

SINCLAIR
LEWIS



DODSWORTH

HARPERPERENNIAL  CLASSICS

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CHAPTER 1

The aristocracy of Zenith were dancing at the Kennepoose Canoe Club. They two-stepped on the wide porch, with its pillars of pine trunks, its bobbing Japanese lanterns; and never were there dance frocks with wider sleeves nor hair more sensuously piled on little smiling heads, never an August evening more moon-washed and spacious and proper for respectable romance.

Three guests had come in these new-fangled automobiles, for it was now 1903, the climax of civilization. A fourth automobile was approaching, driven by Samuel Dodsworth.

The scene was a sentimental chromo—crisp lake, lovers in canoes singing “Nelly Was a Lady all very lugubrious and happy; and Sam Dodsworth enjoyed it. He was a large and formidable young man, with a healthy brown mustache and a chaos of brown hair on a massive head. He was, at twenty-eight, assistant superintendent of that most noisy and unsentimental institution, the Zenith Locomotive Works, and in Yale (class of 1896) he had played better than average football, but he thought well of the most sentimental sorts of moonlight.

Tonight he was particularly uplifted because he was driving his first car. And it was none of your old-fashioned “gasoline buggies,” with the engine under the seat. The engine bulked in front, under a proud hood over two feet long, and the steering column was not straight but rakishly tilted. The car was sporting and rather dangerous, and the lights were powerful affairs fed by acetylene gas. Sam sped on, with a feeling of power, of dominating the universe, at twelve dizzy miles an hour.

At the Canoe Club he was greeted by Tub Pearson, admirable in white kid gloves. Tub—Thomas Pearson—round and short and jolly, class-jester and class-dandy at Yale, had been Sam Dodsworth’s roommate and chief admirer throughout college, but now Tub had begun to take on an irritable dignity as teller and future president of his father’s bank in Zenith.

“It runs!” Tub marveled, as Sam stepped in triumph from the car. “I’ve got a horse all ready to to you back!”

Tub had to be witty, whatever happened.

“Certainly it runs! I’ll bet I was up to eighteen miles an hour!”

“Yeh! I’ll bet that someday automobiles’ll run forty!” Tub jeered. “Sure! Why, they’ll just about drive the poor old horse right off the highway!”

“They will! And I’m thinking of tying up with this new Revelation Company to manufacture ’em

“Not seriously, you poor chump?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, my Lord!” Tub wailed affectionately. “Don’t be crazy, Sambo! My dad says automobiles are nothing but a fad. Cost too much to run. In five years, he says, they’ll disappear.”

Sam's answer was not very logical:

"Who's the young angel on the porch?"

If she was an angel, the girl at whom Sam was pointing, she was an angel of ice; slim, shining, ash-blond, her self-possessed voice very cool as she parried the complimentary teasing of half a dozen admirers; a crystal candle-stick of a girl among black-and-white lumps of males.

"You remember her—Frances Voelker—Fran Voelker—old Herman's kid. She's been abroad for a year, and she was East, in finishing-school, before that. Just a brat—isn't over nineteen or twenty, I guess. Golly, they say she speaks German and French and Italian and Woof-woof and all known languages."

Herman Voelker had brewed his way into millions and respectability. His house was almost the largest in Zenith—certainly it had the greatest amount of turrets, colored glass windows, and lace curtains—and he was leader among the German-Americans who were supplanting the New Englanders throughout the state as controllers of finance and merchandising. He entertained German professors when they came lecturing and looking, and it was asserted that one of the genuine hand-painted pictures which he had recently brought back from Nuremberg was worth nearly ten thousand dollars. A worthy citizen, Herman, and his tart beer was admirable, but that this beef-colored burgher should have fathered anything so poised and luminous as Fran was a miracle.

The sight of her made Sam Dodsworth feel clumsy as a St. Bernard looking at a white kitten. While he prophesied triumphs for the motor car, while he danced with other girls, he observed her airily dancing and her laughter. Normally, he was not particularly afraid of young women, but Fran Voelker seemed too fragile for his thick hands. Not till ten did he speak to her, when a partner left her, a flushed Corybant, in a chair near Sam's.

"Do you remember me—Dodsworth? Years since I've seen you."

"Remember! Heavens! I wondered if you were going to notice me. I used to steal the newspaper from Dad to get the news of your football heroisms. And when I was a nice young devil of eight, you once chased me out of your orchard for stealing apples."

"Did I? Wouldn't dare to now! Mavenex's dance?"

"Well—Let me see. Oh. The next is with Levering Mott, and he's already ruined three of my two slippers. Yes."

If he did not dance with any particular neatness, a girl knew where she was, with Sam Dodsworth. He had enough strength and decision to let a young woman understand who was doing the piloting. With Fran Voelker, he was inspired; he waltzed as though he was proud of his shining burden. He held her lightly enough and, after the chaste custom of the era, his hands were gloved. But his fingertips felt a current from her body. He knew that she was the most exquisite child in the world; he knew that he was going to marry her and keep her forever in a shrine; he knew that after years of puzzled wonder about the purpose of life, he had found it.

“She’s like a lily—no, she’s too lively. She’s like a humming bird—no, too kind of dignified.

She’s—oh, she’s a flame!”

They sat talking by the lake at midnight. Out on the dappled water, seen through a cloud of willow leaves, the youngsters in canoes were now singing “My Old Kentucky Home.” Zenith was still in the halcyon William Dean Howells days; not yet had it become the duty of young people to be hard and brisk, and knowing about radios, jazz, and gin.

Fran was a white shadow, in a lace shawl over her thin yellow dancing frock, as she drooped down on a newspaper which he had solemnly spread for her on the long grass. Sam trembled a little, and sounded very pompous, rather boyish:

“I suppose you went everywhere in Europe.”

“More or less. France and Spain and Austria and Switzerland and—Oh, I’ve seen the Matterhorn by moonlight, and Santa Maria della Salute at dawn. And I’ve been almost frozen to death in a mistral at Avignon!”

“I suppose you’ll be bored in Zenith.”

She laughed, in a small competent way. “I know so much about Europe—I’m no Cook’s tripper!—that I know I don’t know anything! All I can do in French is to order breakfast. Six months from now all I’ll remember of Germany is the names of nineteen towns, and how the Potsdamer Platz looks when you’re waiting for a *droschke*. But you’ve *done* things. What are you doing now, by the way?”

“Assistant supe at the Locomotive Works. But I’m going to take a big gamble and—Ever ride in an automobile?”

“Oh yes, several times, in Paris and New York.”

“Well, I believe that in twenty years, say by 1923 or ’4, they’ll be as common as buggies are now. I’m going in on a new company here—Revelation Automobile Company. I’ll get less salary, but it’s a swell gamble. Wonderful future. I’ve been working on my mechanical drawing lately, and I’ve got the idea that they ought to get away from imitating carriages. Make a—it sounds highbrow, but I mean what you might call a new kind of beauty for autos. Kind of long straight lines. The Revelation boss thinks I’m crazy. What do you think?”

“Oh, splendid!”

“And I’ve bought me an automobile of my own.”

“Oh, really?”

“Let me drive you home tonight!”

“No, sorry; Mama is coming for me.”

“You’ve got to let me take you for a ride. Soon!”

“Perhaps next Sunday. . . . We must go back to the clubhouse, don’t you think?”

He sprang up, meekly. As he lifted her to her feet, as he felt her slim hands, he murmured, “Certainly like to see Europe someday. When I graduated, I thought I’d be a civil engineer and see the Brazil jungle and China and all over. Reg’lar Richard Harding Davis stuff! But—Certainly going to

see Europe, anyway. Maybe I might run into you over there, and you might show me some of it.”

“I’d love to!”

Ah, if she desired Europe, he would master it, and give it to her on a platter of polished gold!

There was the telephone call to her when he should have been installing machinery at the Revelation Automobile Company. There was the drive with her in his new car, very careful, though once he ventured on seventeen miles an hour. There was the dinner at the Voelkers’, in the room with carved beams like a *Hofbräuhaus*, and Sam’s fear that if Fran was kept on food like this, roast goose and stuffed cabbage and soup with *Leberknödel*, she would lose her racehorse slimness.

And there was even a moment when, recalling his vow made in Massachusetts Tech after graduating from Yale that he would cut loose from America and see the great world, he warned himself that between Fran and tying himself to the urgent new motor industry, he would be caught for life. The vision of himself as a Richard Harding Davis hero returned wistfully. . . . Riding a mountain trail, two thousand sheer feet above a steaming valley; sun-helmet and whipcord breeches; tropical rain on a tin-roofed shack; a shot in the darkness as he sat over a square-face of gin with a ragged tramp of Noble Ancestry. But his mind fled back to the excitement of Fran’s image: her spun-glass hair, her tingling hands, her lips that were forever pursing in fantastic pouts, her chatter that fell suddenly into inexplicable silence, her cool sureness that made him feel foggy and lumbering.

In a slaty November drizzle, they were tramping the cliffs along the Chaloosa River. Fran’s cheeks were alight and she was humming, but when they stopped to look at the wash of torn branches in the flooded river Sam felt that he must be protective. She was too slight and precious for such hardship as an autumnal rain. He drew the edge of his mackintosh over her woolly English topcoat.

“You must be soaked! I’m a brute to let you stay out!”

She smiled at him, very close. “I like it!”

It seemed to him that she had snuggled closer. He kissed her—for the first time, and very badly indeed.

“Oh, please don’t!” she begged, a little shocked, her lively self-possession gone.

“Fran, you’ve got to marry me!”

She slipped from the shelter of his raincoat and, arms akimbo, said impishly, “Oh, really? Is that new law?”

“It is!”

“The great Yale athlete speaks! The automobile magnate!”

Very gravely: “No, just a scared lump of meat that’s telling you he worships you!”

Still she stared at him, among the autumn-bedraggled weeds on the river bank; she stared impudently, but quite suddenly she broke, covered her eyes with her hands, and while he clumsily

dabbled at her cheeks with a huge handkerchief, she sobbed:

“Oh, Sam, my dear, but I’m so grasping! I want the whole world, not just Zenith! I *don’t* want to be a good wife and mother and play cribbage prettily! I want splendor! Great horizons! Can we look for them together?”

“We will!” said Sam.

It was not till 1908, when he had been married for five years to Fran Voelker and they had had two babies, Emily and Brent, that Samuel Dodsworth came on his real struggle at the Revelation Automobile Company.

His superiors in the company had equally prized him for his steadiness and industry and fretted at him for being a dreamer. He was crazy as a poet, they said. Not only did he venture to blaspheme against the great Renault-Darracq dogmas of car-designing, not only did he keep on raving about long “streamlines,” but he insisted that the largest profits would lie in selling automobiles as cheaply as possible to as many customers as possible. He was only assistant manager of production in 1908, but he owned a little stock, and his father-in-law, portly old Herman Voelker, owned more. It was hard to discharge Sam, even when he growled at the president of the company, “If you keep the Rev looking like the one-horse-shay, we’ll go bankrupt.”

They tried to buy him out, and Sam, who had been absorbed in blue prints and steel castings, had to learn something about the tricks of financing: about bonds, transfer of stock, call loans, discounts, dealers. With Voelker’s money behind him, he secured twenty-three per cent of the stock, he was made vice president and manager of production, he brought out the first four-door model, and he saw the Revelation become the sensation of America for a season and one of its best-selling cars for a score of years.

And never, these twenty years, did he come nearer to the Brazilian jungle than Wall Street, nearer to the tinkling pagodas than the Revelation agency in Kansas City.

But he was too busy to be discontented; and he managed to believe that Fran loved him.

CHAPTER 2

Samuel Dodsworth discovered that there was a snowstorm, nearly a blizzard, whirling about the house. He closed the windows with a bang and plumped back into bed till the room should be warm. He did not move so swiftly as he once had, and above the frogged silk pajamas which Fran insisted on buying for him, his hair was gray. He was healthy enough, and serene, but he was tired, and he seemed far older than his fifty years.

Fran was asleep in the farther of the twin beds, vast walnut structures with yellow silk draping. Sam looked about the bedroom. He had sometimes caught himself wondering if it wasn't too elaborate, but usually its floridness pleased him, not only as a sign of success but because it suited the luxurious Fran. Now he noted contentedly the chaise longue, with a green and silver robe across it; the desk, with monogrammed stationery very severe and near-English and snobbish; Fran's bedside table with jeweled traveling clock, cigarettes, and the new novels; the bathroom with its purple tiles.

Fran stirred, sighed and, while he chuckled at her resemblance to a child trying to slip back into dreams, she furiously burrowed her eyes into the little lacy pillow, which was crumpled with her determined sleeping.

"No use," he said. His rather heavy voice caressed her. "You know you're awake! Rise and shine! Face the problems of humanity and the grape fruit!"

She sat up, looking at him with the astonishment she had never quite lost at being married, breaking a yawn with a smile, tousling her bobbed hair that was still ash-blond, without gray. If Sam seemed older than his age, she was far younger. She was forty-one now, in 1925, but, rosy with sleeping, she seemed thirty-one.

"I'm going to have breakfast in bed you're smoking before breakfast again I haven't had breakfast in bed since yesterday," she yawned amiably, while he swung his thick legs over the edge of his lilac satin comforter and lighted a cigarette.

"Yes. Stay in bed. Like to, myself. Devil of a snowstorm," he said, paddling round to stroke her hair, to nuzzle his ruddy cheek against her soft fairness. "By the way, did I ever remember to tell you that I adore you?"

"Why—let me see—no, I don't believe so."

"Golly, I'm getting absent-minded! I'll have my secretary remind me to do it tomorrow." Seriously: "Realize that we finally wind up the old Revelation Company today? Sort of sorry."

"No! I'm not a bit sorry! I'm delighted. You'll be free for the first time in all these years. Let's run off some place. Oh, don't let yourself get tied up with anything new! So silly. We have enough money, and you go on stewing—'must change the design of the carburetor float—simply must sell

more cars in the territory between Medicine Hat and Woolawoola.’ So silly! What does it *matter!* Do ring for the maid, darling.”

“Well, no, maybe it doesn’t matter, but fellow likes to do his job. It’s kind of a battle; fun to beat the other fellow and put over a thundering big sale. But I am rather tired. Wouldn’t mind skipping of to Florida or some place.”

“Let’s!”

He had dutifully brought her heavy silver mirror, her brush and comb, her powder, her too-gorgeous lounging robe of Chinese brocade. When she had made herself a bit older by making herself youthful, she sat up in bed to read the *Zenith Advocate-Times*. If she looked fluffy and agreeably useless, there was nothing fluffy in her sharp comments on the news. She sounded like a woman of many affairs, many committees.

“Humph! That idiot-boy alderman, Klingenger, is going to oppose our playground bill. I’ll wring his neck! . . . The D.A.R. are going to do another pageant. I will *not* be Martha Washington! You might be George. You have his detestable majesticness.”

“Me?” as he came from his bath. “I’m a clown. Wait till you see me in Florida!”

“Yes. Pitching horseshoes. I wouldn’t put it past you, my beloved! . . . Huh! It says here the Candlelight Club expect to have Hugh Walpole lecture, next season. I’ll see our program committee pinches him off ’em.”

He was slowly dressing. He always wore large grave suits, brown or gray or plain blue, expensively tailored and not very interesting, with decorous and uninteresting ties of dull silk and no jewelry save a watch-chain. But though you were not likely to see what he wore, you noted him as a man of importance, as an executive, tall, deep-chested, his kind eyes never truculent, but his mouth serious, with crescents of wrinkles beside it. His gray-threaded brown mustache, trimmed every week by the best barber at the best hotel, was fully as eccentric and showy as a doormat.

He made his toilet like a man who never wasted motions—and who, incidentally, had a perfectly organized household to depend upon. His hand went surely to the tall pile of shirts (Fran ordered them from Jermyn Street) in the huge Flemish armoire, and to the glacial nest of collars, always inspected by the parlor maid and discarded for the slightest fraying. He tied his tie, not swiftly but with the unwasteful and extremely unadventurous precision of a man who has introduced as much “scientific efficiency” into daily domesticity as into his factory.

He kissed her and, while she nibbled at sweetbreads and drank her coffee in bird-like sips and furiously rattled the newspaper in bed, he marched downstairs to the oak-beamed dining room. Over second copy of the *Advocate*, and a Chicago paper, he ponderously and thoroughly attended to orange juice, porridge and thick cream, bacon, corn cakes and syrup, and coffee in a cup twice as large as the cup which Fran was jiggling in her thin hand as she galloped through the paper upstairs.

To the maid he said little, and that amiably, as one certain that he would be well served. He was not extraordinarily irritable even when he was informed that Emily, his engaging daughter, had been

up late at a dance and would not be down for breakfast. He liked Emily's morning gossip, but he never dreamed of demanding her presence—of demanding anything from her. He smiled over the letter of his son, Brent, now a junior in Yale.

Samuel Dodsworth was, perfectly, the American Captain of Industry, believing in the Republican Party, high tariff and, so long as they did not annoy him personally, in prohibition and the Episcopal Church. He was the president of the Revelation Motor Company; he was a millionaire, though decidedly not a multimillionaire; his large house was on Ridge Crest, the most fashionable street in Zenith; he had some taste in etchings; he did not split many infinitives; and he sometimes enjoyed Beethoven. He would certainly (so the observer assumed) produce excellent motor cars; he would make impressive speeches to the salesmen; but he would never love passionately, lose tragically, nor sit in contented idleness upon tropic shores.

To define what Sam Dodsworth was, at fifty, it is easiest to state what he was not. He was none of the things which most Europeans and many Americans expect in a leader of American industry. He was not a Babbitt, not a Rotarian, not an Elk, not a deacon. He rarely shouted, never slapped people on the back, and he had attended only six baseball games since 1900. He knew, and thoroughly, the Babbitts and baseball fans, but only in business.

While he was bored by free verse and cubism, he thought rather well of Dreiser, Cabell, and so much of Proust as he had rather laboriously mastered. He played golf reasonably well and did not often talk of his scores. He liked fishing camps in Ontario, but never made himself believe that he preferred hemlock boughs to a mattress. He was common sense apotheosized, he had the energy and reliability of a dynamo, he liked whisky and poker and paté de foie gras, and all the while he dreamed of motors like thunderbolts, as poets less modern than himself might dream of stars and roses and nymphs by a pool.

A crisis in life had been forced on him, for his Revelation Company was being absorbed by the United Automotive Company—the imperial U.A.C., with its seven makes of motors, its body-building work, its billion dollars of capital. Alec Kynance, president of the U.A.C., was in Zenith, and today the final transfer of holdings was to be made.

Sam had wanted to fight the U.A.C., to keep independent this creation to which he had devoted twenty-two years, but his fellow directors were afraid. The U.A.C. could put on the market a car as good as the Revelation at a lower price, and drive them from the market. If necessary, the U.A.C. could sell below cost for a year or two. But they wanted the Revelation label and would pay for it. And the U.A.C. Cossacks were good fellows. They did not treat Sam like a captive, but as a fellow warrior to be welcomed to their larger army, so at the last Sam hid from himself the belief that the U.A.C., with their mass production, would cheapen and ruin the Revelation and turn his thunderbolt into a

standardized cigar-lighter, and he had agreed to their generous purchase price.

He was not happy about it, when he let himself think abstractly. But he was extremely well trained from his first days in Zenith High School, in not letting himself do anything so destructive as abstract thinking.

Sam clumped upstairs and found Fran, very brisk, fairly cheerful, still in her brocade dressing gown but crouching over her desk, dashing off notes: suggestions to partisans in her various clubs, orders to the secretaries of the leagues which she supported—leagues for the study of democracy, leagues for the blind, societies for the collection of statistics about the effect of alcohol on plantation hands in Mississippi. She was interested in every aspect of these leagues except perhaps the purposes for which they had been founded, and no Indiana politician was craftier at soaping enemies, advising friends, and building up a political machine to accomplish nothing in particular.

She shone at Sam as he lumbered in, but she said abruptly, "Sit down, please. I want to talk to you."

("Oh, Lord, what have I done now?") He sat meekly in a chintz-covered overstuffed chair.

"Sam! I've been thinking lately. I didn't want to speak to you about it till you had the U.A.C. business all finished. But I'm afraid you'll get yourself tied up with some new job, and I want to go to Europe!"

"Well—"

"Wait! This may be our only chance, the only time you'll be free till we're so old we won't enjoy wandering. Let's take the chance! There'll be time for you to create a dozen new kinds of cars when we come back. You'll do it all the better if you have a real rest. A real one! I don't want to go just for a few months, but for a solid year."

"Good Heavens!"

"Yes, they are good! Think! Here's Emily going to be married next month. Then she won't need us. Brent has enough friends in college. He won't need us. I can chuck all these beastly clubs and everything. They don't mean anything; they're just make-believe, to keep me busy. I'm a very active female, Sam, and I want to do something besides sitting around Zenith. Think what we could do! Spring on the Italian Lakes! Motoring through the Tyrol! London in the Season! And I've never seen Europe since I was a girl, and you've never seen it at all. Let yourself have a good time for once! True to me, can't you, dear?"

"Well, it would be kind of nice to get away from the grind. I'd like to look over the Rolls-Royce and Mercedes plants. And see Paris and the Alps. But a year—That's a long time. I think we'd get pretty tired of Europe, living around in hotels. But—I really haven't made any plans. The U.A.C. business was so sudden. I would like to see Italy. Those hill-towns must be very curious. And so old. We'll talk about it tonight. *Auf wiedersehen*, old lady."

He tramped out, apparently as dependable as an old Newfoundland and as little given to worrying

about anything more complex than the hiding places of bones. But he was fretting as he sat erect in his limousine, while Smith drove him into town.

These moments of driving were the only times when he was alone. He was as beset by people—his wife, his daughter, his son, his servants, his office staff, his friends at lunch and on the golf course—in his most frenziedly popular days at college, when it had been his “duty to old Yale” to be athletic and agreeable, and never to be alone, certainly never to sit and think. People came to him, swarmed about him, wanted his advice and his money and the spiritual support which they found in his ponderous caution. Yet he liked to be alone, he liked to meditate, and he made up for it on these morning rides.

“She’s right,” he worried. “I’d better not let her know how right she is, or she’ll yank me off to London before I can pack my flask. I wonder—Oh yes, of course, she does care for me, a lot. But sometimes I wish she weren’t quite so good a manager. She just tries to amuse me by playing at being a kitten. She isn’t one, not by a long shot. She’s a greyhound. Sometimes when I’m tired, I wish she just wanted to cuddle up and be lazy with me. She’s quicksilver. And quicksilver is hard, when you try to compress it!

“Oh, that’s unfair. She’s been the best wife—I haven’t given enough time to courting her, what with all this cursed business. And I’m tired of business. Like to sit around and chat and get acquainted with myself. And I’m tired of these streets!”

The limousine was laboring through a gusty snowstorm, skidding a bit on icy asphalt, creaking and lumbering as it climbed over drifts. The windows of the car were frost-emblazoned. Sam impatiently cleared a peephole with the heel of his glove.

They were creeping along Conklin Avenue, where the dreary rows of old red brick mansions, decayed into boarding houses, the cheap grocery shops and dirty laundries and gloomy little “undertaking parlors” and lunch-rooms with the blatant sign “Eats,” not very entrancing at any time, were turned by the rags of blown snow into the bleakness of a lumber-camp, while the breadth of the street made it only the more shelterless and unintimate. On either side were streets of signboards advertising oil and cigarettes, of wooden one-story shacks between old-fashioned yellow brick tenement-houses gloomy in the sunless snow; a region of poverty without picturesqueness and of labor without hope.

“Oh, Lord, I’d like to get away from it! Be nice to see the Mediterranean and a little sunshine,” Sam muttered. “Let’s go!”

The General Offices of the Revelation Motor Company were in an immense glass and marble building on Constitution Avenue, North, above Court House Square, opposite the flashing new skyscraper of the Plymouth National Bank. The entrance to the floor given to executive offices was like the lobby of a pretentious hotel—waiting-room in brocade and tapestry and Grand Rapids renaissance; then something like an acre of little tables with typists and typists and typists, very busy, and clerks and

clerks and clerks, with rattling papers; and a row of private offices resembling furniture showrooms, distinguished by enormous desks in imitation of refectory tables, covered with enormous sheets of plate glass, and fanatically kept free of papers and all jolly disorder.

The arrival of President Dodsworth was like that of a General Commanding. “Good morning!” rumbled the uniformed doorman, a retired sergeant. “Good *morning!*” chirped the girl at the inquiry desk, a charming girl whose gentleman-friend was said to be uncommonly high up in the fur business. “Good morning!” indicated the typists and clerks, their heads bowing like leaves agitated by a flitting breeze as he strode by them. “*Good morning!*” caroled Sam’s private stenographer as he entered his own office. “*Good morning!*” shouted his secretary, an offensively high-pressure young slave driver. And even the red-headed Jewish office boy, as he took Sam’s coat and hung it up so that it would not dry, condescended “Mornin’, boss.”

Yet today all this obsequiousness, normally not unpleasant to the Great Man, annoyed him; all this activity, this proof that ever so many people were sending out ever so many letters about things presumably of importance, seemed to him an irritating fussiness. What did it matter whether he had another hundred thousand dollars to leave to Brent? What did it matter whether John B. Johnson of Jonesburg did or did not take the local Revelation agency? Why were all these hundreds of young people willing to be turned into machines for the purposes of rattling papers and bowing to the president?

The Great Man approached his desk, put on his eye-glasses, and graciously received a stock-report as one accomplishing empires.

But the Great Man was thinking:

“They make me tired—poor devils! Come on, Fran! Let’s go! Let’s drift way round to China!”

Alec Kynance, president of the Unit Automotive Company, with his regiment of officers, lawyers, secretaries, was not coming for half an hour. Sam said impulsively to his stenographer, “Miss Rachman, skip down to the travel bureau at the Thornleigh, won’t you please, and bring me all the steamship folders and European travel information and so on that they have there. And round-the-world.”

While he waited for her he turned over the papers in the wire basket which his secretary had reverently laid on the glass-topped vastness of his desk. These matters had seemed significant a few days ago, like orders given in battle, but now that the Revelation Company was no longer his—

He sighed, he shuffled the papers indifferently: The secret report on the dissipations of the manager of the Northwestern Division. The plans of the advertising agency for notices about the union of the U.A.C. and the Revelation, which was to be announced with glad, gaudy public rejoicing. What did they *matter*, now that he was turned from a bandit captain to a clerk?

For the first time he admitted that if he went to the U.A.C., even as first vice president, he would be nothing more than an office boy. He could make no daring decisions by himself. *they* had taken

from him the pride in pioneering which was one of his props in life—and who *they* were, he didn't quite know. *They* were something more than just Alec Kynance and a few other officers of the U.A.C. *They* were part of a booming industrial flood which was sweeping over him. *They* would give him a larger house, a yacht, but *they* would not give him work that was really his own. He had helped to build a machine which was running away from him. He had no longer the dignity of a craftsman. He made nothing; he meant nothing; he was no longer Samuel Dodsworth, but merely part of a crowd vigorously pushing one another toward nowhere.

He wandered to the window. In that blast of snow, the shaft of the Plymouth National Bank Building was aspiring as a cathedral; twenty gray stories, with unbroken vertical lines swooping up beyond his vision into the snowy fog. It had nobility, but it seemed cruel, as lone and contemptuous of friendly human efforts as a forgotten tower on the Siberian steppes. How indifferently it would watch him starve and freeze!

With relief he looked at the travel brochures when his stenographer brought them in—a lively girl shaking the snow from her little cloche hat, beaming at him, assuring him that he really did exist and was something of importance still. Then he was lost in the pictures. . . . Titanic walls of the Grand Canyon: scarlet pillars and pyramids of orange. A tawny road in Algiers, the sun baking, nodding camels, and drivers with dusky malign faces under their turbans. St. Moritz, shadowed by the mountains, and a pretty girl on a toboggan. A terrace at Cannes, where through fig-trees and palms and tumbling roses you looked on the sea with a lone felucca. A valley of colored patchwork fields seen from a harsh tor of Dartmoor. Japanese children rollicking among cherry trees beside a tiny temple. Dark wood of carven mediaeval houses looming over the Römerberg at Frankfort. The Grand Canal, with the fantastic columns of the piazzetta and the soft pink and cream of the ducal palace. The old sea-fronted walls of Ragusa. The streets of Paris—kiosks, impudent advertisements, a whisk of skirts, a whirligig of traffic, and little tables at which to loaf all day long.

“Wouldn't be so bad!” thought Sam. “I'd like to wander around a few months. Only I'm not going to let Fran coax me into being one of these wishy-washy expatriates, homeless, afraid of life, living on the Riviera as though they were in a sanatorium for neurotics. I'm going to go on doing something with life, and my place is here. We'll go abroad, only I'll make her fight for it or she'll feel she's running the whole show. Then I'll come back here, and I'll take Alec Kynance's show right away from him!”

“Mr. Kynance is here,” announced his secretary.

CHAPTER 3

Mr. Alexander Kynance, president of the Unit Automotive Company, was a small bustling man with large head, an abrupt voice, a lively mind, a magnificent lack of scruples, and a love for oratory and Corona-Coronas. He had been a section hand and a railway superintendent, he had the best cellar of Burgundies in Detroit, and he made up for his runtiness by barking at people.

“Everything all ready? Everything all ready?” he barked at Sam Dodsworth, as the dozen representatives of the two companies settled down and rested their elbows on the gigantic mirror-surfaced table in the gold and oak directors’ room.

“I think so,” Sam drawled.

“Just a few things left,” said Kynance. “We’ve about decided to run the Revelation in between the Chromecar and the Highroad in class—drop it three hundred below your price—two-door sedan at eleven-fifty.”

Sam wanted to protest. Hadn’t he kept the price down to the very lowest at which his kind of car could be built? But suddenly—What difference did it make? The Revelation wasn’t his master, his religion! He was going to have a life of his own, with Fran, lovely loyal Fran, whom he’d imprisoned here in Zenith!

Let’s go!

He was scarcely listening to Kynance’s observations on retaining the slogan “You’ll revel in a Revelation.” Sam had always detested this battle-cry. It was the invention of a particularly bright and bounding young copy-writer who took regular exercise at the Y.M.C.A., but the salesmen loved it. As Kynance snapped, “Good slogan—good slogan—full o’ pep,” Sam mused:

“They’re all human megaphones. And I’m tired.”

When he had rather sadly signed the transfer of control to the U.A.C. and his lifework was over, with no chance for retreat, Sam shook hands a great deal with a number of people, and was left alone with Alec Kynance.

“Now to real business, old man,” Kynance blatted. “You’ll be tickled to death at getting hooked up with a concern that can control the world market one of these days—regular empire, b’ God!—instead of crawling along having to depend on a bunch of so-so assistants. We want you to come with us, of course. I haven’t been hinting around. Hinting ain’t my way. When Alec Kynance has something to say, by God he shoots! I want to offer you the second vice-presidency of the U.A.C., in general charge of production of all our eight cars, including the Rev. You’ve been getting sixty thousand salary, besides your stock?”

“Yes.”

“We can offer you eighty-five, and your share in the managers’ pool, with a good chance for a hundred thou in a few years, and you’ll probably succeed me when the bootlegged hootch gets me. And you’ll have first-class production-men under you. You can take it easy and just think up mean ideas to shove over. Other night you were drooling about how you’d like to make real Ritzy motor caravans with electric stoves and radios and everything built in. Try it! We’ve got the capital. And the idea you had about a motorized touring-school for boys in summer. Try it! Why, God, we might run all these summer camps out of business and make a real killing—get five hundred thousand customers—kid that hadn’t gone on one of our tours, no class to him at all! Try it! And the U.A.C. getting into aeroplane manufacture. Go ahead. Draw up your plans. Yes sir, that’s the kind of support we give a high-class man. When do you want to go to work? I suppose you’ll have to move to Detroit, but you can get back here pretty often. Want to start right in, and see things zip?”

Sam’s fantastic schemes for super caravans, for an ambulatory summer school in which boys should see the whole country from Maine pines to San Joaquin wheat fields, schemes which he had found stimulating and not very practical, were soiled by the lobster-faced little man’s insistence on cashing in. No!

“First, I think I’ll take a vacation,” Sam said doubtfully. “Haven’t had a real one for years. Maybe I’ll run over to Europe. May stay three months or so.”

“Europe? Rats! Dead’s a doornail! Place for women and long-haired artists. Dead! Only American loans that keep ’em from burying the corpse! All this art! More art in a good shiny spark-plug than in all the fat Venus de Mylos they ever turned out. Naw! Go take a run through California, maybe grab a drink of good liquor in Mexico, and then come with us. Look here, Dodsworth. My way of being diplomatic is to come out flat. You necking around with some other concern? We can’t wait. We got to turn out the cars! I can’t keep this open, and I’ve offered you our pos-o-lutely highest salary. That’s the way we do business. Yes or no?”

“I’m not flirting with any other company. I’ve had several offers and turned them down. Your offer is fair.”

“Fine! Let’s sign the contract right now. Got her here! Put down your John Hancock, and begin to draw the ole salary from this minute, with a month’s vacation on pay! How’s that?”

With the noisiness of a little man making an impression, Kynance slapped the contract on the glowing directors’ table, flourished an enormous red and black fountain pen, and patronizingly poked Sam in the shoulder.

Irritably Sam rumbled, “I can’t tie myself up without thinking it over. I’ll give you my answer as soon as I can. Probably in a week or so. But I may want to take a four-months rest in Europe. Never mind about the pay meanwhile. Rather feel free.”

“My God, man, what do you think is the purpose of life? Loafing? Getting by with doing as little as you can? I tell you, what I always say is: there’s no rest like a little extra work! You ain’t tired—

you're just fed up with this backwoods town. Come up to Detroit and see how we make things hum! Come sit in with us and hear us tell Congress where it gets off. Work! That's the caper! I tell you," with a grotesque, evangelical sonorousness, "I tell you, Dodsworth, to me, work is a religion. 'Turn not thy hand from the plow.' Do big things! Think of it; by making autos we're enabling half the civilized world to run into town from their pig-sties and see the movies, and the other half to get out of town and give Nature the once-over. Twenty million cars in America! And in twenty more years we'll have the bloomin' Tibetans and Abyssinians riding on cement roads in U.A.C. cars! Talk about Napoleon! Talk about Shakespeare! Why, we're pulling off the greatest miracle since the Lord created the world!

"Europe? How in hell would you put *in* four months? Think you could stand more'n ten art galleries? I *know!* I've seen Europe! Their Notre Dame is all right for about half an hour, but I'd rather see an American assembly plant, thousand men working like a watch, than all their old, bum-lighted, tumble-down churches—"

It was half an hour before Sam got rid of Kynance without antagonizing him, and without signing contract.

"I'd like," Sam reflected, "to sit under a linden tree for six straight months and not hear one word about Efficiency or Doing Big Things or anything more important than the temperature of the beer—there is anything more important."

He had fallen into rather a rigid routine. Most days, between office and home, he walked to the Union Club in winter, drove to the golf course in summer. But tonight he was restless. He could not endure the fustiness of the old boys at the club. His chauffeur would be waiting there, but on his way to the club Sam stopped, with a vague notion of tasting foreignness, at a cheap German restaurant.

It was dark, quiet, free of the bouncing grandeur of Kynances. At a greasy oilcloth-covered table he sat sipping coffee and nibbling at sugar-crusting coffee-cake.

"Why should I wear myself out making more money for myself—no, for Kynance! He will like hell take my caravans away from me!"

He dreamed of a very masterwork of caravans: a tiny kitchen with electric stove, electric refrigerator; a tiny toilet with showerbath; a living room which should become a bedroom by night—living room with a radio, a real writing desk; and on one side of the caravan, or at the back, a folding verandah. He could see his caravanners dining on the verandah in a forest fifty miles from any house.

"Kind of a shame to have 'em ruin any more wilderness. Oh, that's just sentimentality," he assured himself. "Let's see. We ought to make that up—" He was figuring on a menu. "We ought to produce those in quantities for seventeen hundred dollars, and our selling-point will be the saving in hotel bills. Like to camp in one myself! I will not let Kynance have my ideas! He'd turn the caravans out, flimsy and uncomfortable, for eleven hundred, and all he'd think about would be how many we could slam on the market. Kynance! Lord, to take his orders, to stand his back-slapping, at fifty! No!"

The German restaurant keeper said, as one content with all seasons and events, "Pretty bad snow tonight."

"Yes."

And to himself: "There's a fellow who isn't worrying about Doing Big Things. And work isn't his religion. His religion is roast goose, which has some sense to it. Yes, let's go, Fran! Then come back and play with the caravan. . . . Or say, for an elaborate rig, why not two caravans, one with kitchen and toilet and stores, other with living-bedroom, and pitch 'em back to back, with a kind of train-vestibule door, and have a real palace for four people? . . . I would like to see Monte Carlo. Must be like a comic opera."

His desire for Monte Carlo, for palms and sunshine and the estimable fish of the Prince of Monaco, was enhanced by jogging through the snowstorm in his car, by being held up in drifts, and clutching the undercurving seat during a rather breathless slide uphill to Ridge Crest. But when he entered the warmth of the big house, when he sat in the library alone (Fran was not yet back from the Children's Welfare Bridge), with a whisky-soda and a volume of Masereel woodcuts, when he considered his deep chair and the hearth-log and the roses, Sam felt the security of his own cave and the assurance to be found in familiar work, in his office staff, in his clubs, his habits and, most of all, his friends and Fran and the children.

He regarded the library contentedly: the many books, some of them read—volumes of history, philosophy, travels, detective stories; the oak-framed fireplace with a Mary Cassatt portrait of children above it; the blue davenport; the Biedermeyer rug from Fran's kin in Germany; the particularly elaborate tandalus.

"Pretty nice. Hotels—awful! Oh yes, I'll probably go over to the U.A.C. But maybe take six weeks or a couple of months in Europe, then move to Detroit. But not sell this house! Been mighty happy here. Like to come back here and spend our old days. When I really make my pile, I'll do something help turn Zenith into another Detroit. Get a million people here. Only, plan the city right. Make it the most beautiful city in the world. Not just sit around on my chair in Europe and look at famous cities, but *make* one!"

Once a month, Sam's closest friends, Tub Pearson, his humorous classmate who was now the gray and oracular president of the Centaur State Bank, Dr. Henry Hazzard, the heart specialist, Judge Turpin, and Wheeler, the packing-house magnate, came in for dinner and an evening of poker, with Fran as hostess at dinner but conveniently disappearing after it.

Fran whisked in from her charity bridge as he was going up to dress. In her sleek coat of gray squirrel she was like a snow-sprinkled cat pouncing on flying leaves. She tossed her coat and hat to the waiting maid, and kissed Sam abruptly. She was virginal as the winter wind, this girl who was the

mother of Emily about to be married.

“Terrible bore, the bridge. I won seventeen dollars. I’m a good little bridge player, I am. We must hustle it’s almost dinnertime oh what a bore Lucile McKelvey is with her perpetual gabble about Italy. I bet I’ll learn more Italian in three weeks than she has in three trips come on my beloved we are late!”

“We are going then?”

“Going where?”

“To Europe.”

“Oh, I don’t know. Think how nice it would be for you to ‘pitch a wicked horseshoe,’ as dear Tub would say, in Florida.”

“Oh, quit it!”

As they tramped upstairs he tucked his arm about her, but she released herself, she smiled at him too brightly—smile glittering and flat as white enamel paint—urbane smile that these twenty years had made him ashamed of his longing for her—and she said, “We must hurry, lamb.” And too brightly she added, “Don’t drink too much tonight. It’s all right with people like Tub Pearson, but Judge Turpin is so conservative—I know he doesn’t like it.”

She had a high art of deflating him, of enfeebling him, with one quick, innocent-sounding phrase. By the most careless comment on his bulky new overcoat she could make him feel like a lout in it; by crisply suggesting that he “try for once to talk about *something* besides motors and stocks,” while he rode to a formidable dinner to an elocutionary senator, she could make him feel so unintelligent that he would be silent all evening. The easy self-confidence which weeks of industrial triumphs had built up in him she could flatten in five seconds. She was, in fact, a genius at planting in him an assurance of his inferiority. Thus she did tonight, in her nicest and friendliest way, and instantly the lumbering Ajax began to look doubtfully toward the poker he had always enjoyed, to fear the opinion of Judge Turpin—an eye-glassed sparrow of a man who seemed to admire Sam, and who showed his reverence for the law by taking illicit drink for drink with him.

Sam felt unworthy and apologetic till he had dressed and been cheered by a glimpse of his daughter, Emily.

Emily, as a child, had been his companion; he had always understood her, seemed nearer to her than to Fran. She had been a tomboy, sturdy of shoulder, jolly as an old family dog out on a walk.

He used to come to the nursery door, lamenting:

“Milord, the Duke of Buckin’um lies wovnded at the gate!”

Emily and Brent would wail joyously, “Not seriowsly, I trust,” and he answer, “Mortually, I fear.”

They had paid him the compliment of being willing to play with him, Emily more than the earnest young Brent.

But Emily had been drawn, these last five years, into the tempestuous life of young Zenith; dance movie parties, swimming in summer, astonishingly unrestricted companionship with any number of

boys; a life which bewildered Sam. Now, at twenty, she was to be married to Harry McKee, assistant general manager of the Vandering Bolt and Nut Company (considered in Zenith a most genteel establishment), ex-tennis-champion, captain during the Great War, a man of thirty-four who wore his clothes and his slang dashingly. The parties had redoubled, and Sam realized wistfully that Emily and he had no more of their old, easy, chuckling talks.

As he marched down to supervise the cocktails for dinner, Emily flew in, blown on the storm, crying at him, "Oh, Samivel, you old beautiful! You look like a grand duke in your dinner jacket! You sweet thing! Damn it, I've got to be at Mary Edge's in twenty minutes!"

She galloped upstairs, and he stood looking after her and sighed.

"I'd better begin to dig in against the lonely sixties," he brooded.

He shivered as he went out to tell the butler-for-the-evening how to prepare the cocktails, after which, he knew, the butler would prepare them to suit himself, and probably drink most of them.

Sam remembered that this same matter of a butler for parties only had been the subject of rather a lot of pourparlers between Fran and himself. She wanted a proper butler in the house, always. And certainly they could afford one. But every human being has certain extravagances which he dare not assume, lest he offend the affectionate and jeering friends of his youth—the man who has ventured on spats dares not take to a monocle—the statesman who has ventured on humor dares not be so presumptuous as to venture on honesty also. Somehow, Sam believed that he could not face Tub Pearson if he had anything so effete as a regular butler in the house, and Fran had not won . . . not yet

Tub Pearson—the Hon. Thos. J. Pearson, former state-senator, honorary LL.D. of Winnemac University, president of the Centaur State Bank, director in twelve companies, trustee of the Loring Grammar School and of the Zenith Art Institute, chairman of the Mayor's City Planning Commission—Tub Pearson was still as much the jester as he had been at Yale. He and his lively wife Matilde, known as "Matey," had three children, but neither viceregal honors nor domesticity had overlaid Tub's view of himself as a natural comedian.

All through the poker game, at the large table in Sam's library, where they sat with rolled-up sleeves and loosened collars, gurgling their whisky-sodas with gratified sighs, Tub jabbed at Judge Turpin for sentencing bootleggers while he himself enjoyed his whisky as thoroughly as anyone in Zenith. When they rested—that is to say, re-filled their glasses—at eleven, and Sam suggested, "May not have any more poker with you lads for a while, because Fran and I may trot over to Europe for six months or so," then Tub had an opportunity suitable to his powers:

"Six months! That's elegant, Sambo. You'll come back with an English accent: 'Hy sye, hold chappie, cawn't I 'ave the honor of raising the bloomin' pot a couple o' berries, dear old dream?'"

"Ever hear an Englishman talk like that?"

“No, but you will! Six months! Oh, don’t be a damn fool! Go for two months, and then you’ll be able to appreciate getting back to a country where you can get ice and a bath-tub.”

“I know it’s a heresy,” Sam drawled, “but I wonder if there aren’t a few bathtubs in Europe? Think I’ll go over and see. My deal.”

He did not show it; he played steadily, a rectangular-faced, large man, a cigar gripped in his mouth, cards dwarfed in his wide hand; but he was raging within:

“I’ve been doing what people expected me to, all my life. Football in college, when I’d as soon’ve stuck in the physics laboratory. Make money and play golf and be a good Republican ever since. Human cash-register! I’m finished! I’m going!”

But they heard from him only “Whoop you two more. Cards?”

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