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Rain in the Valley

Helen Papanikolas

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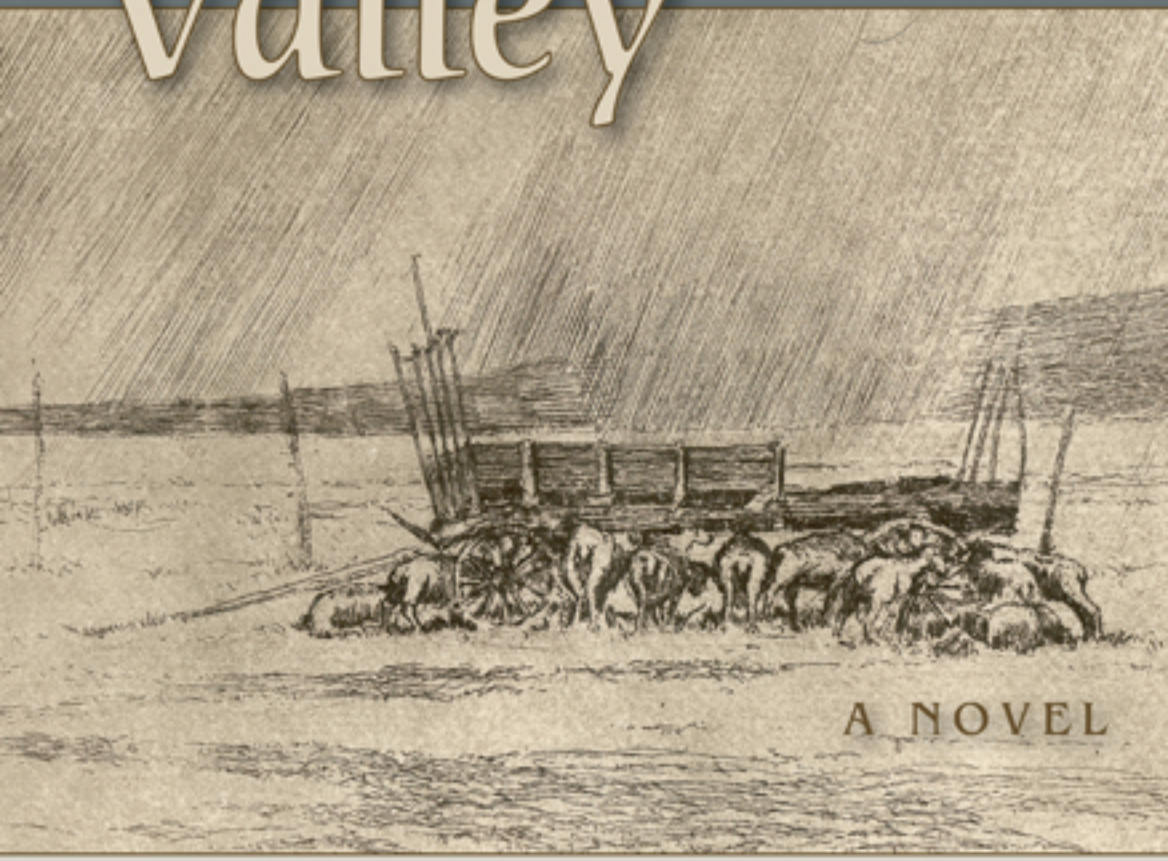

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Helen Zeese Papanikolas entrusted the
final editing of this book to

her son

Zeese Papanikolas

and her grandson

Nick Smart

As she wished, *Rain in the Valley* is dedicated to
her great grandchildren

J. D.

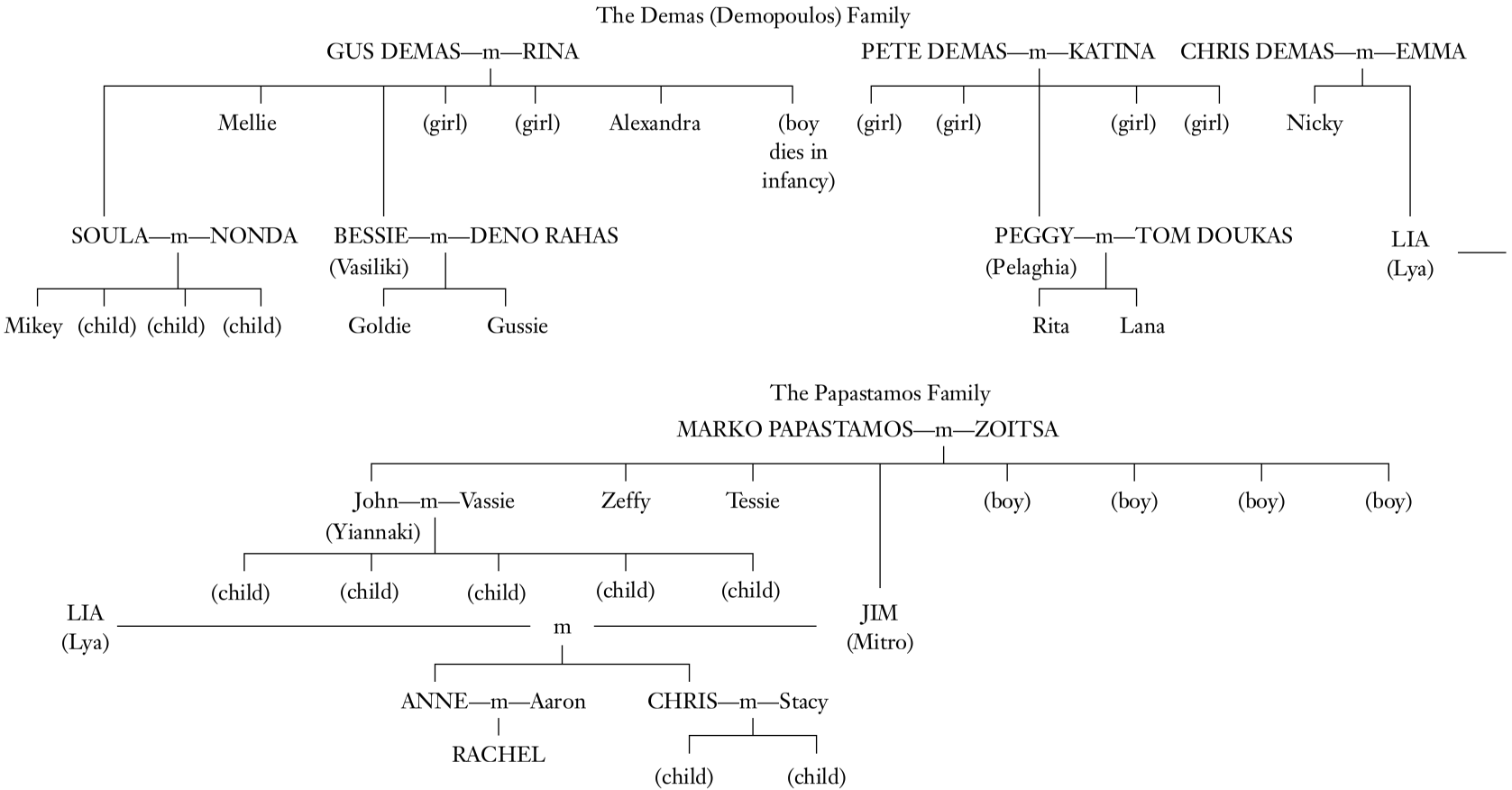
Kallie

Leo

Max

Jackson

May her memory be eternal


The Demas (Demopoulos) Family
GUS DEMAS—m—RINA
Mellie
(girl)
(girl)
Alexandra
(boy dies in infancy)
PETE DEMAS—m—KATINA
(girl)
(girl)
(girl)
(girl)
CHRIS DEMAS—m—EMMA
Nicky
SOULA—m—NONDA
Mikey
(child)
(child)
(child)
BESSIE—m—DENO RAHAS
(Vasiliki)
Goldie
Gussie
PEGGY—m—TOM DOUKAS
(Pelaghia)
Rita
Lana
LIA
(Lya)
The Papastamos Family
MARKO PAPASTAMOS—m—ZOITSA
John—m—Vassie
(Yiannaki)
Zeffy
Tessie
(boy)
(boy)
(boy)
(boy)
(child)
(child)
(child)
(child)
(child)
LIA
(Lya)
m
JIM
(Mitro)
ANNE—m—Aaron
RACHEL
CHRIS—m—Stacy
(child)
(child)

Snow falls on the mountains and rain in the valley
But the door of wedded lovers is made of gold.

—A Greek folk poem

prologue

1915–1922

The commotion in Greek Town reached the nearby grade school, traveled up the one-street western town to Steamboat Mountain, the great jutting rock studded with junipers on its slopes, and circled the imposing two-story yellow brick YMCA that faced the railyards. In the yards coal trains from the thirty-two surrounding mining camps were taking on water for their long haul to eastern cities.

"The Demopoulos name lives in America!" was the cry resounding again and again. Children beat on pans; women with dishtowels tied about their heads stayed the paddles holding dough for their outdoor ovens, and men toasted each other. "At last, a boy is born to the Demopoulos clan! May he live and give joy!" Until then the two older Demopoulos brothers, Gus and Pete, already portly and nearly bald, had only daughters, but now, the youngest of them, Chris, the handsome one, albeit with the family's prominent nose, was the father of a son! Forget that the child's mother was an *Amerikanidha* and that Chris was forced to marry her at the point of her father's gun.

Foolishly he had given a fifteen-year-old waitress at the Grill Café a ride in his new red Buick. On the way back to town a hayrack blocked the way and the farmer with his gangly, toothy son and the sheriff came over. "You ruined my girl's repatation and now you gonna marry her," the old farmer said. Chris protested that he had done nothing bad to her. "Well," the sheriff said, "you should know better than to be seen with a white girl." And so Hristo—Chris—was married to Emma Englehardt in Judge Fitch's crowded living room, where stern pioneer ancestors looked out of oval frames, where crocheted doilies were abundant, and in a recessed gilt frame Mrs. Fitch's

once-golden hair was wound into a flower bouquet. The sweet scent of lilacs came through the windows and would sicken Chris for years.

He drove the stunned Emma to Greek Town. In the center of town women were hanging up wash on clotheslines, children were chasing each other, and older boys and girls were hoeing gardens and guiding irrigation water down the rows. When Chris and Emma arrived a great confrontation began, bigger than any the Demopoulos brothers had had until then. The news had traveled throughout the town with miraculous speed. Chris's two brothers following in the family touring car jumped out shouting at him for blackening the family name. Just as they had become businessmen, someone would throw kerosene on the store and it would all go up in smoke! "We allotted ourselves a half-can of pork and beans, a dry onion, and a fistful of bread to pay our sisters' dowries and get out of the mines and you, brainless jackass, could turn those years we worked the graveyard shift to shit!"

"Demas Brothers Studbaker Agency," Gus, the oldest, sneered. "No American or Mormon will step in to look at our cars now!"

The brothers had changed their names from Kosta, Petro, and Hristo to Gus, Pete, and Chris Demas in 1915 when they got their citizenship papers and bought the car agency. Certainly, they had thought, with a change of names and ownership of a car agency, they would be respected.

"You're no longer a brother of ours!" Gus and Pete shouted.

The older brothers ranted on at Chris while their wives hurried out of their adjoining houses—a telephone call from the coffeehouse had relayed the news. They had to pull Emma, the fifteen-year-old, out of the car and lead her into the cool dark living room of Gus's, the oldest brother's, house. "Let her sleep in my room tonight," Chris said. "I'll find a house."

Directly across from his brothers' houses was an empty one, and on the second day, Chris bought a few pieces of furniture while the girl cleared the cobwebs and dust. The next morning, Rina, Gus's wife, walked through the house early in the morning to check on the sheets as was her responsibility as the oldest woman of the clan in America. Emma was bent over the sink washing her bloodied nightgown. Rina sniffed both in approval and censure.

When Chris awoke he knew he could not stay in the small western coal town. He was a liability to his brothers' new automobile agency. But after he traded back his red Buick for the old family touring car with canvas top and side flaps, he had no idea what to do next.

Marko Papastamos, a fellow villager, dressed in the high-top boots and Stetson hat of livestock owners, gave him the answer. Standing in front of the coffeehouse he said, "Hristo, you have no future here. I'll help you get into the sheep business." He told Chris that Druserre, an immigrant like themselves, a Frenchman, had good ewes for sale and told him what supplies he would need. There was a shack not far from his own ranch in the Colorado mountains that was empty. "I'll loan you Kosta the Crier." Grateful, Chris agreed and shook Papastamos's hand.

The next day Chris picked up mustachioed Kosta outside the coffeehouse. Kosta was another fellow villager, a pair of dime-store eyeglasses well down his hawk nose. He was wearing black wool pants, old and shiny, and a plaid cotton shirt with a faded black wool vest over it. A war medal for service in the Greek-Turkish war of 1912 was pinned to it. Kosta was called the Crier behind his back because his eyes, for no reason anyone knew or could guess, would suddenly fill with tears or he'd be found weeping hard behind the sheep wagon. On that day his big mustaches, twisted into points and already touched with gray, twitched with anger. "My *bossis* loans me to you and I have to treat you like a baby! Forced to leave my *bossis* Papastamos who saved me in this exile. I couldn't read and write my own language and he brought me books in the sheep camp and helped me! Now I have to leave him and teach a light-brain the sheep business!"

A week later Kosta sat on his big brown horse humiliated by the paltry four hundred ewes Chris had bought from Druserre and trailed the band from the eastern Utah winter desert grounds into Colorado. Thousands of sheep owned by other men crowded the dusty road into Craig, Colorado, guided by racing sheepdogs up the Twenty-Mile Road to the summer grazing land.

After three weeks, Chris and Emma took the same road, then followed a smaller one split off on the left and arrived at a filthy, ramshackle cabin. Emma was pregnant but nobody knew it. When Chris opened the door, a sickening odor slapped their faces and Emma ran to the side of the house and vomited. For the next several days she was always on the verge of getting sick, while cooking thick slabs of bacon and eggs for her new husband, sweeping out the mouse and sheep droppings in the house, and gathering cobwebs that hung like wraiths from the ceilings with a cloth-covered broom.

"What sa matter? You no hungry?" Chris asked, seeing her in the hallway holding her stomach. Emma answered by lunging to the door and streaking out of the house. Then it occurred to Chris that

his younger sister-in-law acted in the same way when she was pregnant. He was filled with pride. It showed what a powerful man he was to get this woman pregnant in so short a time.

When the small band of sheep was on its way to the desert winter grounds that fall, Chris and Emma returned to Greek Town. To the sisters-in-law's consternation, Emma was obviously ready to give birth. A quick wedding must follow: Judge Fitch's ceremony was not a real wedding; it had to be a Greek wedding. In the small new Byzantine church, streams of incense mingled with the smells of the lighted candles and the strong-smelling lacquer of the narrow-faced, grieving saints painted on the icon screen took away all the air in the church and left it stifling.

Dots of perspiration formed on Emma's pale forehead. Her satin wedding dress was too large in the shoulders and too snug around the hard swelling that caused mirthful glances from woman to woman and man to man. She stood almost a head taller than Chris and when the best man, the Greek vice-consul Stylian Staes, lifted his short arms to exchange the wedding crowns on the bride and groom's heads, he could not quite reach hers, so Emma's wedding crown lay on her blond head like a hat on a tipsy reveler. A quiet glee went over the congregation.

The reception was held in the backyards of the older brothers' houses. Tables were set up with sawhorses. Lambs on spits, cheese pastries, all the Greek delicacies the immigrants could now afford in America were devoured. Three miners with the instruments they had brought with them from Greece played nostalgic Greek folk tunes; dancing and singing went on until morning, Emma looking on forlornly. At four in the morning she cried out for Chris to get her mother, and after hours of screaming, she delivered the baby boy. Rina told her sister-in-law Katina, "I'll probably have to nurse it, seeing she's straight as a board." Rina had plenty of milk, even though she was nursing one of her own babies. According to tradition, giving of her milk would create a special bond between her and the boy. But Emma disappointed her sister-in-law by not only nursing the baby but continuing to do so for over a year.

The baby Niko was the darling of the neighborhood. When Emma had been read over in church and thereby cleansed forty days after his birth, the aunts Rina and Katina paraded him around the neighborhood, leaving his mother Emma at home. She stood at the living room window, her mouth open as if to call out, her eyes stupified.

For Niko's baptism, coal trains came from all the camps bringing young Greek miners shooting off their pistols in celebration. Emma's mother, father, brother Wardell, and seven younger brothers and sisters, pale, a little ragged in their clean, faded clothes, sat benumbed in the Byzantine church. They stared, surrounded by icons, incense, lighted candles, and the tinkling of the thurible. Later at the banquet in Rina's backyard, they looked at the lambs browning on spits, heard the old-country wail of the clarinet, and said they'd never seen the like.

The aunts kept little Niko supplied with miniature pastries; they bought him little toys. He was handed around from one to the other, and the little girls of the family played with him and took him visiting, where he was welcomed like a little prince. Emma was always searching for him, her face drawn.

It was two years later when Emma and Niko were alone for a rare time. Emma sat in a straight-backed chair to ease her spine while shelling peas. She was pregnant again. In his plump hands, Niko had two small dolls his godfather, the vice-consul, had given him, one a marine, the other a sailor. He brought the dolls together and pulled them away wordlessly again and again, smiling at them.

Suddenly Niko put the dolls down, got to his feet, and walked to Emma. He pulled on her skirt. She looked down at him. He reached up as she bent closer and placed his small hands on either side of her face. "Mamma," he said, "mumum." *Mumum* was Rina and Katina's baby talk for food.

Emma looked at Niko. "Mumum," he said again. For several long moments they looked into each other's eyes, Niko's brown, Emma's blue. The words came to her, *he's mine*.

When Emma was pregnant the second time, Rina said she should not go to the ranch that summer: Emma's mother was a midwife; pregnant women should not be far from midwives and doctors. Emma said quickly, "No, I'm goin' to the ranch." Rina made alarming predictions of what pregnant women faced in the wilds and Katina's forehead wrinkled with worry. "At least leave Niko with us," they said.

"We're only twenty miles from town," Emma explained. She felt light, even happy to leave the sisters-in-law behind, to be up in the clear, cool mountain air, the wild flowers blooming.

"Hristo," Rina said, once more to keep her throne of authority. "What will you do if your woman goes into labor? Far up in the mountains?"

"I'll do what Papastamos does," Chris shrugged. "He's delivered three of his children up there. He said it's no different from a ewe and a lamb." Chris had thought about having Emma stay behind, but preferred having her at the ranch to cook, to take care of the house, and to have little Niko there.

Three days after Chris took Emma and Niko to the cabin, he left them to drive to Wyoming to attend a stock auction. Emma and Niko had finished eating breakfast when the camp tender, bandy-legged Lud with two rows of small tobacco-stained teeth, stopped at the house and called, "Missus, Kost wants to talk to you."

Emma picked up Niko and hurried outside. Kosta was sitting in the cab holding a blood-soaked towel around his right leg. "Lady," he said, his face green beneath his weather-browned skin, "take key to my wagon. Feed dog, Leon. Lud take me to doctor. I cut leg with knife."

Emma put the key, strung with dirty twine, into one of her pockets. She went back into the house with Niko holding on to her skirt. She filled one of his old nursing bottles with water and put several zwieback toasts in the other pocket of her apron. Then she thought she'd better write a note to Chris. *At Kosta camp*, she wrote in big letters, leaving the note under a water glass on the table.

Emma and Niko walked slowly to the meadow. Emma knew Niko would tire soon and she would have to place him on top of her big stomach for the mile or so ahead. Sooner than she had hoped, she had to lift him up and trudge ahead. When they reached the pines on the left, she sat down on a big flat rock and sang to Niko, who was both restless and sleepy: "Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam. Where the deer and the antelope play . . . ." Niko was already asleep. Carefully Emma pulled herself up: the longer he slept, the easier it would be for her.

A half-hour later, she reached Kosta's sheep wagon. His dog Leon saw her in the distance and came running, ears perked, growling low. "It's all right, Leon," she said, and on hearing his name, the dog stood still. Emma had to wake Niko and set him on his feet while she climbed on a stool and unlocked the door. Leon and Niko looked at each other. Emma lifted Niko into the wagon and Leon waited outside.

Kosta was known for being clean and "picky"—as the sheepmen said—about his wagon. Across the back end was his bunk bed, made up and covered with a khaki-colored army blanket. Above it was the window, kept spotless so Kosta could look through it at night when

the sheep were milling about, which meant a coyote or mountain lion was nearby. Above the window was a shot gun in a sling at arm's reach and next to it an icon of the Virgin and Child. Both sides of the wagon were fitted with wooden shelves where Kosta had placed his cups, plates, and utensils and had set cans of beans, fruit, and vegetables in rigid order. Close to the small wood stove, shiny from oiling, cloth bags of flour and sugar stood against the wall.

Emma opened a can of horse meat for Leon and with Niko watching from the door, she let herself down carefully and found the dog's tin plate under the wagon. She added water to Leon's chipped enamel basin from the canvas bags that hung on the north side of the wagon. Leon perked his ears, looked at Emma, and began eating.

Emma then made a survey of the shelves to see what she could make for lunch. She opened a can of peaches and found a jar of peanut butter. Evidently Lud had brought it by mistake because it had never been used. A half-loaf of bread Kosta had baked was in a battered green bread box. While his mother prepared lunch, Niko, sitting on Kosta's bed, watched with interest. At the side of the bed was a table on hinges: Emma pulled it up and they were ready to eat.

An hour passed, then another. Emma looked through the open door for Lud's mud-splattered truck. Niko wanted to go outside and Emma with great effort helped him to the ground. Then they stood and watched Leon in the distance running around the sheep. Niko laughed and clapped his hands. In late afternoon, her heart beating rapidly, Emma brought out the shotgun and looked far off at the sheep while Niko made little piles of pebbles nearby. Coyotes pounced at sunrise and sunset: she looked for stirrings among the band.

Dusk came. The sheep were browsing again. Emma did not know what to do. There was enough food on the shelves and plenty of water in the canvas bags hanging on the outside. She made a small fire in the stove, but Niko did not like the canned beans and the scrambled eggs without butter she served him. So Emma boiled some prunes for him, who loved sweets. Naturally, she thought, the aunts Rina and Katina had seen to that. She mixed some canned milk with water; Niko would not drink it. Emma could not waste food and drank it herself.

Dusk became evening and Emma gave up hope that Lud would return with Kosta. She took some dishcloths from the shelves and spread them over Kosta's bed, undressed Niko, and sang him more songs until he fell asleep. Night was coming quickly. She lighted the kerosene lamp and lay down next to Niko. She did not want to sleep;

she wanted to be able to hear Lud's truck, pick up Niko, and go back to her house.

At night she lay awake knowing the sheep should have been watered at the big tank near the sheep wagon. There was no way she could lead them to it. She strained to listen for sounds from the bedded-down sheep. Far off a coyote howled. She sat straight up, looking at the shotgun. The howling came closer. Emma thought quickly: *Should she open the door and stand on the tongue of the wagon with the gun in her hands? See if Leon was circling the sheep?* There were no stars; what could she see in pitch dark?

She opened the door to the wagon and listened. For many more minutes she heard the howling, then it stopped. She locked the door and went back to bed where Niko slept on peacefully.

Another day began. Emma placed the shotgun against the tongue of the wagon. She and Niko stayed outside most of the time, Niko running around, laughing, loving his freedom, Emma looking beyond the pines to the open space where Lud's truck would suddenly appear: the sheep should be watered. The day went on much as the first; the night brought more howling. A determination grew like a stone inside her: She would not let coyotes destroy Chris's sheep. They were hers and Niko's sheep too.

She kept the shotgun by the side of the door and on the third day, afraid that Kosta had died or was badly injured, she prepared for another night with Niko in the sheep wagon. Then as she threw a basin of dishwater out the wagon door, she saw a car coming, raising dust. It was Chris.

Emma picked up Niko and they stood outside waiting for the car to stop. "What the old man devil!" Chris shouted, running over to them, eyes big, frightened. He grabbed Niko from Emma's arms and cuddled him. "Where's Kosta? Where's Lud?"

Emma told what she knew and Chris stared at her. He thought: *My woman's a leventissa. Courage like a man's, like the women who fought the Turks.* He could hardly wait to tell Marko Papastamos, his brothers Gus and Pete, his sisters-in-law, everybody!

"You watch the sheep good," Chris said and "I find out where that gypsy Lud is and I cut off his *ghidhia*, leaving you and my boy alone with the coyotes!"

Emma could see he was pleased with her.

During the two years between Niko's birth and that of the new baby, a girl, Gus and Pete's agency had become solid, profitable. They did

not, though, put all their money into the Helper State Bank, fearing bank failures and other nameless forces ready to snatch it. They hid part of what they earned here and there and only the two of them knew where the metal safety deposit boxes were. Their wives again had baby girls. Emma would have no more children, although she did nothing to prevent it.

The new baby, a girl named after Chris's godmother Emilia, was called Lya—a name with only one syllable—by her aunts and Lia by her mother. She was born shortly after Rina's fourth girl, Vasiliki, and Katina's third daughter, Pelaghia. The three little girls were brought up as sisters and spent the day in one or the other of the Demas houses. The houses were the vanguard of Greek Town, a half-circle with a dirt courtyard; the older Demas brothers lived next door to each other and Chris and Emma with their children directly across from them.

As infants the three little girls were put on a kitchen floor with chairs set on their sides to pen them in. From their earliest days they knew one certain truth: Rina was the boss of the three houses. Rina went outside when the bang of the meat cart announced the arrival of butchered lamb and chose enough for the three houses; Rina scrutinized the beautiful linens displayed by the Lebanese women peddlers and the gaudy ones sold by the gypsies and again bought for the three houses; Rina presided over the many weddings of bachelors and their new wives, mostly picture brides from mainland Greece and Crete, sometimes a Serbian, occasionally an Italian or an American with her lips pursed.

The aunts were always cooking for Greek sojourners stopping by the western town looking for fellow villagers or for a labor agent to give them work. Rina was thin faced and tight lipped. Katina mostly had a smile on her foolish face but would also weep copiously for her family in Greece, over mine disasters, and especially over her hand-embroidered dowry, which her husband Pete had told her to leave behind: "America has better. Machine made."

The cooking took most of each day. Rina set Emma to work, showing her how to chop onions as if she could not possibly know

the intricacies of kitchen work, explaining in her haphazard Greek-English how to grind lamb for *dolmadhes*, *pastitsio*, and *mousaka*, and teaching her the great importance of smooth lemon-egg sauces. Silently, Emma also did the ironing of the men's shirts, dozens of them, hanging on a line across the corner of Rina's kitchen.

The little girls, meanwhile, slept on piles of coats in the bedrooms, were fed regularly, and that was the extent of their nurturing. As they began to speak, they used English words learned from Emma and Greek words from Rina and Katina. But the girls were not allowed to use English in Rina and Katina's houses. Very early Lia understood a stark truth: her mother was the *Amerikanidha* and the aunts looked at each other when they used the word.

On the little girls played in their pen, sometimes hitting each other, admonished with shrills from Rina. The war was hard on them all. Rina threatened Katina for endlessly keening the laments, the *mirologhia*, and weeping over her brother killed while fighting with the Greek army. Her husband Pete offered to slap her good if she continued. Rina saw to it that the rationed sugar and butter were divided among the three houses but decried the lack of olive oil. She and Katina returned to village cooking, dressing the lentils, beans, and vegetables sparsely. Chris often sent a butchered lamb down from camp and Rina expertly hacked it into pieces.

Beyond Greek Town, the Americans shouted taunts at the Greeks and the other immigrants: "Biting the hand that feeds you! Go back where you come from!" Regularly at night, words made with hard soap emblazoned the windows of the Demas Brothers Studebaker Agency: DIRTY GREEKS; on Stein's, KIKES; on the Double Rock Store, WOPS. The Demas agency displayed an American flag in their showroom window and all the immigrant store owners followed suit.

Rina and Katina prayed earnestly at their icons, lighted tall candles in the little Byzantine church, and bargained with *tamas*, vows of what they would do if their husbands were saved from the army. Rina pledged a chapel in the lonely mountains beyond her village, secretly hoarding silver dollars, hidden from Gus under her dowry linens in the hump-backed trunk that had come with her to America. Katina pledged a more modest *tama.* To keep her husband from battle she would clean the little church every Holy Week and fill it with flowers. For their brother-in-law Chris, that stupid man who brought an *Amerikanidha* who couldn't speak a word of Greek into the house, they did nothing.

When the war was over all the Demas men were safe. But Chris was prosperous: the army had worn his wool and eaten his meat. He bought two thousand more ewes, driving them into the Mormon sheepmen's territory in central Utah and as far as southern Idaho and eastern Wyoming.

After the armistice, Rina's husband bribed coffeehouse habitues with twenty-five cents apiece to vote for him and was elected president of the church. "If the mayor of our village could see me now," he gloated. "Him with his nose up in the air." While Gus was boasting, a Cretan killed a Peloponnesian over Greek politics and the Greek vice-consul Stylian Staes said he would go back to his job reporting for the *National Herald* in New York if the young men didn't stop causing disturbances that sent him running to the courthouse almost daily. Greek Town was busier than ever and so were the Demas houses. The linoleum covering the floors was replaced with carpets; the plain wooden chairs and sofas with skimpy pillows were gone; massive gray-brown plush furniture appeared instead; and each house had a small, dome-shaped radio on a table for the fathers to listen to the evening news. The little girls began talking in sentences and had their ears bombarded by Rina and Katina's hectoring over the contamination the war had brought: Women's skirts began getting shorter until they reached the knees; "women of the streets" had always smoked openly, but now the wives of doctors, attorneys, and merchants drove down Main Street with cigarettes in their mouths. Greek Town gossip told of Saturday night parties in "the good part of town" under Steamboat Mountain, where phonographs blared and bootleggers, including their own Barba Yianni, drove up at all hours to replenish whiskey supplies. A mining-camp doctor and the city attorney died of morphine overdoses. Emma worked on, mute, wondering what the sisters-in-law were hysterical over.

"Attention! Attention!" Rina screeched. "We have to save our children until we can return to our country!" (Gus and Pete made no effort to contradict the idea that they would go back one day to Greece.) The mothers would have to be more diligent about their children's Greek school attendance and about teaching them the Greek *ethoi* and *ethnimata*—customs and nationalism.

For Emma, the only relief from the noise and commotion in the houses of her sisters-in-law were the Sundays when Niko's godfather, the vice-consul Stylian Staes, came for dinner. The vice-consul spoke English on those Sundays, and if Chris lapsed into Greek, he admonished him: "What rudeness is this? Your wife doesn't understand Greek. "

(This was not quite true, as Rina and Katina found out one day when Emma was pregnant with Lia. They discussed her going to Barba Yianni, the bootlegger and folkhealer, to ask if she would have another boy—he was never wrong according to the women of Greek Town. "*Dhen thelo*," Emma answered: *I don't want to.*)

The vice-consul also reprimanded Chris when he lied, such as over the telephone when a caller interrupted their dinner, "Yes, I do it tomorrow. I been away to my ship long time."

The vice-consul said, "I saw you down town yesterday. Don't you think this man could have seen you too and know you lied about being with your sheep?"

Emma smiled.

The vice-consul had come to Chris's rescue a few years before he married when he had been arrested for disturbing the peace over a game of *barbouti*. Getting the young Greeks out of jail was one of his main duties. He also interpreted for them and drilled many of them to pass the examination for citizenship papers ("No, I am not a polygamist"; "No, I am not a criminal"; "Yes, I forget my country. This is my country.") If the immigrant were a *kserokefalos*, a wooden-head like Pete, the vice-consul talked to the judge about this hard-working Greek who had a good heart. If this failed, he brought him a gallon of Barba Yianni's wine.

The vice-consul spoke grammatically correct English, better than the doctors and lawyers of the county. It also put him in good standing among the Americans that he had light skin, blue eyes, and did not look Greek at all. The local newspaper regularly reported his activities in the "What's Happening" column: "Stylian Staes motored to Salt Lake City on government business last Thursday. He will return Saturday." Although he was the vice-consul for Utah, Nevada, Idaho, and Wyoming, his office was in Helper because of the thousands of Greeks working in the mines.

The mothers' cries over American sins went on and no longer caused the little girls to lift their heads at the commotion. By the time they were four years old they were inured to the constant bombarding of shouts, exclamations, and laments. Sensing the need to be calm in this frenzy beyond their circle, they played quietly with kitchen utensils, colored wooden balls, and small celluloid dolls, their three heads bent together, touching.

Lia's hair was pale like her mother Emma's, Pelaghia's black and curly like Katina's, and Vasiliki's straight and thin like Rina's. When they stood up, Lia was the tallest—her legs were long and thin;

Pelaghia was the shortest, short like her mother Katina; and Vasiliki, though of average height, was thick around the middle. Pelaghia had a village prettiness; her round face and large dark eyes were accented by the bright ribbons Katina brought to a bow on her forehead. They called each other's mothers *Thitsa*, Little Aunt, even Emma.

Of all the children in Greek Town, Nicky was the most privileged. When shortages ceased and the scents of cinnamon and honey pastry floated over Greek Town, the Thitsas came to their front doors and called, "Nikolaki! Come! Eat!" Lia knew her family was special because of Nicky. He was often gone for hours, standing at the side of his father in either the pickup truck or the green Studebaker car, bought just as war had been declared. He was no more than a year old when his father Chris had begun taking him along while he looked over ewes for sale or talked with his attorney or went to the bank. Afterwards they had a root beer float or an ice cream sundae at the Palace Candy Store. The sweets often gave Nicky a stomach ache. Chris brought him back to Emma with diapers sopping and worse.

From the time Nicky was five years old, his father took him beyond the county borders, where the ancient tradition of raising sheep went on before his big, intent eyes. He was both the pet and the burden of the sheepherders and camp tenders. At times Chris would leave him clinging to a fence and go off to see how the docking, lambing, shearing, and paint branding were proceeding, and the men knew they had better see that Nicky was safe from knives, fire, and rampaging ewes and rams.

Nicky was mesmerized as the male lambs were castrated and docked, the men with flashing knives pulling out testicles with their teeth, clipping the tips of the ears, cutting off the tail with a fiery hot blade, leaving the lamb no longer a buck but a wether. When lunch time came, Nicky watched the testicles frying over a camp fire and ate hungrily. At shearing, he squealed at the rams butting and squirming out of control. Chris laughed at it all.

In summers, whenever Chris, Emma, and their children walked down the streets in Craig, people looked at them lingeringly. Chris, muscular, darkly handsome; Emma, a head taller, so pale blue veins showed through her skin, her blonde hair, now cut, parted at one side and held in place with a tortoise clasp; and the two children. Beautiful children, people said, and there was some talk about the races marrying and bringing forth these uncommonly beautiful children. Nicky walked with determined independence, olive-skinned, large brown flashing eyes, and curly black hair; Lia held her mother's hand,

a golden hue to her face, her eyes, also large, but gray, the lashes black, and her hair light and slightly curled.

Whether in Greek Town or on the ranch in summer, Nicky paid no special attention to the family's girls. Sometimes, though, he had to tell them of a wonderful sight. The first time he saw a ewe tricked to take an orphan lamb in place of her dead one, he ran, out of breath, eyes round, and burst out, "The mother's lamb was borned dead and there was a bum lamb with no mother and they skinned the dead lamb and tied his hide to the live lamb and took him to the mother and fooled her and she let him drink her milk!"

The little girls looked at Nicky as if he were an interesting visitor. They had only one connection with sheep. In the Colorado mountains where the sheep summered, wires strung around sapling tree trunks formed a corral. Inside were several goats, old ewes, sheep wounded by errant shears, and the bum lambs whose mothers had either rejected them or were dead. When the families visited in the mountains, it was the girls' daily duty to feed the bums with goat milk in large-nippled bottles. The girls had favorite lambs and gave them names: Cinderella, Mary Quite Contrary, Baby Peggy—a child actress—and Bubbles. They had no idea that the bums had been mostly male until they were docked and that when they returned to school in autumn, the lambs would be on their way to market.

After feeding the bum lambs, the cousins tried to imitate the older girls in the family by playing hopscotch but gave up and ran to the meadow to pick flowers. Every spring the ewes trampled the meadow on the way to the grazing grounds, but by mid-summer the plants recovered and spread a panorama of color under the blue skies, which Chris said were like those of his own Greece.

In town the three girls often fell asleep in one of the Demas houses during name day, Christmas, New Year's, and Easter celebrations and the mothers let them sleep wherever they were. When they woke up, they had breakfast and then began their play again with much-used dolls inherited from the older girls in the family and changed into make-belief babies. They could also spend an hour at a time turning the pages of Sears and Montgomery Ward catalogs that eventually found their way into the privies. The cousins shopped for best friends, choosing from the many pretty little girls in fluffy dresses.

Soula, Rina's oldest daughter, was set to tending the girls. A braid falling over each shoulder, she would lean over Katina's sewing basket to choose scraps of cloth to make dresses for clothes-pin dolls

with round-top heads. From the hollyhocks growing in the garden among tomatoes, cucumbers, potatoes, carrots, and string beans, she made little ballerinas. If the girls misbehaved, Rina hit Soula with the *blasti*, the broomstick she used for rolling out *filo* dough. While Soula shrieked, the little girls ran to Emma's house. They were wary of Rina's *blasti*, even though it had not yet been used on them. Instead, Rina ran after them with the *koutala*, a large wooden spoon, or gave them *tryftes*, twisting pinches. Emma demanded in half-Greek, half-English, "What mischief did you girls do? Do you think it's nice for Soula to git a whippin' because you girls are naughty?"

"Soula," Emma said, "you shouldn't let the girls git you in trouble. Stand up for yourself. Tell your mother it's not your fault."

"It doesn't matter." Soula looked at the brown linoleum on the kitchen floor. "She wouldn't pay any attention to me."

Soula took the girls to the thunder jug, then to the privy when they were older, fed them, and washed their faces and hands. She hushed their cries when, restless, they carelessly hit each other with the wooden spoons she gave them to bang on pans.

Sometimes in Stein's or Galanis's Golden Rule Store, Emma bought Soula a small gift: a little green velvet money purse, a miniature mirror, ribbons in satin pinks and blues. She always had a little money to spend, which was a new freedom. The Demas men, like all Greek husbands in the neighborhood, took for granted that their wives were thrifty. Emma's unkempt, gray-whiskered father had flushed a dark red and demanded from her mother where every penny went—even though most of the little they had came from her delivering babies throughout the county.

Once or twice a month, Emma took Nicky and Lia to see her family on the farm. There they sat in the kitchen while Emma's brothers and sisters, in their teen years, looked at them silently and took the cookies outside that Emma had brought to eat. Emma's brothers and sisters stopped attending school at the end of the eighth grade, the boys working with their father on his small farm and hiring out during planting and harvesting, usually to sugar beet farmers north of the county. The girls married farm boys soon after they turned fifteen or sixteen.

Nicky and Lia were polite and mostly silent on their visits to the farm. Their grandfather asked them if they were good children and Nicky and Lia nodded, their big eyes afraid. Their grandfather then walked to the door. "Well, I'll go water the horses," he would say, or "Got to go to the ditch. My irrigation turn."

Emma's mother looked at Nicky and Lia with smiles deepening the mass of premature wrinkles on her face. "You take good care of the children, Emma," her mother said once. Emma and the children always left after fifteen minutes. Emma timed the visits by the clock on top of the stove. Her sisters and brothers watched Emma, Lia, and Nicky get into the car, again silently. Nicky saw the youngest, a seventh-grader, his uncle, on the school grounds, but they never spoke; they looked at each other, then went their way.

Lia went without complaint to see the American grandparents. Nicky demurred but got into the car with a comic book. As they were leaving one day, Emma's brother Wardell came from the fields and snickered about their father Chris: "Well, kids, how's your old man? Got a new car to show off to the girls?" Wardell's big teeth were bared in a smile of satisfaction.

Emma glared at him, her face a bright red. "Watch your mouth, Wardell, before I tell Chris on you." She hurried the children into the car and drove off, giving Wardell a look of hate.

Vasiliki and Pelaghia begged to go with Lia and Nicky to the farm, "to see the horses." They saw plenty of horses around town, but their curiosity was insatiable. Lia did not want them to go to the farm. Her cousins would gape at everything, see how poor her grandparents were, and they would tell their mothers, who would look at Emma and talk about her in Greek.

When Emma finally did take Vasiliki and Pelaghia with her and Lia one afternoon the girls sat like stone dolls in the kitchen, said nothing on the way home, and didn't ever ask again to visit the isolated farm.

On Saturdays, Soula once in a while took the little girls to the Saturday matinees at the Strand Theater. Most of the children in the neighborhood trooped there. Classmates from Wop Town, Bohunk Town, and the railroad houses sat in the dark while a woman with marcelled hair thumped on the piano, soft music or loud, or frantic, whatever the screen action needed. First the Pathé News came on, followed by a short subject like the Ford assembly line spewing out cars, then came the most important segment for the children, the comedies: men dressed like old-time cops running around and getting in everyone's way; people having cream pies smashed on their faces; and best of all the Our Gang kids, whose adventures were funny whether the children could read the flashes of dialogue or not. The serial was next, mostly of Pauline, who at the end of each episode was

tied to railroad tracks with a freight engine bearing down on her, or thrown over a cliff, or stood facing desperados, but always survived for the next Saturday matinee. Last came the main event, sometimes Harold Lloyd or Charlie Chaplin in a comedy, or most interesting for the older girls like Soula and the Papastamos daughters, movie love. They leaned forward, breathless, as Rudolph Valentino looked at them theatrically, or John Barrymore soulfully, or Douglas Fairbanks impishly.

They all liked the cowboy movies. Boys whooped as Tom Mix and his horse Tony raced to beat the outlaws. Some of them brought paper bags filled with sandwiches and apples to sustain them for the second showing when they would leave the Strand in the dark.

The little girls had their favorites: Lia wanted to be like Mary Pickford when she grew up; Vasiliki said Gloria Swanson was prettier; and Pelaghia chose Clara Bow. "Why do you like Clara Bow?" Soula asked, her voice rising with worry. "You could see right through her dress. You could see her—everything."

Pelaghia raised her arms and moved her hips sinuously as Clara Bow had done in the movie. "Stop that, Pelaghia! If our mothers knew we saw things like that in the movies, we'd never get to go." Pelaghia turned her head and looked away, still moving her hips about. "Pelaghia! You're only five years old!"

Sometimes the three little girls quarreled, the aggrieved one running to her own house, but soon coming back and unobtrusively picking up the play without a word. At those times they paid more attention to what they were doing, dressing paper dolls or looking through catalogs, glad to have an armistice silently declared.

Each was fearful and excited because they had been told that they would be starting school. Vasiliki babbled endlessly about school—who they would play with, who would be their best friends; Lia and Pelaghia were silent, gazing wide-eyed in the direction of the school.

2

They were five years old when they began first grade. No rules as to age existed and their mothers sent them early "to get a good start," as Rina said. Rina and Katina had made the sign of the cross in front of the family icon to start the day propitiously. Emma also had an icon, which Chris's mother had sent after receiving his belated letter telling of his marriage and the birth of Nicky. "May this icon keep and protect you by the grace of Christ and His Mother," the village letter writer had written for his mother. Chris had been immensely relieved and placed the icon in Nicky's room with orders to Emma to keep the vigil light burning. Most often Emma forgot, but on the first day of school, Chris himself lighted the taper floating on a layer of olive oil in a glass of water.

Then the girls left the compact world of Greek Town for the boundless, uncertain American world. On that first day of school, Soula and her sister Vasiliki stopped first at Pelaghia's house and had to wait while Katina beat an egg yolk with sugar in a glass and then added warm milk. Pelaghia watched with a little smile on her lips and drank the sweetened milk. Although she was hardly ever sick, her mother worried that she looked *hlomy*, wan. Soula called Lia and they walked out of Greek Town.

The sky was a deep blue; the air was still with the acrid scents of junipers on the mountain slopes and a far-off burning of autumn leaves. Coal trains whistled, clattering as they came down the narrow canyons and into town. From everywhere, from the yellow and brown railroad houses, from Wop Town and Bohunk Town at Dugout, from north of town where new brick houses were being built, the children came. Some girls wore home-sewn dresses; a few boys were proud of their new gray-striped overalls, but most were in faded handed-down ones that were too short at the ankles or too large everywhere.

Trooping after Soula, the girls marched toward the barren school yard. They laughed nervously at seeing the two-story yellow brick schoolhouse with a giant stride, six teeter totters, and four swings. Soula took them to the first-grade room, the same one where she had sat several years earlier not knowing a word of English. Soula told the girls to sit at the desks near the front of the room and to be still and fold their hands. She would see them at recess, and at noon they would meet by the swings to have lunch. Soula carried a large, black-domed lunch pail that held sandwiches, apples, and a thermos of milk for herself and the girls. The girls gazed after her, then, eyes big, at the teacher.

The teacher was a middle-aged widow with puffed hennaed hair sweeping from her ears to the top of her head where it lay coiled. She examined the roll of student names and told them to stand up, one after another, and tell what their nationalities were. Their hearts pounding, Vasiliki, Pelaghia, and Lia creaked out, "Greek," when their turns came. Next, the teacher called out the names of some of the students and told them to come to her desk—she smelled of moist violet-scented powder. Serbian Milka, she said, was now Millie; Italian Pascalena was Lena from then on. Rina's Vasiliki could be either Vassie or Bessie—she chose Bessie; Katina's Pelagia was to be Peggy. Lia was not called up; Emma had enrolled her as Emily, but outside of school she was still called Lia.

The teacher then asked two girls, sitting on the front row, to pass out pencils and paper. The students were to copy the alphabet she had written on the blackboard. While the students bent over their tablets, the teacher sat at her desk and looked through a magazine.

At recess Soula pointed out the giant stride, a pole with long chains ending in horizontal rods that children held on to while they ran faster and faster, then lifted their feet and glided in circles high above the dirt ground. The little girls watched children on the giant stride, the teeter totters, and the swings, but they shyly held back when Soula told them to get in line for their turns. When students took possession of any of the equipment, they tried to keep it as long as they could until other children called them names.

Most of the children ran around chasing each other, laughing hysterically as if they had been imprisoned inside the pale brick school that smelled of age and urine. Neighboring children from Greek Town ran too. The Greek-Town boys played marbles with Nicky and his best friend, Jim Papastamos, and dark boys from Wop Town and Bohunk Town.

"Soula," Bessie said to her sister, "the teacher told two girls to pass out the pencils and paper and then she wrote some words for us to learn and told a boy to wipe them off with an eraser."

"That's what teachers do."

"But she only asked the American kids, not us."

"Yes, I know. Why don't you chase each other?"

They did, laughing like all the others on the playground. Suddenly a great swell of boys congregated in front of the schoolhouse and took sides, the immigrant boys on one side of the cement walk and those calling themselves American or Mormon, on the other side. They shouted at each other and the cacophony echoed against the rock mountains—from the "Americans": "Dirty Greeks!"; "Wops eat slops!"; "Dumb Bohunks!"; "Sappy Japs!" and "Niggers! Niggers!" to the few Japanese and black students who stayed on the periphery of the school yard. From the immigrant boys: "Shitty bastards!"; "Piss-poor cowards!"; "Step over the line! We dare you!"; "Wear your religion round your asses!" (meant for the Mormon children whose parents wore temple garments—special underwear that hung on lines on wash day, even though the mothers tried to keep them camouflaged with towels thrown over them).

The bell rang, and Bessie, Peggy, and Lia held hands tightly as they hurried back to the classroom. Painstakingly, they copied out the alphabet again. Just before the noon bell rang, the teacher read them a story about a rabbit that could talk. Then they went out to the swings. Soula handed out the lamb sandwiches and apples and had them take turns drinking milk from the thermos cup. She said not a word and the younger girls were silent too, looking at her with uneasy glances. When the last bell rang, they followed Soula to Greek school. Their blunted eyes were downcast.

Greek school was held in an old frame building painted tan. The school was across the road from Barba Yianni's house. With his hand raised in greeting, Barba Yianni of the great mustaches stood on the front porch under an arch of white flowering vine.

The school had once been a butcher shop and the hooks on which carcasses of beef and lamb had been hung still jutted from the low ceiling. In a corner of the ceiling, a long, filmy cobweb had been overlooked, and the two narrow windows, one on each side of the room, looked as if they had been sandblasted into opaqueness. Rows of benches attached to long planks served as desks.

The boys sat on the right with an empty space separating them from the girls on the left. A pot-bellied stove stood near the scarred

table that served as the teacher's desk; behind it was a dark green blackboard nailed to the grayed wall. A Greek flag stood in one corner and an American flag opposite it. Next to a window on the right side was an old, fly-specked poster of King Constantine in his army uniform and on the left several pictures, curled at their edges, of the great guerrilla leaders of the Revolution of 1821 against the Turks.

The teacher, a small thin man with a meager mustache and folds pulling the corners of his mouth down, did not keep the youngest students long. He gave them old primers and told them to copy the alphabet at the front of the books and return the next day with them. "Go right home," he told them with a sigh, then turned to the older students and began to harangue them for looking glum, coming to school without enthusiasm for the greatest language in the world, the language that had given light to the world, the language that . . .

A few months later in early spring of 1922, the United Mine Workers went on strike with their old complaints of long hours, poor pay, and dangerous work. The Greek miners walked out immediately; from their first days in the mine they had clamored of being cheated on the weighing machines. The fist fights on the school grounds now pitted miners' sons against those whose fathers were straw-bosses, store owners, doctors, and lawyers and who lived at the foot of Steamboat Mountain, "the good part of town."

Rumors flew about like befuddled bees. Stylian Staes gave unheeded counseling: "Don't carry your guns with you!" Bessie, Peggy, and Lia heard bewildering talk that strikebreakers on a train bound for the Scofield mine district were met by strikers and mine guards, who shot at each other, wounding a mine guard and two Greeks. The strikers in the surrounding mining camps were forced out of their houses and set up tents south of Greek Town.

After school one day, in the few minutes before they were to be in Greek school, Bessie, Peggy, and Lia ran to the road leading out of town and saw the tents. Wash hung on lines strung between poles, and women were cooking on small camp stoves outside the tents. The girls heard babies crying. "We better go back," Bessie said, and they ran to Greek school, where Soula stood outside watching for them, her forehead wrinkled anxiously. "Where have you been? Teacher is asking!" She pulled Bessie's braid. "Do you want me to tell Mama?" Lia and Peggy gave Soula wavering glances: they thought Soula wouldn't tell, but still couldn't be completely sure. Bessie looked at her sister with terror.

The girls' hair was moist with perspiration. They did not answer Soula but hurried past with lowered heads into the classroom. Bessie was the last in line. "Oh, go on," Soula said, and the girls knew everything would be all right.

The teacher glowered, but resumed his tirade against the Americans who thought they were better than the immigrants, those Americans who thought this was their country. "When they tell you to go back to your country, you tell them you were born here! Tell them this country belonged to the Indians, not to them!"

Very little was accomplished that day; the older children were set to conjugating verbs, but the teacher paid scant attention. He sat at his desk tapping the thick ruler on his palm—the ruler he used to hit the back of unruly boys' hands. His lips moved in silent conversation with himself.

At five-thirty when school ended, the children ran to their houses. Some of the mothers were standing on their porches with their hands clasped, looking in the direction of Greek school. Bessie stumbled up to her mother Rina, who scolded, "Clumsy! Can't you be more careful? Now what is it?" and breathlessly Bessie and her older sisters told their mother about the fights on the school grounds and about the Greek schoolteacher's outburst. Rina interrogated her daughters, especially Soula. "Did you keep the girls together? Did you watch them like you should?"

Soula nodded vigorously, her face pale. Katina's face was as red as a tomato. "Pelaghia," she screeched and grabbed Peggy's shoulders. Peggy's older sisters glanced at each other and rolled their eyes, their usual expression at their mother's preoccupation with Peggy.

In the mornings Pete filled his car with the girls in the family and drove them the short distance to the school grounds. The boys in the neighborhood walked to school in a group.

One evening, when the American Legion was having a meeting in Liberty Hall, Jim Papastamos, Nicky, and other Greek-Town boys crouched under the windows and heard a commander rail that the most of the strikers were un-American immigrants, biting the hand that fed them. "Deportation is the only answer for this flotsam on our shores!" the commander shouted. The immigrant veterans had not been told about the meeting, but their godsons rushed to the coffeehouse with the news.

Lia could not drink even a glass of cocoa in the morning. She gagged on it. Bessie filled her pockets with *koulourakia* and nibbled on them without stopping, and Peggy drank the usual glass of warm

milk and sugar with two egg yolks. They walked on the streets holding hands, looking at their shoes when people outside Greek Town passed by them.

Two weeks after the strike began a Cretan miner was shot and killed by a deputy sheriff. Cretans from the town and the surrounding mining camps, almost eight hundred of them, men, women, and children, dressed in black, carrying small blue and white Greek flags, followed the hearse through town. The Demas women and their silent children—Bessie, Peggy, and Lia in front—stood where Main Street ended and the county road began to watch the cortege and made the sign of the cross as the hearse passed by. The marchers then got into cars for the drive to the Greek Orthodox church in Price.

After the Liturgy for the Dead, the mourners walked behind the casket to the Price graveyard. The procession was led by two young miners, one holding the Greek flag, the other the American flag. Suddenly the Greek school teacher ran to the front of the procession and struck matches, trying to set fire to the American flag. Stylian Staes and other Greeks ran to him, wrestled him to the ground, and put him on the next train out of town.

After the funeral the mothers sat in Rina's house trying to understand. They wondered if the dead Cretan had a mother still alive and sisters waiting for him to provide them with dowries. "Those Americans! What do they care?" Rina folded her arms over her slack bosom and intoned the proverb: "Twenty lashes on another's ass, what's that to them?" The children held hands and jumped happily in circles at not having to go to Greek school. Not knowing why they were gleeful, the mothers admonished them to be respectful of the dead.

"The Greeks are their own worst enemy," Emma said. "Why did they have to carry them little Greek flags? They just make the Americans mad at them." Rina and Katina stared at her, frowning with incomprehension. "What did she say?" Katina asked Rina. Emma left the house without saying goodbye. "What a mouth she's developed," Rina said. Outside Emma said, "Them Greeks!"

Another gunfight left a Greek miner with an arm hanging in shreds. His Cretan *patriotes* smuggled him to a doctor who, a gun at his head, sewed up the flesh. They then put the wounded man on the back floor of a car and drove him at night to the Ute Indian reservation, where one of the *patriotes*, homesteading on land that had been opened to whites, took him in. When the miner was well enough, they smuggled him across the state line and put him on a train going east. There he took a ship for his island. Stylian Staes told the men

they should have let him stand trial. "What?" they said at the incongruous words. "And let him spend the rest of his days in prison or be hanged?"

The governor sent in the National Guard and the boys of Greek Town ran to see them march from the dusty road north of town and through Main Street to the strikers' tent town. Bessie was surly. "Boys can do whatever they want and we can't do anything."

The strike was lost and the strikers were brought to trial. The little girls had other concerns. Bessie began a daily campaign to have Peggy ask her mother to cut her hair. "If you cut yours, then the rest of us can. Your mother will let you if you ask her."

One day the newest Greek school teacher, who was fat and slovenly (like the priests the Greek school teachers came and went in this "Siberia for Greek Orthodox priests in America"), told the younger students to go home early. The rest of the students had to stay and practice for a play to be given on March Twenty-Fifth, the anniversary of the beginning of the Greek revolt against the Turks.

Bessie, Peggy, and Lia did not want to go back to Greek Town. The whole world lay before them. Although Bessie had lost hers at recess, Peggy and Lia each had a penny in the pocket of the aprons Katina sewed for all the girls in the family. (The aprons were made of one piece of cloth with a hole cut in the middle for the head and ties on each side of the waist. On Peggy's apron Katina had embroidered little flowers.) The girls looked at each other and suddenly started running beyond Greek Town, beyond the grade school, toward Main Street. "No, kids," Bessie said, "we've gotta go behind the buildings so our dads won't see us."

They walked behind the buildings where battered cans and tubs of trash gave off a bad odor and empty cardboard boxes had collapsed after spring rains. The river, parallel to the stores, rushed with brown water. When they had safely passed the block where the Demas Brothers Studebaker Agency stood, they walked quickly up a side street to Main Street. They were afraid they might meet one of the Greek men coming from the coffeehouse, who would stop them the way Greeks did and ask where they were going and why they weren't in Greek school. But they passed no Greeks on their way to the American Candy Store.

At the candy store, Peggy and Lia took a long time gazing at the boxes of penny candy in the window. As Peggy and Lia kept looking at one box of penny candy and then another, unable to decide what they would choose, Bessie stepped to one side and looked everywhere

but at the window display. She burst out, "You're both selfish! You're gonna have candy and I won't have any! I hate you both and I hate you most of all, Lia! You're not even all Greek! You think you're so smart! Your dad had to marry your mother! They were going to hang him if he didn't!"

For a moment Lia stood at the store window, unable to speak. Then she turned around and ran down Main Street, leaving Bessie looking after her with frightened eyes. "You're gonna get it," Peggy said.

Lia ran to the end of Main Street, through the grade-school grounds, and into Greek Town. She stopped by a backyard garden until her panting quieted, then slowly walked to her house, making her steps light. She looked through the screen door at her mother who was at the sink peeling potatoes. She looked at her for a long time.

3

The next day, Lia took Soula's hand on their way to school. Bessie and Peggy followed, whispering. At recess Soula was able to get Lia on a swing for a few minutes before other children shouted for their turn. Lia then stood at a short distance from Soula and girls of the Papastamos and Pappas families. The two Papastamos daughters were Soula's best friends; like their mother, they were short and plump, with dark, glossy braids. The four Pappas girls were tall and thin; even their braids were skimpy. They were the top students in Greek school. Lia needed Soula's protection but did not want her to think that she was being bold by joining her group of friends.

After school the four girls went on to Greek school and this time the teacher kept all children until five o'clock. By then Bessie, Peggy, and Lia had written the Greek alphabet three times and were hungry and tired. American, Italian, and Yugoslav immigrant children were playing in their neighborhoods, their calls echoing against the mountains.

When the Greek school teacher said, "Go, now!" they hurried to their houses to eat something quickly because their empty stomachs ached. Afterwards, Lia sat at the kitchen table with her book and tablet on the oilcloth cover and painstakingly copied the alphabet. Nicky watched her for a few minutes while his father said, "See, Nicky, what your sister she is doing? She's learning Greek, best language in the world." Nicky, two years older than Lia, nodded and went into the living room to read the Gasoline Alley comic strip. He sometimes attended Greek school, but he was so far behind from spending most of his time driving around with his father that the teacher did not bother to look at his notebook.

Every evening Lia wrote out the English alphabet and stumbled over the little stories about fairies and mice dressed up like little

people. She read them to her mother who wiped the dishes and nodded. One evening she wrote out the Greek alphabet and pronounced it aloud. "Go say it to your dad," Emma said.

Lia went into the living room where her father was sitting in his big chair, smoking a cigar, and reading the *Atlantis*, the Greek newspaper from New York. A stack of wool-growers magazines was on the small table at his side, and Nicky was sitting cross-legged on the floor looking at pictures of ewes and rams.

"Dad, I want to tell you the Greek alphabet."

Chris frowned and took out his cigar. Lia began, "*Alpha*, *vyta*, *ghamma*, *dhelta*, *epsilon*" and on. "Very good. You a good girl," Chris said and patted Lia on the head. He had not believed that with an American mother, his children would go to Greek school or even that they were capable of learning Greek.

At the end of the week, Emma said, "Lia , you don't have to study so hard. You're only in the first grade. You should play a little."

Lia said nothing, but continued gripping her pencil. Emma watched her. "How come you girls haven't been playin' together? Have you been hateful to each other?"

Lia did not answer. "Why are you workin' so hard?" Emma continued. "You've got lots of time to learn good."

"Because I want to be better than them."

"You mean Bessie and Peggy?"

"Yes."

"Well, go to bed now," Emma said and turned to the sink to keep Lia from seeing her smile.

On Saturday Rina prepared meat and rice-stuffed grape leaves. "Go to the farm and get corn," she told Emma. "Then we eat together." Emma took Nicky and Lia with her to see their grandparents. She parked the car in the barren yard and called out to her father, who was irrigating his few acres, "Dad, will you cut me three dozen corn?" He grumbled something they could not hear. Emma's mother came to the door, her hair stringy, one side of her face red and swollen. Emma had seen her mother's face like this often from the time she was a child. She hung her head.

The children and Emma sat in the kitchen with the grandmother they called Granma Annie, Nicky and Lia eating the pieces of sugar cane she had given them. Emma's mother would not look at her. They did not speak. In a few minutes, Emma's father came into the kitchen and said he put the corn in the car. Emma knew ten cents would have been sufficient, but she took a fifty-cent piece from

her pocket and placed it on the table. "Well," her father said, looking at Lia, "she's gittin' to look more like us than her brother." He gave Nicky a quick glance under shaggy gray eyebrows. "The little foreigner" he once called him with distaste. Emma sat up straight and her mother gave her husband a quick look. Grandpa Lester took a chair next to Nicky and poked him in the chest with a horny finger. Emma's mother Annie began folding rags into long plaits to make yet another rug to cover the dirt floor in one of the two bedrooms. Only the kitchen and small living room had wooden floors, made of darkened planks.

"Let me tell you, young fella," said Grandpa Lester, gray eyebrows flaring above his angry blue eyes, "on your mother's side you come from people who's been in this country almost as long as the Indians." He stopped and looked intently at Nicky who turned his large brown eyes toward his mother. "Not like some foreigners who didn't come here until they almost starved in the old country. My people go back as far as the Revolutionary War. They come over in a sailin' ship. Most of them died on the seas.

"My people ended up in the mountains of Kentucky. Worked in the mines like they did back in England and Scotland. Then some goddamn Mormon missionary turned my head with his Joseph Smith talk and I come here in 1890 when they opened the Pleasant Valley mines."

The kitchen was still while Lester twisted his mouth. "The Chinks was hounded out of the mines. Locked up in a boxcar and sent flying down miles of track. Us whites come in. We worked like dogs. Two hundred killed in the Scofield explosion! The owners didn't care." He poked Nicky's chest again. "They didn't care if they didn't git enough air into the mine and the gas and coal dust exploded. They didn't care. You know what they use to say? They use to say, 'It didn't matter if a miner got killed 'cause they could always git more of them, but it did matter if a mule was killed. 'Cause it took money to buy a mule.

"And when we went on strike, the owners got the governor to send in the militia with their machine guns. And you know who them strikebreakers they brought in was? They was foreigners, most of them Greeks, and the mine bosses went out to the farms and brought in Mormon boys and men to break the strike!" He stared wildly. "And that's when I left the Mormon Church! When they brought in Mormon boys to break the strike! And a bunch of us walked all the way from Scofield in the snow to Castle Gate to ask the men to go on

strike with us. Eighteen miles in winter weather. The mine guards wouldn't let us in the company store to git warm. They wouldn't let us git off the county road to git help. We stood in the snow with our hands and feet almost froze stiff. I hate them rich coal owners livin' back east in mansions. I hate the governors who listen to them! I hate Greeks and I hate Mormons!"

Emma stood up and pushed Nicky and Lia before her. Her mother dropped the cotton plaits and followed her. The old man sat by the coal stove, glaring with venom.

Lia looked at her grandmother. "Thanks for the corn, Granma Annie," she said while her mother surreptitiously put a silver dollar into the grandmother's blue-veined hand.

In the car, Nicky said, "I'm never goin' back there ever again."

"You don't have to," Emma said.

Lia did not speak all the way to Greek Town. She did not want to look like her grandparents.

After dinner the children in the neighborhood played run-my-sheepie-run, laughing and racing in the balmy, fading blue light of day. Later in the dark, icon vigil lights glowing faintly in the dim houses, stars glittering in the black sky, the neighborhood was still. Lia and her mother sat on the front porch listening to harmonica music coming from the Papastamos yard. Emma sang along softly; Lia moved closer to her.

> Oh, they say from this valley you're going.
> I shall miss your bright eyes and sweet smile.
> For they say you are taking the sunshine
> that brightened our path for a while.
> Come sit by my side if you love me.
> Do not hasten to bid me adieu.
> But remember the Red RiverValley
> and the cowboy who loved you so true.

"Mitro!" Mrs. Papastamos screamed. "Stop that! Come to bed!"

"Oh," Lia said. "That was Jim playing his harmonica." She thought she'd like to marry Jim some day and be a sheepman's wife.

The next day Bessie, Peggy, and Lia resumed their routine of being together, but Lia still sat at the kitchen table each evening with her primer and notebook on the oilcloth cover.

On March Twenty-Fifth, the anniversary of the Greek revolt against the Turks, the teacher chose Lia to recite the inevitable poem of a small Greek child walking to a clandestine cave to learn the banished Greek language.

> Little moon, light my way
> to learn my letters and the things of God.

Rina pulled Bessie's thin braids in reproach and Katina told Peggy not to feel bad, because she had nicer dresses than Lia. Neither knew that Lia had suddenly started to read easily and that the American teacher smiled at her sometimes.

School ended and Bessie, Peggy, and Lia were taught how to wash dishes, standing on stools to reach the sink, to make beds, dust furniture, and iron flat pieces: napkins, handkerchiefs, pillow cases, and dish towels. In the afternoons they sat on the steps of one or the other of the three Demas houses, usually Emma's, and watched people get into cars and drive off or walk by to visit in other Greek Town houses. They looked at boys playing marbles on the hard earth of the courtyard. Soula and her sisters sat behind them with Zeffy Papastamos and her sister and sometimes one or two of the Pappas girls, each of them embroidering or crocheting for her *prikia*, her trousseau.

Bessie, Peggy, and Lia held their knees close together and pulled their dresses over to their ankles because, as Rina warned, it would be shameful for someone to see their underpants. The girls did not want anyone to see their underpants, not so much because of Rina's warnings, but because Katina sewed them out of white cotton and in an unguarded moment on the teeter-totter, boys teased them about wearing diapers. Bessie forgot to keep her dress all the way down to her ankles one day and Rina stormed across the courtyard and gave her three swats with the koutala, each one punctuated with the words "Clumsy! Stupid! Careless!" Lia was ashamed that the boys had seen Bessie being hit with the koutala, especially that Jim Papastamos had looked up at the commotion.

The three little girls watched the boys with deep curiosity. The boys were older, two and three grades ahead of them in school. The Pappas and Papastamos boys and Nicky shouted and yelled in triumph or groaned in defeat, all except Jim. He said nothing, whether he made a good or a poor shot. A harmonica was pushed down into his shirt pocket. Lia looked at him often. She had heard on the school ground that he was an "arithmetic whiz," although what that meant

she did not know. She also heard his mother tell her Aunt Rina that Jim "even quarreled with his clothes."

The mothers and children of the Demas families began spending each August in the Colorado mountains. Chris's great good fortune during the war years had changed the mountain cabin into a four-bedroom house with two doors, a wide front porch with swing overlooking the valley, and a larger screened one off the kitchen with an outsized icebox and a washing machine run by gasoline. The sink had a faucet instead of a pump. The new furniture was plain, serviceable maple.

The house had no hall; each bedroom had two doors; one opened on to the big kitchen, another on to the dining room, and two of them on to the living room. Each also had an inside door that led to the adjacent bedroom. The house was lighted with kerosene lamps, which the older girls cleaned and kept filled. While they worked, they listened to cowboy songs on the battery-operated radio.

The sheepherders' dilapidated bunkhouse was also torn down and a new one built, larger with a sink and new stove. The privy still stood, made less objectionable with ashes and lime thrown down its holes and painted white like the house.

Beyond the privy the dry land that led to the pines had lain dormant for years after sheep had overgrazed it. Now it took on new life. Flowers and yellow blooming rabbit brush sprouted and multiplied. Emma had called it "the meadow" from the first days in the mountain house.

Chris's brothers, Gus and Pete, had not been so fortunate. After the war ended cars for civilian use were not yet coming off the assembly lines. No cars to sell meant a period of strain on their bank accounts and a return to extreme frugality, presided over by Rina. This was relieved by the passing of the Eighteenth Amendment. Barba Yianni showed Gus and Pete how to make whiskey in Rina's cellar. He told them of a good coppersmith who would build the still and gave them the recipe for the mash—wheat or rye, yeast, sugar, and raisins. Tobacco juice or iodine, he said, would give the necessary amber color and "bite," and when a lighted match held over the distillation produced a blue flame, they would have the best whiskey. Wheat was hard to get, but they paid enough to farmers in adjoining counties to guarantee a steady supply and immigrant grocers saved their store of raisins for the two Demas brothers who weren't raising thousands of sheep up in the mountains.

Gus sent Pete to sell their bootleg liquor as far as Salt Lake City to Greek shoeshine shops, where the city's doctors, attorneys, and government officials had their hats blocked and shoes shined. The two brothers were able to avoid "the Feds'" rampages through Greek Town by Rina's burning frankincense daily on the coal stove and Pete's smoldering a rubber tire in the backyard to camouflage the fumes. When automobile production began again, a new prosperity brought moderate wealth to Gus and Pete—moderate to others, but a fortune to them.

When Gus and Pete took their families to the sheep ranch in the mountains, they remained overnight and drove back to town the next day. The girls in the family slept in one room, Soula and two of her sisters in the bed, and the younger ones and Lia on pallets spread over the floor. Nicky slept on the pull-down sofa in the living room. Emma and Chris slept in one room; Katina with her youngest child in another; and Rina with her latest baby in the fourth bedroom.

There in the cool days, the scent of pines in the air, the mothers set to bottling fruits and tomatoes which Lud, the camp tender, brought from the small farms around Craig. They bottled peaches, pears, and apricots; simmered tomatoes to make *belde*, tomato paste; and rolled out filo dough.

In the evenings in the mountains, Katina sewed dresses for the family's girls, always adding an extra bit of embroidery to Peggy's collars. At times Rina would motion her daughter Bessie to follow her outside where she lectured her not to sit like a crooked log while Peggy and Lia got their way. Rina was exact with all the girls, but harsh with Bessie, who sported bruises made by her mother's twisted pinches. "You're no beauty, my girl, and you better learn to be the best cook and embroiderer of all or we'll never be able to marry you off."

The washing machine on the back porch ran all through the day; the kitchen was in a flurry with three women and their oldest daughters preparing food. Rina and Katina were awed that Emma would get into the pickup truck and drive down the winding, narrow Twenty Mile Road to Craig for supplies. They whispered that they should tell Chris it was not seemly for a lone woman to be wandering about like that—what would people say? The talk stopped when Emma suggested going to the Papastamos sheepfold; she was tired of her sisters-in-law and saw the visit as a relief from the constant talking, working, and being together. When she was a girl, she learned that the mayor's daughter had a room of her own. God had blessed her, Emma had thought.

Emma told Rina and Katina that Lud had not brought the mail and she would ask the oldest Papastamos son, John, to bring it the next time he went to Craig. It was a good excuse. Rina was especially excited. The girls were packed on to the bed of the truck, the youngest sat in the cab on their mothers' laps, and the outing began. Rina held her breath as she glimpsed the canyon that fell from the side of the road, and Katina continually made the sign of the cross and whispered, "My little Virgin, save us!"

At the fork in the road, Emma expertly made a turn and, changing gears every few seconds, drove the truck over the road bounded by wild currant bushes, white milkweed, yellow rabbit brush, bluebells, and white columbines and mountain flowers of all colors. The children's cries of wild joy flew backward in the cool breeze.

When Emma stopped the truck in front of the Papastamos white frame house, Rina jumped out with an agility belying her stolid weight; Katina stood, looking skyward and offering silent prayers to the Virgin for their safe arrival. Mrs. Papastamos hurried out of the house and she, Rina, and Katina cried out and gave each other traditional kisses on both cheeks. Emma said, "Hello, Mrs. Papastamos." "Allo, Missa Chris," Mrs. Papastamos answered. Rina apologized a little for allowing a woman to drive them over such wild roads.

The girls had jumped off the truck and ran around looking for the Papastamos children. There were eight children in the Papastamos family. John, Yiannaki, the oldest, had arrived from Greece at age eleven with his mother—his father had left them in the village and sent for them six years later—the two sisters Zeffy and Tessie were born in Helper, followed by five more boys.

Soon the girls were on the front porch playing jacks. When the younger Papastamos boys saw that Nicky had not come with the mothers and daughters, they lost interest in the visitors. They resumed their game of marbles, kneeling, the oldest using a stick to make a ring in the dirt. Each boy held a vigil over his little mound of colored marbles. Soula and Zeffy sat on the porch swing, whispering and laughing.

Soula jerked the swing to a stop. Peggy had left the jack-playing and wandered over to watch the boys shoot marbles. She slowly made her way closer to them. Suddenly the Papastamos boy holding the stick, reached toward her skirt and lifted the hem of her dress. Peggy giggled. Soula screamed, "Come here, Peggy!" and ran toward Peggy and the boys. Peggy looked at Soula with pretended innocence in her large brown eyes. Soula grabbed her elbow. "Do you want me to tell your mother what you've been doing?"

"I haven't been doing nothing. I've only been watching them play marbles."

"I don't know what's going to become of you."

Peggy twirled, then ran back to take her turn at jacks.

In the kitchen Mrs. Papastamos had put on a large *brik* to make Turkish coffee and took powdered-sugar *kouriambiedhes* from a crockery pot. After placing several of them on a plate, she took the pot to the front porch and gave the children the rest of the cookies.

While the women ate the cookies and sipped the coffee, Rina spoke to Mrs. Papastamos in an artificially polite manner. They had been village friends, although Mrs. Papastamos was several years older than Rina. "Zoitsa," Rina said in this stilted voice, "the *nyfi*"—the bride, another name for Emma—"wants Yianni to get the mail when he goes to Craigie." She had always called him by the diminutive Yiannaki, but suddenly he was Yianni, a grown-up.

"Right now, he and Mitro took some liniment to old Rondoghiannis. His bones are hurting."

"Oh, did they walk to the *stany?*" Rina asked as if interested in the affairs of a Papastamos sheepfold.

"No, they rode on Yianni's horse."

"Ach, how quickly they grow up. Just yesterday Yianni was a schoolboy and Mitro a baby."

Mrs. Papastamos laughed. "Don't let Mitro hear you say that. He's nine years old and thinks he's big enough to go everywhere with his brother."

Emma resented Rina's speaking for her and sat as if watching a school play while the three women, speaking Greek, raised their hands with exclamations of disbelief over what she surmised was an indiscretion—a Greek Town neighbor had hung up her wash barelegged, a woman so addlepated that all the neighbors condemned another who had acted as matchmaker. "Tsk, Tsk," Katina and Mrs. Papastamos said. Rina leaned her head to one side and with insincere piety pronounced the proverb, "'Who knows what her pain is?'"

"What pain?" Mrs. Papastamos retorted. "The woman is stupid." Rina agreed that poor Odysseos shouldn't have been forced to marry her, nodding decisively as if no one knew that Gus had looked at Rina with stupefaction when she stepped down from a Denver & Rio Grande Western train, her hair straggly, her face thin and scabby, and didn't want to marry her either, but the engagement had been sanctioned and could not be broken. Katina said, "Poor Odysseos, he didn't deserve her."

"Yes, he did," Rina said coming back to her usual self for a moment.

Emma looked at Mrs. Papastamos, so happy to have visitors that her round, heavy face was a startling pink. Emma had seen a wedding picture of her and her husband, the tall handsome Marko Papastamos who danced the old Greek dances with twirls and high jumps—Chris was a good dancer too—and there was Mrs. Papastamos, a bride, so small and thin. It was good food, Emma knew, that had made her stout, just as it was good food that had added twenty pounds to herself. She had put a penny in the weighing machine outside Stein's and was so surprised that when she went home, she looked into the mirror above the bedroom dresser and saw that it was true; her cheeks had filled out and her teeth didn't stick out too much. It was probably all those vegetables drowning in olive oil.

Rina's strange, sweet words to Zoitsa Papastamos, Emma was certain, were for a reason. She could see that Katina, looking on benignly, knew it too. Emma was still learning about her sisters-in-law and their Greek ways, but it would be several years before she understood what possessed Rina to act so unnaturally.

At the time of the visit, Soula was eleven years old and John Papastamos was nineteen. In five years Soula would be sixteen and John twenty-four, a good, proper marriage for Soula. Rina was preparing the way and Katina was her accomplice. "Let Soula and Zeffy wash the dishes," Rina said. "You sit and talk with us." As if visibly prodded, Katina burst out, "Soula is such a good little housekeeper."

"Let her play," Zoitsa Papastamos said. "She'll have plenty of dishes to wash by and by."

This innocuous response pleased Rina and for a few moments she forgot her dignified demeanor. On their return to the ranch house, she took a nap, drained by her effort to be someone she was not.

Toward the end of August, Lud stopped by to tell Emma that Kosta was feeling poorly. Emma told Rina and Katina that she would walk to his camp to see him; he was about a mile away, Lud had said. Rina wrapped several pieces of cheese pita in newspaper, but she frowned as she handed the package to Emma with a cursory, "Take to Kosta."

Rina watched as Emma walked beyond the backyard and toward the meadow. "What is she thinking?" Rina told Katina. "A lone woman walking to see a man."

When Emma was about to reach the meadow, Lia left her play, ran fast, and took hold of her mother's skirt. Neither spoke. The

meadow lay before them, a panorama of mountain flowers, pink, red, yellow, orange, and blue. "Mama," Lia said in a hushed voice, "it's like a big carpet of flowers," and Emma nodded. From beyond the meadow a breeze brought the piquant scent of pines. Birds flew, swooping, circling, toward the trees.

Emma took in the glory of it, the meadow, the sky, the pines, the birds, all so close to her house that howled with talk, children's cries, the bang of cooking utensils, and the hot stove, its top a dark red from the fiercely burning coal and wood inside it.

Emma and Lia walked slowly in silence until they came to the pines. Not too far on the open range were the sheep, heads down, nibbling. Sheep bells clinked. "Once upon a time," Emma said, slowly shaking her head from side to side at what she was saying, "your dad only had four hundred sheep. Now he's got thousands and a dozen herders."

Kosta was sitting on the tongue of his sheep wagon. When he was away watching his sheep, he kept it locked, disregarding the unwritten law of the West that sheep wagons were left open to give a traveler a place to rest, eat, and leave as he found it. Kosta was afraid that someone might envy not only his icon of the Virgin and Child, on the shelf above his bed by the sling for his shotgun, but also the small blurred photograph of his mother wearing a black kerchief on her head. His church books and the Greek newspapers Chris brought after he finished reading them were next to the picture.

Kosta was wearing a faded brown flannel robe patterned with Indian symbols; on his bare feet were black felt house slippers, so old that his big toes had pushed through them. On a thin rope strung from a nail above the door of the sheep wagon to a branch of a pine tree hung a long pair of gray underwear. Nearby was a blue, chipped enamel basin which Kosta used to do his washing. Emma stopped short. It occurred to her that Kosta might not have anything under the brown robe and Lia might see something she shouldn't see until her wedding night—if then. Kosta did not see them. He was using a twig which he had whittled into a sharp point to probe his big yellow teeth. "Kosta!" Emma called to warn him to watch the flap of his robe.

That was exactly what Kosta did. He held the front of his robe together as he stood up. "Eh, Bebé," he called out to Lia and immediately walked into the wagon and came out with two candy suckers, handing one to Lia and one to Emma. Lia immediately sucked on hers and walked about the wagon to look for Indian arrow points.

Nicky had told her he had seen a few not long ago when he and their father had checked on the herders.

"Kosta, Lud told me you were sick."

"Who told you I'm a sick, that drunk Lud? Don't listen to Lud! No-good-drunk-big-mouth! What you bring?"

"Rina made pita today. She told me to bring you some."

"Well," Kosta said, looking reluctantly at the oiled newspaper package, "I won't eat today. I don't feel good. I save when I feel good."

"Let me take your underwear and I'll wash it in the machine. You didn't get it clean."

"I didn't get it clean!" Kosta shouted, the ends of his twisted mustache shaking in affront. "Well, okay, take it. Bring it next day. My other I had to burn."

Emma was about to ask why he had to burn it, but suddenly knew she shouldn't ask. "And be sure the next day, or I catch more cold. Get namonia."

Emma told Kosta to put all the clothes that needed washing in a newspaper bundle and he did, looking sorrowful, as if he had been wrongly accused of something.

When they left the pines and walked through the meadow, the sky was fading. Emma hoped there would be a sunset with rolling gold-rimmed red and orange clouds that sent delicate shadows throughout the sky. It would be good for Lia to see it; it had been good for her to see such skies when she lived on the farm. She hadn't thought of talking to Lia about the sunsets; they had never talked about anything in her childhood home except what chores had to be done.

Ahead they saw Chris's car and the girls crowding around Nicky. As they neared the kitchen, Chris's raised voice burst out. Emma wondered why he was angry—it seemed at Rina.

When Chris had driven up, Rina beckoned him into the kitchen and with her arms folded over her bulging stomach, said in the secretive tone she used when telling something shameful that she, as the oldest of the clan's women, was bound to let someone know, "Emma, went to see Kosta. The handyman said he was sick. And she went. Your woman, alone, went. What will people think!"

Chris lunged toward the door, a trained response to an insult to his honor. He stopped and turned to Rina. "What! My woman went to see that religious *fanatikos* Kosta because he was sick? Sit on your eggs, you with your village foolishness!"

Emma entered the porch, lifted the lid of the washing machine, opened the newspaper in which she had wrapped the underwear, a flannel shirt, and several socks, and let them drop into it. She poured far more White King soap than she would have ordinarily used and turned on the water. "Rina," she said in Greek when she went into the kitchen, "Kosta can't eat the pita today. When he's better, he said he would."

Rina looked angrily chastened. She could see that she had the added burden of training Lia because her Amerikanidha mother was ignorant, incapable of the duty.

In early September, Gus and Pete transported their families and their share of the fruit-and-belde-filled Mason jars back to town. Then a simple occurrence changed the lives of the children of Greek Town.

4

The girls were excited as if that school year would be different, as if something magical lay ahead. On the very day that school started, the thin old man who presided over the YMCA and the Y's Sunday school, came into the Demas agency, introduced himself, although introductions were unnecessary in the small town, and said to Gus, "Mr. Demas, I know you belong to the Greek church in Price, but I want to invite your children and all the little Greek children to our YMCA Sunday school. We do not teach any dogma,"—Gus wondered what he meant—"we teach about Jesus our Savior, the Ten Commandments, and to love all people."

The Greeks in town did not attend Sunday liturgies regularly, thinking the seven-mile distance to Price too far. Gus looked at the old man for a few seconds while his thoughts told him it would be a good gesture. Maybe the Americans would stop calling the Greeks names. Yes. They would learn about Jesus. It would be good for business.

"Okay," Gus said and shook the old man's hand.

The next Sunday most of the children in Greek Town put on their Sunday clothes and went to the yellow brick YMCA which faced the rail yards. A surprising vista opened to them, new, far from Greek Town. The Sunday school teachers smiled at them—American women, so different from the painted ones who walked up and down Main Street or hung out of second-story hotel windows, some of them even smoking, and calling down to passing men.

They sat with children they saw, but did not play with, from grade school and listened to Mr. Shepard tell them about a famine in China and people, even children, dying because they had nothing to eat. Mr. Shepard had tears in his eyes. Lia had never seen a man cry. That day they learned two songs:

I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses.
And he walks with me and
He talks with me,
And tells me I am His own.

And

Onward Christian soldiers,
Onward as to war.
With the cross of Jesus
Marching on before.

Soula's voice soared, clear and silvery. Mr. Shepard came over to Soula and looked down on her. "You have a beautiful voice," he said. He was a minister, but the Greek Town children did not know this; he did not even wear a turned-back collar as their current priest had begun wearing.

When Christmas came, the Greek Town children took part in the YMCA program. Many of the mothers came, trying to look at ease with arms crossed over their big bosoms. Soula was the Virgin Mary, a veil over her head, holding a swaddled doll. The children sang "Away in the Manger." Lia recited a poem of several stanzas she had written at one of the old women's request.

My father comes from Greece, so far away.
They had no presents on Christmas Day.
It was the birthday of Jesus to celebrate,
Who came with love to conquer hate.

At the end of the program, Soula sang "O, Little Town of Bethlehem," and all the gray-haired women hugged her. Rina was startled at the commotion. Mrs. Clark, who gave piano lessons, shook her hand and said, "Soula should take piano lessons." Rina's face flushed and she held her head high.

When they returned home from the YMCA, Nicky, who did not attend Sunday school often, said to his father, "Lia said a poem about Christmas in your village."

"Yeah?" Chris said. He had never talked with Lia about Christmas in the village, or much of anything else. Emma had told Lia that when she had asked Chris about Christmas in the old country after

noticing there were no presents and Christmas trees in Greek Town, he said it was a "church day, nothing else."

"Okay. Tell me."

Lia recited the poem while Chris listened, amazed, the cigar in the corner of his mouth hanging loose. "Well, what do you know?" he said, an American expression that was currently popular. "Okay, I'll buy you nice Christmas present like the Americans. What do you want?"

Lia stood straight ahead and said with a little defiance, "I'd like us to have a bathroom at the ranch." She knew they could not have a bathroom in their Greek Town house because they merely rented it, but the ranch was theirs. Also the banker's daughter, Helen Barboglio, lived in a house with a bathroom, and Lia had envied her not having to hold her breath while in the privy or run to it when night was closing in.

Chris laughed loudly, slapped his thigh, and said, "Okay," then immediately thought of how he could get out of the promise because it would require a crew of men to dig the hole out by hand or he'd have to get a steam shovel up the narrow road. He remembered the village: there were not even privies; people relieved themselves wherever they could find a hiding place. Now, though, he was a businessman, and he would have a bathroom at his ranch.

The next day he changed his mind again. The cost would be too much. Chris came home before the children and Emma said, "Don't forget you promised Lia a bathroom at the ranch."

Chris waved his palm through the air. "No. Can't be done. Too much money."

"You promised. You never pay any attention to her, and this time you have to keep your promise."

"Well, I said it, but then I got thinking how much it cost. You know money don't come easy."

"I don't care."

"It cost too much. Take all the money in the bank."

"I don't care."

"*My Virgin*, what's this?" Chris stopped to think of something else to bolster his argument while Emma kept looking at him steadily. She was no longer afraid to cross him because she had learned that Greeks did not divorce; they stayed chained to each other no matter what. Neither was she afraid that he would hit her: she was taller than he and she was Nicky's mother.

Chris tried once more. "You think about it. See I'm right."

"I don't care."

Chris stamped into the living room where he turned on the radio and heard not a word that the announcer said. This *anipotaxia*—this insubordination, from a wife was insufferable.

When the family sat down to eat ham hocks and lima beans, a favorite of Chris's, Lia and Nicky sensed a strangeness in the silence enveloping their father. Then they witnessed one of the rare occasions of parental entertainment. Their father looked darkly at their mother and said, "In Greece they have a saying, 'I don't need your food; your words have filled me up.'"

Their mother did not answer him.

Nicky slid his foot sideways until it touched Lia's and pressed down on her shoe. Lia looked at Nicky and they smiled knowingly. Chris pushed the dish of ham hocks and lima beans away, sat back in his chair, and after a few seconds during which he eyed the steaming food, brought the plate back and ate all but the bone. This time Lia put her shoe on top of Nicky's.

A week later an upright piano arrived by freight from Salt Lake City. Rina had told Gus, "It would make her more desirable for marriage." All the girls in the family would learn to play the piano. Soula began taking lessons from Mrs. Clark and after a few weeks, to Greek Town's amazement, she could hear a tune once and sit at the piano and play it. Mrs. Clark also gave Soula a phonograph record of arias from the opera La Traviatta. Soula hummed along while she worked and Lia sat on the porch and listened.

Soon the children felt at ease in the YMCA. The old minister, Julius Shepard, encouraged the newest Sunday school students to take out books from the reading room. None of the Greek Town boys, except Jim Papastamos, wanted to follow Mr. Shepard upstairs. Soula and Zeffy Papastamos walked behind the old minister and the other girls followed. Railroad men waiting for their trains to come in were reading newspapers and magazines taken off a rack. Light came through the south wall of windows and a soft haze filtered throughout the long room.

Mr. Shepard showed them the shelves of children's books. Soula picked out *Girl of the Limberlost;* Mellie, the next oldest sister, chose the Bobsy Twins books; and Bessie and Peggy decided on cartoon books. Lia looked through a children's book on the religions of the world and asked Mr. Shepard if she could check it out. Jim Papastamos chose a book on the baseball legend Ty Cobb.

Later, Lia sat on the porch swing and read with surprise what people all over the world believed about God. Some didn't even believe in Jesus. She was so engrossed in her reading that she did not hear her Aunt Rina clump up the steps. Rina went into the kitchen where Emma was at the sink washing spinach. She intended to ask Emma for help in putting a washed curtain on a frame.

"Emma," Rina said in her Greek-English way, "Lya read too much. She spoil her eyes."

"Well, then we'll get her eyeglasses."

"Eyeglasses! No one want to marry girl with eyeglasses!"

"I don't know about that."

"I know about that!"

"What about your girls' and Katina's embroiderin' all the time? That hurts their eyes."

"That is ne-cess-ar-y! For when they marry. For the house!"

"I don't care."

Rina turned and stamped out of the house, forgetting her mission. "You spoil your eyes!" she said in a loud voice to Lia. She was determined that she would speak to Chris about his American wife who didn't look ahead to prepare Lya for marrying. She'd had a perfectly good village girl in mind for Chris to marry, but, no, not him, he had to go get tied up with this American *nyfy* they had to put up with.

5

When Rina told Chris about Lia's ruining her eyes by reading and Emma's not caring, Chris said, "Listen to me. My girl will marry the best Greek boy, even if she wears glasses. Parents they will come running to ask for her. Because she has Demopoulos blood in her!"

Rina grunted and left Chris wondering if he could make Lia stop reading. She was better in both American and Greek schools than her cousins. Nicky's godfather praised her and brought her books whenever he returned from Salt Lake City. He said Lia was "serious." Chris didn't know what he meant—girls serious?

While Lia was reading books, Rina's Bessie was thinking about her own long braids much of each day. She often looked at Lia and wanted to do something mean to her, Lia with her light Dutch-cut hair, dark gray eyes, and pale skin that made people sometimes forget she was half-Greek; Lia with her American mother who could speak English in stores and, although she had funny ways sometimes, wasn't always telling Lia how to act. It galled Bessie that Lia didn't realize her and Peggy's plight. All she cared about was reading and making sketches with colored pencils. She could get no help from Lia. Relentlessly, she pursued Peggy to convince her mother to cut her hair. Peggy wore her hair in braids on week days and in ringlets on Sunday. "If you cut yours, then I can. Your mother will let you, if you ask her."

Peggy looked pleased and with a dismissive shrug of her shoulders, pretended she did not care whether she had braids or short hair. "You'd look cute with bangs like Clara Bow," Bessie said of the movie actress whose seductive picture was pasted on the placard outside the Strand Theater. Peggy took out her jacks and sat cross-legged on the porch and began playing. Bessie stalked off. The next day she

offered Peggy a small silver mesh purse, which her godfather had given her. "You can have it if you get your mother to let you cut your hair, *and then* when I give it to you, you must *never* let my mother see it." Bessie's godfather had been killed in the war, in France, so he would not know. Peggy demurred, but kept eyeing the little mesh purse.

In both public and Greek schools, Bessie paid no attention to the teachers. Instead she daydreamed of strategies that would lead to her having short hair like American girls. She was happy when the conversation at the dinner table turned to "hard times that were worse for sheepmen."

Chris was in the mountains for longer periods and had let some of his men go. He often called his house and his brothers' from the telephone company in Craig to hear what was happening in town.

The country had gone into a recession and several stockmen had to sell out. Chris scrounged to keep his flocks ready for market. Luckily, after his first poor season, when most of his lambs turned out to be culls, fit only for the poor, he and Lud, the camp tender, had cultivated and seeded patches of ground on a plateau above the road. He did not have to buy hay from then on, but his problem was paying the big band of Mexican shearers who traveled from Mexico to New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, and back down to the border. He sat on the steps of his ranch house in the black nights and looked at the shearers' tents, red-lighted around kerosene lamps. The shearers' cooking smells permeated the cool air and later their voices rose in poignant songs, reminding Chris of his first years in the country and the songs the Greeks had sung of homesickness in this *ksenitia*, this exile.

Many sheepmen now used electric shearers, but Chris and Marko Papastamos would not. The migrant shearers were often careless and nicked and cut the skin causing infections and pain. Papastamos fired herders and shearers who inflicted pain on sheep. Both he and Chris always made the sign of the cross before quickly slitting the throat of a lamb to cause it the least possible pain.

Chris met Papastamos one day in Craig where they were both buying supplies at the feed store. "*Ti humbaria*?" Papastamos asked, his usual greeting, What's new?

Chris told him he was worried about not being able to pay the Mexican shearers the coming year. Papastamos advised Chris to sell his sheep to a broker, Warren Snow, who represented Boston buyers. It might keep him from going under. Chris followed Papastamos's

advice and sold cheaply. He missed the adventure of taking the sheep to market, the camaraderie with the other sheepmen—he had even thought of taking Nicky out of school to make the trip—and buying gifts for the family. It was all gone. He was jumpy. Fear raced at his side: he might not survive and would have to ask his brothers for help. The fear took over his dreams with jumbled images of his feet in sludge and swollen sheep carcasses nearby.

Chris outlasted the recession and when the ewes were safe on the winter desert grounds, he returned home with nothing more than a pocket knife for Nicky and an imitation gold and ruby bracelet for Lia, which he bought in Craig.

In town he still wandered about as if lost and was relieved that the trials of the strikers of 1922 were still going on and could distract him. He sat in the back of the courtroom and found it hard to listen to the convoluted, unending legal arguments. Stylian Staes hurried back and forth between his office and the county courthouse, smoking and gasping for air while the boys in Greek Town and the students who called themselves Americans fought daily on the school grounds. Newspapers called the immigrants a menace and demanded that laws be passed to deport them quickly and easily.

"We was born here same as you, you sonabitches," the Greek Town boys and their schoolmates from Wop Town and Bohunk Town shouted, their puny fists striking out. They were answered by the fists and jeers of the American boys.

The new Greek priest, teaching Greek school until a teacher could be inveigled to come to their coal-mining area, was castigated in the *Helper Times*. Soula read it aloud to Bessie, Peggy, and Lia. "The local Greek priest has been in America twelve years and cannot speak or understand a word of English. If he doesn't want to learn the American language so that he can converse with local people, he should go back where Greek is the national language." This perplexed the girls: all four thought, but did not say aloud, that the priest was just dumb.

Stylian Staes said it during Sunday dinner. "I don't think that stupid priest actually went to a seminary in Greece. As if we haven't enough troubles without having a blockhead like him represent us." The vice-consul had been in Salt Lake City and had returned with gifts, shiny marbles of all colors, several in burnished gold, for Nicky, and a picture book of famous people for Lia. During dinner Lia thought of the book on her bedroom night stand and could hardly eat from the excitement.

When the three cousins, Bessie, Peggy, and Lia, walked into the second-grade classroom, holding hands, their hearts beat horribly at the thought of the teacher saying, "Each one of you stand up and tell your nationality." To their surprise, the same teacher they had in first grade was now teaching second grade. They were afraid of her, but so relieved about not having to stand up and say "Greek" that they had a few moments of happiness.

At recess Greek, Italian, and Slavic immigrant boys dared the Mormons and other Americans to cross the narrow cement walk leading to the front door of the school. Within seconds, wild fighting broke out, ending only when the principal appeared, holding the rubber hose that he kept on the shelf above his roll-top desk. He marched the ringleaders into the school and up the stairs, then lined them up, and gave each one three blows on the back with the hose.

The hose loomed large in the children's fears. A third-grade teacher asked her students to stand up and tell which flag was theirs. Two boys said "the Greek flag." They were sent up the stairs to the principal's office for the regulation three whacks. When Rina heard this, she fumed, placed the Bad Hour curse on the principal, and stamped over the courtyard to the noisy Papastamos house to vow that she was going to the school, grab him by the hair—she did not know he was bald—and ask him to give an account of himself. The children waited for this ultimate humiliation to happen; it did not.

"Don't tell your mother what goes on in school, you dumbbells," boys told Rina's daughters—especially Bessie. But the Gus Demas family told everything; the daughters did not walk but ran to tell Rina the latest happenings. Each time Rina fumed all over again and vowed to take action. Bessie told Peggy and Lia, "I wish I was an American, then I wouldn't have to worry." Peggy and Lia stared at such a confession.

In March a Castle Gate mine exploded and killed one hundred and seventy-one miners, fifty of them Greek. The Greek orphans came to school in black-dyed, sharp-smelling shirts and dresses. The girls' braids were tied with black ribbons. At recess children taunted them. "Orphans! Orphans!" they called. Lia cried on the way home and sat on the back porch steps looking at the sky and wondering again and again why God would let this happen.

Her questions were answered with more trouble. A big cross in the railyards near the depot was set burning and a few nights later another lighted the sky as it flamed on a high mountain slope. Across the narrow valley on the opposite slope, a circle of fire answered.

Greek Town families ran to the dirt courtyard to watch, at first silently, then fathers and older sons began shouting about the KKK. A runner, one of the coffeehouse bachelors, broke in breathlessly and said Americans, not bothering to wear their robes and hoods, were racing from one Greek store to another, rampaging, breaking chairs and glassware, ordering the American girls to go home and not return to work for Greeks.

Silence followed. The mothers herded their children to their houses and put them to bed with hardly a word. The fathers and older sons remained in the courtyard talking low, then went into their houses. Gus telephoned Stylian Staes who said he had already talked with Joe Barboglio, the Italian banker. By morning Greek, Slav, and Italian owners of stores and properties had joined Roger Reynolds, the Irish locomotive engineer and leader of the Catholics, to fight the Klan.

"Now we know who's in the Klan," Gus told his brothers. "A pint of whiskey to the bums at the pool halls and we know their leaders are the"—he turned to English "American Legion, the *leading citizens* the newspaper is writing about always."

Lia woke up at night screaming. Emma heated a glass of milk with a teaspoonful of sugar in it and sat on the bed while Lia drank it. In his room, lighted by the flame of his unknown grandmother's icon, Nicky slept with a wooden sword next to his pillow. Many mornings Emma found Lia curled up in their bedroom doorway. "It's your fault," Rina told Emma when learning of Lia's fears, "you put her in a bed all by herself. No wonder she's afraid. Children should sleep together."

"You mean Lia and Nicky should sleep together?"

Rina stared with horror. "What! Brothers and sisters sleeping in the same room, in the same bed?" Shaking her head in disgust, Rina walked in her heavy, censorious way out of the house. Emma said aloud to the door, "You don't make sense sometimes."

The children stayed inside their neighborhood; their mothers still came for coffee and sweets, talked low about the latest rumors, and left early. The fathers, with guns pushed inside their belts, were away until after midnight. Then it was over. Chris said to Emma, "They say hello to us on the streets now like we don't know they are Ku Klux. I'd like to spill their guts on the dirt." Emma nodded. "And you know, your brother Wardell, he was one of them." Again Emma nodded.

By the time Bessie, Peggy, and Lia were in the fourth grade, they walked to school without Soula's constant hovering. Bessie and Peggy chattered while Lia silently went over spelling lists and times tables.

At recess and at lunch time she looked off as if daydreaming, but she was again silently spelling words and repeating the times tables. She wanted to be not better than Frank Inui, whose parents were from Japan, but as good as he was.

The children of Greek Town continued going to Greek school under the despairing eyes of a long parade of teachers, one step up from destitution, who came and went, just as priests came and went. The president and parish council met the trains, escorted the latest arrivals to Greek Town where the mothers served the best of Greek dishes. Then suddenly the visitors were gone. "We're not good enough for them," Rina groused, and her voice took on a dark monotone when she repeated the proverb: "Poverty wants a good time." To Emma this tone meant she was repeating something from the Greek Bible.

Yet, most important for Bessie and Peggy, they succeeded in having their hair cut. It began with Peggy's pretending that she wasn't sure she wanted her ringlets cut and saying, with a pirouette, which Bessie despised, that she could make her mother let her. That night Peggy begged Katina to cut her hair "like all the other girls." They were in the kitchen with Katina trying to keep the talk low so that Pete, listening to the radio in the living room, wouldn't hear them. Pete, though, heard everything that went on in the house. He was so intensely curious that from long habit, his ears were finely attuned to hear even whispers. As he listened, he weighed the problem: tradition versus his new importance as an American businessman. "Pelaghia!" he boomed out. Peggy ran into the living room, terrified that some coffeehouse bachelor had tattled on her, but she could not think of anything special that she had done. Even fearing him, she knew her father was nothing; she'd heard him called *Kondo-Kolo*, Short-Ass.

"Tell your mother to cut your hair." With a scream Peggy ran into the kitchen where Katina was rubbing her hands wondering what portent Pete's command meant. Pete moved about uncomfortably in his big chair, belatedly thinking that Gus might criticize him for giving in to Peggy. Gus merely said, "Well, we're in America. We shouldn't look old-country. We're businessmen."

Emma cut Peggy's and Bessie's hair, but Soula and the older girls had to keep their braids. As Lia wiped the dishes that evening, she complained loudly to Emma that it was not fair. "Why can't Soula cut her hair? Why does Aunt Rina act so mean?"

Chris was puzzled by his daughter Lia. A few nights later while they were eating dinner, Nicky said, "Mama, was you going to town in the next few days?"

Emma said, "What did you want from town?"

"An airplane kit from the drugstore."

Lia slapped the oil coth and rattled the dishes. "Not *'was* you going to town!' *Were* you going to town! *Were*. *Were!*"

Nicky sat up straight. "Why are you so hot under the collar for?"

"You're in the sixth grade and you don't know the difference between were and was! *You were*, *they were*, *we were!*"

"Well, I know all that. That's in the books. When you talk every day, you say 'you was, they was, we was.'"

"No! No! No! That's ignorant! That's bad grammar! You might as well *not* go to school if you don't use good grammar!"

The children quarreled while their parents looked on, perplexed. They had never heard such an uproar. For Chris it was strange to contemplate. In his village house, his sisters always stood up when he and his brothers came into the room. They gave their brothers their chairs. They never raised their voices to their brothers, never contradicted them. Any order the brothers gave their sisters was carried out quickly. What was happening here!

Soon it was over. Nicky said, "Okay, Okay, stop yelling. I get the drift."

Chris quickly finished eating and went into the living room to read the latest issue of the *Atlantis*. In Georgia, in the city of Atlanta, he read, the Greeks had organized the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, the AHEPA. It would help the Greek immigrants contend with prejudice and assure the Americans that they were peaceful, patriotic citizens. The AHEPA copied American lodges. A picture on the front page of the newspaper showed the Atlanta Greeks wearing fezes and white pants, and carrying canes. The members conducted the meetings in the English language to show that they were Americanized and their balls in big hotels were given detailed coverage in all the Greek newspapers.

Later, Chris read that other Greeks had organized the Greek American Progressive Association, the GAPA, mainly to perpetuate the Greek culture in America. Chris liked them better. The members wore business suits, used Greek in their meetings, and roasted lambs on spits in nearby canyons.

When AHEPA and GAPA organizations were established in the county, Gus and Pete talked about which one they would join. Every Greek immigrant was impelled to join one on the other. Chris suggested either Gus or Pete join the AHEPA and the other the GAPA.

He himself would join the GAPA: "I wouldn't wear a pair of white pants and carry a cane like I forgot where I came from," he said.

Gus told Pete to join the GAPA: he would join the AHEPA. Pete complained a bit, but was glad not to speak English in meetings. Of all the brothers, he had the most entrenched Greek accent, one that never faded over the years.

Rina's piercing eyes turned ecstatic when Gus was elected president of the AHEPA. She bought an expensive dress at Stein's for her new status as first lady, a dark green lace cut low over the bosom. Katina pleated a piece of green silk to cover the V-shaped neckline.

When the AHEPA held its first open meeting in the Liberty Hall, which had been built after the war, all of Greek Town came, even the GAPAns. Gus, the president, gave one of his serious talks about being good citizens, following the laws of the country (as if he had never bootlegged), and paying attention to American holidays and displaying American flags. Others got up and spoke. "The children should go to the Grik school, yes. They should no fight with the American kids, call names. That is no good. Jesus He say 'Turn other cheek.'"

Lia sat in the hall and daydreamed about the meadow and reading a new book; Bessie gazed sleepily, open-mouthed; and Peggy took out a little mirror from her newly acquired mesh purse and looked at herself. Soula played the piano and led the new members in singing the AHEPA lodge hymn.

On their way home, Nicky and his friends snickered, mimicking the English they'd heard, exaggerating everything, laughing. Bessie pretended she did not hear them. She also had a new dress for the meeting, store-bought, not sewed by her Aunt Katina. She touched the violet taffeta silk as they walked, and flounced it. Peggy's mouth was pulled down and she gave sulky answers as they made their way home. When they parted, she looked at Bessie with squinted eyes. "My mother will make me a dress a lot better'n yours."

"Oh yes, of course," Bessie said. "You can always twist your mother around your little finger. She'll make you a dress like you're a movie star."

Later when the GAPA had its first open meeting, Soula led the members in singing the GAPA hymn. For the meeting, Katina bought an expensive dress, a black silk moire with a red rose pinned at the shoulder. She removed the rose: she was still in mourning for her brother killed seven years earlier in the World War.

Soula was in much demand to sing for lodge programs, communal celebrations in the church basement, and name day open houses.

Her parents ordered sheet music for her from the Atlas Company in New York. The sheet music piled up while Soula played the piano and sang old Greek folk songs and newer ones of chaste love and longing.

When *sarakosti*, the forty days of Lent, arrived, the latest Greek school teacher, a woman, told the priest that the girls, led by Soula, should learn the Good Friday laments. The teacher had amazed Greek Town. Her hair was short and dyed black, her fleshy lips were painted and her eyelids, cheeks, chin, and the crease between her breasts were rouged. The priest, the latest recruit, his curly hair parted in the center, sent the buxom teacher long looks through small metal-rimmed eyeglasses.

Bessie, Peggy, and Lia joined the neighborhood girls to practice three weeks before Easter under the priest's black, piercing eyes. Two weeks later when Holy Week began, they sat with their mothers on the left of the nave, the women's side of the darkened church, hungry for the forbidden meat and dairy foods. The chandeliers were unlit; small votive lights in red glasses hung before the saints on the icon screen. Every day and evening the horrific account of Christ's last days was solemnly chanted by the priest and chanter.

On Friday morning all girls, except for the older ones having their monthly bleeding, were driven to church to decorate the bier of Christ. Over a chicken-wire, domed-shaped form, Bessie, flaunting her cut hair, Peggy, and Lia followed the older girls' example and inserted ferns and spring flowers, blue iris, pink carnations, and yellow daffodils, into the metal mesh until it became the wondrously transformed Tomb of Christ.

That night, incense floating below the domed ceiling, John Papastamos and Barba Yianni's sons hoisted the Tomb on their shoulders and carried it out of the dim church into the cool spring air. The Tomb was carried slowly around the church three times with the girls and chanter following and taking turns singing the laments. The parishioners, dressed in dark clothes came next, their candles flickering gold sparks in the blackness.

> O, Life, how can You die? How can You dwell in the Tomb?
> You broke down the Kingdom of Death,
> And raised up those who were dead in Hades.

Soula's voice rose, sweet and clear; the other girls sang softly as if in obeisance. When Soula sang the Virgin's lament, the words fluttered into the black spring night.

O, My sweetest Springtime, my most loved Child,
Where has Your beauty gone?

At the end of the liturgy, the mothers and fathers protected their candle flames, hoping to get them home to light their family icon tapers. Chris blew out his candle and Emma did the same. Lia sat in the back seat with Nicky and said not a word. She did not want to let go of the spell: the darkened, incense-blue nave, the red votive lights before the icons, the procession following the Tomb, and Soula's singing.

On Great Saturday at midnight, the church darkened, and then a solitary light appeared at the altar, coming forward, giving light to the candles held by parishioners on the first pew. The parishioners in turn lighted the candles behind them, and with hundreds of candle flames flickering, the great Resurrection song burst out:

Christ has arisen from the dead!
By death trampling Death, He has bestowed
life upon those in the tomb.

Louder and louder they sang until the windows quivered and then went on to their houses to break the fast with *magheritsa*, the lemon and egg soup made from the liver, intestines, and tripe of the Easter lamb. Bessie ate a bowl, but Peggy and Lia refused theirs and filled their plates with sesame sprinkled sweet bread, eggs, red-dyed for Christ's blood, and the honey and nut pastries the mothers had been baking for weeks.

Lia's euphoria did not last. A black laborer named Robert Marshall had killed a deputy sheriff and hidden in the mountains. Three days later, he made his way back to his cabin. When he fell asleep the man who shared the cabin brought the law. Forty cars followed the lynch mob to the Hanging Tree. A great crowd gathered and smiled for a photographer while Marshall dangled above.

The Spyro Pappas family bought one of the pictures and pasted it in their family's photograph album. One of the boys brought the album to the front porch and called to the children standing about the courtyard. "Come see the nigger hangin'on the tree." The children went and looked, some of the boys laughing nervously, girls gazing with great interest. Lia went back to her house and stood behind the privy, her eyes staring.

The hanging was the talk of the neighborhood. Bessie, Peggy, and Lia sat on Rina's front porch steps the next day. Bessie said with

awe, "That must have been something to see the nigger getting hanged."

Nicky, Jim Papastamos, and Socrates Pappas were kneeling on the hard dirt with marbles in their grimy hands. They lifted their heads and looked at the girls.

"*Nigger* is not a good word," Lia said. "It's *negro.*"

"Well, you can call him negro. I'll call him nigger. You think you're so smart 'cause you get all A's."

Lia got up and ran across the courtyard to her house and into her bedroom where she closed the door and sat on the floor.

"Well, here you are," Emma said an hour later, "I've been lookin' for you all over. Come on, the food's on the table."

Lia picked at her food. "Why did you git so mad at Bessie?" Nicky asked.

"Because she called the man they hanged a nigger."

Emma, Gus, and Nicky looked at her. "Well, isn't that what they're called?" Emma asked, frowning.

"It's negro," Lia said. "Nigger isn't a good word."

"What the hell," Chris said.

Emma said, "But isn't that what everyone calls them?"

"I don't want to be like everyone." Lia looked at Nicky. "It's wrong. Your godfather said so." Nicky shrugged.

"Hm," Emma said. "You learn something new every day."

That argument and all the others were put aside when a great crisis struck the Demas households. Lia knew she would never see Soula again and when she thought of her it was never as the thin girl in a gingham dress sewn by Katina, a braid over each shoulder, but sitting stiffly in a pale blue georgette bought at Stein's, her eyes gazing at her folded hands, her braids twisted into a knot at the back of her head. Soula was no longer a girl but a woman ready to marry the chortling stranger with the gold tooth sitting next to her.

6

In late July Rina found two tattered magazines under Soula's mattress, a *True Story* that showed a girl with long bruises on her back made by her stepfather's cat-o-nine-tails and a *Movietone* that showed the actress Clara Bow in a skimpy evening dress, the shape of her nipples clearly visible. Rina took her *blasti* and beat Soula worse than she ever had. She kept asking where she got the magazines. Soula shrieked, "I found them!" and would not say that Zeffy Papastamos had given them to her.

That was it, Rina told Katina, they would send someone, Katina's husband Pete would be best, to arrange a marriage for her. "But you said you would wait until Soula was sixteen," Katina said.

"Can't you see this is a crisis!" Rina shouted at her. "It's a catastrophe! It can ruin our family's honor! Before we know it, she'll get in trouble! She'll run off with an American boy! Then, how can we marry off our other girls!"

Katina said a long "Ahh" as if realizing just then the ultimate importance of a family's honor, its *filotimo*.

"What we should do," Rina said earnestly, "is send Petro to talk with Papastamos about arranging a marriage between her"—she refused to speak Soula's name—"and his son Yianni."

That evening a family council was called in Rina's kitchen. Not knowing what was to be discussed, Chris told Emma to come along with Nicky and Lia. Rina sent all the children outside, threatening them that they "would eat wood" if they left the backyard. She had not taken out wine bottles and glasses or put water in the *brik* to make coffee—that would come later after the important business was discussed.

"What we say tonight must not be said beyond these walls," Gus said wearily.

Emma knew the word for walls, *tyhy*—she had heard it often enough: "The family's affairs should not go beyond these walls."

"We have to marry Soula off immediately," Gus said.

Chris put out his hands. "Why? She's only fifteen," he said, forgetting that Emma was that age when he was forced to marry her.

"Because," Gus leaned forward, exploding spit, "she has taken the bad road. She was reading filthy American magazines."

"Well, tell her not to. Let her finish school."

"Don't you understand?" Gus looked at Chris, the younger, unthinking brother he had so often admonished as a boy, "Our family honor is at stake. She might do something bad!"

Emma understood enough to know a marriage was being planned for Soula. She knew Soula was in one of the closed bedrooms; otherwise she would be preparing the coffee and arranging pastries on a tray. A dry dread caught in her throat.

"I'll telephone Papastamos right now," Pete said, getting up importantly, his stomach now divided by a belt into two rolls. He went to the wall telephone, lifted the receiver, and cranked the handle. "Central?" he said loudly, and gave the Papastamos number. He put his hand over the mouthpiece. "I'll speak Greek," he said unnecessarily, "so Central won't know what we're saying."

John Papastamos, home from summering the sheep in the Colorado mountains, answered the telephone. Pete spoke genially in his idea of correct English. "You home from ship? You stay long time over here? You okay now here?" When John's father came to the telephone, Pete switched to rapid Greek, "Meet me at Minas's candy store, in the back. Important. Now."

"I'm off," he said and made the sign of the cross.

Rina squirmed off her chair. "I'll go light the icon."

"I've already made my cross," Pete said and walked to the back door. "Tell him we'll give his son the best Studebaker they make," Gus called.

Rina raised her voice. "Tell him we'll pay for the wedding."

"We don't have to give the whole hog," Pete said, but not too loudly, and let the screen door slam behind him.

The family sat at the table sighing, thinking it would be a long time before Pete returned, but in less than a half-hour he was at the door. He came in, head down. "*Achh*," he said, "*Achh*. He's already engaged. They were going to announce it Sunday."

"What! What!" Rina shouted.

"Yes! Some Cretan girl from Arizona. It's already fixed up."

Katina rocked herself back and forth on her chair. "We're lost. Lost," she whispered.

"That donkey mother of his!" Rina shouted, her face red with rage. "And I wasted my time being nice to her!"

"They could at least have found him a girl from a village in our part of the country," Katina said, and Rina curled her hands as if to choke her.

"Who else can we think of?" Gus asked in a heavy voice.

Chris said, "How about Nikolaides's son?"

Rina's eyes looked as if they were bee-stung. "Not him either. His mother is crying her eyes out. He's ready to marry a *ksenoi*, some American girl who takes tickets at the picture show."

"Now listen, we're not lost. I'll telephone Haralambos," Gus said, naming a Greek-language newspaper reporter in California. "He's arranged bushels of marriages while he runs around the country selling subscriptions. He'll take care of it. Don't worry."

7

Soula no longer went to school and Bessie, Peggy, and Lia hardly spoke as they walked out of Greek Town. Bessie's face was pale, a deep frown between her eyebrows. Peggy had tried to find out about the trouble Soula was in, but Bessie blurted, "Mind your own beeswax."

Lia and Emma looked out their living room windows to see if Soula was outside, but they saw only Rina's house, looking quiet, deserted.

Emma thought she must do something to see Soula, but because she was not comfortable with the Greek Town custom of dropping in on friends and family, she had to find some excuse to visit at Rina's or Katina's houses. One morning she baked a large feta pita and cut it in thirds. She carried two plates of it as she walked across the dirt courtyard, first to Katina's house. Katina told her to come in and immediately put on the *brik* for Turkish coffee. The kitchen was comforting, quiet, the children in school, the baby asleep, the clock on top the stove clicking peacefully.

"Hristo go to ship?" Katina, asked in English, looking over her shoulder as she prepared the coffee.

"He's going tomorrow," Emma answered and then said, "*avrio*" because she wasn't sure Katina knew the English word *tomorrow*.

"*Kala*, *tora* you no have *poly dhouila*. Men make *peripleon dhouila*," Katina said, which Emma translated as: Good, now you don't have so much work. Men make too much work.

Emma nodded in agreement and said in Greek, "It's good we have daughters to help us."

They sat in silence, sipping the coffee which Emma had never learned to like. She decided to say it right out. "Katina, *pou einai i Soula?*"

Katina jerked upright and said, "*Sto spity tis*," in her house.

"*Dhen tin vlepo ekso*." I don't see her outside.

Katina looked toward the ceiling with eyebrows raised in dismissal, a gesture Emma had never seen from her before. Katina placed her right hand on her stomach and began complaining that she had *kopsimo*, cramps. She thought she might see Barba Yianni for one of his cures. Emma realized that Katina was trying to keep the conversation away from Soula. After a long silence, Emma got up, thanked Katina for the coffee, and took the remaining plate of pita next door to Rina's house. She felt unimportant, defeated: She would always be the Amerikanidha, the outsider *nyfy*; she would never be told the family secrets.

There was a scramble as she knocked on the screen door at Rina's house. Then Rina called out, "*Ela*, come in." Emma put the plate of pita on the oilcloth. "Is Soula all right, Rina? I haven't seen her for days."

"Soula she all right. She busy."

Emma turned to leave. At the screen door, she said. "Soula is a good girl."

Rina lifted her chin and gave a nod as if to say, "What do you know."

That evening while Lia was doing her lessons in the kitchen and Nicky was playing ball with the boys in the neighborhood, Emma with hands clasped walked into the living room. Chris was listening to the farm report on the radio. In a low voice, Emma said, "Chris, I'm worried about Soula."

"Shh. Can't you see I'm listening to the important news."

Emma said, louder, "Well, tomorrow you're goin' out to sheep and I got to tell you somethin'."

Chris's eyebrows came together. He lowered the volume of the radio. "What?"

"Soula is like she's in jail. Rina keeps her in the house all the time."

"What can we do? Not our business. Parents do what they want with kids."

"It's not right. And she didn't do nothin' wrong. And to take her out of school. That's *wrong*."

"Today Gus he told me Haralambos fix up for Soula to marry guy from Chicago."

Emma covered her eyes with her right hand.

"Don't worry. It's okay."

"It's not okay," Emma said and glared at Chris, leaving him taken aback. Emma had never looked at him in such a way.

A few days later a letter and picture arrived from Soula's prospective groom. Chris went to Rina's house to read the letter for himself. After the usual greetings about concern for health, the groom wrote he was "well situated, owner of two buildings, and well respected by fellow Greeks." Chris looked at the picture for several long moments. The thin-faced man was smiling at the photographer as if he were repressing a laugh. A watch chain looped across his vest and he was wearing a high collar that was no longer in style. As Chris looked at the picture, a faint commotion came from the back bedroom next to the kitchen. He put down the picture. A soft weeping and quiet, yet angry voices filtered through the closed door. Rina got up from the kitchen table and knocked on the door. "Girls! Stop that murmuring in there!" A sudden silence answered her.

Chris snorted. "I'd like to see his two buildings. He should have sent a picture of them instead of him." He stalked out of the kitchen.

The next morning Rina came to Emma's house and asked her to drive her and Soula to Stein's to buy an engagement dress and to the Golden Rule Store for four yards of white satin, buttons, and zipper for the wedding gown. Katina, full of pride, had learned to insert zippers easily. She had measured Soula, using her outstretched palm and told her to choose a dress from a Montgomery Ward catalog. She would then make a pattern from it. As Katina turned the pages of the catalog, Soula let the parade of smiling models wearing straight chiffon dresses with hems ending in peaks go by without speaking. "I can make the hem straight, Soula." Soula shrugged her shoulders and when Katina waited for her to point to one of the dresses and didn't, she sighed and chose one she liked herself.

Rina sat in the passenger seat and Soula in the back. Rina rubbed her hands and spoke in quick sentences. "We go first to Stein-es," she said, because she thought the dresses at the Golden Rule were not "rich-enough looking." Emma glanced in the rearview mirror: Soula was gazing out the window with a blank look, not the despair Emma expected. Emma parked the car; Soula got out slowly.

The air in Stein's store was dry and faintly tinged with cedar, which told of suits, coats, and dresses well-taken-care-of, ironed, carefully hung. Soula stood behind her mother while the clerk, a thin woman, her face a map of wrinkles and her hair dyed black, pulled out the hangers from which filmy Georgettes, shiny satins, and

variegated colored taffetas hung. "This one looks very good," Rina said in Greek, and then looked at Soula sharply. "You like it?" she asked in English. "It doesn't matter," Soula said. "That's no answer," Rina said in Greek, her voice rising. Then seeing the clerk, standing, waiting, she lowered her voice and said in Greek, "Pay attention. Try on this one."

The clerk took the pale blue Georgette and draped it over her arm with care. In the small dressing room Soula was ashamed of having to take off her dress in front of the clerk and reveal the plain, old-fashioned white slip Katina sewed for all the girls in the family. The clerk pulled the special dress over Soula's head and, smiling with artificial teeth, said, "Oh, it was just *made* for you!" When Soula didn't answer, the clerk said in a confidential whisper, "It's the most expensive dress in the store."

The clerk led the way from the dressing room to show Rina and Emma the dress. It had a fashionably low waist and the hem was just below the knees. The clerk said "Look in the big mirror and see how swell it looks." Soula stood in front of the three-paneled mirror, but looked ahead, neither to one side or the other in order to see the back of the dress.

Rina glanced anxiously at Soula,. She turned to Emma. "You like the dress?"

The dress looked like the kind Emma had seen actresses wear the few times she had gone to movies. "It's like a princess dress, Soula," she said while their eyes met for a moment.

"How much for cesh?" Rina asked abruptly and the clerk knowing full well the cost, looked at the tag and said lightly, "Twenty-two dollars and fifty cents."

Rina gasped. Soula gazed at her. "We take it," Rina said and stood up quickly, wanting to show her displeasure at the exorbitant cost, but her considerable weight forced her to struggle to her feet and her dramatic gesture was lost. At the front counter, the clerk wrote out the charges and said, "You want it charged to your account, Mrs. Demas?" Rina nodded, her mouth set in anger.

"I'll wait for the dress. You go on to the Golden Rule," Emma said.

While the clerk was folding and wrapping the dress, she said, "Well, the girl didn't seem one bit interested in this-here dress."

Emma thought it was no way for a clerk to talk and she felt a protectiveness for the family she had married into. She did not answer. "You'd think she'd be jumping for joy," the clerk continued and

again Emma said nothing. The clerk gave Emma a sour look as she handed her the box. Emma nodded her thanks, walked out to the street, where she unlocked the car and put the box on the floor behind the back seat.

When she went into the Golden Rule Store, smiling to Mr. Galanis, who gave her a courtly bow as he waited on the wife of the town druggist, Emma found that the four yards of satin were already being folded by the red-haired clerk. "We should get some underclothes too," Rina said, without looking at Soula.

Soula's pale face reddened. Her eyes widened and sparked. "I'll get them myself. I don't need anyone to help me."

Rina opened her mouth in surprise, then shut it. "All right. We'll go back to the house. Don't spend too much. Don't be late."

Soula glared at her mother but only for a moment. Emma and Rina left her in the silent store while the small cup carrying the cost of the transaction on the overhead pulley traveled to the open office on the mezzanine with a silvery whizz.

Emma and Rina drove to Greek Town in silence. At her house, Rina said, "Soula she . . . " but did not finish the sentence. Emma carried the dress box into the house.

"Thenk you," Rina said.

The groom was scheduled to arrive two days before the wedding. Gus, Pete, and Chris met him at the depot and drove him to meet Soula. Like her, he was of medium height. He had tight curly hair, which had been dyed black, and crinkles at the corners of his eyes. A long line descended on either side of his mouth, and a gold tooth flashed when he spoke.

Soula was brought out. She was wearing the blue Georgette from Stein's. Gus said, "This is our daughter Soula."

The groom stared at Soula for a moment and with a big smile, stood up to shake her hand. "*Kalos irthete*,"—you've come well—she said like a puppet, and he answered, "*Kalos sus vrikame*"—I find you well—and immediately sat down. Soula then followed her mother to the kitchen and returned in a few minutes with the hospitality tray. Rina carried a smaller tray with liqueur glasses for Gus, Pete, and Chris.

Soula stood rigidly before the visitor while he raised his liqueur glass. Her father Gus and her uncles Pete and Chris said in unison "*Kala stefana*," good wedding crowns. The groom laughed heartily, his face red, and then launched into the reasons he had not brought

his *koumbaro*, his best man, along. "At the last minute, he decided to go to South Carolina to see a girl he heard might be suitable to marry. But I brought the crowns and the tray, all that," he flipped his hand backwards and laughed as if he had told a great joke. He looked at Pete and Chris. "One of you will have to stand up with me." There was a short silence, broken by Pete's hasty, "All right, I'll be the *koumbaro.*"

Soula returned the tray to the kitchen and came back to sit on a straight-backed chair next to the sofa where the visitor sat. The men talked about the *topoi*, the places where they had been born, about their people. The visitor laughed with every remark.

Gus said, "I think you might want to rest now. I'll drive you to the hotel. Tonight my woman and Soula have prepared a big dinner to celebrate."

"Good," the visitor said and jumped up quickly, shook hands with everyone, Soula last of all, and left with wave of his hand. No one spoke as the car drove off. Chris began walking toward his house but abruptly got into his pickup truck. He drove through town and toward the coffeehouse, which he had almost stopped visiting. Then knowing he would be asked questions about the groom and not wanting to return to his house to meet Emma's eyes, he drove to the county seat, keeping the truck below his usual seventy miles an hour.

Emma had watched from her front window earlier as the slender man sprang out, waving his hand, and laughing. Instead of going to Rina's house to help with the dinner for the groom, she brought the basket of clothes from the back porch and sprinkled them with water from a pan. She dampened them with quick, angry motions until they were dripping with water. Chris found her ironing when he returned. They did not speak and Emma kept on lifting the iron from the hot stove and pressing hard on Chris's shirts.

Bessie, Peggy, and Lia came running home from Greek school, excitedly talking about the groom. Everyone had heard that he was in town. They chattered in the kitchen, eating *koulourakia* dipped in milk while Emma looked at them, thinking how little they knew about anything. As her mother said each time she delivered a baby, cleaned and oiled it, "Lil' baby, you've got a lot to learn."

Across the dirt courtyard in Rina's house, lamb was roasting and *pites* were baking. Through Emma's open window and doors, the smells came, now unpleasant, and she wondered if she were getting sick or maybe even pregnant. Chris stood at the door once, holding a newspaper in one hand, a cigar in his mouth and looked at her a moment before he removed the cigar to say, "You should go help Rina."

Emma kept ironing. "Rina she needs help," Chris said again. "I don't care," Emma answered.

Nicky and other children in the neighborhood were playing in the dusk, their carefree, happy calls came to her as she ironed with jerky thrusts of the iron.

In the evening the family, Stylian Staes, Barba Yianni and his wife, and the godparents of all the children sat about the table that had been extended from the dining room into the living room. The buxom Greek school teacher was there, fussily twisting her napkin about, but the new priest, "the flower of Greek priests in America," as the Salt Lake City Greek newspaper called him, had been summoned to the Spring Canyon Mine, where two Greeks had been injured in a fall of coal. Katina had cried out when she heard of the accident: it was a bad omen, she insisted, and Rina told her to be quiet. Katina's hands trembled; she splashed the lemon-egg sauce for the *dolmadhes* and the scorch on the coal stove sent up a stench. "You're making holes in water," Rina said proverbially, and Katina sighed.

During the passing of the bountiful traditional foods and the revelry, Rina sent warning glances toward Soula who sat straightforward and ate very little. The groom barely glanced at Soula, so intent was he on having all eyes on himself. At one point Gus got up to go to the cellar for more wine. Chris followed him. At the top of the stairs, he said, "How old did you say this Ha Ha is?"

In the rough voice he used when he would allow no criticism, Gus said, "He's thirty-eight."

Chris gave a harsh derisive laugh, and as he turned toward the dining room, he hissed the proverb, "There's plenty of laughter in a fool's mouth."

"Marriage will take care of that," Gus answered.

Emma had tried to sit by Soula, but Rina had directed the vice-consul to sit on Soula's left and the groom on her right. Rina was not speaking to Emma. The groom and the children at the far end of the table were in a happy, festive mood. The children nudged each other and laughed at the sonorous talk of godfathers who tried to say their piece, but the groom-to-be would not let them finish. "Did you know that we have a cantor who served in the Monastery of Cefalu?" one godfather said. "He would be here tonight but he had to go back to New York. His brother was given the last rites." The groom glanced at him, then turned to look at the vice-consul while Soula leaned backwards. Laughing, food stuck on his gold tooth, he said, "We had a big scandal, a big one, a priest and a cantor!" Stylian Staes interrupted

by raising his wine glass and saying, "Let's drink a toast to all the *patriotes* we've eaten bread and salt with, and may we see them again, God willing."

They drank the toast and the groom began talking loudly about *patriotes* he'd eaten bread and salt with and never saw again. Barba Yianni looked at the little man with the dyed hair throughout the evening, taking his measure, and the vice-consul, his bald head shiny, ate on without another word. Barba Yianni cocked his head toward the vice-consul and whispered a proverb in his clipped Roumeliot dialect, "An old donkey doesn't take a new path." Staes answered with his own proverb, "The camel can't see his hump."

When the meats, *pilafi*, *pites*, salads, and honey-nut pastries were eaten, and after the Turkish coffee was drunk, the women cleared the table, except for Soula, who was told to sit where she was. The men prepared to sing the *Tragoudhia tou Trapeziou*, the old songs of the table, about their heroes fighting the Turks, but the groom burst out with a contemporary song: "In the Zappeion one day, while I was walking, I chanced to see a Russa, a red-headed girl . . . " His voice was strong and melodious. Barba Yianni leaned close to the vice-consul's ear. "Too bad he didn't marry the Russian," he said and twisted his mustache.

Other songs from the groom followed:

> You're going and leaving me, my light,
> now that the fire has started.
> Leave, but give me back my poor heart . . . .

And

> I was then a lad of eighteen
> And another such as she I had never seen.
> So truly beautiful,
> Such a mouth, such breasts . . .

Katina blushed darkly, Rina looked aghast, and Barba Yianni's wife glared at the singer.

When he began "*Koketa*" he could finish but one stanza:

> Ah, come Coquette, and give me
> for one single moment
> your chic silhouette and your mad body . . .
> filled with mad flame.

"We have some new phonograph records, just come from New York," Gus said. He got up and fumbled through a stack of records next to the small phonograph on the buffet. In a moment, a woman's voice sang out a wedding song:

> Day begins
> Now the dawn breaks,
> now the birds,
> now the swallows,
> now the partridges,
> now all are singing

The groom laughed. Yiannina, Barba Yianni's wife, said, "That's all we have left in America. A wedding song. No seven days of *ghlendi*." *Ghlendi*, the joyous singing and dancing.

A short silence filled with nostalgia followed, but Gus immediately put on another record. The clarinet pealed out, dark, foreboding, then rose higher and higher in a long sustained call. Barba Yianni leaned toward the vice-consul. "I'm going," he said, "the groom has worn me out." He stood up. "Let's go, woman," he said, and when Yiannina got up, Staes said he had had a busy day. One by one the guests stood up and took leave with quiet good wishes for the betrothed. Gus and Rina stood on the front steps and accepted their words with strained smiles.

As Chris followed Emma, Nicky, and Lia down the steps, he turned and said, "The white lamb is married to the blockhead."

"Sst!" Gus hissed, but Chris walked on without looking back.

Lia began crying. "Why are you crying?" Emma asked. Lia did not answer, but cried even after she was put to bed.

The church was filled with all the Greek families of the county and the young men from the mining camps in their black Sunday suits. Zeffy Papastamos and Soula's younger sister Mellie, her bridesmaids, held bouquets of sweet peas, which Gus had told Pete to order at the last minute from a Greek florist in Salt Lake, along with a bouquet of red roses for Soula. They had come slightly wilted.

The bridesmaids wore their past Easter dresses, made in pastel colors, with low waists and pleated skirts. Like Soula, they did not smile once during the hour-long service. Bessie, Peggy, and Lia giggled when the priest led the bride and groom and best man around the table in the Dance of Isaiah: the groom's wedding crown had

moved to the side of his head and gave him the look of a tipsy comedian they had seen at the Strand Theater.

The incense, burning candles, and cloying odor of freshly washed and powdered bodies in the small church with closed windows—no one thought of opening them—was overwhelming. Afterwards in the basement, while the dishes were being filled with roast lamb, *pilafi*, and *pites*, the same airlessness prevailed. The young miners danced and leaped to the music of the *lyra*, the clarinet, and the guitar, but the gaiety was incongruous.

The mothers began to gather their children to take them to bed. Emma approached Soula. Wordlessly they looked at each other. Emma put her arms around Soula and held her for a moment. Then she gave Soula a long, last look and followed Chris and the children outside. Beyond her grief was a bright thought: It had been so easy, so natural to put her arms around Soula. She had never hugged her children. When they were younger and fell, she picked them up to comfort them, but she had never reached out to them spontaneously, and it was so natural.

Long after Chris began snoring faintly, rhythmically, Emma lay awake thinking of Soula leaving with the foolish stranger, of her lying next to him in bed, and when a train whistled as it clipped around Steamboat Mountain, she wept.

The depot was deserted except for the dispatcher, sitting at a roll-top desk and wearing a green celluloid eyeshade. A small electric light globe dangled above his head. Rina, Gus, and their five younger daughters clustered around Soula and Nonda, who lifted first one foot, then the other, rocking, his face under the yellow light purplish from the wine he had drunk. Until the passenger train whistled at the rounding of Steamboat Mountain, they said little. All looked toward the train advancing like a black phantom, imperiously calling out its approach and then easing into the station with steam escaping through its great oily black wheels. The conductor swung down the platform step and placed a stool for the two passengers.

Nonda held out the tickets and lurched onto the platform. The conductor helped Soula up. Gus's eye peered into the dimly lighted interior. "Nonda!" he called. "This is a coach. There must be a mistake!"

Nonda looked over his shoulder. "No mistake! I had a big *ghlendi* for my friends and used up my ready money!"

"Soula should sleep!"

"She can sleep in the chair. It moves back."

By then Soula had walked past Nonda and found a seat in the nearly full coach car where passengers dozed or looked out the windows.

Gus shouted at Nonda, swaying on the platform. "When you get to *Tsicago*, telephone us! Let us know that you got there all right."

"Sure, sure." Nonda laughed, the laugh high like that of an adolescent boy on the verge of finding his manly voice. Inside the coach car, he leaned over Soula and waved vigorously. Soula looked at her parents and sisters and turned her head.

Rina, Gus, and their daughters watched the train chug slowly out of the station, gathering speed, clicking faster until it came to Blue Cut, where it disappeared with a long plaintive whistle.

Two days passed, three, and the telephone on the kitchen wall did not ring with a call from Chicago. On the third evening, red faced and puffing, Gus gave the telephone operator the number Nonda had given him. Rina and her daughters waited.

"*Embros*!" a man answered forwardly, amid a buzz of talk and music.

Gus sputtered, "Nonda," is that you?"

"No. If you're asking for Nonda Yiannopoulos, the groom," the voice chuckled, "he's here. Nonda! Come to the telephone!"

"Who is it?" Nonda demanded, laughing into the receiver.

"Soula's father! You didn't call. I *asked* you to call when you got there."

"Eh, I don't have a telephone in my house yet. You called the coffeehouse."

"How is Soula?"

"Eh, Soula's fine. She's cooking a big dinner. I came to the coffeehouse to get my friends to come and eat it."

"Get a telephone! We want to talk to our daughter!"

When Gus hung up, he looked at Rina, then at his daughters. "She's all right," he said frowning at the ticking of a clock on top the stove. "She's cooking a big dinner."

Mellie, the sister next in line after Soula, turned from her parents and went into the bedroom she shared with two of her sisters. After a few moments of silence and heavy sighing from their mother Rina, Bessie and the younger sisters walked unobtrusively into the bedroom where Mellie sat on the bed, ready to cry. "That's her honeymoon—cooking a big dinner!" she whispered and hiccuped.

Rina and Gus had gone into their bedroom and shut the door. Their daughters strained to hear their father's low rumbling and their mother's high-pitched staccato cries.

Each evening Gus asked if Soula had called and Rina shook her head. Rina told Katina that they had married Soula off badly and it was all the fault of that matchmaking Haralambos, the newspaper reporter. Yet when neighbors came to call, she put on a gracious, smiling air and when asked about Soula, answered with bigger smiles, "Fine. Fine. She's getting along fine." To Mellie and her other daughters, she screeched, "Don't say one word about Soula and him, not to Zeffie, not to anyone in the neighborhood, to no one! What goes on in this house must never leave these walls!"

Two weeks after Soula arrived in Chicago, Nonda telephoned. "Now we have the telephone. Here is the number"—he gave it in English—"Yes, all is well. She's right here. Soula, take the telephone. Talk to your parents."

"Soula," Gus shouted, "are you all right?"

"Yes."

"Your mother wants to talk to you."

"Soula, do you want Mellie to visit you?"

"Mellie's in school."

"She can leave school for a little while."

"There's no room here."

"How much room does one girl need?"

When Soula did not answer, Rina said, "Call us from time to time and tell us how you are getting along. Here, Mellie wants to say something."

Mellie took the receiver, said "Soula?" and began sobbing. Rina grabbed the receiver, pushed Mellie aside, and said in a careful voice, "You must telephone us from time to time, do you hear?"

"Yes."

Rina said goodbye and Soula said goodbye.

Gus and Rina went into the living room and sat in the coming dark without turning on the lamps. They did not tell each other that not once did Soula call them "Mama" and "Papa."

Gus and Rina telephoned on Sundays, but Soula never called them. She answered Mellie's many letters about once every three or four weeks. It was Mellie's duty to stop at the post office every day after school, dial open the family box, one in a wall of identical black drawers, and take the letters to the Demas agency. She hid Soula's letters in her notebook, her footsteps echoing in her ears with fear of her parents' finding them. The letters were short, a few sentences each: *I wish I were home. I don't like it here. Tell me what's going on.*

Mellie sent long letters about their friends—she read them to the younger girls before mailing them—about Mr. Staes organizing a girls' club and advising that Greek boys and girls should have socials together with chaperons! Mellie underlined the sentence: Fat chance the boys would look at any of us. They only look at American girls. The girls' uniforms were the color of the Greek flag: white shirts, light blue pleated skirts, and blue tams. The name of the club was the "Athena."

The town was growing, Mellie wrote. On the east side of Main Street, the row of railroad houses was moved across the tracks and in its place a string of dark red brick buildings was going up. The one on the end was already finished, the Palace Candy Store, owned by Jim Papacosta, who brought a Greek candymaker from Salt Lake to make the chocolates. Bessie, Peggy, and Lia saw some men delivering a juke box. On Saturday night people went there—but not the Greek girls, oh no—to sit at the booths, eat ice cream sundaes, and listen to the music.

Bessie, Peggy, and Lia still did everything together. They listened to the radio every Saturday and sometimes Emma made fudge for them, but mostly they ate apples and popcorn.

Mellie also wrote that Bessie was still getting on their mother's nerves. She hated to embroider dishtowels and pillow cases and got "a bad licking for her sloppy work. Mama keeps telling her they'll never be able to marry her off unless she can show she'd be a good housewife. Ugh!" Lia won first place at school for a drawing of their ranch house; she got a prize of one dollar. "The brothers"—Millie's sardonic term for her father Gus and uncles Pete and Chris—had built on lots they bought in the good part of the town. The brick was a mustard color. Their mother's and Aunt Katina's houses were next to each other. Aunt Emma's was on the main road, at the foot of Steamboat Mountain.

The mothers, she wrote, thought the shiny yellow hardwood floors were wonderful. The living and dining rooms were divided by glass-fronted movable bookcases and "we'll have to buy some books so they won't look so empty." The dining room had a built-in china closet. The mothers were proud of their indoor, tiled bathrooms, but they acted afraid of the electric stoves. Aunt Emma had to read the instructions to tell them how to turn on and adjust the heat. Their mother learned in a hurry, but Aunt Katina was suspicious of her stove and had to be forced by Queen Rina—the regal title Mellie gave her mother—to cook while she watched.

Now that they were living in the good part of town, Queen Rina said they couldn't shout and talk loud the way they did in Greek Town. She was always saying, "Don't let the *Amerikanoi* hear us" or "Don't let the *Mormonoi* hear us!" They were going to Uncle Chris's ranch soon and it now had a bathroom inside the house.

Two months after her wedding, Soula wrote Mellie that she was pregnant and she must not say anything to her parents. She had not told Nonda. A few weeks later, Nonda telephoned, laughing, telling Gus that Soula was going to have a baby.

"How is Soula? Is she all right?"

"Well, she throws up all the time. She says it's my cigar! Ha Ha Ha!"

"Then don't smoke around her," Gus said, his voice raised, disbelieving.

"Aaa, it's all in her head," Nonda pealed away.

Toward the end of Soula's pregnancy, Mellie was sent on the train to Chicago with a box of pastries. Gus asked the conductor to look after her and gave him five silver dollars.

When Mellie returned six weeks later, the family sat around the kitchen table and questioned her. She answered, looking at the faded oilcloth table cover: it had been a long, hard labor. The baby had a big head. Soula lost a lot of blood. After the forty days, they went to church to have Soula cleansed by the priest's readings and "afterwards," Mellie gave her sisters, all looking at her avidly, a quick glance, "Nonda went to the coffeehouse to celebrate."

Rina leaned forward. "Hnnh! And what kind of house do they have?"

"It's not a house. It's an *apartment* on Halsted Street where the Greeks live."

"How many bedrooms?"

"One." Then thinning her mouth, her eyes glinting at her mother, Mellie said, "They have to use the toilet at the end of the hall with the other people who live there."

Rina folded her arms over her bosom, tucked her fingers into her armpits, and rocked herself. The one bedroom was final proof that Nonda had nothing, but worse it galled her that Soula had to use a community toilet. Rina had a horror of the smells of strangers. She complained to Katina about her ungrateful daughter. "She never telephones or writes. When we get ready to visit, she makes excuses. She didn't call her father on his name day and that Nonda never knows

when name days are anyway. He must come from a *vlahiko soi*—a peasant clan. 'Well situated' he said, but they live with other families and use a toilet with everyone else, and Mellie told me more. The apartment is a pig sty. He used to have his *patriotes* live with him and they never even had curtains on the windows. Ach, if we lived back in our village and if I had a son, he would take hold of that Nonda's throat and beat the devil out of him. But in America everything is different."

Each Sunday Rina called Soula and ordered her to have the baby baptized. "If something happens and—Oh, my Virgin—if he dies suddenly, he won't be buried in a consecrated grave!"

Rina told Gus that he must speak to Nonda about the baptism. "Yes, the boy's been baptized," Nonda chortled. "My village friend Stavros went with us to church one Sunday and after the liturgy the priest baptized him, then we came home and ate and drank plenty." Nonda guffawed.

"Let me speak to Soula."

"Good evening," Soula said as if she were addressing the priest or the Greek school teacher.

"What's this? You baptize your son without inviting your parents? You baptize him in secret? To baptize a child is a great joy! Why would you do such a thing?"

Beyond the telephone, a record player had been turned on and Nonda sang along robustly. "The baby caught cold and I was afraid he'd die of pneumonia and not be baptized."

"Bravo. Bravo," Gus said with disdain. When he hung up, he looked at Rina for several seconds. "She lied. She said the baby was sick and that's why they baptized him. She didn't want us there." Later he remembered that he had not asked and neither Nonda nor Soula had told him the baby's name. Rina and Gus looked at the piano; untouched since Soula left, it would remain untouched.

Bessie, Peggy, and Lia often sat on the cement steps of Emma's house with faces angry, then sad, then angry again. Emma came to the door and said each time, "Girls why don't we make a lunch and you can go up to Elephant Rock for a picnic?" or, "Girls, come inside and we'll make fudge," and, "Stop moonin' over it. It won't change nothin'."

Bessie answered, her eyes red, "My mother watches me like a hawk, worse than ever. If she caught on about Elephant Rock, she'd think we went to meet some boys," and, "I don't feel like making fudge" and, "I don't want to stop moonin' over it."

Peggy whispered to Lia, "When is she going to stop that crying?"

Three more times, Mellie went back to Chicago to help Soula with her babies. Even though Gus and Rina told Soula that they would go to Chicago to bring her and the children to visit in the new house, it did not happen. Soula told Mellie she never wanted to see the new mustard-colored brick house.

8

The Demas families had left behind Greek Town's mud-plastered outdoor ovens, large gardens, and sheep pelts drying over wire fences. No longer did Gus and Pete roast the Easter lamb in the backyard; it was not done in the "good part of town." Gus and Pete still made toasts to "*Kali patridha*," the good fatherland, perpetuating their wives' notion that eventually they would return to it.

The days seemed peaceful enough in the new neighborhood, so close to the railroad tracks that they could smell the sweetness from the hand-rolled cigarettes the Mexican track gang smoked. On Saturdays Lia played Soula's La Traviatta record; she had traded Bessie a red and white striped silk scarf for it. Most of the night she read; it was impossible to sleep when noisy parties went on at the doctor's house across the street. She looked out the window from time to time. Barba Yianni's boys ran to the doctor's house to deliver ever more whiskey. One day while she was reading on the front porch swing, one of Barba Yianni's sons went to the door of the doctor's house with a package wrapped in a Greek newspaper. It showed outlines of the whiskey bottle. Lia could only wonder that even though Prohibition was in force, no one ever stopped Barba Yianni's sons from delivering whiskey in broad daylight. She wrote this down in a brown tablet she had begun keeping, thinking it was like a writer's journal.

Although the neighborhood was quiet, except for the Saturday night parties, the Demas houses were infected with a brooding quiet, as if a silent, underground river rushed below their foundations.

Mellie had told no one outside the family about Soula's life, but after her last visit to Chicago she could not contain the dread of what she saw in the Halsted apartment. She walked to Greek Town to tell Zeffy Papastamos. As they sat on the front porch swing, Mellie said

in a low voice, "She says the wedding night was awful, just awful! She can't stand him. All she cares about are the children, especially the oldest, Mikey. He gets sick and Soula goes crazy. Please, please, don't tell your mother what I said. If my mother finds out I told you, I'd really get it."

The Papastamos family could not keep secrets. Bessie, Peggy, and Lia thought any day Rina would hear of Mellie's visit and she would be in bad trouble. Days and weeks passed, and by some fateful circumstance, perhaps, Lia thought, Bessie's prayers at the icon, Rina did not learn of the visit; she kept up her pretense to the neighbors that Soula was living a good life.

It was of great interest to the Greeks in town, and especially to the bachelors relaxing in the coffeehouses, that when Soula carried her fourth child, Rina was also pregnant. Rina was so ashamed of this evidence of sexual activity that she stayed in her house and yard for the entire nine months. Her baby was a puny boy and rather than rejoicing for at last getting a son, Gus looked at him and said, "Well, I guess we'll have to make a lawyer out of him." The baby lived only two months. Katina thought, but was afraid to say, that it was a judgment on Rina for marrying Soula off so badly. Rina said Fate decided everything.

By the time of these last births, the country had fallen into the 1930s Depression. Bessie, Peggy, and Lia were thirteen years old when the headlines in the morning paper appeared, three inches high: STOCK MARKET CRASHES!

Rina and Katina moaned fearfully in each other's kitchen. They had been unaware of the extent of the family bank accounts, only that their husbands had made considerable money in the 1920s. What they heard from their husbands on the fearful day of October 28, 1929, were exclamations of woe, of disaster: "Lost! Lost! We're ruined!" Their stocks were worth almost nothing. Yet they had sizeable bank accounts and silver and gold coins hidden in fireproof metal boxes, which their wives knew nothing about and would never know.

Chris's money was adequate and he had not invested in the stock market. When he sold his wool the following August, the price had dropped so low that it did not compensate for the cost of grazing. The autumn sale of lambs that should have provided the extra money for clothing and a new pickup truck was ominous: lambs that had been selling for eighteen dollars a head, now sold for three. It worsened. When Chris, Marko Papastamos, other Greeks, Basques, and Mormons

rode the livestock freights, watering and feeding their lambs at stops on the way, they found no buyers in Denver, Omaha, or Kansas City and finally abandoned the lambs in the Chicago stockyards.

Chris returned empty-handed. Emma stared at the signs of aging on his weather-browned face. "We'll be all right," he said at the kitchen table with a glance at Emma and a long look at Nicky, then fifteen. "At least we have lamb to eat." He laughed to appear lighthearted and slapped the oilcloth.

The women in the family reverted to the old ways: they made soap with grease they collected in coffee cans, simmered it with lye, poured it into oblong baking pans, let it harden, and cut it into squares. It had an unpleasant fatty smell and the girls in the family hated using the brown soap, especially for washing their hair.

Katina spent more time at the sewing machine and thanked the Virgin each time she sat down to use it. It had replaced the old one that required one hand to turn the wheel. The newer machine had a treadle, which left both hands free to work with the fabric. To sew coats for the children, she ripped the men's worn suits, cleaned them with gallons of gas from Martinelli's service station, and pinned her patterns, cut from newspapers, on the underside of the fabric, which looked new. The older girls' dresses were cut down for the younger ones. Bessie, Peggy, and Lia were glad that in sewing class they had to work with new fabrics, even though the cheap fabrics their mothers bought at the Golden Rule Store wrinkled badly.

Once again they were eating the beans, lentils, pastas, and vegetable dishes of the villages. They were sparing with the olive oil, and when they baked traditional honey-and-nut pastries for name days, Easter, Christmas, and Day of the Virgin celebrations, they made smaller amounts and rationed the pieces clamored for by their children. Emma read a recipe in the town newspaper called "Depression Cake." It had neither eggs nor shortening. She baked it in a big pita pan and had it always on hand for the children in the family and Nicky's old friends from Greek Town.

The children still attended the Saturday matinee movies at the Strand; a child's ticket cost five cents. The Pathé News showed people rioting for bread, breaking into stores, building makeshift shelters out of old pieces of lumber and canvas; some people slept in packing boxes. Long lines of men, three deep, waited for a bowl of soup. Lia told her parents that the Pathé News showed army veterans, twenty thousand of them, living in a shanty town they'd erected in Washington, D.C. They had hopped freights to march on Congress to demand

their bonuses. President Hoover would not talk to them and sent General Douglas MacArthur to burn down their shacks and to bomb them with tear gas. Emma sat at the table, looking distressed, clasping her hands. Chris looked at her. "No use to worry. That Hoover he is sonabitch." Lia had never heard her father speak in such a nice way to her mother.

The families' new houses were closer to the tracks and as transients increased—no longer bothered by railroad detectives—so many appeared at the back screen doors that the mothers baked extra bread. Emma made a cheese with goat milk from the ranch and renin bought at Greenlagh's Drug Store. She put a slice of cheese and several large pieces of lamb between thick slices of bread for the transients. Chris brought lambs regularly from the ranch and butchered them for the three families, for several neighbors in Greek Town who were destitute, for Emma's parents, and for the gaunt men who kept increasing in number. "We're eating so much lamb, we're beginning to baaa," Chris said. Lia wrote in her brown notebook: "Mama always looks sad when she sees the transients and their children at the door."

Bessie, Peggy, and Lia saw the tramps every school day. In 1931 they had begun taking the old unheated school bus to high school in Price. When they returned in the afternoon, they took a shortcut along the railroad tracks. In autumn and in spring the box car doors were open and transients sat there with their feet dangling. At first the transients were young men, but as the Depression went on, older men joined them, then the very old, and then parents with young children. They sat in the doorways, others squatted behind them, the men unshaven, sweaters and dusty coats at their sides. Each man had a small rolled bundle held together with a belt. Mr. Shepard from the YMCA doled out the leftover bread and meat he collected from the Grill Café and the Chinese-American restaurant.

One day as a freight train came ever slower to a stop, the three girls glanced at a family sitting in the open door: the young mother's hair was light brown and hung lank over both shoulders. Her face was white and thin and the man's sunken cheeks were unshaven. The boy and girl, about five and six, gazed at the three cousins, eyes round, their faces pale. The little girl's face was smudged. As they walked on, Bessie said, "You'd think they'd at least wash the little girl's face!"

Peggy said, "Well, 'poor people have poor ways.'" The Palace Candy Store juke box sang out, "Life is just a bowl of cherries."

Lia wanted to get away from them and hurried ahead to her house. She sat on the cement steps, looking at the placid sky above

Steamboat Mountain and wondering why God would let such awful things happen. That night she wrote in her notebook: "I wish I could get on a train and go far away from here."

Lia had begun to wonder if there was a God, but in biology class, students could put bits of string, a fly wing, anything under the one microscope and look though the tube at the wonders there. She had put a sprinkle of salt on a glass slide and was thrilled with the beauty of the hexagonal white grains; even better, a piece of leaf showed rows of cells around its edges, a symmetry so beautiful that she could think there must be a God. Someone had to see to such order; it could not have happened by itself.

Lia and her cousins began quarreling often. Lia made excuses when they telephoned "to do something." She wanted to be alone with her books and colored pencils and was tired of their grumbling. Peggy and Bessie complained about the school dances they weren't allowed to attend and the dates other girls could have, but not them.

Greek boys from their old neighborhood, though, went to the dances in the school gymnasium. The Pappas girls polished their brothers' shoes and pressed their pants for them.

"Our parents think the reason people go out is to jump behind the nearest bush and do it," Bessie said; she couldn't use the words *have sex*.

"They should have stayed in Greece, in their village," Peggy sneered, her face looking as if it had been compacted into an angry ball.

Bessie and Peggy turned on Lia. "You don't care that we can't go out," Bessie said, and Peggy sniffed, "Oh, I guess you intend to be an old maid school teacher or librarian, so you don't care."

"No, it'll come some day."

"Just sit on your fanny then and wait for it," Peggy said with a toss of her head.

Hard times abounded. Mines closed, some worked half time. Coal trains coming down from the mining camps whistled less often. Houses were boarded up. One day the girls talked with schoolmates; the next day they were gone. Unshaven miners lined the streets of the town, leaned against buildings, stood outside the Miners' Pool Hall, and trudged each morning to the mine offices to see if their names would miraculously be on the list of workers for the day.

Several Greek families were leaving for California hoping to find work with *patriotes*. They loaded their children into cars and attached

small, crudely made trailers to the back bumpers. Most of their belongings were stored in the sheds of Greek friends; they believed they would come back some day to retrieve them. Into the small trailers they crowded clothing, pans, cutlery, and food and covered everything with tarps.

Two years later the Depression had deepened. Gus and Pete put their houses up for sale and prepared to move to Salt Lake City. They had sold so few cars since 1929 that they were using up their savings. In Salt Lake they intended to buy real estate.

Chris and Emma stayed in Helper, trying to keep the bank from foreclosing on them. Emma's mother Annie walked daily to the black wooden railroad chapel to sew quilts for the needy under the federal government's Reconstruction Finance Corporation. She was paid fifty cents a day. The most destitute of family men were paid a pittance for cleaning canals and spading their banks, grading and widening streets. Emma's father worked on the canals, the thin flapping soles of his shoes held together with strips of gunny sack.

Chris had always voted for Republicans, but he didn't think President Hoover understood that people were suffering. He became a Democrat and voted for Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Gus and Pete despised him as if he were a murderer or at least a homosexual. "You *pusti*!" Gus shouted. "I don't want to hear your name mentioned to me again!" Gus telephoned two days later asking Chris to see how Stylian Staes was doing; he had been in the Price hospital.

One cold March day, Emma's brother Wardell came to her house, stood in the kitchen doorway, and asked for money, whiskey on his breath. "I don't have it," Emma said, "and if I did, you'd spend it on whiskey."

Wardell looked down on her, contempt pulling back from his big teeth. "Don't give me that slop. Everyone knows them Greeks made a bundle and stashed it away. Red-blooded Americans are dying right and left, but them Greeks, Eyetalians, and Bohunks are livin' high off the hog."

"Listen, Wardell, Chris does more work in a week than you did in five years. So you better go home because I've got no money!"

Wardell faltered and looked at Emma and over her head, eyes bleary and red, as if trying to decide what to do. He jumped at the soft bang of the back screen door. He turned, eyes frightened, but it was Lia. "Okay," he said to Emma, "I guess I'll git goin'." He brushed past Lia. "Wouldn't you rather had a white man for a father?" he said to her.

"A white man like you?" Emma said.

"I've got a white man for a father," Lia answered.

Wardell gave a mirthless "Hah!" as he let the screen door slam.

"Don't pay any attention to him," Emma said.

After graduating from high school, Nicky said he'd had enough of books. During the next year, he spent all his time with the sheep. Chris liked Nicky's working full time with the sheep and Lia's being at the top of her class and teachers complimenting him on Main Street.

When the school year ended, Lia said she would apply to the University of Utah for admission. They were eating dinner and Chris frowned and said, "No."

Lia looked afraid. "Why?"

"You go to the university, you find American boy. No! You got to marry a Grik boy."

Quietly Emma said, "You didn't marry a Greek girl."

"That's different."

"It certainly was." Emma looked at Chris until he turned his head. "Now listen, Chris. Lia's worked hard since the first grade."

"No! Girls should finish high school, marry, have babies!"

Lia burst out, "I don't want to get married. I want to get an education!"

Chris shook his head with finality. "You go to university, you learn how to smoke."

"Mellie goes to the university!" Lia said, tears spilling down her face.

"Mellie she crazy! She don't listen to her father and her mother. She disgrace the family!"

"She does no such thing," Emma said.

Nicky ate on while his parents and Lia quarreled. "How can you say such things about your daughter?" Emma was rubbing her hands. "You like it when people compliment her. And she deserves to go."

"What good learning books do for girls? They don't make living?"

"Well, if my father let me get a high school education, I wouldn't have ended up a waitress at the Grill Café!"

"I don't say Lia go out and work. She stay home until she marry!"

Emma stood up and looked down at Chris. It had never occurred to her before that Lia would go on in school, but she used a tone of finality when she told her husband, "Lia's goin' to the university."

Chris pushed himself away from the table and with a huff went out to the porch where he sat on the swing and read the latest *Atlantis*

newspaper. Each issue had a picture of a young marriageable woman with a demure smile and a bright account of her family; almost always the father was described as being "well situated." Chris thought this would solve his problem with Lia. He got into his car and drove toward Price to see Nicky's godfather, Stylian Staes. He would ask him to write an article about Lia and send it to the *Atlantis*. Lia had a nice picture, which had been taken for the high school year book. Chris drove at high speed to the two story gray frame building that served as a hospital. He bounded up the steps and into the private room where the vice-consul lay in bed, his wire-rimmed eyeglasses on, reading a court document, and smoking.

"*Koumbare*," Chris began and because a nurse went by the door, continued in English—he didn't want her to think he was being secretive. He related his dilemma—his daughter's high-tone ideas about going to the university and the need to find a suitable husband.

Stylian Staes took off his eyeglasses, looked at Chris, and stubbed out the cigarette. He put out his browned palms. "Are you out of your mind?" he said in Greek. "This girl *should* go to the university. You want her to marry some ignorant boy and have a lot of babies! No, I won't write a foolish article about her. And watch what you're doing. Or you'll have another Soula on your hands!"

Chris left, dazed, went home, and right to bed. He hoped no one would know what Stylian Staes had told him and that by the next day it would all pass. It did not. From that night on the evening meals were silent with occasional outbursts. "It's the Depresh," Chris said, shaking his finger at Emma and then Lia. "We can't waste money for you go to the university!"

"Dad, I'll stay with Aunt Rina and Aunt Katina and the tuition is one hundred twenty-five dollars for the whole year."

"One hundred twenty-five dollars a year!" Chris said, lifting his hands high, as if Lia had said one hundred thousand.

Emma looked at Chris steadily, "I'll find the money."

Chris stumbled from the table and went out to the porch, but he could not keep his mind on the Greek newspaper in his hands. In the kitchen Lia, pleading, then angry, looked at Nicky. "Why can't you take my side?"

"Yes," Emma said. "Maybe your dad will pay attention to you, if he won't to us."

Nicky squirmed and looked miserable: he did not like to confront his father. "I think I'll go visit my godfather," he said and hurried out of the kitchen.

"Where you going?" Chris asked him.

"I'm gonna visit my *nono*."

"Maybe he too sick."

"That's why I'm goin'." Nicky took several leaps down the walk and got into Chris's car.

Now, what? Chris thought and hoped the vice-consul would be asleep when Nicky got to the hospital so there would be no talk about the family argument. He went to bed early, even though President Roosevelt would be giving a fireside chat: Chris didn't want to see Emma's and Lia's long faces. He was almost asleep when Nicky returned, and when he awoke the next morning, he had a memory of having heard voices in the kitchen the night before. *Nicky would be on his side, that was for sure*, he thought.

When he went into the kitchen for his coffee, Emma, Lia, and Nicky were already at the table waiting for him. "Dad," Nicky looked away from his father, "my *nono* said Lia should go to the university and he would help pay for it."

"I don't need his money!" Chris shouted, but at that moment he knew he had failed. His own son had aligned himself with those two. Nicky had also brought back his godfather's red leather bound volume of Shakespeare's works for Lia. It lay on the oilcloth-covered table. Lia brought it closer to her, afraid that her father would spill coffee on it.

Chris had little to say to his family for the next few weeks. Each evening he sat in the living room and listened to Greek records on a portable phonograph. The folk songs of the revolutionary war against the Turks suited his mood: the low tones of the clarinet, rising tortuously to a peak, presaged horror and death. It annoyed Chris that Lia would come into the living room, sit quietly, and listen with an entranced look he wasn't certain was sincere. Her mother didn't like this music at all. He wondered if Lia was just trying to make up to him for her defiance. In the end he admitted to himself that Lia must have had real feeling for this old country music.

Both Bessie and Peggy wanted Lia to live with them during the school year in Salt Lake. Peggy was especially insistent, whining that there was more room in her parents' house because there were fewer children than at Aunt Rina's. It was decided that Lia would take turns, one year with Peggy, the next with Bessie. The girls cut straws from a broom and Lia pulled the longer one that belonged to Peggy.

Lia was eager to start college. So much was happening in the country. She wrote it down, pages of it, in her notebook, hoping it

would come in handy when she took her courses in sociology. President Roosevelt's programs battled starvation. One of these, the CCC, sent young men from the East to the West and those from the West to the East to work on reclamation projects. The young men in their plain khaki shirts and pants were everywhere. Another program, the WPA, put businessmen and sheepmen to work with pick and shovel alongside men who had been manual laborers all their lives. Families continued to leave Helper. With a feeling of having lost something important, Lia wrote in her notebook that the Papastamos family had moved to Grand Junction, Colorado, to be closer to their ranch.

Rina was also acutely aware of the Papastamos's move. She wanted to keep close relations with Zoitsa Papastamos because she was determined that Bessie would marry Zoitsa's son Jim. She could not afford another renegade daughter like Mellie who had twisted them around and was at the university. Mellie had begun asking to attend the university from the time she was a junior in high school and was met with silence. The summer after her graduation she walked briskly to the university administration building to see if she could get a job and work for her tuition. Mellie had kept the Demas agency books for several years after the bookkeeper had been let go and knew how to type and file. The weary, gray-haired office manager at the university was glad to have her, and she was able to enroll the following quarter. When Mellie told her parents, Rina shouted, "No one wants an educated woman for a bride!"

"I know," Mellie said.

Having triumphed about attending the university, Mellie still kept her mother's face red with a condition the family doctor said was high blood pressure. Mellie refused to hear any talk of marriage arrangements. Each time a Greek Town girl married, Rina became increasingly agitated. "Do you want to be an old maid and be a servant to everyone in the clan, running here and there at their beck and call? Look at Zeffy and her sister, they married two nice men, not too old, born in our country." She meant Greece.

"Yes, and went to live in a little town in Nevada."

"You're putting on airs, my girl," Rina said, using the sarcastic tone that had worked when Mellie was younger.

When Rina persisted, Mellie silenced her with, "I won't have a fixed-up marriage like Soula's." The silence lasted until the next time Rina heard of a groom she deemed suitable.

Rina and Gus talked at length behind their closed bedroom door about taking Mellie and Bessie to the next AHEPA convention

to see if they could attract some interest in them. The other children would stay with Katina. But they thought of their two very different daughters and their resolve always petered out.

Lia put all this family drama down in her notebook too, smiling while she wrote. Just before Lia left town for university in 1933, she had astonishing happenings to write about, happenings that she would use someday, although she was not certain how or why.

A new union had come to Helper and was recruiting members openly. President Roosevelt's recovery legislation had included the right of unions to organize and bargain collectively and ended the days of secret meetings in the canyons and the back rooms of saloons. The old United Mine Workers Union had almost been destroyed in the strike of 1922, but when the new union, the National Miners Union, came in, the UMW organizers again became active. Lia spoke excitedly to her mother about the strike the National Miners Union had called. "They're talking about the organizers for the new union," Lia told her mother. "They say they're Communists. The governor is sending the National Guard to stop them."

Everywhere people talked excitedly, as if they had been hibernating for the past few years. At the Strand Theater, the Pathé News showed unions in the Kentucky and Tennessee mines also marching against each other, clashing, miner fighting miner. What the news showed could not compete with the battles in the coal mines in Utah, Lia wrote, feeling pride in the miners, for their will to fight against the owners and the deputies. The Yugoslavs and many Italians had joined the new union and to Lia's delight their women heckled the United Mine Workers and the deputies who were bent on ridding the county of the strangers who had come in as organizers. The head organizer, Paul Crouch, was protected by the women when he ventured out. They kept pepper in pouches inside the waistbands of their dresses to throw into the eyes of deputies who accosted them. When the deputies stopped one of the National Miners Union marches and packed the marchers, standing, into old white World War 1 surplus trucks, a Yugoslavian grandmother tore open her dress, exposing her breasts and shouting at the deputies, "Suck and get human!" Six other big Yugoslavian women accosted the hated manager of a Gordon Creek mine, took his revolver, threw him on the ground, and urinated on him.

Lia had no one to really talk with about the clashing unions, but she hurriedly filled one page after another with slanted writing

while a restlessness compelled her to leave out no detail she had heard about or read in the *Helper Journal*. She remembered an earlier strike when she, Bessie, and Peggy had secretly run to see the strikers' tent town. Women had been cooking on small outdoor camp stoves, babies cried, and soldiers came into town. She had seen then, but had not understood.

No one else in the family had Lia's curiosity about the unions and the strikes that were being called in one mine after another. Nicky was concerned only with running sheep and with his godfather, Stylian Staes, who could no longer walk. Chris called his brother Gus. "Staes will be in St. Mark's Hospital Friday. The doctors are going to cut off his legs."

"My Virgin! My Virgin!" Gus burst out and hung up.

Staes had developed Buerger's disease. His veins were full of blood clots. Chris, Nicky, and his godfather drove to St. Mark's Hospital. The hospital room soon filled with businessmen, coffeehouse habitues, and gamblers. Nurses came to the door and looked in, grimaced, and left only to return later when even more men had crowded into the room. The men assured the vice-consul that he would come through all right. They would be waiting for him. After the hospital the men went straight to Holy Trinity Church, asked the janitor to let them in, and lighted candles and prayed, assuring Christ that they'd take care of Staes when he got out.

Near midnight when only Chris and Nicky remained, the vice-consul shook his godson's hand. "You'll be a fine man someday," he said. That night a blood clot stopped his heart.

Chris and Jim Galanis stored the vice-consul's cartons of correspondence and other belongings in the basement of Galanis's hotel. Galanis took the Greek-alphabet typewriter for a memento. A year later a rain storm flooded the streets and basement of the hotel, leaving the cartons burst and soggy. A member of the church parish council shoveled them into his truck and took them to the town dump. Almost fifty years of the Greek experience in Utah and the surrounding states rotted among broken bottles, discarded ice boxes, old furniture, and other trash. Nicky told Lia he felt guilty; he should have taken care of his godfather's papers. Lia nodded. She had hoped to look through the vice-consul's papers herself one day.

9

The houses that Gus and Pete had bought in Salt Lake City were near each other, close to the University of Utah, and older and larger than the Helper houses. They had been built just before World War I and had two extra bedrooms and a bathroom in the basement. Although the purple brick bungalows were well-kept, their hardwood floors had darkened with age. Rina and Katina sighed over the golden floors of the Helper houses which they had kept highly polished. The new houses, though, were surrounded by tall branching elms that had been planted when the houses were built.

Pete had rarely gone beyond the university neighborhood but told *patriotes*, "We got the best houses in Salt Lake City." He didn't mention that they bought them for back taxes with the money they had hidden during the good years of the 1920s.

When Lia came from Helper to enroll, Bessie and Peggy told their mothers that the university taught things about the home. *Home Economics*, they said, giving it an aura of respectability. Rina told Gus that there were four girls at the university from Greek families, "the best Greek families in the city," she said, and a little more education could help their daughters' marriage prospects by teaching them "things about the house." It was not as if they were going out to become teachers or work in offices for strangers. In September Mellie helped her sister and cousins register at the university.

Lia shared a basement bedroom with Peggy. Mellie spent her time between classes with the four girls from those best families her mother talked about. Lia carried armloads of books and spent many hours in the library studying, along with sociology, subjects like logic in the Philosophy Department and English 11 for advanced students who were exempted from taking English 1, a grammar course.

Neither Bessie nor Peggy told their mothers that Lia had been placed in a special English class. They were not interested in "being bookworms like Lia."

Bessie was often alone: Lia was studying constantly and Peggy could not be found. At home in her basement bathroom, Bessie followed the advice given in women's magazines. She slathered a soupy clay on her face and when the mask hardened, rinsed it away with cool water and used an astringent to close the pores. She plucked her eyebrows just a little, so that her mother would not notice, and carefully applied makeup, enough to cover her dull skin. One Saturday she hennaed her hair and Rina, shouting threats and abuse, washed it with laundry soap time and again to get the impossible red out.

Bessie and Peggy knew they could not even think of joining a sorority even if they were asked, an unlikely prospect—ethnic students were excluded. Their parents would not have allowed dues paying or "throwing their daughters to the dogs," as they called dating. Bessie complained at not being able to act like the American girls. No one had ever asked her out, but it would be her unbroken refrain that if her parents had allowed them to join a sorority, they would automatically have had dates.

Bessie kept looking for Peggy on the campus; at times she found her at the College Inn, drinking a Coke with one or another male student whom she found handsome and desirable. Peggy usually pretended she didn't see Bessie. Once when Bessie came over to a booth and said, "Hi, Peggy," Peggy said "Hi," but did not invite her to sit down. At another time Bessie saw Peggy and a hulking football player drive past the campus in an old gray coupe. Later, when Peggy appeared in English I, she looked disheveled, her lips swollen. Bessie sulked and walked the campus by herself. She had to stop between classes to quiet her heart, which pounded, either from being jealous of Peggy or because Bessie felt so fatigued all the time.

Lia told her Aunt Katina that she wanted to go to the Congregational Church to attend the meeting protesting the imprisoning of the Helper strike leaders. She would write about it for a class assignment. Peggy was eager to go and Bessie wanted to get out of the house. They drove to the downtown church in a black coupe, which the Demas agency had taken in years before and been unable to sell. Bessie drove; her father had taught her two years previously, exasperated and almost giving up, but sticking to it so he could get out of driving Rina on errands. Bessie was transformed when she slid behind the wheel. She left her complaining self aside and became

authoritative. She was churlish with Peggy and Lia and sometimes with Mellie if they kept her waiting. Now Rina gave her surprising leeway because Bessie drove her all over town and into the Murray suburb to visit new friends she had met in the church's Mothers Club.

On the night of the protest meeting, Bessie found a parking place not far from the church. The moment she stepped on the brake, Peggy leaped out and ran down the street where she got into another car. It was shrouded by trees. She called back, laughing, "See you after the meeting!"

"I should have known she had something up her sleeve when she jumped at the chance of getting out of the house," Bessie said sourly.

Lia shook her head. "I don't know where she finds all these fellows."

"She finds them at school! That's where she finds them! She's a flirt! That's what she is! And someday she's gonna get caught."

The dim, crowded church had a dry smell like a dust storm that had settled. It looked barren to Bessie and Lia. Their eyes were accustomed to icons, votive lights, and incense. The morning paper would say six hundred people were present. Bessie and Lia saw men and a few women from Helper who were familiar to them, the women in long cotton dresses and cloche hats, the men in suit jackets that did not match their worn pants. Seated on the front pews were several dark men and one woman. The men wore black rumpled suits; the woman was young with frizzy hair that came to the middle of her neck. A man seated in front of Bessie and Lia nodded toward the unshaven man next to him: "They're all Jews from back East."

One after another, miners and their wives and daughters went to the front of the church to tell of being tear-gassed and beaten by mine guards and the "citizens militia." Emboldened, Italian and Yugoslav girls, former classmates of the Demas cousins, stood before the crowd and, with flashing eyes, repeated stories of being accosted by guards who had been drinking. The frizzy-haired young woman, Belle Taub, from the International Labor Defense denied the organization was Communist. One of the dark men said the United States was a capitalistic dictatorship: "If you will just sit and sit," he said with sarcasm, "we, the government, will solve all your problems. Why you have already sat on the seat of your pants so long that if you sat on a dime you could tell if it was heads or tails."

Lia took notes for her Sociology 101 class in her brown journal. While the meeting went on, she decided that without fail she must

become a social worker. Bessie moved about restlessly and pushed her elbow at Lia. "Let's go," she whispered, but Lia shook her head.

The meeting ended with a declaration asking the governor to send a fact-finding committee to the coal fields. The crowd moved slowly outside, talking over what they had heard. The acrid scent of chrysanthemums was in the cool air. "Now where is she?" Bessie said. "I feel like driving off without her and then let's see how she'll get home."

When they reached the car and unlocked it, Bessie looked down the street where Peggy had run earlier. "It serves her right if I do," she said, but a car door opened in the darkness of the street and Peggy hurried toward them, brushing back her hair with both hands. "Oh," Bessie said with disappointment, "she's coming."

Lia wrote an account of the meeting and the paper was marked with an A. For English 11 she wrote about visiting Kosta in his camp the time he was sick and his long underwear hung on a line. At the end of the essay, she did an ink drawing of Kosta in his old robe sitting on the tongue of his sheep wagon. Her next theme was about herself, sitting on the front porch of the ranch house, wondering if there was a God. The teacher, a stooped man with a bush of gray hair combed backwards, wrote a list of books she could find in the school library. The first one she took home was Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*.

It was Peggy's suggestion that they join the choir, but Lia was too busy studying. "You know she'll use it to meet fellows," Bessie told Lia. The choir wore black robes with white collars, and Peggy too much makeup. Katina did not seem to notice. Peggy had also let her hair grow to her shoulders and curled the bangs. Bessie copied the same style, which gave her face a scrunched-up look.

Lia did not tell Bessie that one night after the family had gone to bed, Peggy took off her house coat and was fully dressed. "Where are you going?" Lia had asked her.

"Shh. I'm gonna meet someone."

"Where?"

"At this beer joint."

"Please don't go, Peggy. You'll get caught."

"Not if you don't tell." Peggy smiled ingratiatingly in the shadow of the street light coming through the basement window.

Lia listened while Peggy went quietly up the basement stairs, opened the back door—Peggy's parents slept in the front of the house—and was gone.

Lia was ashamed of Peggy. While Lia, Mellie, Bessie, and other girls like them sat near the door of the first floor study room in the library, Peggy would saunter over to the back where sons of Greek immigrants congregated. It was called the "Greek Table."

"Can someone help me with this problem?" Peggy would ask with a helpless look and a charming smile she had practiced before the dresser mirror. Embarrassed, one of the boys would say, "All right, sit down." Lia noticed that Jim Papastamos, who had known Peggy from the time they were children, burrowed into a book whenever she approached the table. It gave Lia a sweet satisfaction. She began to daydream that she and Jim Papastamos walked around the campus, holding hands. She had to bring herself back from these reveries and reread paragraphs of text.

A tall blond student in her sociology class twice stopped at Lia's accustomed seat at the library table and asked if she wanted to go to the College Inn for a Coke. Lia reddened and said she couldn't. More than once, young men hurried to catch up with her as she walked to a class, but she got away as quickly as she could. She did not want Jim Papastamos to see her talking or walking with a male student. Jim sometimes walked past her table with two friends, Plato Klonides from Rock Springs, Wyoming, who was in his second year of law school, and Charlie Melinas, whose father had been killed in the Castle Gate explosion of 1924. Plato, handsome and friendly, Charlie, needing a haircut, his pants frayed at the cuffs, smiled and greeted Lia; Jim walked past and never looked at her.

A year passed. One autumn day, the trees lining the horseshoe-shaped drive at the center of the campus were golden under the sun. The sky was so blue it made Lia's breath catch. She wished she had her colored pencils to sketch the scene. As she walked in front of the Park Building at the top of the horseshoe, she looked up to see Jim Papastamos stopped in front of her. He was wearing his ROTC uniform, looking tall and thin in trousers like the olive drab jodhpur breeches of World War I, his long legs, wrapped in strips of the same colored cloth. "Hi. How's Nicky?" he said.

Lia looked at him a moment before she could answer. "He's helping drive the sheep to the desert."

"Well," Jim looked at his shoes, "I guess I'll be doing the same thing come next autumn."

"John will be glad for your help."

"No. He thinks I don't know anything because I've gone to school."

They both laughed at Jim's brother, John, known since he was a child for thinking himself superior to everyone. John had been the curiosity of Greek Town when Lia had been a child. He was the oldest of the neighborhood children. His father Marko had left him and his mother in the village soon after he was born and did not send for them until nine years later. John had been petted by his mother and grandparents and thought he had just as much right to express his opinion as adults did. Although Stylian Staes had tutored him in English, he used the speech he heard from American boys on the borders of Greek Town.

Jim looked above the trees. "I almost decided to drop out of school this year." He gave an embarrassed smile. "You don't have to have a degree to raise sheep."

"I guess not," Lia said, agreeing against her better judgment.

"But I'll stick it out. I've learned something about economics and the ROTC pays my tuition."

By then they were the only students in front of the Park Building, yet they lingered and when they said goodbye, they hurried to classes that had already started. Lia smiled, thinking of Jim, tall, thin, with scarecrow legs.

After class Peggy and Lia walked behind the Medical School Building where Bessie parked the car. "I saw you talking to Jim Papastamos," Peggy said in an offended voice that suddenly turned to laughter as if the scene were preposterous. Lia walked on in silence. She knew Peggy was jealous of her for speaking with Jim, but Lia wanted the freedom to talk with anyone she wanted, to know other people, not have to remain in the little circle of three cousins.

Bessie and Peggy resented her making friends with two students in her English 11 class. It was as if there were an unspoken law that they should never have other friends besides the three of them; that it was disloyal. "What's their names?" Peggy asked mockingly, "Luanna and Betty Lou? They're so plain. They could at least use some lipstick."

Lia, Norma, and Elizabeth often sat on the grass within the campus horseshoe during lunch time. Norma and Elizabeth each had two outfits, which they had sewn themselves: long skirts of black serge and brown wool and white and blue rayon blouses with short sleeves. They gave each other home permanents.

The three girls talked about literature, but more often about what was happening in the Depression. Lia's new friends had veered away from their Mormon background and were close to being Socialists.

They spoke with admiration of two girls from prominent families who were Communists. Elizabeth said, "Myra and Janet have more nerve than I'd ever have, not that I'd ever join the Communists."

Norma could not believe that their families allowed it. "Maybe their families don't know," she said, but the three were dubious because Myra and Janet openly disdained American politics and touted Soviet ideas for a better society. With every newspaper or radio report of bureaucratic favoritism and racial injustice—particularly the lynching of blacks in the South—Myra and Janet were surrounded by a small, noisy group in front of the library.

Lia was impressed that two girls from rich families cared about the poor and the blacks. It also gave an excitement to the dreary times to hear Elizabeth and Norma talking about injustices; she thought it meant that the groundwork was being prepared for a better future. Norma and Elizabeth had so little money that they could seldom go to the College Inn for a Coke to carry on their talk. Yet for Lia, sitting with them on the grass, the talk made the day fresh and clean, like mountain breezes that dispelled the raw smells of docking and slaughtering lambs. Each morning she thought about being with her friends. The more they were together, the less worried she was of Peggy's and Bessie's seeing her with them.

The day after Lia and Jim Papastamos had talked in front of the Park Building, Peggy walked over to the back table in the library where Jim and his friends always sat. She swung her hips like the actress Jean Harlow in the movie, *Hell's Angels*. "Hi, fellows," she said, her eyes circling the table, looking at each student full in the face, and lingering on Jim Papastamos. "I need some help for my economics class," she said in a little-girl pleading voice. "Jim, you took the class, didn't you? How about helping me?"

Jim looked at his papers. "All you have to do is read the stuff in the book," he said and would not raise his eyes.

"Hey," overweight Andy Kostakis said, "I'll take you for a Coke and to hell with the economics class."

Peggy clapped her hands in imitation of a child, "Oh, goody," she said. When they passed Lia's table, Andy glanced at her, saying, "I'm taking your cousin for a Coke," and rolled his eyes. Lia was red with shame. She wanted to stay, hoping Jim would speak to her again, but she also wanted to cry. Why, she did not know. She decided to walk home.

Rina was standing on the walk leading to the porch steps, peering anxiously. Katina was crying. When Rina saw Lia, she motioned

with her fat arms making big circles towards her bosom. Lia ran, frightened. Her Uncle Gus came out of the house. A suitcase was next to the car parked in the driveway. "Hurry. Get in," her aunt ordered, "Nicky was in an accident."

Lia thought: *He's dead.*

10

By the time Nicky had reached the forest, thunder shook the trees. He had stopped the truck. Between one roll of thunder and the next, a distortion of sounds came. He'd jumped out and raced to the open range at one edge of the trees. The bellwether was running toward the canyon, and a great mass of sheep and lambs, baaing as they tried to keep close to their mothers, were stampeding. Nicky had looked and seen no herder on his horse, no one to save the flock. He'd started to run toward the frantic circle of sheep, knowing he must catch the bellwether.

Lia sat on the back seat. Gus sped through the city, through the farmland beyond and into the mouth of the canyon. Once Rina, seated next to him, murmured and Gus said, "Ssst!" An ever higher and narrower road with sharp curves rose, bounded on one side by the mountain and on the other by the juniper-studded canyon, so deep that the river looked like a narrow green water snake and the rail tracks parallel to it like two ribbons, shiny under the sun's rays. Gus sped dangerously, the right wheels of his car climbing the mountain side as coal trucks came roaring around curves. Except for the muted buzz of the motor, there was no sound in the car. For two hours they shot around the curves. Sweat streamed down Gus's thick cheeks. Rina leaned forward, her body rocking back and forth. Lia's heart beat like a maniacal thing while the car's engine whirred through the bright day.

They reached the north end of town and Gus slowed the car and paid no attention to the whistle of a train coming around Steamboat Mountain. Rina's shoulders jerked. The car crossed the tracks and continued up the road. Lia opened the car door before her uncle

had fully stopped. Other cars were parked in front of the house. As she ran up the walk, she gave Kosta a quick look; he sat on the steps, holding his head in his gnarled hands, weeping.

Inside, old-time neighbors from Greek Town were sitting around Emma. Chris sat alone on a chair by the window, his head slightly bent as if listening to something no one else heard. The women jumped up and descended on Lia, kissing her, talking all at once. They led her to Emma who looked up with her blue eyes, large in her thin face. "He's gone, Lia," she said, and Lia put her arms around her mother and held her for a moment. Lia went to her father and pressed her tear-wet face against his unshaven cheek. He motioned with his index finger for her to put her ear by his mouth. "I couldn't give him the *Teleftaio Fili*." Lia lifted his hand and kissed it, wishing some thought would come to her about the Last Kiss, wishing that she could somehow convince her father that he had.

The kitchen table was filled with platters and bowls of food the women had brought, but there was no sign that anyone had eaten. Tentatively, one of the mothers whispered to Lia, "Try to make them eat something." Lia said nothing, but sat by her mother and took her hand. After a while, she pulled a chair close to her father and kept her hand on his shirt sleeve, then back she went to her mother, then again to her father.

Within a few hours the rest of the family arrived in several cars, Bessie driving one, Mellie another, and their Uncle Pete the third. A great commotion of shrieks and lamentations shook the house. Godmothers of the children told the family they must stay at their houses and there was talk of where Kosta would go. Someone went out to talk to him and he said, "Shut your mouth! I'll go to the Jouflas hotel!" and began weeping afresh.

Rina said she would stay with Lia's family. "Better not, *Thitsa*," Lia said, reverting to the childhood Greek diminutive. "Let me take care of them."

Rina put her head to one side and said, "As you wish," then rolled the movable bookcases against the wall making the living and dining areas one long room. She pushed the dining room table against the built-in china closet and placed chairs along the walls.

Gus and Pete left the house to talk with the priest. Rina whispered to the children to follow her into the kitchen where she cleared the table. Mellie, Bessie, and their sisters, Peggy and her sisters set the table. The girls ate. All were silent, Peggy cried and ate at the same time. When they finished, the younger sisters went into the

back bedroom and sat on the bed and on the floor, talking about Nicky as if he were still alive.

He had been caught in a thunderstorm, trying to head off the panicked sheep. Lightning had killed him a few dozen feet from his truck. In the living room the visiting women sighed and wept silently. No one spoke. The room darkened. Lia sat close to her parents; Peggy, tearful—Lia would remember later that she had cried dramatically—and Bessie hovered nearby. Chris did not move from his chair and Emma sat surrounded by more women, nodding and whispering, coming and going. Lia went into the kitchen and filled a glass with water. She took it to her parents' bedroom and pulled back the bed covers, then went to her father and led him to his room. He stood there like a sorrowing statue. Lia pressed the glass against his lips and he swallowed once, twice, then turned his head. Gently she pushed him onto the bed, pulled his legs up, and untied his shoes. "Lia," he said hoarsely, "I didn't give him the *Teleftaio Fili*."

"Dad, Nicky wasn't going away. He was only going to check on that new herder. You've given him many Last Kisses." Her father shook his head in denial. After a moment, Lia returned to the living room and led her mother into the bedroom. She began to undo her mother's shoe laces, but Emma said, "Leave me be."

In the evening Rina and Katina wept as they set the table with the bowls and platters of food the women had brought. Emma and Chris shook their heads at Lia: they did not want to go to the kitchen to eat. Emma asked for a glass of hot milk. The children of the family and their parents crowded around the kitchen table and ate the stews and *pites*, their talk subdued.

After Lia took plates of the unwanted food to her parents, she sat with the family and took several nibbles of food. Rina and Katina ate a little. The aunts asked their husbands about the funeral. When Rina first arrived at the house, she had told Gus to remind the mortuary attendants to wrap his body in a *savanon*, four or six yards of muslin, before putting on his suit. "Did you tell the priest everything?" Rina asked. "Yes, I told you," Gus said angrily.

When Rina referred to Nicky's body as "his body," cold flashed over Lia: it was as if Nicky were different now, his name disappearing.

Gus said that he had telephoned Gregory Halles, the confectioner in Salt Lake City, to send wedding crowns on the morning passenger train. Rina and Katina got up from the table and hurried to the backyard. Lia followed them and the three stood in a circle, their

arms around each other and cried loudly, uncaring if they were heard. "Our boy, our boy," Rina choked out. Bessie and Peggy ran to them and put their arms about the circle.

The next day, Rina and Katina sat next to the open casket in the living room and keened the ancient laments. Emma, Chris, and Lia were seated close together at the head of the coffin. Nicky lay in white-tufted satin, thin-faced, heavily powdered, the wedding crown of white wax blossoms on his head. Emma wore the only black dress she had, kept for special occasions. Chris, unshaven, had on a black shirt Rina had hastily dyed, an acrid smell emanating from it, the haphazard collar without a necktie.

Greek Town women sat on chairs lining the walls. All in black, they sat with their arms folded on their laps, listening to the ancient laments. In a steady monotone they sang, Rina's voice dark, strident; Katina's high, frantic. *Charos*, Death, was ever watchful:

> They tricked me, the birds, the nightingales of Spring.
> They told me Charos would never take me.
> I built a house on the mountain, the walls of marble,
> To sit by the window, to look far over the valley.
> The valley was green, the skies blue.
> I see Charos coming, coming to take me.
> Black he is, black his clothes, black his horse
> Black too the kerchief round his neck.

The black-dressed women nodded, heads to one side. On Rina and Katina sang. Three American neighbors came in together and walked toward Emma, took her hand, said a few words about knowing her sorrow, and although the Greek women on the chairs lining the walls stood up to give them their seats, the neighbors left, their eyes opened wide. Emma's mother and father came, her father holding his misshapen hat; her mother, wearing a freshly washed and ironed gingham dress, rubbed her hands together as she came to Emma. Her father looked at her and frowned as if he could find no words to say. Her mother said, "He was such a good, nice boy." They then went to Chris who remained seated, but nodded to them. Lia said "Grandpa, Grandma, come into the kitchen and eat something," but they shook their heads, looking stunned, and left the house.

Still Rina and Katina sang:

To favor you, I placed three sentries.
I had the sun on the mountains, and the eagle in the valleys,
and the north breezes, the cool ones, with the ships.
But the sun set, the eagle slept, and the north breezes
were taken by the ships.
And in this way Charos found time to snatch you.

They began another lament. Chris stood up unsteadily. Lia put her arm about his waist and led him to his bedroom. Emma got up and followed. Lia helped her father take off his shirt. Emma said, "Go out now, Lia, I'll take your dad's pants off." Lia left the room, closing the door quietly. Emma unbuckled Chris's belt and holding the back of his head with one hand, lowered him onto the pillow. She unzipped his pants and pulled them off. Chris moved on his side and pulled his knees up. Emma covered him and walked around the bed where she lay down next to him. "Emma, I didn't give my boy the Last Kiss." Emma put her hand on his hip and gave it two pats.

Through the closed doors the ancient laments seeped:

What shall I send you, my eyes, down in the underworld?
If I send an apple it will rot, quince wither,
grapes dry, rose petals fall.
I'll send you my tears, tied in a handkerchief.

In Rina's improvised laments, she berated the deity for taking Nicky, and Katina kept pace with her as if she had known the words beforehand:

Why, our Virgin and sweet Christ, did you allow our
manly, our beautiful Niko to be taken from us? Why
did you leave us bereft with only our memories of him?

Chris groaned and Emma reached over and patted him again on the hip.

Rina and Katina stayed the night next to the open casket, sitting upright, a small globe in the kitchen giving a dismal light. The next morning, Emma helped Chris dress and shave and then they went into the kitchen to drink a cup of coffee and dip a *koulouraki* into it. Rina tried to convince them to eat something more. "You need food to give you strength," she lectured in a soft tone, but they shook their heads.

Rina then put a few pieces of frankincense on the electric stove plate and the house was soon filled and cleansed with its rough scent. She chose Mellie to remain behind to keep Nicky's soul, unwilling to begin its journey, from entering the house. Mellie looked at Lia and their eyes met in solemn acknowledgment that they would let the old ways be. The last of Rina's acts was to take a lighted candle into every room in the house and then break a plate. "What does that mean, Thitsa, to break a plate?" Lia asked Rina.

"I don't know, my child, but that's how it's always been done."

The lid of the casket was closed and the mortuary attendants rolled it out to the hearse. Drivers of cars, parked up and down the street, started their engines and pulled into the line behind the hearse and the family autos. As Lia walked out of the porch, she looked up the slopes of Steamboat Mountain and was struck by the beauty of it: a light snow had fallen during the night, had sprinkled the junipers on the slopes and capped Elephant Rock—and Nicky was dead.

Slowly the hearse drove down the incline and turned toward Main Street. People stood still as the autos carrying black-dressed people passed by; men took off their hats. At the end of Main Street and the beginning of the county road, the hearse picked up speed, but still moved at a slow pace. Through Spring Glen, Blue Cut, into Price, and to the small-domed church the cortege traveled.

As the hearse stopped, the bells tolled. The churchyard was crowded with parishioners who could not find seats inside. All the way up the steps with the family and others behind, the waiting priest in a brocaded robe swung the censer, with the black-suited ushers behind him holding the casket: John and Jim Papastamos and four of Chris's godsons. In front of the icon screen, the casket was turned to face east in the direction of Heaven, where the sun rises.

Lia and Emma flanked Chris on the front right pew, the men's side of the church. Kosta sat behind them and wept throughout the service. The Liturgy for the Dead proceeded with psalms and supplications: "Blessed are they undefiled in the way, and walk in the law of the Lord"; "Hear my voice, O Lord, according to thy loving-kindness; quicken me according as thou art wont."

Women cried silently. Peggy dabbed her face constantly. Lia and her parents sat with heads bent through the hymns: "Give rest with the just, O our Savior, unto thy servant, and establish him in thy courts as it is written . . . regarding not his sins, whether voluntary or involuntary . . . O thou who loves mankind." The cold scent of flowers banking the casket became warm. Blue incense floated above in

layers. "Come, brethren," the priest called out, "let us give the Last Kiss unto the dead, rendering thanks unto God." The parishioners filed past, making the sign of the cross and kissing Nicky's wedding crown. Old men whispered, "Give my regards to them up there" and "Tell my people I'll see them soon."

The family then went up, first the girls, beginning to cry, some wailing, as they kissed Nicky's crown. Rina and Katina bent over, kissed Nicky's cheek, and turned to their seats with tears falling down their faces and necks. The uncles followed. Lia put her arm around her mother's waist and they went to the casket and looked at Nicky's dead face. Lia kissed her brother's wedding crown, and Emma leaned over and kissed his cold cheeks. Gus and Pete steadied Chris as they moved toward the casket. There, Chris elbowed his brothers from him and reaching in, pulled Nicky's head to him and kissed him on both cheeks again and again. "My son," he said in Greek, "Ach, my son."

Chris lingered there, looking at Nicky, until his brothers drew him unwillingly away. The priest then dripped three drops of consecrated oil and dropped three pinches of dirt inside the casket and closed the lid.

The bell tolled again as the casket was wheeled out and into the hearse. The cortege wound its way to the cemetery, where the priest intoned the final prayers. Back in the church basement, the *parighoria*, the consolation, was held, the food, a traditional fish dinner—fish, the symbol of Jesus. The parishioners proceeded with their duty, telling little stories about Nicky to lighten the bereavement. John Papastamos told of the first time Nicky boasted he could shear a sheep and was knocked to the ground by the befuddled ewe. Released from the strain of their mourning, the friends and family ate and listened and enjoyed the banter. Lia served Emma's family herself. They ate and left immediately. Emma looked on smiling patiently at the gathering, but Chris ate nothing and as soon as the pastries were brought out, he turned to Emma. "I'm going home now," he said. Lia drove them back to their house where Chris went to bed and Emma and Lia sat in the living room. Lia wept and Emma patted her hand while tears ran down her cheeks.

"The Demopoulos name is now lost in America," people whispered to each other in the church basement.

Two days later Emma said, "Chris, I'm going out to Thompson. I have to see if Lud brought the supplies. If Kosta is still in town, I'll take him with me."

"You don't have to go," Chris said weakly.

"Yes, I have to. Lia, you take care of your dad."

"Mom, if you have to go, take the car. Don't go in the pickup."

Emma shook her head. "If Lud hasn't brought the supplies, I'll have to git them myself."

Rina had been staying with an old-time neighbor in Greek Town. She came just as Emma was getting into the truck. "Where you go?" she shouted.

"I'm going out to see if Lud brought the winter supplies."

"You can't do that! You have to stay in house for forty days! It's not right. The Bible it say so! And what will people say?"

"I don't give a damn what people say," Emma said and turned on the ignition. Lia had never heard her mother use the word damn.

11

Emma parked in front of the Grill Café and went in to see Bill White, who was standing behind the cash register. He looked at her, eyes questioning. Men were sitting at the counter, gazing at her with curiosity. "What's wrong, Emma?"

"I have to go out to Thompson. I've got to see if the camp tender brought the winter supplies. Will you send someone upstairs to see if Kosta is there?"

Bill White put out his hands. "Kosta is down at the coffeehouse, looking for someone to give *him* a ride to Thompson. Okay, I'll telephone and tell him to be outside."

His eyebrows pulled together, bewildered, Bill White turned to the wall telephone and made the call. Emma got into the pickup and drove down the street. Kosta was standing outside the coffeehouse, squinting at her. He threw his old leather bag into the back of the truck. "Something wrong, Lady?" he asked as he pulled his long legs into the cab.

"Kosta, I have this feelin' that Lud is on a drunk and didn't git the supplies to the herders."

"Yah, the sonofabitsi, he was drinking too hard when I left."

As the truck noisily streaked through the farmland, Price, the small towns, and into the desert, Kosta wept decorously. *Kosta 'the Crier'* Emma thought. She sensed he did not want to impinge on her grief. "Oh, Kosta," she said with profound weariness,"I know somethin' awful must have happened to you that makes you cry all the time. Why don't you go to the priest and tell him. You'll feel better."

"No, I hate priests."

"But you're a religious man."

"I loave my chorch. I hate priests."

The rest of the journey was made in silence, Kosta crying and Emma's head heavy with pain lodging at the back of it. When they reached the winter grounds, the herders told her, "We ain't seen hide nor hair of Lud." John Papastamos, on his way to his own sheep, saw her truck and stopped. "Don't worry, Mrs. Demas," he said, "if Lud don't show up, I'll see that the men are supplied with what they need."

Emma nodded for several seconds before she thanked him. She circled the flocks of sheep and drove the thirty miles back to the town of Green River where she bought canned goods, cottonseed cakes, corn, and blocks of wood, as much as would fit in the bed of the pickup. She shook her head for not thinking right: she should have bought the supplies on the way to Thompson. Even if Lud had remembered his job, they would not have gone to waste.

By the time she returned to Thompson, the sky had turned gray and she knew that soon the early dark of autumn would settle over the sagebrush. She thought of driving on the lonely desert road in the blackness and the image of the mound of dirt over Nicky's casket struck her hard in the chest. She drove on, tears copiously falling. A few minutes later the skies darkened and suddenly turned black.

The nine o'clock town whistle blew as she drove into the garage. Chris was standing at the window, looking out. She parked the truck and went into the house. By then Chris was sitting on the chair by the window. "Well, Lud didn't show up with the supplies," she said, "so I went to Green River and got what I could. John Papastamos said he'd look out for us."

Chris nodded. In the kitchen, Lia whispered, "When it started to get dark, he stood up and kept looking for you."

Lia had made a soup of orzo pasta with a little tomato in chicken broth. It was the soup Emma had learned to make from Rina whenever anyone in the family was sick. Chris ate a few spoonfuls, then stood up slowly. "I'm going to bed now," he said in his new voice, high and thin.

Emma and Lia sat at the table for several minutes without speaking. Lia cried quietly. Emma said, "Lia, you got to go back to school. You can't miss any more of your classes."

"I'm not going back. I'm staying with you and Dad."

"All right. But you're going next quarter."

Lia did not answer.

Winter came. Chris sat next to the radio, which Lia kept tuned to the news, and gazed ahead. Hitler was continuing his march from Austria

into neighboring countries; Nazi troops were posed on Yugoslavia's northern frontier; and Czechoslovakia had succumbed. War was coming to Europe again and Chris sat not hearing the staccato reports on the radio, nor reading the headlines in the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the *Helper Journal*.

The old neighbors from Greek Town came regularly with platters of pastries. When Chris heard them coming, he shuffled into his bedroom, lay on the bed, and looked at the ceiling.

The house was dim, closed up against the snows. The howling winds flew over Steamboat Mountain and swept across the narrow valley and out into the sagebrush. When Lia turned on the living-room lamps, the dimness remained in the house. The radio was always on, almost inaudible, but no one listened to it. Emma and Lia cleaned the house, washed, ironed, and cooked. Chris sat in the living room, gazing out the window and losing weight.

In early spring Emma put chains on the pickup. "Chris, I'm goin' to go out and see how the lambin' is comin' along."

"Don't go," Chris said. "It's no matter."

"It does matter. I'll be back early." Emma turned to Lia, "Git things ready. We'll go out to sheep when Easter's over."

Bessie and Peggy telephoned that they were coming for Easter. Lia told them that it would be too hard on her father if they spent Holy Week with her family. Peggy said she had to stay with her godparents and Bessie with her godmother or there would be hard feelings.

Bessie and Peggy brought crocks of *koulourakia* and pastries. For the first few moments, they spoke in low tones, kissed their Uncle Chris, said he looked fine, embraced their Aunt Emma, and gave her their mothers' greetings. Then slowly their voices grew louder, more spirited, until they told an anecdote about the squeaky-voiced Salt Lake City priest and his latest bout with the president of the church council. They burst into giggles. Lia looked at them stonily: they had violated the dim house with its pervasive grief. "Let's go in the kitchen," she said, "and have some tea."

Emma went with them and asked about Soula. Bessie shook her head vigorously. "Her son Mikey is just fifteen, but she's so sure there'll be a war and he'll have to go and get killed."

"My history professor says that sooner or later the United States will be pulled into the war," Peggy said and sipped her tea with her little finger held out in her idea of proper etiquette.

Emma wanted to ask more, but didn't: What kind of life was Soula living? Was it better or worse now that her children were older? Did Nonda have a steady job? "That stupid Nonda!" Bessie huffed. "Never lifts a finger to help her. They'd starve if my mother didn't send her a little here and there over the years."

Emma returned to the living room while Bessie and Peggy talked on, Peggy laughing about "fellows" she was sneaking out to meet. Both had taken up smoking and their breath, incompletely camouflaged with peppermint gum, gave a touch of life to the sterile kitchen. Lia wondered how their mothers had not caught on that they were smoking, but she did not care about their gossip and wished they would leave.

Peggy said something about Jim Papastamos. Lia listened closely. ROTC students were being called up, but some who were close to graduation were allowed to finish.

On Good Friday Bessie and Peggy joined the choir singing the Lamentations around the bier of Christ. Lia and Emma attended the services. Chris shook his head: he stayed home and asked Lia to light the icon taper in Nicky's room. It seemed to Lia that the vigil light should not burn until the Resurrection on Saturday because Christ still lay in his tomb. She said nothing, but poured a layer of olive oil into the vigil glass, floated a fresh taper, and lighted it.

At midnight on Saturday, the shadowy priest stepped out of the sanctuary holding the lone lighted candle and soon the church was ablaze. Lia listened to the joyous cry grow louder each time it was sung: "Christ is arisen, Truly arisen!" She could not feel the old happiness: Nicky was dead and she might never see him again. She managed to bring her lighted candle, protected by her cupped hands, home to light their family icon.

Chris followed Lia into Nicky's bedroom and made the sign of the cross at the icon. Emma had set the table with the traditional lemon-and-egg soup of chopped lamb's innards. Solemnly they made the sign of the cross, Emma also—it was one of the first acts she learned to do when she came as a bride into the unwilling Demas family. Lia would not eat the soup, but served herself a piece of roast lamb and a red-dyed egg. They ate in the quiet, while in Greek Town families reveled noisily in Christ's Resurrection.

In spring on the way to the ranch, Emma drove the pickup and Lia the Studebaker with Chris at her side. They stopped at Thompson long enough to see that Lud had arrived, bleary, lying about why he

was late again in bringing supplies: "I got this here bad knee actin' up an' couldn' git behind the wheel. I kep' rubbin' it with Ben Gay, an' then I got a cold s'bad it musta been pneumonia." Chris lifted his hand in a dismissive wave.

They drove to their great spread of ewes and lambs kept together by Kosta and the other herders with their shepherds' hooks. The herders whistled when a ewe or lamb strayed, signaling the sheepdogs that raced around and around, bringing the sojourners back where they belonged. But everything was peaceful when they arrived. Lia watched the ewes munching on alfalfa and the lambs pulling on their mothers' teats. Lia smiled at the innocent, white lambs.

At the ranch house Chris sat on the porch on days when the weather turned warm in the afternoon. Markos Papastamos and his wife drove over to visit one late afternoon. By habit Mrs. Papastamos, Emma, and Lia went into the kitchen where Lia prepared coffee and took pastries out of a crock. She brought a tray to the porch. Chris picked up his cup, leaving the pastry on the plate. Lia listened to her father making a great effort in his thin voice to be polite, hospitable. He asked about the market, but Papastamos said, "My boy Jim is going to war." They were quiet for a minute. Papastamos dunked a *koulouraki* in his coffee and nodded gravely.

In the kitchen Lia found Mrs. Papastamos in Greek-English telling Emma that Mitro, Jim, had to go to the army as soon as he graduated.

Emma said in Greek, "Tell him to come say goodbye."

Mrs. Papastamos nodded, her round face devoid of its perpetual smiling.

Several weeks later Jim Papastamos knocked lightly on the back screen door. Lia stared at him.

"I didn't know whether I should come or not."

"But why?" Her heart beating fast, she stood aside to let Jim walk into the kitchen.

Jim looked at the floor before answering. "You know. It'll remind your father of Nicky. How we used to be."

"I know, but nothing can be done about it."

Emma entered the room, her face lighting up with pleasure. "Jim! How are you? Have you been drafted?"

"Not exactly, but I'm going because I'm in ROTC. I'm on my way to Craig. Do you need anything?"

Emma turned sharply to Lia. "Lia, go with Jim. Git out of this house. We're like we're buried in here."

Jim said, "Yes, Lia. It's a good ride." His thin face flushed and he would not meet her eyes.

"Go on. Nothing'll happen while you're gone. You need to git out of here." Emma pushed them gently out the door.

Jim put Lia in the truck and began the long descent. The scents of early summer were in the cool air; birds swept over the flawless blue sky; flowers grew among currant bushes and vestiges of sagebrush. Jim changed gears every few seconds, neither of them speaking in a warm silence.

In Craig they bought groceries, ate ice cream cones, and glanced at each other, their eyes not quite meeting. On the way up the rutted Twenty Mile Road, they looked at each other often and smiled. When Jim turned into the dirt driveway, Lia sighed: a car was parked ahead. "Oh, it's Aunt Rina and Uncle Gus."

"I'll let you out here," Jim whispered. "I don't want to see your Aunt Rina." They smiled again, conspirators.

"Don't get out," Jim said. He walked around the car and quietly opened the door. Lia scurried up the porch while Jim held the car handle and carefully closed the door.

Inside the kitchen Rina told Lia that she had come to help get the house in *taghma*, order, after being closed up all winter. The pretense was foolish: they had been in the mountains for more than a month; the house had been in order after the first week. In the living room Gus was talking to Chris about the war; already supplies were going to the army even if America had not yet declared war. But when Gus said the Italians had begun invading Greece and the Greeks had answered by painting the white word *OHI*, No, on mountains, Chris said brokenly, "Ach, Greece, our poor country."

For Rina a pressing task was ever present in her thoughts: she was intent on Bessie's marrying Jim Papastamos. That he would be going to the army did not deter her: she envisioned him sitting at a desk giving orders. At the earliest opportunity, she would ask Emma to drive her over to see Zoitsa Papastamos, her old village friend, and make the first move. She had brought with her a candy box of baklava, which, she would tell Zoitsa, Bessie had baked. Emma and Lia hoped Gus would take Rina back with him in the morning, but she stayed.

Emma answered Rina with short replies; she kept her grief like a hard treasure inside her while intent on carrying on the duties of house and sheep. She dreamed several times of walking unendingly through a vast desert where the sagebrush had withered to the ground.

Seeing Emma's preoccupation, Rina could not ask to be driven to see Zoitsa Papastamos. She tortured herself with plans that could not be carried out, but one day to her great delight John Papastamos brought his mother Zoitsa to see the family. Rina and Mrs. Papastamos sat on the front porch and Lia served them coffee and pastries. "Eh, *patriotissa*," Rina said between noisy sips of coffee, "I've been here at Hristos's house and thinking about you and the family. How are things?"

"So so. The grandchildren are fine, but Mitro has to go to the army."

"To the army? I didn't know that," Rina lied easily.

"Yes, to the army."

"May he return whole," Rina parroted the old response. "Are John's children with you?"

"Yes, they came right after school was out."

"How I would like to see them," Rina said with a big smile, she who was not really interested in children, " but I don't want to ask her to drive me over." Her—Emma.

"I'll send either Yianni or Mitro to bring you over. Whoever comes back first."

"I don't want to be a burden, but I would like to see Yianni's children." Rina breathed in deeply, so satisfied that she had to tighten her lips to hide the smile.

John—Yianni—drove over the next day. Rina was disappointed that he had come instead of Jim, but she settled herself in the truck and waved goodbye to Emma, who was hanging up wash in the backyard. Rina spent four hours with Zoitsa Papastamos. They mostly gossiped, temporarily dispelling Mrs. Papastamos's thoughts of Jim's going to the army. Drinking demitasses of coffee, they talked of the last letters from their villages telling of the Germans coming from the north and the Italians from the west. They worried aloud about their people until Rina said, "Maybe their soldiers won't reach our village. It's so high up."

They exhaled noisily and then began talking about Greeks they knew in this *xenitia*, this foreign land. Rina repeated gossip about several *patriotes*' daughters who had misbehaved and, although the charges were untrue, they both tsk-tsked about American ways that were corrupting the young. "Achh, such things would never happen in our country," they both agreed, forgetting the young girls seduced by villagers on mountain slopes while taking food to their sheepherding brothers and fathers.

Rina returned to the ranch, happily thanked John Papastamos for driving her to and from his mother's house, and put on a serious face when she entered the kitchen. The dark shadow was still there, hovering over the house. Chris stayed in his bedroom all day, eating little and sometimes not at all. Lia or Emma would take him a bowl of soup and he would eat just enough to quiet his stomach pangs while sitting on the edge of the bed. They could hear Rina saying long prayers each night at the icon in Nicky's old room. It galled Emma and Lia that she insisted on sleeping in Nicky's room—Nicky's room that they had kept just as it had been when he was alive.

The next time Rina visited Mrs. Papastamos (to her annoyance John was again the driver) she began quietly, talking about young people in general. "Just think, Zoitsa, our children were toddlers not too long ago and now they're grown up, ready to make their own nests."

Mrs. Papastamos nodded, seemingly unaware of the path Rina was taking. "Yes," Rina continued, "there's too much liberty in America. Children marry whoever they want. And you know they get mixed up with those others, the *ksenoi*, before you know it. Look at Nikolaides's son. He had to marry the American girl who took tickets at the show house. They fight all the time, his mother says, and what to do? They brought this little boy into the world. So what is the little boy? He's certainly not Greek. They never go to church. They eat every Sunday at *her* mother's house even if his *own* mother begs them to eat at her table." A little more of the pitfalls in America and Rina returned to the ranch satisfied with her progress.

While Rina was making these visits to Mrs. Papastamos, neither knew that the evening after Jim and Lia had driven to Craig, Jim had knocked lightly on Lia's front screen door at around nine o'clock. Lia looked at him in surprise and Jim mumbled that he knew it was late to be visiting, but Lia did not let him finish. She stepped out to the porch and they sat on the top step. They looked over the canyon to the green slopes beyond. It was still light, cool and darkening. "Where's your Aunt Rina?" Jim whispered.

Lia smiled. "She goes to bed early. It's habit I guess. She used to get up at four in the morning to start the baking and washing."

"Is your dad any better?"

"No, I wish he could die." Lia squinted tears from her eyes. They said nothing until she asked about his going into the army.

"I wish it were over and done with," Jim said angrily.

Lia nodded and again they sat wordlessly, looking at the green slopes turning into a dark blue. Jim then asked about Kosta and some of the other herders. "The way your dad is," he said, "I think it's too hard for you and your mother to run sheep."

"We have to."

"Your dad doesn't like to fire anyone, like my dad, but Lud's no good. Your dad could handle him, but I don't know about your mother."

"She does what has to be done." Lia looked at the mountains. "She lost a son, but no one thinks of her. It's only my dad they think about."

A half hour later Jim said, "I'd better go." They stood up and looked at each other, their shyness masked by the dark. "I'll come when I can if it's okay."

"Yes," Lia said eagerly and did not care how it appeared to Jim.

Mrs. Papastamos and Rina were not aware that while they were visiting, Jim jumped into the pickup and went over to see Lia. "Is that Jim on the porch with Lia," Chris asked on one of these furtive visits.

"Yes," Emma said. "He comes over quite often. He's leavin' soon for the army."

"I hope he don't get killed. Then he can marry Lia and help you. I'm no good no more." Chris shuffled to his bedroom.

Emma looked out the window, a cold shiver pricking her back. She hoped Rina would not return from the Papastamos house until dusk. She needed time to recover from Chris's words: "I'm no good no more."

On Jim's fourth visit, Lia said, "Jim, you know the day in front of the Park Building when we happened to meet?

Jim glanced at Lia, smiling. "We didn't *happen* to meet."

Lia forgot what she intended to say.

Jim said, slowly, "We're going to get married, aren't we?"

"Yes."

"Don't forget, I'm leaving for the army."

"I know."

She had never been kissed on the lips before. Her father and uncles had patted her head when she was younger; her mother hugged her when she won an award; her aunts had given her cheek-kisses. She was trembling with joy.

With her head on Jim's chest, she knew it would be hard for all of them: Nicky had been dead nine months, and no marriages should take place until the year was up. How could she tell her parents that she could not have said "no."

While Rina was making yet another visit to Mrs. Papastamos, Lia asked her mother to come out to the porch. "I have to tell you something." They sat on the porch swing. Lia looked at her mother through tears. "Mama, Jim asked me to marry him." Her heart was beating miserably fast.

Emma gazed with tired eyes. "I thought he would. He's a good boy."

"But it hasn't been a year since Nicky died. What will Dad say? He'll think I've forgotten Nicky."

Emma looked over the sheep pen. "He's too far gone to think about other things. We'll tell him when we find a good time, like the next time Rina goes visitin' Mrs. Papastamos."

Rina's last visit to Mrs. Papastamos was not enjoyable. Plenty of gossip remained to be picked at, but she returned with an uncomfortable fullness in her stomach, a sign she knew meant that she must make a decision. *Me troi*, she thought, it's eating me. One morning Rina had awakened from bad dreams and the patriarch Barba Yianni was not near to interpret them for her. She knew, though, that they were omens, bad ones.

She had to admit to herself that Zoitsa Papastamos, her old village friend, was not responding to her blandishments and hints about Bessie. The failure of her visits and the bad dreams forced her to make a decision, so great that it left her exhausted. She would have to use another strategy with her friend Zoitsa Papastamos, but what it was she could not think of at the moment. Instead of going to bed at her usual early hour, she stood in front of the icon, struck by a looming disaster. She lighted Nicky's vigil light and began praying: "Little Virgin, give me light. Help me." She felt better after her prayers; they gave her the courage to make one more attempt, a big one, to interest Zoitsa in Bessie. Yes, she would forget convention; she would lose ground sending someone to arrange the marriage. She, herself, would face Zoitsa and say it right out.

As Rina made her way from the bedroom to the kitchen, she glanced at the porch where Lia often sat on the top step at night. Rina gasped: two people were sitting there in the dim light, Lia and Mitro Papastamos. Jim had his arm about Lia's shoulder and she was leaning her head against him. Rina stood there, aghast: She did not know how

it had happened, Lia and Mitro! Clutching her hands together, she went into the kitchen and stood silently looking down at Emma who was writing in Chris's ledger.

Emma looked up. "What's the matter, Rina?"

"Mitro on porch."

"Yes, they're getting married. Soon."

"But he's go to *polemo*! And our Niko not dead one *hrono*!"

Emma lifted both hands. "It's all decided." She returned to the ledger and Rina stood looking through the dim living room at the two figures on the porch steps. She thought of poor, stupid Bessie, who was so naive that she couldn't match Lia—Lia who had used her women's wiles to catch Mitro Papastamos. She wanted to march out to the porch and pull Lia's hair.

Rina stood in the kitchen for many minutes. Emma looked up several times wondering what she was thinking. Then Rina lifted her arms and let them fall at the sides of her body. It was probably for the best: Mitro was known for having a bad temper (until then this had not bothered her) and, after all, she sighed, she still had other younger daughters to marry off and the Papastamoses had younger sons also. Aloud she said, "Next time you go to Cragie, you call on telephone to Gus to come take me home."

For several more nights Lia and Jim sat on the porch, talking about their childhood in Greek Town and their years at the university. In the cool black night, the stars appeared close to the pines; fragrant wood and flower scents came to them; and little far-off noises were soothing, pleasant. The light from the living room fell on Jim's face while he listened to Lia. He looked steadily, deeply into her eyes and remained silent for moments at a time until Lia, feeling caught and not knowing what to do, lowered her head against his shoulder. They whispered rather than talked aloud.

"I'm surprised you gave me a second look," he said one night. "I'm just an ordinary guy."

"You're not ordinary to me."

"When did you decide that?"

"I was always watching you when we were children. Then your family moved to Grand Junction. When we were at the ranch in the summer, my dad used to go over to see your dad. I went once with my mother, but you weren't there. I was very disappointed." Lia laughed at herself. "I didn't see you until I was a freshman at the university. You were sitting at the Greek Table."

Lia was quiet for a moment. "I thought you were so handsome, even if your nose was just a trifle too long." She tweaked his nose, then felt foolish: she had seen an actress do that to a boyishly handsome actor in the movies. She said, "I began to daydream about you. I decided you always kept your promises, that you were honorable."

Jim leaned back with the pale light from the living room full on his face. His eyes stared, darkly, almost defiantly Lia thought, into hers.

"I'm not that honorable," he said and Lia breathed in shallow breaths. "I was mean and jealous when a guy stopped to talk to you."

Lia felt a deep pleasure. Then she said, "When did you first give me a second thought?"

"Oh, I always thought you were pretty and gawky with long legs when you were playing with your cousins. Then when I saw you in the U library, it hit me that you were different." He stopped as if for breath: he was unused to talking at length. "I didn't think about what kind of person you were, I just thought you were different in a nice way."

Lia wondered how she would feel when she took her clothes off in front of him. From the time she was very young, she, Bessie, and Peggy had dressed and undressed in closets. It must have come from her Aunt Rina's disgust of the naked human body.

They were silent, listening to the sounds of night in the mountains. Jim said, in a quiet voice "If we could have had the usual honeymoon, we could have gone to New York, seen the Yankees play. Maybe heard Benny Goodman on his clarinet. We could have gone to a museum or something for you."

Lia laughed. "I love the clarinet. From the time I was a little girl listening to those Greek musicians on phonograph records. And I like Benny Goodman."

After a moment, Jim said, "We don't know much about each other, do we?"

On the evening before Lia and Jim were to be married in the Denver Greek church, Mrs. Papastamos prepared a big dinner. Jim's sisters, their husbands, and children had driven from McGill, Nevada, to tell Jim goodbye. They came in one car, Zeffy's husband driving a big Buick with Tessie's husband next to him holding his youngest son. Both men in their late forties were already portly. They kept cigars in their mouths and the fumes in the closed-up car made one of the children cough and sneeze. Zeffy and Tessie sat on the back seat,

both now plump, with great bosoms. Each held a child and the pale cougher was wedged between them. In the middle of the car were folding seats called "monkey seats." A plank, padded with a blanket had been placed across the two seats, and on it three children sat, pushing each other angrily.

Emma and Chris declined going to the Papastamos dinner, but Rina—still with them—was excited, her severely thin face smiling, crinkling the deep wrinkles about her eyelids: She was thinking about her younger daughters and the sons the Papastamos family still had left. She opened the car's front door and got in quickly with the air of a privileged personage. Lia sat in the back seat, as she had expected to, but she resented Rina's being with them. As Jim backed the car out of the yard, his and Lia's eyes met. Lia did not want to go to the Papastamos house; she did not want Jim's last evening in the mountains to be spent with her Aunt Rina and Jim's family. John, she was sure, would make smutty remarks about honeymoons. She tried to like him, but even Jim said he would have preferred Plato or Charlie to be his best man. Better yet if Swede Olson would stand up for him, but that was impossible. Everything had to be done hurriedly. Charlie had already been called to the army and Swede was not a Greek so he couldn't be his best man, anyway.

"I think I know who he is," Lia said about Swede.

"Yeah, tall as me with white eyebrows and hair. A shovel for a chin. One day in high school he said to me, 'I went to a Greek baptism over in Steamboat Springs and I had a hell of a good time. I was the only white guy there.'" Jim snorted softly. "I said, 'Greeks are white,' and Swede said, 'Oh, I know. It's only an expression,' and I told him I didn't like that expression. He backed off and we've been buddies ever since."

As Lia expected, the house was a pandemonium: her Aunt Rina, Jim's mother, and her plump daughters, Zeffy and Tessie, screeching, kissing each other, and stirring pots on the stove that sent clouds of steam into the large, crowded kitchen. Grandchildren ran or crawled through all six stark rooms; the teenage Papastamos sons brought in wood and coal for the stove and were shooed out when they tried to stand about and pick food from platters on the table.

The big black stove was at one end of the room; at the other was a brown wooden, restaurant-sized ice box. In the center was an oblong table. An army cot covered with a quilt, next to the sink, was piled high with children's toys. On the back porch wedged against the copper washing machine, a mound of washed sheets covered another

army cot. In the dining room a third cot was set under the window. For Lia the cots and the leather sofa in the living room that folded out into a bed at night told of eight children growing up in a three-bedroom house, competing for sleeping space with a constant parade of visitors. Jim had told Lia that he slept in the bunkhouse more often than inside the main house. Lia thought that it was a terrible way to live.

She looked about for distraction. John's wife, plump, blue shadows under her eyes, a fat baby whining on her hip, looked fatigued. Lia asked if she could hold the baby. "You look tired."

"He won't let you. He's teething and I was up all night with him." Her three other children, all under five years of age, were pulling on her apron, demanding to eat.

Lia's stomach reeled from the smells. It was as if not food but hot greasy dish water were simmering on the big black stove. True to the family's reputation that they never talked, only shouted, the Papastamos women called out gossip; Rina's fresh tales gave Zeffy and Tessie more to exclaim about and conjecture over.

Lia could barely eat at the crowded dining room table where all the platters and bowls told of days of preparation: feta pastries; eggplant *moussaka;* meat and rice filled zucchini, tomatoes, and green peppers; *pastitsio*—layered macaroni and meat covered with heavy cream sauce; stuffed grape leaves; and several legs of lamb. Everyone, except Lia, ate with both elbows on the table. Children in high chairs babbled and threw food on the linoleum floor; the mothers filled plates constantly, making certain the men had all they wanted. A halo of talk hung, shimmering below the ceiling. The men at one end of the table talked on as if the women's commotion was merely subdued background. The women shrilled; children cried.

After the demitasses of Turkish coffee and baklava and other pastries were served, the men went into the living room and Lia and Zeffy cleared the table. Tessie stacked the dishes, bowls, and platters on the wooden drainboards. Mrs. Papastamos and Rina sat at the dining-room table for another demitasse of coffee. Jim's mother told Vassi to serve the men Metaxa liqueur. Vassi smiled wanly, the baby still on her hip, as she carried out her in-laws' orders. The men were leisurely talking and, all but Jim, smoking. Blue layers of cigarette smoke floated above their heads.

"Vassi!" John called, "Bring me a glass of water!" Vassi turned on the tap and let the water run. Adjusting the baby on her hip, she brought John a plate with a glass of water on it. John took it from her

and drank it in one long swallow. Lia had heard it all her life: "Rina! Bring me a glass of water. Let it run cold!"; "Katina, a glass of water!"; "Emma, I want a glass of water!" Never a thank you from the men. Even now that they were older, the daughters were called to bring the glasses of water and always on saucers. It was not proper to merely hand glasses to their fathers.

The women sat at the kitchen table that had been cleared and covered with Greek newspapers. Mrs. Papastamos told Vassi to tend to the children, nine of them, and the rest of the women were to peel and core crab apples. They had to be preserved immediately or they would become soft. The task was necessary for the rite of hospitality; preserves and pastries must be on hand for the visitors who would drop in at any time.

Tessie blanched almonds, removed the skins, and as the apples were cored, she pushed an almond into each cavity. A syrup of water, honey, and rose water simmered in a large pot on the coal stove. The apples were placed into it and soon turned a pale pink. Lia sat with lowered head and peeled her portion of apples, and once when she glanced at the living room, she saw Jim looking at her. The women kept talking, often several at once, except for John's wife Vassi, who, Lia saw, was acting just like the older Pappas girls she had known in Greek Town. They smiled and did the bidding of their husbands' sisters.

Then an aversion rose up to Lia's throat, an aversion she did not know she had, for her life in the Demas family, for her childhood, for the stranglehold of being together at all times, everyone knowing each other's affairs, their grief, shame, anger. Lia sat with the aversion growing, encompassing the talking, laughing, gossiping women at the table.

Rina embraced Mrs. Papastamos as they were ready to leave. "Zoitsa! May the newlyweds live and give joy to you. Of course, it's hasty, but the times are upside down."

Mrs. Papastamos said evenly, "If my son does not return, at least he will not have gone unmarried. Better, if he left a child so the memory of him wouldn't be lost."

On the way home, Rina talked excitedly without stopping. It had been an adventure for her, and she had no idea that the two other people in the car resented her presence. "You were pretty quiet," Jim said to Lia after Rina had gone into the house.

"Just tired I guess and thinking about tomorrow." Lia kissed him with a passion born of guilt that left Jim looking at her in

surprise. When she was in bed, in the dark, she repeated to herself what she would someday say to Jim. "I spent twenty years being swallowed up by the Demas family. I won't be swallowed up by the Papastamos family. That's not the kind of life I want. Like my aunts and my poor mother, no. I don't want to be together all the time. I don't want to be at their beck and call, like Greek brides are supposed to be. I don't want to run over to help your mother with cooking and canning. I want to have some order in my life. I'll have big name day parties on St. Demetrios day for you and some family dinners, but not all the time. I've got to have time to myself."

She changed her speech many times, with spurts of shame because Jim was leaving, maybe never to come back. She thought at one point that Jim might have different ideas, but she was adamant, perspiration clammy on her forehead: she would not live like her mother and her aunts.

12

Marko Papastamos made the arrangements for Jim and Lia to be married in Denver's Holy Trinity Church. Jim's brother John and his wife Vassi would be their attendants. Rina had unnecessarily reminded Emma that the year of mourning for Nicky had not been completed, and that there could be no real wedding with a big crowd and food, drink, and music following. When Emma told Jim and Lia what Rina had said, they looked at each other with relief. Jim told Lia, "My dad wanted to give me the money to buy you a diamond, but I didn't want to take it. I want to pay for one myself someday."

"I like my gold band," she said.

The brothers left their stockmen's Stetsons on the first pew and stood before the iconostasis with Lia and Vassi. The church was cool and dim with the lingering smell of incense. The priest was kindly. Because of the hurried plans, *stefana*, the wedding crowns, could not be ordered, and Vassi brought her own for the climactic Dance of Isaiah. Wearing a light gray suit, Lia thought she was wilting under the solemnity, the magnitude of what was happening. At the end of the liturgy, she and Jim kissed the priest's hand and walked down the aisle. Hand in hand, they stepped out to the clear blue day.

They had lunch with John and Vassi in the Brown Palace Hotel and although there were only four of them, they sat in the great dining room with the canopy of green glass above, great plants against the walls, and a festive air surrounding them. Vassi and John, finally subdued, looking thoughtful for once, left as soon as they finished eating because the sheep were being readied for trailing to the desert. "I'll look out for your dad's outfit," John told Lia, and to Jim: "Come back."

In the elevator Jim and Lia said nothing, only gazed at each other. They entered their room, breathing deeply as if they had

entered a hidden refuge. They showered, Jim first, while Lia unpacked. He came back wearing briefs, wiping his wet hair, and stretched out on the bed, watching her every move with deep interest. She opened her overnight bag and took out a small cosmetic pouch and something wrapped in white tissue paper. After she went into the bathroom, Jim lay on the bed with his palms under his head. He closed his eyes for a while and opened them to see Lia standing at the side of the bed, looking at him. She was wearing a long straight white satin nightgown with narrow straps and deep neckline. "I felt kind of sad not having a wedding dress," she said with a rueful smile. "I wanted something special to remind me of this day. My dad, well no, my mother gave me a hundred-dollar bill and I used some of it to buy this nightgown." It was not really a nightgown, but an evening slip. The nightgowns in the Craig JC Penney and Golden Rule stores had looked dowdy to her.

Jim reached out and rubbed the satin between his fingers. "Pretty," he said. "Pretty."

He looked on as Lia went through a little ritual. She took off the nightgown and spread it on the bed, folded one side toward the middle, then the other, and brought the top to the center and turned it down to the hem. She then lifted the package of satin and pressed it to her, completely unaware, it seemed to Jim, that he was watching.

On the front porch of the ranch, Jim's hands had run over her blouse, but that was all. He thought: *She's beautiful*, but did not say it aloud. He seldom put his thoughts into words; it was enough for him that he had them. He reached for her, but Lia said, "I have to say my prayer." She turned to what she surmised was the east and making the sign of the cross three times, silently repeated the Lord's Prayer in Greek—she was forgetting much else of what she had learned in Greek school.

Jim watched her thinking how quaint it was, his beautiful bride, naked, making the sign of the cross, silently praying, and facing east where he remembered a priest saying was where Jesus rose. He had intended telling her that he had not really kissed the priest's hand; he had stopped short about an inch from it. He felt he had to be truthful, but now was not the time.

Lia climbed in beside him. "Why are you smiling?"

"That was something, you standing there naked making your cross."

Lia decided that she would cross herself in the bathroom in the future. "Don't you pray?" she asked Jim.

"No."

"When did you stop?"

"In grade school." Jim looked at Lia in amusement. "Let's get down to business," he said.

"Jim, you know I'm a virgin."

"Well, what else could you be, growing up in Greek Town under Mother Superior Rina?"

When Lia became drowsy and was almost asleep, she realized she hadn't been ashamed to take off her clothes in front of Jim.

For two days and nights at the Brown Palace Hotel, they ordered room service, slept late and talked through the nights—they had shared a Greek-Town childhood, but as Jim had said, knew little about each other. Jim remembered Lia's watching him, Nicky, and other boys playing marbles. He laughed at Rina chasing her and her cousins with the *koutala*. "Your Aunt Rina had a bee in her bonnet that I should marry her daughter Bessie."

"Ah! I would have died if you had!"

"You don't think I would have done anything so stupid, do you?"

"How did you know about it?"

"She hinted to my mother. And my mother can never keep anything to herself. My brother John teased me so much over it that I thought of putting a fist in his face—now that I'm taller than he is."

"Aunt Rina could make us feel so guilty even when we hadn't done anything. And if we had done some little mischief—we felt terrible."

Lia told Jim about the night she and her mother heard him playing "The Red River Valley" on the harmonica and her mother singing along.

"I never knew the words," Jim said. Lia knew them, but said nothing: a girl leaving the cowboy who loved her—it was too sad, might even bring something like bad luck.

"Yeah," Jim went on, one arm around Lia's shoulders, "I was always trying to get away from the house. Always full of commotion. I found a place, a pretty good place, to hide behind the coal shed."

"Do you still have the harmonica?"

Jim wasn't sure.

"Maybe your mother would know what happened to it."

"In that madhouse!" After a moment he said, "I thought she'd start crying and carrying on when I left yesterday, but she was quiet. It's the first time I ever saw my mother quiet."

"With eight children and all those visitors your dad brings home on the spur of the moment who could blame her?"

"Yeah. I guess she didn't have time to do anything more with us kids except feed us."

He was overwhelmed at that moment with Lia's loving him. He had never before thought about whether he was loved or not loved; he had never thought about it at all.

"I wish you had the harmonica."

"I don't know what happened to it. Everything in the house was family property. Every night I folded my clothes and put them under my pillow or the next morning I wouldn't know where they were and I'd end up being late for school."

Lia stroked Jim's arm. "We didn't seize the day, did we?"

"What do you mean?"

"'Seize the day, put no trust in the morrow.' It's a quote. Those two years at the U, we could have been together."

After a long pause, Jim answered, "No, it's happened at the right time," and, after a moment, "Those two years were miserable for me, but they made what we have now much more important. No, for me it was better to go through those two years."

"Maybe, but I would have had you when Nicky died. It was so miserable and lonely."

"I feel like a jackass. I should have had the sense to come to you. I wanted to stop at your house after the funeral, but I didn't know what in hell to say to you."

They lay still and quiet for a while. Then Jim laughed and said, "Seize the day! Are you going to be throwing quotes at me the rest of our life?"

"Yes."

"Well, I guess if it comes with the package."

Lia laughed. "I'll try not to overdo it."

"No, it's okay. I know sheep and you know books."

They said nothing about the war. Their talk lessened and just as Jim was about to close his eyes, Lia said in a hesitant voice, "Jim, do you know anything about how my dad and mother married?"

"Well, yes."

"I know he was forced to marry her, but do you know if he did anything to her. Like get her pregnant or . . . ?" She couldn't finish.

"God, no. He just gave her a ride in his new car and you know what they thought of Greeks in those days." He raised himself on his

elbow. Lights from the city streets touched his face distinctly in the dark. "Have you been worrying about that all these years?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you ask someone? Bessie and Peggy would have told you. Everybody knew about it."

"Bessie's the one who told me my dad had to marry my mother. We were in the first grade."

"Oh God, and you've carried that with you all these years." He drew her closer and Lia lay still with a relief so deep that she soon fell asleep. Jim breathed in her scent, entranced, not knowing it was merely the soap she used. He knew little about women: his sisters were older, noisy and bossy, and washed their hair with harsh-smelling laundry soap. The girls he had squirmed with on the back seat of his father's car used cheap perfume that made him sneeze.

As he lay with his arm around Lia, he worried that she would have to drive her father's car alone to Craig and up Twenty Mile Road. He was afraid of something happening to her. When he told Lia his fears in the morning, she said she was certain she would have no problems, that Lud was to follow her in the truck. Jim's concern was wonderful to her. She wanted nothing to spoil their two days, and she telephoned the boardinghouse in Craig where Lud stayed when he was not at the ranch. Jim took the telephone from her and told Lud he'd better show up at the Denver & Rio Grande depot or else. "And don't take even one drink or I'll break your neck when I come back."

On their last night in the hotel, Lia could not sleep. All her resolve that she would not let Jim see her fear for him dissipated. She tried not to think about his loneliness, his being in danger, shot at, wounded, even killed. She wanted so much to help him and could think of nothing.

Quietly she got out of bed and hurried to the bathroom, the red neon light beyond the window flashing on her body. She closed the door just in time to cover her face with a bath towel and sink sobbing onto the cold tile floor. She wept with abandon, her cries muffled. Then the door opened. Jim reached under her arms, pulled her up, and carried her to the bed. They huddled there without a word and fell asleep just as the pink of dawn was coming.

When they awoke, there was no time for showers. They packed hurriedly and quickly drank coffee and ate a roll in the hotel coffee shop. They spoke less and less. At the train station, they parked the car near a banged-up pickup truck they recognized. Lud was standing

at the entrance to the station, looking at the people who filed past him, scrutinizing every face to make certain he did not miss Lia.

Lia and Jim were silent, gazing at each other. The platform was crowded with men in uniform and raucous teenage boys in suits or sweaters, on their way to uniforms and guns, crying out excited goodbyes to their families, their mothers telling them to be careful. Children were lifted up to the windows where the young men, looking for seats, had to wave and smile. When the conductor called out, Jim turned his back on Lud, standing about twenty feet away, chewing on a toothpick, and kissed Lia. "Take my Stetson," he said and Lia held it close to her. She would not move until the train left the station. Then she got into her father's car and began driving toward Craig, looking into the rear-view mirror from time to time to see Lud's truck following her.

Somewhere between Denver and Glenwood Springs, she realized Lud's truck was not behind her. Breathing fast, fearful that she might have a flat tire, she drove at eighty miles an hour, straining to keep down the fear roiling inside her. Hardly another car was on the road. When she came to Craig and to the branching-off Twenty Mile Road, tears blurred her vision. She would not write Jim and worry him, or tell her parents: they would be unable to find another camp tender; men were leaving for the army or taking defense jobs in cities. Her mother would have to take over the work of keeping the herders supplied.

A snapshot was enclosed in the first letter Lia received. Jim was wearing his second lieutenant's uniform, smiling broadly, holding something in his right hand. She looked at it carefully for several moments before she knew it was a harmonica. She reached for Jim's Stetson on top of the icebox; with the inside of it close to her face, she breathed in the faint scent of his hair oil.

13

Bessie and Peggy wanted to talk of nothing else but Lia's marrying Jim. "Well," Peggy said, "she finally found someone tall enough for her."

"Uh-huh," Bessie said, because she thought Peggy knew more than she did.

Lia at five-foot-seven was not so tall as her mother, but Peggy reveled in being short. Although her eyes were brown, when she thought she had made a conquest, she would burst out with the popular song of the twenties, "Five foot two, eyes of blue, has anybody seen my gal?"

Peggy snapped her fingers. "I could have had him like that. But he was so tall and skinny."

Bessie was never prepared when Peggy spoke of her prowess with men and felt a clutch in her stomach. No one had ever shown any interest in her. "Oh," she said.

"He used to give me the come-on all the time, but he just wasn't my type."

Bessie thought about this. She wanted to say, "I never noticed anything like that," but when Peggy talked about flirting, men, and sex, Bessie never questioned her and was left miserable, feeling unattractive, unimportant.

Both Bessie and Peggy were intensely envious of Bessie's sister Mellie, who had been recruited for the Women's Army Corp, the WAC, on the university campus. Rina and Gus told her she could not go, but Mellie went without arguing with them. Rina said she could not keep her head up any longer—a daughter off, consorting with soldiers. Bessie and Peggy thought longingly of dressing up in a uniform, meeting army officers, and getting away from their mothers and the rest of the family. That Mellie had earned a degree in sociology and a Phi Beta Kappa key did not pique their envy.

Rina was pleased to tell the Mothers Club in the church basement that Mellie was an officer in the army for women, but she sighed over this daughter who had ruined all chances of marriage by going off without a family's protection, just like American women did.

But Bessie's and Peggy's families were not entirely concerned about their daughters at the moment: Chris was their constant worry. They made quick trips to the ranch to exhort him to eat. They were appalled at how his clothes hung on him. When he deigned to speak a few words in his high, thin voice, they looked away, to avoid his eyes. Rina suggested that Gus bring the priest to give him communion since he would not go to church, but Chris shook his head. The brothers and their wives left with long sighs. Emma told Kosta to stay away because his weeping made Chris worse.

Chris began having headaches, so painful that his vision blurred. He started taking a few aspirin a day, then several more, until he was putting handfuls in his mouth. Emma and Lia whispered about it, but when they spoke aloud, Chris would not listen, lifting his head in the Greek way of silencing them. They sat, mother and daughter, on the porch in the evenings until the sky turned black, hardly speaking. They had talked and talked about what they could do and nothing could be done.

The evening breeze turned cold; sheep were being trailed to the desert grounds for winter. Kosta passed by the house with his head turned away from Emma and Lia, whether in affront at his being told to stay away or because he was weeping—they did not know. Lia called out to him, but he went on.

When Lia and her parents returned to Helper, they found it as it had been in the twenties, when the mines had worked three shifts a day and the coal trains came one after another down the canyons whistling, each with its characteristic call, brash, nostalgic, plaintive. Young men were leaving for the army. The *Helper Times* had something to say about each one, often with faint approval: "One of our young men, ready to fight for his country"; or exaggerated praise, "One of the finest young men this county has ever produced. He will acquit himself honorably and return a hero."

Every morning Lia turned on the radio, but Chris showed no sign of hearing that the Allied offensives were going badly in the Pacific. Jim was being sent to the "Pacific theater," the war with the Japanese. Lia came in and out of the kitchen, holding a dish cloth, to catch the latest news. She heard the names of the once-unknown

Pacific islands: Gilbert, Marshall, Admiralty, Mariana, the atolls, and they loomed in her thoughts. When H. V. Kaltenborn snapped out the numbers of dead American soldiers and the greater number of Japanese, waves of shivering went over her body and an icy cold gripped her stomach.

Chris dozed off and on for hours while the radio voices went on, and even when his brothers came bursting with war news, especially the heroic struggle of their poor Greece against the Nazi soldiers, his eyelids drooped and heavy breathing followed.

The "Japs" Gus and Pete called the Japanese and saw no reason to condemn the government for forcing nine thousand of them and their American-born children out of the west coast and into relocation camps. One was in Utah, in Topaz, named after a nearby mountain. There in the alkali desert, these citizens existed in tar-paper barracks.

"It isn't right to do that," Lia said. " They've been in this country since the turn of the century and their children were born here. They're people like the Inui and Yamasaki families. It's not right."

"What's not right?" Gus flared up. "The government knows what it's doing. They know things you don't."

Pete flung out his fat hands in exasperation. "Your husband's fighting the Japs and you can't support him!"

Lia paled. Chris opened his eyes and closed them again. In Greek, Gus said, "My girl, you better take it into your inner brain and you'll see you're talking foolishly." Pete said, "You're unpatriotic."

From then on, her uncles made fewer visits through the canyon to see their brother. The government had rationed gas along with butter, meat, sugar, coffee, and anything made out of rubber and metal.

Bessie and Peggy left the university. It was patriotic for women to take jobs left vacant when men went off to the armed services, and it was a good excuse for them to quit school. They telephoned Lia often to talk about the excitement that had taken the place of the dreary times before Pearl Harbor. Trailer parks had sprung up. The crowds on the street made Salt Lake seem like a big city. People from all over the United States were coming to work in the quickly built naval supply depot, the air force base north of the city, and the proving grounds on the west desert, in the small arms plant and at the Kearns Army Base. Young men were going into the army in large numbers, and finding workers was so difficult that recruiters brought African Americans from the South and Pueblo and Navajo workers from

Arizona and New Mexico. Puerto Ricans came to work in the copper mines and farmers depended on Mexicans to harvest their crops.

"It's so strange," Peggy told Lia on the telephone, "to see those black and Indian faces on the street, right in with all those Mormons."

"And the women who're working in the arms plant and all over!" Bessie said. "They're doing all kinds of work, making ammunition, folding parachutes. All kinds of work!"

Newspapers printed a story about children left alone day after day in trailers while their parents worked. A picture taken through a trailer window showed a small child, about eighteen months old, tied by an ankle to the leg of a bed. He was wearing a diaper and on the floor was an empty bowl. The reporter said it was obvious that the trailer was overheated because the child's face was red. Lia hurt for the child, agonized in her dark bedroom for its fear and loneliness.

With a pillow over her head to keep her parents from hearing, she cried for Jim every night, thinking of him injured or in misery, sweltering, hungry. She sometimes woke up, frantic, with images of American soldiers captured by the Japanese in the Phillipines, struggling to keep moving forward.

Many soldiers were stationed at the Kearns Army Base, built on pioneer farmland west of the city. They walked the downtown streets, made friendly remarks to girls and young women, their overseas caps cocked on their heads. Increasingly, more soldiers sauntered about with young women or girls in their early teens hanging on to them. Heavily made-up women wearing tight dresses were on the streets, sitting in hotel lobbies, and at bars, ordering the 3.2 beer that was legal in Utah.

On Sundays Greek American soldiers came to Holy Trinity, and Rina and Katina, like most of the mothers, invited them to their houses for Greek food. Peggy and Bessie served them, Peggy with her hair parted on the side and over one ear like the soldiers' favorite pinup, Rita Hayworth, Bessie with her hair in ringlets on her forehead like another pinup, Betty Grable.

Peggy flitted about with a nonchalant air, as if she were above the necessary task of waiting on men. When a soldier gave her a quick glance, she responded with a sultry look.

Bessie attempted to be quiet, smiling, her face subtly made up. Rina made no complaint when Bessie plucked her eyebrows, she was becoming worried that Bessie might not marry and it was not good

for the girls in the family to have to compete with those others who could make themselves pretty. Mellie was bad enough. From fashion magazines Bessie learned how to wear the latest styles—broad shouldered dresses and suits that minimized her thick middle. She could buy the expensive dresses and suits now that she worked and did not have to wheedle clothes out of her mother with her old-country ideas of buying economically.

Soldiers came and went, but one from Kearns came regularly for Sunday dinners at Rina's house. He had learned typing in high school because his handwriting was illegible. Typing was a much needed skill and Deno Rahas would stay at the army base for the duration of the war. He was helpful to Rina, taking out the garbage, putting up folding chairs, and storing them after the dinners—not until Rina herded the soldiers into her house did her daughters know how many plates they should set on the tables. Rina always gave Deno a package of honey-nut pastries and leftover meat to take with him. One Sunday Deno and Bessie were momentarily alone in the kitchen. "How about meeting me at Fred and Kelley's some day this week?" he asked, and Bessie could hardly speak at her good fortune.

Unable to sleep from excitement, Bessie thought of Deno. He was dark with large eyes and heavy eyebrows and a little overweight, but he was a man and liked her! They met at Fred and Kelley's drive-in secretly whenever he had leave. Bessie wanted with all her might to let Peggy know all about Deno, but she was afraid she would take him from her.

Deno talked about his family. His father owned a shoe-shining shop; his mother was fat (he laughed) and a great cook; he'd gone to college for two years before he was drafted. He liked the West; he didn't intend to go back to Pawtucket, Rhode Island. He held Bessie's chair for her, opened the door of a used car he had bought, and began driving with one arm around her. She cringed at first, afraid that a coffeehouse Greek would see her and tell her father.

After several furtive meetings, Deno insisted on picking up Bessie at her house. Rina reluctantly gave in. After his second visit, Rina told him, "You've come once. You've come twice. The third time you come with a ring." So without even discussing marriage, Deno and Bessie were suddenly engaged. Soon they began to go beyond kissing. They went too far one night while parked near the state capitol building that overlooked the city. Bessie had often had daydreams of being in a car parked on Lovers Lane, looking over the city, and it had finally happened. When it was over, she suddenly felt abandoned "now that he had his way with her," as she had read in magazines.

Rina was relieved and in great spirits, overlooking her obvious role in the engagement. Peggy said, "Oh, it's nice," when she looked at the diamond. It seemed to Bessie it had been reduced from its modest size to a pinpoint under Peggy's scrutiny. "Well," Peggy said, "I wouldn't think of marrying an enlisted man. If I marry an army man, he'll have to be an officer."

That night Bessie lighted the family icon and prayed to the Virgin that Peggy never marry an officer. Rina, Gus, and Bessie sat around the kitchen table after the younger daughters had gone to bed and whispered. Rina said, "You better get married right away. Your Uncle Chris can't last much longer. If he dies, you'll have to wait a year. And you won't have the excuse that Deno is going to be sent away like Lya's poor Mitro."

Bessie and Deno made plans; they were lucky enough to find a basement apartment near the Kearns base. Peggy found it hard to believe that it had happened. She thought of Bessie as a sneak, yes, a sneak going behind her back and carrying on with Deno. That Deno would actually look at Bessie instead of her! She had to make a real effort to get a man immediately. She volunteered more hours at the canteen for officers. Also, she made certain that she would make a good impression on everyone, not only the officers. She smiled, talked softly like Janet Gaynor, an actress of a few years earlier, who always got her hero in the end—in fact Peggy knew she looked like Janet Gaynor, her big brown eyes helped out with mascara, a pretty mouth, sweet gazes. Then one afternoon, an officer took a doughnut from a tray she offered and said, "Are you Greek?" Peggy nodded and in her newly sweet voice asked, "Are you?" They sat down to talk and by the time her shift was up at the canteen, Peggy knew she had found her man.

A week later Peggy was engaged. Compared to Bessie's engagement ring, hers was an impressive two carats. Katina said, "You've got to marry right away. Poor Uncle Hristo can't last long. Then you'll have to wait a year."

Rina and Katina decided a double wedding was the answer, especially since the army officer, Thomas Doukas, was being transferred to the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland. Tom Doukas, like Jim Papastamos, had been in the ROTC while in college. His father owned a restaurant in Boston; his mother had come from the small provincial city Tripolis in the Peloponnese. "I always felt a little sorry for my mother," he said. "She came from an educated family and married my father who didn't have much of an education."

Only Tom's mother came for the weddings. Tom's father couldn't leave the restaurant—most of his employees had been drafted, Tom's only sister had just had a baby, and his brother had enlisted in the navy and was on board ship. Neither of Deno's parents could come. His father was recovering from a stroke and his sisters had small children and no one to care for them.

Holy Trinity filled with parishioners who were drawn to the novelty of a double wedding. Many soldiers from Kearns were in the nave, some having had too much to drink. Peggy walked down the aisle, her eyes glaring: the wedding dinner had to be held in the basement of the church. She had wanted a hotel dinner reception, but the hotels could not offer the varied and bounteous foods the families wanted.

The rationing of butter and meat had been no drawback. The Mothers Club president asked the members to give up whatever coupons they could; many widows gladly complied and Gus had what he called a *pyghy*, a well, to draw from—he meant connections—and no one questioned him. Rina, Katina, and members of the Mothers Club made the *dolmadhes*, sweet bread, both cheese and spinach *pites*. Emma sent plenty of lamb, packed in ice, by train. Rina and Katina rolled out uncounted balls of dough into sheets of *filo* for honey-and-nut pastries. They worked until midnight and were up at dawn, yet happy and relieved that two of their daughters were being married off. The younger daughters made the *koufeta*, the wedding favors. For each one they placed eleven white Jordan almonds—the number had to be uneven for good luck, their mothers said—on a square of white net, gathered it together, then secured it with white ribbon tied in a bow.

Lia was asked to be the matron-of-honor. Bessie and Peggy wanted only her, their cousin, their childhood friend. Their younger sisters would be the bridesmaids. Deno's best man was a cousin from New York and Tom's was a single Greek-American soldier who was the center of much interest among the mothers in the congregation.

Lia did not want to be her cousins' matron-of-honor. She did not want to leave her father, who was a living skeleton. When she thought of the Demas family all together, the crush of the reception dinner—all the aversion she had felt in the Papastamos house welled up. She wanted to be left alone with her parents and her thoughts of Jim.

She took an early train from Helper. The sooty coach was crowded with people she had often seen on Helper's Main Street.

Several mothers and small children ate a picnic lunch of hard-boiled eggs and bologna sandwiches. Lia covered her nose with a handkerchief as the train sped inexorably on to the wedding.

She felt unkempt when the train arrived at the depot, a block west of the Holy Trinity Church. A soldier, a friend of Deno, met her, driving Gus's black Cadillac. At Bessie's house Lia took out the long gray silk dress she had hurriedly bought at Flacille's Dress Shop. She tried to show she was happy for Bessie and Peggy. She smiled and pretended, but she had not heard from Jim for more than a month. She wanted the day to be over with, to return to her quiet house and her father who had stopped talking and her mother who made him warm malted milks, which he usually would not drink.

At the icon screen, Lia kept her eyes on the priest, called Goatbeard, because his white beard ended in a point, and then at the icons on either side of the Royal Gate. She breathed in the incense and performed all the obligatory duties—holding the brides' candles while the rings were exchanged, making certain that the wedding crowns were firmly set on Peggy's and Bessie's elaborately styled hair, and seeing that their wedding trains would not bunch up as each one followed the priest three times around the wedding table in the Dance of Isaiah.

Later in the basement, she sat across the table from Peggy's mother-in-law, whose stout body was stuffed into a brown silk dress, dark on the seat and under the armpits from sweat. Tom's mother ate the lamb and *pites* with an amazing gluttony, hardly looking up to see what was going on beyond her plate. Lia remembered that Peggy had mentioned several times that Tom had said his mother had married beneath her. Katina was ashamed of her *symbethera*, her daughter's mother-in-law: "If she married beneath her, what's her husband like?" Pete said, "Does he eat with a shovel?"

After the wedding dinner Lia watched Bessie's and Peggy's happy faces as they led the bride's dance—two rings were formed. When her wristwatch neared the time of the train's departure, she left quietly. She had explained to her aunts that she could not be away from home overnight. They nodded in agreement; she lifted her hand in goodbye and followed Deno's friend to the car. At the restroom in the depot, she took off her long dress and exchanged it for the shirt and skirt she had worn in the morning.

The depot was filled with soldiers, families giving them last minute admonitions and goodbyes. When her train was called, the conductor's voice reverberating under the high ceiling, she made her

way to a coach and found it filled with soldiers. One of them let her have his seat, then leered at her until she turned her head and watched the railyards recede. She closed her eyes and thought about her father: What if he had died and her mother was alone in the house? Her mother would take it calmly, but Lia did not want her to take it calmly, alone in the house.

A week later, Emma awoke in the morning and Chris was dead. Blood had flowed out of his mouth and soaked the bed sheets. Emma and Lia sat at the kitchen table, holding hands, and cried silently.

14

Rina, Katina, and their husbands came to take charge of the funeral but Emma and Lia had already made the arrangements by the time they arrived. "Don't let them do that singing over the casket," Emma told Lia. "Your dad didn't like it." She was not certain about this. She knew she did not like it. Rina was adamant that it should be done. "Thitsa," Lia said, "bodies aren't brought to the house now because of the war."

"Then we can sing the *mirologhia* in the funeral place."

"Oh, no. That wouldn't be right. People hearing those songs in a public place."

"We'll sing them *sigha-sigha*."

Emma came into the kitchen and said, "*Dhen thelo*," I don't want to—her old response to Rina's harrassing. Weary but determined, she would not let the laments be sung in the mortuary, no matter how softly. Rina made chewing motions with her lips, lifted her shoulders, and let them drop in extreme displeasure. Without another word she began arranging the pans and bowls of food, tied with dishtowels, which she and Katina had brought from Salt Lake. Emma and Lia set the dining room table. Rina said, "Emma, you go sit down. No work for you." Emma gave her a smile and brought down dishes and glassware.

Lia said, "We don't know how many people will be coming, Mama."

"We never did," Emma said. Her own father had died a few months before. Besides Lia, Emma, and her mother, three old men stood at the side of the open grave. Wardell had not been heard of for several years and Emma's other brothers and sisters had scattered like wanderers, seldom leaving a forwarding address. Emma's father was

buried hurriedly because her mother did not have the money or the inclination to have him embalmed. Emma knew the sooner her father was in the ground the better. The three grizzled men looked as if they were of one family; red puffs bulged under their pale eyes and their faces were pulled down with age. Two wore old suits and the third, in faded bib overalls, read a few verses from an old Bible, about the Resurrection of Jesus. Then, with embarrassed glances, they shook hands with Emma, her mother, and Lia and walked out of the dirt graveyard. Two men who had lowered the coffin, old themselves, waited at a distance and as soon as the three women left began spading the rocky earth over the coffin. While the women walked to the car, the thuds of dirt and rock on the wooden casket came with measured beat. Emma did not invite her mother for Chris's funeral: she would sit in misery there among the icons and lighted candles.

In the church a few soldiers stood among the sixty and seventy-year-old immigrants and younger people of Lia's generation. Bessie and Peggy had come, their hats wide-brimmed, their black suits by the designer Adrian, with skirts above the knees. They had driven down alone. Rina had not paid attention to them until they were standing in church and with fury saw their vivid makeup. They were preening, holding their heads up; Rina could not wait until they were back in Chris's house to give them a scathing lecture. What kind of reverence for their uncle was this! Coming to church as if to a party! Now that they were married, they were putting on airs!

John Papastamos, his parents, and other sheep owners had come from their mountain ranches. Jim's mother maneuvered herself between Rina and Katina to stand next to Lia. She took Lia's hand and held it tightly for a few moments. As the Liturgy for the Dead proceeded, women wept, pressing handkerchiefs against their mouths. Peggy and Bessie wiped tears with their forefingers to keep mascara from smudging. A sobbing reached Emma and Lia; they looked at each other. It could only be from Kosta.

Men, some with their wives, had come from Utah, Colorado, Nevada, and Wyoming. They were Roumeliots from mountain villages in Greece, around the provincial town Lamia: Mavrolithari, Stromni, Rodhitsa, and hamlets of not more than ten or twenty families. They had not had to bury a *patriotis* since the first two decades of the 1900s when young village friends had died from coal falls, explosions, and railroad accidents. They were men who had sat in the three Demas houses and talked of their life in the villages, of festivals

and weddings, of gypsies playing bagpipes, *clarinos*, and drums—the *daoulia*—whose thud rolled from the mountains to the valleys. They had talked of the early days in the new country, about their miseries and hunger and yet also of barbecuing a lamb when they had a little money and, after eating their fill, singing the old songs of the revolutionary *klefts*.

They stood with heads down or with eyes on the icon screen, avoiding the open casket. They had been in America for nearly forty years, the last fifteen to twenty of them spent leaving labor for business, marrying, and raising families. Their memories of village life and the early days in the new country, that exile as they had called it, were fading. Now, one of the youngest of them lay dead, too young at fifty-five. It struck into their very beings that the grave awaited them also.

When they passed by the open casket, they gave Chris, skeletal, gray, no longer the Chris they had known, messages to their people in the beyond. "You were too young to go, Hristo, too young," Marko Papastamos, ten years older than Chris, said to the dead face and kissed the cold forehead. Emma nodded to each person who made the sign of the cross and turned from the casket.

It was not until the casket was lowered into the grave that Emma and Lia closed their eyes. They stood, Emma with Lia, holding her arm, pressing against her. They had hoped Chris would die to release him from his suffering, but Rina and Katina were perturbed: wife and daughter were not grieving enough.

At the *parigboria*, the funeral feast, the expected, necessary talk of past incidents, little comic anecdotes, could not be sustained. Mourning lay heavily over the *patriotes*. The men spoke a little, looked thoughtful.

Kosta had come with the Papastamoses and was sitting on the back stoop, weeping. "Tell Kosta to stay here tonight if he wants to," Emma told Lia. Lia went out and leaned over him. His mustache was wet with tears. He looked up, his eyes red, angry. "My *bossis* is dead, Bebe," he said, and shook his head. "No, I won't stay in his house. He's dead." Kosta's head drooped, and Lia pressed a hand on his bony shoulder. Kosta looked up. "I should be dead, not him. I'm more old."

"Kosta, you know what the liturgy says. He's gone to a place of rest, a place of green pastures."

Kosta flung out an arm in dismissal. "Aaa," he said. Lia nodded and left him.

Slowly the old friends left. Emma and Lia stood on the front porch thanking each one. Some stopped at the side of the road and talked with each other for a few minutes, then got into their cars and were gone. The Papastamoses had come in two cars. They took Kosta with them. Mrs. Papastamos had kissed Lia goodbye, but ran back. "You hear from Mitro, you tell us," she said tearfully. Jim's mother spoke to her in English because her mother Emma was an American. They hugged each other tightly.

Bessie and Peggy with their younger sisters had cleared the table, washed the dishes, and put them away. For a few minutes Rina and Katina looked about, their hands folded, as if searching for a duty. Gus and Pete sat on the porch swing, hardly speaking, both wanting to light a cigar, but feeling that pleasure at such a time was unseemly. Gus said, "He was the youngest. He shouldn't have gone first." Pete nodded.

Emma told Rina and Katina that they had a long drive—although it was only one hundred twenty miles—and they should leave. The women stood awkwardly as if they were acquaintances, then after hesitating a moment Rina gave Emma the traditional kiss on both cheeks and Katina followed.

"In forty days," Rina said,"we bring the *kolivo*."

Emma thanked them; she had not thought about the memorial wheat mixed with parsley, currants, nuts, and pomegranate seeds that was eaten forty days after a death. She watched them leave and felt sad for them; they did not know how to act around her: She was still the foreign *nyfy*, but it did not matter.

Bessie and Peggy stayed longer. They sat in the living room with Emma and Lia, uncaring that their mascara was smudged, their hair loosened from the elaborate styles. Bessie said, "I don't like to leave you all alone in this house," and began crying. Peggy began sobbing, "Uncle Chris was so good to us!"

Emma stood up and reached out for Bessie and Peggy's hands. "He's better off, your Uncle Chris." This brought a burst of sobbing and soon all four women were crying, Emma and Lia silently. After Bessie and Peggy had gone, Emma and Lia sat in the kitchen. Lia made tea and they sipped it, both weary. "We're bone-tired," Emma said. Her pale blue eyes looked to Lia as if they had sunken; a myriad of minute wrinkles fanned over her mother's temples and cheeks.

"There were soldiers in the church, Mama."

"Yes, one was the Kastoris boy. He was Nicky's age." Emma looked down at her blue-veined hands. "Maybe tomorrow you'll hear from Jim."

A long, but restful silence followed, then Lia said, "You took good care of Dad, Mama."

Emma nodded. "Yes, I did."

Far into the canyon beyond Steamboat Mountain, a train whistled faintly. Now Lia looked at Emma with determination. "You . . . " Lia's resolve wavered. She began again. "Mama, you liked Dad, didn't you?"

Emma raised her eyes and gazed at the ceiling, then looked at Lia. "Well, let me put it this way, I can't feature havin' been married to anyone else."

Two weeks later, Lia received a letter written by a Red Cross worker. Jim had been wounded in the right leg. He was being transferred to an army hospital in California. The words grew thick and black on the page.

15

For several weeks, Jim's letters were written by someone else, then soon after, when Emma and Lia had gone to the mountains, one came in his own handwriting, shaky, but readable. He was in the Letterman Military Hospital in San Francisco and would be coming home, discharged. He gave orders: his brother John and his parents would meet the train in Grand Junction. The family would drive to Craig where Lud would be waiting in the truck. His family would then go on to their ranch. He wanted Lia to wait at the Demas ranch.

On the morning of the day Jim was to arrive, Emma got into her car to drive to her Helper house. Although Lia had told her to stay, she said, "No, you got to be alone." Lia did not protest. Emma had told Lud to build a ramp of planks with narrow strips of wood at crosswise intervals over the two steps leading to the porch. Lud was peevish: he hated carpentry and planting. "Just go ahead and do it, Lud," Emma said with the decided tone of voice she had developed once Chris no longer cared about anything except his grief. "Jim's got a bad knee and we can at least make it easier for him to get up to the porch."

Emma and Lia had done everything possible to make Jim's homecoming pleasant. They had cleaned the house thoroughly; they had washed and ironed every sheet, towel, and article of clothing; and they had cooked and baked. Lia said, "I don't even know what Jim's favorite foods are."

"You'll soon find out," Emma said. "Your dad expected me to be a mind reader. He'd come home and if I had cooked something like my mother used to, he'd say, 'Don't cook Mormon food. Mormon food got no taste.'" She smiled. "Then I found out years later that he used to go to the Grill Café and order roast beef with gravy. You know the Greeks don't use flour with the drippings."

"Dad was—was," Lia began and her mother finished, "Dad was a character."

Lia liked hearing her mother talk this way. It was as if her mother wanted to make certain that the man she had been married to for twenty-five years had not been forgotten. They put their arms around each other, standing by the dusty car. Emma said, "I hope you won't git pregnant right away."

After Emma left, Lia had little to do but wait, walk about the house, look critically at her face in the mirror, and comb her hair again. She had set the kitchen table with a cloth in blue and yellow cross-stitch design and had gone to the meadow to pick blue columbines, yellow daisies, and red Indian paint brush for a bouquet.

The food was ready, kept warm at the back of the stove. In the Brown Palace in Denver, Jim had ordered chicken cacciatore. After Jim had gone, Lia telephoned Sam Weller's Book Store in Salt Lake City to send her a copy of the *Women's Home Companion Cook Book*. In town or at the ranch, she kept all the necessary ingredients on hand, except for fresh mushrooms. She had to substitute canned ones instead. The house was redolent with tomato and herbs.

Lia was satisfied with the house, with the food, and yet her heart was beating fast. She wondered how badly Jim was injured, if they would be at ease with each other—if he still loved her as his short letters said. The hours passed. Lia put the chicken cacciatore into the icebox. Fatigued with anxiety, she sat in her father's big soft chair and dozed.

The crunch of truck wheels brought her to sit upright. It was evening. She wanted to run out, but she also wanted Lud to turn around and disappear. Slowly she walked to the front screen door. Lud was helping Jim out of the truck. Jim gave a little jig with his left leg as he adjusted a crutch under his right arm pit. Lud reached out to him. Jim shook his head and after a moment's hesitation, Lud picked up the duffle bag from the back of the truck, and with sprightly steps, as if to get away as quickly as possible, tossed it onto the porch. "So long," he said to Jim, then got into the truck, and drove with a screaming of tires down the road.

Lia walked slowly toward Jim. As he maneuvered the crutch, he looked at her. His eyes were dull. Lia ran, put her arms around his waist, and rested her head on his chest to keep him from seeing her face. Jim laid his hand on her head and held it there. Lia smelled the cigarettes in his breast pocket. With both arms surrounding his waist, Lia, eyes blurring, led him to the ramp. "Lud made it for you," she

said. She helped Jim up the ramp and into the house. Jim did not look around; he allowed Lia to lead him into the kitchen.

"The food's ready, if you want it."

Jim closed his eyes. "Let me rest," he whispered. Lia hurried to the bedroom that opened on to the kitchen—she had decided they would sleep there because it was closer to the bathroom. She folded back the clean-smelling sheets and blankets, afraid she would start crying again but was determined she would not. She went back to the kitchen, steadied the crutch for Jim, and slowly helped him onto the bed—his right leg was like a piece of heavy wood.

She began to remove his shoes. He raised his hand to stop her, but Lia took them off and then his socks. She unbuttoned his wrinkled khaki shirt, pulling first at one sleeve, then as he turned his body a little, at the other. Lifting his head with one hand, she removed the shirt and the sleeveless khaki green undershirt, dark with sweat. He murmured, "No," as Lia unbuttoned his pants and pulled them off. He lay stretched out in green moist briefs that smelled like mud. He had gained weight, no longer was his body the one Lia remembered on their wedding night, thin with ribs showing. "Come next to me," Jim said. "Not to do anything, just to be here." Lia nodded.

"God, I smell."

"I don't care," Lia said and laughed a little.

"What is it?"

"That's what my mother used to say to my dad all the time. 'I don't care.' If he'd say, 'You want to go to Craig?' she'd say, 'I don't care,' and the next minute she'd be sitting in the car, holding her purse. If he'd tell her to go help Aunt Rina or Aunt Katina do something, she'd say 'I don't care,' and sometimes she would and sometimes she wouldn't." She smiled anxiously, avoiding Jim's eyes. She had talked too much out of nervousness. "I'll be back in a second."

Lia went into her old bedroom where she had slept since her father had died. She undressed and put on the same nightgown she had worn at the Brown Palace Hotel. Jim was asleep when she returned. It was late evening. Lia pulled down the dark green blind and got into bed, close to him. Suddenly he began flinging his arms around, talking in garbled words. An arm struck her across the chest. Quietly she got out of bed, covered Jim with the blanket, and went into the adjoining bedroom that had been Nicky's. No one had slept there since he had died, except her Aunt Rina, but Lia wanted to be near if Jim called. She lighted the icon taper, crossed herself, said the Lord's Prayer, and tried to sleep.

She thought with profound grief of the time they had wasted. At the university on the first day of her registration, she had passed Jim on the library steps. They glanced at each other. If they had only spoken then or the next time they saw each other, instead of waiting almost two years when they met in front of the Park Building. They had been young then. She was now twenty-two and Jim was nearly twenty-five; she felt they were old. They had been too shy, too afraid of rebuff.

She would fall asleep, then awaken suddenly, and with the moonlight guiding her, go in to look at Jim. Each time he churned about, the blanket on the floor. Lia was unsure if she should wake him, give him a glass of water, ask if he were hungry, but instead she covered him with the blanket and got into Nicky's bed. It gave her a small comfort.

The early morning coolness came through the screen doors. Lia got up, tied on a flower-patterned cotton robe, and went into the kitchen where she made coffee. From a crock on the drainboard, she took out a handful of *koulourakia*, and set the table. Then quietly she opened the bedroom door. Jim was awake, looking at the door through slitted eyes. Lia walked to him and kissed his salty forehead and his mouth. Overnight a stubble had appeared on his cheeks and chin.

"I have coffee ready and *koulourakia*."

"All right. But first come to bed. Just to lie next to me. I won't fall asleep this time. But God, I smell even worse today."

"It doesn't matter," Lia said.

About a half-hour later, the back screen door slammed and heavy boots trudged over the porch. "What the hell?" Jim said.

"It's Kosta."

"Lya, Bebe, I come to see the Mitro!"

Lia sat up. "Kosta," she called, "pour yourself some coffee and eat some *koulourakia*. I'll be there in a minute." Lia put her palms against her face and hurried into Nicky's room where she dressed. When she went into the kitchen, Kosta was smacking his lips as he dunked a *koulouraki* into the coffee and wiped his great mustaches with a gray handkerchief. "Purty good *koulourakia*," he said.

"Whose watching the sheep, Kosta?"

"That no-good drunk Lud. I come to fix the knee. You make warm the olive oil and get rags."

Lia looked at him, exasperated. "Jim has to rest, Kosta. Let him get enough rest first." Lia was afraid Kosta could smell Jim's sweat on her.

"No, the better the sooner! I'm ready," he finished in Greek and loped into the bedroom.

Lia warmed a cup of olive oil on the stove while Kosta's booming went on. In a mixture of Greek and English, he shouted, "Don't tell me I don't know what I'm doing! In the old country, I learned things doctors don't know! And my ship! You see better ship, healthy like mine? Broken legs, bad cuts, worms—I know how to take care of my ship!"

"Yeah, like pissing in their eyes when they get infected. Well, I'm not a *ship*, Kosta. I'm a man."

"Lya! Bring the oil!"

Lia brought the pan and an old bed sheet. Kosta lifted Jim's right leg and placed the sheet under it. "Now, look, Lya, every day, two times, morning and night time, you do this. Watch me!"

Kosta poured a little olive oil into his left palm and carefully rubbed his hands together. Lia remembered their softness on her head when she was a child, soft from the lanolin of sheep wool. Slowly Kosta moved his palms up Jim's leg and over the swollen knee crisscrossed with white and purple lines. Jim winced. Every three or four times, Kosta would slowly try to bend the knee, but only until Jim shouted, "Stop!"

Lia left the room and walked to the front porch. The duffel bag was too heavy to lift and she dragged it by the ropes into the kitchen. She took out matted clothes and skimpy dark green towels, then searched through the bag again, looking for the harmonica, but it was not there. The Purple Heart was in its box and a blue silk kimono patterned with large pink and white chrysanthemums was wrapped in white tissue paper.

A half hour later, Jim lay exhausted. "Okay, now," Kosta said, a drop of perspiration at the tip of his nose, "Now I help you wash yourself."

"That's all right, Kosta," Lia assured him with nods. "I'll help Jim take a shower."

"What!"

"I'll do it, Kosta."

"A lady giving man bath!"

"Well, Kosta, he is my husband."

"It's no right! In old country, old ladies wash dead mans with wine. Never still live!"

"Thanks, Kosta." Jim said. "Get back to the sheep. Don't worry about us."

"I'll do just what you did, Kosta. Every day."

Kosta looked dazed. He left the room, shaking his head. "In America, women wash men! Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. My Virgin, did you hear what I heard?" America had assaulted Kosta's village propriety from the first time he had seen a bathroom in a house. That people would relieve themselves in the same place where they cooked! And here a woman was going to wash her husband's naked body!

After Kosta slammed the back screen door, Jim said, "When he figures out that you have to get in the shower with me, we'll have a dead man on our hands."

"Jim, I looked through your duffel bag and I couldn't find your harmonica."

Jim stared at the ceiling. "I gave it to the guy next to me in the hospital. He had both legs and an arm shot off."

Two times a day of massaging Jim's knee were not enough for Lia. Three times were better she told him, in the morning, an hour or so after lunch, and before the evening meal. He did not protest: It might be useless, but they had to try. Some day maybe he could drive the truck and get on a horse again. "I feel like a horse's ass lying flat on my back while you do all the work," he said.

"Shh." Lia warmed the olive oil; to make certain it would not be hot, she tested it by letting a drop fall on the inside of her wrist. She followed Kosta's directions, giving her whole attention to her work. The first time she finished stroking her oiled hands up and over Jim's scarred knee and carefully tried to bend it, Jim shouted, "No, it hurts!" Lia pressed the thumb and index finger of her oiled right hand on either side of Jim's lips and kissed his mouth. Jim basked in this loving gesture, for Lia it was like a mother's kissing a child's bruise to make it better.

When Lia was finishing the routine one morning, Jim said, "Lia, those two days and three nights we spent in the Brown Palace kept me going. At night, or whenever I had a few minutes, I forgot where I was. I would start with the minute we shut the door of our bedroom and I went through the entire time, every little detail. If something didn't cut off my thinking, I'd start all over again, reliving every moment."

"Yes, I did the same."

When the bottle of olive oil was almost empty, Lia asked, "Should I drive over to your parents' place and get some?"

After a silence, Jim said, "Tell Lud to go get it, and tell them I don't want any visitors. I'm not ready to hear about what's going on over there."

The next morning Lia dressed before going into the kitchen to prepare coffee. She had a feeling that she should not be in her robe. No sooner had she put the coffee pot on the stove, than the front door rattled and John called, "Open the door, Lia!" Being told that Jim was too weak for company had offended the Papastamoses. Lia hurried to unlatch the screen. John stood there, holding a cardboard box of freshly baked bread and pastries and looking at her with cold eyes. His mother, next to him, was smiling happily. Rattled by the appearance of Jim's family after she had told them to stay away, Lia did not know what to call Jim's mother, certainly *mytera* was too formal; *mama* too intimate; and the Papastamos family used an old word, almost discarded in America, *mana*. "Come in, *Mytera*," she said.

Jim's mother bustled in screeching in her high-pitched voice. "I've come to see my boy! My boy!"

Lia led the way to the kitchen. "Come and have coffee. I think Mitro is still asleep." She pulled out a chair for Jim's mother and poured coffee for her and for John, who glanced at her peevishly as if expecting some reproving remark from her. Lia then went through the dining room, through Nicky's room, and into the bedroom where Jim lay looking at her with profound weariness. Lia whispered in his ear. "What should I do?"

"Oh, God. Her voice." Jim exhaled noisily. "Let them come in. That goddamn John."

Lia opened the door to the bedroom and said, "Come in. I'll bring your coffee, Mytera."

Mrs. Papastamos jumped up, all wobbly fat. "No! I don't want coffee! I want to see my boy!" She rushed in, grabbed Jim and kissed his cheeks again and again, then began a high, loud talking of all she would do to make him better: his favorite foods. Every day, his father or John would come to take him to their family home where he would spend the day. He would get better faster there in his old familiar house! Everyone was waiting to see him! He would get better in a hurry!

Jim closed his eyes and made snoring noises. Mrs. Papastamos stopped her screeches and sat watching Jim sleep. Perspiration came out on her furrowed forehead: her son was under another woman's care. Not able to act as she naturally would have, with high-pitched sing-song lamentations for her injured son, she crossed her hands over her big bosom and panted. After fifteen minutes or so, John said, "Let's go, Mana! I'm not going to sit here all day and watch him sleep."

Reluctantly his mother stood up. John gave Lia a triumphant look as he walked out of the house with his mother following him. Lia went back to the kitchen with a sickening churning in her stomach. She thought of herself as being sucked into something muddy, something hateful. A listless warmth went over her face and body. She sat down for a few minutes, knowing that Jim had feigned sleep and was waiting for her to return.

All day she felt dragged down by an invisible weight. Every small motion, washing the few dishes, trying to decide what to prepare for Jim's lunch, filling the washing machine with his army underwear and towels, all took an energy she did not have. She thought of herself as sleepwalking while being pulled down by the invisible weight.

Three weeks later, Lia thought they had made progress. It seemed to her that there was a slight, very slight bend to Jim's knee. She did not want to tell Jim: she could be imagining it, like the monks and visionaries who wanted so much to see Christ that He came to them. She would make a special dinner, lamb with *pilafi.* Lia thought she would also go up to the alfalfa field; some dandelion greens could be growing on the banks of the irrigation stream.

"I'm going up to see if Lud cut the alfalfa," she told Jim, not wanting to tell him that she hoped to find greens for his dinner. He nodded sleepily. She hurried up the incline to the field with an apron tied about her waist and a paring knife in one hand. There was the field of alfalfa, green, purple-flowering, uncut. Lud had not followed Emma's orders. Lia would think about him later, right then she had to look for dandelions. She found a few here and there along the banks, not the first tender ones of spring, but she pulled them up until her apron filled.

When she returned to the kitchen, she spilled the greens into the sink, pulled off the thick outer leaves, and found the more fragile inner ones. She washed these several times and put them on to boil. The chunks of lamb were well browned and simmering in red wine. She was pouring rice from a box into a measuring cup when Jim, the crutch under his right armpit, walked into the kitchen. He looked at the rice, gagging as if he were going to vomit. "Don't cook rice," he said. Lia opened the door below the sink and threw the box and cup of rice into the garbage pail.

"First thing our men did—when they caught them, cut out their tongues. Then they'd let the bodies rot. Little white maggots all over. Little white maggots crawling all over the dead bodies."

Jim looked dazed. Lia put her arm around him and slowly led him out of the house, down the ramp, and to the bench next to the corral. She helped him to sit down, then ran back into the kitchen where she pushed the pans of lamb and greens to the back of the stove. On the drainboard was a bottle of milk with a large nipple. She picked it up and ran outside. While Jim stared at the pen, she lifted out a bum lamb and set it on the bench between her and Jim. The lamb was not yet two weeks old; his tail had not been docked nor his ears notched. He gulped the milk noisily. Jim looked at the lamb and slowly recognition came into his eyes. "Did Lud cut the alfalfa?" he asked.

"No, he didn't."

"We've got to can him."

Lia was momentarily shaken—she never wanted anyone fired. Then she was euphoric at the look in Jim's eyes as he spoke.

16

Rina had gathered gas coupons from her family and had Ari—Aristotle—one of her godsons, drive her to the Papastamos sheepfold. Ari was excited about driving his godmother to the ranch. To him it was the Old West: the great flocks of sheep on the green mountain slopes, the weather-browned sheepherders, the talk of lambing, shearing, trailing.

Rina was glad to get away from her daughters and their children: one or the other was always sick; she was forever cooking soups and always sending the younger daughters with pans of food and pieces of roast in between times. The sixth daughter, Alexandra, was the reason for the visit to the Papastamoses. Her mother had devised a perfect strategy to get this daughter married to one of the Papastamos boys.

John Papastamos's wife and children had not come to the ranch that summer. When John took Aristotle with him to check on the herders, Rina's severe face, now set in downward pulls on either side of her mouth, relaxed. She crossed herself and silently thanked the Virgin for arranging that she and Zoitsa Papastamos would be alone in the house.

After making certain that they had exhausted each other's news—births, soldiers dead, lost, or wounded, marriages—Rina said, her head bent sorrowfully, "Zoitsa, it is my obligation to tell you what people are talking about?"

Zoitsa Papastamos's eyes opened wide. "What is it, *patriotissa*?" "People are talking that Mitro is a *soghambros*." Rina pronounced the word *soghambros* in her Roumeliot dialect—a young man without property who marries into a family with no heirs and assumes its name. This was a lie: people were saying that Jim had done a *psyhiko*, an act good for his soul. He had married Lia and would save her family's sheep.

"But," Zoitsa Papastamos sputtered, "it's not true. He has a home. He can always claim his portion of his father's sheep!"

Rina was prepared. "Have you thought, Zoitsa, what would happen if Lya died? Where would Mitro be? Those relatives of Emma would get everything that Lya's poor father worked so hard to accumulate. All of Mitro's efforts would be dust."

"You're right. It could happen to my poor Mitro. And I haven't seen him except for a little bit."

Rina could not let the subject get beyond her control. She leaned over the table and lowered her voice confidentially. "There's a way to protect him." Rina straightened up to assume a commanding presence. "It's to go to an attorney and have papers drawn up." It could be easily done, she said, then Zoitsa and her family would rest, assured that Mitro would never be cheated of the fruits of his hard work with Emma's sheep.

Zoitsa's round, pleasant face was now furrowed as she thought about Mitro, who could be in a precarious position and, worse, that people were talking about him. She wished Rina would go before her husband returned from examining the irrigation ditch—a rancher was stealing water out of turn. She wanted him to know immediately that people were talking about them, sullying the Papastamos name. He would halt the talk immediately.

While she was mulling over what had to be done, Rina, having demonstrated her concern for the Papastamos *filotimo*, its honor, eased into more talk about her old friend's family. She asked about Zeffy and her sister who had married immigrant men and had been living in Nevada for years. She asked how many children they had and how often they visited the ranch. Rina then asked about the four sons younger than Jim, and Zoitsa answered in short replies, her thoughts on Jim as a *soghambros*.

Zoitsa did not ask about Rina's children until she realized she was being ungracious. Soula's children were doing well, Rina answered too readily. No use telling her childhood friend that Soula worked in a garment factory and her husband Nonda was a drunk. A passing *patriotis* told Gus that he lolled about in bars, watched until customers got up to leave, then hurried to drink what whiskey was left in their shot glasses before waiters cleared the tables. Rina wanted to unburden her soul to Zoitsa, to tell her that Soula wouldn't get a divorce, even though she and Gus had offered her far more each month than she could get in the factory. Soula had told Mellie it was too much trouble.

As for Mellie, she was a top officer in the WAC. She had married an army officer in the post chapel; they could not leave their military base while the war was on, but the family would meet Colonel Grant Hillsdale when they could get leave. Of course, he was a *ksenos*, a stranger, but he was an important man.

Bessie was working at Auerbachs, the Salt Lake City department store, because, "You know, Zoitsa, the girls had to take the place of the men who were called to serve. It shows patriotism." Why should she say that Bessie's husband had no manners? And why say that Bessie spent all her money on expensive china, goblets, silver, and wouldn't listen when she, her mother, told her to remember the bad years before the war, the *Depresh*, and save her money? Bessie liked her job at Auerbachs; she got a discount on her purchases.

The next two daughters were engaged to soldiers, sons of immigrants, who came from substantial families—of which Rina knew absolutely nothing. That's what war did. All the rules and customs were broken. Rina then came to her daughter Alexandra, who was a freshman at the university and who had to be married off before people found out that she had a bad temper, answered visitors' polite questions with remarks that verged on the sarcastic, and actually defied her parents when they asked her to come home early and "not run around like a *theatrina*"—a movie actress.

"The house will be so lonely when the day comes that Alexandra leaves," Rina began, but Zoitsa Papastamos was not hearing her, she was leaning forward, listening for other sounds. Rina crossed the middle and index fingers of her right hand, "mother and daughter are like that."

The crossed fingers caught Zoitsa's attention. She sighed deeply. Except for her two oldest daughters, the rest of her children were boys. She had become tired of mothers coming to praise their daughters. Then John's truck roared to a stop and Ari ran into the kitchen. "It was so much fun! John showed me the sheep getting dipped!"

He looked at the two women and had no intention of sitting with them. "Nona, I think we better start back. It'll be after midnight if we don't."

"Stay and eat with us," Zoitsa said automatically.

"We can't, Thitsa," Aristotle said, remembering to be polite.

Rina rose reluctantly, her mission incomplete, but there was still hope: she had shown Zoitsa her concern for the Papastamos family by bringing them the non-existent gossip about Jim. There was still a little time. She hoped.

Zoitsa sat at the kitchen table and rubbed her hands, thinking that if her husband did not come soon, she would burst. When she heard his car, she stood up and waited, wringing her hands more thoroughly. "What's wrong?" Marko Papastamos said, standing in the doorway and taking off his Stetson. His face was a dark brown except where his hat had protected it from the sun and left a band of pale skin at the top of his forehead.

"Sit down and I'll tell you," Zoitsa said.

Papastamos sat down and began untying his high-top boots, his usual response to his wife's urgency over crises. He pulled them off, then his moist socks. While Zoitsa waited for this ritual to finish, she held her breath. She could not tell her momentous news until she had her husband's full attention. When he leaned back, his bare feet on the cool linoleum, and looked at her, Zoitsa stumbled all over her words: Rina had visited and said Mitro was being gossiped about as a *soghambros* and they had to have papers drawn up to make sure that if Lya died, he would not be at the mercy of Emma's relatives, those Americans, one step up from the gutter, who would trick her.

Papastamos put his elbows on the oilcloth and said, "Sit on your eggs."

Zoitsa leaned back, shock in her eyes, her mouth open. "Did you hear what I said?" she asked, because he often didn't.

"I heard and that should be the last of it. Let Rina run her own house. And," he pointed a finger at her, "don't you dare say one word to Mitro."

But Zoitsa, noted for being easy-going, for being jolly, for taking everything in stride, decided she would speak to Mitro the first chance she got. If only he would come to visit her, so she could really see him—she could not count the few minutes she watched him sleep as a real visit. Bits of news from John about Lya's rubbing his knee with olive oil, about Mitro being too tired to talk—that was not enough.

Lia, at that moment was washing the dishes that should have been done hours ago. After each session of massaging Jim's knee, she tried to tell herself that she saw a small, very small improvement in his ability to move. She had sent for a family home medical book and looked up the chapter on bones. After reading it, she wrote Emma to ask if she thought warm, moist towels would be helpful. Emma wrote back that yes, they would be, but not hot enough that they would burn Jim's skin. Lia put the towels in hot water, threaded them

through a hand wringer, and then wrapped them around Jim's knees. She changed the towels as they lost their heat.

Jim thought that nothing could help his knee, but he watched Lia patiently. "If I ever," he said one day, "say one mean word to you the rest of your life, I want you to kick me in the teeth."

Lia looked up. "Jim, what a thing to say. Married people are supposed to help each other. Anyway, some day you'll help me with the children." Lia smiled at Jim. From the puzzled look in his eyes, she realized they had never really talked about children.

Jim decided he would give Lia another month of trying, then he would tell her he would have to do the best he could. Lia knew what he was thinking. She told Lud to find a good harmonica and buy four yards of flannel from JC Penney for the hot packs. Lud did not mind buying the harmonica, but he clenched his small tobacco-stained teeth at going to JC Penney's fabric counter. The shame of it, his having to go into women's territory!

"Now you can practice those old songs you used to play, hiding behind the coal shed," Lia said to Jim when Lud brought the harmonica. While she worked with the hot towels and massaged his knee and leg with warm olive oil, Jim began tentatively blowing into the harmonica. The old songs soon came back to him. The first one he relearned was "Red River Valley." Lia sang softly to the tune of the harmonica.

> Come sit by my side if you love me
> Do not hasten to bid me adieu
> But remember the Red River Valley
> And the cowboy who loved you so true.

The melancholy, sweet harmonica music made time pass more quickly while she worked on Jim's knee. Sometimes when she finished wrapping his knee with flannel to keep the warmth inside, she lay back on a pillow next to him while he smoked.

Lia had asked him when he had taken up smoking and Jim said the tobacco companies handed out cigarettes to the soldiers all the time. "It was something to do," he said.

"At least they're not cigars. The Demas men kept the houses filled with cigar smoke. Aunt Rina was always yelling about it. She'd fling open all the doors, bringing in clouds of flies, then chase the flies out with a dish towel."

"That Aunt Rina is some woman."

"I won't forget what she did to Soula." But Lia did not want to think about Soula. "I guess a person would say the songs are corny," she said to change the subject. "But they're part of our childhood. Like those songs we sang at the YMCA Sunday School." She did not say that she also liked the martial marches—the marine, army, and navy songs. Not because they had to do with war, but because of their stirring beat. She said nothing to Jim about the war, about what she read in the newspaper Lud brought from Craig.

Lia knew Jim had given up, that he wanted her to stop the massages and hot towels. She tried to distract him with talk about their childhood Greek Town, about the Denver & Rio Grande Western passenger and freight trains that slowly left the rail yards, gathered steam, chugged faster toward the canyon, whistling their cries and calls. She talked about listening to the train whistles at night as the trains rounded Steamboat Mountain, the whistles getting fainter and fainter until everything was completely still.

"Yeah, I wanted to be on those trains, riding the rails, being a hobo, cooking out of tin cans in a hobo jungle," Jim said wistfully. Lia nodded, understanding.

The next day, she placed the portable phonograph on the bedside table, cranked it, and stacked some records of the twenties and thirties and a few Greek folk songs on the spindle. Jim felt sorry for her desperation; she was trying to placate him so she could keep working on his knee. He listened to "The Missouri Waltz"; "Jeanine, I Dream of Lilac Time"; "Walking My Baby Back Home"; and "Take Me, Body and Soul."

He was sick of the harmonica; sick of talk; sick of the phonograph records. He devised a strategy that would keep him from seeing Lia's desperate, useless determination to bend his knee. As soon as he lay back and Lia began placing hot towels on his knee, he would fall asleep until she finished.

A month later, to his great surprise his knee had begun to bend a little. "Let's celebrate," he said, "and then I guess I better go see my mother."

"Jim your hair needs cutting. Should I try to do it?"

Jim laughed. "You're no barber. Let's go down to Craig. I'll start out driving and see how I can manage. If I can't do it, you take over. Then we'll get my hair cut and on the way back, go see my mother."

Jim whistled as he pulled the driver's seat as far back as it would go. Lia helped him get behind the wheel and put his crutch in the

truck bed. Lia was afraid that if Jim failed, he would fall into depression, that his eyes would get that frightening blunt look again.

Jim turned on the ignition. "That sounds good," he said turning to Lia. He drove to the road and let the car hump over the ridge at the right of it. "I forgot about that bump," he said, but he was smiling. "Oh, it feels good. I hope I can make it all the way to Craig."

He was driving too fast and slowed down. "I better not go so fast because if I have to step on the brakes, I might take too long to move my foot."

As they drove on, Lia leaned back in relief. "Tell me when you're tired," she said, but Jim was ecstatic, his brain fed by something wonderful, as if his body was manufacturing a kind of electricity. He drove all the way to Craig. "I'm a little tired now," he said. "Let's go to the café and have something to eat while I recuperate."

The small café had a long wooden counter on the left where men sitting with their hats on were reflected in the wall mirror. Coca Cola and Nehi Soda signs spread across the top of the mirror and the bottom was decorated with old postcards stuck into the frame above the toaster, coffeemaker, and glassware. The café was deserted, except for the few men at the counter.

Lia and Jim sat in a booth and ordered roast beef sandwiches and Cokes. Jim sat opposite Lia, with his right leg stretched into the aisle. His face was pale. A song sung by the Andrews sisters came from a juke box at the back of the café: "Don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me, anyone else but me, 'till I come marching home." Lia looked at Jim, afraid of his memories, but he smiled and reached out to touch her hand.

The old waitress, her hair a variegated orange and white, brought the sandwiches, placed them on the bare table, and returned with Cokes. "It's good to get out," Jim said and Lia nodded. The sheepherders at the counter, wearing cowboy hats, all of them in their sixties and seventies with narrow hips and big stomachs, were talking about the war. One of them said distinctly, "My nephew was killed in the Battle of the Bulge."

At that moment a young woman with her hair in a crocheted snood, like those featured by actresses in magazines, walked past their booth. She stopped, said, "Ah," in surprise. Then "Jim!"

Jim colored. "This is my wife, Wanda."

The woman turned to look at Lia. "Oh," she said, then, "toodledo," and wiggled her fingers in a coquettish goodbye.

Lia smiled at Jim's discomfort. "A girl friend?"

Jim nodded. He would not look up. Lia laughed a little, but Jim still would not look at her.

"Well, I never told her I loved her," he said. "I never told them I loved them."

"There were others besides Wanda?"

"Two more," Jim said, looking so miserable that Lia put her hand on his. "Jim," she said, "I didn't expect you to be a monk. One of us had to know what to do."

She squeezed his fingers until she knew she was hurting him. He looked up with a short laugh. They finished eating, glancing at each other from time to time. Jim relapsed into a frowning preoccupation. Lia wondered what he was thinking about.

After paying the old waitress at the cash register, Jim went into the barbershop and Lia to the grocery store. When they met at the truck, Lia thought Jim looked almost as he did on the day in Denver when he got on the troop train. "Do I look like a human being again?" Jim asked and Lia smiled.

On the way up the mountain, Lia said, "Do you think you can manage the road to your parents?" She knew he could; it was wider and smoother. "I think your mother would like to see you alone."

Jim scoffed, but Lia said, "If I were in her place, I would want to see you by yourself."

Jim said, "Let's see how I feel when we get home."

Home he had said; Jim had come to feel he belonged in the ranch.

"Well, all right, I'll go get it over with," Jim said when Lia got out of the truck. Lia put his crutch on the passenger seat and took the two bags of groceries into the house while the truck roared toward the fork that led to the Papastamos house.

Zoitsa Papastamos was alone when Jim drove up; she hurried out of the house, her stout body moving from side to side. Jim could see she had lost some of her considerable weight. It gave him a pang; she had probably worried about him, away in the army. His mother tried to pull him out of the truck. She clutched at his shirt, tears falling, murmuring, "My Virgin! Thank you, my Virgin!"

Jim disentangled himself and pulled his crutch from the seat. His mother helped him right it on the ground. Then they walked to the house. Jim had a little trouble getting up the three steps and his mother clasped her hands and cried, "They've killed you! Killed you!"

In the kitchen, his mother quickly poured coffee from the ever-simmering pot at the back of the stove. Then, her eyes glancing from

time to time at the open kitchen door as if her husband would suddenly appear there, lost no time in telling Jim what Rina had told her.

"Mana," he said, his arms folded across his chest, "Emma went to Harry Metos and put my name on her Helper house, on the *stany*, and on the sheep. The papers were there when I came back from the army. I would have married my *ghinaika* without getting anything." The word *ghinaika*—woman—shocked Zoitsa Papastamos. He was putting his *ghinaika* above her and the family, this woman who was not even a blood relative! America had ruined him!

A deep silence settled in the kitchen, punctuated by the clicking of the large clock on top of the stove shelf. Zoitsa rocked back and forth. "Good," she said hollowly, "good."

The visit was short. Jim asked about his sisters and brothers. His mother answered, evading his eyes. When he left, she gave him a sack of *koulourakia*. She watched the truck circle the yard and skim a spray of miniscule rocks as it reached the road. Then a profound hate swelled in her for Rina, her childhood friend, who had shamed her in front of her son, who had made a fool of her. She would never forget what Rina had done. It was she, *she* who made her son talk to his mother as he had.

She would have to work hard to bring Jim and his wife into the Papastamos family properly. Didn't Lya know she was no longer a Demopoulos, but now a Papastamos? What could you expect of her, raised by an *Amerikanidha*, a *Mormona*.

Frowning, Jim drove down the road. Everything had gone so well until his mother said the word *soghambros*. He had a wild thought that he and Lia would leave the mountains, go somewhere else, start over. He wondered if people talked about him, and he gritted his teeth thinking of the village people who made up his world. He would have to prove himself, to show them all who he was. He hated what he called "village stuff." Petty, silly, things that belonged to the Old Country. "I don't give a damn," he said out loud, turning his truck for the sheepfold.

17

Two days later, after Lia had massaged and oiled Jim's knee, she helped him put on a pair of levis and a plaid shirt. He set his old cowboy hat on his head and, with an impatient grab at the crutch, walked down the ramp to the truck. Lia held the door, admiring him, thinking of her aunts Rina and Katina standing on their porches, smiling at Nicky. She watched the truck bump off into the meadow toward the herders' camps. Jim had asked her to come with him, but she said she should do the washing. It was a small lie: she wanted Jim to go alone, to prove to himself and to the herders that he was the new boss.

It was evening when he returned, his eyes sparking, lips tight. "What's wrong?" Lia asked.

"It's Lud. He was two days late with supplies. Some guys were out of coffee and all of them were out of beans, and salt pork."

Lia avoided Jim's eyes. She had hoped it would be a good day for him; she turned away, not wanting Jim to sense her disappointment. "What are you going to do?" she said.

"I told the men to give him a message from me—to stop at the house on his next trip."

Lud had forgotten the mail when he finally did show up with the supplies, and he had not stopped at the house to see if Lia wanted anything from Craig. She knew Lud was afraid that she would detect his hangover, but she did not want to say it at that moment. She wanted to think about Lud, about what could be done with him, and she still had not told Jim that he had not followed her car all the way to the ranch on the day Jim left for the army. For that Jim would fire him on the spot without a thought of first getting a new camp tender.

A week later they were finishing lunch when they heard Lud's truck—what they called Lud's truck, even though it belonged to the

ranch—brake to a stop. Jim and Lia stood up at the same time. "Lia," Jim said, "I've got to fire him."

"Jim, he's been with us a long time. Can't you just talk to him?"

"No. He should have been fired long ago."

"Where will he go? Who'd give him another job?"

"He'll go from outfit to outfit, wearing out his welcome, that's what he'll do. I've got to do it, Lia."

"He'll end up on the streets. Please, Jim."

"No, this is a business we're running. And just remember your folks needed help after Nicky died and instead he made everything worse for them. I'll try to find someone to take his place. I might be late."

Jim walked out of the house and down the ramp. Lia saw him through the window, clutching his crutch with his right hand, making big circles with his left, and Lud hanging his head. She went back into the kitchen and heard Jim call, "Lia, Lud wants to say goodbye."

Lia went to the porch. Jim had thrown his crutch into the bed of the truck and was carefully getting behind the wheel. Lia had to keep herself from running to help him. "Lud," she said, "I'm sorry how it's turned out."

Lud hung his head, opened his mouth just enough to show the small brown teeth stubs. "Well, I got it comin' to me, I know that." He glanced up quickly, small gray eyes bloodshot, and looked down again. "I got used to it here. Saw you grow up." Then fumbling for words, he said, "So long." He turned. Lia reached for his hand to shake it. Lud's eyes, in their red-rimmed lids and sagging pouches, widened. Lia thought: *He's never shaken a woman's hand before.*

She watched Lud go down the steps sideways—old people did that. Then she went into the kitchen and sat at the table for a long while.

Jim lashed out at Lud as he drove the truck recklessly over the narrow rutted road, "You've made my wife feel bad, you goddamn jackass!"

Lud mournfully nodded.

"You should have been fired years ago!"

Lud agreed silently, nodding.

Lud sat as still as a rock. Once he lifted his age-spotted hand to touch the tag of his tobacco pouch in the pocket of his faded shirt. Jim saw Lud finger the tag, then fall back. At another time he would have given him the entire package of his own Lucky Strikes. Now he wanted to punish Lud, even though he was also punishing himself because he really felt like a smoke.

The truck went on down the twenty miles and into town, the two men silent. Outside the grocery store, Lud got out of the truck, shut the door, and leaned into the open window. "I know a man'd make a good camp tender," he said, squinting. "Name's Bud Nelson. He just got out of jail for beatin' up his wife. She took the kids and left. He don't know where the hell she went. He don't know what to do with himself. He hangs out in the pool hall. *And he don't drink*."

"Okay, Lud, take care of yourself," was all Jim said before setting his jaw and driving off to see to his business.

Before heading back to the ranch, he stopped at the post office. Their mail box was packed: Lud had forgotten more than one week's mail. Jim took out a wool growers magazine, the Greek newspaper *Atlantis* from New York, still coming more than a year after Chris's death, several bills, and two letters, one from Emma, the other from Bessie. He hoped neither was coming to visit.

On the way up the road, Jim saw bleakness in the bright blue day. He remembered again Lia's pained eyes. *It can never be the same*, he thought. And what would she do the first time he had to take his gun and go after a coyote?

Jim stopped the truck at the fork in the road and sat for some time looking at the sky. He smoked a cigarette. Grayish clouds in the west were beginning to take on a pinkish hue. He'd found Bud Nelson at the Pool Hall as Lud had said, and Nelson was eager for the work. He thought that when Lia found out that the new man would use his own truck, she might wonder why he hadn't given Lud the old one. He mused over what to do when something happened that would hurt her. He decided that he wouldn't tell her; it would save this, this—what they had, if it hadn't already been ruined by Lud's firing. He turned on the ignition, but as he came closer to the house, he knew he could not do that: It wasn't right. He had to tell Lia, no matter what.

He parked the truck and got out carefully, making his way to the bed of the truck to pick up his crutch. It was an ominous sign: Lia was not at the door, not running out to help him. He went up the ramp slowly, opened the screen door, and walked through the living room and into the kitchen. A pan of food was simmering on the stove. He leaned his crutch against a chair, put his hat and the bundle of mail on the table, and sat down. There was a pang in his chest because Lia was not there. He opened the *Atlantis* and turned the pages to find the weekly cartoon, but he merely stared at it, read the Greek words, and didn't even try to think why they were supposed to be funny.

After preparing a stew, Lia had gone to the meadow, thinking Jim would not return until evening. She sat down and sketched a stand of quaking aspen; their leaves fluttered like myriad disks of gold as they caught the sun's rays. It helped her to keep from thinking about Jim's pleading eyes. Then she stopped and looked at the mountain beyond the canyon and thought what Jim had said—that her parents had needed help after Nicky died and Lud had made everything worse. Anger grew slowly until it was hot inside her head. Her parents had lost a son; her father had become a ghost; her mother had to take the pickup in all kinds of weather to bring supplies to the sheepherders, to the shearers; she had to see how the lambing and dipping were going, and where was Lud? He was drinking himself stupid. No thought of his responsibilities to the family that had kept him on for thirty years. And she was no better, a fool with her silly ideas about him; she had thought of Lud and not of her parents.

She put her shoulders back: she had been disloyal to her parents; in some ways she could have helped her mother take care of Lud. She knew one thing for sure: she was not going to let the foolish feelings over Lud's firing, as if he were an innocent in a world of wolves, affect Jim.

As she walked back to the house with her tablet and box of colored pencils, she heard the truck come to a stop. She entered the house quietly, holding the screen door to keep it from banging shut. Jim was sitting at the table, his right leg straight out, his chair pulled sideways, so that his back was turned from her. She came toward him, put her right hand on his shoulder, and gave him a light kiss on the temple. Jim clasped her hand and his breath came with a long rush of relief.

"The food's ready," she said.

"You've got two letters."

"Are you hungry or should I read the letters first?"

"Read the letters."

"Should I read them out loud?"

"If you want."

Lia sat across from Jim and opened her mother's letter. She read:

> Dear Lia,
>
> I want to tell you what I've been doing. Grandma is having trouble with arthritis in her hands. We've been putting them in melted wax and that helps for a while. I've been

wanting to tell you that I had Mr. Fossat put in a bathroom for Grandma. You know your dad tried to have that done for her, but Grandpa made such a fuss. Of course he never said no when your dad brought him half a lamb every so often. So when Grandpa died, I decided I would do it. I told Grandma she could live with me in the new house, but she won't budge. I also had Mr. Fossat put wooden floors down in the other two rooms. Now when you and Jim come to town, you can have my house to yourselves. I canned peaches and pears and tomatoes for the herders and rolled out plenty of *filo.* Give Jim my best. I'm glad his leg is better.

Mama

Jim looked at Lia and said, "Your mother's nice, but I'm glad we'll be alone."

"We'll have the house to ourselves," Lia said and drew in a long breath.

"I just didn't want to share the bathroom with her."

Lia lifted her eyebrows and smiled. "Doesn't it occur to you that she didn't want to share the house and the bathroom with you?" She began reading Bessie's letter.

Dear Lia,

Have I got news for you! Peggy and I are pregnant! I'm so excited! It's working out just fine, for me. I've got all my Lennox, sterling, and glassware out of lay-away, and now I can start accumulating a layette and baby furniture. Deno doesn't say much, but I know once he sees the baby, he'll be just as thrilled as I am. Peggy's miserable. Throwing up all the time and hates the way she's starting to get big. She's mad at Tom for getting her pregnant, like she didn't have anything to do with it. She's going to come home to have the baby so Aunt Katina can help her take care of it. Oh, yeah, Aunt Katina will help her take care of it. Sounds like old times!

I saw Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca* yesterday. It was so wonderful. I wish you could see it. Tonight we're going to see Deno's favorite actress, Jane Russell, in *The Outlaw*. You know she can't act worth a darn, but I think its her big bust that Deno's got his eyes glued on. I feel like telling him those big busts start to sag pretty quick. Aunt Katina spends all her time baking sweets and sending them

to Peggy in big coffee cans, because you know poor Peggy is away from home and she's married to a *very important man*.

Love, Bessie

Lia shook her head. Jim asked, solemnly, "Do you want a baby?"

Lia nodded. She folded Bessie's letter with an uneasy thought that Jim did not seem interested in babies.

The next morning, a Saturday, Jim's brother John drove down to bring Lia a message from his mother. He parked his truck in the front yard. Music soared out of the house. "Oh hell," he said as he took the steps two at a time and pulled on the screen door that was latched. The unfamiliar music annoyed him; he recognized it as what was called "high-brow," and the latched screen door angered him: no one locked doors. The scent of coffee was in the air as he rattled the screen door and called, "Hey, open the door!"

Lia and Jim did not hear the impatient rattle and call that competed with Mimi's dying aria. Jim was at the kitchen table with his right leg thrust out and Lia sitting on his left thigh. Her head on Jim's shoulder, she was listening to him asking if she wanted to drive to Craig with him.

Angrily John walked down the porch steps and to the side of the house. He stopped at the kitchen window and with his right hand shading his eyes, peered inside. Lia was wearing the blue silk robe patterned with white and pink chrysanthemums which Jim had brought when he had been discharged from the army. John gazed at the long expanse of white thigh and leg. He gaped, dumbfounded: There was certainly nothing like that in *his* house. It made him angry. He hunkered down as he stole away, but his cowboy hat bobbed up and down and Jim saw it.

"John's around," Jim whispered.

Lia stood up. "I haven't even taken my shower. Maybe he'll go away."

"Fat chance."

John had intended getting into his truck and driving off, but he remembered his mother's message and besides he wanted to break up the scene in the kitchen. Petulantly he walked up the steps and pounded on the screen door. "Let me in!"

"Go take your shower," Jim said. "I'll give him a cup of coffee." With a long sigh, he walked, feet bare, over the kitchen linoleum and the thinly carpeted living room.

"For God's sake," John shouted, "it's past ten! How come you're not dressed?"

"Because it's Saturday and we slept in."

"Oh yeah, newlyweds."

"Get lost," Jim said in Greek and turned off the radio.

John twirled his right hand in an obscene Greek gesture for intercourse and followed Jim into the kitchen. He looked right and left, taking everything in as if he had never been in the house before. "Where's Lia?"

"Taking a shower. Want some coffee?"

John sat down, giving Jim a displeased look, and answered questions about their mother—she had gone to the doctor who told her to lose weight and stop eating salt. Jim asked about John's wife Vassi, who was pregnant again. He wanted to say scathingly, "Aren't four children enough?"

John leaned back and began talking about his family staying in town because the doctor was giving Vassi IVs for dehydration. His mother-in-law had come to take care of the family. "Boy! Can she cook! She makes those Cretan *skaltsounia*, you know them little pastry things with *myzithra* cheese inside! God, I can taste them right now!"

John continued enumerating other delights Vassi's mother cooked for him when he went to town. The water from the shower went on. Then it stopped and Lia was imprisoned in the bathroom, taking a long time to dry herself, cream her face, even put on some make-up while listening, hoping John would leave.

Jim knew she would not come out until John left. "Well, I better finish getting dressed. It's my water turn," he lied.

With a great show of stretching and appropriate exclamations of *ahs*, *ohs*, and *jeez* as if his muscles and bones hurt, John stood up. He remarked on town gossip, but Jim did not show enough interest in furthering the talk. He remembered why he had come. "Mana wants Lia to come over and help her put up peaches."

Jim sat looking at John. After a moment he said, "I don't know what plans she's got."

"Plans! Peaches can't wait. You tell her." Raising his voice, John shouted, "Goodbye, Lia!" He thumped out of the house, got into his truck, made a sharp turn onto Twenty Mile Road, and couldn't wait to tell his mother the latest goings on in the Demas house.

Lia came out of the bathroom, rubbing a towel over her wet hair. "So, what did John want?" she asked.

"A message to you from my mother. She's putting up peaches Monday and wants you to help."

Lia put the towel on the back of a chair and came close to Jim. She did not look at him. "What is it?" he said.

"I'm afraid to tell you."

"Why, do you think I'll hit you?"

Lia looked down and began speaking the words she had planned on the night before her wedding. "Jim, for twenty years I was swallowed up by the Demas family and I don't want to be swallowed up by the Papastamos family. I don't want to be together all the time, canning, making *filo*, cooking at all hours for a parade of men dropping in as they please. I can't have that kind of life."

Jim's eyebrows pulled together questioningly. "Jim, I didn't know how awful it was growing up in Greek Town with my aunts and all the children in the family. All those family dinners, everyone knowing everything about each other, every grief, every shame, every little mistake. All of it discussed and analyzed. Our houses were always in turmoil. There was no privacy, no freedom to be ourselves."

"Jim," Lia lifted her eyes, "I don't want to run to help your mother put up fruit and roll out *filo*. I don't want to work my fingers to the bone like our mothers and my aunts. I don't want to be like Vassi, always the bride, the *nyfi*, running when anybody calls. We'll have your nameday party and we'll have some big dinners for the family on holidays—of course we'll do that. But I want some order in my life. I want some time to myself. To read. To sketch a little. I don't want to be dead tired every night."

Jim kept looking at her with the deep stare that could disturb her. "I don't want you dead tired either. You don't have to do anything you don't want to. Let's go down to Craig for lunch."

Lia smiled and put on a new dress, a "town dress" instead of the skirts and shirts she wore at home. It was pale blue, sleeveless, with a short-sleeved matching jacket. "Pretty," Jim said.

In town they ate in the café where a large table at the back was reserved for sheepmen. A group of them were sitting there when Lia and Jim walked in; several were eating with their Stetsons on. Jim waved to them and he and Lia sat down in a booth and ordered sandwiches, Cokes, and apple pie.

When they finished, Jim said he would go back and talk with the sheepmen and would meet Lia at the truck. Lia went down the street to the drug store and bought shaving cream for Jim, a lipstick for herself, and a box of Whitman's chocolates which she would send

with Jim when he visited his mother again. At the grocery she bought bananas, apples, bread, and lettuce. When she came out of the store, she did not see Jim leaning against the hood of his truck, talking to a fat little man, bow-legged Scrub McNeil, a sheep broker. She walked down the street, looking into the store windows.

Scrub McNeil said, "Well, Jim, here comes your pretty wife."

"Yep, you betcha," Jim nodded, easily falling into the sheepmen's lingo. "Here comes my pretty wife."

The sun was golden on Lia's hair. The pale blue dress fit her slender body closely. *Beautiful*, *mine*, Jim thought as she came nearer.

"Pretty face and pretty legs," Scrub said with a click of his false teeth.

"Pretty everywhere," Jim burst out angrily, as if Scrub had said Lia was ugly. He was furious that this shrimp Scrub had the gall to talk about Lia's legs and stunned that he himself had used the word *everywhere*. Just the kind of anecdote that would be repeated at the table in the back of the café.

"Some guys have all the luck," Scrub said.

By then Lia saw the two men and Jim's angry face. She thought unhappily that Jim shouldn't be angry with the harmless little man. She shook hands with Scrub, who said, "Your man don't treat you nice enough. I'd sure treat you better."

Lia said, "But, Scrub, that would make you a polygamist."

"It'd be worth it," Scrub said while Jim made his way to the door of his truck. He thought when Scrub told the sheepmen at the back table what he had said, they would eye Lia whenever they saw her. He wished Lia had not shaken hands with him.

Lia got into the truck and said, "Jim, I saw your old girl friend, and she's dyed her hair a reddish purple."

"Don't tease me."

Lia touched his sleeve and, mollified, Jim gave her a small smile. "What were you and Scrub talking about?" she asked him.

Jim snorted. "I asked him if he knew this sheep broker in Laramie, a guy by the name of Pierre Samain, and he said, 'I know him well enough to pick the lint out of his belly button.'"

By the time they reached the ranch, Jim had convinced himself that Scrub had not heard what he had said. He thought that Scrub had been more interested in Lia's walking down the street than hearing his outburst, and probably Scrub was also hard of hearing. He could not quiet himself until he had convinced himself that that's how it had been.

"Jim," Lia said, "when we go back to town, will you dig up a shovelful of meadow flowers. I want to transplant them on the west side of the house. I hope they'll grow."

They had had a good day, Lia thought as they drove up Twenty Mile Road—blue sky, birds flying, mountain flowers at their peak—but something nagged at her: lately Jim lost his temper, not at her, but over inconsequential happenings. If Grover Hardesty came a few minutes too early to lift the irrigation gate to water his field, Jim shouted at him as if he had stolen an hour; when the postmaster had mislaid his mail and he had to wait while it was located, Jim made sarcastic remarks about the time he was wasting hanging around looking at Wanted posters. Lia did not like Jim getting a reputation for being bad tempered. At least, she thought, she was lucky to be spared, but two days later, he lashed out at her.

18

Jim slammed the back door and stood in the kitchen shouting about the water master. "I know for a fact he gives Carson a better schedule than me! Most of my turns come in the middle of the night! He and Old Man Carson are buddies! He's hiding! Afraid I'll knock his block off!" He stood in the doorway, his face a dark red, filling the kitchen with shouts of going to the water board. "I'll get him for this!"

While he burst out with more threats, Lia opened the refrigerator door and took out a pitcher of water. Each morning she refilled it to have cold drinking water during the day. She poured a glass for Jim, then pulled out a chair for him. "What the hell are you doing!" he turned with a fierce grimace at her. "Leave me alone! Get out of here!"

Lia stepped back, frightened. She did not know what to do, where to go. Dazed, she went into their adjoining bedroom, closed the door and lay on the bed. Her heart was beating fast and tears came to her eyes: *what is happening?* she thought. She was afraid of Jim's opening the door and standing there looking at her.

A few minutes later, Jim rushed into the room and pulled her to him. "I didn't mean it! I was so mad at Williams I lost my head! Lia, I didn't mean it!"

"It's all right."

Later, Lia thought something might have happened in the army and had come to the surface, but she was too afraid to speak out. Jim avoided looking at her all that day and was shame-faced. Lia then believed such an outburst could never happen again.

A period of calm came to the ranch house. Jim invited his friend Swede Olson for dinner. Lia prepared *mousaka* and Greek vegetables—

Swede had told Jim they were his favorite Greek foods. Jim watched Lia serving dinner, talking easily with Swede, looking, he thought, very pretty. He was proud of her, of the food, of the table set with flowers from the meadow; the columbines that year had been larger and bluer than anyone remembered. Lia filled water and wine glasses, served Swede several helpings of everything. Jim had told her to make plenty of food because, he repeated at the table, "Swede eats like a hog."

"How can you talk like that about the man who's supposedly your best friend?"

"You ought to hear him talk when women aren't around," Swede said.

Swede's family stories held Lia's attention; she thought they should be written down, and suggested it to Swede. "Nah, if I had kids, maybe I'd do it, but all those first families, those homesteaders, they all have the same kind of stories to tell."

Swede wasn't interested and Lia had to stop herself from offering to write down the stories for him. Swede professed no interest in his family history, but he became animated when talking about it. He had not known his grandfather, who had tried to farm in Minnesota in the early 1900s until a drought wiped out his crops three years in a row. The grandfather cut logs for homesteaders' cabins and corrals after that and was killed by a falling tree. Swede's father was at Ludlow in 1914 where Louis Tikas, the Greek leader, was riddled with militia bullets. His father decided he would farm near Loveland—Jim had seen the cabin, still standing, dirt floor, dirt-and-straw roof, ragged gunnysacks over the windows. No, Swede had said, he wanted none of that shovel-and-pick life; he sold insurance instead to farmers and sheepmen and had a big repertoire of comic stories to tell them. He had been married twice, briefly, and had no children. Yet he had a breezy, happy manner about him and Lia was pleased when he came to dinner: Jim smiled and laughed throughout the evening.

Lia regretted that she had failed to convince Swede that his peoples' histories were important. She remembered the vice-consul Stylian Staes's papers, soggy from rain flooding, disintegrating in the Price city dump. She felt pangs of remorse.

A week later Jim rushed into the house, fuming. The camp tender had told him one of the new herders wasn't taking care of his sheep: he'd left a ewe with an infected udder out in the sun without water or salve, nothing; a lamb had broken a leg and he hadn't put a

splint on it. "That lamb was bleating its last when I got there! I told him to get the hell out of my outfit! I told him I'd see that he didn't get another job in any other outfit around here! I hit him hard!"

"Jim! He could have stabbed you! He could have hurt you! Where did he go? Are you sure he's not coming back?"

"For God's sake, stop snooping around! Why do you have to know everything! Why don't you mind your own business?"

Lia stood in front of the stove and could not move, her eyes riveted on Jim's snarling mouth. Suddenly he stopped raving, stared at Lia, sat down and pulled her onto his lap. "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" He seemed about to cry.

"Jim," Lia said, breathing fast, not looking at him, "in what way am I a snoop? I don't even know what you have in your bank account, and I probably should. I never open your bank statement. I never look in your ledger or read your mail."

Jim stroked her hair. "Oh, don't pay any attention to me. You know I don't have a way with words."

Jim ate very little. When Lia turned on the radio, he did not seem to be listening. "I can't understand why I yelled at you like that," he said. "I wonder if I'm going nuts."

"It's over. Stop thinking about it or you won't be able to sleep and you have a big day tomorrow at the range meeting." Lia tried to speak lightly, but a darkness lurked in the kitchen; she blinked her eyes several times before she could see clearly.

Later, in bed, Jim snoring lightly, Lia thought of the Demas men, always shouting, usually over trifles; her Uncle Pete was the worst. Lia had never seen it, but it was known that he sometimes gave Aunt Katina a backhand. And her mother had hurried after her father as he stomped toward the door, his voice raised, rebuking her. Her mother had rushed after him more than once and caught him by the belt, forcing him to listen to her.

No, she would not pacify Jim; she was the victim, not he. She would be ready. Yet when she heard his heavy footsteps coming toward her; when the door slammed and she stood with shivers going up her arms, waiting to see his face, to see if he was angry; and when she heard his loud shouts before she saw him, her knees went weak. Then he appeared and she saw that he was not angry at all.

The next outburst came over the ledger where he wrote down expenses and receipts. "Where'd you put my ledger! Why don't you leave it in the drawer where it belongs! What's the matter with you! The ledger is none of your business!"

For several moments Lia did not speak. She looked at Jim steadily and he blinked once and then again. "I didn't take your ledger. There's no reason for me to touch it. Did you look in the living room?" Lia stood at the sink, making no move to look for the ledger as she would have done if Jim had asked about it calmly. She held her breath while Jim loped out of the kitchen.

Jim found the ledger under the wool growers magazines. He looked ashamed and glanced away from her. "I forgot I have this hard-nosed wife," he said, to make amends.

Another halcyon period followed. One morning Lia told Jim she was sure she was pregnant. He gave her a weak smile. "You don't seem glad about it," she said in a voice so quiet it was hardly audible. Her cheeks were cold as she waited for another outburst from him.

"Yes, I am." To assure her he offered to take her to the White Horse Inn for dinner.

Lia took special pains with her hair and dress. It was an important evening for her; a light, airy joy took hold of her and she nourished a small hope that Jim would feel some kind of pleasure also.

In the restaurant Jim smiled often, to assure her, she thought, that he liked the good news. Jim had ordered a steak and she roast chicken. They were almost finished with dinner when four people came from the back of the restaurant, talking loudly as they stood by the cash register. One woman had long, bleached hair that curled under the ends. The woman was laughing at something one of the men said. Her back was turned from Lia and Jim; they could not see her face. With her hand reaching for her wine glass, Lia looked again at the woman. Jim grabbed her hand and held it tightly, hurting her. "Don't you dare compare yourself to her," he said, his voice low, "or I'll break your knuckles." Then he let go of her hand and would not look at her.

Something, Lia thought, in their life was so wrong that it was already doomed. She said, "Let's not have dessert. I think we should go."

Jim shook his head several times, trying to say something, but unable to get the words out. "This has nothing to do with me, Jim," Lia whispered.

After paying the bill, they got into the truck and had gone only a block away when Jim drove into an empty parking space and stopped under a street light. He half-turned to Lia and without looking at her began, "I should have told you this at the very beginning, but I didn't know how you would take it." He gave his right cheek a long stroke

and under the pale street light, his face pulled down, he looked as if he were a far older man. "In the summer between my second and third year at college, I had this girlfriend. She had long blonde hair like the woman in the White Horse."

He turned his head from Lia completely and looked ahead. "When autumn quarter was about to start, I tried to break up with her and she got mad at me and told me she was pregnant." He took in a few deep breaths. "I thought of my Dad, of having to face him. It was the Depression. I knew that would be the end of college for me. I told her to make sure and that made her madder. She got out of the truck and slammed the door. Two days later I came to town and telephoned her house. Her mother said she'd gone to Las Vegas to work as a dealer."

Lia's lips froze. She tried to speak, but the words would not come. Her heart beat loudly in her head. She took several deep breaths, then pulled Jim's arm. "You never heard from her again?" Jim shook his head. Urgently Lia said, "Women sometimes say they're pregnant to get a man. Maybe that's how it was. Or maybe she was just wrong. There might not even be a child."

"But what if there is?"

"Then we would have to acknowledge it."

They sat in silence until Jim let his breath out. "God, Lia, if I had only known you'd say that. I would have told you on the porch steps of your house before we were married."

This time it was Lia who broke the silence. "Didn't you ask anyone about her? Didn't you have any clues?"

"I told Swede. He nosed around. Said he didn't believe it. He drove over to Las Vegas, couldn't find her in any of the casinos. I saw her sister one day not too long after she left and asked where she was and she said, 'That's for me to know and you to find out.'"

"Jim, if there were a child, it would visit the grandparents. Somehow or other you would hear about it. You'd hear something."

"But I don't know. It's possible I have a son or daughter and I don't know about it."

"Jim," Lia's voice was uncharacteristically strong, "she would have asked you for money to support the child."

Jim put his head in his hands. "I can't get it out of my mind ever since you said you wanted a baby."

The next morning Jim wrote to Plato Klonides, one of his college friends, who Lia remembered sitting at the Greek Table. He now had a law degree and was 4F. Plato had plenty of clients—and

connections—since many other young lawyers had been taken into the army intelligence services or legal staffs. Lia spent an entire morning looking through the big heavy book of births and deaths in the Moffat County courthouse. She had the name Jim had written on a piece of paper. No woman of that name had given birth during the year 1937. Several months later Plato wrote Jim to rest easy. The private detective Plato had called in Las Vegas had sent in his report. "You're no father, yet, Mitro," Plato wrote.

In the evenings Lia and Jim sat on the porch with a fresh awareness of the changing colors of the mountain as dusk became evening and then night. They listened to the sounds of the night—the rustle of the aspen, the breeze through the pines, the scurrying of squirrels. A clean, beautiful peace was all about them. Lia wished she could paint a picture to commemorate such evenings, but she could not believe that she could capture the essence of them—better to leave them in her memory.

One evening John came with another message from his mother, a tactic Zoitsa Papastamos thought Lia and Jim could not deflect. Zeffy, John said, was pregnant and he should offer to be the baby's godfather.

Jim and his brother were sitting at the kitchen table and Lia was pouring coffee for them. "Oh, I don't know, John. I don't know if I'm ready for any of that right now," Jim said. "They should get some friend in McGill."

John looked at Jim with half-closed eyes. "If you don't, *mana* isn't gonna like it."

"Well, I'm not going to do it. Let them choose one of the old timers they know for the godfather," Jim said, to Lia's great relief.

John drank his coffee quickly and left the kitchen shaking his head. When Zoitsa Papastamos heard that Jim refused to be the godfather for Zeffy's baby, she said, "It's her, Mitro's woman. She pulls him around by the nose. She doesn't know what it means to be a family."

19

The three cousins, Lia, Bessie, and Peggy, each had a daughter by 1945 when Lia's girl, Anne, was born. As Jim's best man, his brother John, according to custom, was the baby's godfather. John was the kind of godfather to Anne that old-country Greeks were to their godchildren. He bought her presents on his trips to Craig, Grand Junction, and Denver. He often took her home to spend the night with his children. He also expected all the prerogatives of old-country godfathers. At any time of day or night he dropped in and sat at Lia's table, waiting to have coffee, pastries, even dinner set before him. He never bothered to call his wife Vassi—the ranches now had telephone lines—to tell her where he was or when he would return home.

His mother showered her grandchildren with indulgences, especially Lia and Jim's Anne: Zoitsa would see to it that the little girl was a Papastamos and not one crumb a Demopoulos.

John's and his sisters' children had used up the family names and Lia asked that the baby be named Anne after Emma's mother Annie. Lia remembered her with half of her face red and swollen from blows, her silent grandmother, whose children grew up, snarling and fighting, and who escaped beyond their father's horse whip as soon as they could, seldom returning to the small, unpainted farm house. She wanted the name for her mother.

Each evening, while Lia finished cooking dinner, Jim put Anne on his shoulders and took her for a walk: in town around the yard and up the street as far as the irrigation canal; at the ranch into the meadow and back. Anne was almost a year younger than Bessie's daughter Goldie and Peggy's daughter Rita, named after the movie actress Rita Hayworth. Peggy had told the godfather that was the name she had chosen and he, a son of an immigrant and a Danish woman, did not

know he could have named the baby whatever he wanted. Lia's second child was a boy as was Bessie's; Peggy had another girl.

By then Jim's knee had become nearly flexible. He no longer used a crutch or a cane, and a shoemaker in Craig put a lift inside the heel of his right shoe that made the slight bulge of his kneecap less noticeable.

Anne was three-and-a-half years old when her brother Chris, named after Lia's father, was born. Bessie asked to be his godmother. Chris was irritable, slept little, and Lia tried all the cures Emma recommended for babies, but nothing helped. She read Dr. Spock in vain. One night Jim came into the living room where Lia stayed with the baby to keep his cries from waking him and Anne. "What can I do to help you?" he said.

"My jaw hurts from singing, and when I stop he cries."

Jim went into the bedroom and returned with his harmonica. He began playing "Down in the Valley," and after several minutes of hiccupping, the baby quieted. Next, Jim played "Shenandoah" and "Home on the Range." By then the baby was asleep and Lia gratefully laid him in his crib. Chris was almost two years old before he began to have a regular routine. He grew slowly and caught everything that afflicted children: colds, earache, and flu.

When Chris neared his third birthday, he would bring a book to his mother and Lia would set him down on the sofa next to her to read it. She cherished these moments, happy to feel a little leg against her thigh. When she finished, he would get down from the sofa and walk away, not having spoken a word. After he learned to read, he sat alone on the floor, moving his lips, and the earlier sessions of the two of them on the sofa, she reading, Chris listening, became a memory for Lia.

Jim spent most evenings listening to the radio news, reading wool-growers magazines or biographies of the presidents, and bringing his ledger up to date. He never used a pencil to make additions and subtractions. He would look at a column of figures, pass his gaze over them, and write down the total. This little scene endeared him to Lia, no matter how often she witnessed it. "You could have been a scientist," she told him the first time she had seen him at work.

Jim had shaken his head. "No, I always wanted to be a sheepman."

Sometimes he closed the ledger and thought about Chris. Both he and Lia wondered why their little boy seldom smiled. Anne had reveled when she had ridden her father's shoulders; Chris merely

looked about. Jim thought it strange that Chris was hard to hold. He never put his arm around the person carrying him. Lia had tried placing one of his small hands on her shoulder, but Chris let it slide down limply.

Even though Chris paid no attention to Anne, she still persisted in trying to make him talk; she had no expectations that he would play with her. Lia and Jim, sitting on the sofa, glanced at Chris often as he played by himself, building intricate designs with Lincoln logs, not interested in Anne or either of them. Lia took Chris to a pediatrician in Salt Lake City who told her to "Relax. Nothing's wrong with the boy. You're just an overprotective mother. Stop reading Dr. Spock."

During the school year in town, when the children were older, Lia drove them to liturgies until Chris began to complain endlessly and, rather than have him slump on the pews and draw the ire of the latest priest to stand at the Holy Gate, Lia allowed him to stay home. Lia and Jim decided they would not send the children to Greek school; it was held sporadically, teachers staying a few weeks and leaving. That was their excuse, but in truth they did not want their children to go. Jim, especially, remembered it as an agony.

At the ranch, a woman in her fifties, a daughter of the old, henna-haired waitress in Craig, drove up the road once a week to help clean the house. John snorted when he saw the waitress's daughter. "Jim, what's wrong with your wife? Does she have eggshells for a backbone?"

"If you want to keep your wife like our poor mother who didn't know anything better, that's your business. But don't *ever* criticize my wife to me."

Jim also had new rules about the herders: Lia was not ever to cook for them unless they were in the bunkhouse sick. "I buy them what they need," he said. With Kosta, he was lenient: she could send him Greek dishes and pastries.

Lia went about her work with a restlessness that was new to her. She could have taken classes at the small college in Price, but she did not want to become a student again. She felt less agitated in the mountains, but at times she did not know what was the matter with her.

On a day when the children were visiting the Papastamos ranch, she and Jim drove to Craig on errands. Afterwards, they went into the café to eat. The small restaurant was crowded and the sheepmen at the back table were talking loudly, laughing in raucous bursts. In the booth behind them three sheepmen's wives were discussing the food

they would prepare for the communal branding. The sheepmen were working out whose sheep they would brand first with the various colors of paint. Jim ordered and said, "I'll go back and see the guys."

Jim greeted the women by name as he walked toward the back table. The women answered cheerfully and one with a deep voice said, "Hey Jim, you good-lookin' Greek."

Cigarette smoke traveled over the top of the booth and settled on Lia. "I'll say it again," the woman with the deep voice said, "let's feed them ham sandwiches, cookies, and drinks." Lia had seen her irrigating her garden wearing her husband's old shoes.

"Bless your heart, Viola," a sweet voice said, "for wanting to make it easier on us, but you know the men don't want sandwiches. It's a celebration for them. The branding's their get-together and they want their lamb stew and my chocolate cakes." The sweet-voiced woman "went all out," people said, at branding time; otherwise she was noted for frugality. Once in Safeway, she scribbled a recipe for Lia—mock pecan pie, using red beans instead of nuts.

A chipper voice said, "Every year we have this same conversation and we always end up with lamb stew and Marian's chocolate cakes. Viola, let's just get our Dutch ovens out and forget this discussion."

Lia hoped the women would not see her. She knew they talked about her, trying to make out why she never took part in their gatherings. When the branding was being done on their sheep, Lia sent the latest camp tender with two large feta *pites*. She would hear the far-off camaraderie, the voices of the men and women carried by the breeze. She wondered how Jim felt about her not being part of the sheep-raising traditions. She could not; she did not want to be with the women.

Leaning far back as if to camouflage herself against the wooden booth, she heard the men, laughing, cajoling. Jim would be standing, maybe with a foot on a chair seat, leaning over, hands on his left knee, laughing along, but she had learned that he was "a loner." He wanted the nearness of other human beings only for a limited time, enough to avoid giving offense, then he would wave a goodbye. At the moment the men were teasing a seventy-year-old friend who was marrying for the third time. "Can you still get it up, Bill?" one said, and Scrub McNeil added, "At my age a good shit is better'n a good fuck." Jim laughed with the rest of the group and lifted his hand in goodbye.

In Helper, Lupe, a Mexican woman in her thirties, helped Lia with the housework. Her father had escaped the 1910 Mexican revolution and had been brought to the mines by a Japanese labor agent, where

he worked as a mucker in Spring Canyon. Later, he brought his family from Mexico and fathered eleven children.

Lupe had gone to the Helper grade school for a few years. At fourteen she had her first son, and two more followed within the next three years. Lia did not ask her about the boys' father, but the wife of the jeweler, who lived next door and whom Lupe cleaned for, said he had deserted them.

When her mother could not tend her grandsons, Lupe brought them with her. In their worn clothes, the pant legs frayed, they sat quietly in the kitchen, glancing at Lia, Anne, and Chris with large wondering eyes. Lia began teaching the boys to read. The oldest, Miguel, was in the third grade, but could barely make out the words in the primer. Arturo was in the second grade and didn't know the alphabet. Pancho, the youngest, was in the first grade and looked frightened whenever Lia put a hand on his shoulder.

Lia told Lupe that she wanted the boys to come to her house every day after school for an hour. She prepared a snack for them, peanut butter or ham sandwiches, cookies, and milk. For several weeks, the boys looked at Lia with watchful eyes. Then they began to smile and speak to each other in Spanish. Lia told them she was raised to speak both Greek and English. She encouraged the boys to use English outside the house and especially on the school grounds. She bought them new clothes at JC Penney, which she gave to Lupe when Anne and Chris were not in the house. She did not want Lupe's sons to feel ashamed.

The boys ate the sandwiches and cookies solemnly. Over the coming weeks their big eyes changed from wary to cautious to interested. Lia told them about the ranch when she was a child and the Mexican sheep shearers who stopped once at on their way to the Canadian border and a second time on their return to Mexico. She used simple words from the spelling list she had drawn up.

Lia learned that at times Lupe kept the children at home. Miguel was left to care for the younger ones when they were sick and Lupe was out cleaning houses. When Lia explained that the boys would get behind if they did not attend school regularly, Lupe looked at Lia with resentful eyes. "My mother she's sick and I got to make a livin'." Lia went to the grade school, the Central School bordering Greek Town, which she had attended, and spoke with the boys' teachers. They were polite and gave her an idea of what lessons they were teaching, but Lia left thinking the teachers had decided that the boys could not learn.

Lia asked Jim what he thought about taking the boys to the ranch for a week or ten days and he agreed it would be good for them. Lupe said it would be nice. She had begun using cheap perfume and bright lipstick. When Lia told the boys, they could hardly sit still while going through their lessons.

Two weeks before school was out, an old car stopped at the house. Lupe and her sons got out. A man stepped out of the driver's seat and stood smoking with his arms draped over the top of the open door. Lupe and the boys came to the door and Lia, surprised, said, "Why aren't the boys in school?"

Lupe laughed. "We're gonna go to Los Angeles with Vicenti."

Lia glanced at the scrawny, unshaven man, smoking and leaning on the car door. "I was hoping to take the boys to the ranch." She looked at the boys watching her with trusting eyes.

"No, we're gonna go to Los Angeles! We just come to say goodbye."

"Come in, boys. I'll give you some cookies to take with you."

Lupe and her sons walked into the house while the car horn blasted. Lupe looked back. "In a minute, Vicenti!"

Lia gave Miguel the cookie jar and Arturo and Pancho the root beers she had intended for later, to celebrate their coming to the ranch.

"You want us to take the whole jar?" Lupe asked.

"Yes." Lia followed Lupe and the boys to the porch. She reached down and hugged each one.

"*Pronto! Pronto!*" the man ordered and the boys hurried to get into the back seat. The man waved, Lupe waved, and the boys looked at Lia out of the dirty window.

Lia tried to compose herself before Jim came home. She sat down to look through a flower catalog and turned the pages to choose which plants she would order. She had tried transplanting flowers from the ranch meadow, but they withered. The bright pictures of petunias, phlox, asters, dahlias, and daisies looked fake.

That day as Jim was driving back to his family, he thought of the time when Chris would work with the sheep and he and Lia could travel to San Francisco or New York and the national parks. He expected Anne would be like her mother, intensely interested in what she read and what she saw. Even while they were driving to or from the ranch, she had a sketchbook open and pencils ready to draw: a green-winged katydid flattened on the windshield, golden stubble pushing up through a field of snow, a black crow sitting on a fence

made of antlers. She was almost always smiling, unlike Lia who was pensive and sad at times.

Jim had bouts of loneliness when he felt himself on the periphery of Lia's thoughts. It did not happen often, but when it did, he felt as if something was gnawing inside him. "Are you sorry you didn't go on to school?" he asked once.

"No. No." Then Lia seemed relieved at her answer and life went on as before.

Sometimes, though, she pondered over worries, insignificant to him, deeply serious to her. When he drove to the ranch one evening, Lia was sitting on the bench in front of the corral. One of the bum lambs was standing next to her on the bench—she had her left palm on its back and an empty nursing bottle in her right hand. Far off in the meadow the children were sitting in the middle of a patch of wild flowers. Jim walked over to the bench, picked up the lamb, and reaching over the fence put it inside the corral. He sat next to Lia. "What is it?"

Lia looked down sorrowfully. "Jim, I can't eat lamb anymore. We raise them and then kill them and eat them. I can't do it anymore."

"You don't have to."

"It'll get around and people, your brother John, will make fun of you for having me for a wife. A sheepman's wife who won't eat lamb."

The children had seen Jim's car and were running toward the corral.

"You don't want to eat lamb, you don't have to."

"I've been taking small pieces of it and leaving it on my plate." Lia looked at the lamb. "I don't really care what other people think about me. I care that you'll think I'm odd, different."

Jim leaned toward her. "You're not odd, and I'm glad you're different. The world can go to hell."

Lia looked at him quickly, seeing the children coming closer. "What shall I tell the children when they notice."

Jim whispered as if the children were ten feet away instead of fifty. "Say meat hurts your stomach."

Anne was out of breath, but she kept running ahead of Chris who blubbered that she was going too fast. Anne was excited that her parents looked as if they were going to kiss, like the family on the new television set where the mother kissed the father goodbye as he left for work, and when the father came home and called out, "Honey,

I'm home," she ran to him, stood on tiptoe, and kissed him. But when Anne reached her parents, they were not kissing at all, they were just looking at each other.

In Helper the evenings were quiet except for the freight and passenger trains whistling as they rounded Steamboat Mountain. The children had been bathed, read to, and were in bed. Lia sat next to Jim on the sofa that faced the television set against the opposite wall. On both sides of the sofa were reading chairs with lamps, but Lia always sat next to Jim when he was watching a sports program or a basketball or baseball game. One evening Jim was watching a basketball game. Lia was reading: "The Jesus of the two earlier gospels has nothing whatever about Him which allows him to be explained as a personality originating in a myth: Moreover, with His eschatological thought . . . " Lia looked up, staring at the basketball players while she considered the word *eschatological*, the ultimate destiny of mankind.

Seeing Lia's gaze, Jim thought she was interested in the game, and turning away from the television set, he said, "The Bulls are ahead. Their point guard just made a three pointer. That puts the Bulls ahead by two." As he explained what had gone on in the game, Lia was struck by the eagerness in his eyes: he was happy that she was interested in the game and he wanted to keep her interest. Lia closed the book.

Sometimes when she watched the television programs, her thoughts were on herself: what would she be doing now if she had gone on to the university and done graduate work? For Jim, watching sports on television took his thoughts away from the declining market for wool. Clothing manufacturers were using the new synthetics, especially Dacron, sometimes with wool, sometimes by themselves. They hardly needed ironing. Jim watched the game, waving away the textile problem. "Wool will always be in demand," he had told Lia, "I'm not worried." He followed the stock market and made more investments.

The three little girls, Lia's Anne, Bessie's Goldie, and Peggy's Rita, did not see each other as often as their mothers had in the Greek Town of their childhoods. Lia lived in Emma's Helper house, Bessie and Peggy in Salt Lake City in small GI houses. The government houses were temporary, they both said.

In summer Bessie and Peggy with their children went to the ranch for a week or ten days. The ritual of preparation for winter

had slipped away: Emma, Rina, and Katina's bustling about, filling hundreds of Mason bottles with peaches, pears, and apricots; hanging sacks of tomato puree to drip over the sink for tomato paste; and rolling out countless sheets of *filo*—all was in the past. Emma's mother was crippled with arthritis and Emma would not leave her. Rina did not care to visit the ranch anymore; she was happy to have a few days peace without the grandchildren about, and the mountains had always reminded her too much of her village, even though the ranch house had a bathroom, a lean-to addition. Katina would have gladly come, but Peggy would not let her, saying there was not enough room in the car.

During the ranch visit, the little cousins screeched and chased each other, and the girls fed the bum lambs. Jim spent one day with the children. He took them to Craig, where they sat on the Palace Drug Store stools to sip root beer floats; gave each one two dollars to spend; and drove them back up the road to the ranch house. Then he found errands to run. He took tools to be repaired, talked about the state of the market with sheepmen, and visited his mother, who had lost weight. "I have sugar," she mourned, less often the jolly woman who loved visitors. Her blood pressure was still high, but she ignored her doctor's orders not to salt her food. "You're a *stravoxilo*," Marko Papastamos said calmly and visited his neighbors rather than look at her, the "crooked stick," who could not control her appetite.

At the ranch Lia and Jim's son, Chris, had the excitable company of Bessie's son Gussie, named after his grandfather Gus. The two boys would not come near the three girls; instead they explored the gullies and paths around the house and followed the narrow road through the meadow, into the pines, and to the open range. They were five years old when they began this almost daily routine, and none of the mothers worried about them. The boys stopped at Kosta's camp for suckers, precious to them, and went farther on until the sky faded. Then they began running, suddenly remembering frightening tales they had heard about monsters rising up to do little boys harm. When they saw the ranch house ahead, they stopped running and walked slowly with a feigned bravado toward the group of girls, usually feeding the bum lambs.

Bessie's daughter Goldie had inherited her grandmother Rina's narrow, belligerent face and manner. "You boys always run off when there's work to do," she lectured. "Just because you're boys, you think you can do anything you want."

Gussie said, "Well, I'll feed the bums."

"No! You don't know how!"

The boys walked off. "Sure! Go ahead and play marbles," Goldie shouted. "All you do is play."

On one of their visits, Peggy's two daughters hung around Jim on the day he put aside to spend with the children. The other children preferred riding in the truck instead of the car, but Peggy's daughters wanted to sit inside the cab with Jim. Lia's and Bessie's children climbed into the back of the truck. The second of Peggy's daughters, a five-year-old who looked much younger, thin, with large dark brown eyes, blue puffs under them, put her arms up to Jim. He picked her up and settled her in the cab with her sister.

Bessie and Peggy were sitting on the porch watching Jim and the children. In the kitchen Lia was putting a lamb leg in the oven for the evening meal and wishing everyone would vanish and she could be alone in her house. "Jim's nice to the kids," Bessie said, pulling down her cheeks, frowning. "Deno has no patience with Goldie and Gussie. It makes me so mad, and he insisted, *insisted*, that we name Goldie after his mother. I hate the name Goldie and so does she."

Peggy turned to Bessie, shaking her head. "So he hasn't got patience with his kids and you let him off the hook?"

Bessie lowered her eyes and shifted them from side to side. Peggy screwed a corner of her mouth. "I've told you a hundred times you got to take a stand or Deno will walk all over you. But you just sit and take anything he dishes out to you."

"I don't know what to think. Before the kids came, he was always in a good mood, joking, nothing fazed him. Now, when he has to sit down and pay the bills, you'd think I was responsible for every penny that has to be paid out. Everything bothers him."

Peggy folded her arms over her bosom, which had increased in bulk over the years. "Well, I've told you how Tom and I do our bills," she began another of the lies Bessie always believed. "We sit down together and write them out. Then we know where the money has gone, but you just let Deno take care of everything and then you sit and whine."

Bessie looked ashamed, and when Lia came out with cans of Coca Cola, she busied herself with reaching for one and taking her time pouring it over ice in a tall glass. Lia saw that Peggy was browbeating Bessie again. She had an intense longing to run beyond the meadow.

When Jim drove off, Peggy looked about despairingly and refused to take part in the conversation between Bessie and Lia. Several

times she jumped up as if in disgust and walked around the house, past the penned-in sick and bum lambs, and out to the meadow.

Bessie sniffed, pouted. "I don't know why Peggy loses her temper so quick. The only time she acts half decent is when Jim's around."

Lia wanted to say, "That's because Peggy's always been man crazy," but she knew that Bessie told Peggy everything. Then another row, like those of their childhood, would begin.

Like Jim's brother John, Bessie and Peggy tried hard to learn about Lia and Jim's intimate life. Bessie complained about Deno, thinking Lia would say something about herself and Jim. "When I hear the shower going at night, I think, 'Oh, oh, he's going to want to *pedhiso tis tris*, you know, jumping around like a goat.' If I tell him I'm too tired, he says he'll get stone gullions if I don't let him. Have you ever heard of stone gullions? I looked it up in my college dictionary and I couldn't find the word *gullions*, so I went to the city library and looked in their big dictionaries. I found *gullions* but not *stone gullions.*"

Peggy said, "What did it say?"

"It said gullions meant a stomach ache."

Peggy sniffed. "Deno just made up that stone gullions stuff. I'm glad Tom is considerate of me."

Bessie bit her bottom lip, angry that she had mentioned stone gullions.

When the truck drove up in the evening, Bessie and Peggy were again sitting on the porch swing. Lia was in the kitchen preparing a salad: she had refused offers of help. She had little to say to her cousins anymore. Lia's and Bessie's children climbed out of the truck bed and jumped down, then ran to show what they had bought with the money Jim had given them. Chris and Gussie had comic books; Anne and Goldie identical cheap bracelets with Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck charms attached with short chains. Peggy looked at Jim opening the door and helping her older daughter out of the truck, then reaching in and lifting the younger one into his arms. Lana, who had been named after the movie actress Lana Turner, put her arms around his neck. Anne and Goldie ran into the house to show Lia their bracelets. Chris and Gussie sat on the bench by the sheep pen and opened their comic books.

Bessie sighed, "Jim's sure nice to little Lana."

Peggy's eyes brightened. She turned to Bessie, "Well," she whispered, "don't you see the resemblance?"

"Resemblance," Bessie repeated.

"Yes, don't you see the resemblance between Lana and Jim?"

Bessie stared at Jim as he walked up the steps and put Lana down on the porch. The little girl stood there. "Show your mother your present," Jim said. Without a word, Lana took a Disney coloring book to her mother. "Oh, how nice of you, Jim," Peggy said. "Come and sit with us."

"No, I can't," Jim said and opened the screen door. Lana ran after him. Peggy smiled, her eyes on the mountain range northward, with satisfaction as if she had won a victory over Bessie.

When it was time for his cousins to leave, Chris wanted to go with Gussie, and Bessie said it would be all right. "What if you get homesick, Chris?" Lia felt a grip in her chest and Jim said, "We can't leave everything to bring you back. You'd have to wait until the first week of school."

Chris wrinkled his forehead. "But I want to. Gussie and I have so much fun. I want to go to Salt Lake. I want to go to the city."

Bessie raised her eyebrows in a signal to Lia, who did not understand it. Then Bessie said in Greek, "I'll drive him back if he gets lonesome."

Goldie said, "You come too, Anne."

"No, I'll stay here," said Anne, without a hint of petulance. Like her parents, she preferred to say at home.

As the children got into the car, Jim looked at Chris angrily. That his son would leave the ranch in summer, the best time of the year, for the turmoil in Bessie's house was a mystery to him, an affront to him and Lia.

When they drove off with Peggy at the wheel of Bessie's car, Lia stood on the front porch watching until the car was out of sight. For her something very bad had just happened.

Anne reached up and put an arm around her mother's waist. "Don't look sad, Mom. If he gets homesick, it'll serve him right."

"Oh, Anne. He's just a little boy. Of course, he's going to get homesick."

Anne was puzzled by something she had seen, but would not ask about. An aura of privacy pervaded their houses, the Helper house and the ranch. She knew it came more from her father than from her mother: a shut door should not be opened; no one should use another's possession without permission; letters were for the person whose address was on the envelope; and when someone was sick, there should be quiet in the house.

The puzzle began on the day Anne and Jim had gone to buy peaches and pears from a farmer in the small town of Rifle. When Jim opened the trunk of the car to put in the lug of fruit, the corner of the box lifted up a blanket. Anne caught a glimpse of a package wrapped in white with gold ribbons. Jim quickly covered the package, and Anne was consumed with a curiosity that would remain unsatisfied. Her parents did not give each other presents—that was something "Americans" did. Presents were for children, not grownups.

One morning, while she was sitting on the back porch stoop, sketching the bunkhouse, Anne heard a murmur of voices and looked through the open door to the kitchen. Her father was standing in front of her mother. His hat was pushed back on his head and his arms were draped over her mother's shoulders. Her mother had the fingers of both hands hooked inside his belt. Her father was looking down at her and saying something to her and she was nodding. Anne put her head down and slinked around the corner of the house. She did not want to be seen, but she was happy. It was a wonder to her, better than another time when her parents were standing by the pen and a cool breeze came up. Her mother had crossed her arms over her chest. Her father put his arm about her and drew her close. The best thing of all would be to see her father kiss her mother, but it had not happened. When her parents' low voices came to her from two bedrooms away and she drifted into sleep, she thought: *they are talking and kissing.*

Lia insisted the children give their father a kiss whenever he drove off on a trip, even for one night. She would tell them, "Kiss your father goodbye." Then she followed him to the car and after he settled himself on the seat, she leaned over and, making sure the children were out of sight, kissed him on the mouth. Lia waited until he drove off, then went into the room they called Nicky's room, lighted the vigil light, made the sign of the cross, and said a prayer. Lia had never explained the Last Kiss to the children; she was afraid that it would disturb them.

In her prayer Lia asked that Jim not be morose on his travels. He complained that he could not sleep in motels; when he did, his dreams were a mess, and restaurant food stuck in his stomach. When he returned home, he ate some of the soup Lia had prepared or swallowed two tablespoons of Pepto Bismol and went straight to bed. "Come to bed as soon as you can," he told Lia. He did not want to sleep without her beside him. It had something to do with the war, but he did not want to think about it.

Two weeks after Bessie, Peggy and the children left for Salt Lake, Jim and Lia walked through the quaking aspen to see Kosta, whose arthritis was painful enough to keep him from sleeping and whose hearing had become so poor that his dog had to bark until hoarse before he came out with his shot gun. Sheep carcasses would be strewn over the range soon enough, Jim knew.

Lia carried a covered bowl of *rhizogallo* in her left hand. Her right arm was around Jim's waist and his left arm was about her shoulder. They walked this way, slowly, for over a mile, listening to the thin, musical rustle of the quaking aspen.

While they were walking toward the sheep camp, Kosta used a thick tree branch to help him climb up a hill not far from his sheep wagon. At the top he gazed far off, one hand protecting his eyes from the glare of the fading sun. He was searching for another place to move his sheep; they had grazed the present pasture down to its roots. Through the pines, he saw two people walking toward his sheep wagon. He was aghast at those two, Jim and Lia. They stopped in the path and Jim stooped down and kissed Lia. "By the little Virgin! Look at them, like a sailor and a *poutana!* Kissing for all the world to see! Ach, ach! Now he has his hand on her breast! Parents of two children! What those poor little children must see in that house! Ach, my little Christ!"

As Jim and Lia neared the sheep wagon, they untangled their arms from each other. The sheep wagon was locked and Lia put the bowl on the tongue and hoped no little animal would find the pudding. Jim walked a few steps away and saw Kosta standing near the top of the knoll. "Kosta!" he called, cupping his hands around his mouth. Lia said, "I think he saw us." Again Jim called out. Kosta turned his face away from them.

"He's mad about something," Jim said. "I wonder what's in his craw."

They decided not to walk farther to speak to Kosta. "When he's got something eating him," Jim said, "you might as well talk to the wall." They retraced their steps and as soon as they were well away from Kosta's sheep wagon, Jim again put his arm around Lia's shoulders.

20

In 1953 the Korean War was going on. For the children what was important was the new wonder, television. They watched black and white cartoons and the Lone Ranger on his horse Silver, with his faithful companion Tonto, riding over the West to subdue villains. Jim would not quarrel with Anne and Chris over the television. The family was in town and the sheep on the winter grounds in the desert while the McCarthy hearings were being televised. Jim bought a smaller television for his bedroom and watched in disgust as Senator Joseph McCarthy—he called him a *lipodhiti*, an oily fraud—denounced one after another people in government and public life as Communists or fellow travelers. "And Eisenhower for God's sake," Jim told Lia in pained wonder.

Lia read accounts of Paul Crouch, the organizer for the Communist Party during the 1933 strike in Helper; in 1949 he had become a government witness against his former comrades at twenty-five dollars a day. So eager was he to inform that he offered more names than those asked of him: "I would like to mention one specific instance. A Howard Lee of Alabama, who I personally knew, had been a leading member of the Communist Party . . . " And "I personally know that the leading officers of the Southern Conference, Theresa Kantor . . . "

When she saw the immigrant Yugoslav mothers and their daughters she had known in school, Lia wondered how they felt about the Paul Crouch they hid from authorities, protected from being seized by deputies. She thought wonderingly about the strike sixteen years ago when she had wanted to be a social worker. The hearings left her unhappy with herself; she felt worthless; she had not done anything with her life.

Television also showed Charlie Steen, the "Uranium King" who was making millions in the red rock country in southeastern Utah. Bessie's husband Deno and Peggy's husband Tom stopped one day on their way to the Colorado Plateau to look for uranium themselves. They talked enthusiastically about the penny stock they had bought. Lia did not know why it fatigued her to prepare lunch for them. She was relieved that they were eating quickly, eager to be on their way with their Geiger counters and Geological Survey maps.

When Lia returned to the kitchen for another bowl of lamb stew, Deno told Jim a story about a woman with inverted nipples. Tom leaned a few inches over the stew, reminding Lia of his gluttonous mother's eating at Bessie's and Peggy's wedding dinner. His face had become full, tending to fat. The children in the family called him "Scrooge" because he never gave them money to get ice cream cones at Snelgroves, which was not far from his house.

Lia stood on the porch waiting to wave goodbye, but Deno kept talking. She thought she would fall if she did not sit down.

"That red-rock country is wasted on them," Jim said when Tom and Deno had gone. He sat on the porch steps. "Let's sit down. I've been thinking about something. I want to talk to you before the kids come home from school."

Lia waited for him to go on. "I don't like the idea of Anne taking the school bus to Price when she gets to high school. Why don't we move to Salt Lake? Before you know it, the kids'll be going to the university. They'd have to stay with their aunts, and I don't like that idea."

"But that would add another hundred-twenty miles to the ranch."

"Twice a year, we could put up with it." Jim watched her, her head lowered, a habit when she was thinking about a problem. She had become more quiet the past year; the closeness they now had was sporadic. He was afraid, as he had been in the early years of their marriage when he had premonitions that something would destroy their idyllic life. "Another reason would be so you could go to the university and finish your degree."

"Jim, I don't want to get a degree. There are so many important books I haven't read yet. If I went back to get a degree, I'd be stuck reading for classes books that I'm not interested in."

"You could attend lectures," Jim said, hoping for a look of interest in Lia's eyes.

"Yes. I'd like that."

"There's only one thing," Jim said. "We'll have to put up with Deno and Tom more often." They looked at each other and shook their heads. "And I know it would be hard for you to leave your mother and grandmother, but they're going to live to be a hundred."

They found a house near the university. It had been built in the early nineteen hundreds, with the corners of the roof upturned in the Japanese style that had been popular in those years. It was larger than Emma's Helper house, with window seats and two bathrooms. The trees lining the street were tall, sturdy, and old. Anne and Chris attended the Stewart School, which trained university students majoring in education; Lia, remembering Lupe and her children, volunteered to teach minority kids to read on the city's west side.

Anne and Chris showed no signs of being homesick. They had their cousins, spent considerable time in their aunts' houses, and were spectators in the turmoil played out in Peggy's and Bessie's families. Most often the cousins congregated at Bessie's house. She or her mother Rina always had cookies or pastries on the kitchen table.

Rina regularly lost her temper with Bessie because the children were not attending Greek school. Bessie had enrolled them, but they rebelled, complaining they were too tired after public school, and hungry—even though Bessie put extra cookies in their lunches. In winter it was almost dark when they got off the street car, and in spring and autumn they wanted to be with the children they could hear playing in the gentle, balmy dusk. After two years, they refused to go. Bessie asked Deno to tell them they had to continue, but he didn't care. "What good did it do me? Has it helped me make a livin'?" Bessie had to face her mother's censure alone. She was piqued that Lia's children did not have to go and there was no fuss made about it.

Peggy did not think at all about whether her children attended Greek School. Other concerns kept a constant, suspicious look in her eyes. Her daughters closed themselves in their bedroom as soon as they returned from school, but their mother's carping at their father poured through the cracks of the house, which Peggy told him she hated: "If you'd ask for a raise, we could have a better place! Look at Lia and Jim, they move into a nice part of town while I'm here, stuck in this cramped ugly box like we were a family of bananas! And even the bananas move to a better area!" She was talking about the Greek immigrants who had arrived after the Second World War.

"Well, why don't you get a job if you want a big house! Those imports work, both the husbands and their wives!"

"So, now it's my responsibility to make enough money to get a decent house!"

The sisters played quietly, seriously, with miniature dolls their grandmother had given them. Their *yiayia* Katina also sewed little dresses for the dolls. Almost everyday she came to the house with food she had cooked. She did not know how to drive, and her husband Pete would not take her to "that daughter you spoiled rotten." She came in all kinds of weather, carrying a pan tied with a dishtowel. She had learned to take the right streetcar. Sometimes Peggy drove her home in the family's second car, an old Ford.

Katina wrung her hands over Peggy's haranguing about a house, until one day she gathered all the determination she could and told her husband Pete that they must help her get a better one. "That neighborhood is no good. A block away *Mexicanoi* and *mavroi* live in trashy houses. It's not good for the girls." She hoped that by using the granddaughters she would arouse Pete's sympathy. But it didn't work.

"No!" he thundered. "We've got five daughters, not one! You've deprived yourself to give that ungrateful daughter of yours what she wants! No longer! Do you hear?"

"What can she do? He doesn't make enough money!"

"She chose him! We didn't! She made her bed! And what makes her think she deserves better than that man of hers with his nose up in the air? Always talking about being an officer in the war! And what a good family he comes from! What are we, garbage? Let me tell you, I'll bet he sat at a desk during the war, just like that other fool, that son-in-law of Gus's, that Deno! I don't know where we got these sons-in-law! I guess on the punch board!"

Katina would believe anything Peggy told her. Peggy and Bessie had sold the GI houses they had lived in after the war and with the money put down payments on larger ones near a grade school and a junior high school. The new neighborhood was middle-class. There were no minorities within a dozen blocks of her house. Still Peggy fumed: Lia had a better house in a better neighborhood.

For the Feast of Saint Thomas, Katina had baked *pastitsio*, spinach *pites*, and baklava for an open house. Peggy wore a long, tight-fitting red satin dress called a hostess gown. She had her hair dyed—a few white strands had appeared at her temples—and she was heavily made up. The buffet was ready for the visitors. Few came. When the doorbell no longer rang, Peggy, with artificially high spirits, insisted that Jim, Lia, Bessie, and Deno have another cup of coffee and more pastries.

The conversation turned to guests who had come in earlier. "Well, they're certainly living it up," Peggy said.

"Did you know what that goof Charlie Melinas said to me?" Tom asked, leaning over, stubbing out another cigarette into a bowl of butts. "He had the nerve to tell me that he set up his business all by himself with a GI loan! You know his godfather, Sam, the bootleg king, knows everyone in the Republican Party. I'll bet he paved the way for Charlie." Tom made a washing motion with his hands. "I'll bet Sam greased plenty of palms to get Charlie his licenses so quick."

Bessie nodded. "It seems like you just have to know someone nowadays to get anywhere."

"Yeah," Deno bellowed, "so Charlie's Stella dolls herself up like a movie actress, but what she needs is major plastic surgery!"

Peggy put on a demure look. "I remember her when she lived on the west side and wore awful hand-me-down dresses."

"They're all a bunch of showoffs." Tom's mouth pushed out petulantly. "Did you hear Plato Klonides say that he was building a house way up on the avenues, on Pill Hill, where the rich doctors live?"

"Well, they can have their big houses. I bet they all lose them to the bank in another year or two," Deno said.

Bessie nodded. "They're money hungry."

When they got into their car, Jim and Lia looked at each other and shook their heads. Jim said, "I bet they started talking about us the minute we left the house."

Deno assumed, as Bessie, Tom, and Peggy did, that Jim had money and that he had not really worked for it. "Well, you've got money," one or the other would say to him. "So you can talk like that."

When Jim bought Lia a Chevrolet, Bessie, Peggy, and their husbands talked about the car at length. "Why didn't he buy a Cadillac or at least a Chrysler? What's he gonna do with all that money?" After a decade of marriage, Jim bought Lia a diamond. Bessie and Peggy discussed it thoroughly. Peggy was so afraid it was larger than hers that she became sick. She would not look at the marquis-cut diamond.

Jim and Lia had their own small group of friends. Lia never mentioned them to Peggy and Bessie. Like their mothers, Bessie and Peggy touted the family as a bulwark against the world and others beyond it as strangers. Neighbors could be friends but only to a certain extent. The family should always be together, ready to defend its

members against gossip—even if it was true; the family must always come first, and the great church days be spent together without fail.

Each autumn, when Jim, Lia, and the children returned from the ranch, Lia invited two couples to dinner. The men were Jim's friends from college days, students he had sat with at the Greek Table in the library's study room: Plato Klonides, the attorney who had helped out when Jim thought he might have a child with an old girlfriend, and Charlie Melinas, from the west side, the owner of the city's largest shopping center and the object of Bessie, Deno, Peggy, and Tom's disdain. When Bessie and Peggy found out about the dinners, Bessie looked hurt and Peggy said, "Aren't we good enough to be invited to eat with your rich friends?"

Every month or so Lia had lunch with Norma and Elizabeth, her classmates at the university. Peggy saw her lunching with her friends one day in the department store ZCMI's Tiffany Room. Lia introduced them and Peggy said coldly, "How do you do." Lia invited Peggy to have coffee with them, but with a haughty lift of her head she hurried off. The next time Lia saw her aunts, Rina said with didactic disapproval, "Don't move away from the family! The family must be first. If you are sick who comes to help you? If you have troubles, who comes to give you solace? Not some stranger. Your family comes running, that's who!" Lia nodded and smiled, knowing words were useless and wondering at this talk of "a family that came running," the last thing she wanted or Jim would allow.

Once a year on the feast day of St. Demetrios, Jim's name day, Lia invited the three generations of the Demas clan for dinner. Emma helped out at the house and Bessie baked her specialty, *pastitsio*. Lia felt she had fulfilled a good family tradition when the guests left in happy spirits; Jim always said, "Well, that's over for another year."

More repulsed by the family gatherings than Lia had been in her day, Chris and Gussie roamed the city, went to the Saturday movies without fail, and visited places their parents knew nothing about, like when they spent all day at the Ringling Brothers Circus and talked with seedy-looking performers, or the time, only one time, walking through City Creek Canyon where a tall, thin man offered them candy and they ran and would have been caught except for a tree root that flipped him over.

From the time of Chris's thirteenth birthday, he balked at going to the ranch for the summers. Lia and Jim asked why he didn't invite Gussie to spend the months with him in the mountains, but Gussie was not interested in pines, mountain quiet, and sheep. He wanted to

wander the city streets and Liberty Park, eat at drive-ins, sit in movie houses. He even told Anne that he had *done it* with a girl. Lia and Jim compromised: if Chris came to the ranch for six weeks, Jim would drive him back to spend the rest of the summer with Gussie.

At the ranch Jim squirmed at television and news reports on the dangers of cigarettes. He had tried stopping a few times without telling his family. His throat swelled at the thought that he could die and leave them because of smoking. He told Lia he would do it this time. He took the package of Lucky Strikes out of his shirt pocket and tossed it into the oil drum that was used for trash.

"I know it'll be hard, Jim," Lia said. "We'll help you. We'll stay out of your way. I'll walk on egg shells. I want so much for you to stop."

Jim nodded, the folds on either side of his nose pulling his mouth down. He went into his bedroom and shut the door. Lia stood at the window and looked toward the meadow. When Chris and Anne emerged from the pines, she walked outside and waited. The children were quarreling. When they came into the yard, Lia said, "Anne, will you set the table?"

Chris whipped his pants with a willow switch and began following Anne into the kitchen. "Chris, I want to talk to you." She began walking toward the corral. Chris stood where he was.

"Well, what do you want?" he said.

Lia controlled her anguish at his rudeness. "Chris, I know Anne has told you that Dad is going to try to stop smoking." Chris smirked. "That is exactly why I want to talk to you," Lia said gravely. "Listen to me. Your dad's addicted to tobacco and it's going to be very hard for him to stop." Chris whistled softly, as if trying to deflect her voice. "I was hoping that you would help us. But if you're going to make things worse, maybe you should go back to Aunt Bessie's earlier than we expected. I know it'll be all right with her."

"Oh, why doesn't he just grow up and stop?"

"When you and Gussie stop experimenting with marijuana, then you can talk."

Chris's small face went red and he tried to defend himself, but Lia said, "I know what marijuana smells like. In Helper we lived close enough to the railroad tracks, and Mexican section workers smoked it. If I smell it once more, I will have to tell Dad."

Chris hurried into the house, and Lia thought: *He doesn't care about us. We don't mean anything to him.* She stood by the corral and gazed with despair at the pine-covered mountain beyond.

Jim hardly slept that night. He dozed off toward morning and got up late, looking tired, miserable. Lia hooked her fingers over his belt and said, "Would you like some French toast?"

Sensing they were being watched, Lia turned suddenly. Chris was standing in the doorway to the dining room, looking at her with a contemptuous smile. Lia stepped back. Throughout the day she kept thinking about the awful smile, but she could not find words for its meaning—it seemed it had something to do with his acknowledging and despising her intimacy with Jim. It was the last time she hooked her fingers over Jim's belt.

Chris became increasingly belligerent about going to the ranch at all. "I can see he's not going to be a sheepman," Jim told Lia, although he hoped that as Chris grew older he would have a change of heart. The quiet child who liked his mother to read to him, who spent time looking far off, not hearing when he was being called, was now angry, forever talking back to his mother.

Jim stood near the sheep pen and looked over the canyon to the green mountain beyond. He breathed in a flutter of fear that now after nearly twenty years of peace, his world was being threatened. He was helpless; everything he and Lia had tried with Chris had not only failed, but made matters worse, and he had the heavy worry about the declining sheep business. The sheepmen at the back table of the café talked about their plight constantly: synthetics, prices, competition. It wasn't the same anymore, being a sheepman.

Chris was nearly sixteen and summer on the ranch was a failure that could not be repaired. He gazed off moodily, could not be appeased with trips to Craig, to Basalt, to Glenwood Springs to swim, would not agree to see the Indian ruins in Mesa Verde or the rodeo in Laramie.

One evening after a dinner during which Chris sat sullenly without speaking, Anne followed him outside and hissed at him, "You're a spoiled brat, making Mom and Dad feel bad after all they do for you, bumming around Salt Lake City as if that makes you something special. You and Gussie and your low-class friends!" She ended her diatribe. Chris looked at her steadily, infuriating her further.

Later that same week they were seated at the kitchen table, Anne was trying to start a conversation about the television family, *Father Knows Best.* "Oh, them," Chris scoffed.

"I know it's fluffy and unreal," Lia began.

Chris interrupted. "Oh, you would, Miss Goody-Goody."

Jim dropped his knife onto his plate. He stood up. "Come into the other room," he said.

Chris stood up. Fear contracted his face, but with a swagger he followed his father to the front bedroom. Jim closed the door. "Okay, what's eating you?" Chris shrugged his shoulders. "What's this Miss Goody-Goody business? You think your mother is silly because she's soft hearted and teaches kids to read?" Chris looked at the floor. "Or do you think she's a weak little pushover? I'd be a cripple today in more ways than one if it hadn't been for your mother. You don't know a damn thing about your mother. She's your mother, but she's my wife, and I don't let people make her feel bad. If I see you looking cross eyed at her or hear you call her a 'Goody-Goody' or any other name one more time, I'm going to smash your face in." Chris was pale, but he still looked at the floor. "Now, I'm going back to the table and you can either come back and tell your mother you're sorry or not, but if you don't, I'll remember it the next time you ask me for something."

Jim walked back to the kitchen and sat down without looking at Anne's and Lia's worried faces. "You weren't too hard on him, Jim?" Lia asked in a fearful voice.

"No, but I didn't practice child psychology either." He tried to eat, but was about to push his plate away when Chris walked into the kitchen, reached down, and kissed Lia on the cheek. Lia looked at him, startled.

"You don't have to come to the ranch anymore," Jim said. "You can stay in town as long as you get some kind of job." He felt as if his bones had gone soft.

He lay in bed awake for a long time and when Lia got in beside him, he knew that she too was unable to sleep.

21

The next summer Jim and Lia gave up all hope that Chris would come to the ranch. Jim's disappointment deepened as he saw the signs that the sheep business was finished. Chris was failing high school, sneering when Lia offered to help him with his homework, and there were times when he did not come home for the night. The next day Lia would telephone Bessie hoping Chris was there. Bessie said, "Gussie didn't come home either. They're bums. I hate their long hair."

The 1960s suited Chris and Gussie. "The times were made for them," Jim told Lia.

Families meant nothing to the young anymore, Jim thought. An acquaintance in the Craig feed store had talked about it: "It's their friends who are important. They don't give a damn about their families. They don't need them. They can always go on welfare if they haven't got a job. They have kids who never see their grandparents." He stopped, looked at the floor, ashamed at having talked about himself.

That autumn, as Jim and Lia drove back from the ranch, they passed a bearded young man thumbing a ride in the opposite direction. It was an exceptionally hot day for autumn. A young woman sat in the dirt a few feet from the man with a little boy in her lap. She was wearing an ankle-length print dress and had a blue bandana around her head. The little boy had white Dutch-cut hair. A sling bag was on the ground next to them. Jim knew Lia was grieving for the little boy, wondering if he were being fed properly, wondering whether a car would pick them up. No doubt they were going to California, probably San Francisco, where drugs were easy to get. It was already evening. There was sadness in the car; there was sadness in their Salt Lake house and in their ranch house. There was sadness in their love making. Jim glanced at Lia: the sadness came from her.

Lia hardly read anymore and she had stopped attending the university lectures. Jim wanted to talk with her about it, but again he did not know how to begin or even what to say. The sadness was like a barricade between them.

Chris had begun to criticize his mother again when his father was not nearby. "Why are you wearing your hair like that? And those prissy clothes. You're out of style."

"Mom is not out of style," Anne glared at Chris. "Mom's got classic features. Why should she go around with her hair long and stringy? I suppose you'd like to see Mom in those 1930s dresses and old men's jackets that come out of the Salvation Army. You're a sheep. You have to dress like all the other hippies and act like them. Where's the freedom in that?"

"Everything is so fucking blah here!"

Anne opened her mouth wide. "Chris!"

Lia said, with a strained smile, trying to ward off the trouble ahead. "Well, then, I'll stop baking those f-ing chocolate cakes and not let you take my f-ing car."

On Saints Constantine and Helen's name day, Jim, Lia, Anne, and Chris were at Bessie and Deno's house for the family dinner honoring Deno. In the dining room two tables had been pushed together and covered with linen tablecloths edged with several inches of crochet. Rina had made the tablecloths for all of her seven daughters. One end of the tables protruded into the living room. The grandchildren were seated there and at bridge tables, similarly covered with Rina's crocheted linen. Platters of the familiar feta cheese and spinach *pites*, roast lamb, *dolmadhes*, and salads were spread down the length of the improvised table. Plates of baklava, powdered sugar cookies, and honey and nut pastries were set on the buffet.

Deno was greatly pleased with himself, the host of the bounteous dinner cooked by his mother-in-law Rina, his wife Bessie, and her Aunt Katina. He was toasted properly. Platters and bowls circulated; the old grandfathers Gus and Pete were waited upon with the proper, respectful concern by the women in the family. The grandmothers Rina and Katina were told to sit still; they were not to lift a hand—as if they had not done most of the cooking themselves.

Gus was jovial, recounting some old-country anecdotes, and Pete talked about the early days in America when the men tried hard to celebrate their name days without women. "How much bad cooked cabbage and potatoes we ate with the lamb! But there was lots of wine!"

Deno stood up to give a toast to "Our men fighting the Gooks! May they beat those slit-eyed bastards to their knees!"

Jim toyed with the stem of his glass. Lia looked at him and then at her untouched wine glass.

"What's the matter?" Tom boomed out. "Aren't you drinking to our men risking their lives in Viet Nam?"

"I hate this war," Jim said.

"I guess you think all those anti-war demonstrators are okay?" Tom said, and Gus, the patriarch, shook his finger. "Jim, it's no good to think that way. The government he knows what he's doing." In his old age, Gus had begun mixing his pronouns. He had also stopped driving after getting a ticket, the first in his life. He had almost run into a woman crossing a street. Pete now did all the driving and the banking. Rina sat with folded arms over her sagging bosom and looked on, frowning at this unbelievable state of affairs.

Pete raised his glass. "Come on. No more talk about the war. Drink more wine."

Deno stood up and raised his wine glass. "My country right or wrong!" he shouted and gulped down the wine, leaving purplish spots on the white linen tablecloths. Rina and Katina looked at them in dismay.

"It should never be my country right or wrong," Jim said.

No one moved; the children at the far end of the living room, stopped their talk. "I don't like to hear this unpatriotic talk in my house," Deno said with an attempt at great dignity.

Jim said nothing.

"We know you were wounded," Tom said with a sniff.

"I think you sat at a desk all through the war," Jim burst out, "just like Deno did." He stood up and Lia joined him. Jim began walking out. Lia stopped to kiss Rina, Katina, and Gus and Pete. She said no word of apology and waved her hand to Bessie who looked shocked.

"Good riddance to the Cripple," Deno said. "Okay, let's not let that turncoat ruin my name day. Bessie, get the coffee on the table and pass the *ghlykismata*."

In the car Jim said, "Well, Greek style, we'll all make up, but that's the last time I'll go to Deno's and Tom's houses."

"You don't have to go. I'll see Bessie and Peggy in the daytime." Lia's and Jim's eyes met in one of those understandings that often passed between them: the pattern of Demas family solidarity had been broken.

Chris, in the back seat next to Anne, said, "I'm still gonna go to Uncle Deno's house. Gussie's my best friend."

"Your dad didn't tell you not to," Lia said angrily.

After the children had gone to bed, Jim sat next to Lia in the cool, dark living room and said, "I shouldn't have done that. Made a scene in someone else's house."

Lia touched his hand. "You said what you felt and they're boors."

Chris looked at Lia for several seconds while she returned his gaze questioningly. "Lia, what's wrong? Why are you sad all the time?"

"I didn't know I was."

"Yes, you've been sad and far away for a long time." Jim glanced at his brown sheepman's hands. "You don't read much anymore. You've stopped going to the U's lectures. Is it," he stopped a moment and looked above her head to avoid her sad eyes. "Do you feel you made the wrong decision, way back. That you should have gone on to school and had some kind of career?"

"No. No," Lia said in surprise.

"Do you think you made a mistake in marrying me?"

Lia slowly shook her head, a look of incomprehension in her eyes. "Oh, no, Jim. No."

Jim waited for something more, then stood up. He gave Lia's hand a pat. "Goodnight," he said.

Lia heard him walk into the kitchen, then the sound came of water running from the faucet—she thought of Jim's drinking a glassful without stop. He then went into the bathroom where she knew he would brush his teeth vigorously before going to bed. She was stunned by Jim's giving her hand a pat. She had seen him pat other people's hands over the years—an impersonal, goodbye gesture. She thought: *I've hurt him and, worse, I didn't even know I was doing it.* She wondered what she had been doing that made him ask her such terrible questions. She sat in the dark and could give no real answer. After a while, she sensed that she had been wanting something more, but what? She did not want to work years getting a doctorate. She would have had to be gone for most of the year at the university while Jim was out with the sheep. She could never have left him for even a few weeks.

And, he said she was sad. Yes, she had slipped into sadness because of the war, because of worry over Chris, because she had wanted life to be idyllic as it had been when they were younger, and because

she was dissatisfied with herself. She jumped up and hurried through the dark house into her bedroom. Jim was on his right side, whether sleeping or not, she could not tell. She undressed and lay next to him with her right cheek against his bare back and her left arm around his chest. Tears wet his back as she cried soundlessly. Then Jim stirred, turned to her, and cradled her against him. "I hurt you, Jim, and I didn't know I was doing it." The tears still came, wetting his chest. He stroked her hair and wiped the tears with the hem of the sheet.

The next morning Lia lighted the vigil taper in front of Nicky's icon of the Virgin and Child. Although she still said nightly prayers before the icon of the Mother and Child, several years had passed since she had lighted the vigil taper. She crossed herself and looked at Them whom she often wondered about. Silently she prayed, then made an oath in Their presence that she would never again cause Jim sadness and pain.

The day after his eighteenth birthday, in 1966, Chris registered for the draft, so he could burn his card, he told Anne. He and Gussie were going to the California Bay area, he said. "That's where all the action is."

"Chris, if you stay here, finish high school, and register at the U, you could get a deferment," Lia told him.

"No one with any sense goes to college anymore."

"Then how are they ever going to get work?"

"Manual labor, that's how. That's the only good kind of work."

"Please don't go, Chris."

"No! I want to be with all those people marching and making a statement! Nothing's happening here."

"Where will you live? Where will you get the money for food?"

"I'm cashing in my savings account. Anyway there's no problem with food. Volunteers go to all the restaurants and pick up the unused food. They serve it in the parks."

"And if you're drafted?"

"I'll go to Canada."

Lia looked at Chris for several seconds. "Are you going to tell Dad or are you and Gussie going to just drive off in Gussie's car?"

"No, I'll stay and tell him when he comes home."

Lia turned from Chris. "Take bread and cheese with you. That's a long desert you have to cross and not many places to stop."

Chris went into his bedroom and began packing his father's old duffle bag.

Lia walked about the house, listening for Jim's car coming into the driveway. She met him outside. Anne was with him; he had picked her up at school. "Chris and Gussie are leaving. They're driving Gussie's car to California."

They went inside. Lia and Anne sat at the kitchen table and looked beyond the dining room, into the late afternoon darkening of the living room. Jim walked into the hall and into Chris's room. "You'll get lost there. You're too young to step into it."

"I'm not too young! I believe in what they're doing."

"Like the drugs and the casual sex? You know what I mean. Girls and women having babies and dragging them all over the country. A string of fathers who come and go."

"What do you think I am? I'll take care of myself."

"I won't send you any money."

"I'll get by. I can always be a hospital orderly if I'm in trouble. That's what they do."

"Wait another year."

Chris turned to filling the duffel bag.

Jim appeared in the living room and stood there with his head down. Lia hurried to him. "Jim, let him go. He's going to anyway. Don't cut him off. So he can come back." They looked into each other's worried eyes.

"Is that how you want it?"

"Yes."

Jim kissed the top of her head.

With tears running down her face, Anne went outside and stood near a lilac bush that was coming into bloom. A few minutes later Gussie drove up in his old car with worn tires. Anne hurried into the house. Lia was putting cookies into a coffee can. "Mom, let's give Chris Dad's harmonica. It'll remind him of us."

"All right, but maybe it won't mean anything to him. Maybe he won't take it."

"I'm not going to give it to him. I'm going to slip it into his duffel bag."

22

During the next three years, their families received several scribbled postcards from Chris and Gussie. No address was on the cards. Lia and Bessie stopped telling each other, "If they'd only call collect," and silently wondered what they could have done to raise their sons differently.

People were dying, first Emma's mother Annie, then Gus. Two years later Pete was hit by a car crossing State Street and died in the hospital. Rina and Katina made no demands about singing the laments. They had been in America nearly sixty years and the dark *mirologhia* were no longer part of their lives. There were now only memories of dead village grandparents lying in rough coffins, their bodies surrounded with thyme and wild flowers and frenzied women keening the ancient laments. Wearing the necessary black, sipping American coffee with other old, wrinkled women, they remained in their houses for the forty days that were the extent of their mourning.

Chris and Gussie did not know about the deaths. Bessie called Gussie a spoiled, self-centered brat, who was thinking only of having a good time, not having the decency to want to know what was going on in the family. "Let's see how he likes it. To come home and find his grandfather is dead." She hated seeing anything on television about the hippies, but kept watching, thinking she might see Gussie among the rag-tag wanderers. She had only Lia to talk with; Deno had "washed his hands of that no-good son."

Lia and Bessie could not reassure each other, fearing the worst, while Peggy, who now spent much of her time in erotic reveries about herself that often included Jim, told them, "It's all your own goddamn fault. You let them go. You should have known better."

Lia would not defend herself, but Bessie pleaded with Peggy. "We didn't let them go. They went against our wishes. You don't know how it is with boys. You've got two girls and they're not adventurous." Bessie told Lia, "I wanted to say, 'You've brainwashed your girls. They wouldn't dare do anything you didn't like.'" Lia and Bessie looked away from Peggy when she used profanity. "The way we were brought up," Bessie made a hissing sound, "we wouldn't even say 'hell' or 'damn.' She doesn't even seem to care that our mothers are old and need us."

Lia had tried to convince Emma to come to Salt Lake. Emma said she had no intention of leaving her mother's house. She did not want to talk with the next-door neighbors in the Helper house. "Sell my house. I'm perfectly all right here," she said. Emma had become so thin that the outline of her shoulder bones showed through her dress. Her face was a maze of fine wrinkles and her blue eyes had sunken into their sockets. All day long she puttered about her mother's little house and, as she said, "straightened it up." In the evening she watched television and with her fingers, deformed from arthritis, crocheted layettes for unwed mothers. Nor would she come to the Colorado Rockies for the summer. "No, that part of my life is over," she said. "I'm perfectly content here." Her mother, Lia knew, finally had the privacy she had needed and wanted.

Lia and Bessie drove down to Helper almost weekly to see Emma. When they first began making the trips, Lia invited Peggy to come with them. "Big deal!" Peggy said, "Ooh what fun!"

"I thought you might like to see my mother," Lia said.

Peggy frowned. "Well, some other time. I just have too much on my mind." Then the usual litany followed: Tom had been cheated out of becoming a manager in his organization. "It's all office politics. It's that shitty buddy system. And he works so hard. I don't know why all the bad luck had to fall on me. And Lana is having another nervous breakdown. It's all the fault of that dope she married. First man that looks at her and she falls for him like a *kouti*, a real dumbbell! And my mother's either getting senile or I don't know what!"

"Can you imagine Peggy telling us that Tom works so hard?" Bessie scoffed to Lia. "Deno says any time of the day you can find him hanging out at that *souvlaki* place on Third South. She's gotten worse since Uncle Pete died."

Instead of inheriting a big sum of money, Peggy and each of her four sisters received twenty thousand dollars. Both she and Tom had made assumptions about Pete's money. Because he drove Cadillacs,

they thought he would leave a fortune. To make it even worse, Pete had his attorney draw up papers which gave the bulk of his assets to Katina under the control of the bank's trust department. Now Peggy could not go to her mother and complain monotonously until she gave in; now Katina could give Peggy only a little of her Social Security check. Katina mourned at the icon of the Virgin, "How did she get this way? Why does she torment me?"

The telephone call Lia and Bessie had hoped for came. Chris said, "Mom, it's me."

"Chris! Where are you?"

"Mom, Gussie's dead." Chris began crying. Her voice cracking, Lia said, "Go ahead. I'll wait."

Chris wept loudly, then sputtered for several moments. "We took him to Emergency and he died a few minutes later. The doctor said his lungs gave out. What should I do? Oh, God, tell me what to do."

"Give me a telephone number. I'll tell Aunt Bessie and call you right back."

Crying, Lia got into her car and drove to Bessie's house. *You little fools*, *you little fools*, she repeated again and again to herself. When she reached Bessie's house, she got out of the car, stood on the burnished autumnal grass, looked at the ornamental maples on either side of the sidewalk that led to the porch, and made fists of her hands: she had to go into the house, had to.

Bessie opened the door. "Lia! What's wrong? You look awful!" Bessie's cheeks had sagged since Gussie had gone away. Suddenly they turned a bright red and Lia feared Bessie's blood pressure was going up dangerously.

Lia stood inside the front door. "Let's sit down, Bessie, I have something bad to tell you."

Bessie made her way to the sofa. "It's Gussie, isn't it? And he's dead, isn't he?"

Lia sat next to Bessie. "Yes," she said and put her arms around Bessie's heavy shoulders. They cried, then sat staring ahead into the dim light at the worn period furniture, faded and soiled pink damask chairs that matched the sofa, and an oiled coffee table where three china boxes with flowered design had sat in the same place for a quarter of a century.

"I have to call Chris to tell him what you want to do."

"I'll call Deno. He's probably in the *souvlaki* hangout. He'll call Mellie and have her husband make the arrangements to bring Gussie home."

"I'll stay with you if you want, Bessie."

"No, Lia, I long ago got used to the fact that Gussie was lost. Lost. It's no surprise to me."

Gussie's body came by plane, the same one that Chris was on—Jim had sent him the ticket. "It's better the coffin isn't open, Mom," Chris said, thin, his pony tail unkempt, and turned his head from her. "He's just skin and bone."

When Lia drove Chris to see his Aunt Bessie, she said, "I don't want to hear any lies, Chris. It was drugs that killed him, wasn't it?"

Chris paled and nodded. "Don't let his father know," Lia said. "I couldn't stand to hear him yelling about it to Aunt Bessie the rest of her life." Rina railed over Gussie's death, blaming every one over their laxity in setting him straight. "You should have gone down there and brought him home," she shouted at Deno.

"How! Tie him up like a calf?" he shouted back.

Emma came for the funeral, driving through Price Canyon in the early morning, staying long enough for the Liturgy for the Dead, and in the evening returning to her mother's house. Chris had offered to go with his grandmother. "No, you better take care of yourself. You look pretty bad off. I hope you're not goin' back."

Chris shook his head. He had wanted to return for the past year, but Gussie had become too sick and needed Chris to take him water and help him to the bathroom. He had made the decision one day in the Haight Ashbury; he was stumbling along—he had smoked one marijuana cigarette after another for three days, knowing that there was no hope for Gussie. He passed an alley where a young woman with a gypsy scarf around her head and wearing a dirty flowered skirt was sharing a can of dog food with a scrawny boy Chris' own age.

He felt dirty over Gussie's long dying, as if he had been an accomplice, and unworthy to go back to his parents' house. Lia wanted him to come back to his old bedroom and sit at the dinner table as he had when he was three years younger. Before she could ask Jim about it, he said, "I know you want him here, but we wouldn't be helping him. Anyway he doesn't want to come home. He feels guilty it looks to me."

They rented a small basement apartment in an old house a few blocks from their own. Chris took some of his possessions: tape player, record and tape collection, books, clothes. He found a construction job but was too weak to keep up with the other laborers. Sam Weller gave him work in his bookstore, but he could not concentrate on the customers' questions.

If Chris was asked what he was doing, he would say he was "between jobs." He was fired from waiting tables because he was too slow; for a while he drove a delivery truck for a company providing laundered linen for restaurants but took too long to find the addresses; for another two months he carried bags of salt for water softening tanks and hurt his back. Mostly he spent his time listening to tapes.

"It's going to take him years to get hold of himself," Jim told Lia.

Lia told Chris, "Come and eat with us as often as you want. Just drop in. I'll always have something ready."

Now in the Graduate School of Social Work at the university, Anne met Chris for hamburgers and Cokes and they regularly attended foreign films at the Tower Theater. She practiced the counseling skills she was learning, but Chris gave her a wan smile. "Anne, don't make a guinea pig out of me." Anne was flustered: she thought she had been subtle. She decided not to ask him what happened to their father's harmonica.

Lia often thought about the apathy of Chris's babyhood; of his having only one friend, his cousin Gussie; of never wanting to be part of the family; of his insolence toward her and Jim. She remembered the first time he left the ranch to stay with Gussie: she knew at the moment he stepped into Bessie's car that something bad was happening. She thought of it now as the beginning of a long sorrow.

Jim told Lia he would set up trusts for Anne and Chris. He didn't think Anne would ever need hers, but Chris could not function without help. The bank would be the trustee.

Not once had Chris asked about the ranch, about the sheep. Lia wanted to say to him, "Can't you see what's happening to your father? Don't you know he's desperately trying to keep what sheep he has left?"

Marko Papastamos's herd had also been depleted, and the price of wool fell to its lowest in the last fifty years. A coal company offered to buy his winter grazing land. The coal beneath it belonged to the federal government, but to get to it the company had to buy Papastamos's surface rights. He sold for millions, but he was lost and said so. Quiet and sad, his wife dead, he now lived with John's family. John spent most of his time in the cafés and pool halls in Grand Junction, not seeming to care that he was no longer a sheepman.

Peggy agonized over Marko Papastamos's selling his land, certain that he had divided his millions from the coal company with his children and that Jim and Lia were very rich. Marko Papastamos had

eight children, thirty-one grandchildren, and at the time of the sale seventeen great-grandchildren. He established trusts for them that would bring them a comfortable, not affluent income.

Peggy gave Lia's hands quick looks, expecting to see a five-carat diamond on her ring finger. The five-carat diamond had not yet appeared, but she still shot sly glances at Lia's hands. Tom said, "You'll see. The next thing you know Jim will sell his sheep, now that he's got a lot of money jingling in his pocket." Deno said, "Just look around. All these people of our generation that have money inherited it from their fathers. They didn't work for it." Bessie said nothing. She had begun thinking that she had made a mess of her life. She never handled situations as she should have, never stood up for herself.

One after another the matriarchs, Emma, Rina, and Katina, died. Katina had not recognized her children for almost a year when she broke her hip; she lived for a few more weeks. Rina had a stroke after Gussie's funeral and was paralyzed on her right side. Her grandchildren and great grandchildren avoided her: they could not understand what she was desperately trying to tell them about someone named Soula. Emma died in her sleep in her childhood home. Lia was relieved that she did not linger in a care facility; her mind had been alert; and she had died peacefully. Her funeral was held in the Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption in Price. No one told the priest, a recent graduate of the Holy Cross Seminary in Massachusetts, that she had never converted to Orthodoxy. Emma was buried next to her husband Chris and her son Nicky. The only old person Lia now had to look after was Kosta.

Jim had no trouble convincing Kosta that he should retire. "You have your Social Security and enough savings, and if you run out, tell me."

"My boy," Kosta said in Greek—he was beginning to use English even less than before, "It's time for me to go. I can't give you a full day's work. It would be a sin to take your money and a sin not to take care of the sheep like I should. And you don't have the big bands of sheep you once had."

The Holy Trinity priest suggested the Bristol rooming house, around the corner from the church. It had been built in the 1880s or 90s when the neighborhood began to change to an immigrant enclave. Its old brick, black-sooted from clouds of smoke from the steam engines at the railyards, had been painted dark red time and time again. Giant gas stations, a sausage factory, a moving van

warehouse, and several commercial buildings dwarfed the Bristol and the old houses that had once belonged to Mormon pioneers.

The entrance to the Bristol opened directly into a long hall extending to the back porch; on either side were single rooms for aging men. Kosta's room was at the front of the house on the right. It had one window and a limp curtain which Lia replaced. The brown patch of linoleum was so worn that the flowered design showed only under the bed. The bed was pushed against the back wall and spread with a gunny sack cover that Kosta had sewed together with a big needle—to keep the bedspread clean, he told Lia. On the left wall was a closet where all of Kosta's meager belongings were carefully put away. Next to the bed was a table with a hot plate. There Kosta boiled eggs and simmered sliced, peeled apples. With day-old bread bought at a nearby bakery, he subsisted. Day after day he ate the same food: hard boiled eggs, apples, and bread. "Don't bring me any food, Lya! It goes to waste. My belly can't handle rich food. And I don't want to give it to these sneaky *bastardellos* in this house."

Kosta had quarreled with all the renters from the first day he had come to the Bristol. Each time Lia visited him, he had new complaints: they had stolen his icon of the Virgin and Child; they pushed insects under his door; last week he found a scorpion in a little glass bottle in his pocket. Suddenly the Greek Puritan, as Jim called him, would start shouting, calling the roomers "whorelickers," "fuckers of mothers and sisters," and other names Lia did not know. When she asked Jim, he said he had heard the words but only knew they were obscene.

During Holy week, Kosta made a truce with the old men. He colored eggs with dye from the Greek importing store. American dye, he said, was too light, not the true red of the Resurrection. He presented an egg to each of the old men telling them, "Christ He risen." He could not sustain this Christian loving-kindness and next day grumbled and accused the men of other violences toward him.

Winter was hard on Kosta. His bones ached so that he could not rest, could not sleep. When Lia said she would see if there was some other medicine to help him, he said, "Pain is good for people."

One Sunday Lia sat in the old immigrant church and wondered if Kosta were sick—or even dead. He was not in his usual place on the right side of the nave, at the end of the second pew. When the priest handed her the *anditboro*, the consecrated bread, she asked for an extra piece for Kosta. She stepped into the gray day, raw diesel smoke heavy in the air, and drove around the block to the Bristol.

Lia hoped that Kosta was mercifully dead in his sleep, ninety-three years of age, his six-foot-four body stretched out, his ancient profile serene, a dignified patriarch—if a person didn't know him. She parked in front of the Bristol and with a feeling of dread looked at the rooming house. She had almost asked Chris to come with her, but knew it was a foolish thought. What kind of people were they, she thought, that she could not ask of her grown son a simple favor because she knew he would refuse her. He was now attending night school with other lost young people to get his high-school diploma.

As she opened the door, two old men were shuffling down the long dark hall. A muffled sound came from the other side of Kosta's door. She knocked harder. "Kosta, it's Lia" she whispered in Greek, hoping not to attract the old men down the hall and those behind closed doors, the fragile men living on old-age pensions and Social Security who had no families or who had abandoned them or were themselves abandoned.

Two old men turned and walked back up the hall. "He's in there," one of them said. "He's been pounding in there all morning."

"Kosta! Kosta!"

"Eh?" The voice was strong and clear.

The two men waited with Lia in silence. A bolt pushed out of a slot, a chain link fell against wood, and a key shook for several seconds around and then into the keyhole. Lia shook her head: how many times had she told Kosta that if there were a fire, he would never get the door unlocked in time?

The door opened and Kosta stood straight, head back, and peered down at her like a sheepherder scanning distant meadows. He scowled at the old men. "Go away. Go away," he said in English. "Come in Lya. Come in."

The room was brightly lighted with a large dangling light globe. On the brown linoleum all of Kosta's belongings were heaped; stacks of the Greek newspaper *Atlantis*, tied with knotted string; a few cans of green beans, which he no longer ate; empty egg cartons; rolled up long underwear; a double-breasted, wide-shouldered suit, which he had bought decades ago to wear to church; his shepherd's crook; three small wooden boxes he had made out of scrap lumber, each one secured with big locks. Inside the boxes were church bulletins, letters, and form notices sent to him over the years: Dear Social Security Client, new payment for . . . ; Dear member of our Senior citizens, the Salvation Army invites you to be its guest at the annual Thanksgiving . . . ; Dear Householder . . . .

"I should be ashamed to bring you into this mess. I've been searching since yesterday. I went—pardon me for saying this—to the toilet and when I came back, my medals were gone, stolen! Stolen! My medals from the Balkan War, and the one was the King's medal, the medal I got when we were caught outside Thessaloniki . . . "

Lia breathed rapidly to get some air in the closed-up room. She burst out, "Kosta, how could that be? You always have the medals pinned on you. And you always lock your door. They're here. Remember the time you thought you had lost your Saint Constantine medal and we found it in your coat lining?"

"Look! Look!" Crying, Kosta held out his long, lined palms, the pads of the fingertips a pattern of vertical, parallel wrinkles, the hands of the very old. "I've been searching since yesterday. I haven't left one space uncovered."

"Haven't you eaten this morning?"

"I ate a piece of bread."

"Did you take your medicine?"

"Yes, I took it! I'm not ready to die yet." Fresh tears ran down his cheeks. His chin dropped toward his thin chest. "I'm not ready, but He Who knows all . . . "

On the dresser two apples and a knife lay on a newspaper next to the hot plate. A board under the hot plate had a deep charred spot. "He'll burn the whole place down," the priest had told Lia. Kosta had continually exasperated the priest, wanting explanations. "Christ's mother was a Jewess! Christ was a Jew!"

"Kosta," Lia said in a tired voice, "here's a piece of *anditboron*."

"What! Was there liturgy today?"

"It's Sunday."

"Ach. Ach. I was so wrought up I forgot." Kosta made the sign of the cross and looked at the church calendar nailed next to his icon. "Yes. How did I forget it? Old age. Old age." He knocked the side of his head with his knuckles.

"Have you any letters for me to read?" Lia glanced at the door, wanting, longing to get out of the little room.

Kosta lifted his hands impatiently. "It was Fate that made you come today. I was going to take a *texi* and come to your house." Tears coursed down in rivulets on his sunken cheeks. He pinched his nose and sniffed. "No, what I'm going to tell you I have kept inside me, locked in my heart since the War of 1912. *I must tell it!* I never wanted to tell it to a priest." He gasped for breath.

"The young lieutenant I told you about, the *palikar* with the nice wife and two small children. Orphans all these years!" Kosta made the sign of the cross and turned his head stiffly to Lia. He hesitated. "When we were in the hollow at night and the Turks came up on the ridge, the captain got excited. I was standing by the lieutenant. I was his orderly. The captain wanted the men to wait until dawn and storm the ridge. The lieutenant said we should follow a soldier who came from those parts out of the hollow. There was no moon, but the soldier knew the way.

"The captain went crazy when the lieutenant argued with him. The lieutenant kept trying to convince him. Then the captain! The captain! The captain put his pistol against the lieutenant's head and fired! The lieutenant fell dead, and because of the shot we had to follow the captain up the ridge at dawn.

"The few of us who got out alive got medals. King Constantine himself pinned them on us. And I never told anyone about the lieutenant. The poor young lieutenant! Never! Who would listen to me, a charcoal maker, a sheepherder who didn't have a pair of shoes of his own until he went into the army? Who couldn't write his own name? Who would have paid attention?

"A young man in his prime!" Kosta went on. "A young widow, two orphan children! The captain fat and prosperous. And I never said it to anyone. Right after the war, I came to America. I learned to write, but I never wrote to anyone. I wanted to tell the *bossis*, Papastamos, but good man though he was, he wouldn't have done anything. 'The priest's shoes are none of your business,' he'd say."

Tears were in Lia's eyes, but Kosta had stopped crying. He mumbled and looked at his clasped hands. "It was seventy years ago, Kosta. God understands." Her voice weakened as she spoke the platitude. "Don't blame yourself. Maybe no one would have listened." She gazed at his bowed head: if he had known town ways, been able to read and write then, gone to a newspaper. If he'd been a different kind of man.

"Forgive me, Lya, but I better lie down."

Kosta followed Lia to the door. She shook his old hand tightly and put her arm around his bony shoulders. She stepped into the hall and heard the bolt being pushed into place, the chain clinking, the key rattling.

Two days later, the priest called and told her that Kosta was dead. After the funeral Jim said, "I'm glad he didn't know that I'm selling the sheep."

"Jim, you've decided for sure?"

"What else can I do? I'd hold on a little longer if I could only break even."

They returned to the ranch. Jim walked around in the evenings, often standing at the edge of the canyon and looking into it, sometimes sitting on the porch steps, where he and Lia had sat together and talked. She was reluctant to go near him at those times, even though she would say nothing.

The day a lone rider drove the sheep past the ranch house, Lia and Jim stood on the porch and watched. The horse, the old sheep dog, the lambs and ewes, the sheep wagon were all going past, toward Twenty Mile Road.

They stayed on the porch for several minutes after the sheep had disappeared, then suddenly Jim walked around the house to the meadow and on toward the pines. Lia was dismayed that he felt only his own grief, but was unaware of hers. She glanced out the kitchen window at intervals; Jim returned when it was almost too dark to see. There was no moon. He brought the smell of crushed sheep droppings stuck to his shoes and the odor of sweat. Lia had his food ready, but he said he did not want to eat and went to bed.

Early the next morning, he left the house after drinking a cup of coffee and eating a piece of toast. Lia wanted to go with him, but his brooding face kept her from asking if she could. Again he was gone most of the day. He hardly ate much, was mute, and Lia was afraid to question him. For a week he continued his new routine and the night was given to frantic lovemaking that Lia knew was only a means to help him sleep.

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On the second Monday after the sheep had gone, Jim showered, shaved, and drank a cup of coffee while standing. "I've got to go to the bank," he said. Lia followed him to the front porch, hoping he would say, "Come with me," but he went on without a goodbye. She thought that at least he seemed more like himself and returned to the kitchen to prepare his favorite dishes; it was his fifty-fourth birthday. She had not said "Happy Birthday" when he had come into the kitchen that morning. It could not be a happy birthday after selling his sheep.

Lia also postponed the usual family dinner for Jim. It had become a ritual for the family to celebrate at the ranch. There were nine of them now: Anne, her husband, and daughter Rachel; Chris and the woman he had lived with for years—both in their thirties, they had met in night school and had two small children. Lia's overtures to Chris' girlfriend, Stacy, had not been rebuffed, but neither had they helped establish family affection. "They're oddballs," Jim had told her. "You've tried hard enough. At least he's cut off that damn pony tail."

The bank was quiet. Besides the employees, Jim was the only person in it. He sighed several times. He nodded to the red-headed loan officer who glanced up at him with a quick smile, her blue eyes fringed with black mascara. She was sitting at a desk next to the aisle; he knew her only by her first name, Margie, and acknowledged her with a tip of his hat. A gray-haired, intensely wrinkled woman he had known since the early thirties when his family had moved to Craig stood behind the counter and also smiled at him. "How's Dan, Marva?" he asked. "Mean as hell," she replied. He nodded and signed for the matching key to his safety-deposit box. He took out the papers from the Forest Service, returned the key to Marva, and walked down the aisle.

Margie jumped up, her black leather purse ready on the desk. She adjusted the long straps over her shoulder and caught up with Jim's long-legged stride as he reached the door. Jim opened the door for her. As she stepped past, she breathed out heavily and looked over her shoulder at him. "I'm on my break," she smiled, her thinly plucked eyebrows lifted. "How about buying me a cup of coffee?"

Jim did not answer, only looked at her. "Oh, come on," she said, "it's only a cup of coffee."

Jim followed her into the deserted café, a few stores down the street. They sat in a front booth opposite each other. Margie settled herself, like an excited teenager, Jim thought, wondering how old she was, probably late thirties or early forties. He shifted on the imitation leather seat, hoping no one would see him having coffee with a woman who wasn't his wife. After giving the waitress their order, he gave Margie a long look while she talked about the stack of mortgages on her desk.

Jim's eyes strayed to her lips, full, slightly parted, and the same pale red color as her hair. Her blue silk shirt was open down to the third button. A few freckles showed there. He drank his coffee quickly. "Margie, I have to go. I've got an appointment."

Margie put on a sad face. "Next time, I'll buy the coffee."

Jim thought of her while driving up Twenty Mile Road. He knew Lia would have all his favorite dishes to celebrate his birthday, and yet red-haired Margie interfered with his thoughts. He ate his birthday dinner, almost in silence.

A few days later, walking past the bank, he gave it a quick look and continued on. High-heeled shoes clicked behind him. "Jim! Jim!" a woman's voice called and he knew it was Margie before turning around. She was wearing one of her regulation suits—all with long jackets that minimized her ample hips.

"Jim, I'm lucky I saw you going by. Will you give me a ride to the garage to pick up my car?"

"Sure," Jim said readily.

"Now, this time, I'm buying the coffee," Margie said with a long look.

Later, driving up Twenty Mile Road, Jim thought only of the bright face across the table from him, the excited look in her eyes, the girlish little motions with her hands, white with a few freckles, the nails long and painted a bright red.

Lia wondered what was happening to Jim over the past week. He watched his sports programs on television but when she asked him

a question about a player, wanting him to speak because she could not understand his silence, he did not answer. He had not really been watching the plays. "Is something wrong?" she asked one night. He turned his head and pretended he was absorbed in the football game.

Something very wrong was going on. The strongest gauge to Lia was that Jim, the creature of habit, for more than a week had not turned to her for what he had always called making love.

The beginning of the second week of his peculiar silence, Lia walked into the kitchen, and as she had done for thirty years, put her right hand on Jim's shoulder and lowered her head to give him the usual light morning kiss on his temple. He jerked away from her, and she stood like a statue, humiliated, distressed, not knowing what she should do next. She heard Jim opening and shutting drawers, slamming the closet door shut, but she could not force her legs to take her into the bedroom to find the cause of the commotion. Then he stood before her, holding his brown leather bag, jamming his hat on his head. "I'm leaving," he said in a loud voice. "I'm involved with another woman." The front screen door slammed, the truck wheels caught with an impatient spitting of gravel, and the sound of the engine grew fainter until there was only silence.

For a long time she stood in the same spot, then her legs began to pain and she sat at the kitchen table. She looked at the long list of groceries she had intended to buy that day; she had put off going to town for more than a week because of Jim's strangeness and had used up most of the perishables in the refrigerator. She sat staring, her head numbed, thinking again and again that the truck would roar to a stop; he would return; tell her it was a mistake. She began to hope she had only imagined it, but as the day turned bright and then began to darken, she knew it was all true. He was gone and she could not get her thoughts together to even wonder why.

The sky turned darker. A horrible fear sent her heart pumping, suffocating her. She got up—she had eaten nothing all day—closed and locked all the windows, pulled down the blinds, bolted the doors, and sat, frightened, on the sofa. Later she made a bed of sorts there with a pillow and a blanket, but she could not sleep. She had left the light above the kitchen stove on, yet every creak of a twig or the sweep of the breeze turned into dangerous foot steps.

For three days she sat on the sofa, disheveled, forgetting to take a morning shower, eating the last of the soda crackers and a small lump of *feta* cheese, just enough to keep her resisting stomach from

hurting. She thought of Jim's turning from her when she tried to kiss his temple, of the sterile nights, of his hard face as he told her he was involved with another woman. When had it happened? She wondered if she had chased him into another woman's arms; she had read those words on the cover of a woman's magazine at the grocery store check stand. But what had she done? Who was this women who had taken possession of him? Was she so beautiful he couldn't help himself? What had happened? Was it losing his sheep? She thought it might have been something that had happened during the war. She nibbled on the last of the food in the refrigerator and cupboards. To keep her stomach from hurting, she dipped *koulourakia* into water, lacking the resolve to even boil the water and make tea.

Then she began to see herself as more than unloved—despised, revolting to Jim, even ugly. She began to think that Jim had been moving toward leaving her for a long time, but everything was without logic; she forgot how ordinary the routine of life had been before the sheep left. Every other day Anne telephoned and each time when she asked the ritualistic, "How's Dad," she answered, "Oh, fine. He's all right."

"Make a list of the things you want and Rachel and I will bring them the end of the month," Anne said.

A dryness breathed in her. She forced herself to speak. "I don't need anything."

"Well, then we'll bring you a lot of things you don't want." Anne laughed.

At the end of the week, the telephone rang. Her heart beat fast at the thought that the news had traveled from Craig to Grand Junction, and it would be John on the phone, demanding, yelling, blaming her.

"So the goddamn, son-of-a-bitch went off the deep end!" Swede shouted. "Shacking up in a motel like a sleazy traveling salesman! I'd like to beat the shit out of him!"

Lia was mute. "Okay, Lia," Swede softened, "I'll bring your mail. What else do you need?"

"Nothing, Swede. Nothing."

Lia's knees buckled, and she waited a few minutes before walking to the bathroom. She quickly took a shower and washed her hair, not wanting Swede or anyone to see her unkempt. Then she gathered the pillow and blanket from the sofa and threw them on to her bed. Her breath came fast and shallow; her arms ached, but she kept on putting the house into a semblance of order. She opened the windows

and doors, making sure the screens were latched. Her head bobbed in sorrow: she had half a can of coffee, but no pastries to offer Swede. She was ready to prepare the coffee when he drove up in his old gray Cadillac.

He did not want coffee or to come inside; he wanted to sit on the porch and curse Jim. "My God, taking up with Margie, the chippie!"

"Who is she, Swede?"

"She's that redhead that works in the bank. She's got this little boy eight or nine. Supposedly divorced. He fell into shit, the stupid cocksucker!" Swede's care to watch his language around women had vanished. "She was the old manager's girlfriend. I guess that's how she got the job."

"Have you seen Jim?"

"No! The bastard runs the other way when he sees me coming! Hasn't shown his face at the back table in the café either! He's going to get it from me, I'll tell you that!"

Swede knew more, but he wanted Jim to be taken back if he returned and so would not tell Lia details—that every evening after the bank closed, Margie and Jim ate dinner at Tom's at the edge of town, then went to his motel. Margie left around ten o'clock. Her son usually stayed overnight with his grandmother, a woman Swede detested whenever he saw her on the street. Her big buttocks moving under a JC Penney dress, her hair a variegated white and pale red, and at times wearing house slippers, brought all of Swede's dislike for such aging, bedraggled women to an unreasonable hate.

"Something happened to him, Swede."

"I don't want to hear any of that shit! Just another stupid bastard falling for a supposedly sexy dame."

Swede tried to convince Lia to let him drive her to town, have dinner, and then he would bring her back. "I don't want you wasting away over him, the shitass! You look peaked."

"Not today, Swede. I'm still trying to get used to it." Smiling wanly at Swede, she wondered how she could live the rest of her life without Jim. She tried to picture what he was doing and the image of him looking at the red-haired woman—both of them smiling, even laughing, talking intimately—brought an acrid rise of vomit to her throat. Swede left, vowing to "catch the fucker and make him pay through the nose."

At that moment Jim was returning from Rawlins, Wyoming. He had finished making a deal to become partners with a sheep broker. He

whistled, something he had not done since college. He drove over the long road with a joyful anticipation of seeing Margie at Tom's, then going to the motel. She always put on a show for him when she took off her clothes. He thought of it, the girlish gestures with her hands, clutching them, pretending she was hiding her body from him. She usually had something in her hands, her brassiere or slip that she held at her waist, which was pudgy. Her legs were short and muscular, but she did not seem to know it. He smiled at her perkiness. "What no pillow talk?" She had tickled him the first night together, but he could not keep his eyes open. And even now, as soon as he climaxed he would begin to fall off to sleep.

He was obsessed with her. He made several daytime trips into Wyoming and Idaho, driving over the same desert roads that he and Lia had traveled for years. The same sagebrush, the same birds in the sky, in Wyoming large herds of antelope that Lia had loved to see, but images of Lia standing in the kitchen had easily faded away.

He avoided the familiar places, the table at the back of the café, the stores where he often met farmers and sheepmen whom he talked with for a few minutes. Something told him to to avoid these places, but it wasn't thoughts of Lia.

One evening Margie wanted to hear a country band that was playing in town. Jim said, "I'd rather not."

"Why not?"

"Well, how would it look, me a married man seen there with a girlfriend?" With a jolt, he had a clear thought of Lia for the first time since he had left her ten days before.

With her head to one side, Margie said, "Well, don't you think it's about time you did something about that?"

He did not answer.

The next evening Margie said she had to take her son home with her because her mother was sick. First, they ate at Tom's, then picked up her son—Jackie, a thin nine-year-old with crooked teeth—and went to Margie's five room frame house. There she gave Jackie a peanut butter sandwich and a Coke. The house had an unlived-in look. It was almost as bare as his motel room, no magazines, not a house plant on the window sills, and one dime-store picture of a thatched French farmhouse on the living room wall. Nor did the house have the distinctive essence that all houses garnered from the washing of laundry, cleaning, food being prepared—Margie had said she "wasn't into cooking." She ate, though, chicken fried steak and other ordinary foods with little cries of enjoyment: "Ooh how good this is," and "Just delicious."

After Jackie was in bed, Margie beckoned Jim with her forefinger and a lift of her eyebrows to come into her bedroom, but he said he was tired. Margie pouted. He left quickly and drove to his motel room with the television set that had horizontal lines through the picture, the pale green chenille bedspread, and the unlined, flower-patterned curtains over high, small windows. A cheap bureau stood next to the door leading to the linoleum-floored bathroom. He thought of the little boy with the crooked teeth who had glanced at him warily. Quickly he turned on the television set, took off his shoes, and lay on the chenille bedspread. A stark dissatisfaction with the room struck him for the first time and as he looked around, he was smothered by loathing. He would not remain in the cheap room one more night. He stood up and pulled the brown suitcase from under the bed. He emptied the clothing from the bureau into the suitcase and left it open to put the leather kit with his razor, toothbrush, and toothpaste into it in the morning. He did not know where he would go, probably the old Continental Hotel, but he could not stay in that room.

Lia was losing weight. The windows and doors remained locked, and each night she lay on the sofa but did not sleep. She thought persistently that Jim's war experience could be the basis for his bizarre leaving, something that he had forgotten. Nothing from her reading came to her; instead she was left again with the now familiar view of herself—despised, abandoned, hated by the man she had lived with for thirty years. Like something bitter on her tongue, she thought she was tasting the sham of her life.

One day as she lay on the makeshift bed, a car drove up. She sat up straight, but it was not the sound of Jim's truck. She listened to heavy footsteps coming up the steps, across the porch, then a sharp knocking on the screen door. She did not move, but sat stock still on the sofa, filled with nausea. The sofa had become a symbol of desolation: the sleepless nights on it, the foreboding sounds beyond the locked windows and doors, the dryness in the house. Yet she would not lie down on her own bed or on any other in the house.

After the truck had gone, she waited for considerable time to pass, then got up and carefully opened the door. Through the screen door she saw a Green River watermelon on the porch. A note was speared to the melon with a piece of wire. She unlatched the screen door and lifted the round, pale-green melon. To the right of the door she glimpsed six ears of corn on a piece of newspaper. The corn silk had dried up—they had been there for some time. She left the corn

there, not even wondering who could have brought it. Quickly she took the melon into the house and locked the doors. The note said, "Thinking of you. Scrub."

She put the melon into the empty refrigerator. It did not occur to her to cut and eat a slice. The telephone rang and she hurried to answer, but it was Swede. "I'm going out of town for a coupla days. Then when I come back, I'm gonna come and get you and give you a decent meal." During the ten days of Jim's absence Swede had telephoned every morning, begging Lia to let him take her to dinner.

"All right," Lia said, although she had no intention of going to Craig and eating dinner with Swede. That night a fever alarmed her; her face burned; her body was clammy. She thought of her children and grandchildren; she couldn't get sick or die. Water, she thought, she had not been drinking water; the only water she'd had was that in which she moistened *koulourakia*; her kidneys were about to stop working. She turned on the tap and drank two glassfuls.

When Swede returned, Jim had been gone two weeks. Swede said, "I'm coming up to get you. And no ifs, buts, etcetera. I won't take no for an answer."

"You don't have to come for me, Swede. I'll meet you there. I have to buy groceries."

"Park in front of Tom's at six o'clock sharp."

Lia wondered why Swede hadn't said to meet at the White Horse Inn. She was pale, her face thin; she had eaten the last of the *koulourakia* and had to buy groceries without fail. While Swede was gone, her misery had turned into a hard anger: she was grieving, sick, and Jim was enjoying himself with a Margie. She knew some day she would see him; he might even come to the ranch to ask her for a divorce, and she was ready. She had the words well rehearsed. She would be careful to speak quietly wherever they met; she did not want people to talk about her, the wronged wife screaming in a public place. And she would not let him talk, inarticulate Jim who could not match her with words.

She took pains with her hair and makeup. She wanted Swede to see she was not a frail little wreck. For the past few days, she knew she would not survive or perhaps would go a little crazy if she continued as she had the last two weeks. She had a daughter, a son, and three grandchildren; she had to become strong again.

She drove down Twenty Mile Road with grief settled about her in the car. She looked neither at the sky, the pines, nor the summer greenness, but straight ahead. Swede was standing at one side of the café. He motioned for her to park next to his old Cadillac. She

thought he was acting strangely. He could have gone into the café and waited for her.

Jim and Margie, sitting in the front booth, saw them through the window. Jim flushed darkly. With her large blue eyes pleading, Margie had just asked Jim if he would take her son Jackie to his first orthodontist visit. Jim had frowned and reluctantly nodded.

Lia walked into the café with Swede following her. Lia gave a start at seeing Jim, then she looked across the table to Margie. She wanted to do Jim violence. "Anne and Rachel are coming Saturday," she said with controlled calm in her voice. "I think you should come to the house and explain your new situation to them."

Jim blanched and looked at his half-eaten dinner. Lia's anger hardened further: Jim had not even thought of Anne and Rachel, or anyone. Margie was drumming her long red fingernails on the bare table, as if to give notice that she was an important part of the scene and was not to be ignored. Swede, Lia, and Jim all looked at her. Lia moved past two occupied booths toward the last one. Swede stopped, put his lips next to Jim's left ear, and said, "Jackass."

At the back booth Lia smiled faintly. "You planned all this, Swede."

"You betcha. I knew the son-of-a-bitch would come to his senses sooner or later. But the bastard's my friend and I wanted to save him before he lost all respect for himself."

At the front booth Margie was saying, "Well, that was a nice little to-do."

Jim looked at her. He was suddenly repelled by her fleshy lips, her vacant blue eyes, her greedy gusto while eating, the unbuttoned silk shirt that covered the hanging breasts that ended in puffy nipples and her bushy red pubic hair. *What have I done?* The words came to him stark, cold.

"I don't know why she drives around in a nice car and I have to ride in a truck," Margie said, eyeing Jim, trying to look young and innocent.

"She drives a car because she's my wife."

Margie's eyes sparked. "Well, what about me? I was under the impression you left her for me."

"Yeah, like a goddamn fool."

"Jim, don't be mad."

Jim slid to the edge of the booth. "Goodbye, Margie."

Margie stood up, pulling at her skirt. "You goddamn Greek," she said and flounced out of the door.

"Sounds like there's a commotion in the front booth," Swede said, smiling sardonically.

Jim remained seated for a few minutes, then putting a twenty-dollar bill on the table, he left the remnants of his spaghetti and meat balls and hurried outside. He walked to his truck and sat in it, looking at the door of the café. When Swede and Lia came out, he sprinted toward them. "Please go, Swede," Lia said. She was not afraid; she knew what to say.

Jim brushed past Swede, who moved off a bit. "Lia," he said. "Lia."

Lia had opened the car door, but closed it. "Jim, I won't give you a divorce."

"No, no, Lia! Let me talk."

"You can live with your new woman in town or in another state, but I will always be your wife. When we married in the Denver church, Jim, I didn't marry you until you found a younger, more attractive woman. I married you until one or the other of us died."

"Lia, listen!"

"The other reason is I have to protect you. I have a lot of hate for you now, Jim"—his face went pale under his tan—"for what you've done to me. You stole my self-esteem. You abandoned me without a thought of how I was going to get along. You spoiled everything that gave my life meaning. You made me feel worthless, ugly. If it weren't for your friends looking out for me, I would have gladly died, but I had my children and grandchildren to think of.

"And even with all that, I can't forget the thirty years we had together when I loved you. I still love you. So I have to protect you. You're not a rich man, Jim, and half of what you have is mine. My half is for my children and grandchildren, not for a strange woman with a poor little boy. You can't afford to keep up two houses, Jim. I can see you getting grayer, getting shabbier and shabbier. When you're old and have all those ailments of aging, she'll still be young enough not to want to take care of an old man. I won't give you a divorce, ever, Jim. You should find an older woman whose children are grown and gone from the house."

"I don't want a divorce! Please, Lia!"

Lia sat, silent. They looked at each other for several long moments. Jim seemed to be holding his breath. Lia hung her head, bowed by an oppressive burden that held her body so that she could not move. After a moment she looked up. "All right, Jim, we'll see how it goes."

"I'll follow you home." He hurried to his truck. Margie was standing near the driver's-side door. "Jim, please forgive me," she said, trying unconvincingly to look like a sorry young girl, "I didn't mean what I said."

"It's over, Margie."

"You son-of-a-bitch!"

"Get out of the way, before you get run over." He left her, her mouth twisting horribly as she shouted, but he could not hear the words and was glad that the street was empty.

Lia drove faster than usual up Twenty Mile Road, with Jim too close to the rear bumper of her car. She had no feeling in her. When they parked their cars, Jim jumped out and hurried ahead of her, opened the front door, and then stood a moment in the closed-in dryness, looking about him. He went from window to window, opening them, seeing the rumple of pillow and blanket on the sofa. Lia followed and sat at the kitchen table. Jim finished with the bedroom windows and came back to the kitchen. He opened the refrigerator door for the pitcher of water Lia always kept full. But there was no pitcher, only the watermelon, the condiments in the door, and a piece of moldy cheese. He turned to Lia. "What have you been eating?"

Looking at her hands folded on the table, Lia said, "*Koulourakia*. I intended buying groceries after I left Swede, but then I forgot about them when you came to the car."

"The store's still open. Give me the list and I'll go get them."

"No, let's get them tomorrow. I'm tired."

Jim looked around uncertainly. He remembered his bag lodged behind the front seat of his truck and thought of the clothing that he had used in the motel with horrible disgust. He wanted to take a shower and put on underclothing from his bureau. "I've got to take a shower," he said to Lia as if he were asking permission.

"I'll sit on the porch for a while, then go to bed."

When Jim came out of the bathroom wearing briefs and a T shirt, he saw that Lia was on the sofa, her head on the pillow. He walked toward the sofa cautiously. Her eyes were open. "Lia, why don't you at least use one of the other beds?"

"No, I wouldn't want to use Nicky's room, and I have the beds ready for Anne and Rachel. Good night, Jim."

Jim felt he had been dismissed. He had hoped they would sit on the porch and listen to the night, smell its scents. He went into their bedroom and lay in the dark. He wanted to be punished. He thought he would go to Denver and confess, but he did not want to talk to a

young American-born priest; he wanted to be harangued by one from the old country, like those of his childhood, who would not spare him. And Lia had not shouted and screamed at him with the open anger he had wanted. Yet she had said that she had a lot of hate in her now, and there could be no greater punishment. He could not sleep; the shame of what he had done was suffocating him and he wondered if it were a sign that he was going crazy. He could not lie there any longer; his skin was hot, stretched unbearably.

He got up and with the small kitchen light above the stove guiding him, walked quietly into the living room. Lia turned her head to look at him. "Lia, please come to bed. I can't sleep without you. I won't touch you, but please come to bed." He waited and then Lia drew the blanket back and sat up. She swayed as she stood. Jim lifted her, carried her to her side of the bed, and covered her. He wanted to kiss her, to ask forgiveness again and again, but he sensed he had to wait for a sign from her.

They lay in the darkness, each knowing the other was awake. A soft cool breeze carrying the scent of pines came through the open window. "Jim," Lia said quietly, "every time you touch me, I'll think that you touched and kissed her in the same way you touched and kissed me. I don't think I'll be able to forget."

Jim held his breath. He wanted to tell her the truth, to be berated because everything he had done was gnawing at him, but knew it would only add to her humiliation. He told her then the first lie of their marriage. "I barely touched her. We hadn't got that far along."

Lia heard the lie and in the fraction of a second allotted her for her answer, she decided she would pretend to believe it, in order to live the rest of her life with Jim, to protect him from Anne and Rachel's knowing what he had done. They would no longer respect him, and she knew neither she nor Jim could live with that. "All right, Jim," she said, while a breeze flowed through the pines outside their open window.

Jim breathed in deeply, knowing Lia understood that he had lied. He fell asleep from the exhaustion of it and later in the night he awoke to a faint noise from Lia. She had moved beneath the covers. From under the pillow over her head came a muffled sobbing. Jim was suddenly fully awake. He wanted to draw Lia to him and put his arms around her, but he was afraid of what she would do.

Jim slept lightly, woke up at intervals, and listened to the night sounds. Later, when the sky was lightening, but still dark, he heard a car drive into the front yard. He sat up and hurried to the door,

unlatched it and the screen door just as the car, without headlights on, took a right turn onto Twenty Mile Road. He pushed the screen door slightly to get a better look. On the stoop was a paper plate filled with human excrement. In a rage he picked up the plate and ran toward the canyon, rocks and twigs cutting into his bare feet. At the edge of the chasm he threw the plate into the air as if it were a discus and watched it fall out of sight. He went into the bathroom, closed the door, and washed his hands twice before returning to bed.

When dawn came, he fell asleep. Later he heard Lia in the shower. When the shower turned off, he knocked on the door. "Lia, I'll take the list and go get the groceries." She mumbled in reply.

He sped down Twenty Mile Road. In town he drove to a cubby-hole café called the Galveston Restaurant. As he expected, Swede was at the counter. Jim knocked on the window and Swede came out, wiping his big jaw. "What's up?" he said, chewing loudly. Jim told him about the paper plate. "Okay, I'll take care of it. Don't you dare go near the bank."

Jim then drove to market where he filled a cart with Lia's list of groceries. He did not know where anything was and feverishly walked around the store, retracing his steps and losing time.

Swede, at the same time, had finished his breakfast and with a toothpick in his mouth, went to the bank. He stopped at Margie's desk. Wearing a violet blouse and dark pants, she looked up and smiled. Swede put his palms on her desk and leaned toward her. "Just keep smiling, Margie," he said. Margie stopped smiling and looked to her right and left.

"Now, Margie," Swede smiled and said conversationally, "don't you dare drive up Twenty Mile Road to Jim's house one more time. And don't you dare do anything to bother Jim and Lia, or I'll make a bow tie out of those funny boobs of yours. You get it?" Swede tipped his hat, gave Margie a still wider smile, and left her looking after him with bulging eyes.

When Jim returned to the ranch, he tried to help Lia put the groceries away, but except for the butter, eggs, milk, and meat, he did not know where she kept anything. They did not speak and later when they sat at the table, they had little to say. "I saw Swede," Jim said, not looking at Lia.

"Oh? How was he?" Lia's eyes were turned toward her plate.

"Okay, I guess." Jim let the conversation drop. Lia would not look at him.

They had to spend two days with Anne and Rachel and pretend that all was well. Then the rest of the summer lay before them. Lia walked over the old trails to the herders' deserted camps; Jim sat on the porch or watched baseball games—Lia no longer sat next to him on the sofa. The hardest times were at night in bed with the measured space between them and sitting at the table eating, their stomachs tight. They made occasional comments: "Anne called. They're taking Rachel to Yellowstone"; "Swede's taking down the old cabin and selling the logs to some interior decorator." Long silences followed.

They stood up with relief when they had finished eating. Lia's stomach still felt empty, she could not make it stop gnawing in her. Jim had taken to absent sighing. Twice Jim asked Lia if she wanted to go with him on a sheep-brokering trip, but she flinched at their being closed up in the car together while the sagebrush flew back, the engine hummed. They had nothing to say to each other as he stood in the doorway about to leave. She gave him the Last Kiss, a quick touch of her lips on his cheek.

During the last days of August, the mornings turned cool and often were cold enough so that Lia turned on the kitchen oven and left its door open. She stood outside one late morning against the empty corral where the bum lambs year after year had butted each other and been fed with big-nippled bottles of milk. Across the canyon, the aspen had lost their leaves and the mountain was brushed with gray. She thought that summer had gone. It had been wasted on her and Jim, and she thought their marriage was over. She was standing looking at the mountain when Jim drove up. She heard him walk toward her. "Lia," he said, a frantic tone in his voice. She turned and saw his anguished face. "Lia, talk to me. I'm so lonesome."

She ran toward him.

24

For the next twenty years the three cousins gravitated closer to each other; the deaths of their mothers had brought an emptiness—Lia thought of it as a dark hole. Their children were grown and had their own children; the three cousins were on the periphery of their lives.

The deaths of her college friends, Norma and Elizabeth, in their seventies, left Lia forlorn; there was no one with whom she really enjoyed talking. The cousins had an argument over the Equal Rights Amendment that lasted for months. Peggy pronounced the whole issue a "Lesbian thing." She said a television documentary showed a group of women who met in each others houses and suctioned out their menstrual blood at whatever time they wanted. Bessie was aghast and couldn't believe it. Her concern was women who left their husbands and took their children to live together in lofts and big houses. Lia tried to convince them that much of the women's movement made sense, no matter what some people in New York or California did. Their lunches were strident until the ERA question had run its course.

Bessie and Peggy had facelifts, paid for out of their inheritances, but their skin then sagged back into the natural condition of age. Bessie's hair was dyed a light golden brown called a "champagne tint"; Peggy's was jet black and was referred to by the children in the family as "witch black." Lia had left her hair as it was, and the pale strands had become mixed with silver. "Lia has such pretty hair," Bessie said one day to Peggy, who retorted, "What do you mean? You'd think she'd dye her hair and not look like a hag."

Bessie pressed her lips together and said, "I wish I looked like a hag."

They preferred not to meet in each other's houses because their husbands were now retired. Having lost most of his hearing, Deno

kept a sports channel blaring throughout the day and Bessie's shouts were like a stuck needle on an old-time phonograph record. Tom would come into the kitchen when they were having coffee and bore them with loud, inane remarks. Peggy tried to look pleasant as he talked; she would never admit to her cousins that Tom was a bore and mostly had been incapable of making any money. Tom's father-in-law Pete had often said before he died, "The words that come out of his mouth 'have neither nose nor ass.'"

Lia knew that Jim felt put upon when he roamed through his house and saw strangers—Bessie and Peggy strangers! Both looked happy to see Jim, and Peggy, thinking she was still pretty and desirable, batted her heavily mascaraed eyes at him.

Sometimes when the cousins talked of other peoples' lives, Lia contemplated something that blotted out Bessie's and Peggy's animated disgust. She thought that she had not done enough with her life. She had to remind herself that Albert Schweitzer had said every one couldn't go to Africa to work among the poor. Usually the dispirited feeling would last only a few seconds. Sometimes, though, Bessie and Peggy talked on while Lia gazed at them and songs rose from her memory: those learned in the YMCA, those Jim had played on his harmonica, and those sung between the notes of the soaring clarinet about Greeks wounded by the scimitars of Turks, exhorting their comrades to fight on as they died. The songs came to her also when she sat in a dentist chair.

The three cousins tried new little shops that usually closed after a few months and always ended up at Little America for early lunch. Bessie talked about the church. She attended Sunday liturgies, all of the women's *Philoptochos* meetings, the Athanasios Diakos lodge activities, and the excursions to Wendover, Nevada, to play the slot machines. Parishioners knew that there would be thermoses of coffee, Greek pastries, and Greek singing on the buses. "Going west" the church bulletin termed the trips because the priests would not let them use the word Wendover, which they felt would suggest their approval.

Peggy derided the gossip Bessie brought to the table. When Bessie said, "Poor Angie Horofilakas had to get help from the church again," Peggy folded her arms over her fallen breasts and said, "'Poor people have poor ways,'" as if her cousins were unaware that she and Tom had little left over from their Social Security checks. Lia wondered at their having no order in their lives; Peggy even did the family wash on Sundays, something that would have horrified Aunt Katina.

They talked about children always in the third person. "Kids today," Peggy would often say, "just don't know what it was like growing up in the Depression, then the war. They don't save a penny."

This talk from Peggy brought a deep red to Bessie's jowly face: Peggy had not known what it was like to grow up in the Depression. Bessie remembered the butterfly skirt her mother Rina would not let her have and that Peggy had one the moment she saw the display in Stein's windows.

Peggy complained about her daughters' husbands: "They don't lift a finger to help. Women have to work nowadays, what with all the expenses. Everything costs too much." Mostly, though, it was the men in her family as victims of the business world that Peggy talked about: Tom never had a chance; his mother was domineering; he had bad luck on each one of his jobs, either the boss brought in a distant relative or just plain overlooked Tom's hard work. Same thing with her sons-in-law: big corporations took over the companies they worked for, and they were either demoted or fired. She muttered bitterly about people they had grown up with who were well off—with the old complaint that they "had pull" or bribed someone to get them where they were.

Bessie was constantly talking about what should be done with all the linens, silver, china, and crystal she had accumulated. "Girls don't care about those things anymore. What in the world am I going to do with all that stuff? I never use it. We don't have big parties anymore or anything like that."

Lia had nothing to say. She had never had sterling, only plate silver, and although she had a beautiful set of Lenox dishes, that was the extent of her possessions. Jim's mother had crocheted a tablecloth for her, which she used on Jim's name day.

Bessie and Peggy's biggest complaint was that none of the seventeen grandchildren had married people of Greek background. "Not a one!" Bessie said, disgruntled, and Peggy, who had avoided church and Greek community activities all her married life, said, "You'd think the way we brought them up, at least one of them would have married a Greek or a half-Greek. They've married Mormons, Episcopalians, Catholics, and Jews"—Lia's daughter Anne's husband was Jewish—"but not a single Greek!"

Lia let this pass. "I've heard most younger women don't have icons in their houses," she said.

Peggy often criticized her children for not paying as much attention to her as she had to her mother in her old age. "She's rewriting history," Bessie said.

Eventually months or even a year would go by and Lia and Bessie would see little of Peggy, who made instant friendships among the "Americans" she once derided and spent every leisure moment with them, until something went wrong, a supposed insult or misunderstanding. Then Peggy, spiteful, turned on those friends whom she had earlier said were "family" to her.

They often talked about their Greek Town childhood: all those rules the mothers had that were foolish, that had no place in America, that made them so different from their schoolmates. They laughed at Rina's superstitions and ideas of propriety. Bessie often laughed so hard that tears ran down her face. "Remember," she said, "when my mother told us to keep our legs together because if we didn't we'd catch colds in our stomachs?"

Bessie rushed on, near hysteria camouflaged by tears: "Remember the *dhisko*," she said of the hospitality tray, and in a pinched, high voice imitating her mother said, "'Now, remember serve the men first, then the women, and last the children.' It never failed. I was so scared I wouldn't do it right and I'd really get it from her. And I did!" More high, uncontrolled laughter. Then angrily, "And we couldn't even date or anything! We had to take the first guy who came along for a husband."

Bessie realized she must have looked hysterical and became quiet. "I don't think I could write a letter to my relatives in Greece anymore. I've forgotten the grammar."

Peggy pulled her shoulders inward in revulsion. "Ugh! Those awful songs they sang for dead people in caskets. Thank God that's gone with the wind."

"Those proverbs we heard all the time, they're gone too," Bessie said and sighed.

They spoke of how World War II had changed American life. "Remember," one or the other would say, "when sales clerks always wore black or navy blue? And stores were never open on Sunday? And only poor women worked." Then the war came and people started locking their doors at night; sales people were rude; children, barely out of high school, left home and got apartments with friends; and Peggy said, "Girls started going to beer parlors, even girls from good families!" Bessie looked at Lia.

"It's worse today," Bessie went on. "You know at church one day," her eyes widened within their wrinkled sockets, "I heard one of the little kids on the way to Sunday School stop to say hello to his godmother. She was sitting by the aisle and he called her by her *first* name!"

Peggy burst out, "What's happening? The world's gone crazy! Kids are crazy today!" She had one granddaughter with a shaved head and another with every space of her body covered with tattoos.

At times when Bessie and Peggy were alone, the talk centered on Lia and Jim. "They were lucky," Peggy would say. "They never had to worry about money. Everything was handed to them. And they were just lucky in their marriage. They never had anything to bother them. Just plain lucky." Bessie's silence forced Peggy to talk even more about how lucky Lia and Jim were in everything. She pressed on; she could not let Bessie waver over Jim and Lia's good fortune. Bessie yawned quite often during Peggy's speeches. She was bored with it all; the idea had come to her that she and Peggy were to blame for not being lucky; they had blundered through life.

Lia and Jim were in the Butchart Gardens in Victoria one day—Swede, dead five years now, in Alaska, had recommended it—looking up the emblazoned slopes of autumn color. Each year they visited another national park or monument, always in spring when school was not yet out. Jim turned to Lia. "Let's go home, Lia. Something's wrong with me."

Anne's husband Aaron made an appointment for tests with one of his colleagues at the university hospital. The tests showed that Jim had lung cancer. Lia and Jim hung on each other, composed themselves, and began the round of doctors, hospitals, blood tests, radiation, and chemotherapy. In four months Lia saw Jim go from a virile seventy-five-year-old to a stooped old man with skin covering his bones. "Aaron, please don't let him suffer," she said.

She was determined that Jim would die in his own bed, but Aaron asked Jim if he would try an experimental drug and Jim nodded. It was useless. Jim went through his records and made certain they were in order. "Tell the kids not to sell the ranch," he told Lia. "Some day summer houses will be built all over the mountains. It will be a good inheritance for them."

Lia and Anne spent many hours in the waiting area near Jim's room. Most of their talk was about him.

"Mom, you've always taken such good care of Dad. You really love him, don't you?"

Lia smiled. "I asked your grandmother Emma the same thing when my father died—I didn't use the word *love*, I said 'like' and she looked above my head and said, 'Well, let me put it this way, I couldn't feature bein' married to anyone else.'"

"Oh, poor Grandma."

"Now, once, I did something that shocked me," Lia said. "I never wanted to make your dad feel small. We were in Craig and were having lunch. After Dad paid for it, we went outside—now, remember, this was before you were born. Dad had taken a toothpick from a cup near the cash register. Then while he was holding the toothpick in his hand, I reached over and took it without thinking about it. I was horrified at what I had done and I couldn't look at him."

Lia continued: "A little while later we were back in Craig at the same restaurant. Sheepmen were at the back of the room—they had a big table especially for them. Your dad waved to them when we came in, then when we were finished, I went down to Cowan's Drug Store. He said he'd meet me at the car. When I walked back, the sheepmen were standing on the sidewalk outside the café. All of them had toothpicks in their mouths except your dad. He was standing there, more than a head taller than the others, most of them with pot bellies, and had his hands in the back pockets of his pants. I felt kind of sad and I didn't know why."

Anne laughed in sympathy. "But, Mom, what could you ever do that would really bother Dad? I never saw anything that seemed to bother him about you."

"I was too sensitive. I couldn't stand to see or hear anything about the Holocaust. About children being abused. Lambs being killed by coyotes and ranchers killing the coyotes. It bothered your father and I forced myself to say nothing about what was going on in my mind. He hated to see me like that. It was hard when he came in after killing coyotes—the raw smell of blood and something like sagebrush all together. He kept his guns in the bunkhouse and when he came home; he took off his sheepskin coat and hung it up on the back porch. Then he'd take a shower. We never mentioned where he'd been. For his sake, I had to pretend, and why shouldn't I? There was nothing that could be done about any of it. Why make him feel bad?"

They said nothing for a few minutes, then Lia said, "If I could only know that I will see him again." Anne feared her mother would cry, but Lia bit her lips and after a silence said, "It was hard for your father when the sheep industry went bad, when synthetics came in. His sheep went below five hundred. It's a good thing he had made other investments. But he was a sheepman. It hurt us both when we realized Chris would never take over the ranch. Dad wanted to live and die a sheepman. Being a part-time broker helped a little, but it wasn't the same."

One evening they knew that a crisis was coming. They saw it in Jim's sunken eyes.

The nurse stood at the door and motioned to Lia and Anne. "Anne, let me go in first. I want to tell your father something. He's heard it before, but I want to tell him one more time."

Anne watched her mother walk into the room, a little jerkily because of arthritis in one knee. Lia leaned over Jim. She kissed him on his forehead, on his chin, on one cheek, then the other, and on his mouth as if she were making the sign of the cross with her lips instead of her fingers. "Jim," she said to the sunken brown eyes, "I love you."

Jim's mouth moved, but no sound came from it. "I know," Lia said. "Anne wants to come in. Then I'll come back and sit here, next to your bed."

After Anne left, crying, Lia sat in the chair, looking into the gloom. Chris came in at about nine o'clock, breathless. He was in his middle forties and his children were now in their early teens. He was always in a hurry. After years of aimlessness, he had gone back to school, first to earn a high school diploma, then to the university for a business degree. Lia often wondered what kind of a husband and father he was.

After he looked at his father, Chris said, "Well, I have to go. I've got to stop at the grocery store. I'll be back tomorrow, Mom." When he returned the next day, Jim was dead.

Tom died next. In his obituary Peggy had inserted "he married the love of his life Peggy Demas in 1942," but she was glad he was dead.

Bessie cried every day for months over Deno's death, because she was afraid to stay alone at night.

25

In 2003, a handful of years after their husbands' deaths, the cousins, Bessie, Peggy, and Lia, planned a family reunion. Peggy had decided they would have one, and Bessie and Lia agreed. It would take place on Orthodox Easter, which fell that year on April 27. Peggy's energy surprised both Lia and Bessie. "What does she care about getting the family together?" Bessie said, "She always thought she was too good for that kind of thing." Lia knew Peggy had some scheme in mind that would eventually unfold.

Peggy's plan was to marry off her granddaughter Jessica to a young doctor who had come from Detroit for additional training at the University of Utah Medical Center. He had called Peggy one day, explained who he was, and said, "My grandfather told me that he and your father were boyhood friends in the village."

Immediately Peggy invited the young doctor to dinner and for the first time in years took out her Lenox plates, crystal, and sterling silver. Because her mother Katina had always done the cooking for her dinner parties, Peggy had the Greek Market cater the food. She was still driving—her license had been revoked, and she had become forgetful—so she picked up the food herself, not wanting anyone to know that she had not cooked it. Peggy invited the doctor to the family reunion on Easter.

All the family's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren were notified of the reunion; some lived in town, others on the east or west coasts or in between. "You know," Peggy said into the telephone, "Greeks always return to the family on Greek Easter." This was news to her children and grandchildren. Altogether twenty of the family came, but none attended the Resurrection services. Lia's son Chris, his wife, and children did not come. "We have to catch up on Sundays," he said.

The Easter dinner was held at La Caille; the gardens were in bloom; the graceful swans floated in the ponds; and the castle-like restaurant gave Peggy the assurance that the young doctor, Tony Kassavas, would be impressed. Although it strained her bank account, she also bought Jessica a linen suit. She could do nothing about Jessica's short hair, which Peggy wished she would wear shoulder length, like the actresses of fifty years back.

She contrived to have Jessica and Tony sit next to each other. Bessie gave Lia a knowing look. Tony answered questions about his parents, grandparents, Detroit, and ailments. He was handsome, affable, and made a point of speaking with the more than twenty strangers, all with eyes on him. Anne's husband Aaron stayed longer than he usually did at the dwindling family dinners.

Tony spent more time talking with Rachel, Anne and Aaron's daughter, than with anyone else. He told her about the nurse he wanted to marry, and she told him about the young law student she was dating—they were both studying for their bar exams. Rachel and the young doctor sat on the patio watching the swans gliding in the pond while Jessica wandered around the grounds in her expensive white linen suit.

Lia watched her granddaughter. Rachel's long blond hair was brought into a twist at the nape of her neck; her nose was delicate and slightly curved, a legacy of her Jewish grandmother. She had her great-grandmother Emma's blue eyes, but her skin was the ivory-gold of her great-grandfather Chris's Mediterranean blood. Jim had seen her for the last time when she was thirteen years old. He had been pleased. "Lia, Rachel is getting over being gawky. She's going to be like her mother and grandmother."

A sense of something crowding inside her chest forced Lia to take deeper breaths. Carefully she took a small brown bottle from her purse and put one of the nitroglycerine tablets under her tongue. Immediately her head pained; she waited, but the crowding in her chest persisted. After a few minutes, she told Anne she had to go home. "I don't want to spoil the party. Let's just go out quietly."

When Aaron's car arrived at the restaurant door, Anne helped Lia into the front seat and she sat in the back. Aaron drove a few dozen yards down the lane and stopped. He took Lia's pulse and drove to Emergency in St. Mark's Hospital.

Lia was admitted, had an EKG, and was taken to her room. Aaron talked with the staff doctors, and Anne called her brother Chris and her daughter Rachel on her cell phone. Almost immediately Rachel arrived.

The next day early, Peggy was at Bessie's door, jamming her manicured red index finger against the doorbell. She knew it took Bessie a long time to get out of her chair and use her walker to answer the door.

"What in the world, Peggy? What's wrong?"

"I'll tell you what's wrong!" Peggy yelled, pushing past Bessie and jerkily reaching the faded rose brocade sofa. "Did you see Lia's grand-daughter making a play for Tony? Up until then he was interested in Jessica, but no, Lia's granddaughter, oh, what's her name?"

"Rachel," Bessie said. "Yes, that two-by-four started giving him goo-goo eyes and there was poor Jessica, ready to cry her eyes out. That Rachel's just like her grandmother, just like Lia, who could always twist Jim around her little finger! And I went to so much expense for this goddamn dinner party!"

"We all paid for the party, Peggy. Everyone thought it was great."

"Great, great," Peggy sneered in imitation. "I didn't spend all my money to give a great party!"

"Well, what did we give it for?"

"For my granddaughter! Every one overlooks her because she's so quiet, and here she had Tony interested in her and then *that Rachel* comes along and ruins it for Jessica!"

"Peggy, those things take their own course."

"I don't want to hear any of your goddamn shitty platitudes! I tell you Tony was interested in her! I should know! When he came to dinner, he spent a lot of time talking to her."

"Well, of course he would spend a lot of time talking to her. They're about the same age."

"I don't have to hear any of your crap!"

Bessie leaned forward and clutched one handle of her walker. "Your Jessica is a nice girl, but she would never give Tony whatever-his-name-is a second look. She is a lesbian, Peggy. Everyone knows it but you, her stupid grandmother, who always had so much to say about everyone else in the family."

"What are you talking about? I'm talking about my granddaughter Jessica!"

Bessie clutched the other handle of the walker. It suddenly occurred to her that she was sick of her cousin Peggy. "Your mother spoiled you rotten! You always got what you wanted! And when we did something bad, you always turned it around so your mother always blamed Lia and me." Bessie's hands shook on the handlebars.

"You grew up talking about boys and how this one or that one had a crush on you and like a fool I believed you! They only wanted some heavy petting or sex out of you!"

"Shut up! You were always jealous of me because I was pretty and you weren't."

"Yes, I was naive! I was gullible! I thought everything you said was true! Like all the time telling me how you and Tom handled your finances and made all decisions together, making me feel like a fool! Then it dawned on me, too late, that you hated Tom! You were covering up your bad marriage. Didn't Tom ever see you falling all over yourself when Jim Papastamos was around?"

"Shut your mouth! Or I'll leave this minute!"

"And that awful thing you told me that your Lana looked like Jim! And big dumb me almost believed it!"

Peggy stopped a few feet from Bessie, her garishly lipsticked mouth twisted, her mascaraed eyes staring, speechless with rage. "Bessie you. . !" she screamed and picked up a table lamp, throwing it at Bessie, who dodged but fell back in her chair with her lips parted, her eyes popped wide.

When people heard the news, they echoed the word *unbelievable*. The three Demas cousins had died within three days of each other during Bright Week following Easter. A friend of the cousins, like them in her middle eighties, remembered, among lost immigrant folklore, that death during Bright Week gave instant forgiveness of sins. One of Bessie's children found her dead on the floor, the lamp she had always cherished for its little bisque shepherd and shepherdess holding hands broken beside her. Two days after that Peggy was killed in a head-on collision. Lia was the last to die. Chris and Anne speculated that news of Peggy and Bessie had reached her, but in truth she had merely lived long enough and looked forward to dying, to being rid of her quiet empty house, of the bother of shopping for only one person, of sitting alone each night watching television.

At the funeral half of the nave on the right side was taken up by the dead women's families. The great-grandchildren of the patriarchs had so little Greek blood in their veins that they looked no different from children seated in a Protestant church, that is, all except one teenager with the prominent nose of the Demas clan.

Six weeks later, Anne began clearing out her mother's house. She brought several grocery boxes with her. It was not difficult work because her mother kept everything in order. Lia's three suits were in

their plastic covers, untouched from the time they had come from the cleaners. She had pinned a note on each one: they were to go to a charity for women who had been out of the workplace for a long time. Most of her other things, clothes, shoes, bedding, and pans Lia had taken herself to the Salvation Army.

Anne had gone through everything but the drawers of the bedroom highboy. The top drawer had a neat stack of silk scarves, linen handkerchiefs, and her mother's few pieces of jewelry. The second drawer held underclothing. When she opened the next to the last drawer, she stared, unbelieving. The entire drawer was filled with exquisite folded nightgowns with tissue paper in between them. She opened the last drawer. It too was filled with nightgowns. Kneeling, she carefully looked at each one, satins, silks of all colors, some with handmade lace that must have been done in the forties because such work was no longer seen in stores. Most of them had small straps and plunging necklines.

Anne thought: *Who had bought these beautiful nightgowns?* She knew it had not been Lia. Her mother had more than a touch of her grandmother Emma's frugality. She had grown up in the Depression. She had always been careful of what she bought. Then she remembered as a little girl watching her father put a lug of pears and peaches into the trunk of his car. He had brushed aside a blanket and exposed a white gift box tied with gold satin ribbon. Her mother would not have bought a present for herself and have it wrapped as a gift. It could only have been her father's gift, her tall, laconic, dignified father. She thought of him in Denver for wool-growers meetings, going to the lingerie department in Daniels and Fisher, his Stetson on his head, going back, year after year, where the saleswomen knew him, taking his time, perhaps a bit of embarrassment showing under his reserve, choosing what he thought Lia would like. Her eyes filled with more tears at the memory of him as he was before he became sick, still standing straight, his hair thinned, wearing metal-rimmed eyeglasses.

Anne wiped her eyes. The nightgowns had been a gift for her mother. Her mother, yes, who had waited until she and her brother Chris were at school to wash and iron her nightgowns with great care.