

would come to either one. Her last look in her father's eyes told her that. Or was it the last, ^{stern} look he saw in her eyes which reassured her?

CHAPTER III

Dancing at the Grave?

George sits by the sea. Blanca is huddling close to him in the chill of the evening of early spring. His arm around her, George sits alone. So is the buffeting ocean left alone to its foaming and roaring at the miles of sunbleached hard-packed sandy beach. Deserted early in the evening at this time of the summer season, the beach is enormous and overpowering in its loneliness. It is the bewitching hour, when the last monster-wave of violence clashes with the immense silence of the sea. A thunderous clap, a million-volt discharge, and all again is silent mystery in the quiet darkness of the night.

George sits by the sea. A distant vessel echoes a blast on the undulant surface of the water, blinking distant lights on the horizon. Through the thin night mist he makes out a dim whiteness - the night boat on its merry way to Boston. In the focus of his intense gaze he sees the brilliant lights of the candelabra inside, twinkling to him in the white swath of water. He remembers the time he was on the boat, looking out from its decks onto water and shore. He is nostalgic for the wide sweep of the ship's wake, the thrust and weave of the wave at its side, the pitch and the roll; the swirling foaming white; the shudder of the downthrust to the bottom of a rocky wave; the smell of the boat, and the penetrating but unoffending odor of disinfectant and sea peculiar to

latrines on ship; the sharp and heart^y, saltiness in the air that inflates and invigorates the lungs with an eagerness that fires your cheeks; the diving cadence that gives you pleasant giddiness and exhilarating nausea. The boat's cradling under your feet with the padded softness of its red carpeting, which gives you a feeling of abandon and forgetfulness. And now the boat dims and disappears, leaving a twinge in your heart - a white wake in a white vacuum. You feel the whispering loneliness of the sea, and you press Blanca tighter and you kiss her lips parted in sweet agony.

A white flash of light streaks through a window of the hotel and lights the little white caps on the water brought on by a sudden breeze. The light and the music at the hotel snap George to attention.

The wedding! He stirs and tries to unlace a lame arm.

"Still dreaming, Blanca?"

Nuzzling deeply in his shoulder: "So cozy and warm!"

George blinked at the unaccustomed brilliance of light, and the white blur of evening gowns, as he entered the hotel. The groom, at his designated station, was waiting to receive his bride. Tall and massive he stood there under a cupola of candelabra, his heavy jewels, tightened against the rustings of age by the master-hand of a masseur, were already beginning to loosen and sag from the humid heat. Tiny rivulets of moisture were already beginning to form on the fatty folds of his brow, the gorged temples and puffy cheeks - appearing to be flowing from the black pool of his silk hat. Stripped of the vestments of wealth and the seeming levity and conviviality, which George suspects is only a pretense, he stands there a mechanical robot controlled by impulses of an ancient spark, which he hopes will be revived and revitalized by a new life of connubial bliss with that young slender vision of female pulchritude in white approaching him now. Dancing at the grave! The music

strikes up! A pyrrhic dance of skeletons to the music of reeds - their own martial dance of victory over him who stands there in the false glee of light and love. A fallen Colossus of ancient vintage, who hopes to arise and stand erect again at the virginal well of maidenly youth. But life is short (sometime sweet) dream. And you want to sweeten the end. And who can blame you? You turn your grisly head and behold the lovely vision that'll be yours to have and to hold: despite the snicker and protest of friend and foe alike,-- who tried to make ^{it} sour for you. Gorge yourself and get the last suck and smack of life's sweetness. The morning will yet come for you to dispell the shadows... Strike up the band for here she comes. An angel in white, crowned by a halo of raven-black hair, accentuated a hundred-fold under the white veil. Already, despite this symbol of purity, you have learned life's lesson at this early age! Already have you learned to subdue that quiver of passion for the youth of your own days for the material gain of another day! Already in your calculating head have you made the decision to exchange your golden youth for the sunshine of a waning day! Was your soul already gripped with horror at the thought of a future more dismal than the days of your past stricken with poverty! Or already have you seen the lap of opulence, the indolent love, as a base for base operations for other and more requiting and, to you, more deserving love! That youth, for instance, you had been with the night before! A ruthless philosophy yours, my dear bride. Is it the law of Nature, or the law of the Jungle, or both! For you are high and mighty, and it is your day to rule and condemn and lash out by virtue of the power of youth, charm and loveliness. You have lashed out, but at the same time you are demure and deceiving. But that also you'll say is the law of nature. Yes, maybe so. At any ^{rate} who am I to condemn? For I shall be thinking of you as an echo in the long past, a horrible beautiful echo. It'll sting and whiz in my ears, it'll buzz. But it won't be my conscience. It'll be yours. I shall hear your sighs when

you lie in his arms. And you'll cry out in your heart. These the echoes of your conscience! And in those dark moments, in the silence of the night, I shall take you to my breast to bring the warm glow of life to the chill pale marble, and to bring the glint of smile into your eyes. And as I lie alone, gripping the emptiness of the dark silent night, I shall not curse your soul, but pray that like the whiteness of your body that was once clean and unsullied it come out white and pure of that incest... For you are God's beautiful creation, and were born in His image... The macabre march! Right foot forward. Left. Right foot. Your head uphigh, the face thrust forth cutting the air. It's a keen, serious face. The smirk gone. ^{Passing rage} Your whole future wrapped up before you. You hold it tightly. A little capsule in your white gloved hand. You feel it and roll it in your fingers. Or maybe you want it exploded and be free. Free! Free to gambol in the sunshine of your youth, and embrace in the green meadows. The green fragrant meadows where the stink of the macabre never penetrates. No explosion. It might kill those handsome young ushers through whose serried ranks you are now passing. See how gracefully they bow over you, how they sweep their tall hats over your head, and protect you in the shade of their bower from the evil eye. Look, they salute you! Are they mocking you? That one on the right, you know him well. His face is solemn. Not a hint of last night's bacchanal. The last farewell, the last embrace! Never, never to see him again after you are married. Yet you wanted him to be an usher. Just a last look. Your head is on fire, your face is a furious flush of crimson. A thousand hammers pound down your neck. A throbbing fire stabs at your breast. Your limbs quiver and you halt in a momentary paralysis. Your head moves ever so light^{ly} to the right. At a glimpse of him your heart stands still. His face is a blank. Has he forgotten you already? Or is it hate and common defiance! Forgotten! Forget and forgive, isn't that what you wanted? You little minx, remember when he pleaded with you? You played the role of the martyr well.

Rather a long passage
 Cont. next

But in your inner self you were light-hearted even then. That little capsule, your future, it's beginning to crush you like a curse. It comes to you in a flash. Those beautiful things of the future feel like the rough web of a shroud on your faintly tinted and fragrant skin. You call upon an inevitable and invisible Power from above to come down with a blast of lightning and end it all. For you are no Samson to pull down the columns of the heinous temple you have built for yourself, and destroy everyone in its ruinous pile. You need help. And now in the pangs of real martyrdom your spirit rises high, you are no frail little girl, but a Joan of Arc, (Aha, you have read De Quincy in high school.) bes- triding a rearing foaming steed. And you command god and the elements. And then in one split second it happened. A crash of thunder and light- ning over the roof, sharp and reverberating, as if the whole structure were falling apart. The floor shakes under your feet, a moment of grace, a moment of darkness. But only a moment. Then it was light and clear again, as before. A moment of paralyzing enchantment and you are on the move again. With the brilliant lights and the smiling faces around you you march on. First the left, then the right foot. And your heart is unburdened. After all... Yes, after all, you know. And you think you are really happy. You have overcome that obstacle, the one of your true love, and it hasn't left a gash in your heart. You lose yourself com- pletely in the merry-go-round which is surrounding you. Every face is lit with a smile, and you wonder whether the smile is mocking you. Strange, nameless faces, not a friendly one among them. They came here to witness her shame! The men, they are disrobing her! Her body, her thighs are so sharply outlined against the flimsiness of her wedding gown. Her eyes are darkened with a mistiness that comes from the soul. Con- trition. But it's too late. These people here will never forget or for- give. No one here is envying her. She is the condemned one. She must put up a brave front. The head up high, the chin forward, like the mighty

prow of a ship, and the eyes gleaming in a firm conviction. Any conviction. The thing is conviction. You have got to have one to go on. It's somewhere in your mind. That is the resolution that you have a conviction. Now your steps are firm. You are at his side now. He says "I do". And then you hear yourself saying "I do". Panic seizes you again. Before Him and His minister and witnesses you have uttered a falsehood! And you are only a little girl, with a tender heart and a fearful conscience; fearful of punishment before god in such a solemn and holy rite. But you lift the veil and seal the pact with a kiss. Can't blame yourself for that. You have gone that far and you can't go back. Were ^{you} at the brink of the grave you'd go into it. No matter how lightly a thing is begun sometimes it ends most seriously, no matter the circumstance. Once begun we most often cannot control the chain of events to the very end; for things have a way of accumulating and getting stronger as they roll on. Like an avalanche of misfortune. ^{Paragraph} A poignant memory...! As she lifted up the veil George suddenly remembered the face. Divested of her queenly garments and majestic bearing, she stood before him the simple girl of his freshman year. Barely older than himself. A sharp remembrance struck him full in the face: A soft sunshiny June morning, just about two years before. A gas-iron salesman he was for the Portgrave Gas Company. How far in the dim past it seems now. A small street in a district just a step above the slums. A tumbled-down frame house. "Good morning Mrs. Pollen". It took exactly two weeks of the best efforts of the Gas Company's salesman and your own sweating persistence to overcome your natural reluctance to putting your foot in someone's doorway and say "good morning", and to try to sell a gasiron. "Good morning, Mrs. Pollen!". Only it wasn't Mrs. Pollen. In her morning gown slumped over the kitchen table you couldn't know. But when she turned to you with a smile you knew at once. And she knew too. You blushed furiously to see her of all people in this your humiliating role. But she, lovely and benevolent in her display of good ^{will} ₁₉₁₅.

where, my dear, you never can be bad. You have only striven for the light of the sun. I hope you'll be happy. You are closer to her now, and she gives you a smile of recognition. And you smile back. Her smile was a plea, and you smile back acquiescence. Can't be stern with a kitten, though naughty, who wants to play in the sunshine. The groom's face is wreathed in a smile of possessiveness; an ethereal something lights up the not so coarse features, and their assumed grossness is chiseled into heroic proportions. And a hero he is. He came, he saw, and conquered. He conquered the tides that swept against his mighty breast. He has her now by his side despite all the inuendos, chitterings and chatterings about him. He marched a straight line to his goal, without the slightest deviation, right or left, no matter the obstacles. Yes, there almost is a spiritual quality to his countenance, large and noble, chiseled in heroic granite. And the face is young and masterful - oh, ever so young!

Right or wrong, Hobo - unseen, unrecognized - you there!

~~Kinships~~, you must remember, old friend! And that kinship between your brother and Old Mr. Forrest. Right or wrong!

CHAPTER IV

Mr. Forrest Has Compulsions.

Mr. Foster Forrest, despite his flint-like nature and the New England-Yankee-hard-exterior, had inner compulsions. But compulsions are not always good ones, and the good not often succeeded penetrating the tough mold of generations of his own particular bias and his own special status-quo that formed the bulwark and mode of life for him. A wall surrounding his little world so complete that outside influences were forever barred! A life so sheltered that it grew in archaic vastness, and was cradled in the eccentricities of the years. And what was truly