "Keep still now and breathe with your mouth open," he ordered.

Dennis arrived and typed blood for the whole family. John phoned for Elliston. The four doctors talked the case over, they gave the patient serum, they arranged to transfuse him in the morning. Mindful of possible developments Finlay wrote down the statements of the sick man and his relatives and got their signatures; he also filled out the history sheet carefully and had

the other physicians make written notes of their observations and recommendations.

It was not until one o'clock that Sun Mount settled into nocturnal quiet and John went to his own rooms. He had barely settled himself in bed when the phone rang. It was Grace Rodney calling from Portland.

She told him that Eleanor had talked to her all afternoon and evening and that they had finally decided to ask John to bring Dennis to Portland. In Miss Rodney's voice Finlay caught the tremor of suppressed excitement.

"You mean . . . she's going to marry him?"

"Yes. If Dr. Dryden is still willing."

"Oh, he'll be willing." There was a trace of bitterness in Finlay's words. "But how is she?"

"Not at all well," came the answer. "You'll understand when you see her."

"But I can't come down tomorrow," explained John. "I've got an ass in here with meningitis from a boil in his nose that he monkeyed with, and I don't dare leave town. I'm afraid to take a chance with the fellow."

So it was agreed that Dennis should go alone and John hunted out D.D.'s telephone number from the list under the glass top of his bedside table. If I stop to think, he told himself, I'll never go through with this.

He listened to the distant ringing. Then a sleepy voice growled, "Yes. Dryden speaking."

"Hello, D.D. This is John. Eleanor is in Portland. . . . Yes, Portland. Miss Rodney went down this morning to see her. She called me just now—Miss Rodney, I mean. They want you to go down tomorrow. . . . No, I can't go, not with this meningitis case in the house. Hadn't you better take the plane? . . . No, I don't know a damned thing except what I've told you. . . . No, you'll have to make your own decision. . . . O.K., then. And let me hear from you as soon as you can. Good luck, D.D."

The hand that had held the phone was damp. Absent-mindedly John wiped it on the spread. Then he threw back the covers and plodded into his bathroom. Tonight he did not choose to lie awake thinking. He could count on his fingers the number of times he had taken a sedative, but he reminded himself grimly that at fifty-two neither his physical nor his mental resilience was all it might be. He swallowed his tablet and went back to

bed, only to remember suddenly that he had forgotten to tell Dennis where to find Eleanor in Portland. Wearily he picked up the phone again.

It was the next morning but one when John stepped out of Sun Mount to see Miss Rodney getting out of a taxi at the foot of the steps. Her face seemed a bit paler than usual but she displayed no other sign of having had any unusual experience. John fingered his mustache nervously and waited.

"Good morning," said Grace Rodney, calmly.

"Good morning," rejoined Finlay. But aware that his voice sounded like a rasp he said no more until he had closed the door of the nurses' office off the main corridor of the hospital. "Well?"

"They were married yesterday afternoon."

John sat down on the edge of the desk. "They were?"

"Yes. There seemed no reason to wait once they had made up their minds."

"No, I suppose not."

"Some of these cases live for years, Dr. Finlay."

"Yes, I know. But she has already lived at least four years, which is more than the average."

Grace Rodney had pulled off her gloves and now she stood turning them in her hands. "I still think they did the wisest thing. And if you could have seen Dr. Dryden yesterday afternoon you would have thought so too."

"What are their plans, do you know?"

Miss Rodney smiled faintly. "They will be back tomorrow. I came ahead to get the apartment ready for them."

"You mean your apartment?"

"Yes. Dr. Dryden's isn't fit for them and Eleanor isn't well enough to look for one. Besides, I'm here at Sun Mount so much of the time that it won't mean any particular inconvenience for me."

John smiled thinly. "Women never stop being romantic, I guess."

"Why should they?"

But there was no romance in Miss Rodney's questions concerning what had happened in the hospital during her absence.

"The meningitis case is going bad," explained Finlay. "His blood culture is positive this morning and his spinal fluid is loaded with strept. Transfusions haven't done any good. Sometimes I

wonder if we'll ever have anything that will cure blood-stream infections." The man's shoulders slumped as he spoke.

Miss Rodney's dark eyes softened. She put a hand on his sleeve.

"You're tired. You haven't been sleeping. I'll take a look around and then go over to my apartment. I won't need much time there. I'll be back before noon." She took off her hat and laid it on her desk. "Don't worry about Eleanor and Dr. Dryden any more. They did this with their eyes open. You and I have no more responsibility about it."

She started to leave the room but halfway to the door she paused.

"I'll call Miss Graham as soon as I've looked around the hospital and explain to her."

Dully John watched her slender erect figure disappear. How much, he asked himself, did she know about Priscilla's feeling for D.D.? But in such questioning there was no profit and he stood up and went about his own business, grateful that he at least did not have the task of breaking the news to the one other person most concerned.

Crowded as his day was, Priscilla was never far from Finlay's thoughts, and he was not surprised to find her at Sun Mount that evening waiting for him in Miss Rodney's office. He sat down covertly studying her face. There was high color on her cheeks and she was smartly dressed and well groomed, but in her eyes he fancied he could see the trace of tears.

"I thought you should know that Schuyler means to take advantage of Dr. Dryden's leaving town without notifying him."

"You mean George is going to fire him right away?"

"Yes," Priscilla answered quietly. "You see, Dr. Dryden phoned me and said he had been called out of town unexpectedly and was taking the morning plane south. He said he'd be gone three or four days perhaps and asked me to explain to Schuyler. But of course I didn't know what had happened and I'm afraid I didn't make things clear to . . ."

"Don't reproach yourself. It wouldn't have made any difference what you told George. He's been waiting for a good excuse and here was one, ready to his hand. No one else could have done any better."

"Thank you, Dr. Finlay. I wouldn't like . . . anyone to think I'd messed things up."

"No one will think so. You may be sure of that, Priscilla."

The girl's eyes brightened with relief. She sat motionless; only the hands tightly clasped in her lap betrayed her tension. She glanced around the room and smiled a little, but John could see that the smile was brittle.

"I must be going," she said at last. "It's late."

"Let me drive you back to Seaforth. I must see one or two patients in the house but that will take only a moment and then I'll be free."

The girl smiled again, even more faintly. "Oh, thank you, Dr. Finlay. But Peter is waiting for me . . . outside."

"He is?" John wondered if his words sounded as hollow to her as they did to him.

"Yes, he brought me over." Priscilla got up and in one swift movement reached the door. John sprang to his feet and followed her. She paused with her hand on the door handle.

"I think I should tell you that I am leaving Seacliff too. I . . . I resigned today."

John looked down at the short slight figure so smartly dressed. The air in the room was tense between them. "My dear," he began.

"I really must go. Peter will be worn out waiting for me."

"When will you be leaving Seaforth, Priscilla? Or are you leaving? This . . . I hadn't thought of your going too."

"I'm sure Dr. Schuyler wouldn't want anyone in the laboratory who had been associated with Dr. Dryden. He was very disagreeable to me today. I would be very unhappy there now."

"But you won't leave town without seeing us again, letting me know where you're going? If I can do anything for you, give you letters of recommendation, I want to do it. I'm really very fond of you, my dear."

Once more Priscilla smiled. In the dim light she looked very small and her face was wan and tired.

"Thank you, Dr. Finlay. You and I always got on together, didn't we? You were nice to work for. And I promise I won't leave Seaforth without seeing you again."

John opened the door. There seemed to be nothing more he could say. The girl stepped past him into the hall. He walked beside her to the entrance.

"Good-by, Dr. Finlay," she said.

The cold fresh air swept in over them.

"Good-by, Priscilla," he answered.

Then he stood in the open door, watching her go down the steps alone. He switched on the lights along the driveway. Across the street he could see the faint outline of a small car standing at the curb.

When he turned back into the hall Grace Rodney was there waiting for him.

"She took it standing up," he said wearily.

"She would," answered the nurse. "Miss Graham is a very fine person."

Irritably John ran his hands through his hair and down across his face.

"Some men are utterly blind!" he exclaimed.

In the half-light Miss Rodney smiled at him. "Yes, some men are," she agreed.

For a moment John stood facing her, then he shook himself free from his vexation.

"Well, I must go up and see my patients anyhow. Thank the Lord, things like this don't happen very often. How is the meningitis case this evening?"

"Still alive. But that's about all."

"He'll be checking out in a few hours—and all because he picked a boil I told him to leave alone."

Finlay started up the incline; Grace Rodney kept in step beside him.

"I have everything at the apartment ready for the Drydens. Were you planning to meet them at the train tomorrow, or shall I go?"

John looked sideways at the nurse. "Perhaps," he said, "if you don't mind going. It's hard to get away from the office."

"I shan't mind in the least. I had planned to be at the apartment when they arrived anyhow."

Their footsteps swung into rhythm again. They reached the head of the incline together. There John stopped and suddenly he began to laugh softly.

"Well, at last I've got all my group together. One after another George has kicked them out: McBride, Elliston, Garnell, and now D.D. He'll always think of the Sun Mount Associates as castaways from Seacliff."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

JOHN FINLAY settled himself in his chair at the head of the table.

"The Sun Mount Associates will please come to order. You fellows are almost as disorderly as Schuyler's Efficiency Committee, but we do have to have a business meeting once in a while."

In a ripple of laughter the other men at the table shifted their positions and conversation died away. Finlay's level dark gray eyes looked at each of them in turn.

At his right sat Arthur McBride, his big hands on the table top, his brooding hazel eyes straight front. Next was Nathan Garnell, his narrow thin-cheeked face more tranquil than when John had first met him. Beyond him was the newest addition to the group—a short thickset man with the competent air of a good mechanic, the dental surgeon Franklin Greenwood. At the foot of the table opposite Finlay was Grace Rodney in a crisp white uniform, her hands on the pile of papers in front of her. To John's left was Walter Elliston, whose perpetually anxious brown eyes were searching Finlay's face, and beyond him was Dennis with his thick mop of corn-colored hair for once smoothly brushed. On him John's gaze lingered longest; the older man found himself wondering what emotions were dammed up behind those blue eyes and the full curving mouth.

But this was not the time for speculation and Finlay pulled his thoughts back to the business in hand.

"First of all, we should welcome our new acquisition. If we needed anything more than a good dentist I don't know what it was. Do you begin to feel at home with us by this time, Greenwood?"

The short man smiled, his round face beaming with good

nature. "I never felt so much at home anywhere in so short a time, Dr. Finlay. I'd like to stay here the rest of my life."

Every face around the table reflected Greenwood's amiability, and McBride grinned and said, "For a tooth carpenter you make pretty speeches, I must say."

"The next order of business is the reading of the minutes of our last meeting. Do you have them there, Miss Rodney?"

"I'm not sure I can make much of them," said Miss Rodney opening a loose-leaf notebook. "I'm not a stenographer and there was so much talking I'm afraid I didn't get everything."

"Why not omit the minutes?" asked Dryden. "We didn't do much but cuss out Boyd."

"Do you see anything in your notes that you think we need to hear tonight, Miss Rodney?"

The nurse scanned the pages quickly. "I don't think so."

"Well, then let's get down to business. We should agree on the strategy for the present situation. Boyd's campaign is putting us in the hole. We might as well admit that."

"Perhaps things aren't as clear to Dr. Greenwood as to the rest of us," suggested Miss Rodney quietly.

"It won't take long to straighten that out," said Dennis. "Pat Boyd, public enemy number one so far as we are concerned, is a renegade doctor whom the respectable members of the County Medical Society get to do their dirty work for them on occasion. Early in '32 he opened a clinic here in Newland, put up a Neon sign and went after business in a big way."

"As soon as John rebuilt Sun Mount Boyd lowered his rates fifty cents a month and sent agents around all the mills on the tideflats to sell medical insurance in his outfit. But that didn't work so well: he had to pay the agents a commission and some of the men knew Finlay from old times while others were smart enough to recognize Boyd for a crook. So last month our boy-friend pulled a new stunt. Have you Exhibit A there, Miss Rodney?"

"I have." The nurse unfolded and spread open a half-dozen sheets of newsprint. "It looks like a cigarette advertising campaign. 'Premiums 25% lower than any other clinic in Queen County.' 'Big Prize Contest! Win a brand-new Ford or Chevrolet for selling only 60 memberships in the Boyd Clinic!' 'Valuable Prizes for pleasant part-time work!'"

Greenwood's round face went blank with amazement. "You mean the man runs ads like this in the papers!"

"And how!" exclaimed Dennis.

"There are other premiums too," said Miss Rodney dryly. "Furniture, dishes, percolators, silverware."

"Connie says she's heard of one couple who furnished their whole apartment this way," observed McBride.

"Of course many of these prizes may never materialize," said Elliston.

"Oh, I think Boyd will cough up the premiums all right," broke in John. "His game would collapse if he didn't. But here is an interesting point. The Wagoner Company is making the furniture prizes and Baldwin and Arnold are both stockholders in that outfit."

"This all sounds incredible," exclaimed Dr. Greenwood. "Why doesn't the County Society call a halt on the fellow?"

"A large group in the County Society would like nothing better than to see us put out of business, and they're backing Boyd to do the job." Finlay watched Greenwood's startled eyes going from one face to another. "Perhaps by the time this little meeting is over you won't want to throw in with us after all."

"I've got something else I'd like to show you," put in Nathan Garnell. He pulled a sheet of paper from his pocket. "A woman brought this in to me yesterday. It's a letter from Boyd to her about her child. It seems that he is visiting every rural school in Queen County, examining the pupils free. He gets the parents' names and writes each family a letter telling all he found wrong with their children's eyes or tonsils or ears or hearts and urging them to bring the kids into him for a more thorough examination. He winds up by offering special rates for any treatment he finds necessary."

John took the letter, read it through hastily.

"Let me see that," said Walter Elliston. His head and Dryden's bent over the paper together.

"The woman who brought me the letter," went on Garnell, "had taken her boy to Boyd earlier in the week. She showed me the prescription he had given her. The youngster is ten years old and Boyd was going to put bifocal glasses on him. Can you imagine anything worse?"

"You see, Greenwood, we have our troubles," said John, as

Dennis passed the letter across the table to the dentist, who stared at it in unbelief.

"And that isn't all the bad news," resumed Finlay. "We're losing members steadily. Too many people came in as individuals or in loosely organized groups with no other reason for existing, and they're dropping out as fast as they signed up in the first place."

"What's wrong with them?" demanded Dryden angrily.

"A good many things, D.D. Some of them have lost their jobs. Others complain that our monthly dues are higher than Boyd's. But a lot of them joined simply because they needed an operation or some other medical care, they stayed in long enough to get what they wanted and then pulled out."

"That woman in 34 is a good example, Dr. Finlay," said Grace Rodney. "She took out her membership in February. In March she came in for an operation. She's been here six weeks and it will be another two weeks before she can leave. And she brags about how smart she has been to get everything for less than ninety dollars when it would have cost her five times that anywhere else. And she says she will drop her membership as soon as she is well."

"Of course some crooks always get into any set-up," said John quietly. "But just now the crooks have almost swamped us. Sun Mount has been in the red every month since it reopened."

"Is there any way to meet such a situation?" asked Elliston, his voice sharp with worry.

"That's what we must think about," answered Finlay. "I believe that in the future we should select only ready-made organizations with some other reason for existing, such as labor unions, professional societies, credit unions; they won't fall apart without warning. Then we must have a contract with these groups so that their officers can collect the dues and pay us in a lump sum. That will save most of the trouble over collections. It's no use expecting several thousand individuals to send in two dollars every month; even the honest ones will forget half of the time."

"It seems to me that we should take in as individual members only people with credit ratings or those on whom we can get reliable reports." Miss Rodney spoke earnestly. "There was that old man this winter who'd gone through bankruptcy unbeknown to us. His son bought his membership for him but refused to do anything more even though he makes twenty thousand a year. So we got no more dues from that source."

Greenwood whistled softly. "Reminds me of a cartoon I saw the other day. Two paunchy middle-aged men in the Union League Club, one saying to the other, 'Well, I got the old folks on relief last week.' Nice people!"

"Very nice! But we have to deal with them as is," answered Dennis.

"How many members must we have just to get by?" asked Arthur McBride.

"A thousand families or 2500 individual members is about the minimum. At a monthly rate of five dollars per family a thousand families would bring in \$60,000 a year. Twenty-five hundred individuals would do the same. Three thousand families would mean \$180,000 a year."

"I've been wondering how many hospital patients you can count on in a set-up of this kind," said Dr. Greenwood.

"All I can tell you is what other men's experience indicates. The average seems to be from ten to twenty hospital patients the year round for every thousand families. But of course we have a good many cases here who are private patients of some of us and not members of our insurance system."

"And they get the same low rates as the insured cases?"

"Oh, no. That wouldn't be fair to the folks who pay insurance premiums."

"How many patients can we take care of now, with five doctors and a dentist on the staff?" asked McBride.

"With office practice, house calls, and the hospital work I don't think we could handle more than 1200 families or 3000 individuals."

"Even at that we've got a long way to go, judging from the figures Miss Rodney has given us."

"I admit that. But there must be a way to beat this thing. Other groups have done it, and we ought to be able to do it too. I want each of you to throw in suggestions. We're all in this together. It's your gamble as much as it is mine." John reached into his pocket for his pipe and tobacco; over the bowl his gray eyes went down the double row of faces.

"I didn't go into this venture blindfolded. I thought it over for a long time first. But now I'm here to stick. I've got some money left—not nearly as much as I wish I had, and perhaps not all we'll need. But I promise you I'll put up every dime of it rather

than let Sun Mount close. Now can we, putting our heads together, win this battle of wits?"

"I'm with you, sink or swim, John," exclaimed Dennis.

"Me too," cried Arthur McBride.

"And me," said Walter Elliston.

"And me." Nathan Garnell's voice was low and tense with feeling.

"Why not make it unanimous?" inquired Greenwood. "Nobody ever scared me out of doing what I wanted to."

John Finlay smiled the length of the table at Grace Rodney and she smiled back. A few hours before they had had a serious discussion of the situation and both now found the warmth of this response comforting. John told himself he would not soon forget the spontaneity of these men, and in his gratification he forgot the remaining bit of bad news until Miss Rodney's intent dark eyes recalled it to him. He laughed and took the pipe out of his mouth.

"One more unpleasant thing I have to tell you. Dave Reynolds sent me word yesterday that a malpractice suit is hanging over my head."

"Malpractice!" The word hung in the air, a harbinger of blank dismay.

"You remember—at least all of you will except Greenwood—the man who picked the boil in his nose and died of meningitis and septicemia. Well, some shyster lawyer got to his family evidently. Reynolds says the gossip around town is that it's simply a nuisance suit; no one seems to expect it to stick. But it will make a sensation and do Sun Mount a good deal of harm."

There was an uneasy silence for a moment. Then John grinned broadly.

"That is absolutely the end of the bad news for tonight. I'm afraid I sound like a croaking raven but I want every one of you to know exactly where we stand. So you have to know the bad as well as the good. You're always free to pull out of the group if you want to. Most of you have wives and children to provide for. Some of you probably have other obligations too, of which I know little or nothing. You must make your own decisions. Take your time, think it all over."

"I made my decision long ago," said Arthur, looking at Finlay with his smoldering hazel eyes. "I'm not going to think about it any more."

"Nor I," exclaimed Nathan Garnell. His thin cheeks were flushed and his slender fingers beat a tattoo on the edge of the table.

"I won't pretend that I'm not worried," said Walter Elliston. "But that has nothing to do with my sticking." His anxious brown eyes were on Finlay's face as though to reassure himself.

"Even if I knew the whole thing was going to blow up in our hands," said Dennis, "I'd still be with you, John."

Greenwood was watching the lean weather-beaten face at the end of the table. He said to himself that he liked the looks of John Finlay: the level gray eyes, the cropped gray mustache, the thick tumbled gray hair, the quick movements of the lanky body, the high color in the cheeks, the deep grooves running down toward the angles of the jaw. It was not the face of a weak man or of a man who was afraid, not even of a man who was reckless or off his guard.

"I've said once this evening that I like this place. I also like the people in it. I want to stay as long as you'll have me."

John glanced at Grace Rodney. "Everyone seems to have signed up for the duration except you," he said.

The thin olive-skinned face at the end of the table flushed.

"More than anyone else in this room except possibly yourself, my life has been Sun Mount. I came here first eighteen years ago. I hope to stay as long as I am able to work."

As the nurse spoke, quiet fell on the room. Outside was the soft spring darkness. Through the windows one could hear frogs croaking in the distance. There was also the faint sound of music. Within, the light fell softly on rows of books along the walls, on the polished table top, on the gleaming soft brown floor. Over the six men and one woman there fell an air of solemnity as though they had pledged themselves to something bigger than any of them, to which they were prepared to sacrifice health and ease and security. The silence was so deep that when John broke it they all started.

"Thank you. I hope none of you ever has cause to regret what you have just done."

Still no one moved to rise. Finlay smiled at the double row of faces.

"If there's nothing more I think we may stand adjourned."

One or two chairs were pushed back, the men began to get up and move about talking with friendly informality. One by

one they drifted away until only Dennis and John were left with Miss Rodney.

"Why don't you both come over to the apartment?" urged D.D. "Eleanor always enjoys seeing you."

"I would like that," said Grace Rodney. "We can ride over with you and walk back later. The fresh air will do us good."

Eleanor they found lying on the davenport which stood at a slant in front of the fireplace. She smiled at them all and put a thin hand on her husband's sleeve as he bent down to kiss her.

"Do you mind my being lazy?" she asked. "The evenings are still cool enough for me to enjoy a grate fire. I like to lie here and watch it."

Miss Rodney sat down on a small black walnut rocker she had retrieved some years before from a secondhand store, John shrugged himself deep into an armchair, and Dennis settled down on a hassock within reach of Eleanor's couch. He pushed a packet of cigarettes toward Grace Rodney, who smiled and helped herself. Finlay took out his pipe and began to pack the bowl with skillful fingertips. They all relapsed into a friendly silence.

John tossed his match stub into the glowing coals in the grate and let his eyes wander from the fire to the faces of his companions. About Eleanor there was something beyond tranquillity. He studied her more carefully. She was thinner than she had been the year before but her eyes had lost the haggard look he had seen in them when she was in Seacliff. He noticed that D.D.'s hand lay on hers. He remembered his own desire when the girl was in the hospital to sit with his palms upon her skin so that he might pour into her body the energy and vitality she lacked; he wondered whether Dennis did not have the same desire.

Although part of her strange pride and fierce insistence on privacy had disappeared he sensed still an impenetrable reserve about her. But she seemed to find pleasure in her husband's presence; now and then she touched him with her free hand and whenever she spoke to him her voice was gentle. Finlay asked himself whether she had ever in her life actually let herself go and been spontaneous. He thought not. And now it struck him that there was something strange in her attitude toward Dennis.

There was no sound in the room except the soft burning of the coal in the grate, but the silence seemed to resolve itself into a medium of communication. It was like the quiet of a church

into which one came, leaving behind the bustle of the street and the struggle to live, while one paid homage to the dead. But John was puzzled by it.

From the shadow of his deep chair he studied D.D. The features were as they had always been—broad square chin, full curving lips, bright blue eyes—and yet the face itself had changed. Finlay remembered the young fellow who had first come to Sea-cliff—alert, vivacious, full of fun, with a driving ambition near the surface. Like all young men in search of success he had demanded as his right both achievement and happiness. It seemed to John that there was but little left of that Dennis. The native cleverness of his tongue and his habit of concealing beneath a cloak of levity much that was serious he would always retain, but the new man seemed to expect little of life and nothing of any person except himself. Whether he was unhappy or merely resigned, Finlay could not tell. But, John reminded himself, it was possible that he was—for the moment at least—at peace.

Finlay glanced over at Grace Rodney. In her face he thought he could see a trace of pride. Had she not always wanted Eleanor to marry Dryden? It was hardly too much to say that she beamed upon the couple as though she had brought about their marriage. And perhaps, indeed, she had, reflected John.

He closed his eyes, felt his muscles relax, stretched his legs toward the fire. It was good to rest, to be quiet, to shelter in a snug harbor out of reach of storms. Was this perhaps what death brought to human beings—safe anchorage? Memories of Nancy came flooding into his mind, but strangely softened, robbed of their power to sting. Suddenly he was aware that somewhere that bright being who had been his wife still watched over him, cared what happened to him. So long as he himself lived, something of her would live too. So long as Dennis lived, something of Eleanor too would live. He saw D.D.'s hand close over his wife's and from far away he heard Eleanor's voice.

"Don't you think we might offer our visitors some coffee, dear?"

Over the coffee they all became cheerful and matter-of-fact. Dennis repeated what had been said at the staff meeting that evening and Eleanor made no secret of her disgust at Boyd's tactics.

"I can't see how such a man got into the profession in the first place."

Grace Rodney looked up over the brim of her cup. "There ought to be a St. Peter at the gate of every school of medicine and nursing, but there isn't."

"The fellow will fizzle out in the end," said John quietly.

A little later, on the pretext of fresh air, the two men went outside. Without a word they fell into step and began to walk up and down the block. Finally Dennis spoke with a hesitation new to him. "How does she seem to you, John?"

The older man was careful in his reply. "She's amazing, D.D. She's far better than she was in '32."

Dennis made a sound in his throat that might have been a strangled laugh.

"I know what you mean. Every morning I feel the same way. And each evening I come home and find her still alive it's a miracle. But I know it can't last and I wonder whether I can hold out as long as she does."

"You will, D.D. I know you will."

They walked a little way in silence. Then Dennis began to speak again.

"I don't know whether I can make myself clear or not. But Eleanor is literally dying by inches. She is withdrawing into herself away from life, away from people, more and more. She's always been reserved, but this is different. She's detached, if you see what I mean. Detached from the processes of living, uninterested in them. I'm losing touch with her too. It's as though she died every time I leave her. Then I come back and she's still there, but I can't make contact with her again except after a struggle. She doesn't care to live any longer. Perhaps the desire to see me again was the last flicker of her will to live. It's as though she died every morning but doesn't stay dead. I know I'm talking rot, John, and not making myself clear, but . . ."

Dryden drew back his shoulders, breathed the soft spring air deep into his lungs and looked up into the darkness of the sky overhead.

"If I can only hang on, not let her see how I feel. Find the strength somewhere to keep up my pose of the cheerful, rather ignorant husband. I remember what you told me that day in the lab—that somehow a man always finds the strength to go on. But sometimes I'm afraid I can't."

John put a hand on the younger man's shoulder and swung him around.

"This sort of thing seems unbearable. No one knows that better than I. Watching someone you love going to her death, without being able to raise a hand to help her. But believe me I know you better than you know yourself. I once hoped you wouldn't marry Eleanor or even tell her you loved her. But now that you have you won't break. Of that I am sure. And if she gradually withdraws farther and farther into herself, perhaps going will be easier for her. Don't begrudge her that, lad. Remember she's lived for a long while with her death sentence hanging over her. Be glad if nature is softening the blow."

Back at the door of the apartment building Dryden paused.

"Thanks, John," he said. "I'm glad you don't mind when I blow off. I have to do it now and then, it seems. Otherwise I couldn't keep up my play acting. Talk about Nero fiddling while Rome burned. I'm fiddling while my wife is dying!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

PETER McFARLANE patted his clippings into order, snapped an elastic around them, and slipped them into an envelope.

"I just wanted you to see how much stuff I've actually had in the *Advertiser* about Sun Mount this last year. It's repetition that does the trick, telling things over and over a little different each time."

John smiled at the animated old-young face and realized that, no matter how long he knew Peter, he would never really become accustomed to that queer combination of fair skin, seagreen eyes, bald head fringed with sandy hair, and the general air of cynicism tempered with penetrating shrewdness. If McFarlane looked like an aged infant he acted like a crafty strategist. He would shrink at nothing and neither would he admit the possibility of defeat.

"I don't suppose that I can ever make you understand how I feel about this sort of thing, Peter. I can't separate the means from the end. I don't believe that a good purpose justifies everything a man does. I don't enjoy seeing my name in the *Advertiser*, nor do I enjoy seeing Elliston's there—or Garnell's or D.D.'s."

McFarlane grinned reminiscently. "But that story about Dryden leaving Seacliff made Schuyler squirm."

"It made me squirm too, Peter."

"Oh, you're persnickety! You had no reason to be upset. You hadn't done anything out of line."

The older man shook his head. "When a boy grows up with no sense of ethics, no feeling for what is fitting and what isn't, I suppose there's no hope of showing him the dividing line between a profession and a business."

Peter studied the serious face opposite him with frankly puzzled green eyes.

"Damned if I get you, J.F.! Every word I've put into the paper about you has been true . . . or almost true. Now when you have nothing to hide and are playing the game square, why not tell people about it?"

"Because the crook makes just as good publicity material as the honest man. The quack can tell just as convincing a story as a good doctor. Most fakers have the gift of gab, and the general public usually mistakes the phoney for the genuine."

"And if nobody ever explains anything to them, they never will know the difference, J.F."

Finlay frowned, his dark gray eyes narrowed thoughtfully.

"Pat Boyd does just as well as we can when it comes to publicity. We have a clinic, so has he. We sell medical insurance, so does he. And his price is lower than ours. How can people be persuaded that he's a crook, that he's incompetent and greedy?"

"Give me time and I'll make 'em believe it."

"But Boyd too can go on saying his piece over and over. Why should people believe me instead of him?"

"It's like war, J.F. You've got to get there fust with the mostest men."

But John was not convinced. "I still don't think you can sell medical care as though it were women's stockings. And the spotlight makes me uncomfortable."

"Well, manipulating the spotlight doesn't disturb me in the least—not even when it's turned on me. Did you know that those stick-in-the-muds down at the *Advertiser* have elected me president of the local Guild so I can go to the convention in St. Paul next month?"

"Don't tell me there's going to be a national convention."

"I'll say there is. If you'd read the paper now and then you'd know that we have 8000 members. And I'm going to represent the Sound country and Seaforth." The young man paused, looking appraisingly at John. "I might not be going to St. Paul alone, J.F."

The dark gray eyes across the table cooled and sharpened. "What are you driving at?"

McFarlane tried to keep his casual air but did not succeed. He twisted his neck inside his collar and fumbled for cigarettes.

"You needn't be so upset," he protested. "Why should you be?"

I told you months ago that I'd fallen for Priscilla and I meant it. I know a real dame when I see one, while your precious Dennis Dryden passes her up to marry a woman with one leg in the grave."

"Leave Dennis and Eleanor out of this." Finlay's voice was harsh.

"O.K. O.K. Don't get all hot and bothered. I'd just as soon tell the guy to his face what I think of him, but he wouldn't enjoy hearing it." McFarlane's green eyes wore an expression of deeper cynicism than usual.

John leaned toward the reporter. "I asked you before what you are driving at."

Peter drew back a little. "Well, good God, what's all the excitement about? I was merely going to tell you that Priscilla and I are going to be married in a week or so and I'm going to take her with me to the Guild meeting in St. Paul."

"I see." There was a mixture of relief and dismay in the exclamation.

Peter looked sharply at the weather-beaten face, the gray eyes.

"Well, I'll be damned if I don't think you had a notion I was going to kidnap the girl or tangle up with the Mann Act! Sometimes I wonder what you take me for."

John smiled faintly. "Sometimes I wonder too, Peter. Don't get me wrong. I like you and I respect your ability, but you're not quite sound, not quite square with yourself. I'm never sure what you'll say or do."

McFarlane grinned but there was little amusement in the eyes that searched Finlay's face.

"Well, get this into your head once and for all. I haven't seduced Priscilla Graham. Strange as it may seem to you with your hangover from John Knox and the Puritans, she loves me." There was a pause. Peter thumbed his lighter. There was a curious edge to his voice as he added, "At least I hope she does."

"So do I if she's going to marry you." Once more Finlay's voice was cool and collected but in his eyes there was a trace of speculation. He was wondering what McFarlane would think if he knew what was going on in his friend's mind. John himself felt that it was better not to contemplate the fact that a certain obscure jealousy stirred within him when he talked about Eleanor and Priscilla with their lovers, and almost unconsciously he made a little grimace. There was something distinctly unpleasant in being

relegated by youth to that category of the elderly whose years were fifty or more.

Then he noticed that Peter had lost his air of assurance and was puffing furiously at his cigarette and drumming his fingertips on the table. Perhaps even so modern a young man was not always confident. John found himself taking a perverse pleasure in this thought.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

Peter shrugged his shoulders, made an effort to sound flippant.

"Stage-fright! No gal ever threw me before and it makes me sort of skittish—if you see what I mean."

John grinned. "May it do you good! You've been at loose ends long enough. It's time you settled down."

There was an ironical gleam in the seagreen eyes when McFarlane answered.

"Why don't you follow your own prescription, J.F.? Here you are past the half-century mark and I don't see you in a snug brick cottage with flower beds and a garden out back. Although, of course, that may be more Grace Rodney's fault than yours."

John laughed shortly. "There's probably no woman in the state whose mind is less on matrimony than Miss Rodney. I wouldn't worry about her if I were you."

"I'm not worrying about anything except how to pay our bills on the trip to St. Paul. Theoretically the Guild should pay my expenses but they haven't got the money. So I've got to dig it up myself, which is a damned nuisance."

A few days later when John met Priscilla coming out of the Central Bank in Seaforth he was put to it to explain to himself why the girl flushed hotly when he spoke to her. It seemed strange that she should be nervous and upset. Not until he had gone into the bank did it occur to him that the bride-to-be was probably also the source of funds for the trip to St. Paul. For a moment this realization staggered him and he stood staring stupidly at the glass top of the desk before him while he smothered an impulse to run after her and try to persuade her to reconsider.

When McFarlane called him on the phone a few nights later to say that he and Priscilla had been married that afternoon by a justice of the peace and were leaving on the late train for the Middle West John assured himself that this was his reward. He went down to the station to see them off. There was a noisy group of newspapermen and their wives there too and it seemed to

Finlay that Priscilla was uncomfortable with them, but he ignored this intuition and shook hands warmly with both the bride and groom as he told them good-by.

In Priscilla's hand he left a slip of paper. "I didn't know what you'd like best so I'm leaving the choice to you," he said softly. "Blow yourself to something you wouldn't get otherwise. And the best of luck, my dear."

Afterward as he drove away from the station he wondered whether he could have imagined that there were tears in Priscilla's eyes when she turned away from him, and much later when he had gone to bed he found his thoughts going back to the girl.

But crowding events soon drove all such speculations out of his mind. The big longshore strike began on the ninth of May and bade fair to last for several months. Nearly all Pacific Coast ports were tied up and although the greatest violence spent itself in San Francisco there were sporadic outbreaks along the Seaforth waterfront. Union members were out of work, the reserve funds were inadequate for their needs and most of them had soon to apply for relief. The unions with contracts with Sun Mount were unable to pay their dues for June. There was much name-calling in the papers and in the Central Labor Council; allegations that the Communists were responsible for the strike were flung about indiscriminately.

"Suppose they are!" exclaimed Peter, who had thrown himself into the conflict with enthusiasm as soon as Priscilla and he got back from St. Paul. "Maybe they're the only ones that see things straight these days. Maybe they're the only ones that have guts enough to do anything. And if they are, maybe we'd better all find it out and throw in with them."

John knew that McFarlane spent every minute he could snatch from the *Advertiser* on the waterfront with the pickets and he was not surprised when Priscilla asked him to speak to Peter.

"I'm afraid," she confessed. "Peter tells me about men being beaten up and thrown into the tank at the city jail. And this morning the papers said it might be necessary for the officers to use tear gas to clear the docks. Won't you talk to him?"

"Sure, I will. But it won't do any good. He's in this thing heart and soul, Priscilla, and you'll have to take him as he is and put up with him."

John did not add that when he saw the men brought in, beaten and bruised and bleeding, with their eyes swollen shut,

their teeth knocked out and their clothes torn off, he felt almost as strongly as Peter did about the police. "I'd better keep my mouth shut," he said grimly to himself. "Sewing these fellows up and getting them on their feet again is worth more than the satisfaction of shooting off my face." But his sympathy did not keep him from hoping that the strike would not last all summer; the shrinking receipts of Sun Mount Associates saw to that.

In midsummer another blow fell upon Sun Mount. Following the lead of the national medical association the Queen County Society adopted certain regulations controlling medical practice. These rules forbade the solicitation of patients directly or indirectly; they forbade any physician or group of physicians to set fees lower than those deemed adequate by the county society, as well as any type of contract practice considered by the association to be contrary to "sound public policy"; and finally they stipulated that schemes for prepaid medical service must include all qualified doctors in a community who wished to join in the plan rather than a small selected group. Furthermore a resolution was adopted to the effect that any physician who disregarded these regulations should thereby forfeit his membership in the local society and all privileges attendant on such membership. At the next meeting, as John had foreseen, he and the other members of Sun Mount Associates were formally expelled from the Queen County Society.

The reactions of the men to this action interested Finlay for many reasons. Elliston, as might have been expected, was plunged into despond, but at the same time an unsuspected stubbornness stirred in him and he declared that nothing now could make him turn back. McBride simply hunched up his shoulders and said he "had dug in for the duration a long time ago." Franklin Greenwood was still faintly incredulous about the whole proceeding. Garnell brooded darkly and hinted to John that the group would face lesser handicaps without its Jewish member. Dennis alone seemed scarcely aware of what had happened; his preoccupied face and manner showed that his thoughts were not concerned with outward events.

"What else could we expect?" Grace Rodney asked John. "I shan't be surprised at anything they try to do to us. I won't even be surprised if eventually they succeed."

Finlay could not acquiesce with this outspoken statement but in his own heart he felt that the nurse had spoken for him too.

Their receipts were dwindling every month and so was the balance in the First National Bank as well as the returns from the investments he still retained.

It was true that there were certain small changes for the better. Boyd ceased offering premiums for securing subscribers to his medical insurance system and stopped soliciting openly among the millhands in Newland, but he continued to underbid Finlay on group contracts and Seacliff continued to offer hospital rates as low as those at Sun Mount. Slowly the volume of work declined. John found himself despondent and the realization made him irritable. When Wharton called his attention to the fact that no man's resources could withstand such a drain indefinitely his temper flared into hot words.

"For God's sake, Charlie, lay off me! I'm not asking for help or advice or even sympathy. All I want is for people to mind their own business and let me mind mine. Damn it all, do you suppose I don't know what I'm doing?"

But the words had hardly left his lips when he was ashamed. "I'm sorry. I guess I'm not quite myself just now. But I can't stand having it rubbed into me that Sun Mount is a failure."

"I don't want to rub it in, John. I'd like to help you if I could. I hate to see you lose everything you've got. It isn't easy to start at the bottom in your fifties."

But Finlay was in no mood to listen and he carried with him when he left the bank an irrational resentment at Wharton's attitude.

Things were in this state when Peter was brought in from the waterfront one afternoon with a deep scalp wound from which he was bleeding profusely. To clean the gash and suture it together was merely routine but the reporter's frame of mind was extremely disquieting. All the while John and Elliston worked, Peter raged at the Communist faction among the strikers.

"But it was only a little while ago," protested Finlay, "that you were defending the Communists to me. You said maybe they were the only ones who had the answer, don't you remember?"

"Sure I remember. Christ, what a fool I've been! Believing those bastards with their 'party line'!"

"Pipe down, Peter. We can't sew up your head with you bouncing around this way."

"Then leave it alone and let it bleed! I don't give a damn! What does it matter? I'm only a stool pigeon. The *Advertiser*

pays me to worm myself into the unions and then peddle the dope where it'll do the most good. Didn't you know that?"

"Don't talk rubbish!" admonished Finlay.

"I'm here with my head split open because I was a sap. I trusted people. I was all for getting everybody together so we could present a united front to the employers. These damned Reds yelled so loud I thought they meant what they said. I really thought they'd go along with the rest of us. And now, when I say we ought to consider the shippers' counterproposals, they spring this stuff about me being a stool pigeon trying to undermine the unions."

"Nobody who knows you will believe them," said John.

"The hell they won't! You don't know how these Reds can talk. Didn't they sell themselves to me, pull the wool over my eyes just as though I'd been fresh from Sunday school?"

"Who beat you up?" asked John.

"Trampalia and his gang from the old U.C.L."

"I didn't know the U.C.L. was communistic."

"No more is it. But these bastards have fooled them too. What do those simple souls know about Communists? There was never a more gullible outfit than the unemployed. Unless it's investment bankers." McFarlane gave a laugh which broke off short. "Say, for God's sake, what are you doing up there?"

"The scalp is tough," explained Elliston. "And the anesthetic is wearing off."

"Well, hurry up!" growled McFarlane. "I want to get home before Priscilla hears anything about this. She's in a stew every time I go down on the waterfront."

A few days later when John saw the headlines announcing that the maritime strike had been settled and the men would go back to work the thirty-first of the month, he wondered whether Peter's enemies would still think him a traitor in the camp of labor. But he was too occupied to give much thought to the matter for by this time the malpractice suit against him had come to trial.

The case dragged along as though it were being kept alive artificially. Every day Peter sat in the courtroom and wrote a story carefully slanted in John's favor. Indeed at his instigation the court was crowded with union men and sympathizers. The *Seaforth Globe* seeing an opportunity to ape notorious criminal trials in the East became more sensational than the *Advertiser* and sent photographers to cover the proceedings.

To Finlay the whole affair seemed unreal. The facts were both simple and easily understood: the patient had disobeyed instructions, his infection had spread into the blood stream and as a consequence he had died in spite of the best efforts of all the doctors at Sun Mount; the suit had been brought by his family at outside instigation. In spite of the legal subtleties of which the prosecution took advantage, the zeal of the trial attorney died down and public interest also waned.

Finally a verdict was returned in Finlay's favor. But it was with no elation that John left the courtroom. He was sick of the whole farcical business whose only purpose had been to discredit him and his associates with the public and he was apprehensive of its effect on the dwindling business at the hospital. Only for a moment did he feel a flicker of anything beyond relief that the ordeal was over; that was when Peter came up to him in the hall and said in a low voice, "Watch the *Advertiser* for the next few days, J.F. It'll be worth your while." But before nightfall he had entirely forgotten this admonition.

When he reached Sun Mount he found Miss Rodney in his office.

"How many people are waiting for me?" he asked dully.

"I don't know. But however many there are they'll have to wait."

John looked up and realized that the woman's face was very serious.

"What's happened?"

"Constance McBride came in just after noon."

"Yes?" John's eyes had darkened and his voice was alert.

"It seems that she discovered some time ago that she was pregnant. She felt that she must hold her job and so she went to an abortionist in Seaforth last week. She picked the date because her husband would be away at that meeting in Portland for several days. Last night she began to have fever and chills and today she had to go home from the office. When she came in I took her temperature; it was 102 so I made her stay in the house. But she refuses to allow any of the other doctors to see her."

This was a story which had become familiar during the depression. The country, it seemed to John, was full of young married women who would have liked to have children but were at work and felt that they must hold their jobs at any cost. His conscience pricked him that the wife of one of his own associates should be in this predicament. A little irritably he looked at the calendar.

"When will Arthur be back, Miss Rodney?"

"Not until late next week, I understand. He's decided to stay for a short course of Xray lectures, his wife tells me."

Finlay got up and reached for his white office smock. "I'd better see Constance before we send for him. She might object."

And this supposition proved to be correct. Constance forbade any such action.

"I may have a fever," she said, "but I know what I'm doing. Arthur wouldn't be of the least use, Dr. Finlay. I never have a cold or a sore throat that he doesn't worry himself sick."

John accepted her verdict without argument and set about examining her. He ordered a blood count and a blood culture and then asked Elliston to come to his office.

"We've got a mess on our hands and it looks as though you and I have to fight it out. The first laboratory reports will be up shortly. We must decide what to do to begin with."

The surgeon listened in silence to the history of the case. Informed who the patient was he shook his head gloomily. When the blood count was reported he studied the figures intently, and when at last he spoke his voice was cold with anger.

"Why the devil do these abortionists infect women this way? It isn't necessary."

"Perhaps they don't bother to wash their hands," said John. "But after all it's mostly our fault that things like this happen. The profession recognizes no social or economic reasons for abortion and women have no choice but to go to shady practitioners. Here's the wife of a doctor and she didn't know how to find a clean careful operator. How can we expect ordinary women to choose more wisely?"

"She should have asked some of us," muttered Elliston.

"That's neither here nor there now. The question is what do we do first."

Walter Elliston frowned; his brown eyes took on a new depth of concentration.

"Of course much will depend on what the blood culture shows. Until we know about that I suppose we'd better be conservative: keep her in bed, push fluids, try to prevent the spread of any infection she already has, type her blood so we can start transfusions if we need to. We might try mercurochrome too, I suppose, although I haven't much confidence in it."

"There are rumors around that some German chemist has found a dye that knocks septicemia," said John thoughtfully. "But I don't know whether it's true. Perhaps they're keeping it bottled up for Hitler's use only."

Elliston sighed. "When I was in school we heard a lot about chemotherapy and there was a good deal of excitement about dyes as antiseptics during and after the War. But I think everyone's been disappointed in them."

Finlay shook his head. "I've never forgotten Paul Ehrlich. I saw him when I was in Europe in 1909. He was sure he was on the track of great things. We simply haven't found the right lead. The day will come when many infections will be treated with specific chemicals."

"But that doesn't do us any good now," objected Elliston.

"No, it doesn't. We've got a very sick woman on our hands."

The battle for a life was not new to John Finlay. He knew the stakes and did not underestimate the odds against him, and he was emotionally involved in the struggle. Quiet as she was, Constance had appealed to him from the moment Arthur McBride had brought her to Newland. Small, slight, almost demure, there was something about her which people found very attractive on further acquaintance. Her brown hair with glints of red in it curled around her ears and over the back of her neck, her blue-gray eyes were soft and understanding, on her nose there was a sprinkling of freckles. Her voice was low-pitched and musical and there was an infectious gaiety in her laughter.

But now her cheeks were flushed and her eyes bright with fever, although there was little else about her appearance to show how dangerously ill she was. She joked a little with Elliston and Finlay when they came to her room; only the slightly unnatural pitch of her laugh disclosed the abnormal state of her mind.

It's just as though you'd opened the draft in a stove, thought John as he watched her. He put a cool firm hand on hers and felt how hot and dry her skin was. "Any complaints?" he asked, smiling down at the eyes shining in her flushed face.

"Only that everyone who comes in sticks me somewhere. I shan't have any blood left if they don't stop."

"Then we'll give you fresh new blood," promised Finlay.

In so unspectacular a fashion began the struggle whose outcome was in the balance for days. Of all concerned probably Constance herself endured the least actual suffering. Delirious

and stuporous by turns, with strangely lucid intervals when she betrayed some realization of her own danger, she drifted through days and nights filled with a sort of gray half-light and peopled by vague figures which meant but little to her. At times she recognized John and Miss Rodney; Elliston and the other nurses she seemed never to know.

On the third day after she entered Sun Mount Finlay sent for her husband and after that he sat by her bed much of the time watching her for some sign that she knew he was there. Now and then she murmured unintelligible words and sometimes she squeezed his hand, but for the most part he seemed not to exist for her.

Whenever Arthur left the sickroom he stalked up and down the corridors, his shoulders bent, his eyes brimming with wretchedness. He haunted John's office and dogged Elliston from the moment he reached Sun Mount each morning.

"What do you think now?" he would ask, his tongue stumbling over the words. "What does this shift in the white count mean? Shouldn't she have another transfusion today? I'm sure I've come back enough that you could use my blood again. . . . She seemed more rational last night. She talked about the mouse that used to come out and watch us evenings in our apartment in Philadelphia last year."

In spite of their sympathy this constant questioning got on the nerves of both Finlay and Elliston. "Damn it all, Mac," exclaimed John one day, "you're a worse complication than her blood culture," and afterward was conscience-stricken when he saw McBride shamble away down the corridor, his big hands dangling limply at his sides.

Back and forth the tides of battle ran. For a day or two Constance would seem better, then the laboratory findings would foreshadow a relapse and she would sink back into the depths. All members of the staff would gather in John's office to talk over her condition and make suggestions. Oliver Marlin drove over from Seaforth to offer his services; Garfield called from the County Hospital to say he would be on call any time he was needed. Robert Jackson met Elliston on the street and asked whether there was anything he could do to help. Priscilla telephoned to say that she would be glad to do anything they wanted her to in the laboratory. Grace Rodney slept with an alarm clock at her elbow and got up every two hours all night to see whether

there had been any change. Many of the other patients in the hospital heard what was going on and asked after Constance with interest.

John forgot that collections were sinking to a new low and memberships still declining. He did not know what Boyd might be up to and did not care. When Charles Wharton met him on the street and began to say something about business conditions in Newland John brushed him aside abruptly.

There finally came an afternoon when he and Elliston faced each other with strained grave faces.

"I think tonight will tell the tale," said the surgeon. "I know we've thought that before, but she can't go on like this much longer. One way or the other this thing is going to be decided in the next twelve hours, I'm sure."

Finlay nodded, not trusting himself to speak. He had ransacked his brain, pored over his books and journals, written to friends for advice, studied the laboratory reports until his mind was a whirl of confusion. His pity for McBride added to his distress. If Constance died she would scarcely know what was happening, but the haggard man who sat beside her hour after hour would collapse. Only the night before he had lurched into John's office demanding that something more be done.

"You've got to do something! You can't let her die! Oh, for Christ's sake, don't sit there staring at me! Do something, anything—do you hear me?"

And then he had crumpled into a chair, hiding his face in his arms, and sobbing in great gulps, "I can't let her go! I can't! I can't!"

All the while Finlay was conscious that Dennis kept in the background, avoiding Arthur, never going into the sickroom; he knew the torture Dryden must be enduring. With his own wife marked for death, D.D. must find the sight of McBride unbearable.

Sometimes when he had a moment or two to himself John puzzled over the ways of life. It was well enough to say that death was as natural as birth and that there could be no greater calamity than to live indefinitely, but this did not cover the ending of lives only well begun. The spirit of rebellion which years of practice had pretty well dampened flared up in Finlay's heart again, and once more he found himself wasting energy by revolting against events beyond human control. And now he hated to

admit that Elliston might be right in saying that another twelve hours would settle the issue for Constance one way or the other.

But as night came on he began to visit her room at more frequent intervals. Arthur was so completely exhausted by emotional turmoil and loss of sleep that he submitted to being led across the hall into an empty room where he lay down to rest and was almost instantly swept away by accumulated fatigue into uneasy slumber. Walter Elliston came in, studied the chart, wrote an order, and slipped away. D.D. crept silently down the corridor to ask whether there was anything he could do before going home for the night.

Finally Grace Rodney and John were left alone except for the nurse on duty.

"Why don't you go to bed?" asked Finlay sharply. "There's nothing you can do."

"Why don't you?" retorted Miss Rodney. "There's nothing you can do either."

Each of them looked at the other and then down at Constance. More than once in the past it had struck John that there was something magnificent in the last struggle of the human body against death. A purely instinctive resistance clashed against an implacable enemy offensive. It made him think of a ship wallowing in the trough of mountainous waves, water-logged and overwhelmed, but still rising on the giant swells and riding over them. The girl's stubborn heart beat on and on, she still breathed—that was all. Every other atom of energy was being husbanded for the final crisis.

The two left the room together, closing the door softly behind them. They walked down the passageway to John's rooms in silence. There Miss Rodney sat down and Finlay offered her a glass of wine.

"There's nothing to be gained by letting yourself collapse," he observed. "I'm going to mix myself a whisky and soda. Perhaps you'd rather have one too, instead of sherry."

The nurse shook her head. "I'd rather have the wine," she said.

Again they were silent. Everything they could have said to each other about Constance had been said long ago. There was no need to talk about her now. There was nothing to do but wait.

The small clock on the table ticked industriously away; there was something implacable about the repeated rhythmic sound. John pushed a box of cigarettes toward Miss Rodney; she took

one and lighted it. Presently Finlay got up and fetched his pipe. He sipped his whisky and soda, still in silence.

When he had finished he roused himself to ask whether his companion would care to listen to some music while they waited. She nodded. He turned the radio on and found a symphony. Now they could hear the clock no longer but both watched the hands moving slowly around the dial. When thirty minutes had gone the nurse rose.

"I'll go and see how she is. I'll be right back. There's no need for you to come this time. I'll send for you if we need you." She smiled briefly as her dark eyes rested on the man's careworn face. "You could do with some rest yourself now and then."

Quietly she slipped out of the room. Just as quietly she slipped back ten minutes later. John had fallen asleep while she was gone. His head had fallen back against the cushions of his chair, he was breathing very deeply, his pipe was still between his fingers in his lap. Softly Grace Rodney took it from him, then she tiptoed across the room to open a window and turn down the lights.

For a moment she bent over the sleeping figure, her lips parted, her dark eyes like black velvet. Then she left the room as noiselessly as she had entered. Morning would be time enough to tell him that Constance had won her battle.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

JOHN FINLAY was not sure exactly what it was about Peter which irritated him today but vague as it was the annoyance was definite. Whether it was the reporter or himself who was at fault he did not know, but he had been displeased at the news McFarlane brought him. Even the knowledge of this fact added to his vexation in spite of the fact that it proved his standing with the unions to have the Central Labor Council vote to boycott the Community Chest drive because of the attitude of the Seaforth hospitals toward Sun Mount Associates. It was indeed dawning on John that above all else he hated this business of fighting with his own professional brothers.

"I've been too busy with Constance McBride to know what was going on," he said.

"Well, you certainly don't seem much set up over the glad tidings," remarked the reporter, touching a match to his cigarette. "I thought it would take your mind off your other troubles."

"I've got too many of them," answered Finlay, forcing a smile.

"What might be griping you at the moment, J.F.?"

"Oh, everything. For instance, we took personal notes from a good many berry growers and small farmers for individual memberships in the hospital. And now the bulk of them are going by the board. Some of the folks have good reasons: they've been sick or they've got a poor price for their crop. But a lot of them simply won't pay up. Some of them have got what they wanted—an operation or a pair of glasses—and others have decided they'll never need a doctor anyhow, so why bother."

"And I suppose it would cost more to sue and get judgments against them than to let the notes slide?"

John nodded.

"Too bad you didn't foresee this, J.F. I'm rather surprised that you didn't spot that possibility."

"Well, I've learned something, Peter. I'm going to change the membership basis; there's no use selling to individuals all over the county. In the future we'll take in only people employed in some firm or factory and their families, and other groups already in existence that have some permanency about them. And we'll set a time limit too, during which they're not eligible to enter the hospital or have free medical care."

"A good many folks won't like that," objected McFarlane.

"I can't help it. We've been swamped all spring and summer with people who joined simply to get something done and dropped out as soon as they got what they were after. It just won't work the way we've been doing."

"But won't that play into Boyd's hands, give him another club to use against you?"

"I suppose it will," admitted Finlay grudgingly. "But I can't help that either."

"If there was only some way to make these birds understand—the ones of them who are honest—what you're up against."

John shifted uneasily in his chair. "I'm going to call a meeting of our members next week, explain the situation to them frankly and appeal for their support."

"You need bait, J.F. Some sort of a come-on. People don't fall for appeals any more. They've got calloused to them. Now if there was only something . . ."

"There is." Finlay was surprised at the gruffness of his own voice. "I've got what you call bait, ready for them."

"You have?" There was no mistaking the eagerness in Peter's exclamation. "What?"

"I've had it up my sleeve for months. Ever since February last year."

"Well?" There was something inexorable about the question.

"I suppose I might as well tell you." John frowned and drew a deep breath. "When things were their blackest with bank holidays all around and poor old Hoover sitting like a knot on a log knowing Congress wouldn't let him do anything, I went over to see George Schuyler. I told him I'd decided to start practice again and rebuild Sun Mount. I . . . I intimated that I hadn't dropped a cent in the market and was well heeled for whatever might happen. Now George had a hospital two-thirds

empty on his hands and he hadn't forgotten that I once had a lot of patients in Seacliff as well as at home. So he offered me a rebate above certain amounts on every patient I brought into Seacliff, and I took him up—not too quickly of course. I didn't want him to catch on that this was what I had come for."

In spite of his ill temper Finlay grinned at the recollection of this exploit.

"Well, quite a number of our members were among the people I took into Seacliff under that agreement, before Sun Mount was completed. I kept very careful records and know exactly what rebate I got on each of them. I couldn't return the money at the time because Schuyler would have gotten wind of it. So I've been waiting, holding fire so to speak, for the time when it would be most useful. I think this is the time. I'm going to pass out checks for those rebates at the meeting of our members next week."

"Smart lad!" murmured Peter. "Very smart! It'll be a honey if they don't start griping because you didn't refund the money sooner."

"That chance I'll have to take," said John with a thin-lipped smile. "And I've got one other plan that I think may work out. I'm going to have the members to dinner here at Sun Mount the next month or two, in groups of ten or a dozen at a time. They'll get to meet the staff and talk with them and that may do some good. I know it's a grandstand play, but we've got to do something soon or it will be too late."

Peter crushed the butt of his cigarette in an ash tray and looked up with a broad grin. "In other words, the end justifies the means when you select the end. I get you perfectly."

The weather-beaten face opposite him turned red and the reporter laughed aloud.

"I'm glad you've got the grace to blush, after all the lectures you've read me about my unprincipled methods of getting what I'm after. And now I know why you were so cranky when I first came in. You've been battling Grace Rodney about having these folks up here, upsetting her precious routine and throwing the help into a state. Aren't I right?"

The gray eyes that looked at him were slightly sheepish as John answered, "I wouldn't be surprised." Then both men laughed together and the tension that had hung in the air of the room was suddenly gone.

But hardly had McFarlane relaxed when there was a tap on the door and Dennis walked in.

"Oh, hello, McFarlane," he said in some embarrassment. "I didn't know you were here."

"No, I suppose not," replied Peter. "No more than I knew you were."

The two young men eyed each other distrustfully. D.D. had never forgotten that it was McFarlane who had found him in a Seaforth waterfront joint and taken him home and undressed him and left him to sleep off a drunken stupor. And Peter could never forget that this was the man who had worked beside Priscilla day after day for six years without knowing that she was in love with him. Further than this Peter would not allow himself to think; as he had once told Finlay he hoped Priscilla had married him because she loved him.

Now the two of them stared at each other silently and the room once more filled with tension. Finlay felt his earlier irritation creeping back. The young male was an uncomfortable animal to have around: here were these two supposedly intelligent educated men glaring at each other like angry tomcats. For the moment he agreed with Thurber that perhaps sex wasn't necessary.

Abruptly McFarlane stood up and pulled his hat down over his eyes.

"I must be on my way. Even the ace reporter must now and then do something to earn his pay. I'll be seeing you again in a day or two. 'By, Dryden."

Peter's quick footsteps died away down the corridor. Dennis shrugged his shoulders and sat down. "Somehow that fellow always gets in my hair," he said peevishly. "I don't know why."

"You mean you won't acknowledge it," retorted Finlay and at once was contrite.

He reminded himself for the thousandth time that Dennis was desperately unhappy and should be treated accordingly. He had been about to ask after Eleanor but this too, he perceived, would be tactless just now. There was nothing new to be said about her. Any normal adjustment of her relations to D.D. was impossible, and of late John had begun to wonder whether it might not have been wiser to have connived at an earlier marriage when her health was less precarious. The present situation seemed to be one of those insoluble dilemmas which crop up from time to time.

Dennis selected and lighted a cigarette before breaking the uncomfortable silence.

"Greenwood got his report from the Dental Board this morning. He passed his examination and am I relieved? I wonder if the dental crowd really has more sense than the medical board."

"Well, more than once I've known them to act far more sensibly than the doctors."

"I thought you'd like to know about the good news and Greenwood was too busy to come in himself. I had no idea there were so many bum teeth in the world."

"That's because you work in a laboratory and don't see as many patients as the rest of us, D.D. I'd like to bet you that when the next war comes along and we have to raise another army we'll turn down more boys for bad teeth than for anything else."

"I won't bet with you, John. Too many of your hunches turn out to be right."

Finlay laughed as he ruffled through the correspondence on his desk.

"Here's something that will interest you, D.D. The state department of health writes that, much as they regret it, they won't be able to supply us with drugs for the indigent syphilitics we're treating free. Isn't that nice?"

"I'm not surprised. I only wonder why they didn't think of it sooner."

"Isn't there a method of torture which consists of dribbling water on a man drop by drop?"

Dennis crushed out his cigarette stub angrily. "If these fellows would use half the energy and ingenuity they spend tormenting us to figure out how to distribute their services to the people who need them, there wouldn't be any health problems in Queen County," he exclaimed.

"But they're not interested in that, my boy." John picked out another sheet of paper. "Here's a different sort of letter. The Rural Resettlement office is asking about our rates for medical insurance. They might buy a whole block of memberships in the SMA for the families they're colonizing in the country around here."

Eagerly Dryden took the letter. He scanned it hastily and looked up with the old animation in his face.

"Why, John, if they do this we'll be sitting pretty this winter!"

"Yes, if . . . But it's a big 'if.' However I'm going to write as

seductive an answer as I can and get it into the mail today. We need that business."

"And how! Five hundred memberships!" Dryden's voice was fervent. "A thousand dollars more a month. That would be swell!"

Before John could reply the phone rang.

"Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Who? . . . What does he want? . . . Well, all right, if he insists. . . . O.K., I'll wait."

It was a puzzled pair of gray eyes that Finlay turned toward Dennis.

"Francis Arnold is here. Now what on earth . . ."

"Warren's son, you mean? That little rotter? Well, I'll be damned! So long, John. I just dropped in with the good word about Greenwood."

"Don't go, D.D. I might need a witness. I haven't an idea what the kid wants but I suspect it's something unsavory."

Dryden settled back in his chair and scrutinized Finlay's perplexed face. John stared back in equal uncertainty. Neither spoke for several moments. Then Dennis said, "Where is the kid? Why doesn't he show up?"

"The switchboard girl said he told her he had something in his car he wanted to get."

D.D. took a small notebook out of the pocket of his laboratory coat.

"Hadn't I better take notes," he suggested, "if he tries to proposition you?"

This question was cut short by a rat-a-tat on the door. John crossed the room and opened it quickly. "Come in," he said crisply.

The young man who entered was not a second edition of his father. Where Warren Arnold was short and broad and red-faced his son was tall and thin and his skin was pasty. He was fashionably dressed in a black and white diagonal Irish tweed and under one arm he carried a box in which typewriter paper had been sold. His dark hair was slicked back off his forehead and he looked nervously from one older man to the other. His eyes, Dennis saw, were pale by contrast with his dark brows and they did not rest long anywhere.

"Dr. Finlay," said the young man at last, "I don't suppose you remember me. But I used to see you sometimes when I was a kid, out at the Gun Club."

"No, I wouldn't have known you. You're not the chubby youngster you were when you came out to the Club shoots with your father years ago. . . . This is Dr. Dryden, one of our associates here."

The young man bowed jerkily.

"Won't you sit down?" asked John.

Rather hesitantly young Arnold took a chair. He pulled up the knees of his trousers carefully and glanced meaningfully toward Dennis.

"You can speak freely before Dr. Dryden," said Finlay. "He is one of my partners. What can we do for you?"

Francis Arnold still hesitated. One side of his face twitched. A nervous tic, thought John. And he can't be more than twenty-two.

"I hardly know how to begin, now that I'm here. I . . . I wanted to speak to you about my father."

"Isn't Dr. Arnold well?"

This question did not seem to help the visitor. Dennis got the impression that, now he had forced his way into Finlay's office, the boy wished he were somewhere else. The right side of his face twitched again and he alternately drew his long fingers up into the palms of his hands and extended them. Then he seemed to gather his courage to plunge into speech.

"I know you and the old man are at outs, Dr. Finlay. I know he's got it in for you. I know he's doing everything he can to break you. And I know he's not the only one in on the deal. Now what would it be worth to you to have the low-down on him and the others?"

John's dark gray eyes narrowed. "I suppose you have the . . . information in the box you're carrying."

Young Arnold's thin fingers tightened on the package in his lap, but his words denied his action. "No, I haven't got the dope with me. But I can get it in fifteen minutes if we come to terms."

"And what does it consist of, may I ask?"

"You can't expect me to tell you that right off the bat." Francis Arnold looked from Finlay to the silent Dryden. "But it's on the level. It'll settle the old man's hash once and for all. He'd never bother you again."

"How could I be sure of that?"

Misgiving flooded the young man's pale restless eyes but he leaned forward and tried to answer slowly and convincingly.

"What I've got on him would ruin any doctor. I know that. But of course if you don't want it I can sell it to somebody else. The old man's stepped on everybody's toes. There are a dozen men in Seaforth who'll give me whatever I ask for this dirt. But I thought I'd give you first chance. Now it's up to you. I'm not particular who I do business with."

"No, I suppose not." John spoke softly as though he were doing sums in his mind. "No, I suppose you aren't. . . . How much do you want?"

The question came so suddenly that it caught Arnold off-guard.

He swallowed hard, glanced obliquely at Dennis, then blurted out, "Twenty grand."

"A gangster expression," murmured Dryden ironically, and almost inaudibly, "meaning twenty thousand dollars. This is what comes of allowing children to go to the movies and read modern American authors like Hemingway."

A quick flush stained Francis Arnold's cheeks; his pale eyes hardened.

"That's my price. Take it or leave it!"

"I doubt whether that box you have there could possibly hold twenty thousand dollars' worth of information," said Finlay calmly.

Now there was consternation in Arnold's eyes. "I told you before that I haven't got the dope with me," he said, trying to control his voice.

"We heard you," remarked Dennis quickly.

"Do you expect anyone to buy a pig in a poke?" asked John dryly. "I'm not flattered if that is your opinion of me, young man. Besides, what can a boy like you have on his own father that could be worth so much money? Aren't you a little ashamed of what you're trying to do?"

"No! No, I'm not!" Unnoticed the box young Arnold had been clutching slid out of his hands into the seat of the chair in which he was sitting. "The old man's only getting what's coming to him. He's a devil! I hate him! The whole family hates him! And he hates us! He won't give me a dime. He treats me like a dog!"

"I'm sure you must be exaggerating."

"I'm not, Dr. Finlay. He buys all the liquor he wants but let me ask for some and see what happens. He belongs to the Merrimac Golf Club but I have to play on a public course. He won't

let me have a car. He checks up on the women I go out with. He tied up the yacht in Lake Union rather than let me have it."

"And so you want to break him, do you? Ruin him. When you do, he won't be able to buy liquor or play golf or run a car or keep his boat or even make a living. And how much better off will you be?"

Francis Arnold licked his lips nervously and the side of his face twitched. "I'd have twenty thousand dollars," he said defiantly.

"But you'd have your mother and sisters on your hands and twenty thousand wouldn't go far."

"Oh, my mother . . ." Young Arnold stopped suddenly and a crafty look crept into his pale eyes.

"It's really more for her and the girls I'm doing this than for myself," he said in an obvious effort to be convincing. "You don't realize what they've had to put up with, Dr. Finlay. When I was a kid we were all terrified by the old man. At night after I went to bed I could hear him working my mother over. But she had three kids and no way to earn her living so she stuck it out. She's put up with his devilishness all these years. But I can't stand watching it any longer. If it was just me I could take it, but I've got to get her and the girls out of there. That's the truth—God's truth. I didn't mean to tell you, but you forced me to. Now you can see why I feel like I do."

The young man sank back in his chair as if exhausted but underneath his eyelids he glanced furtively from Finlay to Dennis and back again. Both faces were expressionless.

"Yes," said John after a long pause. "I think I understand your situation. But I'm afraid you don't understand mine. What you ask me to do is unprofessional. If it were discovered I would be as thoroughly discredited as your father. Besides, twenty thousand dollars is a lot of money these days. In 1929 it might have been chicken feed but it isn't now. I'll have to have time to think things over."

"Couldn't you give me something now? Say a hundred dollars . . . for an option . . . to show you mean business?"

"No—o—o, I don't think so," answered John slowly. "If you're in a hurry you'd better go to one of the men you spoke of in Seaforth who may have more ready cash than I have."

Both Dennis and Finlay saw panic creeping into Arnold's eyes.

"I forgot one thing," he began hastily. Then with a visible

effort he got control of himself and spoke slowly. "I've got as much on Baldwin and Boyd as I have on the old man. Not one of them would dare stay here if I spilled all I knew. The whole dirty bunch would be cleaned out."

"How interesting!" murmured Dryden, his voice absently speculative.

"Yes, isn't it?" said John without a flicker of expression.

Desperately Francis Arnold stared at first one and then the other, then he suddenly leaped to his feet.

"Oh, damn you!" he cried. "Damn you both! I might 've known you are cheap skates! But you'll be sorry one of these days. I'll get the money and you'll be out in the cold."

"You don't know what you're saying. Nobody would close a deal for that much money without thinking it over. I'm interested in what you've told me but I don't believe in acting hastily. I suggest that you call me up a week from now. Then we'll see what can be done."

Young Arnold continued to stare at the older men, his eyes a medley of desire, alarm, and apprehension. His face twitched, he licked his lips. When at last he said, "O.K.," his voice came in a squeak. He looked around feverishly.

John sprang up. "This is the door to the corridor, Arnold. The entrance is straight ahead. Let me hear from you sometime next week."

Finlay stood with his fingers on the door knob as the young man walked out, avoiding the gray eyes so near his own.

"Good-by." Finlay's voice was urbane, inflectionless.

Behind him Dennis stood up and stretched, smiling grimly. As he did so, his eyes fell on the box in the seat of the chair the visitor had occupied. He stepped across the floor, picked up the box, and shook it. He heard the swish of loose paper inside.

"Look here, John!" he cried. "The young scamp left the dirt behind him!"

Finlay closed the door and came across the floor. He stared at the box in Dryden's hands.

"There's paper in it all right," said Dennis. "Do you suppose that brat actually has got the low-down on Warren? I sized him up for a kid playing at being a gangster."

"So did I," said John. "I thought the box was a 'plant' and he was hanging onto it in order to convince us that he really had something to sell. But now what?"

Dryden laughed. "Certainly the kid has presented you a neat problem. Maybe he's smarter than we thought he was. As for me I'm going back to work and try to get the taste of him out of my mouth."

Finlay ran his hands through his hair. "I've got work to do myself," he said. "I suppose I'd better keep the box here for the time being. Perhaps the young crook will come back for it in a few days."

When Dennis had gone out John opened a drawer in his desk and put away Francis Arnold's package but when he had done this he did not set to work at once. Instead he sat looking fixedly out of the window, turning over in his mind what had just happened. He could dimly recall young Arnold as a chubby pink-cheeked boy of nine or ten who had sometimes come to the Gun Club with his father and dodged about among the trap shooters. He had been a rather attractive child but there was nothing prepossessing about the long-legged shifty-eyed young man who had just gone away. John could remember nothing in his tirade that had the ring of sincerity in it except his outburst about Warren's refusal to give him money and the use of an automobile and the family yacht.

But Finlay did recall a phrase or two the lad had used: how there was more than one "in on the deal" and how he had "just as much on Baldwin and Boyd as on the old man." John had recently begun to feel that he would have to do something more aggressive, that he might have to fight his enemies with weapons of their own type. They had threatened him, they had tried to bribe him, they had intimidated his assistant William Lawrence, they had dragged the Sun Mount Associates into court on a trumped-up malpractice suit. They would no doubt have attempted blackmail too if they could have found a loophole.

Now Francis Arnold had insisted that he had something on "the whole dirty bunch" and had specifically mentioned Baldwin and Boyd in this connection. If that half-baked kid could get something on these men, why could not he, John Finlay, do as well?

Grimly John told himself that he should have had more practice in dark and devious methods. He was unwilling to buy information from young Arnold but he refused to believe that there was anything his recent visitor could do that he could not do better. Herbert Baldwin was both prudent and farsighted but Boyd

and Warren Arnold were dull-witted and injudicious. They were the weak spot in the combination; that was the place to strike. For the time being professional standards must be abandoned; in the jungle only jungle manners availed.

For a time Finlay sat absorbed in thought, then he reached for the telephone but before he could take the instrument off the stand it rang. Answering it he heard Oliver Marlin speaking.

"I have a bit of news for you, John. There was an Efficiency Committee meeting last night at Seacliff. By a narrow margin the committee adopted a resolution asking the state medical board to investigate your conduct and the SMA."

Finlay hesitated an instant. This was the most direct attack yet; the board had power to revoke licenses for due cause.

"Thanks, Oliver. It's good of you to let me know. I've been half expecting something of the sort."

"The resolution was very circumspectly worded. No direct charges, only a statement that rumors were afloat to the effect that you advertise and solicit patients."

"Oh, of course. That was George's doing."

"I'm coming over soon to see you, John. I want to talk to you."

"Why don't you eat with me tonight, Oliver? The food at Sun Mount isn't bad. And we can talk afterward."

"Thank you, John. I'll be there."

After Marlin hung up John sat with the phone in his hand. It was time to act and to act decisively. He swallowed twice and took the receiver off the hook.

When he put it up again and leaned back in his chair there was an expression of surprise and dismay in his eyes. For what Constance McBride had just told him was not what he had expected to hear.

"I don't know who examined me, or who did the operation. You see, they kept my face covered all the time. All I can tell you is the address of the first place I went, over in Seaforth."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

OLIVER MARLIN settled himself comfortably in an armchair opposite the one in which John Finlay sat smoking. Marlin took the cigar out of his mouth, sniffed at it appreciatively, deposited the ash neatly in the tray beside him, and resumed his meditative study of the flames licking the alder sticks in the fireplace. The silence in the room was tinged with the confidence of long friendship and understanding.

"I'm glad you didn't tell me you were having a dinner for some of your members tonight, John. This way I got to see their reaction to your staff and the whole Sun Mount set-up."

Finlay slumped deeper into his chair; over the pipe bowl and through its tiny column of smoke he eyed his old friend.

"These dinners are a lot of extra work. The kitchen help don't like them and I nearly had to scalp Grace Rodney to get her into line. But they are worth all the trouble. They've made us more friends than any other stunt we could have put on I believe."

"Well certainly the people here tonight went away one hundred per cent for you," said Dr. Marlin.

"Oh, no. Not quite that much." John laughed a little. "But I think three-fourths of the members who have come to these dinners are thoroughly sold on our plan now, whereas this time last year not over twenty-five per cent were."

"It's the personal contact that does it," said Marlin. "There ought to be some way to get people and doctors together more often. Then we wouldn't have such crazy ideas about each other." He sighed and stretched his feet toward the fire. "I like the way you've got everything together up here—hospital, offices, laboratories. And I like the spirit of your staff. Nobody took a back-

hand crack at anyone else all evening—which is most unlike the attitude of the Seacliff staff as you know quite well.”

“Well, the smartest thing we’ve done yet is to get the men and the people who will one day be their patients together. If we pull out of this slump we’re in that will be what does it.”

Once more there was silence between the two men. The fire burned quietly and the light flickered on rows of books along the walls. Shaded lamps made pools of pale yellow radiance on the floor beside the chairs. Now and then a gust of wind blew a spatter of rain against the windowpanes. This was one of those autumn nights, Finlay said to himself, when it was good to have a snug living room of one’s own from which to survey the world with appropriate detachment. And then he smiled grimly when he remembered how little detachment there was these days in his own attitudes and how even tonight he had had a purpose in asking Oliver to stay and visit with him.

He got up and put another stick of wood on the fire. At his movement Marlin opened his eyes with a start.

“You must have been out late last night, Oliver.”

“I was. I went to one of those confounded musical evenings my wife promotes. You don’t know how lucky you are to be able to do as you please and stay at home when you want to.”

Finlay turned searching gray eyes on Marlin. The man seemed fagged out. His face was deeply lined and his white hair seemed to throw all the wrinkles into bold relief. Behind his spectacles his eyes were scarcely to be seen. Suddenly it came to John that Marlin was really an old man on the downgrade, with most of his life behind him. He had never quite realized this before and now it made him feel old himself. This in turn annoyed him and he sat down abruptly and began to refill his pipe.

“It’s your own fault, Oliver. Why let a woman drag you around? You don’t have to go to all these things and be bored to death.”

“That’s what you think.” There was the slightest possible trace of bitterness in Marlin’s voice. “But wait till you’re my age and married to a woman twenty years younger than you are. Then you’ll feel differently.”

John moved uneasily in his chair. He did not like the turn the conversation had taken. It was always poor judgment to discuss a man’s domestic relationships and, besides, he did not want

to feel sorry for Marlin just now. It was far from easy to ask favors of a man you were sorry for.

"Have another cigar, Oliver. You've been dozing and that one's gone out."

"Thanks, John. These are very nice. I must find out where you get them."

"I'll give you a box when you go. I don't smoke cigars and my stock is deteriorating here in these dry rooms." Finlay paused a moment and then forced himself to go on. "There's something I want to ask you, Oliver. I expect you'll think I'm up to no good and I suppose I am. But the fact is that I'm on the trail of certain things that happened years ago and I need information which I don't know exactly how to lay my hands on. How long were you on the state medical board?"

Marlin sat up a little straighter and looked at Finlay with a flicker of excitement in his faded blue eyes.

"I went on the board in 1900 and served until 1916—four full terms."

"I knew you were on when I got my license in 1911 but I wasn't sure when you were first appointed. Now isn't there a permanent record of the board's meetings and transactions?"

"Yes, certainly. One of the members is always elected secretary."

"And his office girl or stenographer actually does the work and keeps the records, eh?"

"Just what are you driving at, John?"

"I need to know certain facts which I believe can only be proved by the records of this board some thirty years ago. I don't want to use them to make a stink, Oliver, but simply to make our position here secure. I want these men who've gone in with me to be able to make a living and have a place in the community. I want peace for Sun Mount."

Finlay had purposely kept his voice low and refrained from looking up as he explained himself, but now he lifted his eyes and watched Marlin anxiously.

"In other words, John, you are about to resort to . . . shall we say justifiable blackmail?"

Finlay sprang up and going over to a cabinet built in below a bookcase pulled out a small covered stand. "I'd like you to listen to something, Oliver. It's the record of a conversation I had in December last year with Henry Roberts. When you've

heard it I think you'll understand why I feel that any weapon I can use is justifiable."

All the weariness had left Dr. Marlin's face. His dim blue eyes shone with interest.

"Let me hear your record and then tell me what you want me to do for you, John. I'm not in the habit of leaving my friends in the lurch."

There was a pinball game in the cigar store and if Herbert Baldwin had not stopped in the doorway between the little shop and the lobby of the office building, McFarlane might have missed him; but the obsequious voice in which the clerk spoke to the great man caught first Peter's ear and then Bruce Hewitt's. Dodging three or four people clustered in front of the elevator stack, the reporter dashed after his quarry.

Hewitt watched McFarlane take out his pencil and paper; he also noted the complacency which almost visibly oozed out of Baldwin. But he needed a better view of the surgeon's face and was rewarded when Peter drew Baldwin out of the path of traffic coming through the revolving doors, into a position where he faced the cigar store. The little labor leader leaned against the end of a counter with a magazine in his hands, his bright dark eyes fixed on the physician. Presently he laid down the magazine and sauntered out into the lobby where he dawdled in front of the building directory and studied Baldwin from the side. Then he went outside and waited on the sidewalk just beyond the entrance to the building. He was there when Baldwin brushed past him on his important way down Fourth Avenue.

Shortly Peter emerged stuffing loose sheets of yellow paper into his jacket pockets. "Get him?" he inquired.

Hewitt nodded. "From all angles."

"O.K. Let's go. The jalopy is just around the corner."

The coupé into which McFarlane bundled Hewitt was the same battered Model A Ford in which he had driven out to Sun Mount to interview Finlay in 1932 and when he slammed the door the whole vehicle trembled and shook, but the motor started with a roar and the car leaped away from the curb with a bound that jerked Hewitt's neck.

Peter wrapped his bony big-knuckled fingers affectionately around the wheel and stepped on the gas.

"My wife nags me to get a new car but I like this old baby. Jesus, how she can go when I cut her loose!"

Hewitt glanced at the speedometer and wondered how much of the illusion of speed was fathered by the noise of the motor and the rattling of the body. A traffic signal stopped their mad flight momentarily. McFarlane jiggled the gas lever and let the motor idle.

"Did you get quite an interview from the doctor?" asked Bruce.

"Oh Lord, yes! I never saw a guy so well pleased with himself and so tickled to get in the limelight. He's pretty smart—at least John Finlay says he is—but Christ, is he gullible? You can't lay it on too thick for him. It never occurs to him that somebody might be taking him for a ride."

"What did you ask him about?"

Peter laughed. "What's everybody on the Coast talking about this fall, brother? EPIC and Upton Sinclair. The less they know the more they talk. And that goes for his nibs too. He hasn't the foggiest idea what it's all about, but that didn't stop him gabbling."

The light changed and the little coupé lunged ahead again. For a block or two Peter was silent but Hewitt noticed the grin that came and went on the mobile mouth. Finally the reporter looked around and said, "The notes I made on Baldwin just now are going into the bin where I collect all raw material of that sort. When the bin is full I'm going to quit work and write a book."

For the first time in the years of their acquaintance Hewitt saw the other man's seagreen eyes entirely free from mockery and completely serious. There was another long pause and then Peter spoke again.

"All this junk I write now is bull and I know it, Bruce. But I've got a good book or two in me, and more than anything else on earth I want time to write them before I get too old to feel that they're important."

Once more they had to stop for a light. McFarlane looked over at the earnest sallow face of his companion. "You haven't said how Baldwin struck you."

Bruce Hewitt looked up, surprised that Peter was actually asking his opinion.

"Well, you know, it's kind of funny I guess, but all I could think of was how much he looks and acts like the Big Fellow."

McFarlane was openly startled; for a moment he did not say anything, then he began to laugh.

"By the Lord, you're right, Bruce. Now why on earth didn't I spot that? Here you are—beating me at my own game."

"It's not their faces that are so much alike," said Hewitt thoughtfully. "It's the way they stand and walk and hold themselves, and the way they feel inside. There's not a spark of kindness in the Big Fellow; he don't care about anybody except himself. He knows what he wants, he goes after it, he's shrewd and determined and as smart as they come. And ruthless. He had to be, I guess, or he'd 've been driving a delivery truck yet. Well, Baldwin's got the same kind of face and he feels like the Big Fellow about things. I wouldn't want to get in the way of either one of them."

The little car was clattering along the rough pavement of an alley on the edge of the wholesale district. Suddenly Peter turned sharply into the broad opening of a storage garage of whose existence Hewitt had had no inkling until that abrupt turn.

"My pet hangout," explained McFarlane. "Useful when I cover waterfront strikes or want to keep under cover for some other reason. It's only a block from the Burkett Building."

The Burkett Building had housed many high-grade professional and business offices until after the first World War; it still had a shabby-genteel air about its high arched entry and dark somberly paneled lobby.

"Decadent but respectable," mumbled McFarlane as he scanned the directory of occupants. "Here we are, Bruce. 426. Let's go."

None of the other passengers in the elevator got out on the fourth floor. Peter led the way briskly down the corridor and paused before a door which bore the words, "Austin B. Prentiss, M.D. Walk In." There was no one else in sight. He opened the door quietly and stepped inside with Hewitt at his heels.

The small neatly furnished waiting room was empty except for a young woman in a severely plain black dress who sat at a desk filling out cards. At the sound of footsteps she looked up; the appearance of the two men seemed to surprise her.

"Did you wish to see the doctor?" she inquired with a slight hesitation.

"Sure, sister. We ain't here for pleasure," drawled McFarlane impudently.

The secretary surveyed him with evident disapproval.

"Did you have an appointment? Dr. Prentiss is very busy this morning."

"No, no appointment. We didn't have time. This is an emergency, sister. Move up on it, will you? We haven't got all day to wait around. It's after eleven o'clock now."

The young woman looked sharply and meaningly at Peter's hat which was still on his head.

"What name, please? I'll see what the doctor says but I doubt whether he can see you today."

Before Peter could answer the buzzer sounded imperiously. The secretary seemed to be annoyed by the sound. She spoke into the transmitter almost brusquely, keeping her eyes on McFarlane and Hewitt. Both men heard a masculine voice say curtly, "Come in, please, at once, Miss Ramsay."

"Please be seated," said the girl as she picked up her notebook. "I'll be back in a moment."

"That's a cagey gal," observed Peter. "They probably don't take any patients who aren't sent here by some doctor in the crowd, and Prentiss himself evidently keeps out of sight."

McFarlane prowled up and down restlessly, his composition-soled shoes making little squeaking noises on the polished floor. He glanced at the wall clock above the secretary's desk and compared it with his wrist watch; he peered inquisitively at the papers and cards strewn over the top of the desk and into the waste basket.

"You remind me of a monkey, poking into everything," said Hewitt grinning good-naturedly.

"I play the smart aleck pretty well, don't you think?"

But before Hewitt could reply, McFarlane cocked an ear toward the door through which the secretary had disappeared. Behind it both men could hear a rumbling voice raised in what was apparently anger.

"Look out and see if anyone's coming down the hall," said Peter.

Hewitt did so and shook his head No. The reporter walked noiselessly across the room and took hold of the door knob. Slowly and soundlessly he turned it, opened the door a crack. The deep voice was now clearly audible.

". . . I simply cannot be hampered by incompetent assistants, Miss Ramsay. There must be well-trained nurses available in this town. You must find them. Only carelessness can account for

the infections we've had lately. Such accidents are disastrous. We can't be too careful. I want you to get two good nurses—middle-aged if possible. I'm sick of these young flibberti-gibbets."

"You know how hard it is to get well-trained people for this work," replied the secretary. "The last time I interviewed fifteen nurses before you hired one. I think it would be better to go out of town. At least it could do no harm to try. Let me get you a letter I've just had from an agency in Chicago. It would be simpler to hire through a place like that."

There came a sharp tapping of heels approaching the door through which Peter and his friend were eavesdropping. Instantly both men became absorbed in copies of *Time* hastily snatched up. Miss Ramsay entered the waiting room; she frowned at the door she found slightly ajar, glanced sharply at the two men, opened a file, took out a folder, looked once more at her callers, and finally went back into the inner office. As the door closed behind her there was an unmistakable sound of a lock fastening.

Peter grimaced across the top of his magazine at Hewitt.

"I gummed that up," he admitted. "Eavesdropping is much easier in mystery stories than in real life, I can see."

"Why don't you clear out?" asked Hewitt. "The girl's suspicious of you, but I think I'm simple enough looking to pass muster. I'll tell her you had to move your car. That'll give me an excuse to stick around for a while."

"O.K., Bruce. I'll wait for you in the lunch counter downstairs."

Hewitt nodded and buried his face in his magazine again. His persistence was rewarded when the secretary came back to her desk.

"Where's your friend?" she asked sharply.

Bruce looked up in apparent confusion. "Oh, he was afraid he'd get a ticket so he went to move the car. He'll be right back." Hewitt fidgeted in his chair and smiled so appealingly at the young woman that she relaxed a trifle.

"There really isn't any use of your waiting," she said. "Dr. Prentiss has appointments straight through until five o'clock."

"But my friend told me to wait for him. He's coming back here." Hewitt's sallow face was so frank and his manner so ingenuous that the secretary shrugged her shoulders and said, "Oh, all right then."

She opened her typewriter and put paper into it; the noise of the machine, Bruce knew, would cover any sounds that might come from the private office. He sat waiting and watching, motionless. Presently he heard a faint click of a door in the hall. With a lazy movement that concealed a good deal of speed he got to his feet.

"I'll be back in a minute, lady."

Miss Ramsay scarcely looked up from her work.

When Hewitt looked down the corridor he saw halfway to the elevator a tall man who walked with almost military erectness and whose arms were so long that his hands hung well down toward his knees. He had his finger on the down button when Bruce came up beside him and stood staring stupidly at the signal lights.

"Which car goes down?" he asked.

The big man looked down at him condescendingly. "All of them," he replied. His voice was deep and rumbling. Abashed, Hewitt followed him into the first car that stopped at the fourth floor.

Having found Peter wolfing a sandwich and a chocolate milk shake Bruce ordered the same and dropped down in a booth in the lunch counter opposite the reporter.

"There's no doubt about it, man. The beard Prentiss wears doesn't conceal the resemblance. I can't see why no one ever noticed it before."

"Few people are really observant," answered McFarlane. "They're too absorbed in themselves to pay attention to what is going on around them. That's why it's easy to put things over on most folks. . . . But, oh boy, is John Finlay going to be tickled at what we have to tell him today?"

When Peter's call came in Finlay had just started to go through the afternoon mail. On the top of the pile was a long official-looking envelope. The return in the upper corner said "State Board of Medical Examiners"; at the bottom of the letter was a sprawling signature above the typewritten words, "Secretary of the Board." John sat for a moment staring at that signature.

He knew Thomas Cayman, had heard him crack jokes about the strange answers the Board got on examination papers from men who were applying for licenses to practice medicine in the state. Now here was this sheet of letterhead signed by Cayman

and addressed to Dr. John Finlay, exuding a disconcerting official sternness.

The communication was curt and decisive. Certain charges of unprofessional conduct had been made to the Board concerning Sun Mount Associates. Each member of the group was therefore summoned to appear before the Secretary of the Board when full details of the alleged misconduct would be forthcoming. Following this hearing a period of twenty days would be given them to answer the charges but, pending the Board's decision, each of the accused would be required to deposit his license with the secretary, Dr. Cayman.

Now that this not unanticipated blow had fallen, John was half-amused at his own calmness. The whole thing smacked of the unreal. He had been practicing in the state since 1911; he knew Cayman and the other Board members; he had held office in both the state and county societies, he had published articles in the state journal; he had been a reputable member of his profession all these years. And now these old acquaintances and friends were summoning him for investigation. It was incredible, but here was the letter in his hands. Suddenly John recalled the anxious faces of a generation of interns at Seaclyff who had gone up to face the Board and write their examinations; now he too was facing the same materialization of cold impersonal authority.

But there was the information Peter had just telephoned him. The line of investigation that had seemed a blind alley was clearly not a blind alley after all. The man in the Burkett Building to whom Constance had gone, Herbert Baldwin, the mystery hinted at by Oliver Marlin's recollections were all tied up together. More facts must be exhumed, more connections followed up. For this, time was essential. It could not be completed before the day set for the first appearance before the medical board. Therefore that appearance must be postponed. And above all neither he nor any other member of the Sun Mount group dare deliver up his license to Cayman: there was on record, Marlin had said, no case in which a license so surrendered had been returned.

What was to be done now? John pushed back his chair and went over to the window. It was a day with high clouds; the Sound stretched before him—a five-mile strip of turbulent gray water made deceptively smooth by distance. Beyond it were the mountains raising their rugged shoulders against a somber sky,

their crests already rimmed with snow. Finlay began to pace up and down the room; there was no more comfort in the scene outside than in his own thoughts.

Ought he to summon the other men and tell them what had happened? He knew how each of them would react. Arthur would be angry, he would brood over this new injustice and then burst out in a flare of hot anger. Elliston would brood more silently in a mixture of alarm and foreboding. Nathan Garnell would be convinced that he was the principal butt of the attack and responsible for the predicament the whole group was in; he never forgot that he was a Jew even when the others did. Greenwood was not involved, since his dental license had been issued without question. Dennis would be the angriest of all but he would conceal his indignation as well as his misgivings under a camouflage of wisecracks and understatement. But among them all there was no one who could lend effective aid in the emergency.

John plodded back and forth doggedly. He could think better when he walked, and this was no time for false starts or mistakes.

He caught sight of the raincoat hanging in the corner of the room. Grace Rodney had brought it in the day before and hung it there. She always remembered things like that. She had never been known to forget anything. Sometimes he was oppressed by her incessant watchfulness. It would have been almost a pleasure to go out into the rain and wind without his raincoat & rubbers, but there was no chance of that with her nearby. That woman . . .

He stopped suddenly. Why had he not thought of her before? No man could ask for a better ally in battle. Hurriedly he went back to his desk and picked up the house phone.

When Miss Rodney came in he pushed a chair toward her.

"Sit down," he said. "I want to talk to you. But first read this letter. It explains itself."

The nurse held out her hand; she read the letter twice, the second time very slowly. Then she raised her head and said quietly, "What about this, Dr. Finlay?"

"That's what I want to talk to you about," he answered.

It was late that afternoon when John drove out of town south-bound. The clouds had settled down as the day wore on and now a drizzling rain was falling. The windshield wipers swung

rapidly back and forth; through the half-open window at his left the wind blew bursts of rain upon his shoulder.

"I wish someone would build a car with a signal system a man could work from inside," said Finlay. "Here I drive all winter with the window open so I can get my arm out."

"But it would be just as well not to get picked up on a traffic charge tonight," chuckled his companion.

John nodded and grinned. "I'll keep below fifty," he promised. "Why don't you turn on the heater? I don't want you to get pneumonia and die on me now that we're in this mess together."

Dave Reynolds laughed. "I won't. Don't worry. I've practiced law as long as you've practiced medicine and I'm just as tough as you are."

"I don't understand all I might about that paper you've got in your pocket, Dave. But if it gives me a little time so I can get my evidence together, it'll be worth driving a hundred and twenty miles for."

"You just get me to Cascade, John, and I'll do the rest. If the judge wasn't out on circuit we wouldn't have had to make this trip, but once he signs this injunction you can sit back and let the Board stew in its own juice for several months."

"All right, sir. I'll concentrate on the road and leave the heavy thinking to you."

At this the long dark car seemed to settle into its gait so that nothing was heard except the swizzle of tires on the wet black road.

It was at this exact moment that Miss Rodney and Dennis Dryden, having just ushered out the Rural Resettlement Administrator who had come to Sun Mount to see Finlay, turned to each other with smiling faces.

"I wish John had been here," said Dennis. "I know he had a letter from this man only a few days ago asking about memberships in the SMA for the colonists but I don't believe he had much faith that the deal would go through."

Grace Rodney smiled at the young man; in spite of his unhappiness his old enthusiasm still boiled up on occasions.

"I wouldn't be too sure of it yet," she said. But her smile robbed the words of the tartness her retorts often had. "There's so much red tape about these government agencies."

D.D.'s face sobered a little but he was still optimistic. "Well, I think that chap means business, Miss Rodney. He sounded to

me as though he had his mind made up now. And think what it would mean to have five hundred new paid-up memberships to start the winter with! Why, this place would be sitting pretty and we'd all of us know we were going to eat regularly for the next few months."

Miss Rodney nodded. "I certainly hope you're right, Dr. Dryden," she said. But she made no mention of the errand on which John had gone. For the present at least it was better that no one else know the latest danger in which they all were standing.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

JOHN FINLAY hung up the phone and turned toward Dennis. The younger man held in one hand an open letter and in the other a newspaper. He had been laughing when he came in but at sight of Finlay's expression his blue eyes grew somber.

"What's up now, John?" he asked.

The low voice in which Finlay answered was more expressive of indignation than any amount of shouting could have been. "That was Oliver Marlin calling to tell me that the County Society last night passed a resolution condemning the plan of the Resettlement office to buy memberships in the SMA for their colonists. A copy of this resolution is to be sent to the administrator so he'll be sure to understand its importance."

Dryden was shaken completely out of his good humor.

"Why damn their souls! They can't take care of these families so they won't let anyone else take care of them either."

"No, D.D. That's where you're wrong. They also proposed an alternate plan."

"So what? It'll be rotten!" retorted Dennis hotly.

"Oliver told me just now that the society proposes that each of these families pay so much a month, depending on the number in the family, into a central medical fund. When they need medical care they can call any doctor they choose from the list of those who go in on the scheme. At the end of each month all the doctors send in their bills and get their pay out of the common treasury."

"And what if the bills come to more than the fund?"

"Oh, that little detail apparently wasn't considered. Why cross any bridges before you get to them?"

"Anyhow it's a steal! A cheap imitation of the Sun Mount sys-

tem. Everybody pays into the pool but he isn't sure that there'll be enough cash to pay the doctors who go in on the set-up. It sounds like one of George Schuyler's half-baked ideas."

In spite of his wrath Finlay smiled. "I wouldn't be surprised if our fat friend had a hand in it, D.D."

"He's in on every dirty deal, John, along with Baldwin and Arnold and Boyd and the half-dozen cat's-paws on their string in Seaforth."

"They're after us full cry, D.D. Here's something else you might as well know about, too." John opened a drawer and produced the letter from the state medical board summoning the Sun Mount Associates for investigation on the charge of unprofessional conduct.

Dennis read the communication and looked up bewildered.

"But we're supposed to be down there today, having our first hearing."

"No, D.D. That attack is stymied for the time being anyhow. We got an injunction forbidding the board to rescind any of our licenses. So now they've attacked from a new angle. Perhaps Dave Reynolds and I weren't as smart as we thought we were."

Dryden shook his head and ruffled his thick mop of corn-colored hair.

"They're crazy, John—the whole bunch of them! What can they gain from kicking up a stink like this?"

"They expect to put us out of business and close up Sun Mount. They think that will keep other men from attempting any ventures into co-operative medicine in this state. As a side issue of course they'd like revenge on me for several things and they'd enjoy discrediting all you other fellows in the group."

It seemed to Finlay that for the first time he could see in Dryden's face something resembling fear rather than defiance.

"All this struck me as funny when I first saw the stuff," said the younger man looking at the letter and the newspaper in his hands. "I didn't realize how serious things might be for some of the fellows."

John nodded. He knew that Dennis was wondering how Walter Elliston and Nathan Garnell would support their families if they were drummed out of their profession. "Maybe it's lucky for Arthur that Connie has a job of her own," added Dryden soberly.

"Let me see that letter again," said Finlay. "It isn't often that

a man is asked to contribute money to put himself out of business."

"This didn't come to you, John. It was addressed to me."

"Just a slip-up of some office girl, that's all. But as long as the association gives us advance information of their plans we mustn't complain."

John smiled and went on reading. Dryden studied his face: it was thoughtful, even somber, but in the dark gray eyes and the deep lines around the mouth there was undismayed grimness and suddenly, without realizing exactly why, Dennis felt his own spirits lighten.

"Well, Baldwin and his gang have taken on quite a job. It may not be as easy as they think to push a bill through the legislature. We may have some friends of our own down there."

"We'll have to have some, D.D. For if the state medical practice act is amended so as to prohibit incorporated groups practicing medicine and keep us from admitting anyone to Sun Mount who isn't a member of our insurance system, we'll be done for. Washed up. *Spurlos versenkt!*" Over the last phrase Finlay laughed roughly.

"Are you going to this meeting tonight?" Dryden put one finger on the newspaper lying open on the desk.

"Certainly. Are you?"

Dryden frowned regretfully. "I don't like to leave Eleanor alone in the evening," he said. "But Arthur said he'd be there."

"All right. Tell him to come in to see me, will you? And let me have the paper. I think I'd better study it carefully to get all that may be between the lines of that article."

The call which had gone out for a mass meeting of physicians, dentists, and druggists in the Seaforth Eagles' Auditorium brought a crowd that had filled the whole lower floor of the hall before John Finlay and Arthur McBride arrived. They paused in the entrance to look over the gathering. Finlay's eye almost immediately was caught by a compact group of men seated together on the right side of the room about halfway toward the platform.

"That's the delegation from the dental society," he said. "I wonder if they've got anything up their sleeves."

McBride grinned cheerfully. "Greenwood was running around all day on what he called 'public relations management.' I don't think he was doing it for his health."

Finlay chuckled. "Greenwood is quite a fellow, isn't he? Do you think he'll be here tonight?"

"Not him. He prefers to pull the strings from behind the scenes."

"Well, it's more comfortable to be behind the scenes than up in front where the shooting is."

Down toward the front of the hall a tall figure stood up and gesticulated energetically.

"There's Eric Nelson," said John. "Come on, Arthur."

The two men walked together down the center aisle. Necks turned as they passed, faces full of curiosity watched them. In a few of the eyes that looked after them there was unconcealed dislike and in some real hostility, but in most there was no more than questioning or bewilderment. Eric Nelson remained standing in his place, his broad shoulders and fair head towering above the seated figures around him.

"Come right in here," he called. "We've been saving a couple of seats for you. How are you, John? Where have you been keeping yourself lately? Glad to see you too, McBride. You know Oliver Marlin, don't you?"

Marlin did not get up but he held out a cordial hand.

"Of course I know McBride, Eric. I get around among the young fellows. Sit down, my boy, and tell me what you've been doing since I had dinner with you all at Sun Mount." The old man leaned forward and smiled across Arthur at John Finlay. "How are you doing, John? Don't forget you've got a return dinner date with me very soon."

From his seat beside Nelson Finlay looked around him. In the crowd there were many familiar faces. The doctors flocked together in the front of the auditorium; behind them on the right was the delegation of dentists. Scattered here and there over the remainder of the hall were the druggists and stray physicians and a sprinkling of hospital administrators and laboratory technicians.

Bolt upright in an aisle seat a few rows forward John saw Herbert Baldwin. He was alone and he sat looking straight ahead, apparently devoid of interest in anyone else. His massive figure was impressive in its very rigidity. The strands of his carefully combed dark hair made a pattern of bold stripes across the top of his head. His neck was thick but not fat, his coat collar fitted perfectly. Presently he took a small book out of a pocket and began to read.

Beyond him there were several unoccupied seats and a man whom John did not know hesitated in the aisle as though debating whether to push past Baldwin toward them, but Baldwin did not move or look up and presently the newcomer went on. Finlay recalled a comment Dennis had once made about the surgeon: "Do you suppose he ever unbends enough for fornication?"

Some distance from the surgeon sat Warren Arnold and beside him Patrick Boyd. Arnold's bullet-shaped head, it seemed to John, was wreathed in an aura of spitefulness and his ill-tempered red face was filled with ineffectual petulance, but at the moment he was talking to Boyd and laughing raucously. Boyd had turned toward his companion and Finlay could see in profile his hatchet face, his large straight nose, his slicked-down black hair. An unsavory pair, those two, he reflected as he remembered some of the things Francis Arnold had said about his father. Very likely the boy was right when he said that Warren hated his family and his family him, and probably the lad had not exaggerated too much when he called the older man a devil. Like father like son, John said to himself. Warren Arnold had never scrupled to sell out the other fellow and now his own child was trying to sell him out. Finlay wondered whether the boy had approached anyone else with his blackmail material and with what success.

Arthur McBride nudged John and said in a low voice, "Take a look at Wilkins and Morrison over there at the end of the row in front of us. I bet they'd walk out right now for a nickel apiece."

It was true that both young men looked uneasy and apprehensive.

"They're decent enough," continued McBride. "They had no idea what Baldwin was like when they came out here to work for him, and now they're stuck and don't know how to get away. But they hate his guts, everyone knows that."

Finlay raised his eyebrows. "When I was their age I wouldn't have worked for a man I felt that way about."

"Sure, I know. But that wasn't 1934 and there wasn't a Depression. These boys are stuck and they can't help themselves."

"That's what you think, but I don't agree with you."

McBride laughed. "It's never necessary for the other fellow to make a living, is it? But you can't expect Morrison and Wilkins to feel that way about themselves."

John was aware that he was becoming annoyed. Not infre-

quently it had seemed to him of late that he was out of tune with the younger men of his own profession and even of his own group. And now here was Arthur McBride—he of the unyielding professional standards and the Puritan conscience—suggesting that he was old-fashioned and outmoded in his judgments. Rather than make a retort he might later regret he turned to Eric Nelson and asked how things were going in pediatrics.

Throughout the room there was the rumble of voices; men got up and moved about, greeting their friends and talking with their neighbors. A few rows ahead a stocky man with red hair stretched himself and looked around.

"Hi, there, John," he called out. "I didn't see you come in."

Garfield plunged over the knees between him and the aisle and came hurrying back to shake hands with Finlay.

"I haven't seen you since I came home from the public health meeting in St. Louis," he exclaimed. "You look all right to me."

"I'm not complaining. And how's the County Hospital?"

"Lousy! How else could it be? Being gadfly to the Queen County Commissioners is a fool's job. How come you got in here tonight? Don't you know this meeting is to fry you alive?"

"I had my suspicions," replied John. "That's why I came over. But why they let me in I don't know."

"I'd like to 've seen them keep us out," exclaimed Arthur McBride.

The red-haired man grinned. "I'd forgotten what your hands were like, Mac. Jesus, there's a couple of fellows in this room I'd like to see you smack down!"

Garfield and John and Nelson laughed and Arthur looked down in embarrassment at his big-knuckled fists. Then he put them in his pockets, out of sight.

Duncan Garfield sat down directly in front of John. "I'll park here as a sort of advance guard. Unless I miss my guess we're in for a hot time tonight."

Just then George Schuyler walked past and paused in the aisle beside Dr. Baldwin. The surgeon read on absorbed and oblivious. From somewhere a solitary snicker rose and forthwith many eyes turned to watch the tableau. A dark red flush crept over Schuyler's round pudgy face and down his fat neck. He cast a hasty glance around him. Even at this distance John caught the malignancy of the pale eyes glaring from between puffy lids. Then Schuyler pushed rudely in front of Baldwin.

"Beg pardon," he said in his disagreeable high-pitched voice with its overtones of malice. Baldwin looked up, nodded coldly, and resumed his reading.

"A touching scene of mutual confidence!" remarked Garfield. "How those two love each other!" He twisted around to look directly at John. "You know, Finlay, that I don't approve of what you're doing out at Newland. I think it's an opening wedge which might lead to state-controlled medicine with the politicians—damn their eyes!—bossing us all. But when I see Baldwin and Schuyler and a few of their yes-men around here I'm almost persuaded to throw in with you and help run them out."

"I'm not trying to run anybody out," protested John. "All I want is not to be run out ourselves."

"Bosh!" retorted Garfield. "There isn't room for you and them both. Neither you nor any other decent doctor has a chance as long as these bastards dominate the society. If we had any sense we'd get together and put the skids under them. Wouldn't we?" The man glared from one to another of the four faces before him, demanding an answer. "Well, wouldn't we?"

"Sure!" exclaimed Arthur McBride, his high cheekbones flushed, his hazel eyes smoldering.

"I'm afraid you're right though not elegant," agreed Eric Nelson, his blond face full of distress.

Oliver Marlin cleared his throat gently. All the others looked at him and almost at once the belligerence in Duncan Garfield's face began to die away. "We should do exactly what Duncan says," came the mellow old voice. "Our house is in sad need of cleaning and we should do the job ourselves. But I fear we won't get around to it until it is too late."

Marlin removed his spectacles and let them dangle from his fingers by one bow. His mild blue eyes stared straight ahead into the distance and over his face there crept a sort of bleak despair. John Finlay alone knew what his old friend was thinking. Like himself Oliver Marlin had loved his profession for years and been proud to belong to it; now that he saw it profaned he was both hurt and angry. But greater than his resentment was his heartache, and greater than either was his dread of the future.

From the uneasy silence which had fallen upon them, the little group was startled by a sudden hush that swept over the entire room. Looking up John saw two men taking their places on the platform. One of them was a druggist whom he knew by sight

only—a man who operated a string of stores in the Sound country in which he boasted one could buy anything except clothing and hardware. The other was Robert Jackson, now president of the Queen County Medical Society. The druggist, Huston by name, was self-possessed and patently pleased with himself but Jackson was quite as clearly in an agony of embarrassment and confusion. His good-looking amiable face was distressed, he looked at the audience with obvious agitation. He sat down on one of the two chairs on the platform leaving Huston to call the meeting to order.

The druggist embarked on a long rambling discourse concerning the dangers besetting the healing art in the modern world, and John Finlay found his mind wandering from the speaker to the unhappy Jackson. He had known the man for fifteen years and Dennis had told him how deeply Jackson had cut into Baldwin's practice thereby incurring the surgeon's dislike. John himself knew that the younger man had tried to placate Baldwin by introducing motions and resolutions for him and smoothing over explosive situations. But he had also continued to take as many women patients away from Baldwin as he could. This combination of timidity and obstinacy Finlay had seen before in men who seemed to him to be weaklings, and now he assured himself that he had a prime example before his eyes.

He glanced at Baldwin; the surgeon had put away his book and was gazing fixedly at Jackson. So were Warren Arnold and Pat Boyd. In spite of himself John was more than half amused. At last Jackson had come to a place where he must take a definite stand in public. Tonight he would not be able to smooth over and placate and evade. It was too bad, thought Finlay, that Dennis could not be here to see this. And yet D.D. would probably not enjoy the sight for, in spite of everything, he still liked Robert Jackson and found excuses for him. Suddenly John remembered the absconding brother whom Jackson was keeping out of the penitentiary and a certain furtive sympathy for the wretched man on the platform swept over him.

Eric Nelson moved uneasily in his seat and glanced at Finlay. "Good Lord!" he whispered, "who put this windbag in for chairman?"

Duncan Garfield looked around and grinned wickedly. "Your friend Jackson was scheduled to preside. But he got cold feet. And now to look at him, I'd bet he has wet pants too."

"... We are all of us partners together in the great task of alleviating suffering and pain," the tedious chairman was saying. "Here as in other fields there is strength in unity, weakness in division. My own profession, I have always felt, is a mere adjunct to that of medicine but even in this humble station I have been proud to serve my day and generation. And now in this hour of threatened danger, of menace on every hand, of peril and uncertainty, we must forget our disagreements, close our eyes to the mistakes of the past, and take counsel together for the present and the future lest we find one day that the enemy has come upon us while we slept. In this struggle it must be all for one and each for all. We must fight shoulder to shoulder, brothers all. Let it never be said of us, here in Seaforth, that we shirked our duty or failed our task."

The stream of mellifluous words ended. Men looked at each other in surprise as though they could not believe it.

"What these birds are willing to do to get some fool on their side staggers me," muttered Garfield. "Here, in order to snaffle off the drug stores and make sure of the pill-rollers, Baldwin is willing to let this man Huston gush all over the place for twenty-three minutes by the watch. But at least he has to listen to it too."

Baldwin was sitting like a ramrod in his aisle seat, staring straight ahead. John could see only part of his face but that glimpse left no doubt of the contempt he felt for his henchman. A place or two farther along the aisle George Schuyler's fat neck and thin smoothly brushed hair caught the eye. But while there was no question of Baldwin's exasperation with the chairman, there was equally no doubt of Schuyler's admiring envy.

Huston was undisturbed by the lack of appreciation in his audience. He waited until the few scattered handclaps died away, then stepped over to the table and poured himself a glass of water before returning to the front of the platform. John noticed that he did not look at Jackson, who continued to sit with his arms folded across his chest and his head down, a figure of immobility.

"Now, gentlemen," resumed Huston, "the object of this gathering tonight is to create unity of spirit among us and to lay plans for the immediate future. We must have our strategy in mind and our tactics ready when battle begins. Probably one of the most important phases of the struggle and one in which every one of us can and should take part consists of contacting all candidates for the coming legislature and getting signed state-

ments of their attitude toward state medicine and other crackpot schemes for distributing medical attention to those who neither deserve it nor appreciate it."

Scarcely had the chairman launched into this burst of eloquence than John saw Baldwin turn his head and look meaningly at Schuyler. Almost at once the fat man squeezed out of his seat and hurried to the rear of the hall. Finlay craned his neck and saw Schuyler dart into the lobby. A minute later a boy appeared in the wings at one side of the platform and tried to attract Jackson's attention. But Jackson was too absorbed in his own discomfort to look up. Meanwhile Huston talked on.

"It is necessary to know the frame of mind of every representative and senator we send to the state capital this winter. Not only that, but each of them must be committed in writing. Otherwise they will promise all we ask, ride into office on our votes, and then sell us out. We must remember that all these half-baked theories about socialized medicine sound good to the unemployed and the ignorant; the prospect of getting something for nothing is always seductive. And the lower classes outnumber the intelligent responsible citizens, so there is always a great temptation for politicians to truckle to them."

"Don't you sell the lower classes cosmetics and patent medicine?" called a derisive voice from the part of the house occupied by the dentists. There was a chorus of disrespectful laughter and the speaker hesitated and looked uncertainly at his audience.

In this momentary lull John saw Dr. Baldwin scowl and glance sharply at the lad who was still fidgeting in the wing. The boy started forward and thrust a note into Huston's hand. The man stared down at it stupidly.

"Read it!" cried a rude voice from the rear of the hall.

Duncan Garfield turned around and grinned at the men behind him. "The master mind seems to have trouble with his hirelings, just like other dictators," he said.

On the platform Huston was spelling out his note for the second time and Robert Jackson had at last become aware of his surroundings and looked up. John saw that Baldwin was glaring hard at Jackson. At last the chairman turned his back on the audience, walked over to Dr. Jackson, and bent down to show him the note.

Even at this distance John could see dismay flooding into Jackson's handsome face. But there was no escape for the unhappy

man. Baldwin's stern gaze never left him and at last he pulled himself to his feet.

"It seems wise not to continue our discussion of specific plans in a . . . in an open meeting," said Jackson looking about him anxiously. "It has been suggested that we ask all those who are not members of the state medical and dental societies to leave the room."

No one moved to go. Here and there heads turned to look at John Finlay and John saw Arthur McBride's big-knuckled hands slowly clench into hard fists. He shook his head at the younger man. The silence became oppressive. Jackson shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"It should not be necessary to repeat such a request," he began again. "No honorable man stays where he is not welcome."

Slowly John got to his feet. Calmly he surveyed the rows of faces turned toward him.

"No names have been mentioned, but I presume that your pseudo-chairman refers to Dr. McBride and me. It is true that the entire staff of Sun Mount was read out of the Queen County Medical Society last summer at one of those meetings when a bare quorum was present, but both Dr. McBride and I are paid-up members of the state association and we both have our cards here to prove it." Finlay held up a pink card familiar to all the physicians present. "This being so, we have as much right here as anyone else in this room."

Finlay remained standing and Arthur rose and stood beside him. From several quarters came a spatter of applause. The chairman thwacked the desk with his gavel. The unfortunate Jackson, unable to retreat, cleared his throat nervously; when he spoke his voice was thin and reed-like.

"I have here," he said, fumbling in his inside pocket, "a letter from the legal counsel of the state association stating that in his opinion persons who have been expelled from their county societies for good cause are no longer bona fide members of the state association even though they have paid their dues and hold membership cards."

From one corner of the room rose a groan, from another a faint hiss.

"Hear, hear," cried one of the dentists. "Better sue and get your money back, Finlay."

"Thanks. That's not a bad idea." John grinned broadly at his

adviser. Then he swung on his heel and once more faced the platform. Herbert Baldwin, he saw, had not stirred and George Schuyler had not returned to his seat.

"Neither Dr. McBride nor I wish to force ourselves into a group where we are not wanted. But I call your attention to the fact that this meeting was announced in the *Seaforth Advertiser* as one for all dentists, druggists, and physicians interested in maintaining professional standards in this locality. I would like to point out also that the Sun Mount Associates are, all of them, men with special training in addition to their regular medical education. We are vitally interested in doing our own work well and in raising the standards of practice in the county. We are all duly licensed physicians and I maintain that we have as much right here as Dr. Jackson himself or Mr. Huston or even Dr. Baldwin and Dr. Arnold." At this thrust John was sure he saw Baldwin flinch.

He glanced at Arthur and asked, "Is there anything you would like to say before we leave, Dr. McBride?"

On McBride's high cheekbones burned the dull flush that always signaled anger but he spoke with a sternly controlled manner.

"There's a lot I could say but I wouldn't waste my time here, Dr. Finlay."

"Then," said John, "I think we'll go."

There were scuffling sounds as Oliver Marlin and Eric Nelson got up to shake hands with Finlay and McBride. There was a louder sound when Duncan Garfield sprang up and followed them into the aisle.

"This crowd here is a bunch of bums!" he shouted. "That goes for you too, Jackson. I'd leave too except that there mightn't be enough decent fellows left to vote down whatever you propose. Good luck to you two. I'm for you."

Once again there was scattered applause. Finlay walked straight to the rear door of the hall without looking around. Behind him stalked tall Arthur McBride, face flushed, eyes burning. Just as the door swung after them John glanced back for the last time. Huston had advanced to the front of the platform and Robert Jackson had gone back to his chair where he sat slumped down with his eyes fixed on the floor. Apparently he had completed his task for this evening.

"I miss my guess if they get anywhere with that crowd in

there. They're like a six-horse team with the traces tangled up. Why not go home, Arthur, and leave them to fight it out with one another?"

But it was not easy for McBride to smother his resentment.

"That God-damned bunch of spineless nitwits!" he growled. "Between them all they haven't got the guts of a Belgian hare!"

The older man laughed. "Some day you're going to get yourself into trouble, Arthur. There are a lot of fellows in there who are our friends but they know something you haven't found out yet—that there are other ways to fight than with your fists and other ways to kill a cat besides choking it."

These somewhat oracular remarks were to recur to John the next day when Grace Rodney brought into his office a suave soft-spoken individual who announced himself to be a representative of the Resettlement Administration whose task it was to inspect Sun Mount before arrangements were concluded for the care of the Resettlement clients by the Sun Mount Associates. There was something about the man that Finlay did not like and from Miss Rodney's distrustful expression he knew that she was of the same mind. When she took the stranger out to begin his inspection her slender erect back was as eloquent of her annoyance as her gleaming black eyes had been.

"Very well, Mr. Kilgour," she had said with icy civility, "if you will come with me I will see that you miss nothing."

In spite of the seriousness of the situation John could not keep from laughing to himself as he watched the unsuspecting Kilgour follow her out of the room. He would put in a longer harder day at Miss Rodney's heels than he could possibly expect. Then Finlay remembered the trace of portentousness with which he had assured Arthur the night before that choking was not the only method of efficient homicide, and at the recollection the amusement died out of his eyes to be replaced by something like savagery. Turning to the telephone he put in a call for Dave Reynolds.

It was almost dinner time when Mr. Kilgour still attended by Grace Rodney re-entered Finlay's office to report on his investigation. He was still polite but the fine surface of his urbanity had worn away and he seemed glad to sit down. Miss Rodney took a chair behind Kilgour's. This seemed to annoy the investigator and he looked around him uneasily.

"You may feel free to say anything in Miss Rodney's presence

that you would say to me, Mr. Kilgour. She has been with me for eighteen years and really has more to do with the operation of the hospital than any doctor on the staff. I am sure she will want to know what you have found wrong here at Sun Mount and what recommendations you have for us."

While he was speaking John kept saying to himself, I must hold my temper, not let him get me down. Be careful, be careful! But it did not add to his composure to see Miss Rodney shake her head at Kilgour's back and make other signals of suspicion.

The inspector cleared his throat solemnly and began to talk in a low confidential voice.

"I realize, Dr. Finlay, that you rebuilt the hospital here under severe handicaps. During a Depression it is impossible for anyone to command the resources he would otherwise have. I assure you you have no reason to apologize for your little institution; it does credit to your good judgment and your skill in economizing."

Finlay tried to break in on this monologue to say that he had not economized, that he had planned Sun Mount for the utmost efficiency without regard to cost. But he had no chance. The inspector kept on speaking without even apparent pauses to breathe.

"Of course all these matters must be taken into consideration in my report to the Resettlement office, Dr. Finlay. All government agencies at this time feel the obligation to do their utmost for their clients. I'm sure you realize that it is our duty to secure for our colonist families the best possible medical care and hospital facilities. And I am equally sure you will not resent some of the questions I have jotted down as I went along."

Kilgour referred to a notebook and John watched him unblinkingly, wondering whether he had not seen the man somewhere before.

"First, as to the qualifications of the staff. I noticed on the list you gave me that two of your men are from Mayo's, so I suppose there is no question about their rating as specialists."

"There is none in the eyes of the American Medical Association. You will find both Dr. Elliston and Dr. Dryden in the list of approved specialists published in the Journal of the Association." John's voice crackled dryly and Grace Rodney smiled grimly at the back of Mr. Kilgour's head.

"Yes, yes. I will make a note of that." The room was so quiet that the little scratching sound of the pencil on paper was plainly

audible. "And now I have a notation on a very important point—free choice of physician. As you know, that is one of the basic principles of the American Medical Association, but in a closed staff institution such as this it is impossible."

"You are right, Mr. Kilgour. It is impossible for anyone to come in here and select an incompetent physician. Some of our patients may not care for the looks of our staff or for their manners, but they are sure of getting a good doctor here. Which seems to me to be more important than freedom to choose a quack who spends his time buttering up his patients."

In spite of his determination to let nothing upset him, there was an edge to John's voice. But Mr. Kilgour did not seem to notice it. He wrote busily for several moments in his notebook and then went on with unruffled urbanity.

"Another point that occurred to me was the size of your reserve fund and the proportion of current income going into staff salaries." The inspector's cold pale blue eyes peered sharply at Finlay.

"I think it is preposterous to expect a hospital built in 1933 to show a reserve of any size in 1934. You yourself mentioned the Depression a few minutes ago. Surely you haven't forgotten it so soon. I suggest that you ask Mr. Wharton of the First National Bank about my credit rating. He has known me since 1910. As for the salaries of the staff, I consider that the net earnings of the clinic and hospital belong to the men who bring in the money. As long as I have anything to do with Sun Mount at least three-fourths of the income from our practice shall go to the men who earned it."

"A commendable theory, Dr. Finlay, but hardly practicable in a business."

"This isn't a business. It's a hospital."

"But, my dear Dr. Finlay, even a hospital must be run in a businesslike way."

"Sun Mount always has been and always will be run in a human way, Mr. Kilgour. There's a difference."

"No doubt, no doubt." Kilgour spoke hastily and again scribbled something in his notebook.

"Just one more thing along that line. I was informed that none of the staff are members of the Queen County Medical Society. Doesn't that make it difficult to secure malpractice insurance?"

"It makes it impossible, Mr. Kilgour. It also makes it easy for

people who are so disposed to induce former patients to sue us for damages, real or imaginary. In fact this has already occurred, as you undoubtedly have been told."

Mr. Kilgour elevated an eyebrow. "Indeed? I'm afraid I must make a note of that too."

"Yes, do—by all means." John pushed back his chair, jerked open a drawer, and pulled out his pipe and a can of tobacco. If his teeth were firmly set on a pipe stem he felt that he could control his desire to set them on Mr. Kilgour's smooth pale skin.

"In arranging for medical care for five hundred families comprising in all some two thousand persons, we must foresee all possible contingencies, Dr. Finlay. Now I notice that there is no provision here for mental patients or for cancer or tuberculosis cases."

At this comment John froze into immobility with one hand holding a match over the bowl of his pipe. He stared at Kilgour and then at Grace Rodney who, in her turn, was glaring at the inspector's back. Not until the match flame reached his fingers did Finlay move. Then he sprang to his feet.

"I've been sitting here letting you pester me with these idiotic questions long enough. Now you listen to me. Of course we have no beds for mental cases or TB patients. Why should we? No other general hospitals in this county have such beds. There are three state hospitals for the insane and five for the tuberculous. Once the diagnosis is made, these patients are transferred to these institutions which are supposed to be specially equipped to care for them. As for cancer beds, why expect to find them in a small town like Newland when Seaforth itself has so few?

"You came out here to kill the deal between the Resettlement office and this hospital. I was sure of it when I saw you this morning. You've been grubbing around all day trying to dig up things to report against us. I'm flattered that the worst you can do is to suggest that two of our staff might not actually have had the graduate training they claim, to learn that no patient at Sun Mount can choose an incompetent physician even if he wants to, to hint that the staff gets too large salaries, to tell me that we can't get malpractice insurance—which I already knew—and to end up by complaining that our facilities for taking care of insane people and tuberculosis and cancer cases are not comparable with those in New York City. Now, if you've had your say, I suggest that you get out before I lose my temper."

With an effort John checked himself, then turned away, picked up his pipe and struck another match. Miss Rodney rose from her chair with alacrity. "Well," she said crisply.

Kilgour still sat with his notebook in one hand. He looked from the man in front of him whose back was toward him to the woman behind him whose black eyes seemed to be boring through his skull.

"You'll regret this," he exclaimed. "You'll regret it bitterly, both of you."

"I doubt that," answered Finlay without looking around. "But you will regret something, Mr. Kilgour, if you stay here much longer."

"Your hat is outside with your overcoat," said Miss Rodney icily. "Will you come with me?"

Once again Kilgour found himself following the slender white-clad back through the door. Finlay turned to watch him leave the room and as his eyes fell on Kilgour's sloping shoulders it struck him for the second time that he had seen this man somewhere before. He was still trying to remember when and where when Miss Rodney came back.

She sat down on the edge of the chair Kilgour had occupied, holding herself stiffly erect.

"I trust that our visitor found his way out all right," said John.

"Yes, I saw to that," she answered quickly. She paused a moment and then went on. "Do you know what I think? I believe Baldwin sent him here. I don't think he represents the government or the Resettlement office, either one. I think he was sent here purposely to find out things that will keep us from getting that contract for the Resettlement families. I watched him all day. He doesn't know much about hospitals."

Finlay rubbed the back of one hand across his forehead. "I'm sure I've seen the fellow before but I can't remember where. *Anyhow he's gone. Thank God for that!"

"I don't see anything to thank God for," retorted Grace Rodney. "Here we are with a hospital and a clinic and a staff of doctors and nurses on our hands, going into the red every month. That can't go on forever even if you put every cent you've got left into it."

"No, I suppose not." John's voice was tired. "But I keep thinking that something must come right before long. Nobody ever has

nothing but bad luck. If we can only get a few more members to carry through the winter things may pick up in the spring."

"I've heard that sort of wishful talking ever since 1929," said Miss Rodney. "And so far it has never been true. Why don't you get a business manager, Dr. Finlay?"

"A business manager?"

"Yes. Why not? What Kilgour said is true. Hospitals do have to be run on a business basis and you're not a businessman. You're trying to be one but you're not succeeding. I do all I can too, but it isn't enough. You're a doctor—a good doctor. You ought to be practicing medicine, but you aren't. You're trying to be a promoter. You don't have time to do medical work any more. You have to give dinners for our members, you have to go to meetings and make speeches and talk to that impertinent reporter from the *Advertiser* and run around over the country getting injunctions to keep them from taking your license away from you. Is that work for a doctor? Now if you had a manager you might have some time for your profession, for the things you really know how to do."

John got up and went over to the window; he stood looking out at the vaguely outlined balls of light in the fog around the lamps along the driveway.

"Perhaps you're right, Miss Rodney. As an executive I seem to be a flop. As a promoter I'm worse. I hate the whole business, I assure you. But I started something and I can't stop. Here we've got five men on our staff depending on this place for part or all of their living. Whether I like it or not, I've got to go on trying to be a businessman and a promoter . . . and a detective, until we get out of this mess one way or the other."

There was a long silence and he was about to turn around when he heard the nurse saying, "I suppose you're right. But I don't like it. Everything is so different from the old days in the first Sun Mount."

Different! he said to himself. Good God, yes! And it always will be.

But aloud he remarked only, "I'm afraid time never reverses, Miss Rodney."

The woman sighed and stood up. "It's after dinnertime now," she said. "You'd better come down to the dining room as soon as you can or your food won't be fit to eat."

Finlay watched her go toward the door. For the first time he

could remember, she looked tired. And there seemed to be something discouraged in the way she carried herself. The idea startled him: he had never thought of Grace Rodney getting old or being tired. But of course she couldn't be a young woman now, for she had been a young woman in 1916. That seemed a long time ago, in a different world. Perhaps this feeling of unreality was one of the unwelcome things the passing years brought with them.

Miss Rodney had reached the door and put out her hand to open it when it was suddenly and violently flung open in her face and Arthur McBride rushed in. The nurse started and drew back but he did not notice her. In three long strides he cleared the distance to the desk and leaned over it toward Finlay. His dark brown hair tumbled down over the forehead from which it was already receding, his hazel eyes shone under their protruding brows.

"Listen," he cried, "I've got something! Come down and see my films. At last Boyd has come a cropper. We've got him where we want him now. Come on. Don't stand there staring at me. I want you to see the films and the man himself. Why, he's been going around for a month with a broken neck and didn't know it."

John pushed shut an open desk drawer and picked up his pipe.

"All right, Arthur, let's go. Am I to gather from your incoherent remarks that Boyd didn't know the man's neck was broken?"

"That's just what I've been telling you, but it took a long time to soak in."

Grace Rodney looked after the two men; her expression was a mixture of tolerant amusement, exasperation, and weariness.

"I'll have to call the dining room and tell them to put Dr. Finlay's dinner in the warming oven. I suppose he'll find out soon enough that Peter McFarlane is upstairs in a drunken stupor. And I'll have to think up at least one more plausible lie to tell that man from the *Advertiser* when he calls up again to find out what's wrong with their star reporter."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

OVER and over John Finlay told himself that he should have known how it would be. As Dennis had said, five hundred memberships for the Resettlement families would have been enough to see the Sun Mount Associates through the winter with a little to spare, but that wasn't going to happen. Instead things would be tighter than they had been the first year, for the number of subscribers had fallen off from the high point in the spring. The waterfront strike had had something to do with this, the expulsion of the whole Sun Mount staff from the County Medical Society had had more perhaps. The malpractice suit with its gossip and newspaper publicity had been a factor. Business generally was picking up but Sun Mount was still running at a loss and John was still dipping into his personal reserve to meet the deficits.

He sat fingering the letter that had just shattered the hopes he had built around the proposed Resettlement contract. His eyes fell upon his desk calendar. December 18. It hardly seemed possible that the end of the year was so near. In a few days he would be dating his checks 1935. 1935. Over five years since the big crack-up. Nearly six years since he had sold out and left Newland. But it seemed even longer. So many things had happened. This was a new world of whose rules he was not quite certain.

Once he had been sure that eventually the Associates would overcome opposition, but during the last few weeks an unhappy lethargy had settled over him. He was no longer sure of anything. It was a strange mood for John Finlay. Mentally he had always admitted that the venture was a gamble but emotionally he had never acknowledged the possibility of failure until the last few days. To do so even now was odious. He hated the fear that had crept into him and this in turn made him resentful,

so that he had come to exist in an emotional turmoil which he found impossible to control.

A week ago Grace Rodney had showed him an announcement in the *Advertiser* that a new administrator had taken over the Resettlement office in Seaforth. The new man's signature was on this letter. After the fashion of *Time* magazine he was curt, clear, concise. He gave his reasons for turning down the proposed agreement for memberships in the Sun Mount medical prepayment plan: patients would not have a free choice of physicians; it would be hard to replace staff members who died or went away because the group was in bad odor in official medical circles; there was no provision for the care of insane or tuberculous persons or of cancer cases; there was no reserve fund for emergencies chiefly because too large a proportion of income went to the staff doctors.

All these objections Finlay had heard before; Kilgour had raised them when he inspected Sun Mount. John remembered how the man had said to him and Miss Rodney, "You'll regret this—both of you." Of course the fellow had reported to Baldwin and Baldwin to the Resettlement office. It might be a coincidence that there was a new executive in that office, and it might not. It really did not matter. The new administrator had turned down the contract.

"And that's that," said John to himself. He repeated the absurd little sentence aloud, taking an irresponsible pleasure in the flavor of finality. "And that's that."

But that was not all. At ten-thirty Peter McFarlane had come in, visibly excited. The moment the door had closed behind him he burst out with his disconcerting information.

"J.F., do you know that the state association has raised a slush fund of fifty thousand dollars for a medical lobby at the legislature?"

The reporter's sardonic green eyes probed Finlay's. He pushed back his hat and tilted his chair against the wall.

"I knew they were raising money but of course I had no way to know how much they've got." With an effort John kept his voice steady and looked McFarlane in the face.

"Well, I got it straight that they have fifty grand in the bag. And it's all to push through that bill you're afraid of."

"Yes, I know. The new medical practice act." John spoke quietly and his eyes did not fall.

"You're a cool egg," remarked Peter. "I feel a reluctant admiration for a man who can speak so calmly of his own death sentence."

Finlay's mouth twitched. "What do you mean—death sentence?" he asked. "Do you suppose I didn't see this coming? What do you think I've been doing? I've been expecting this move for months."

There was open skepticism on McFarlane's long fair-skinned face. "I don't know whether to believe you or not. I used to think I knew how to take you. But you aren't yourself this winter."

John put the palms of his hands on his forehead and ran them back over the sides of his head.

"I guess I'm groggy, Peter. Too many things have happened too close together. Here's one of the newest developments."

McFarlane skimmed over the letter from the Resettlement Administration, whistled softly, and mechanically fished a cigarette out of the crumpled pack in his breast pocket.

"That puts you in the hole for the winter, doesn't it? Now, if this had only panned out you'd 've been . . ."

"Sitting pretty. Don't say it. I know all about it and I'm sick of that expression." Finlay's voice was quick with exasperation.

Peter raised his eyebrows. The old man's getting touchy for sure, he reflected.

"I'm sorry," said John.

"Oh, that's all right," replied McFarlane.

"How's Priscilla?" asked Finlay after an uncomfortable pause. "I haven't seen her for weeks."

Peter laughed shortly. "I guess she's O.K., J.F. I don't see much of her myself any more." He hesitated. "I've been doing a good deal of night work here lately."

"Yes, I know. You were in here last month recuperating from some of it, remember? Peter, you're a fool. You married one of the nicest girls I ever knew and you behave like an idiot. Why don't you get a house and settle down and have a decent home?"

McFarlane looked suddenly wistful; for once his seagreen eyes were candid and serious. "I'd like to. Honestly I would. But something inside me won't let me. Sometimes I think about it—a little house with big windows, on the bluff above the Sound where we could see the big ships going up and down, with a garden in the back and flowers and trees and grass. I've got some books in me, J.F., and I could write them in a place like that. But then

I go downtown and I forget all about it. I like the noise and excitement at the office and the feuds with the other papers. I'm tangled up in the Guild and I've got a finger in the other unions and I cover all the strikes. I get a few drinks in me and I forget all about going home."

"I'm afraid you forget all about Priscilla too."

McFarlane flung out of his chair and across the room. His hat was still on his head, he stuffed his hands into his pockets and stood looking out of the window toward the water. There was a dense quiet in the office. After a long time Peter turned around and leaned against the wall, his hands still in his pockets, his eyes fixed on a spot in the floor halfway between him and John.

"I wish I could forget Priscilla, J.F. You see . . . she doesn't care anything about me. She . . . never did. I caught her on the rebound from Dryden. I thought I was lucky. But I was a God-damned fool! She's a swell girl, but she was not for me. I wish I'd realized that last spring, but I didn't. And that's that."

"That's that." The absurd little sentence sang itself over and over in Finlay's brain. "That's that. That's that." He had said it about the lost contract. Peter said it about a lost wife. Life was like this. "So that's that."

"I'm sorry, Peter," he said awkwardly. "I'm fond of Priscilla, you know. I always have been. And I hoped you'd be happy."

McFarlane laughed. "You've always been sort of stuck on her, haven't you? Well, she might be a slightly shopworn young widow one of these days, if I keep meddling in strikes and whatnot." Then as he saw the expression on John's face, "Oh, forget it! I didn't mean that the way it sounded. But I can never remember that you don't take things as I do."

Finlay's gray eyes brightened with annoyance. "I'm not ashamed to belong to the older generation. We didn't talk about women the way you do."

But Peter's brief period of seriousness was over. He clapped John on the back and said he had to go along. "I'm supposed to be at work, you know. But I wanted to give you the dope on the slush fund. I'll keep my ear to the ground, J.F., and let you have whatever I find out. Anything else I can do for you?"

"No, I think not." There was still a certain stiffness in Finlay's manner. "I'll let you know if there is. But there probably won't be much doing now until after New Year's. I . . . I wish you and Priscilla could get straightened out."

McFarlane grinned and shook his head; all his old impertinent recklessness seemed to envelop him again. "Don't think about us, J.F. Maybe I'm cockeyed. Maybe she's crazy about me. Anyhow don't worry about it. We'll get along."

But there was no reality in the words and John sat for a minute or two after Peter left, frowning at his blotter and wondering what could be done about these two unhappy people. Then he remembered that Dennis too was unhappy. Theoretically romantic as it might be to marry a dying woman, it had proved in real life far from satisfactory. Here were four young people, all of them wretched. And there was nothing he could think of to do for any of them. They must mend their own lives if mending was to be done. Priscilla, he felt, could eventually do this; probably Dennis could too. But of Peter he had his doubts; there was something fundamentally wrong there, something out of harmony with life. Vague as this something might be, it was none the less menacing. As for Eleanor she was literally dying bit by bit.

He had seen her a night or two ago. He had found her remote, as though she had withdrawn into a recess of her being where people not yet touched by death could not follow her. Sweet-tempered and gracious as she had been, he had felt a gate closed to his advances. She was not like other people; perhaps she never had been. But there was a resiliency in Dennis that would serve him well when she finally slipped across the line dividing life from death.

Finlay might have sat there at his desk brooding for an hour over the tangled fates of his friends but he could not put out of his mind the news about the slush fund to be turned against him and his little group at Sun Mount. Fifty thousand, Peter had said. "Fifty thousand," John repeated the words aloud. That was a lot of money.

He opened a drawer, took out an account book and turned to a page headed "Statement as of June 30, 1934." He studied it carefully, then put the book in his pocket, took his hat, and left the room.

Not until he was sitting in Wharton's private office at the bank did he remember how long it had been since he had seen his friend. For some reason this recollection embarrassed him and he tried to explain himself.

"I've had my hands more than full, Charlie, what with one

thing and another. We're always busy at the hospital and it seems that there are more plans to be made and more decisions to be reached than there used to be."

Wharton smiled but his eyes were busily noting the tinge of grimness in Finlay's lips and the deepening wrinkles in his face.

"We've been busy too, John. Business is picking up. I don't suppose you pay much attention to such things as car loadings and the index of production, but it means a good deal to us that steel is operating at better than sixty per cent of capacity again and that the railroads are taking in a third more money than they did last year."

Finlay looked faintly surprised.

"Those figures probably mean something to you," he said. "But to me they don't. Steel companies don't get sick and go to hospitals and neither do railroads."

"Most of them ought to," replied Wharton. "Most of them are sick. But the trouble is that the experts can't agree on what to do for them. However that doesn't concern me so much. In a little country bank like this all we can expect is a trickle through from the few prosperous corporations at the top of the heap. There were less than a thousand companies in the United States that made a real profit this year."

The look of faint surprise returned to Finlay's eyes.

"Wouldn't you do better if more people had a little money to spend instead of a few big corporations hogging it all?"

"I don't know, John. Perhaps so. But let's not discuss the matter. I'm more interested in what has happened to you. You look worried."

"I am worried, Charlie. I hate to admit it, but I am."

"Tell me about it."

Finlay hesitated; it was harder than he had thought it would be to confess his failure thus far. But he had never been accustomed to dodge tasks because they were hard. He took a deep breath and opened his account book.

"Let me show you how things stood at the end of the fiscal year, Charlie. Then we'll go on from there."

All the while he was talking, one section of Finlay's consciousness kept wondering why it should suddenly be so difficult to explain matters to Charles Wharton. In the years he had known Charlie there had never been this uncomfortable constraint between them. It was irrational that it should exist now. But there

it was. And it finally became so oppressive that John could talk no more. In the end he stopped as though his voice had been slowly throttled.

"Well," he managed to say and sat looking down at the account book where a pencil still pointed to the sum of a column of figures. He was surprised to see that the pencil was in his own fingers. He wanted to put it away but could not seem to move his hand. "Well," he repeated dully, "you see how it is."

"Yes, I see," answered Wharton slowly. "And I don't like it. Forgive me for being blunt, John, but I know you'd rather I told you the truth. I don't like the state of affairs according to your own figures."

One part of John Finlay sat startled, silent; the other part said, I knew it all the time. Of course he doesn't like it. Who could?

Wharton was a patient man and Finlay was an old friend. The banker watched the succession of conflicting emotions crossing that familiar face. He knew them all: incredulity, fear, stubbornness. He saw too the craftiness that flared suddenly in the dark gray eyes and as suddenly died away. He saw the lips twitch under the short gray mustache and the chin settle into grim determination.

"Then there's no use of me going on," said Finlay. As he spoke he looked up straight into Wharton's eyes.

"No bank would loan you money on this proposition, John. They wouldn't dare. Personally I'd be glad to let you have any amount I could spare, but not to put into this hospital of yours. You can't make it go. You ought to know that by this time. You might have squeezed through if you hadn't gone to war with the whole medical association, but . . ."

"They started the fight, Charlie. I didn't."

"That makes no difference now. Be sensible for once, John, and pull out before you use up all your own resources and have to go into bankruptcy. You can still salvage enough to live on if you quit now."

"Nothing is further from my mind than to quit," said Finlay.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders. "There you go. It's no use talking to you. You won't take my advice."

"I wouldn't speak of that if I were you, Charlie. Do you remember what you told me in this room in 1929?"

There was a long pause before Wharton answered. Then he said, "I remember, John. You were right then and I was wrong."

But this time I'm right. No man could win against the odds you're facing without a fortune behind him, and you haven't got a fortune now. You may be right, but you can't win. The best you can hope for is to save what you can and get out."

"And what about the men with me—Elliston and McBride and Dennis Dryden and the others?"

"They didn't have to go in with you, did they? They haven't invested money in the hospital, have they? They've had good salaries while they were in the group and probably, if you close Sun Mount, nothing more will be done about revoking their licenses, so they won't actually lose anything in the venture. I can't see that you have any more responsibility for them."

"I suppose you don't see it, Charlie. But I do." Finlay's mouth had changed into a wide slit between grimly drawn lips. "And not only to them but to Miss Rodney and to Sun Mount itself. Don't forget that there are such things as ideals in the world. I couldn't be disloyal to my plans and dreams even if there were no other persons involved."

"The only word for you, John, is pig-headed. I admire a fighter as much as any man, but it's foolish to go on fighting against hopeless odds. Here the state association has fifty thousand dollars for a lobby at the legislature. You simply haven't a chance."

"But I don't need anywhere near that much money. All we need is a good lawyer and a man in the field to see that our friends out in the state write in to tell the legislators how they feel about us. I don't want to buy votes. I just want to keep the association from buying that new medical practice act."

But before he finished this protest John realized its uselessness. He was a little surprised to realize too that he was not angry at Wharton. In his old friend's dogged refusal to lend him money John could see the man's determination not to abet action which seemed to him foolhardy and suicidal. It was not in Charles Wharton to be cold-blooded however mistaken he might be.

Finlay picked up his account book and put it back in his pocket.

"Let it go, Charlie. I'll scrape up the money myself somehow."

"Don't do it," begged Wharton. "You won't get anywhere and you'll simply throw good money after bad. As a matter of fact I believe there's a way out of this predicament that would be perfectly honorable. From things I've heard here and there recently I think the county might take over your buildings to use as a tuberculosis division."

"But, Charlie, the people up there in that neighborhood have fussed about Sun Mount and certainly a county institution would annoy them more—especially for a contagious disease like tuberculosis."

Wharton's mouth took on a determined look. "I'm prepared to talk the neighborhood over, John. I don't like the idea too well myself, but I'd do almost anything for you—anything except help you ruin yourself faster than you've been doing."

Finlay was touched. He knew how the Whartons liked their home; he remembered how Charles had worked to get the permit to build the original Sun Mount in that part of town. To have a unit of the County Hospital there instead would be a bitter pill, but Wharton was prepared not only to swallow it himself but to push it down the throats of others.

"Thanks, Charlie. I know what it cost you to say that. But I won't turn Sun Mount over to the county. I'd rather it burned down again. I've never tried my hand at arson but . . ."

"Don't joke about such things, John. You never know what might happen."

"We never do," agreed Finlay. "And that includes you. Maybe I can pull a rabbit out of my hat. Anyhow I'm going to try." He stood up and reached for his raincoat. "Thanks for seeing me and taking so much time with me. I'll let you know how I come along. Good-by, Charlie."

"You're being very foolish, John. Why won't you listen to reason?"

"Because reason has so little to do with life and life is the thing I've always been concerned with. . . . Well, I must be going. Give my regards to your wife, will you?"

"Yes, John. And come out and see us when you can. We haven't seen as much of you as we used to."

"Well, I've been busy . . . and so have you. But I'll run out one evening soon."

Charles Wharton watched his friend cross the main banking room and recalled another day more than five years before when he had watched John leave after refusing advice. He remembered how young and energetic Finlay had seemed in 1929. Time had made changes which struck the banker more forcibly today than ever before. John Finlay had always had an air about him; perhaps it was his carriage, the way he walked as though his feet were brushing the earth aside. And always he had radiated energy

and resourcefulness. But now he was trudging doggedly toward the street, his shoulders a little stooped, his head bent, his shapeless soft brown hat soberly straight.

Suddenly Wharton thought he would give anything to see John straighten up and stick his hat on at its old irresponsible angle. Involuntarily he moved to follow his friend but at the door of the office he stopped. It would not do. John was being foolhardy. It was kinder to refuse him now than to help him complete his own ruin. But as Wharton went back to his desk he sighed. Why was one's duty so often contrary to one's inclinations? And why were really fine projects so often financially unsound?

John Finlay had always prided himself on self-control and now he walked through the bank and out to the street, as he thought, without attracting attention. But once outside he stopped and rubbed his hand over his face. What had happened in Wharton's office was incredible but now he realized that half-consciously he had expected something of the sort when he came downtown. And here he was outside, without the loan he had come for.

He began to walk and had gone more than a block before he saw that he was going in the wrong direction. He turned about, telling himself that he was probably what people would call stunned. He had been borrowing from the First National off and on for twenty-three years; he owned shares in the institution; he had even been a director once for a time. He had known the Whartons since 1910; he had been their family doctor; he had operated on their daughter Margaret when she was a little girl and saved her life. For years his credit rating had been A 1. But he had not got the money he needed now.

Nothing looked natural—neither the buildings nor the men hurrying past him. One or two people spoke to him but he did not notice them. He was plodding along blindly when a hand fell on his arm. He started and looked up into Bruce Hewitt's sallow face and sympathetic dark eyes.

"What's the matter, Dr. Finlay? You nearly walked into me just now."

"Oh, hello, Hewitt. I . . . I was just thinking."

Hewitt peered at the older man questioningly. What he saw told him that something had gone very wrong indeed. He did not wish to seem inquisitive but . . .

"Come in here with me and have a glass of beer. I want to talk to you."

At first Finlay demurred but finally he allowed himself to be led into a beer parlor and established in a corner booth in the rear of the room. Bruce ordered and then stood up to look around in search of possible eavesdroppers, but the other booths were empty and at the bar there were only two small groups of idlers talking loudly over their glasses.

"Take some popcorn. It goes good with beer." Hewitt pushed the bowl toward John and noticed how mechanical his response was.

"You know, Dr. Finlay, I've been thinking ever since McFarlane told me about that slush fund the state association's raised. There's only one way you can beat the frame-up."

Finlay looked up and Hewitt saw how dull his eyes were: slate gray, like the water in the Sound on rainy days in winter. He had never thought of John as of any particular age before, but now he wondered how old the man really was. His hair, his eyes, and his skin all seemed that dull, lifeless gray.

"Well?" said John abstractedly.

Hewitt took a mouthful of popcorn and a swallow of beer.

"I know you don't like the Big Fellow. And God knows I don't blame you for that. But he could pull you out of the hole you're in. And he's the only one I know of who can. He's got men in both houses who do as he tells them and he's got a lobby to turn on the heat when fellows try to break over. What he says is going to be done down at the legislature this winter. The unions are all behind him and the Seaforth Commercial Club is backing him to the limit this session. They know they've got to play ball with him or get into trouble; they're afraid of him. So there you are—a perfect build-up."

"Yes?" The voice was blank, expressionless. Plainly nothing Hewitt had said had meant much to Finlay.

"For Heaven's sake, snap out of it! Don't you get me?" Bruce looked around cautiously once more but there was still no one within earshot. "If the Big Fellow passed the word along that he wants the medical bill killed in committee, everything would be O.K. and you'd have nothing to worry about until another legislature. And by that time you ought to be sitting pretty."

"Sitting pretty." That was the expression Dennis had used. "Sitting pretty." It was a strange phrase. It didn't seem to mean

anything definite. "Sitting pretty." But Bruce was frowning at him. He must have annoyed the boy somehow. This was an unlucky day. First, he hadn't been able to explain things to Charlie Wharton, and now he had offended Hewitt without meaning to do so. He must pull his wits together and watch what he was doing.

"Say it again, Bruce. I'm sorry, but I don't see just what you mean."

"O.K. Now listen. One, the Big Fellow has plenty of backing in both houses and he's got a hell of a lobby to poke up the fellows who try to bolt out of line. Second, if you could get him on your side that medical bill would never get out of committee. Now do you get me?"

Finlay brushed a hand across his forehead. The Big Fellow—fat, beefy-jowled, tough-talking—could save him. Bruce said so and Bruce knew what was what. Not for an instant did Finlay question Hewitt's statement. That would mean not saving merely one man but the whole group—D.D. and Elliston, Garnell and McBride, Greenwood and Grace Rodney—and Sun Mount. Gradually things were coming into focus again. He pounced on the one thing Hewitt had not mentioned.

"What's the catch, Bruce? What does the Big Fellow want for himself?"

Hewitt's face clouded. "I don't know. He didn't tell me. But I'm sure from the way he talked that he's got something worked out."

"What else did he tell you?"

"He wants you to come to the party at the Athletic Club tonight."

"The party?"

"Sure—the one he throws every year just before Christmas for the big shots. Businessmen, shippers, the local bankers, members of the legislature, Congressmen, Senators, Elder of the *Advertiser*—they'll all be there. And the Big Fellow says for you to come too. All you have to do is be there. We'll fix the rest."

"And you don't know what he wants from me?"

Hewitt shook his head. "No, I don't, Dr. Finlay. But he's got something doped out and you may be sure that if you get him on your side your worries about this legislature will be over."

They talked a little longer but there was nothing more Hewitt

could tell and presently Finlay said he must get back to the hospital.

"Now, remember you're to be at the Club by seven o'clock. I'll be watching for you and I'll take care of everything."

During the afternoon as he went about his work John began to wonder whether Peter would be at the party too. "I bet he knows something is being cooked up," said Finlay to himself. It was curious to know that the Big Fellow was interested in Sun Mount and the Associates. John had never thought of such a possibility before and he did not understand why the Seaforth labor boss was interested in his fate. Through his thoughts there ran an undercurrent of distrust from whatever angle he approached the situation.

This suspicion was still in his mind when he went to his rooms to dress for the evening. Bruce had suggested that he wear dinner clothes and he could not remember where he had put his stiff shirt or his dress trousers. Finally he managed to assemble the suit and scramble into the shirt. Then he could not find his black tie. Irritably he pawed through his chest of drawers; he knew there was one somewhere.

And as he searched he debated what to do about the Big Fellow. The man would have his price, so much was certain. And was he prepared to pay it? Half angrily he asked himself how he could answer such a question when he did not know what the Big Fellow had in mind.

At last, under a thin packet of papers held together by a rubber band, he found the missing tie. Mechanically he twisted the bow and settled it in the opening of his collar. Then he stepped back to look at himself in the mirror. Some latent streak of vanity made him rub a hand over his stomach appreciatively; his figure was as good as it had ever been. He rummaged for a handkerchief, adjusted it in his breast pocket.

As he did so his eyes fell on the papers he had taken out of the drawer with his tie. Across the one on the top was written, "Contents of Safety Box, 6-30-'34." Below was a carefully itemized list. He could not remember how he had come to leave these things in his bureau drawer when they should be locked up in his desk; he picked up the packet and took off the elastic band and began to run over the sheets. Presently he sat down holding the papers in one hand. There was an item in the list on which his attention lingered. He sat motionless staring at it. "That's a

hell of a lot of insurance for a single man to carry all this time," he said to himself. "A hell of a lot!"

Six o'clock came; six-thirty. And still John sat in his room alone. He did not know whether he was thinking or not but he knew he was not going to the Big Fellow's Christmas party in Seaforth. When the phone rang at seven-fifteen he answered it calmly.

"Is that you, Dr. Finlay?" demanded Hewitt's excited voice. "Why aren't you here? What's the matter? There's a big crowd and the Big Fellow is in a fine mood. This is the time to strike him."

"I'm not coming, Bruce."

"Not coming! What in the devil?"

But Finlay would not argue. He simply repeated that he was not coming until Hewitt hung up.

It was therefore no wonder that, when Peter McFarlane looked up from the slot machine he was playing and saw the little labor leader coming out of the telephone booth in the lobby of the Seaforth Athletic Club, he should have noticed that his friend was out of temper.

"What's eating you, Bruce?" he inquired casually. "Better come and have a drink. That fellow in the bar makes damned good highballs. I've been sampling them."

Hewitt did not answer at once. He leaned against the wall with a puzzled expression on his face and jingled a few coins and keys in his trousers pockets. "By God," he said at last, "I don't know what to make of that man Finlay."

"Neither do I sometimes. What's the old boy up to now?"

Hewitt explained. "Why didn't he say so today if he didn't want to come, instead of letting me pace around here waiting for him and chewing my tail? And then he says simply, 'I'm not coming.' What do you make of that, wise guy?"

McFarlane shook his head.

"I never know quite how J.F. will react to things. Any man who has ideas is bound to act queer part of the time. And I can't help you. Finlay's off me, you know. He told me so just this morning for the *n*th time. He disapproves of my drinking, he doesn't like me to play slot machines, he objects to me neglecting my wife. So why should I worry about him and his troubles? What happens to him or to Sun Mount is no skin off my back, or yours, Bruce. So don't fuss about it. Let's toddle into the bar and hoist a few."

Hewitt had no objection but he did not care much for liquor and did not stay long in the bar. He could not get Finlay out of his mind and he had to think up something to tell the Big Fellow if he should ask where John was.

McFarlane however fell in with some other acquaintances and in their company drank three whisky sours in rapid succession. After that he felt melancholy creeping over him, he told them, and presently he went off alone and sat down.

Finlay, he was certain, was in trouble. Of course that was no concern of his. Hadn't he just told Bruce Hewitt so? Hadn't he said it was no skin off his back what happened to Sun Mount or to John Finlay? Wasn't he justified in feeling that way? Didn't J.F. upbraid him for drinking, for gambling, for neglecting his wife? Wasn't the old bird always riding him about something? Only this morning when he had said that Priscilla might "be a slightly shopworn young widow one of these days," John had flared up—something about the manners of the younger generation.

McFarlane laughed at the recollection. John Finlay was a swell fellow but he didn't know the world. He still thought people were honest and could be trusted. He thought they appreciated what you tried to do for them. Well, he was going to be taken—for plenty. He couldn't have a hell of a lot of money left by this time. If he'd had anything to fall back on, he would never have promised Bruce to talk to the Big Fellow. With curious alcoholic clarity Peter saw that Finlay must have tried to raise the money he needed before he saw Hewitt; if he hadn't failed he would have turned down any hint that he approach the Big Fellow. And then, after he was supposed to have arrived at the Club, he told Bruce he wasn't coming. Just that—no more. What did that mean? What had hit the old boy after Bruce saw him? Could he have found money somewhere that afternoon?

Peter was not drunk—there was too much alcohol constantly in his blood stream for that—and quite to his own surprise and quite without conscious reasoning he found himself perfectly sure what Finlay had done. "Of course," he muttered under his breath. "Why didn't I think of it before? Dumb cluck! It's a natural. Perfectly characteristic."

McFarlane put his head back and studied the high intricately carved ceiling above him. The Athletic Club had spent a lot of dough on this building even if they did put it up in the middle

of the Depression. That ceiling, for instance. All carved up, into curlycues and whirligigs. No angels or cherubs, such as they would have had fifty years ago. And now that he looked at it he could see a pattern in the whirligigs and curlycues. There was a pattern in everything if a fellow only looked for it. John Finlay had a pattern too.

He had been half in love with Priscilla. He had been half in love with Eleanor Mainwaring too. And he knew it. That was why he didn't like to talk to anyone about Eleanor and Dennis; that was why he got sore when he thought Priscilla was neglected.

But that was not all the pattern John Finlay had. He was old-fashioned, he belonged to an older generation. He was even proud of it. True he was smart for a man of his age; he had made a success of things in the old world that ended with the '20's, he had been independent, he had thought for himself, acted as seemed best to him. Up to now he had always landed on his feet. It would be impossible for him to go around begging for help. He wasn't the sort who could do things like that.

A fellow must remember that John was pre-War. His generation looked at things differently. They weren't hard boiled; they still had ideas about self-sacrifice. Finlay almost certainly had one resource left of which even Peter had not thought before—a resource that would be available as soon as he was dead.

McFarlane got to his feet and went into the bar again.

"Whisky soda," he said. "No. Take it back. Make it a whisky sour."

The attendant grinned. "For a long slim guy, you can hold more liquor and show it less than any other man who comes into the Club," he said admiringly.

Peter looked at his drink meditatively, took a swallow, swished it around in the glass, took another swallow. His face was owlsh, his seagreen eyes solemn. He crooked a finger.

"Bring me the phone book," he called.

At the head of a column of "D's" he steadied a long finger. "Hell's fire! Who'd 've thought there were that many D's?"

"Is it Seaforth you want?" asked the page boy, fingering the tip Peter had given him.

"No. I should say not. Newland."

"Maybe you better let me find the number for you." The boy

turned the pages, wrote what he found on a piece of paper and handed it to McFarlane.

"Thank you, kid. You'll be a success some day, I can see that. Helpful—that's what makes people appreciate you." Peter reached into his pocket for another coin. "Here, get me some nickels. I want to use the phone."

He swallowed the rest of his whisky sour and walked away from the bar. The attendant looked after him.

"Ain't that some man? Still walks as straight as a string. I don't see how he does it."

"I guess maybe his legs are straighter than his head," replied the page boy. "He give me three dollars already tonight."

Inside the telephone booth McFarlane dropped his nickel in the slot and waited. When the connection was made he had the change ready and said distinctly and slowly, "I want to speak to Mrs. Dryden."

"Dr. Dryden was called to the hospital a little while ago. If you wish to get in touch with him . . ."

"I don't. I want to speak with his wife."

"But Mrs. Dryden is ill. She never answers the phone."

"She'll talk to me. You tell her it's a matter of life and death—John Finlay's life and death."

Peter propped his elbow on the ledge and waited confidently. After a long delay he heard a soft voice over the wire.

"Mrs. Dryden? . . . Well, this is Peter McFarlane of the *Advertiser*. You don't know me. I don't think you ever saw me. I'm a reporter. But I've got something I want to tell you. . . . No, this is of interest to you—and to your husband. It's about John Finlay. . . ."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

FORGIVE me for insisting. And thank you for letting me have my way." Eleanor Dryden's low voice went on after a moment's hesitation. "I know it must be hard for you to let me do this, but you've been very gracious about it."

John moved restlessly in his chair, pulled his gaze away from the woman on the couch to the flames flickering in the grate. The professional side of him was scrutinizing her carefully, the personal side could hardly bear to look at her. It was not that she was no longer beautiful; nothing could alter the lines of her face or the soft brilliance of her eyes. But more plainly than ever she was stamped with the mark of approaching death. The dead whiteness of her skin discolored slightly on one cheek by an old hemorrhage beneath the surface, the huskiness of her voice, above all the bright translucence of her eyes—these were signs he knew of old. Their meaning was clearer now than ever before and he still found himself burning with resentment at them. He remembered the winter night when he had discovered what was wrong with her. Again and again that night something in his brain had clamored "Why? Why? Why?" And now he found his hands clenched, moisture beading his palms. Why? Why? he thought.

But when he spoke there was only the barest undertone of emotion in his voice. "Well, you see, I've always been able to do as I pleased and either get out of predicaments single-handed or stay in and fight my way through."

Eleanor smiled. "I know, dear John Finlay. And I realize that it is harder for you to let me help you than it would be to go down fighting. But you have more than yourself to consider. You

have Sun Mount and Miss Rodney and all the men of your staff. You're a man with a large family on his hands."

John was sitting with his elbows on the arms of his chair; now he put up both hands to the sides of his face in a gesture that was becoming a habit and ran them slowly back along his head as though he were brushing something aside. Then he laughed a little shakily.

"I'm a fool," he said. "Once I was rid of all that, had no worries. But I came back and got into a worse mess than I had ever dreamed of. It's no one's fault except my own."

The faint smile still hovered over Eleanor's pale mouth.

"But you were not happy when I saw you in Europe. Having no responsibilities would never make you happy."

Finlay grunted. He was not behaving politely, he admitted irritably to himself, but how could he, sitting here watching this woman? He looked at her rebelliously. There was nothing fair in the whole world: it was not fair that he should be persecuted for seeking an answer to an old problem, it was not fair that Eleanor should be dying when she had the right to expect her fullest vigor.

"I don't want you to think I'm unappreciative," he began.

A quiet ripple of laughter stopped him. He paused in surprise.

"I don't think so," said Eleanor. "It's only that you're not accustomed to being helped. You've always been the one who did things for other people. Dennis would say you hadn't had much experience on the receiving end."

"If it was only myself," John said slowly, "I wouldn't let you do this. I'd stick it out. I've still got a shot or two in reserve. But there are too many others to think of—Dennis and Arthur McBride and Constance, and Walter Elliston and his family, and Garnell and his wife, and Greenwood and Grace Rodney."

"And me." Eleanor added the words quickly.

"You?" Surprise shimmered in his eyes as he looked at her.

"Yes. Me." There was a pause. "I don't know whether I can make you understand, Dr. Finlay. But you've been an ally of mine since 1932."

"An ally?" he repeated blankly.

"Perhaps accomplice would be a better word. No, don't interrupt. Let me try to explain. When Dennis and I had that accident and I was in Seacliff you found out what was wrong with me and you helped me keep it from Dennis. More than that, you

agreed with one half of me that I should not let him make love to me or marry me. And that half of me won out at that time.

"But the other half of me clung to life, insisted on my right to love D.D. And that half chose Grace Rodney for an ally. Because these desires were really dominant I kept in touch with her after I ran away. For the same reason I got in touch with her when I came back. You see, being a woman, she saw the situation as it affected Dennis. She used to say to me that he ought to have something to remember *afterward*. She was concerned for us both, but for him more than for me."

There was a pause and John opened his mouth as though to speak but said nothing. He kept his eyes on the fire in the grate and waited.

"But you . . . Well, you were a man and so you thought about me more than about Dennis. You felt we wouldn't be happy if we did marry, that it would shorten my life, but that I ought to be allowed to do as I chose with whatever time I had left. Didn't you?"

John nodded.

Eleanor smiled again. There was a strange deep warmth in her eyes as she leaned toward him and put a hand on one of his. He was startled first at its thinness and then at the burning heat of the fingers.

"I think you loved me a little yourself. Don't deny it. It pleases me to think so. And in my own shadowy fashion I loved you too. Don't you remember I wrote you a letter beginning, 'Dear John Finlay'? That is how I always used to think of you."

There was almost an admission of guilt in the rigidity with which Finlay forced himself to sit staring into the fire.

"Of course all the while I was in love with Dennis. Don't forget that. . . . It's unfortunate that we have only the one word 'love' to use. . . . And I know you never wanted to marry me. But there *was* something between us. I'm sure you must know that."

John stole a rapid glance at the girl; she was gazing fixedly at the flames in the grate, her burning hand forgotten on his.

"Perhaps I can explain it better this way. In 1932 I was still looking back at life, finding it good. I didn't want to die. I resented what had happened to me. And you were one of the strongest links between me and life. So because I loved life I

loved you too. Isn't that something like the thing psychiatrists call a 'transfer'?"

"I think so."

"That's what I meant when I called you an ally. You were a bond between me and life, you could see my side of the situation between Dennis and me, you cared what happened to me because you liked me as an individual."

"But Miss Rodney has always stood up for you."

"I know she has. But she did it for different reasons. She is more interested in Dennis than in me; she would rather I was sacrificed for his happiness than he for mine."

There was a long pause. Then Eleanor went on: "I'm sure you think it very odd for me to talk to you this way, don't you?"

This unexpected question startled Finlay and he looked up quickly.

"You needn't make any other answer," said the girl slowly. "I'm not sure that I can ever explain myself to anyone. One would have to know my whole background to understand. You see, Dr. Finlay, I was left an orphan when I was only a baby. I spent the first years of my life in an orphanage. Oh, it was a very superior place where only wealthy children were taken, but it was an orphanage just the same. It was not until I was past four that my aunt and uncle took me to live with them."

Eleanor spoke thoughtfully as though she were searching for words to express exactly what she meant.

"When I was in the orphanage I had to live with all the other little girls. We slept in one large room, we ate together in another. We played together. We were bathed in relays by nurses who hardly knew one of us from the other. There weren't even any doors on the toilets. I was never alone. I didn't have anything that seemed to belong to me. I was just one in a crowd.

"As I grew older I developed a passion for privacy. I know I must have hurt my aunt many times. I was very fond of her, but I did not want her to undress me or come into my room when I was in bed. I wouldn't allow the maid to help me bathe or comb my hair. I struggled with my clothes alone. I locked my door at night. I wouldn't let other children play with my things."

"Well, that seems to me to have been a natural reaction for a child," said John making his voice carefully matter-of-fact.

"Yes, I think it was. And in time I'd probably have gotten over

it if I hadn't fallen ill. I don't believe anyone can imagine how angry I was when I was first taken sick. It was quite some time before a definite diagnosis was made and meantime I was sent around from doctor to doctor and hospital to hospital. To me it all seemed like a reversion to the orphanage. I was stripped and examined and X-rayed; I was bled and asked questions. The doctors and nurses took specimens and cross-examined me. I hated them. They were so cool and impersonal—just like the nurses at the orphanage. And not even the shock of learning that I had an incurable disease could wipe away my resentment at what seemed to me to be an inexcusable intrusion on my privacy and my dignity as a human being."

Finlay shifted his position so that he could see Eleanor's face in profile.

"There was something of this in that letter I read—the one you used to carry in your purse, remember?"

"So there was. I'd almost forgotten. The one I keep with me now is much shorter."

"But there was nothing about the way you were brought up, which of course explains the whole thing."

"Now that I've started I have something else I want to say to you," continued Eleanor. "Aren't you accustomed to having your patients unbosom themselves to you?"

To John's surprise there was an undertone of amusement in the girl's voice.

"You and the half of me that sides with you were right, and Miss Rodney and the half of me that sides with her were wrong. I shouldn't have come back, I shouldn't have married Dennis. Not that he isn't good to me. Nobody could be sweeter to me than he is. I want you to know that. But it isn't good for him to live with a person already half-dead. And it hasn't been good for me either. Now you can say, 'I told you so.'"

She paused so long that Finlay glanced swiftly at her to see whether she had made an end of her confidences.

"You see, so long as I hadn't committed myself, there was always a choice open to me, or at least I felt that there was. I could go on traveling about, writing once in a while to Miss Rodney, keeping in touch with Dennis and you in that way, and all the time telling myself I could come back if I wanted to. I suppose I had an illusion of being a free agent. At any rate it

was something to think about—a sort of connection with the world of ordinary life.

"Then suddenly I decided to come back to this part of the country. At first I told myself I wouldn't see Dennis or let him know where I was. But when I got to Portland I couldn't stand it. I telephoned to Miss Rodney and you know what happened after that.

"For a little while excitement kept me up. But then I began to slip backward. A doctor would say that was because the disease was progressing and of course that is partly true. But there was more to it than that. Now I had nothing to look forward to, no more choices to make. Dennis would take care of me as long as I lived. And somehow death suddenly became no more inevitable but much closer. There was nothing I had to do for myself, no responsibility I had to take.

"Oh, I know I'm not making myself clear. But all at once, instead of looking backward to life and clinging to the things which bound me to it, I found myself looking forward toward death. I sank into a sort of lethargy. Nothing meant much to me. There was no basis for ordinary normal relations between Dennis and me. I could feel myself withdrawing from him.

"Everything became a gray blur. I've been existing like a vegetable for months. No one could call it living. And then last night this Peter McFarlane whom I have never seen called and insisted on talking to me. I'm sure he bullied the maid because I never take phone calls, and I believe he was a little drunk. But never mind. When I finished talking to him I had something to do, a reason to live again—for a little while at least. And I was glad. I'm still glad. And you won't do anything to spoil it for me, I'm sure."

'No,' John Finlay said to himself as he left the house. 'No, he couldn't spoil what was left of life for a woman who had looked death in the face for long without wavering.' Why and how she continued to live he did not understand. She had a progressive anemia, she was thin as a shadow, her color without make-up would be ghastly, but she had been deceptively frail four years ago when he first met her. Increasingly he realized that there was more to living than merely being in good health. He remembered the hot touch of Eleanor's hand; the fire was still high in her veins.

He climbed into his car and started the motor. It was not quite ten o'clock but he could use the side door of the First National. He felt the faint crackle of the check in his pocket. The figures on it would startle Charlie Wharton; indeed he himself was still startled by them. Less than twenty-four hours ago he had tried to put on a bold front before Wharton, vowing to raise the money he needed himself. He knew Wharton had not taken his bluff seriously; he had not believed it himself. But nevertheless here he was with this check in his pocket.

He had been pinching himself ever since eight o'clock to make sure that he was not dreaming. Dennis had come in while he was eating breakfast, pale-faced and determined, and insisted on being heard then and there. He began with Peter's call to Eleanor and his own long talk with her after he got home from Sun Mount at eleven-thirty.

"I've never seen her so insistent on anything. You'll hurt her terribly if you don't see her at once. I believe she'll get up and come here if you don't come back with me to the apartment now."

But at the door of the apartment house Dennis turned away.

"I'd rather not go in, John. I'll just get on with my work. Things have been piling up in the lab lately. Eleanor knows how I feel about this. We talked it all out last night. And I'm sure she'd rather see you alone."

Finlay could remember the eloquence of Dryden's back as he walked away into the rain. Something that was not quite resignation, something that went beyond loneliness, something that transcended suffering. He wondered whether these two had found in each other anything except pain. Their eyes haunted him now: D.D.'s blue, bewildered, feverish; Eleanor's glowing, translucent with the look of death.

John shook himself, rubbed a hand over his forehead. He had too much to do to sit here dreaming. First he must go to the bank. Then he must decide when to make his own moves. The money Eleanor had loaned him would take care of the legislative campaign in the state but even with the new medical bill defeated there would be no assurance that other attacks would not follow. That was where the material he had locked up in his desk would come in, but he must manage the affair skillfully. A thing like this could easily backfire.

Still in a brown study Finlay let in the clutch and drove away. The wisest plan, he decided, was to deposit Eleanor's check in a

special account. And even his preoccupation was not great enough to keep him from hoping that Charlie Wharton would be there to see him do it.

Not quite a fortnight later John called on Patrick Boyd. He had planned the visit and rehearsed it so often in his mind that it seemed to him like a well-prepared play when he entered the waiting room of the Boyd Clinic. There was a handful of patients sitting listlessly on cheap new metal-tube chairs and a blonde woman no longer young was addressing envelopes at a desk in one end of the room. She looked up indifferently and mumbled something in John's general direction.

"Is Dr. Boyd in?"

The woman pushed her gum around into one cheek before answering.

"He ain't here yet. He never comes in till afternoon."

John glanced at his watch and then at the clock on the secretary's desk. It was not quite noon. He sat down with an air of indecision and looked around him. In spite of modern metal furniture and Venetian blinds the room had an oppressive atmosphere. The other people who were waiting gave the impression of being listless and impatient at the same time. They were shabbily dressed and for the most part they fidgeted in their chairs or stared dully at the walls without reading or talking to each other.

John changed his position and contemplated the secretary. She was now stuffing statements into the envelopes she had finished addressing; most of them seemed to be stamped "Past Due, Please Remit." He smiled to himself, and the secretary, who had been looking uneasily at him from time to time, frowned.

"Maybe you'd like to see one of the other doctors," she suggested. "Of course if you're sellin' anything . . ."

"I'm not a salesman," said John. "Or a detail man. I wanted to see Dr. Boyd personally."

"I don't think I got your name." The secretary's eyes were still distrustful.

"No, you didn't ask for it. I'm a doctor myself. I'm visiting around to see how you do things out west."

The woman pushed a button and presently a nurse came into the room.

"Here's a doctor wants to see the clinic," said the secretary.

The nurse looked John up and down critically. Without being actually dirty she gave the impression of unkemptness. The skirt of her uniform, John noticed when she turned around, was badly wrinkled.

"Come on in," she said ungraciously.

Finlay had been prepared for small rooms cluttered with cheap equipment but he had not expected the labyrinth in which he now found himself. A room he took to be a closet proved to be the laboratory. Another narrow room was jammed with X-ray machinery. Three or four frowsy harried-looking nurses ran in and out.

John paused at the door of what seemed to be a minor surgery. A thin young man in a blood-spattered gown looked up, frowning, from a hand he was sewing together.

"I don't want to buy anything," he said shortly.

"And I don't want to sell you anything," replied Finlay. "What have you got there?"

"This fellow ran his hand through a trimmer this morning."

"Looks as though he got the flexor tendons."

"He certainly did. That's what I'm trying to find now."

"Maybe I could help you. I used to do a good deal of work like this."

Before the job was finished, as John afterward reported to Arthur McBride, the young doctor had so far thawed out that when another man came in he introduced him. The newcomer was pale and anxious looking.

"When you get through here, Packer, I wish you'd take a look at the body cast I just put on. It's not so hot, to my way of thinking."

"The old man won't know the difference," replied Packer, "if you've got the outside smooth."

The second young physician looked curiously at John. "Just looking around, did you say? I don't suppose you've run into any good locations lately?"

"No. I haven't. To tell the truth I haven't been looking very hard."

"Oh!" The young man's eyes clouded over.

John glanced around the crowded little room; it smelled of alcohol and iodine, it was cluttered with instruments and cabinets.

"I think I'll go on down to Dr. Boyd's office," said John suddenly.

He walked down a narrow hallway to a door marked "Private" and knocked. Then without waiting he went inside. A tall hatchet-faced man was sitting with his feet on a desk reading a copy of *Thrilling Tales*.

"Hello, Boyd. I thought I heard your voice a minute ago. I've been waiting for you."

Patrick Boyd's dark skin seemed to turn a shade lighter but there was no other sign that he was upset. He took his feet off the desk and put down the magazine.

"What's on your mind, Finlay? Been visiting the boys, have you?"

"No, not exactly. They don't know me of course. I watched young Packer a while. He was working on some flexor tendons. He's clever with his hands."

"I've got him pretty well licked into shape now," asserted Boyd pompously. "He didn't know much when he first got here."

"Well, we all have to learn, don't we? I remember when you were learning, back in 1918. On the Spruce Division boys."

Boyd's eyes narrowed coldly. He ran a hand over his smoothly brushed black hair and then began to straighten a pile of medical journals.

"These things accumulate," he said. "I was just going through them when you came in."

Finlay crossed his legs and looked up at the diploma on the wall above Patrick Boyd's head. Beside it was an internship certificate and nearby a diploma from a Laboratory of Surgical Technique and three state licenses.

"Those things accumulate too," he said nodding at them.

Into Boyd's cold eyes there crept a gleam of anger.

"What do you want, Finlay? And how did you get in here?"

"I walked in," answered Finlay. "I said I was a doctor looking around the country and your employees come and go so fast none of them knew me. I thought perhaps you could tell me something about this." He opened the small case he carried and took out a green envelope.

"What is this—a hold-up?" blustered Boyd reaching for the envelope.

"No. It's a batch of Xray films of a man's neck. The name is Douglas. He was in here a few weeks ago. Probably you remember him."

"Certainly I remember him. He was a God-damned malingerer. There was nothing wrong with his neck."

"Sorry, Boyd. He had a crushing fracture of the last cervical vertebra. It isn't easy to Xray of course, but McBride managed to get it satisfactorily. And Douglas has developed some nasty symptoms."

Boyd had taken the films out of the envelope but had not yet looked at them.

"It's nothing to me what symptoms the fellow has now," he said, trying to appear unconcerned. "A lot of things may have happened to him since I saw him. All I know is that his neck was O.K. when I examined him."

"I don't think it was, Boyd. As a matter of fact the man has been continuously disabled since his first injury."

"Who says so?"

"His father, two sisters and their husbands. Five adults, all of whom live in the same house with Douglas and all of whom are prepared to go to court if necessary."

Boyd's assurance was fading. He held the films up between him and the window.

"You're looking at them upside down," observed John.

Boyd flung down the films and jumped to his feet.

"Damn you!" he shouted. "What are you after? What does this son of a bitch Douglas want?"

"Sit down," ordered Finlay coolly. "And don't yell at me. I don't like it. And I shouldn't think you'd want everyone in the place to hear you. Now listen. I don't want to have to repeat what I'm going to say.

"I know who backed you in this clinic. I know the set-up you work under. I know how you split the income—technically known, I believe, as the 'take.' I know you're an incompetent physician. All right, we'll start from that.

"Douglas won't sue you for damages unless I tell him to. Fortunately he has a job he can go back to, broken neck or no broken neck, and unless we run into some bad luck we'll get him into fair condition by spring. But he will always have some disability and some symptoms. Now we have a large number of films of his neck. One complete set is in a safety deposit box. We also have a careful record of our findings when we first examined him at Sun Mount and depositions by his family con-

cerning the time of his injury and the onset and nature of his symptoms then."

Boyd did not look up.

"Do you want to go to court over this case, Boyd?"

"What I want doesn't have anything to do with it that I can see."

"That's where you're wrong. No one is going to force you into a lawsuit. I went through a malpractice action this fall; it was extremely unpleasant. Before the lawyers got through with you they'd 've run you through a sieve. They put it down on paper—everything you've done, everywhere you've been, every word you've said for twenty years. That sort of thing does a man a lot of harm. I don't want to force anyone into an experience like mine."

Boyd seemed to have shrunk in stature. There was a peculiar expression in his eyes when he looked up.

"What do you want?" he mumbled. "What's the shake-down?"

"Why don't you learn to speak English?" asked John mildly. Then his voice changed and he leaned forward and spoke curtly. "I'll tell you what I want. I want you to run this place decently and behave yourself. I want you to cut loose from Baldwin and Arnold and this man Prentiss." Finlay noticed that Boyd started at the word "Prentiss."

"I want you to stop splitting fees with the shady surgeons in Seaforth. I want you to stop lying about Sun Mount and the Associates. I won't ask you to shut up shop or move away. I merely want you, within the natural limitations of your mental equipment, to practice medicine like a white man. That's all.

"But if you don't do as I ask I'll put the screws on you and I'll put them on hard. And not just on you either. I know a hell of a lot about a good many other doctors around here and there's going to be some deep-reaching reforms begun in the Queen County Medical Society this winter. . . . Now, how much of this do I have to repeat to be sure you get it?"

But the man across the desk had put his head down between his arms and his fingers were clawing at his hair.

"Jesus!" he said. "The dirty bastards! They've left me to hold the sack!"

By mid-afternoon John was driving north toward Seaforth. The day was unseasonably springlike; the air was cool and fresh and

full of the odors of damp earth. He sniffed it with appreciation and stretched his legs to their full length under the cowl of the car. The sky was more gray than blue but here and there were brighter patches and beneath them on the ground a pattern of light and shade.

When he remembered what he had done that forenoon and what he had yet to do before dinnertime Finlay's eyes darkened and his mouth straightened into a grim slit beneath the gray mustache. He did not relish the methods he was using but he assured himself for the hundredth time that this was the only way to forestall further attacks on Sun Mount. This is an uncomfortable world to live in, he thought. Always changing. And a man has to change with it or . . .

When he drove into the once-familiar parking lot behind Seaciff he did not glance toward the windows of the laboratory; he did not know who worked there now in place of D.D. and Priscilla. Crunching across the fine gravel with which the lot was surfaced, he caught sight of a familiar number on a license plate; evidently George Schuyler still retained his privilege of using the same number year after year. Apparently also George was not doing too badly for himself; his car was new and shiny. In passing John ran a finger over the glossy dark green surface; then he grinned and hurried on.

In front of the entrance, where there were several large "No Parking" signs, there stood another car—a long black sedan with white side-wall tires and a man in dark gray uniform on the front seat. Again John paused for a moment; the grin on his lips broadened, his eyes narrowed a trifle more. He went up the steps two at a time, not running but with the air of a man who has important, if disagreeable, business on hand.

As he entered the lobby the girl at the switchboard looked up.

"Why, Dr. Finlay," she exclaimed. "I haven't seen you for a long time."

"No," answered John. "I haven't been here for a long time."

Something in the way he spoke impressed the girl; she looked at him more closely.

"Gee," she said afterward to her friend at the reception desk, "there was something funny about him. Maybe it was the way he talked, I don't know. It wasn't anything he said. But he always used to jolly us girls so much and that day he was hard—you know what I mean."

John took no heed of her scrutiny. He held his hat and brief case in one hand and mopped his face with his handkerchief.

"And it wasn't hot that day, either," reported the switchboard operator afterward.

"Is George—Dr. Schuyler in his office?"

"Yes, but he's busy just now. Shall I tell him you want to see him?"

"No. Don't bother. I'll go on around to the doctors' room and wait till he's through."

From the doctors' room, if one sat in the right position, one could watch both the corridor and the door of Schuyler's office. John flung his hat and coat on a table and settled down in a chair. In the quiet he could hear a deep voice rumbling intermittently. A one-sided smile twitched his mouth, he set his brief case down beside him and picked up a copy of the *British Medical Journal*.

But in only a few minutes he heard heavy footfalls in the hallway. He looked up in time to see a tall man passing by; he was dark, he carried himself with military erectness, and he wore a closely cropped beard. So much John saw at a glance.

His gray eyes followed the newcomer along the corridor to the door of Schuyler's office where the man paused, glanced quickly down the hall, and then knocked gently. The door opened immediately and John heard Schuyler say, "Come in, Prentiss. You're late." Then the door closed again.

Precisely five minutes later John also knocked on Schuyler's door. This time there was a considerable interval before it opened and a petulant round face appeared in the cleft. At sight of Finlay its annoyance turned into malice.

"You!" exclaimed Schuyler. "What do you want?"

"I want to talk to you," replied John quietly.

"I can't see you now. I'm busy," said the superintendent of Seaciff sourly. He started to close the door but John's foot was against it.

"You have time to see Baldwin and Prentiss, so why not me? I have something to say that all three of you will be interested in."

Schuyler's flabby face went white. He still clung to the door handle but peered up at Finlay from between his puffy eyelids with something like terror in his gaze. Behind him now loomed the massive figure of Herbert Baldwin. Over Schuyler's head he looked at John.

"What's all this about, Finlay?" he asked coldly.

As the surgeon spoke John remembered Baldwin's own account of his streamlined offices and his new method of practice; he remembered also Ada Maitland dying of a disease Baldwin had failed to recognize, and the great man at the mass meeting a few weeks before staring Robert Jackson into action and ordering George Schuyler around as though he were a bellboy.

"Let me come in and I'll tell you," answered Finlay, looking straight back at Baldwin and pushing Schuyler aside as he closed the door behind him.

The superintendent scuttled across the floor to the chair behind his desk, like a hen seeking shelter. Finlay did not look at him; he was eying the tall man who stood at the window with his back to the three of them. He was standing very erect, his hands clasped behind, his figure rigid.

"I don't believe I have ever met you, Dr. Prentiss," said John.

The man at the window turned around. Finlay saw that his eyes were opaque with a sort of desperate resignation.

"No, Dr. Finlay, we have never met before. You are right about that."

The deep voice was so like Baldwin's that John was startled. He made a swift survey of the man's face and figure: the same wide sloping shoulders, long arms, domed head, thin dark hair. The resemblance was striking but Prentiss wore a short dark beard which effectually concealed his chin and the lower part of his face, and his eyes betrayed none of the insolent arrogance and vanity which characterized Baldwin's expression. John was annoyed to feel a sort of sympathy for Prentiss stealing over him.

He looked around. Baldwin was standing behind him glowering at Prentiss and Schuyler in turn. Schuyler was huddled in his desk chair. Something about the tableau struck Finlay as slightly ridiculous.

"Well, George, may we sit down?" he asked slyly.

At the sound of his voice Schuyler seemed to shrink into himself. He moved one pudgy hand a little but did not answer.

John glanced from one to another of the three faces turned toward him. In all of them there was fear and in two anger as well, but where Schuyler was craven and terrified Baldwin was still arrogant and domineering. The man has intelligence and courage, thought Finlay. Why couldn't he have been decent too? Prentiss was more puzzling: now that he could get a better view

of him John wondered whether what he had taken for desperation in the man's eyes might not be something more like relief.

"I have something to put up to you three men," Finlay began slowly. "Perhaps I'd better ask it in the form of a hypothetical question."

There was a dead silence in the room. Prentiss was looking fixedly at the wall opposite him, Baldwin stared straight ahead, Schuyler's eyes were fastened to the blotter on his desk. John cleared his throat and continued.

"The assumptions are these: we have, at the start, two young men—cousins of about the same age—who bear a striking resemblance to each other. Both study medicine but one had plenty of money while the other had to work most of his way through school. The one who graduated first did very well for a while, and then he got into trouble. I won't go into details but a pretty scandal was brewing which he found it impossible to face.

"Meanwhile the other young doctor had finished his education and gone west to practice. But he never had the knack of making money and moreover he had married before graduating and his wife was in poor health. He hesitated to pull up stakes and move to the southwest with her, losing what little he had been able to save, and he couldn't afford to send her away to a private sanatorium. It was when things were at this pass that he heard from his cousin in the east for the first time in several years."

"All this sounds theatrical and improbable," remarked Baldwin superciliously.

"Yes. It does," replied Finlay. "That's exactly the way I reacted when I first heard the story. It's interesting to see that you feel the same."

Although he was smiling as he spoke, he watched Baldwin sharply. It seemed to him that the surgeon flinched a little under this scrutiny.

"I'll come to the point as quickly as I can, gentlemen. The upshot of the whole matter was that the western cousin took his wife away for a trip the next summer; when he returned he was alone. He told his friends that it had been necessary to leave his wife behind in a sanatorium. He also announced that he was leaving his present location and going to a city in another part of the state to practice."

"I see nothing particularly unusual about that," said Baldwin acridly.

"Neither did I until I found out that the man who left on the summer trip was not the same man who came back."

Until now Prentiss had not stirred but now he glanced quickly at Finlay and then away.

"The eastern cousin had given the western man enough money to care for his wife for a considerable period, and the person who came back from the southwest to pack up and move away was not the man who had left but his eastern cousin who looked so much like him. You see, he not only escaped the scandal brewing around him in the east but at the same time acquired a state license and a position to some degree established. In fact he came here, to Seaforth. He is practicing here today. You know him, all of you."

Prentiss had turned to face Baldwin. Schuyler was busily poking holes in his blotter. Baldwin moistened his lips with his tongue and said slowly, "I still don't see what all this has to do with any of us here."

John laughed curtly. "Don't you? That is where the hypothetical question comes in. Part of this story I've known for some time and recently I came upon the connecting links. For instance I learned that the western cousin after his wife died returned to this state and resumed practice under another name on a license issued by reciprocity with the state to which he went with his wife years ago. I also learned that he has been forced by his unscrupulous cousin to become an abortionist under threat of blackmail."

John glanced from one to another of the three men before him; each was rigid as a cataleptic.

"The question I want to put to you is this: Shall I tell what I know? If I do both men will lose their licenses. They will not be able to practice in this state and it is almost certain that no other state will license them. It would ruin them both professionally."

Herbert Baldwin licked his lips once more.

"What do you advise me to do, gentlemen? Is it my duty to speak to the state board about this matter or not?" John spoke briskly as though he expected an immediate reply. When there was none he looked about him with assumed surprise.

"So my hypothetical question has all of you stumped also! Well, well. Here I've been thinking I was stupid not to be able

to decide what I ought to do about it. Perhaps I wasn't as stupid as I thought."

George Schuyler stabbed viciously at the blotter he had already punched full of holes.

"You're a devil, John Finlay! Who's in with you on this deal?"

"I have no intention of telling you that, George."

Suddenly Schuyler sprang up, kicking his chair backward. "Damn you for a sneaking damned bastard! I . . ."

"Shut up!" ordered Baldwin in so venomous a voice that Schuyler dropped back, silenced. "What do you want, Finlay, to keep your mouth shut?"

"Are you trying to bribe me?" demanded Finlay. "I wouldn't try that if I were you. I'm not for sale. I want to know whether I should do my duty or not. It means a lot of damage for other people. Take your own example, Baldwin. You are so sure that co-operative medicine is wrong that you consider it your duty to put me out of business. You have attacked me and my associates and done everything you could to force us to close Sun Mount. You got us ousted from the County Medical Society and now you've got the state association lined up against us. If you succeed all our licenses will be revoked. You may have done all this from a sense of duty but it has meant a lot of trouble for us. So far I've hesitated to follow my own sense of duty in this other case because . . ." John raised his voice. "If you must have it, Baldwin, it didn't seem to me quite fair to Dr. Prentiss."

There were beads of sweat now on Baldwin's forehead and upper lip. He wiped them off with a shaking hand.

"If we call the whole thing off, Finlay, will you meet us halfway?"

John cocked his head on one side. Surreptitiously he glanced at his watch and frowned a little as though considering.

"Well," he began slowly, "when you put it that way . . ."

The telephone on Schuyler's desk rang. He did not seem to notice it. It rang again, raucously.

"For Christ's sake, answer that damned thing!" ordered Baldwin.

The superintendent obeyed like an automaton. Finlay could hear a voice speaking over the wire. Schuyler was transfixed; he listened as if he were hypnotized.

"No, no," he babbled. "No, no! There's nothing in it. It's absurd. . . . I tell you there's nothing to it, nothing at all. . . ."

I'm certainly in a position to know, I tell you. . . . No, I won't. I'm in conference. I can't see anyone."

When he hung up the superintendent was in a pitiable condition. His face looked as if it had been molded out of congealed lard, his pale eyes were limpid with mingled fear and hate, his hands were shaking, his whole body seemed shrunk inside his well-cut blue suit.

"Dr. Baldwin," he cried, "do whatever Finlay says. Anything, anything at all. That was a reporter on the phone. He wanted to know about an abortion ring here in Seaforth. He said he had information that the Coast headquarters were here and that the Seacliff staff was mixed up in it. Seacliff, mind you!" The man's voice rose to a scream. "The rest of this dirty business is bad enough, but by God when it comes to my hospital I won't stand for it. It would ruin me!" He stopped for breath, then suddenly collapsed and buried his face in his hands. "Oh, my God!" he whispered hoarsely. "Oh, my God!"

Baldwin was still sitting bolt upright, staring at Schuyler. There was disgust mixed with contempt in his face; there was also alarm but there was no panic.

John gazed at the man with reluctant admiration. Guts and brains, he thought. Why couldn't the fellow be decent too? His eyes moved on to Prentiss, who also was sitting bolt upright, his arms folded tightly across his chest, staring at a spot on the floor in front of him. Again he felt a twinge of pity.

"You win," said Baldwin suddenly. He cleared his throat and turned toward Finlay. "You win," he repeated. "We'll call off everything tonight." The surgeon looked back at Schuyler. "You damned coward!" he exclaimed. "I might have known you'd blat everything the moment you got scared enough."

"But Seacliff," quavered Schuyler. "My hospital!"

"Your hospital, my foot! You don't give a hoot in hell for Seacliff or for anything else except your own bloated hide! Don't try to put anything over on me. I know you too well."

Stiffly Baldwin got to his feet. He moved as though his joints were painful, like an old man's. He picked up his hat and straightened his tie, he buttoned his double-breasted coat around him. Then he stalked out of the room.

Schuyler did not move nor did Prentiss. For a moment John studied both men. Then he turned his back on the superintendent of the hospital.

"Come out to Newland one day and look our place over, Dr. Prentiss. It's a small town of course and a small hospital, but I think you might find something there that would interest you. I'd like to talk to you anyhow."

Prentiss looked up. There were tears in his eyes. Finlay thought of Mark Whitney, the contractor; Mark had cried when he got the Sun Mount job after years without work. It was embarrassing to watch another man cry. He held out his hand.

"I'll be looking for you," he said. "Remember that."

Then he too went away without bothering to speak to George Schuyler.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE first thing Eleanor became aware of was that this waking was not like any other in her life. She moved slowly, first one arm and then her head. Gradually another awareness developed: in the faint light of early morning she could see the cherry blossoms outside her window. One of the greatest advantages which Grace Rodney had pointed out to the Drydens about her apartment was the row of cherry trees in the curbing. Now just beyond the open casements myriads of white blossoms swam in the gray translucence of dawn. There was a faint, almost imperceptible fragrance in the air. It had rained in the night and the street had been washed clean.

As she lay on her side she could see Dennis still asleep, his face turned toward her. His thick blond hair was tumbled over his forehead and his mouth was firmly closed; his skin was clear but there were creases between his brows, and even in his sleep he looked drawn and tired. Poor D.D., she thought. Then she remembered how Grace Rodney had said he ought to have something to remember *afterward*. Poor D.D., she thought again. I wonder if he will.

She put up a hand to adjust her pillow and it seemed more difficult to move than usual. Fatigue she had known constantly for years but there was something different and a little frightening about this new lassitude. Perhaps, she reflected, it was the reaction from the last few months.

With her telephone conversation with Peter McFarlane late in December life had surged back over her. Before that she had existed in a shadowy half-world where even Dennis was partly unreal, but from the day she sent for John Finlay and forced him to accept her help she had followed events with as keen an

interest as any member of the Sun Mount staff. She had been thrilled when word came from the state capital that the medical practice act had died in committee, when D.D. reported jubilantly that according to Oliver Marlin the County Society was to be reorganized in such a way that eventually Finlay and his associates could again become members. She had been elated when John told her that Dr. Baldwin and Pat Boyd and the others who had fought Sun Mount so ruthlessly were no longer actively hostile. She had laughed at Finlay's story of Wharton's astonishment over the deposit of her check to the credit of Sun Mount Associates. For nearly four months she had lived in what seemed to her a swirl of excitement and crowding events.

Very likely it had tired her more than she had realized. She was not in pain, only more exhausted than she could recall having ever been before. Even breathing was an effort. And her thoughts seemed jumbled and confused.

Oppressed by these queer sensations she lay very still, not attempting to move or think. She could see the cherry trees outside the windows, a canopy of white. Spring had come early this year. Even in the apartment she had caught the odors of the new season: the fresh smell of young leaves, the green smell of growing grass, the coolness of the first flowers, the sweetness of the south wind. It had been good to see April coming over the land, to feel the change in the people who came in—town dwellers though they were. It had been very good. She could not recall a spring she had enjoyed so much since she had been ill. Before that . . . She was a little shocked to realize that already most of her life before her illness had receded into a sort of half-light. It was strange that one could forget so much before one was thirty.

She smiled ruefully. This failing of mental faculties, she supposed, was only to be expected. But now, as at certain moments in the past, she felt that it was not death she dreaded but the process of dying. After all, when it was all over, it would be as though she were asleep, but anyone might be forgiven for dreading to go to bed if falling asleep were always painful.

She glanced at her hand and drew the sheet higher over it. There was a big dark blotch on her wrist and forearm—a new one which had appeared yesterday. Another hemorrhage under the skin of course. She looked in the mirror now but seldom; she had never been particularly vain but she had always known

her face was beautiful and it depressed her to know how disfigured it was at times. Her skill at make-up, she realized, was a bit of good luck; for one thing it kept Dennis from noticing how ghastly she really looked much of the time. There had been a long period, she recalled, when these hemorrhages had appeared only on her body; she wondered why it could not have continued so.

Weary as she was, it became tiresome to lie in one position. She tried to turn over and found again that strange weakness. It was almost as though she had no power over her muscles, as though she were paralyzed. Paralyzed! The word rang in her brain. Paralyzed!

Slowly, with great exertion, she felt one foot with the other. It was numb and there was a curious faint tingling in it. She lay back exhausted, her eyes well open. It had come then, at last!

She started to call out to Dennis but her tongue was thick, she could not say the words. She looked at him appealingly but he was drugged with sleep. One arm was thrown up above his head—thick, strong, rounded. She felt that if she could only touch it some of his strength would flow into her spent body, but she could not reach him.

Gradually it came to her that she must die as she had lived—alone. The last spring was over—her last short northern spring. The blue sky behind the blooming cherry trees she would not see again. Summer would come with warmth and flowers, but she would not know it. She would not feel the wind or sun on her face, she would not hear music or laughter, she would not feel D.D.'s firm warm flesh on hers. She would not exist; she would have come to nothingness.

Suddenly she felt that she could not let go her hold on wind and sky and sunshine. Perhaps she had lived too much with them in these last years when there had been so little she could do. Dennis loved her and, in her way, she had loved him; they had reached out toward each other but he had never really found her. Only the wind and the sun, the sky and the sea, had ever found their way completely into her being. Her primitive instinct to live had fastened to these simple bases of existence—air and water, light and warmth. In the end they were the things that held her to the world she knew.

Outside the sky was brightening. Birds were beginning to sing. The small branches and the cherry blossoms whispered faintly in

the breeze that came up from the Sound. She listened hungrily, she watched with wistfulness. She moistened her stiff dry lips.

Then suddenly something snapped. She gave a stifled cry. The light beyond the windows dimmed, the song of the birds faded, the whispering of the leaves died away. There was nothing but a heap of flaccid sodden flesh. When Dennis touched it he shivered.

One afternoon in May John Finlay encountered Priscilla on the street in Seaforth as she came out of a dress shop. Sight of her embarrassed him: when the girl left Seacliff to marry Peter McFarlane he had fully intended to keep an eye on her but he had been so engrossed in Sun Mount and, recently, in his own affairs that months had gone by since he last saw her.

"Why, Dr. Finlay," she said, "you're the last person I expected to see."

John stood a bit awkwardly, bareheaded in the sun, trying to think where he could ask her to go for tea. It struck him as odd that he should be so ill at ease with Priscilla and he wondered whether his embarrassment had anything to do with the fact that he had been thinking of Eleanor just now.

Brown eyes flashing, Priscilla looked him over. "When did you go collegiate?" she asked.

"What? . . . Oh, you mean my hat. Well, to tell the truth, Miss Rodney took the old one away from me and I haven't gotten around to buy a new one yet." He ran a hand over his short thick crop of gray hair and smiled down into the girl's vivid heart-shaped face. "I suppose I should be my age," he said.

"Nonsense! You feel the age you look. Everyone does. But why not take me shopping with you? I'm an excellent judge of men's hats. And I never saw you with a new one."

"Yes, I'm sure you're a connoisseur of hats," answered John looking at her appreciatively. Priscilla was trig and smart in her street clothes. The severity of her black and white color scheme set off her small slim figure, her dark hair, her flashing brown eyes, and her artfully reddened lips and cheeks. He asked himself whether he could have forgotten how pretty she was and how vivacious. "But you see, I was about to suggest that we go somewhere for tea. I haven't seen you for a long time."

"No. You really have neglected me all winter and spring, Dr. Finlay."

John shifted his weight uneasily from one foot to the other and looked down at the sidewalk, as though expecting to find words there.

"But I forgive you. I know how busy you've been. Now Peter says that Johnson's Men's Shop is very good and I like their tea room. Why not go shopping first and have tea afterward?"

Priscilla slipped a hand through John's arm and he obeyed the faint pressure of her fingers, wondering why it was so easy to do her bidding just as he had once marveled at the alacrity with which he had allowed Eleanor to persuade him to accept her help.

"You are a handsome man, Dr. Finlay," Priscilla was saying.

John felt himself flush. He muttered disagreement.

"No, really. I mean it," insisted the girl. "You carry yourself well. You have a good figure. And you aren't bald. But you're just like Peter. His trousers are always baggy too and he can't remember whether he told the tailor to get cloth for a spring suit or not."

Finlay peered down at himself. It was true, he knew quite well; his pants always did bag at the knees and his collar points habitually did stick up in the air. He picked a thread off the front of his coat and brushed a sleeve with one hand.

Priscilla laughed. "Your conscience hurts you," she said. "You know that suit looks as though you'd worn it every day since New Year's."

"What type of hat are you interested in?" inquired the clerk who met them at the entrance to Johnson's Men's Shop.

Finlay looked around vaguely. "Oh, I don't know. I suppose I ought to get something different. What about that one over there?"

The salesman followed John's glance toward a black bound-edge Homburg perched on a display rod.

"I'll see if I have your size, sir," he said.

Priscilla sat down in a customer's chair. "He doesn't approve," she observed.

The clerk returned, creasing the crown of the hat he carried with meticulous care. "Well back," he advised, "off the forehead and a little to one side." He stepped aside. John looked at himself in the mirror. Priscilla giggled.

"Are you impersonating Anthony Eden?" she inquired. "If you buy that hat you'll have to get a new suit of smooth cloth

and keep it pressed. And you should wear spats and gloves and carry an umbrella rolled up."

John laughed. "What good would an umbrella be in this country rolled up? Don't worry. I don't like this thing. It doesn't look like me. Let us see something else."

Ten minutes later they left the department. John wore a soft brown Stetson with a snapped-down brim.

"I'm sure this is the first new hat I ever saw you wear," said Priscilla. "But it looks exactly like all your others."

"That's what I like about it. And it feels good on my head."

The girl laughed. "Men are funny," she said. "I can't imagine anything worse than buying a new hat that looks like an old one."

It was not until they sat waiting for their tea at a small table in the restaurant that seriousness overtook them. John had been covertly studying Priscilla. She was very trim in her black and white; other women glanced at her obliquely and men stared openly. He was proud of her, proud to be with her. The get-up was artificial and premeditated, he realized—planned to the last detail—but it was very attractive. He found himself wondering what people would think who had seen her only in her laboratory uniform.

But now that she was sitting still, for the moment neither talking nor laughing, he could see what her vivacity had hitherto concealed. Her eyes were unhappy and there was a drawn expression about her carefully tinted mouth. She was worried about Peter of course. And had she, perhaps, been thinking of Dennis since Eleanor's death?

John felt that he ought to ask her about these things but before he could find an opening she had taken the lead away from him.

"It must be wonderful for you to know that Sun Mount is safe at last."

"It is wonderful, my dear. More than wonderful. And Peter had a good deal to do with the outcome, remember."

At this remark the brown eyes lightened a little. "Did he really, Dr. Finlay? I'm glad. He never said much about it but he used to come home sometimes laughing at things you'd put over—when he came home at all."

There was an awkward pause. John drummed his fingers softly

on the arm of his chair and looked about to see if their waitress was coming.

"Well," he said at last, "some of the things that happened were funny. And then, of course, your husband sees something to laugh about in nearly everything that turns up."

"I know he does."

John thought there was a tinge of bitterness in these words and answered quickly, as though on the defensive. "Well, a sense of humor is a good thing to have."

"I know that, Dr. Finlay." Priscilla's eyes softened. "But sometimes you like to do the laughing yourself."

After the waitress had put down their tea and sandwiches John tried to bring the conversation back to safer channels.

"Certainly no one except Peter would have thought of packing the court room with men in overalls and working clothes when the state Supreme Court had its hearing on the injunction Reynolds got for me against the medical board. But he insisted that those judges watch popular reactions and I believe he was right for we haven't had any more trouble about our licenses."

"Some day I shall ask you to tell me the whole story of your war with Baldwin and Arnold and Schuyler. You see I hated them too. They were never good to . . . Dr. Dryden."

John thought there was a slight change in her voice when she mentioned Dennis.

"I don't suppose anyone who ever worked in Seacliff is likely to forget any of those men or waste any affection on them." Finlay squeezed his lemon into his tea with great care. "Oh, by the way, had you heard that Dennis is going away next month?" John did not look across the table; he did not want to see Priscilla's face just then.

There was a short pause and then the girl said quietly, "No, I hadn't. Isn't it rather sudden?"

"No, not specially. You see . . . his wife left him all she had—quite a sizable estate—and he has to go east in connection with it. Then he expects to do some more graduate work before he comes back."

"But he is coming back?" About the question there was a queer under-cover insistence. John stole a glance at Priscilla. Her hands were busy with the tea things, her face was expressionless; only in the shining darkness of her eyes did he catch a glint of suspense.

"I hope so. I'd hate to lose him. He's a brilliant fellow in his own line and one of the finest men and best friends. I've ever had."

Finlay was a little surprised at the fervency of his own voice and half-afraid that it would seem vehement to the girl, but to his relief she smiled at him as carelessly as if they had been speaking of some casual acquaintance.

"I think it's fine that he can have this chance. And you mustn't be too disappointed if he decides not to come back to Sun Mount. I think he likes a city better than a small town."

Nothing more was said about Dennis. John imagined that someone else might have handled the situation more skillfully, explained about Eleanor's desire for D.D. to be independent, made it clear just how fine a person she really had been and how lost and bewildered Dennis had been after her death. But he was conscious of a barrier which made it impossible for him to say any of these things to this girl.

In a few minutes they were talking cheerfully about many things of no great importance to either of them. Priscilla had just read *Life With Father* and laughed over childhood in the bucolic New York of the '80's; John had just read *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* and found it sentimental. Both had seen *Mr. Deeds Goes To Town* and Priscilla foretold an epidemic of films carefully equipped with a Hollywood version of the simple incorruptible hero. John confessed to a vulgar desire that Shirley Temple's career in the movies should come to an early end. Both admitted an intense dislike for *The Music Goes Round and Round*.

From their conversation no one could have guessed that Germany was feverishly rearming, Italy on the verge of attacking Ethiopia, the New Deal on trial for its life in the chambers of the Supreme Court in Washington, drought and dust driving the Joads out of the dust bowl, or the letters WPA about to become a permanent addition to the American language.

But when at five o'clock John put Priscilla on her bus he turned away grave-eyed and heavy-hearted. The girl was talkative and gay, she was beautifully groomed and more attractive than ever, but her life was empty and she was unhappy. Whether it was true, as Peter had said, that she did not care for him and had only married him on the rebound from Dennis, he was not sure. But for whatever reason she had married McFarlane, their partnership was a failure. The fault was probably on both sides,

John admitted to himself, but he remembered that he had always thought poorly of Peter as a husband. As he drove back to Newland he kept wondering whether, once D.D. had gone, it might not be a relief to Priscilla to spend some time each week in the laboratory at Sun Mount. Keeping house in a small apartment, for a husband who was home as seldom as Peter, must be at the very least a bore to an alert young woman—even to so disillusioned a wife as Priscilla. And probably the money she could earn would be useful. Peter's salary was not large and liquor was still expensive.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

JOHN FINLAY was in that pleasant state halfway between sleeping and waking. He opened his eyes and closed them again. Presently he would look at his watch to see if it was time to get up. He stretched himself comfortably as full consciousness approached. He felt well; after all it was good to be alive. Now that Sun Mount was doing satisfactorily he could almost imagine that the old days were here again.

About him were the faint sounds that always attended the hospital in the early morning; the day nurses were coming on and patients were having their breakfasts. John wondered how Oliver Marlin was feeling this morning; his brush with pneumonia had been a near thing. Perhaps he would have died if it hadn't been for the new drug Dennis had brought home with him last month. Finlay grinned lazily; when he was a boy his mother had given him sulphur and molasses to clean his blood in the spring; now the research men were using a sulphur derivative to treat infections. It was queer how things worked out.

John heard the whine of tires on the driveway. Apparently Mark Whitney had made the curve just a bit too sharp; whenever anyone drove up in a hurry there was that sound. It would have to be fixed even if CWA did not want to move his flower beds or do the necessary resodding. The old fellow had acted as though he owned the place ever since he and Grace Rodney had finished the new plantings.

Finlay pushed back the sleeve of his pajamas to look at his watch. It was seven o'clock. He turned over and glanced out of the window; the day would be clear, he could see a patch of sunlight on the lawn outside. Spring had come early again this year; the daffodils in the valley were in full bloom and the haw-

thorn trees were a mass of bright rose color. Along the edge of the bluff above the Sound there was a great yellow bank of Scotch broom. If he got up at once he would have time to go out and take a look at the flowers before breakfast.

There was a sharp knock on the door from his sitting room into the corridor.

"Come in," he called, sitting up and gathering his blue flannel bathrobe around him.

The door opened a crack and CWA peered inside. The old man was excited and short of breath.

"That young feller wants you downstairs," he exclaimed. "He said could you come right away. Some feller's been took for a ride, I guess."

"Tell him I'll be right there, CWA."

The old man withdrew his head and closed the door. John hurriedly washed his hands and face and combed his hair. Bath and shave would have to wait.

As he hastened down the incline he was frowning thoughtfully. When they got their first intern they expected him to take care of the ordinary accident cases and minor emergencies, but this lad got the wind up too much of the time; he was always sending for help. Either he must do better or there would have to be a new intern at Sun Mount.

John pushed open the door of the emergency room. Just inside were two men in working clothes and bending over the table in the middle of the floor was a tall figure in white. At the sound of the door opening Kenneth Chatham looked over his shoulder; his smooth pink-cheeked face was frightened and when he saw Finlay his relief was visible.

"What's up, Chatham?"

But before the boy could reply one of the men near the door spoke up.

"I don't suppose you know me, Dr. Finlay, but I belong to the S.M.A. My friend here and I found this fellow along the river road as we drove into work this morning, so we picked him up and brought him in here. Looked to me like he'd been beaten up pretty bad and we figured the sooner he got to a hospital the better."

John looked appraisingly at the two workmen. "We'll have to have your names and addresses in case it turns out to be a police

case. Pure formality, of course. Will you get the information, Chatham, and make out that blank over there?"

Finlay walked toward the table. The injured man lay very quiet; he was in his shirt sleeves and a little trickle of blood was running from his side. John bent down to glance at the averted head and started back. It was Peter McFarlane. His face was pulp and two thin streams of blood oozed from his nostrils, half-clotting on his upper lip.

John put his fingers on Peter's pulse. It was irregular and weak. He reached for a flashlight and pulled back McFarlane's eyelids; the pupils of his eyes reacted sluggishly. He tore off the blood-soaked shirt. There was an ugly little slit between the ribs on the left side; the crimson rill which oozed out soon clotted on the skin.

"Have you called a nurse?" asked Finlay sharply. "We've got to work fast. Didn't you recognize this man?"

Kenneth Chatham's smooth young cheeks flushed. "I thought he looked familiar but I wasn't sure. . . . He's in shock, isn't he?"

"Yes. He's lost a lot of blood already. We must get him warm and start fluids intravenously at once and arrange for transfusion. . . . Oh, there you are." John looked up at the two nurses who came in. "Bring that intravenous set here. And Chatham, you take blood for typing. . . . No, wait. I'd almost forgotten. I'm a universal donor. You can use me. Here, let me have a tourniquet and a needle and a flask of citrate. I can bleed myself, while you start the intravenous. Get the electric pad and extra blankets. There isn't time to get him upstairs in bed."

Finlay picked up the phone. "Call Dr. Elliston for me and ask him to come over at once. Tell him to hurry."

The emergency room hummed with methodical haste. No unnecessary motions were made or words spoken. The swift sureness of practiced skill was summoned; there were rapid footsteps, low-voiced orders, the soft click of instruments in use. John sat close enough to watch Peter's color and his breathing. He observed the reading on the dial of the blood pressure instrument as young Chatham pumped up the cuff. "Too low," he muttered. "How are his heart sounds, Kenneth?"

The intern took the stethoscope out of his ears. "Poor," he said. "Distant and sort of muffled."

Finlay was not surprised. The moment he had seen Peter he

had felt it was too late to do anything. But of course there was always a chance. He looked down impatiently at the blood running out of the needle in the vein at his elbow. There wasn't enough yet. They should have a blood bank for crises like this. He and Dennis must look into that at once. There would never be time to send all the way to Seaforth even if George Schuyler were willing to let them have blood from Seacliff.

"Don't you think I can start the transfusion now?" asked young Chatham.

John nodded. He felt a bit queer; perhaps it would be better not to watch his own blood running out into the flask. He made a mental list of stimulants that might be useful. Then he bethought himself suddenly that more than likely Priscilla knew nothing of what had happened. But he could not use the telephone just now and the intern and both nurses were busy.

McFarlane moved his head and muttered something unintelligible. Finlay bent his head and listened. It seemed to him that Peter's color was worse; his lips and the lobes of his ears were a pale livid blue and there were great drops of moisture on his forehead and around his mouth. Chatham however reported the pulse a little steadier. John drew a long breath; perhaps after all they could pull him through.

But the little flame of life having flickered up for a moment died down again. Peter's leg twitched, he moved his head feebly and mumbled something that none of the four people working over him could understand. Once Finlay thought he caught something that sounded like "tramp," but the rest was gibberish. In spite of heat and stimulants and intravenous fluid and the hasty transfusion the unconscious man sank deeper and deeper into coma. John fought back the temptation to push the inflowing blood faster: any reaction however slight would be immediately fatal. They had done all they could with what they had to work with.

In spite of the suspense he was in, Finlay's recollection of his first meeting with Peter was sharp and vivid: the cold rainy day in November when the reporter had come out to the ruins of the old Sun Mount to interview him for the *Advertiser*. He remembered their dinner at Blanco's the night before election that same month; he had had to leave because Dennis and Eleanor had had an accident. He recalled McFarlane's conversion to co-operative medicine, his boundless enthusiasm and his shrewdness,

his endless resourcefulness. He remembered the day Peter had told him that he and Priscilla were to be married and the words he had used—"she loves me . . . I hope." Then he pictured that marriage as it had seemed to him the last year: Peter believing that Priscilla had never really cared for him, Priscilla unhappy and resentful because her husband drank and gambled and stayed away from home. She had seemed somewhat more cheerful when she first found that there was a baby coming, but later she had . . .

"I'm going to take the needle out of your arm, Dr. Finlay," said Kenneth Chatham. "He's gone."

John stood up dizzily and looked down at the old-young face on the table. There were still bloodstains on it but even now there seemed to be stealing across it the strange composure and serenity Finlay had come to expect on the faces of the dead.

"You'd better sit down," advised Dr. Chatham. "You've lost a lot of blood too. We'll take care of him."

John rested his head between his hands, closing his eyes until the giddiness left him. He heard Chatham and the nurses moving about, he heard a wheeled cart being brought in and taken out. When he lifted his head again there was no one in the room except one of the nurses busily cleaning. It occurred to him abruptly that he had not had his breakfast.

"I guess I'd better go and dress and get something to eat," he said.

But before he could rise, the door opened and Grace Rodney came in. She was as nearly flustered as John had ever seen her. Her cheeks were flushed, her dark eyes dismayed.

"I met Dr. Chatham in the hall just now," she said. "Did you know that Mrs. McFarlane came in upstairs ten minutes ago?"

"Priscilla? What is she doing here?"

Miss Rodney checked the impatient exclamation on her lips as she noticed the gray pallor on Finlay's face.

"She's been bleeding since last evening, she says."

"Then why didn't she come in sooner?"

"Because her husband wasn't at home last night. She hasn't seen him since yesterday morning. She kept thinking all night that he'd come at any moment."

"And she probably didn't have the price of a taxi in her purse," muttered John rubbing his forehead with the back of one hand.

"She's asking for you." Miss Rodney studied Finlay calculatingly.

"I can't see her now. I'm not up to it." John pulled himself out of his chair and took a hitch in his bathrobe. "Elliston will be here any minute. Have him see her. . . . If he wants to call in Prentiss go ahead. I'll see her later when I've had something to eat."

"What's the matter with him?" Miss Rodney inquired of the young nurse when the door had closed behind Finlay. "Is he ill too?"

The girl pointed to the flask of citrated blood still standing on the table.

"He bled himself for the transfusion," she said.

Grace Rodney's eyes softened. "I might have known," she said to herself as she hurried from the room.

Finlay was annoyed to find that his dizziness persisted enough to delay the processes of bathing and dressing, and even after Grace Rodney sent a tray to his room a trace of this annoyance persisted. He told himself acridly that he was evidently not resigned to being his age: he would not expect any other man of fifty-four to lose nearly a quart of blood and go about his work as though nothing had happened. But when he uncovered the tray and found there eggs and meat and milk as well as toast and marmalade and coffee his vexation melted away.

Although he ate hungrily his thoughts were busy with Peter. McFarlane had mentioned the expected child to him but once; he could remember the exact words—"I'm afraid that was a mistake too." And on the same occasion Peter had denied any thrill in anticipated fatherhood. "I've seen babies," he explained. "Shoals of them. And I can't see why I should be proud to have one. If it takes after me it will be no good and if it takes after Priscilla it won't care for its father. So what?"

Finlay sighed and folded up his napkin. As time went on he would realize more than he could now how much he had depended on Peter, how attractive the younger man had been and how much his raillery and resourcefulness would be missed. All men were not designed for domesticity and it should not be held against McFarlane that he was by nature one of these or even that he had married unwisely.

It was at that point that Bruce Hewitt arrived. One glance at him told John that he knew what had happened. His thin sallow

face still had an air of disbelief and his deep-set eyes were dark with wretchedness, but in spite of his obvious grief he did not beat around the bush.

"Peter was murdered, wasn't he? Taken for a ride?"

"Yes, Bruce. Of course the coroner will do a post later today but there's no question in my mind about it. He had been beaten around the head—I wouldn't be surprised if his skull was fractured—he was bruised over the body and he had been stabbed in the left chest."

"What actually caused his death do you think?"

"Loss of blood probably. Or brain injury, if it turns out that his skull is fractured."

Hewitt leaned his head against the back of his chair and studied the ceiling. "I see. He didn't say anything about who did it?"

"No—nothing I could understand. He mumbled something once or twice—I don't know whether he was really conscious or not—but I didn't catch anything at all except one word that sounded like 'tramp.'"

Hewitt sat pondering Finlay's answer. "Tramp," he said thoughtfully. "I wonder if he wasn't maybe trying to say 'Trampalia.'"

"You mean . . ."

"Yes, the left-winger. Used to be in the U.C.L. and did as much as anyone to run that outfit into the ground. Ready to cut anybody's throat who suggests that Trotsky might not be the devil himself. Mind you, I haven't anything against Communists—they've got a right to their political ideas the same as I have. But this Trampalia was a son of a bitch and he had it in for Peter."

"Why? What had Peter done to him?"

"Well, I guess to start with they just naturally disliked each other. Then McFarlane wrote an article for the *Sunday Advertiser* about conditions among the unemployed and he used a picture of Trampalia's house; that made the fellow sore. Last year when the Supreme Court heard that injunction of yours and Peter was fixing it up to pack the court room, Trampalia insisted on heading a bunch from the Workers' Alliance and he was madder than hell when Peter told him he wasn't wanted. Then in the summer when the lumber strike was on and the governor called out the troops, Trampalia and his gang began bombing

strikebreakers' homes and cars. Peter said it was O.K. with him to bomb the mills and beat up the scabs but he drew the line at bombing women and kids who had nothing to do with the strike. He wrote the whole thing up in the paper and made it pretty clear what kind of a skunk Trampalia was in his opinion."

"And you think the fellow wouldn't stop at murder to get back at anyone he hated?"

"No, of course he wouldn't. He's shot at the Big Fellow twice and missed both times. Not that I blame him for taking a crack at the Big Fellow, but it shows the way he looks at other people's lives. He's one of these flamboyant birds that have more influence than you might think. He goes around making speeches and you'd be surprised at the following he's got in Seaforth. I've always thought that he was the reason Peter never got farther with the Newspaper Guild around here."

"But you haven't actually got anything on the man?"

"No." Hewitt made the admission grudgingly. "But a man may know things he can't prove. As soon as I heard what had happened I said to myself, this is Trampalia's doing."

"But I don't see that you can do anything about it under the circumstances."

"Don't you?" Bruce Hewitt leaned forward, his eyes shining. "Well, I'll tell you, Dr. Finlay. I can't do anything now but I'm a good waiter. I'm in the unions to stay: if the auto mechanics decide they don't want me I can hook up as business agent for some other outfit. And I'm on the inside track with the Big Fellow. It's not that I like him or approve of his methods. I don't. I think he's as big a son of a bitch as any member of the Seaforth Commercial Club. But I've hoed my own row in the past and I'll continue to do so in the future. It wouldn't get me anywhere or do my union any good if I picked a fight with the Big Fellow. See?"

"But I know all these guys. They're my friends. And I'll keep my eyes and ears open. Some day I'll hear something or find out something. Or maybe Trampalia will get to feeling his oats and start bragging. Anyhow I'll get it on him one day. It might take one year or it might take ten. I don't know and I don't much care. But when I get his number I'll have him rubbed out. That's what we got gorillas for. I ain't big enough to kill him myself but I'll see that he is bumped off and that he knows what for."

Peter was a good friend of mine and that's the least I can do for him."

John knew it was useless to protest. Bruce Hewitt saw himself as a soldier; he was fighting a war just as truly in his own opinion as though he were facing a foreign foe in uniform. And in war there is no room for tolerance or understanding. Hewitt was a zealot as truly as though he were threatened with death at the stake, and he would give his enemy the benefit of no doubt.

When he had gone Finlay sat thinking about him. He realized how surprised he would have been when Peter first introduced Bruce to him to know that this thin frail-looking man with the thinning sandy hair and worn neat clothes was a fanatic who would deliberately set about revenging murder on his own responsibility. Perhaps one day the Big Fellow would pop off and Hewitt would take his place. Then, John told himself, the labor movement in the Sound country would change its complexion, for where the Big Fellow delighted to connive with predatory business at the expense of the consumer, Bruce Hewitt would stick with his unions and fight the reactionaries off their feet. It was men of his stamp who brought social change.

But there was little time to philosophize or brood, for Bruce had barely taken himself off when Walter Elliston and Dr. Prentiss came in search of Finlay. They had examined Priscilla and reported that her condition was not good and they wished to get a specialist from Seaforth in consultation.

The ponderous way in which Prentiss expressed himself would have amused John under any other circumstances, but he had come to hold a sincere respect for the judgments Prentiss arrived at in his own deliberate fashion. Perhaps the fact that he had for years engaged in illegal practice had made him particularly judicious and vigilant. Certainly the situation in which they found themselves demanded all possible care and John told them to go ahead with their consultation as rapidly as possible. Thereafter he set about his rounds in the hospital.

But the whole place he found was disorganized. Everyone on the staff knew Priscilla for she had worked in the laboratory much of the time while Dennis was absent. The nurses had discovered that Peter had died in the emergency room at the very moment his wife entered the hospital; in the chart rooms and corridors they whispered to each other whenever they thought themselves safe from Miss Rodney's watchful eye. The kitchen

employees knew what had happened and stopped working to discuss the affair. Outside, on the grounds, CWA shook his head and talked to himself as he trimmed borders and weeded flower beds. "'s bad business. Just like them gangster murders I used to read about in Chicago. And the pore young lady havin' her baby post-humorous." The old man laid down his tools, mopped his face, and sat back on his heels to ponder the unjust ways of the world. "It ain't right," he muttered, "nohow you look at it. They was, both of them, nice folks."

Even Grace Rodney was distraught. She sat in her little room on the first floor staring out of the window at the lawn without noticing that CWA was moving at less than his usual snail's pace. She knew that Walter Elliston and Prentiss were waiting for the consultant from Seaforth, that Elliston had canceled the operations he had scheduled for that morning, that Dryden was typing blood and running chemical tests in the laboratory. She watched three anxious mothers take their children to the minor surgery where Dr. Garnell was removing tonsils, she saw the orderly trickle of patients into Greenwood's waiting room. She saw John set out on his rounds without moving to join him or telling him anything about the persons whose charts he had just been studying. Through her open door she could see his back as he stumped away down the hall.

"The old boy looks seedy, doesn't he?" said a voice.

Miss Rodney started. Arthur McBride was standing in the doorway, also staring after Finlay.

"This business of bleeding yourself takes the starch out of a man," he went on. "He should have called one of us younger fellows."

"Dr. Finlay has never been in the habit of asking other people to do things he can do himself," retorted the nurse with some of her usual austerity.

A glint of satisfaction glimmered in McBride's brooding hazel eyes. He had an impulse to say, "Atta girl! Snap out of it! I don't like to see you like this," but restrained himself. Instead he leaned against the wall with his hands in his pockets and tried to think of something cheerful to say. But at this moment his mind refused to picture anything except Connie as he had left her that morning in their apartment. Their son was six weeks old today and in honor of this anniversary his mother permitted herself the gratification of holding him for a few minutes. She

had even threatened to disobey the rules by rocking him to sleep after his next feeding. Arthur became aware of an increasing fullness in his throat.

Grace Rodney looked up at his long gangling figure. She liked McBride but his attacks of taciturnity sometimes got on her nerves.

"Well," she asked, "haven't you anything to do today in your department? If Dr. Finlay can go about his work as usual I don't see why the rest of us can't."

With the words she got to her feet, smoothed the front of her uniform and pulled down the skirt, and marched away toward the east wing where John had disappeared.

In the gaze which McBride directed after her there was no resentment but rather the self-esteem of a man who has accomplished what he set out to do. "That's better," he said to himself. And then he added a comment which would never have occurred to him a year before. "You're a good old wagon, Grace. Go to it!"

Shortly before noon the entire staff gathered for counsel in the clinic library. John was the last to arrive; his face was gray and haggard and the grooves beside his mouth seemed to have deepened since morning. He shook hands with the consultant from Seaforth, a scholarly-looking man of medium height who had an air of competence.

"Glad to see you, Dr. Wilburn, but not on this errand I must admit."

Finlay looked about at his associates. Garnell's dark eyes were warm with sympathy. McBride's brooding face suggested that he was almost ashamed of his happiness over his first son. Greenwood hovered on the outskirts of the group, seeming to feel that he was least fitted of them all to have an opinion. Near him stood Kenneth Chatham, the intern, palpably excited and almost as palpably enjoying the drama going on around him. Elliston looked tired and his brown eyes were, if possible, more worried than Finlay could remember having ever seen them before. Dennis was standing at the window with his back to the others; there was something bellicose about his shoulders and the set of his head and neck.

"What do you think ought to be done, Wilburn?"

"Mrs. McFarlane is toxic, she is still bleeding. In my opinion the sooner she is delivered the better."

Everyone, John realized, was looking at him except Dennis,

who was still standing silent at the window staring outside. Obviously they felt that he was the one to make the final decision. Slowly he straightened his aching back and ran his hands back along the sides of his head in his familiar gesture.

"If it is your judgment, Wilburn, after examining Mrs. McFarlane with Elliston and Prentiss, that her best chance is immediate operative delivery, you should go ahead at once. If there's anything I can do to help, send for me. I'll be here within call most of the day."

The little group broke up quickly but when the others left the room Dennis remained behind.

"There was no need for this to happen," he said in a low brittle voice. "Why didn't you watch her, John? Why didn't you examine her every two weeks? If you had she would never have got into this condition."

Finlay stared at the younger man in amazement. "I did watch her. I examined her, so did Elliston and Prentiss. Laboratory tests have been done regularly, her blood pressure has been taken. Now she says she noticed symptoms two weeks ago, but she didn't consult any of us about them."

"Why did you wait for her to come in? You should have sent for her, gone after her."

John met Dryden's angry blue eyes without flinching.

"Maybe you're right, D.D. Maybe I did fall down on my job. But that has nothing to do with the emergency we face now. What do you think we ought to do today?"

Dennis threw back his head and laughed bitterly. "Why ask me? How should I know? I'm only a laboratory man. I refuse to accept any responsibility. You let Priscilla get into this mess, now you can get her out of it."

Holding himself erect D.D. strode from the room without looking at Finlay. Tired and heavy-hearted, John sat down at his desk. He would scarcely admit to himself that he was hurt by Dryden's outburst. He kept telling himself that Dennis had a hot temper and that he would be back before long contrite and apologetic. But he could not dispel his own gloominess. Neither could he get Peter out of his mind—that long fair face with its strange seagreen eyes and its habitual sardonic grin had seemed so young and defenseless this morning. Peter would not have wanted to die; he loved life and movement, he had books he hoped to write, he had been curious about the future. But he

was gone—gone, with his mocking laughter and his mordant wit—and there would always be a certain emptiness in his heart, John told himself, just as Eleanor's going had left behind a fugitive sense of isolation.

But there was no time for grieving. The autopsy was to be done at one-thirty and the coroner had asked him to be present. Once more John forced his body into action. Then he remembered that he had not seen Dr. Marlin yet. It was true that Oliver had no real need for him now but the thought of this old friend was comforting.

Finlay left the clinic building and walked across the lawn toward Sun Mount, quite oblivious to the fact that he was trampling the new sod old CWA had laid with such care. At the entrance to the hospital he bumped into someone. Looking up he recognized Constance McBride.

The young woman's eyes were dark with distress. "Oh, Dr. Finlay, isn't it terrible? Arthur said he'd phone if anything happened, but I couldn't wait any longer. How is she?"

Surprisingly enough John felt his lips smiling into the anxious young face lifted to his.

"Am I to understand that you actually left John Finlay McBride with the maid while you came this far away?"

There was a faint flush on Constance McBride's cheeks and a little of the foreboding on her face faded away. "You needn't tease me, Dr. Finlay. That baby is my job from now on. That's why I'm so anxious about Priscilla McFarlane. I don't know her very well but she's having a baby and her husband is dead and I got to thinking . . . about Arthur and little John and . . ." Her voice broke and Finlay saw the tears on her long eyelashes.

"I understand," he said gently. "But nothing has happened yet. They're going to operate soon and I'm sure Arthur will let you know when it's over."

"I suppose I was silly," said Constance. "But I got to thinking how it would have been with me if anything were to happen to Arthur . . . or the baby."

Finlay's eyes followed the small hurrying figure out of sight. Then he turned into the hospital and went up the incline to Dr. Marlin's room.

"Good morning, Oliver."

"Morning, me eye!" Dr. Marlin grinned up at his friend.

"They'll be here any minute with my lunch. And am I ready for it? Honestly, I don't know when I've had such an appetite."

"That's good—fine." With a visible effort Finlay made his manner hearty and cheerful. "A few days and you'll be going home, Oliver."

The old man smiled. Against the pillows his face was calm and dignified and serene—almost as serene, John thought, as the faces of the dead. The faded blue eyes were quiet and content.

"It isn't my fault that I'm going home," said Marlin. "I did my best to die. But you wouldn't let me."

Finlay moved uneasily. "It wasn't time for your number to go up, Oliver. If it had been we couldn't have done anything about it."

The old man put out a thin hand and touched his friend's.

"You're thinking of Peter McFarlane, aren't you?"

Finlay nodded.

"I know how you feel, John. You'll always feel that way whenever someone dies you've been working over, just as I do. There's a sense of guilt and failure that only doctors know anything about. But really, as a matter of fact, you couldn't expect to save a man who had a skull fracture and a stab wound in his chest and had bled half to death before you saw him."

Finlay looked so surprised that Marlin hastened to explain.

"Young Chatham's been talking to me, John. He had to talk to somebody, you see, and I'm glad I was here to listen to him. He said he never saw anyone work faster or keep his head better than you did this morning. The boy admires you enormously. I wish you could keep him on, here at Sun Mount. You could make a real physician out of him and he wouldn't have to lose all his illusions."

This turn of the conversation startled Finlay so obviously that Marlin changed the subject. "I suppose you don't know how the operation is going yet?"

"No, they're just starting. But I'll ask Miss Rodney to send you word. I have to go down town. The coroner's doing a post on . . . Peter."

The wise kind old eyes softened. "You were fond of him, weren't you, John?"

Finlay nodded. "I hated watching him die, Oliver. And now, if Priscilla goes too . . ."

"She won't. Wilburn will see to that. He's a good man. I've

watched him work many times. So put that out of your mind. Why don't you sit down, John, and eat your lunch up here with me? They can get you a tray in a moment. I'll ring for the nurse now and order one. Besides there's something I want to ask you about and I don't seem to get many opportunities to talk to you even when I'm here in your own hospital." Marlin reached for his bellcord and peered up into the other man's face. "The food will do you good, John. You look as if you need it."

To his surprise Finlay felt himself relaxing as he sat listening to Marlin's cursory small talk while they ate. His legs stopped aching and his head seemed clearer. When he finished eating he borrowed a cigarette and smoked it with relish.

"Now, if you could either go to bed or spend the afternoon up here with me," he heard Marlin saying, "and then get a good night's sleep and a couple of big meals into you, you'd manufacture blood in a hurry and be yourself again."

At Finlay's stare of surprise the older man laughed. "Oh, Chatham told me about your bleeding yourself too. That impressed him more than anything else you did. He told me about it just the way my youngest boy used to brag about the exploits of his brother. Sheer hero worship, John."

Finlay shook his head. "If he only knew how futile and helpless I feel most of the time," he began.

Marlin leaned over and laid a thin hand on Finlay's arm.

"Don't we, all of us? I wouldn't give a dime for any doctor who didn't feel that way."

"Thanks, Oliver." John looked at his watch. "You said you wanted to ask me something and I have to go in five minutes . . ."

"So get on with it, eh? All right. What is it Dennis Dryden has up his sleeve?"

An expression of guilt and stubbornness came into Finlay's eyes. At sight of it Marlin hurried on.

"Now don't leap to conclusions, John. Chatham hasn't been talking to me about this and neither have the nurses. But now that I'm stronger and can look back over my illness I realize that I didn't get the orthodox treatment for pneumonia. I can remember that Dryden was in here a lot and I seem to have a picture of him sticking my fingertips. Since he'd been away for nearly a year I began to wonder . . ."

"What?"

"Whether you weren't trying something out on me. Perhaps that new stuff we've heard rumors of in Germany."

Over Finlay's face crept the look of a small boy caught doing something of which he is not ashamed but which he nevertheless wishes to conceal. He stood up, buttoning his coat and crushing out the stub of his cigarette.

"Bull's eye, Oliver. D.D. brought back with him a little of this new sulphur drug. A man he knew brought some to the United States this spring and parceled it out here and there to fellows he could trust to try it out. You were the first pneumonia we had after D.D. got back and the minute he found out you had a Type III infection he put it up to me to let him use it. He hung over you day and night at first, doing blood counts and watching for reactions, and when you turned the corner and your fever dropped he was half crazy. He's been sending in reports on your progress by air mail, and only yesterday he told me he had the promise that Sun Mount will be the first hospital on the Coast to get a sizable quantity of the drug to test clinically. That's the story, Oliver. I hadn't meant to tell you, I was going to let D.D. do that. But you asked for it and there you are."

"So I was right in thinking I'd been a guinea pig. You know, John, when I first began to piece things together and suspect what you and Dryden had been up to, I was a bit sore. I thought you might have picked someone younger. But then I caught a glimpse of my chart and saw that I'd had a Type III pneumonia and then I remembered the mortality figures for Type III. And there I was alive. So I began to be proud of myself and proud of you and Dennis for having the guts to try something new. It reminded me of the first time I ever used insulin. I injected it drop at a dose into a man in diabetic coma, and if it had been high explosive I couldn't have been any more scared. But the man got well."

"And so have you," said Finlay quickly. "I'm sorry but I've got to run. I'll be late at the coroner's now. We'll finish this conversation later."

"That's all right, John. I know this is a hectic day but you will let me know about the girl, won't you?"

"Yes, Oliver, I will. As soon as I know myself."

"Thanks." The old doctor smiled warmly. "I'm as interested in this place and what happens here as if I were one of the Associates. You know I've been skeptical about the scheme—afraid

this sort of thing would open the way for political control of medical practice. Even now I'm not sure I've changed my mind about that. But, confound it all, I can't help believing in the men you have with you, John, any more than I can help trusting you and Miss Rodney. Why I honestly think that if you could get Baldwin and Schuyler and Arnold in here sick and keep them a few weeks you'd convert them too. I can't tell you how glad I am that Sun Mount has come through. If I had some champagne I'd propose a toast to the hospital, John, and to you."

Dr. Marlin sank back against his pillows, his face flushed, his blue eyes bright. "Well, I feel better now that I've got that off my chest. I've been wanting to say it for a long time."

Plodding wearily down the hall John felt his throat tighten. After all, old friends were best. It was twenty-five years since he and Oliver had first met and what Marlin had just said to him was a sweet morsel to his tongue even though it was exaggerated by the man's affection.

CHAPTER THIRTY

JOHN sat down heavily, threw his hat on the desk, and propped his head between his hands. It was three o'clock; he had just come from the coroner's. And he had slipped in the back way with cautious noiselessness for lack of courage to face anyone and ask after Priscilla. For the moment he felt he could bear no more.

The examination of Peter's body had left no doubt that he had been set upon and beaten mercilessly. His broken hands and wrists gave evidence that he had had nothing else with which to defend himself. The stab wound had been a gratuitous insult to a man already fatally injured. From the time he realized how brutally McFarlane had been sent to his death John had been thinking of Bruce Hewitt, remembering his pledge of reprisal and finding it no longer repulsive. Finlay too was sick with hatred and repulsion. It was hard to admit that there were in the United States men as bestial as the German Gestapo.

Already John had had one encounter which jarred him by its very triviality. Driving back to Sun Mount he stopped for gasoline and as he drove into the filling station found Charles Wharton checking his tires. Obviously Wharton had not heard about the murder for he waved a hand and came over to Finlay's car smiling broadly.

"I tried to call you twice this morning, John, but the line was busy." He could not have noticed Finlay's preoccupation because he went on without waiting for an answer. "Luck is certainly running your way. Do you know what's happened now?"

John shook his head. Wharton leaned closer and spoke confidentially.

"I could have given you a hint several weeks ago but I didn't.

I thought I'd better be sure before I said anything. It's that Stockton Lumber Company stock of yours." He paused as though he expected some reaction to this statement and, not getting it, went on quickly. "The whole outfit is being consolidated with that new plywood corporation—the one that's building down on the tideflat below the Eleventh Street bridge. The fact of the matter is, John, that your shares in the Stockton Company which you and I wrote off as a dead loss three years ago are back above par. You can exchange them for stock in the new corporation if you like, or turn them in for cash if you prefer. You're a rich man again by our standards out here. . . . What's the matter, John? Are you sick? Didn't you hear what I've been saying?"

"Yes, Charlie, I heard you. But what good is money? It won't bring back life to a dead man—a young dead man."

Then Finlay saw the bewilderment in Wharton's pleasant face and repented his brusqueness. "I'm sorry," he said. "I don't mean to be a crab, but . . . well, you'll know what's wrong with me when you see tonight's paper."

To the approaching attendant John explained, "I don't need gas after all. Guess my gauge must be screwy," and with that drove away leaving both Wharton and the young man in white staring after him.

Having finally reached his private office Finlay had no intention of seeing anyone until he had retrieved his self-possession. Long ago he had learned that one must meet the worst things in life alone—the greatest grief, the keenest suffering, the sharpest pain, the most consuming fear.

He pushed back his chair and began to pace the floor slowly. All his life he had been able to think things out best when he was moving. Now he walked doggedly back and forth on his aching legs, thinking of Peter and his brutal death, of Priscilla and her baby. Sometimes he put his hands in his pockets, sometimes he rubbed them up and down on his sides, sometimes he swung them to and fro or clasped them about his head. Finally his tread grew slower and he dropped into his chair again; his face was still gray and worn but in his eyes there was again a measure of command.

He reached for the house phone and had just finished talking with Grace Rodney when there was a knock on the door and Dennis looked in.

"May I come in?" he asked humbly.

Far back in the dark gray eyes that searched the younger man's face there was the faintest possible glimmer of triumph.

"Why not, D.D.?"

Dryden closed the door behind him and stood with his back against it. He was bareheaded and in spite of fumbling attempts to smooth his hair with his fingers it stood up over his head in a bristling amber mop. His full curving lips were grim with determination, his blue eyes stared sternly straight ahead.

"I've come to apologize and resign," he said hoarsely.

"Resign?" repeated Finlay.

Dennis put his hands behind him as though to brace himself. "Yes. I . . . I'd like to get away as soon as possible."

"I won't accept your resignation," answered Finlay. Dennis did not move. "I won't accept your resignation."

Dryden gave no sign of having heard him. John went over and took him by the arm.

"Don't stand there like a wooden Indian. I know what's wrong with you. You've been thinking about what you said to me this forenoon. Well, forget it. I put it out of my mind before you finished saying it. I knew it was just steam pressure blowing off."

The blond face and stubborn chin were touched with penitence.

"That's all very well for you to say, John. You're like that. You always see the other fellow's side of things. But I was a rotter to say what I did. There's no excuse for me. I simply behaved like a damn fool."

John took a firmer grip on Dryden's arm. "Come over here and sit down."

"No, I feel better on my feet. I've been sitting all day since I ran out on you. I had to think, I had to be alone. So I drove up the mountain road to a place I know, and I sat there for hours figuring this thing out. I can't stay here, John—not after today."

"I've told you twice that I won't accept your resignation. If you try to insist I'll lock you up until you come to your senses. And if you resign in writing I'll burn the letters just as I burned Francis Arnold's box of dirty stories."

"Listen to me, John. You've got to let me say what's in my mind."

An expression compounded of affection and surrender spread over Finlay's tired weather-beaten face. He leaned back in his desk chair, folded his arms across his chest, and waited silently.

"I acted like an ass this morning, John. I don't believe in clitching inhibitions. It's inhibitions that make the difference between a son of a bitch like George Schuyler and a gentleman like Oliver Marlin or you. I shouldn't be allowed to stay here at Sun Mount even if I wanted to."

Dennis was standing at one corner of John's desk, his eyes fixed on the window overlooking the lawn and flower beds. The late afternoon sun was slanting across the grass and tracing a pattern of light and shadow on the floor but D.D. did not notice it.

"There are a lot of things I must say to you, John. And you must listen. Part of it is about . . . Eleanor." Over the name his voice went brittle. "I don't know why I fell in love with her. She wasn't my type. But maybe it was because she was so different that she bowled me over. I'd never been infatuated before and I couldn't help myself. I determined to marry her, whether or no. And then she ran away."

Dryden swallowed hard, ran his tongue over his lips.

"I didn't know where she was. I didn't even know that she was alive. I went out of my head when I found out what was wrong with her. I hated you, I hated Miss Rodney. I thought you two had persuaded Eleanor to go away without a word to me. Then you talked to me and I realized that I'd been wrong about that. I couldn't forget Eleanor of course, but after a while she began to grow foggy in my mind. I couldn't remember how she looked or how her voice sounded, and I began to get interested in other things and stopped drinking and tearing around like a fool.

"Then when I'd stopped even hoping for it Eleanor came back. She was beautiful, you know that. And she said she loved me, she said that she had had to come back because she couldn't stand it to go on without seeing me. I don't think she had marriage in mind, but what could I do? The fact that she was dying only added to the difficulty of thinking the thing out coolly.

"In a sort of ecstasy I swept her off her feet. There was a little while that we lived in a sort of dream. And then she began to drift away from me. At the time I thought she had used up all her energy in coming back to me, and perhaps I was right. I'm not sure. But she never showed any interest in anything after that until Peter McFarlane told her about Sun Mount and she sent for you and insisted on giving you money to fight your way in the legislature.

"There were a few times that winter and spring when I thought she was thinking of me, trying to reach out for me again. But as soon as I moved to touch her she would creep back again into her shell. I had no notion she was going to die when she did. She hadn't seemed any worse than she had been. And the morning she . . . she went I didn't even wake up for two or three hours. She was . . . cold when I first touched her."

A painful silence filled the room. Try as he would, John could find nothing to say. He remembered what Eleanor had told him of her childhood experiences and her reaction to them, of her incontestable preoccupation with the approach of death. Long ago he had realized what an ingrown personality she had had, how introverted and absorbed in her own feelings she had become and how estranged from the processes of ordinary living. But what would be gained by telling all this to the distracted young man before him?

Presently Dennis seemed to regain control of himself.

"I don't know now whether she really loved me. What's more I'm not sure that I loved her. I was fascinated by her; she was the most beautiful, the most graceful, the most alluring creature I had ever seen. But whether what I felt for her was love in the usual sense of the word I don't know, John. When she was dead I grieved for her but there . . . there was a sort of relief about it too. I've wondered whether she herself wasn't glad to have it over."

The vividly blue eyes at last turned toward Finlay. They had lost part of the wild storminess that had shone in them when Dennis first entered the room.

"Sometimes I thought that Eleanor cared more for you than she did for me. I don't know how I got the idea first but I had it very strongly those last months before she died. Nothing I had ever done seemed to pull her back toward life but when she found out that you were in danger she set about helping you at once. And she told me once that I should send for you when she was dying if there was time."

John sat up in his chair and started to explain that he had always felt an attraction to Eleanor and that she had told him during the last winter of her life that she had felt it too, but after a few words he caught himself. Nothing could be gained by going into this thing any farther. D.D. had now released the pent-up tension which had been accumulating in him for years; that was so much gain. Why jeopardize that gain by giving him

something else to brood over? He might even get the idea that he—John Finlay—was the sort of man who went about trying to get young women to fall in love with him.

Smiling crookedly Finlay looked up at Dennis. The younger man's face was very pale and there were beads of sweat on his forehead.

"Sit down, D.D.—before you fall down!" The command was peremptory and yet good-natured. "You've been talking long enough. I've got something to say too.

"There was nothing unnatural about your infatuation with Eleanor. She was a fascinating woman and there would have been something wrong with any young man who didn't fall for her. Besides, she was a very fine person—tied into knots emotionally, it is true—but nevertheless very fine.

"Plenty of other people have married more unhappily than you did, Dennis. Priscilla Graham, for instance. It was as plain as a pikestaff that she was in love with you, but you never had the gumption to see it. When you stood her up she married McFarlane. 'On the rebound,' he told me quite frankly. Now much as I cared for Peter I knew he wasn't good raw material for a husband. He was loyal and outspoken and brave, he stuck by his friends and his principles through hell and high water; but he didn't have the minor virtues that make a good marriage partner. He drank too much, he gambled and played slot machines, he wasted his money, he kept late hours and often didn't go home at all or even call up to explain where he was.

"They were unhappy from the start. I think Priscilla came back from her honeymoon disillusioned. I know that she gradually grew bitter and fault-finding. And Peter was sensitive and so he also turned bitter and unhappy. You didn't know any of this because you never paid much attention to Priscilla and you instinctively disliked her husband. But it's true."

Dryden was staring at Finlay with incredulous blue eyes. John's lips twitched faintly under the gray mustache.

"Don't try to play the innocent with me, D.D."

"I'm not," protested Dennis. "I had no idea Priscilla cared anything for me. She . . . well, she used to boss me when we were in the lab at Seacliff."

"What of it? Modern girls don't languish or go into declines when men turn them down."

"But," began Dryden when suddenly his face changed. "How

... how is she?" he stammered. "Did they operate on her this afternoon?"

Even in moments of temptation Finlay was a man of mercy. "Wilburn says Priscilla is out of danger, D.D. And, in case you're interested, John Peter McFarlane is also doing well." Having said this, John put a rough hand on Dryden's shoulder for an instant and then left him alone.

A quarter of an hour later he opened the door softly and peered inside.

"They say we can see Priscilla for a minute if we go up right away."

But when the two men reached her room John whispered, "You go on in, D.D. I want to look at the baby first. And for God's sake act as though you had good sense."

As the door swung back after Dennis, the older man went on to the nursery. Outside the big glass window he halted. There was a row of bassinets inside and he had no idea which contained Priscilla's son. Although he had practiced medicine for so many years all babies looked alike to him. Here now was a row of red wrinkled faces indistinguishable one from the other. He remembered that he had stood here only six weeks ago looking for another infant—John Finlay McBride. His mouth broadened into a smile: John Peter McFarlane, John Finlay McBride. Perhaps there was hope for the future after all.

For an hour or two Finlay had forgotten how tired he was, but by the time he had eaten his evening meal fatigue had reasserted itself and he had become too restless to sit still or go to bed. He refused Elliston's offer to make evening rounds for him and stubbornly tramped through the hospital seeing each of his patients, Grace Rodney at his heels.

"Why don't you put that man to bed?" asked Oliver Marlin. "He doesn't know what he's doing tonight."

"No," agreed Miss Rodney grimly. "He doesn't."

The old doctor watched them leave his room together with a speculative smile. "Some fellows simply have it and others don't," he said to himself and picked up the detective story on which he meant to go to sleep. But presently he began to chuckle and mumble something to himself. The nurse who was coming in to give him his alcohol rub was startled at the words she thought she overheard. "But I tell you they didn't make sense," she said

later to her friends in the chart room. "Why on earth should Dr. Marlin be saying, 'Good luck, Grace! Go to it!'"

Rounds completed, John went to his rooms and Miss Rodney interviewed the switchboard operator.

"No matter what happens," she said firmly, "you are not to bother Dr. Finlay. He's out on his feet. Even if Mrs. Roosevelt should call, you're not to ring him. Do you understand?"

Having made sure of this, Grace Rodney went on. There were always things which the superintendent of a hospital must do; weariness and birth and death she took in her stride, but lapses of technique in the surgery or the sterilizing room stirred her to immediate action. Accordingly she was on her way to the top floor of Sun Mount.

Meanwhile John had tried to read and found he could not. For once he was uninterested in the vicissitudes of Philip Carey; his armchair was uncomfortable, his rooms were warm and stuffy, the overhead light was too bright and the wall lights too dim, his bed seemed singularly uninviting. Dennis had not appeared in the hospital dining room for dinner; Miss Rodney said he had stayed a few minutes with Priscilla and then come quietly down the incline and driven away in his car.

Finlay picked up two or three magazines and leafed through them, only to be instantly sure that each of them would be bore-some. He lighted his pipe but the taste was repulsive and he allowed it to go out. He went into his bathroom and hunted for the Allonal tablets but put them back on the shelf untouched. At last he pulled a sweater over his shirt sleeves and went outside.

Over the nearby scene dusk had already drawn a kind concealing blanket of darkness but above the mountains in the west there was a blazing sunset. His tired eyes took in the brilliant colors—crimson and gold and green. He remembered his childish fancy that there were the gates of heaven. Now he was an old man—almost an old man, he corrected himself—and for all he knew it might be true. He wondered if some part of Peter McFarlane perhaps hovered somewhere near at hand to keep watch over his wife and son. He wondered where D.D. had gone and what he was doing.

And suddenly John felt very lonely. Eleanor was dead, Peter was dead, Dennis and Priscilla would come to an understanding after a time. All the other men on the staff were married and had families. Arthur and Constance were enchanted with their first-

born. Grace Rodney was always busy; she seemed to feel that she would have Sun Mount on her hands forever. There was no one now who had much need of him . . . unless it was that small weazened newcomer upstairs, John Peter McFarlane.

He repeated the name aloud. It meant something to him, but would it mean anything particular to the child or to anyone else? In all probability this boy had no more and no better a future ahead of him than John had had fifty-four years ago.

In one's teens and twenties life looked so alluring, so full of possibilities. But it seldom paid out. Finlay thought of his own career. He had had more than the usual physical strength and endurance, his mental equipment too had been above the average. And what had he done with them? His existence had been a treadmill—no more than that—for a quarter century. If Nancy and little John had lived, it might have been different. But they had died many years ago and the gaiety of life had gone out with them.

Other men hunted, fished, climbed mountains, collected things, had cabins at the shore or motor boats on the Sound. But he—John Finlay—did not hunt or fish or climb mountains, he did not collect anything, he did not have a yacht or a cottage on the shore. He had bought a camera the summer before—a Leica, he believed—which was supposed according to the salesman to take pictures practically in the dark, but he had never gotten around to use up the roll of film that came in it. Suppose he were asked to write down something about himself—a death notice for instance—what could he put down on paper?

"John Douglas Finlay. Born 1882, Oakdale, Illinois. Graduated Oakdale High School, 1900. Graduated Rush Medical College, 1903. Practiced Bellevue, Illinois, four years. Traveled in Europe between 1908 and 1910. Located in Newland in 1911 where he practiced until the date of his death. Built a private hospital in 1916; after this was destroyed by fire in 1932 he rebuilt the institution and organized around it the first co-operative medical group in Queen County. Dr. Finlay's wife and only child died in 1906; he never remarried and leaves no living relatives to mourn his passing. He was considered a good physician and was highly thought of by the members of his profession."

No, that last sentence would have to come out. He was not highly esteemed by his colleagues, many of them, in spite of the fact that he and the members of Sun Mount Associates had been

grudgingly readmitted to the County Society. The obituary must end with the doleful clause—"and leaves no living relatives to mourn his passing." What sort of a life was it that could be boiled down to this? Had it been worth the sweat and pain and tears he had paid for it?

The fiery glow over the western mountains was fading rapidly. Darkness was about to engulf not only the land but the sea and the sky. He turned to face the hospital. The lights at the entrance had been turned on; windows shone in the increasing gloom, row on row. The yellowish gleam fell on the lawn in patterns of light and shadow. He looked at the glowing window of Priscilla's room and then at the dimmer radiance which marked the nursery. And in his heart he felt a tiny spark of comfort kindling.

Peter was gone but Peter's son was safe up there, and Priscilla too was safe. There had been many other babies born there; there would be many more. A multitude had died within those walls but another multitude had lived and grown strong. Sun Mount would always be a battleground between light and darkness, life and death. Many years ago he had cast in his lot on the side of life; his remaining years would go the same way. Struggle there would always be—wars and rumors of war—for man was still a beast in many respects. But perhaps the years would not be wasted. Perhaps the things that mattered most about a man were not things anyone could write down in an obituary. Perhaps the only memorial he could desire was the sprawling hulk of Sun Mount.

"John." The voice that spoke was very soft, so soft that for an instant he thought it was Nancy's. "John—dear."

He was not surprised when he saw Grace Rodney beside him.

"So many things have happened today," she said. Her hand was on his arm. He put his own over it—warm, firm, resilient.

"I've worked here with you for so long. . . . Without you life would mean nothing."

There was a long pause. He could see her figure but not her face. A cool wind swept in over them from the Sound. He looked toward the west again. There against the mountain tops lay a bank of sullen lead-colored clouds but above them was a strip of dull red—the afterglow of a sun already set.

His hand closed tightly over hers; so much of life was gone even now. He bent his head and laid his lips against her fingers.

"We'll go on together, my dear. As long as we live. Into whatever lies beyond."

