

p. 9 Things would never be the same for me again. Through the window above my father's broken, bloody body, in the darkness shrouding the town square, I could make out nothing. I felt slip from me in that moment not only the certainty of my future but the fixity of my past. It was as if I had been wakened out of my childhood.

p. 22 They say that we would all like to escape from the rigors of life by getting back into the womb--I was from that womb untimely ripped. My childhood was amputated, and it ached as a missing limb continues to ache for the rest of your life.

p. 38 This vanished house, as different from all other houses in Clarksville as my father was different from all other fathers, assumed in my mind the exaggerated importance of something one has lost and knows that to search for is futile, and yet for that very reason is something one cannot give up hope of finding.

p. 41 Every only child is Narcissus--that other Narcissus of whom Pausanias tells us, pining for himself but not for his lost twin, the cure for his congenital, lifelong loneliness.

p. 66 Meals at the table in my father's boyhood home were short, and after the grace said mechanically over them, eaten in the silence of

animals at their stalls. Prepared and served as a duty, the food was eaten as a necessity; no refreshment for the spirit was in it. The family's time together away from work made work seem a relief. The days were spent in mindless drudgery that gave them nothing to say to one another after supper in the evening. There was nothing to read, no urge to read anything, barely the ability. There was a musician in the family, but no mood for music. The nearest neighbors were miles away. The shortness of the answers they got to their questions about things dried up the boys' curiosity. There was nothing to do but go to bed. Most evenings they were too tired to do anything else anyway. Such news of the world as reached them was of lives as monotonous as their own. After a few years of that life, about the only use for his tongue that a person had was to curse.

p. 79 The woods were a place to hide. To hide from everybody. A place to explore. To be an idle boy instead of a boy forced to do the work of a man.

p. 85 The stillness, the sea-calm silence: that was the thing that struck me first about the deep woods, and which as it steadily deepened, steadily challenged and put in doubt my sense of myself, of everything. Timelessness hung like a vacuum over that vast, unvisited domain. For me, time was associated with sound, inseparable

from it: the chatter and bustle of human affairs, the dependable chiming of my town clock, which I had heard within, at most, an hour after coming into the world, and with the comforting conviction that others were regulating their lives in synchrony with mine. Time was people, social life, the sharing with others of measured portions of the day, at school, at work, at play. Time was schedules to meet, anniversaries, celebrations, communions. This journey into silence was a journey into timelessness. And since time was commitments, responsibilities, I understood as never before the lure of these timeless woods for that half-wild father of mine.

p. 145 As always, it was impossible to tell what my grandfather was feeling--whether he was feeling anything new to him. His face had the range of expression of a tombstone: rain or shine, its somber inscription the same. He bore this new blow as he had borne a lifetime of them, with the same unflinching patience as his old plowhorse bore the whip, and plodded on at the only pace he knew. One could draw no comfort from his outward evenness, for it was not the sign of inner composure or fortitude but of resignation, of settled despondency--perhaps, by now, of numbness.

pp. 145-146 My grandmother was all tears. This now from the son who had never brought her anything but trouble! Who better than she had always known it would come to something like this one day? Foreseeing the worst, she was inconsolable, and bitter in advance at not getting the pity which was her due.

p. 168 He had never benefitted from the stock market boom; why should he suffer now in the bust? It was his betrayal by a system that promised reward to a man who did honorable, honest, hard work, and now was reneging on its promise.

p. 176 Now, dispossessed and driven off their land and turned adrift in cities where there was no use for their country crafts, nothing but contempt for their country ways, such men turned truculent and resentful, vengeful, and the lawlessness and violence just beneath their skin erupted. The sense of helplessness, of the futility of trying to get ahead through hard work when there was no work to be had, turned desperate men into desperadoes, and a sympathetic public followed their exploits in the papers and secretly cheered them on.

pp. 216-217 My mother, glancing up at the clock on the wall, said nothing. In his present condition, he was a stranger to her, so said her manner, and she urged me with a look to go on with my dinner and ignore the man. She always began a fight by acting above the fray, as though contrasting her refinement to his crudity. This never

lasted long; she could, and soon did, turn just as low-down rough as he.

"Well, no hurry about it," said my father. "A man needs to work up an appetite for a meal in this atmosphere."

"If you know another one more to your liking--"

How could they not see how unhappy they were making me and stop it, both of them? Did they not love me enough to love each other any more?

"Any other! Any at all! You're the one who makes me say it. It's you who drives me away."

"And me that drives you to come reeling home, a shame and a disgrace to your own child? Is that me, too?"

Oh, how I wished she would leave me out of it!

p. 234 First of all, I was no longer a boy. Funeral services for my boyhood would be held tomorrow. I was little--nothing I could do about that; all the more necessity, then, that I be cunning, sly, tough. Hurt beyond bearing, and about to be transferred to a world ignorant of and indifferent to my story, I must protect myself against all further hurt. Without a father to run to for protection, I must protect myself. Instead of open, I must be guarded, instead of trustful, suspicious, instead of confident, afraid. Ambition? My task now was not to get ahead but to get by.

p. 235 My father had known that. The lesson of his life was: live, don't learn. For tomorrow you die--if you last that long; today is not over yet. Then the living they can't take from you, and the learning you can't take with you.