Master of the House

by David Adams

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CHAPTER ONE

And the Evening and the Morning were the first day

Monomy! Sea and sky. Island of sand stretching south into the sea. Windswept. Grass and the waves breaking. Desolate.

Today the sea is calm and blue, flecked by occasional tufts of foam. The last cirrus clouds of a summer night evaporated earlier this morning and left the straight eastern skyline a pure pastel fading evenly into the sea and rising profoundly into the zenith dark above the sun. The sea shimmers beneath the sun. The sky flashes silently with light. The sea throbs softly. The sand glistens. Grass quivers tensely in the breeze, and flies buzz here and there. Lost among the dunes, a dead frog revolves slowly with mosquito larvae in an oil drum sunk into the sand.

Opposite the island's northern tip a fisherman parks his car on the last beach of the Cape and begins to wade the channel separating him from his customary fishing spot. He is the day's first visitor to Monomoy. Ten miles to the south a lighthouse beacon has turned off and stopped its revolving above the only permanent residents. Between the fisherman and the lighthouse the wind alone plays unseen games among the dunes.

The city folk invade Cape Cod by the thousands during the summer. They crowd the trains with dark suits and summer dresses. They jam the highway with their convertibles and station wagons. They flock down the great highways and turnpikes from Boston, Springfield, Providence, Hartford and New York and from farther away, Illinois and Oklahoma and Ohio. They drive slowly up and over the great bridge spanning the canal at Sagamore and pause to look out into Cape Cod Bay for freighters that will pass underneath. Suddenly the air is salty and calls forth stories from the sea. The fog that lingers among the pine-clad hills beyond the bridge swirls around shadows of oilcloth fisherman, harpooning giants, and chart-exploring captains. Lean forward on your seats

and hurry while the vision lasts! Speed up your cars and hurry down the highways of the Cape: the northshore six, the midcape highway, the southshore twenty-eight. Hurry to your cabins hidden in the trees, thrown foolishly out against the sea, or stuck meanly along the road. Throw aside your business suits and cotton dresses and step into swimming suits and sunning shorts. Drive to the beaches and display yourselves. Have a good time!

If it rains one can explore the docks and shops of Provincetown, the weatherbeaten shores of Truro, the neat little harbor of Harwichport, the churches of Harwich, the great old houses of Dennis, the expensive shops of Hyannis, the scientfic centers at Woods Hole, or the famous glass-making town of Sandwich with its beautiful snow-white dunes.

So the Cape is overrun by tourists all summer long. They peer behind your house, come snooping through your fields, land their boats on your beaches, and drive across your land.

But the tourists do not go to Monomoy.

There is no road on Monomoy.

There is no boat to Monomoy.

You can go no further east than Chatham. Its old and fashionable houses sprawl across the last sandy hills before the sea. Here your back on the rest of America to watch the great Atlantic spreading out further and further into the skies and fogs of the mysterious East. Chatham lighthouse and coast guard station perch among resort hotels on the very last bluff above the harbor. The highway turns sharply alongside and stops abruptly above the cliff and beach below where the pulsing sea moves away beyond all sight. Here the tourists must stop. They get out of their cars and sweep their eyes around the merging line of sky and sea in imitation of the lighthouse behind. Some find the long winding wooden staircase leading down to the beach and descend to wet their toes in the quiet water.

There is no surf. Only in storms do the great waves mount over the natural breakwater of peninsular Nauset and come crashing down upon the town. The Nauset dunes come down from the cliffs and beaches of the north and stretch a low sandy peninsula outside Chatham harbor. The low throbs of the waves from this outer beach rise and fall upon currents of air that follow the lapping water across the harbor and up to the rows of cars parked beneath the lighthouse. The air moves softly around the tourists who gaze at its source, a sweeping view of sky and sea beyond which lies the strange and distant continents of the Old World. The tourist stands for a long time looking. He does not tire soon.

He becomes fascinated by the atmosphere, the flags fluttering above the houses, the hair streaming silently around the faces of girls in front of their cars, and the soft splashing of bathers in the harbor. His eyes follow the fishing boats going out for the day, their motors chugging intimately to each other. The patterns of their curving wakes cross and criss-cross the steady sweep of the ripples borne on the breeze. Bubbles and foam blend into blue water again. The boats cross the harbor and disappear beyond the houses that line the cliff. They have finished posing the seascape framed by houses and the line of shore. So, too, the tourist decides he must pose in the scene. He must take his car into it, become a part of it himself.

He turns around and follows the direction of the road with his eyes. It narrows and descends back toward the west and south from the lighthouse. Then it splits, one fork returning to town and another going down to the water past crowded cottages. The tourist turns from the sea and enters his familiar car. He backs into the road behind the other cars and turns towards the south. The lighthouse and the parking lot, the tourists and

the bathers, all are left behind. The landscape closes around him. He has descended into the scene itself along the water's edge.

The road ends. An old wood railing and a few feet of sand separate him from the water. Next to him the fisherman's car faces the south, its owner not yet returned from across the channel. Water from the east flows swiftly with the rising tide towards the west where it will meet the slower rising waters of Nantucket Sound. Beyond the channel rises a great hill grown wild with trees above the rolling sands of a deserted beach. Monomoy!

High above the ocean, struck from the pines of the one great hill, stand the old frame buildings of an abandoned coast guard station. Gray ghostly walls weather in the wind, recalling innumerable storms. Today the sky is blue, and the wind only whispers in dry, broken windows. The old tower looks out to sea with the town on its left. On its right, stretching out to the south, Monomoy. From the hill and the old coast guard station as far as one can see on the clearest day, the dunes still disappear southward into the sea. Immediately below the wooded slopes of the hill, the island falls to its lowest point and allows the high tide to sweep across twice a day in a rushing, deadly river. Each tide etches the sandy wastes into a new pattern, an etching never to be repeated. Streak upon streak and channel upon channel cross the narrow peninsula beginning in the sea on one side and ending in the sea on the other. And beyond the channels, sand dunes rise above the tide and supersede each other far into the distance. On either side the surf beats unceasingly and unrestrained. Up and down the shore an undulating crest of blue, then white, breaks and sends its foam racing, fighting, washing towards the other side. Waves climb the dunes and spend their power in one last transparent purling

tongue. Exhausted, they slide away, leaving bubbles to disappear in the sand.

The wind is infinitely playing in the sand and grass. Today it teases their sunlit sparkles and drives the salt spray away. Tomorrow it will cover the face of the sand in gray and pull a blanket of fog around each blade of grass. But yesterday it was silent. Yesterday was strange on Monomoy. The clouds were lifted away from the land and shone with ice miles into the sky. Their movement was imperceptible. The sun, too, waited for something. And the wind remained silent. The grass and the sand remained in place. Waves slid up the beach and slid away again without a sound. All was silent and waiting

But no one came. No one ever enters the dunes. No one dares their desolate wilderness. No one knows why the wind was silent yesterday, for no one came to ask questions. No one came to discover its reasons so the night fell and the wind kept its secrets.

During the summer the shore is crossed by the tracks of beach buggies. Sometimes the city folk will descend from these old four-wheel-drive, balloon-tired cars and scan the horizon with their German binoculars looking for the masts of ships moving below the curve of water or examining the rusted hull of the freighter that once foundered a few miles offshore. But these tourists never go far from the beach. The wind still hides in the dunes behind and goes unnoticed. These are the only people who ever come out on Monomoy, yet they never go back into the dunes.

What lies in those dunes that no one has ever seen?

Listen now to the secret of the wind . . .

Out of the north and a blue sky. Out of the endless rows of dunes and the great hill standing sentinel. Moving slowly

and silently in the distance. Lost among mounds of sand tassled by grass. Then breasting a taller dune and casting a delicate silhouette against the horizon. Invoking the distant wind with uplifted arms. He has returned.

The sky envelops him in a blue shimmer of light. Waves slide to him across the sand bearing little presents: bits of broken shell, a crab's claw, a strand of whelk eggs, brown seaweed, green seaweed, and a last line of sinking foam. The grass beckons him ahead. Tin cans and broken bottles greet him from their homes half buried in forgotten dunes. White shells open to him out of the sand. A path of memory leads through the dunes. Behind him the waves play with his footprints along the shore, erasing some and leaving others as if some places he had not come at all.

Colors flash from a mussel shell in the grass. A new shell, floated in on the tide last night. Its iridescent surface has already begun to fade in the hot sun, and soon it will have crumbled into powdery white like the others. But now it catches all the colors of the sun and plays with them in its glistening cup. His shadow falls across the shell and he picks it up to turn it to the sun. Only such a new shell can shine. But only the old ones can remember him.

The dunes are higher here than they have been since he left Chatham. Despite the clarity of the air, the hill and the buildings of the old coast guard station are only specks where he left them in the north.

A faint pair of tire tracks deviates from the usual route of the beach buggies which he has been following along the shore. They turn towards the interior, lose themselves in the tall grass, and disappear entirely beyond the first of the larger dunes. This old crossroads is a familiar one for him. Here he bids

farewell to the eastern shore and turns inland along the winding trail. His tennis shoes sink into the warm, soft sand and pass through tough grass that has overrun the unused tracks. Patches of poison ivy reach across the lane. He steps carefully to avoid their ugly yellow leaves. The road crosses a level place, climbs into the dunes again, and curves back on itself towards the north where it will rejoin the main trail.

There is no road into the highest dunes where he is going. He must leave the old trail and blaze a new one towards the south, a new set of footprints over and down the dunes and up the other side, sinking into the sand, pushing it aside, starting little slides of sand down the steep slopes. Each grain, heated by the glaring sun, scorches the soles of his shoes. The grass is dry and woody, like spears of paper. Sea shells lie scattered and bleached by the sun, mute witnesses to the ancient storms that cast them so far inland. There is no other sign of water. Only a few flies buzz among the blades of grass Then a patch of green appears beneath the dunes. Woody shrubs struggle to support a few gnarled leaves from the brackish mud of a little bog. A cricket chirps in the shade. His single song is lost among empty stretches of white sand and white shells and faded grass.

Suddenly the sparkling blue waters of Nantucket Sound appear between two dunes in the west. Each one of the dunes now falls into place, related to the shore. On the top of one he pauses and looks down upon an older set of footprints coming out of the north and preceding him over the sand. The old prints have settled into shallow, time-obscured cones filled by windblown grains of sand, but he still knows them and smiles in recognition. He had left the trail at a different point before, but now he can follow them for the

rest of his journey. He slides down the sand and joins a new set of prints to the old, following them toward the south.

A loosely strewn layer of dark pebbles and pebble-worn glass paves the bottom of the next depression. A single iron spike rusts in the punky edges of a driftwood beam. The surf-pitted pieces of green and white glass shine dully among the smooth rocks. He pauses among these faminiar objects before going on. Then he mounts a last dune. Its other side falls away to a small sandy hollow, revealing the ruined walls and halfway buried planks of what was once his home.

The sky arches over Monomoy and waves roll along its beaches. The wind sweeps softly across from the eastern shore to the western sun. He lingers above the scattered, sun-bleached planks and then notices the pool of water contained by the old oil drum sunk into the lowest depression of sand. The rusted iron rims peek through the struggling grass while inside brown, turbid water turns slowly under the breeze and the sun. He bends over and discovers hundreds of mosquito wrigglers hatched in the hard, brown water of the little pond. Floating in the midst of them is the corpse of a dead frog. The stench of its decaying flesh strikes him suddenly. He steps back and looks around. Old footprints overlaid into a path lead toward the shore less than a hundred yards west. A wave strikes the beach with a thud and another one gathers itself in turn. Around him the footprints, the bleaching boards, and the old oil drum merge into desolate sand and grass. The wind blows softly through it all, the waves, the boards, the sand and him. He has come home.

Slowing, absorbing the shimmer of the afternoon, he wanders along the trail toward the beach, turning to avoid one poison ivy patch and going around another. At last he mounts a knoll and, pushing aside the tall grass, steps out above the

beach. A wave tumbles gently below him and slides to rest. Then it slaps back and gives way to another. Wave follows wave with slow and uncanny precision. The hesitant throbs and the shimmering sky and the warm sand envelop him with a misty trance. He lolls on the sand and sways to and fro in the slow breeze. His fingers wind little curls of grass and release them to uncurl again without consequence. The day sleeps silently around him. The day wanes. The sun cools.

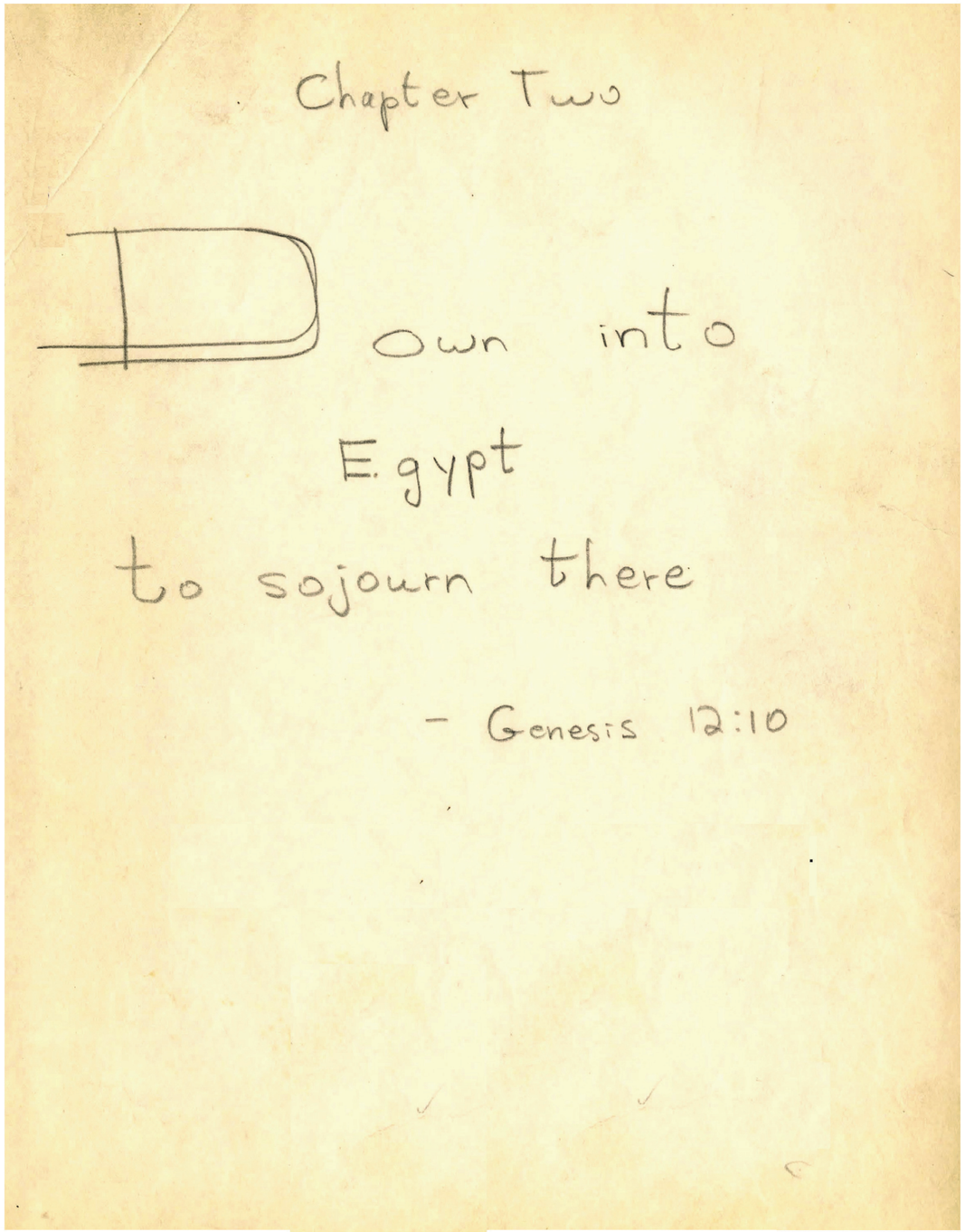
He wanders back across the dunes and pauses again over the well and the buried planks His fingers wind around the matchbook in his pocket. Unconsciously he draws it out and looks around for firewood. His strong brown hands gather sun-dried wood among the dunes and stack it together upon a small crest of sand. He strikes the match and shields it in a cupped hand. A small, dry flame leaps from it to the wood, red like the sun descending near the surface of the sea.

The little fire is dry and quick, a ritual flame reflected in his quiet eyes. He takes out a new pipe bowl and fills it tobacco, lights it with a smoldering stick from the fire, and puffs slowly against the first hint of chilliness in the evening breeze. The fire wanes and the sun prepares to set. A star begins to flicker overhead. He looks around once more and breaks into a smile. The sky and the sea and the wind and the little things buried in the sand all acknowledge his smile and settle back again towards darkness.

It is time to go. The sun has set and the air is becoming chilly. But first he takes an old spike rusting in the sand and carves upon the board new figures alongside the old. Now the board reads "1958" as well as "1957." He turns and goes back the way he came, fading from sight among the dunes. The old life is over, and he has paid his respects to it. A new life

spreads endlessly outward on the summer evening.

Only the wind is left in the dunes to rustle in and out of the grass. And the wind loves to keep secrets on Monomoy. Perhaps it even carries messages from God. But we will never know.



A second of silence. Then the sounds of hymnbooks closing and noises of sitting, the rustling of summer dresses in the congregation. Joe had caught his choir robe beneath him when he sat down. He pulled it out to get comfortable and then raised his head to survey the crowded church. Sunlight crossed the pews and struck Iris on the back row. She had been watching him and met his eyes with a smile. Then the voice of the minister came between them. He had remained standing behind the pulpit, hands folded on the huge old Bible.

We were lost and now we are found. We had wandered away from the house of our fathers, but now we have come home again. For this is none other but the House of the Lord, and this is our home for ever and ever. Let us pray.

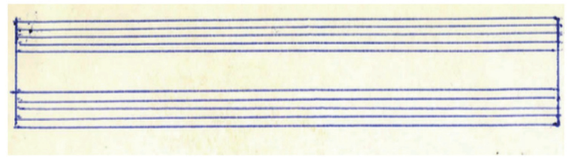
Oh God, our land lies desolate and our people are hungry. We find no solace on the earth. Our homes are dry. Our schools are barren and our jobs are empty. We turn to each other in vain, for all of us walk as if in a dream. All men walk in the valley of the shadow where death like a veil obscures the features of life. Nothing is certain. No one of us knows. Out of darkness and despair we seek Thy face, for Thou, Oh God, art our only hope. For thine is the only knowledge and the only certainty. Hear us, we pray. Turn Thy face to us and give us vision and direction that we may turn away from this life and lift our heads towards that eternal one promised to us through Jesus Christ, Thine only Son, who taught us how to pray together, saying: Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever, Amen.

Let us now worship God with our tithes and offerings.

Joe lost the words of his minister as he opened his black music folder and took out a set of proofs from his printing shop. The paper crackled between his fingers. He looked up quickly to see if anyone had noticed. The other tenors paid no attention. Choir stalls and the heads of the sopranos shielded him from the eyes of the congregation. Satisfied that no one could see, he turned back to the proofs and began to read.

HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH

The Presbyterian Church of New Canaan, Ohio, was founded in 1865 at the home of Judge Arthur Landis who lived south of town. The membership consisted of five families who had been worshiping together under the leadership of Abe Farnaby. An itinerant preacher, he had arrived in New



Canaan several years before with only two possessions, his name (which he referred to as "the calling of the Lord" and his family Bible (his "sword of the Spirit").





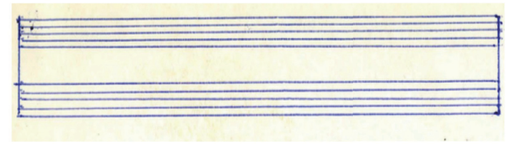
After serving with the victorious Northern armies in the war to free his black brothers in the South, Reverend Farnaby returned to New Canaan and established the preaching circuit which he had planned during those long starry



nights that mock men's petty wars. For several years the new church met in private homes, and then in 1868 a frame building was constructed to house it where Spring and Hill streets presently meet. The temporary building was furnished well and boasted one of the finest pipe organs in this section of the country. Abe Farnaby remained pastor until 1884 when he died at the age of 58. The church immediately purchased two acres of land upon the crest of the hill overlooking New Canaan from the west, the hill from which Indians had once scouted and upon which fur traders had built the area's first fort. Reverend Farnaby was laid to rest there in what was to become the church cemetary. The remainder of the land was set aside for the construction of a



permanent church building. But the congregation had to wait through four short-lived pastorates before they found the right man to initiate construction. Perhaps they chose





Ike Berndsen as their new pastor in 1884 because he had originally been a stone mason and carpenter by trade. At any rate it was Reverend Berndsen who built most of our present building. He designed the tall stone bell tower and





the spacious nave. Great limestone blocks were cut for the walls under his supervision in the old quarry north of town. He was on hand to choose the wood which panels the elaborate ceiling. And it was he who returned from New York with the set of bells whose music give us such pleasure today. It is said that he did the work of any two men during the actual construction. Finally, on September 21, 1897, the time of harvest, the pews, the pulpit and the pipe organ were moved in from the old frame building and the first service was held in the new church overlooking a panoramic view of New Canaan. Reverend Berndsen continued to preach here for twenty seven years before he resigned and undertook a new challenge at the church in Grand Falls. Many of



The four ushers had taken a cue from the organist near the end of the offertory music and had already finished their formal procession to the front of the church by the time the final chord resolved. In sudden silence they bowed over the gift-laden offering plates while their minister, who had risen to meet them, led the congregation in prayer.

Lord, this world would teach us to measure devotion in dollars and cents. And as the world has taught us, so we must give. But thou hast taught us a greater way. For Thou in love and mercy hast given us a far more precious gift in the person of Thine only begotten son Jesus Christ, that through his death and resurrection we might see the way to eternal life. By the example of this, Thy supreme sacrifice, may we learn to give to Thee our hearts and minds so that money, though we give it in abundance, will be no more than a token of that greater sacrifice, our dedicated lives. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our example, Amen.

The congregation raised their eyes out of the depths of offering and prayer. Their minister was still bent over notes on the pulpit. After a brief silence he raised his head and and spoke in a matter-of-fact tone of voice.

Elder Powell Benson has asked me to make the following announcement. The regular meeting of the Session will take place this Friday. our present organizations were established during his ministry, including the Men's Club, the Sunday Evening Choral Society, the Women's Bible Study Class, the Weekday Bible School, and the Morning Star Mission Group. It was also through his efforts that we have such a sturdy and comfortable parsonage. The building was constructed under his supervision during the the summer of 1904.

The battlefields of World War I claimed seven of our finest young men. We have always been especially proud of them and their families whose sacrifice was an honor to the cause of freedom and democracy.

Manny! Joe could not continue with the proofs. The name of his son had cut into his thoughts like a sharp stroke of a bell through the church hushed with prayer. His son hushed forever in the the bosom of the sea. Never to wander away again. Never to come back home again.

Reverend Berndsen returned to visit us from Grand Falls on many occasions. Our older parishioners still tell about his sermons which were as rough hewn and solid as the stones of the church that he had built and in which he now preached. It was here also that he was laid to rest after his lamented death in 1929. The funeral was one which no one who attended can ever forget.

Powell! Joe looked beyond the pulpit to the middle pews where Powell Benson was seated with his family. New Canaan's wealthy industrialist,

The meeting is of special importance so all members should be present if possible. Please speak with Elder Benson if you cannot attend.

The scripture lesson this morning comes from the book of Genesis, chapters thirty two and thirty three.

Jacob is preparing to meet and reconcile with his brother Esau. Twenty years have passed since Jacob gained his father's blessing by deceit and then fled from the wrath of his brother.

And so commanded he the second and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him.

And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face: peradventure he will accept of me.

So went the present over before him and himself lodged that night in the company.

And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

And he took them and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as showed no sign of recognition at the mention of his name. No sign at all.

But Friday night? Joe swore under his breath. Kris and I will both have to go. We can't invite him for dinner now. Joe looked out to find the eyes of his wife, but she was listening attentively to the scripture lesson. She had wanted him to invite the minister and his wife over for Friday evening, but Joe had forgotten that they would have to go to the meeting instead. He chided himself for not having remembered. Perhaps because Powell would run the show, leading the droves and saying on this manner....

After 1923 a succession of ministers preached from our pulpit, none of whom remained much more than a year. Church membership, which had risen above five hundred with Reverend Berndsen, now began to diminish instead. Maybe the materialism of the twenties was to blame. Or perhaps the church simply suffered from lack of leadership. Whatever the cause it was struggling for its very life.

The end of a life! 1923. Goodbye Chicago. Father's stroke and going back home. Iris and Manny to come along. No longer the strong farmer, master of the land. No longer the old wrestler, stronger than his sons. So Jim and I came back to help. We built a new barn, sold the cows and milking machines. We switched to beef so the work would be easier. When the old man died, Jim would have to work the

he wrestled with him.

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved.

And as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him and he halted upon his thigh.

Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. He divided the children unto Leah and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.

And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

And he passed over before them, and

farm by himself. I only stayed to make him happy near the end. When he died I was free. Iris, where do we go from here? Back to the city? The rat race again? No, thank God, she had fallen in love with New Canaan instead. The name, perhaps. So much in a name if you're religious. This, the name of the promised land. This is the promise to your sons of a name forever. So I set up shop and stayed in New Canaan. The hills of Ohio. A home forever for Iris and Manny. A yard and garden. And fields nearby for a growing boy. To wander and come home again.

Joe looked out at his wife in the congregation. Light streaming through the back window glowed on her face and caught dazzlingly in her vivid, black hair. She caught his eyes and smiled back. Had she read his mind? Was she still happy with New Canaan? Sunlight flowed along her shoulder and struck the fancy red hat of the woman alongside. Then it disappeared behind the pews. Fallen onto the floor behind. Emptied into another time.

And James lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld his brother coming coming across the field with a family he had never seen before. Jim, I want you to meet Iris and our little Manny. Corn tassels swayed in the breeze. The tractor engine revolved noisily. Black cultivated earth warmed in the sun. And the smell of the corn and earth mingled with memories of long days

bowed himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother.

And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are these with thee? And he said The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.

Then handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves.

And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves.

And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he now said, These are to find grace in the sight of my Lord.

And Esau said; I have enough, my brother; Keep that thou hast unto thyself.

And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

Reverend Goodmann closed the Bible slowly, raising his eyes to the congregation. He gazed into rows of expectant faces that stopped him from speaking for a moment. "May God add his blessing to the reading and hearing of his Holy Word."

As their minister seated himself behind the pulpit, the choir rose and prepared to sing. Joe, caught unaware, grasped his music and stood up with the others.

sweating in the sun. I'd wandered away and now I'd come home again to the land of my brother and father and grandfather who cleared the fields and bore the yield to a little church.

The past swirled back into darkness And Joe lifted up his eyes and saw a new people springing out of light and thronging the little church. A bright people flaring in the sun and the summer breeze, hands fidgeting and dresses rustling. Eyes darting here and there. Morning sunlight falling in a spray across one corner of the room broke into colored patterns of various costumes. Joe's eyes opened wide to the congregation. As if he had become aware of their reality for the first time As if he had wandered away and now returned.

As the vision faded, he began consciously to focus on familiar faces. The solid, imposing circle of the congregation separated into many little faces, each one leading into a different life. Each face became unique. Each face meaningful, distinguished by wrinkles or flowing hair. Each was a world of its own. Each mirrored a new set of memories.

The vision, fleeting again, renewed itself in familiar names: Powell and Iris and Marian, Tom and Dan and Bart. Names unfolded. Past became present and swung into the future. Destinies unfolded, face by face, name by name.

Freely and expressively = 80 baritone soloist

These are the signs that thou art my people. These are the signs that

chorus

thou art the people whom I love. No man alive can go alone into the

world of the night. No man alone can go beyond the stars I have given him.

soloist

These, my stars, are a sign to you, these my jewels of the sky. These

my sons, are a pledge to you. This my sky, is a promise to your son

that the sky and the stars are the signs of my love that forever shall en-

ritard

dure. Though men dissuade themselves of my love and try to destroy them-

a tempo

selves, my stars shall endure as a promise to your sons that my people

full chorus

whom I love shall endure. All men everywhere look at the sky we see. All

men everywhere know that the stars are signs of his love. No man anywhere

need fear for the world of the night ~~has~~ holds the stars of his love that for-

ever shall endure. God speaks in many ways. God speaks in the stars.

The organ faded and silence returned to the crowded church. The minister rose for the morning prayer as Joe sat down with the choir and began to read.

Oh God, we heard Thy voice calling and saw Thy face seeking ours as in a dream. From the depths of our despair we heard Thy voice from heaven and caught a glimpse of the light of Thy hope. We heard a promise of eternal life where despair and suffering shall be no more, where all our tears shall be wiped away. Oh God, we long for our eternal home and languish impatiently here on the earth. It seems so long to wait. Forgive us our impatience. Make us content to see Thee in the stars and sea and in the bodies and faces of men. Let us find Thee in lonely forests and mountains. Let us find Thee in crowds of men when suddenly a strange face will appear and radiate Thy love. And after we have fought and wrestled with Thy will all day long, may we be quieted and find in Thee peace and humility.

In Thee our lives have found hope and direction. Thy presence has saved us from despair. So help us to extend Thy promise to all of our brothers in Christ. Give us the strength to witness for Thee. Through us, give comfort and healing to the sick and hope to the despondent. Help us to forgive and to guide those who do evil. Through us, give shelter and love to the homeless and lonely. We pray for all of mankind, who, unless they know of Thee, are sick in the depths of their heart. Give us faith and strength to be like Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen.

The church was without a minister on that spring day of 1932 when elder George Gibbs offered a cup of water to a stranger who chanced to be crossing the courthouse lawn. God himself must have been directing this coincidence since the stranger turned out to be a Presbyterian minister looking for a church. Thus began fourteen years of service dedicated to our congregation by the Reverend and Mrs. Fred Rogers.

Reverend Rogers strengthened our people into a solid spiritual body that was able to successfully withstand the crises of the Great Depression and World War II. The church became especially active in civic work during this time. The men at New Canaan's military camp found here a haven from war and a substitute for the spiritual and social lives they had left behind. Membership in the church increased to its highest level of 740 before the Reverend Rogers retired in 1946.

Five ministers have served with us since the war. Under the second one, Reverend Smith, the church raised a new educational building across the street to house its teaching and meeting activities. Our present minister, Kris Goodmann, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York, and his newly-wed wife, Marian, have been with us since June of this year.

The special service we hold today commemorates our sixty years in this

Let us now turn for our responsive reading to Psalm 156 in the back of the hymnal. Reverend Goodmann looked up and gave the congregation time to turn pages before he began to read from the huge Bible opened before him on the pulpit.

O give thanks unto the Lord;	for his mercy endureth for ever.
O give thanks unto the God of gods:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
O give thanks to the Lord of lords:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
To him who alone doeth great wonders:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
To him that by wisdom made the heavens:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
To him that stretched out the earth above the waters;	for his mercy endureth for ever.
To him that made great lights:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
The sun to rule by day:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
The moon and stars to rule by night:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
And brought out Israel from among them:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
With a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
To him which divided the Red Sea into parts:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
And made Israel to pass through the midst of it:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
To him which led his people through the wilderness:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
To him which smote great kings:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
And slew famous kings:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
Sihon King of the Amorites:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
And Og the king of Bashan:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
And gave their land for an heritage:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
Even an heritage unto Israel his servant:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
Who remembered us in our low estate:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
And hath redeemed us from our enemies:	for his mercy endureth for ever.
Who giveth food to all flesh;	for his mercy endureth for ever.
O give thanks unto the God of heaven:	for his mercy endureth for ever.

building since it was dedicated on September 21, 1897. We look forward to many more happy years within its walls.

September 21! Six weeks away! Enough time to print and bind. But what kind of covers shall I give them?

A moment of silence. Joe looked up. Time for the sermon. But Reverend Goodmann stood silent behind the pulpit. He lifted the covers of the open Bible and held them up for the congregation to see. Then he spoke two measured words: "The Bible." With slow ritual gesture he lowered the Bible to the pulpit once more and began the sermon. Joe sat back in the choir to listen.

Is this no more than a book? Simply the words of man? Just a book of history? A book of songs? Philosophy? Theology? Ethics? Is that all? Or is it not something beyond us all? Are these not, set within covers of gold and leather, the words of almighty God himself? God who created the heavens and put each star in its place. The God who created the eyes of man to behold each star he had made. The words of our God like the stars are set in these pages before us. No wonder the wandering tribes of Israel built an ark for their covenant and a tent to house it. And it's no wonder that our forefathers carried the Bible over the mountains in their covered wagons crossing the prairies to America's West - America: truly the land of the Bible. Founded by English who left their homes and braved dangers beyond our experience so they could interpret the Book for themselves. Plymouth, Jamestown founded by English, founded on the Bible. Providence, Philadelphia, the names speak for themselves. Moving west, every covered wagon carried one book, one dream. The book was the Bible and the dream was the dream of a promised land, the land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the dream of Moses who lay on his deathbed and gazed out over a land flowing with milk and honey. So long ago?

God forbid that we fail to remember. God forbid that we ever cross the threshold of this our church without looking over that great valley spread below us in the sun, give thanks and remember the faith and courage of our forefathers who carved it out of the wilderness. For Ohio was the quest of Bible-reading men. God-fearing men in search of their promised land. Men who looked out over the view below us and fell on their knees in thanksgiving. Here they founded their settlement and here they called it New Canaan. Land of promise. Our lives today bear witness to their dream. Ours is the nation they founded, the valley they found, and the Bible they followed. One book was the source of their strength and the source of their dreams. They read a literal Bible. They took it literally. So it has been since the beginning for God-fearing men. Abraham heard a demanding voice, a harsh and terrible word. "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering." Words to be taken explicitly, not to be argued with. Offer thy son as a sacrifice, thine only son, the son of thy heart. What if Abrahan had stopped to consider whether or not God meant what he said. What if he hadn't taken God's words to heart? If he'd been too weak to carry them out? Would there ever have followed a chosen people? a promised land? The written word of God? Abraham's act of unquestioning faith has become our heritage. His test speaks to us

so long ago - 1917 to 1921 – and then the years of my youth were gone - married and settled down - grown old - so we walk through the valley of the shadow - so I worked in the valley with the sun on my back - helping my father in the fields - who read to us out of the family Bible at night - after plowing the land in the sun all day - the sun by day and the Bible by night - after working the land that my grandfather cleared - sacred land of a farmer's dreams - Valley that followed the winding river - banked by earth drawn from the source of the river - rich black earth to begin the corn — the source of its growth - so my mother raised me while my father raised the corn – the son of their heart - the first beloved - the first born and the first to leave – forsaking the land for a life in the big city - we argued - no son of mine should want such a thing - it's Mother's boy who is running away — Father said he didn't give a damn - no son of mine - did he mean what he said? - I guess I'll never know - never mentioned it after the war - perhaps he was proud of me in the army - Mother was - perhaps he forgave me when I came back and worked the land with Jim - sometimes I wonder - if I'd stayed on after he died - maybe he was right after all - the old man - you're born to be a farmer - to watch the sun go down on a seeded field - to

today. And yet despite it all, do we not fail to listen and believe? With the words of God in a book before us, do we not close our ears and refuse to consider? This morning, did you listen when I read to you the story of Jacob, did you listen closely and believe? Who was the stranger that wrestled with Jacob at night by the river? Do you not know? Have you never wrestled the demon of God? Oh, faithless generation! Your fathers would have known. They were men well used to wrestling. But we have grown soft today. Our schools, our science, our philosophy and our technology, they have led us astray. We wander like Jacob before that night by the river. We are spoiled by worldly success, trying to gain a heavenly birthright by deceit. But one of these nights God will come to you as he did to Jacob. His face will be terrible and he will wrestle you for life itself. Even your name will be called to account. Jacob, he who takes by the heel: that is our name today, Israel, he who wrestles with God: that is our name to come, after we have met God face to face, after we have wrestled the demon of God, the spirit of death, as Jacob did by the river Jabbok. Don' t be fooled by our schools and our science. They point skeptical fingers and try to evade by asking questions. How? And why? How could God have a face and hands and wrestle like a man? And why? Why should God choose to injure Jacob? Is this the gentle God of love whom we know from the New Testament? Or is this some other God? Our

watch it rise on a stand of corn - that's where I belong - to stack the hay - to cultivate the corn - to feed the chickens - to milk the cows - through the barn lot in the rain - manure on my boots - manure and moonlight - the reaping and raining of the harvest moon - weeping and waning of seasons - where did I read that poem? what if Father had ever caught me reading poetry? - sweat and dirt on his coveralls - face like that of an angry God whenever he got mad - like the time I broke the mower blade - you should have known - taught Jim and me to wrestle by the river where Mother couldn't see - so Jim and I taught Tom in turn - (Joe looked out at Tom Simon's bald head in the congregation.) - so long ago - he must be over 60 by now - face furrowed by advancing years - both of us nearing the end of our lives – both of us holding onto the faith of our fathers - the faith in a God who created the earth and filled it with living things - with the name of spring and face of the rain - the spirit of corn and the winding river - but Tom stayed on the farm while I came to town with schools and science and skeptical fingers - a printing press on College Street — not publishing books but papers and posters instead - The Free Press - the history of a church in a little pamphlet to pass out free at our centennial - (A cloud began to pass

schools and our science, our philosophy and our technology, they claim to know. They claim that the God who wrestled against Jacob was a different God than the God of Jesus. They say that the Old Testament God of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, the God of vengeance and the God of death, they claim he was a different God than the New Testament God of love and mercy. Jacob's God must belong to an older tradition and an earlier stage of belief. He is no more than the vestige of a primitive ritual beyond which we have progressed today. They would tell us that there is one God in the Old Testament and another God in the New Testament, that each man chooses the God he will follow. Then one must be right and the other wrong. One God must be true, the other false. Oh what blasphemy! "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," The God of death is one with the God of life. The God of vengeance is one with the God of love. Just as He threatened the life of Jacob, He took the life of his only son. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son." A message of love and life for us, but for Jesus it was a message of death, a bitter cup to swallow. "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me." But The God of Jesus was a God of sacrifice, the sacrifice of Jesus like the demand of Jacob, just as He demanded of Abraham, who took his son to the altar with a knife upraised. So long ago? Perhaps in years, but have

across the summer sun outside. Joe watched the stained glass windows darken and the congregation fade from view. A cool breeze entered the church, rippling the darkened curtain of his vision. From the wind and the hills and a myriad whispering tents the children of ancient Israel emerged and assembled before his speechless gaze. They came before Moses, their leader, huge as an ox, clothed in a black robe, he stood and looked down at them sternly, indestructible, solid symbol of almighty God himself - Jehovah. The eyes of a guilty people shifted beneath his scorching gaze. Fire sprouted from the bushes - the mountain burst into flame - trumpets blasted forth and then subsided into silence - and Moses spoke – "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all its might the sun returned. Mount Sinai exploding into vengeful fiery smoke. An enemy pilot grimaced and pulled away from the tangled wreckage with the body of an only begotten son - A message of death: Corporal Kenny Judson killed in action. July 3, 1945. Plane down in the South Pacific. We regret to inform you - but I couldn't believe - and Iris – O God - she wouldn't speak – hiding her hurt so I've never seen – and never forgotten - never the same again – since he went away – off to school as a little boy – so long ago – how many

times changed? Has the nature of man? Has God changed? Is sacrifice something of the past, merely some ancient ritual. Our teachers and our scientists, our philosophers and our technologists, they think so. For them God changes with the times. They have a spring God, a summer God, an autumn God and a winter God. But one God they ignore and that is a God of sacrifice. If they'd read their Bible they'd find their mistake. Since the time of Abraham and Jacob there has been one God and He is a God of sacrifice. God does not change. The mind of man and all that he sees may change. But God and his Holy Word remain the same. The Word of God, the Bible, the same today as the day it was written. There's no progress in His demands. Nor is there progress in the nature of man. The Biblical times are still at hand. The Bible continues to prophesy, telling us the future as well as the past. The man of the Bible will always be man and the God of the Bible will always be God. The sins of Adam are still upon us. Though some would claim that man has progressed and that man is perfectible, the facts belie such a claim. Are we not on the brink of world suicide, of war and destruction the likes of which have never before been seen? The facts all clearly show that man by himself will never change. Without God there is only despair. With God there comes promise, the promise of another world where man

years? Let's see – 1957/1943 – fourteen it's been but nothing has changed – It's still Iris and I and our house and my shop – fourteen years - he'd be 36 — with a wife and kids of his own by now - like Kris maybe - but much older a teacher perhaps – but not a scientist - was never good with facts - better with people — took after me - But not a farmer either - never knew the land - played baseball in the summer instead - Jim could have used him on the farm - I could have used him in the shop - maybe a businessman but not a preacher like Kris - You have to be fanatic when you're still young, though he never much cared about God - like me I suppose - got along well with everybody - didn't worry about them - let them take care of their own affairs - no more demands than necessary - Kris is too serious - the Biblical times - sin and damnation - dire predictions and prophecy - not good with people - worries about them instead - makes me worry, too - responsible in a way since I stood for him in the beginning - told the session we wouldn't find better - he's hot-headed and young - but he'll settle down - of course, he's not perfect, but he'll be good. I finally got Powell to agree. (Joe looked out at Powell in the congregation) I wonder if he's still satisfied with Kris? Progress he's always demanding - no progress, no business, no money - no wonder even a war is good for his business - made

will be perfected. In heaven all tears will be wiped away. On earth God will visit with vengeance. On earth He will come with death. and so it was one day here in this church last week that I came face to face with death. There was a funeral here, the funeral of a young man no older than I. Friends and relatives filled the pews, but behind the pulpit stood a stranger, a man he had never met while alive. I was that stranger. and yet, when after the service I chanced to look into the open casket, I knew him. I looked and saw myself.... dead. A fear like none I have ever known, a trembling shook me to my very roots. For I realized, I understood for the first time that I must die, that I shall die, that we all shall die. That stranger, that dead stranger, has come to me since in my dreams and wrestled for my life. My sleep has seen torn by fears. He has told me that I must prepare for death. He has given me warning. But I am not alone, for you, too, must prepare. Oh, all of us would rather forget that we shall die. We like to think of our God as the God of life and love, and we forget he is also the God of death, the God who claims all things unto himself again. Is this fearful? Is it terrible. Must we shudder to think of it? Oh, you of little faith! Is it fearful that our God should claim us for his own? Fearful that we should be called unto heaven? Fearful? Should we not be joyful instead? Wandering thirsty in the wilderness, we have been told the way to a fountain of life. All we must do is trust our guide across the region of death.

his killing then - off the boys like Manny - steel castings - airplanes - bombs - destruction - not my fault - I just make them - and death - and money - and build a new church - progress he wants – tear down the old and build a new - the funeral - Don Gibbs - a big boy - football captain a few years back - all-state, wasn' t he? - left half - scored when the chips were down - when the chances came - got caught at the end - passing a car at 75 - hill - Cadillac coming - crash - dead on arrival - he died as he lived - big diesel on Friday - back from St. Louis with forty tons - last haul to be made for a week - boozing it up Saturday night - motorcycle instead of a truck - didn't stand a chance - too much to drink - going home - where is my home? - night and the treacherous road - single headlight coming round the curve - a pale stranger - a lone rider - black leather jacket and heavy goggles - silver teeth and a sinister face biting into the wind - a nameless mask and a grip of steel cutting the final notch - you shall die - come with me - but where, are we going? - boarding a train in the middle of the night - nameless faces crowding the platform - eyes that evade and look far away - shadows of speech in lighted windows - whispers waken me - then falling asleep as the train moves on – through

And yet we fear. And yet we fear the dark and unknown, unseen and mysterious death. "Oh ye of little faith" But of course, the region of death is unknown. Of course, it is dark and mysterious. The things of death are the things of faith, not knowledge. No man knows the appearance of death as no man knows the face of his God. Death is the time for faith as our God is the God of faith, the God of faith and the God of mystery. Here on the earth we never really know Him, and yet, by some mysterious means, through faith, the features of God appear to us. The eyes of faith, and faith alone can behold Him. To the eyes of faith, the stranger who wrestled with Jacob, the demon who tried to kill him, even he wore the face of God. And the brother who had sworn revenge, he, too, in the eyes of faith, wore the face of God. Death wears a mask, and those who seek knowledge are baffled by the mask. But if you seek God through faith you will see in death, the mask of death, the features of God. Now, I recognize the face of the dead stranger, the face that has troubled my dreams since I saw it last week. It is strange to my knowledge, but familiar to my faith. It is God, himself, who has come in disguise to warn me of death. He has come to prepare me, just as His only Son came two thousand years ago. The words of Jesus ring true for us today as if they had just been written. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two

strangely familiar regions - past fearful, mysterious landscapes - gray and misty with occasional red fires here and there - a shrill whistle is wailing far ahead and into distant night - the train begins to gain speed - couplings strain and then suddenly they jolt (Joe awoke and glanced around the church. All faces were turned towards their preacher. No one had noticed he had slept - no one really knew that he had started to dream - a train – where? hard to remember – what is Kris talking about? - the eyes of faith- the eyes of the dream never look you straight in the face - their glances averted - unreal and strange - the evil demons - who believes in such things anymore? those who kill - those who have sworn revenge - the evil eye - the face of the nightmare - mask of death - demon - evil - dream - Gee. I'm getting to be as bad as Kris - superstitious - better not to think of such things - evil thoughts breed evil dreams - last week - Oh yes, before I forget - must see Andy about a speaker (Joe glanced at his co-chairman for the centennial service.) Andy Phillips was seated alone on the right side of the congregation. His flat, brown, neatly combed hair seemed especially appropriate to his vocation as pharmacist - Philips drugs - prescriptions prepared for finicky old ladies – labels written neatly as his hair - moved here from around Cincinnatti -

taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left. Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. So God warns us to prepare for death. And so He gives us the true preparation. His commandments are before us. Set in the pages of the Bible. The Ten Commandments. The exhortations of the prophets. And their fulfillment in the teachings of Jesus. For Jesus came to fulfill the law. He taught by the law of his people. "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" This question each of us must ask for himself. Each of us, like the lawyer in the book of Luke, must go to Jesus and ask. And be prepared for the question he asks in return. It will seem simple, but on his simple words will depend life and death, light and darkness, hope and despair. The lawyer was simply tempting Jesus. "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" But Jesus was deadly serious in the question he returned, a question for us today as much as the tempting lawyer. "What is written in a the law? How readest thou?" The lawyer could answer easily. "Thou Shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus must have been pleased by the reply. His comment is one of affirmation, to us as to the lawyer. "Thou hast answered right; this do and ye shall live." This do and ye shall live. Ye shall live with your God in peace forever. This is the greatest promise ever made. Why then do we struggle against

but who will we get to speak? - old man Rogers, perhaps - no - we can do better than that - Kris hasn't been here long enough - must sit in the congregation for a change - wonder if he'll feel slighted? - such a sensitive boy - Kris Goodmann - what kind of name is that? Polish perhaps - (Joe looked over the organ console at his preacher.) Speaking from notes, Kris kept his faee turned down and away where Joe couldn't see – his thick wavy hair combed back across his head seemed almost as dark as Iris's. Joe looked beyond the pulpit to his wife. He started to smile at her, but she wasn't watching. Her dark blue eyes, slightly bleary in the morning heat, remained fixed on Kris instead. Joe felt a little pang of jealousy for her attention - so serious she looks - but never mind - only inside - she'll smile when the sun comes out after church - wonder why she wants to invite them – Kris maybe, but why Marian? - didn't get along from the first time they met - stuck-up, Iris said - pretty, I thought - but she shouldn't be jealous - pretty herself at that age - my little rainbow - gypsy girl – her bright red dress and shining black hair - so many years to remain in love - with all my heart and all my soul - to live together until death do us part - the greatest of promises – (Joe

it? Why do we fight the Commandments to love our God and our neighbor? Why do we speak words without meaning and then ask skeptical questions: "Who is my my neighbor?" Must we always justify ourselves with skepticism? ls it not pride that makes us this way? Pride in our own little lives. The senseless pride that man can be something apart from his God. With the words of Jesus set down in the Bible before us, do we not still harden our hearts and close our ears? We refuse to take his words literally. Instead we have different creeds made up to justify ourselves. This is the course of our human weakness, the method of human nature. Only a strong church, a strong faith can counteract it, a strong church that will constantly call us to humility and obedience, that will call us to read and hear the word of God. The words of the Bible contain our salvation. But an unread Bible doesn't speak, and a church that fails to speak from the Bible is a false church. It took an old man, who if anything was anti-religious, to show me this. He refused to believe in God and was proud to make it known. But the attack he made on. our church cut with the keen edge of truth. "The church," he said, "is composed of liars and fools." he told me this while the people mourned at the funeral of someone each had known. He came to church to pay his final respects. Now another of his friends had gone and his own funeral might well be the next. But he swore up and down that he would have no such mourning at his death. He would never allow his funeral to take

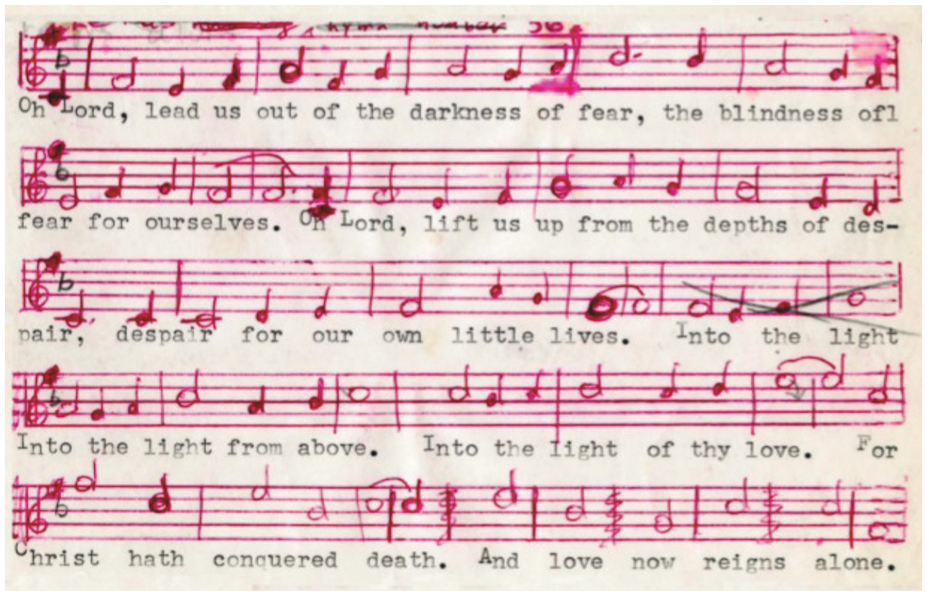
compared his wife with Marian Goodmann across the room - Iris's hair, once so pure and dark was now invaded by strands of white. Her eyes were sharp and her brow furrowed as she sat and listened to the sermon. Joe imagined her face transformed by a smile - from sadness to laughter - more sharply defined than Marian's features - whose soft brown hair is flowing around an oval face - and eyes - are they brown to match? - turned down to her little boy playing on the pew beside her - ears closed to the words of his father - (Joe tried to determine the color of Marian's eyes as she raised them toward the pulpit.) Hazel, perhaps, when the light strikes them right - when they open wide with innocence - with full lips and a face framed by soft brown hair - too much for Iris - and me - (Joe turned his eyes back to the pulpit as Marian caught him looking.) Has Moses finished laying down the law? Believe in God. Satisfied that he'd kept up with the sermon, Joe started to contemplate the design of the stained glass windows. He let the design of a cross in the center sink deeply into the back of his retina. Its deep red began to tremble against the blue background. Joe closed his eyes and let them give back the image in darkness. First blue and then red outlined a cross, then two crosses where he had shifted his focus. Gradually the

place in the church. His was an old man's fury and I'll never forget it. "Liars and fools," he called them, "they claim that their God gives them a better life after death. But when the chips are down, when death has struck, they mourn more hopelessly than anyone." No, at least he wasn't going to act up just because our friend had died. After all, everyone has to die sometime and better to die than suffer in your old age. "You'll learn someday," he said to me. Of course, he didn't have any hope of meeting our friend in another life, he had no cause for rejoicing either. "If their religion were true," he said, "these people would rejoice in death. But instead of rejoicing they mourn more than anyone. Either religion is false or they are false to religion, he said. At least, I have no hypocrisy. I neither mourn nor rejoice. Death is inevitable. We should take it in stride. These people here, they don't really mourn for our friend at all. Instead they mourn for themselves. In death they see a refutation of their own little hopes of immortality. Now you see why it sickens me so much. They mourn for themselves, not the deceased." The old man deals us a sharp critique. Some of you in the congregation may die soon. Are you so selfish that you must have everyone mourn your passing? As if to prove how much you meant to them? Is that how you feel about death? Do you feel it's a test of how you have won friends and influenced enemies? How expensive a coffin you will have? How large a congregation at the service? Or rather, have you you such a stock of hope and faith in the next life that you can share your joy with them when you finally go to claim your inheritance. Can you ask them to rejoice at your coming of age. For that is the true nature of death, not an end, but a beginning. For death is man's coming of age.You have passed the test of mortal life and gone on to gain an eternal one. A time for sorrow? For

images faded back into darkness so he opened his eyes to renew them – funny, the tricks we pull with our eyes - optical illusions - reading my type face upside down to keep from having it backwards - Chinese read that way - ought to make their time go backwards - Hebrew, too, and all of the Old Testament - Kris must have read it - must ask him sometime - reading a book from back to front - writing backwards - from the beginning - The history of our church - maybe one of New Canaan someday - much bigger job – could talk to all the old-timers - no hypocrisy- tell the story as told to me - by these our people - and these our friends - and remember those departed in death - remember, record, and live forever in words - Oh, little hope of immortality - mine and all that I have - for some must die - and some must soon - and some are selfish and they must have their mourning.

judgment perhaps, but not for sorrow. For pain perhaps, but not for mourning. Death is a time to rejoice or else we are false to our faith. Our funerals should take place in light and happiness, with color and music. Yet we hold them in darkness and mourning, with black and whispering. Was the old man right? Are we all hypocrites? Are we a false church or can we stand over the coffins of our friends, throw back our heads to heaven, and lift our voices with joy that "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let us pray. Oh Lord, lead us out of the darkness of fear and into the light of a glorious victory won for us by Jesus Christ. For Christ hath conquered death and we need fear no longer. All praise be to Thee, Amen.



In the pause between the last two verses, the choir began to recess from the choir loft, past the pulpit and the front rows, down the side aisle, and out the door leading to the choir room. Sopranos, altos, tenors, basses, Joe Farnaby leading the tenors. The organist watched them leave and played a final amen. Quiet reigns for the benediction.

The Lord bless thee and keep thee:

The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

Amen, A - men,A - - - - - - - - - - - - men.

The ritual complete, the scene which had been so carefully ordered was broken into groups of people talking and leaving. The minister, who had followed after the choir to the back of the church, greeted the congregation as they left. Outside, they were struck by the brightness and warmth of the summer Sunday noon. Issuing from the large main doors at the back of the church, they stepped onto white cement just a little less dazzling than the unbearable sky. Soon the steps, the doors and the sidewalks were filled with people. The grey limestone walls of the old church glistened with the light of the sun and captured and held on to its warmth in its stony crannies. The same warmth reflected in the faces of the lingering people. The face of God shone all around. Some hurried away to their cars and drove off quickly without saying goodbye. Others stood and talked in little groups, catching and holding the warmth. It is through these groups that Joe emerged from behind the church walking in step with Douglas Campbell, bass. Joe drank in the warmth and regarded its reflection in the faces around him. "Sunday is a good day."

Douglas stopped before the door of his car. "Going home to eat," he said. "I'll see you Wednesday night." Joe, interrupted from his reveries, could only mumble, "Sure." But, then upon reflection, he had to say more. "Take it easy,

Doug." Douglas had already swung his slim powerful frame across the front seat and was starting his car, so Joe continued down the sidewalk toward a little knot of men at the base of the steps. His silver white hair laughed in the sunlight and he flung back his head with the pride of its laughter. His steps were sure-footed and unhurried. He thought of interrupting Iris who was talking with another of the Sunday School teachers, but instead his eyes caught those of old Mrs. Olson. She was leaning absent-mindedly against the railing halfway up the steps. People passed her but no one lent a hand, and she didn't seem to notice that she was not alone. Joe considered the faint smile on her lips as if she thought herself young again flirting with her beau. Our gentleman stepped up and offered her his hand. "How are you this lovely day, Mrs. Olson?"

"Why, fine, thank you," she replied, quite startled. Yet one could tell she appreciated the question and the hand she took to descend the steps. "It is a lovely day," she repeated after a moment as if vaguely recalling Joe's words. "A lovely day, indeed."

Joe left Mrs. Olson at the base of the steps. "Are you OK?"

"Yes, thank you again." She continued on down the sidewalk and Joe thought her thoughts as he watched her go. She, too, has seen many years and many faces with the light of her faith in God. Just as the church from which they each emerged, she has seen many lives come and go. But when she dies, only the church will remain.

Seeing Iris again reminded him of his errand. Reverend Goodmann was preparing to re-enter the church by the time Joe called out.

"Kris."

Reverend Goodmann seemed surprised to hear his first name and turned quickly towards Joe. "Yes, Joe, how are you today?"

"Good. Enjoyed your sermon."

Kris's laugh fell to a slightly perplexed look. "Sometimes I wonder, you know, whether I should take your - or anyone else's for that matter - whether I should take their enjoyment as a compliment. Oh, I know they mean well when they say 'I enjoyed your sermon.' And yet I wonder . . .enjoyment isn't enough, you know. And sometimes maybe it's a bad sign . . . . Oh well, forgive me for such dismal thoughts on such a beautiful day."

The two of them formed a brilliant picture in the sunlight next to the carved oak doors. Kris, still draped in his black clerical gown, his dark hair unruly though combed, his dark eyes flashing with the interest of his speech; and Joe, a sharp contrast with his light, almost ice-blue eyes, his pure white shiny wavy hair, and his neatly-cut light blue summer suit. The two of them were speaking as if it were spring, the meeting of winter and summer, the two of them like the trees across the street budding and sprouting in the sun and the flowering bushes making ready to bloom at the base of the church. The breeze fluttered the bushes, making them dance with light and shadow.

"I wanted to ask you if you and Marian could come to dinner on Wednesday before the session meeting. Marian could stay with Iris after we leave and you could pick her up on the way home."

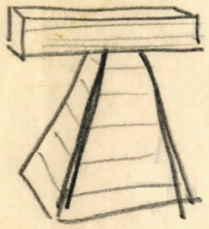
"I'll have to ask her, Joe. I have no other plans so it would be fine with me. Say, by the way, what do you know about this rumor that's going around about a new church? Has Powell talked to you about it? He hasn't said anything to me."

"Nor to me either, Kris. But I suspect we'll hear about it on Wednesday night. Iris looks like she's ready to leave now, so I'll be seeing you then, OK?"

"Right, Joe, and thanks. I'll call when I've talked to Marian."

Kris turned to enter the church, but in the doorway he stopped and looked back outside. All had gone home to their Sunday dinners. Home for a holiday in the sun. Swimming, driving, boating? Or just watching TV? But I must work. He turned, resolutely this time, into the dark, stuffy aisle of the church. In front of the pulpit he paused and looked down at the table. A casket appeared on it, and the strange face inside looked up at him out of the darkness. He shuddered and passed hurriedly on.

Chapter Three



The house which I build is great, for great is our God.

- II chronicles 2:5

Powell Benson had spoken about constructing a new church when Dave, his architect son-in-law was visiting earlier in the summer. Since the old church only seated about 150, Powell and several other elders had often talked about either expanding it or replacing it with a new building. Their Sunday services had been attracting a capacity crowd for a long time, and although people had rarely been turned away, a larger sanctuary might in itself attract a larger congregation, especially if it were a brand-new, modern building.

This was the last weekend of the summer that Dave and Michele had planned to spend with her parents, so Dave had decided to make some landscape sketches of the old church before they left. He set off on the expedition with Powell driving his cream-colored Lincoln convertible.

"Lean forward, Dave, while I pull up the seat. Marge must have been driving last." The red-cushioned seat slid forward and locked into a new position closer to the windshield and steering wheel. Powell Benson was shorter than his wife. He flipped the automatic transmission to reverse and turned the car around in the long driveway.

"Now I see where Michele learned how to cook so well. That was quite a feast we had this noon."

Powell smiled at his son-in-law's earnest expression. "Yes, I guess Marge is a pretty cook." He thought of how Michele would never cook for them when she was still at home, though she must be doing all right for Dave. "Where would you like to go first?"

"Let's drive downtown. I'd like to see if the church is visible from the square."

Powell wrinkled his brow trying to remember. "I don't think so though I don't generally notice such things. It could be, I guess."

They turned a corner and headed towards town. The big car rolled noiselessly down a long hill, past dozens of prosperous houses lining Jefferson Street. Dave looked across at Powell whose eyes remained steadily on the road ahead and hesitated before asking the question that was on his mind. Then he spoke gingerly. "How did you first come to settle in New Canaan?"

"I was born and raised south of town here. Then after the First World war I came back to set up business. It took me a couple of years to get enought capital together for the casting plant. But once I did, of course, I was all set. Since then everything's been fine."

A new Ford had reached the intersection they were approaching. It halted before crossing their path. Powell eyed it cautiously and then sped by. He

watched the car in the rear view mirror as it turned and began to follow them. He had not recognized the driver.

Dave spoke again. "I hope you don't mind if Michele and I leave right after supper. I have to be at the office early tomorrow morning and we've got a long drive back to Springfield before I can get to sleep.

"Yes, you might as well get a good start." Powell turned into the square and circled around the courthouse. The hot sun shone off white stone and sidewalks. Even the cedars had begun to fade and lose their green in the summer sun. The square, usually crowded in the afternoon, was remarkably empty. Only a few Sunday drivers circled slowly and a few cars were parked in front of the closed stores. "We should have gone swimming today, Dave.“

"It's sure warm enough, isn't it!" Dave peered down Main Street towards the west. "You can't see the church from here. It's too far to the left of the road. Let's go on towards it."

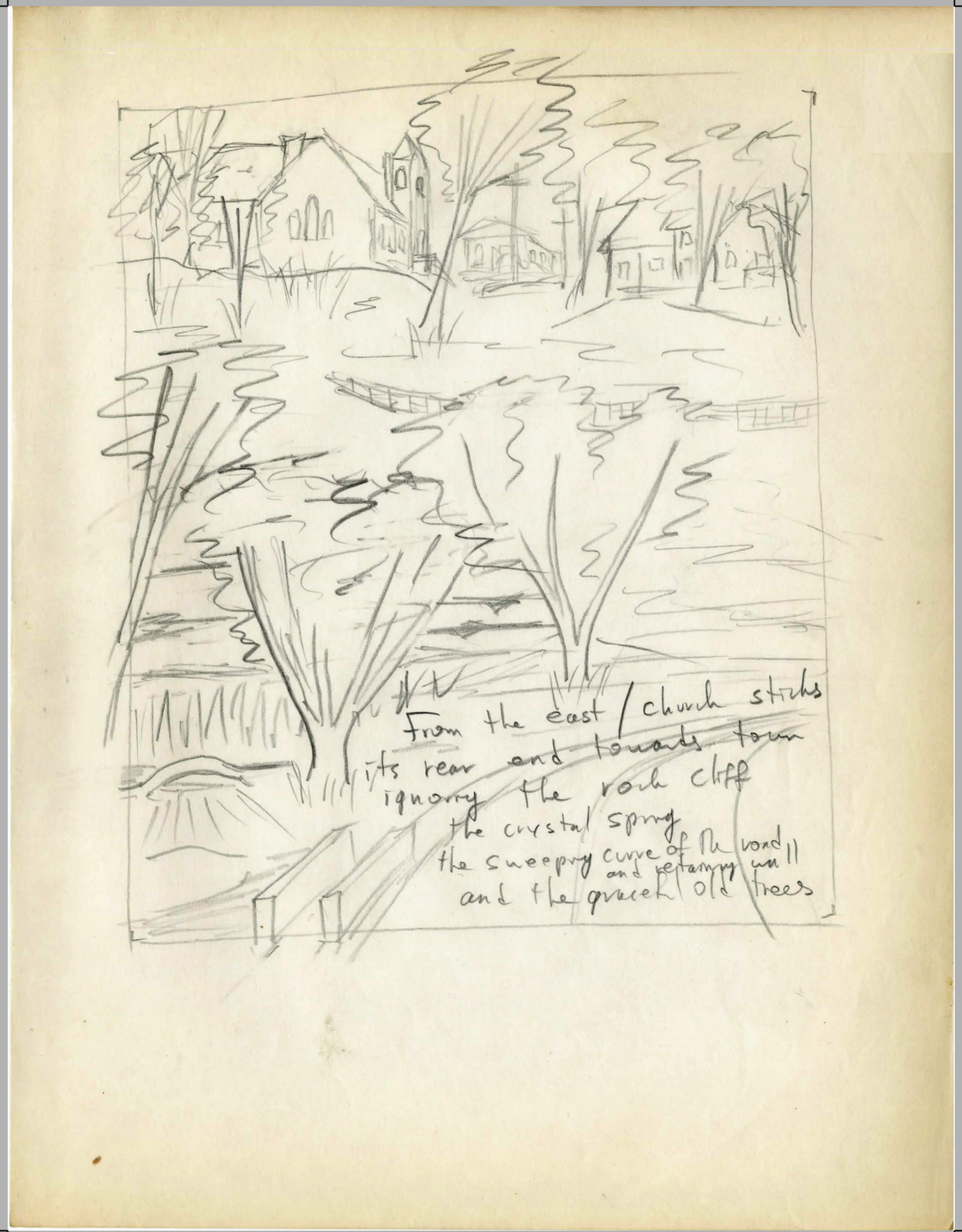
Powell had already swung the car into the right lane in order to drive down Main Street. Two blocks later they could see the church on top of the hill rising above the park. Powell parked alongside the curb as Dave got out his pad and pencil. His hands traced quick, sweeping lines across the pad. Before Powell had a chance to look at the drawing, Dave had already taken a second sheet and started over again. Powell felt useless and disconcerted waiting behind the wheel of the motionless car. His voice was impatient. "What do you expect to get from those drawings?"

"Well..." Dave paused and kept his mind on the pencil and the scene he was sketching. "Just a minute."

Powell leaned back against the seat. He reached into his pocket and took out a cigar and matches. Dave was scribbling a note to himself across the bottom of his drawing. Powell lit his cigar and puffed. Layers of blue smoke drifted through the car. Dave coughed and put aside the finished drawing.

"May I see it?" Powell did not move but took another puff on his cigar instead. Dave looked over at him as if wanting the question repeated. Then he handed him the drawing.

"You want to know what I can see in this. Well, I want to work with the lines that surround the church. I want it to grow out of the land itself. Out of the lines of the rocks and roads. Out of the trees and streams. A church determined by the place where it lives. A building that couldn't be any place else. Uniquely conceived. Meaningful. Here, I'll show you what I mean." Dave leaned over and traced the road where it turned and out sharply up the hill. Then he followed the lines of the trees and the little curve of the bridge where it arched across the

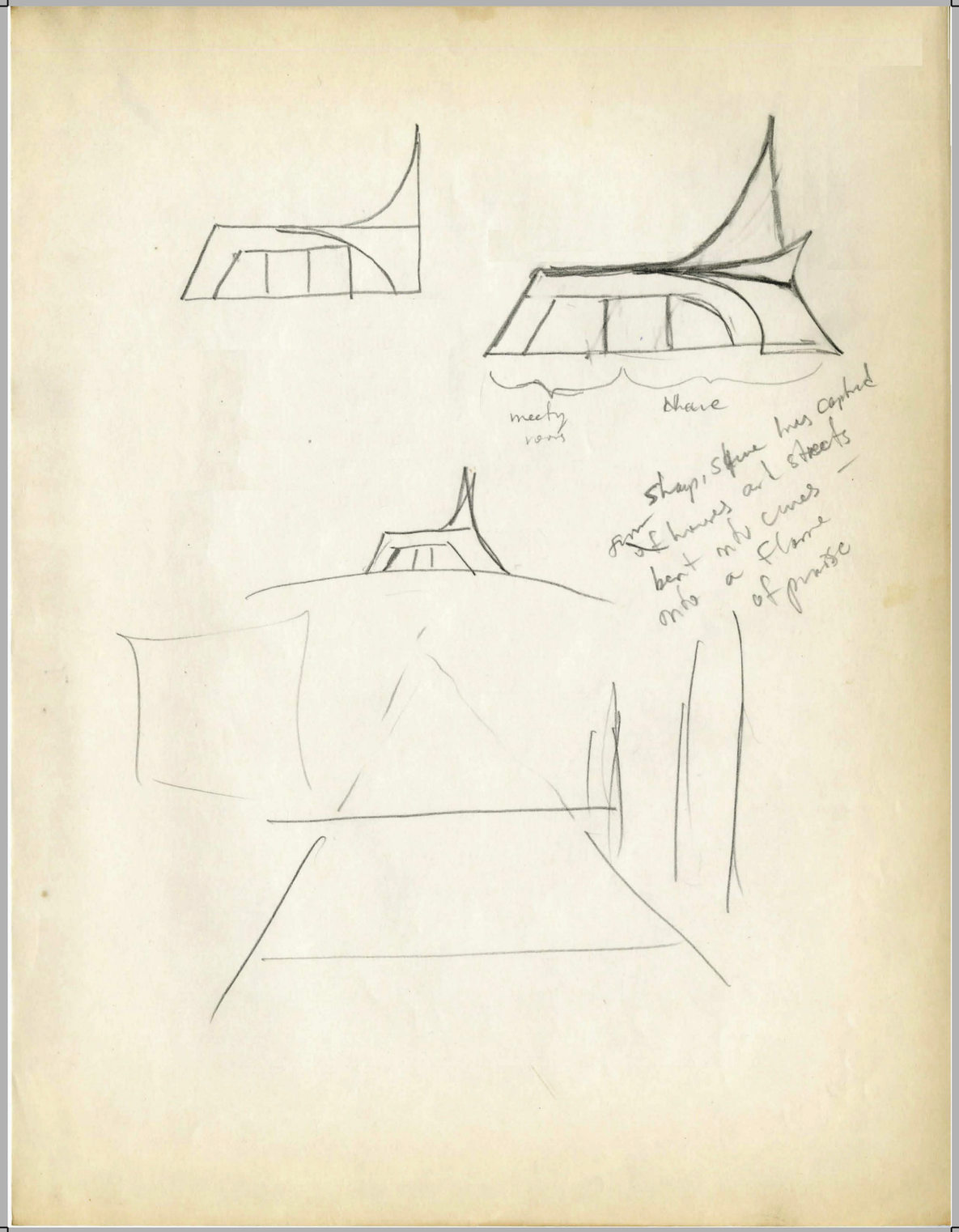


spring. "I want a building that grows out of the land itself, that takes all the lines of the landscape and gathers them together in one gesture. That culminates them. That gathers and consummates and consumes them in one living flame." Dave's eyes shone with his vision. Powell was aware of this without looking. In fact, he dared not look. He dared not even speak, fearing that any word or even a questioning glance would destroy such a delicate bubble of abstraction. After all, thought Powell to himself, buildings are constructed out of heavy stone, not airy dreams. You can't get around it.

Dave was sketching again so Powell didn't have to reply. Dave spoke above his pencil which was tracing new lines across the paper. "You know, I should know better than to begin designing at this point. Everything I do now will have to be changed later when I start thinking about seating and building materials and everything. But I just can't resist playing with these lines now. One to mirror the turn of the road and follow the line of the retaining wall. And a tree in front. The church is mostly hidden now, but come winter and it will show through the trees and need their lines to take part in the landscape."

Dave had finished one page and was beginning another. "You know, Powell, there's something strange about working on the spur of the moment like this. If I wait to start until I'm fully prepared, then I'll never get anything done. I seems that my best ideas always come before I'm ready for them. That I've just got to stop and get them down before they disappear.“ Dave pointed to his last drawing. A curving tower rose like a thorn from the ground and pointed into the sky. Powell smiled at its audacity.

Dave was quick to notice the smile. "You see what I mean? Wild, isn't it? But let yourself go. Forget it's a building at all. Think of it as sculpture. The lines of a bird. It floats. It doesn't belong to the ground. It defies foundation. It wants to rise and soar like an airplane, a bird. See how the cross is hidden in here. Leaves engulf it, softening the sharp edges. They are caught up, consumed by a flame, rising, rising into the clean point of fire. The whole landscape, the road, the wall, the trees, and the spring burrowing under the hill, everything rises in one sacrificial flame. It's not a stone tower. It's a living thing, a living flame." He stopped and grinned. "You know, Powell, after all this, I‘ll probably end up throwing the whole thing away. It's just a facade. Nothing to back it up. Nothing behind it. No rooms. No space. It's not even sculpture, but just a drawing of a church. Two dimensions, not three. Come one, let's go before I get too attached to it." Dave leaned back against the seat and looked ahead through the windshield. He furrowed his brow and worked his mouth to the side in sarcasm at his own



exuberance.

Powell felt the down-to-earth power of his Lincoln engine roll smoothly under the touch of the ignition. Suddenly he became aware that the afternoon had become very warm. "Where to now?"

"Can you see the church from below the hill to the south?"

Powell tried to remember. "Yes, I'm pretty sure you can. I'll take you over by the railroad tracks."

The church moved across the windshield as Powell swung the car up the hill. He gunned the engine and the church disappeared. Powell wondered how he could present such a drawing to the session. Would they approve it? Phil and Bart and Andy? They would probably back him up. Kris and Tom? Most likely. Joe? Maybe not. How much money would be needed? Two hundred thousand? Powell tried to figure how much he would be able to give personally. Of course, Dave would help keep the expenses down. Get the best contractor. Inexpensive but thorough.

"Dave, what kind of materials do you expect to build with?"

"Reinforced concrete, I imagine."

"How expensive does that run?"

"Not bad at all. Especially when you consider that it takes so little time. Just build the forms and pour. You know all about casting."

"I've seen plenty of manufacturing with metal, but our present building is mostly steel and aluminum. Not much concrete in it. Do you have contacts with good contractors in Springfield?"

"I guess so. Why?"

"I'm just wondering how much we'll have to plan on raising for the new building."

"I sure can't help you now, Powell. I haven't a plan yet, let alone an estimate."

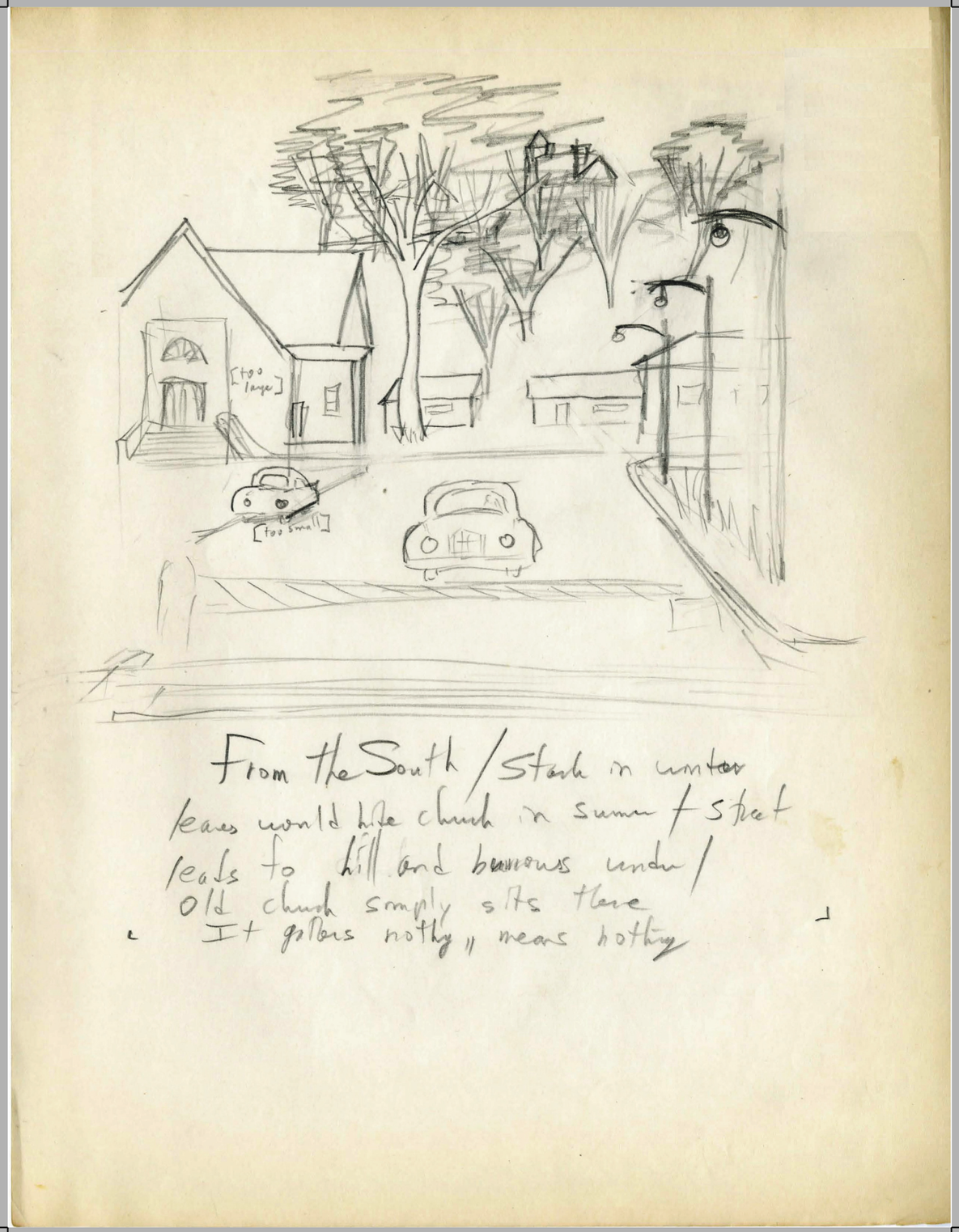
"What do you think? A hundred fifty thousand? Two hundred?"

"Or more, maybe?"

"I hope not."

"Well, I'll see what I can do." Dave hesitated before speaking again. "I wish you would get your church to give me some sort of written statement of intention about a new building. I'd hate to plan one especially for this site and then be turned down on it without even so much as a written record‘

"Don't worry. I'll talk to them Wednesday night. I'm sure everything will go smoothly." Powell had turned into the street that approaches the hill from the south, but the gate was down to stop the traffic across the railroad crossing. "I guess we'll have to wait a while. Is this close enough for you?" Dave looked up



at the hill and nodded in approval. He opened the door as Powell pulled over and parked alongside the curb. "I think I'll get out this time and take advantage of that little breeze. It'll just take a minute or so."

Powell remained in the car and waited. Dave's head was moving quickly and furtively up and down from the paper to the scene. His hand and pencil continued to move even when he had lifted his head to find new lines for the paper. He seemed so lost in his work that Powell couldn't help comparing the calculating intensity of his movements to those of a wild animal stalking its prey. Every muscle was taut and glancing back and forth from the paper to the hill and church. Every line of his body was leaning forward to capture the scene. All of life seemed focused for him in the end of the pencil lead. Then, suddenly, he had finished and was holding the paper away from him to inspect it. He jotted down a couple of notes on the bottom and came back to the car.

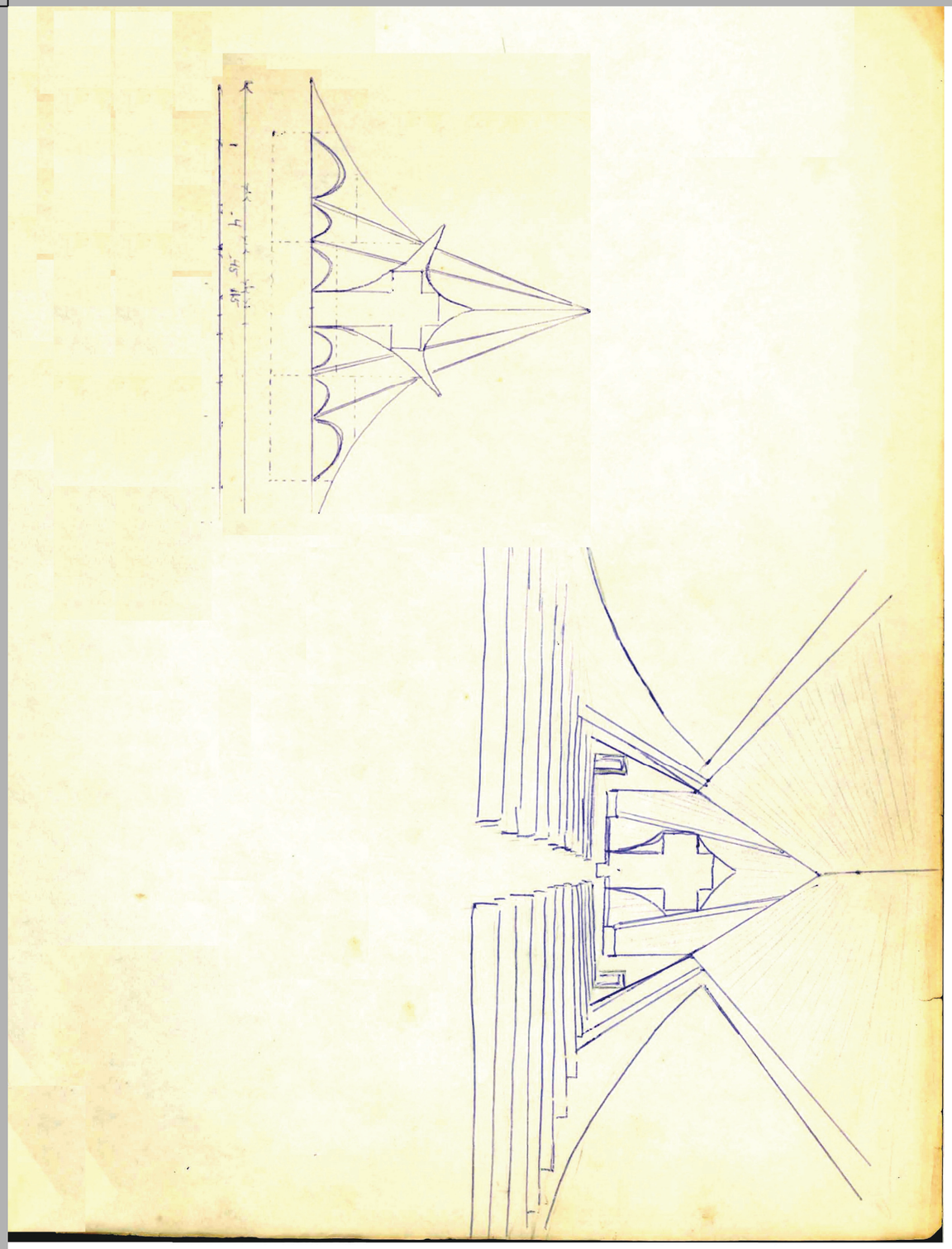
The switch engine had backed across the street and was gone. The gates had begun to lift. Dave looked up from his sketchpad where he had started still another design. "Just a minute before you start. I have an idea I want to get down first."

Powell looked across at the drawing Dave had made outside. The hill rose flat and steep above the converging lines of the street. At the very top stood the old church.

Dave had traced the lines of the street onto the new drawing he was making on the sketchpad. He pointed them out to Powell. "See how these diagonals of the street merge into the diagonals of the church. Then the flat roof caps it off like the square end of the steet. One enters a conventional building, square and austere. Then as the straight lines approach the altar they begin to bend into sweeping curves. Two wings of concrete form from the roofline and arch over to the ground like wings poised for flight. The roofline rises to a pointed tower. One enters the church from the square-cut, artificial world of the city and by walking the length of the church he is caught up into fantasy and transformed by the sweeping, tireless lines of nature, the plant, the flame, the flight of birds. It's a journey, a transformation. See what I mean?"

Powell nodded and said nothing.

"Of course, I'm no more popular with modern architects than I will be with the conservatives in your congregation. They teach you to be functional today. They teach a design that comes out of the space and materials to be used. Nothing is to be wasted. And that's a fine idea, of course, but it has its limits which they don't seem to realize. Since when is beauty confined to austerity? You don't require a sculptor to be austere. You don't ask a painter about the function of his painting. What would it be? To cover walls? Is a larger canvas better than a smaller canvas



because it covers more wall space? No, art isn't function; it's imagination. And architecture's no different than sculpture and painting, especially nowadays since we can do almost anything with steel and concrete. I have materials and techniques to make a building soar. To make it forsake the ground. What do you think? Isn't it sort of my duty as an artist to try such a flight." Dave paused and frowned as he looked over at Powell. "Or is it too wild?"

Powell took off his glasses and wiped his sweaty forehead. "You haven't finished with it yet, have you?"

"No, we'll see. I may come up with a completely different design that will satisfy everybody, although on second thought I guess that's impossible."

Powell had started up the car and moved across the railroad tracks towards the hill. "Do you want any other sketches?"

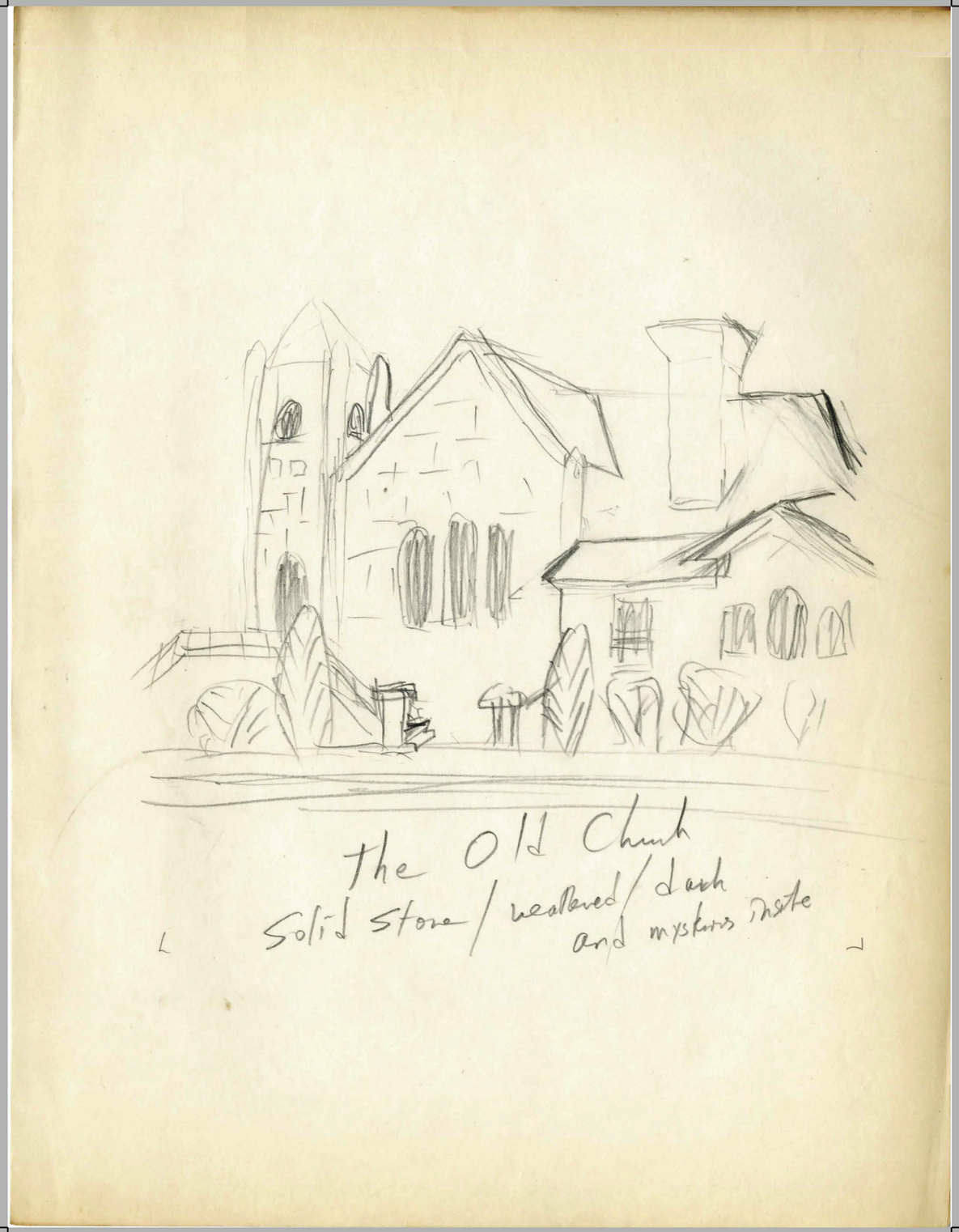
"Yes, I'd like to make one of the church itself. I've already looked over the grounds and foundations, but I don't have a good picture of the building itself."

"Will you be able to use any materials from the old building?"

"I doubt it. But I have a habit of drawing the old buildings I replace. Out of respect for them, I suppose. You know there's probably a lot of interesting history in this old building. Sometimes I hate to destroy one building to make way for another. Especially a.church. There's something special about church buildings. I've been thinking about this for a long time. Just about all of the world's great architecture has been put into churches and temples. The Parthenon was a temple to Athena. The Byzantine basilicas, the Muslim mosques, the French cathedrals, Amiens, Paris, Rheims, Chartres. All of them were temples to God. All of them special buildings, the most beautiful a city could raise, since they were built for God. In fact, I have always suspected that there could be no religion without a building to worship in. The Old Testament makes it clear that the wandering tribes weren't very strongly religious. It took the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon to unify them. The captive people longed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. It became the focus of all their hopes. And so forth."

Powell had climbed the hill and was turning the corner towards the church. Dave got his sketchbook out again.

"I've thought about these things quite a bit and decided that building a church is like leaving the last sheaf of corn in the field or sacrificing the first born of your flocks. Man has desecrated the sacred lands of God and used them for his own purposes. He has cut down the trees for his fields and killed the predators to protect his flocks. It is in propitiation for this, as an appeasement to the angered and forgotten God, that men have left the sheaves in the field and sacrificed the first-born of their flocks. But he has also taken the land for his homes and market



places and built his own private structures, stealing the land and buildings from God, so to speak. Thus, as a guilt offering he must set aside the best piece of land and the most beautiful architecture that he has as a place for his God. In this respect it could even be argued that the worship service itself, the gathering together in the sacred place, is something which only came about after building the church. One could claim that all of organized religion is a product of architecture. Architecture and the guilt which would make men build the best for their god.

Dave stopped and began to sketch the old church. Powell frowned slightly at such an over-simplification of religion, but said nothing.

The architect spoke again before finishing his drawing. "Perhaps that's why I have never been religious. I can see through its reasoning. Seen through the church and its ritual. the sacrifice for a guilt that it is not really mine. I suppose you have wondered why Michele and I never go to church except when we visit you. Well, that's the reason. I hope you don't mind. I'm sorry if you wanted Michele to go."

Powell thought a minute before replying. "No, I suppose it's up to the two of you. Of course, I think you're overlooking something if you have no religion, but then we've all got to see these things for ourselves, my son."

Dave breathed deep. Should he ask? Could he address Powell as his father? For a second the battled raged violently within him. He could not decide. Powell said nothing to break the heavy silence.

And suddenly the door of the house of the Lord was opened and the preacher of the Lord came to them. Kris came to where the two men sat in their car.

"How do you do? Powell. Dave. Nice afternoon, isn't it?"

Dave's relief at escaping the impasse of his thoughts turned into sudden anger at the impudent intruder. He set his face and turned away from the dark-haired young minister to whom his father was replying.

"Yes, a little too warm, perhaps, but not really bad."

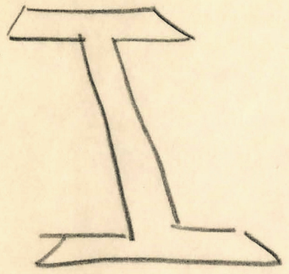
Kris had noticed the look on Dave's face. His own face colored as he realized he was intruding. He was out of place. He backed away from the car, suddenly very ill at ease. "Please excuse me. I'm expecting a call inside."

Dave watched him go and turned to Powell. "Something about him bothers me very much. Do you know what I mean?"

Powell wiped his forehead. "Perhaps." He was quiet a moment, staring out of the windshield before him. "He could be a very good preacher. Maybe a little earnest. But better that than cynical."

Dave did not reply as they drove on.

Chapter Four



s not my word like as a fire, Saith the Lord.

- Jeremiah 23:29

Marian set down the salt and pepper on the dining room table and surveyed her living room. Would the Judsons find it neat? The archway separating the two rooms framed her hazel eyes. A blue couch on the left fitted snugly along the edge of the deep red carpet and faced a television set and bookcase opposite. Across the room a piano and a desk shone dustless with polish in the low August sun. Red drapes caught the light and complemented the squares of warm light lying softly on the carpet and swaying with the shadows of lilac leaves in the window. Beside her another kind of light glanced upward from the plates and silverware and caught in the ice cubes of the tea glasses. Now that the days were getting shorter one needed overhead lights for supper.

Marian had appraised the room in a glance and was satisfied . . . except for one thing. The carpet, the drapes, the couch, the piano, the bookcase, the television, the dining table: all were OK. But the man of the house was not. There he sat, or sprawled, one should say, across his easy chair at an angle that disrupted everything. His hair was unruly, his pants wrinkled from sitting, and his eyes were as casual as the newspaper he scanned. And the newspaper? Its second section was no longer folded neatly as when she had left it, but was opened across the coffee table and dropping over the edge.

"Kris!" Was it love or discouragement or chiding? He wasn't sure and looked at her through puzzled eyebrows over the top of the headline: "Summit Talks at Standstill; Russia Blames the U.S."

"Can't you ever leave anything neat? You're worse than Jamie!"

While speaking, Marian had come to the sofa and folded the newspaper. She laid it on the coffee table and kissed him lightly on the head before going back to the kitchen. Kris, seeing that it was love, went back to his reading with the trace of an impish grin on his lips. His hair was unruly where she had kissed him.

The headlines were full of violence. Kris counted them: international crisis at the summit; revolt in colonial Africa; robbery at a local supermarket. And at the movies tonight: one murder story and one Western "loaded with two-gun action."

"Marian," he shouted toward the kitchen. "I threw away that old cap pistol that Jamie found."

"Just a minute, Kris. I can't hear you in here."

"I say I threw away the cap pistol that Jamie found outside the other day. I don't want him playing with such things if I can help it."

Marian said nothing but frowned slightly from the doorway at her unobserving husband. He remained bent over the newspaper as if there were no consequences to his words. As if to say, "Of course, Jamie's gun should be thrown away." And what should she reply? "For the word of God remains to prove . . . " And besides the potatoes were ready.

In the next room Jamie continued to work with his tinker toys. His facsimile of a pistol seemed surpisingly accurate.

Kris switched on the lamp to read about the robbery. He had read down to the third paragraph before the doorbell rang. The room was bright and cozy, the most cheerful it had ever looked, decided Joe Judson as he and Iris were ushered into the house. He let Iris say so, however.

"Marian, I have never seen the manse looking so nice. I'm almost glad you decided not to come and invited us instead, just so we could see it. And where's the little culprit?"

Jamie peeked shyly around the door of his room and smiled at the visitors, captivating them instantly. "Why Marian, he's getting to be quite the little man. What are you busy with, you cutey pie?" Iris's tone embarassed her "little man " and caused the vision to disappear around the corner.

Marian spoke for him instead. "Well, Iris, you know Jamie would have been delighted to come visit you, but even if he doesn't think so, I think he ought to get to bed at a decent hour. Besides, as you say, it is nice to have a chance to show off the house."

"I suppose this is the first one for you and Kris."

"Oh, we had an apartment in the city when Kris was finishing at the seminary, but this is our first real house. I'm very pleased with it. Wouldn't you like to see the other rooms?

"Yes, why don't we? I guess it's safe to leave the men alone."

"Well, Kris, are you ready for the fireworks tonight?"

"I'm not sure, Joe. How do you suppose Powell will approach us? Since I talked with you Sunday, I met him with the architect as they looked over the grounds. The boy seems level-headed, but I don't like the drawings."

"What did they say about a site?

"Right here, Joe. I guess you expected it, didn't you. There's no other hilltop like this. But then, you haven't even seen the drawings have you?

"No, what are they like?"

"We'll get a chance to see them tonight, I'm sure. It's better to see for yourself rather than listening to me describe them. As I say, I'm not happy with them. But I have no say about it. If I'd been here twenty years, even ten, for that matter, I might feel qualified to judge for the congregation? But two months isn't enough so I'd better keep my mouth shut.

"Don't worry about disagreeing with Powell, This is Kris's bedroom. I suppose you recognize the bed and dresser. We brought the rest of the furniture with us from New York. I thought maybe he would get a lot of use out of this desk, so I put it by the window right here on the South Side, but as it turns out, he prefers to work in the church study and to use this as a table instead. You know how men are!"

"Yes, Joe's the same. I'm the only one to use our desk. What he can't get done at the print shop, he does on the sofa or on on the dining table. But never on the desk!"

Marian led her guest into the next room through the connecting door. "And here's my room."

Iris did not reply for a minute, and Marian knew she must be wondering why they had separate rooms. Marian said nothing, but let the room speak for itself. The drapes and the bedspread of matching deep green material glowed like spring with spangled roses. Kris would be out of place in such a woman's chamber.

"And so he works over in the church," Iris understood.

"Iris, this here is a real life-saver," Marian was pointing to the washer-dryer combination in her laundry room.

"We have a Westinghouse at home. It's so nice not to even need the concrete floors anymore.

"I've been working in the backyard as you can see. And next year maybe we'll be here in the spring so we can do some real gardening."

"Is that an apple tree?" Iris pointed towards a corner of of the yard.

"Yes, but it needs be sprayed. Otherwise the worms will get all the fruit this year except for one batch of green ones that I made into a pie. I'm afraid Jamie is a little hard on the lawn. He's at that

Whether you do or not, I can tell you now that some others of us are going to. Kris, my my grandfather and my father are buried here. If they want to disturb their graves, it will be over my dead body. And 1'll tell you another thing. I'm not the only one who feels this way. This church has been good enough as long as as I've been alive. There no reason why it isn't now. If it were decrepit or ugly or cramped, I could say "Sure, let's build a new one." But as it is, there's no need for a new building. If Powell wants to show us how much money he can throw around, let him do it some other way. Just not by destroying our church. Like I say, Kris, I'm not the only one who will tell you this. The trouble is that you'll find a lot of elders who will kow-tow to Powell and if we don't speak up, this church will find itself in the middle of the worst financial crisis in its history. Believe me, Powell's not going to give us two hundred thousand dollars. Oh no! The burden will fall on us to raise the money. Oh, he'll pay for the architect all right, but wait until you start counting up the cost of materials and profits and heating and insurance. Then you'll see who has to pay through the nose. And by that time the old church will have been torn down and we'll be stuck. Stuck! See what I mean?"

Kris winced under the blows of Joe's attack as if they were meant for him. And Joe's voice had risen to such a high pitch that one might think they really were.

"Yes, Joe, I see exactly what you mean. But let's wait and see how things turn out. No one makes these decisions overnight. Not even Jamie's tinker toy creation was still small, but he had worked on it carefully. With a little imagination, one could make out the shape of his lost pistol. All it lacked was a trigger.

Powell Benson. And besides, there's more to this thing than just money. You and I each know that Powell is sincere in his way about the interests of the church. I see no reason why we we can't work everything out so that everyone gains by it. After all, Powell has already done more for our church than most churches receive."

"I'm sorry, Kris. I didn't mean to sound so vehement. Besides, I'd better save my energy for later. Let's get going and hurry up Iris and Marian. I'm afraid they've forgotten we have to go by by 7:30. And we haven't even thought about supper!"

Iris pretended she was shot expecting to amuse the young desperado. But Jamie showed no signs of amusement. The game was deadly serious, and once having killed her, he had finished with the pistol. Marian smiled at his serious expression. That is, until she turned and caught the look on her husband‘s face. Kris didn‘t speak. Nor did he look at his stepson who had now gone over to show Iris the toys in his toybox. Instead he met Marian's eyes as if she were to blame. Then, pursing his lips to keep from speaking, he bent over and picked up the abandoned tinkertoy. "Joe, tell me something. Is there something in our blood that gives us the urge to kill? Have we an instinct to murder? Or do we learn it from the world around us?

Kris seemed transported from the bedroom and set remotely upon a pulpit before the congregations of the world. His voice had reclothed itself in a black robe of mystery. Joe hesitated to answer such a loaded question. “Kris, I don't think there's a child in the world who doesn‘t play with weapons. If there had been no cops and robbers or cowboys and Indians, then kids would have had to invent another such game to play. As you say, it‘s just our nature."

Obviously Joe's answer was too simple for Kris did not change expression at all. Instead he turned and started walking slowly toward the living room. "Were you in the war, Joe?"

The question surprised him. "Why yes, I was. I served with the Third Army

The pistol was complete. Jamie pulled with hook of his finger against the make-shift trigger. It yielded slightly to the pressure, enabling him to shoot the women as they entered the room. Bang, bang, you're dead!

digging stage, you know."

"You're lucky that you you have such a lawn for him. Have you seen the new housing project on the north side of town? Hardly a blade of grass, let alone a tree!"

"Yes, it's really awful, Iris. Anyway, let's go and feed our menfolk so they can get to their meeting on time. Oh, but I haven't yet showed you Jamie's room."

in France during the First World War.

"Yeah, well, never mind, Joe. I don‘t even know why I asked."

"You managed to miss the war, didn't you, Kris?"

"Yup." Kris seated himself on the couch and picked up the newspaper. "From the way this reads, I might still stand a chance for one." Kris had tried to pass over the subject lightly. But his smile was not very genuine and Joe didn't smile at all but looked down at the floor. Kris watched how Joe, too, evaded the subject. Suddenly he gathered himself together and spoke up sharply.

"Joe, look at this newspaper. Violence, violence, violence: is it any wonder our kids play with guns. Turn on the television. Read the paper. Just listen to people talk. Guns, tanks, airplanes, bombs. Bigger and better bombs. Oh yes, they call it defense. Civil defense. What a laugh! What a pitiful deception! We're nothing but fools, all of us: Blame the Russians, they say. Pass the buck. But it‘s not the Russians, Joe; it‘s all of us. And our congressman are the worst. Boy, this country's headed for a fall. And I mean America. We're all headed straight for destruction! Hellbent for destruction! Hellfire and damnation: The next war won't be somewhere else. It'll be right here on top of us. And we'll all be dead!"

Kris's eyes were flashing and oblivious to the three startled people before him. The fourth, poor little Jamie, had run into the next room frightened by his father's outburst.

Kris had stopped and was looking down. No one spoke. Marian was embarassed. Joe was thinking. Iris, with her Sunday School teacher's voice, was the only one who could speak.

"We all wonder about these things, Joe, but there's not much we can do."

Kris seemed to be waiting for this remark for he sprang from it with renewed spirit. "Ah, you're so right, Iris. Nobody dares to think about these things. Nobody thinks he can do anything about it, so they all shut up and pass by on the other side. And in the meantime they pay their taxes to build bigger bombs. Thats just what I'm getting at. It's not just the generals and the dictators that I blame, but it‘s you and me who just sit back and condone it all by our silence. If we can‘t even talk about it, obviously we can't do anything."

Marian, seeing Kris under attack, broke her silence and joined the debate against her better judgment. "Just what is this terrible thing that we can‘t talk about, Kris? I've heard plenty of people preaching against war. But they're all idealists like you. what are you going to do? Throw away all the guns just because some people don't know how to use them? It‘s not the guns we should be concerned with, but the people who use them."

Kris was not satisfied. "Marian, I don't know how we justify building even a single atom bomb. There's not a time in the world when we could use it. I don‘t care if the Russians bombed our cities. Would it do any good to destroy theirs, too? Wouldn’t that be just twice as bad?"

"Who said anything about using them? Of course, I don‘t think we ought to use them. But we haven‘t any choice except to build them, even if it's just a bluff."

"Yes, and Jimmy‘s toy pistol is just a bluff, too."

Marian‘s voice matched the tinge of sarcasm in that of Kris as she replied. "So what are you going to do? Stop building the bombs? Why don't we just invite the Russians over?"

"Maybe we should. Maybe we should. Maybe that‘s just what Christ would preach. I really don‘t know."

"But Kris, haven't you anything to defend. what about Jamie? Shouldn't he be able to grow up in a country with freedom of speech and liberty?

"Of course he should. But in the long run you don‘t gain freedom by guns and hate. You don‘t make peace by keeping an army. Learning how to kill is just as bad as killing itself. That's why 1 would never join the army. Remember what I told you about the draft? I could never kill a man. Nor could I learn how. There could never be a reason."

"I know. I know. It‘s not an easy question. But since when has one sin been justified by comparing it to another. Besides which, preparing for war is about as bad as starting one. A lot of times it amounts to the same thing."

Iris replied this time. "If a man asked which way your father had gone so he could kill him, would you tell the truth and let him be killed . Or would you tell a lie to save his life?

Marian nodded. "Yes, there's the whole thing in a nutshell, Kris. One just has to use common sense and take what looks like the best choice. Don‘t you agree, Joe?"

"Yes, and sometimes we haven't even any choice."

Kris was left to defend himself. "Ok, Ok, I agree with all of you. You're right. You're right. If we were to turn the other cheek, then the world would descend back into the dark ages. And yet, why can't we even talk about it? Even the subject seems taboo. People refuse to even consider the possibility that turning the other cheek might refer to the Russians."

“Everybody ready for supper?" Marian's question broke the electrified atmosphere. Everyone became genial again, even Kris, who threatened to make sandwiches if dinner wasn't ready yet.

But Kris was in no danger of such work. Dinner had been ready for some time already and Marian was only waiting to put it on the table. Kris and Joe, anticipating a stormy battle at the session meeting, took a break from serious subjects during supper and discussed baseball instead. Iris was interested but did not join in. Marian was not interested and could only make sure that her guests got enough to eat while they talked.

"Pass the butter please, Kris. I‘ll tell you who will replace Kluszewski. You know this boy George Crowe that they bought from the Braves? Well, he's just the guy who could do it once he's given a chance. They never let him get started up there at Milwaukee. Gee, Marian, this roast is done to perfection. Do you feed Kris this well all the time?"

"Don‘t worry, Joe. My wife is especially ambitious tonight. But 1 never can complain about getting enough to eat. It‘s a good thing I didn't meet you five years ago, Marian, or I'd be fat as a barn by now.

Marian laughed. "Aren‘t you?

"I'll have you know I haven‘t gained over ten pounds since I suited out for high scbool football in Massachusetts. And every bit of it's muscle. Have some more potatoes, Joe?"

Joe had been smiling. "No thanks, not me." He couldn't quite make such a boast anymore, though once upon a time... He caught Iris grinning at him from the corner of her mouth as if to say, "No more potatoes for you!"

And Marian reigned as queen of the party. Hers was the house and the food. She it was who had inspired the kidding and the laughter. And only she could bring on the dessert. For nobody leaves for session meeting without dessert even if they are already five minutes late as were Kris and Joe.

The first planet, jupiter it must be, thought Kris, was just emerging when Kris and Joe left the house and started across the lawn and street to the church. They could see several of the session members' cars parked along the curb. There was Powell Benson‘s new white Lincoln all shined up. And Dan Matthews' new Buick. There was Tom Simons' old Studebaker and Andy Phillips' Chevrolet. Funny how one could read their financial status from their cars like reading the very figures. Bart Asherman was just being dropped off by his wife as the two greeted the other members waiting in the doorway of the church, catching the last rays of the evening sun. Bart's car was a Lincoln much like that of Powell Benson. Here was the one discrepancy of the group. Of course, the Superintendent of Schools didn't make as much as Powell, nor even Dan Matthew: for that matter, if one could believe what he heard about the income of the town's lawyers. But then, Bart was someone who would make a fuss about things like a new car.

Kris was first with the greetings. "Well, how's everybody this evening? Shall we sit out here and enjoy the light while it lasts?"

"Why not?" Dan Matthews seemed to speak for everyone and so they didn‘t go in when Bart joined them.

"Well, Tom, when are you going to take a vacation? Now that Andy’s back, everybody but you has gone off to the woods for a while."

"Why, every day‘s a vacation for me, Bart. I thought maybe you'd ask when I was going to do some work for a change."

"I've got plenty of work for you, if that‘s what you want.”

"I‘ll stick to my word, Bart. What do you have for me?"

"Well, let's see. How would you like to break in my new secretary for me?”

This last remark set up a general protest, in which Tom's ability came off rather badly in comparison with the talents claimed by his colleagues. Upon which disagreement Kris took leave to shepherd everyone inside.

The session did not have a meeting room of its own, but used the room occupied by the Senior High School class on Sunday mornings. They seated themselves around the table in the seven cushioned seats which had been provided as a concession to their status. (on Sunday mornings there was always a scramble among the students to see who sat in them.) Joe returned from the study with the minutes of the last meeting which, as clerk of the session, he kept in a neat round hand. He'd always been proud of that handwriting, inherited from his mother and fostered by the trade he was in. "A word is more than a word." There was something magic about than as if a man's fate could be read from his hand-writing. The book of life. But this was simply the minutes of the session. Down to earth again, Joe read his notes drily and asked for additions or corrections. None. Unfinished business? None.

"Gentlemen," Powell began, "I have called this meeting in order to consider what I think may be the most momentous challenge we here in this church have ever faced. You all know, I am sure, my son-in-law, Dave, who works for the architectural firm of Clark & Standefer. This last weekend, he was visiting here along with my daughter, Michelle, and he made these drawings that I'll now pass around and let you consider. As you can see, they're designs for a church building

or a cathedral, I should say, which would be built on the crest of a hill such as this one. I personally think that such a cathedral will bring fame to a town that builds it, not to mention the men who build it and the congregation who raise the funds and uses it. As you can see it would be a very expensive structure and far beyond our immediate means. How expensive we can't know until we pay for an estimate. In the meantime, however, I think that it may be possible to raise funds in excess of five hundred thousand dollars which this would require. But before I go on, let me hear some opinions from you. Bart, what do you think?"

"Well, I must admit it takes a minute to get used to the idea, but if one could put the materials into such a building that it requires, then I agree with you completely that it would be quite a beautiful church."

"Dan, what about you?"

"I'd like to look at it some more before I comment."

"Andy?"

"I agree with Bart, Powell."

"Tom?"

"Well, let‘s see now, Powell. I'd like to ask some questions about this here church design. In the first place, I've never heard of curving the walls of a building this way. In my time, anyway, such a drawing was pure foolishness. Now it may be that since I haven't kept up very well with the building trade in the last few years, why, it may be that they can do this now. And another thing. You've got this odd-shaped nave here and I just don't know about the acoustics in something like that. And the way you've got the choir all run into the corner like that. I just would like to hear more of what this fellow has to say, that's all I've got for you."

"Good questions, Tom. I think I can help answer them for you in a minute. What do you think of it, Joe?"

"You'll have to convince me we need this thing before I'll go any further with it."

"I think maybe I can give you a valid reason, Joe. That is, if you'll keep

something of an open mind here. Kris, you're the only one who hasn't spoken."

"I'm like Dan. I'll wait and hear more about it."

"OK, gentlemen, now that we've all had a chance to see the plans and make some snap judgments, let's consider the thing a little more closely. Tom wants to know about the curving walls. OK. The best I can do is pass along what my son-in-law has to say on the subject. Such walls are possible with the new era of reinforced concrete building. They're expensive and they require extra work. But in this case they would be absolutely essential as you can see. Dave pointed out to me that the Guggenheim Museum in New York City will be similar and the actual construction on it is about to begin. On the one hand we would be taking a big gamble with relatively untried techniques and the other hand we could be real pace-setters in a new type of building which I am personally convinced is going to come into its own within a few year's time."

Dan interrupted him. "You say this is expensive and I agree, but you mentioned five hundred thousand dollars which is already way beyond our means. And I think you are still being too conservative. If I remember correctly, the Guggenheim Museum building has already run to over a million dollars and construction hasn't even begun."

"I can't say about that, Dan. I really don‘t know. But as I said earlier, I think the only decision we can make how is to go ahead and procure an estimate from the firm recommended by my son-in-law. Then we can start worrying about the money."

"If it's going to be higher than we can conceivably afford, why waste our money with an estimate?"

"I was afraid you'd reply this way so I guess I shall have to go out on a limb. Dave asked me not to say anything about it, so I must ask all of you to maintain a good business silence about what I shall say. It appears that his firm has same connection with a foundation back east which might, just might, be able to provide a good deal of the cost, providing they could choose the contracting firms and supervise us on a few details."

"Such as?" Dan was quick to question the "few details."

"I believe that they would be undertaking such a building in order to make it something of a national shrine, you know, something of a symbol of Christianity in this country. I wouldn't be surprised if they required that the church be inter-denominational."

"What!" Joe was loudest in his outburst. "Why I wouldn't even consider such a thing. This is a Presbyterian church and I'm a Presbyterian and so are the rest of you, I thought. And as far as I'm concerned both I and this church are remaining so!"

"Well, gentlemen, I was afraid you might object to this so I wanted to hold it until after the estimate. After all, this is all still speculation. I have no contact whatsoever with this foundation and I am not even sure that they would require what I have suggested! But even if they did and the time came to make a decision on building this cathedral, I'm sure that we would owe it to God and to our community to proceed with it. After all, becoming an inter-denominational church might be a most valuable and worthy step in itself. Perhaps one of the troubles with the churches is their hair-splitting and denominationalism. I personally think of myself as first of all a Christian and only second a Presbyterian."

Bart shook his head in agreement. "Very well put, Powell. I'm with you a hundred percent on that."

Andy also indicated his agreement.

"Now Tom asked me about acoustics and I'm sorry but I really can't answer you on that. Dave didn't mention the acoustical problems and I didn't think to ask him. This as another problem which has to be worked out as we go along. I do know that a lot can be done these days with ceiling materials and loudspeakers so I guess we can cross that bridge when we come to it."

"All this is fine, Powell, but do we need it?" Joe repeated his question.

"Yes, I told you I would try to give you a valid reason and that I will try. Perhaps somebody else can do better than I, however. "Andy, what do you say?"

"I don't know quite see what you two mean by this needing a new church. Could you explain further?"

"All right. Let's put it this way. We have a church building and congregation at the moment. Our church holds 300 people at a maximum while our congregation now numbers over 700. It looks to me like we ought to be trying to get the majority of our people at least to come to church. As it is now I don't know how we dare even ask them since we haven't the seats for them anyway. And as for the 250 who do come to church, I'm afraid I must complain about their interest and initiative. Now, don't mistake me. I'm not criticizing any of us here, nor am I leveling a finger at our church in particular. I think this is a national thing. People seem to have forgotten that a church is a place to work as well as a place to enjoy themselves. What we need is a task, a real challenge to wake us up and make our religion come back to life. And believe me, gentlemen, I think the answer lies in our hands. This is a great challenge, a great challenge."

Bart cleared his throat. He, too, had presided at board meetings and he knew how to command attention. "Gentlemen, I am becoming more and more enthusiastic about this with every word. Sure it sounds impossible, but as Powell says, perhaps what we really need is to attempt the impossible. As we've all seen many times in our lives, with God nothing is impossible."

Dan suddenly felt himself assuming the role of defense attorney appealing to the judge. "Before we go any further with this, I'd like to say just one thing. I don't think any of you have really looked at these drawings very closely. You've just been passing over the actual design. As far as I'm concerned, I've been looking at these things while you've talked and I'm greatly displeased with them. Instead of a beautiful cathedral, I think this thing promised to turn out a vulgar, showy example of what happens when architecture forsakes tradition and tries to be spectacular.

"Oh, now wait a minute!" Bart replied indignantly. Powell, however, only smiled.

Dan continued. "Say what you like but 1 do have standards of taste and these drawings do not live up to them. What's more I think you'll find that the finished building would be much less smoothly constructed that in these drawings and that

it will look disjointed in addition."

Kris spoke for the first time. "I rather agree with Dan though less strongly. I'm not too sure that the image of a man's hand is appropriate here. It smacks just a little bit of the Biblical graven image."

"Ah, but here's the strength of the idea, Kris." Powell was in his glory. "This is the hand of man not the hand of God. It is the hand of man pointing upwards and onwards and yet gathering up its congregation at the same time. Instead of boasting in itself, it points upwards to its real creator. when a person comes before it for the first time, his eyes will be directed towards the sky, towards the stars." The businessman, usually so matter of fact, flushed under the eloquence of his words. He reverted to his usual tone of voice as he continued. "But you haven't yet asked about some of the most important parts of the plan. As you see, the tower and basement would give us room for plenty of meeting rooms, a kitchen, and a dining room. We have all talked previously about how cramped our meeting facilities are here in this old church. In fact several of us had been toying with the idea of constructing a separate building in order to house them. Now of course, we have a far better solution before us which will take care of all our needs for as long as we can possibly foresee."

"Another major part of the design you haven't yet mentioned. And that is the stained glass. The glass of the tower would probably be clear or perhaps glazed to match with the exterior view of the lower stained glass. The four windows of the nave, however, and possibly their extension down to the lower floor would be stained glass. If we go ahead with plans for the rest of the church as outlined here, then we owe it to the grand style of the architecture to get hold of the best in modern stained glass windows. This church is, as you can see, a perfect showcase for the best that America can offer. Dave was telling he that until now Europe has always had a monopoly on the world's stained glass and that this might well be America's chance to come into its own. A rather tall order, I should say, for us here in New Canaan, but then as I said before this makes it even more of a challenge. And a challenge which I think we can and ought to meet.

Dan remarked wryly, "And more money from somebody's pocketbook."

Powell looked around for other comments. "I'll turn the floor over to the rest of you for a few minutes and you can think it over some more." He excused himself and went for a drink of water.

Joe was the first to speak up. "I'm going to put in my piece for the other side of the picture. This business about progress and showpiece and challenge is all fine and good if you want it. But as far as I am concerned you can do it someplace else. I believe that tradition and plain good honest architecture will hold its own any day without all this fancy stuff. Besides which, I think that if you try this thing, you're going to find yourself in water over your head and you won't be able to swim. Things like a million dollars and breaking away from our parent church are too risky for the church of God. We have more important business to attend to."

Andy felt called upon to defend the plans, "It's all a matter of whether you're willing to accept the challenge, as Powell says. Apparently you're not, Joe, and in some ways I don't blame you at all. But I hardly think you should stand in the way of the people who do want to meet the challenge."

"Yes, and let you tear down the church we already have and get the foundation laid on another before you run out of money, so that everyone can see what a pack of fools you are."

"Let's not worry about the money until we find out how much we need and whether or not we can raise it through some foundation like Powell suggests," Andy again quoted Powell who had now returned from getting his drink of water.

"That's where we disagree? replied Joe, "but I'll let it go at that."

"OK," Powell spoke. "That's fair enough. Where we disagree we'll say so and be done with it. I can't say as though I have ever seen a worthwhile project being put over without disagreement. I do think, however, that we should get an estimate on this thing before we come to any hard and fast conclusions about either its feasibility or its beauty. One thing remains to be done, however, before we can get an estimate. Do you have anything you would like changed in these plans?"

Dan replied. "Well, I may not like the plans as a whole, but I must admit that if you're going to go after this thing at all, you might as well go whole hog with the

windows like finger-nails and all of that. As far as the interior of the church is concerned, I'd like a more accurate estimate of the number of rooms and the seating capacity of the nave."

"The nave would seat approximately 450 people and as for the number of rooms, I don't have an exact figure, but you can see they would be quite adequate."

"Don't forget that your estimate should include such things as to whether we could use the old organ or would have to buy a new one. And then I'm sure we'd have to buy all new furnishings such as choir stalls and pews and pulpit and carpeting. Then, too, don't forget a heating plant, and maybe air-conditioning. And an elevator for the tower. All these things run into a staggering sum of money, Powell. I don't see how it could possibly be raised. But then, as you say, one needs an estimate before seeing about fund- raising." Dan finished and the others remained silent a moment counting the cost of the items he had mentioned. And these had nothing to do with the actual building which would be so expensive in itself.

"Before we undertake a vote on getting an estimate have you any other changes you would like to have made?" Powell waited a minute and then asked for a show of hands. Only two went up when he asked for those in favor and he looked questioningly at the other four. "All those opposed?" Three went up opposed. Kris sat looking at his hands.

"Tom, I'm surprised at you." Powell turned to his elder and waited for a reply.

"Well, Powell, it‘s good to see you so enthusiastic. Yes, indeed, it most certainly is. But I'm afraid you've bitten off more than you can chew this time. So I think it would he better to drop it right now instead of getting more involved to the point that it can't be set aside. You know every step forward is just one more that you will have in coming back."

"Well said, Tom, but I really think that we stand a chance even if you don't and I'm willing to go further with it in the risk of having to drop the whole project if it fails to materialize the way I think it will."

"Dan, how about you?"

"As I say, I am most fundamentally opposed to the taste of the design itself and I don't see how it could be changed to suit me. I realize this is just a personal opinion, but I would hardly want to break my back trying to get hold of the money and building something that is not pleasing to me."

"And Joe, I guess we know where you stand. So, I guess that leaves us with a tie vote, three and three. I had hoped we wouldn’t come to this, but I guess the burden rests upon your shoulders, Kris. Are you for or against?"

"I don't know." Kris's voice directed at his hands, had a strange quaver and even Joe looked a little perplexed at hearing it. Suddenly Kris looked up and swept over them with a piercing, wide-eyed glance. His dark eyes were a deep black, almost frightening in their intensity. "Will you excuse me for a minute?”

"Sure," Joe was the one to answer. He got up as Kris left and spoke to him in the hallway. "All you all right, boy?"

Kris suddenly broke into a smile. "Sure, Joe, I'm all right. I'll be back in a minute."

Reassured, Joe listened as Kris went down the hall and into the study. He heard something set on the desk and then pages turning.

In the study Kris was lost in the pages of his Bible. Genesis 11:4 "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Genesis 11:8 & 9 "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel." He had read enough. His frown was broken as the light of truth broke out across his face. He returned immediately to the session meeting.

"Well, I took a look in my Bible for an answer and I am relieved to say that I think I found it. But I shall delay my answer until Sunday when you will receive it in the sermon. Is that all right with you?”

No one spoke. Then, at length, Powell said, "However, you want to decide, Kris. That's up to you. I guess that's all I have for this meeting then."

Nothing further was said, so they adjourned and went out into the hallway. Kris was stopped in the doorway by a hand on his shoulder. Powell was asking him to wait and talk with him. The others had gone down the hall and outside before he said anything.

"It looks to me like your getting ready to oppose a new church, Kris. Am I right?"

"You are."

"Yes, that's what I thought. well, you must have your reasons and I won't try to go into them until you‘ve had time to prepare this sermon of yours. But I think there are a few things you ought to be aware of, which I believe you haven’t taken into consideration."

"Yes?"

"For one thing, you should recall that two of the session members are up for re-election in January. And that they are Tom and Joe. In other words, I feel certain that they will be replaced by younger men more likely to forward our enterprise. Even if only one is replaced, you see, that's gives us a majority. Thus, by opposing us you put yourself on the losing side. Now as far as I am concerned, that‘s fine. You do what you think you should. But don't forget that if a pastor is opposed in something as vital as this by the majority of his congregation, then something has to give. It's rather a awkward situation, don't you see?"

Kris's eyes were flashing. "Winning side, losing side, it makes no difference. I do what I think is right."

"Now wait a minute here, Kris. Don't get me wrong. I’m only trying to do you a favor and help you see what the consequences are of your decision. I don‘t give a damn what you decide. Do you understand? I just don‘t want to see you set a trap for yourself, without knowing it. I guess I haven‘t said anything to you before, but my wife and I have grown rather fond of you here and we would like to see you stay for a long time." Powell put his arms around him and watched his face. It was averted. "OK, boy, we’ll hear you out on this thing Sunday. Just don’t say anything, you might regret later. Goodnight."

Kris did not reply and Powell left him alone in the darkened room. He shivered.

When he got outside, he found Joe still waiting for him, silhouetted against the afterglow of the evening sky.

"What did he say, Kris?"

"Nothing. You know, just what he said in session. About how he is sure of getting the vote eventually and that if I oppose I'll be on the losing side."

"Humph. You knew that‘s what he'd say, didn't you? The trouble is, he may be right." Joe had started walking back towards the house and Kris kept pace by his side. "Are you aware that Tom and I are to be replaced in January?"

"Yes, Joe, he mentioned that."

"Ah... I'm afraid for you Kris. Maybe you'd better disagree with me this time. I don‘t know what else you can do. Getting an estimate wouldn't be so bad, you know. It doesn't oblige us to go ahead and build this church. And I wouldn‘t be surprised from the way they talked in there that this whole thing is too fantastic to ever take place. What do you think?"

"I don‘t know, Joe. I just don‘t know yet."

"Yeah, well you think it over and if you decide to vote for the estimate, why I won’t feel bad at all. See what I mean."

"Yes, that‘s good of you Joe. But things aren't that simple. I've got to think it over."

The two had reached the house. Marian and Iris were waiting for them in the living room. "Well, how did it go?" Iris inquired of her husband who was standing over her chair.

"Not too well,” came the reply.

Marian did not speak to Kris but looked at him a little puzzled. Upon entering the room he had flopped down in his chair and assumed the same pose of averted eyes which had bothered Joe during the session meeting.

Joe was pulling at his wife's hands. "Let‘s go, Honey, and give these people a chance to go to bed." '

Marian objected. "But it's still early. Iris and I have some coffee and cookies for you in the kitchen if you'll just sit down."

"That's too good to miss, so I guess I can stay awake that long for cookies. But

I'm afraid we'll have to leave soon after." Joe sat down next to Kris and slapped him on the knee. "Well, I guess you found out about rich men tonight, didn‘t you, Kris?"

"I don't think he's so bad, Joe, if you look at things his way. But then, as you say, he's not a person to rub the wrong way."

Marian had returned with the cookies and they all settled around the coffee table. Before long the cookies were gone.

Iris got up. "We'd better leave, Marian. You can see Joe’s starting to fall asleep. He likes to get up around six and get his work done early, so we'd better get going and get him to bed."

After they left, Kris got up as though to go to his room. Marian stopped him. "Kris, what happened over there tonight?"

"Well, I suppose I might as well tell you all about it, Marian, since it may get more complicated yet. You heard Joe and I talking about Powell's plans for a new church, didn‘t you?“

“Yes.”

“Well, just as we expected, he brought them tonight and asked for a vote to procure an estimate on such a building."

"And how did the vote go?"

"It was tied and I abstained."

"So?"

"So Powell came up afterwards and hinted that if I did not support his plan for a new church we would be replaced here.”

"So that's what it amounts to, huh? What did you reply?"

"I said I would reply in the sermon Sunday."

“What will you say then?"

"I don't know yet, Marian. I've got to give it some thought first."

"Can I help you?" Marian put her arms around her black-haired man.

"No, Not now, at least!" Kris got up and went to the door.

Marian watched him go and felt a little mad. "Oh well. He'll need me soon, I know." She carried the coffee cups back to the kitchen.

In his room, Kris got down the old family bible. Its leather cover was beginning to crumble but the binding was still good. The pages fell open automatically to the section between the Testaments where his parents' marriage was recorded. The green and red design around the edges had faded, but the ink still looked fresh. He was able to recognize his mother's handwriting, the clear, round hand that he ought to have inherited. Too bad that he had not learned to write in such a clear hand, but had taken to scribbling and then to printing instead. His mother always said that he wrote like his father, in a hieroglyphic series of series of marks that only he could read. And on the opposite page, on lines crossing a floral design, containing enough space fo a family of twenty, the births of him and his brother were recorded. These were the depression years. Soon the family split apart, never to be reunited, he and his mother remaining alone. So it was that he and his mother read this very same Bible together when he was yet small enough to sit on her lap. Kris turned the page and stared at the blank page with a place for marriage announcements. Why hadn't he entered his marriage with Marian? He started to look for a pen and then stopped. No, this was a closed book and he had no right to add anything to it now.

This certifies
that
Betty Ann Czerny
and
Alan Goodmann
were united
in holy matrimony
on the 13th day of May
in the year of our Lord
1933

Births

Kris Goodmann
January 25, 1934

Ivan Goodmann
July 2, 1936

Kris caught his mind wandering and suddenly turned the pages towards the Biblical passages he had intended to pursue. These would give him the raw

material for his sermon. He needed answers, definitive answers for Powell and, above all, for himself. The pad and pencil by his side so seldom used ("never," according to Marian) were just the thing he needed. A list of references began to grow under his hand. First came the tower of Babel. And next had to be the Temple of Solomon. Kris searched through the books of Kings and Chronicles, finding several passages. But one must be best for his purpose. Better to have God speak instead of Solomon. And so he would use the passage where God speaks to David by the mouth of his servant Nathan. Kris studied the passage and its context. Perhaps the answer was not so easily obtained here. For God was going to have Solomon build a temple even if David could not. Better to search in the New Testament. After all, the word of Jesus is closer to our needs. This time Kris had no problem finding the passage he wanted. He needed no guide for the New Testament. Even before Seminary, he had practically memorized the gospels. The choice was not an easy one this time, but he chose Luke as perhaps his favorite of the gospels. He read it over again and again . And yet, perhaps he was not reading it right. Perhaps it was not meant to apply to the House of God, but only as an illustration for understanding the words

II Samuel 7:5-6

Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?

Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.

Luke 6:47-49

Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings and doeth them:

He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon the house and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

But he that heareth, and doeth not is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

of Christ. To be sure it was a good illustration of what he meant to find. And yet since it was not especially meant to be, perhaps he had better skip it for a while. Now Kris started comparing the most important references. These were the ones he had saved to the last, knowing they were the most important. But they, too, were controversial; that he knew from his school days. He would have to use several passages and point out the consistencies and inconsistencies among them. Here was a case where the gospel writers, especially John, had been too apologetic for Christ. They had not been strong enough to take his medicine straight. Thus it would be necessary to use Mark and Matthew where there was the least amount of editing by the writers. John's would be the best were it not for the fact that he enters his own interpretation. For Christ did did mean he was going to destroy the temples of men. And there was one more referece to back up such an interpretation. Why else was the veil of the temple rent? Oh yes, one could give other apologetic reasons. But as in the case of Christ's saying he would destroy the temple in three days, such a watered-down interpretation was only for those who couldn't take the strong medicine of Christ. Now he knew what he would say to his congregation on Sunday. Now he knew the answer. The call of Jesus was a spiritual call and one must forsake all that he can see and grasp before he can respond. Such a church would only be a stum-

Mark 13: 1-2

And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here.

And Jesus answering said unto him, seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Matthew 26:61

This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Matthew 27:50-51

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

bling block to the faith of its people. God cannot be tied down to a temple made with hands. And it was Paul who understood this best. So Kris began to hunt through the epistles of Paul. He finally chose a passage in his favorite letter, I Corinthians. Perhaps Paul's language was not as strong here as it was elsewhere, but it was plain that the temple of of God was in the hearts of man and not in any ediface built out of stone and glass.

I Corinthians 3:16

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?

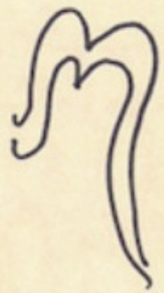
Kris's head reverberated with the word of God. He could not sit still, but paced the room. He left. The screen door at the back of the house was covered by night insects attracted by the kitchen light. He opened it and stepped outside into the sultry darkness. Stars blinked above but to the southwest they were obscured by approaching cloud banks. He walked nervously across the lawn towards the church grounds. A slight breeze was moving in the treetops. Gradually his eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness. To the left and below the cliff the lights of the highway and the business district of New Canaan flashed on and off. On his right hidden by the tall weeds along the fence, cemetery stones shone dully. Beyond and through the grove of trees, the distant hills were shrouded in the shadow of advancing clouds. And there! In that little valley among the hills! Fire! Fires burned in the summer night. Distant flames danced their ancient ritual. His blood tingled with kinship seeking expression like the fire. Desires moved deep within him and struggled for the free dance of the flame. he moved away and looked at his darkened church. A flutter of wings came to him from the bell tower. The Holy Spirit ascending and descending.

Then he caught a flash of light from the corner of his eye and turned again towards those distant hills and the gathering storm above. Again. Lightning. Tongues of fire flickered in and out of the wooded hills. Leaves shuddered around him with the beginnings of a wind and the burning fields began to die away beneath the early rain. He stood listening to the awakening wind! And heard a low, wind-borne wail from the west. Then silence again and the whispering leaves. A wail like pain buried far beneath the fallen leaves of memory. Somewhere far to the west a freight train rolled back into the shadow of a mountain where its whistle echoed in another direction lost to the ears of a man full of strange new fears.

And the veil of the night was rent from east to west:

Slam went the car into a coupling. An object slid heavily along the wall and struck hard against the cold floor of the box car. Crash. Again the switch engine backed into the row of box cars and sent them slamming into each other. The bum felt himself moving again with added cars on the train. Rain fell without ceasing through the black night and leaked through the partly opened door. It awakened a stench of old cargoes of fertilizer and rubber and moulding cardboard. Thunder rolled overhead and mingled with the grinding of the wheels. The bum shook violently in his filthy coveralls and spit up more blood. The floor was slimy with his discharge. But the train was moving again and he settled back into sleep. Rain fell and covered the vision with a shimmering curtain. All was obscured.

Chapter Five



ary kept all
these things
and pondered them
in her heart

– Luke 2:19

Marian sat cross-legged on the deep green cover of her bed. Sounds of
the rain falling softly outside settled like music around her. Drops plopped
in rhythm from the trees and eaves to the pools beneath her window, and cold
trickles went meandering down the win- dow panes. She could look through
them into another world where the wet leaves shone like spring in shafts
of sunlight peeking through the shower- clouds. Two streams met and merged
and rolled down together. They struck the wood and disappeared. Perhaps
they would gather with other drops and fall down to water the pansies below.
Flowers outside and flowers inside. Pansies nodding in the rain and roses
waiting on the wall. Ah, nice the warm rain and paper roses in spring sun-
showers. She extended her hand to the wall and brushed a rose slightly, but
it was flat and cold and only looked warm in the yellow lamplight. Lamp-
light in the daytime. Day of rain and damp. Jamie's in the living room,
playing on clean carpets. That I did this morning. The whole house cleaned
and cold. White woodwork and cold, cold porcelain shining in the kitchen.
Drapes, covers and bedspreads clean. And smooth, clean sheets on the bed.
She slid her hands along her calves and felt their firm shape beneath nylon
stockings. She slid down and they were smooth. And back, rough. And down
again smooth while a stream of shivers and goosebumps came over her. They

started at the touch of her hand on her calf and rose through her waiting
body, her thighs and sides and breasts and shoulders and arms and straight
up her spine to the back of her neck. She leaned into it and threw back her
head and closed her eyes and fell back into the pillow, both her arms crossed
over and pressing her breasts to hold them still. Goosebumps faded like a
wave and came again as a smaller wave, and then faded away. She stretched
and pressed into the cover to calm and sober herself. The air was cool and
the bed would be so warm. So tempting. So tempting! But no. I musn't. He's
too old new. And besides, he's busy building a tower out of his blocks.
I'll watch him instead. She extended her cute little toes to the floor and
slid down from the bed. Too cold. She looked under the bed for her slippers.
In the top drawer maybe. Her toes sank warmly into the little throw rug in
front of the dresser. This is the house of my baby. And these are the rooms of
my love. This is my chest of drawers. And this is my closet of things to be
remembered. She lifted an armful of papers from one corner of the drawer.
Leaves of my loves and lines of my life. She took them over to the bed. Lines
of death. She sat on the bad and placed them out in front of her. A thousand
and one little thing. One little ring. She spread them out across the covers.
One little ring though maybe unworn. And he of my ring is always around

though maybe he be unaware of my love. He of my love in the pines of summer.
He of my late in the jagged city. The shattered glasses and stinging streets.
The broken bottle of our love. The warm bottle of my love. Oh, sweet Jamie.
Tender until. Tendons develop. She pushed the papers aside and lay next to
them, her eyes closed, unthinking. Or was she not thinking of distant things
and other times? Was she not swaying in summer swoon. Sunday school in the
church basement. Under the heating pipes. Jesus loves me. Yes, I know.
Georgie loves me, too. Jesus, suffer me unto you. Georgie, stay away from me
now. Oh, when was my first love? In the second grade, my one and only valen-
tine. Soft little fawns fading into brown. Browning cardpaper fading into
fawns, so soft and spotted from birth. I love you, Georgie. Such darling
words that daring day. Love like a hart hides and appears
when you least expect it. Twice married and yet
elusive. How well I know! She knitted
her brows and slid away, elusively,
into the guise of a little girl. How
I smiled and ran from him like
spring breezes. Played with his
name. Georgie Georgie. What
was his last? Lost forever, the name of
my little one! Jamie. My favorite. Marcel
wouldn't have liked it. Jean Jacques he wanted
instead. For his Paris woman. that was just too
much! That bastard! Oh Jamie, never ask me when
you get older. But he'll be known as Jamie Lam-
bert. Mommy. Why? I'll say I chose Lambert just like
Jamie. But then at school, Why is your name different from your
Daddy's? Mine is the same. Oh, they'll know with all their ageless
cynicism. They'll laugh at him, call him. Jamie Lambert and Jamie Good-
mann, where is your Daddy? He'll come home to me, tears over his face, and
dirt and Mommy, Mommy. Come cry in my arms, my baby, my little one. So
small and helpless when he was born. And now so big. When I get big I'll run
away. Why will you run away? No. I'll stay and marry you. Will you stay
and marry me? Yes, I will stay and marry you. Marian tiptoed across the
room and peeked into the living room. Jamie was playing with his tinker toys
and did not notice her presence in the doorway. She went over and knelt be-
side him. He looked up with a smile. She put her arms around him. Oh yes,
he knew. His eyes were so beautiful when he knew that way. Deep with trust.
Hazel like her own. Now I've got you. You can't get away. She squeezed him,

HARTS LOVE
SOFT THINGS
SO
I
AM FOND
OF
YOU

more than she dared, and then she saw a shadow move. She looked up. Kris had been watching. Suddenly she was mad.Why didn't he speak? What does he want, anyway? The front door closed softly, and her anger faded. Where is he going? Back to the church, I suppose. Working on that sermon that's got him so worked up. Wouldn't say a word to me this morning. Or last night either. Can I help you at all? No, not yet. Oh Kris, my love, what are you go- ing to do? Suffer me to oppose you, Mr. Powell. For the word of God remains to show that truth is truth and right is right. I can do no other, so help me God. So help me Marian. But he did not ask me. I'll go to him anyway. Your study is so cold. And your books so dry. Like Jesus with no place to lay your head. My lap will be your manger. Little Lord Husband, nestle in me. Oh yes, he'll come. He'll come to me. She kissed Jamie and went back to her bed and memories. Carcinogens! Oh, that stupid re- porter! If I'd spelled Carcinogens," was ranked it once, I spelled it high in all the categories for him at least a do- She thus becomes the zen times! How stu- first Landmark student pid! Not one word to win the coveted award. about can- cer! Why, he didn't care at all what carcinogens are! Just who are your parents, and what street do you live on, and aren't you the officer of a club or something? But the mice alone were worth it for me. Poor little things. I gave them nice funerals in the backyard. Then Washington. And Dennis. We'd have never met in a thousand years. Me from Michigan and he from the Ozarks. Uranium, his fair project. His rock collection. Oh, why didn't I save our love letters? Our perfect letters and perfect love! First love! Sweetest, O sweet sixteen! Eighteen. I will be yours for- ever till death do us part. Till we told each other goodbye. And wept. The first of my loves and the first to leave. So all alone it was like dying when he went away. "Too much," he said and he had to go. So I burned them. I tore him into a thousand pieces. And then looked again to see

LOCAL GIRL WINS SCIENCE FAIR

Miss Marian Crosby, a senior at Landmark High School, has been awarded the grand prize in the fifth annual Regional Science Fair at Muskegon February 21-23. She thus becomes eligible to compete in the National Fair being held this year in the nation's capitol.

Miss Crosby's project entitled "Coal – Tar Dye

Miss Crosby has plans to attend the National Fair March 27-22 at the Hotel Statler in Washington. She will display her work with 125 other winners from across the country.

She has earned many honors at Landmark High School. Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. Orville E. Crosby, 917 Park Street.

him again in the smoke. But it was better that way. Better never to see him again. Never again the little things I gave him. Gone forever the bunch of violets and that first night in the lobby so shy. He would read my eyes when he got bold. And see himself reflected there. So, I captured him not even wanting to. Hand in hand while the others went ahead. Walking around to avoid the puddles. Spring shower pools. Such a beautiful night it was! Bright lights shining on the wet street. Red and green. And footsteps ringing like bells on the sidewalk. Do you know what, Marian? What? Tonight. Yes. Tonight. Yes, I am very happy! Oh, be my love in the hall by my door. Not in the hotel I whispered, losing my breath when he squeezed me so hard. And then one night we went to the Washington Monument. What did he call it in my sonnet? Here. Pyramid of hope. Funny way to put it. And showing me a star through the trees. I will give you a star. Where are you now, my first love? Grad School? Are you married now? You were going to become a scientist. Do you write any poetry now? Or was this for me the only one? Written on the train from our first goodbye. Ran along the plat - form as we pulled away. One last kiss I threw from the window and one last move- ment of our lips in , "I love you!" Then came our letters and other lit- tle things. Like my baby ring. Why did I send it? Knowing I would never see it again? Wonder if you still keep it around somewhere. And what do you think when you open the drawer and happen to see it again? You must never forget. You know I never will. I'll love you forever just like during our summer together. Our summer nights under the stars. And pines and the grass wet with dew when we didn't care. Such kids we were! Fumbling with first love. Shivering in breezes from the river. Shivering in love from the river to the hills to the stars - to the stars he would carry me away. "Too much," he said and he had to leave. Left me alone. All alone. All of them leave. Even Jamie. But not for years of our own to come. Here we are safe with a home of

To Marian

I saw a mark set in the sky, a star
That flamed upon the pyramid of hope,
Soft framed by graceful elms unto our scope.
'Twas light eternal from our God afar
Down glancing to a place where still we are,
A shady place yet starlit on the slope
From this imperfect love in which we grope
To love with God in whom perfection's par.

I asked the keeper what he charged as toll
That I might pluck the star for you to wear,
But he replied that I must sell my soul
And that I could not give the star but share
In perfect love. My life's no longer whole,
But now I place this star within your hair.

our own. Let us be happy here , my little one. Marian slid her cold, smooth legs beneath her and tucked them warmly away. I suppose they're all scientists now. Like I was going to be. Marian Crosbly, Ph.D. Never could I even guess where I am now. Marcel. Jamie. New York. Kris. And here in New Canaan, a stranger, with a home and a husband and a church - and sermons. If someone had told me, I would never have believed. No wonder they don't predict the future. Even if they could, who would believe? Where would I be if I'd stayed in college? Never met Marcel. Sung in the choir. Worked in the lab. Could have been an assistant the next year, the professor liked me so much. Caught him staring at my long brown hair, down to the middle of my back. Then my own research. Except for Marcel - he danced me away. The world needs more scientists but I need you more, he said. Like hell, he did! And like hell it was, too! But then, so was school. Gossip, gossip, that's all that they knew. When they found out about Marcel and me, just jealous! The stories they told. All lies, I thought. Until I learned. Girls're worst when they they're right. When they rub it in. Patty was nice. Oh, so were many of them, I guess. So long ago. All of them married by now, I suppose. And I was first. On the second dance, he asked. It's funny now. Come outside! Forget about poor Larry! Who's he? Sure, I was happy to go. Poor Larry! But just as well. Happier for it in the long run. Find himself some nice girl to dance with. Not like me. Marcel - drunk every night, sick in the morning. Threw that bottle at me. Crash and splatter all over. Clean it up yourself! But always in bed he would snuggle up, so innocent. But one night he locked me out! Aunt Anna was good to me then. Not like later on. But always better than him anyway. He and his cheap apartment and expensive cigars and expensive whiskey. All he wanted was a good time. What about school? Not for us. We're young! Let's live! But he was getting old fast. Lines on his face I could see. Already a bum at 22. And his friend, what's his name? Lost his father's money. Marcel helping him along. Wanting to study psychology. His wet dream! I'll analyze you. Analyze yourself, you fool, you bum, you drunkent sot, you need it! Oh boy, you need it! Drunk and snoring. I'd get his money. Oh, I was mean then! I learned his tricks. But I got what I wanted anyway. Jamie, I wanted. Sweet Jamie. The world in ruins before he came. Oh, springflowers blooming in my

THE MIDNIGHTERS BALL

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

5. _____

* * * *

desert! Blessed am I, the deserted. Blessed am I, the white-winged dreamer. Watching him grow, I forget the ruined world. Now watching him build another with blocks, I forget Kris. He'll make a good father when he learns. But what about me? Can I love again. After Marcel and his ways, claiming the French know all about love. It's a cruel thing, he said, and made it come true. But then there were other nights. The last before he left me. So gentle like I never knew. So simple like a little child. Tell me about the boy Marcel, wandering, wandering across the hills. Then going to the cities – Marseilles and Paris, like clouds of drapes and tapestry. Draping the bed we were going to buy. Just you and I. Seulement. I loved his accent. But how do I remember? Before he got tired and left. Good riddance by then. I didn't even care to burn his note. Wouldn't even give me his handwriting! Surprising he even signed his name. Do not wait. As if I would. As if I could even cry. My eye springs dried up, done with crying. Mind's eye closed. Finished loving, finished for good. Like an old woman, wearing my names like a brace of old rings. Crosby, Lambert. Goodmann. They tinkle together like old signs hanging in the wind, like old markers in the rain. Marian Crosby, born May 13, 1935. Died to love, March 17, 1954. Married again, June 7, 1957. Marian Crosby Lambert Goodmann. An old woman plays with her rings, searches for her old friends in the frosty trellis. Fingers the vines without knowing. Dying. O Kris, bring me back to life again. And love. Carry me off to the bed of love. Black-haired wild man seduces little girl. Kris Wildman. Like Kris-Cross, I called him once when he was mad. He looked so funny with his hair all mussed up. All hot and bothered, come in to me, cross-baby, cry-baby Don't you listen to them, big shot Powell in the pants and Joe and Iris with the latest gossip. Write me a sermon. Just for me. Point your finger at them, all of them. Woe unto you, you hypocrites! Blasphemers! You whited sepulchres and dead men's bones! Hellbent for destruction! Hellfire and damnation! Brimstone and fire God. High on the mountaintop. Hear, Oh Marian, the Lord, our God, is one God. The God of death and the God of life. The God of vengeance and the God of love. Above the world and coming on the clouds, all ringed with

I must go now.
It can be no other way.
You are young and beautiful
and think sometimes that
all the world must be so.
Mais non! It is not so.
Thank God that someday
I shall find you again in
heaven where things are
different. I shall love
you forever.
A dieu

P.S. Do not wait.
Do not look back.
Je ne reviens pas.

light. Coming, coming to meet you, flying, flying high on white-winged dreams. But he doesn't come. Where is he, oh lost, my love? Mine hour is not yet come. Know ye not that I must be about my father's business? Wait and watch for me and I shall return. Waiting and watching, he shall return. He shall come back as they all come back. He of my love in the pines and summer. He of my love in the wounded city. He of my lovely boy the father. Step father. Oh, what miscarriage. And then making the birth announcement. Just to see what it would be like. Aborted. Never to be printed. Never to be opened. Never to be read. Lying on the desk. What if Aunt Anna had seen it there? I hated her when I thought so. Now she is dead. Wanting so much to see Jamie before it was too late. So I took him to the hospital, to her wasting arms. His little red body, ugly, in her boney hands, ugly. So ugliness to ugliness, birth to death. Alone we come, and alone we go. Only love between. Or loneliness. Like Anna. Fifty years and not a single man. Just not enough good men in the world. So she cried over Jamie. And I, too, the hardest that ANNOUNCING I ever cried for somebody else. Forgetting all about Marcel and myself and every THE BIRTH OF thing but her and my little baby. We called it his christening. Never JAMES CROSBY LAMBERT baptised the way he should have been. Now not until confirmation. Like me. Twelve on years old and I'll never forget. Going to become a December 4 missionary. But then came science, college and Marcel 1955 - no time for God. What had he ever done for me? Until I met Kris. Handsome, black-haired minister. Eyes of Slavic mystery. Sunday afternoon, it was. International House. Reading the Sunday Times. In my good suit I thought he was a foreign student. Jamie? How old is he? He'll be three in December. He's very cute. You speak English very well. Yes, I am American. Oh. Silence. Do you go to school around here? No. Do you? I am at Union. I'll be graduating next spring. Then all about his thesis. "The Demonology of Jesus." I'd like to read it sometime. Really? He was all so serious about it. Your husband? Just my Jamie and I. That really threw him. Kept right on speaking so I wouldn't notice. That was his downfall. I watched how he wanted to ask. But he didn't dare. The weather? Very nice. Any news? Look at the paper, yourself. So blunt I embarassed him. Was he going to leave? Jamie wanted to go, tugging at my dress. I didn't much care. But watching him, I knew he would ask, so I waited. Men are so simple. He looked at his hands.

The poster. A dance? Do ministers dance? His first smile. Mine, too. The waiting was over. Jamie could go now. Wait a minute. Where do you live? I'll meet you there at nine o'clock. He was already jealous when I danced once with Frank. Where is the program? Did I lose it? Oh no. He kept it, the rascal. Forgot to give it to me. Marcel would have remembered. Oh, so many things get lost! Like the picture I received at confirmation. And the bookmark. At least, that I still have. It should have been a magnifying glass, we all said. I was the only one to get a picture. Special from him. Brown-faced Jesus glowing out of black. Eyes soft as a little lamb. Madonna of the sheep like a woman. With eyes like a woman and deep to suffer more. Bleed for the sins of his people. Rise from the tomb to a MY garden of spring and angels and lilies and a woman waiting. A girl I was, waiting to grow up. Kept it in my drawer like a movie star. SOUL Kiss me, Jesus. How could I have lost it? Somebody must have stolen it. Gone forever. But not my memories. My dream. Back in the church like morning again. Angels flying in white, but flying DOTH in the sky on white-frilled wings like the dress I was wearing. And the bluest of summer blues. So high it was in the MAGNIFY sky with white and wings and all around angels sing- ing - almost to God. But then I stopped. I'd forgotten some- thing. I would have to return. And wake up. Then remembering THE Jesus and his strong, brown arms. Jesus and his strong, brown eyes looking into mine. His face like my Daddy so near. Closer. Suffer LORD little children to come unto me. Come to me. It wasn't my fault. I never told anyone until Marcel, and then I should have known bet- -- ter. So cruel he laughed. And stupid. He and his psychology! He knew all kinds of love. But not mine, he didn't. He could never know. Never in this world. My communion dress and white LUKE dream flying. Brown angels and crying afterwards. In his office. 1:46 Where're your parents? They're gone tonight. He asked about my dream and angel and my soft brown hair and so beautiful I was a little girl I could have been dreaming and flying again in his arms asleep so strong. I forget. So he would never look at me in Sunday school again. Afraid I would tell. His wife was fat and they moved away soon after. The new minister was better looking and he moved all the furniture around in the study. Kris in his study. Fun to make love there sometime in the leather chair with all the books around. But he wouldn't like it. Wants a private room. No sex here. All the rooms of the house are yours, but this one is mine. Brings me little presents from there. His books. "I never noticed this, have you?" So I read and

he watches my eyes. Harder that way. Reading my eyes while I read his work. His sermons. Searching my eyes for the way I feel. Once he said he couldn't write without me to show it to. His way of loving. I'll dedicate my sermon to you. How can I say when I don't like something? Last time he wouldn't tell me his dream. You can read about it in the sermon. But why do you tell them, if you won't even tell me? Do you think they want to know when you are having nightmares? I speak to them for God and I must tell them everything, he says, even when it's in my dreams. God speaks in dreams just as much as in any other way. Maybe even more! I'd hurt his feelings. Yes, I said to finish. He can be so serious about such things. Touchy. Like me and my confirmation dream. I could never tell him. Even though married. But then, nobody can understand what's going on in the dreams of somebody else. Let alone understand what's in their thoughts. This morning when he wouldn't tell me. What was it running through his troubled mind? How can I ask? Like last night, How can I help? No, no, not now! He'll come when he's ready. After reading in his Bible. The word of God the same today as the day it was written. It was July 19, 1956. From their old house. Someday we have to visit there. Is the only thing from him? Not even one letter. It's such a funny little love!

Chatham July 19

Dear Marian,

The picture of the Cape dunes is quite accurate. We are having a fine vacation. Mother sends her love and I'll see you shortly.

Love, Kris



Miss Marian Crosby
662 Riverside Drive
Apartment 2A
New York 27, NY

No letters at all anymore. Dennis's burned and none from Marcel. He was never away. Nor Kris, for more than two months and just one postcard. So I wrote just one in return. I wonder if he saved it. How should I sign it? With love? Yes, that was my downfall. Falling down. Maybe I should have known better. But maybe this love would be different. Like last week when he was reading to Jamie and he didn't see me watching. So happy and Jamie, too. Maybe someday . . . . Someday, what a wonderful word! To think to look ahead years with hope. My Kris and Jamie growing together. Watching them read and run and wrestle. My men. The men of my house. And who knows? Why do I never think about it? As if I no longer could. As if there were not thousands of years unthought of ahead. New lives. New loves. The winter ending and the spring returning. Springflowers peeking from under the leaves. Sunshowers coming to water our lives. To grow and give and burst into bloom. To know and have and bring forth again and again. Oh life! Oh love! Oh rhythm of spring that forever

returns. That forever comes back to my waiting arms. But children? Oh, Kris! How could I ? Oh God! Jamie was enough! If only I could and I couldn't! Yes and no. I love you. I love you not. Oh . . . . . She threw back her head with her eyes closed shut. Fingers stretched. Every delicious muscle taut. Skin to sinew and muscle to shoulder. And fell back exhausted like a cat going to sleep in the sun. But the papers wrinkled and complained beneath her hips. Time to put them away. The sounds of rain had subsided now and only the steady dripping from the eaves remained. A noise came from the front porch. The mailman. Oh Gosh, already time for lunch, and Kris will be coming. Just one more stretch and then go. She pushed the papers aside and slipped off the bed, her stocking feet landing on the floor with a heavy thud. She laughed at her clumsiness and danced across the room. Be graceful, Marian! She patted her hairdo into place and looked at her image in the mirror. Shaking her hair, she let it fall back of its own accord. Gracefully. Jamie was not in the living room, though his toys were scattered all around the carpet. Jamie! No answer. Jamie! The noise of something falling came from the direction of his room and then the patter of little feet. What, Mommy? Do you want to come get the mail with me? OK. She opened the door for them. Three envelopes in the box. The rain was ending. The sun sparkled on everything. Even the church was streaked deep gray with water instead of its usual dry and powdery white. No sign of Kris yet. Bills. Bills. And a note. From his mother. So businesslike. Typed instead of handwritten. From where did he get his Slavic mystery? Not from her anyway. This week? Nuts! At least the house is clean! If Jamie and Kris will just leave it that way. This means I have to cook. Maybe some pies. Jamie will have to sleep in my room. Meeting his "grammer" for the second time. Do you remember, sweetie pie? But he'll remember Mom instead. At our open house. Didn't I save the invitation? Such a wonderful day it was. Mom and Dad were so pleased. Finally a home for Jamie and their little girl! With tears hiding behind her eyes, Mom helping me in the kitchen. You're going to be a good cook for him. Closest we even came to each other. And Dad and Kris talking together. They got along so well together. I was afraid they might

August 20

Dear Marian,

I shall be coming through New Canaan on my way to the West Coast next weekend and would like very much to see you and Kris and Jamie. I have lots of questions, but I'll save them until I see you.

Love,

be jealous instead. Ought to visit them soon. At Christmas anyway. But what if Kris? But no, everything will turn out well. Marian finished setting the table and started to get lunch out of the refrigerator. She stopped and looked at the clock. It was almost noon. Better wait a while. Where's Jamie? She closed the refrigerator and went to the living room. He had returned to his blocks and was beginning a tower. Too busy to be hungry yet. She went back to her room of roses and memories. The bed was all mussed up. Might as well get in it. She took off her dress and slipped her smooth legs between the cool, clean sheets. Her papers lay scattered across the bedspread like quilted patterns. Country of memory. Map of my life. With lakes and meadows and hills and valleys. A shady place upon the slope from this world to the next. Some poem I read. Where? The weeping and waning of the seasons. Etching the wheel of our fortune. Cutting the notches of our years. Oh, there it is. So I did keep our invitation after all.

Suddenly, Kris was in the doorway. She felt his eyes resting upon her. She slid her hand slowly along the pillowcase, caressing it softly, softly. His gaze grew troubled; then suddenly he was at her side, his body tense. She slid one calf softly against the other and raised herself up on the pillow, looking into his eyes. His hand was on her now and his eyes entering hers.

"I knew you'd come, my love! I've been waiting for you all morning."

"Did you? Did you?" Kris was breathing harder and there were waves of color moving across his face. His hand trembled.

"What is the matter, Love?" Then he was on top of her covering her face with hot kisses and her legs were sliding together, together. "Come, my Love!"

"Oh, Oh, I should have known." His words were lost in the animal smell of her hair, flowing, tumbling, his heart rushing, muscles moving beneath the endless caressing of her hand. So soft and strong, a shelter of quiet from the noisy world. She listened with half-closed eyes to the rhythm of his heart and the rhythm of his breathing. Listened with poised body arching away, away. So softly they rolled and nestled their warm bodies into the cool white linen and the cover with little tufts of cotton in rows. She covered him with soundless kisses and combed her fingers through his tangled hair.

"What's the trouble, my baby?"

"I just can't get it written. Nothing will work for me. The words. The words, they just won't come and I get so mad at it all."

She kissed him again and blew the breath of her warm lungs into his cold ear.

You are invited to an OPEN HOUSE at the church manse Sunday afternoon June 11 for Reverend and Mrs. Kris Goodmann

He was tickled and turned his head away. Suddenly, he had grabbed her again and her breath was gone. "Kris!"

"Marian, Marian! What if I can't write it at all. What am I going to say to them on Sunday?"

She soothed him with her hand and her voice, caressing. "It will come to you after a while. Just forget about it now and it will come later." She paused. "Are you hungry?"

His voice was muffled in the pillow. "Marian."

"What, Love?"

"What would you do if they fired me?"

She had known that the question would come. Sometime it would come, so she had waited for it and prepared her answer. Now it was asked, and she must give her answer to him. "Don't worry, Honey. we can always find another place. Don't worry. I'll be with you."

He sat up and looked at her carefully as if he had never seen her before. As if he were searching for something in her face, searching with eyes of wonder and a glimmer of tears. And then as if he had found it, he smiled and spoke slowly, oh so softly. "Yes, I know. I know. That's all I need to know."

He dropped his head softly and nestled between her breasts. She caressed him there into quietness. The wisp of a little smile hovered on her lips as she looked down at him.

"Kris, do you want to show me what you have written?"

"No. That's just it. I haven't written anything at all."

"Are you sure that you want to oppose a new church?"

He looked at her, surprised by the question. "What do you mean? Of course, I'm sure."

She smiled at his vehemence. "Yes, Honey, if you sure, then I know it will be all right. I just didn't know."

Would he talk about it? She had seen him with the architect Sunday but he had said nothing about it to her. She had seen how concerned Joe had been after the session meeting. But Kris had said nothing. He wouldn't speak. He would make his own decision. She knew and in a way she was proud. If only she could help a little.

But he was silent. She watched his face, and couldn't tell anything. For a long moment they were silent, he looking down, she watching. Than she got up. "Let's go eat some lunch, OK?"

"OK. I'll be in pretty soon." So she left him there on the bed, her papers stacked on one side. At the door she paused and looked back. He was watching her. She blushed. He smiled and turned away.

When she was gone to the kitchen, Kris looked over the papers but did not pick them up. He examined the roses in the wallpaper. Flowers, he was so out of place among them. Damn it? Why couldn‘t he say what he wanted? Maybe she was right and it would all come later on. He got up and left the room.

Jamie had built a little house. Marian was setting the kitchen table. Kris stood in the doorway between them.

Jamie decided to build a tower as part of the house. How many blocks high? He counted the blocks as he placed them on the tower. "One, two three . ."

"Kris."

"Yes, Honey.“

"There's a note from your mother on the table.“

"four, five . . . "

"The envelope was very small. He was nervous. What did she want from him? What was it now?

"six, seven . . ."

He opened the note. His hand was shaking.

"Eight." Jamie stopped counting and watched his father turn towards him with the letter. He waited for him to look.

His mother was coming. He looked up.

Jamie struck and toppled the tower. Blocks tumbled down.

Box cars swung round the curve. Brakeman swung along the caboose. Trees rushed by in a swirl of dust. The bum was awake with his head stuck out the door. His hair flew in the rushing wind. His eyes were narrowed to slits. His lips were tight and his breathing hard with the curse of death.

Chapter Six

He that
cometh after me
is preferred before me:
For he was before me.

- John 1:15

Three pages. He lay them down again. An outline at least and better than nothing. His eyes slipped out of focus. Can't even look at them, let alone write. Or the typewriter, waiting to be used. Come on, Kris, finish it and go home.

He got up and went to the window. Hunger gnawed at his stomach. But I just ate about an hour ago. The glass was cold where he had laid his hand to hold the curtain back. He rubbed his cheek to feel the smoothness of his hand. OK. Must be later than I thought. Darkness had settled since he came from the house. Got the last minute jitters, I guess. In front of the manse the street lamp seemed to sway slightly in the wind. Or is it the trees that sway? Shadows laced the street into intricate patterns. Light and dark. Cold and still, yet dancing in patterns. Where are the stars? He looked up through the window for them, but he couldn‘t see; the ceiling light reflected into his eyes. Perhaps it will rain again. Sure nice this afternoon. Saturday afternoon. Everybody and his mother out washing cars. Would have washed ours but for this darned sermon. Wonder what is Marian doing? He tried to catch a glimpse of her through the warm, curtained windows of the house. But all he could see was the corner of a table and the back of an empty couch. Probably putting Jamie to bed. Across the street the house of the Baker family was dark. Wonder where they are? Saturday night? Do they go to church? Funny I never asked. Headlights flashed on the darkened house. A car went speeding, screeching around the corner in front of the church. Its skidding wheels marred the quiet night. Kids! Saturday night. Go ahead, kill yourselves. Makes you madl What if Jamie were in the yard? The car shot by and emptied noise from a muffler cutout. Kris grimaced and watched its lights disappear. Looking for thrills. Symbol of a decadent world. The two car garage. One for

Dad and one for Junior to wreck. I didn‘t want one, but Marian insisted. And she was right. Got to have it for calls. But even so . . . . He looked at the house. That he had wanted for her. For her and Jamie after living in the city. Her lush bedroom. A woman's room. Get your big feet off the chair. Oh, you men! But she loves it anyway. It's her way of loving. The windows of the manse threw yellow patches of warmth onto the fresh grass. Good rain we had. Wonder if there's dew on it? Suddenly Marian passed by the window, and he caught her brown hair in the lamplight. And then she was gone. Into the kitchen probably.

Come on, Kris, get to work. He sat down again and looked out through the open door of the study. A blank wall stared at him from the darkness of the empty corridor. Silent and cold. But in the morning it will be full of kids. And mothers. And noise. And color. Can‘t work then. Better get busy now. And then in the church. Summer dresses and colored eyes. Watching the insects in the window and the girl across the room. But all of then sit around me. There in the center. High in the pulpit. Can I answer their questioning eyes? Look at them. Square in the face? Eye to eye. Man to man. You and You and You! So you want to build a church. So you want to put God in his place. Build him a new little house. Well, hear the word of the Lord. Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house that can hold me? Where is the man who can trace my presense? The room did not answer. The corridor remained dark and quiet. Kris listened for sounds of the night. A fly buzzed against the window. He leaned back in the chair and looked for it. Too lazy to swat it. Too lazy to work on his sermon. He looked again at the outline and thought of the seminary. So many spoke from only an outline. Wouldn't write it out. Talk to

them. Between you and me. But Kris had always wanted his written out. Every last one of them. On file in the drawer. He almost reached in to take them out and look at them. Of course, writing them out is not the whole job. One must have a good delivery, too. Speak if from memory almost. Look at your congregation. Full in the face. Speak with them. But having it written is good insurance. At least you know what you're going to say. And yet . . .

Oh, quit it, Kris, you're iust too lazy. Or am I afraid? Afraid to tell them that Powell is wrong. Afraid to prophesy. Predict America's doom. All towards destruction. Not one stone upon another. Only the word of God remains. Oh God! Oh God, strengthen me. Alone I am afraid. With your help I can tell them the truth. Direct to each person. You and you and you! Maybe God speaks in my fear. Maybe he wants me to use only an outline. To forget about writing it out. Wait a minute. Like in the last days. Where is that? Kris reached for the Bible on his desk. His seminary copy with neat lines of notes in the margins and fly-leaves. Mark would have it. Mark 13. Verse 11. "But when they shall lead you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." Kris smiled and leaned back again. The problem was settled; his fears resolved. The Word of God, not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

He found himself standing to face an imaginary audience. Hear the Word of the Lord. Such eloquence! He smiled at himself and glanced at the outline. I have something especially vital to speak to you about this morning. As if they're not all of them vital. And aren't they? Filed in the drawer. Look at them if you

want. Read them. Not a wasted word. That's the beauty of writing them out first. Cut out the padding, the useless stuff. His congregation had disappeared and Kris was now faced by professorial criticism. How can you talk from a written page? You'd be reading, not speaking with them. I don't care how you do it. It's impossible. You'll never get it across.

The study seemed stuffy with criticism. The door was open and waiting. The corridor beckened, come, come! Your congregation awaits you. Kris picked up his sermon outline and left his critic behind. He turned off the light and stepped into darkness. Images of the study behind him flashed in his eyes not yet adjusted to the darkness. But his footsteps echoed in the hall and guided him securely. Faint blue lights and flickering leaf shadows began to greet him from the rooms and windows he passed. Classrooms waiting for Sunday morning. Tomorrow morning. Will I be ready?

His eyes were used to the darkness. At the end of the hall he opened the door into the choirroom and didn't bother to turn on a light. The air of the room stood silent and empty around him. Like the classrooms and the church itself, waiting, always empty and waiting for one morning a week. Kris walked the familiar path to the pulput. His hand reached automatically for the switch of his reading lamp and then hesitated. The church seemed larger than usual and mysterious, as if it held secrets in the corners. He turned and looked into the choir-loft. Velvety silence greeted him. At the windows. One shone with the street lamp outside. The others were dark. At the ceiling. It disappeared into shadow. Empty and waiting. Waiting for tomorrow. Will I be ready?

Kris switched on the lamp and looked over the pulpit. He raised his eyes to the church before him and began to speak.

(1) Report about the session meeting. (Check Joe's minutes) Powell's proposals. Describe the architect's plans, the session meeting, and the vote, saying that you abstained and promised to tell why in this sermon. Do not mention any of the elders by name since the session should stand more or less as a single body to represent the congregation. Say that you are not questioning the sincerity of any elder and that they all want what is best for the church. Say that despite your objection to to the plans as they stand, you feel that the proposal could be turned into good results. For all things work for the best over time. Promise to discuss each reason in favor of the project and to follow this with our objections, one by one.

This morning I have something very timely and important to discuss with you. Perhaps some of you already know that there is talk about a new church building for our congregation. That was the topic at Wednesday night's special session meeting. Elder Powell Benson introduced architectural drawings which had been made been made by his son-in-law, Dave Cantor, of the Architectural firm of Williams and Scott. I hope some of you will have the opportunity to see these drawings in the near future, for they are quite remarkable - and controversial, I may add. We discussed them at some length during the meeting, and then we voted on whether or not to procure an estimate. on the design. The vote was tied - three to three. Mine was the tie-breaking vote and I abstained, saying that I would deliver my reasons and a vote in today's sermon. I have given it careful thought and prayer and searched the Bible for an answer. And I have found it. (pause). I am opposed to such a plan. But before going into the reasons, there are several things I want you all to bear in mind. First of all, my opposition bears nothing personal at all . . . Yet . . . How do I know? How can I ever be totally impersonal? Powell with his fat defense contracts. How do I know? And Joe. Jealousy maybe . . . No, that can't be. In other things, maybe, but not in this. Oh God, what am I doing? How do I know? (Kris bowed his head and waited for an answer. The congregation had disappeared from view by now, and he was left alone with his God.)

The pulpit lamp threw light on the chancel behind him and lost itself among organ pipes and the paneled ceiling. The line of its shade struck across his chest, leaving all but the gleam of his eyes in darkness. Half of his necktie yielded patterns of gold and green, but part remained hidden

Darkness settled around his bowed figure and no answer came. He became aware of the droning of silence and the weight of his head against his arm. Light peeked between his sleeves and awakened him from nothingness. He raised his head. Anxiety had faded and dissipated itself through the vast emptiness of the church. Looking around, he was greeted by each pew in turn. For a second they seemed full of people brightly dressed, and the next they would be empty and and dark again. Their changing aspects seemed to laugh and mock his make - believe sermon. Little feet seemed to scurry up and down the aisles and strange eyes peered at him from the corners.

The ticket agent surveyed an empty waiting room. No passenger train for another hour. But the freight from Pittsburgh is overdue. Ah, there. It's whistling down the line. The call of a distant train rose and mourned in the night. Its echo lingered around the church and faded away.

(2) To replace the old church because it is out of date or too small or in need of repair. Reply! While it is true that the church cannot hold its entire membership, such a statement carries little weight. The nave is never filled to its capacity except Easter Sunday when everyone is home for the holidays. Besides, our membership includes a lot of dead wood and people who've moved away. If it were necessary to seat more people, one should first consider enlarging the present space

But of course! Of course, I can't have certain knowledge! What's wrong with me tonight? Tempting God with such faithless questions. Our God is a God of faith. A God of faith and a God of mystery. But what was my question? Funny, I completely forget what it was . . . Yes, being too personal. Much too personal. Yes. And what was it I decided? A God of faith. Darn it! That doesn't apply. What the heck is going on anyway? This nonsense makes my head ache. Go on with the outline instead. What? From the west. A train I guess. Comin' for to carry me away. Carry me home. Home, it is. Home where the heart is. And your treasure. In heaven many mansions. In Marian's room a curtain of green and a bed roses. So tempting and warm. But no! Must get ready for tomorrow! How did Joe put it? Run out of funds with only a f oundation laid. And by that time the old church destroyed. Over my dead body they'll tear it down. Writing a history of the church. When you finish, I want to read it. A history of birth and death. Of creation and destruction. But the building itself ? An idol of wood and stone. So you want a

instead of tearing down the old in order to build another in its place. As for being out of date, I don't see how this should be of concern to the church of God which has stood for so many centuries. And as for physical repair, no mention has been made of it and, so far as I know, the church is in good shape. The destroying angel will level your stones, scatter them abroad. Grind them to dust. A and give them to the wind. Ah, the wind of God. The word of God wind is all that remains. Only my love shall endure. All else is doomed. was Go on! Go ahead! Go to and build yourself a tower! Put it up starting high in the air! The higher they come the further they fall! Oh to grow outyes, that's what they really need to hear. Powell and Joe and side. Clouds every last one of them. And someday I'll give them such a of rain rode on sermon. Someday. But not tomorrow. Tomorrow is the the wind. Trees time to be business-like. Cool and collected. That's the quivered around word. Extemporize on the topic. Kris Goodmann, minister, the church and reverend, gentle pastor, guide for his sheep. Reminding them, the windows urging them. But never harsh. Oh Jesus! What rubbish! Come rattled and with a sword to separate our sheep. You there! You may live but then quit. you must be damned. You and you and you are to die in the fires of hell! Hear ye, all ye hypocrites. The God of love is a God of vengeance. The God of life is a God of death! You there in the pews! Front row center. Prepare to meet your maker! Darn it! I'll never be ready if I don't get back to work on this sermon. Ah yes, progress. Here's my chance. Now I can really go ahead and speak my mind to them. Progress! Progress! Is it progress to kill a million innocent people with a single bomb? Is it progress to bring moving pictures of violence into every home in the nation? Murder in color.

new church, do you? Tear down the the old one. Build you another more solid and lasting. And you think you you can make it to last forever. To keep God there in a little box as if He were a good luck charm. Oh no! Oh no! God dwells in the open air. No house can hold him down. The wind and the rain and the angel of destruction will visit your house.

(3) To build an architectural showpiece, a monument to technical progress and Christianity in AmeRica. Keep up with the Joneses or one step ahead. This is the chance of a lifetime if we can get support from a foundation. Really? Is it really the business of the church of God to concern itself with

Murder in black and white. Take your choice! Build better printing presses. Ah, that's a good one. Now it will be cheaper to publish newsstand pornography. When our chemists really get going, then we'll have more effective poison gas. Of course. And then we'll be safe from atomic attack. No doubt. But what about the good things, you say. Drugs to combat disease. home appliances, labor-saving devices. Yes, I reply. Work only four days a week, get fat, healthy and lazy. Oh, there is no sin so subtle as complacency. Do you think that your television sets will pray for you? But somebody'd better! What we need is not health and ease but a spiritual anguish. A craving for God. A thirst. A hunger. Blessed are they that hunger after righteousness. The Sermon on the Mount? Did you think it was all gentle and complacent? Did you forget how Luke records it? Woe unto you that are rich! Woe unto you that are full! For ye shall hunger. Progress comes in the heart of man. It comes in his soul. Not in his pocketbook. Not in his factories. There can never be true progess unless it be the progress of the spirit. And there is no other temple of God but in the hearts of man. Oh, little flock! I do not mean to be so harsh. But there is no other way. Love must be taught with a tongue like a The church sword. The word of the Lord burns like fire. (Kris spread seemed to fill his arms to heaven and drew down the love of God to with people. He comfort his sheep. His eyes were misty with com- looked for a clock. passion. Marian and Powell and Joe and Iris and Had the organ begun? Jamie and all of them, all.) Or was there not a All were waiting for him.

technological achievements, let alone America's so-called "technological progress." As far as the the relationship between God and man is concerned, there's no such thing as progress. Adam was as close or closer to God than any man alive today. Besides, the technical achievements of America are illusory and blind us to their real dangers. They lead us toward self-contentment and self-destruction, rather than towards the spiritual yearning which man so needs today.

Raindrops sprinkled across the darkening hills. The night freight had left a sunset behind and now tunneled ahead toward the storm clouds. Couplings creaked under The surge of a powerful engine pulling higher into the hills. The screeching of wheels and jangling of cars rushed into the empty box car and startled the bum awake.

a black sheep among them, lurking secretly in a corner of their minds. Hiding a nest of evil. What is it that makes you want to gain fame for our church? Search your hearts. Search them carefully. Do you know your reasons? No selfish motives hidden beneath the surface? Are your minds minds free from deceit? Is this for the glory of God? Or is it for yourselves? Search your hearts! Is it not for your businessmen, and your pride and your pocketbooks? Like the Chamber of Commerce drumming up trade. To fatten your purse and your pride to boot. To kill two birds with one stone, and then call it Christianity. But the church of God needs no such fame. No hordes of sight-seers. No need for admission fees in the collection plate. Instead, the church of God needs love and concern for others. Not towers of stones heaped one upon another like Babylon, the city of stone. Babylon the great. Mother of harlots. "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." So the Lord came down from heaven to look at their city. He could see right through their wickedness. So He scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth. Building a city and

(4) To bring fame to this church and the sponsors of the project and the the own itself. To make a name for themselves. Reply that the thirst for fame is another subtle sin. It is so easy to think we are seeking fame for God while in actuality, we seek fame for ourselves. God needs no fame. And besides, our own fame among other men lasts only so long as the men themselves. The quest for fame is an illusory quest. One lives forever only in God's eyes and God favors the meek and lowly, not the high and mighty. Compare the purposes of the builders of the tower of Babel. Quote Genesis 11:4 and remind them of God's retaliation.

The Pittsburgh freight rolled along a valley floor carrying the bum sitting against the door of his box car. A long curve swung towards the rain-streaked lights of a town and slanted his speeding platform into the path of the falling rain. Cold rain lost itself in the thickness of his hair and trickled down the back of his neck. Clean rain, washing away all but the silvery rails leading him onward - knives of steel cutting away name and past and all but the sweet freedom of the race. Racing away from the nameless past and into a future of darkness unknown.

a name. But a name for man and a city for man. It would be sad indeed if we were to blind ourselves and to build ourselves such an earthly city in the hope that God would bless our endeavor. For the city of God and the name of God will never be mortal and earthly, but everlasting and heavenly. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world. His name cannot be praised by stones, but only by the hearts of men. His name must be written on our hearts and graven on our minds. Borne upon our shoulders. . . Name shall be wonderful. . .

Born with a name

Mark of my destiny

Dissected
and
known.

myself alone

(5) A new church would make the congregation more aware of worshiping God. They would be reminded that the purpose of their lives is to praise Him. Reply: The true church of God has never required a building for worship. The Hebrews required only

Sounds of the rain
rushed in from the night

and floated away.

Shadows moved across

vacant pews

and dissolved.

Things were tilting

unsteadily.

slanting across my forehead.

graven at birth on the book of life.
Known by naming and all foretold.

Oh God!
Someday
to be
my true
self.

that I hadn't the burden
of Kris to bear

my mother's name

And not my own . . .

a few stones and the top of a hill. The people whom Moses led out of Egypt and through the wilderness worshiped God in a tent. (Quote II Samuel 7:5-6) The prophets had to stand outside the doors of the church and preach at the people coming out (Quote Jeremiah 7:1-4). Overturning the tables of the money-changers Jesus predicted the coming destruction of the temple. For Jesus came to build the temple of God in the hearts of men and not in buildings of stone and glass. (Quote I Corinthians 3:16) The early church was forced to meet in the catacombs under Rome. Even today Christians in some countries must worship God in cellars and other secret places. If Jesus were to return to us today, he would probably preach from the hillsides and the street corners. I might even oppose the hypocrisy of the established church as he once did in Jerusalem (Quote Luke 19:45-46).

Clouds hovered over the church and the wings of the Spirit fluttered above. Sparks and smoke from the door to the organ to the the pulput to the pews to the walls to the windows were surrounding Kris with the Spirit of the Lord. He trembled in its powerful grasp.

What time is it?
Must be late.

Time for bed
and going
home.

But I must
finish the
sermon
first.

So tired.

Maybe Marian's
in bed.

I've been
waiting
for you
all morning

in my
mother's
room.

I must stand
in the place
of my father!

The house
of the
Lord

In the station the agent yawned, listening to the mail truck. The sounds of the Pittsburgh freight had died away in the East.Wind swept the empty platform, and there was no one sitting in the waiting room. But down the line a bum had dropped from the train. Too long in one place so he had left his box car and set out walking in the darkness. A new Lincoln passed him on on the street and turned into a long driveway. A nice section of town. Its driver turned off the lights in his garage and went inside. All was quiet again. The street lamps followed him along the sidewalk, at first behind him, then overtaking and moving ahead into a long and blurred shadow. The stars battled with clouds overhead and raindrops began to scatter over the the pavement below. He would need shelter by the top of the hill. A home for the night and then move on

How long before morning?

How can I be ready?

How can I speak when
I can't even read it?

And nothing
to read
but an
outline

It's always
been wrtitten out

What if?

What if I've
never spoken
to them
at all

Just read
from a
book

Couldn't
understand

Have
I
failed?

Oh God, speak to me!

(6) To create a work of art and beauty as a gift to God. Reply: It is a good thing to praise God in art, but in this case, I personally question the work itself. It is controversial, to say the the least. Can the magnification of a man's hand by one hundred times be considered a work of art? Or is it not some sort of grotesque image? It reminds me of the images worshiped as idols. The Holy Bible warns us over and over to beware of this. Somewhere there's a Bible verse for this. I'll think of it later. Something about trying to make an image of God.

And never
done it
before

I've always
been ready
but now . .

Oh God!

that they've
never
understood

and they
couldn't
hear

Oh God,
help me!

What am I to do?

Oh God!
help me,
I pray!

No answer came
from the dark
musty depths
of the room
and silence
began to
weigh
upon
him.

Eyes peeked from
the unlit lamps
suspended from
the ceiling.
Little demons
cavorted and
laughed in-
side, with
hideous
intent.

Oh God,

Where are You?

If you are testing me,

please give me a sign!

(SILENCE)

Oh God!

Create a shout inside my soul!

Foot
steps
outside
lingered
in misty
air, nearer,
nearer . . . .

Run my ears into the ground!
Twist a stake clear through!

and through . . .

Let the rushing torrents of

Thy voice pour through . . . .

that I may hear

that I may understand . . .

(5) The church is lethargic and needs a challenge. The fund-raising and work on the new building would supply such a challenge.
Reply: This statement is the most valuable to come out of the discussion so far. When one recognizes his own lethargy, then half of the battle is won. For it is true. This church and all American Christianity, for that matter, needs a challenge. But the challenge is not so simple and easy as that of building a new church building. No, the challenge of God is a spiritual challenge instead of a material one. It is the call to seek first the kingdom of heaven and let all else fall into place behind. This is what Christ means when he tells us that we must take up our cross and follow him. I have to speak about this quite specifically in order to respond to the very concrete proposal for a new church building. It is my duty to transmit to you the true God-given challenge. In order to do this, I promise to study the Bible and to deliver a sermon on this to you next Sunday.

Footsteps sounded

in the night

Oh God,

What do
have
for
me
to
do
?

How can I answer the challenge?

How can I possibly?

Am I wrong?

Do You
want
such
a church?

How can I know
if I am right
or wrong?

How can I know?

How can I know?

Answer me!

Please answer me,
Oh God!

OH GOD OGOD O GODO GOD!
What?
Who's there?
what is wrong?
i cannot tell
Who's there o what?
in the darkness
I can't see!

(the chancel darkness wavered and congealed
around the objects of
the room usually
familiar but now
inhabited by
strange
voices.)

Oh my God!
my God!
What is What if I have gone mad?
wrong?

(Things lost their shape and started to
turn upon themselves. Nothing was real
except the words, words, words . . .
words,
words,
ringing in
the darkness words,
standing by
hands themselves
shaking,
grasping at heart racing,
violent pews,

racing, racing, racing to the door and flinging it open

to cold air and wind

and light of the street..

there . . .

in the light

of the street lamp . .. .

CLEARLY

VISIBLE

OH GOD

NO

THE FACE

OF

DEATH

Time

stood still,

and a second became years.

a second of horrible disclosure when

the trees leaned together and framed an image
beneath the streetlight. The image of Kris. the
face of Kris on another man. On the wasting

body of a dying man. Staring.

Staring and pointing at

Kris with hideous

intent.

He fled

into the darkened church

and down the aisle,

past the pulpit,

through the door
and into

the night. His body floated,
suspended in time.

across the yard

and into the house.

He shook in the darkness,

shook on the bed,

and wakened her quiet shape.

Only under the spell of her embrace,

and her fingers soft in his hair,
stroking, stroking, stroking
was he gradually returned to life again.

He fell asleep like a little child in her arms.

Oh, the moon upon the shadowed lake
and time parceled among the dancing waves.
Time returned slowly,
like a lost child
returning
home
again.

Goings and comings
silently weaving
and making with wandering a world
of other times
of once upons
then and strangest knowledge
peace . . . .
time flows on so slowly . . . .
on
and
now on
and
then a face
or two
in the evening
silhouettes
of and
twilight gradually
a shape forming
slowly from the void,
filling the calm and sleeping
soul. The room of sorrows and the
room of remembrance. The womb of sleep
and slowly becoming dreams and going to sleeps
of warm and husky, swarm and dusky-flighted evenings.
Shadowy forests full of knee-deep, mist-decaying
leaves and blue-green Chinese footbridges.
Old houses tumbled into tunneled
eloquence where one might
find, O could I only
be . . and go . . forgetfulness.
through of
unknown cloak
The passages in the
heavy- to . . . dreams
throated, where? early
warm- the
entrancing all
drug of sleep enclosed

until
the sun
strikes sharply,
rattles the
window
panes.
He stirs
and sleeps again . . .

The
dream
is coming
coming on the wings
of green forests,
riding red mountains.
A place in the West . . . a New City
under siege . . . imminent danger . . . waiting

. . . . . .

Suddenly the room
where mother and father and I and brother
were used to be, but now . . .

Goodbye, don't cry . . .

wave after wave of stifled screams,
rising and whirling in dambroken flood
higher and higher and HIGHER

and out of it all a stifled cry:

IVAN! IVAN!

then fading to consciousness
in the early morning
of another room.

Chapter Seven

From that time Jesus began to preach

– Matthew 4:17

He kicked against the slick-shiny, green enameled legs of the little chair, making dull scratchmarks. He examined the random patterns and tried to give them order. Some were larger than others. Some were straighter and more narrow, neater than other, fatter ones. He tried to make a best one and kicked carefully, but it wasn't any better than the others. Sunlight, streaming through the windows, reflected in a long, bright patch on the slick, linoleum floor. There were scuff marks there as well. Perhaps it would be cooler on the floor. He was tempted to climb down. He thought about it a bit, but didn't move. His fingernails wandered over the skin of his left arm itching the warm skin. He scratched his elbow and looked down to see if it was all right. The air was stifling and overheated in the nursery school room. He wished his mother would come back and take him outside. As if in answer, a cool breeze suddenly lifted the curtains and brought him the smell of clover in the mid-morning sun. It would be green and soft and cool in the clover outside. If only his mother would come. He looked toward the door. Two little girls were playing house in the corner, but the doorway was empty. The corridor was silent. Voices from the corner brought his attention back to the room. A little boy was trying to join the girls playing house, but they wouldn't let him. He began to insist with a loud voice ready for tears. Jamie turned the other way indignantly. At least he never tried to butt in where he wasn't wanted. A patch of blue light began moving across the floor. The reflection, a pure, formless, bright blue color seemed even prettier than the dress it came from. He wondered why. Shouldn't the real thing be prettier? The reflection was larger, perhaps that was it, and it had no definite boundaries like the dress. Instead, it merged gradually into the colors of linoleum and window reflections. Besides, the little girl in the dress was too small. He looked around for Bevvy as a comparison, but she wasn't in the room. And the little girl's face wasn't as pretty as Bevvy's. She never seemed to smile.

Blocks tumbled to the floor next to him. Billy looked around to see if anyone had seen his block fortress falling down. He noticed Jamie and looked helplessly back at the blocks. Jamie felt sorry for him. He knelt to the floor to help him build another. Side by side, the two of them began to build another foundation. Jamie would stop to examine each block before using it. Was this one right for the job? He felt its squareness and examined the letters on the side. They should not be used upside down. Billy chose indiscriminantly but he was methodical about placing them once he had chosen which to use. Jamie could build quickly. The foundation was easy, but the walls were harder. Jamie tried to make the blocks slope towards the center in order to close off the roof. One teetered. He reached. The house caved in. Jamie dropped a block from his other hand in frustration and stared at the fallen bricks angrily. Block houses are just no good, he thought to himself. They don't have any inside, and if you try to make them with one, they cave in. He turned from the blocks and left Billy to work on with them alone. It was clear that Billy had yet learned about blockhouses. Jamie watched the colored reflections on the floor for a moment and then looked around for something else to do. He had almost forgotten the drawing he had made a while before. Suddenly he realized that the little boy at the table was scribbling on it. In a second he had reached the boy and was pulling him away from the table.

"That's mine! Leave it alone!"

The little boy was silent. He offered no excuse but just looked from Jamie to the picture and back again.

Jamie glared at him for a moment to let his condemnation sink it and then sat down in the chair facing the drawing and with his back to the intruder. He picked up the crayon as if to draw. The other boy hadn't moved from behind him. Jamie turned around. Now he began to move away slowly and Jamie turned back to the drawing of his house. Now that he was in a position to draw, he no longer felt like it. Besides, the picture was finished. He examined the house, the tree and the sun. That boy had scribbled on one corner of the house. If only he could erase it, but

but there was no eraser on the table.

The soft rustle of a dress enveloped him from the side as Beverly Matthews bent over the coloring book of the little girl next to him. Her cool, smooth, pleated skirt and her warm legs were so inviting! Jamie wished she were his mother so he could touch.

"Bevvy, do you have an eraser?"

She looked over at Jamie. "What's wrong?"

"Somebody's scribbled all over my drawing."

"Why, that's not bad. I wouldn't have noticed if you hadn't showed me."

Jamie did not agree.

"That's a nice tree, Jamie." Beverly pointed to it on the right side of the picture.

Jamie was defiant. "That's not a tree," he boasted. "That's me."

"Who's that above the house?" Beverly pointed to the sun.

He considered the question seriously and then answered, "That's me, too."

Beverly saw that he was still unhappy about the scribbles. "That's a good picture, Jamie. Why don't you sign your name at the bottom like a regular artist?"

Jamie looked at the lower right corner of his picture. Beverly waited for his reply, but instead he bowed his head.

"You haven't learned to write yet, have you? Can I sign the picture for you?"

Jamie nodded and wiped a tear out of his eye. He watched her write "Jamie" across the bottom of his drawing. Neatly formed letters appeared as if by magic from her pen. When she had finished, Jamie looked up with a smile.

"Thank you, Bevvy."

"You're quite welcome, Jamie. She went back to helping the little girl seated next to him.

Jamie had grown tired of his picture. He reached across the table, pulling the Bible picture book towards himself. Here were pictures in bright color with all sorts of details one could never tire of looking for. Jamie was transported into another land teeming with earthenware water pots, brightly-clad camels and men wearing beards and long white robes. In one picture, his favorite, the men wore colored robes instead and the camels had great scarlet and purple canopies for their riders. Each man carried something in his hand, a box, a bottle, and another box. They were kneeling before a beautiful woman, perhaps the most beautiful woman in the world besides his mother, Jamie thought. How he would have liked to be there for a while to wander in and out of the picture. To feel those colored robes and smell what camels smell like. And, oh, to have a ride in one of those camels way up high with a scarlet and purple canopy! Perhaps he could in a circus sometime when he got bigger. The beards on the camel men were not as long as those in the next picture. Jamie thought of himself as the little boy in the middle of the picture and looked around at all the old men with long white beards. But they were all sitting inside, and Jamie wished he were outside like the men with the camels. He looked up from his picture book and watched the people on the sidewalk outside through the open windows. His mother would be coming soon. It was almost time for church.

"Beverly." Jamie looked up again to see Lois in the doorway calling his teacher. Lois had the class next door.

"Do you know what Bart just told me?"

"What?"

"Ssh. I don't want the children to hear." Lois pulled Beverly into the hallway and shut the door behind them. Jamie decided he wanted to hear so he went over and stood near the door.

"....and found a tramp that came in last night and died in the back pew. Can you imagine?"

"Oh, my gosh!"

"He said it was a disgusting sight. The bun had TB or something. He messed up the floor and everything, you know."

"I wonder who's pew it was."

"Don't ask me. I'm just glad we don't sit in the back row. Well, you don't either, Beverly, so don't worry."

"What did they do with him?"

"Bart helped Joe take him down to the morgue. I don't suppose anybody will claim him so they'll have to give him a pauper's burial."

"That's awful. Right here in the church. And this morning!"

"Bart says he was just a young fellow. Like in his twenties. But really a tramp."

"I didn't think we ever got tramps around here."

"We don't usually. Funny thing he should have come here."

"Was he dead. . . " Beverly was interrupted by a cry from her room. She opened the door and discovered that Jamie had repulsed his scribbling friend from the table with a shove that skidded him onto the floor."

"Boys! Boys! What's going on here?"

Jamie spoke quickly and angrily. "He won't leave my picture alone."

"Now that's no reason to push him down."

"He scribbled all over it before."

"Well, did he this time?"

Jamie was silent. The other little boy gathered his nerve and spoke for the first time that morning. "I was just looking at it."

Beverly interceded. "There you see, Jamie, he was just admiring your picture."

Jamie looked at the tearful face of the boy he had pushed and reconsidered his hastiness. Beverly continued, "Why don't you show him how to draw, too?"

The other little boy nodded slightly. Jamie sat down and turned to him. "Here," Jamie handed him the crayon and the boy came to sit with him.

Jamie handed him a piece of paper. "What's your name?"

"Lenny."

The two boys went back to work. Beverly surveyed the room, quiet once again and went back to Lois Asherman in the hallway.

"I'll bet the preacher's son is the worst of the lot, isn't he, Bev?"

"Oh, he's not so bad, just a bit impulsive like his father, I guess."

"Kris isn't his father, you know."

"Isn't he?"

"Oh no. Of course not. They weren't married until just before coming here."

"Oh, so she's been married before?"

The hallway was already crowded with parents coming to get their children. Lois motioned for Beverly to be quiet as Marian was just coming in the front door. Lois greeted her. "What a lovely dress, Marian."

"Yes, it's very becoming to you," Beverly added. Indeed, Marian's new brown cotton dress was a perfect match for her soft brown hair and brown eyes. She wore turquoise pin, a present from Kris before they were married. She stood in the warm sunlight of the doorway, like a beautiful statue, swaying slightly.

"Why, thank you! How's my little Jamie this morning?"

"He's busy teaching Lenny Williams how to draw."

"Well, I'm afraid I'll have to interrupt the lesson and take him to church."

Lois looked at her watch. "Yes, it's time to go. I'll see you later." She went back to her own room to straighten things up after the departing children.

"Mommy, look what I drew this morning." Jamie came running to his mother with the picture. Marian bent down with a smile for her little boy and took the picture from him reverently.

"Are you ready to go, sweetheart?"

"OK, Mommy. Can I take this with me?"

Marian and Jamie went down the hall together toward the church, Jamie clutching his picture in one hand and his mother's hand in the other.

"Mommy, where's Daddy?" Jamie didn't look up as he spoke to his mother.

"At the house, Jamie. He just woke up."

"Did he sleep late?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because he was tired, my love."

"Oh." Jamie was silent, his questions apparently answered.

In front of Kris's study, Joe Judson was looking through the glass at an empty office. "Marian, where's Kris this morning?"

"He'll be along shortly, Joe. He overslept this morning."

"I guess I'll have to catch him after church, then. I haven't any time before the service now." Joe turned and preceded them briskly down the hall. His choir robe floated out behind and almost hid the children he passed.

"Mommy."

"Yes, Jamie."

"Where's Daddy?"

"I told you He just got up."

"Mommy."

"Yes."

"Where would we go if Daddy went away?"

"Hush, Jamie. You ask too many questions."

The two of them passed through the door of the church annex and into the summer sun. Light glared from the white pavement and lost itself in the green of trees beyond. They crossed the sidewalk and entered the church. It was so dark inside that Jamie couldn't see anything. He felt as if he had gone from night into day and now back again to night. Death must be dark like this, he thought to himself.

Jamie held back as they entered the church and Marian had to pull him through the small lobby and into the nave. Andy Phillips, one of the day's ushers, met and preceded them along the aisle. At the end of their pew, he bowed slightly "Good morning." Marian nodded and smiled back as he handed her a program and returned to his station near the door. As she sat down with Jamie, the organ crescendoed to a high point of the prelude. "Cesar Franck," she thought to herself, and looked in the program. Yes, it was. Where had she heard it before? New York? Riverside? Or perhaps downtown. Near the office. Jamie pulled at her sleeve for the program so she handed it to him and looked up to await Kris's entrance. "I hope he shaved well," she thought to herself. "His beard is so dark...." As if in answer to her question, the door opened and Kris emerged preceding the choir to the chancel. He had shaved well, as she hoped, and looked very neat in his full black robe. She looked carefully for signs of sleep in his eyes but could not tell from so far away. She could vaguely recall his coming in late during the night. What time she did not know. He was mumbling in his sleep when she woke in the morning. Perhaps about the sermon. He hadn't finished it, nor had he showed her anything.

The organ ended its prelude and began the first verse of the hymn. Marian helped Jamie find the number and then stood up with the congregation to sing. The service had begun.

Kris had been so rushed to get ready for the sermon that now during the first hymn he found his first chance to breath. He had been so busy he had forgotten.... He had not written out the sermon. In fact, where was it? Desperately he looked at his hands. Empty. At the pulpit. Empty except for the huge old Bible. At home? Last night? He remembered confused dreams, a dark church, and suddenly that face outside. He started. Suddenly the hymn was over and people were sitting down. It was time for the call to worship and prayer. But he wasn't prepared.

Time seemed diabolical that morning. Sometimes it would fly and disappear with alarming speed. This occurred as if he were asleep approaching some dangerous point unaware. And then suddenly he would awaken and time would stand still. Each second would become a painful eternity. And his memory. It, too, was playing strange tricks. The first prayer seemed to take forever, but he could not remember what he had said. As he sat down during the offertory afterwards he realized that he might well have said nothing at all. He had only been mouthing words, going through an empty ritual. meaningless, stale. hypocritical. Unprepared. Lost. All he could think of was "lost, lost, lost." Soon it would be time for the sermon. What would he say? Perhaps he could think of another sermon. No, he must oppose the church. He had told Powell... He looked back at Powell. He was not watching. He looked at Marian. She was helping Jamie with something. He must do it himself. All alone now. He should review the sermon in his head. There wasn't much time now. Not much time. Must remember it now. Now. Now. His mind was blank. Now when he needed it most. A dull pain began to beat at his temples. He tried to remember the outline. Sheets of paper. But they kept disappearing behind strangely irrelevant details. His foot was asleep and prickled uncomfortably. He shifted. it to the other side. His mother. She was coming. When? He tried to remember, but couldn't. Instead he found himself in fantasy. He had gotten sick and fallen from the pulpit. The congregation was in an uproar. Someone had called for an ambulance. They were bringing a stretcher. Marian was bending over him. "Kris, Kris, what is wrong?" Suddenly he was aware that the offertory had ended. The men were waiting for him to cue the procession. How long had they been waiting? Had they noticed that something was wrong? When they came forward he tried to read their faces, but they acted as if nothing had happened.

Marian began to notice how nervous he was. How long he had waited to

cue the offertory. And now during the prayer, in his voice a hitch, a certain nervousness. She tried to catch his eyes to calm him down, but he seemed to be avoiding her. Anger touched her thoughts for a moment, and then she remembered another such time. The first sermon she had ever heard him give. Over a year ago. Columbia. Chapel. Noonday service. Hardly anyone there. Kris high up in that old, carved pulpit. Me back in the shadows. Forgotten his sermon now. But never forget the picture of him up there. And nervousness like now. He would have backed out before. I had to tell him to go ahead. How I loved him then, needing me so much. And now. And now here with a congregation of his own. Nervous again waiting for the sermon. To oppose a new church. I wonder why. Must have reasons. Well, in a minute.

Kris had chosen the story of Babel for the scripture lesson. It sounded strange to him now as he read it. Like an old irrelevant legend. Perhaps he was making a fool of himself. “Therefore is the name of it called Babel; His voice quivered a little bit. "because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth..." He had almost finished. What if?

He finished the reading and sat down. Doubts flitted like confusing clouds through his mind. Perhaps he was wrong. Perhaps his sermon would be terrible. Perhaps he wouldn't be able to give it at all. What was he going to say? That they shouldn't build a new church. Why? Because they had more important challenges. Like what? Like... Oh, God, what am I going to say? The church grew dark to him. It seemed like night again. The church was empty. And then full of people again mocking, laughing with distorted faces. Making a fool. Oh God. Oh God! Be with me now! He felt as if ready to faint. His legs were weak. In a minute it would be time for the prayer. What would he say? Hypocrite! Fool! Voices mocked him from within his own mind turned traitor. Perhaps there was no God and he was merely crying in the dark. A preacher without faith. He scorned himself. He mocked himself.

Desperately he began to pray. "Oh God, the devil is moving within me. Scourge me. Deliver me. If thou wilt only save me now, I promise Thee anything. Everything. All that I have. Every thought. Every prayer. Every love. No longer relying on others, only on Thee, my God. Oh God, hear me!

His body poised, quiet a moment, listening, listening. What if there should be no reply? What if God failed to answer? Perhaps he must listen harder. He strained to hear the slightest sound. He strained forward.

Suddenly, catching him by surprise from behind, there sounded a whisper, clear and soft as a little bell. "Be still. I am with thee." His tense body released like the string of a bow. God had spoken. "Be still. Be still, I am with thee" rang and echoed throughout his mind, so loud and confused before, so loud he couldn't listen to God but now clear and soft as a little bell. He had been so worried, so concerned about himself he had failed to listen. Failed to yield his own little problems to the greater plans of God. But now God had spoken. "I am with thee. Forever and ever. God, himself, would now speak through his voice. "Not my will but thine be done" Kris answered silently. “Thank you, my Lord. Now I am Thine forever." Peals of the organ had broken loose from the singers behind him and began to climb a great swelling scale. Higher and higher, his soul flew on the music of the organ, an offering to God. A sacrifice. "My Lord, Now I am wholly Thine." Never again will I stray away. He became aware of his congregation listening to the anthem. Why had he ever worried? None of them out there had ever heard God speak, let alone did they know his will. Only he, Kris, alone, could speak God's word. A pure and simple instrument, the spokesman of God. He would yield all life of his own and let God speak. All his personal worries had fallen into place, minor concerns in the great all-encompassing plan of God. The sermon was now clear and simple. Why had he ever worried? The difficult sermon wouldn't come until next week instead. This one was only preparation, the promise of an answer to the challenge. The real challenge had only begun. He rose for the morning prayer.

"Oh Lord, we have been away from Thee too long. We had strayed away like lost sheep. Lost in the mountains of our own confusion. Lost. Lost. In the darkness of night, the darkness of sin. Voices confused. The night was cold. And there was no reason. No reason to speak or love. No reason to go on living. Our hearts starved for Thy love. Our eyes dry, we had no tears. Only despair and doubt and emptiness. Thou seemed so far away and long ago and we could not call. We had no strength, no faith.

"Alone we would have perished, but Thou, Oh beloved Father, Thou came after Thy lost sheep. Thou found us on the rocky ledge and stretched out Thy strong hand and held us securely once again. Now we have returned to Thee, Oh Lord. We had been away but now we are home again. Lost and now we are found. Hold us secure in Thine everlasting arms, so strong and warm with mercy and forgiveness. Never let us go from Thee again.

"Now, Oh Lord, the time has come for a deeper more meaningful life with thee. We promise that never again will we let the vain desires of this life distract and swerve us from the true faith. Superficial beauty, miserly possessions, earthy imperfect love, the praise and approval of lowly man, all these things we renounce. They are but tarnished substitutes for the calling of Christ, the calling to sacrifice and courage to do Thy Holy Will, the preaching of Thy Holy Word. I commit myself, Oh God, as a living sacrifice to thy flaming altar of truth. Lead us in paths of the saints and prophets who lived and died, Thy word on their tongue and Thy love secure in their hearts. Through Jesus Christ, who endured the taunts and hatred of an established hypocritical church and who was finally crucified by a shouting mob. Through Jesus Christ, who hath told us unless we become as a little child, we cannot taste of the riches of heaven. In His name we make this, our prayer and humble supplication. Amen."

Kris arose from prayer with a renewed spirit, a well of strength deeper than he had ever known. The spirit of God had entered him and taken full possession. He opened the Bible, conscious of standing taller and stronger than he had ever known.

It was as if he were speaking the beatitudes for the first time as he and his congregation began exchanging the responsive reading. The words were so real and vital! Living words! Commands! For him, Kris Goodmann. The will of God.

"Blessed be ye poor....blessed....when men shall hate you.....your reward is great....but woe unto you that are rich....woe unto you that are full....woe unto you that laugh...but....love your enemies...bless them that curse you...unto him that smiteth...offer also the other...love ye your enemies...condemn not...Give... can the blind lead the blind...thou hypocrite...an evil man bringeth forth that which is evil...whosoever cometh to me...built an house...laid a foundation on a rock... but he that heareth and doeth not...house upon the earth...fell and the ruin of that house was great."

The word of God had been spoken. The sermon could be only an anti-climax now. But his commitment had only begun. The challenge was yet to be given.

Kris paused after the responsive reading to take out a pencil and paper from under the pulpit. Quickly he remembered and sketched out the seven points of his sermon outline from the night befiore. (1) Session meeting (2) on replacing the old church (3) an architectural showpiece (4) quest for fame (5) aid to worship (6) work of art, and (7) need for challenge. Slowly and factually he laid them out for the congregation. He told the results of the session meeting and gave each reason in favor of a new building. Then he destroyed them one by one. The old church was adequate. Why tear it down? Architectural showpiece, the quest for fame, need of a beautiful place to worship, praising God through art, all these things he countered from the Bible. Moses and Jeremiah, Paul and Jesus attested that true worship comes from the heart and not the building. Finally he turned the need for challenge to his own advantage, calling for a renewed spiritual challenge instead of a material one. He committed himself to read and study the word of God and deliver the calling of Christ the next Sunday.

Kris remembered little of the service afterwards. The voice he had heard made everything too automatic, too effortless. There was no reasoning necessary; words came without preconception. They flowed freely as if living by themselves, as if he were only a passive instrument speaking a will beyond his control.

After the service he felt his face strangely composed, almost mask-like in its hardness and self-possession. He paid little attention to the talk of the people around him, despite the fact that he knew they must be speaking about his sermon. Only a few mentioned it as he greeted them, and then their comments were inane and valueless. He was not even afraid when Powell left Bart Anderson's car and came back to speak with him after the last of the congregation had gone.

"Well, I guess you've played your hand now."

"I guess so," Kris replied coolly, almost sarcastically.

"You know the consequences." Powell looked him the eye, squinting slightly into the sun.

"I do." Kris looked straight back at him. What more was there to say?

Powell turned to go without speaking. Then, he turned back for a final word. "I'm sorry."

That last remark sparked off a sudden sharp anger in Kris. It boiled up from the depths of his soul and flushed his face violently. He tried to think of a cutting reply. How could anyone dare feel sorry for him? Too late to reply, he could only watch Powell walking away. "Blessed are ye . . . " His mind was turning a phrase. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile . . . " He turned into the church and tried to pray. "Oh God, forgive my anger. Calm me. Help me to forgive." Gradually his anger subsided. He walked slowly through the nave, resting his hand on the back of one empty pew after another. Empty for another week. He made another effort and came up with the required words. "I forgive you, Powell." But now the break was open.

"If only a single person had understood," Kris pondered as he went back to his study. At the end of the hallway, he looked up. Joe was standing in front of the office. Joe, he would understand. "Well, Joe what did you think of it?"

"What's that, Kris?"

Kris had not expected such a vague reply. It annoyed him and put him back on the defensive. "Oh, nothing, nothing at all." Kris took out his key and unlocked the study door. He went in without asking Joe what he had wanted.

"Kris, I thought I would tell you that Reverend Rogers won't be able to come and preach for the centennial service."

Kris found this news almost gratifying. He said nothing in reply, but opened the desk and took out paper and pencil.

Joe went on. "I wonder whom I should ask now. Do you have any suggestions?"

Kris looked up for the first time, anger in his eyes. "I'm sorry, Joe, but I couldn't care less. You're as bad as those who want a new building For you it's the old one. What's the difference? Old one, new one, just as long as it's something you see, is that it?"

Joe backed out the door. "I beg your pardon." He paused. "Before I go . . ."

"What is it?" Kris spoke sharply.

"I thought I'd tell you about the bum that we found in the church this morning."

Kris was struck dumb. He tried to reply but could not.

"Bart and I took him to the morgue."

"The morgue?" Kris handled the words as if they were deadly.

"Well, I must go." Joe left him abruptly. Kris was leaning against the desk, his eyes unseeing, his heart pounding.

"Oh my God." He fell into the chair and threw his head down on the desk "Oh God." All was blank for a while. Only his breathing continued. And his heart

At first he felt uttterly alone, but then after a while he began to fantasy persons coming to the room and finding him here with his head in his hands. She would ask what was wrong and soothe his troubled soul. This fantasy continued for a long time before he gave it up as useless. Instead, he began trying to pray to God. It had all been so good during the service. Was everything to end so quickly?

A knock sounded on the door. Someone outside. Kris sat up and ran his fingers through his hair. He straightened the blank paper on the desk and picked up the pencil as if to write. "Come in."

Marian peeked around the door. "Aren't you ready for dinner?"

Kris was embarassed. What if she had seen his head on the desk? "Just a few minutes," he answered.

Marian came over to the desk and stood beside him. "What have you been doing?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all." He told the truth. The paper before him was blank.

Marian would have liked to sit on his lap, to make love with him on his leather chair among all his books of theology. Kris knew. Should he ask? Everything seemed in such turmoil, he didn't know what to say.

Neither said a word. Marian looked down at him. Kris looked at his hands. He looked at the pencil and the blank paper. He must get busy with the sermon - the challenge - get down the Bible and begin to read. There wasn't much time - no longer relying on others, but Thee alone, Oh God . . .

Kris looked up suddenly at his wife. "I'll be along in just a minute."

"OK. Any time you're ready." Then she was leaving, and Kris was suddenly afraid. She was leaving. And she hadn't even mentioned the sermon at all.

"Marian!"

She came back to the door.

"Marian!"

"Yes?"

He tried to find words to ask her. Insead all he could think of was Powell. "Powell came up after the service."

There were tears in her eyes. She knew what he must have said. Kris noticed and stopped speaking. He wanted to run to her, to throw his arms around her, to ..... Instead, he tried to speak. "I . . I . . I'm sorry, my love."

Suddenly, she had burst out sobbing. "Kris, Kris, what are you doing? What are you doing?"

A sorrow like pain burst in his chest. He closed his eyes helplessly. When he opened them again, Marian was gone. The door swung shut outside and her quick footsteps died away on the sidewalk. He gritted his teeth and clenched his fist in hopeless anger at himself, at everyone, at everything in the world. "Damn, Damn! Damn!" He struck the table with his fist each time until it hurt. Mad and weeping and helpless all at the same time. He got up, but it did no good. He sat down again heavily. He got up again and began pacing the floor. "Oh God. Oh God. Oh God, help me!" Back and forth he paced. Back and forth. Trying to forget. Back and forth. Calming. Forgetting.

Finally, he found himself facing the book shelf and his seminary Bible. He reached out, took it down, and opened it at random. Psalm 37. "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." A great peace began to settle upon his troubled spirit. Kris read on and on. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Fret not thyself . . . Cease from anger . . . and forsake wrath . . . the meek shall inherit the earth . . . " Afterwards he lay the book aside and began to pray. "Oh Lord, twice now today I have forsaken Thee and gone into despair and confusion. And twice Thou hast sought me out. And twice Thou hast claimed me again. Now I know that there will never be rest between us, but that I will always be going astray until death. Until then, Oh Lord, I pray that Thou will continually claim and redeem me. And now, Oh Lord, help me to get started on the sermon and the readings. Strengthen me. Give me faith and

direction. Help me, Oh god, I pray. That I may see the Way."

All was quiet afterwards. The spirit of the Lord descended upon his soul and gradually bathed him in peace.

Chapter Eight

And when he had opened the book

— Luke 4:17

Kris had originally planned to do most of his work during the morning, being afraid that if he waited until evening he would not get finished in time to deliver the sermon on Sunday. Monday morning, however, he was forced to make a call to the hospital and he could not get started until afternoon. By the time he had finished the work laid out for the first day, it was already after midnight. Hence it was that Kris saw little of his family that week. He would waken with the sun already high in the sky, his body sweaty with mid-morning heat and his eyes red with sleep. Then he would spend all afternoon and evening reading or trying to read in his study. He skipped lunch and only stayed home long enouth to eat supper an the evening and then he would go immediately back to the open Bible. He had postponed all of his social commitments and there were only two visitors to the study all week. On Tuesday a young man came by to enquire about beginning a Boy Scout Troop in the church. And on Thursday a young unmarried couple came to confess their sins and ask his advice on an abortion. Kris was much perplexed by their story. He was certainly against abortion, but he was not certain when he gave them the advice to get married. The young man's total income came from the bowling alley where he set pins. The girl had not been working at all. She did not seem very bright.

Constantly in the back of his mind he was troubled by the feeling that something was dying. Sometimes it took the form of Marian. She seemed like a ghost to him all week, as if she had already died. Or was it he who was dying? Or at least going away. At one point as he left after supper, Jamie followed him to the door and stood in his way: "Daddy are you going away? And where will you go? And will you come back?" There were tears in his eyes, and as he left, Kris found that tears were falling from his eyes as well.

At the pace of two hundred and fifty pages per day Kris did not even come to the New Testament until early Thursday. He then read and re-read the gospels several times, finding there the inspiration he needed for the sermon. After finishing Revelation on Friday he set to work on the sermon itself.

Oh Lord, let me begin again. Let me come to Thy words as if I had never seen them before. As if Thou were sitting with me across the room now and speaking the words for the very first time. Oh, let me forget all the times I have heard them before. When I sat on the old red sofa and listened to Mother, or sat in her lap and read them myself. The lessons in Sunday School. And thousands of church services since. With Old Testament lessons and New Testament lessons and responsive readings. All of the reading I did by myself. On the hill overlooking the Bay and the fishing boats. And that awful room on the quad where I read for two days in a row. Oh Lord, take them all away and let me come to thy words anew. Even

And the Lord God commanded the man saying Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him. And out of the ground the

Monday was hot and a hard day to read. Kris kept catching himself staring out the window, lost in other times, instead of reading. Old names were bothering him. Mrs. Selby, his third grade teacher. Loretta, her first name. Came out at recess once when the boys had a gang fight. Two gangs to run the playground, but Kris had not taken part. "Sissy Krissy," they had called to him. His ears had stung, and they called the more and the girls had laughed. He hadn't grown until so late. "Let's go, Kris, Baby. Hey! Hey! Chuck it in there." Those girls never saw him pitching. But that was years later on the Cape. Five and two he had gone that summer, best in the league. but the girls would never know. Nor see him over the bay throwing prac-

Kris was there when the waves first raged and darkness covered the face of the deep. He saw God part the mists with his magic lightning. And life began. Long molecules entwined and linked and duplicated their intricate patterns. Life filled the seas before his eyes with its mystery and overflowed to creep across the land. God made the earth a dominion for his image, man, and bone of his bone a companion, woman. Kris walked for a time in the Garden of Eden where angels guarded the Holy Gates and a flaming sword turned each way to protect the tree of life. But the devil was subtle and inserted sins. They grew in his heart as rape and murder. His brother had wandered while keeping the sheep while he had stayed at home to raise the corn. His brother had hiked and fished in the mountains while he was plowing the fields. And then God turned up his nose at the corn and preferred the smell of the sheep instead, so he took revenge.

tice rocks off the cliff and far. far out into the waves. And the flat rocks along the beach. Sailing them up and over sidearm. Or overhand for distance. The smooth, powerful swing, the whole body and every muscle into flight. But by then it was too late. "Sissy Krissy," the calls would still hurt somewhere deep inside. And his name would never be changed. But for some reason Marian had liked it. Twelve letters like her own before she was married. And afterwards same in our last names, eight. All even numbers. Counting them that day on the bus on Fifth Avenue. Across by Harlem. Where were we going? Four and six and eight. That means we are meant for each other. she'd say. Meant to be a preacher. Oh Mother, what if you were wrong?

Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle and to the fowl of the air and to every beast of the field:

-Genesis 2: 18-20

seminary, how do I know they were right? Oh Lord, speak to me directly. make thy words new and fresh and wonderful. Make me anew like Adam standing before Thee in the very first innocence of Eden. Give me Thy first commandments and let me begin the story of man, eating the apple of knowledge, finding the difference between good and evil. And the pain, nakedness and shame. And the guilt. The burning guilt that sees and cuts and burns me free from my evil, leaving me pure to Thy face, Oh God. And when I've known my own evil, give me the wisdom to see it in those around me, to see through their pretense, to search out their secrets, and to know their evil thoughts. For only then, Oh Lord, with Thy help, can I deliver Thy challenge. Amen

In those days there were giants in the earth. But there had never yet been a rainbow. It took a flood, a raven, a dove, and a leaf from the olive tree to find the beginnings of the rainbow. The rainbow brought color to the earth from heaven. Colors to be gathered and woven into gowns. For the fairest of women at the wells. Drawing of water no man had known. Sarah. Rebecca. Rachel. Yielding to men that were chosen of God. Abram to Abraham. Isaac. And Jacob to Israel. He knew them all. And the skies were close to him then. A ladder reached high into heaven and thrilled to the sound of angel songs. And the stars came down at night to speak in dreams. For Jacob had taken the rainbow and made it a coat for his favorite son. But his brothers were Cain and Esau and many as the colors of his jealous coat. He placed the blood of a lamb on the altar and skin of a goat on his hands for a blessing. But his brothers returned with only the coat. soaked in the

Oh Lord, how am I to tell Thy voice from others inside of me. Voices that come from the Evil One and whisper temptations, selfishness dressed up like religion. I have known Thee closer this past week than ever before in my life, and yet I still cannot always recognize Thee. Thou comest to me in such strange appearances, it seems I must expect Thee everywhere. Thou might speak to me out of something I least expect. Like the strange face at the funeral. How could I have known Thou wouldst speak to me from death? My fear was so strong that the devil himself might have been frightening me, and yet I know it was Thee. And in my dreams. Sometimes they are so selfish and sometimes, oh so subtly evil! And so undependable! And yet Thou came to me there as well. And

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the

Kris had always loved the dance and play of fire, the red flicker, the shape without shape. There had been large fireplaces in both their winter and summer homes when he had been small. And bonfires on the beaches when he was older. Sometimes even he and his mother alone when they had no company. He often wondered if she had loved his father. He could not remember his face at all, only the smell of tobacco smoke, the rich fragrance of his pipe. And his strong shoulders when he carried me up to bed. He probably never believed in God as Mother did. Jamie must find it so different with me being closer to God than to him or Marian. But someday he'll understand. He will learn when he leaves us, and then the old teachings will come back to him. Kris felt how the

blood of a lamb. He had followed with his people the God-sent Joseph down into Egypt and sojourned there until hard times came and slavery. And then followed the God-sent Moses into the wilderness across dry ground in the midst of the sea to the music of Miriam's timbrel. He had stood with the priests and watched his leader ascend the steep slope into the fearful clouds of God. And waited with his people to hear the laws. If an ox gore a man, thou shalt not suffer a witch, thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave offering upon the tip of Aaron's right ear. And he shall take to cleanse the house two birds, cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him. And let them make me a sanctuary, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, and I will be with thee and guide thee into the land of Canaan where he was no

old teachings lay deep at the roots of his life. He remembered the years of college when he had tried to discard them all. The hardest years of his life. Trying to destroy all he had ever believed in. The others got drunk or went to the whores to forget the real problems of life. But he would go off by himself and wrestle with them. And all the time he stayed away from God, he knew eventually he had to return. Strange how sometimes we know what we're going to do, even if we won't admit it to ourselves. Each time I passed by a church. Six months without going inside. Then that night at St. Joseph's and everything was sure again and there would never be such a time again. Return to the Bible and God and then to Seminary. A life of certainty ahead, of purpose and direction.

when Thou spoke to me in church, I almost turned around to see if the organist were speaking to me instead of Thee. I had so little faith, Oh Lord, I could hardly believe Thou wouldst answer my prayer. And in despair when I reached for the Bible and it fell open to just the Psalm that I needed, how could I have known? And yet, Oh Lord, I do know Thou was with me. Sometimes I can feel Thee so near that I can almost reach out and touch Thee. And sometimes I feel my own sinfulness and unworthiness so strongly that I know I must be in Thy presence. Oh Lord, please forgive me that I look for miracles and signs. Give me the faith so I will know Thou art with me always. And I thank Thee, Oh Lord, for singling me out among men to deliver Thy challenge. Amen.

bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither; Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, afraid to look upon God.

- Exodus 3:2-6

stranger. For he had dwelt among all of the tribes. He had herded sheep among the peace-loving Moabites and sold bright wares in the cities of Gilead. And he had fought with the Zarhites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Canaanites, the Gazathites, the Ashdothites, the Eschkalonites, and the Philistines. He had fought in battles with numbers unknown and names too many to be remembered. In cities like the watchfires of an enemy camp, flaring and dying in the night. Like the spears of the sons of Canaan, wild and pagan, the sons and idols of Canaan betrothed to enemy gods. And he had called as comrades to captains of Israel: Shammua, Shaphat, Caleb, Igal, Oshea called Joshua, Palti, Gaddiel, Gaddi the son of Sodi, Gaddi the son of Susi, Ammiel, Sethur, Nahbi, Geuel. Shoulder to shoulder, arm linked to arm and shield to shield they had marched through the land of Canaan.

Oh, Lord, I want to be yours completely and yet all I can do is talk and talk. If only I had the strength to act instead. For I am not able to trust mere words. Oh Lord, I have promised myself to Thee before and then gone back on my word. Like at the parkbench in Harlem. I am so weak. Oh Lord, forgive me and give me strength. Let me do something instead of talk. Let me make a commitment, start on a way that I can't turn back. Oh, give me a call I can't refuse. As Thou sent Moses to Midian to meet Thee on Thy Holy Mountain. So he couldn't turn back. Or how Thou sent Elijah into the wilderness and fed him by the ravens there. Or Amos, a lonely keeper of sheep whom Thou called from the mountains to become a prophet. Or John the Baptist in the wilderness.

And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thy self by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according

In college he had often gone to a pine grove by the river where nobody ever came. There was a flat rock like a table for him where he spread out his books and made ready to study. But he never got any work done there. Instead he ended up by watching the tanagers and warblers in the pines or just contemplating the complexities of life. For only there was he completely alone. Only there could he think by himself. At seminary he had missed such a place. He could have walked over to the Palisades, but that was not wild enough. One found broken bottles and beer cans all over the place. And now that he had gotten married, he had never gone back to to those places or found any new ones. His only place to be alone was the study where he sat

Their strength was the walled, the unshakeable, the God-given, Mosaic phalanx of the law. And when he had grown too old to fight, he sat in the elders' seat and spoke the weighted words of the Lord. He watched the warriors with an old man's approval: Joshua, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Saul, Jonathon, and David. Each was the subject of a thousand songs to be sung with the harp and timbrel. I will praise thee, Oh Lord, and sing praises upon the harp, for in the day of Thy wrath, in the hour of Thy vengeance, Thou hast stayed the sun and lifted up the hand of Thy servant Joshua to slay the kings of the Amorites. And by Gideon's men who lappeth the water Thou hast delivered the hosts of Midian unto Israel. How shall I tell of Thy might, Oh Lord, in the day of Jephthah? How thou gave him the hosts of Ammon. And the strength of thy servant Samson at Gaza. Truly Thou hast been good to Israel, for Thou hast given him the mightiest of kings. For Saul hath slain the Ammonites, and Jonathon, his son, with a single man, hath stormed the Phili-

now and daydreamed. But it seemed he had always needed a place outside where he could be completely alone with nature. Like the old abandoned orchard behind the house where he had gone every day after school. Where his hideouts were hidden among honeysuckle and bushes along the creek. Where the girls had followed him once but hadn't found him. And that place on the Cape he had found one summer. And spent day after day there all by himself. Far, far away from the nearest road or lake.

Protected from view by tall pines and granite boulders so no one could ever have found me there. Like the time I wanted to run away from home and find a place far back in the dunes. Far, far away where no one could ever find me. But I never went.

of Judea, feeding on locusts and wild honey. Or Jesus, whom Thy spirit drove into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan, tempted to turn the stones into bread. As for me, I just sit here in my comfortable office with my books and a leather chair. And the sun and the wind and the trees outside, they call to me. Speak to me, Lord. Tell me to go where Thou wouldst, and I will follow. Only let it be decisive for it is hard to be just waiting and waiting. But then. But then, forgive me if I am too impatient, Lord. And perhaps I am even being selfish. I keep asking Thee for a challenge for myself alone, but Thou wouldst have me speak to Thy people instead. Give a challenge to them instead of just to me. Speak to me from Thy Holy Bible. Give me the words of Thy challenge. Amen.

unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning. and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

- I Kings 17:2-6

stine garrison. But of the triumphs of David will I sing all the day long. Of his might will I sing till I go down to the grave. For Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands. When David returned from battle he sang in the streets with the women. Someday he would be born as the son of the king and his most beautiful of wives. While young admired as the prince, handsome among the girls, the crown prince Solomon. When he grew up he would build a house for his Father. Of stone and timber, of cedar and plank of fir and boarding of cedar and chains of gold and veils of blue and purple and crimson. And carved with cherubims and pomegranates and oxen and palms. And possess wisdom above all men. No riddle beyond his understanding. In all of the earth only three things too wonderful, yeah four, which he knew not, the way of an eagle, the way of a serpent, the way of a ship and the way of a man with a woman, though he knew the fairest of Moab and Ammon, of Edom and Zidon and the Hittites. Though the daughter

Oh Lord, it is so difficult when I am right and others are wrong. When I can see and they can't. Why hast Thou chosen me to deliver Thy warnings? When we both know that only a few will listen, and I will get angry and impatient. It was so hard Sunday. I was speaking straight to them about their church, but they couldn't listen. Nothing I could have said could have been plainer and more to the point, but they chose to ignore me and pay no attention. Even if only a few, if only a few had known. But Powell just closed his ears. Oh Lord, what a fool! And Joe, if only he'd understood but he was just too busy thinking about his own little schemes. And even Marian. Please give me patience, Oh Lord, or I shall go mad with these

But if the watchman see the sword come and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of

He found himself thinking of Judy Palmer. One of the cheerleaders in high school with a tempting figure. Asked her for a date once to a football game, but she went with Roy instead. Always flirting with everybody. I was sure that she'd be raped someday, and sure enough. Found out last time I was home. But she hadn't learned anything. There she was, back at it again, more flirtatious than ever. Some people never learn. So many times in his life he had seen such things coming. Like George in college. Knew he would wreck that sports car of his. And sure enough. Lucky he wasn't killed. Too late to tell him, "I told you so." Doesn't do any good. And it had been hard for him during school when others were wrong. Should he tell

of Pharaoh opened unto him a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed. But the wives of the kings brought idols. And Ahab's Jezebel, Baal. To speak the word of the Lord, he was forced to stand outside the temple or flee into the wilderness. Then promise the vengeance of God. Who shall entice Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? For the dogs shall lick his blood. To Jehoram a plague till his bowels fall out. And Ahaziah, thou shalt surely die. Tomorrow a measure of flour a shekel, but thou shalt not eat thereof. For three transgressions of Judah and Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have despised the law of the Lord. Therefore will I smite the winter house with the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish. For Israel is an empty vine, the faithful city become a harlot, Jerusalem ruined and Judah fallen. Behold the days come that all that is in thine house shall be carried into Babylon. But behold also the burden of Bablylon. Wild beasts of the desert

them and make them mad? Or be silent and feel the truth struggling inside of him to be made known. Struggling until it made him miserable. It was even worse if he himself were wrong. At least he was fair and demanded nothing of others that he didn't of himself. But the others would never listen to him. Not even in his dreams. Like after the movie that showed the photographs of Nagasaki. Beside the house praying. God tells me that a war is coming. Run through the streets shouting, but no one listens. Running faster, faster, striding, then almost floating, naked, trying to escape. The bomb is falling. Coming right at me. I can't move Trying to crawl. Grasping the ground to pull ahead. Hands slipping. Got to wake up!

things. Why hast Thou chosen me? It is so hard. And yet if I were to refuse, Thou wouldst have my life, their blood on my hands if I do not warn them. Teach me, Oh Lord, these are not my warnings but Thine. And that here is the place for my love! For Powell and Joe and Marian. For I do want to love them, Oh Lord. Is not my warning the warning of love? That I want them saved more than all else in the world. But Lord, Thou has given me the vision of war and horror like the world has never seen before. Everyone else ignores it. But I can see a war coming. Is it too late to warn them? Is there nothing I can do? Give me strength, They must be warned! They must be stopped before it is too late. Oh God, help us! Amen.

man unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me. When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou doest not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. - Ezekiel 33: 6-8

shall lie there. And Assyria and Moab and Syria. Ethiopia and Egypt and Arabia. Each shall be laid waste. Each shall be trodden down. Behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire. For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them. But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance. For the Lord is in his Holy Temple and He will save. He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in thy love. He will joy over thee with singing. He will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, gather them on every side and bring them into their own land. And the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former. Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. And all nations shall call you blessed. I shall

Oh Lord, look down and test me and see that I am no coward. For every time I oppose war, people look at me as if I were afraid. And yet, as Thou knowest it takes more strength and courage to be a pacifist. All of my friends went into the service, but they didn't know why. They just had to. Is that courage? Or is it not more courageous to oppose war and stick to my principles, to refuse to fight under any conditions? All my life it seems like I have wanted to be strong, to fight, to destroy. Thou must contain me, Oh Lord. Turn my strength to courage for the right and my victories into winning men's hearts to Thee. But I can see it now when I give my sermon. Marian's brother was in Korea. Joe fought in France.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and per-

One night in seminary, after studying late, he had turned on the radio and discovered a re-broadcast of the Nazi invasion of Poland. The sounds were terrifying; men pleading for help, parents screaming, bombs exploding. Kris was stunned. He felt hurt, paralyzed, as if he was actually there. Strange chills shook him and then he felt an immense, almost beautiful, sympathy for his people. Later, he remembered having seen a photo of his great grandfather standing stiffly in his uniform as an officer in the Polish Army. His mother had kept it somewhere and shown it to him only once. It was after his first dance. The eighth grade it must have been when she took a photo of him and the girl he took. He was so stiff

send you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. For thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth. He shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and he shall sit and rule upon his throne. He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. Thus in fulfillment he came. In the worst of times. Wars and rumors of war. Soldiers everywhere. Marching through the streets. Lounging around the marketplace and the temple. With orders for war from blood-thirsty generals. And Herod. Cyrenius. Archelaus. Caesar Augustus. Roman legions preparing to march on Ethiopia. Jewish children slaughtered for the Aryan race. Cities full of refugees. Confusion. Chaos. And out of it all blooming the quiet, the beautiful, the dark-eyed star of David, Bethlehem, Mary, shy, blessed among women. Dark-haired Mary, most beautiful among the

and straight and tall, so she showed him the picture he was like. As if someday, he, too, would wear such a uniform. But since he had grown to dislike uniforms. They seemed to reduce men to machines. Pictures of Nazis goose-stepping or American soldiers on parade gave him a hint of terror, as if men could be murderers once they're all dressed and marching alike. Yet, all his friends seemed attracted, almost hypnotized by the war movies and television shows and even books. Not as a warning, but somehow as a thing to enjoy and be proud of, without having the guilt of being responsible. As if to say, "It is only a movie. I did not do it." But they did do it once, and now again they are preparing it even if it would destroy the world.

Powell lives on defense contracts. And all on the rest of my congregation. And all of America. How many billions for defense? Defense? More like murder. Bombers, rockets, hydrogen bombs. And a great army just ready to kill, kill, kill, kill! And all of us responsible. Every one of us. What shall we do? Oh Lord? Are we going to destroy the entire world? Thank goodness, Thy kingdom is not of this world. And even if we do have a war, some of us, those of us. Oh Lord, I pray for Marian and Jamie and I. Look after us. And Joe and Iris and even Powell. Let us have peace. And if it be Thy will that we must have war, then gather us all safely into Thine everlasting kingdom where there is only love and peace. Amen.

secute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your regard in heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.
-Matthew 5:9-12

women. Seeing she has known no man. Saving in dreams. Saving her softness and beauty for the son of her heart. And the white angel. Night in the summer room and the whirring of wings and a bluish glow and a voice like the distant thunder. Then shadow and darkness, power and strength and majesty, whirring, flying and coming, naming, coming into her. Oh Marian, Marian, thou shalt conceive and bear a son. And his name. But she woke to a stable among cows and calves. One came in the night with a lantern and mother licking it off on a bed of straw. Oh, mystery of mysteries. So she laid her own in a manger. And loved him and loved him. And he grew and learned by the Book and by his Mother. He had no Father but God the Carpenter of Heaven and Earth. The old men, white bearded and scholarly, found him among books in the temple. But even they could not answer his questions. Even they could not be father. The books and mother and white haired men were not enough. He must go beyond. He must find the mystery of mysteries, book within a book, Father in Son, Son

All praise be unto Thee, Oh Lord, for Thou hast shown me a most wonderful thing. Thou hast answered my prayers and shown me the challenge. In only a couple of simple words Thou hast shown me the answer to war. It is not enough to negotiate. Or to hold up a balance of power. To say our weapons are only for defense. For even the defense would be wrong. Even if the enemy does attack, what right have we to retaliate? If New York City is bombed and millions are killed, what good, what right have we to destroy Moscow as well and merely double the destruction? No. War can never be justified. No matter what happens, there can never be any justification for it. The planes and rockets must never be used. We must throw them away as use-

He was five when the Nazis invaded Poland. America may not have been very concerned, but Kris's mother knew what was coming to the land of her father's people. Kris remembered how his mother's face changed during those years. He determined to grow up and defend the homeland for her. Every soldier became his father, defending against the enemy. Then came Pearl Harbor broadcast by radio just before his mother took him to Sunday School. He was at the slick-shiney, white-enameled table, eating cereal for breakfast, the same place where he'd lost a tooth another day. She had told him to pull it out, but he had refused until at last it fell out by itself into the cereal bowl. And suddenly planes were screaming and bombs and men

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

in Father. So he left on a search for the mystery. In the cities: Capernaum, Jerusalem, Damascus, Tyre, cities of trade and wealth and learning. Learning the prophets and law and the old stories of his people. And turned to the future, learning Greek and shipping and the changing of money. But men were hurried and careless in the city. They knew no mystery. So he returned to the timeless land and lived by the seasons. Seed-time and harvest. In the mountains of the North. The deserts of the South. Forested hills along the sea. But the eyes of the farmers were hardened from watching the storm and dust. His search bore no fruit. The years were passing away. The old mysteries lost. But stories came to him of a new prophet in the wilderness. A man who had renounced the cities and farms. Clothed in a coat of camel's hair and a girdle of skin. Living on locusts and honey as the prophet Elijah. Could this be he that the prophets foretold? Coming before

and women killed and dying and his mother looking as if she had known all the time it would happen. And it was really war. At first he had been too young to understand, but in the final years he had kept track of the war with elaborate maps copied and sometimes enlarged from the atlas. Normandy. Salerno. Iwo Jima. It was like a game then, an exciting game that our side had begun to win. And yet so serious, going to grow up and become a soldier. With bazookas and hand grenades, PT Boats and B-29's. Oh, I knew all about it then, all of the weapons and strategies, so terribly much for a boy my age. But I didn't know the cost. The destruction and death. The homeless and hopelessness of it all. Oh, I was so innocent then. So foolish.

less, even though we can only do it alone. Even if our enemies invade. We We must invite them to invade. Welcome them as brothers. Build with them. If necessary, even suffer under them, so that they, too, may learn the lesson of love. Oh Lord, if only we took thy words seriously. Always they have been here. "Love your enemies." If only we had listened. How can there be war if we have no arms and refuse to fight? And invasion and police state would only give us a chance to witness to Thee. Not even militant pacifism like Ghandhi, but a brotherly one, to win their hearts to Thee. to build a better world. Oh Lord, could there be a greater vision and a greater challenge to us as Christians? I thank Thee with all my heart for showing me this, Thy true challenge. Amen.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you:

-Matthew 5:38-44

the Messiah? At long last had he found the mystery? He traveled on foot into the wilderness and found crowds at the river Jordan. Lunatics, lepers, beggars, curious townspeople, and a few like himself, searchers. They gathered around a huge man, black-bearded, receiving initiates into the water of the Jordan. "Repent and be saved. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. The Messiah comes. He that hath two coats, let him give one to his neighbor." Could this rough speech show the mystery? Yet it rang with conviction and knowledge of God. Could these ragged, hungry crowds be the chosen people? Yet under his spell they turned into pilgrims at the stream of life. His soul filled with the mystery. The words of John. The power of God. He hung back in the crowd and listened several days, each more certain than the last. "The Messiah comes." And then stepped forth to be

Oh Lord, Thy words come flooding to me now. I have no questions, but Thou answerest them. No doubts but Thou givest me understanding. Even after Thou had told me the answer to war. I still had doubts and questions. How can we risk our way of life to an enemy invasion? Surely they would strip us of all our possessions. Soldiers would ransack our houses, and officials would confiscate what was left. Our clothes and shoes and food. Our enemies have never seen such wealth as ours. They would plunder us as if starved. All that we own. All that we value. Our homes and money and all sacred things. Oh, it would not be easy for us, but the path of sacrifice and martyrdom. And yet, it would purge us of our sinful laziness and our

Therefore I say unto you Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much

The lilies and thrushes never went to to war. They were not selfish or cruel or miserly. And they were beautiful. Every day after school he would enter their little world in the orchard and find peace and knowledge beyond the world of men. "The peace which passeth . . " Oh Lord, give me those days again. For then I was truly able to pray. I prayed with the music of the thrush and the sweep of the gull, the color of the the golden rod and the beauty of the wild rose. And all of the earth was music and color and form and sweep and full of Thy love and beauty. Things were so simple then. I had no care in the world. Nothing to own but the sun and wind. Oh, what became of those days? School. Hard, cold desks and books. And the city. Cold stone, cruelty. And

baptized. A hand laid upon his shoulder. So bright like a dream and unable to see or remember. The crowd staring and the deep voice over them. John. "I have seen the Spirit descend as a dove and the Lord has spoken. This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." The hand and the words of John weighed down upon him like a great burden. He closed his eyes and prayed to understand. What if he could not bear it? The crowds had surrounded him now, clamoring, milling, shouting. He looked around for John, but the crowd was pushing and all he could see were the faces of strangers. "Save us, Messiah," someone shouted. There was laughter. Someone pulled on his coat from behind. He looked around into the empty sockets and wasted face of a blind man. "He who hath . . . ." What should he do? All around him they pressed. No escape. He closed his eyes and tried to pray. Shouts ringed him in. "Oh Lord!" He opened his eyes and raised them to

money and work. And even God. He had been so simple before. The God of the wind and sun and flower. My Father. But why did he have to have a son? And why be crucified? And why were there laws for sacrifice and buying and selling instead of simply for love and peace? And why was there sin? And a devil? These things all puzzled him so that he determined to grow up and find out the answers. He would go to school and become a minister. And then he would know. How God must take the form of men and die on the cross for their sins. How sin came from the devil. At first it seemed too hard to believe, but eventually I came to see the devil in myself. But the things that were so simple will never be so simple again. My world has been clouded by sin.

complacency, the self-satisfaction of America, so rich in things, but poor, so poor in spirit. Oh Lord, refine our spirit as silver. Hammer it pure and strong. Are not the treasures of heaven more to be desired than all we have on the earth? Thy love more precious than all the automobiles and dishwashers and ranch-style houses in the world. Forgive us, Oh Lord, for we have been blind and selfish and miserly. We have hoarded up petty things and forsaken Thy commandments of love and mercy. Grant us the strength to be martyrs. To forsake the treasures of this earth and prepare for treasures of heaven. And most of all, may it never come to pass that we would wage war and kill millions of men just to hold on to these things. Amen.

better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

-Matthew 7:25-29

the sky. A dove circled and flew away. "Oh Lord, save me." The crowd was growing wild. He tried to escape. They followed. He ran. Faster. Through the trees. Some were still following. On and on he raced into hills he had never seen, and then suddenly it was quiet and peaceful again. He was alone. He began to see again in the twilight. A bed of pine needles. Echos of shouts and the river and the hand on his shoulder turning and turning and slowly subsiding. Then sleep and forgetting. Peace and sleep without dreams. Each morning he would awaken refreshed and then the doubts would begin all over again. The leper pulling at him. "Save us, Messiah." The burden. The terrible burden. He lost track of the days. His clothes were ragged and food scarce. And then temptation set in. The Evil One whispered and played with his hunger. "The Messiah can turn stones into bread." He resisted. "The Messiah will claim all the riches of the earth." He

Oh Lord, it is all very easy to speak of sacrifice, but who is to set the example? I have tried it once and failed because of my weakness. Or perhaps because it was not Thy will. How can I require it of others if I cannot even do it myself? I have grown so used to my possessions. To all of the comforts of life. I can't even realise all the things I would miss. My house. Without it I would have to live in the rain and cold. My food. I'd have to beg or go find it in the woods. My car. Wherever I went, I would have to walk. My clothes and shoes. They would be old, ragged and filthy. And all the cleanliness and sanitation that I take for granted. Toilets and baths, soap and hot water. I would be filthy and full

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto

Once he did attempt to follow the example of Jesus. It was during the spring of his first year at Seminary, when he had come to realize that they were just glossing over the words of Jesus by calling them figures of speech. They dared not take his words seriously, but could only rationalize. So he took his Bible and left for a walk. First he went along Riverside Drive where the buds and leaves were just beginning to open. The Hudson drifted below him in soft, warm mist. Everything outside was calm and beautiful, but inside his soul was the terrible conflict. Who could dare take the path of Jesus? Who dare be his disciple? He wandered all around the city with a heavy heart and looked down over Harlem.

resisted. "The Messiah will leap from the temple, and angels will bear him up." But temptation only strengthened his replies. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord." Anger and conviction returned to him. The Evil One must be destroyed. A new battle had begun, the son of God entering the battle for his Father. Halfway to the Jordan he stopped. Where was he going? It was as if he had started back to John, but for some reason he had not thought about John since the temptation. What would he ask when he found him? All the way back he wrestled with the question. With a fearful heart he approached the river. He climbed the last ridge and looked down. There were no shouts. No crowds. No one at all. Only the river flowing smoothly, clearly around the bend and disappearing again. He went on to Capernaum and stopped an official in the marketplace."Where is John the Baptist?" The man squinted at him curiously. "Wherever Herod desires." And walked away as if angry. Later he found out how Herod had thrown John in prison and it felt as if a load had been lifted from his shoulders. Now he was on his own. And yet a new

The squalid city spread out below him with chimneys and roofs and dirty windows and wash hung out catching the soot. Thousands, millions of people crammed together in poverty. Unconsciously he felt the thick wallet he carried in his front pocket to protect it from pickpockets. If I were a true disciple. Suddenly his mind was made up. With reckless abandon he descended the steps into Morningside Park and crossed to the edge of Harlem. Where should he begin? Three colored children darted out from behind a car. Their legs were skinny. He sat down on a bench and watched. Doubts began to return. He fought them. He tried to get up and go on. But his legs would not move. If only I dared. But I didn't.

of disease, homeless and hungry. Perhaps I would die. And even if I lived, what good could I do? Preach from streetcorners? They wouldn't let me into a church. A dirty, smelly beggar. I could carry a Bible, perhaps. But none of my other books. None of the thousand little things I am used to. My collections. All the things I have saved. What would I be without them? Naked. Stripped of all pretense. Oh Lord, give me strength. How can I stand before Thee alone? Ashamed of my nakedness. Afraid Thou wilt see through my sin and littleness. And cast me away. Oh, purge me of reliance on material things. Let me come before Thee ready to do Thy will even through martyrdom. Amen.

his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.
-Matthew 19:21-24

fear was beginning to take its place. What if the Evil One should return? On the sabbath day, as was his custom, he read from the scripture in Capernaum, but this time he began to teach the people as well. Instead of picking over the laws of the marketplace and sacrifice, he called for repentence from sin. He repeated the words of John with a new urgency. "Repent and be saved, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He told them to forget sacrifices and material gain. All those things would only distract from the coming kingdom of God. Sometimes he could feel his congregation inspired, but more often they seemed to forget, or not to listen at all. Disappointed, he went on to Nazareth. Once he would have told all his plans to his mother, but now for some reason he could no longer go to her. When he stood to read in the synagogue he met her eyes for the first time. They were bright with tears of pride for him and suddenly he was ashamed. Terribly ashamed. But he hardened his heart and read as he had planned the Isaiah prophecy of the coming Messiah. He finished and looked out over the congregation,

Oh Lord, forgive my doubts. Thou hast answered me again. Even if we sacrifice ourselves, I wondered how we could speak for those we love. Even if we submit to the enemy, what right had we to sacrifice our wives and children and friends? Do not men go to war to protect their families? Do they not say they are fighting to make a better world for their children? And yet, thou hast answered all these questions. Our wives and children and friends are no more our brethren than are the soldiers and families of the enemy. We are all Thy children, American, Chinese, and Russian. If I kill an enemy soldier to protect my family, then I have killed a brother to save a brother. That doesn't make any sense. Is it

His roommate Stan argued that war was just failed diplomacy. The enemy would break an agreement as quickly as make it. Some men had no morals, he would say, and they must be destroyed. "Look at Hitler or Stalin." But Kris would keep asking "Why do the people follow them?" And claim that the fault lay in men who were willing to kill, not in the men who commanded it. "If we refused to fight, there could be no war." But Stan had served in the Marines and was majoring in political science. Kris could not lecture to him about war. And Stan knew more about love. Kris would say there were two kinds, sensual and Christian. That one should love all men, regardless of race, creed, friend, or enemy. Stan said he could only

There came then his brethren and his mother and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying,

strength returning. "This day is the scripture fulfilled." His townspeople muttered and grew angry at his pride. They met and waited for him at the door. Then he was in their midst being pushed towards the cliff above the river. "Blasphemy," someone cried. "Stone him." They dropped back to look for stones. Perhaps he would have been killed had he not run to the side and escaped. The way of the martyr had begun. He had claimed to be the Messiah and nearly been killed for it. Why had he uttered those words so certain of his claim? As if God Himself were speaking. "This day is the scripture fulfilled." And now that he had spoken there could be no turning back. The past had ended. He had answered his Father's call and now he must forsake them all: his mother, his brothers, the town of his boyhood. But what if he were wrong? What if the voice was not from God? Words of the Evil One, playing on his vanity. "The Messiah will claim all the riches of the earth." He was reading from Isaiah in Capernaum. Lawyers, merchants, farmers, laborers. All had crowded into the synagogue sweating in the summer

love those he knew. Once he tried to persuade Kris to go to a prostitute. Stan was from Missouri. They talked about religion long into the night. Stan said that God was imaginary, that Freud had proved he was only a mass illusion, a wishful fantasy, a projection of the superego. Kris tried to argue that God was real at first, but later began to doubt it himself. That was the beginning of the hardest time of his life. The next year he roomed alone and changed his major from religion. God was very remote and love was very confusing. He found a girlfriend who was very pretty. But she wouldn't let him do any more than hold her hand. Once he grabbed her, but she started crying. Then he didn't see her anymore for a long time.

Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked roundabout on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

-Mark 3:31-35

not rather Thy will that we submit our families to sacrifice and commit no murder? That we teach them to love their enemies even as Thou hast taught us? If we go to war, then surely we will kill our enemies and they will kill us and all will be lost. No one can possibly gain from this. But if we lay down our arms and refuse to fight, then by Thy grace we may win them to Thee and show them the way of love. Then all will be gained and no one could possibly lose. Is this too much of an ideal? Is not everything possible with Thee? The Evil One may thwart our plans in this world, but for all of us there is another world to come, where all men are brothers, and there is no family but the family of man. Amen.

heat. He ended the scripture. Then a sudden scream, and shouting. "Let us alone, Thou Jesus of Nazareth. Come to destroy us. I know who thou art, The Holy One of God." Shouts echoed in his soul. No. No. I did not. "Hold Thy peace and come out of him." One last scream and then silence. And it came to him he had won. He had shouted down the Evil One, and now there was silence. A man lying in the aisle turned his face upwards, a face from the crowd at Jordan. “Save us, Oh Messiah." A madman. But now he lay silent and peaceful. A murmer ran through the crowd. "He commands, and even the Evil One obeys."The madman sat up. "I am healed." At the door others gathered and waited for him. A blind man. A hunchback. He slipped past quickly and escaped. But this time it was with power and fulfillment. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." What other proof could he need? No longer could there be any doubt, but oniy conviction from God. And from that time forth he began to seek out and expel the Evil One from all disease, from lameness, blindness and

Oh Lord, let me not be ashamed of Thee. When I tell them Thy answer to war, they will call me a coward. They will say that America will never surrender. That she will go down still fighting. They will make fun of my visions. Perhaps even fire me from the church. But what does it matter? They'll do that anyway when the new church is built. And now I know Thy challenge. Oh Lord, Thou hast given me the final answer. We may lose our property and those that we love, and even our very lives by refusing to fight. But in losing our life here on this earth we will find it in heaven with Thee. And by losing our life here, if we lose it for Thee, we may help others to find their lives in Thy love and law. And now I know why Thou came to me with the

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, add take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he

When he was small, he learned about death from his pets. After Terry was run over by a car, his body was stiff and flat, and there was blood in his mouth and his tongue hung out. It made him sick to look. "If you're not careful when going across the street, you could die like your doggy." Then he started to fear he would die in his sleep. Then it was dark with noises. He cried that night as they buried him, and he kept crying afterwards for weeks every night. He would never come back. Never to pet him again. Nor to feel him move at the bottom of the bed. Never. Gone forever. So that was death. And once when digging in his flower garden he found a long red centipede. It ran by his hand and under a rock. His heart pounded.

madness. Crowds followed him. Some he healed immediately. Others he sent away with new hope. And always they asked in the name of God. And the name of his Son, the Messiah. He began to teach them as well, all he had learned and new truths besides which came to him even as he spoke as though God were giving him the words. Once by the Sea of Galilee he got into a fishing boat and pulled out from the shore because the crowd was pressing so close. When he had finished teaching they tried to reach him in order to be healed, but he was tired, so he asked the fishermen to row him away. Sitting in the boat, tired, watching the disappointed crowd of lepers and blindmen, hunchbacks and cripples drift away, he knew he must have disciples to help. He had found power over the Evil One, power over himself, power over disease, but no power to call the healthy and he shuddered to think of accepting the diseased as disciples. He listened to

He lifted the rock, took a stick, and plunged it into him. The creature squirmed and twisted. He tore it in two and looked again. Each piece was moving, crawling slowly away. In horror, he ran screaming towards the house. That was death. Once when he was older and unhappy he spent an entire day just sitting and listening to the hum of a power line. All he would have to do would be climb up the tower like a tree and touch the wire. What would it be like to die? But the sun set and he went home for supper. Until that time three weeks ago, he had never looked closely at the face of a dead man. And then the face was his own. Something had broken in him and had not healed. Something had begun that he could not control.

face of death. To prepare me for life with Thee. So now nothing can keep me from doing Thy will, from being Thy true disciple. And I almost believed it was the Evil One instead. That he was trying to drive me insane. Oh Lord, I've never had such visions before. How was I to know it wasn't madness? My face at the funeral. And in my dreams. Eyes unmoving, white, still as a mask. And the face that night in the church. Never have I been so afraid! It came to me by night and day, vision and dream, trying to destroy me from every side. Oh Lord, give me strength. Let me step out alone into the night and meet him unafraid. Let me wrestle with him face to face until I destroy him completely. Then I'll never be afraid again. Amen.

shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

-Mark 8:34-38

the rough speech of the fishermen. They had caught no fish the night before. "Did you say your name was Simon?" "Yes." "Why don't you let down the nets over there?" "Andrew, he says to let down the nets over there." He watched and waited. They pulled up the nets again. Full. Even the fish obeyed him now. The men came to him. "How did you know?" He answered them with new power. "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." And they followed him. Where would it end? And what if he could not control his power? If it grew and grew and overwhelmed everthing? He prayed to God for an answer, but none came. So he began to impart it to the disciples. He sat up with them late into the night anound a fire in the mountains. And taught them all he knew and prepared them. There was so little time. Then, even before they were fully prepared, he could wait no longer and sent them forth with power over the Evil One and nothing but the coats on

Oh Lord, how hard it is to be Thy disciple! How few of us can do it! How subtle are the sins that would lead us astray! Thou hast given us wives and children and friends and yet we must forsake them. Even hate them for Thy sake. Mother. Marian. Jamie. Joe. All that I love most in the world. All that I long to be with forever. To be safe and warm in love and home and happiness. But I would grow old and soft and selfish there. How could I heed Thy challenge? For Thou wouldst lead me in the hard way of sacrifice and love for all mankind instead of simply for my family. But it is hard for me to leave them, Oh Lord. Thou must give me strength! Is it possible I could stay with them and still do Thy will? But how can I know? Would

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also. he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you,

Don Acker and Doris Teal were their names. After introducing themselves rather forwardly, they became embarassed and had a hard time speaking. But he knew at a glance all they would say. He knew how they "really did love each other and all that," but how they were afraid. What would their parents say? He knew all the details without asking. How the boy had been a little drunk. How the girl had known better. How neither of them had really known any better. And yet, for some reason, he'd made them tell everything, made them stumble through every detail, shameful and sinful, then stood aside and washed his hands, the stern Father Confessor. And yet he knew it was what they needed. That they felt guilty and they

their backs. He left them with the promise of the coming Kingdom. "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." And he went off alone into the mountains to meet with God and prepare. But the weeks went by and God did not come. And even the Evil One seemed strangely remote. Then it was the beginning of harvest and the disciples were drifting back. They had done well, but the harvest had come and where was the kingdom? He left them for a while and prayed bitterly. Had he failed his Father? What had he done wrong? And then he began to realize he must die. He must be the sacrifice, the innocent, the lamb to be slain for the sins of man. And only after the purge of death could he come again. So he told the disciples they must prepare to keep the passover in Jerusalem. They argued with him. The priests would cast him in prison. He replied that he knew. That perhaps they would kill him as well. Simon, the strong

needed to be told to get married, as simple as that. At the same time, it saddened him to think they could never be saints or martyrs. They could never know the meaning of discipleship. He could only counsel them to be married. And when they left, he felt sullied and sordid. As if they had trampled over his reading and his prayers. Suddenly he was angry at Marian, too. He was angry for loving her. Angry for needing her. Angry it was time for supper and that she would wait for him and be patient for him and love him. She would be lying in bed and reading and hear him in the hall. “Hi, My Love. I knew you were coming." He put his face down in his hands and wept and looked up to see her in the door, but she wasn't there.

they not keep me to themselves in a little house and family. Just like my congregation wanting a new building. Modern and comfortable so they can sit on cushions with their friends and feel pious. Put a few dollars in the collection plate. For what? For "peace of mind?" Oh Lord, forbid that we be so blind. Whenever I mention that we should never go to war, they reply that the enemy would destroy our churches. As if Thy temples were made wood and stone instead of the hearts of men. They put their trust in hollow shells and empty symbols instead of Thy word, Oh Lord. Teach us to see through the empty things of this world and seek the true treasures of heaven! Challenge us to follow the path of Jesus who gave his life in Thy name. Amen.

intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

-Luke 14:25-30

one, replied. "This shall not be unto thee." Words from the Evil One. He turned upon him in anger. "Get thee behind me, Satan!" And they followed him to Jerusalem. Afterwards he was sorry for his anger and loved them all the more. The crowds met him at Jerusalem with palm leaves and shouts of Hosanna. But he knew they would forsake him. At their last supper together he washed the feet of the disciples and tried to tell them of the coming things. And in the garden afterwards he could not bear to leave them. "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me." But he knew they would forsake him. That Judas would only be the first. Then the crowds before Pilate. "Crucify him! Crucify him!" And even Peter, "I know him not." So he died alone, broken and forsaken. And at his death God rained destruction on the earth. Earthquake and fire and storm of his vengeance. The veil of the temple was rent in twain and men fell down on their

I wondered what would happen if every man became Thy disciple. If no man or woman married, there would be no families or children, and the whole race would perish. And if no one had possessions, we would all be beggars and no one would have anything. We would starve to death and be no better than the animals. But now I see that these questions are false. And that even more false is the reason I was taught for the golden rule. One cannot say “ If everyone loved his neighbor." For this could never be true on the earth. And Kant was wrong and all morality. Men cannot all be the same on earth. We are all different and only in heaven can we be reconciled. The reasons for love and sacrifice

But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possess not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion

They were married on a Saturday morning in early June. Two and a half months ago. It seemed like only a couple of days. Like only a couple of hours ago we sat under that tree behind the museum, and I said "I love you" for the first time. She seemed so surprised. And in my apartment "Will you marry me" and "yes" and "as soon as I graduate?" and "yes." Suddenly she was in my arms and "Marian. I love you so!" "But what about Jamie?" “He will be my little boy." And then her parents and my mother at her church and all the people she had known as a little girl, perhaps some of them her old boy friends. And then I saw her and knew forever 'til death do us part. So beautiful! And afterwards on the

knees before Him. "Truly this man was the Son of God." And out of the storm and wind and fire a lily grew, and a woman came softly to an empty tomb. He had risen again in light and peace and returned to His Father in heaven. Kris shut the book and looked out the window with tears in his eyes. He had died alone but had risen again and returned to his Father in heaven. And he set out with Paul throughout Europe and Asia to spread the news until all should know. Christ, the Lord, hath died on the cross to redeem all men from sin. To redeem us all from death. Believe on him and be saved. And wrote letters to the churches he had established. In the great cities, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Jerusalem. And smaller towns, Galatia, Philippi, Colossae. He knew their questions and their weaknesses and answered and chided them back to the way of God. To the Romans, gentiles, be free from sin and the law and live by faith in Christ. To the Greeks and Corinthians, forsake the lovers of wisdom brought unto foolishness and turn to faith in

Cape. Our own little cabin in the pines. Our own little lake. Lie in bed and watch the sun come up. "Keep me warm." "I'll light the fire." Sharing every detail of life. Everything mine is yours. And now. Her first house. Mine, too. The other morning in bed. "I waited for you all morning." Her hair so brown and full and falling softly, oh so softly over my face and hands and tears. Oh Marian: I can't live without you. I cannot live. As if in a dream he felt her presence in the study and watched as a tear fall silently from her eye and land just inside the door. She was speaking to him now. Calling him gently, "Kris, Kris, what are you doing? What are you doing?" And then she was gone.

of this world passeth away. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.
-I Corinthians 7:24-33

are for more deep and profound than that. Not that this is the way to save the earth, but that this is the way to prepare for heaven. That in heaven we shall love all mankind and have no possessions or families but the possessions of man and the family of man. But, Oh Lord, what about war? Is Thy challenge of peace only to prepare us for heaven? Is it no more than a vision, an ideal that can never be reached on the earth? Must there always be war and men be fighting and killing each other on the earth? Then what is the use, Oh Lord? And yet I dare not forsake Thy challenge. For this is the way Thou preparest me for heaven. The way Thou preparest all of us. And I must tell them, Oh Lord. Give me strength! Amen.

Christ. To virgins, remain and marry the Lord as I have done. To those who prophesy, continue and forbid not the speaking of tongues. Wives, submit to your hushands. Children, obey your parents. Masters, be just and equal. Bishops, be blameless and sober. Deacons be grave, not doubletongued. Young men, be sober-minded. All ye of various gifts and births, Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, praise the Lord, according to your skill. Together ye form the body, the temple, the whole armor of Christ on earth. Each of ye form a separate member, a building stone, a part of the whole. And though ye see not the finished work on earth, someday ye shall see it in heaven. For here on the earth the body, the strivings, the yearnings have no completion. They are imperfect. But someday in heaven the spirit, the love, the knowledge shall be complete. And ye shall be given perfection of God. Having finished the Holy Book, he turned back and searched with John, the mystic of

Oh Lord, what would I be without Thy Holy Bible? If it were lost? If I had never seen it? How could I know about heaven? How would I know that Thou carest for each of us as Thy children? How could I know that the Evil One is sly and subtle and uses us to his evil ends? Perhaps these things could be handed down from my parents as the Jews must have done long ago. But then they would be distorted and Thy commandments made less difficult. For even with Thy Holy book open before us, We have failed to take it literally. We have all condoned the culture of war. Without Thy book who would have dared to say we must love our enemies? Only Jesus and his very words. Oh Lord, I would be lost without them. I thank Thee that

And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go, and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it

"What a great sermon! No one has ever dared say it before!" Kris could imagine people talking after his sermon. But some would be angry and offended. Powell. Perhaps even Joe. "Dishonorable. Cowardly. Wants us to surrender." He could see their meeting and the hands go up. All in favor. "Aye." All opposed. "Nay." They would dismiss him, martyred to the cause. Marian standing in the doorway with Jamie in her arms."What have you done? We have no home." But I must be about my Father's business. He would begin a crusade. The newspaper headlines. Pacifists demonstrate. High on a platform. Take on all comers in debate. They would get angry but he would answer, cool, collected. "We do not wage war against war. We

Patmos. He searched out the visions of final judgment, the visions of God and his Holy Angels, the names and numbers and symbols of God. From Genesis, he drew the cycle of creation, the six days of work and seventh of rest. From Exodus, the plagues, the ten afflictions of the wrath of God. And the trumpet calls and the appearance of God unto Moses at Sinai. The Passover ritual and the jeweled breastplate of Aaron, twelve jewels for the tribes of Israel. In Numbers he found the Feast of the Dedication, when God spoke to Moses in the tabernacle. With David he numbered the Levites, and with Isaiah he saw a vision of the Lord, sitting upon his throne and surrounded by seraphims. Isaiah and Jeremiah showed him the fall of Babylon and the destruction to be poured upon earth. With Ezekiel he saw visions of God and of heaven and the creatures of heaven. He was given the book of prophesy and told to sit by an angel. And guided through the future temple of the New Jerusalem by the angel of the line and the measuring reed. He

wage peace against it." Turn the other cheek. The movement gaining, sweeping the world. Beyond government. Beyond church. A resurgence of true Christianity. The path of Jesus. The devil would come and tempt him, You can be famous, rich, even king. The people need a leader. But he would turn him away. "Get thee behind me Satan. And pray to God, "Thy kingdom come." Thousands would see and follow him. Turn from Satan and pray to God. "Not a militant pacifism, but a brotherly one, to win their hearts to Thee. To build with a them a better world. To prepare for heaven. Kris saw himself finally as an old man, his life over, his name fulfilled, the world in peace. And God calling him to heaven. "My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And again he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.
-Revelation 10:8-11

Thou hast shown me his words and called me to preach them. For we have not dared look at them face to face. "Love your enemies." "Take no thought for your life." "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor." And "Hate thy father and mother and wife and children." They have been too difficult, so we have made excuses and rationalized. Like the people at Seminary. And the church. They are not true Christians at all, but hypocrites! And I must show them. I must write a sermon unlike any they have ever heard. Open their eyes unto the truth. But, Oh Lord, what if I can't. Last week I couldn't write at all. And now I must write as I never have before. And tomorrow is the last day. Oh Lord, give me strength. Amen.

saw the river of life and the trees which shall never fade. And the name of the city was "The Lord is there." Daniel gave him visions of the beasts and the times before the end. With Zechariah he found the four horsemen and the seven lamps and the olive trees and the visions of the BRANCH who shall bear the glory of God. And finally he drew from the gospels the visions of Jesus, the times before the coming judgment of God. And with John he bound them together into a vision of visions, a book of books, a poem of poems, a cycle of creation and feast day, destruction and judgment, star-cycle, sun-cycle, moon-cycle. Six times he repeated the apocalypse, each time drawing nearer the end. Destruction and judgment were poured upon earth. The angels of the Lord wrestled and fought with the angels of Satan and bound him finally for a thousand years. And the redeemed came unto heaven, the new temple, the New Jerusalem, to be with their Lord forever.

Chapter Nine

His Word was with Power

— Luke 4:32

This morning I promised that I would find and bring to you the true challenge of God. All week long I have prayed and read and studied the words of God in the Bible. And God has answered my prayers and shown me His challenge. It is a radical challenge, not what you are accustomed to hearing, and probably difficult for your to accept, but if you take down your Bible and read it carefully, you will find it clearly written there in the words of the prophets and the teachings of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

God's challenge to us is not to be found in buildings or rituals of the church. Instead he challenges us to risk all we have in the cause of world peace. To make an end of war, even if it costs our lives. To make a world where all men work together as brothers in the name of God. And where no man goes to war with another.

Only the man who believes in Christ can conceive of the horrors of war. He alone has the perspective of heaven. For the man who has no God, the man who has no promise of heaven, he dare not even consider war. For war would destroy the entire world and this world is all that he knows. To destroy it would leave him nothing and this he cannot conceive. And so, though he uses the word and wonders about it sometimes, he dare not look war in the face. He goes about his business as if it were nothing more than a word. As if war could never happen. And what else can he do? What can one man do about war without the help of Almighty God. And so the clouds of war gather and men gather and men look the other way. The signs of war gather and men remain blind. They forget the horrors, the destruction, the death, the homeless, the orphaned of war. And they dare not realize that the next war would be even worse. "A false church." Each time he came to that point he could go no further. With the rest of the sermon he was satisfied, but here the way was blocked, the end had come. He had asked the fatal question. And received the fatal answer. Unless the church renounces war, they will have been only a false church, a false hope. Unless the church changes now, it will be too late.

And he knew they would not. That they would never change, never, never in the world. He knew it more than anything else, more positive than the sin of war, more positive than the calling of God for sacrifice. That many things might change, governments, nations, wars, all the things of the world, but not the church. It wonld only remain the most conservative, the most self-satisfied. The last to risk its easy life. The last to endanger its rituals and prayers and self-righteousness. Its buildings. Yes, for they had put their faith in buildings, not sacrifice, not the word of God. It was true, all too true, they could only be a false church, a false faith. His own church

his own faith. His whole life. The faith of his mother. The teachings of seminary. Kris Goodmann, pastor with his parish in New Canaan, Ohio. All of it without meaning. All of it false. For unless they change. Renounce war. Risk all. But no, it would never be. Their only concern would be a new building or a boy scout troop. And they would never change.

Again he had been unable to finish a sermon. But last week it had been different. Last week, perhaps he was wrong. Perhaps he was even going mad. He could not write at all. He stood before the church without even any notes. But this week he had a sermon all written out. All prepared. And all right. For this week he could not be wrong. There could be no doubt. For this was the true challenge of God. Written in the Bible where all can see. Where truth is truth and right is right. The words of Jesus. Who could deny them? What doubt could there be? If there was a God. If there was a Jesus Christ. If there was a heaven, what doubt could there be? And yet, though he was right, though the words But he who has Christ has a promise transcending the destruction of earth. He can look on the face of war, the horrors of war without fear. Though he sees what happened at Nagasaki. Though he sees the destruction of Hiroshima. Hundreds of thousands of men like you and me. Women. Children. The innocent. Burned and tortured and maimed. Dying or living a living death. Disfigured and tortured by cancer and other disease. Begetting strange children, distorted and crippled by effects of a bomb that fell fourteen years before they were born. One bomb. Fourteen years ago. And now, thanks to the wonders of modern science, thanks to the false god, the idol of today, there are bigger bombs. Better bombs. Clean bombs. Dirty bombs. Rockets to deliver them. And radar to give us warning. Five minutes warning before your death. Oh sinner, just time enough to pray. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were only warnings. They were nothing like the destruction the next war will bring. For war will not be confined to just two cities, but will come down upon all cities and all men and all of civilization. All that man has carefully built in his thousands of years on earth. The books and music, buildings and works of art. All of the things we treasure. All destroyed. If it were only men destroyed, but art as well. All of the things we treasure. All destroyed. And if it were only men destroyed but no, the whole world of nature must suffer as well. For years, centuries after war, the world would be swept by clouds of deadly dust. The rain would be deadly. The grass would wither and die and poison the animals. The cattle and deer and birds. All animals. All life would be dying or disfigured. All that we love. Yes, only we, the chosen of God alone can con-

ceive of such things. For we have seen that the folly of man has no bounds. That having received this world as a gift from God, he can turn and destroy it for thanks. For he worships a false god called science. And without the true God he has always gone to war and he always will. But have no fear. For God has claimed us as his own and promised us a life beyond this earth and war and destruction, a life of everlasting peace.

He who knows God. Who knows of the folly of men. He alone can watch how wars begin. How men are beguiled by the plans of the devil. How men call war honorable. But my friends I tell you war is dishonorable. That all who have fought in them, all who have sponsored them, have sinned against God and against man. But the devil has convinced you that war is honorable. So the farmer in his patriotism leaves the plow and learns how to handle a rifle. The worker in a factory earns his pay by assembling a tank or a plane, weapons of untold destruction, but only another job to him. The engineer takes pride in his drawings for a new rocket or a bomb. Capable of destroying a million people. But just another drawing for the engineer. The industrialist builds a new factory and sells secret military parts to the government. Just good business, he claims. So the rifles and tanks and planes and bombs are made by you and me. And used by you and me. The soldier says "I'm not to blame. I follow the general's orders." And the general says "I'm not to blame, but the President's orders" And the President says "I'm not to blame, for I'm only the voice of the people." And you, the people. Are you not to blame? Did you not order our armies to prepare for war? Did you not order our industry to build weapons of destruction? By your ignorance, by your

were written, the sermon prepared, the congregation sitting in the pews and ready to listen, he knew he could not go through with it. That it would only be useless. They would never understand. Never believe. Never in this world. Not even one of them. Instead they would laugh and mock him. Or be amused. Or shocked and offended. Or simply not understand. All of the ways a people can avoid the truth. A truth they cannot bear. If he gave the sermon, he would destroy his last chance to talk with them, his last chance to convince them of the challenge. He would be fired. Never allowed to preach again. And their hearts would be sealed forever against the truth. They would lock up their hearts and close their ears.

And the chance would be lost forever. If he could only find some way to make them understand. Break it to them gently, easily. But no. There could be no easy way. The choice must be made. And the calling is hard. For truth is truth and right is right.

It was only then that Kris realized that the last tie had been broken. Never again

would he be able to speak to them. And it came to him that now he was a preacher without a congregation. A shepherd with no control of his flock. A leader with no tie to his people. And he knew now that he hated the smug, complacent church, that he had always hated them and never dared realize it before. That he hated the Powells and Joes who put their faith in new church buildings, who ease their souls on the easy teachings and ignore the hard ones. And the ministers, feeding their congregations what they want to hear, a watered-down Bible, stripped of its real meaning. And the professors at the seminary, rationalizing and making the sayings less difficult, taking away their cutting edge, blunting their challenge, the call for sacrifice. He hated all of them, hated their complacency and hypocrisy and yet could do nothing about it. For they were so certain in their smug self-righteousness that they would be the last to listen, the last to change. And now he knew why Christ had converted no Pharisees, but had stopped in the temple to drive out its moneychangers

unthinking work with the devil, you, each one of you, have ordered the bombs and planes and rockets and rifles. Oh, the devil has used you! He has fooled you with his subtle plans. And the devil has given you excuses. He has whispered in your ears that the enemy is at fault. That wars are made by evil dictators and false promises. That force is the answer. Force against force. That we must bluff them into submission. Oh, what better way could the devil find to destroy our world! Or else he has convinced you that wars come from lack of understanding between governments. That the answer to war is in negotiation and agreement. Peace conferences and disarmament control. But have you not seen the folly of disarmament talks? How each side refuses to concede or back down from their posture of war. How each side insists it must remain as strong as the other. How we are concerned with inspecting the enemy, not disarming ourselves. And just who will be our enemy when every little nation has thousands of atomic bombs? Who will we blame then? What good is any peace conference when each side is backed by thousands of soldiers trained for nothing but war. By thousands of rockets aimed at the other side. By thousands of bombers poised and ready to kill. Why, it doesn't even take an official cause for war anymore. An accident could set it off. No, the cause of war does not rest in governments and conferences, but in the preparation by the people themselves. It's the people that wage a war. not the diplomat or the dictator. Of course, they would like to think they control the world. And they tell you so. And you believe them. But without soldiers and weapons, all the diplomats and dictators in the world would be no more than petty criminals.

And you and your sons are their soldiers. You and your sons have given them power. Have prepared our nation for war. And in the whole history of the world, from Caesar to Napoleon, from Genghis Khan to Hitler, no nation so prepared for war has not gone ahead and waged it. Have you gone to all this trouble merely for a bluff? Why are your guns aimed? Your soldiers ready. Your rockets aimed and loaded with warheads of destruction. Simply an accident may set them off now. Oh, men may speak words of peace, but they have prepared for war. Diplomacy is no help. Unless we disarm, war is inevitable. Unless we no longer prepare for war, we will have it. Unless we say to the world that never under any circumstances, never for any reason would we go to war. That nothing could ever be worth it. And unless we disarm, whether or not the enemy is willing to disarm as well, unless we disarm, we will destroy the world. We must send our soldiers back to the farms and schools. Burn the uniforms and rifles. Throw away the rockets and planes and bombs. And say to all men. You are our brothers, the sons of God. Come, build with us a better world.

But the man who has no belief in Christ. Who has no promise of heaven. He cannot even consider this. To disarm? He calls it cowardly. To love our enemies? He calls it surrender. The enemy would invade. He would lose all he knows. But the man who knows Christ, he can consider disarmament, even if the enemy invades. For he who has treasures in heaven can risk losing things of the earth. His family. His prosperity. His country. Capitalism. Democracy. Freedom. These are the things we are told to fight for.

These are the things we are told are the causes instead, to denounce the Pharisees, calling them whited sepulchres and dead man's bones of the old, stagnant religion. And the denunciation had done no good. The Pharisees could not listen. They could never be disciples.

And now Kris, too, was alone. Alone against all the churches and congregations and seminaries everywhere. The whole organized church. His whole life, turned against him. For he alone had dared to look on the words of Christ and take their meaning to heart. He alone. And now what could he do? Denounce the church? He had done so in the sermon. "A false church, a false hope." But what good would it do? They would only laugh at him, harden their hearts, fire him, stop up their ears and never listen. No they would never change from their easy life. Now he knew why Christ had chosen the disciples he did. The fishermen and tax collectors, poor, faithless men, outcasts, with little to lose and everything to gain. But the rich young rulers could never leave their easy life. The smug, complacent

pharisees never dare.

What could he do, he, Kris, alone against the church. Denounce them? Start a rival church? What folly? No, he must take up the cross of Christ. Set the example. Give up all things and preach the word of God, the challenge of Christ, denouncing war and its preparations. Go through the land, preaching from street corners. Call disciples. But the thought seemed somehow impossible, almost ridiculous. He, Kris Goodmann, leader of men, with disciples. He almost laughed. He would call the lame and the blind, the sick and the poor. Yes, at least they would understand. But what good could they do? A band of beggars. Preaching from street corners. From jails. Yes , he, Kris Goodmann, in jail, in prison. Again he almost laughed at the idea. He would have been preaching on a street corner somewhere. Harlem perhaps. Again it seemed inconceivable. "My friends, I tell you war is dishonorable. And all who have fought in them have sinned against God and man." Men would gather in of war. Are they worth it? And in some cases, would we really lose them anyway? Those who tell us to go to war claim we would lose them all if the enemy invaded. But I am not so sure. Let us consider them one by one. Our families. In a war, yes, our families would all be killed. But in a peaceful invasion, would the enemy kill off everyone? What use to conquer a land if there are no people there? Why not conquer the North Pole? Certainly there would be political suppression and executions. Perhaps even thousands, but not millions. A secret police. But not mass destruction. Imprisonment. But not mass murder. Perhaps our political leaders and those who try to resist by force, but not our families.

And our prosperity. Would it be lost? Or would the enemy not try to keep it alive. What use is it to conquer a desolate land? To be sure, there has always been looting and robbery when soldiers invade a land. The enemy would strip us of our luxuries. Our television sets, automobiles and fur coats, maybe even shoes. The things we have never shared with them. But it would still be to their advantage to keep us producing. To keep us prosperous.

But we would certainly lose our country, you say. Yes, America. The American flag. "The Star-Spangled Banner." The Fourth of July. All of our pride and patriotism. Yes, without this, many people would fall apart. For patriotism has become a religion to them and our country a false god. They have no strength in themselves, no faith in God, but they find their strength in their country and their faith in its leaders. Woe be unto them on the day of judgment, the day of the wrath of God.

And capitalism. Yes, we would certainly lose our capitalism. And we would be forced to be

communist instead, a wasteful process, an inefficient economy. But though communism does not hold the answer, is it not time that we questioned our own system that cannot allow us to share our abundant farm surplus with starving people in other lands, our own system that threatens to fall apart unless it is geared up to produce the weapons of war.

And democracy. Yes. The political campaigns. Buttons and slogans and meaningless promises. The "x" on a ballot. The first Tuesday of November. But more than these, the whole concept of a two-party system. Without this you feel you have no say in your government. That you would no longer be free. But the two-party system has come to be a magic thing and a great illusion to you. You think by an "x" on the ballot to chose your government, but were the candidates not picked long before you voted? You chose only one of the two. And if the candidates are just alike, what choice do you have? Locally, yes, democracy can work as it claims. The mayor, the judge, the councilman, they can be chosen. But for the state and nation, how much more choice do you have than the people of Russia or China?

But most important of all, we would lose our freedom. Yes. Freedom of speech. Could I preach such a sermon as this in Russia? No. but can I even preach it here in America? Will it not be condemned and forbidden. Perhaps the House Un-American Activities Committee will hear of it. Or perhaps the American Legion. Yes, freedom of speech is a wonderful thing, and we should miss it dearly. And freedom of the press. Yes. We would miss this, too. But just how free is our press? Can it be any more free than the men who write for it? And are they not victims

the street. Big, brawny men. Ex-soldiers, marines perhaps. "Who do you think you are talking to, buddy? Did you ever fight in a war? Have you ever seen your best friend killed by a Jap? Huh?" They would beat him up. Run him out of town. And then the government would hear that "He's preaching the overthrow of the government." Clap him in jail. A quick trial. To prison. What good could he do there? Preach to the prisoners? But what would they care? They would only laugh. And even if he wrote, who would print it.? After what he had said about newspapers and magazines. What good could he do? Oh Lord, what good can I do?

He was standing before the desk, the pages of the sermon in his hand. What good was it, all written out, but never to be spoken, never read. As if from a dream, as if he had preached from street corners and been thrown in prison, he suddenly awoke and shook himself to awareness. As if from a nightmare, now it was morning and all would be right. When he had been writing the sermon he had often

thought of how he would take it to Marian and she would understand. She would love him all the more for it and understand. Now that it was finished, he could take it to her. She would show him how to tone it down. How to make it easy for the people. And they wouldn't fire him after all. But no. The idea revolted him. All his ideas. All his life. Would he compromise forever? Ignore the challenge of God. He saw himself as an old man, harmless, mouthing all the same words as the other preachers, telling the people just what they wanted to hear. And again he knew that the end had come. The break was open. He could no longer turn back, no longer give them the easy sayings. No longer tone down the truth. No longer ignore the challenge.

The morning had come. He had only dreamed. But the nightmare was real. There was no escape. No time. He was already walking along the corridor towards the church. There could be no turning back. The nave would be filled, the people waiting. But his hands were

of propaganda? Writing just what we want to hear? Blind to the follies of war? Putting their faith in their country and their strength in weapons of destruction? Beware of the newspapers and magazines. They would lull you into a false complacency. They would do all your thinking for you, and lead you on the path to destruction.

But what about freedom of religion, you say? The enemy would burn our churches and put our preachers in prison. This is true. And you do put your strength in churches and your faith in preachers, don't you? Instead of in heaven and Almighty God where they belong. For the Lord needs no church buildings. He needs no graduates of seminaries. Christ preached from the hillsides. He went to no seminary. He was no pharisee. But the son of a carpenter. He learned from God in the wilderness. No. God does not need our churches and seminaries, our worship services and prayers. He does not need our sermons. Not even our Bibles. For even if the churches and Bibles were lost. Even if His name were forgotten, he would come again to some shepherd in the mountains. He would reveal His book inside the wall of a building. No. Do not fear for the Word of God. Fear only that thou do His will.

And so I have not denied that we would lose some things if the enemy invaded. We would lose our capitalism, our patriotism, and our democracy. But perhaps we would not miss them as much as some would say. For they have become false hopes to us, magic words, false gods. And, it is true, some of us would be killed if the enemy invaded. And we would lose some of our prosperity. Most important of all, we would lose our freedom and miss it dearly. For

surely, freedom is a valuable thing, worthy to be preserved, but not at all costs. Not at the cost of war. For nothing could be worth the cost of war. Not our freedom or our country. Not even our families. For not just these, but all things would be lost in war. The lives of our families and even our own would be lost. There could be no prosperity, or freedom, patriotism or capitalism after war, but only mourning and poverty, fear and disillusionment. After war, what hope? What freedom? What religion? Surely the losses of war are far greater than in any possible alternative. And yet, unless we disarm, together or alone, and unless we disarm soon, war is inevitable.

But the man who has no God. Who has no promise of heaven. For him there is nothing beyond this world. For him there is nothing beyond family and prosperity, country and freedom. His only strength is himself and his only hope is his children. For him surrender is unthinkable. This world is everything. Worth going to war. For though he will lose them in war as well, he would rather lose them fighting. This is why unilateral disarmament is not even mentioned in our country. Have you ever heard it? Anywhere? No. Not in the newspapers or magazines. Not on television. Not on the street corner or in the classroom. The only answer to war. And it is never even mentioned. Men without God do not dare.

But the man with God. The man with the promise of heaven. His will is the will of Christ and his way is the way of heaven. And the will of Christ and the way of heaven and the law of God, they all say explicitly. "Thou shalt not kill." "Thou shalt love thine enemy." This is more important than any family or country, empty. He had left the sermon in his study. What could he preach? What could he say to them? The people loomed before him, monstrous, powerful in their demands, choking, suffocating him with cries of hate. "Is this all you have for us? Is this your thanks? You never had the guts to fight, you coward, you foolish, surrendering coward! My son was killed by Hitler! My son was killed by the Japs." He tried to argue, but they were pressing around him. He tried to escape. Surrounded. They would beat him up, kill, murder, destroy him. "He killed my son!" The world seeing, coming together in the final, terrible crash. The rockets poised and aimed to kill. The soldiers ready, their rifles ready, aimed, and fired to kill. The end had come. The end of time. And the church unprepared. The sermon unspoken. He, Kris, at fault. Blood required at the watchman's hands. Blood, blood, blood! Explosions rocking the world. Fires and clouds of destruction. Men dead and dying. He was at fault. And it was too late. Too late.

His breath was coming in gasps, his legs shaking, must sit down. He gripped the pulpit, dying in the midst of a dying world. Everything tumbling down. Everything fleeting away. Fleeting away and leaving only the quiet, darkened church, punctuated here and there by the broken patterns of stained glass in the evening light. As if it had been too much to bear, all was quiet again. The church was empty except for his little, shivering figure behind the pulpit.

Then a calm and beautiful vision began to come over him, somehow irrelevant and detached from the world, perhaps a vision of heaven. Marian was lying there on the bed in her nightgown, her smooth, beautiful skin waiting for him. "I knew you would come. I have been waiting for you all morning." In her arms he would forget it all. It would have been only a bad dream. Only her fingers would stroke his hair, slowly, slowly, peacefully. Standing behind the pulpit, he looked out towards the spot where each Sunday she sat with her little Jamie. Combing his hair. Slowly. Slowly. "My wealth or freedom in the world. And Christ foresaw that we would have to choose between them. The treasures of earth and the treasures of heaven. We cannot always have them both. And Christ told us plainly which we must choose.

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." And "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." The way is plain. The choice must be made. But the calling is hard and few can answer. Few can abandon the things of this world and follow the challenge of God. But with His help all things are possible. Through our prayer and devotion, He will give us strength. With His help, neither family nor country, wealth nor freedom will stand in the way. But we will risk all things in his name. And set the world an example of love and sacrifice such as it has rarely seen. Like Job we must lose all things first. But for the losing we will gain more than we ever had before. For whosoever will find his life will lose it. But whosoever will lose his life in the name of Christ. will find it.

So God has given me a vision of things to come. A promise beyond our wildest dreams. A vision, it is true, of sacrifice and martyrdom, but a vision as well of peace and victory. For with the help of God, in the name of God, a few dedicated men will risk the loss of all things in the cause of peace. They will preach that we must love our enemies. That war is wrong and the preparations of war. They will risk martyrdom, imprisonment, even death, by refusing to serve in any army. By refusing to work on the building of any armaments. And men every-

where, inspired by their example, will see the dawn of a new day. There will arise a new and living Christianity. America will be the chosen people of God. They will form a new government dedicated to peace at any cost. They will announce to the world that America will never, not under any circumstance, not for any reason, never will she go to war. And finally, they will set a date, only so far away as all the world can see and be prepared, and on that day the soldiers will cast aside their rifles. The planes will be grounded and stripped of weapons. The rockets and bombs will be dismantled. And the enemy will find instead of ambush, welcome. Instead of sorrow, a holiday, a festive day, the Day of Peace as it shall be known for all generations. They will find a people of love and faith, ready to work and build with them. To create a new world where all men can work to the glory of God. And, if a few of us dedicated to the will of God, can so convince America that she lays down her arms, risking all things to enemy invasion, how much more can the people of America convince the rest of the world, yes, even convince the invading enemy of the love and promise of God, of the brotherhood of man, of the way of peace. And then I see a new world of peace and prosperity, freedom and religion beyond any we have ever known. Where all men are brothers in the name of Christ. And where there can be no war.

This, then. is the true challenge of God. This is His will and commandment. If any man hears and believes it not and follows it not, he cannot be Christian. And if the church does not renounce war and the preparations of war and preach the way of peace at any cost, then it cannot be the church of God. Now the time is short. The harvest has come. The rockets are aimed and the soldiers ready. The day of judgment is at hand. The church must change now. Or else it will be too late. It will have been only a false church, a false hope . . .

little one." And suddenly it was night again and the church was dark and filled by ghostly figures. The little ones moving in the aisles. Their lights. Their little eyes peeking and laughing. Laughing at him. "You'll never give the sermon." No. Fear could do nothing to him now. He braced himself against the pulpit and stood erect. Death would be waiting for him outside. Under the street lamp. But this time he would be unafraid. He would meet death alone. And this time he would conquer. He would look on the face without fear. He would study the mask, the face, in every detail, would gaze and gaze and gaze on it unafraid and stand straight and tall, unflinching. Death, thou shalt die! He gripped the pulpit in one last, strong grip. God, be with me! And began to walk towards the door. His footsteps echoed in the empty church. Shafts of broken, colored light, streaming with dust, crossed his feet in the aisle. He came to the vestibule, swung open the door, and stepped in. Only one more door and then outside. Under the street lamp - the face of death. One more step. He gripped the door handle. God, be with me, please! And stepped outside.

Bright sunlight was streaming through the trees. A breeze rustled a piece of paper on the steps. A car passed in the street. But the sidewalk was empty. The street lamp stood alone. There was no one there, but he, alone, standing outside, shivering with fear and excitement. What if someone had seen? He looked around. Jamie. His hand arrested on the handle of his little wagon, Jamie stood along the side of the church watching him curiously.

Kris started. What if he should come over and ask what he was doing? "Why are you shivering, Daddy?" But Jamie said nothing. And did not move. But watched. Curiously.

Kris stepped quickly back inside and shut the door. And listened. There was no sound. Jamie was not coming. He turned around and looked at the empty church. Where could he go? He would get the car. But the keys, they were in his room.

As in the night of the vision, he went out the back of the church and across the street. But this time it was daylight and he went around to the back of the house. He held his breath listening, then opened the door and stepped inside the kitchen. Marian was not there. He breathed in relief. He crossed the room and started upstairs. Then stopped and listened. Voices came from the living room. Visitors. Marian was speaking. He shifted his weight without thinking, and the steps creaked . Marian had heard. "Kris, is that you? Kris? Guess who's here."

He was frozen with fear, unable to move. Then he opened the door and came into the kitchen. He felt his face grow strangely distorted, as if he had stepped outside himself and was looking back, seeing himself in some horrible dream, knowing it was only a nightmare, that he was only acting and would soon wake up. He could see every motion of his hand and body, every line of his face, his mouth gaping, his eyes wide with fear, as if asking some terrible question, as if seeing the answer, too terrible to believe. His mother had come.

When she saw his face, Marian give a little cry and almost fainted. She said

nothing, but only backed away from him, backed against the sink, letting him pass.

He went quickly, as in the dream, into the living room and stood before his mother. Yet, all he could see was himself, still acting in the dream, his face distorted. His mother said nothing. He looked at her with that terrible question mark on his face, and suddenly left her and strode back to the kitchen, to Marian.

She had put her hands over her face and her shoulders were shaking. She was sobbing silently. He looked at her, but she didn't dare look back. He felt his eyes grow hard, strange, terrible, piercing as he looked at her. His teeth gritted, his face hard and terrible.

He would not look back. He turned around and went back to the living room. He pierced his mother with that same terrible gaze. She turned her face aside.

And all this time there was no sound but the sound of his footsteps as he went back and forth, back and forth, from the living room to the kitchen, from the kitchen to the living room. Mother to Marian. Marian to Mother.

And all this time his face remained set in that horrible grimace which he saw as in the mirror of dream, hard, cold like stone, like death. He ran up the stairs to his room and got the keys.

Neither Marian nor his mother had moved when he came back down with the keys, opened the front door and, without looking back, ran away from the house.

Then he was in the car driving too fast in the street, his eyes still hard, cold like stone.

Then he was on the highway leaving town, still driving too fast.