JOYLEG

Ward Moore and

Avram Davidson

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THE DISCOVERY OF JOYLEG

The chairman, pawing among the papers before him, muttered, "Now, uh, here's a file from the Veterans' Administration, a sort of list, just picked at random, from the letter J…" He pondered, head down. "Uh, anybody want to look at it?"

None of the subcommittee, including Lucinda did. Nor did their guest from the Finance Committee. The room was warm, stuffy, caught between winter's heat and summer's air-conditioning. Lucinda—the Honorable Lucinda Rose Habersham (R., Tennessee)—thought fleetingly that lovely spring days were better spent among the willows in Rock Creek Park than in the House office building. She suppressed the unworthy thought.

The chairman started to put the stapled pages to one side, glanced at them again, smiled. "Odd name. Joyleg. Unusual." He frowned; clearly unusual suggested controversial to him. He put the file down firmly. "Eleven dollars a month."

"What!"

Lucinda glanced at the subcommittee's visitor, the Honorable Tully Weathernox (D., Tennessee—from the district adjoining her own as a matter of irritating fact). The Congressman was on his feet, a look of utter outrage on his face.

"You mean a veteran is drawing a miserable eleven dollars a month pension? That a grateful Republic, in the excess of its generosity is flinging such a contemptuous pittance to one of its venerated defenders?"

Good heavens, thought Lucinda, the man is simply an occupational hazard or something he slips into on the floor of the House. It comes natural, like—like cold feet. He should have been in the Senate, seventy-five years ago, complete with string tie and goatee. But Representative Weathernox's slightly archaic rhetoric didn't embarrass her for him, she didn't think him ridiculous. Besides, he being on the other side of the Aisle, and holding the views he did—outrageous, even for a Democrat—Lucinda refused to know him well enough to laugh at him.

"What it says here," confirmed the chairman phlegmatically, ignoring their guest's breach of etiquette. "Isachar Z. Joyleg, Rabbit Notch (care of Sevier Post Office), Tennessee—"

"May I see the file, please?" Lucinda's voice was brisk and cold. As a member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, veterans were her business. As a Congresswoman from Tennessee, Tennessee veterans were doubly her business. As the daughter of one and the widow of another, they were triply so. The chairman handed over the wad of papers, clearly glad to be rid of it. "Now about those teeth braces," he began.

Lucinda closed her ears to the dental discussion and read the pages with a disciplined eye. Finished, she started to hand them back. Weathernox intercepted them apologetically. "May I—?"

"Of course," she answered, not sure that he properly had any business reading them.

He skimmed through them quickly—too quickly, thought Lucinda. Then he said, "Forgive me, Mr. Chairman—I'm sure I'm out of order—"

"Right ahead," mumbled the chairman; "informal procedure."

"Thank you, Sir. Sir, I'm shocked beyond belief that one who has worn the uniform of the United States, who has answered his country's call to offer his life on the field of battle, who has willingly risked his existence for the common good—"

"Maybe he was drafted," suggested a subcommittee member in a low voice. He was unanimously ignored.

"—common good," repeated Weathernox, in a slightly louder voice, "should be treated with such contumely, such arrogance, such heartlessness. Eleven dollars a month—"

"Maybe it's a mistake, a clerical error," said another member. "One-one instead of One-one-oh? Hundred and eleven'd be more like it?"

"It's eleven dollars a month," said the chairman. " 'S repeated five, six, seven times."

"Incredible!" said Weathernox. "Beyond belief. Why, Sir—"

Lucinda spoke crisply. "I noted no mention of any service-connected disability. And no war period is specified in these papers. I see no reason why this man Joyleg should receive any pension at all."

Tully Weathernox looked at her across the table. Lucinda gave her head—a very fine head it was, too, with a mass of heavy hair that just missed being reddish, lovely eyes with little laughter lines, a straight (perhaps a trifle long) nose, and a wide mouth—the slightest toss. She was perfectly willing to pain anyone set on raiding the treasury, including Captain Tully Weathernox, (USA, Ret.).

"At least it's being spent at home," offered a subcommittee man conciliatingly; "Not in—uh—Antananarivo or Trincomalee."

The chairman, restive, said, "Those teeth braces—"

"Rabbit Notch, Rabbit Notch," singsonged a committee member. "Benet, you know—in love with American names. No doubt reached by way of Bug Scuffle and Possum Trot. Would that be in your district, Mam?"

"Certainly not. I've heard—vaguely—of Rabbit Notch. Sevier is at the point of a very sharp salient between Willie [she pronounced it, correctly, Wye-lie] Jones County in Captain Weathernox's district, and Chinquapin County, in mine. I presume Rabbit Notch is in Willie Jones."

"No," stated Weathernox firmly. "I think investigation will disclose it's in Chinquapin and yours. Must be pleasant to represent a one-party district where you can mislay a section and never miss it."

The chairman murmured hopelessly, "Prosthetic dental work…"

"Eleven dollars a month," interrupted Weathernox measuredly, "is not a pension. It's an insult. Who can live on eleven dollars a month?"

"Pensions—except for total disability, obviously not the case here—are not meant to be lived on. They merely make up the difference to full earning power lost by reason of service. If this pensioner cannot live on eleven dollars a month—others have done it without whining—let him apply to local charity."

"Really," gasped Weathernox. "Really… I know that the Gentlewoman merely states the brutal philosophy of her political party, but I never thought to hear it so harshly from the lips of a lady. A lady from Tennessee," he added, as though this were the last straw.

"I'm sorry to upset the Gentleman from Tennessee," retorted Lucinda tartly. "The fact remains that this Joyleg appears to be feeding from the public trough. I agree that eleven dollars a month is an outrage—I see no reason for any payment at all."

"You certainly go in for straight backbones and straitened pocketbooks," Weathernox said angrily. "Nothing serves a veteran so well, I'm sure, as a little judicious starvation. Why not end pensions altogether, and put our legless, armless men—yes, our basket cases—on the sidewalk with tin cups to appeal to the generosity of executives and stockholders?"

Lucinda clenched her fists. "Whenever I hear speeches like that," she said, stiffening herself against the angry tremble she knew was coming, "I think of a veteran of World War One who lived in Chinquapin County. On the basis of a minor flesh wound which bothered him only when he went for his periodic checkup, he received a pension of twenty dollars a month. That was money back home in the Twenties and Thirties—it would have gone a long way to help support his family. But because he didn't have to work for it it seemed like a windfall, a gift, stage money, gravy. He spent it all on sugar moon liquor, never holding a job, and his family went hungry." She had kept her voice level, but now it rose. "Why should a man be softened and corrupted with free money? Because he was in a war? It was only his duty. A veteran, absolutely helpless from a war-connected disability is one thing, but—"

Weathernox was stern. "Is this hearsay, this tale of the veteran who drank his pension? Or did you know him— personally?"

The tremble had begun, but Lucinda rode it down. "Oh, I knew him—personally," she said, matching her spacing to her tormentor's. "He was my father."

Three subcommittee members coughed in unison. Weathernox turned red. The chairman said, "Uh—let's take a coffee-break, uh?"

While the others stood up, stretched, walked out, Weathernox hesitated. Lucinda evaded his apology—if that were his intention—and he went after them awkwardly. She slumped over the table. The tremble was gone; she was no longer the younger daughter of Sugar Moon Harve Smith (she couldn't remember the time he was Sergeant Harvey Smith, AEF, with a medal) the bootleggers' friend. She was the candidate who had beaten her opponent in a vicious contest and gone triumphantly to Washington on her merits. She had come a long way from her bitter girlhood, unhelped by family and background as men like Weathernox were.

And, Damn!, she thought—an unusual emphasis for Lucinda—I've got to go to that Press Club cocktail party after this. Why, of all afternoons…

The subcommittee (and Weathernox) filed back in, but for the moment Lucinda's thoughts were concerned with the mechanics of the cocktail party. The jade wool dress, certainly, and her earrings—but the brown shoes, or the spike-heeled black? Her black bag was shabby, which tipped the scale for the brown shoes, on the other hand…

"Now," began the chairman with relish, "about those dental braces—"

"Sir," said Weathernox, "are you really going to ignore this poor man, Joyleg, with his eleven dollars a month?"

Lucinda, deciding instantly on the black shoes after all, spoke up spiritedly. "Indeed, we are not. It's our duty to expose any irregularity in the payment of pensions."

Weathernox's indignation was apparent. "Irregularity! There is indeed an irregularity when a veteran—"

"Or fraud," concluded Lucinda smoothly, going just a little further than she had intended.

Weathernox's mouth opened and shut "There isn't the faintest indication…"

The chairman, desperate for the debate on dental prosthetics, rapped for order. "I'm sure there can be no objection to the Gentlewoman from Tennessee exposing any irregularity—" he swallowed, and repeated, "—any irregularity if such indeed should exist. Now, if you please, let's get back to the question of paying part costs for…"

To herself, Lucinda—finally putting aside the question of which hat—said, This bears looking into. And whenever anything bore looking into, Lucinda Rose Habersham looked into it. She closed her ears to the surge and subsiding of discussion, never doubting that the next generation of veterans' children would have straighter teeth (if not from cost-price braces then from free vitamin D) than their predecessors'. Cocktail parties—Lucinda would have rather gone to an amusement park and ridden the roller-coaster—an experience Joe had inveigled her into on their honeymoon: one which she still remembered with horror. But not to go was considered snooty—and your name had to be Alice Roosevelt Longworth to survive a tag like that.

Anyway she really wanted to meet Jill Brittin face-to-face to tell her… But of course she wouldn't tell her she hadn't liked what Jill Brittin had written about her in her column. You didn't do things like that when you were a gentlewoman, with or without initial capitals. But there was no law said you couldn't want to. "The attractive and politically active widow of Air Force Major Joseph ('Ride Em Down Joe') Habersham has been assigned by the gallant logic of the Committee on Committees to Veterans' Affairs while her neighbor—so to speak—from the adjoining Tennessee district, the Hill's handsome bachelor,

Tully Weathernox, with five battle stars and the Purple Heart, has been assigned to the Finance Committee." Just as though it were her fault, as though she had pre-empted Weathernox's rightful place. She wouldn't miss the Press Club party and the chance of meeting Jill Brittin face-to-face for anything. As soon as this stupid meeting was adjourned—they were now earnestly on the alternative metals for the prosthetic braces—she would have to taxi (a thought which outraged her) to her wallbed-and-kitchenette to change.

In her jade wool, the party was just as she had expected, only more so. Miss Brittin was devouring politicians like canapes, perhaps with more relish, because the tiny sandwiches were stale. The newspaperwoman was small, girdled, plucked-looking. She was drinking a martini so dry it could have been sold as straight gin without violating federal law; Lucinda nursed a Tom Collins that was merely a lemonade with a dash of sophistication.

"So good to see you face-to-face," the columnist murmured huskily, fluttering blue-green lids upward. "I feel as though I'd known you a million years. I always have so much more material on a subject than I use."

Lucinda shuddered. She had a momentary certainty that this women knew all about the hand-me-downs and the underwear made from flour sacks. "I suppose," she said.

Jill Brittin trilled as though Lucinda had been witty. "You were a Smith before you married, weren't you? Those hills of yours must be full of Smiths. Intermarriage, inbreeding, incest, and all those quaint old customs, ay?"

"I—I don't think I ever came across any," answered Lucinda weakly. Then, trying a foredoomed diversion, "Your maiden name—but of course it's still Brittin, isn't it?"

"Not at all, dear. Brittin's a professional touch. I was born Brittock. Loathsome, isn't it? Sounds synthesized from brittle buttock. Suggests starched petticoats and jolly attitudes to preserve virginity, doesn't it?"

Lucinda flinched and took a step backward. Miss Brittin took one foreward, the fragrance of juniper going before her. "I'm afraid I don't know," said Lucinda.

"Oh you widows," lilted the columnist "Snatching the men right out of us spinsters' jaws. Tell me—on or off the record—have you picked the lucky victim yet?"

"Honestly, Miss Brittin," said Lucinda, reminding herself that congressmen didn't offend powerful journalists if they could help it, "I'm not—I'm not—"

"Well if you aren't—nonsense. Oh, here's just the man for you." She waved her hand and shouted across the room, "Tully! Tully, you great, handsome knight of the Old South you-all come over here and meet your fate."

"I already know Captain Weathernox," said Lucinda steadily.

"Aha, I might have guessed it. Of course you know most of the Weathernox money is gone; still Tully isn't entirely dependent on his salary and mileage."

"Really…" began Lucinda helplessly, fighting the blush she felt rising and simultaneously indulging the smug thought that no wonder Weathernox was prodigal with pension money; he had never learned its

value by having to struggle for it.

He reached them through the press of the crowd and bowed toward her, ignoring the columnist. His bow showed that his blond hair was thinning. She wondered if his fashion of wearing it just a trifle long was a deliberate attempt to identify himself with his constituents who had little money to spend on frequent visits to the barber. "Mrs. Habersham—how lucky I am." Then he turned to Jill Brittin and smacked her lightly on the lower edge of her girdle. "Go along with you, Jilly," he ordered, "and leave your betters to themselves." His assurance made him seem older and an entirely different person from the indignant guest of the subcommittee.

Jill Brittin giggled with pleasure and called for Senator Zillidore to freshen her drink and Senator Tuggins to get her something to eat. She showed no resentment at Weathernox's airiness; she acted, thought Lucinda, like a high-school freshman who has been noticed by a college boy. She took a fortifying sip of her drink—melting ice had chastened it still further—and looked at him over the rim of the glass. Lucky victim indeed!

"You mustn't mind Jill's exuberance, Mrs. Habersham. She's not nearly as silly as she sounds. As a matter of fact, she's done some remarkable things, unofficially, where the State Department couldn't take an official hand."

"Yes," said Lucinda. "No doubt the government can't be choosy about its instruments."

"No," he returned; "it takes them where it finds them, in time of need. When the need is over it sometimes forgets them entirely—or almost forgets them which is worse."

"You're back on the subject of the man who's drawing eleven dollars a month."

"Joyleg. Yes I am, and I intend to pursue it till he gets what's coming to him."

"So do I, Mr. Weathernox. If everyone who had ever served in the armed forces drew eleven dollars a month the country would soon be bankrupt. I expect to do some pursuing myself."

The two Tennessee representatives smiled at each other politely, like hostile diplomats.

II

THE INCOMPLETE HISTORY OF A PENSION

"If he means to fight," said Lucinda firmly, "I'm willing."

Martha Forsh jerked nervously to attention and dropped a paper to the floor. "Who, LR?" she asked, retrieving the document. Martha was a competent secretary even if her timidity did annoy Lucinda.

"Weathernox. Everybody's friend but the taxpayers'. Where's the map?"

"What map, LR?"

Lucinda clicked her tongue impatiently, checked herself. "The large-scale map of our district," she said gently. "I'm sure I saw it just the other day."

"Here it is," said Martha eagerly. "Can I find something for you?"

"No, no—I just want to see something."

"It's almost time to leave for the House," Martha reminded her.

"I'm not going. The appropriation for aid to the Nicobar Islands and some private bills for paying old claims are all that's coming to a vote today and I'm paired against them all. I'm going to get my teeth into this."

"Of course, LR" Martha looked at her admiringly, and Lucinda was again ashamed of her impatience. She took the map and smiled her thanks.

Spread out on the desk before her, it was an impressive piece of cartography. Looking from east to west, it showed the five counties—ending in Chinquapin—who had sent her to Congress. At the extreme left side was Willie Jones County; nosing up partway from the southern edge was the terra obscura of another district and county, with Blountsburg bisected by the lower border and Sevier shown as a tiny circle. It was a fine map, showing every Gap, Fork, Hollow, Bald, Lick, Run, Branch, Bottom, Cove, Ridge, Bluff, Valley, and Notch, including Rabbit Notch.

The county lines were clearly marked:.—.—.—, dot-dash-dot-dash, winding sinuously from mountain peak to mountain peak, following the hogbacks, dipping down to skirt the edge of valleys, climbing again to crawl precariously along the side of a caterpiller which wasn't a caterpillar at all, but the cartographers' symbol for rugged terrain. And there, yes, there was Rabbit Notch, a few miles north of Sevier, and definitely not in the same county. As to whose district it was in… mmmm… mmmm… Was that dot Rabbit Notch or part of the boundary between her district and Weathernox's? "Martha—let me have the magnifying glass, please."

It couldn't be in her district. She would have known— she would have visited it at least once, to explain why its voters should cast their ballots for the party of Lincoln and Eisenhower. A false deceiver like Joyleg who would cheat a trusting government out of eleven dollars every month, simply could not be in her district. The self-respecting Republicans of Chinquapin County—and none are more rock-ribbed than East Tennessee Republicans; the Vermont breed, in comparison, are mere converted Federalists—would never stoop to dissimulation. Not so the decadent Democrats of Willie Jones County. By this time Lucinda's intuition told her Joyleg simply must be defrauding the treasury. Possibly for years. Similar cases— she smiled bleakly—had been known. She took the magnifying glass and bent over the map again.

That dot might be Rabbit Notch. But even under the glass she couldn't tell in which county it was. And no post-office (else why in care of Sevier?). Call the Geographic Board. Meanwhile send Martha to trace the date of the earliest payment to Isachar Joyleg. Not only would this rivulet of unearned bounty be cut off, but the wretched man would repay every penny of it, every single penny, plus six percent interest As for fine and jail, that was a matter for the courts.

In all fairness, the voters in Weathernox's district weren't responsible. Very likely they too would welcome the exposure and perhaps show their feelings by turning the rascals out at the next election, sending a good Republican to Congress. Then see if that odious Brittin woman would find Tully Weathernox so charming.

"Nineteen thirty-nine!" Lucinda cried as the first of Martha's reports was brought in by messenger, for

Miss Forsh, blissful among dusty, musty old archives, couldn't be expected to tear herself away until the last drop (or grain or mote) of data had been extracted, or the office closed. "Nineteen thirty-nine! He wasn't in Korea or World War Two." She was a climber who had passed the foothills and now faced the mountains, not even faintly winded.

Nineteen-nineteen. Lucinda winced, thinking of Harvey Smith. Suppose he and Joyleg had been comrades in the Argonne—nonsense! He was a fraud. She knew he was a fraud. Besides the next slip—Martha's excitement was manifest in the slight tremor of her usually rigid handwriting—dispelled the thought. "As of Jan. 1912. Will check 1911."

Nineteen hundred! The last year of the optimistic century: McKinley, Victoria, the Dowager Empress in Peking; only three republics—two of them insignificant—in the entire Eastern Hemisphere. And Isachar Joyleg, of Rabbit Notch—Outrageous was the only word for it. For some inscrutable reason, Lucinda was at this juncture moved to powder her nose. With some surprise she noticed color in her cheeks—she had been pale lately. Joe had admired her complexion. Joe… There was no point in dwelling on the past, unless of course there was some purpose in it. As there certainly was now.

Eighteen ninety-nine. Nothing could be more unlikely, but Lucinda was fair. If he were really a veteran of that brief war he would be drawing a sizable pension—good money after bad, in her opinion—but it would do no harm to check. A phone call to the Washington office of the United Spanish-American War veterans, a prolonged wait, then: No Mam, no Joyleg in the Spanish-American War. But since Representative Habersham—lot of brave boys from Tennessee were with Dewey at Manila Bay and Schley, uh, Sampson when Cervera's fleet was sunk, to say nothing of El Caney and San Juan—since Representative Habersham was interested in that heroic struggle, might not the USAWV count on her support of Private Bill 66-706, to reimburse former Corporal in the 23rd Iowa Sharpshooters Birdwin E. Sadbright the hundred and six dollars and seventy-five cents he had spent himself on transportation between Zamboanga, Mindanao, and San Diego… ?

There you were—everybody and his brother, with a long hand reaching out. It would be interesting (mentally she gave the word a sardonic emphasis) to know just how Joyleg got his name on the rolls in the first place. It must have been during the second Cleveland Administration, when the captured Rebel colors had been returned and the other Adlai Stevenson (who flirted with the Populists) had been Vice President. Impatiently Lucinda waited the next appearance of the messenger, but it was Martha herself, with dust on the tip of her nose, and the delight of research glinting in her eyeglasses. It wasn't Cleveland after all.

"Eighteen sixty-eight. Mmmm." East Tennessee's own loyal and dreadfully misunderstood—but equivocal, there was no getting around it, a Democrat elected on a Republican ticket—Andrew Johnson was in the White House (still the Executive Mansion), by the grace of one Grimes, Senator from Iowa, or was it Kansas? "There now, Martha, you see? It would make the man over a hundred years old. There's not a doubt in the world left. Fraud. Sheer, wanton fraud. Not only do the dead vote in the Honorable Mr. Weathernox's district, they also draw pensions. You've done a splendid day's work, Martha."

"But, LR I didn't—I mean, eighteen sixty-eight isn't necessarily the year the account was established."

"What? Oh… preposterous. Very well, just keep going back till you find the year Joyleg wasn't on the rolls.'.'

"That's just the trouble. The assistant archivist said the earlier records weren't available and he wanted to know if he could quote you as favoring an appropriation for putting them on microfilm so they can be brought out of dead storage."

"Appropriation? Certainly not," Lucinda said automatically. For a moment she was baffled, frustrated. Then she smiled. "The courts can worry about that when they try whoever has been forging a dead man's name to pension checks. I feel just a mite sorry for Congressman Weathernox, to have this scandal break in his district. Still and all, I'd like to see his face when he knows."

Miss Forsh started to say something, succumbed to the dusty afternoon, and sneezed. It wasn't till she had crumpled her third tissue that she managed to say, "He must know already. Minnie Hatters was right there beside me all the time."

"Who on earth is Minnie Hatters?"

"I thought you knew. She's Mr. Weathernox's secretary. She was looking up what I was. Isachar Joyleg."

Tully Weathernox began with the concept, "poor Joyleg." By the time he saw the name traced through the vouchers for 1928, '27, '26, it became "poor old Joyleg." Poor old Joyleg, quietly uncomplaining about his beggarly eleven dollars, probably walking around Rabbit Notch a bit stiffly by now but with never a bitter word against the bureaucrats keeping him in grinding poverty. Much good it had done him to serve along with Tennessee's own Sergeant York in 1918. The American Legion would leap to his side as soon as he made this scandal public.

Poor old Joyleg must have served in the Philippine Rebellion. Poor old Joyleg had fought for the oppressed people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, and… mmmm… Hawaii? Samoa? No—Guam. Poor old Joyleg had been called out to keep order in the Pullman strike—ay? Let's hope not. (Even though Weathernox was a sterling Democrat, he admired John Peter Altgeld, the Eagle Forgotten.)

Eighteen eighty… Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of an honored veteran of our march from sea to shining sea. Today we can see the justice of the Indian position, still destiny… Regardless… This man, Mr. Speaker, offered his life against a merciless foe—of course, I do not condone…

Eighteen hundred and sixty-eight. There it was. 1868 Unbelievable, yet Weathernox believed. With a slight tremor in his fingers and voice he called the Veterans' Administration Archives. What would it have been then? There was no V. A… the Bureau of Pensions? "Hello? This is Representative Weathernox. I…"

"Yes sir, as I told your secretary, but maybe I didn't give the whole picture. You see, when…"

"What battles did Joyleg fight in? Campaigns? Decorations? Wounds? Was he—"

"Yes sir, as I told your secretary and the other one, you see, they wanted disbursement-of-pensions records. Now, ours only go back to '68, the others are in dead storage. Battles? Well, Congressman, those records are Adjutant-General's files; they're maybe in the sub-basement of old War, or I really couldn't say for sure where—Library of Congress might know—but I do know all the files of vets without surviving widows were taken out of Live when this old gentleman passed away, Albert Woolson. The last member of the GAR. They were taken out of Live and put in Dead because, gee, do we need the space!"

Unthinkingly Tully thrust his fingers in his shirt front, the traditional gesture of the era. "But do you realize there's evidence a veteran of the Union Army is still alive? That Woolson wasn't the last?"

"Yes sir, I remember the incident. It was checked and there turned out there was nothing to it."

"What, Joyleg from Tennessee?" Tully was confused.

"No sir. Very old man by the name of Baker out of Oklahoma. Claimed he enlisted at fourteen or something, but as I say the files were checked and it showed the soldier of that name was listed all right but— Well, gee, it's a kind of complicated story but the Adjutant-General's office said they didn't believe him, Woolson was the last, and I see I got to lock up now, sir."

Well, rejected Oklahoma claimants notwithstanding, Albert Woolson hadn't been the last. Perhaps the last of the GAR, yes, but Tully didn't make the mistake of equating the Grand Army of the Republic, a veterans organization, with the Armies of the United States. There was no reason Joyleg had to be a member of the GAR. And most likely, on eleven dollars a month, poor, unique old man, he simply couldn't afford to pay dues.

Captain Weathernox's heart beat faster at the thought of a Stillness at Appomatox. Incredible as it sounded, there was yet a survivor of the Irrepressible Conflict, one who had rallied round the flag, tented on the old camp ground, marched with John Brown's soul and seen the glory of the Lord. In Rabbit Notch, ignored by history, forgotten by the descendents of blue and gray alike, there lived a man who had read Lincoln's call for volunteers while the ink was still wet, heard the cry, On to Richmond! as a fresh and startling call, seen the shot-torn battle flags carried against the fury of Parrott guns and leveled musketry. By Heaven, the man may have looked on Father Abraham plain, seen the ghastly carnage at Mayre's Heights or Antietam Creek, presented arms to the vanquished Lee. Mr. Speaker, I ask only simple justice for this living memento of unfading valor, justice for Joyleg… There would be utter silence in the house, broken only by sobs; then mad, thundering applause.

"Men are romantic creatures, Martha," Representative Lucinda Rose Habersham explained. "Their heads are full of medals and battles, oratory and trips to Mars or Jupiter. They even invented the Amazons and puffed up Boadicea and Jeanne D'arc. Women are realistic, they count the cost. Because they have to. Men jaunt off to the wars and leave the women to make the munitions and nurse the wounded; they fling pension money around as though it were counterfeit and the housewives have to scrimp and serve beans or hash in order to pay the taxes. Men dress up in gaudy uniforms at any excuse and complain when their wives just simply have to have a new hat to keep up their morale. No, Martha, they are just not to be trusted with things requiring calm, realistic judgement."

"How right you are, LR," murmured Miss Forsh.

"And because they are romantic they are ruthlessly ambitious. Every steppingstone is a pedestal and viceversa."

"Why, that's an epigram," exclaimed Martha. "I must write it down."

"Nonsense. I have no desire to pretend cleverness. Of course, if this should turn out to be the first exposure of fraudulent activity on a more than merely local scale it's only to be expected the Republican party and I will both benefit."

She heard her own words and was a trifle ashamed, for this was understating the situation by a good deal. Benefit? How could she help it? In Chattanooga, Nashville, Memphis, they would be looking for the most available candidate for the next governor of Tennessee. (Why not? Why not?) The first woman governor of the Volunteer State, the true daughter of our great commonwealth, from the Appalachians which harbor the heart of our heritage, our own, our very own incomparable Lucinda Rose… (The gubernatorial candidate of the Grand Old Party opened her campaign with a slashing exposure of the waste and trickery going on in Democratic Administration after Democratic Administration. When the Republicans got in they were too busy cleaning up the mess left for them…) Yes, my fellow citizens, the

mess, the corruption, the crookedness—petty, some might say: what is eleven dollars a month to the wealthiest country on earth? But eleven and eleven and eleven, multiplied and multiplied, squared and cubed and—bother! she never could remember what came next—could bankrupt us all. It was cumulative, cumulative and symptomatic, this enervating drain which has been going on for—for (by that time she would know exactly how many years). Oh, my fellow Tennesseeans, my fellow Americans, the time has surely come…

Must remember to tell about helping Grandmamma make kettle-boiled lye soap. No need to mention that Grandmamma had no teeth and that her chin-furrows always ran with the seepage from her snuff-packed gums or that little Lucinda Rose hated to look at her, let alone kiss her, or how she hated the bite of home-boiled soap on her rough, cracked skin. Yet it was honest soap. Honesty might bite but it kept you clean. Might even say something about Aunt Mary Esther-Ann. [Visit grave next time home.]

(… Aunt Mary Esther-Ann was Grandmamma's oldest daughter, grim and honest and scrubbed. Determined. It was she who put Lucinda through highschool, gave her clothes and book-money and a home in town—a hard bed with rough, scoured sheets and a faded quilt in the corner of her own bedroom. Tiny, tiny, three-room house.

Aunt Mary Esther-Ann never gave Lucinda Rose a sweet word or a smile or kiss, but when her brother-in-law came roaring through her kitchen that he wanted his daughter to quit schooling and get to work and earn money, Aunt Mary Esther-Ann had reached up a long piece of stovewood from the box and hit him alongside the head with it. Not a word or threat. You might have believed from her face—unaltered a whit of its invariable pinched concentration—that she was about to feed the fire, but she hit Sugar Moon Smith's head with the noise of *Thunk*. Aunt Mary Esther-Ann said nothing but advanced slowly toward him, and he stared at her for just about two seconds, then broke and ran. He didn't bother Lucinda Rose again. She finished highschool, won her scholarship, went off to college, met and married Joe…)

She shook her head. Never mind the past. Corruption was evil, so was idleness. If it wore a veteran's button in its lapel, so much the worse. Strike it hard. Never flinch.

The records exhausted of their information without the bribe of an appropriation for microfilming or reactivation, there remained one source—the obvious. Confront the serpent in his den—um—lair. How did one get to Rabbit Notch? The map showed no road, and of course no railroad. No use calling the Post Office Department since— aha! Perhaps it was just another trick, this business of Joyleg getting his mail at Sevier. "Call them, Martha."

No, there was no post office at Rabbit Notch, Tennessee, but they had a Jackrabbit Gulch in Nevada, would that do? (Lucinda saw her secretary stiffen at the levity— though it wasn't till later that Martha repeated it disdainfully—and repeat icily, "This is Representative Habersham's office," with the bald implication that civil service or no civil service, the Gentlewoman would have his job if he uttered another single crack.) Sevier? Would,she please spell it? Oh, Sevvy-yer; thought you said Severe—no offense, Mam. Sevier, Sevier—yes Mam. Mail routed from Blountsburg. Sorry—try the Census Bureau—they've got those figures..

Lucinda called the Bureau of Census herself. Sevier? (Lucinda relaxed a little when she heard it in two proper syllables instead of three.) Population, last census, 88. Mmm. Was 107. back in '40; 123 in '30—by golly", they had 251 in'1890! What do you know! Excuse me; get sort of carried away by the picture behind the figures. What was that? Rabbit Notch? Notch or Nautch? Just a minute. Mmm. Mmm. No Mam, lot listed. Wait a minute while I go back. Mmm. Mmm. Mmm. No figures in any census back to 1850. Maybe under some other heading. What? Sorry, I wouldn't know.

" 'Mail routed from Blountsburg,'" repeated Lucinda. But even this was not simple. Blountsburg to the Post Office was Union Junction to the Eastern Tennessee, Western Virginia & Appalachian RR. In the best American tradition of Sharpsburg-Antietam, Pittsburgh Landing, Shiloh, Bull Run-Manassas. And in that same tradition the F.T.W.V.&A. was belligerently reluctant to recognize the rival nomenclature. The semantic barrier overcome and a protocol established, they supplied the information that there was one passenger train daily from Knoxville to Union Junction.

"You can see for yourself, Martha, how ridiculous it is. I don't care what the Library of Congress told you, I don't even care what the secretary of the private secretary of the Secretary of Commerce told you. This is the United States, not a bit of the Balkans where a principality—Peoples Republic, I suppose now—can be mislaid for a century and only come to light when it decides to issue a new set of commemorative stamps. No post office I can understand, even no tally of inhabitants. But no RFD, no REA, no soil conservation program, no Federal aid to education —apparently no education to aid, either—no social security, unemployment insurance, no taxes collected, no benefits disbursed? Martha, I might be persuaded to swallow everything else—though I doubt it—but I cannot believe an east Tennessee community, however tiny, would fail to turn up a sizable electorate. I won't say it's unAmerican, it's simply unbelievable. If they'll forge a name to a pension check, why would they hesitate to forge a register of voters?"

Miss Forsh cut through the shell and went to the kernel of the nut at once. "It's such a bad time of the year to travel," she protested. From the warmest March in a long time (emphasized by the overhauling of the House Office Building's airconditioning) it had turned overnight into one of the coldest Marches in a long time. (Maintenance had decided to overhaul the heating system too.)

Lucinda resisted the impulse to blow on her fingers. "Pack," she commanded.

III

A JOURNEY TO THE PAST

They met in Washington's Union Station. Lucinda wore a fur-trimmed cloth coat, her eyes were bright through the wispy little veil which just touched her nose and did not hide the wind-freshened pinkness of her cheeks. Armed with righteousness she was, indeed, as near beautiful as her firm features permitted.

Miss Forsh peered nearsightedly at the crowds and the train, held her brief case defiantly against potential purse-snatchers (while at the same time keeping a wary eye on the two suitcases and overnight bags) and gave a startled hiss of recognition as Representative Tully Weathernox appeared. Lucinda was excited enough by anticipation of the trip—she had never traveled on a train till she was nineteen—and all it promised (Dewey and, uh, Kefauver had made national reputation by exposing crooks) to look upon Congressman Weathernox, if not with favor, then without disfavor. After all, it was hardly to be thought he was one of the Ring. She smiled at him. Not because he was a handsome man of suitable age (as that dreadful Brittin woman would doubtless classify him), certainly not, but because… Well, did you have to have a reason to smile politely at an acquaintance?

He took off his stetson and bowed with Southron gallantry. "What a delightful chance. A short respite

from this blustery clime? Off to sunny Florida or Louisiana?"

Lucinda could—as Martha clearly did—take this as a suggestion they were deserting the Hill while Congress was still in session, bent on a hedonistic escape. Conscious of having paired against a dozen pending private bills and the amended Nicobar Islands Aid measure, thus leaving the fort secured against her return, she said softly, "We're on government business, but not at government expense—" this last having been an issue in both their campaigns; the voters of Chinquapin and adjacent counties had seen her arguments against wasteful junketeering. Those of "Willie Jones and the other unhappy territories in his district had been hypnotized into agreeing with his foolishness about public servants with broader horizons than the provincial "—back home," she concluded.

"You're bound for Tennessee?"

"We are. We certainly are." Her expression defied all the soft-hearted sentimentalists who were tools of corruption and the wicked men who were corruption itself. "And you?" she inquired, meaning only to smooth her defiance with ordinary courtesy, but blushing to think he might take it as a sign—horrors—of personal interest.

"Me? Oh, I too. That is, I'm making a flying visit. Heading for, ah, Blountsburg. Lovely little town. Bears the name of the valiant first governor of the Southwest Territory."

Lucinda heard Martha's gasp, felt her own smile slipping, pushed it into place again. Blountsburg? Union Junction. "Surely this lovely little town isn't in your district?"

"That's right," he said easily, "but it's the best way to get to Sevier. Lovely little town; bears the name of the valiant first governor of Tennessee. Uh—something wrong?"

"Oh no," said Lucinda, wondering just how much Weathernox would hamper her investigation. "Not at all. And from Sevier I presume you will go to. Rabbit Notch?"

He looked at her in unalloyed admiration. "That's right. Either you're a mind reader, Mrs. Habersham, or you're very fast with your deductions."

Lucinda bit her lip. The man showed no confusion at being discovered; was he shameless? Or was he laughing at her? But it was really impossible to credit Weathernox with guile, not with him beaming at her as though she were a bright young niece or cousin who had done something particularly clever and made him particularly proud.

"Board—aw aaaaaaaaaBOARD!"

"Oh dear! We'll miss it! Where on earth is car eleven?"

Weathernox did not pause to speculate. With a firm, masculine grip, he guided them swiftly (Martha said afterwards that he had hustled them, but Lucinda thought this was carrying prejudice too far) into the nearest pullman (named *Monomotapa)*, deftly scooping up their unattached luggage on the way. Lucinda, her initial shock subsiding, found it not unpleasant to be taken care of so competently—Joe, so considerate in most things, had been apt to assume that she had four hands while he had none— but she saw poor Martha was mortified; after all it was her responsibility to see the congresswoman comfortably settled in her proper place. Her failure, and the initiative displayed by the collective enemy, threw her into confusion. She uttered little whimpers of outrage, protest or apology which neither helped nor hindered.

Weathernox's chair was in car ten *(Lillian Gish);* it was easy enough to switch to car *eleven (Gondwanaland)*, and get the seat next to Lucinda's. His masterful manner had not quite faded. "I

assume you are headed for Rabbit Notch too?"

"Yes," said Lucinda. "Someone there is using the name of a veteran—a genuine name, unless there's a gigantic plot to falsify the federal archives—to cheat the government of eleven dollars every month—"

"Cheat the government! My dear lady—that's preposterous. Poor old Joyleg—think of it: the last, the very last of the boys in blue, the lone survivor of the Union armies —poor old Joyleg is the one who has been heartlessly cheated, despoiled, swindled. Why were the innumerable raises in pensions never passed on to him? Why has no attempt been made to compensate—as if there could be compensation—the man whose shoeless feet bled at the siege of Nashville—or on some other scene of carnage and bravery."

"Nonsense," said Lucinda. "The man's an impostor—if it is one man and not a gang. Last of the boys in blue indeed! When I expose him he'll be just one of the boys in stripes. Although I think," she went on reflectively, "they put them in denims in the federal penitentiaries. Why common sense alone shows the baldness of the crime. No veteran of any war was ever satisfied with the size of his pension, and the very fact that this alleged Joyleg hasn't badgered you to get his check raised, proves… Oh!" She looked at Weathernox with sudden suspicion. "Perhaps he has, and that's why—"

"Rabbit Notch is in your district—why should he consult me?"

"Nonsense. The map shows where Rabbit Notch is— right in Willie Jones."

Weathernox looked at her searchingly. "I don't know what map you saw. The one I have shows Rabbit Notch almost on the county line—but inside Chinquapin."

"Well, we'll soon settle that."

"Of course. Assuming I'm right, no doubt you'll be ready to help the poor old man."

Lucinda snorted. It was a ladylike Snort, but still unmistakable. Encouraged by the sound, Miss Forsh ventured—not directly to Weathernox, but over her employer's head toward his vicinity—"LR was elected on a platform promising scrupulous honesty, rigorous economy, and a full accounting."

" 'LR'? Oh yes. Well, we can all agree on those sentiments."

"Good," said Lucinda. "Then you won't be unhappy at my exposing corruption in Rabbit Notch?"

"Democrats always welcome the exposure of ill-doing. Our own great Estes Kefauver symbolizes our attitude. But I am even more concerned right now with justice for Joyleg."

"I'll settle for justice." said Lucinda dryly. "Someone in Rabbit Notch is going to find himself in a federal courtroom. The British practice of granting hereditary pensions is one we didn't take on with the common law. As he or they will learn."

"Perhaps," murmured Weathernox, leaning back. "Or else the brutal indifference of generations of jacks-in-office will be ventilated."

Martha glared at him; the look lost most of its force in filtering through her glasses. Lucinda smiled sweetly and turned her attention to the Virginia countryside beyond the window. By rights this ought still to be in the District of Columbia, but the Cession having been returned there was probably nothing to be done about it.

Weathernox, feeling he had somehow been put in the wrong, yet still burning with zeal in Joyleg's

cause—impossible the error of not increasing his Civil War pension with the others hadn't been discovered in Washington; the monstrous regiment of clerks had simply not wanted to call attention to their mistake—cleared his throat several times, muttered, "Excuse me, ladies," and went looking for the club car.

He passed through the diner, found himself in the region of sleepers—strange, detached world. People who tried to explain relativity to him often used the figure of a man moving through a train at one rate of speed while the cars themselves moved through the country at another. He retraced his steps, returning to the diner by the kitchen end. A soldier with a New England accent was asking the steward the same question Tully had ready: was this the bar car too? The steward bantered with him, then, noticing Tully and evidently sensing at once he was no northerner, instantly changed his manner.

Tully ordered Tennessee whisky, assented to the supposition that the gentleman didn't want mixer, ice, or chaser. "Yes sir—always say, If the good Lord wanted branch water in liquor, He would have put it there."

Tully appreciated the meticulous way in which the steward avoided the word bourbon; he was less pleased at the subtle change in attitude. Taking a seat in the tiny lounge at the end of the car, he wondered when his son and the steward's son would be able to address each other as casually as they would those of their own color. The problem had begun in 1619, it should have been solved by 1620. Solution was long, long overdue.

Without provocation the man in the next seat began a rambling discussion of the tariff. "Now, look at me," he suggested. Tully complied politely, saw nothing remarkable, returned to his drink. "I make—" something that sounded like butterfoots. Butterfoots? Some kind of confection, doubtless. He found his attention wandering from his advocacy of the wholesome doctrine of (Tennessee's own) Cordell Hull to the riddle of feminine character and the oddities of female politicians. It was a puzzle how someone otherwise so sensible, interesting and… mmmm… downright handsome, could be so obstinate, blind, and Republican as his distinguished friend, the Gentlewoman on the other side of the Aisle.

"Now you take the Japanese," said the butterfoot entrepreneur, leaning forward as though to insist on the congressman accepting all eighty million immediately. "They make a product that looks all right when it's new. And they can retail it for less than my labor costs. Less than my labor costs. See what I mean?"

"Thth," tutted Weathernox. "On the other—"

"But they bend," said the businessman impressively.

"They—? Oh, you mean the Japanese? Bowing?"

"The buttonhooks. They bend the first time you use them."

"I see. Must be inconven— Wait a minute. Did you say buttonhooks?"

"Several times, and for at least twenty minutes. I manufacture them, and so may be excused a certain intensity of interest." He crunched an ice-cube moodily.

"I beg your pardon; I'm afraid I was thinking of something else at the time. But surely there are very few people still wearing button-shoes?"

"Who said anything about shoes? Young man—"

"But what do they use them for, then? Your customers, I mean?"

"Why zippers, naturally. Pedal-pushers and housecoats that fasten in the back can be zipped up without conscripting a husband. Just reach over and, zip!, there you are. Of course we have a small trade in re-threading pajama drawstrings for those modern enough to want something more adequate than a safetypin."

"I see. Never thought of it before."

"Don't underestimate technology, young man, that's what's made America great. Ever-widening markets. There's no gadget invented that doesn't call for another gadget to make it work better, faster, or oftener. Here, let me present you with our model 5A for your lady. With my compliments—though how much longer I can be complimentary before going on a diet of rice and fishheads, I don't know. Tell her to use it next time she wants to zip herself up without twisting her neck."

"Thank you," said Weathernox, putting it in his pocket. It would be an inestimable privilege to perform the operation for Lucinda Rose Habersham personally, and not delegate it to a soulless buttonhook. Then the picture embarrassed him with its sudden vividness and he told himself it was an unpardonable liberty to think of Representative Habersham's back in such detail. When he rejoined the ladies he was so conscious of the gift in his pocket as to almost forget Joyleg for long periods.

Lucinda, who had tired of the scenery, found nothing of interest to read, and absolutely refused to have anything to do with Martha's briefcase, was unreasonably pleased at Weathernox's return. For once he wasn't pompous or stuffy, but talked relaxedly, as though they were, if not old friends, at least acquaintances of long standing. She was happy—though she noted Martha wasn't—to find their companion quite sound on several—non-political, Joyleg-free—subjects, such as coffee (steeped not boiled) with cream and no sugar, the unique beauty of the Cumberlands, the annual mule fair in Columbia, Saroyan, Steinbeck, and Spillane, catfish, Pittsburgh-plus, raspberry sherbert, late model cars, and the Right way to serve hominy grits. Indeed, so long as they stayed away from controversial matters, Lucinda found him singularly congenial, broadminded, and well-informed.

At Knoxville she became newly elated; this was the real start of the journey to Rabbit Notch. They drove through the mellowed city, pleasurably sniffing the soft-coal scent in the dovegray softness of the smoky air, to the ETWV&A depot on the other side of town; freight might make the connection on rails, not people. The minor discomforts of the antique coach—half-coach rather, for the front end was a baggage-car—fascinated rather than annoyed them. They were delighted with the wine-red plush seats, the intricate brass hardware, the hanging kerosene lamps. In effect they were taking a step back into the past, and the past was where Joyleg properly existed.

Delight, however, was tempered by local patriotism. "Surely," Lucinda said to the—conductor? the highly polished insigne on his high-crowned short-billed cap seemed to read, CAPTAIN—"Surely this car hasn't been in continuous service on this line since it was built?"

The captain-conductor smiled benevolently. An uninitiated traveler might have expected him to be unkempt, possibly dribbling the juice of a wad of cut twist; actually he was neat and archaically well-preserved as the car itself. He glanced at the bashful top of a silver turnip watch tugged a quarter-way out of his vest, indicated an apology, swung half out the door to wave. The whistle sounded— none of your foghorn diesels for the Eastern Tennessee, Western Virginia and Appalachian—the car recoiled, trembled, rocked, moved out of the yards with increasing speed.

"No mam, and that's a fact," the captain said, returning. "Our unhandseled cars were bespoke by the government during the Kaiser's War, so we put the retired ones back on. I don't rightly know what become of the others. Heard they were maybe sold Mexico-wards, or perhaps China. Government pulled the insides out, turned them into troop trains."

"Nationalization," said Lucinda triumphantly. "Democratic administration. Ruined the railroads."

"Well, mam, I wouldn't know what it did to others, but it saved our goose. Kept us going all through the depression."

"Ha!" said Weathernox. "Ha! Excuse me."

Lucinda ignored him. "Does it pay to maintain passenger traffic on this line?"

The captain pondered. "It's this way, mam—it does and it doesn't. Some runs I'm all alone, other times I've got maybe seven, eight tickets to punch. Thing is, we've got to keep the franchise, that's the point. You never know. No mam, you just never know." His tone indicated—not without complacency—that when the public tired of the automobile, bus, or plane, the ETWV&A was not only prepared and ready to serve but willing to be magnanimous about it.

"You're a Tennessee man yourself, Captain?" asked Weathernox.

The captain partly averted his face. "Not entirely," he answered in a low voice. "My grandfather—fine man he was too in every other way, and I defy the man who says he wasn't—was a foreigner. From Kentucky."

There was a short silence after this shocking revelation. Lucinda wanted to lighten the moment but all she could think of was, We are all immigrants—and she didn't care *to* quote a Democrat. Finally the captain perked up of his own accord and consulted the silver swede again. "Next station's Armbruster," he announced. "Armbruster, Coopers Crossing, Big Shallow, Villiersville, Three Forks… last stop's Union Junction, Union Junction." He paused, smiled treasonously at them. "That's Blountsburg," he said slyly.

IV

BLOUNTSBURG (UNION JUNCTION)

The depot at Blountsburg showed some signs of having been repaired since Andrew Johnson's swing around the circle— but not many. It was sooty, compact, gothic, it reminded one of Mr. Jefferson's octagonal brick invention which has given an enduring simile to the language. The captain waved and the train chugged slowly off.

There was no stationmaster, telegrapher or porter visible. No one called, Taxi…? Beyond the depot a wide road of yellow mud wound like a relaxed snake, in sweeping curves, the crests of its ruts oozy and glistening in the sun, their depths frozen stiff. An austere wooden structure bowed under a sign (more paint on the sign than the edifice), FREE WILL ORIGINAL BAPTIST CHURCH. A false-fronted building evidently had once been brightened by the advertised virtues of Cinco Cigars; the colors had long faded to provide a background for the laconic announcement, store. By looking hard it was possible to read the legend over one of the two small windows. U.S. post office. To one side was a naked gaspump. pre-Lincoln Highway in design, with a basketwork top, hand crank, and cogs. On the other a barn, drab in mournful washed-out gray, eulogized 666, Bevo, Sweet Caporals.

"Doesn't seem to be a great deal of activity," commented Lucinda, searching the landscape for some moving object other than a group of hopping, quarreling sparrows.. There were no other commercial buildings, but there was a brick cube with a mansard roof which stood alone in a trampled yard and

looked institutional enough to be a school. All the houses had a uniform air of sad resignation to the Free Original Will of Providence.

"Well," said Martha, "You'd think in a place as dead as this they'd at least be out to watch the trains. Train, I mean." She was from Missouri; in her state or any other except this one, the two Tennesseeans would have agreed; now they both gave her the pitying stare original inhabitants save up for ignorant aliens.

"Well," began Weathernox, "we'll have to—"

"There's someone now," interrupted Lucinda. "She's coming this way."

They all turned to watch the stately, irresistible progress of an heroically proportioned woman making her way from the store to the depot. It was clear beyond argument that she was impelled by business, that idle strolling, gaping or reflection were not for her—no, nor never had been. She lifted massive legs, shod in heavy boots to the calf, and set her feet down carefully, as though they were valuable beyond their kind. A man's jacket hung across her shoulders, a small dun-colored apron swung sporran-wise. She trod heavily past them without a glance and retrieved the most insignificant mailsack ever seen, so minute and so collapsed that none of them had noticed its being left off when they were.

"Excuse me," said Weathernox. "We're on our way to Sevier."

Speech made them suddenly and permissibly visible; she recognized their existence by a thoughtful scrutiny, her concentration aided by the set of massive jaws and drooping eyelids. "Sevier, hay? Not many goes there."

"We're actually on our way to Rabbit Notch," confided Lucinda, "but I understand we have to go to Sevier first."

The woman swung the mailsack reflectively from one finger. "Rabbit Notch, hay? Not many goes *there*."

"But you know of it?" asked Weathernox eagerly.

"Don't believe's been a creature from here to there in sixty-seventy years." She was clearly going back over her own memory and local history for confirmation. "Not in sixty years. No." It was social criticism of the most final kind.

"We are—we have to go," stated Lucinda firmly.

The woman took an implacable step toward the road, her fat, white, veinous calves showing briefly between her skirt and boots, bouncing once, subsiding. "You got to, you got to. Free country."

"Perhaps you could tell us how to get there?"

"Get there, hay? Don't know about getting to Rabbit Notch. Don't believe anyone's been from here to there in fifty-sixty—"

"To Sevier, then," Lucinda pressed.

The woman sucked in her pendulous underlip, masticated it appreciatively. After prolonged cogitation, she spoke. "Like's not I'll be taking MacCray's mail and freight in two-three days. If you've a mind you could ride along with me for—" again the appraising glance, the lowered lids, "—dollar apiece. And a quarter each for your bags," she added.

"The price seems fair enough," said Weathernox.

"But we have to go right away," Martha Forsh broke in. "We couldn't stay here for days and days."

"You can't, you can't." The insult was registered, scrutinized, relegated to the unimportance it deserved. "Right away, hay? Well, you have to, you have to." She began walking firmly away. "Still here in two-three days," she addressed the princes and powers of the air, "come see me then."

"Wait a minute," called Weathernox. "Is there no other way of getting to Sevier?"

"Other way?" They waited a lengthening interval as she plodded along. "Shank's mare," she cackled and crossed the road to the store.

"Hospitable and communicative," muttered Martha. "Might as well be in Maine."

They treated this shocking comparison with the silence it deserved. After a moment Weathernox reflected, "If they're this shy of strangers in Blountsburg, what will they be like in Rabbit Notch?"

They picked their way over the ruts, thin deep ruts, not the broad flat ones of modern tires, until they came at length to the security of some heavy planks, solidly mired out but not too slippery even for Lucinda's high heels.

Weathernox pulled open the door of the store with a flourish (Lucinda had a fleeting impulse to call out, Mr. Stanley, I believe?) to allow the brief escape of warm air smelling of a coal-stove, sweet-cured tobacco, linty piece-goods, pickle-brine, sharp cheese, damp wool, dry saltfish, penny candy (anise), kerosene, stick cinnamon, cloves, cider, oilcloth, leather, country ham, molasses, and sawdust. They stood in the entrance a moment, letting the conglomerate scent lap about them, then they filed in.

Dimly lit, the store was a curious medley of two divergent if not opposed styles. Packaged groceries—standard, nationally touted brands—were heaped on old, ornate wooden counters containing outward facing drawers of crackers, farina, beans, oatmeal, rice, tea, macaroni. Beside them were small glass cabinets of thread, cards of buttons, hooks and eyes. Above, in closely serried ranks, hung rubber boots, slabs of bacon, heavy work-shoes, coils of rope, overalls, denim jackets. Articles Lucinda thought had long passed from common use—hatpins, chamberpots, nightcaps, corsetcovers, mustache-cups, sunbonnets, highwheel coffee-grinders, trivets—were set off by shining new appliances. Flatirons sat next to steam-irons, heating pads next to brass bedwarmers, candle-molds to light bulbs; an umbrella-stand held an assortment of buggy whips and vacuum cleaner attachments, Shaped-note hymn-books sat beside a pile of one-shot magazines detailing— with photographs—the true life story of a singer-guitar player. There were tubes of lipstick with French names and packets of rice powder, cube sugar and loaf, liniment (for man and beast), herbal remedies in boxes printed in Tuscan type, and antihistamine-chlorophylized-neocureo-myacin tablets.

The woman studied them anew, this time as if they were Martians. Lucinda began, "Is there anyone in town who could drive us to Sevier today? Or perhaps rent us their car?"

The proprietress shook her head with such vigorous satisfaction her doublechin bobbled one way while her bun jiggled the other. "Nup."

"It's a government business," Weathernox said.

The headshaking froze. "Government!"

All three nodded.

"Blockaders?" She scowled hideously. One great hand reached toward a collection of cowbells, the other slid over to the meat cleaver. "Blockaders, are you? Speak up!"

"If you mean, are we internal revenue agents," Lucinda said crisply, "the answer is 'no.' Have you ever heard of women revenuers?"

"Mmmm. Well… guess not." The large head shook grudgingly.

Lucinda smiled at her. "We're on business for the House of Representatives—nothing to do with the Treasury—Mrs… Mrs.—?"

"Davney," supplied the woman as though loath to admit them to this intimacy. Once more she sucked in her lower lip. "All right," she conceded abruptly. "Government, hay? Congress? Congress can afford to send you to Sevier, Congress can afford to pay your way. Fifty dollars the lot. Take it or leave it."

"Fifty dollars!" cried Lucinda. (Harvey Smith never had fifty dollars in a lump his whole life long.) "Outrageous! You said a dollar apiece before—"

Mrs. Davney's chins descended into her neck. "Said, two-three days: dollar apiece and a quarter each for the bags, yup. Go today—fifty dollars the lot"

Weathernox said, "We'll take it, Mrs. Davney. Though please understand, the government isn't paying, we are."

"All one to me. Cash is cash."

Lucinda was still seething with outrage. "How far is it?"

The drooping lids dropped further. "A right smart chance. You'd not like to walk in them heels and tote your bags—not even if your man took most of the load."

Before Lucinda could explain her absence of proprietorship in Tully Weathernox, he had his wallet out and was handing over a bill. Mrs. Davney didn't so much take it as absorb it in a swift, sweeping motion. "Will! Oh Wee-yill!" she called.

Will had a single eye and a single arm (had he been disfigured, Lucinda wondered, in conflict with blockaders?); he was tall as his wife and as spindly as she was stout. He walked with an unbalanced, shuffling gait. "What's it now? More trifling Yankee drummers with nicknacks and folderols? Got aplenty already, I say. Move slow."

"M'usband," Mrs. Davney said proudly, applauding this display of commercial acumen with a quick bob-jig of her head and chins. "Mr. Davney," she added, lest they assume she was Mrs. Davney in her own right and her spouse bore some lesser title. "People for Sevier, Will. I made treaty to take'm for fifty dollars."

Their eyes met in complete, mutual approval; they had met the outlanders and taken them in. Then they shifted to scan the parties of the second part and, in union, defy complaint.

"Gas 'noil come high," Will Davney said. "Not aspeak tires. But treaty's a treaty. Davneys never went back on our word—not going a start now. Let them mock us for it as will."

"Right," approved his helpmeet, shaking her head toward Weathernox while a tight, coy smile lifted her lips to show she held no malice at being taken advantage of. "Well, no use narrating and politizing here; sooner we go, sooner I'll get back."

"I never—" said Martha. Lucinda pressed her arm; they all followed Mrs. Davney outside. She was a fast walker for all her bulk, and disappeared around the corner of the store next to the gas pump. "At least," resumed Martha, "Rabbit Notch can hardly be more primitive than this."

A noise like hissing steam sounded forth and a car whose designers had never heard of tailfins or even streamlining jack-rabbitted into view. It was not merely the age or the design of the vehicle which startled them, but the oddity of its indecision between touring car and station wagon. A homemade putty-and-frame job held a pane of glass forward of where the original windshield had been; the back window was cracked brown isinglass.

"Why is the motor so silent?" inquired Martha. "You can barely hear it."

"Familiar spirits," suggested Lucinda with a levity she didn't feel.

"No," said Weathernox seriously. (Wouldn't you know, thought Lucinda, not the slightest sense of humor.) "It's a genuine mountain wagon."

"Really?" asked Lucinda, unenlightened.

There was a prolonged hiss, and everything was swallowed up in a cloud of steam. "The Stanley Brothers' favorite model," explained Weathernox.

"Come on if you're coming at all," Mrs. Davney's voice cut through the vapor. "Else I'll be obliged to travel without you. The carriage's skittish. And you won't get your money back neither," she warned.

V

SEVIER

"Hop in and settle wherever your pleasure is," Mrs. Davney invited, as though a wide choice was involved. "Just loaded up; no weal gained by making an extra trip of MacCray's trade goods… Ah. The mail." She heaved herself out of the steamer's front seat, thumped back to the store.

" 'Just loaded up,' " Lucinda quoted. "In that minute? No, she's cheated us: she was already to go before we came—she must just have been waiting for the mail—and she knew we'd have to accept her terms." Martha accompanied her with an antiphon of sounds indicating soothing agreement in her annoyance and anger.

Weathernox blundered into an untimely facetiousness. "Surely what is good for Mrs. Davney is good for the country?"

And just when she had begun to think he was rather pleasant in spite of his politics. It went to show that they were all demagogues, all of them. She fixed him with a disdainful eye. "That's a common misquotation," she said coldly, "and neither relevant nor amusing."

Mrs. Davney returned, wearing a heavy man's sweater. She hung the mailbag on one of the brackets to which the uprights supporting the top were fixed. Lucinda punished Weathernox for his quip by refusing

to let him stow her luggage; the suitcases and overnight bags were squeezed between the back seat and the front; the front itself was occupied by MacCray's freight Lucinda felt almost indecently intimate in the half-reclining position, so much so that she took the middle place instead of Martha, feeling that a maiden lady ought not be forced to sit next to a man in such circumstances.

Mrs. Davney pushed irresistibly through the door, which, like the steeringwheel, must have yielded to the resolution of her flesh because the reverse did not seem possible, and shut off most of the view. With a vehement hiss the car jumped forward but, swiftly as it moved—and even the roughness of the road could not deny its speed— Lucinda had time to observe that Blountsburg wasn't so ill-supplied with cars and trucks as Mrs. Davney had implied. After all, what was the gas pump for? The other vehicles were younger, but none was late enough to be really low-slung.

Vexed anew, she said, "If this is a steam-car, Mrs. Davney, what did your husband mean by gas and oil coming high so that you had to charge us—"

"Pilot light," the voice from the front seat billowed back. "Runs on gas. Burner uses coal oil. Kerosene, that is. High, terrible high." She drove the mountain wagon as" though it were a draft animal—a rebellious horse or stubborn ox—who could be expected to bring on disaster at the slightest relaxation of her vigilance. She hunched forward tensely; she plied the throttle—or whatever the device was—with bravado; she wrestled the wheel in a spirit of triumphant righteousness.

The road did not narrow as they climbed over rolling country. It wound relaxedly in full, unpaved width— enough for a six lane super-highway—between far-spaced habitations—here and there a well-kept homestead with snug outbuildings, here and there a haggard farmhouse with propped-up barns; tight, cement silos alternating with wooden ones threatening collapse. Seemingly hosts of children prowled and played at each farm. Some were dressed warm and clean; at others bare arms and legs stuck out of ragged cutdowns. Well-dressed or mean, the children were lavishly supplied with dogs. The Stanley sped by so silently most of them didn't bother to run after it, contenting themselves with barks and howls addressed *pro forma* to its retreating back.

"With electrification and better farming methods," commented Weathernox, "in a few years all these places will look as good as the best."

Lucinda was tempted to answer, what's good for TVA is good for the country. Her legs were cramped and—at the moment—she thought Tully Weathernox a sententious bore. "Spending public money won't make people work. My aunt fed and kept herself on five acres, put me through high school, and saved money. She had no electricity and never spoke to a Department of Agriculture man in her life."

"She must have been a fine woman," said Weathernox. "On the—"

"She was." Lucinda felt an unfamiliar emotion misting her view of the road. It couldn't be affectionate memory, for she had none, grateful though she was to Mary Esther-Ann. "Farmers who prosper work hard. Those who can get something for nothing remain shiftless as ever." She shut her lips. Unless the shiftless could be forced to work by cutting off all assistance (root hog or die) and shown an example, such as the swift retribution overtaking those who forged pension checks.

For miles the power poles accompanied them, high-tension lines snootily aloft, the thin strands of phone wires demurely subordinate below. Abruptly they ended; the road narrowed and twisted. Stubby telephone poles tried to keep up the pace but they soon became discouraged as the way became unashamedly a muddy track wandering drunkenly onward.

They climbed a higher hill than most. Mrs. Davney lifted a hand from the wheel and pointed. "Sevier," she said, in the tones of a New Yorker introducing Blountsburg.

Lucinda craned and peered. The dark mass drew apart as they approached, resolved itself into a dozen or so houses clustered in mutually suspicious groups. They were all in the weathered silver-gray uniform of wood never painted or whose paint had long been erased by sun and rain and wind. Behind them, unobscured for the first time, rose the hills, brown and white pudding balls where snow and bare earth alternated in patches. Farther, much farther, on the mountains, towering gruffly, everything was white except where the snow, shedding and sliding off branches from its own weight, had revealed the dark pines.

"Dreary," croaked Martha.

"Bracing," corrected Lucinda, heartened by their proximity to the starting point. From here she could reach Rabbit Notch and the felons, and—again the challenging thought: why not, why not?—perhaps the governorship. Once there… but reflections of the dangers of *hubris* kept her dreams from reaching too far.

"Cold," moaned Martha. Lucinda interpreted this as a plaint that political rectitude was being carried at least fifty miles too far.

"You won't know these hills in a few weeks," said Weathernox. "Spring bursts on them like a—like a thunderclap."

If Lucinda had thought Davney's establishment in Blountsburg primitive, she had to admit the architecturally self-confessed former farmhouse which was Sevier's store was far more so. A flag was the sole sign that it contained the post office, a flag so old and faded that its red was pale and only the stitching showed the stars—in uneven rows.

Several men and two women, evidently alerted by the bicycle horn Mrs. Davney had squeezed unrelentingly upon entering the Greater Sevier area, waited, an old photograph, respectfully fixed, on the steps as they drove up. If the blase inhabitants of Union Junction had been too surfeited with novelty and excitement to notice the arrival of the train from Knoxville, those of Sevier still retained their innocent enjoyment of the mountain wagon's steamy advent.

It was a grave pleasure and one with presumably fixed rules: the Sevierites unloaded Mrs. Davney's freight with quiet comments: ("Here's the mail; anybody been awriting to the matter-monial bureau again?" "Looks like MacCray's gettin his new line of cartridges—now them deer'll suffer persecution." "Haint there no keg of nails? I ben waitin a nine-ten months for sixpennies to fix that privy. Old woman's got a store of calomel she dasnt take.").

Courteously no one stared at the strangers, though visitors must surely be extremely rare. Lucinda didn't mind being ignored; she approved their good manners. Tennesseeans were just naturally ladies and gentlemen—for the Davneys represented a universal rather than a local type —unless they were corrupted by easy money. Which was bound to corrupt anyone.

As the trade-goods were removed and the travelers released from their imprisonment at last, they got out stiffly, stretched, watched the villagers scatter so soon as the return freight was laden aboard, freight consisting of four letters tied together with a string, a small barrel of small apples, a bundle of patchwork quilts, a keg of cider and three larger kegs about whose contents—seeing the special care they received, Mrs. Davney's covert looks and recalling her attitude toward suspected blockaders—Lucinda didn't care to speculate. Raising her voice over the preliminary hiss of steam, she offered a polite "Thank you" to Mrs. Davney, who had not moved from the driver's seat.

"What for? Your man paid me didn't he? Thanks where thanks are due, I always say." She checked a dial. "Water at the spring," she muttered.

Lucinda glanced at Weathernox, hoping he had not overheard the stupid reference to "your man," tightened her lips and frowned when she saw by his silly expression that he had. He averted his face—at least he had a sense of shame—and hastily asked, "Now how do we get to Rabbit Notch?"

"See MacCray." The car went *ssss-ffff* and was gone.

"Helpful to the end," muttered Weathernox.

"Look!" exclaimed Lucinda. "That sign—the curling one in the window."

"What?"

"Over there. Surely… but it *does*. 'Leeching & Cupping. Alfo herbs & fimples'."

"Oh, they have some quaint survivals around here," said Weathernox proudly. He set his face in the smile so familiar to Lucinda, the smile of an after-dinner speaker about to make a feeble joke, "Why, the pureft Englifh in the country is fpoken in our mountains." She forgave him and they stood for a moment in proud reflection.

"Hah!" noted Martha, and sneezed.

The store was dark, but warm and cozy. "Mr. MacCray?"

"Duty to you," murmured the short, grizzle-bearded man behind the counter, either forewarned or utterly stoical. He cleared his throat and raised his voice. "Pretties for the ladies? Victuals? Sweetmeats? Swaddling—no. Something in velvets or taffetas? Prime three-knob snuff perhaps?" His voice dropped a tone. "Fine line of spirits at reasonable, nay, modest prices, warranted not less nor three years old." It must have been a long, long time since anyone had entered the store who didn't already know every pin in it, and he was making the most of the occasion.

"Thank you," said Lucinda. "I'm afraid all we want is the way to Rabbit Notch."

MacCray inclined his head, twisted his little finger in his ear. It came out clean, leaving him no choice but to believe he'd heard aright. "Mmm. The Notch? None from hereabouts goes there, can tell you that. Tis no easy jaunt."

"Surely there's a bus," suggested Martha with evident irony.

"Bus? Oh… omnibus, you mean. Heard of them to Knoxville afore they put on the trolley-cars and after they ripped them out. Bless you, Mam, we don't have devices like that up this way. Horseback and buckboard's well enough for folk like we, though Old Squire had a shay or surrey or somewhat. I suppose though, Amos Turbyfill'd let out his rig for hire."

"We'll take it," snapped Lucinda recklessly—for her.

"Will you now? Amos'll be might'ly pleased; not more than a courtin couple ever uses it once in a few years. He'll make a point of silver though; won't take paper. All them Turbyfills has been set that way since the wildcat bank went tore-down broke in Villiersville in Dandy Frank Pierce's time."

"Where will we find Turbyfill?" Lucinda was prepared to convince him that federal reserve notes were better than silver (shades of 16 to 1) any day.

"Oh, he'll be along sometime. Right now he and the mare are away fixing timber for the pave. He's a haulier— all them Turbyfills is hauliers."

"But we want to get to Rabbit Notch as soon as possible."

"Do you now? Ah, if it was only to Warm Soack or Pitch Pit, you could go by bull-cart—was there folk from either borough here today to carry you back. Rig's too tender for them places. That matter, rig'll not get you to the Notch neither, nor a bull-cart."

"Why not?"

"No road." Having delivered this intelligence, MacCray uncorked a bottle of snuff—presumably prime three-knob —pinched up a quantity, let it dribble along the back of his left hand from knuckle to wrist, snuffed it up a grateful nostril, concluding the process with a "ha ha" of satisfaction. "There's some as dips," he reflected, "and some as gums. The one is sorry and the other is common. Old Grandser used to tell that us MacCrays had give our blood for the Young Chevalier and it didn't fit for us to take tobacco in our mouths like as we was Guiches or Redlegs… though who all they could've been I'll own I do not honestly know."

Weathernox would no doubt have pursued this unexpected survival of Jacobite sentiment, thought Lucinda, who had no patience with dilettantes or amateur folk-speech fanciers, but Martha, having evidently realized the enormity of it, cried, "No roads! Is this the United States… or…"

The storekeeper put his elbows comfortably on the counter and cradled his chin in his hands, the beard jutting forward. "Well Mam, tis an argument still persists. Of course, I'm postmaster, a Whig-Unionist and *Re*-publican like all the MacCrays since John Bell was defeated (pity, that was), but there's those hereabouts—naming no names—that still hold by the Southron Cross and the Golden Circle. But live and let live's come to be our emblem; I misdoubt there's been a cutting or a shooting over the matter in a twenty-thirty years, excepting—"

"But how do we get to Rabbit Notch, then?"

MacCray drew back, evidently offended. "Well sir, that's a question I puzzle to answer." Then, possibly forgiving Weathernox his outlandish manners or taking pity on the women and his own desire to keep on talking, he resumed, "I've heard tell that back when there was talk of running a spurline for the train of cars from Blountsburg to here, there was thought of a funicular or somewhat to the Notch. That'd be! about, yes—mmmm—the time General Garfield was killed, shot up in a railroad station the poor man was, which naturally put down all talk of trains round about here, encouraging vice and rough conduct like that… But afterwards the folk were regretful and a lot of them moved on to places like Coal Creek and Elk Valley. Wheedled by high wages and easy living, such as prevails around the mines. Satan's snares. Never did regain our former numbers."

Lucinda, rendered almost desperate by MacCray's social history of Sevier, exclaimed, "But people from Rabbit Notch come down here to get their mail, don't they?"

"Only one ever comes this side of the Gap is Gustus Praseworthy. He makes the run bout once a month when he brings the li—the whi—when he brings down produce to trade and picks up the government letter for Master Joyleg.

"Oh!" cried Lucinda. "Aha!" bubbled Weathernox. "Well!" said Martha.

There was brief silence while MacCray looked from one to the other.

"Joyleg…" Weathernox rolled the name on his tongue. "What's he like?"

The postmaster shook his head. "I don't know. None from Sevier living have ever seen him, no sir, and if

the account be true he has never come down out of the Notch since settling there. What's he like? Why I suppose he's a man like other men, born of a woman and bound for a shroud, yet there have been dark tales of pacts with the devil and suchlike stuff—which of course I do not believe on. I've heard tell how my old grandser's dam once sighted the gaffer, but she'd never narrate about it, and I feel the same way. I've no desire to lay eyes on Master Joyleg, and if twere not my duty to handle his government letter I'd as soon not. Mind you, I don't hold with superstition or belief in witchcraft, but why take chances. Nay sir and ladies—my advice would be (if I may be so bold) to stay clear of Master Joyleg and all his works."

VI

FRANKS PAY NO TAXES

"You see!" Lucinda could not contain her triumph. The plot was unfolding, and it was even worse than she had anticipated. Not only was Joyleg's name being used to mulct the treasury, but the forgers had taken care to spread a net around their operations so that the ignorant country folk would shy away from their base and the supposed veteran. "You see!" she repeated. "Hearsay and fable! Tales and mumblings! Seized upon by cunning rascals!"

"Are you took sudden with the vapors, Mam? Hold on —there's hartshorn hereabouts somewhere."

"Don't bother," said Lucinda indignantly. Vapors indeed! She stole a peek to see if Weathernox was smiling; he wasn't. Of course he too must now realize how right she had been all along.

Yet he showed no signs of agitation. Instead, he said to MacCray, "If your great-grandmother caught sight of Joyleg, simple arithmetic shows what a very old man he is. What a very, very old man—well over a hundred. And I'm not surprised that legends cluster around him, they always do to such ancients. Though I'm sorry to hear they're of that nature."

"Stuff!" cried Lucinda. What was the matter with the man? Was he still going to persist in believing there was a real, living veteran with a legitimate claim? "What nonsense!"

"Sure you're all well, Mam?" inquired MacCray. "Some camphor to sniff at, perhaps?"

"Now then," said Weathernox briskly, dismissing both MacCray's concern for Lucinda's righteous anger, and gossip about Joyleg, "Now then, if Praseworthy gets down, he must get back up, else he wouldn't be able to come down again next time."

"Right," agreed MacCray; "you reason sharply. Sometimes he rides the jack and sometimes the jenny, whichsoever he don't ride packs the freight. And sometimes he brings along a two-three more, to trade off."

"So," finished Weathernox, "if he can ride a jack or a jenny I guess we can?"

He looked at Lucinda, whose first impulse was to ignore him. She nodded shortly. Martha looked glum.

MacCray shook his head. "Wouldn't do for the womenfolk. Never at all. No sir."

"Why not?" demanded Lucinda, bristling for equality.

"No sidesaddles. Not a one in town. If you're bent and determined to go, you'll have to leave the ladies. Just as well too; scoff though you may at tales, I'd want no female of mine within reach of Master Joyleg. There's tales…Miz Stevens might could put them up whilst you're—"

"Thank you," interrupted Lucinda. "We shall not need Mrs. Stevens' hospitality. I've come to go to Rabbit Notch, and go there I will. I've ridden mule-back and—"

"Not been a mule round here since eighteen and sixty-three…" He paused with the manner of a man determined to be fair, and added, "Well, sixty-four, anyway. It was when Andy Johnson was military governor that the army bought up all the mules here, and then, afterwards, there was a considerable attention of religion in these parts; the folk said it was time to give more heed to Scripture and not let our beastses gender with divers kinds, so—"

"Jack-back, then," said Lucinda, standing firm. "I'm not unused to roughing it and I've campaigned in some pretty rugged territory. In case you don't recognize me, I'm Lucinda Rose Habersham." She paused modestly.

"Honor to know you, Mam." MacCray bowed gallantly. "And you, Mr. Habersham. Good Tennessee name, 'tis."

"I am *not*—" began Weathernox, much more annoyed than seemed called for.

"I represent the next district in Congress," Lucinda pressed on, with some exasperation. "The Congress in Washington. And Mr. Weathernox—of Willie Jones County—represents the one next to it."

"Do tell! But you don't need to make a point of saying 'Washington,' Mam, though I honor you for it. Us MacCrays and most of the Sevier folk too, and so far as I know, those of the Notch, never had aught to do with the Rebel congress in Richmond City. Twas chiefly General Zollicoffer as stirred up the lowlanders unto Secession— though many of them commenced loyalty right smartly when the Rebel conscription—" Martha's disgusted sneeze brought him back to the present. He straightened, smoothed his beard between his palms, took more snuff. "So you're a Congress-lady. My, my. The women hereabout been fidgetin to vote long's I can recall, but they never do get around to it. It'd be legal now, wouldn't it? And the folk in your district—that'd be Chinquapin now, wouldn't it, where they hanged a poor feller back in ninety and nine or so for no more than shooting a blood-enemy—sent a lady to Congress, ay? Do tell." He looked at her with grave curiosity, wagging his head.

"You mean you have no contact with the outside world at all?" demanded Martha. "Don't you have the faintest idea of what's going on?"

MacCray drew himself up offendedly. "I surely wouldn't say that. I been as far as Chattanooga myself, thirty year back—precious poor whisky they had thereabout, and a man had to skulk around like a bushwhacker to get a scruple of it, too—and there was four-five boys from here who fought the Germans in Europe *and* Japan. We get both wish-books here, and city papers now and then. Miz Stevens she takes in *McCall's* and the women use the patterns if they ain't too immodest or fluttery. Salesmen have drove clear up here from Blountsburg for my order instead of getting it from Miz Davney, though naturally not every year. And we've got thirteen registered voters. We're no means bodily out of date like the Notch folk."

Lucinda, in passing, noted and regretted the thirteen voters, for it was certain such self-sufficient

characters couldn't help but mark their ballots rightly. "What Congressional district is Rabbit Notch in?"

" 'Taint in none."

"Impossible!" cried both Representatives simultaneously.

"Well Mam and Sir, being but a ignorant backwoodsman," MacCray said touchily, "I wouldn't know what's possible and what ain't." He twiddled with the brass cog of a kerosene lamp, struck a match when the wick was high enough to suit him. "Howsoever—" a soft yellow light sprang up, made shadows, began to flare sootily, was dimmed and surrounded by the glass chimney; "—it's a fact about the Notch. They ain't in no district because—"

A small girl in a long cotton dress opened the door and stood in petrified fascination at the sight of strangers. Lucinda's smile and Weathernox's cheery greeting only made her shrink into a writhing bashfulness which did nothing to abate her fixed stare. Only MacCray's reassuring familiarity persuaded her to whisper her wishes in his ear—without ever breaking the hold of her eyes. As soon as her purchase was deposited in her cloth poke, she sidled out, more backward than forward, and the storekeeper went on.

"—because they ain't in no county. No county at all. None of the three'd have'm. Willie Jones said—or maybe twas the other way round—"They pay no taxes, we don't want'm.' Chinquapin—or maybe Willie Jones—said, 'And we're not ones to take your leavins.' Our county looked matters over—looked'm over from here, that is, Notch dwellers being touchy then as now—said, 'There's not an ell of ground there could be assessed for the cost of posting it.' So each draws its lines, leaving Rabbit Notch to tother, which winds it up in none. And since district lines hereabout follow county lines, why…" He shrugged.

"You mean they don't pay taxes?" Lucinda demanded, aghast.

"None's I ever heard of."

"That's—that's impossible." She almost said, UnAmerican.

"Say they, why pay taxes for nothing?"

"Aren't they afraid their land may be seized?" asked Weathernox.

MacCray laughed briefly. "Shouldn't care to be the one to try. Nor does any sheriff fancy being Archibald-Bell-The-Cat. No, they pay no taxes, not them Franks."

"Franks?"

"Old name they call themselves. Don't know why."

Lucinda said firmly, "Something must be done about it."

"Yes Mam," said MacCray respectfully. "But they figure themselves tolerable the way they be, all right."

There was a brooding silence. Then Weathernox asked, "When does this Augustine Praseworthy make his monthly trip?"

"Gustus. Caesar Augustus, that is."

"I beg your pardon. And Mr. Praseworthy's."

"No matter. No matter at all. Let's see. March eighteenth, almanac says; government letter come with

today's post as usual—mmm—he might could arrive tomorrow. Or day after. But he'll happen along before Fools' Day for sure."

"The first of April? We can't wait that long," said Lucinda, visioning all the wild spending that could go on in her absence. "If he doesn't show up tomorrow morning we'll rent whatever donkeys are to be had here and get to Rabbit Notch as well as we can. After all, this isn't Tibet or Bolivia."

"No Mam, nor North Carolina, neither. Howsoever, even if Sevier folk was to overlook ladies ariding straddle-saddle—I'm not the one to say they would or wouldn't— and hire out their beasts to you, they wouldn't trust their not coming back."

"What about us not coming back?" asked Martha shrilly.

"Oh come," protested Weathernox. "Surely these mountains aren't so wild we need a guided tour?"

"Maybe. Maybe not. Sevier men naturally value their livestock. Things that get to the Notch don't often get back."

"Witchcraft and pacts with the devil, no doubt?"

"Or a wishfulness for property. I'll not slander them by saying they'd steal, but they might forget to return a beast for a year or so."

Lucinda found herself ready to yawn. "I'm afraid I'm tired," she apologized. "Could Mrs. Stevens put us up for the night?"

"Sure to, if I ask her," MacCray said. "Seeing she's my sister. And the congressman can abide abovestairs with me if he'd like."

"That's very kind of you."

"Proud to do it." MacCray tilted his head back so that his beard jutted out. "Old Grandser used to tell that MacCrays had give a place by our fire to the Prince as could claim four crowns if he'd had his entitles…" For a moment, as the lamp flame guttered in a tricky gust which somehow got past the chimney, the light flickering on his face might have come from a peat fire in the bleak and dangerous Hebrides. Then he gave an embarrassed smile and added, "Though who he was or which four might could be, I own to you I do not know."

VII

RABBIT NOTCH

Lucinda had not slept well, though the bed—she told herself—was comfortable enough. Hadn't she slept on a bumpy, lumpy pallet long enough so that Aunt Mary Esther-Ann's straw tick seemed soft and downy? Mrs. Steven's cornshucks were certainly no less satisfactory. And wasn't the worn quilt—worn through years of scrubbing with kettle-boiled soap, no doubt—nearly identical with the one on her old bed?

If she had allowed herself to become dependent on innerspring mattresses and the small luxuries Joe had provided for her and which she could now afford herself, why then she was showing the weak streak of Sugar Moon Smith instead of the sturdy nature of Aunt Mary Esther-Ann. A person had a right to the enjoyment of what he earned, but a public servant had a special duty. And a special need never to get too far from the standards of those she represented lest she become subtly corrupted.

She had felt no stranger to Mrs. Stevens' hospitality but had been immediately at home. The supper of fried chicken—company fare—"doughboys," and dried-apple pie, had been ample. Her hostess had been shy but obviously awed at the status of her guest. She was shy—her brother's being the tongue of the family, it seemed—but she quietly made Lucinda understand how honored she felt at entertaining her.

Why had she slept so ill? And dreamed in snatches of Joe Habersham? Her grief at being widowed had long since quieted. Why had she dreamed that Joe had come floating out of the Lincoln Memorial, wearing his uniform—no, not quite; it was the choke-collared tunic of Sergeant Harve Smith—and saluted her while a band played *Hail To The Chief*, and Joe's dark hair and eyes changed to blond and gray like—like someone else's, and Carroll Reece had followed Joe (not Joe) and pulled the pavement out from under her?

What a silly farrago of nonsense. MacCray had been right after all, she had been taken with the vapors. Or was it the altitude? No, of course not. Just the excitement, the nervous tension of being so close to Rabbit Notch, of exposing the Joyleg ring. Lucinda Rose, she admonished herself silently, pull yourself together.

After breakfast—fried mush, homemade pickles, hashed potatoes and gravy, more pie, and chicoried coffee—she and Martha started out to rejoin Weathernox at the store. The morning was gray and cold; it was misty with a mist just falling short of sleet, and Lucinda wondered what had happened to the promise of spring. Down the frozen ridges of creamy mud which served Sevier as a street, came a string of four donkeys, led by a man in a fox-pelt cap who could only be Caesar Augustus Praseworthy. "Turn around," she hissed at Martha, seizing her secretary's elbow.

"Wh-what?"

"Come back. We have to change."

"Now?"

There were rare moments—rare, because Lucinda was basically patient—when Martha exasperated "her. "Of course, now," she said. "If Praseworthy sees us in skirts he will think in terms of sidesaddles and the unladylikeness of our traveling to Rabbit Notch at all. Wearing slacks may not convince him we are proper donkey-riders, but at least we won't be adding obstacles."

"Any—ha-choo—adythig you say, LR."

Lucinda's less than satisfactory glimpse of her trousered hips—thank heavens, she didn't have to wear a girdle—in the dresser mirror was compensated," not that she cared particularly, by Tully Weathernox's appreciative glance. Ten years younger and less a gentleman, his look would have been expressed in a whistle. Lucinda blushed, and then became quite irrationally annoyed because his cursory glance at Martha's form evoked only an amused smile. What right had he to appraise women as though he were a sultan or—or something? "Good morning," she said coldly.

MacCray shook his head, as he looked at them, in slow wonder. "Hah-rrrrmmmm," he muttered, but whether this was greeting, comment, or scandalized expression was not evident. Praseworthy, a sandy-looking man with a walleye, averted his glance from them after the first startled look, and kept his

head resolutely turned thereafter.

The store was warmer than outside, but though the fire licked at the mica or isinglass window of the stove, Lucinda could still see her breath. For that matter she could see Praseworthy's too. He was addressing Weathernox with a certain truculence.

"And what might be your concern in the Notch, goodman?"

"I'm Congressman Weathernox; my business is with Mr. Joyleg."

The man absorbed the information slowly. It was clearly disturbing. "A squire, be you? A law man? From Nashville?"

"I am—or was—an attorney, but not a law man in the sense I suppose you mean. And not from Nashville—from Washington."

Praseworthy looked at Weathernox with doubt that graduated into respect. "Federal city, hay?" He wagged his head unhappily. "Be flayed and pegged," he muttered. "The pension…"

"What about the pension?" Lucinda demanded, coming forward, tired of the obscurity relegated to women in Sevier whether they wore skirts or pants. MacCray gaped in interest, but Praseworthy refused to acknowledge her existence.

"Yes," said Weathernox, "what about the pension?"

"How do you mean, good sir?"

"I mean—"

"He means the pension presumably goes to one Joyleg. How does it happen you know of it?" Lucinda was sure the donkey driver was one of the ring.

"Why… why," muttered Praseworthy, addressing Weathernox as though it had been he who had spoken, and sliding his red fur cap over one eye and scratching his overlong hair. "Talk… Not much else to do about the fire of a night but talk whilst making reparation on the gear. Time and again talk turns to the pension, and be the congress-men be coming to do justice to Master Joyleg or be they not… ? 'Tis a long year since the pension money went far enough. And now—I'll be flayed and pegged."

"I'm not sure I understand," said Weathernox.

"Aye," sighed MacCray. "Understanding's not easy."

"But be that as it may, can you take us—that is, Representative Habersham, Miss Forsh, and myself, back with you to Rabbit Notch so that we can talk to Mr. Joyleg in person?"

The cap slid back into place. A slow, uncertain smile played on Praseworthy's face. One eye looked Weathernox up and down, the other appraised the storekeeper's shelf of medications: Jalap, Cajaput, Mag. Sulph., Sal. Vol., Lobelia, Benzoin… "Talk to Master Joyleg in person? Mmmmm. Should think… mmmm… should think so."

"The Notch is no place for gentle ladies," expostulated MacCray. "You sir, must go if you must, but recollect I've warned you against taking the women-folk. Rough ways there, and no learning, to say nothing of dark goings-on and pacts with powers that shall be nameless, though they call theirselves Christians—"

"Don't hold with storekeepin nor dancin," said Praseworthy, "not to mention card-playin. 'No trafficker shall be seen in the temple on that day,' says Zachariah. Devil's work."

MacCray reddened and stepped back. "Hearts nor Old Maid are not card games in an evil sense. You'd be ill-off, Gustus, without traffickers and storekeeping to sell your… mmmm… pro-duce."

"Better use it to home," replied Praseworthy promptly. " 'Tis but a vanity: sugar (can we not grow sorghum?) and salt (there's licks aplenty not too far off), ribbons and thread and other such gauds, the Tempter's path to pride and luxury."

Lucinda's heart swelled. She could hardly go along with a standard finding MacCray's meager stock luxury, but she exulted in the self-sufficiency it indicated. Eleven dollars a month would be princely in such a society; she applauded —no, of course she didn't applaud. The eleven dollars a month was stolen money.

"How old, exactly, is Mr. Joyleg?" Weathernox asked. MacCray looked alarmed.

"'How old, exactly…'" repeated Praseworthy. "Ay Master, how old is old? Riddle me that." Weathernox shook his head. "No offense," added the donkey-driver.

"And none taken."

"How long would you be fixin to stay about the Notch?"

"Not long—just long enough to talk with Joyleg," said Weathernox.

"Just long enough to prove he's a fraud or—more likely—doesn't exist," Lucinda corrected, instantly aware she had been unwise.

Caesar Augustus looked her over, his face blank. "Men shall not put on what appertaineth to women, nor women that which appertaineth to men." He turned his better eye toward Weathernox. "This your yokemate?" he asked. "Or tother one?"

"Neither," answered the congressman, flushing slightly.

Praseworthy's look grew bold, almost insolent. "Take a power of provin. Old dog-fox was sound of wind and limb yesterday. Endorsed his last month's document and sent it down to trade with." He took out an oblong blue card. The three breathed in sharply, bent over it. On the back, in a large, archaic hand, in rusty ink, was the signature, hardly wavering at all: *Ifachar Joyleg*. Weathernox smiled; Lucinda set her mouth firmly; Martha sneezed.

"Yup—a power of provin. Well, if you're set and determined to go, I'll not trade the extra beasts till next trip. Meanwhile I'll be about my commerce with the goodsmonger here and be ready to sally shortly."

Lucinda chided herself for the tremor of nervousness she felt. She had thought nothing, back in the capital, of setting out for Rabbit Notch, yet here in Sevier, now the way was clear, she was timorous, as though about to travel into the interior of China or the Congo. Praseworthy's yokel stare had not affected her—she was used to that sort of thing and accustomed to turn it to her advantage by a combination of haughtiness and forthrightness—but could MacCray's maunderings about dealings with the devil…? Or had she developed a kittenish clinging attitude just because Tully Weathernox was along? Absurd!

Methodically the Rabbit Notch courier laded his purchases and exchanges aboard one of the donkeys. "Me and you'll trade off ridin and walkin," he said to Weathernox.

"What about saddles?" demanded Lucinda.

"Recollect Mam, I warned you there weren't no sidesaddle in all of Sevier," said MacCray.

"No-no, I meant ordinary ones."

"Don't need no gear to ride straddle," said Praseworthy contemptuously. "Man and boy I never had aught betwixt me and the brute but my breeches."

Weathernox looked at Lucinda inquiringly. "I guess I can manage bareback if Martha can," she replied.

"I wish I was bag hobe," said Martha. "Otherwise I dode care."

Actually Lucinda found her seat more comfortable than any saddle she had experienced. She moved her knees high and ran her fingers over the furry hide. Martha looked uneasy and Weathernox, as might have been expected, looked quite absurd, his feet almost touching the ground.

"You're not back by time Miz Davney comes again," said MacCray dubiously, "best I send word by her to Washington City…" It was part statement, part question, part a final, hopeless warning. The two representatives smiled; Martha looked miserable, Praseworthy disdainful.

He jerked the rope bridle of the lead beast. "Bespoke guests have naught to fear," he said. "Goatsuckers and slanderers, hill-gahoons and they that defy the plain Word —all suchlike interlopers…" He left the threat unfinished and ominous.

"Good-bye, Mr. MacCray," called Lucinda over her shoulder as her donkey began moving. "We'll be all right, and thanks for everything."

"God be with you," shouted the storekeeper entreatingly. The jack bearing Weathernox brayed a farewell—or was it a diabolical laugh?

It was chilly in Sevier. The sun shone warmer in the hills, exposing patches of faintly steaming earth, and coaxing shortlived trickles of melting snow to run between the tree-trunks and over smooth rocks. They passed a very few, very small cabins; but though smoke wandered out of the chimneys no one came out to hail them or even stare as they went by. Once a shag-backed dog rushed up, snarling furiously. Praseworthy made a swift, chopping motion with his hand and the cur swivelled and ran off yelping, snow flying from its paws.

After that they passed no sign of settlement or cultivation. In the mountains it was unarguably downright cold; the pines wrapped themselves in green and white against the wind; the boulders were huge in their snoods; the bare branches of oak and larch looked winter-hard against any suggestion of returning bud and leaf. And always, following no trail visible to the visitors except the tracks of this morning's early journey into Sevier, already more than half obscured by wind scattered snow, always, the way led up.

Once, looking back, Lucinda caught sight of Sevier huddled far below as if to escape the cold; and once Praseworthy, breaking the silence which had fallen on him when he passed out of the wordly turmoil of Sevier, gestured to two hair-thin wisps of smoke or vapor. "Pitch Pit there… Warm Soack yonder." After that there was nothing to remind them men dwelt in these mountains, or ever had. By and by mists descended, then it began to snow.

"Cad we stob for a few midutes and lide a fire?" Martha begged pitifully. The red fox cap didn't turn, but Lucinda raised a questioning eyebrow. "No. Just a fire. I'm code."

"It can't be much longer," Lucinda encouraged, without deep conviction. She thought she knew the hills,

but she had never been through any part quite so wild, trackless, untouched. She caught herself searching for blazes on the trees. The wind, now not merely blustering but howling, flung sharp snow in her face.

The wind shifted, the snow stopped. Reaching a hogback, they came upon a bald place from which they were able to catch a glimpse of the crest's profile. From here it could be seen that Rabbit Notch really was a notch, a pie-shaped plateau protected by blunted peaks on three sides, open only to the south. Lucinda thought it must have looked fair ground indeed to settle on in days when a man was concerned only with climate and fertility, game and wood, not on money or markets.

Praseworthy's voice broke through. "About to cross the Gap. Hold on, all." A thin, terrified squeal from Martha answered him.

The donkey's tiny hooves thudded on a wooden bridge of uneven planks, worn, warped planks—a very narrow bridge without any railing. To right and left, and through the breaches between the planks they looked down into a deep cleft. How deep it was, Lucinda didn't care to speculate. "Close your eyes, Martha," she admonished, "and hang on tightly." She herself was gripping with her knees and the fingers on the bridle were clenched. Only shame prevented her from throwing her arms around the donkey's neck. "H-how did the first's-settlers cross? Or did the Indians c-conveniently have a bridge ready?" She looked resolutely ahead—not down.

"Tree," enlightened Praseworthy. "Fallen. Tall one, they do say."

And then they were across. Lucinda reached forward and held her knees with her hands. It was easier to keep them from quivering that way. Their guide halted the caravan.

"Stomp your feet a bit," he advised. "Twon't take but a minute."

"What?" asked Weathernox.

"Here," ordered Lucinda peremptorily, "help me with Martha."

Obediently he dismounted, and together they went to the secretary. She was still clutching grimly, her eyes tight shut. Weathernox lifted her off the donkey; Lucinda and he supported her till she grew steady enough to stand alone. Then Lucinda reached for Weathernox's arm. "Tully! Look! What is he doing?"

Praseworthy had hitched all four donkeys to a strange apparatus and was leading them around in a steady circle. "A windlass—a ship's windlass," said Weathernox; "how the devil could it have been dragged up here and over that chasm?"

"Devil's work, Mr. MacCray might say," said Lucinda. "But what for?"

"We'll soon see."

As they watched, a rope came up, slowly and tautly from the abyss, and the wooden causeway swung with deliberation to one side. It was not fixed to anything on the far edge of the gap, and evidently rode on some sort of pivot. With only a protesting creak or so, it moved along its ninety-degree angle and came to rest snugly against the rock shelving.

"We—we're completely cut off," Martha wailed. "No one can ged do us from the outside world."

"Ay up, you're safe now, Mistress," Praseworthy observed, unhitching the animals and gesturing them to remount. "Let the heathen rage howsoever they list, none of 'm can cross over unto the Notch without leave."

Lucinda glanced at Weathernox, who was walking in long, easy strides—he and the guide had changed off—as though he crossed drawbridges into isolated retreats daily, as a matter of course. She could not take the incident so calmly. Suppose Joyleg's gang were not only cheats and forgers, but robbers and murderers as well? What could Weathernox do against them?

Though the tilted plateau that was the Notch looked small and flat from die edge of the Gap, as they went farther they could see it was expansive, rolling with gentle hillocks on which last year's cornstalks were moldering black and brown and gray. There was not a trace of snow and the ground did not look hard-frozen. Odd-looking sheep nibbled in the rows. The farther they went, the more it lost its distinctive quality—though it was distinctive enough simply by being located out of geographical context—the peaks receded and disappeared, the land seemed just another stretch of farming country, with a snake-fence here and there, an occasional black-and-white chicken which looked different from the usual plymouth rocks, and a rare, rangy-looking, undersized cow, treading daintily indifferent to gaggles of geese.

Weathernox pointed to these last. "If I hadn't read they were practically extinct I'd say those must be Pilgrims' Gray Geese."

"Gray Geese," conceded Praseworthy. "Fine roastin come Twelfth Night or Commodore's Birthday. Not heard of Pilgrim, though. No such name hereabout"

They came to a log house which might have posed for the woodcuts in an old biography. The ends of the logs had not been trimmed; they protruded unevenly, the roof was crossed with transverse poles and a sticks-and-clay chimney oozed smoke. "It looks like pictures of Cherokee cabins before the Removal," said Weathernox.

Praseworthy scowled. Then he nodded to a man with a long rifle who stood beside the trail. "Cousin Drew."

The man acknowledged the greeting with a nod so brief it barely seemed to move his head. He was darker than Praseworthy but the resemblance was unmistakable. "Cousin Gustus." He kept his attention intently fixed on the strangers.

"Studyin to go squirrelin?"

"Might."

"Make tasty stew-timber."

Cousin Drew did not comment on this culinary observation but allowed his head to incline slowly toward the three strangers in manifest question.

"Up to see Master Joyleg," explained Praseworthy, with just the faintest—or was Lucinda imagining things—just the faintest nervous twitch. As though he had exceeded whatever authority he possessed and feared reprimand. Or—dreadful thought—was suffering the anxious excitement of triumph at having lured three victims to their doom.

VIII

POOR OLD JOYLEG

"Up to see Master Joyleg," repeated Praseworthy. "Male person's Congress-man, fixin to see about the pension." Was it Lucinda's imagination, or did some secret signal flicker between them?

Cousin Drew's mouth opened slowly, shut into a threadlike line. No further words were exchanged, but Lucinda felt Cousin Drew's eyes unwavering on their backs as they moved off.

"Is it far to Joyleg's?" asked Weathernox. Lucinda wondered how he enjoyed being referred to as the "male person," remembering how hill people delicately referred to bulls, boars, rams, roosters, and billies as the male crittur or the male beast. If it were not for her fears she might have been amused.

"A small chance," said Praseworthy.

"Does he live alone?" Weathernox persisted.

"Do and don't," replied Praseworthy cryptically.

A toothless woman in something resembling a mobcap opened the door of the nearest cabin to spill dishwater, stood in frozen posture while the basin steamed thinly, watched them go by. Stricken just as silent was a small boy at her side, his legs partly covered by pants too long for shorts and too short to be considered long. Lucinda's thoughts of robbery and murder suddenly eased. It was hard—impossible—to believe all of Rabbit Notch was a den of thieves. The Joyleg ring of swindlers, yes, but that was probably all. "What are those black and white chickens, or don't they have a name?" she asked.

"Dominickers. Tasty fried. For turnin on the spit, folks fancy…" The phrase ended with "pigeon," but the adjective before it confused her. Popinjay-pigeon, passerjay-pigeon? She couldn't make it out.

"The sheep and cattle," asked Weathernox; "are they any special breed?" Lucinda thought it obvious they were simply underfed, inbred scrubs.

"Sheep's Arlington Long Wool, I've heard Master Joyleg tell. Cows're plain cows and cow brutes, far's I know." Cow brutes, not male critturs.

"The Department of Agriculture—" Lucinda began, then stopped. It wasn't her district. It wasn't anyone's. Still, it was part of Tennessee; if she ran for governor… They didn't vote. There could be a first time, couldn't there? There would be no use telling Praseworthy or Cousin Drew what the DA could show them about breeding or butterfat. Talk to the women. Government services, men like Tully Weathernox were always voting such extravagant appropriations, could do more for the women. That poor creature with the dishwater was probably young despite her toothlessness—a tooth for every child wasn't an inviolable maxim. And she could open their eyes to the conspiracy which kept them voteless, at which MacCray had hinted so blandly. But first, expose the pension fraud. That was what had brought her here, not DA pamphlets nor the paternalism of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The cabins seemed regularly spaced. More children appeared who stared, marvelling—the girls in long dresses and caps, the boys in the same compromise pantaloons—and were joined by dogs, all bearing a family resemblance, as did the children. Inbreeding was inevitable in these remote places; Lucinda hoped it was no closer than cousin-ship, remembering Jill Brittin's nasty speculations with distaste.

The dogs barked confusedly—with friendly welcome for Praseworthy and his donkeys, in puzzled outrage at the strangers. Men, bearded or clean-shaven were surprised in their chores; a few women's faces peered from behind rudely-made dutch doors whose upper halves were open.

"Here," said Praseworthy abruptly, "you'd best pack the letter to Master Joyleg yourself. Please to dismount; I'll take the beasts."

Lucinda was startled. "But…aren't you going to show us the way?"

"It's not needful. Follow after your nose to the last place above." He handed Weathernox the brown, franked envelope ("Franks," MacCray had called the inhabitants of Rabbit Notch—could there be some connection?) and turned his donkeys off toward a cabin indistinguishable from the others.

"I musd say… moudan hosbidality…" Martha mumbled;"… choo!"

Lucinda said, "Hospitality has nothing to do with it. Either he has belatedly regretted bringing us here and is afraid of a reprimand from the leaders of the ring or else… or else he simply wants to stay out of the line of fire when we're mowed down."

Weathernox turned a shocked face toward her. "Surely you don't—you can't—still believe such things? Why, all you have to do is to look around you to dispel such melodramatic notions. Oh, no—you are tired, you aren't thinking."

Suddenly she was ashamed of her hysteria. He had spoken gently and not—despite his words—in a tone of reproof, but he carried over to her the conviction that she had been talking like a silly girl. That Rabbit Notch harbored a swindler or swindlers she did not doubt, but the fancy of desperate mountaineers ready to murder to protect their ill-gotten gains of eleven dollars a month vanished. "I'm sorry," she apologized.

He touched her hand. "No need to be sorry. Come on. Do you realize we'll soon see Joyleg and find out whether he's real or not?"

She smiled at his concession that there was a possibility she had been right about the fraud. "What on earth did he mean by following after our noses?"

"All I know is, you can't help it, unless you walk backward. Anyway, we'll soon see—excelsior and so on."

Lucinda, looking back and down, felt there was something vaguely amiss about the way the settlement had been laid out or grown. She pointed. "Those cabins are too far apart for a village. Much too far apart. And they're too close together for farms. Unless… good Heavens! Tully, do you imagine they… ?"

He nodded. "Why not? Communal fields? Very possible," he said, as though noting a harmless novelty instead of aghast at an ugly heresy.

"Col*lect*ivism!" She tried to make him realize.

"Oh, my dear Lucinda—" a manner of speech of course, but the notion of being his dear Lucinda was disturbing. "—cooperative farming is an American usage as old as Jamestown and Captain John Smith. Mmmm—relative of yours, perhaps? The Russians practice it also, but they were doing so long before Joe Stalin's comrades began feuding in regular mountaineer style. Even Britain had her commons, glebe or otherwise, before the Enclosure Acts. The jealously guarded little family plots we owe, I think, to the French. Because no Chinese… Just as we owe log cabins to the Swedes and Finns in Delaware."

"But Tully…" She lost the thread of what she had been about to say. How had they abruptly come to be on first name terms, he instructing her in historical oddities and she hanging on his words with mouth properly agape? She could almost hear herself twittering, *Why, how interesting*—like a ponytailed,

blue-jeaned adolescent. How revolting could one get?

Happily it could not be long before they came to wherever they were going. Once facing the villain who was forging veteran Joyleg's name—it made no matter if he were son, nephew, or cousin to the original—this interval of mooing and cooing would be over soon enough. Then they'd see what was what and who was who.

He paused, sniffing. "There's a funny smell in the air."

"Donkeys," suggested Lucinda. "Or their sudden absence."

"No, no. Sweetish. Mmmm. Sort of familiar…"

"I dode smell a thig," declared Martha.

Lucinda took a deep breath. "Mash!"

"Of course. I knew it was familiar."

"No wonder they're content to have no law or taxes here. Utterly anarchical."

He shrugged. "It would cost more to enforce the law than would be gained in revenue. And the purpose of taxation is revenue, not prohibition."

"I dode drig," said Martha. "Probised by gradbother."

"I suppose poor old Joyleg's a moonshiner. Poor fellow, it's probably the only way he can stretch his pension to cover bare necessities."

"Ridiculous. It's part of the general picture of scofflawry. I'll venture to say well find a close connection between the distilling and the defrauding."

Martha's sneeze was a substitute for loyal applause. Weathernox shook his head as though unable to understand such persistent error. He opened his mouth to say something, but before he could speak, they came in sight of the house. It might not have been impressive by any other standards than Rabbit Notch's, but by those it was a mansion. The logs were not only peeled and fairly matched, but shaped; instead of the minimum of meager windows there were a great many, close together, all glazed. Some were tiny bull's eye panes, others were clear glass and large enough.

The most startling feature was the verandah fronting it, a genuine Mount Vernonish verandah, with thick logs, smoothed and tapered so that they bulged slightly in the middle, to serve as columns. Attica in the wilderness—or at least urbs in rure. The front door was studded with fat-nailheads and had big wrought iron hinges; top and bottom it was fitted with St. Andrew's crosses which filled the space. Lucinda had heard of "witch-doors"—was this one? MacCray had said…

"Well," she whispered. "If that's Joyleg's, *some*body's certainly made a good thing out of Uncle Sam's carelessness." . —

"Or else it goes to show how good old American know-how and backbone can triumph over even the parsimony of pennypinchers and nickelnursers. Imagine doing all this on eleven dollars a month."

Lucinda sniffed disdainfully. Martha snuffled. The odor of mash now pervaded the air, almost driving out all other smells: wet wood, rotted leaf mold, animals, earth—everything. Smoke came out of the chimney—brick, not sticks and clay—but the scent was lost.

A picket fence enclosed a front garden of flagged walks, shrubs, the black remains of last summer's flowers. The gate refused to budge, but there was a stile; Weathernox helped her over it with enthusiasm emphasized by the antiseptic efficiency with which he assisted Martha Forsh. "Now what?"

"Good Heavens," cried Lucinda. "What did we come here for? Now we march in and expose Joyleg, of course."

He hesitated. "Listen, Lucinda: whether he's a neglected hero as I believe or a villain as you do, he's still an old man—a very old man—undoubtedly fragile and easily unnerved. Surely you don't want to be responsible for what might be tantamount to murder?"

"This is do dibe to mage speeches," flared Martha. "I wad to get inside—id's code."

With some hesitation Weathernox advanced to the door. An ornate knocker in the shape of a Turk's head— once enamelled, judging by the flecks of coloring in the recesses—stood out. He used it. There was no answer to the hollow bang. He turned. "Could we be too late? Poor old man, alone and neglected—"

"Oh, really," said Lucinda impatiently. She brushed by him and opened the door. The poor man could well be taking advantage of their hesitation to make a getaway. The large, highceilinged, panelled room was gratefully warm, even stuffy. The evident source of heat was a great fireplace in which logs burned and crackled, but it also seemed to seep in from a room beyond.

"Hello," called Weathernox. "Anyone home?"

Lucinda thought she heard a faint voice in the room beyond, then Martha clutched her elbow. Someone was sitting in the high-backed chair before the fire. A hand drooped over the side. It was long and brown and knobby at the joints and serpentined with veins.

"Mr.—Mr. Joyleg?" asked Weathernox.

The hand leapt, closed and opened, fell again to the chair arm. A weak noise like the beginning of a whimper rose. "Ay? Who ye be?" The voice was feeble, tremulous. Lucinda saw there was a mass of quilts in the chair, topped by a knitted cap. Slowly the cap rose. There was a face under it, the color of tea-stains, with sunken cheeks, a hooked nose, a long cleft chin on which white bristles sprouted unevenly. The feature which demanded and held attention, however, was the eyebrows. Starting—it seemed —deep in the sockets and pre-empting a wide sweep from the forehead, they were thrust outward in a thick mass, writhing and tangled, fining off to wisps and whorls far forward. The white hairs were broom-stiff; working their way out between them were rare, fine, dark ones which curled slyly. The whole effect was arresting, compelling— as though the eyebrows had not been sapped of their vitality but had drawn it from the rest of the body, parasitically.

Deepset, redrimmed eyes glazed, yellow, unfocussed, filmy. A dry tongue appeared and lapped at dry lips. "Who…?" the weak, cracked voice repeated. "Come nigh—I can't make you out… ay? Mag! Ay there, Mag —where's Mag?"

"Mr.—Mr. Joyleg?" Lucinda found her own voice just a little unsteady.

The shaggy eyebrows rose, drew together in a frown. "Mmmm…" The head moved questioningly forward, the eyes strained. "Ay, mistress. I'll ask your pardon… my not rising to make a leg. Where's Mag got to? Can't fashion to get up alone. Pardon…" The head fell back, the lids closed.

Lucinda turned to Weathernox. "Tully? Oh Tully, forgive me. I really do think I believe in him now."

IX

IT CAN'T BE TRUE

There was a sound at the inner door, of the sort people who are nervous of them make at cats. A flickering light was there—Lucinda realized suddenly that it had darkened since they entered—held by a sturdy-looking woman.

"You'll be the outlanders Cousin Gustus brought up from below." She held a saucer with a dark looking candle in it, shielded by a thick, uneven chimney, seemingly made from a bottle. Her long dress fell from chin to ankle with no interruptions save those provided by nature. "He acknowledged as how he'd conveyed the Congress man, chirruping like a lumpkin. True?" She thrust the last word at Weathernox directly, like a sword. "Yea or nay?"

"I'm Representative Weathernox, and this is Representative Habersham and Miss Forsh. I'm afraid we came in uninvited, but there was no answer to our knock."

The woman curtsied to Lucinda. Straightening up, she said, "Ay Master, there's none as knocks here. We're simple folk—even Master Joyleg—and think it not amiss to come and go freely for we have naught to steal nor hide." A look of doubt crossed her sallow face. "If she's your lady, how's she not got your name?"

Lucinda's cheeks felt warm. "I'm not—" she began helplessly. It was utterly ridiculous, the way they all assumed that she and he…

A sound came from the chair. "Mag?"

"Aye, Master Joyleg?" The woman set the candle on the mantel.

"Mag—are their horses hitched? And oats—did you oat them, Mag?"

"They come afoot," she informed him briskly. "Horses? When was there last a horse in the Notch? Eat a smart chance too much, horses do, as who but yourself knows better? Can use the oats ourselves for porridge or haggis or kedgeree. Ready for your soak, old sir? Tis long beyond time." She bent over him. "Or'd you liefer narrate a bit first? I'll turn your chair."

Tully suddenly came out of the daze which had enveloped him and moved forward to help, but she had already moved it, man and all, before he got to her side. Either she was very strong, or Joyleg was very light. Skin and bones, thought Lucinda, and nothing to flesh them out on eleven dollars a month. Oh, cruel…

The chair was now at right angles to the fire, so that half the incredibly ancient face and one incongruously fierce eyebrow was illuminated while the other was in shadow. Mag brought over a settle, gestured them to sit. For a moment no one said anything. Then, slowly, the knitted cap drew back, the head came up, the old bleary eyes opened. The withered lips parted and he bunked at them.

"Forgive our intrusion," said Weathernox. "You *are* Isachar Joyleg, receiving a monthly pension from the federal government?"

"Isachar Joyleg. Servant."

Lucinda hadn't realized she had been holding her breath.

"Then you must be—that is… You were in the Civil War?"

All three leaned forward. The old man swallowed, pushed his lips out, considered. "In the war? For sure. Civil… ? Twasn't civil… raw heads and bloody bones. Naught civil in war, no…"

"The War Between the States, then. Or the War of the Rebellion. Umm—the Great Rebellion?"

The eyelids flickered. Fire glinted in the pupils, tiny red sparks. "Rebels ay… Twas a nice question. 'Disperse, ye rebels,' hay?… Called the Commodore a pirate…"

Lucinda said with some perplexity, "You don't suppose… ? No, he couldn't have been on the Confederate side or he wouldn't be drawing a federal pension. What commodore could he be talking about?"

"Semmes of the *Alabama*? But as you say, he couldn't have been on the Southern side…"

Mag turned and spat into the fire. "Time he had his soak," she said. "He's not usually near this poor. Can't recollect it in all my days, though I've heard of hard winters when he lay for weeks like a mummy. Thaw's overdue, that's what it is, I make it." She raised her voice. "Come along, old sir; your warm soak's waiting."

He made a noise in his throat as she peeled away the quilts. Underneath was a furry robe, which she laid aside. Then she plucked out two pillows wedged on either side of him and he half slid into her arms. "Never seen him this poor," she said. She hoisted him to his feet. As Tully moved forward she shook her head. "Obliged to you, but I can manage."

Joyleg, held up like an outsize puppet, stared vacantly into the fire. "I don't understand," began Lucinda. "Surely he should be getting medical attention, special care, hospi-talization…"

"On eleven dollars a month? In Rabbit Notch?"

"It's awful to see the poor old man fading away before our eyes and nothing being done."

Mag said, "I'll call my niece and have her warm some victuals whilst I settle Master Joyleg. The march and all must have whet your appetites."

"Oh, you mustn't trouble," murmured Lucinda.

"Coulded ead a thig," stated Martha.

"Please don't bother," said Weathernox.

"Old he'd take it mighty amiss was you to spurn his welcome. And where else would you feed, if not here? Girl's in the kitchen now. Thirzah!" She started off, the old man's legs moving slowly and stubbornly. "Thir-*zah*?"

A young voice answered, "Yes, Aunt?" and Lucinda thought the girl who came into the room and looked at them in shy wonder was pretty in a plain way. Her dress, like Mag's, was of some coarsely woven, yellowish-brown stuff which appeared more durable than dainty.

"Don't gape and yammer," admonished Mag's voice, receding through the door. "Make your manners to

the Congress-man and dame." The girl curtsied quickly, flushing. "Set four places, though belike himself will not be eating. Beeswax lights. Pigeon pottage. Venison from the smokehouse. Taters in the left pile of ashes, yams in the right'n. Drippin gravy. Hurtleberry pies. Warnuts and wine. Taint every day Master Joyleg has guests." Her voice died away. Thirzah blushed again, murmured something, followed.

"Grand-daughter or great-grand-daughter, I suppose," said Weathernox, gazing after her. "Fresh and unspoiled."

"She probably smokes a pipe and will be a hag at twenty-five," said Lucinda snappishly, somewhat to her own surprise.

Weathernox made no reply. He found the stump of another candle and lit it at the fire. "An antique collector's paradise; there's not a thing that doesn't look Eighteenth Century, though I suppose most of it is just traditional pattern. Still, it doesn't show the deterioration you'd expect in such a case. This clock, now—wooden works, I swear. Yes. This silver-gilt bowl, if it wasn't quite so battered, might pass as the cousin of some made by Paul Revere. And books. Leatherbound, every one, mostly in what looks like tree-calf… Mmmm. Josephus. Filson's History of Kentucky. Holy Bible, naturally. Bartram's Travels. Narrative of the Wreck of the Brig 'Commerce.' Mmmm. Hobbes' Leviathan. Common Sense by Thos. Paine. Sermons of Jno. Knox. Wide-ranging taste-though he can't be expected to read much now. Funny, no books on the Civil War. Mmmm: *Traite de la Culture des Pommes de Terre*. Reads French too."

Thirzah entered, either still pink—or pink again—to set the table. The candles were thick and brown and had a strong scent, not unpleasant. The beeswax was evidently unbleached. The cutlery was a casual mixture of silver, pewter, and hornhandled iron pieces. There were wooden bowls and trenchers and earthenware. There was a mortar and pestle with peppercorns, and another set containing coarse salt. The last piece was simply a slab of hardwood, humped and worn, on which rested a breadloaf and a long knife, bright with recent honing. She left again and came back, pushing a wagon holding platters of food and steaming bowls. Lucinda smiled at her (so did Weathernox, with more warmth than Lucinda thought called for), but she seemed overcome with shyness and whispered faintly. "Please to help yourselves," and backed out, this time for good.

Included on the wagon was a basin, an ewer of hot water, and a piece of rough linen evidently a towel. Lucinda dipped her fingers, dried them. Martha and Tully Weathernox washed a little more heartily. "It looks and smells delicious," said Lucinda, dishing out after a moment's hesitation.

"Cad sbell a thig," moaned Martha.

They took their places. "Mr. Weathernox," said Lucinda, only a quarter-joking, "will you ask the blessing?"

The food was good, very good, though strange to their palates. "Feel like I was eating something prepared by an old, old recipe," said Weathernox, swallowing. "Mag could make a fortune opening some exotic little restaurant."

"Cand dasde a a thig."

"No conveniences," explained Lucinda. "No ready-ground seasonings, no pressure-cookers, no quick-frozen, cellophane wrapped, predigested, pre-cooked, degerminated, purified, sterilized, refined and re-refined ingredients. Natural food, naturally prepared."

"Good for nature," agreed Weathernox. "Do taste the wine, Lucinda. It's obviously made from wild grapes—Scuppernong or Catawba—mild and delightful. Really, Mr. Joyleg does all right on his

pittance."

"It's a shame," said Lucinda feelingly, taking a sip of wine. It was good, not sticky or suggestive of alcohol. "Something must be done for him."

"If it's not too late. I wonder how old he really is."

"I've heard of genuinely documented cases, right in this country, of people a hundred and fourteen or fifteen. I suppose there's no reason why an exceptional case under exceptional conditions couldn't be a hundred and twenty-five or thirty. This old man certainly appears to be every bit of that. I suppose we'll have to check the Adjutant-general's files to see what age he gave when he enlisted."

"I can hardly wait to find out what service he saw… Chickamauga? Lookout Mountain? Perhaps Vicksburg?"

"He's so old, he may have been in from the very first" Lucinda took up the litany. "Balls Bluff, Bull Run, Murfreesboro."

"You dode know yed he foughd ad all," muttered Martha, still loyal to Lucinda's original stand, but weakening.

"Nonsense!" said Lucinda. "An old man like that must be telling the truth—it's like a deathbed confession."

Tully smiled benignly at her and she looked down. Between them they would see things were righted for Joyleg; they would fight together in a nonpartisan cause. This was above party politics.

"Besides, he's breagig the law—moodshiding."

Lucinda winced. "Probably nothing to do with him at all."

"That's right," said Weathernox. "He's clearly far too feeble to have any hand in it. But, by the smell of things the still must be quite near the house. Either the Notch folk have taken advantage of his condition or—and I'm afraid this is just as likely—he simply doesn't care. Distilling has never been looked upon as a real crime in the hills. *Malso prohiborum*, rather than *malo in se*."

Lucinda shook her head. "Just the same, it's breaking the law."

"So we are fortunate in being lawmakers rather than lawenforcers," he said. "My, this mountain air has certainly given me an appetite. Maybe I will have just another bit of that pie, if you will be so good?" Somehow he made the request seem quite intimate and domestic, even with Martha there. And really, she didn't mind; there was something about him that made her feel comfortable.

"Why," she said, coming out of the study into which she had fallen, "we must have been sitting here for hours and hours."

"Time flies in pleasant company," said Tully, looking directly at her. She hoped her hair wasn't too untidy. He pushed his chair back and got up from the table. "Do you mind if I let in a little fresh air? It does seem a bit stuffy in here."

"Not at all."

A clear, icy gust which might have been waiting outside purposefully, came rushing in. Martha shivered, gave him an angry glance and moved as near the fire as she could get without scorching. Tully closed the

door apologetically. Lucinda thought she heard a mutter or growl from the inner part of the house. "I wonder how long his soak will take him? In fact, I wonder what kind of soak it can be?"

The shout came trumpeting through the air. "Some plaguey dolt has let a poisonous draft of night air in! Scathes and strays—d'ye want me to catch an affliction? Y'rogue—whoever you be—batten that hatchway on the double!"

There was volume to the shouting voice but no depth or resonance. "Someone must have come in a back way," suggested Lucinda.

Tully called out, "It's shut, sir. May I ask who's there?"

"Who do ye suppose? Who were ye expecting—Simon Girty, or me Lord Howe?" There was a clattering of wood on wood. "What's your business? Mag, girl, there's strangers without, foreigners belike, mayhap even outlanders, French soup-suppers from the mincing sounds of them. See what's their affair here, that's a love."

They heard the murmur of Mag's voice, but couldn't make out the words. "Odd," muttered Weathernox.

The other voice growled, "Come afore, did they? When I was poorly? I tell ye, lass, I was not poorly, just—me mind was on other things. Strangers? There's been no strangers come acalling since I don't know when…" The voice died away to a testy mutter.

"How peculiarly he speaks, whoever he is," said Lucinda. She raised her voice. "If Mr. Joyleg has finished, may we see him again? If it won't tire him."

"A wench, by gad! A strange wench! Nay, lass, twill not tire me. Just bide a bit till I slip on me breeches. Ha!"

Luanda's eyes widened. "That couldn't be him," she whispered. Then she laughed. "Why I suppose it's someone else with the same name. They're all cousins here, aren't they?"

"Now then, Mag, look sharp. A foreign wench, ay? Tis a long day since I've clapped eyes on a dear creature as wasn't blood kin to every other soul in the Notch. Tie me ribbon, Mag, and mind the ends are even and lie straight. Stap me vitals: a foreign nymph! Ha!"

The two representatives were still looking at each other in perplexity—Martha was absorbed in the fire—when a step sounded in the doorway. He stood there, the fringes of his buckskin coat swinging gently. He was dressed all in leather, soft leather hugging his calves and thighs, hanging loosely over arms and chest. One bulge-veined and knuckled hand gripped a knotty stick, more like a cudgel than a cane. His gray hair—startlingly picked out here and there with strands of absolute black—was long, clubbed behind with a ribbon. His shaven cheeks were hollow but not sunken, his thin mouth was drawn firm under a great jutting, bony nose, his eyebrows—

Lucinda recognized the eyebrows first. They were more than bushy and wiry, the black and white hairs long and trailing; the same alive brows she had seen on the old, old, very old man hunched, bundled and feeble, in his chair. But that one's eyes had been dim and rheumy, almost vacant; this one's—

His eyes. They weren't merely the physical focal point, they were the explanation and key to him. His hands, his skin, his stooped bearing, even the set of his mouth despite the compression of the lips, all spoke of age, great age—vigorous but unmistakable. But the eyes were not old, the color—the blue-gray of a winter sky—was not faded nor the sharp glance dulled. His eyes were powerful, commanding, willful. They were eyes which had seen an incredible lot without losing the desire to see much, much

more.

He bowed. The gesture was antique but not humble. "Your servant, sirs."

Tully stared, swallowed. Martha snuffled. It was Lucinda who spoke, and she found herself rising to her feet. "Are you the Mr. Joyleg—I mean—you *are* Isachar Joyleg—"

He came into the room on a bound, support from his stick superfluous. His eyes darted from her slacks, to her face and bosom. "The same. Ecawd! A minx in breeks! An old jape and a neat one, 'tis a pocketful of years since I've enjoyed such a frolic. I mind once we smuggled a doxy aboard of the old *Alfred* … No matter, 'tis not a tale for maiden ears. Forgive an old man's loose tongue."

Lucinda thought some pieces were falling into place— though there was no explanation of the transformation of senile Joyleg. Called the Commodore a pirate, he had said at the first meeting; and now, Aboard of the old *Alfred* . . .

"You were in the navy!"

"Aye Mam," he bowed.

"Wonderful!" cried Tully. "Whom did you serve under? Porter? Farragut? Or possibly Cushing?"

"Never heard of um. Who be they?"

Tully stepped back in evident confusion. Lucinda too, was taken aback. How could a sailor forget Farragut, or even Porter? Cushing… well, frankly, she was a little vague on Cushing herself. But there was Worden, of the *Monitor*, and DuPont, and… and Dahlgren—whoever *he* was… But one thing she wanted to get out of the way, no matter what admirals he had served under and forgotten. "Mr. Joyleg, you receive a pension from the Federal—"

That did it, of course. No veteran was ever so old as to forget his pension. "Aye," cried Joyleg; "the scurvy bletherers, the knavish federalists, they've served me ill. A pension of eleven dollars, an eagle and a piece of eight every thirty days, whilst his majesty King John fills his potbelly with Madeira and Chesapeake Oysters in the Federal City… Nay, he's dead, ain't he? And Red Tom on the same day…"

"I'm not familiar with the names—" began Lucinda, and was halted by the look of astonishment and reproof flung at her by the old man.

"Not familiar with the names of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson? Nay, outlander though I plainly perceive you be, still—"

Tully scowled; it was the first time she had seen him so evidently annoyed. "Mr. Joyleg, just what war is it in which you claim to have served?"

The old man straightened his spine, threw back the bowed shoulders. "So tis come to this, has it? The knaves now begrudge me even the pittance of less than two pounds a month. 'Claim,' says you. What mischief… ? I'll answer and be damned. The War Against King George. The War Against Great Britain. The War For Independence. The Revolution. Take your pick."

There was a long silence. Lucinda, very slowly, very gently, shook her head. Poor, befuddled old man, dreaming—like Don Quixote—of the past until the line of reality wavered. Tully broke the quiet. "Mr. Joyleg," he began, his face pale and set. "Mr. Joyleg—" He stopped, took a deep breath. The breath changed to a sniff. He repeated it. "Mr. Joyleg, you've been drinking."

X

SPIRIT OF '76

Lucinda thought, in that first moment, that the old man would fire up and order them out. Tully had been harsh, much too harsh, and she was sure the explanation for the old man's aberration lay elsewhere. The physical change in him might be the key. Hadn't she read or heard somewhere that manic-depressives were known not to miss, in the manic state, the eyeglasses essential in the normal or depressive condition? And hadn't she also heard that those close to death often had a resurgence of vitality? The old man was probably drawing now on his last reserves of physical energy, but his mind was going.

She laid her hand on Tully's arm. "No. He isn't drunk."

The anger went out of Joyleg's face. He sighed, slumped, leaned on his cane. "I thank you, dame. Nay, I'm not drunken. Time was, though, when I played Anacreon with the best of tosspots and maltworms. I mind a song—but no matter. That's all gone—gone too long ago… So much has gone."

Tully gestured. "But really… You can hardly expect us to believe a man old enough to have fought in the Revolutionary War is still alive," he said, almost pleadingly.

Joyleg considered this. He stumped over to the fire, set his stick in his chair. "Believe it, ay? Tis a newish thought, and I've not had many new thoughts these years. Truth, I'm more meself this moment than I've been since… I know not when. Thriving on me soak and new voices. One decade slips away much like another, and with none to talk with—saving the Notch folk, and their talk, with all respect, has small scope—why, my mind's grown rusty like an old fraw or a tomahax left outdoors. But… believe it? That I'm aged? Why, there be times I scarce believe it meself. Behind these eyes a young blade looks down at wrinkled hands and palsied knees—how's believing possible? Old? Tis nonsense, absolute nonsense, belied only by the shortened breath and unready limbs. Months and years go by like unto dreams. Winters, most of all, when they say I'm too bad and the soak is slow to do me good…"

Luanda's attention wandered from the last words. *A young blade looks down at wrinkled hands . . . how's believing possible*? To be so old, and to feel young…

He looked up from the fire at them. "Last time I crossed over the Gap, twas in me mind I'd come here to die. But I didn't, did I? No, no—" he shook his head, wondering at it himself,"—I didn't die…"

There was another silence. Lucinda and Tully had come this long, difficult way to Rabbit Notch to meet Joyleg, each with a different opinion, then for a while they'd held the same opinion, and now it seemed they didn't know for certain what opinion to hold. Not even sure of what she was going to say, Lucinda began, "The Federal Government—"

At once the firelight danced in the old man's eyes. "Aye Mam, there's the nub of it. Federal government…" He might have been picking up the thread of an ancient argument as though the interruption were momentary. "Federal District, Federal laws, Federal army, Federal taxes, Federal excisemen, Federal popinjays paid with Federal coin. Damme, we need some Liberty Boys, some Bloody Rangers, some honest whigs—not the fellers Harry Clay, that gaming macaroni from the

Kentucky country, stirred up to vote for poor old Will Crawford and General Harrison, him as killed Tecumseh—some real Democratic-Republicans, some good Pennsylvanians like Albert Gallatin appeared to be afore he… Ay, I'm twaddling again." He smiled briefly, sobered with a new thought, rubbed his long, cleft chin. "Don't bring to mind as I'd had the honor of hearing your names."

Tully, with a flurry of apologies, made the introductions. Joyleg nodded, inclined his head, but Lucinda got the impression that he wasn't quite sure who was who. Then Tully said the wrong thing again. "If you could offer some evidence… so we wouldn't look so foolish in getting recognition for you for your service in the Civil—"

"Civil again, do ye call it?" roared Joyleg. "Evidence, is it? Blood and guts! Do ye want to see King George's lead in me chest? Or the bale of bum-paper and pie-wrapper they called money and paid me off with in eighty-three? Or Captain Barry's letter, offering a commission? Or—Bide a bit. Bide a bit. Did I hear the. word 'Congressman?' One of those scullionly marplots as jibber night and day to no purpose? Or mayhap youre one of Black Alec's excisemen, come to rout me out?" Here he leaned far forward in his chair, flourishing his stick like a sword. "Twill take more than some soft-handed catchpole to blandish me—"

With a snap and sputter a burning coal popped from the fire onto the hearth. Joyleg bent to worry it back with his cane. Lucinda whispered, "Better humor him; I'm sure he believes it all." At that moment Martha sneezed.

Joyleg was instantly the solicitous host. "You've been about in the noxious night air, good sir; 'tis full of miasmas, leading to fevers and consumptions. Happily I have a sovereign restorative—"

"A-a-AH…choo!"

"Bless my liver, 'tis another doe set out in pantaloons—thick as alewives they be. Never fear, poor she, our mountain dew works as well on a woman as a man. Mag, dear doll, fetch us a draft from the old keg, the one I broached for the Commodore's Birthday."

So, thought Lucinda. Well, really… But she was more concerned at the moment with the mystery of Joyleg's hallucination than with his lawbreaking. Almost immediately Mag returned with an earthenware demijohn and three well-polished pewter mugs. Joyleg filled one with a practiced hand without spilling a drop and handed it to Martha.

"Dode drig," she refused firmly. "Probised by grad-bother."

"Lord love you, dear filly—drink the dram down, tis naught but physic to quench the malign fluids. Down with it now, before I can say Jack Randolph. Nay, nay, don't choke or splutter; the stuff's smooth as Peggy Shippen's back or one of Poor Richard's sayings."

"Bud—"

"He's right, Martha," Lucinda interposed. "Look on it as medicine."

Joyleg nodded approvingly. "Well spoke. Now then, tell me what a sensible female like yourself is doing abroad in small-clothes with a poxy tipstaff."

"You are jumping to conclusions, Mr. Joyleg," said Tully. "Congress does not enforce laws. I am not concerned with suppressing violations of the Excise; Rabbit Notch has nothing to fear from me. I believe a man has a right to make whiskey for his own use, particularly in inaccessible places where his corn might otherwise rot and certainly couldn't be profitably sold."

Joyleg looked at him searchingly. "Fair words; I'll trust you're none of Tim Pickering's crew, no, nor one of Gallatin's turncoats neither. You spoke of evidence before. Do ye think I'd lie?"

"Not exactly—"

Joyleg slapped his knee. "Right. Was I a rogue, I'd lie, and was I a rogue, any papers I'd show could be false."

But, thought Lucinda, how could a man who, by government records, had been continuously in Rabbit Notch at least since 1868, manage to counterfeit documents purporting to date from the Revolution? For that matter, how did he come to be so full of talk of that period? It was a singular delusion which would entirely skip the events of a man's own youth and dwell on those of his grandfather's. Why, if he were only a Civil War veteran of the thirty days' minimum service, one who had never "seen the elephant" and spent his war on picket duty in his own county, the natural thing would be to embroider on that— there would be a chance he'd be credited—not to invent a lifespan perhaps twice his own authentically long one.

It was puzzling, but then so had Joyleg's existence been, till she'd seen with her own eyes that he was real. Now, she felt, it would not be utterly impossible to believe almost anything about him. Almost. Within reason. But what kind of soak could it be, from which he had emerged rejuvenated? Was the fountain of youth here in Tennessee? (No better place.) Here in Rabbit Notch? "I'm sure any documents you have would be well worth a careful examination," she murmured.

Weathernox pressed him, "Do you mean you have no memory of the Civil War at all? Fort Sumter, Chancellorsville, Appomattox?"

"Sumter… mmm… Sumter—I mind Gamecock Tom Sumter as was with General Washington when Braddock was whipped. Stuck to his guns with Pat Henry for liberty against the rascally Federalists to the end. But Pat turned Federalist afterward. Did hear he was elected to Congress from South Carolina—sat in the Senate too. So they baptized a fort after him, ay? In Carolina, I suppose. Aye, there was some clamorment and turmoil thereabout, but 'twas in me mind Andy Jackson (knew his lady when she was wedded to Robards, her first man, and a piss-worthless sort he was, saving your presence, good dames) had put down whatever treason was afoot. Chancellorsville, Appomattox? I know them not."

Tully sighed, sank back in the settle. "If only it were true. What a thing it would be for our national morale to have a veteran of the Revolution still among us—the Spirit of Seventy-six invigorating us. An example for our boys and girls, an inspiration to our armed forces, an answer to the sputniks, a shot in the—mmmm… uh… arm to the State Department, the Defense Department—"

Lucinda Rose stiffened. First name terms, and this was what it came to. "Really, Mr. Weathernox, need we descend to partisan politics at a time like this?"

"No, no," he cried. "Such a man would be above politics. He would—don't you see—unite Republicans and Democrats—"

"Wasn't aware they'd split," said Joyleg.

"—Dixiecrats and Adam Clayton Powell, Knowland and… mmmm… whoever's got something Knowland wants. Why, if Mr. Joyleg turned out to be one of Washington's men—"

"Well, I baint. Never was. Not for a minute."

The two representatives cried, "*What*?" in a single voice. Lucinda thought, At last the mists have cleared from the poor, muddled old mind.

XI

FROM THE MAINTOP OF THE BONNY DICK

"Soldier? Do you think I'd be such an addlepate, such a ninny-dizzard, wittold or noodle, as to go for a footslogger? Drill night and day for that stiff-necked Prooshian? Mince and prance for the French markee? March bare-arsed-naked in the snow for that Polander, Koskyoosko? Isachar Joyleg may have come to be a dotard in time, but give me leave to tell you: Dame Mehetavale Joyleg raised no spooney bairns… God rest her soul," he finished, his voice trailing off weakly.

Lucinda shook her head helplessly. Martha said, ""Could I hab sub bore bedicide? Id seebs to heb."

Joyleg roused himself. "That ye can, me love. A sovereign remedy… And you, Mam? And you, sir?"

Weathernox accepted and drank absently. Lucinda looked at him sharply. Wine, and now whiskey… but he was no Sugar Moon Smith, she was sure. "If you weren't in the service, how can you claim a pension?" she asked.

"Damme, do ye think the war was won by dog-robbers and such? Did ye never hear of the time we harried the lobsterbacks' own land from the *Bonny Dick* and struck fear into the hearts of the Hanoverian squires as they sat snug on their fat backsides by their hearths?"

"The *Bonny Dick*?" inquired Lucinda, puzzledly.

"It is… do you mean the *Bonhomme Richard*?" Weathernox hazarded.

"Aye. So fame's not lost entirely. The *Bonny Dick*…" he retreated into a mist, returned abruptly. "Bonny she was not. And you can't believe I was aboard her, ay? That I never served under John Paul his self?"

Tully muttered, "John Paul… John Paul Jones. Foster son of Willie Jones…"

"Aye, Jones he called himself, but John Paul was his true name. Took the other when he was in trouble with the law for flogging Mungo Maxwell. Yes, Isachar Joyleg was on the *Bonny Dick*, and afterward with the Commodore on the *Ariel*, too. Sergeant Joyleg of the United States Marines at your service—no soldier. No sir, never was."

He left his chair and strode across the room and back, standing before the fire now so that his form was silhouetted by the light behind, while at the same time the last stubs of the beeswax candles threw black shadows on the crags of his face. To Lucinda he was an arresting figure, and none the less so because she was filled with pity for him. He had spoken truly when he said he might have become a dotard in time: there was no doubt his mind wandered off and came back abruptly to relevance. How much else he said was the truth would be seen sooner or later; for the moment she pondered the miracle of his rejuvenation from the man who had first greeted them and this self-proclaimed, almost convincing

sergeant of marines.

"Was I with Jones when-he spoke the *Serapis*, you may ask? Where else would I be but up to the top with me platoon of musket-men when the captain of the Sassenach frigate (fifty guns, and the *Bonny Dick* naught but a sloop, fit for dipping herring from the German Ocean and little else), seeing he stove us in on one side and was raking us fore and aft on the other, halloes across, 'Have ye struck, Sir?'

"I looks down, and there's poor John Paul, his little ship sinking beneath his feet, dead men all around, and that lunatic frogified dancing-master in command of the *Alliance* running off after firing into us. Blood and guts was ankle-deep on the deck, and the blackness of despair was on me Commodore's face. I knew by the hang of his head what the answer had to be. I thought back on the dreary months we'd stagnated in French ports, groaning and helpless—though many's the dear French girl tried to lighten our mood—and how our friends and kin at home were hard-pressed, and how John Paul—aye, and Dr. Franklin too and Silas Deane and t'other man as shall be nameless who proved to be in English pay—begged and prayed till we got the old tub, ill-rigged and worse supplied, he called the *Bonny Dick*. I thought of all this, looking down at the shrouds, and I couldn't bear to see us come to such an end of things.

" 'Have ye struck, Sir?' calls Dickie Pearson. 'No sir,' I bawls out. 'We've not started yet!' John Paul lifts his head and pricks his ears. 'What did you say?' shouts the Englishman. 'I said, "I have not yet begun to fight, Sir,"' John Paul shouts back, and zooks! it turned out to be the truth. The *Bonny Dick* was sunk, yes, but we took the *Serapis* for prize."

Lucinda listened, rapt. The light of the fire might have been the light of a burning ship, the snap and crackle of the dry logs the scattered musket and pistol shots. Then she pulled herself up short. Of course it wasn't true that this man had witnessed it all, but oh, if it only could be true… "Sergeant—I mean, Mr. Joyleg, are you sure you didn't hear it all from, say, your grandfather and—"

He stared at her, outraged. "Grandfather, sitha! Grandsire was a Cameronian in Scotland in the Killing Times and had long gone where good Scots go when me father come across the sea to Pennsylvania. Trunnions and turnbuckles! A man as hinted so, I'd have his heart and liver. Grandfathers' tales! Why, damme—"

"I didn't mean…" faltered Lucinda, fearful of the consequences of such excitement to his worn heart and fragile body.

He calmed down, grinning unexpectedly. "How to satisfy you I didn't hear it from another? Well, Mam, they do say females have no logic, but this I have never held. So follow this reasoning, if you will: John Paul was a Scot. I'm part so meself (North Briton's a Hanoverian term; I'll have none of it), so I'll not support the slander that a Scot is closer than a Yankee or Frenchman. Still, tis known from Assiniboia to Van Dieman's Land that a Scotsman'll think hard afore he gives something for nothing.

"Now John Paul weren't merely a Scotsman, he was a shrewd one, and had been a braw merchant into Guiana and Tobago afore his trouble. Still he was a grateful man for all that; he never forgot Joyleg up there on the maintop. He had naught to reward me at the time save some of the plate we manumitted on our raids—I've a pretty piece or two still lying around—and the thanks of Congress to him amounted to eighteenth on the Captains' List and a dress sword unfit to cut butter less it had been larded. But later on now he was sweet-man (saving your presence, but truth's truth) to Dutch Kate, who pizoned her husband, the Emperor of Rooshia. Do ye think he forgot his old sergeant then?"

It can't be true, thought Lucinda. Yet to suppose he looked it all up before 1868 and that it had stayed fresh in his mind ever since is to presume a miracle greater than the age he claims would be.

"If you do, ye little know the Commodore. Admiral he was then, in the Rooshian service, but always Commodore to us. Evidence? Aye, I've evidence. Bide you here."

He stalked from the room, using his stick as an ornament rather than a help. Lucinda looked at Tully; Tully looked back at Lucinda. How far can you suspend belief? she wondered; how far can credulity go? Tully's face was bemused, showing no scepticism; she feared hers reflected the same expression.

They heard the sounds of moving around from the next room, and what might have been the thud of a trunk lid against the wall. There was a silence, then Joyleg was back with a heavy, curling parchment, weighted with seals, and a single sheet of foolscap. He handed them both to Lucinda.

The parchment was inscribed in what she vaguely recognized as Cyrillic characters. It had a scrawled signature above the seals, and beneath it, some paragraphs beginning, *Nous, Catharin, a la Grace de Dieu, Imperattice…*

Lucinda, who didn't read French fluently and was doubly puzzled by the peculiar spellings and turns of phrase, turned it over doubtfully. What was evidently a translation was carefully engrossed on the back. "We, Catharine, By Grace of God, Emprefs and Autocrat of All the Rufsias, Prince of Mufcovy, Grand Duchefs of Kieff, Duke of Nowgorod, King of Byzantium and Jerufalem, Grand Hetman of the Oukraine, Ruler of Crim Tartary and Cazan, &c &c &c; Proclaim to all Men under our Hand and Seal, that We have this Day devized to Our loyal and dear Servant, *Jno Paul Jones*, Chevalier &c, Knight &c, Rear Admiral hi Our Imperial Navy, Acting Vice-Admiral of Our Black Sea Fleet &c &c &c, And to the Heirs of his Body OR to his other Heirs and Afsignees FOREVER, the Rank of Boyar & Gofpodar in all Our Rufsian Lands and at our Court, together with ten thoufand (10,000) fquare verfts in the Gouvernment of Sibirfk (as fhown in the Map attached hereto and the copy of this document in Our Archives in Peterfbourg) up to the Sky and down to the Center of the Earth, including all Timber, Peltry, Gold & other Minerals, and whatfoever Nomads, Vagrants, Efcaped Servants &c &c (excepting only foldiers, Crown ferfs, & others in Our Employ, loyal to Us & on lawful bufinefs) to be ferfs to faid Chevalier Jones, to have & to hold, to hypothecae & fell; in appreciation of Services great & numerous which he hath rendered to Our Body & Our Nation… Ekatrina, Czaritfa."

The foolscap sheet was laconic. "I, the aforementioned Chevalier Jno Paul Jones, sometime Cmdre USN, do hereby devise the said grant from the Empress Catherine to Isachar Joyleg Esqu as a Token of remembrance of his part hi our Engagement with HMS Serapis, and this devisement recorded HIM Ambassador's Notary in Paris this day. 10 July 1792. J P Jones, Captain, Navy of the U. States."

Well, said Lucinda to herself, passing the documents over to Tully Weathernox, so there was a Joyleg—an Isachar Joyleg—with Jones, all right, but how do we know this is the one? But even as she asked herself the question she knew that the burden of proof had subtly shifted: if the papers were false (she was sure they weren't), it was not up to Joyleg to prove them genuine, the carbon tests, the verification of watermarks, inks, signatures, would be up to those who couldn't believe. And Isachar Joyleg was Isachar Joyleg; those who refused to accept him as one and the same would have to show just when he was born and how he had come to have his story so pat.

"Um," said Weathernox. "Well…" He looked helplessly at Lucinda, who stared implacably back. The silence was broken only by the sound of Martha diligently sipping her medicine. "Well," repeated Weathernox, "I'm sure… that is, I hope there'll be no trouble convincing everyone. When you come to Washington—"

Instantly Lucinda Rose had a picture of Joyleg in a Veterans' Administration hospital ward, bleak and white and deathly, badgered by psychiatrists and gerontologists, prodded and tested and questioned by nurses and internes and specialists, a spectacle for visiting officials, newspapermen, article writers,

actuaries, lawyers, press agents, theatrical producers, sapped like an old tree torn up by the roots. Never, she told herself fiercely, never!

"When I WHAT?"

"But naturally you'll come to Washington," Weathernox bumbled on. "We'll get your pension adjusted in no time, and the President will shake your hand—"

"More likely hand me over to that black byblow, Alec Hamilton, a pox on him, the brass-leg. No sir—"

"But Alexander Hamilton's been dead more than a hundred and fifty years."

A slow, grim smile spread over Joyleg's craggy features. "What's that? Did Colonel Burr really put lead through him?"

"So you *did* know!" cried Lucinda.

Joyleg sighed and rubbed his chin. "You hear so much. And seems you can never forget so much as you hear to clear your mind for new hearings. I've even heard they have iron ships now and other marvels. If I recollected all I've heard I'd hear no more. Well, it's no matter. Burr passed through hereabouts in ought six—or was it ought five, now? I disremember. The year the bears was so bad and the scaped wench made her way from the plantations. (A tidy morsel she was.) He had a long cock-and-bull story, all politics and women and plots against him. But I suspicioned him, always did, though I'll not say but what he was a great man in his way. 'Do ye mean to break the West from the Union, yea or nay?' I asked him. 'On that subject I am coy,' sitha. Mmmm. Well. So Alec never got to be President for all his scheming and conniving. Eh-heh." A stony chuckle broke through his lips. A sudden thought seemed to strike him. "Does that mean there's no tax on spirits now?"

Weathernox echoed his sigh. "I'm afraid not. I believe it's something like eight dollars."

"Eight dollars on a barrel of whiskey? Nay, sir!"

"Not a barrel—a gallon."

Joyleg looked at them speechless, then at the demijohn. Martha had quietly helped herself again and was still sipping, with a bland, almost smug face. "And I took up my squirrel-piece again Alec Hamilton for fifty cents a barrel."

"You took it up— You were in the Whiskey Rebellion?"

"In it? Ecawd man, I begun it. In a manner of speaking, that is. Tis too long a tale to tell for the moment. Twas the good Liberty cause, and all the mealy office-seekers were on our side till they saw the wind blowing tother way. Us veterans asked ourselves how we who couldn't stomach. King George's stamps were supposed to lick King Alec's."

"But that's all a long dead issue," said Weathernox with a trace—too strong a trace, thought Lucinda—of impatience. "The Whiskey Rebels were all pardoned."

"Pardoned?" Joyleg's voice went up. "All of 'm?"

"Oh yes. By George Washington himself."

"Well, blast the pockified wretch, that hangman dog, blackleg and crapulous Hessian. He never breathed word. 'We must move sly, Master Joyleg,' quotha, 'and not stir them up again you.' That scant-soap will

never get my suffrage for hog-warden."

Lucinda, completely bewildered, queried, "Who… ?" [n]

"Why, that tosspot Congressman I give six Spanish pieces and a hanch of venison to get me allotted stipend raised from eleven to twelve dollars. Aye, the foul scut, cozening me and then absquatulating for Texas [he pronounced it, Tex-shuss] along of Sam Houston and Colonel Bowie to try his hand at cozening the Dons."

"I'm sorry to hear such a thing of a fellow Representative," grieved Weathernox, all ears and politician now. "What was his name?"

Joyleg frowned, knuckled his temple. "What was the runnion's name, now? Never forget one—nay, nor face, neither—Cocker? Crocker? Crockett! Damned old, drunken old Davy Crockett, with his fancy white shirts dirty around the neck, his blue swallowtail coat with possum-grease on it, and his high white beaver, won with a five-ace deck… Never trust a popinjay, I say, and b'gad I never shall again."

The horrified silence was broken by Lucinda's repeating, "Davy *Crockett*?" in a weak voice.

XII

CLAMORMENT…

The contented look vanished abruptly from Martha Forsh's face. "I… I believe I'll lie down," she muttered. "My cold seems to be making me… making me lightheaded. Must have a fever."

Lucinda's dismay at hearing the legend of Tennessee's own Davy Crockett shattered—a dismay clearly reflected in Tully's face—was separate and distinct from the conviction (distinctly unwelcome this time) that Joyleg's fantastic claim was true. The two feelings floated in her mind like a layer of oil on a layer of water. Seeking for some hold on present reality, she found it in Martha's announcement.

"Poor dear," she consoled, turning to her secretary and putting a cool hand on the woman's forehead. "No, you haven't a fever. It's the whisky, and no wonder. Still, it does seem to have been good for your cold." She helped Martha lie down on the settle, placed a pillow under her head.

"Good for man and beast," cackled Joyleg. "Cures what ails you, if you haven't got it, twill give it to you."

"It seems to have worked well for you," said Weathernox.

"That it has. Never a consumption, catarrh of the bones, nor yet a flux, an apoplexy, nor an ague."

"You think it's entirely due to your drinking moo— whisky?"

"Drink it? Who said aught of drinking it? Hain't been able to stomach anything stronger than syllabub since the winter of Ninety and Nine (or was it Eighteen and Ten) ; gives me the dyspepsia, though I can chaw on bear-brawn or buffalo rump (not seen hardly bide nor hair of the creatures since the National Road was put through) with the best of them since me fourth teeth come in."

"Your what?" Tully appeared only mildly surprised by this latest wonder.

"Me fourth set of teeth." He lifted his lips to show yellow rows clearly unindebted to dental mechanics. "After I lost the last of the second crop—about the time Jemmy Monroe bought the Floridas (and a poor bargain it was)—I reckoned to get meself carved chompers, but spit me like a chicken if me gums didn't start itching and the tushes come through." He added reflectively, "but the dyspepsia was still there. Same thing happened thirty-forty years on—bout the time of the comet."

"I'm completely confused," confessed Lucinda. "If you don't drink the whisky, how do you use it?"

"Soak in it, girl, soak in it. Two mortal hours a day, or else four every other day, more or less according to the season and me state of health. Not the stuff in the barrel, mind; the first distillation, afore the spring water has lost all its natural endowments. Not that the force is all within the water; I've tried that. It must be used while virginal, afore the power of the air has begun to age it.

"I was an ailing child. Mother had died of the milk-sick, which might have somewhat to do with it. Father had his still, like all farmers, and one day after he'd barreled the run I was clambering about. The lid of the butt was loose, and in I fell. 'Twas some hours before I was missed and pulled out, and bless ye, I was hearty and sound and piping loud for victuals—me, that never had appetite to speak on. From that time whenever I was took poorly, he'd run a batch through the worm and have me soak. After I left home and traveled wide and far, I wasn't able to do it, but 'twas no matter, being of rugged constitution by then. 'Twas not till after I'd lived in the Notch a parcel of years and begun to be troubled with rheumatism and me old wound—getting to be a little deef I was too, and not seeing well—that I took it up again. And it serves me well, though perhaps not so good in the winters, when 'tis my conviction the melting snows dilute the virtue of the spring. And they tell me that some days I'm took bad before my soak, but I remember none of that afterward. At any rate, I didn't die. No… I didn't die…"

He got up then, muttering an excuse, and left the room. Martha began to snore softly. Lucinda looked at Tully; he looked back at her. "You do believe him now?" she asked.

He nodded. "Yes. Perhaps not as firmly as when he's speaking but—well, yes—I believe him. However the thing will be to get others, those to whom he hasn't spoken directly, to believe him. And once the matter of increasing his pension is raised the story will have to come out. The world will be incredulous, just as I was."

"Ah," said Lucinda. "But you had an open mind from the beginning; I wasn't even willing to believe he was in the Civil War. It's clear now that when the effect of soaking in this—this magic wash wears off that he's like he was when we first saw him, weak and feeble and dull. I don't want him to be like that again, Tully; I want him to be clear and vigorous. We can't let them put him in a hospital; by the time they finally decide that there's therapy in his soaking he may be—may be… It may be too late."

"If they want to examine him they'll have to come here," he agreed.

"Tully, must we break this story at all?"

"What do you mean? How on earth can anything be done for him otherwise?"

"That's the point—is it worth it to him? Agreed that eleven dollars a month is ridiculous. Monstrous. Still, he's happy. And he certainly isn't starving or neglected. You know what publicity can mean—poking and prying, curiosity and ridicule, doubt and amazement, as though he were a mummy, not a living man. Need we expose him to that?"

"Just go away and forget it all?" He considered the possibility, then shook his head. "No, Lucinda, even if

it would work, if everyone kept quiet and no one knew we had come here and why, it wouldn't be right. Joyleg is a hardy old warrior; he can stand the glare of publicity. We owe it to him to let the world acclaim him for his service—not just American, but the whole world. Think of the effect the discovery will have. Joyleg isn't only a living monument, he's the answer to the criticisms, the charges that we've grown old, tired, decadent, anti-revolutionary. Could we have a more fitting personification of American vigor, American courage, American vision than a United States marine from the fighting top of the *Bonhomme Richard*?"

He's right, thought Lucinda, rhetoric or no rhetoric (poor dear, he cannot help it), he's right. The discovery of Joyleg could rank with the Emancipation Proclamation and President Eisenhower's appointment of Oveta Culp Hobby…

Joyleg came back. "See you've eat," he said. "And I'm about ready to. Just a by-bite and a dish of sassafras tay. Maybe a' morsel of jonnycake and a bit of pigeon. You'll be staying the night at least; I'll have Mag air the sheets and the pillowbiers and red up more pie-timber. Twill be too late for Gustus to carry ye back down—I'd not relish crossing the Gap of a night myself, though I've done it." Lucinda understood how the indifference of his speech hid his eagerness to have them stay. He went on, "Caesar Augustus is an old name in the Notch. Come down from Caesar Augustus Elmholm, a Dutchman or Polander or such-like, as was our commissioner to the Georgia nation in Chucky John's day."

Lucinda, answering his loneliness rather than his offhandedness, said, "We'll be very pleased to accept your hospitality. But we'd like Mr. Praseworthy to take a message to Sevier as soon as possible so we can get word to Washington."

But Washington, thought Lucinda later, lying beside Martha in the wide doublebed she suspected was, or had been, Joyleg's own, Washington was far away, and not only geographically, but in time and history. There was something in the very air of Rabbit Notch, something perhaps created by Joyleg, or something there all along which had so long ago attracted his younger self, softening the imperative and modifying the tempo without weakening the energy or slackening the drive. She was determined to protect the old man and see that some amends were made to him, but it no longer seemed essential that it be done tonight, tomorrow, or even the day after. Nor did she foresee a national disaster if she and Tully failed to get back to the capital before the session ended. After all, coming as they did from the opposing parties, they were, in a sense, permanently paired. A political sense, she added hastily in her thoughts, wondering if she were blushing in the darkness.

Seemingly Tully Weathernox agreed with her, and Joyleg was delighted at the prospect of their continued stay. Autocratically he commanded Gustus Praseworthy to do their bidding without question, and that hitherto independent mountain man responded deferentially. So it came about that they received the news of the Joyleg sensation at a paradoxical second-hand—in the company of Joyleg himself.

They dispatched Praseworthy with the later-to-be-famous telegram which was so long that it had to be sent collect to Minnie Hatters, Weathernox being dubious of how Mrs. Davney or the operator at Blountsburg would react to a check. They also ordered from Blountsburg, through MacCray, a portable radio, with an extra set of batteries. When they tried to pay Gustus for the days now spent almost exclusively in their service, he refused bluntly. "Gold and silver's devil's glister to make men avaricious, and what good's paper? Nay, Mistress, I've lived all my life without them, touching only Master Joyleg's government document once a month when I needs must take it to Sevier; why should I stain my hands with dross now?"

"But your time is worth money," protested Weathernox. "You have to have food and clothing and shelter."

Praseworthy looked at him as though he had just confessed congenital idiocy. "Ay, master; I've a snug cabin left to me by my father; it needs but a little repairing every two-three years. As for clothes, my woman cards and spins wool whilst Laurie Graham—that's Cousin Drew's woman—weaves for both. And we've not had a year when food must need to be scamped in the Notch in my memory."

"It is communism—just as I thought from the beginning," said Lucinda. "And I presume Joyleg is their master in fact as well as in name."

"If you mean Notch folks does pretty much as Master Joyleg wants, you're right, but there's no compulsion in it; we accept his counsel because we believe it wise, just as we accept the goods MacCray exchanges for his pension and our produce—vanities though they be. 'Tis no trouble to provide his firewood or tan leather for his breeches; one hand washes the other as the saying goes."

Lucinda shook her head doubtfully. This was certainly not good Republican doctrine.

"But don't you see," argued Tully, "it isn't communism as we know it. It's not totalitarian at all. It's the sort of utopianism that is historically American, from Bohemia Manor, Woman in the Wilderness and Ephrata, through the Shakers, Owenites and Fourierists, to Brook Farm and Oneida."

"They all failed," said Lucinda decisively.

"Mmmm. Some of them fell apart for ideological rather than economic reasons, some were simply too successful —they made too much money. Rabbit Notch has not—so far—been impinged on by the outside world. It seems to work satisfactorily for these folk, and since they aren't raising an army to overthrow the government nor conspiring to subvert free enterprise, I hardly think they represent any clear and present danger to our institutions."

Lucinda's headshake this time was one of utter disagreement.

Joyleg watched the unwrapping of the radio with interest. What would be his reaction, wondered Lucinda, as Tully explained the invention as best he could, turning the dials till a voice came in clearly, "—ember, friends, if you're troubled with sour stomach, indigestion or irregularity, Chew-a-choc's the remedy for you. Chew-a-choc's delightful flavor and gentle action—"

"Aye," said Joyleg, when Tully shut it off. " Tis a notable advance. 'Tis evidently based on the French telegraph that used to flash messages from Toulon to Paris on sunny days within the hour."

"Wasn't that a heliograph?" asked Tully. "The radio sends impulses by means of electricity."

Joyleg nodded. "Dr. Franklin's discovery. So they put the two together. Truly, as Scripture says, there's nothing new under the sun."

If Lucinda had expected an immediate release of Joyleg's story, she was disappointed. The newscasts told of a filibuster in the Senate and a log-jam of bills in the House. The President was taking a vacation. The skies were filled with artificial satellites, one which carried a white mouse —"Micknik," the newspapers called it—further from the earth than any living being had ever been, followed by one with a shoat ("picnik") and another with a hen ("chicknik"), and still another which displayed the national colors of its country in the night skies. In the UN the USA and the USSR continued to agree in principle on international control of atomic energy while disagreeing on the admission of Tannu Tuva and Monaco. In the Near East, cotton pashas, and petroleum potentates—to say nothing of émigré effendis—continued to play the middle against both ends.

"Do you suppose they are suppressing…?" wondered Lucinda.

"Just investigating," said Tully. "How can you suppress a report by two members of Congress?"

"They don't know," insisted Martha. "Nobody knows. The telegram was never sent We'll spend the rest of our lives in Rabbit Notch." She had fallen into the habit of taking a little cold cure every day—though the malady was gone—and it hadn't improved her disposition.

Then Jill Brittin arrived.

She came as they had, donkey-back, led by an extremely unsettled-looking Praseworthy. She was wearing white jodphurs, a white stetson, a white cashmere sweater and a red silk scarf and red earrings. Two meek donkeys plodded under the baggage of her safari into the wilds. "Oh, hi," she greeted them distractedly. "I suppose every rag I have will smell like donkey. And I hate to think of my specially blended creams and powders all mashed up together—How are you dear; you're looking positively radiant. And windblown, of course, but it's quite becoming to the demure type. And you, Tully, you wicked, handsome man, running off this way—you rascal. Hi, Miss… Miss Forrest, is it? Forsh, of course. All right, lead me to your great discovery, your antediluvian man. Can he talk? I suppose not; Washington was bad enough but at least it was better than being shunted here to cover old Pegleg who's probably forgotten all about the birds and the bees. That is, if he's as old as you say—"

"Stop a minute, Jill, and catch your breath," suggested Tully. "Then our telegram wasn't just filed and forgotten—"

"Forgotten, hell! They practically had to call out the paratroopers to keep the AP and UP from going crazy and splashing it all over. The Veterans' Administration has requisitioned all the aspirin every government agency has inventoried and there's a thriving market in tranquilizers and barbituates. Fortunately someone heard I was a close friend of you both. Fortunately! What am I saying? Anyway, here I am, accredited by everyone from *Time* and *Life* to the *Virginia Quarterly* and *Our Sunday Visitor*— by the way, has the copter dropped my equipment yet? And for God's sake, what's the chance of getting a drink around here?"

Joyleg had had his daily soak—actually, he hardly seemed to need it since their arrival, for the stimulation of their presence kept him at his alert best—and so they took her to him immediately. Lucinda was quite put out at the correspondent's assumption of close friendship and outraged at—at what? Something…

"A pleasure, Mam. So you be a scrivener for the public prints, hay? Do ye do pamphlets as well, or mayhap a tale now and again like Mistress Fanny Burney or Mrs. Centlivre?"

"Oh, we're much more specialized nowadays. I'm a newspaperwoman pure and simple."

The old man drew his heavy eyebrows together. "Pure you may be, Mam—" he bowed and smiled in a manner ne had never used toward Lucinda and which she found thoroughly out of taste and not at all in character, as she had conceived Joyleg's character, "—but simple I'll warrant you're not."

Jill opened her eyes wide. "You know," she confided huskily, "I believe I'm going to like you. Two hundred? Why you're just in the prime of life."

"Tis merry converse that thwarts dotage, Mam; I've languished for years for the lack of wit and persiflage. An I exchange quips with you long enough I'm like to be a colt again."

"I'd never keep up with you if you were any younger." She smiled, rolled her eyes (quite disgustingly, thought Lucinda, withdrawing her annoyance for just an instant from Joyleg who was so clearly being led on) and sniffed. "Do I smell something drinkable? Oh, you absolutely marvelous man! I'm perishing of thirst."

"Are ye now? 'Twould be a misfortunate end indeed, and one we must circumvent. Will ye have a sup of our corn squeezings? Or would you prefer some hard cider, applejack, or grape wine?"

. "You're well stocked, aren't you? Don't happen to have a little vermouth and gin around do you? You can skip the vermouth if it isn't handy."

"Vermouth? Some foreign tipple I don't recollect. Nay, we have it not. Gin? Geneva spirits, you mean? Tis a vile liquor in my estimate, unfit for gentle gullets. I fear I've none to offer you."

"Try the whisky, Jill," advised Weathernox. "You'll never hanker after martinis again."

"Oh God," moaned Jill; "I was weaned on whisky. It always reminds me of milk."

"Ah," murmured Lucinda. "Times have changed; milk comes in bottles now."

"Why, Lucinda—and I thought you were an unsophisticated country girl! Even I know better than that." She took the pewter mug from Joyleg's hand and sipped. "Why, it's marvelous! Aren't you all going to join me?"

"Mr. Joyleg doesn't drink and it's too early in the day for us," said Weathernox.

Jill smirked over the cup which she didn't lower far. "How nice to have someone speak, for you, Lucinda. I'm not the dependent type myself but I can understand its compensations."

"Mr. Weathernox was speaking solely from observation," said Lucinda. "I have no particular need for alcoholic stimulation."

"Oh come now," said Jill. "Anyway alcohol—a nasty name for this delicious drink—isn't a stimulant but a depressant. Emotional creatures like myself need it, but I suppose women who go into politics are— Oh, the hell with it. Bottoms up, cheerio and so on. I hope to savor this stuff when I have more time. Right now I'm suppose to be on the mountaintop or reasonable facsimile signalling the 'copter. I don't want all that equipment dumped in the gully."

"Gap," corrected Joyleg. "If I follow you, and I'm not sure I do, you expect a hot-air balloon to drop gear for ye. Times have indeed changed, as Mistress Habersham says well, when a scrivener needs more than a goosequill—we've plenty in the notch and I can fashion a pen with the best of clerks—and a quire of paper. Twould be me pleasure, if my old bones permitted, to accompany you; as tis the Notch folk'll render you all assistance."

After Jill was gone, and Weathernox gallantly with her, Lucinda turned on the old man. "How can you be so blind?"

"Ay, Mam? Blind is it?"

"You know very well what I mean. Why you were actually flirting with that woman."

Joyleg settled himself comfortably. "Now lass, don't take on. Ye'll not lose your congress man to the likes of her. Bless you, chick, any man with breeks can see what she is and what you are."

"And what am I?" she demanded, but not quite so belligerently as she had intended.

"Lord love you, dear lass—a lady of course. And she's a drab. Though," he rubbed his chin ruminatively and smiling, "I always was one with a kindness for drabs."

Jill Brittin's equipment—safely retrieved and gotten under shelter—consisted of cameras, film, and

portable radio and TV transmitters. Lucinda admitted to herself— grudgingly—that the correspondent had authority the moment she was concerned with her trade. She took her pictures at long and short range with certainty and conviction; her formal interview with Joyleg was a matter of crisp questions, courteous pauses, delicate promptings for elaboration. She was brisk and efficient at everything connected with reporting and Lucinda detested the way Weathernox and old Joyleg admired her briskness and efficiency.

Her stories, pictures, television interviews went out. In Rabbit Notch, severed in time and space from the community of newspaper readers and TV viewers, they got the reaction by radio. It was immediate and stunning. Joyleg shook the world.

A crew of men working double overtime—in complete disregard of all peacetime precedent—unearthed the oldest records from the sub-sub-basement of Old Navy. An-nouncedly unrehearsed, the Secretary of Defense flipped nervously through the dusty old files while a crew of reporters, newsreel and TV men hovered at his elbows— as though he were speaking directly to Rabbit Notch, the radio announcer was especially graphic in securing this beat so far unobtainable to his TV rival—sneezing and coughing and joking, and suddenly— "Here it is, ladies and gentlemen, indubitably and beyond question… I just wish you could be with us to feel and see these ancient documents…"

"Joyleg, Isachar, born in Shawnee Pass (Pa.) July 4 (auspicious date on which Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died; Calvin Coolidge and George M. Cohan born), 1748, issue of Zebulon and Mehetavle (Simpson) Joyleg. Enlisted in the US Marines, April 11, 1777, served aboard frigate *Alfred*, sloop-of-war *Ranger, Bonhomme Richard*, and *Ariel*. Land engagements: Nova Scotia, Whitehaven. Musketball in left breast as result of engaging enemy frigate: inoperable. Mustered out January 24, 1783. Pension awarded in 1800, under the Act of 1790…"

"Twas the twenty-fifth," commented Joyleg. "I mind as how we had an issue of twenty-five pounds of hardtack and salt horse which we buried with full honors…"

"Let's not argue with the date," said Weathernox. "It will be difficult if not impossible to prove it was the twenty-fifth and if we once cast doubts on the government record it might take years to reestablish your claim."

Lucinda agreed with his logic, even though she frowned over the morality of it. Tully Weathernox had his undeniable good points, but his code of ethics would never have passed scrutiny with Aunt Mary Esther-Ann. Condoning moonshining first, and now tampering—by omission, true, but still tampering—with government archives. On the other hand, could she really be sure Joyleg's memory was so accurate after a hundred and eighty-odd years?

Her attention came back to the radio. What was the Government going to do about it, a reporter asked the Secretary of Defense. The Secretary fumbled around for a moment—Lucinda was sure he was weighing the merits of a slashing attack on economy-minded Congressmen who proposed to cut his department's appropriation, and a spirited endorsement of generosity to Joyleg—and finally said that that, of course, was up to the Veterans' Administration. No, he had no idea what the VA planned; no precedent existed for dealing with two hundred-and-some-year-old GIs. Haha. (But the laughter trailed away as the Secretary clearly wondered if it were in place.)

" 'Precedent,' " spat out Joyleg. "Rascally pettifogger!"

"Now, now," soothed Jill Brittin. "Watch your blood-pressure, old dear. He's just doing a little judicious fence-sitting."

"Seen his kind set on a rail," muttered Joyleg.

The radio interview plodded on. Did the secretary believe the story himself?

Well, uh, naturally, a thing like this… it had to be approached cautiously. That is, to say, with caution, he meant. He had seen the fine pictures in *Life*, taken by his good friend, that splendid newspaperwoman, Jill Brittin. Of course he knew a great number of other fine newspaper people—didn't mean to single one out especially—um… And that film—also taken by her. Too bad conditions made it impossible at present to televise—not that he meant to slur the radio or printed word. Not at all… He understood that a leading authority on geron—mm—gerontology was going to Rabbit Notch as soon as—um— possible to examine the—ah—veteran. Had this doctor seen the pictures? Naturally, naturally. Couldn't come to any conclusion from them. Certainly looked old, but you couldn't go by looks…

"More company," growled Joyleg. "A barber-surgeon to boot. I'll not have any quack-salver's leeches nor purges; had I put myself in such hands I'd been dead and buried long since."

"Don't worry, old darling; this is no stock character with a heart of gold and a black bag full of babies. He isn't going to prescribe for you—just tap you with one of those little stone hammers and take your blood count or something like that. Now just listen to what the nice man in the idiot box is saying."

XIII

… AND TURMOIL

The Secretary of Defense was gone from the air, replaced by a voice that seemed to ooze through molasses candy. "Congress is almost ready to recess, having rushed through the appointment of a joint House-Senate Committee to Inquire into Veterans' Surviving Wars Fought Before Eighteen Fifty. Need I say, ladies and gentlemen, that the only purpose of this committee is to report on Joyleg? But the peculiarity of this body is not confined to the object of whether a man of over two hundred is—ah —in short, whether Joyleg is Joyleg or not. The committee consists of only four members—a small number for so prominent a group—but it is, of course, strictly bipartisan: two Republicans and two Democrats. The oddity is that both House appointees are from the same section of the same state—Weathernox and Habersham of—

"That's us," said Tully complacently if superfluously. "I'd like to have seen the Speaker's face when he realized it was unavoidable, since we'd discovered Joyleg. Ha! Haha!"

"I haven't the faintest idea what to wear," muttered Lucinda softly.

"—really curious feature," burbled the radio, "is the naming of the committee counsel, something customarily left to the members themselves. He is Carl Gloose, whose long history as counsel for many Senate investigations has made him a prominent figure—"

"Gloose!" exclaimed Jill Brittin. "Wow! Someone wants to bust up your playhouse, boys and girls."

"Nonsense," said Lucinda reflexively. "We have nothing to conceal."

"Of course not," agreed Tully. "Still, Gloose is a rough customer. It would almost seem that they want to

give Joyleg the full treatment."

"Ay? I ken not all this backing and filling, this committee and counsel and intrigue. What's it all to do with me pension?"

"It's beyond your pension now, old sweetheart; someone's after your hide and that of our friends here," said Jill.

"Aye? Then let them come and try and be damned to them," growled Joyleg. "I'll send them back to their Federal city with their tails betwixt their legs like the curs and whelps they be."

But whatever slight shadow cast upon Joyleg's prospects by the strange composition of the committee, he remained the sensation of the country. Even before Jill Brittin departed from Rabbit Notch ("I'll be doing a MacArthur," she told them bitterly; "back with the committee, along with a hundred or so graduates from schools of journalism.") Praseworthy grumblingly led his donkeys —a train now, plodding under overloads—laden with newspapers and magazines. There was not a syndicated column, including those devoted to sports, which didn't mention Joyleg. He was on the front page of every paper except the New York *Times* and the Monterey Peninsula *Herald*. (In both he got full coverage, but inside.) There were maps of Tennessee, with details of Blountsburg (Union Junction) and Sevier, with arrows pointing to the assumed position of Rabbit Notch. There were pictures— taken by Jill—of Joyleg: full-face, profile, three-quarters; standing, sitting, holding John Paul Jones's grant from Catherine the Great, wearing a cocked hat. There were pictures of Weathernox and Lucinda—poor ones, all of them, she decided—and Martha Forsh, Gustus Praseworthy, Mag, and even Joe Habersham. There was an interview with a famous biologist who pooh-poohed the notion of a magic mash with rejuvenating powers; there was an interview with a famous chemist who saw no theoretical reason why such a soak should not be beneficial. There was a statement from the Bureau of Internal Revenue which said it had the matter under scrutiny; there was another from the WCTU which denounced the whole matter as vicious propaganda. The Governor of Tennessee, addressing an enlarged press conference, declared "Righteousness exalteth a nation," and that his state was filled with wonders. The governors of Kentucky and West Virginia asserted vehemently that the springs of Rabbit Notch had their origin in their respective territories.

Joyleg's picture, drawn by the staff artist and surrounded by vignettes of famous Revolutionary scenes, was on the cover of *Time*. Perhaps because its corps of researchers had not yet made its way to Rabbit Notch the story was reasonably unbiassed and contained a minimum of snide insinuations. It concluded, "Death, as it must to all men, has not yet come to Isachar Joyleg. Question in the mind of all US last week (and this): Has it been delayed by 210 years? Or is Joyleg merely a senile ham dreaming, as old men will, of the lives they might have led?"

Two by two—unlike Jill Brittin, they did not venture the trail from Sevier alone—strangers arrived in Rabbit Notch. The gerontologist was among the first; he proved to be an enthusiastic amateur antiquarian, listening enraptured to Joyleg's speech and buying from him all sorts of relics, from stray bits of continental currency to a letter from Randolph of Roanoke. Perhaps this friendliness with the object of his examination gave him pause on his return; at any rate his report was noncommittal. Those who looked with suspicion upon Joyleg took it as exploding his claims; those who felt differently saw it as complete confirmation.

The TV networks were temporarily baffled by the primitive conditions at Rabbit Notch; this delighted the press services, which set up a joint headquarters at Sevier, now connected with the outside world by electricity, telegraph, and telephone. The radio people—newscasters, technicians, commentators—took over the Commercial House at Blountsburg and spilled over into hospitable private homes. The Davneys, their Stanley mountain wagon now the most photographed vehicle in America, having foresightedly

cornered all available automobiles for miles, were outraged when a new wave of pilgrims arrived in their own cars instead of coming decently by train to be mulcted for further transportation. In far better position was the new-found partnership of MacCray and Turbyfill, lessors of every horse and donkey in or around Sevier. By agreement with Gustus Praseworthy, who thankfully gave up his ever more burdensome trips down the mountain and instead made the bridge over the Gap into a toll one ("Gold and silver are still Satan's snares, but how can you be sure of your salvation lest you test it against worldly temptations?") they monopolized the carrying trade to the Notch.

When Praseworthy's right to collect toll was challenged, he promptly hauled in the bridge. After his ruffled feelings were soothed, there were no further complaints. His position was impregnable anyway, since it was soon found that, due to the terrain and wind conditions, it was never possible to land a helicopter in the Notch, much less a conventional plane.

None of these goings-on detracted from Joyleg's newsworthiness. Naturalists went half-mad with stunned ecstasy on discovering that the pigeons favored by the Notch folk for stews and potpies were passenger pigeons, survivors of the birds which had once been cloud-thick in American skies. The local popinjay proved to be the Cumberland parrot or Carolina parakeet, long believed extinct also. The cattle were, as Praseworthy had said, just cows and cow-brutes, but the Dominicker chickens were pure Dominiques, uncorrupted by alien strain, and the sheep were the Arlington Long Wool breed, developed by George Washington Custis, the first president's stepson, to be found nowhere else outside museums.

Sunday feature writers asked, Is Rabbit Notch the American Shangri-la? They refused to be dashed when the story that it harbored the dodo proved false. Instead they speculated on the probable route of Ponce de Leon from Florida to Tennessee and back. (An ingenious extrapolator suggested that Joyleg was a timetraveller from the Twenty-fifth Century—when everyone would live to be at least three hundred—transported back to the Eighteenth.)

The nation read a daily installment of Joyleg's autobiography (as told to Quentin Reynolds, who left Lucinda distinctly unimpressed, but who got along splendidly with Tully during his brief stay) at breakfast, listened to the commentators on Joyleg while riding to work, heard brief interviews (transcribed for this more convenient hour) with Joyleg during coffee-breaks, scanned Joyleg's opinions on everything in the evening papers ("Why, they're completely fabricated," cried Lucinda in amazement. "He could sue for a fortune!"), and after supper sat down to see filmed shorts on TV of Joyleg at home, Joyleg describing John Paul Jones, Joyleg feeding English corn (i.e. wheat) to passenger pigeons, Joyleg soaking, Joyleg in his ancient uniform. "Making a spectacle of the poor old man," said Lucinda. But the poor old man seemed to love every bit of it.

Radio Moscow, after ignoring the matter for weeks, and by coincidence selecting the same time *Trud* and *Pravda* came out with denunciations of Catherine the Great and of Jones, the American mercenary, blasted the story as a desperate hoax designed to distract attention from the sputniks and the overwhelming superiority of Soviet science. It was an effort to secure, by a forged grant, an imperialistic foothold on the soil of Mother Russia. Joyleg was a fraud, a tool, a jackal, a gutter-proletarian hooligan, a declassed capitalistic kulak tenant-farmer in peonage doing the bidding of his masters, a lackey of the plutocratic press. No one could be two hundred and ten or more years old—except, of course, a Soviet citizen like Semyon Pantaleovich Radshjasvili, a native of the Caucasus, who was undeniably two hundred and fifty.

Lucinda knew she was by no means getting the full heat of the Joyleg fever, but as much as did filter up made the Notch almost tropical. A famous distiller repackaged his goods with a new label, OLD JOYLEG. A competitor came back with OLD RABBIT NOTCH. A disgruntled importer of rum advertised his product as The Drink of Joyleg's Youth. The Cumberland Spring Water & Cola Bottlers became a national firm

overnight (stock quoted at 377 and no sellers) when Madison Avenue puffed its wares as the only genuine water used in Joyleg's distillation. Toymakers flooded the stores with Joyleg dolls, Joyleg squirrel-muskets (shooting real but harmless sparks), Joyleg hats with red-white-and-blue cockades, Joyleg (simulated) buckskin shirts, Joyleg powderhorns (filled with hard candies), Joyleg candlemolds (with marshmallows). An enterprising milling company was first on the market with BONNY DICK, a mixture of buckwheat and samp, the breakfast food of America's Oldest Inhabitant. As soon as the boxes could be printed, another firm came out with NOTCHIES, the Only cereal with *all* the vitamins and minerals taken by Joyleg every day. (Realistic plastic reproduction of Revolutionary soldiers, sailors and marines in every package.) A drug firm asked, Do YOU Want Youth and Energy at 200? Only magic-mash capsules, a byproduct of the Joyleg distilling process, supply *all* your needs.

From Monrovia came greetings from Isachar Tubman Ashmund Joyleg, direct descendent of Cudjoe Joyleg, free Negro, whom the squire of Rabbit Notch had helped finance in settling there. Mr. I. T. A. Joyleg, national chairman of the Unit Whig party, announced he had the discharge paper of his ancestor, one of the seven thousand Negroes who fought in the Revolution, and that his daughter was interested in starting a Liberian chapter of the DAR. Fifty State Regents shivered in their taut sashes of office, made no reply.

The President of the United States came to Blountsburg and sent the Secretary of Defense to Sevier. The Secretary of Defense sent the Secretary of the Navy to Rabbit Notch. He arrived there badly saddle-galled and sent the Assistant Secretary to present Joyleg with the Legion of Merit. It was explained this was in acknowledgement of his having lived longer than any other American. The order was open to civilians; if and when his precise status in regard to war service could be established, no doubt a higher decoration could be awarded.

"Bosh," said Lucinda, "Hedging."

"Come, lass," said Joyleg, caressing the medal '"Tis not to be sneezed at. Belike it would fetch a shilling or two in a pawnshop."

Opposition papers demanded to know why more wasn't being done for Joyleg; administration journals pointed out that Joyleg had been utterly neglected until a president with a great heart took office. A contingent of boy scouts hiked up the trail to make Joyleg Honorary Chief Scout, a distinction previously accorded only ex-presidents and Uncle Dan Beard. The SAR and DAR presented Joyleg with emblazoned scrolls; the Governors of Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama and New Hampshire made him a colonel; the governor of an ex-republic—with some heart-burning over the ghost of ex-Congressman Crockett —made him Commodore of the Texas Navy.

Pennsylvania proclaimed Joyleg Day, with ceremonies at the site of Shawnee Pass; Tennessee countered with Joyleg Week, ceremonies all over. Thousands of newborn girls were named Joy, hundreds of boy babies were named Isachar. The weathered survivors of the Greenback Party met with the right wing of the Socialist Labor Party (after a terrific verbal battle and subsequent split) to nominate Joyleg for President. Patriotic groups demanded action to see that the Soviet Union recognize the Jones-Joyleg grant or cede back to our brave Turkish ally both Crimea and Bessarabia which Jones had made safe for Russia by the battle of the Liman. Equally patriotic groups demanded the suppression of subversives who wanted such fraternization with the enemy.

The country went Joyleg-mad. Born in Pennsylvania, he pleased the North; living in Rabbit Notch, he gladdened the South; a pioneer, he delighted the West. He was, or had been, a Democratic-Republican: both parties took him to their bosoms, one overlooking his views on taxation, the other his views on the tariff. He held with this and that: the eggheads loved him; he didn't hold with that and this: the anti-eggheads adored him.

It was Joyleg's year, but it was too good to last. Lucinda knew that the serpent had entered into Eden when the corps of engineers strung the telephone wires, followed shortly by the electric cables and the towers of an overhead monorail. The first passengers on this conveyance included their fellow committee-members, Senator Alden Tuggins (R) from down east, and Senator Cleveland W. Zillidore (D) from the shores of the Pacific, as well as Jill Brittin and other newsmen for the great investigation. This time Jill wore a simple tweed suit which somehow managed to make her look both provocative and defenceless.

"How's my old ancient marine-er been? Has he missed me, the darling?"

Senator Tuggins, trim and gray as a whippet, had struggled so hard for decades to keep himself on the front page that he thought of himself as a member of the working press, said, "Oh, he's too old for you, Jilly." The senator had begun his career during the Bull Moose campaign. "And I doubt if moonshine is good for you. Better stick to the dry, dry martinis I mix."

The engineers, with Joyleg's consent, had erected a barracks for their own use, and these had been improved and made more comfortable (on the express understanding that they, like the monorail, the telegraph, telephone, and electric wires would be removed and all traces effaced) for the accommodation of the Joint Committee and all the personnel essential to a congressional investigation— newsmen, radio and film technicians, photographers, friends, feature-writers, sight-seers, tarts, gigolos, lobbyists, salesmen, typists, secretaries. Since the Notch, while self-sufficient, would hardly have enough provision stored away to feed this incursion, a mess was set up in the barracks, where eatables and potables were freighted from Knoxville and still farther points, to be prepared and served by cooks, waiters, busboys, and dishwashers.

Whether it was the coming of this vast population, natural exhaustion following the month of excitement after Luanda's and Tully's arrival, or another change in the weather, Joyleg had relapsed into a "poor" state again, though he was by no means sunk so deeply as he had been when they first saw him. Both he and Mag assured them he would be completely recovered after his next soak.

"Well, I must say," fretted Senator Tuggins, "It will be extremely awkward if he's comatose or—uh—dead when the proceedings begin."

"No wedding without the bride, ay?" said Jill.

"I'm sure he'll be all right," said Lucinda. "He's waited a long time for this vindication—he's not likely to miss the opportunity."

"A long time, yes…" Tuggins murmured vaguely. "Quaint, very quaint. The—uh—natives claim the small cannon on the swivel out there is from one of John Paul Jones's old boats."

" 'Ship,' " corrected Tully. "If Joyleg heard you call a ship a boat it would be almost as bad as calling a rifle a gun. Yes, it was brought up on a litter strapped between two horses. The Indians were still wild and it's kept in working order against their return. One of many survivals from Joyleg's youth, like keeping 'Old' Christmas according to the Julian Calendar and celebrating Commodore Jones's Birthday. Why, they even continue to hold Muster Day. I suppose this is the last place in the country for a century to do so."

"Speaking of survivals and brides," said Jill. "I suppose you've spotted the burying ground? I did, right away."

"Why no. We've been all over the Notch but—"

"Mind on other things?" Lucinda felt herself blushing at the creature's leer. "Come on, Tuggy, I'll show you. And you can come along if you like," she added magnanimously. "We have nothing to hide." The woman was insufferable.

"I don't know how we could have missed a graveyard," fretted Tully. "Joyleg never mentioned it, still we've walked all around; there are some really magnificent views, and as for the early flowers, now that the snow has all gone…"

But it was easy enough to miss. Situated on a dim trail on which no cabins had been built, it was on a little bald hillock rising amid the surrounding woods. There was nothing to see from below, no indication that the top of the hill was any different from the grassy slopes. "Must we go up?" asked Senator Tuggins. "I mean, I'm sure it's interesting and all that—"

"Out of condition, Senator?" prodded Jill, leading the way.

"Certainly not. I have the arteries, heart, and lungs of a man half my age." He quickened his pace.

All the headstones were short, and the chiseled messages were roughly cut, though legible enough. The cemetery was well-kept; no marker had been allowed to fall, and the grounds around them was smooth and even. There were Praseworthy's innumerable, Macklys, Grahams, Thomsons, Tollivers, Wickershams…

"Fine old American names," remarked Tuggins as though it were a personal achievement.

Jill marched ahead to a row standing like a well-drilled file of soldiers. The leading stone had been badly eroded, but it was not hard to make out the lower part of the inscription:

OF ANNA
AMIABLE SECOND SPOUSE
OF
CAPT ISACHAR JOYLEG
B. 1771 D. 1802

" 'Captain'?" Tuggins questioned. "I thought he claimed to be a sergeant?"

"Probably a militia title," suggested Tully. "Muster Day you remember."

The second obituary was more substantial.

VIEWER PAUSE AND MEDITATE
DEATH CAN BE A PEACEFUL STATE
SO WE PRAY OUR DEPARTD WIFE
IS QUIETER NOW THAN SHE WAS IN LIFE

ABIGAIL JOYLEG

born PRASEWORTHY Took Leave of This World
Dec 5
MDCCCXIX

"Eighteen nineteen," said Weathernox. "Mmmm. I wonder whether she was garrulous or if this merely expresses a hope for her peaceful repose. Doesn't tell how old she was."

"Next one does," proclaimed Tuggins, and read it aloud, to Lucinda's repressed annoyance. "Jane

McInnes, For Twenty years the virtuous wife of Is. Joyleg. Went to her Reward in her Thirty-Fifth year, 1840.' Slightly ambiguous, ay?"

Jill and Tuggins laughed, but Lucinda thought the senator in bad taste and moved on to the fourth marker, a little smaller than the others, and engraved simply, ELIZA JOYLEG/WIFE TO I. J./1822-1871. Next to Eliza rested Caroline (another Praseworthy), then came Dolley (Mackillwraithe), Emma (another McInnes), and finally Keren-happuch ("A DILIGENT SCRIPTURE SEARCHER"), who had widowed Joyleg for the latest time in 1949.

"The style of the epitaphs is quite inconsistent," said Tully. "You'd hardly think they were composed by the same man."

"Perhaps he was only reflecting the qualities—or his reaction to the qualities—of the deceased," remarked Tuggins. "Edgar Lee Masters and so on."

"He must have spent his pension on gravestones," commented Jill; "Wear them out; get a new one, or do without. Wonder how he likes doing without on cold nights. Someone ought to take pity on him."

"He seems to have done without for some time," Tully pointed out. "And really, nine wives in two hundred years is not excessive when you think of it."

Lucinda preferred not to think of it. "It may not be excessive, but it is undignified."

"What a Victorian you are!" cried Jill. "Should you have committed suttee? Or don't you ever expect to marry again?"

The senator looked at her sharply, Weathernox coughed, Lucinda felt that infuriating blush coming on again. "I'm not a national figure."

"Shapely though," appraised Tuggins, a rakish McKinley.

"Don't be modest," said Jill. "You discovered Joyleg. You have a good record in Congress. You're a war widow. It wouldn't take much to get you the vice-presidential nomination."

"Thank you," said Lucinda. "I have other plans."

"Oh?" asked the correspondent on an ascending note. She glanced from her to Weathernox and back. "Can I quote you?"

"Certainly not! I mean… There's no reason for my political future to be tied up with Joyleg."

"Couldn't think of a better cause," said Tully.

"Mmmm… When I think of some of the background material I left out of the *Time* story— Well, it's better for everyone the research wasn't done by one of their regular snoopers."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Lucinda haughtily. Jill had pretended to like the old man (probably only *to* soften him up so she could pump him), and now she was prejudicing Tuggins against him.

"Yes, tell us, Jilly. Is the old rip looking around for a tenth wife?"

"What simple, unsophisticated people you lawmakers are. Of course the old charmer is looking around. He undoubtedly has the very first chicken inspector badge issued. All the unmarried females in Rabbit Notch are at his service."

"Oh, come now," Tully protested. "You're making a simple, natural convenience sound vicious. Joyleg is an old man and not always well. It's only right and kindly the neighbors should help him, and since the married women have their own household tasks, the girls and widows—"

"Help him in and out of his daily bath in moonshine," finished Jill. "What's vicious about that?"

"Um," muttered the senator. "Hmmm. There may not be anything wrong, still I'm not sure this old man is quite the shining figure you two think he is. Naturally I'm not prejudging anything. I'm absolutely unbiassed. Absolutely. When the hearings begin tomorrow you can be sure I'll listen with an open mind."

Lucinda reflected dismally that she and Tuggins were the two Republican members of the committee. She only hoped the senator's open mind didn't make it drafty inside his head.

XIV

THE UNINHIBITED YOUTH OF ISACHAR JOYLEG

The hearings were held in Joyleg's house. Since even his large room barely accommodated the committee, staff, and witnesses, spectators and press had to be content with crowding at the windows and listening to loudspeakers rigged on the verandah. The weather had turned warm, so they were not uncomfortable. Homespun-clad Notch children, who had been the first to rebel against their traditional moneyless economy, did a brisk trade in cider, perry, and mead. More imperious drink was to be had in "the bake-house," in between the main dwelling and the privy. (The army had erected a chemical latrine near the barracks, a functional edifice much admired by the Notch folk, but a number of visitors, particularly the older ones and those originally from rural districts, nostalgically preferred Joyleg's weathered three-holer; wicker box of corn-shucks and the almanacs for 1815-20 conveniently at hand.)

Senator Cleveland Wilson Zillidore, not perhaps quite so handsome as his campaign pictures, yet striking in his wavy hair and large, soft eyes, was to be first of the rotating chairmen, even though Tuggins could have claimed seniority. Lucinda, having observed a tendency on the part of Senator Zillidore to wander from the point in hand, thought him not ill-pleased at the absence of television lenses capable of transmitting every slurred, repeated, or hesitant word and undignified gesture instantly, and the substitution of movie cameras whose film could be edited almost as satisfactorily as the Congressional Record. He ran his fingers through his hair, surveyed the audience, smiled, and began, "Now, Mr. Joyleg—"

"A moment, Senator," interrupted the committee counsel.

"Yes, Mr. Gloose?" Lucinda followed the chairman's gaze to the counsel's round face and knife-thin lips, and she thought she caught a hint of instantly suppressed dislike mingled with grudging respect.

"With your permission, Senator, I'd like to get the history of Mr. Joyleg's service on the record before we proceed to details."

"Well, now," began Zillidore dubiously. "Actually, the real point is to ascertain that Mr. Joyleg—this Mr. Joyleg, that is—is the same Mr. Joyleg, or rather that he is the Mr. Joyleg…"

"Precisely, Senator. And if he is, he should have no trouble corroborating material uncovered by's—(Lucinda was sure he had started to say scholars and thought better of the word) by scientific investigators from the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard, Yale, Linnell, the Library of Congress, National Archives and Kenyon. Most interesting material."

Zillidore blinked. Clearly unable to pit himself against such an array, he capitulated. "Very well, Mr. Gloose."

"Thank you. Now, Mr. Joyleg: please tell us when you joined the marines."

Joyleg, sitting erect, without the slightest sign of being poorly, was an impressive figure, Lucinda thought He was not wearing his buckskin, but a black broadcloth suit and dark blue neckerchief wound around a high stock. Evidently Rabbit Notch had some intercourse, no matter how brief, with the world of fashion in the 1830s or '40s. On his little finger was an antique ring he had not worn before.

"Seventy-seven," he answered succinctly. The electric lights, the cameras, the microphones, he ignored as if his life had been spent among them.

"Thank you," Gloose consulted—or did he merely pretend to?—a sheaf of notes in his hand. "That would be seventeen seventy-seven, of course?" His voice implied that he was prepared for any reply, no matter how preposterous.

"Seventeen and seventy-seven," Joyleg agreed. "Twas the year Poor Richard said, 'We must all hang together or separately.'"

"That's not exactly the date or form the quotation has come down to us," put in Senator Tuggins. Gloose frowned.

"Well sir," said Joyleg easily, "Dr. Franklin was a frugal man, Boston to the bones. Belike he said the thing first in talk, then in his *Gazette*, and once more in the Almanack. But twas true enough, no matter how put, and I'll warrant tis true enough still, though I never was and never will be a toady Federalist. Colonies, states, nations…"

"Yes, yes," said Gloose. "Now then, Mr. Joyleg, to what organizations did you belong before you joined the marines?"

"Ay?" asked Joyleg, cupping a hand behind his ear. "How's that, Advocate?"

"I'm not— Remember you are under oath. Let me put it this way: Were you not a corporal in the Pennsylvania militia in 1775?"

His tone caused everyone in the room, except himself and Joyleg, to lean forward, though Lucinda was certain none of them had any more idea than she did what the exchange was all about. Gloose looked tense, Joyleg leaned back relaxedly, no longer even faintly hard of hearing. "Ecawd, master, every soul with a musket, pistol, fowling-piece or horse was in the milishy those days. Baint they still? 'Tis naught to brag on."

"But you were in the militia?"

"Aye."

"And you took an oath to serve until discharged?"

The old man shrugged. "Had I a groat for every—"

Tully had been reading a note carried to him hand over hand from a window. He winced, passed it to Lucinda. *Joyleg personally no issue* (it read) *but his coat-tails are. Got to be cut off to keep the Pres. from riding into renomination on them. Watch Gloose eat the baby*. There was no signature. Weathernox jumped to his feet. "Mr. Chairman, will you inform—"

"Have you a point of order, Congressman?"

"I have, Senator. This is not a court, Mr. Joyleg is not accused of anything. Nor is he an unfriendly witness; he appears here of his own free will—he has even extended the hospitality of his house for our hearing. I hope you will instruct counsel not to badger our great and distinguished friend."

This was obviously old stuff to Gloose. He opened his eyes very wide. "Mr. Chairman, my only interest is in facts. I'm sure Representative Weathernox will be the first to assert that facts cannot injure his client—I beg pardon —friend."

"Are you insinuating—"

"Why, Congressman, you yourself just now called Mr. Joyleg your friend."

Belatedly, Senator Zillidore rapped for order. "Let's proceed. I'm sure counsel did not intend to treat the witness with anything but the respect due his age."

"Certainly not, Senator. Now, Mr. Joyleg, when you were on active service with the militia, were you not engaged to one Amanda Peppercorn?"

For a moment longer Joyleg's face retained the impassivity with which he had sat through the squabble. Then he smiled, lifted his head. "Ah, Mandy… A sweet lass. Lips like strawberries. And across her nose, three little freckles…" He grew silent but still smiled.

A sigh passed from the spectators, the crowd outside, and the listening audience all over the country as they realized he was speaking of a girl dead and gone at least a century, and whose youth and beauty must have faded long, long before that. Only Gloose remained unmoved. "Come sir, you were engaged? Yes or no?"

"En— Betrothed, you mean? Aye—in a manner of speaking."

"What manner of speaking? Were you or weren't you betrothed to Miss Peppercorn?"

"Ay, lad—you're a sharp one, and dogged, too. Yet no ladies' man like Dr. Franklin, I can see that. Mayhap tis but lack of opportunity. However, ye may learn betimes that with females tis not always one thing nor tother. Sometimes 'tis both, sometimes neither."

"Well then, since you find it difficult to give a straightforward answer, in a manner of speaking you were engaged to Amanda Peppercorn. Now: Weren't you also betrothed—at the same time—to Arabella Jepworth?"

Joyleg's smile broadened. "Arabella. I had not thought of her for a parcel of years. Bella… Now there was a fine little filly. Sharp as the breeze, soft as new-churned butter, sweet as cream. Aye, Bella was a girl to turn your head for a second look."

"Please answer the question."

"I misremember, lad. Twas so long ago."

Gloose put his teeth firmly together. "Were—you—
not—betrothed—to—Miss—Jepworth—at—the—same— time? Please answer yes or no."

Joyleg settled back. "No."

Gloose looked staggered. "Did you say, 'No,' sir?"

Weathernox jumped up again. Before he could protest, Joyleg went on, "We was betrothed, *de facto*, ye might say, not *de jure*—but twasn't at exactly the same time as Mandy and me."

The audience let out its collective breath. It took even Lucinda a long time to reflect that Joyleg's status as a fiance couldn't possibly conflict with his status as a veteran.

"No," repeated Joyleg pensively. "Mandy and me was bespoke in April; I didn't meet up with Bella till June."

The audience inhaled sharply.

"Then you admit there was a period when your engagements were concurrent?"

"Ay? What was that law-word?"

Gloose swept on. "And you are aware, I'm sure, that in August of that year, the unfortunate Miss Jepworth was summoned before the vestry of the North Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia charged with fornication, and pleaded that Corporal Isachar Joyleg had seduced her on promise of marriage?"

The audience broke into a gabble. Lucinda's tones were hard and cold as ice: "Really, Mr. Chairman, it's hard to see what purpose is served in raking up ancient gossip." She looked at Gloose as though he were something the cat forgot to bury.

Through the buzz of conversation she finally heard Joyleg. "… always considered the Philadelphia synod, vestries and all, was tinctured with the Arminian heresy. I drew the unwatered milk of pure Cameronian doctrine from me good mother's orthodox bosom, and if there be one thing I detest more than an exciseman or a pimp, tis an Arminianist…"

But Gloose was now in full cry. "And early that December you were haled before the justice's court on a bastardy warrant—" sensation "—sworn out by Megan Ap Howell, indentured servant at the Bull and Fiddle Inn, were you not?"

Joyleg shrugged one shoulder, as if to dislodge a small fly. "Poor witless Welsh Abigail. She did but name me, as it might be any man, to save herself a skinning from Mistress Grassgreen, who held her indentures. Every malt-worm at the Bull and Fiddle knew twas Benjy Grassgreen —a lusty lad for his fourteen years—as got poor Meg with child, and so it come out in the justice chamber, and so I was let off."

Gloose gave the audience no time to erase the imputation. "And right on the heels of all this; overlapping engagements, charges of fornication, seduction and bastardy, was there not a meeting in January 1776, of the male kin of Amanda Peppercorn, Arabella Jepworth, Allison Smith, Maria Hankins, Judith Bingham and Nancy Lockerby, with all of whom, it was charged, you had misconducted yourself?"

Sensation.

"Nay."

Greater sensation.

"Please explain your answer. There was no such meeting? Mr. Chairman," Gloose cried as Tully jumped to his feet again, "the purpose of my questions will be shown shortly—if there are not too many interruptions. I assure this committee I'm not bringing out irrelevant details. Well, Mr. Joyleg?"

"Why, there was naught betwixt Nancy and me her own mother—and Dame Sapphira Lockerby was a strict Two Seed In The Spirit Predestinarian Baptist—couldn't have witnessed. And you can put that in the log." But his tone was faintly regretful.

Pause, then sensation doubled.

"Very good, Mr. Joyleg. I strike Nancy Lockerby from your list of conquests."

"When she was a maid, that is. I recollect meeting her in '81—or was it '80—when she was a widdy—"

"Oh, you did not exclude widows from your attentions, then?"

Joyleg considered, stroked his long chin. "It depends, I suppose, what you mean by attentions. Seems to me I danced a minuet once with one as had the trimmest ankle a man could fancy: the Widdy Custis, her as become Lady Washington—"

Uproar. This was too hot even for Gloose to handle and squeeze. Hastily and loudly he said, "Did you not, as a consequence of the meeting mentioned, where decisions were reached which could have resulted in indignity, not to say physical discomfort and possibly even worse to you, did you not desert—"

Uproar again. Weathernox shouted, but no one could make out what he was saying. Lucinda, scarlet, was shaking with anger at Gloose. Senator Tuggins looked at Joyleg with critical interest. Senator Zillidore banged his gavel without effect.

The Tass correspondent, who had only reluctantly been granted permission to go to Rabbit Notch, and who stayed so far from Joyleg one might have thought he carried the Russian land-grant in his pocket and was fearful of being asked to hand it over, hissed, "Outrage! A childish plot that anyone could see through it!"

Jill Brittin murmured, "Five girls at once—what a man."

The President, it was later rumored, turned to his Assistant and inquired, "Shouldn't we see about getting that Legion of Merit back?"

Five million listeners turned away from their radios with horror; five million remained fascinatedly attentive; five million laughed fit to bust; five million looked glum. A newspaper columnist dubbed Joyleg, "The Incontinent Continental"; a California candidate for congress announced his platform as simply, No Pensions for the Immoral.

At length something like silence was gained, and Gloose unwound again. "And did you not, I say, therefore desert the Pennsylvania militia and enlist in a New Jersey Continental unit—the Monmouth Fencibles, to be exact— where you served until it was bruited about you had retained Tory property illegally instead of at once releasing it to—"

Minor uproar, drowning out Joyleg's, "A whipped hound-dog I found a better master for."

"… and again, without awaiting proper discharge, took leave of the comrades you had sworn to serve with?"

Joyleg stroked the hollow of his cheek with his thumb. "You mean I run off from the war? Flay and peg me if I'd have been the first. Many's the stout lad—not just common soldiers, but gentlemen officers with, rounds of gilt braid scaring the birds off their shoulders—I've seen slip quietly away and wait for a better time to send the lobster-backs to hell. Twas the same when we took up against General Hamilton's excise, twill always be the same of men who baint mercenaries nor caught unwilling by the press-gang. Steuben never got it through his High Dutch head, the difference betwixt free men and parade-ground dummies. We fit because we had a mind to it, when we lost the taste and relish for it, we quit—mayhap to come another day, mayhap not.

"Bloody flux, Man!" he burst out, "D'ye think we fought because General Washington was a fine figure on his white stallion? Or because Pat Henry had a quick tongue? Or to keep Sam Adams and Jack Hancock from bankruptcy through paying King George's levies? Or because we was all lined up, washed and polished and pipeclayed, and swore we would? Od's wounds! It were so, any coxcomb with a handful of seals could get up an army to beat the British, the French, the Dons, and the Dutch—aye, and with the Swedes, Turks, and Tartars into the bargain. Oaths! Swearings! Uniforms! Parades! Musters! Drills! Duties! Do ye think we fit for them? Only a dolt would. And you can put *that* in the log!"

Jill Brittin scribbled on a hitherto clean pad, "I have heard the authentic voice of the spirit of Seventy-six, and it speaks no sweet words to fife and drum, but the bitter language of agitation and subversion. For the first time I understand that this was no merely noble War of Independence but a real, rough, crude, violent revolution…"

When the place quieted, Senator Zillidore, beaming, announced, "I'm going to interrupt just long enough to read this, which just came in. 'The FBI has compared a fingerprint found smudged in ink on a Joyleg pension for May, 1801, with one of Mr. Joyleg's prints obtained recently, and the director has announced that they are one and the same.' This means there is no longer any question—not that I, personally, ever doubted…"

"Nor I," said Tuggins, hastily.

"Vindication!" shouted Tully.

Lucinda cried, "Hurray!"

The audience began to applaud, faltered, tried it again, gave up. "Oh," said Zillidore, looking at Gloose, who stood with his head a bit to one side in an I-am-waiting-patiently position.

"I repeat my question: 'Then you admit having—not once but twice—deserted?' I take it, Mr. Joyleg, that you have answered, 'Yes'?"

Joyleg shrugged. The fire was gone from his expression; he looked exhausted. Senator Zillidore said dubiously, "Perhaps this would be the best place to adjourn till tomorrow."

XV

FURTHER REVELATIONS FROM AN INDISCREET PAST

The measured tones of A. B. Matterhorn vibrated sonorously through the loudspeaker of the portable radio. "And so we see that Mr. Gloose has forced the admission from Joyleg that his relations with women were unstable, and that he twice left one branch of the service for another in an irregular manner at a time when the new nation was struggling into existence. On the other hand, Mr. Joyleg, with his antique rhetoric, has given us something to think about, something to shake our prejudices and preconceptions. What this means to all of us as patriotic Americans, only historians, historians in the future, perhaps, can tell us."

"I don't need an historian to tell me that Joyleg was an old lecher, even as a young man," said Alden Tuggins, glancing at Jill Brittin. Lucinda bit her lip. She could not defend Joyleg's shocking lapses—though to be sure, eighteenth-century standards were what they were—but surely Senator Tuggins was in no position to censure him or anyone else.

"I don't think he's changed a bit either, the old love," commented Jill.

"Really?" Zillidore displayed an ambivalent interest. "Such an *old* man?"

Lucinda, remembering the old man's glee at meeting trousered women and his happy recollection of ancient "japes," said nothing.

"His soaking in moonshine," explained Jill, "not only pickles him, it keeps him in running order. Alert, too." Had ex-Sergeant, ex-Captain, and now several-times-Colonel Joyleg (with a self-confessed weakness for drabs) cast a lewd and only slightly dimmed eye on Jill, Lucinda wondered.

"Alert enough, evidently, to have established a sort of *droit de seigneur* over all the young ladies of Rabbit Notch," suggested Tuggins.

"They probably won't leave the poor old sweetheart alone," said Jill. "Like Aaron Burr, beset at eighty by advances he was too gallant to refuse. And I can't blame them—he *is* interesting."

Tully Weathernox, sounding as weary as Lucinda felt, said, "Whatever Joyleg's ethics, the fact remains that he has served his country and we owe him better than eleven dollars a month, better than being baited in the witness chair, better than having his character picked to pieces in order to question his absolute purity."

Senator Zillidore, far more at ease than he had been as chairman, gently smoothed his hair. "Let's not forget that we do have modern American standards of rectitude. I agree that Gloose's methods are crude and even demagogic—he is, in fact, a most unpleasant character—and I wish today's hearing had been on a higher level. Nevertheless I think we must ask ourselves if we can accept a tarnished symbol—"

Lucinda broke in. "But Senator, it isn't up to us to accept or reject Joyleg as a symbol. He exists, he is the last surviving veteran—by ninety-odd years—of the Revolution. The question isn't whether or not his morals are those of Grover Cleveland—"

"Or Warren Harding, or Joyleg's own bogey, Hamilton." Tully's alliance with Lucinda was evidently overcome for the moment by party loyalty and a recollection of Zillidore's given name.

"Now who's raking up old scandal?" asked Jill lazily.

Lucinda shook her head in annoyance. "I mean that Joyleg is a symbol—"

"Warts and all," quoted Tully, loyal again.

"Well, well," soothed Tuggins. "No doubt our old gentleman will justify himself at the next session." But

Lucinda, realizing how Gloose had managed to make even the proof of Joyleg's bicentennial authenticity an anticlimax, doubted the opposite.

However, Tuggins in the chair began as though determined to have his prophecy fulfilled. He opened with a gratifying speech pointing out that the committee's purpose was to inquire into the condition of the Revolutionary veteran and accredit him for further assistance if need be, not to rake up ancient allegations of turpitude. Gloose bowed his head—and at once snapped it up and struck again.

"Of course, Mr. Chairman, there is the question of Mr. Joyleg's being entitled to his present pension at all."

"What?"

"The Act of 1790, passed by the First Congress, under which he receives this pension, referred to commissioned, not noncommissioned, officers. It might be enlightening to learn how—"

Joyleg cut through the babble which greeted the first attack of the day. "Discharged in Eighty-three," he said, looking carefully over Gloose's head. "Peace was not made with the redcoats until Eighty-four. Betwixt such dates your servant was captain in the North Carolina Militia, fighting off such of the Five Civilized Tribes as was disaffected by the King's agents and stirred up into attacking the western settlements."

Tuggins', "There, you see—" was brushed aside by Gloose. "Now, Mr. Joyleg, yesterday we touched briefly on your desertion from the American armed forces—"

"Mr. Chairman!" shouted Weathernox.

"Armed?" snorted Joyleg. "Aye, after a fashion. D'ye know how much powder there was in all the Colonies in Seventy-five? Ay? So little, more than half what we used was took from the lobsterbacks and Hessians theirselves. Firearms? Blunderguns and fowling-pieces, so few of them that pikes was beat out in the smithies, pikes again muskets tested at London Tower, pikes again the Royal Artillery. Why, President Hancock hisself said—"

Tuggins—who, as a New Englander, should have known—said, "*John* Hancock? What was he president of?"

"President of the United States in Congress Assembled, was what."

"Mmmm. That's neither here nor there," reproved Gloose, carefully avoiding yesterday's pitfalls, "Now then, after twice deserting, you served in the marines—"

"With great distinction," roared Tully. "Mr. Chairman, surely it's time we were through listening to gossip and heard something positive."

"—'creditably,' I was about to say when I was so impetuously interrupted," Gloose went on smoothly, with the self-assurance of one who has calmly surmounted the proof of his adversary's more than two hundred years. "Now, all your fellow marines were not, I imagine, of impeccable reputation."

Joyleg gazed at Gloose blandly.

"Will you answer me, sir?"

"Aye. If I can. And if you ask a question."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Joyleg." Gloose was exaggeratedly abject. "Let me rephrase it. When you were in the marines, were not some of your companions men with unsavory backgrounds, criminals, fugitives from justice, suspected—"

A spectacled, mild-appearing reporter, who had been quietly doodling, suddenly erupted. "Let me at the son of a bitch! I was at Iwo, and no damned shyster's going to say anything against the Corps while I'm around. Come on, you legal rat, I'm going to beat the living crap out of you!"

Gloose folded his arms and waited while the reporter was subdued. (Joyleg nodded and waved his hand. "Brother," he called.) When there was comparative silence, he went on calmly. "Suspected lawbreakers and so on?"

Joyleg considered the question. He considered it so long that Gloose began to fidget and had just opened his mouth when the old man replied. "Aye. Saints and sinners too, as anywheres else. Wartimes, the codes of peace go by the board. Today's hero was yesterday's cutpurse. Ye do not ask the man who saves your life with a thrust of his cutlass against the boarder's neck whether he's a regular churchgoer or a knight of the road."

"Thank you. And no doubt some of your more dissolute companions—"

"Dissolute? Man, man—how dissolute can ye be after fifty days at sea with naught but the ration of weak grog to drink and only the memory of a neat waist to lie with of nights?"

"Very well. Let's hold that question in abeyance a while. Hmmm. All the world knows now of the document granting John Paul Jones a patent of nobility by Catherine the Great, and which he presumably bestowed on the witness—"

Lucinda struck the table with her fist. "Shame!"

Tuggins looked at Gloose as if he'd asked a dollar for an item marked ninety-eight cents. "I really think 'presumably' is out of order, Counsel. The document has been authenticated by all sorts of learned experts."

Gloose bowed to the chairman. "Since the document in question seems to have been validated by no court, or consummated by usage, it appeared to me its provisions were presumptive rather than established. However, if the word is somehow offensive, I withdraw it. Now, Mr. Joyleg, I want to ask a very serious question."

"If it has aught to do with venery," growled Joyleg, "I'm weary on the subject."

("And high time, too," observed Edison Toby III to his millions of radio listeners that afternoon.)

"It has only remotely to do with such matters. Now, Mr. Joyleg—Mr. Joyleg—" But no one was attending to Gloose. All eyes were on Joyleg as he produced an outrageously long clay pipe and something looking like a gnarled root. "Mr. Joyleg…" The old man nodded, and scraped the twist with a skinny knife, gathering the shavings in his palm. "Mr. Chairman!" But the chairman was absorbed in watching Joyleg fill the pipe-bowl with delicate care before he took out a tinderbox. "Really, I must protest!" raged Gloose. "He's deliberately trying to distract attention."

"Witness may smoke," ruled Tuggins abstractedly, as Joyleg struck flint to steel, getting a light immediately. "So may Counsel, if he wishes."

Joyleg pulled on the pipe, blew out the smoke slowly. Gloose fanned the air in front of him, coughed, spluttered, wiped his eyes. "Tis kinnikinic; the willowbark rolled in with the tobacco gives the tang,"

Joyleg observed. "I learned the art from the Chickamaugas—more than a drop of Chickamauga in the blood hereabout—and though I have lost most of me taste for smoking, I still take it on occasion. But ye have other business than to listen to an old man's chatter; the Writer to the Signet was about to ask me somewhat. Proceed, lad," he said indulgently. "Don't stand there like a bear with a sore paw. Fire when ready."

Gloose swallowed, made a stern effort to pull himself together and ignore all that had happened in the last few minutes. "Ah," he began, "hmm. We touched briefly on the matter of your association with criminal characters at sea—"

"You touched it," corrected Joyleg. "Not we."

Gloose, now fully recovered, wheeled and thrust his shoulders forward. "Mr. Joyleg," he demanded, "when were you on the account?"

There was shocked silence from those who recognized the phrase, a baffled frown from those who didn't. "Aye— the account," Joyleg said slowly. "Twas bound to get to that sooner or later. Well, many a man has sailed under letters of marque only to swing for a filibusterer; many a jolly rogue has truly been on the account and sailed home to be presented with a dress sword and mayhap made governor of Jamaica or such."

"Ah… Then it's your contention that you were never a pirate—" he grated out the word; a shiver ran through the leaning listeners,"—but merely a privateer?"

"We sailed with letters of marque and reprisal under the Parmese flag, as we had right, since we was commissioned by the Prince or Grand Doge or whatever his spangly title was."

"Parma," said Gloose scornfully. "A landlocked duchy—no ports, no seacoast, no need of a navy. But you persuaded them they had need of, ah, privateers, ay?"

"It took little persuading. They was at war with Two Sicilies or somewhat—mayhap 'twas with Sardinia, Modena, or the Grand Turk's domains. I disremember. We only made one-two cruises."

Gloose nodded. "I imagine one or two was quite enough." He drew a paper from his briefcase. "Let me read you this definition: 'Privateer. The name applied in time of war to a ship owned by a private individual or syndicate, which under government permission, expressed in a letter of marque authorizing the privateer to attack, plunder and destroy the vessels belonging to enemy shipping which he may encounter, makes war on the shipping of a hostile power.' "

"Aye," agreed Joyleg, taking his pipe from his lips.

Gloose raised his voice. " 'To make war on enemy vessels without this commission, or on the shipping of a nation not specified in it, is piracy.' PIRACY!"

"Mmmm," said Joyleg.

"Is it not true, that while you were with the vessel *Frolicking Anna*, a Moorish prize was seized and plundered? That no Moorish nation was specified in your letter of marque? That both the United States and *Parma* were then at peace with the Moors?"

"The States went to war with them later though and lost the *Philadelphia* doing it. As for our prize, twas took in self-defense, for they fired the first shot, thinking we was unarmed. Why man, that was the trade of vessels flying the rag of a Barbary bashaw: *they* was pirates. The best defense is a good offense, and all that scrimshaw."

"So it doesn't seem very important to you?"

"Mmmm. Tis and taint. All over and done with now. Privateer and prize alike have had their timbers broke up for firewood; seamen and landsmen, boarders and boarder, all dead and gone. Me mind, young sir, is rather crowded with memories. Can't truly say as this one seems very momentous now; no."

"No," said Gloose reflectively; "no doubt the line between the legal and illegal is not momentous to an admitted deserter and pirate—or privateer. Now, when you returned from the scene of plunder to the United States, within a short time you took up arms against it. This is quite a record: double desertion, possible piracy, and now rebellion."

"Master Weathernox and the Congress-lady tell me pardons was made out by General Washington, signed by his own hand. And twas not the States we fought, but Alec Hamilton's whisky tax."

Gloose grimaced. "A fine distinction. If I were to take up arms against the income tax I doubt if the government would be as lenient with me as it was with you."

Joyleg, through a puff of willow-scented tobacco, said, "Mayhap the government is of lesser men now than General Washington, Governor Jefferson, and Jemmy Madison."

"Ah. And what of men out of the government—men like Simon Girty? It's true you knew him?"

"Aye."

"And that you tried, unsuccessfully, to get him amnestied?"

"Aye. He was wicked—but man is sinful by nature, and he was not all wicked. He saved Simmy Kenton's life, who did brave service on the frontier later."

"A pity you weren't equally solicitous for the bloody victims of this dreadful renegade, Girty, who foreswore his own race to fight with the Indians!"

"Race? It seems to me one race is much the same as any other. I've knowed Indians to raise white babes with their own, and the white man who didn't learn scalping and tomahaxing with the best of them soon lost his own hair or had his own brains bashed out. Simon Girty fought against his own? Was this the first time white men killed white men or massacred women and children? Mayhap if he'd been amnestied he'd have turned his coat again and then he'd be a hero."

Gloose brushed this contemptuously aside and pressed on. "I imagine you took pains to conceal your fondness for this woman-scalper when you went to Tennessee."

"Weren't no Tennessee then. 'Twas the western lands of North Carolina, and after the Cession, become the State of Franklin."

"Quite so. And since the State of Franklin was never admitted to the Union, North Carolina having withdrawn its cession for the time being, you no longer considered yourself under the jurisdiction of the United States?"

Joyleg's shaggy eyebrows came down and together. "What ox are you trying to shoe now, Master?"

Gloose's tone was triumphant. "I hold here the photostat of a list written in 1795 by one Silas Bigglestave—"

"That marplot never learned to write more than his poxy name."

"—and attested by him, of those he swore sold weapons to the Chickasaw hostiles. And after your eloquent defence of the noble savage, whose name do you suppose leads all the rest?"

Joyleg half rose from his chair, managing to look at once outraged, amused, sardonic, and belligerent. Gloose, who had approached quite close, retreated two steps. "Weapons!" he roared. "Weepons—or weppins in your macaroni speech— Why, damme, if they rusty hatchets, dull knives and flintlocks from Braddock's time was ever used on man instead of beast, twas only again the Creeks, not whiteskins. Many an express we dispatched to the General Government, warning of the Dons stirring up the Creeks and border tribes to keep the settlements from expanding south and west, but do you think they hearkened? Why…". He spoke on, but the page of history he referred to was a book closed, to his listeners. Beginning to fidget and then to cough, they knew nothing of Miro, West Florida, *guarda costas* , Choctaws, the closing of the Mississippi. *Sold weapons to hostile Indians* … That much got through, and little more.

Oh yes, thought Lucinda, heartsick. Of course Joyleg had sold weapons to the Indians, risen (and conspired to rise) against the "General Government," been a pirate, a deserter, a betrayer of young girls. It counted for nothing that he could answer each charge with explanation or extenuation; he might have blunted the edge of any one charge but the whole arraignment was cumulative. As the day went on it was disclosed that Joyleg had helped Tories escape the furious justice of patriots. (His rejoinder that the families in question had been innocent of overt act and were indeed merely victims of a looting mob didn't erase the implication of treason.) He had spoken scornfully of the Continental Congress and described the Constitution as "a compact among men of commerce." He thought Nathan Hale had been of "impetuous humor." He…

"Are you now or—I mean, were you a member of the Conway Cabal?"

"I stand mute."

Headline: JOYLEG TAKES FIFTH.

He had said Mistress Ross couldn't sew for a hillock of beans.

What hadn't he done?

When the boom was really lowered, all that went before was by comparison a gentle spoof. Gloose's final action of the day began quietly enough. "You are familiar," he purred, "with the names of John Sevier, Governor of Franklin and later Tennessee, and William Blount, Governor of the same area when it was the Southwest Territory?"

"Nolinchucky Jack and Billy Blount? Aye."

"Have you anything to say against the reliability of either of them?"

The old man hesitated. "Nay."

Gloose took another photostat hi his hand, his face expressionless. "Here is a letter from Governor Blount to John Sevier. Let me read one sentence: 'Another question you must decide as brigadier-general of the territorial forces, is how much trust to repose in Joyleg of the Notch in view of his intimate connection with B.A., whose ring he wears upon his finger.' "

All eyes went to the ring on Joyleg's finger, noted the trembling of the hand, swung to Joyleg's face, twisted with sudden fury.

"B.A.," repeated Gloose musingly. "I wonder who that could be." Then, evidently tiring of the pose, he

swung his arm as though to strike the old man. The hand arrested so that the pointing finger was only a few inches from Joyleg's angry eyes. Gloose shouted: "B.A. stands for Benedict Arnold, doesn't it? *Doesn't it*? Ben-e-dict Arnold? And that is Benedict Arnold's ring you wear, isn't it? How lucky it is that you have this chance to explain to the American people the nature of this intimate connection you had with Benedict Arnold!"

Joyleg seemed to retreat into the chair. "Tisn't… tisn't what you think," he strangled out.

Gloose was the soul of suavity. "Then tell us what it is," he invited.

Joyleg cowered away. Then, with a convulsive, jerky movement which snapped the stem of his pipe, he sprang up and clutched wildly at his tormentor. The counsel stumbled backward and went sprawling. Zillidore and Weathernox jumped to their feet and took Joyleg's arms. At their touch he collapsed and was set back in the chair as easily as though his clothes were empty.

There was an appalled silence. Then Senator Tuggins muttered, "Committee is adjourned for the day."

Lucinda wept.

XVI

JOYLEG'S RISE AND FALL

She wept, but she was not a woman to take refuge in either sorrow or angry frustration. A better or worse politician, seeing that it was now impossible to rehabilitate Joyleg, would have disassociated herself from his cause, and voters' memories being what they are, in time her advocacy would be forgotten, which is much better from an officeholder's viewpoint than forgiven. Drying her eyes and repairing her makeup, she sought out Tully.

"We can't let it end here," she said.

"No, of course not. Look, I'm slated to take the chair tomorrow; I'll just shut Gloose up—stamp on him, order him out, if necessary—and let the old man have the floor to himself."

She shook her head. "It's too late now. That would have worked if Zillidore had done it right away, or even if Tuggins had done it before the worst damage. But now all the poison is in the record. Joyleg is beyond ordinary rehabilitation."

"What do you want me to do?"

" I don't know, Tully, I honestly don't know. When I think of all those lies, all those sneaking insinuations, I could just strangle that slimy Gloose with my own hands."

"Darling—believe me, no jury would convict you of murder, either."

"I—" They both looked at each other, suddenly aware. Tully reached out, a little tentatively at first, and when she didn't back away, took her into his arms. He kissed her; she kissed him back. They drew

apart; he looked at her again, she looked at him, dropped her eyes, raised them defiantly. He kissed her tenderly, fiercely, ravenously. She kissed him gently, lovingly, wistfully.

"Oh, Lucinda…"

"Oh, Tully. I thought—I thought you never would."

"Why, my dear—I never dreamt—I mean I thought you would be offended—"

"Oh, Tully, what ever happened to your oratory?"

"My…?"

"I thought when you came to it—if you ever did, and I'd begun to have serious doubts—you'd sweep me off my feet with such a speech that would bring me cheering into your arms."

"Ah—now you're laughing at me."

"And that's forbidden?"

He considered. He kissed her, and considered some more. Then he kissed her again. "No," he said slowly. "Keep on laughing at me. Laugh at me always. I like it."

She opened her eyes wide. "Do you really, Tully? *Really*?"

"Yes, I do. And the funny part is, I've never been able to stand being laughed at in my life before."

They continued to explore the amazing—and wonderful —world in which they found themselves. For an hour. Two. Three. "Gracious," cried Lucinda. "We've forgotten Joyleg!"

"So we have. Poor old man. Darling, what shall we do?"

"Well," said Lucinda brisking, all business now, as though her dress and hair were quite unrumpled, her mouth unbruised from being pressed, and her shoulders quite cold for lack of a man's pulling, demanding arm against them. "Well, first off, we must get to the bottom of this Benedict Arnold business."

"Mmmm," commented Tully dubiously.

"We must," insisted Lucinda. "And that means we have to talk to Joyleg before the session tomorrow. And *that* means we must ask Mag to see he takes his soak earlier than usual."

"Yes, dear," agreed Tully meekly, with the happy air of a man who doesn't at all know what it is all about, but is prepared to be led.

There were difficulties. Mag reported that the old sir refused to take his soak at all. Later she reported he was in his soak but refused to see any foreigners wandering up to badger and bedevil him. It was perilously close to starting time, before he was heard to say pettishly, "All right, then; if they'd audience with me like I was King Lewis or the Grand Cham, let them come in and not stand there chop-fallen, waiting on me pleasure."

There was nothing in his bathing arrangements to offend Lucinda's modesty, for he sat in an oval wooden tub, the staves copper-banded; a flat, hinged board top with a shaped opening for his neck concealing all but his head. "Good morning," said Tully briskly. Lucinda put her hand on his arm and gave it a little squeeze hoping she was conveying the message that this was no time to be jolly.

"Duty to you," growled Joyleg. There was a silence, then he said with a sort of childish defiance, "I suppose ye expected to see me in me dress greens or somewhat, mayhap with me old musket from the *Bonny Dick* (twas a cranky piece and always fired high), like Arnold—there, I've said the name out loud for the first time since West Point—dying in his old Continental uniform and directing he be buried in it. But though I be as good as buried, I'm not dead yet."

"Of course you're not," exclaimed Lucinda. "Why you haven't even begun to fight."

He looked up suspiciously. "I've found when a woman throws a man's words back at him she's most likely hatching mischief."

"Nevertheless," said Tully with surprising firmness, "this is a conflict you can't avoid."

"Ay? Have ye pressed me? Conscripted me like a witless Hessian clodhopper?"

"Times have changed," put in Lucinda. "We have a draft in this country too, now."

"Do ye? And twas held against John Adams that he had a standing army and navy. Well, likely I'm too old to be took for a soldier. Or sailor, neither."

"But not too old to answer Gloose*" insisted Tully:

"Answer him what? That I was in no plot with Arnold? What need had he of me to encompass his treason?"

"Well then," said Lucinda, "you must tell why you wear his ring, and what the 'peculiarly intimate' connection was."

"Aye Mam? Must I? Curiosity killed a cat, says the adage. I warrant it killed no females, for they never rest till they find out things. Well, this is my business, and I'll not spread it abroad."

"But it's spread abroad already," cried Lucinda. "Those who missed the broadcast have read it in the newspapers, or listened to it from commentators, or heard it from others. Whatever the truth is, it cannot be as bad as Gloose insinuates, and once revealed, it will be forgotten, not left in the dark to breed new suspicions."

"Ah," said Joyleg, more like himself than he had been since the fatal question had been put, "I begin to see why they sent you to Congress. Just the same I'll not answer that hangdog knave. No."

"But—" began Weathernox.

Joyleg silenced him with a look. "It shakes me, I own. I knew Billy Blount heard the tale, for who hadn't, but I never thought he misdoubted me. And now ye two…"

"We…" Lucinda hesitated. "It isn't a question of doubting you, Mr. Joyleg. We want you to clear yourself. Desperately," she added.

"Ay, lass, I believe you. Mag!" He raised his voice. "Mag!"

"Coming, Master Joyleg."

"Fetch me the small leather pouch that lies in me box. Not the traveling box, but the small cabinet that sits atop the highboy. Aye, thank ye, lass—hand it to the Congress-lady."

Lucinda accepted the ancient suede bag with its rawhide drawstring. The material felt powdery to her

touch. With a glance at the old man for permission, she opened it. drew out a miniature. It was a crude piece of jewelry, of tarnished silver, and the picture was poorly executed, _ though the colors were still bright. The face in the oval was young yet somehow matronly, with a hint of plumpness. Her bearing was aloof, but it was not the aloofness of arrogance; rather, it spoke of withdrawal, shyness, timidity.

"Beatrix Joyleg," said the old man harshly.

"Your wife," said Lucinda. "Your first wife?"

"Aye. She lies buried in Philadelphia, whence she'd gone to visit her mother. Foster mother, that is, but the only one she'd known. Swept off by the pestilence both, the malignant fever. She was reared by good church and chapel folk, but they gave her the belief—twas none of mine, nor cared I at all—that her birth was shameful. He gave her no name, naught but this ring, which I treasure because twas hers."

"She was Arnold's daughter?" asked Tully.

"Aye. His natural daughter. To her it was a flaw she felt all could see. And when the scandal broke, loud and ugly, she drew away, as though the father's treason doubly tainted the already blemished daughter. She died afore she could bear the added guilt of a husband charged with rebellion against the excise or resistance to the Barbary pirates."

"I'm chairman today," said Weathernox. "We'll bring it out and make Gloose eat every slimy word."

Joyleg shook his head. "You're a good lad, for all you sit in Congress, which seems to have changed precious little since Prattling Jock Hancock's day. But Bea's name shall not be used to close foul mouths, nor wipe mud from Joyleg's breeks, nor yet to sell diurnals and newsletters. Let them think as they will and do as they wish."

"But—"

"Nay, lass. But me no buts. The sooner they begone, the better. They shan't have her memory to higgle and chaffer and dilly with." He threw back the lid of the tub. "I'll ask your pardon Mam, if I'm uncivil, but me soak is cooling and for decency's sake 'twould be more convenient if ye'd withdraw."

They entered the big room where the microphones were already being tested for the day. Lucinda discovered that her chief disappointment was not for her own ambitions— which would certainly have been immensely helped by Joyleg's apotheosis—or even for the old man himself (after all, he had lived for over a century and a half on his eleven dollars a month without unendurable hardship) but for Tully. Had a few kisses, a quickening of the blood after an emotional day, so turned her head that she had become a different person? "Poor Tully," she whispered.

The crowd was gathering outside the windows. Why? To enjoy—on the part of the visitors—the final degradation of Joyleg? Or to repudiate—on the part of the Notch folk—the aspersions cast upon him? Last night and this morning the newscasts had changed their tone, hitherto ranging from quiet scepticism to warm encouragement, *to* one of scorn if not outrage. Jill Brittin's, "The skeleton will now presumably be returned quietly to the closet," was one of the mildest. Other pundits spoke weightily of the empty niche in the Saratoga Monument, the rigid standards of American idealism, the proper demand that everyone declare exactly where he stood on all occasions without anything to hide.

Waiting for the session to begin—and conceding that Tully Weathernox was certainly a more imposing chairman than either of his predecessors—Lucinda reflected that the worst had been done to Joyleg. Now the President would have to gain or lose the renomination on his own or by way of the smokefilled (airconditioned) room; there would be no presentation of the Medal of Honor to America's Oldest

Inhabitant.

The people might accept a hero with an infirmity or eccentricity—Washington's false teeth and temper, Hamilton's amours, Jefferson's dressing gown and slippers, T. R.'s tusks, Wilson's intellectual pretensions—so long as it was singular and capable of being discreetly subdued. But their symbols had to be stainless: Nathan Hale, Decatur, Lincoln, Lassie. Joyleg, at best, was fated to go down in history with other men who had been found wanting: Manuel Noah, McClellan, Lew Wallace, Warren G. Harding.

Tully rapped with his gavel. "Ladies and gentlemen. This committee is engaged in hearing testimony pertinent to the condition and services of the surviving veteran of the War of Revolution. It is not the intent of this committee, and I know I speak for my fellow-members when I say it is not our purpose to muckrake or seek headlines." He paused; Lucinda nodded vigorously, Zillidore and Tuggins gave assent a little reluctantly. "This investigation is a matter of great moment to our countrymen; I hope we can conduct ourselves with the decorum such an audience deserves." He turned to Joyleg. "Mr. Joyleg, you are still under oath. Will you—"

"One moment, Mr. Chairman. There was a question pending at the close of yesterday's session. Mr. Joyleg—"

Weathemox cut in sharply. "You were addressing the chair, Counsel."

"What? Oh yes—to remind you sir, that I had had no answer to my question—"

"You did not remind the chair, nor did you have a point of order. Sit down."

"Mr. Chairman—"

"Does Counsel have a point of order?"

"Yes indeed. I have an unanswered question—"

"The Chair has already considered your statement. This is another session. You are out of order, Counsel. Sit down."

"But—"

"Mr. Gloose, have you forgotten that you are an employee and subordinate of this committee? Do you know what it is to be cited for contempt of Congress? Do you realize you are impeding the progress of a joint congressional committee? If you do not cease your attempts to obstruct and harass I'm afraid you will be painfully reminded of these facts. Not another word, sir! Now, Mr. Joyleg, I want it clearly understood—I want the record to show—that we are not here to invade your privacy."

"Ye mean all that pother about wenching and prizetaking and so on is to be struck out? Ay master, ye'll have naught but blank parchment then."

The obstinate old man, thought Lucinda; he simply won't allow himself to be rehabilitated.

"Very well, Mr. Joyleg, then let's get some of the relevant things on the record; so it won't remain blank. Now sir, you joined the marines in 1777; will you please tell us…"

But it was clearly of no use; Tully might coax a suddenly modest Joyleg into bashful admission of heroic deeds, of references to the British bullet still lodged in his chest, when the muzzled but not entirely disarmed Gloose had only to raise a skeptical eyebrow or clear an incredulous throat to remind the committee—and millions of *listeners*—that Joyleg was a blackguard, poltroon, deserter, subversive,

pirate, traitor, and as good as self-confessed associate of the Arch-Traitor himself.

Lucinda admired the way Tully maneuvered to get in position where he could attempt to undo the worst without betraying Joyleg's confidence or touching his scruples about revealing the origin of his first wife. The reiteration of his fighting record could not wipe out the stigmas Gloose had put upon him, but it served as a good background for the questions the chairman was leading up to.

"While in the service of the United States—and afterward—you had no contact or correspondence with the enemy or his agents?"

"Well now, young sir, I can't rightly say I didn't."

Gloose smirked; Weathernox looked ill; Lucinda closed her eyes. "Explain, please," urged Tully coolly.

"Well sir, every time I shot off me musket and the ball lodged in timber or flesh, I had contact with the enemy or his agents, the more so when I was shot meself and when we met face to face in boarding. As for correspondence, you may know we raided the English coast in seventy-nine and eighty, and there was—as was natural—certain private capitulations and correspondence betwixt damsels and crew—"

"Never mind that," interrupted Tully in evident exasperation. "I'll rephrase my question: Did you ever receive a letter from Benedict Arnold?"

"Nay."

"Did you ever meet him?"

"Nay."

"Were you in any way a part to his treason?"

"Nay."

"Is it not true that whatever connection you had with him was through a third party and that that connection had nothing to do with politics or patriotism?"

"Aye."

"Then let him tell what the connection was," shouted Gloose. Tully looked helplessly at Lucinda.

Whether from dislike of Gloose, a sense of justice, or comradeship with their fellow-legislators, both senators put tactful questions to the old man, giving him every chance to repudiate Gloose's accusations and insinuations, but out of pride or perversity, the old man disdained to take the proffered opportunities, showing a stubborn aptitude for verbal quibbles ("Ay, master—what's loyalty? Have ye surgeons now to trepan a man's skull and bring up his thoughts for examination? Thoughts he might be only half thinking, at that?") or answers so qualified they did him more harm than good.

After it was over, the committee met very unofficially in Senator Tuggins' room in the barracks. For the first time in her life Lucinda accepted a drink gratefully, and put the glass to her lips without feeling revulsion from the rising alcoholic fumes.

"Too bad… in a way," said Tuggins.

"I don't know what you mean by in a way," began Lucinda belligerently. Then she said, "Yes, it is—too miserably, miserably bad."

Weathernox, looking tired and rumpled, muttered, "It's a damned shame."

"Question is," said Zillidore, "would another session do any good? I mean, wouldn't Gloose just rampage, and Joyleg give the wrong answers?"

"But he is a veteran of the Revolution and he is only getting eleven dollars a month," insisted Lucinda helplessly.

"Well," said Tuggins, "they shot Lincoln. You want justice?"

"Yes!" cried Tully.

"Ah, you're young, young," said Tuggins wistfully. "For my part I agree with my honored colleague—there's no point in going on."

"If you are agreeable," Zillidore took up, "we can note for the record that the committee met in executive session and adjourned. Merciful end, you know."

"But what will happen to Joyleg?" demanded Lucinda.

"Oh, he'll undoubtedly continue to get his eleven dollars a month. And likely he'll pick up a few pennies here and there from now on. For good or ill, he's a national figure. And when the hubbub dies down you can introduce a private bill to give him a decent amount. A nice, quiet private bill is always a good solution."

Lucinda's fingernails dug into her palms. Do good (or right) by stealth and blush to find it fame, she thought wildly. "Outrageous."

"Very well, my dear," said Tuggins resignedly; "we'll hold another session."

Tully looked at her. "Do you really want to, Lucinda? Do you still think there's a chance of salvaging anything?"

"No," she answered. "Of course you're right. It would only be futile, or worse. Give it up."

"I think you're being very sensible," commented Zillidore.

"So do I," agreed Lucinda bitterly, feeling like one of the weaker characters in *Pilgrims Progress*. That night it turned colder and she dreamed of Valley Forge.

XVII

MUSCOVY DUCKS AND DRAKES

The Joint Committee on the Claims of Surviving Revolutionary Veterans left, but signs of their incursion into Rabbit Notch remained behind them. The phone and electric lines, the monorail towers, the barracks—already dissolving as new cabins, privies, corncribs, chicken-pens, roofs, fences and

sheepfolds rose out of this new and delightfully easy to handle lumber—a boy baby named Radio Witness Meacham, "Rad" for short, nylons on the legs of some of the girls, several hundred dollars in the ambiguous possession of (Justus Praseworthy, dozens of copies of *Life, Time, The Manchester Guardian, Playboy, Fantasy & Science Fiction*, cartons of used flashlight bulbs thriftily stored away to pop come Commodore's Birthday, so many scarcely-used cigarette butts that little burley was planted in the Notch next season, several pairs of pants hastily abandoned by newspapermen only too pressingly aware of the code of the hills, a taste for candy bars, cokes, cool music, lipstick, Dick Tracy, and—thanks to a radio technician soon to be fired—the poetry of Christopher Smart, continued to remind the Notch of its moment of prominence. On the whole they felt they were the gainers; the world had come to them, and they found they were well out of it.

The Internal Revenue posted blockaders on the other side of the Gap. The Eastern Tennessee, Western Virginia, and Appalachian Railroad took off the extra trains to Union Junction. The Secretary of Defense—

The Secretary of Defense said, No, certainly not. There was no intention of paying claims—submitted before the committee began its hearings—for traveling expenses incurred by ex-Sergeant Joyleg after his discharge in 1783. The funds appropriated for this purpose by the Third Congress had been long ago exhausted. No, said the House Majority Leader, he did not favor any special bill for this purpose; the Committee on Revolutionary Claims had not sat in, um, well over sixty years, certainly. There were more important committees for the House to concern itself with.

Carl Gloose, as heard unsatisfactorily over the radio as the sound alone of a TV interviewer, responded to questions, "What about the authenticity of the travel vouchers, tavern chits, stable bills and other documents brought up from Mr. Joyleg's trunk?"

"The trunk. Ah, yes, the famous trunk. Isn't it remarkable how many convenient documents this curious old gentleman—some call him unconvicted traitor, some unjustly treated hero, but I am willing to wait for *all* the evidence —this peculiar old gentleman manages to dig out of one little old trunk. Must have no bottom to it at all."

For Lucinda and Tully had put off their departure, unwilling to suggest an acceptance on their part of a repudiation of Joyleg, an admission they had been mistaken in their initial enthusiasm, a resignation to hypocrisy and self-righteousness. Both knew their staying could do nothing to help Joyleg and only damage their own careers; long phone calls from county seats, Nashville and Washington made that clear. As good politicians they should have hastened to denounce him and reestablish themselves as idealistic enough to vote aid to Franco and Kuwait and realistic enough to see that under present conditions Joyleg would be no more fit to serve in the Marine Corps than his friend and commanding officer, John Paul Jones, could be appointed to command anything more important than a lighthouse tender. They were simply stupid enough to be loyal in the narrow, old-fashioned sense.

So Lucinda, Tully, Joyleg and Martha heard the broadcast from Moscow which came over the air by a series of coincidences for which the Federal Communications Commission got a hundred and seventeen different kinds of hell from a hundred and seventeen different authorities, and twenty-nine employees were suspended, reinstated and subsequently investigated by countless congressional committees after being scrutinized, rescrutinized, and re-rescrutinized by enough loyalty boards to build a plank road from Oscaloosa to Omsk (or for that matter, from Poughkeepsie to Petropavlovsk or from Brattleboro to Birobidjan—which is absurd, for who would ever travel it?). Anyhow, by an inadvertence proving that American defenses had become sadly weakened since the days when William Randolph Hearst issued his clarion calls in support of Gouverneur Morris, Nicholas Biddle, Terence V. Powderley and other pillars of patriotism against Almirante Cervera, George V, and Pablo Picasso, all major networks

interrupted their regular schedule to announce breathlessly, "… and now we take you by shortwave to Moscow for an extraordinary broadcast…"

The unmistakable sound of Paul Robeson—like a great bell tolling while others pulled the rope—singing *I Dreamed Last Night I Saw Joe Hill* was abruptly cut off by a woman's voice. She spoke with a faint but definite accent, endeavoring to steer between American and British usage but inevitably veering toward the dilute Oxford which is the mark of the English-speaking continental.

"… the Commert Secretary has now been speaking for three hours to thunderous applause and presently approaches the climax of the subject. I trahnslate: 'So what have we here, Commertz? The old boorzhooi conspiracy against the working class. For who is Joyleg? I ask you, Commertz, What is Joyleg? *Is* Joyleg an instrument of the reactionary imperialist mad dogs?'"

Joyleg cocked his head. Lucinda listened with increasing disquiet.

" 'Is Joyleg a paid enemy of the Soviet Union? Is Joyleg dedicated to the enslavement of the colonial peoples? Is he a tool of Zionists and cosmopolitans? Yes, Commertz, you may well shout, "NO!" and "NO!" again and again, for we know Joyleg is none of these.' Here the Commert Secretary pauses while the great hall is filt with applause. The Commert Secretary takes a drink. He takes another drink with a little lemon and salt. He takes a third drink and continues. I trahnslate: 'What is Joyleg? He is an old underground worker, a member of the people's resistance movement, an insurrectionist— Stop, Commertz, don't hiss yet!—an insurrectionist against boorzhooi taxes, against colonialism, against capitalist enslavement of the proletariat. Yes, Commertz, Joyleg fought the warmongers with a gun—'"

Joyleg frowned, growled, "Pesky feather merchants. Twas a musket, as any fool would know."

"—hiding from the ruthless secret police—the FFV, the FTC, OPA and TVA—in the mountains of Tennessee, once the Autonomous Region of Franklin but now forcibly incorporated into their oppressive union, with many of its peasants ruthlessly deported to the badlands of Dakota or the granite quarries of Vermont. But Commertz, listen to this: the American tyrants have not liquidated Joyleg. They have not dared to mete out this final measure of social injustice. And why? Because, Commertz, Joyleg is a Soviet Citizen!'

"Once more the great hall is filt with colossal applause and cheers. Demonstrations with banners—a Russian invention, stolen by the decadent Americans, of the patriotic hero whose name is borne by the Order of Chmielnicki— parades with Soviet banners are going on. Seven brass bands are playing the noble anthem of the USSR while everyone presents a clenched fist to defy the plutocratic exploiters. The Commert Secretary raises his hands, and with true Soviet discipline everyone becomes at once quiet. The Commert Secretary continues. I trahnslate: 'Yes, Commertz, but the slavvering dogs do not dare lay a hand upon Grazhdanie—practically Tovarish—Isachar Zebulonovich Joyleg. The might of the non-aggressive Red Army, the Soviet Navy, the kolhozes, the electrification network, the Turksib Railway, the organs of peoples' culture and the Communist Party itself, forbid it. It is true, Commertz, that the origin of his citizenship is in a grant by a dynasty now repudiated—though once representing a progressive force, for under it many dark peoples were first blessed with Russian culture—nevertheless we accept it in the name of the Soviet peoples. We say to I. Z. Joyleg, "Mother Russia welcomes you. Come home to her generous bosom. Isachar Zebulonovich—""

"Generous bosom, hay?" cackled Joyleg. "Hmmm…" he considered.

"""—come to the Workers' Fatherland! Come and enjoy a hero's reception in the land of peace, progress, and culture!" ' The Commert Secretary pauses; he is now about to begin the main body of his speech. He takes a drink—"

" 'But Joe,' I said, 'you're ten years dead,'" the rich voice burst into song as the platter was given a spin and then was abruptly cut off. At this point someone, somewhere, somehow, woke up to the fact that the unsullied ears of the American people were being polluted by foreign propaganda, and the broadcast was shunted back to the various studios where short interludes of soothing light classics presumably wiped out all memory of the heinous assault until decorous programs could be rearranged.

Lucinda sighed, "Really…"

"Well," said Joyleg. "Twas a mighty pretty talk. A right powerful powwow."

"Mmmm," said Joyleg. "Generous bosom… The Muscovites are a fairspoken lot."

"Ah," said Joyleg. "A hero's welcome, ay? No slander, no tittle-tattle, no—"

"Nonsense," said Tully rudely. "They're only playing politics with you."

The old man frowned his heavy brows together. "And what was this congress-committee a-doing? Fainting with rare thought and righteousness, no doubt."

"You have no idea," began Tully helplessly.

"Generous bosom," mused Joyleg. "Yes, I've heard tell the Tartar maids be buxom. I've a mind—"

"Oh no," cried Lucinda; "don't think of it."

"Why not?" He got up and stood with his back to the cold fireplace. "Since I been pardoned by General Washington, what's to stop me?"

"Well," said Tully, "for one thing, you probably couldn't get a passport."

"Passport? Safe-conduct, you mean? Be the States at war with the Roosian Emperor?"

"In a way," explained Weathernox. "That is, not exactly."

Joyleg nodded. "Like John Adams and the French Directory." Something flared up in his eyes; Lucinda wondered if it were a momentary vision, a dream of letters of marque, of guns primed and ready, of muskets on the fighting tops aimed downward toward the enemy's deck. Then the eyes quieted. " 'Tis no matter. I'll go without."

"But you—" began Tully.

Lucinda interrupted before he could dare the old man with the word, "can't." If Joyleg should really make up his mind to go, nothing short of incarceration could stop the old law-breaker, and she was not too sure of the efficacy of even that. "Listen," she pleaded. "We know you haven't been well-treated, but you're still an American; you do owe something to your country—"

"Aye?" asked Joyleg, scratching his long chin, "I'd have thought the boot was on't'other foot."

"It is, of course," said Weathernox. "All of us are in your debt. But I recall your saying the other day that you hadn't fought for George Washington's land schemes or John Hancock's commercial success."

"Fit the damned lobsterbacks and poxy Hessians. Indian hostiles, too."

"Yes, and you fought them *for* something."

"Aye? Likely we did, looking back. At the time things wasn't so clear. Right and wrong on both sides, you might say."

But Lucinda realized a little wryly that Tully was not going to be deprived of this opportunity. "Of course you fought for something: for the self-evident truths that all men are created equal and that they, have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To be sure, your Commodore fought for the Russians against the Turks—there was little to choose between them—but believe me, there's no more liberty or equality in Russia now than there was then. As for the pursuit of happiness, it is simply a hopeless, unauthorized chase. If they seem 'a fair-spoken lot' to you—as they have to others—believe me it's for their own purpose, and it's no purpose any real revolutionist, American, French, or Russian, could possibly endorse. George III was the most benevolent of constitutional rulers compared with those who hold power in the Soviet Union."

"We fit again taxes," stated Joyleg shortly. "From all I can see the States have more taxes now than Lord Bute and Lord North—aye, and Mr. Secretary Hamilton too—ever thought of together, did they still live and keep aworking at it night and day all these years."

Lucinda begged, "At least—"

"I'm tired," announced Joyleg suddenly. "We'll talk tomorrow, after I've had me soak."

Lucinda looked at Tully. "Do you think he will… ?"

He shook his head doubtfully. "I'm afraid I'm not enough of a psychologist to predict what a man like him will do. It seemed to me for a moment that the old lust for adventure was riding him—but could the spirit sustain the flesh for a trip like that?"

"I wouldn't be astonished if it could. His obstinacy is likely to increase too, if the idea is really on his mind, and insist on going in spite of everything. I wish there was some way to per—"

The telephone line from Blountsburg had an extension in the big room. It rang now. Lucinda picked it up. It was Jill Brittin. "Listen, you two," she shrilled in Luanda's ear, "that is, I'm assuming your boyfriend is still around?"

"Representative Weathernox is here, if that's whom you mean."

"Oh come, wither me if you must, but surely 'whom' is breaking a butterfly on a wheel. Anyway, this is serious. The Russians want Joyleg."

"We know. We heard the Moscow broadcast."

"Who didn't? If they were relayed every day, no one would listen; as it was everybody and his brother tuned in. But do you realize why they want him? And don't say to land on the moon—I don't think I could take it."

"I had no intention of saying any such thing," replied Lucinda coldly. "Naturally they want him to annoy the Administration and generally confuse all sorts of issues."

"That's standard procedure; they have a more particular reason."

"Go on."

"Longevity."

"I don't understand; we must have a bad connection."

"Longevity. Long life. How old is Joyleg?"

"Two hundred and twelve."

"Exactly. And do you think there isn't a member of the Politburo or Presidium, or whatever the current name is, who wouldn't give up his chance to sit on the right hand of Marx to live a couple of hundred years? Presuming he could anticipate or manipulate every switch of the party line?"

"But—"

"Once they got him there, they'd worm the secret out of him."

"But there's no secret. Everyone in Rabbit Notch, everyone who's read the newspapers or listened to your broadcasts, knows—"

"Quiet. If everyone knows, then the FBI or whoever takes charge of these things will see that the knowledge doesn't leak out. Besides, the Russkys never believe the capitalist American press. In the meantime, the secret is our property, part of our famous know-how. It's something we can haggle with them over, and maybe get something useful in return—like the drive in Sputnik Thirteen."

"So Joyleg has ceased to be a sapper of American morale and has become a national asset with a cash value? Desertion, subversion, piracy and all."

"My dear, for a politico you are extraordinarily innocent. Don't blame me for looking realistically at the old man; the appraisal comes from a group of VIPs to which ordinary VIPs are mere buck privates."

"Oh," said Lucinda. "Then this call is not entirely—"

"How clever of you, dear. No, this is strictly cloak and dagger. I'm thrilled, of course."

"But why…?"

"Why me? Lots of too numerous to mention reasons, I've done a column about each of you and reams on old Jolly-limb. (How is my old honey-lamb, by the way?) Congress could scarcely pass a joint resolution appointing you a special committee of two to guard Joyleg, and it would hardly be wise to have Zillidore and Tuggins traipsing—my how that sweet old man has increased my vocabulary—back to Rabbit Notch with all the retinue and paraphernalia. More obvious things like troops and martial law are out—backfire. If the P—if a very very very important VIP were to reach you personally it would be awkward all around if things went wrong and you had to be repudiated. Finally, as the girl said when she got on the Reno bus, it wouldn't look well to have the old beau whisked out of sight and kept hidden. Habeas corpus, and so on."

"I have no idea how Mr. Weathernox will react to being appointed one of Joyleg's keepers. For myself, I find the idea quite distasteful."

"Well, of course it's up to you, Governor, but—"

"Oh, really!"

"If you hang on to Joyleg till they get the paint mixed you can hardly miss, and hoo boy! Won't they all come trotting up with marbles and apple-cores for a chance at the brush. Otherwise… Well, you won't like this, and I won't say it's been irrevocably decided, but unless you two agree to try to persuade

Sergeant Methuselah, I hear there's a very good chance Rabbit Notch will be declared a National Monument by executive order. On account of the pigeons and parakeets and so on. And the Park Service would have to block the way in—which means out too —until their numbers had safely increased."

After a moment, Lucinda said, "I don't think you understand. If his mind is made up—and we're hoping it isn't—then I doubt if we could influence hirn not to go to Russia after the way he's been treated."

"If you can't, no one can."

"Jill, he was perfectly satisfied—well, almost perfectly satisfied, until—"

"Until you two tracked him down. So it's up to you, now."

"But we didn't—"

"You didn't know it was loaded. Well, we all do now. The marines' delayed-action gift to the world is all yours. Lots of luck."

Lucinda turned from the phone to the patient Tully. "It's ridiculous!"

"So I gathered. Would you mind briefing me a little more fully?"

"We're a committee of two—"

"So we are! Lucinda, I never got a chance to tell you the other night how much I—"

You ought to tell me or kiss me, Lucinda told him silently. Oh my dear, you must don't know the first thing about women. Aloud she continued, "—unofficially appointed to hang onto Joyleg." She repeated what Jill had said.

"That's ridiculous," he muttered.

"As I immediately pointed out. But Tully—I suppose it's very wicked and unpatriotic—for the moment I'm more worried about what they'll do to the poor old man than anything else."

"I don't think it's either wicked or unpatriotic. Our side places a value on individual fate; it's the totalitarians who believe in sacrificing some for the alleged good of all."

"So they may torture him. Or perhaps brainwash him, have him confess that Rabbit Notch is used to prepare bacterial warfare if they don't get the secret of his longevity."

"But Lucinda, you know there isn't any secret. Just his soak in moonshine." .

"So I told Jill Brittin. But is it any moonshine, any mash? Remember he said something about the particular virtue of certain springs."

"I see your point. Probably vodka wouldn't work at all. So Commissar Joyleg will have to show them how to set up a five year plan to make a whisky still. Vodka may vanish. This could create a real revolution in the social habits of the USSR. Bigshots will learn to carry their liquor, once they can taste it—"

"Please. Let's not be frivolous."

"Very well. Though it's difficult to be absolutely sober when you look so tempting. As for the secret, if the

Russians duplicated the way illicit Tennessee whisky is distilled and happened to use precisely the right kind of spring water, they might be able to isolate the important factor. What important factor? I've no idea. I drink the stuff, but I'm no chemist. Vitamins, minerals… I doubt if he has to soak in it daily, in spite of the feeble way he was when we came. It's most likely cyclic; maybe he can go for a month at a time—if anyone knew what time—without withering. So if he's set on going all he has to do is take a sample of his soak with him. First the Russian chemists analyze, then they synthesize. They might even duplicate the stuff, only to find it won't work on anyone but Joyleg himself."

"Then they'll shoot him."

"Why would they? Sure, they want the longevity formula; that would be nice for the Kremlin boys personally, but Joyleg would be far more useful to them politically. Imagine—the last survivor of the first modern Revolution being quoted as telling the world that Lenin was the only true successor to Washington and that Jefferson has been reincarnated in whoever is the cock of the Soviet walk at the moment. No, if there's one thing they'd certainly do if they got hold of him, it would be to preserve him with utmost care."

"Then there's no use trying to scare him into not going," said Lucinda despondently.

"Scare an ex-pirate?"

"Privateer."

"Good enough."

"Could we bribe him?"

"Why, Lucinda! This from a member of the House? Bribe him with what? A couple of months ago a few extra dollars on his pension check would have worked just fine; now he'd only laugh at it. Unless…wait a minute… I have the glimmering of an idea. The old boy is crazy about women—"

Lucinda froze. "Are you suggesting—"

"What? I was wondering if Martha could entice him into marrying her."

"Absurd. I can't see a perfectly good secretary becoming Mrs. Joyleg Number Ten or Eleven or whatever it is."

"You can never tell. On the other hand he had a stubborn gleam in his eye when he mentioned the Russian women."

"I can't imagine what they've…"

"Got that American girls lack. Nothing but novelty. Look, what about a grand tour of the USA for Joyleg? See and be seen. With all the trimmings, Top of the Empire State, top of the Mark. Hollywood and Miami; Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, Seattle and New Orleans. Show him the country he made. Instead of talking abstractions, make him see things for himself."

"It's a possibility. In fact, I like the idea. Do you think it would work?"

"All we can do is put it up to him. And perhaps we can think of something else as well."

XVIII

THE BEAR THAT TALKS LIKE A MAN

Joyleg told Mag to invite them in again. "I'm holding another levee in me soak. Your pardon."

"Oh, Master Joyleg," cried Lucinda, for the first time falling into the address usual in Rabbit Notch; "we were thinking last night—"

"Aye? So was I. And it come to me more forcible than ever how foolish a thing it was to give up the old Articles of Confederation for this newfangled Constitution. Why, 'twas little better than the original proposition to bring over the Bishop of Osnabruck to be King…" Then, one ancient image evidently conjuring up another, "Did I tell ye I once saw Prince Charles Stewart in Paris? Drunk, he was. Aye. Lacked enough Scots blood in him to wet the feet of a Dumferlein flea, kilties and claymore or no, which is why. Would he've made a better king than German George? Mmmm…"

"Oh kings," said Lucinda. "No one's worried about monarchial subversion any more, as they were in your day."

"In my day? I'm quick yet."

"I didn't mean that. I meant, since you came to Rabbit Notch. Instead of—how many states were there then? fifteen, sixteen?—there are fifty now."

"Oh, aye? Well, we was bound to get both Canadas and the Maritimes in the end, and Newfoundland and the Antilles as well. What's size? Have the Muscovite lands shrunk any? Tell me of more worthy things if you've a mind to prate; Samuel didn't anoint Goliath in any Scripture I heard of."

"Well," said Weathernox, "we're prosperous."

"Good. Doubtless there's not a man nor a widow-woman nor orphan but has his own acres to do with as he please, without neither squire nor patroon spying and prying? And what commerce and manufacture there is, is but the necessary business to the husbandman, not a prime occupation? And the Cincinnati hath been put down and no man raises his head above another's save by reason of a useful invention or notable exercise of the arts?"

"Perhaps not exactly," muttered Weathernox.

"Everyone has at least one car," said Lucinda, "and more people own their own homes than ever before."

"More? You mean there's still those that don't? Still owing their souls and crops to the landlord?" The old man raised his thick eyebrows.

"You don't understand," exclaimed both Representatives together.

"So said me Lord Gage and me Lord Howe. Where's the nation of free farmers, master mechanics, and artisans Tom Jefferson would hold up to the world?"

Lucinda spoke firmly. "Times have changed. Sun-to-sun toil is gone. Things people once feared—kings,

plagues, wolves—have vanished, or aren't fearful any longer. Things unknown, undreamed of, have become dangerous. Why not see the country—your own country—for yourself?"

He snorted. "Country which as good as stood me in the stocks? Old bones are brittle for bestriding nags and jogging from one place to another. But a journey by sea, now, when the ice has melted in Crownstadt Harbour so that a ship might anchor in the Neva at Saint Petersburg—"

"Oh," said Lucinda hastily, "there wouldn't be any jogging or discomfort. You'd need to ride only to Sevier. Then an automobile to Blountsburg and the railroad to Knoxville. Then an airplane—"

Joyleg pursed his lips. "You mean one of the Frenchified hot-air balloons? Nay, lass—such devices are not for Isachar Joyleg. Engines of that sort are well enough to lift a basket of cock-chickens and amuse both rabble and gentry of an idle afternoon; they're naught for a sober man to trust with his life."

Lucinda—perhaps too quickly—said, "We'll go by any means you like."

"What cabal be a-hatching? I spoke no word of going at all. Of a sudden there's much concern with Joyleg's likes and mislikes. 'Join us on the Grand Tour, Master Joyleg.' 'If the post-shay is disagreeable to you, we'll travel by coach and pair.' Can this be the same Congress that was so uncivil only t'other day?"

"You mustn't judge Congress by the committee, nor the committee by Gloose," said Tully.

Joyleg grunted. "Nor the Rooshians without visiting them."

"What," asked Lucinda, firing at random, "would your grandfather have said about a country where freedom of religion is as restricted as it is there?"

"Me grandsire? Which one? Devil Sam Simpson, who burned down the Quaker meetinghouse? Or Malcolm Andrew Joyleg, who could quote John Knox's sermons by the hour? A dour man, John Knox. Poor Mary Stewart, 'I fear John Knox more than an army of ten thousand men,' sitha. Poor creature, had she ten thousand husbands instead of three they'd all have served her as ill, for all they wanted was the crown matrimonial whilst all she wanted was a strong arm and a loving heart."

Impulsively, Lucinda went over to him and pressed her hand against his cheek. "But you wouldn't have served her ill; you'd have tamed her enemies."

He rubbed his cheek against her hand. "I would that." He turned his face to look up at her. "And why are you still a widow-woman, for all you've no enemies in Scotland?"

"I'm afraid I have enough right here in Tennessee."

Joyleg smote the side of his tub. "Who be they?" he roared. "I'll call them out one by one! And if so be they'll not meet me with pistols or rapiers, I'll fetch them each anon such a clipe with the tomahax as their hair'll not be worth lifting. Nay, lass, there baint but one way to approach enemies, whosoever they be: Go in with your guns double-shotted and firing, your futtock-shrouds ready with boarders, your tops full of musketmen. Hit them betwixt wind and water, splinter their decks, dismast them, make them strike, and tow them into port with your flag at the jack."

"Ah," said Lucinda regretfully. "It makes a pretty picture. I'm afraid it's impractical, though. But thank you— hank you. You can't fight duels in Tennessee any more. Or anywhere else either. And perhaps enemies was too strong a word. Opponents, political opponents."

Mag bustled in, curtsied perfunctorily. "Now, Master Joyleg, you've been in long enough, I think."

"Aye; me soak's cooling. I'll join you, Sir and Dame, in a short while."

In a large room, Tully said in a low voice, "What do we do if we can't persuade him against going?"

Lucinda shook her head. "What can we do? Inform Jill Brittin, who'll pass it on to the Administration, who'll transform him into an unofficial prisoner?" She paced meditatively from the fireplace to the window opposite and back again. She thought of the women in the graveyard and wondered if they had tried to change this house to suit their fancies or if they had in turn realized they were but temporary, only sojourners, content to fill their brief terms of occupancy, while Joyleg waited inexorably for their successors. She felt dispirited quite beyond the anxiety for her career, Tully's disappointment, the shabby treatment of Joyleg, her very real fears of the propaganda the Russians would make of the poor old man.

"I have a wild idea," Weathernox announced suddenly. "Do you mind if I try it? It's so silly I doubt if it will work." He crossed the room and went to the telephone.

She hardly heard him. There was inherently a melancholy quality to Rabbit Notch, she decided, as there always must be to an anachronism, yet there had been dignity too, and that dignity had been hurt and lessened by the machinery she and Tully had first set in motion. At least, she thought, Tully's impulses had been generous from the first, his sympathy had been fired by the picture of Joyleg. His responsibility was mitigated by the essential goodness of his nature. She, on the other hand, had come in pettiness and cynicism, full of corroding doubt. Had she had Tully's spirit originally, between them they would have established Joyleg so firmly that not all the Glooses in the country could have degraded his position so as to make him vulnerable to Russian misuse.

Tully put down the phone just as the door to the other room opened. "Ahoy!" shouted Joyleg. "Lend a hand here."

He and Mag struggled with a leather trunk, wider at top and bottom than at the waist, richly brown with age. There was a crest on the lid, and the peeling letters C RNWAL IS were splotched with old dark stains which might have been ink or blood. Weathernox jumped forward and took hold. Evidently he was surprised at the weight, for his face reddened, but he carried it into the center of the room and set it down on a bear-hide from which the hair had long since worn away. How strong he is, thought Luanda.

"Thankee," acknowledged Joyleg. "Now let me clear out a partial of gear and relics to make room for me Sunday breeches, pounce-box, and such-like in this traveling chest. Mighty handy it is too; I had it of a vagabond who swore he bought it of a Hessian but tis my fancy he stole it."

He took an immense brass key and fitted it into the brass lock. He lifted the lid and laid it gently back on its leather hinges. The first object Lucinda saw was a folded red and white striped bunting with a rattlesnake writhing from sinister to dexter. The stripes were almost the same uniform pale brown, but the snake was still visibly black.

"Spare ensign from the old *Alfred*," remarked Joyleg, "me Commodore's first man-o-war, but it flew on the *Bonny Dick* too. No use to man nor beast now. Why I took it for a keepsake I've no notion, nor why tweren't used for a dustcloth or mop-rag long since."

"But it's priceless," gasped Weathernox. "Absolutely priceless."

"Aye?" said Joyleg carelessly. "I'd liefer have a handful of shillings or a gold half-eagle."

Ah, thought Lucinda, shocked. That's the trouble. We look at him through a sentimental haze. The Spirit of Seventy-six and all that. But he hasn't our perspective, doesn't acknowledge our frame of reference. He's still the deserter, sergeant of Marines, pirate, whisky rebel. He is history, so he has no reverence for

it. No wonder he isn't neat and tidy enough for TV or the Sunday supplements…

Joyleg looked up. "I hear foreign footsteps," he rasped. "Belike 'tis some new plaguey courier from the Congress—it badly needs a Cromwell, I tell ye. Let him begone; I've had my fill of them."

There was a knock at the door. We have corrupted everything, thought Lucinda bitterly; this is probably the first time Rabbit Notch has forgotten its hospitality. The knock was repeated.

Joyleg roared, "Belay that noise and go about your business!"

Instead of complying, the visitor opened the door and entered. Rotund, his pinstriped suit emphasized his rotundity. He panted and perspired, as a stout man should; he also looked tired and nervous, as a stout man shouldn't. He stood, blinking against the light for a moment, then removed his homburg to reveal a skull as shaven and pink as his cheeks. He bowed with his heels together. Slightly behind him was a lean, tightly-built man, with unshaven dark jowls and a less well-fitting homburg which he didn't remove. He didn't bow, either. "Bezhpopodnikov," stated the stout man. "Special envoy of the Supreme Soviet."

There was a palpable silence while everyone tried to adjust. The thin man stepped closer to the fat one and cleared his throat. "And Comrade Illyn," added the special envoy with obvious reluctance. "My… ah… associate."

Illyn grunted, staring at Joyleg. Lucinda wondered how on earth they had gotten by the FBI. "I have been instructed," said Bezhpopodnikov, "to present to the Soviet citizen, I. Z. Joyleg, the Order of Suvarov, in recognition of his activities in the progressive cause." He pulled a slightly crushed cardboard box from his pocket and thrust it toward Joyleg.

The old man peered at him from under his heavy brows before opening the box and taking out the glittering medal. "Order of Suvarov, hay?" he said, weighing it in his hand. "A heavy bauble. Orders and decorations; monarchial pomp. Might have had such macaroni with the Cincinnati, had I cared to. Mmmm. Suvarov… I mind when he drove the French before him into Austria and through the Italies as a man might drive so many geese. That would have been about when those curst rascals were harrying Chucky John Sevier. Or when Senator Cocke was attained for treason. Nay, indicted only; no attainders in your Constitution, give the devil his due."

Bezhpopodnikov said, "Every Soviet citizen, being cultured, knows of the masses' opposition to that boorzhooi conspiracy. We all know how the old fighters like Samuel Adams were liquidated, politically liquidated, that is. Such ingratitude the USSR would never show the figures of our revolution."

"Mmmm," murmured Weathernox. "Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev…"

Both Russians threw him swift glances; the envoy's was unhappy, Illyn's ferocious. They turned back to Joyleg who placed the decoration tentatively against his chest. "Does this make me chevalier, as me Commodore's medal from King Lewis did him?"

Illyn glowered. "Better than that," said Bezhpopodnikov, quickly. "Much better. It makes you a Hero of Suvarov, entitled to special rations equivalent of a commissar's."

"Don't relish me victuals way I once did," said Joyleg regretfully. "Can't hardly distinguish whether venison's from a doe or buck."

"And to ride without charge on the Moscow subway."

"Aye? What may that be, some sort of carrousel?"

Bezhpopodnikov murmured, "Ah, culturny, culturny… It is a sort of underground diligence-coach, drawn by electricity. A Russian invention, of course. In Eighteen Forty-five, Dmitri Alexandrovitch—"

Lucinda found her tongue. "Why, we've had subways in America for more than sixty years."

"With stations lined in marble of sixteen different colors? With mosaics of Soviet art? With free rides for decorated heroes?" .

"No, of course not. We—"

"Ah, boorzhooi apologetics. Only your plutocrats ride free in your subways."

The thought of Henry Luce or one of the DuPonts at Times Square in the rush hour made Lucinda smile. Joyleg smiled also. "Ah well," he said, "all such devices be but Satan's snares and birdlime, as the Franks in the Notch would say."

Eagerly, the Russian caught at the tones of amusement and irony. "But you, Isachar Zebulonovitch, have no such corrupting religious superstitions."

"I was reared," said Joyleg sternly, "in the strait and wholesome doctrine of the Cameronian, or Reformed Presbyterian Church, and should I ever depart the simple faith in the great First Cause, which I share with Dr. Franklin and Deputy Paine, twould be there I'd return. I'll have none of your metropolitans and archimandrites," he warned the Russian. "No episcopacy!"

Illyn shook his head uncomprehendingly. The special envoy's mouth opened, but only a horrified squeak came out. The old man's error—not such a grave error at that, Lucinda thought, considering how neatly the hierarchy of the communist party paralleled that of the Orthodox Church—had clearly robbed him of voice.

Mag came in with a tray. "I brought some cider for the visiting folk."

"That's a clever lass," commended Joyleg. "Help yourselves; tis a mild beverage, aged enough to make it smooth." He reached out towards the tray, picked up the mug to his lips and held it there. When he took it away, his "Ahhhh!" indicated both satisfaction and its emptiness. Illyn looked suspiciously at his and turned away sourly. The envoy bowed to Lucinda. "I can see you are a cultured person, Madame. You are doubtless interested in the struggle of the oppressed masses."

"Indeed yes," she agreed.

"Mrs. Habersham is a member of Congress," explained Weathernox.

"Ah," said Bezhpopodnikov. "I have been myself a delegate to the Supreme Soviet. So we are in a sense colleagues."

"In a sense," Lucinda admitted.

Her colleague became expansive as he drank up Illyn's untouched mug and refilled his own. It was real cider, hard cider, not the chemicalized juice a bemused government allowed to be sold under the traditional name. "You should visit the Soviet Union," he invited, his heavy face loosening into lines of geniality. "Never will you see such unanimity, such lack of opposition, such monolithic unity. Decadent boorzhooi parliaments chatter and wrangle, but we act as one man."

"Not always the same man, though," suggested Weathernox.

"I'm afraid our parties aren't so monolithic," apologized Luanda. "There are those in mine who haven't been happy with me in Congress. And those who'd never be happy with any woman in office. Now they have a very good chance to get rid of me. If they succeed, you and I will be ex-colleagues. In a sense."

"Ah," said Bezhpopodnikov. "You will be purged."

"Tsk," tutted Joyleg. "Tain't fitting to mention female insides."

"Worse than that," said Lucinda. "I may not even be renominated."

Bezhpopodnikov nodded understandingly. "Why waste the people's time? In the Soviet Union the party selects those best qualified for election. It is like… mmm… your caucus."

"Not mine," said Joyleg promptly. "I was made governor by acclamation."

"Governor?" exclaimed Weathernox.

"Aye. Provisional governor, that is, of Franklin State after Jack Sevier's term expired and his and the state's false friends slipped away. Like rats afeared of North Carolina, the general government and, I'd be unsurprised, of haunts and night bogles, too. Later the same finicking rogues took office under the Southwest Territory and then Tennessee, and drew their county lines first to one side and then t'other of the Notch; neither'd have it. So it never was nor be it now in their misbegot Tennessee. Twas in Franklin, and so tis still. We're all good Franks here, for as the lawmongers say, One sovereignty can only be extinguished by another… Ay well, it don't signify…"

"Your Excellency," began Bezhpopodnikov. Lucinda had to admit that for all his fat, he was quick on the uptake.

"Druther be chevalier," muttered Joyleg. "Vanity, vanity."

"Excellency," the Russian tried again, "we've heard much of Admiral Jones' gift of the land in beautiful Siberia."

"And now ye want to see the document Fair enough."

He delved into the trunk, produced the parchment they had seen before and something else as well. "Here's the letter as come with it."

"Her Imp. Maj^{ty} was pleased [the letter began, after salutation] to grant to my fellow Commanders in the Black Sea Squadron & Flotilla, the Brigadier Alexiano & the Prince of Nassau-Siegen, Estates in the civilized Dominion of White Russland. I know not why I alone receive a Tract of Wilderness, and so distant a Wilderness at that, unless it be the Discontent or Malice of Prince Potiemkine. This is ungallant of him, for such Charms as the Empress hath he enjoyed before me, and, I am sure, enjoys after. These Demesnes in Tartary or Siber, which I can neither visit, occupy, enjoy nor sell—for who w^{d} be daft enough to buy? —are assigned to me ostensibly in addit^{n} to my Pay & Prize Monies. As these are long overdue & of the arrearages I have collec^{d} but a Pittance, methinks this pretty foolscap is all I shall ever obt^{n} for trouncing the Cap^{t} Pashaw of the Turk Navy. In short, my dear Joyleg, I assign to you both Land and Titules, not because you are like to obt^{n} the price of a Tot of Rum for them, but simply as a Token of my regard. Together we periled our lives in the cause of Popular Liberty & Independence, & in that dark Moment when mine ane lips stammered, they had only to repeat y^{r} stout cry for to gain Strength & rejoin Battle. Leaving that for the nonce, you will recall my ever abiding Interest in redeeming the Captives. My heart greets sair for the Americans languishing in Barbary slavement. If you have any Interest with the Gen^{l} Gov^{t} at Home, pray good Friend, use it in this Cause."

The two Americans preserved a reverent silencd. The two Russians breathed noisily. Bezhpopodnikov said dolefully, "Ah, the poor American prisoners of the reactionary Barbary pirates."

Lucinda snapped, "What about the poor American prisoners of the Soviet Union's Chinese friends?"

"Ay, what's that?" asked Joyleg.

"War criminals and spies!" snarled Illyn. "Enemies of the people!"

"We shall make representations on their behalf," soothed Bezhpopodnikov. "For the sake of our dear Soviet citizen, Comrade His Excellency Governor Sergeant Joyleg of Franklin."

"Well and good," said Joyleg, "though this is the first I've heard of difficulties with the Grand Cham. 'Set free the prisoners,' says Scripture. Now then, about me lands in Muscovy."

"Sibirsk—Siberia," corrected the envoy. "Yes, Excellency?"

"They're fitting for a boyar and gospodar to live upon? Plenty of timber and game, a country mansion and so forth?"

"Oh, but your Excellency wouldn't live there."

"Why not?" demanded his Excellency testily.

"Well… you see… that is, you will be an important person in the Soviet Union. An extraordinarily important person, Citizen—uh—Gospodin. Delegations from every constitutent republic, from every autonomous region will wish to see you. You will be a national institution, like the Palace of the Soviets and Lenin's T—like, ah, the glorious Moscow subway. So naturally you will live in Moscow, with of course, a dacha in the country—"

"Mhhh. I mislike cities. Full of stink and flies, malignant fevers, cholera, and yellow jack. As for these pretty little villas, chalets and such, they're naught but cakes of airy frosting, all gimcracks and no nourishment. Mary Antonetta playing at milkmaid in her toy house."

Illyn looked ferocious. Bezhpopodnikov said hurriedly, "Oh no, Your Excellency has been misinformed. Soviet medicine wiped out epidemics years ago. And as for our dachas, they are a unique achievement of Slavic culture—"

"Me Commodore's grant said naught of Moscow nor dachas. Am I or am I not the proprietor of those lands?"

Illyn's rumble sounded distinctly like, *Nyet*! Bezhpopodnikov interposed, "There's no question of that, Gospodin Joyleg. They are indeed yours: ten thousand square versts. The most fertile soil on earth, watered by charming Soviet lakes and calm Soviet rivers, dotted with forests of birch and beech and pine, blooming with glorious collective farms tended by happy Soviet peasants. The present names of the villages—cities, I should say—will be changed to Joyleggrad, Joylegorod, Joylensk, Joylegabad, and so on, and in the Lenin Corner of every study-hall will be a picture of you, Isachar Zebulonovich."

"All very well," said Joyleg, "but it sounds as though there were a fistful of strings on me grant. 'Tis clear your present Autocrat would keep me under his eye in the old capital—not even at his court in Saint Petersburg—and while 'tis doubtless a pretty enough compliment to rename the villages, mayhap I'd rather do it myself. Say, Heartsease, Amandaville, Jonesborough, Nancytown or some such. 'Twould appear to me, offhand the land's not mine to do as I wish with."

Lucinda began to relax. The old man seemed to be as much of a handful for the Russians as for the Americans. Evidently the envoy was coming to the same conclusion, for he sighed deeply. "It is a delicate matter, Boyar Joyleg. The land is yours, undoubtedly and unquestionably. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet has confirmed the grant. But private ownership of land in the capitalist sense is impossible in the USSR—"

"Ha!" cried Joyleg. "Ha! Stratagems!"

"No, no. It will really make no difference. Your income will be the same as a commissar's, no, more than that: the same as one of our popular writers who explain Russian policy in their novels, Alexei Tolstoy, Ehrenburg, Sholokhov, rich men. The state will provide you with a valet, chauffeur, masseur. Your heat, light, food will be provided free and freely. Suckling pig, vodka, cherry jam, caviar—"

"I won't go," said Joyleg flatly. "Fish eggs or no."

XIX

FROM THE SALT LICK TO THE BLASTED OAK

Lucinda squeezed Tully's arm happily. The old warrior had not only resisted the temptation to desert his country but he had, by implication, endorsed the principles of the Grand Old Party. Defeat had turned into victory. She was so elated she could even spare sympathy for Bezhpopodnikov, who was wiping sweat from his forehead. Would they shoot the poor man for failing in his mission, or merely send him to work on Joyleg's grant in beautiful Sibirsk? That dreadful Illyn was grinding his teeth; no doubt he was the MVD agent sent along to report on his chief.

"Is… is this your final word?" faltered the special envoy.

I'm not one to chaffer," said Joyleg grandly.

Illyn, without turning his face from the old man, snapped his fingers twice.

"Perhaps… perhaps," muttered Bezhpopodnikov, and the words seemed to stick in his throat, "perhaps an arrangement can be made in this special case."

Joyleg set his lips together. "Perhapses powder no shot, Tis either mine in fee simple, down to the center of the earth and up to the sky, or taint."

It was evident the heavy Russian had little stomach for what was coming. "My instructions anticipated the… uh… possibility of such a contingency." He pressed the folded fingers of one hand into the palm of the other. "My government agrees to your terms."

Lucinda's heart sank. She squeezed Tully's arm again, this time in despair. The Congressman demanded, "Can we trust your word, sir?"

Bezhpopodnikov sagged still further. "I have it in writing," he whispered, and drew a paper from his pocket which he handed over to Joyleg.

The old man held it close to his eyes, then at arm's length. "Ay, man, I cannot decipher these backward letters. It looks like gibberish to me."

"The Cyrillic alphabet," explained Bezhpopodnikov mechanically, "a great Russian invention. I have an English translation also." He handed over a second paper.

Joyleg studied it. "Aye," he said at last. "It appears to be in order. How can I trust it?"

"How can you trust the promises of any government?" countered Bezhpopodnikov, "unless you have larger armies and navies and munitions to enforce it. And in that case you wouldn't need the promise in the first place."

"No democratic government," said Weathernox, "would dare to renege on its word. Public opinion wouldn't allow it."

Illyn gave a small, crooked smile, but the envoy heard Tully out courteously. "Our government creates public opinion. Yours bows to it—in small matters—for the sake of economy. It is cheaper than keeping your people in order with guns and tanks and secret police—though I seem to have read that there have been times when democratic governments have not been too gentle. Well, we are interested in doing things inexpensively also; it is less costly for us to keep our word to Citizen Joyleg than to antagonize him."

In this Lucinda believed he was telling the truth; he had recovered some of his aplomb and there was no trace of bombast. This was not the way he would have talked for Tass. No sooner was the word formed in her mind than she said aloud, "If you really intend to keep faith with him, then you can have no objection to releasing the story to the press agencies." It was her last card. She held her breath. The round face crinkled as though the envoy were going to cry. Illyn gave her a swift, malignant look that flickered like a snake's tongue, then was gone, replaced by something almost respectful. Then he snapped his fingers again.

"Where is telephone?" asked Bezhpopodnikov, only the absence of the article betraying whatever emotion lying behind his dead voice. Listlessly—she had failed, as he had succeeded too well—she pointed. He plodded over, placed the call (getting through to Washington remarkably soon, considering) and delivered his announcement.

Lucinda turned her head away. She and Tully a committee of two to save Joyleg from the Russian wiles! Fantastic. The best diplomatic talent in the country ought to have been conscripted for the job. What could two backwoods Tennessee congressmen do against the craft and cunning of the world's most ruthless negotiators? She could have wept with anger and frustration.

She wondered why the Russians looked so glum instead of gloating over their triumph. They seemed in no hurry to get their prize away. Was it because they had failed to lure Joyleg without making the final concession, thus laying themselves open to disapproval? Bezhpopodnikov fiddled with his pockets—surely he had no further startling papers in them?—his lapels, the creases in his trousers. Finally he spoke, without looking directly at anyone, and he startled Lucinda by speaking with the faintest of accents.

"There is now one slight complication. To tell you the entire truth, Isachar Zebulonovich, we do not know the exact location of your grant."

"Hay? How's that? Ye've mislaid a parcel of ten thousand square versts?"

The envoy smiled deprecatingly. "Not mislaid the land, merely the location.- The map appended to the

grant of Admiral Jones—Chevalier Jones—is not, does not appear to be in the archives. This is not important, I assure you, not important at all. One ten thousand square versts in glorious, progressive Siberia is very much like another ten thousand square versts: the same lovely forests, black soil, new cities, splendid tractor factories—"

"Aye," said Joyleg, "but me Commodore passed on to me the land as was bestowed on him by Dutch Kate, and as twas doubtless a pretty piece of sentiment on her part it'd ill become me to cross the two of them."

"Nicely put, Your Excellency, very nicely put. Unfortunately, the map—"

"If it could be found, your Emperor would confirm it?"

"The Government of the Soviet Union has already given its word, Isachar Zebulonovich. We will not retract. The search for the map continues unabated. But, I greatly fear… the destruction caused by Czarist wreckers during our revolution…"

Joyleg got up. "Then all's well." He strode over to the traveling-chest. "For me Commodore, though a trusting man at heart, misliked the intentions of that one-eyed Pot —Pot—pot-something—"

"Potemkin!"

"Aye, that's the rogue. Chevalier Jones had the caution to have a duplicate map prepared and its propriety attested by the Imperial Cartographer—some Frenchman. Tis a bulky thing, hence tis down among…" His voice trailed off as he sought deeper in the chest. "Ah, here we be—no, tis but a packet of letters from Master Button Gwinnett to Dr. Franklin. How I come to have them I disremember, and why I've kept them is beyond my understanding…"

Lucinda finally found her voice. "Master Joyleg," she began coaxingly, "I beg you to reconsider. You are an old —no, no—I mean it is late in life for you to be traveling so far from home. I know the Congress will raise your pension to an adequate figure—"

"That's right," said Weathernox. "Not a doubt about it."

"—and you will be able to enjoy your well-earned reward right here in Tennessee instead of living among strangers with different customs, different morals, different—"

Joyleg emerged triumphantly from the trunk. "Knew the poxy thing could not elude me too long. 'Twas hid beneath the charter of the Grand Lodge of Franklin Freemasons. There! Cast your eyes upon that!"

Lucinda tried to look over Bezhpopodnikov's left shoulder—his right was pre-empted by Illyn—and found it difficult, since the Russian was taller than she. Tully, seeing her predicament, elbowed a space for her, letting his hands stay on her arms. It was not one map but several, the smaller ones around the edges evidently orienting the latter in its relation to various Siberian points. She could make nothing of her glimpse, and she had the feeling Tully made little more.

Evidently the Russians did though, for they were shaking their heads, uttering guttural grunts, exclamations of dismay and amazement, and unmistakable profanities. Bezhpopodnikov was visibly trembling; Illyn struck himself on the forehead angrily. "What is it?" Lucinda asked.

Illyn, for the first time raising his voice, exclaimed, "*Atom-grad*!"

"Da," sobbed the envoy brokenly, his English fled.

"You mean his grant includes the city of Atomgrad?" Tully demanded. "The site of your most important nuclear development?"

"*Soo-kin-sin*!" growled Illyn between his teeth.

Bezhpopodnikov said, "Impossible to… Our agreement—it cannot stand…"

"After you've told the whole world?" Tully asked. "Remember what happened to other diplomats who made mistakes in public. No my friend, your only hope now is to stick to your instructions."

But the stout man was beyond reasoning with. Forty years of indoctrination fell away from him. "*Hospody pomilüy*!" he muttered. As if in a trance, his fingers moved from face to shoulder, to the other shoulder, to chest. "*Hospody pomilüy* …"

"Which," said Tully, "means, if I remember my *Boris Godunov* at all, 'Lord have mercy on us.' "

The special envoy of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet continued to cross himself and murmur his prayers. Joyleg watched him critically. "Tis popish mummery without the Pope. Belike—"

Gustus Praseworthy stuck his head in the door. "Thought you'd like to know. There's another press of foreign folk in the Notch, headed this way."

"Blastm all!" roared Joyleg. "Place is getting busier than an ant-heap afore a storm. Plague take'm, when I settle on me new lands I'll contrive to keep all strangers out somehow, if I'm obliged to rig mantraps and pitfalls. Gustus, damn your crown and collions, pull in the bridge."

"Twon't help," said Gustus philosophically; "this lot, like the last, was dropped by one of them helly-copters."

If Joyleg meditated protection against immediate intrusion he was too late. Three men in blue serge suits entered without knocking. They were followed by one in dark gray. The blue serges looked truculent and wary, dark gray looked tired and fastidious.

"Never mind," sighed Joyleg. "Let'm all come across. We'll have the Cumberland Presbyterian Synod along afore we're done with'm, I'd not be surprised."

Dark gray approached Weathernox. "Monsieur Bezhpopodnikov?"

"I'm Congressman Weathernox. That's Bezhpopodnikov."

"Pardon," murmured dark gray, turning his back on Tully. He waved his hand toward the Russian. "Arrest him," he said gently to his three companions.

"Hold on," cried Joyleg. "What's this about? Arrest me guests? What for?"

"Illegal entry into the United States, traveling beyond privileged areas, conspiracy to suborn treason, intent to disaffect the armed forces of the United States— Is that enough, or would you care for more? And you, Mr. Joyleg," he said mildly, "had better not interfere. You may be subject to arrest yourself under the provisions of the Logan Act—which you may remember, since it was passed in Seventeen-ninety—forbidding private citizens to hold diplomatic negotiations with any foreign power."

Joyleg looked grim. "Just try to arrest the provisional governor of the sovereign State of Franklin on his own territory, and I'll fetch ye such a clipe with a tomahax that ye'd bring naught if cried at vandue in Natchez-under-the-Hill!"

"I and my staff have diplomatic immunity," stated Bezhpopodnikov.

Dark gray smiled wearily. "My name is Webster Quill; I am Assistant Secretary of State for Special Commissions. So I know you aren't accredited to the United States."

"I am accredited to the United Nations."

"Then what are you doing in Rabbit Notch, Tennessee?"

The stout Russian smiled. "Gathering material for a speech before the General Assembly comparing the treatment of veterans in America, Nepal, and Ethiopia."

Joyleg, still wrathful, said, "A question as might be put to you, Master Quill."

"We came from Union Junction as soon as Monsieur Bezhpopodnikov's call to Tass went through—"

"Ho," said the Russian admiringly. "You tipped the wires, ay?"

"Certainly we didn't tap the wires," said the gentleman from the State Department stiffly. "We just happened to be assisting the operator." He turned to Joyleg. "I'm rather surprised at you," he said sorrowfully; evidently he had decided not to bother with the Logan Act, which was just as well, thought Lucinda, seeing it had never been invoked since its passage. "Surely a man of your patriotism cannot really wish to go against the policies of a grateful government—"

" 'Grateful!' Grateful, is it? Ha! Ay man, gratitude's not in the nature of the States. D'ye recall the bales of paper they paid us patriots off in?"

"Every dollar was made good," said Lucinda, suddenly remembering which party she belonged to.

"Oh aye. After Alec Hamilton saw that every scrap was bought up by speculators. Moneybags as was neither Patriot not Loyalist till they smelled where the profit lay. Talk gratitude to them as guzzled their port and marsala whilst farm-boys marched bareassed naked (your pardon, Dame) in the snow, or clawed their way along yardarms to truss rotting canvas. 'Every dollar was made good.' Aye, in a way you can say it was. But what of the promises? What of the pledges? What of the patents?"

The skin around Quill's eyes furrowed slightly. "What patents?"

"Patents like this one," answered Joyleg, plunging into his trunk again. Gloose had erred in calling it a carpetbag, but it did perhaps seem he might have been right in saying it had no bottom. "This one. Haply a grateful government will confirm it?"

The document was flat, but creases showed where it had been folded and refolded; the edges were dirty and softened. Quill held it gingerly, though the material was sturdy enough, neither split nor worn through. For a moment Lucinda could make nothing of it, so ornamental were the flourishes of the lettering, so confusing the paraphs and curlicues. She glanced uncertainly at Weathernox who was reading with avidity. When she looked again she was able to make out that the State of Franklin doth enact and it be hereby enact^{d} by the Authority of the Same, that Cap^{t} Ifachar Joyleg of the Militia is hereby grant^{d} in Perpetuity and free of all Taxes until he fhall clear his firft Crop: 1000 Acres in the Militia Diftrict of the Wafingt^{n}, Franklin State, from the great Cairn to the Middle of the Creek & thence to the Spot where the Same joins with the Oth^{r}; from thence to the next Cairn by the Blafted Oak & in a ftrait Line to 100/^{ft} fhort of the Hill Top (sometimes call^{d} Chepmunk Hill) & fo to the firft C^{m}, and including the Salt Lick, the Oak Ridge, Deer Meddoaw, &c &c &c, to hold the Same without Seizure or Efcheat fo long as the Sun doth rize & Grafs doth grow. GOD SAVE THE STATE. Given under my Hand & Seal, J^{no} Sevier, Esq^{u}, Gov^{r} of FRANKLIN, Pref^{t} of the Privy Counc^{l}, Cap^{t} G^{nl} &c &c &c…

"Oak Ridge!" whispered Weathernox.

"You mean, Oak Ridge?" breathed Lucinda.

"Not a doubt in the world."

Webster Quill looked up with the same slight smile he had worn during the reading of the patent. It disappeared when he saw the expression of the two representatives. "Surely not!"

Lucinda nodded.

"*The* Oak Ridge?"

"Not a doubt in the world," repeated Weathernox.

Quill went white, sat down suddenly.

XX

STALEMATE?

"Aye, the Oak Ridge," said Joyleg, his good humor apparently restored. "Tis a pretty stand of timber, well fit for shipwrighting. But who'd launch a ship there, or cart the lumber to the seaboard? Where it stands tis naught save firewood. But that deer pasture, now, twould make a pretty farm."

Quill glanced up and caught the Russians' wary eyes. "Better get those two out of here," he said in a low voice, getting up.

Lucinda shook her head. "They know by now, anyway. There's no possibility of keeping them quiet. What's more to the point, we—including you, Mr. Quill, as of now— have just become aware that Mr. Joyleg's Russian grant is set square across the site of Atomgrad. Interesting coincidence, isn't it?"

"Providence," said Weathernox reverently.

Quill sat again. "But this patent is worthless. Franklin was never admitted to the Union, so it was never a state."

"That's a question," said Tully slowly. "In a way it was, because it functioned as one without much interference. *De facto* and all that. Many of its legal acts were later confirmed by North Carolina and Tennessee, including its land grants. Mmmm, yes… I remember now. The case of Ingram's Heirs versus Coxe was one such precedent. There are others."

"But surely," said Quill, "in the case of Oak Ridge the courts would hold this patent against public policy?"

Lucinda said, "Perhaps ordinarily, except for the endorsements." Her finger pointed to the parchment below Sevier's signature. She read aloud. "Said Document drawn by me, And^{w} Jackson, Att^{y}-at-Law.

Patent acknowl^{gd}, & certif^{d} as lying within the Terr^{ty} of the U States South of the Ohio. Tho^{s} Jefferson, Sec^{y} of State. G^{eo} Wafhington, Pref^{nt}. There's not a court in the country which would override those names."

Quill, pale, said, "We could not turn the hub of our nuclear fission work over to one man."

Bezhpopodnikov said, "I trust the American Government is not seeking to destroy the right of individual ownership, or deprive of his rightful property the Soviet citizen, I. Z. Joyleg?"

"You could," said Lucinda, ignoring the Russian, "if he happened to be the same man who owned the hub of the Soviet nuclear fission work. Stalemate?"

The State Department man turned to one of the Justice Department's men. The latter said, "Can't get Washington. Can't even get Blountsburg. Wire's dead."

Joyleg remarked placidly, "Expect some thrifty Frank has cut out a smart chance of it for trap-snares. Place baint called Rabbit Notch for naught."

"Not stalemate," said Webster Quill; "at most a temporary deadlock."

"Very well," said Lucinda. "A deadlock and an opportunity." She addressed the Russian envoy. "As a delegate to the U. N. are you empowered to negotiate directly with a member country?"

Bezhpopodnikov considered the question with his eyes on Illyn, who remained imperturbable. "Subject to ratification by my government, yes."

"And you, Mr. Secretary?" she asked.

"I could initial an agreement, but it would have to be approved by the Secretary and the President. Confirmed by the Senate if it were a treaty, not if it were an executive order."

"Good enough," cried Lucinda. "Gentlemen, will you give me a few minutes to talk to Master Joyleg before you go any further?"

"I haven't the faintest notion what you can be driving at," confessed Quill.

"Nor, I'm afraid, will I, when you explain to the House Committee how big an appropriation your department needs to maintain your division. But I'll be glad to have you instruct me," she added, almost gaily.

"Um," said Quill. "Umm. The pleasure will be mine, I'm sure."

Lucinda plucked Joyleg's sleeve and drew him aside. She whispered lengthily in his ear. She had feared he would protest, more from lack of understanding than from selfishness, but he patted her on the arm, saying, "Go to it, lass; thou'rt a better man—aye and a better Congressman—then many and many a coxcomb in breeches. Have thy say; I'll stand behind thee to the full."

She pressed his hand and turned to the others. "This is our proposition: Master Joyleg will lease both his properties to an International Commission for the Control of Atomic Energy for peaceful purposes for a period of a hundred and ninety-nine years in consideration of a monthly rental of… of… fifty dollars—"

"Gold," interjected Joyleg; "None of your pretty banknotes for me."

"—of fifty dollars in gold and… and—"

"A flowered waistcoat of good quality every year," said Joyleg. "In case I should have a mind to go courting," he added in explanation.

"And other considerations," amended Lucinda. "Both properties to be freely accessible to the United Nations at all times and not subject to the sovereignty of the states within whose boundaries they lie."

"Ridiculous!" snapped Bezhpopodnikov.

"Preposterous!" exclaimed Quill.

"Inconceivable," muttered Bezhpopodnikov.

"Not to be thought of," said Quill.

"Ha," said Bezhpopodnikov; "one sees for oneself how the warmongers refuse to give up a single weapon."

"The representative of the USSR knows his country would not accept a constructive solution to the question," said Quill.

"The plutocrats will never compromise with the peace-loving countries, as is obvious," said Bezhpopodnikov.

"We have had too much experience with Soviet double-talk," stated Quill.

"It is clear the imperialists fear nothing more than the benefits of atomic power for raising the living standards of the masses," announced Bezhpopodnikov.

"It is easy to see the Soviet Government is the prisoner of its own lust for domination," said Quill.

. "Gentlemen," Lucinda broke in firmly. "You are not before microphones; you have no audience outside this room. Be reasonable, I beg you. This is your chance to break the deadlock that always comes in high-level conferences. I don't know that the acceptance of Master Joyleg's offer will bring world peace and understanding. It is quite possible, even unfortunately likely, that it won't. But this is your opportunity to try. If you should succeed, we would all be irrepayably in your debt; the Bezhpopodnikov-Quill pact will be a milestone in history—a great milestone."

"Hang John Jay," muttered Joyleg, and then, as if repeating a litany, "Damn those as won't hang John Jay. Damn those as won't damn them as won't hang John Jay."

Lucinda went on, "And it's even possible we overestimate the chances of failure. If the world gets a hint of your negotiations—and it is not entirely unlikely it will— your superiors will not dare disavow you."

Bezhpopodnikov looked doubtfully at Quill. Quill eyed Bezhpopodnikov warily. The Russian squinted at the impassive Illyn; the American considered the equally impassive three in blue serge. Weathernox went to the door and opened it. Through it came a spring breeze, driving away momentarily the smell of mash and smoke, bringing the scent of pine and grass and freshly turned earth.

"Look at the more immediate picture," urged Lucinda. "The Russians want Joyleg for his great propaganda value; the Americans want to hold onto him because his loss would be a diplomatic defeat. Behind this, as we all know, is something else: the secret of longevity. There has never been a secret, of course, but because it was revealed immediately no one believes this. Very well, I'll repeat this secret for you again—give it to you fully and freely."

"Ah," breathed six visitors simultaneously.

"However, there is a price to pay for this longevity. Not for the secret but for its use. It is up to each individual to determine whether he or she will pay that price."

Unexpectedly, it was Illyn who spoke. "I pay. Anything. Anything at all."

"I must say," remarked Quill, "this sounds extraordinarily like a pact with the devil or some such mysticism."

"Not at all," said Lucinda. "Everyone knows alcohol is a preservative. There is some special quality, yet to be analyzed, in the whisky in which he soaks himself. That's all there is to the 'secret,' the rest is up to science and research. But the price—"

She could not help but pause while the pent breaths were let out.

"But the price— Well, our friend has been married a number of times, and his youthful indiscretions have been smeared on the record. Has no one thought to ask where are his descendants?"

"By Heaven!" cried Weathernox. "I never thought—"

"Ah…" sighed Quill.

"You mean," asked Bezhpopodnikov laboredly, "that the price of great age is sterility?"

Lucinda nodded.

"Ha!" said the envoy. "How poetic! How Russian!"

"The teeming millions of the Orient," Quill said thoughtfully.

"Make Joyleg the first world citizen," suggested Lucinda; "his property and his secret to be the possession of all mankind. The names of Quill and Bezhpopodnikov will always be remembered. Immortality has advantages even over longevity."

"Machiavelli," whispered Weathernox admiringly.

"We… uh… might discuss it," admitted Quill, glancing at Bezhpopodnikov.

"Conversation can do no harm," the Russian agreed.

"No secret talks," warned Illyn.

"Certainly not," said Quill. "May I suggest we adjourn to Sevier or Blountsburg and see if we can draw up a draft protocol…It mightn't be amiss to include something about a joint Soviet-American medical team getting to work on this—ah—magic mash."

"Why not? But can one get vodka in this backwoods?"

"Better than that," said Tully enthusiastically. "There's Joyleg's own excellent aged liquor. I'm sure he'd be only too glad—"

"Yes," burst out Martha Forsh, "Joyleg's whiskey, Joyleg's lands, Joyleg's history and Joyleg's traditions! Isn't it all just wonderful how convenient Joyleg is for everyone! How available he is to be used for anybody's purpose? That horrible Gloose has enhanced his reputation at Joyleg's expense. Tuggins and

Zillidore have made the front pages because of Joyleg; that awful Jill Brittin is undoubtedly coining money by writing about Joyleg. Mr. Weathernox—*Captain* Weathernox—is so patriotically concerned about keeping Joyleg a hundred per cent American that he actually telephoned the Marine Corps Commandant to come to Rabbit Notch in order to bully Joyleg—"

"Ay?" said the old man. "How's that?"

"It was just an idea," confessed Tully a bit sheepishly. "On the basis of once a marine, always a marine, I—"

"True enough," said Joyleg. "Always considered meself in the reserve."

"And incidentally, I don't quite understand why he didn't get here," said Weathernox.

Martha laughed. Lucinda, who had listened in shocked silence to her secretary's tirade, was startled at the laugh's uncharacteristic harshness and authority. "Oh," Martha cried, "you marvelous people who persuade the voters to elect you instead of having to prove you can do a job in order to get hired, aren't the only ones who can pull wires. We humble ones whose reward is a pat on the back and a sweet smile know how to get things done or undone too. And when I found out what you planned for Joyleg— to have some general come here and browbeat him and order him around and pretend that there was still danger from the Indians, to destroy his dignity as a human being —I simply had the scheme buried in red tape."

"Martha!" exclaimed Lucinda.

"*Krasny*!" growled Illyn approvingly. "You are correct, Commert. Down with capitalist elections. Down with the schemes of parliamentary politicians. Down with the warmongering generals."

"Yes," said Martha, whirling on him so swiftly that he took two steps backward. "And what did your side want Joyleg for? To fool and befuddle and make into a puppet. You would have treated him as you do all revolutionists: glorify and pamper them so long as they are useful, shoot them when they become inconvenient, mummify them when they are dead."

"Very well put," murmured Webster Quill.

"And do you think yourself so much better, Mr. Secretary?" demanded Martha. "You, the representative of a philosophy which holds the individual sacred? What did you care about the individual Joyleg? You bargain over him as though he were a chattel, you consider making treaties about his grants and his status, you are even willing to lock him up to serve your convenience or your fears, no doubt on the basis that one must be sacrificed for the good of many—the old, old story, until the many are sacrificed one by one. Do you think you have a right to a superior attitude?"

"On the whole, yes," said Quill.

But Martha swept on. "None of you have given a thought to Joyleg as a person. Even you, LR—"

"Oh come, Martha."

"Yes, even you. You and Mr. Weathernox are sentimental about the poor, quaint old man. Would you feel the same way if he were just old, and not a Revolutionary veteran? Just quaint, not symbolic, not a steppingstone, not a—"

"Martha!"

"There's no use Martha-ing me, LR. I've worked for you, I've admired you because you've had courage and vision, and—and weren't just out to be some man's pet. I guess I still admire you, but you have certainly changed. I think it's simply disgusting the way everyone has tried to use Joyleg—"

"Ay, lass," interposed the object of her commiseration, "that's what folk are for. To be used and used up—else they'd lie fallow and stinking, like a swamp."

"You mean you don't mind all this petty wrangling and scheming?" demanded Martha, aghast.

"Tother man's plans are ever petty; tis only our own that are high and mighty. Ay, child, the world's full with cozeners and sharp-dealers," said Joyleg thoughtfully. "Always was. Not and again some mild-mannered creature like yourself gets fed up and turns again'm. That's not to say ye've been altogether fair with the Congress-people, for you haven't. If Master Weathernox thought it proper to call on some gold-laced popinjay, he was but trying to save a situation, like Old Putnam when he galloped his horse down a stairs to get away from the British. And Mistress Habersham is a loving soul I'd be proud to have as a daughter if it had ever been my fortune… no matter. Still, I'm glad you've said your say. It reminds me forcibly that I've had my bellyful of the wiles of men of affairs. Once—nay, thrice—I withdrew from the world to live out my days in the Notch, far from them all. Once I left it to go a-privateering, another time to fight the excise. Mayhap I was recently seduced by promises of gewgaws and honors and luxuries, but 'twas wrong and foolish. I see that now. I'll stay put."

"What!" cried everyone else in the room.

"Aye. Tis me final decision. Mind, I hold nothing against any of ye. But here I'll remain."

"But Your Excellency, what of your lands in Sibirsk?" asked Bezhpopodnikov in dismay.

"What of them? They'll not slip away. Mistress Habersham has shown you how to make a treaty on them with profit; if you and the lad from the Department of Foreign Affairs—I beg pardon, State—can but swallow your suspicion of each other long enough to agree, twill be of advantage to all the world. Not that I have great faith in potentates, principalities, and powers at my age; still a man must work with the tools to hand when he can't get better."

Lucinda wondered if his sudden quiescence might not precipitate as much trouble as his recalcitrance. Bezhpopodnikov could be counted upon to do his best to come to an agreement with Quill; there was no future for him unless it was made and ratified. Quill had not so much to lose, but it was more than likely his ambition was fired. Illyn? Would he denounce his colleague? On the whole, she thought not; Bezhpopodnikov's disgrace might reflect on him, his success certainly would. And—distasteful as the thought was—she would have to get word to Jill Brittin right away. It would not be difficult to leak the news to the free world—disseminating it behind the iron curtain was something else again. If it could be done, if the average man in Wichita and Liverpool, Smolensk or Foochow learned that the USA and the USSR were on the point of agreeing, no matter how reluctantly, to place both Oak Ridge and Atomgrad under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, it would take a very rash or a very wily leader on either side who could explain away a failure to consummate a treaty. Such things had been done, but perhaps now, with the very real threat of total destruction, and with the plausible concession of Joyleg's rights so that neither side would lose face, they might not be done again.

"That's all very well," stormed Martha; "no doubt when you get to be two hundred-odd you can afford to be tolerant and philosophical. But justice is justice. You have turned over invaluable properties for the benefit of the world for fifty dollars a month—"

"Gold," Joyleg reminded her. "Aye, tis a goodly sum, and tis still possible the Congress will repent of its parsimony and raise me pension—"

"I'm sure it will," said Lucinda.

"Not a doubt of it now," agreed Tully.

"—so I must learn to think big. A dollar or a shilling, a farthing or a half-eagle—they're all but coins to a man of property. And tis evident too that these days women are as good as men—as I never doubted. So lass, if you'll be me man of business—me plenipotentiary, so to speak, to the States and Muscovy and whosoever else is concerned —I'll contract with you. What do you say?"

"Oh Martha," cried Lucinda in dismay, "you couldn't think of leaving me…"

"LR," said her secretary levelly, "as things were, I certainly couldn't. I'm not ambitious in the ordinary sense, I've seen too much of the frantic rush in Washington to have greater seniority, or a slightly larger budget, or not to come to the phone till the other party is waiting. I guess I'm the recessive type, anxious to work for someone who will get the credit while I stand back and proudly join the applause. The qualification seems to be—and I know this sounds petty and I should be ashamed, but I'm not—that my employer stands alone and lonely, truly appreciated by none but me. I'm a true spinster you see, not just by chance—though I suppose, in all honesty that's part of it; in all my life only two boys tried to kiss me—but by inclination. And a spinster can be just as demanding, in an entirely different way, as a—lover." She shut her eyes when she said the word, but went doggedly on. "She doesn't demand affection or recognition, only the privilege to serve uncomplicatedly. And originally, LR, you were ideally suited for me. You aren't going to be a Congressman long; you'll soon be Governor, Senator, cabinet member, vice-president. Anyone could see that, and it was wonderful to work for you, knowing I was helping someone who would someday be a part of history, someone whom people would write books about and refer to in speeches. But you see, you aren't a spinster yourself; you aren't satisfied— believe me, I'm not saying you should be—to help someone else, to stay in the background, to be satisfied with the recognition accorded your principal. You need success for yourself—and you need men. I never understood the need for either. I'm accepting Mr. Joyleg's offer gladly because he's too old to care about success, and if he marries again and again it won't interfere with any service I can give him because that relationship will never affect any other part of his life." She paused, then finished in a rush. "Oh, LR, forgive me. If you really want, I won't take the offer."

"No, no," said Lucinda. "Of course you must take it. I shall miss you though."

"I will miss you, LR, but you will get another secretary, and when you are Governor of Tennessee—"

Lucinda felt the old excitement surge through her. "I wonder if I have a chance for the nomination, really?"

Tully waved a reassuring arm. "No party could fail to endorse the candidate who so brilliantly brought Quill and Bezhpopodnikov—by the way, where are they?"

"Left," said Joyleg succinctly. "Anxious to hold a powwow on their own, without females holding forth. I mind the Cherokees was the same: no squaws in council whilst we passed the pipe betwixt ourselves and swapped iron pots, brass medals and pewter gorgets for good land. Savages, be they red or white or Tartar, are alike in fearing the power of women. But not Isachar Joyleg; I've lived long enough to know the bewitching sex is likewise the rational one. And if you've a mind to be Governor and commander-in-chief of Tennessee, why, happen tis time to call the Franklanders together, dissolve the state, and demand inclusion in Tennessee."

"There!" cried Tully. "Can you miss, now? You started the Soviet-American treaty, kept Joyleg at home, finally extinguished the State of Franklin and added it to our own. It's a shoo-in."

"But it was you," she said troubledly, "who first recognized the justice of Joyleg's cause. Nothing would have happened but for your quick understanding, your human sympathy that shames my narrow, quibbling caution."

He smiled at her. Now it is I who've become oratorical, she thought, and he who's cut out all the flourishes and rhetoric. "Suppose the Democrats nominated me," he said. "Do you suppose I'd run against you, even at the risk of seeing a Republican elected?"

She felt warm arid confident and just a little bashful. "Why not?" she asked boldly. "At least we'd keep it in the family. Unless… unless you absolutely refuse to marry a Republican."

He moved swiftly. She closed her eyes. Maybe I had to push him a little, she thought, but it was worth it. This kiss was entirely different from the other ones, but it was just as good, perhaps even better. I don't care if Martha and Joyleg are looking, she thought, I don't care about anything…

"Ay well…" She heard Joyleg's voice from far off. "Ay well, I hope ye'll not forget to see to raising me pension when ye begin taking an interest in the rest of us sinners once more. Bless me soul, I'm right pleased to see times have not changed so mightily after all and that lads and lasses can still buss as heartily as they did in Poor Richard's day. Lord love the two of ye, though ye be Congress-people and doubtless voted for the excise."

"Mr. Joyleg," said Martha, "before I leave we must discuss—"

"We will, lass, we will, but for the moment let us congratulate Master Weathernox and wish his lady happiness."

Tully drew back without letting go. "My lady," he murmured. "That's right. I almost forgot."

"Forgot?" asked Lucinda drowsily.

"Yes," said Tully, reaching into his pocket without releasing her. "This was given me for my lady."

"A buttonhook. What on earth—"

"You won't need it. Martha, let me present you with this token of our esteem. I shall personally zip up my wife's housecoats."

"Thank you," acknowledged Martha acidly.

"Tis a likely looking invention," remarked Joyleg, opening his trunk again. "Mmmm… Though I have meself set against wandering into foreign parts it might hap one of these days I'll get me down to Nashville and do a minuet at a marrying if I can light upon me best buckle-breeches I'd swear was packed next to me pounce-box."

He delved into the trunk. "Who knows," he said over his shoulder, "but what the Governor and her consort—or the Governor and his lady—will make me known to some likely maid who'd not overmind becoming Mistress Joyleg at the sight of me in a flowered waistcoat."

He came up with a small, a very small, shoe. "Ah me. She surely had a trim foot, the Widdy Custis had…"