



Dotty

There would be times when she would be in a roomful of bright people, and come to realize with a sudden horror that not a one of them had it, not she herself, that there was no Grace in that room.

A sacrament properly speaking is that which signifies and contains the grace of God, and is the cause of it. *Summa Theologiae* (III, q. 60, a. 3, ad 1)



# CHARACTERS

## OKLAHOMA

Adalbert Weblein  
Agatha Perkins  
Aunt Jenny Kearns  
Catherine O'Toole  
Clara Anne  
Colonel Keen  
Father van Heuvel  
Floyd O'Toole  
Helmrich Kit Carson  
Joe Elias  
Johnny Gozzi  
Mary Theresa O'Toole  
Mr. Grudaire  
Mrs. Slater  
Naomi  
Ninety-Proof Nolan  
Ramford Riordan  
Richard Railley  
Sedalia O'Conner  
Sheriff Slywood O'Toole  
Shantytown Shadrack  
Sister Mary Catherine  
Sister Mary Claire  
Sister Mary Regina  
The Kearnses  
Tim O'Reilly  
Tommy Etzel  
Uncle George Kearns

## GALVESTON

A Yankee reporter

Amelia Garrard  
Angel-Face Hogan  
An old Irish woman  
Aloysius McGivern  
Arthur Braden  
Avril Aaron  
Basin Street Becaud  
Betsy Mish  
Catherine Cadensus  
Catherine Collins  
Charleyhorse Heckel  
Charles Le Marin  
Charles Peisson  
Claud Armand  
Cora Carter  
Cora English  
Daniel  
Estelle Beausoleil  
Fat Wesley Fitzcannon  
Father Knight  
Felix Cassel  
Finnegan  
Frenchy  
George DuShane  
George Hearn  
Gun Boat Thompson  
Hulda Engelbach  
Hugh McDonald  
Jacob Spencer-Cartwright  
Jaime Prescott  
Jeannie  
Joe Smith

John Sourwine  
Karl Zaleski  
Kitty Kark  
Little Dotty Nesbitt  
Little Dutch Eckel  
Mary Parisi  
Mellicent Garrard  
Melody Jane Clybourn  
Mildred Davidson  
Miriam LeBlanc  
Miss Universe  
Mossback McCarty  
Mr. Garnier  
Ned  
Nicky Parisi  
One-Chance Hardwick  
Ouida Garrard  
Rubenstein  
Sam Engelbach  
Selma Steicher  
Sherman J. Wintergarden  
Shot-Gun Schaeffer  
Shrimp Boat Gorden  
Soft-Talk Susie Kutz  
Tommy Katt  
Victor Hambledon

## New Orleans

Flannel-Mouth  
Leo Hanrahan  
Patricia Solli  
Philip Sherrington



# LOCATIONS

**The Balalaika:** A Galveston club.

**Barbecue Ben's:** A Galveston eatery.

**The Beach Comber:** A Galveston club.

**The Big Oyster:** A Galveston eatery.

**The Bloody Bucket:** Nickname for a Galveston dive.

**The Blue Room:** A soldier's bar.

**The Bonanza Room:** A Galveston club.

**Bragg's Drug Store:** Located in Galveston.

**The Caribou Bar:** A Galveston eatery.

**The Cat and the Fiddle:** A New Orleans club.

**The Chatterbox Club:** A Galveston club owned by One-Chance Hardwich.

**The Creola Room:** A Galveston club.

*Der Roche*: One of the three ships that Charles Peisson worked on.

**The Fat Chance:** A Galveston club.

**Flannel-Mouth's Irishman:** A New Orleans club.

**The French Casino:** A club located in both Galveston and New Orleans.

**The Harbor Lights:** A New Orleans club.

**The Hop Hut:** A Galveston bar.

**The House on Elm Street:** The place where Dotty grew up in Oklahoma.

**Jack Oak County:** A former county in Oklahoma.

**The Jamaica Inn:** A Galveston cl

**The Jetsam Room:** One of the Galveston dives; not its real name.

**The Jungle Club:** A Galveston club.

**Little Germany:** Sam Engelbach's ranch in Texas.

**Little Mexico:** A Galveston eatery.

**The Little Oyster:** A club and eatery in Galveston where Dotty splays the piano.

**The Lost Dutchman:** A Galveston club.

**The Monkey Bar:** A New Orleans club.

**The Octopus Bar:** A Galveston eatery.

**The Old Absinthe House:** A New Orleans club.

**The Old Wooden Ship:** A bar in Galveston.

**The Oyster House:** A Galveston eatery.

**Piccone's:** A New Orleans club.

**Post Office Street:** A street in Galveston; associated with "Post Office Street girls."

**The Raviola Inn:** A Galveston eatery.

**The Red Pirate:** A Galveston bar.

**The Red Room:** A Galveston club.

**The Red Snapper Drive-In Emporium:** A Galveston eatery.

*The Sainte Noire*: One of the three ships Charles Peisson worked on.

**The Salt-Water Chop House:** A Galveston eatery.

**The Scarecrow:** A Galveston bar.

**The Sea Platter:** A Galveston eatery.

**The Sea Serpent:** A Galveston bar.

**The Smelly Goat:** One of the Galveston dives; not its real name.

**The Snake Pit:** One of the Galveston dives; not its real name.

*The Spogelset*: One of the three ships Charles Peisson worked on. It is referred to as a "ghost" ship.

The Three-Four-Five Club: A New Orleans club.  
The Treasure Island: A Galveston club.  
Tremont Avenue: A street in Galveston.



# Events in Dotty O'Toole's/Peisson's Life

## Birth and Early Childhood

- Dotty O'Toole is born on **October 15, 1933**, in Jack Oak County, Oklahoma, to Sheriff Slywood O'Toole and Mary Theresa. Her conception occurs under violent circumstances.
- She has two older siblings, Floyd and Catherine.
- Dotty lives in a Defective or Provisional County, lacking a county seat.
- She experiences a difficult early life marked by poverty and frequent dust storms.
- By age three, she runs out into the face of the storms and is almost unacquainted with water for washing.

## Move to Elm Road and Encounters with Family

- Dotty moves to Elm Road and lives with her brother, sister, ten cousins, and other children of the town and country.
- She expresses contempt for other children, despite being the youngest of thirteen.
- Dotty befriends Clara Anne, a black dog, and a duck.
- She learns to read at a young age, possibly self-taught, and receives help with hard words from her father and Uncle Tim Reilly.
- Dotty tells people she is half Gypsy and learns Romany language and lore.

## School Years

- Dotty attends St. Joseph's school.
- She clashes with Sister Mary Catherine but forms a close friendship with Sister Mary Regina, with whom she has deep discussions on various topics and acquires a foundation in all the sciences.
- She is not allowed to transfer from first to eighth grade, despite her intelligence.
- She attends a special class with Father Van Heuvel with other talented and intelligent students.
- In mathematics, Dotty is the best girl in school.

## Religious and Mystical Experiences

- Dotty experiences nightmares and fears not waking up from them.
- She rebels against religious practices during thunderstorms.
- She has an early and intimate acquaintance with the Mystery itself.
- She believes she has the gift of discerning whether people are in Grace.
- She is initially deemed too young for first communion but is eventually admitted.

- She wears a hair shirt as a form of penance, which leads to positive changes in her parents.
- Dotty has a mystical experience during a fever, seemingly helping a forgotten soul and contracting the measles.
- She makes a one-sided bargain with the Lord to be good and perfect in exchange for protection from serious evil and tragedy for her and her family.
- She reads St. John of the Cross.
- She expresses controversial opinions about St. Theresa, leading to a reprimand.

### Wartime Experiences

- Dotty is puzzled why Uncle Tim Reilly is not called up for the War.
- She writes letters to various officials about her Uncle Tim.
- Her father, Slywood O'Toole, becomes a Sergeant in the M.P.s and is stationed in Texas.
- Dotty visits her father in Texas, traveling by bus and encountering various people.
- She goes to the beach and displays a natural ability for swimming.
- Dotty spends time with soldiers, drinks, and makes friends, including Naomi.
- She has a cryptic talk with Colonel Keen, whom she distrusts.
- She subverts Colonel Keen's secret agents with her charm.
- Dotty frequents Johnny Gozzi's hangout, learning Italian and about different foods and wines.

### Family Conflicts and Changes

- Dotty overhears a quarrel between her parents.
- She discovers her father is an "ink-stained sadist" who enjoys tormenting her mother with letters detailing his infidelities.
- She is ashamed and angry that her mother does not take steps to bring her father to heel, and instead is sniffing and sighing.
- The rift between her parents widens.
- Slywood O'Toole deserts from the army in Australia and remarries.
- Colonel Keen returns and is put in charge of the surplus property disposal at the plant where Mary Theresa works.

### Adolescence and Trouble

- Dotty goes to live with her mother and Colonel Keen.
- On the day of her arrival, Dotty is met at the station by Colonel Keen.
- She receives three ten-dollar bills from Colonel Keen.
- She buys a kitchen paring knife and friction tape.
- She stabs Colonel Keen multiple times and then runs away.
- Dotty confesses to killing a man.

## Life in Galveston

- Dotty moves to Galveston.
- She receives absolution.
- She becomes popular at school and with other students.
- She introduces wine drinking to her school friends.
- She frequents various establishments, including rougher places.
- She sells crab meat for two old derelicts.
- She is known as the Mayor of Tremont Avenue.
- She learns French, Latin, and Italian.
- She is a fabulous worker.
- She creates "Dotty Specials," offering services like nose-rubbing and lap-sitting for a fee.
- Dotty maintains her virtue, but a little of it can be rubbed off for a nickel.

## Relationships and Personal Struggles

- Dotty cultivates relationships with older individuals.
- She advises Betsy Mish against making rash vows.
- She tells Mary Parisi that she is going to get an apartment of her own.
- She loses her faith and feels despair.
- She makes restitution for Joe Smith's bad checks.
- She works at the Smelly Goat.
- She takes a couple of men but finds it disgusting and gives it up.
- She is caught in a con game and briefly jailed.
- She is bailed out of jail by Mary Parisi.

## Charles Peisson and Marriage

- She meets Charles Peisson, a French seaman.
- She experiences a period of "widowhood" when Charles is at sea.
- She writes a letter to Charles Peisson, warning him about her state.
- She becomes a weaving woman, aided by Soft-Talk Susie Kutz.
- She accompanies Susie to early mass.
- She buys a house and fixes it up.
- Dotty and Charles get married around 1950.
- They honeymoon in New Orleans with Patricia.
- She learns about ad valorem and mill rates and such, for now they are property owners.
- She makes Charles take out his first papers.
- She joins study clubs.
- She joins the Altar Society and is enrolled in the Third Order.

## Married Life and Tragedy

- She and Charles have a happy marriage.
- Charles writes letters to Dotty to be delivered after his death.
- Dotty loses her child.
- She is knocked down by a car.
- She cares for the children of working women.
- Charles dies at sea during a hurricane.
- She turns her fury on God.

## Later Years and Continued Struggles

- Dotty is found drunk and disoriented at the Old Wooden Ship.
- She goes through a period of recovery, aided by friends.
- She gives Aloysius McGivern a dollar bill and stands drinks for the house.
- She tampers with the U.S. Mail.
- She discovers Charles has written fifty-two letters to be mailed after his death but refuses to read them.
- She slashes herself about the throat and wrists and bleeds copiously, and falls into a passable swoon.
- Dotty works for a month for a trucking company.
- She spends time in the country with Catherine and Sam.
- She has a chance to marry a nice farm.
- She gives Hulda a severe lecture about attending Mass.
- She finally reads the letters from Charles.
- Dotty reaches her majority.
- She works hard at a respectable job which she dislikes.
- She returns doggedly to her Faith.
- She plays the piano at the Little Oyster.
- She has forty friends and fires up the old coffee-maker that used to be in a ship's galley.
- The Colonel writes to Dotty sometimes.



# THE DOTTYS

<i>Category</i>	<i>Not to Mention Camels</i>	<i>More Than Melchisedech</i>	<i>Archipelago</i>	<i>The Devil is Dead</i>
<i>Nature / Identity</i>	<p>Dotty is the title of a notable art triptych rather than a character.</p> <p>Described as a “breath-flubbing triptych.”</p>	<p>Dotty Yekouris is a journalist, a barmaid, and a key member of the “Poison Pen Society.”</p> <p>Widely admired; multiple people want to marry her.</p> <p>Absalom Stein (a pro journalist) and Melchisedech Duffey (an amateur) acknowledge her superiority in journalism.</p>	<p>Dorothy “Dotty” Mary Yekouris (sometimes called “Dorotea”) from New Orleans, daughter of a printer, raised in the printing trade.</p> <p>A “secret intellectual” who almost became a rogue.</p> <p>Seen as “Penelope” by the group. Has had many “suitors,” partly to keep up her spirits.</p>	<p>Multiple Dottys: Dotty Danvers, Dotty Peisson, Dotty Hulme, and Little Dotty Nesbitt. .</p> <p><i>Dotty Peisson</i> is notable for her piano playing (best Galveston-style in the world).</p>
<i>Occupation / Roles</i>	<p>The triptych itself is an artwork, so no explicit “occupation.”</p>	<p>Dotty Yekouris edits <i>The Bark</i> (journal/magazine) into a livelier, more intelligent publication.</p> <p>Composed a song called “Forty Scribbling Seamen.” - Also works</p>	<p>Barmaid (knew Finnegan before the war when he was a customer).</p> <p>Daughter of a printer; highly skilled in the printing trade.</p>	<p>Dotty Danvers, Dotty Hulme, and Little Dotty Nesbitt all have a history of multiple marriages (sometimes to the same men).</p>

		<p>or has worked as a barmaid.</p>	<p>Becomes the “boss” at Pelican Press; knows more about printing than Duffey.</p> <p>Temporarily lives with “Show Boat” before Show Boat’s wedding.</p> <p>Advocates for making the magazine (<i>The Pelican</i>) a tool for “restoring the world.”</p>	<p>Dotty Peisson is a piano player (Galveston style).</p>
<p><i>Physical Description / Personality</i></p>	<p>Depicted in three panels as a girl who is “pretty” in each: clothed (left wing), unclothed (center), and viscera-exposed (right wing) yet still “pretty.”</p> <p>The third (right) panel is “unsigned and painted by a different hand.”</p>	<p>Described (via nursery-plant-catalog adjectives) as “Graceful, ever-blooming, magic, dazzling, attractive, miracle-new, floriferous, gorgeous, velvety, popular, fragrant, glossy, handsome, exquisite, luscious, thrilling, superb, exotic, bell-like, sweet, tropical, juicy, showy, unsurpassed, delicious, enchanting, flashy, stunning, succulent, hardy, and disease-resistant.”</p> <p>Finnegan’s rime: “More beautiful than birds that fly..”</p>	<p>“Strong and not conventionally beautiful, yet better looking than many beautiful girls.”</p> <p>“Magnetic, marvelous, smarter than the rest, and amazingly kind.”</p> <p>Has a “charge” about her: even prosaic statements have impact.</p> <p>“Thick ankles,” according to</p>	<p>No specific physical descriptions of these Dottys (Danvers, Peisson, Hulme, Nesbitt) beyond confusion in marriages.</p>

			some descriptions.	
<i>Relationship with Finnegans</i>	The triptych features the same girl in three states. There's no direct mention of "Finnegans" in this conovel.	Dotty and Finnegans are closely connected: X states both were slain in a "futuristic episode" near Havana, but their deaths may not be final.  Dotty was desolate when Finnegans left.	Dotty has a "rift or hesitation" with Finnegans but no sharp words pass between them.  Finnegans is engaged to Dotty until the day he dies.  He sees her as a "great poem" but a poem of "irretrievable loss."  She tries to keep him from "going over the hill" (recognizes he is lost, his drinking is secondary).  She knew him well pre-war but realized (from a letter) he had changed.  Finnegans visits her yearly (difficult for him).	"Dot" - "Dorotea" (Yekouris).
<i>Key Events / Notable Quotes</i>	"Almost too good and nostalgic to be	"It's only a novel, you know." (Dotty to	"Dotty" wants to call the magazine <i>The</i>	N/A for "key quotes" from the multiple

	<p>believed, and not the sort of thing one comes upon in every lifetime.”</p>	<p>Duffey, who’d overpaid for something.)</p> <p>“There are still a few bright spots left in the world, And mostly they are ourselves.”</p> <p>“It was a lovely joke, X, and you are a lovely person.”</p> <p>She refused to publish a list of 1,000 people who were present for the release of the Devil.</p> <p>Warned Henri Salvatore about “early perfection.”</p> <p>Didn’t return from Bagby’s funeral (though people expected her to).</p>	<p><i>Pelican</i>, referencing liturgical symbolism and Louisiana.</p> <p>Declares they’ll focus on “restoring the world” rather than “cops and robbers.”</p> <p>She defends poverty as one of the transcendent things.</p>	<p>Dottys, but we do see mention that Dotty Danvers, Dotty Hulme, and Little Dotty Nesbitt had complicated marital histories. - Dotty Peisson played piano.</p>
<p><i>Other Notable Relationships</i></p>	<p>No additional relationships outside the triptych’s subject (the “girl”).</p>	<p>Many people wanted to marry her (e.g., potential suitors, Absalom Stein respects her, Terry Cork remarks on her beauty).</p> <p>Dotty called Mary Virginia Schaeffer the “Saccharine Kid.”</p> <p>She told X “It was a lovely joke…” indicating a friendly or teasing relationship.</p>	<p>Dotty was living with “Show Boat” in St. Louis before Show Boat’s wedding.</p> <p>She meets Sally (sent by Marie) and jokingly instructs Mary Margaret Stone to “knock Sally in the head and drown her.”</p>	<p>Dotty Danvers and Dotty Hulme both married Buffalo Chips Dugan.</p> <p>Dotty Danvers and Little Dotty Nesbitt married two brothers in Sugarland, Texas (one brother also previously</p>

		<p>Letitia funded <i>The Bark</i> after Dotty disappeared (Dotty would not have done so).</p> <p>She had professional ties with Melchisedech Duffey and Absalom Stein.</p>	<p>Nicknamed “Penelope” by the “boys,” referencing her many suitors.</p> <p>Hans was so shaken at meeting her that he clenched his hands till they bled.</p> <p>Patrick Stranahan felt he might have missed out by not knowing her.</p>	<p>married to Dotty Hulme).</p> <p>Dotty Danvers also married a man of the same name as Little Dotty Nesbitt’s first husband.</p> <p>Dotty Peisson rarely married, only loosely connected to the others by name.</p>
<i>Disappearance / Death</i>	N/A (no direct mention of the girl “disappearing,” though the third panel was unsigned).	<p>Dotty did not return after Bagby’s funeral; the Pelican Press folks kept expecting her, but she never came.</p> <p>X said Dotty and Finnegan were slain on the Marianao Coast in a futuristic episode, though some believe their deaths might not be final.</p>	<p>No explicit statement of her death here; Finnegan dies while still engaged to her, but Dotty remains in the circle.</p>	<p>Nothing about their deaths, but extensive mention of marriages and confusions among the various Dottys.</p>



## Chapter 1

### Overview

Set in 1933 Oklahoma, the novel describes the birth of Dotty O'Toole (later known as Dotty Peisson) into a struggling family led by Sheriff Slywood O'Toole and his wife, Mary Theresa. Economic hardship, dust storms, and dwindling resources shape their lives in the barren Jack Oak County. Mary Theresa resents their dire circumstances, while Slywood stubbornly clings to his fading sense of honesty. Dotty's early years unfold amid constant dust storms and a home strained by poverty and conflict. Eventually, the family abandons Jack Oak County entirely, closing the door on its short, beleaguered history.

### Summary

*Dotty* opens by specifying the exact time and connoval: Pius XI is Pope in Rome, Roosevelt II is President in Washington, and Murray I is Governor in Oklahoma City, all on October 15, 1933 (the Fourth Sunday of Autumn), which is also the Twenty-Sixth year of the State and the One Hundred and Fifty-Eighth of the Republic. On this day, a daughter is born to Sheriff Slywood O'Toole and his wife, Mary Theresa, and this child is destined to be known as Dotty O'Toole and later as Dotty Peisson.



The narrative then shifts to the circumstances of Dotty's conception, recounting how, on a cold January night, Slywood and Mary Theresa went to a dance at the barn of the Bohannons in a neighboring county seat. The attendees—Bohannons, Croskys, Perrys, Chronics, Crispins, Allhollows, Bluesrems, and others—are collectively described as small town “dudes,” given to talking about economic theories from figures like Henry George and Veblen instead of enjoying the dance. Mary Theresa, unimpressed by what she considers depressing conversation, complains about the bleak atmosphere. Afterward, on the drive home, she and Slywood begin a serious argument over their precarious finances and whether to use county money for personal needs. Mary Theresa accuses Slywood of clinging to pointless scruples; he refuses to touch the funds. The disagreement continues at home, culminating in a locked door, a forced entry, and Dotty's conception that same night.

Dotty is born on October 15, 1933, joining older siblings Floyd and Catherine. Mrs. Slater comments on Dotty's fierce expression as a newborn, predicting she will be both pretty and mean. Mary Theresa admits to seeing “hate” in Dotty's eyes even at three days old, and she worries about what her daughter will become once she can talk and move about.

The family resides in Jack Oak County, a “defective” or “provisional” county without a proper county seat, where official business is sporadically conducted in personal homes. Sparse farmland and relentless wind characterize the region, which can barely support short grass, wheat, and minimal livestock. Soon a “Black Blizzard” of dust storms, lasting years, descends on the Great Plains. Newspapers in places like Wichita, Grand Junction, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Topeka, and Kansas City take note, though a witness from Jack Oak County insists conditions are far worse back home. Dust storms rage for an extended period, and topsoil is blown away at alarming rates.

Slywood, still serving as sheriff, conducts numerous sheriffs' sales amid foreclosures but makes very little money doing so. Over time, he uses up county funds, personal savings, and whatever resources remain. Mary Theresa grows increasingly haggard, while Floyd and Catherine seem merely dull in the face of hardships, and Dotty—by age three—relentlessly challenges the dust and wind whenever she can. Finally, when their last cow dies and the windmill collapses for the final time, Slywood packs up his family, takes the remaining county treasury of thirteen dollars, and leaves. By locking the front door, he effectively ends the story of Jack Oak County, which is soon absorbed, renamed, or simply left behind.

(Adalbert Weblein), (Allhollows), (Black Blizzard), (Bluesrems), (Bohannons), (Catherine), (Chronics), (Crispins), (Croskys), (Dorothy Theresa), (Dotty O'Toole), (Dotty Peisson), (Floyd), (Grand Junction), (Henry George), (Jack Oak Canyon), (Jack Oak County), (Kansas City), (Legislature), (Mary Theresa), (Mrs. Slater), (Murray I), (Oklahoma City), (Perrys), (Pius XI), (Rome), (Roosevelt II), (Sheriff Slywood O'Toole), (Slaters), (St. Teresa of Avila), (The Republic), (The State), (Thorstein), (Topeka), (Tulsa), (Veblen), (Washington), (Wichita)

**Dotty:** Dotty O'Toole is introduced as a newborn with an unusual intensity and will, though she takes no significant actions of her own at this early stage. The book tells the reader that "On the Fourth Sunday of Autumn (which, as you have already guessed, was October 15, 1933), a girl was born to Sheriff Slywood O'Toole and his wife, Mary Theresa. This child was to be known in History as Dotty O'Toole and later as Dotty Peisson." From the first, she unsettles observers: "'She is the meanest looking baby I ever did see,' said Mrs. Slater," prompting Mary Theresa's acknowledgment, "There has not been, since the world was made, a pretty baby, and you know that as well as I do. But she will be pretty; and mean." In the novel, this fierce impression deepens when another voice admits, "I never saw such hate in the eyes of a three-day old child before," and Mary Theresa, wary of her daughter's potential, remains "a little afraid of her new daughter [...] throughout her life." Dotty is christened Dorothy Theresa, named in part for her father's mother and the saint on whose feast day she was born. Even in infancy, the novel describes how "It was to take her a few years, surprisingly few, to achieve her dominance over them," implying a future of extraordinary influence. Most striking is the child's affinity for the harsh landscape, as "if there had been eleven thousand separate dust storms, then surely Dotty had been lost in the Storms eleven thousand times," running out into them, half-buried, always fighting her way back out. The novel presents this "double-damned wind" as both enemy and companion to a child born into a difficult environment, her strong will and unusual personality emerging even before she can speak or stand.

## I. Birth and Historical Framework

1. A Moment Defined by External Authority Figures
  - A. Global and National Context
    - a. Religious leadership centered in Rome
      - i. Pius XI<sup>1</sup>
        - (a) Spiritual dimension
    - b. Political power in Washington
      - i. Roosevelt II<sup>2</sup>
        - (a) Federal governance
    - c. Executive role in Oklahoma City
      - i. Murray I<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pius XI (1857–1939) was Pope of the Roman Catholic Church from 1922 to 1939. He issued the encyclicals *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), addressing social and economic issues, and *Mit Brennender Sorge* (1937), which criticized Nazi ideology.

<sup>2</sup> Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945) was the 32nd President of the United States from 1933 to 1945. He led the country during the Great Depression and World War II, implementing the New Deal to address economic recovery and social reforms. Not a Lafferty hero.

<sup>3</sup> William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray (1869–1956) was the ninth Governor of Oklahoma from 1931 to 1935. During his tenure, he frequently deployed the National Guard to enforce state laws and declared martial law

- (a) State-level direction
- B. Local Enforcement and Social Order
  - a. Position of Sheriff in Jack Oak County
    - i. Slywood O'Toole as law officer
- 2. Convergence of Calendar and Landscape
  - A. The Date and Seasonal Marker
    - a. The Fourth Sunday of Autumn
      - i. October 15, 1933
        - (a) The Twenty-Sixth year of the State<sup>4</sup> and the One Hundred and Fifty-Eighth of the Republic
  - B. The Family Milestone
    - a. Birth of a Child in a Small Household
      - i. Daughter born to Slywood and Mary Theresa O'Toole
        - (a) Named Dorothy Theresa,<sup>5</sup> known as Dotty O'Toole and later as Dotty Peisson

## II. Social Encounters and Economic Undercurrents

- 1. A Gathering That Promises Leisure but Yields Disaffection
  - A. The Journey to a Dance in Winter
    - a. Travel from home to a neighboring County Seat
      - i. Destination: the Bohannons' barn
        - (a) Attendees: Bohannons, Croskys, Perrys, Chronics, Crispins, Allhollows, Bluesrems, and others
  - B. Affected Social Identities
    - a. Young progressives, agrarian radicals, and country sophisticates?
      - i. No—just small-town dudes
        - (a) The Barn Dance as contrivance rather than genuine festivity

on multiple occasions. Murray's administration coincided with the Great Depression, and he implemented measures to address economic challenges, including the establishment of the Oklahoma Tax Commission to improve tax collection.

<sup>4</sup> Oklahoma became a state on November 16, 1907, the 46th state to join the United States.

<sup>5</sup> *Dorothy*, derived from the Greek *Dōrothéa*, means "gift of God." Saint Dorothy, a 4th-century martyr from Caesarea venerated in the Catholic Church, is traditionally associated with a miraculous event in which roses and apples were delivered in winter to her executioner, leading to his conversion. *Teresa*, a name of Spanish origin likely derived from the Greek *therízō*, meaning "to harvest" or "to reap," is borne by Saint Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582), a Spanish mystic and reformer of the Carmelite Order, and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–1897), known as the "Little Flower of Jesus." Dotty takes pride in being named after Saint Teresa of Ávila.

2. Widespread Money Troubles<sup>6</sup> and Resultant Talk
  - A. Money *Evaporating* Faster Than It Accumulates
    - a. Dull worry and forebodings of hardship
      - i. Anxious focus on scarcity and uncertain futures
  - B. Superficial References to Economic Theories
    - a. Invoked names of Henry George<sup>7</sup> and Thorstein Veblen<sup>8</sup>
      - i. Humorous juxtaposition of intellectual figures and local farmers
        - (a) Theory vs practice

### III. Private Dissatisfaction and Domestic Strife

1. Mary Theresa's Disenchantment<sup>9</sup>
  - A. Assessment of the Dance's Quality
    - a. Brew lacking savor, atmosphere lacking joy
      - i. Personal sense of hollowness amid pretension
      - ii. Desire for authentic pleasure thwarted by grim discourse

<sup>6</sup> During the Great Depression, the U.S. economy faced high unemployment, with rates around 25%, and significant declines in industrial output and GDP following the 1929 crash. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, launched in 1933, sought to address the crisis through programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Public Works Administration (PWA), and National Recovery Administration (NRA), alongside financial reforms like the Emergency Banking Act and the establishment of the FDIC. Efforts to stabilize agriculture through price controls and subsidies, as well as the abandonment of the gold standard, marked this period as one of significant economic experimentation and cautious optimism. Oklahoma, deeply affected by both the economic collapse and the environmental catastrophe of the Dust Bowl, saw its agricultural economy devastated by falling crop prices and severe drought, forcing thousands of farmers to abandon their land and migrate, often to California. The oil industry, another pillar of the state's economy, suffered from overproduction and plummeting prices, leading to widespread job losses. Federal New Deal programs, including the CCC and PWA, provided some relief through employment and economic stabilization efforts, while Governor William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray implemented aggressive state measures, including martial law, to curb the crisis, underscoring the severity of economic and social conditions at the time.

<sup>7</sup> Henry George (1839–1897), an American political economist and journalist, is best known for his book *Progress and Poverty* (1879), in which he proposed a single tax on land to address economic inequality.

<sup>8</sup> Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929), an American economist and sociologist, is known for his satirical analysis *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), where he introduced the concept of "conspicuous consumption" to describe the ostentatious spending of wealth on luxury goods as a display of economic power.

<sup>9</sup> In 1933, the United States underwent significant changes in its monetary system. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 6102 in April, requiring Americans to exchange gold coins, gold bullion, and gold certificates for paper money, effectively taking the country off the gold standard and allowing the federal government to issue currency without direct gold backing. The Gold Reserve Act of 1934 formalized these changes, devalued the dollar against gold, and enabled inflationary measures to counteract the deflation of the Great Depression.

2. Tensions over Integrity and Resources at Home
    - A. Contested Use of Slywood's Owed Salary
      - a. Mary Theresa presses him to write a voucher against his pay
      - b. Slywood's firm refusal to touch County funds
        - i. Moral scruples clashing with immediate need
    - B. Fear and Loss in the Face of Lawlessness
      - a. Rustling of livestock (family has lost 13 head) and risk of violence
        - i. Necessity to burn wheat for warmth and brew substitutes for coffee<sup>10</sup>
          - (a) Material deprivation and erosion of dignity
  3. The Move Toward Separation and Forced Union
    - A. Intentional Isolation as a Form of Birth Control<sup>11</sup>
      - a. Mary Theresa locking herself in the old parlor
        - i. Physical barrier imposed between spouses
          - (a) Decision driven by harsh circumstances and moral stance
    - B. Slywood's Rape of Mary Theresa Leading to Conception
      - a. Slywood's forced entry and rape; Mary Teresa bites him and it doesn't heal for a month.
      - b. The act that results in the conception of Dotty
- IV. Early Impressions and Growing Personalities
1. The Existing Children and the New Arrival
    - A. Siblings Floyd (4 years old) and Catherine (2 years old)
      - a. Older siblings showing limited expression early on
        - i. Contrast with Dotty's intense demeanor from infancy
        - ii. An infant's look reflecting severity beyond her days
  2. An Environment of Dust and Want
    - A. Constant Dust Storms and Rationed Water
      - a. Minimal hygiene and washing
        - i. Storms as daily hazards and inadvertent companions
          - (a) Conditions shaping Dotty's formative experiences

<sup>10</sup> During the Great Depression, roasted wheat was used as a coffee substitute, typically roasted until dark and ground to mimic coffee's appearance and brewing process.

<sup>11</sup> In 1933, contraception in the United States was regulated under the 1873 Comstock Act, which prohibited the distribution of contraceptives and related information. Despite this, contraceptive methods like diaphragms and condoms were becoming more accessible, driven by advocacy from figures like Margaret Sanger, who founded the American Birth Control League in 1921 (later Planned Parenthood). The Catholic Church firmly opposed artificial contraception, a stance reiterated on December 31, 1930, in Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Casti Connubii*, which emphasized procreation as the primary purpose of marriage and condemned artificial birth control as contrary to natural law, permitting only natural family planning. This position was fully defined in *Humanae Vitae* on July 25, 1968.

## V. The Nature of the Defective County

1. Jack Oak<sup>12</sup> County's Structural Anomaly
  - A. No Official County Seat or Central Hub
    - a. Administration held in private homes
      - i. Records stored in an adjoining County's seat
      - ii. Makeshift governance blending townships loosely
2. Agricultural Shortcomings
  - A. Land Unable to Support Trees or Diverse Crops (corn, etc.)
    - a. Sparse population dependent on wheat and short grass
      - i. Reliance on deep wells and sturdy windmill
  - B. Unforgiving terrain precluding prosperity

## VI. The Black Blizzard's Grip<sup>13</sup>

1. Storms Redefining the Landscape
  - A. Dust Continuing for Years
    - a. Blanketing the region, topsoil lost in layers
      - i. Eleven thousand counted dust storms
        - (a) Protracted hardship far exceeding urban discomfort
2. Desperation and Eroding Integrity
  - A. Common Sheriffs' Sales with Negligible Returns
    - a. Slywood's turn to County funds for survival
    - b. Mary Theresa's persistent decline amid endless wind
    - c. The family navigating moral collapse in barren surroundings

## VII. The Departure and Erasure of Jack Oak County

1. The O'Tooles' Final Exodus
  - A. Loss of Livestock and Machinery
    - a. Windmill toppled, tractor buried, granary dust-choked
      - i. Final recourse: last gasoline and last of the County money
        - (a) Closing the front door and question of whether the county is still there
2. The County's Vanishing Status
  - A. Later Legislative Absorption of Defective Entities
    - a. Jack Oak County no longer listed in newer atlases

<sup>12</sup> A colloquialism for the Blackjack Oak (*Quercus marilandica*), a tree species native to Oklahoma and the surrounding regions, known for its resilience and use in firewood and charcoal production

<sup>13</sup> Used during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s to describe severe dust storms that darkened the sky and caused significant agricultural and economic damage across the Great Plains. Oklahoma was among the hardest-hit states, with farmland devastated, thousands of families displaced, and widespread economic hardship. The worst storm, known as "Black Sunday," occurred on April 14, 1935, blanketing the region in darkness and worsening the crisis.



b. Land reclaimed under different names, new families returning  
B. Former County's identity lost to official memory and time<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Memory and recovery are important themes. Dotty is a disguised autobiography in which Lafferty recreates his his past: lost locations, lost people, etc.



## Chapter 2

### Overview

Dotty O'Toole and her family move into a sprawling, crowded house on Elm Road that belongs either to her Grandmother Kearns or to her Uncle George Kearns. She shares the space with numerous relatives, all sustained—however precariously—by Uncle George's finances and the property's abundant garden, orchards, and livestock. Dotty's precocious nature stands out among her many cousins, and she develops a disdain for "kids" and a sharp tongue that often lands her in trouble. Despite her youth, she reads fluently, questions everything, and clashes with her first-grade classroom at St. Joseph's, viewing school as a prison. Meanwhile, she finds a more receptive mind in Sister Mary Regina, with whom she explores big ideas, even though no one will let her skip grades.

### Summary

The chapter begins by noting that the large house on Elm Road, now renamed Elm Street, no longer exists, so its precise size cannot be confirmed. It must have been enormous, however,

because five O'Tooles moved in without overwhelming the already sizable household. The house belongs either to Grandmother Kearns or possibly to her bachelor son, Uncle George Kearns, who is described as tall, unsmiling, with a white bony face, and known for keeping careful financial accounts. Someone remarks, "Oh, the hell he isn't stingy, it cuts his soul to turn loose of a dollar," reflecting how his reluctance to spend money is both habitual and painful for him, though he still shoulders much of the household's debts.

Uncle Thomas Kearns, his wife Aunt Janet, and their children Andrew, Robert, and Joyce live in the house, as do Uncle William Kearns, Aunt Helen, and their seven children: Howard James, Michael John, Mary Elizabeth, Peter William, Mary Margaret, John Donlevy, and Clara Anne. Uncle Timothy Reilly, who is Grandmother Kearns's brother, is also there, as is Aunt Martha Kearns, the unmarried sister of George, Thomas, and William. Additional extended relatives pass through the house, staying briefly before moving on to search for work.

Because most of the unpaid grocery bill is in Uncle George's name, he is effectively supporting everyone. Aunt Jenny proclaims, "Never mention money or hardship to children," believing children should not worry about adult problems. Aunt Helen counters that Aunt Jenny herself seems unworried, though she is not a child. Tensions arise, but the house's size and the land around it provide ample room and resources. The structure is large, white, and wooden, built the year after "the Run," with two stories and an attic converted into extra living space. Gables, porches, and two turret-like structures are topped by lightning rods. Various lean-tos and enclosed porches serve as sleeping rooms. Inside, there are multiple cellars. Outside, a garden, orchard, and additional half-lot—unclaimed for fifteen years by its Sedalia, Missouri owner—together amount to nearly five and a half acres. Alongside numerous fruit trees cherry, plum, peach, apple, crab apple, a pear stump and partial bushes persimmon, huckleberry, sumac, witch hazel, sassafras, Orange Orange, there are vineyards of blue Concord grapes, white Niagara grapes, and an unspecified red variety. Vegetables include watermelons, melons, cucumbers, tomatoes, beans, peas, corn, lettuce, carrots, okra, peppers, onions, rhubarb, strawberries, and various berries Logan, black, Dew, June. Chickens, ducks, beehives, rabbits, and a cow and calf occupy pens and lots; there is even a pig area awaiting the right pig "with the correct bone structure and ear novelure." A lawn, flower gardens, ornamental shrubs, and a wood lot complete the sprawling property. The family supplements its meals with these home-grown supplies and preserves, including over thirty jars of watermelon pickles.

Into this chaotic abundance come Sheriff Slywood O'Toole, Mary Theresa O'Toole, Floyd, Catherine, and young Dotty, who is nearly six. Dotty scorns the other children, calling them "a bunch of blamed kids" and "No damned body at all." When Mary Theresa reminds her that she, too, is still a child, Dotty retorts, "It's all a damned question of outlook." Although she often earns reprimands or spankings, she remains largely unrepentant, and Mary Theresa admits she loves her "perverse daughter."

Dotty reads surprisingly well, which puzzles the family. Asked how she learned, Dotty quips, "Some things are just instinctive." In truth, Mary Theresa and Slywood had taught her briefly in Jack Oak County, and Uncle Timothy Reilly gave her lessons on Elm Road. Dotty's childhood at the house is lively but internally lonely; her closest companions are Clara Anne, who is described as "an imbecile," a black dog belonging to the Potters, and a particular duck.

One day, Dotty asks Mary Theresa whether she might be part Gypsy. Mary Theresa denies it firmly, threatening to spank her for suggesting that a hypnotist might have deceived her mother long ago. Dotty's hair remains straw-colored in different hues, and although she climbs, runs, and throws with the skill of a tomboy, no one could mistake her for a boy. She has little tolerance for sentimentality, and the narrative highlights that summer is the dominant season of childhood, though it inevitably ends with the onset of school.

Dotty is sent to St. Joseph's, which she views as a prison. She expresses contempt for the first grade, calling her classmates babies and describing the repetitive drills as stifling. She especially dislikes Sister Mary Catherine, whom she deems too childish, but forms a bond with Sister Mary Regina also referred to as Sister Hillary Regina in the novel, the eighth-grade teacher. They discuss a range of questions, from bullfrogs to dog behavior and from water puppies to eclipses. Despite their close rapport, Sister Mary Regina insists Dotty cannot skip directly to eighth grade. Dotty warns, "One of these days something will snap inside me," but no one relents. The chapter ends emphasizing that Dotty "grew in wisdom," though she still chafes under the constraints of first grade.

(Aunt Helen), (Aunt Janet), (Aunt Jenny), (Aunt Martha Kearns), (Andrew), (Boyson berries), (Catherine), (Cherry), (Clara Anne), (Dew berries), (Dotty O'Toole), (Elm Road), (Elm Street), (Father Van Heuvel), (Floyd), (Grandmother Kearns), (Gypsy), (Howard James), (Jack Oak County), (John Donlevy), (Joyce), (June berries), (Logan berries), (Mary Elizabeth), (Mary Margaret), (Mary Theresa O'Toole), (Michael John), (Orange Orange), (Persimmon), (Peter William), (Potters), (Robert), (Romany), (Sedalia, Missouri), (Sheriff Slywood O'Toole), (Sister Hillary Regina), (Sister Mary Catherine), (Sister Mary Regina), (St. Joseph's), (Timothy Reilly), (Uncle George Kearns), (Uncle Thomas Kearns), (Uncle Timothy Reilly), (Uncle William Kearns)

**Dotty:** In the novel's second chapter, Dotty performs no notable actions, but her personality and intellectual abilities are emphasized. The novel describes how she lives among siblings, cousins, and other local children, yet "she had already begun to have a contempt for children as have many philosophers," telling her mother, "There is nobody to play with here but a bunch of blamed kids... No damned body at all." When asked about her reading, Dotty casually claims, "Just since I came in from out doors, about ten minutes," having learned in part by assisting her sister, Catherine, "When Catherine got her first primer and was too dumb to learn it and used to cry over it, then I had to help her," yet she dismisses parental help as "Some things are just instinctive." The novel reveals that Uncle Tim Reilly secretly tutored Dotty, unnoticed by others, emphasizing that "reading is a valuable acquisition" and implying Dotty's childhood will be "a foreshortened one." Challenging conventional

identity, she wonders if she might be “part Gypsy,” provoking her mother’s denial and resulting in a spanking when Dotty persists: “There is a point where precocity is no longer cute.” Nonetheless, she continues to claim Gypsy heritage, learning some Romany in her bohemian days. Her appearance is fair and straw-haired, shifting shades with her moods; she is graceful, agile, and clever, never a tomboy though she might act like one. Lafferty insists that Dotty “was never sentimental,” and she anticipates school as an oppressive institution, seeing through its “vicious lie” and calling it a “jail.” She regards certain teachers as lacking intellect, preferring the company of Sister Mary Regina, the eighth-grade teacher, with whom she has extensive discussions on varied topics—bullfrogs, lunar phases, animal behavior, and more. Growing frustrated with the triviality of the first grade’s repetitious sentences, Dotty yearns to skip directly to eighth grade, though this proves impossible. The novel establishes Dotty’s independence, critical intellect, and resistance to all that would confine her.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Relationship to Dotty</i>	<i>Other Relationships Noted in Chapter II</i>
<i>Grandmother Kearns</i>	Maternal Great-Grandmother	Mother of Dotty’s mother and Uncle George, Uncle Thomas, Uncle William, and Aunt Martha; Owns the house
<i>Uncle George Kearns</i>	Maternal Great-Uncle	Brother of Dotty’s grandmother, Uncle Thomas, Uncle William, and Aunt Martha
<i>Uncle Thomas Kearns</i>	Maternal Great-Uncle	Brother of Dotty’s grandmother, Uncle George, Uncle William, and Aunt Martha
<i>Aunt Janet</i>	Wife of Uncle Thomas; Maternal Great-Aunt	
<i>Andrew</i>	Maternal Second Cousin	Child of Uncle Thomas and Aunt Janet
<i>Robert</i>	Maternal Second Cousin	Child of Uncle Thomas and Aunt Janet
<i>Joyce</i>	Maternal Second Cousin	Child of Uncle Thomas and Aunt Janet
<i>Uncle William Kearns</i>	Maternal Great-Uncle	Brother of Dotty’s grandmother, Uncle George, Uncle Thomas, and Aunt Martha
<i>Aunt Helen</i>	Wife of Uncle William; Maternal Great-Aunt	
<i>Howard James</i>	Maternal Second Cousin	Child of Uncle William and Aunt Helen
<i>Michael John</i>	Maternal Second Cousin	Child of Uncle William and Aunt Helen
<i>Mary Elizabeth</i>	Maternal Second Cousin	Child of Uncle William and Aunt Helen
<i>Peter William</i>	Maternal Second Cousin	Child of Uncle William and Aunt Helen
<i>Mary Margaret</i>	Maternal Second Cousin	Child of Uncle William and Aunt Helen
<i>John Donlevy</i>	Maternal Second Cousin	Child of Uncle William and Aunt Helen
<i>Clara Anne</i>	Maternal Second Cousin	Child of Uncle William and Aunt Helen; Imbecile
<i>Uncle Timothy Reilly</i>	Maternal Great-Uncle	Brother of Grandmother Kearns
<i>Aunt Martha Kearns</i>	Maternal Great-Aunt	Sister of Uncle George, Uncle Thomas, and Uncle William
<i>Mary Theresa O’Toole</i>	Mother	Daughter of Grandmother Kearns

## I. Uncertainty of the House’s Dimensions and Ownership

1. Inability to determine exact size
  - A. House no longer there
  - B. Elm Road now known as Elm Street
  - C. Childhood perception often distorts size
    - a. Typically, places seen in youth appear larger than they were
      - i. This exception suggests the house was genuinely large
2. Evidence of spaciousness from resident count
  - A. Five members of the O'Toole family joined an already numerous household
    - a. Their addition did not overfill the home
      - i. Indicates a substantial living area capable of housing many people
3. Ambiguity of property ownership
  - A. House may have belonged to Grandmother Kearns
  - B. Alternatively, may have been under Uncle George Kearns's control
    - a. He maintained strict financial records
      - i. Possibly held a mortgage against his mother's home
        - (a) Not a matter of generosity, but careful, recorded lending
4. Financial constraints in a difficult era
  - A. Uncle George's reputation for reluctant spending
    - a. Seen as stingy due to pain in releasing money
      - i. Yet no one truly held much wealth at that time
      - ii. Many depended on his careful management, surviving on resources linked to him

## II. Composition of the Extended Household and Internal Frictions

1. Additional Core Residents
  - A. Uncle Thomas Kearns and his immediate family
    - a. Thomas Kearns: a younger brother of George Kearns
    - b. Aunt Janet (Thomas's wife)
    - c. Their children: Andrew, Robert, and Joyce
  - B. Uncle William Kearns and his larger family
    - a. William Kearns: the youngest Kearns brother
    - b. Aunt Helen (William's wife)
    - c. Their children, all addressed by double names:
      - i. Howard James
      - ii. Michael John
      - iii. Mary Elizabeth
      - iv. Peter William
      - v. Mary Margaret
      - vi. John Donlevy
      - vii. Clara Anne



2. Other Permanent and Transient Residents
  - A. Uncle Timothy Reilly, brother of Grandmother Kearns
  - B. Aunt Martha Kearns, spinster sister of George, Thomas, William, and Mary Theresa
  - C. Various relations passing through briefly
    - a. Staying a week or two while searching for work elsewhere
    - b. Departing and being replaced by new arrivals in a revolving pattern
3. Dominance of Uncle George's Financial Responsibility
  - A. Central role of Uncle George Kearns
    - a. His name on the mostly unpaid grocery bill
    - b. Others living off his strained credit and reputation
4. Differing Attitudes Within the Household
  - A. Aunt Jenny's stance on shielding children from hardship
    - a. Belief that children should remain carefree and unworried
  - B. Aunt Helen's contrasting view
    - a. Remarks on Aunt Jenny's own lack of worry as an adult
    - b. Resentment toward newcomers and feeling that others are intruders
  - C. Resultant tension and implied competition for resources and space

### III. Extensive Grounds and Varied Agriculture

1. The House and its Surroundings
  - A. Large, old-fashioned structure
    - a. Built the year after the Run<sup>15</sup>
    - b. High, white wooden house with multiple floors, attics, gables, porches, and turrets
      - i. Turrets topped with lightning rods<sup>16</sup>
    - c. Various enclosed porches and added lean-tos repurposed as living spaces
    - d. Multiple cellars: an inside cellar, an outside fruit cellar, and a summer house
  - B. Vegetation and Cultivated Land
    - a. Garden and orchard providing fruits, vegetables, and shade
      - i. Fruit trees: hickory, oak, maples, pecan, cherry, plum, peach, apple, crab apple, and a stump of a former pear tree
      - ii. Transitional growths: persimmon, huckleberry, sumac, witch hazel, sassafras, and Orange Orange
      - iii. Grapes: Concords (blue), Niagaras (white), red varieties (unknown specifics)
    - b. Melons and Vegetables: watermelon, musk melon, cucumbers, tomatoes,

<sup>15</sup> Built in 1890, a year after the Land Run of 1889 opened the Unassigned Lands of Oklahoma to settlement on April 22, the structure represents an early settlement effort during a period of rapid regional development.

<sup>16</sup> Commonly installed to protect buildings from lightning strikes, particularly in rural and storm-prone areas, lightning rods became even more critical during the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s. Severe dust storms generated static electricity and lightning, while extreme dryness heightened the risk of rapidly spreading fires.

beans, peas, corn, lettuce, carrots, okra, peppers, onions, rhubarb, strawberries, Logan berries, blackberries, Boyson berries, and attempts at June and Dew berries

C. Domestic and Farm Animals

- a. Chickens, including multiple clutches of young chicks and pullets
- b. Ducks and a duck pond large enough for children to swim in
- c. Bee hives and rabbit hutches
- d. A cow and calf in the cow lot
- e. An empty pig lot awaiting a suitable pig

D. Ornamental and Utility Spaces

- a. Lawn, extensive flower gardens, ornamentals, and low twisted cedar trees
- b. A grape arbor with a seating area fully covered by vines
- c. A wood lot supplying fuel for daily use

2. Actual Land Holdings and Use of Neighboring Property

A. Survey records show only two and a half acres

B. Real usage extended into adjoining absentee-owned property (a man who went back to Sedalia, Missouri, 15 years ago)

- a. Additional area nearly three acres more
- b. Combined total about five and a half acres utilized by the family

3. Ample Home-Produced Provisions

A. Home-grown food supplemented grocery items

- a. Reduced the net effect of Uncle George's unpaid grocery bill
- b. Hundreds of jars of preserved produce, including many jars of watermelon pickles

#### IV. Dotty's Position and Attitude Within the Household

1. Childhood Environment Among Many Relatives

A. Dotty living with brother, sister, and ten cousins

- a. Surrounded by children of various ages
- b. In contact with children of the town and countryside as well

B. Initial disdain for other children

- a. Expressing contempt toward them as "blamed kids"
  - i. Refusal to identify herself as one of them

2. Family Recognition of Dotty's Youth

A. Mary Theresa's reminder that Dotty is still a young child

- a. Dotty only a few months shy of six years old
  - i. Youngest among thirteen related children

B. Dotty's insistence on a different "outlook"

- a. Maintaining a precocious sense of self separate from peers

3. Interaction with Authority and Discipline

A. Mary Theresa's occasional but not frequent use of punishment

- a. Whipping Dotty when her remarks become too crude
  - B. Mary Teresa loves her perverse daughter
- 4. Dotty's Solitariness Despite the Crowded Home
  - A. Limited selection of companions chosen by Dotty
    - a. Clara Anne, an imbecile cousin
    - b. A black dog belonging to the Potters
    - c. One particular duck
  - B. Acknowledgment that three friends are barely sufficient
    - a. Implicit suggestion that more might be desirable but not pursued
- 5. Early Demonstration of Intellectual Ability
  - A. Dotty's reading skill developed at an unusually young age
    - a. Claims of assisting older sister Catherine with primer learning
    - b. Attributing her ability to "instinct"
  - B. Three forgotten lessons given by Mary Theresa in Jack Oak County; Slywood helped Dotty with hard words; months of unnoticed sessions with Uncle Tim Reilly
    - a. Parents and others oblivious to Dotty's exact learning process
- 6. Dotty's Physical Appearance and Mannerisms
  - A. Straw-colored hair varying subtly with mood and light
  - B. Graceful but energetic physicality
    - a. Climbs dangerously high and outruns others her age
    - b. Throws well, though distinctly not like a boy
- 7. Inclination Toward Verbal Assertiveness and Lying
  - A. Fluent in subtle falsehoods common to precocious children
    - a. Lying appearing as a natural skill rather than a learned one
- 8. Early Speculation About Identity
  - A. Dotty's suggestion that she may be part Gypsy (she will later tell people she half Gypsy)<sup>17</sup>
    - a. Mary Theresa's denial, insisting on Irish heritage only
      - i. Prompting a spanking when Dotty persists with speculation
  - B. Physical description of Dotty: fair to freckled, straw-colored hair, her moods affect how her appearance is perceived
- 9. Retention of Childlike Qualities in a Compressed Childhood
  - A. Not denial of her childhood, but acknowledgment that it is shortened and unusual

<sup>17</sup> Dotty's reading probably fed into this. Early 20th-century storybooks often portrayed the Romani as exotic and mysterious figures, frequently emphasizing their nomadic lifestyle, fortune-telling abilities, or musical inclinations. Examples include depictions of them as child-stealers in *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899) by E. Nesbit, as freedom-loving wanderers in *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) by Kenneth Grahame, and as part of exotic adventures in *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) by Rudyard Kipling.

- B. Dotty is not sentimental
- C. Foreshadowing future phases and escapes as Dotty ages
  - a. Still situated in that first summer on Elm Road, despite advanced traits

## VI. Perception of Childhood, Summer, and the Onset of Formal Schooling

1. Recognition of a Foreshortened Childhood
  - A. Dotty experiencing a compressed but still genuine childhood period
    - a. Enjoying a measure of freedom and formative experiences before school
    - b. Retaining aspects of childhood innocence despite precocious traits
2. Dominance of Summer in the Child's World
  - A. Summer seen as more expansive and significant than other seasons combined
    - a. Its influence extending even into parts of the year not considered summer
    - b. Forming a large portion of Dotty's early life and memories
3. Introduction to Formal Education and Its Constraints
  - A. School presented as an institution fundamentally opposed to freedom
    - a. Seen by Dotty as a prison rather than an enjoyable or nurturing place
    - b. Rejection of the notion that school could be "fun"
      - i. Belief that any claim of school being enjoyable is a falsehood
      - ii. Dotty never fooled.
      - iii. School is a jail
4. Evaluating St. Joseph's School and Its Faculty<sup>18</sup>
  - A. General respect for most of the sisters as dedicated teachers
    - a. Exception: Sister Mary Catherine of the first grade, considered unintelligent and babyish
      - i. Condescending behavior, including baby talk, offends Dotty's sensibilities
  - B. Contrast with Sister Mary Regina<sup>19</sup> of the eighth grade
    - a. A teacher of notable intelligence and insight
    - b. Engages Dotty in deep, wide-ranging discussions in convent kitchen
      - i. Topics spanning natural phenomena, animal behavior, common curiosities, and everyday mysteries
    - c. Provides intellectual stimulation that Dotty craves
    - d. Attempts by Dotty to move directly from first grade to eighth grade denied

<sup>18</sup> In the 1930s, Catholic convent schools for girls emphasized an education that integrated academics with religious instruction. The curriculum typically included reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, catechism, domestic sciences, and the arts, taught by religious orders such as the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

<sup>19</sup> The name is significant for the role the sister plays in Dotty's life. A nun might take the name "Mary Regina" to honor the Virgin Mary under her title *Regina*, meaning "Queen" in Latin, reflecting devotion to Mary as "Queen of Heaven." This title is invoked in the Marian prayer *Salve Regina* ("Hail, Holy Queen"), which venerates Mary as a compassionate and intercessory figure.

by Sister Mary Regina

5. Dotty's Growing Frustration and Internal Struggle
  - A. Forced to endure the first grade despite mental readiness for more advanced material
    - a. Repetition of basic lessons causing emotional strain and exasperation
  - B. Persistent mental tension
    - a. Something "nearly snaps" inside Dotty due to enforced confinement in unsuitable academic surroundings
    - b. Nevertheless, she continues to accumulate knowledge and sharpen her understanding of the world



## Chapter 3

### Overview

Dotty O'Toole wrestles with haunting nightmares of Hell and an intense awareness of both the "Mystery" divine grace and the "Adversary." She longs for confession and first communion, fearing her sins will send her to damnation before she can make things right. While her mother, Mary Theresa, tries to console her, Dotty lashes out in defiance—daring God during storms, writing irreverent verses, and testing religious boundaries. Meanwhile, her uncles and father join the army as war unfolds, leaving her to spar verbally with Uncle Tim Reilly and question why certain men are chosen for military rank. Ultimately, Dotty's rebellious streak intensifies when her father is stationed in Texas, and her first encounter with the sea convinces her that she must remain near its smell, no matter the cost.

## Summary

Dotty's situation at the start of Chapter III highlights her awareness of both a "Mystery" and an "Adversary," which she believes dwell within her. She anticipates a lifelong internal battle between these forces and feels a sense of impending defeat. One night, Mary Theresa notices Dotty crying—an unusual occurrence—and asks what is wrong. Dotty replies that she has "the damnest nightmares" whenever she sleeps, specifically of being in "Hell." Mary Theresa expresses surprise, explaining that she has deliberately avoided telling Dotty about Hell, and wonders if school taught her. Dotty says no: she learned by going there in her dreams. She describes seeing children her own size or younger in Hell, placed there "for the damnest things," and insists that "good little girls" do indeed end up there.

Mary Theresa tries to reassure Dotty, but Dotty remains convinced of her own damnation, pointing out that she cannot go to Confession for four more months—until Holy Thursday—and might perish before then. She admits that she says the "Act of Contrition" constantly but does not mean it, a fact that troubles her. Mary Theresa urges her not to worry, but Dotty insists she does mean it when she says she cannot truly repent yet. After the conversation, Dotty goes back to sleep and experiences another nightmare, revisiting Hell.

Time passes until the day before Holy Thursday arrives. Dotty is finally able to be "shriven," or receive the sacrament of Confession. Despite this, her internal turmoil continues, and she remains susceptible to moments of "black revolt." She finds herself playing a dangerous game: enjoying temporary absolution and then falling back into rebellion, a pattern that she knows could be ruinous if she dies "off base."

Dotty's defiance also appears during storms, a frequent occurrence in "storm country." While her grandmother lights a blessed candle and her mother sprinkles the children with holy water, Dotty dares the thunder to strike her, counting aloud and mocking each thunderclap for "flinching." In daytime, she rails against an overly "sweet" depiction of Heaven, deciding she would refuse to enter unless it offered something more compelling. She writes irreverent verses mocking angels, heaven's cleanliness, and the idea of being "laundered in the blood of Lamb." She declares, "All but me. I won't come in."

Despite her rebelliousness, she also experiences the "Mystery Itself" as an inner light she likens to a lamp shining from a cave inside a mountain. She discovers she can tell if someone else has the light of grace, even when she herself lacks it. This gift sometimes horrifies her, such as when she realizes that no one in a room—including her—possesses that light.

In February, Father Van Heuvel initially deems Dotty too young to join the first communion class, given that she is younger than the rest of the children. Only Sister Mary Regina's intervention allows Dotty to enter. She receives first communion before Easter, but by Easter night, she lapses into another revolt, acknowledging that confession provides only a temporary release from danger.

Her confidant on spiritual matters is Uncle Tim Reilly, who has long engaged in his own “battle with Principalities.” He warns Dotty that playing “loose” with salvation becomes riskier with age, as returning to grace feels harder over time. Dotty insists that she repents often, but Uncle Tim hints that genuine repentance is elusive for a hardened soul.

Meanwhile, the men in Dotty’s family—Uncle Thomas, Uncle William, Uncle George, and Dotty’s father Slywood O’Toole—join the army or otherwise leave for the war effort. The Elm Road house refills with their wives and children “for the duration,” so life there continues much as before, minus the men. Curious about who is selected for military service, Dotty wonders why Uncle Tim Reilly is not called up, jokingly threatening to write letters on his behalf to remind officials of his “remarkable history.” She follows through, contacting her Congressman, War Department personnel, the President, and the Governor. Only a minor official from the Governor’s office responds, in jest, recalling past days “wrangling mules” with Uncle Tim.

Dotty also questions why Mr. Grudaire, a lawyer, has become a Major, while Shantytown Shadrack—an infamous fighter who once forced Mr. Grudaire to walk around him—remains a low-ranking soldier. Mary Theresa explains that Mr. Grudaire’s background in law qualifies him for leadership, though Dotty remains skeptical.

Slywood O’Toole attains a position as a Sergeant in the M. P.s based on his previous experience as Sheriff of Jack Oak County. He is stationed in a port city in Texas, and Dotty visits, discovering the smell of the sea for the first time. Entranced, she decides she cannot imagine living where she cannot smell the ocean, “even if she has to go ragged to remain there.” She never fully explains this decision, yet it marks a new chapter in her life, one shaped by an enduring rebellious spirit and a growing fascination with the coastline.

(Mystery), (Adversary), (Act of Contrition), (Angels), (Army of the Potomac), (City), (Congress), (Dotty O’Toole), (Father Van Heuvel), (Gabriel), (God), (Governor), (Hell), (Holy Thursday), (Indian Wars), (Jack Oak County), (Mary Theresa), (M. P.s), (Mr. Grudaire), (Mystery Itself), (Pershing), (President), (San Juan Hill), (Shantytown Shadrack), (Sheriff Slywood O’Toole), (Sister Mary Catherine), (Sister Mary Regina), (Spanish-American War), (Storm Country), (T. Town), (Texas), (Tim Reilly), (Uncle George), (Uncle Thomas), (Uncle Tim Reilly), (Uncle William), (Villa), (War Department)

**Dotty:** Dotty’s restlessness emerges one night in tears and troubled sleep: “Well, it’s just that I have the damnest nightmares every time I go to sleep. And I’m afraid that I won’t be able to wake up from one of them, and then I’ll be lost. I dream I’m in Hell.” Rather than dismissing such fears, she insists on her direct knowledge of the place: “I’ve been there, five times tonight; and lots of other nights. I’ve seen the blamed place. Do you want me to tell you what it’s like?” The notion that only the wicked visit Hell does not quiet her; she contradicts her mother’s reassurance, “That’s all you know about it. I’ve seen them there, some of them not much bigger than me, one of them not as



big. You have no idea how many different kinds of people are there; and they put them there for the damnest things...And when was I ever? But innocent people like you wouldn't understand things like that, mother." Her fears deepen as she weighs her unconfessed sins, worrying, "Oh, mother, with you it couldn't be serious. But they say I'm too little to go to Confession. And it's four months till Holy Thursday when I can go. What if something happens to me before that?" Nor does the Act of Contrition bring peace, as she admits, "Oh, I know that. I say it all the time. But the trouble is that I don't mean it when I say it. What do you do when you can't mean it? If I die tonight I'll go to Hell."

After this exchange, Dotty tries to sleep again, only to experience yet another nightmare. Later, as thunder shakes the world outside, Dotty does not cower but challenges the divine: "I dare you! I dare you!...You can put me in Hell in five minutes...You were the one who flinched. I didn't flinch." Unimpressed by heavenly sweetness, she rejects the notion of a perfect afterlife, calling it "too damned sweet," and composes mocking verses about angels and roll calls at the Golden Gate:

'Angels all have yellow hair,  
Bright and sweet, so could we be.  
God and Gabriel waiting there,  
Everybody there but me.

Gather at the Golden Gate  
Blow that silly horn, you queer.  
Mama, Papa, let them wait,  
Call the roll. I won't say 'here'!  
Everybody come and join,

All be shrived of sense and sin.  
Pay them all in golden coin.  
All but me. I won't come in.'

She dismisses angels again—"I bet there isn't a blamed one of those Angels who ever chewed tobacco in her life"—and writes another verse favoring her current self over any cleansed, lamb-washed crowd:

'Children gather in the sky,  
Laundered in the blood of Lamb.  
Clean the whole damned bunch, but I  
Like me better like I am.'

The novel observes that Dotty takes pleasure in being mean and describes her own inner nature in bold terms: "What I am," said Dotty, "is a mountain with a cave in the middle of it. If there is a light in the cave, it can be seen shining all through the mountain." Though she cannot always find grace for herself, she perceives it in others. She panics at first about being too young for First

Communion, eventually receives it, then returns to her rebellious stance by Easter, aware there is always a way back from her “dangerous game,” yet continuing to play it for years. In time, Dotty writes letters to government officials, arguing that Uncle Tim Reilly should be drafted into the war; she questions why some men serve while others remain at home. She finds it logical that the best fighter should have the best job, defends Shantytown Shadrack’s abilities despite his flaws, and appreciates Mr. Grudaire’s competence in handling him. When her family moves to a Texas port city, the scent of the sea enchants her, and, breathing it in, Dotty decides she wants to remain near the ocean for the rest of her life. The novel states that she has encountered both Mystery and Adversary and that she will be their battleground; it shows her mother’s doubts about Dotty’s strange claims, notes Sister Mary Regina’s help in guiding Dotty to First Communion, reveals Uncle Tim’s parallel struggles, and portrays Dotty’s honesty and rational yet impulsive nature. Through it all, she is neither easily fooled nor sentimental, finding quiet amusement in the world’s oddities, even as her letters earn her a reputation among officials.

## I. Initial Awareness of Spiritual and Moral Struggle

1. Early Internal Conflict
  - A. Encounter with the Mystery and the Adversary<sup>20</sup>
    - a. Recognition that Dotty herself will be a battleground
      - i. Expectation of a prolonged, possibly inconclusive struggle
        - (a) No assurance of eventual victory
        - (b) Premonitions of defeat and destruction overshadowing any hope
2. Emotional Turmoil and its Rarity
  - A. An unusual episode of crying at night
    - a. Dotty rarely cries, making this event notable
  - B. Mary Theresa’s Concern
    - a. Mother’s intervention to discover the cause
3. Fear Centered on Nightmares and Eternal Consequences
  - A. Recurrent Hellish Dreams
    - a. Dotty frightened by recurring visions of Hell<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The *Baltimore Catechism* (1888), No. 2, states: “A mystery is a truth which we cannot understand, and which we must believe because God has said it” (Lesson 1, Question 9). This formulation emphasizes the believer’s act of faith, acknowledging that divine mysteries, while accessible through Revelation, remain ultimately beyond the full grasp of human intellect. Adversary denotes Satan, the opponent of God and humanity, described in 1 Peter 5:8 as “your adversary the devil,” who seeks to lead souls away from salvation

<sup>21</sup> In Catholic doctrine, the fear of hell, described as *servile fear*, serves as a deterrent against sin and a motivation for repentance. Hell is eternal separation from God, the result of unrepented mortal sin. This fear is connected to the sacrament of reconciliation and the concept of *attrition*, which is sorrow for sin motivated by fear of punishment. While attrition can lead to repentance and forgiveness, it is considered inferior to *contrition*, which arises from love for God and regret for offending Him. The sacrament remains valid whether

- i. Fear of not waking from such nightmares
  - (a) Worry about being trapped permanently in that state
  - b. Direct experiential claim of having “visited” Hell multiple times
- i. Observation that even very young children appear in Hell<sup>22</sup>
  - (a) Suggestion that innocence is not guaranteed salvation
    - B. Source of Knowledge of Hell
      - a. Mother surprised Dotty knows of it without formal religious instruction
    - i. Dotty asserts personal experience rather than learned doctrine
      - C. Urgency of Spiritual Readiness
        - a. Distress over inability to confess before a possible sudden death<sup>23</sup>
          - i. Familiarity with the Act of Contrition,<sup>24</sup> but inability to mean it sincerely
            - (a) Concern that insincere contrition will not safeguard her soul<sup>25</sup>

the person confessing acts from either attrition or contrition. This fear of sin and hell is a recurrent theme in Dotty’s life.

<sup>22</sup> Historically, the Catholic Church has taught that children who reached the age of reason (typically around seven years old) could commit mortal sin if they willfully chose to act against God’s law with full knowledge and consent. If such children died in unrepented mortal sin, they would face the same consequences as adults: eternal separation from God in hell. This teaching emphasized personal responsibility and accountability for sin once moral understanding developed. For this reason, the Church stressed education, confession, and moral guidance to help children avoid sin and grow in virtue. Dotty’s precociousness suggests that she reached the age of reason early. Lafferty will be much concerned with this in his work. Cf. Evita in *Past Master*: “Yes, there is, Charley-boy. I was naive in my methods and in my direction of revolt,” Evita said. “The teachers said that there was no Hell and no Devil, and this angered me; I knew that they were wrong; I had had some personal contact with both. They said that there was no sin. In particular, they said that children were not able to commit serious sins; and in this I knew that the teachers were sinfully wrong.”

<sup>23</sup> Dotty must wait until Holy Thursday for her first confession. Holy Thursday, which commemorates the Last Supper, is closely connected to the Sacrament of Confession in Catholic tradition. At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist, and after His Resurrection, He gave the Apostles the authority to forgive sins (John 20:22–23), forming the foundation of the sacrament. In many parishes, the period leading up to Holy Thursday is significant for preparing children for their first confession, emphasizing repentance and reconciliation as essential steps toward receiving the Eucharist worthily, often for the first time on Holy Thursday or during Eastertide.

<sup>24</sup> The traditional Act of Contrition, *Deus meus, ex toto corde paenitet me omnium meorum peccatorum, eaque detestor, quia peccando, non solum poenas a te iuste statutas promeritus sum, sed praesertim quia offendi te, summum bonum, ac dignum qui super omnia diligaris. Ideo firmiter propono, adiuvante gratia tua, de cetero me non peccatum peccandique occasiones proximas fugituum esse. Amen.*, expresses deep sorrow for sin and the firm resolution to amend one’s life. *My God, I am sorry with all my heart for all my sins, and I detest them, because by sinning, I have deserved the punishments you have justly imposed, but above all because I have offended you, the supreme good, and worthy of all my love. Therefore, I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.*

<sup>25</sup> An insincere confession, in which a person deliberately withholds a mortal sin or lacks true sorrow for sin, is invalid and a sacrilege (*Baltimore Catechism*, No. 3, Q. 792).

4. Continuing Distress and Return to the Nightmare
  - A. Mother unable to reassure Dotty effectively
    - a. Doubt that “good little girls don’t go to Hell” applies
  - B. Dotty’s Persistent Anxiety
    - a. Acceptance that, if she died now, she would be damned
  - C. Reversion to Sleep and Recurrence of Terror
    - a. Dotty falls asleep again
      - i. Another nightmare ensues, returning her to the same Hellish visions

## II. The Waiting Period and the Cycles of Rebellion and Grace

1. Anticipation of Spiritual Milestone
  - A. Four-month interval before Dotty can confess and receive communion
    - a. The day before Holy Thursday as the target date for being “shriven”
      - i. Hope that this sacrament might save her soul and grant reprieve
2. Intermittent Spiritual Revolts During Storms
  - A. Grandmother’s Rituals at Night
    - a. Lighting the blessed candle during lightning storms
    - b. Mary Theresa sprinkling children with holy water
  - B. Dotty’s Defiance of Divine Power
    - a. Daring the God of thunder to strike her<sup>26</sup>
      - i. Counting aloud, taunting lightning and rain
        - (a) Claiming the storm “flinched” first
        - (b) Display of bravado intended to show fearlessness and challenge divine authority
3. Daytime Cynicism Towards Heavenly Concepts
  - A. Skeptical Attitude Toward the Sweetness of Heaven
    - a. Doubt that any place could be so perfectly pleasant
    - b. Speculation about hidden flaws or nuisances (such as being “over-run with flies”)
  - B. Composition of Defiant Verses
    - a. Writing irreverent poetry expressing refusal to join heavenly ranks
      - i. Emphasis on retaining her own flawed nature rather than conforming
        - (a) Mocking angels and saved souls as untested or unadventurous
        - (b) “Blow that silly horn, you queer!”
        - (c) Claiming she will not answer the heavenly roll call
        - (d) “Laundered” as travesty of “washed” in the blood of Lamb

<sup>26</sup> In Psalm 29:3–4, Jehovah’s voice is “upon the waters,” the “God of glory thundering.” Similarly, in Exodus 19:16, His presence on Mount Sinai is accompanied by thunder and lightning, signs of His divine authority and the awe of His revelation.

4. Attempting to Understand the Inner Mystery<sup>27</sup>
  - A. Personal Metaphor of Grace as Inner Illumination
    - a. Imagining herself as a mountain with a lit cave inside
      - i. If the light (Grace) is present, it should shine through her being
  - B. Extraordinary Sensitivity to States of Grace in Others
    - a. Dotty able to discern who possesses Grace and who does not
      - i. Gift persists even when Dotty herself lacks Grace
        - (a) A dangerous ability, causing discomfort and isolation<sup>28</sup>
  - C. Realization of Moral Vacuums in Groups
    - a. Awareness that entire gatherings might be devoid of Grace
      - i. Sudden, horrifying recognition of universal spiritual emptiness around her

### III. Obstacles to Spiritual Milestones and Limited Reprieves

1. Potential Exclusion from First Communion Class
  - A. Father Van Heuvel's Initial Refusal
    - a. Deeming Dotty too young for the class due to a half-year age gap
      - i. Threatening delay to receiving first communion<sup>29</sup>
  - B. Sister Mary Regina's Intervention

<sup>27</sup> Sanctifying grace is a supernatural gift of God that enables the soul to participate in divine life, first conferred through baptism and restored through the sacrament of confession if lost through mortal sin. Being in a state of grace allows one to grow in holiness, perform meritorious works, and maintain a relationship with God. Sanctifying grace stands in contrast to actual grace, which refers to temporary, divine assistance given by God to enlighten the mind and strengthen the will, enabling individuals to perform good acts, resist temptation, and cooperate with God's will. Dotty's life will be filled with actual grace and many returns to sanctifying grace.

<sup>28</sup> Because Dotty is as much a novel about divine grace as it is about Dotty, it cannot be understood without understanding the difference between the Catholic and most Protestant understandings of grace. Articulated at the Council of Trent (1545–1563) in response to the Reformation, Catholic doctrine holds that grace both justifies and sanctifies, and that human beings, elevated by this grace, can freely cooperate with God's will. Justification, from a Catholic perspective, is a process involving the infusion of sanctifying grace, good works done in grace, and the sacraments. In contrast, mainline Protestant traditions shaped by the Reformation—particularly Lutheran and Reformed—emphasize the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) and view it as a forensic act in which God imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer. Works—while expected as the fruit of faith—do not contribute to the believer's justification. See *Council of Trent, Decree on Justification* (Session VI, 1547); Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian* (1520), in *Luther's Works*, Vol. 31; and Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> A baptized child receives the Eucharist for the first time, marking full participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Traditionally, preparation includes catechesis on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, understanding the significance of the Mass, and receiving the sacrament of confession beforehand to ensure the soul is in a state of grace. The typical age for First Communion is around seven.

- a. Sister's understanding of Dotty's urgent spiritual need
  - b. Persuades inclusion of Dotty into the first communion class despite norms
- 2. Aftermath of Sacramental Initiation
  - A. Attaining First Communion
    - a. Though Dotty is shriven before Holy Thursday, her inner conflict persists
  - B. Persistent Pattern of Revolt and Return
    - a. Periodic lapses back into "black revolt" against divine order
      - i. Recognition that while she can always return to Grace, it is risky
      - ii. Understanding the "dangerous game" of oscillating between states of sin and Grace

#### IV. Insight from Uncle Tim Reilly's Experiences

- 1. A Relative Who Has Battled Spiritual Forces
  - A. Uncle Tim's Credibility
    - a. Viewed by Dotty as one who has confronted "Principalities" in the arena of the soul<sup>30</sup>
  - B. Advising Dotty Against Rebellion
    - a. Warning that playing "loose" with spiritual well-being is not worthwhile
      - i. Confession that he himself erred in this approach<sup>31</sup>
- 2. Uncle Tim's Disillusionment with His Own Defiance
  - A. Recognition of Superficiality in His Longstanding Rebellion
    - a. Disclosing that his defiance has grown stale with age<sup>32</sup>
    - b. Encounters with hidden evil in outwardly good individuals
      - i. Realization that secret vices of apparently righteous people surpass his own showy wickedness
  - B. Futility of Sustained Rebellion
    - a. Worn down by years of empty defiance
    - b. Admission that genuine repentance now appears difficult

<sup>30</sup> Ephesians 6:12: "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."

<sup>31</sup> Uncle Tim claims that he had a good time giving scandal. Dotty says she does not understand the phrase "giving scandal," which is often used in Catholic homes. The *Baltimore Catechism* defines scandal as "any word, act, or omission which is in itself evil or which has the appearance of evil, and is the occasion of sin to another" (*Baltimore Catechism*, No. 3, Q. 1321). Scandal is a serious sin, particularly when it leads others into grave sin, with greater culpability assigned to those in positions of influence or authority. Uncle Tim's name is no accident, echoing the admonition in 1 Timothy: "Reprimand publicly those who do sin, so that the rest also will be afraid" (1 Timothy 5:20), and "Some people's sins are public, preceding them to judgment; but other people are followed by their sins" (1 Timothy 5:24)

<sup>32</sup> Uncle Tim has not experienced sanctifying grace for forty years. He says, "I don't know the way back anymore." Dotty, however, will choose a different path.

3. Dotty's Response and Continued Rebellion
  - A. Considering Uncle Tim's Cautionary Example
    - a. Acknowledging the risk of ending like him if she continues her pattern
  - B. Yet Maintaining Her Own Path
    - a. Persisting in the cycle of grace and revolt, even after being forewarned.

## V. Shifts in Household Composition and Wartime Dynamics

1. Reduction in Household Crowding
  - A. Economic Improvement
    - a. People leaving Elm Road as they secure jobs in the City and T. Town
    - b. Result: A less crowded house, changing the daily atmosphere
2. Entry into Military Service
  - A. Family Members Called to Arms
    - a. Uncle Thomas, Uncle William, Uncle George, and ultimately Slywood O'Toole joining the military after a few years
    - b. Women and children return to Elm Road during the men's absence
      - i. Restoring a similar pattern to before, but now without the men
  - B. War as a Mere Topic of Conversation
    - a. The conflict itself having little direct daily effect on the household beyond providing something new to talk about
4. Questions of Competence and Hierarchy in the Military
  - A. Uncle George's Promotion
    - a. Rising to Corporal and Mail Clerk
    - b. Dissatisfaction persists despite small advancement
  - B. Slywood O'Toole's New Role as an M.P. Sergeant
    - a. Leveraging prior Sheriff's experience from Jack Oak County
    - b. Gaining a sense of holding "the army by the tail"
  - C. Dotty's Critique of Military Judgment
    - a. Noticing discrepancies in rank and ability
      - i. Shantytown Shadrack<sup>33</sup>, an alleged formidable fighter, remaining low-ranked
      - ii. Mr. Grudaire, a lawyer once intimidated by Shadrack, now a Major
    - b. Dotty's confusion over how theoretical competence (legal skill) outranks practical fighting prowess
  - D. Attempt to Elevate Uncle Tim Reilly's Status
    - a. Dotty writing letters to Congressman, War Department, President, and Governor on

<sup>33</sup> In the Book of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were three Jewish youths taken into exile in Babylon. When King Nebuchadnezzar commanded them to worship a golden statue, they refused, declaring their unwavering faith in God. As a consequence, they were cast into a fiery furnace but remained unharmed, and a divine figure appeared alongside them in the flames. Witnessing this miracle, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the power of their God and issued a decree forbidding anyone from speaking against Him.

Uncle Tim's behalf

- i. No significant reply except a casual note from a state official recalling shared past labor, not military heroics

## VI. New Horizons and the Lure of the Sea

1. Slywood O'Toole's Posting by the Coast
  - A. Assignment to a port city in Texas<sup>34</sup>
    - a. Opening the possibility for Dotty's first encounter with the ocean
  - B. Indirect Opportunity for Dotty to Relocate
    - a. Chance for her to experience a radically different environment from Elm Road
2. Dotty's Immediate Attachment to the Sea<sup>35</sup>
  - A. Sensory Revelation of the Ocean's Scent
    - a. Experiencing the distinctive smell of saltwater
      - i. Instant recognition of its power and meaning
  - B. Irrevocable Decision
    - a. Belief that there is no logic in living away from the ocean's smell
    - b. Accepting hardship (ragged living) if necessary to remain near it
  - C. No Need for Rationalization
    - a. Unique departure from Dotty's usual pattern of justifying impulses
      - i. Embracing the coastline as her true home without further argument

<sup>34</sup> Texas's port cities played a crucial role in U.S. military operations during World War II, serving as hubs for logistics, training, and coastal defense. The Naval Air Station Corpus Christi (established in 1941) trained naval aviators, earning the nickname "University of the Air." Naval Air Station Hitchcock (commissioned in 1943) near Galveston supported lighter-than-air aircraft operations for anti-submarine patrols. The San Jacinto Ordnance Depot along the Houston Ship Channel stored and inspected ammunition for the Army and Navy, while coastal defenses at Aransas Pass included artillery batteries and observation posts to protect strategic locations along the Gulf of Mexico.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. "*The Ugly Sea*" (1961): "It is foul. It is dirtier than a cesspool, yet men who would not willingly bathe in a cesspool will bathe in it. It has the aroma of an open sewer, yet those who would not make a pilgrimage to a sewer will do so to the sea. It is untidy; it is possibly the most untidy thing in the world. And I doubt if there is any practical way to improve it. It cannot be drained; it cannot be covered up; it can only be ignored" This short story is a version of *Dotty*.





## Chapter 4

### Overview

In this chapter, Dotty travels with her mother, Mary Theresa, and siblings, Floyd and Catherine, by bus to visit her father, Slywood O'Toole, stationed in Texas as an M.P. The long, crowded bus trip separates Dotty from the others at first, but she manages just fine on her own. Upon reaching the coastal town, she is instantly drawn to the sea, regarding it as the new center of her world. While she notices her father's harsh treatment of soldiers on shore leave, she remains enthralled by the beach's energy. Later that night, she sneaks out, befriends rowdy revelers, and returns only to witness a startling exchange between her mother and Colonel Keen.

### Summary

The chapter opens with the information that Slywood O'Toole is in Texas, which is not "over-seas" but feels somewhat foreign. Mary Theresa, Floyd, Catherine, and Dotty travel by bus for eighteen hours to reach him. They must change buses in Oklahoma City, Dallas, and Waco. From Oklahoma City to Dallas, there is a double-header service, and Dotty somehow boards the second bus, leaving Mary Theresa frantic when she discovers Dotty is not on the same bus. A driver assures her that Dotty is safe: "She had to escape from both us drivers. I had her once, but it would have been

easier to load a wild cat.” Mary Theresa fears losing Dotty altogether, while Floyd and Catherine imagine the worst, but the driver insists Dotty will arrive fine.

On the second bus, Dotty encounters unwelcoming passengers. One man tells her, “Dammit, go away. I want to sleep,” and she retorts that he should stay awake to enjoy the trip. A woman says that if Dotty were her daughter, there would be “a painful awakening for someone.” Dotty questions whose awakening that might be. Another man with a fiddle case refuses to open it or let Dotty see inside, prompting her to claim he might be carrying a machine gun. She writes a note warning the next station manager, but nothing comes of it. Finding the seated riders unfriendly, Dotty heads to the back with the Black passengers, who converse warmly with her.

They reach the Dallas Bus Station at one in the morning, where the cafeteria stays open all night. Dotty drinks coffee for the first time, apparently unnoticed by Mary Theresa, who is too weary to intervene. After another transfer in Waco, the family sleeps on the bus, but Dotty stays awake chatting with some drunken soldiers before she too dozes off. By noon they arrive in Houston. On the final leg to the island, Dotty senses the nearness of the sea. She notices how, from about forty miles out, the smell of the ocean permeates everything, and the paint on houses does not hold. Once they cross the causeway to the Island, Dotty—still under nine years old—feels an instant recognition that the beach will captivate her forever.

Slywood O’Toole greets them wearing a small moustache, brassard, white leggings, and an M.P. helmet liner. Dotty barely acknowledges him at first, fixated instead on finding the beach. Slywood explains that he must oversee the young soldiers, scolding them to “keep them looking sharp.” Dotty perceives that he enjoys berating them, confirming her suspicion that her father can be mean.

They secure a very dirty room in a run-down house, bathe, and finally reach the shore. Dotty plunges into the breakers with enthusiasm, proving herself a natural swimmer, unlike Floyd and Catherine, who remain wary. Mary Theresa also swims, though she becomes distracted by Slywood’s presence on the sea wall, barking orders at careless soldiers.

Colonel Keen appears, introduces himself to Mary Theresa, and is soon joined by Slywood, who seems eager to please him. Dotty notices an unsettling undercurrent to their interactions, almost as if Slywood is willing to flatter Keen in unseemly ways. Colonel Keen is generous, giving money to Floyd and Catherine, and giving Dotty an even larger sum. After dinner, Slywood returns to the Fort, and Mary Theresa goes out again, telling the children to stay in their lodging. Dotty sneaks out anyway, climbing through a window and heading to the pavilion on the beach.

She roams the boardwalk-style attractions, buys souvenirs, steals little items when the vendor turns away, and explores the penny arcade. She tries to enter the Blue Room where soldiers dance and drink, but is repeatedly ejected for being underage. Eventually, Dotty meets three soldiers—Carson nicknamed Kit but actually named Helmrich, Richard Railley, and Nolan called “Ninety-Proof”—along with a girl named Naomi. All have just been expelled from the Blue Room for rowdy behavior.

Dotty feels kinship with them, contributes her own money to buy liquor, and they move to Naomi's room to continue drinking. Dotty laughs and jokes with them until midnight, getting "higher than a balloon." Before leaving, Nolan laments that Dotty is only nine and wishes she were older.

Returning to the tourist home quietly, Dotty stumbles upon Colonel Keen kissing Mary Theresa on the front steps. Dotty mutters "Oh, for pity sakes," and slips through her window just in time for her mother's arrival. Mary Theresa finds Dotty awake, and Dotty pretends she was nearly asleep. Mary Theresa asks if Dotty would think badly of her if she did "something a little bit indiscreet." Dotty advises her mother to settle it with her own conscience. When Mary Theresa confesses that Colonel Keen kissed her, Dotty replies, "Not much I don't see," and points out that she herself did not stay in for the evening. Mary Theresa admits Dotty is her "favorite child," but Dotty only suggests she carefully consider her actions. Mary Theresa ends the conversation, telling Dotty to go to sleep.

(Blue Room), (Carson), (Catherine), (Colonel Keen), (Dallas), (Dotty), (Floyd), (Helmrich), (Houston), (Kit), (Mary Theresa), (Mr. Perkins), (Naomi), (Nolan), (Oklahoma City), (Richard Railley), (Slywood O'Toole), (Texas), (Waco)

**Dotty:** In the novel's fourth chapter, Dotty displays a love of travel that keeps her cheerful on long bus rides, where "everyone was cranky except Dotty, who loved to travel." During a layover, she escapes her assigned vehicle, causing the driver to remark, "She had to escape from both us drivers...I hate uproar on a night run." Undeterred by scolding or weariness, she encourages a grumpy passenger to stay awake—"Dammit, too much sleep isn't good for you...Stay awake and enjoy it"—and responds to a hostile woman with a bold retort: "That is a two-way street...What odds would you lay who that someone would be?" Suspicious of a man with a violin case, Dotty questions him and then consults the driver: "If he really had a fiddle in there he wouldn't be so fussy...Should I write a note and throw it out for the station master?" With permission, she writes a note and tosses it out at the next stop. Feeling snubbed by other riders, Dotty finds camaraderie among the Black passengers, who treat her kindly, and later drinks her first coffee at a bus station cafeteria. She takes pleasure in conversing with drunken soldiers, appreciates the dawn "as the crown of a perfect night," and sleeps soundly by day, reasoning "It is the days that are for sleeping." Near the coast, her senses sharpen, and she recognizes the coming of the sea long before it appears, a crucial experience "to be enjoyed before the end of the ninth year." Upon arrival, Dotty observes her father's newly revealed cruelty toward young soldiers, concluding that he is a "mean man," and she senses odd currents in the interactions between her mother and Colonel Keen. Accepting a large sum of money from the Colonel, she sneaks out at night with over four dollars in her bag, steals souvenirs by distracting a vendor, and tries to enter a dance hall repeatedly, only to be expelled for her youth. Befriending three soldiers and Naomi, who have also been kicked out, she drinks wine and later whisky ("snake-bite serum") into the night, grows "higher than a balloon," and departs at midnight as the party wanes. Returning stealthily, she witnesses Colonel Keen kissing her mother on the front steps. Pretending to have been asleep, Dotty lies easily to her mother,

admits seeing the kiss—“Not much I don’t see”—and cheekily compares her minor mischief to her mother’s indiscretions: “At least I didn’t let a Colonel kiss me.” She then advises her mother to “get yourself firmly in hand,” and, after all this, goes calmly to sleep. Though claiming to be nine, she is not yet nine years old, and yet her instincts, mischief, independence, and self-reliant spirit are already fully formed.

## I. Journey to Visit Slywood O’Toole in Texas

1. Setting the Destination and Travel Conditions
  - A. Slywood O’Toole stationed in Texas, not overseas but considered somewhat “foreign” from the family’s perspective
  - B. Eighteen-hour bus trip required for Mary Theresa, Dotty, Floyd, and Catherine to reach him
  - C. Bus is crowded and passengers irritable, except Dotty who enjoys travel
2. Multiple Transfers and Separation En Route
  - A. Required changes of bus in Oklahoma City, Dallas, and Waco
  - B. Accidental separation of Dotty from the rest of the family during a double-header run
    - a. Dotty boarding the second bus while Mary Theresa and siblings remain on the first bus
  - C. Mary Theresa’s Panic
    - a. Frantic attempt to halt the bus, fearing Dotty is lost
    - b. Assurance from the driver that Dotty is on the second bus heading to the same destination
      - i. Driver noting Dotty’s independence and difficulty to restrain
3. Passengers’ Hostility
  - A. General crankiness and unwillingness to interact amiably
  - B. Dotty’s Attempts to Engage
    - a. Trying to keep a man awake who desires sleep
    - b. Receiving threats of painful discipline if she were someone’s daughter
      - i. Dotty answering back with boldness, indicating no fear of confrontation
4. Suspicion Toward a Mysterious Passenger
  - A. A man with a fiddle case refuses to let Dotty see inside
    - a. Dotty suspects it might contain a machine gun instead of a fiddle<sup>36</sup>
  - B. Dotty’s Report to the Driver
    - a. Driver dismissing her fears as musician’s peculiarity
    - b. Dotty considering writing a note and dropping it at the next station to alert

<sup>36</sup> The image of concealing a machine gun, or “Chicago typewriter,” in a violin case became a cultural trope during the Prohibition era (1920–1933), when compact submachine guns like the Thompson (Tommy Gun) became synonymous with organized crime. Dotty’s imagination is fueled by crime reporting and early gangster films such as *Scarface* (1932).

authorities

i. She follows through, but no response or action is taken

5. Finding Friendlier Company

A. Rebuffed by most of the bus riders, Dotty seeks out more welcoming passengers at the back with the negroes

a. Receives courtesy and openness missing among the other passengers

b. Engages in long, interesting conversations into the late hours of the night

## II. Nighttime Layovers and Further Encounters

1. Dallas Bus Station Interlude

A. Cafeteria operating all night, enabling a meal at one in the morning

a. Dotty having coffee for the first time

i. Mary Theresa too fatigued to object or possibly unaware

B. Re-boarding the bus in Dallas for the Waco leg

a. Dotty now riding together with her family again

2. Waco to Houston Run

A. Presence of Drunken Soldiers on the Bus

a. Dotty amused and engaged by their antics

b. Finds their company entertaining rather than distressing

B. Enjoyment of the Dawn

a. Dotty aware that dawn is best appreciated by staying awake through the night

i. Viewing it as the culmination of a perfect night, rather than a miraculous morning event

3. Approaching Houston

A. Exhaustion of the Family

a. Floyd and Catherine fretful travelers, showing discomfort

b. Sleeping soundly during the daytime portion of the ride from Waco to Houston

i. They arrive in Houston at midday, about noon, after a long and eventful journey through the night

## III. Final Leg to the Coastal Island Environment

1. Heightened Sensory Awareness

A. Dotty becoming notably alert as they near the coast

a. A subtle transformation in the landscape and atmosphere as they draw closer to the sea

B. Migratory Hints

a. Land and air infused with a sense of the Sea's proximity

b. Signs of salt in the air affecting paint on houses and the appearance of the soil

c. Birds out of their normal habitats flying overhead

2. The Causeway as a Transformational Threshold<sup>37</sup>
  - A. The Crossing of the Causeway
    - a. A crucial dividing line between ordinary land and the special domain of the Island
    - b. Emphasized as a final gateway experience that must be lived before reaching a certain age
  - B. Age Limit for Such Discoveries
    - a. Dotty still under nine, thus able to enter this “new world” fully
    - b. Floyd and Catherine deemed too old to appreciate this transformation; Mary Theresa also too old to sense its profound meaning
    - c. Assertion that failing to encounter Sea and Island by the end of the ninth year forfeits a priceless life experience

#### IV. Reunion with Slywood O’Toole and the Island Experience

1. Arrival and First Impressions
  - A. Slywood’s Altered Appearance<sup>38</sup> and Role
    - a. Sporting a fine moustache and dressed in M.P. *suntans*, white leggings, brassard, and decorated helmet liner
  - B. Overlook of the Sea
    - a. Sea heard booming over the hill and behind the sea wall
2. Dotty’s Immediate Attraction to the Beach
  - A. Curiosity and Impatience
    - a. Dotty eager to reach the beach as soon as possible, barely acknowledging her father’s presence
  - B. Slywood’s Questioning
    - a. Surprised at Dotty’s ability to pinpoint the beach’s location by sound, scent, and observation
3. Slywood’s Professional Posturing and Attitude
  - A. Role as a Military Policeman<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> A Galveston icon, the Galveston Causeway was completed in 1912, connecting Galveston Island to the Texas mainland. By the 1930s, it had become a vital transportation link, carrying both road and rail traffic. The structure consisted of a concrete viaduct with a swing bridge to accommodate maritime navigation. During the Great Depression, the causeway facilitated economic growth and recovery, serving as a key route for goods and people, particularly as the island remained a prominent port city and tourist destination.

<sup>38</sup> Several distinctive elements were associated with the uniform and appearance of military police (M.P.) personnel, particularly in the mid-20th century. The hairline moustache was a common style of the era, *suntans* referred to the light khaki-colored uniforms worn in warm climates, and white leggings were part of ceremonial or dress uniforms. The M.P. brassard, a cloth armband, identified military police personnel, while a painted helmet liner often displayed unit insignia or identifying marks to signify rank or function

<sup>39</sup> During World War II, U.S. Army Military Police units patrolled Galveston’s streets to maintain order among servicemen on leave and to support coastal defense installations.

- a. Abusive toward young soldiers to ensure discipline and neatness
- B. Revealing Character Traits
  - a. Dotty recognizing for the first time that her father is genuinely mean-spirited
  - b. Contemptuous treatment of soldiers on passes, relishing the act of bullying them
- 4. Mixed Family Reactions
  - A. Mary Theresa, Floyd, and Catherine
    - a. Accept Slywood's explanation that strictness is necessary
    - b. Unaware or unwilling to acknowledge underlying cruelty
  - B. Dotty's Quiet Realization
    - a. Understanding that her father enjoys being contemptible
    - b. Not allowing this revelation to spoil her excitement about the Island
- 5. Settling In and Reaching the Beach
  - A. Finding a Room
    - a. The chosen lodging is dirty and rundown, but they must accept it
  - B. Hygiene and Mealtime Delays
    - a. Taking baths and eating before heading to the beach
  - C. The First Encounter with the Open Sea
    - a. Dotty's innate mastery over the breakers
    - b. Floyd and Catherine calm but less enthused, termed "Sticks" for their lack of verve
    - c. Mary Theresa feeling some excitement but overshadowed by Slywood's watchful, controlling presence on the sea wall
- 6. Introduction of Colonel Keen
  - A. Keen's Interaction with Mary Theresa
    - a. A superior officer known to Slywood
    - b. An odd atmosphere of potential favor-trading hinted at by Slywood's behavior
    - c. Slywood pandering out Mary Theresa to a superior
    - d. Dotty doesn't have the words for it, but she understands the sexual dynamics
  - B. Colonel Keen's Generosity toward the Children
    - a. Floyd and Catherine receive a small amount of money
    - b. Indication that Dotty likely receives a larger sum, suggesting Keen recognizes her sharper insight
  - C. An Unnamed Suspicion
    - a. Mary Theresa's uneasy feeling that, under ordinary circumstances, she would never believe Slywood capable of "offering" her to Keen
    - b. Vague yet disturbing undercurrent sensed by Dotty, lacking only a name to define it

## V. Nighttime Adventures and Moral Ambiguities

- 1. Mary Theresa's Brief Departure
  - A. Leaving the three children in the tourist home with strict instructions to remain inside
  - B. Mary Theresa going out again alone in the evening



2. Dotty's Secret Escape
  - A. Surveying the room for easy egress
    - a. Finding a window allowing unnoticed exit and reentry
  - B. Dotty slipping out into the town with more than four dollars and sixty cents in hand
    - a. Money likely from Colonel Keen's earlier generosity
3. The Pavilion Scene
  - A. Souvenirs and Small Crimes of Opportunity
    - a. Cheap shells and balloons available for purchase
    - b. Dotty engaging in petty theft of trinkets for sport and excitement
  - B. Penny Arcade and Flicker Movies
    - a. Sampling the amusements: games, devices, short "erotic" films
  - C. Sights and Sounds of the Surf
    - a. Balcony overlooking the ocean, lights catching the waves
    - b. Surf booming and making a colorful spectacle in the darkness
4. Attempt to Enter the Blue Room
  - A. Dancing, Drinking, and Adults-Only Atmosphere
    - a. Dotty repeatedly ejected for being underage and lacking a suitable escort
    - b. Recognition of a world of grown-up fun off-limits to her
5. Meeting New Companions
  - A. Three Soldiers (Helmrich "Kit" Carson, Richard Railley, and "Ninety-proof" Nolan) and a Girl Named Naomi
    - a. All recently expelled from the Blue Room<sup>40</sup> for rowdy behavior
    - b. Bond of shared exclusion from festivities
    - c. Dotty drinks wine for the first time<sup>41</sup>
  - B. Drinking and Conversing Freely

<sup>40</sup> The Blue Room was one of Galveston's elegant nightlife spots in the 1940s, catering to a blend of locals, tourists, and visiting servicemen. Located near the city's bustling Seawall district, it offered live music, dancing, and late-night entertainment that complemented the island's already thriving gambling and club scene. Though not as famous as venues controlled by the influential Maceo brothers, the Blue Room nevertheless contributed to Galveston's reputation as the "Free State of Galveston," where Prohibition-era laxities lingered into the mid-20th century.

<sup>41</sup> Wine will represent the doubleness of her nature. In Catholicism, wine holds significant liturgical and symbolic importance, particularly in the celebration of the Eucharist, where it becomes the Blood of Christ through transubstantiation. This practice, instituted by Christ at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:27–29), is central to the Mass. Outside the liturgy, moderate wine consumption has traditionally been accepted in Catholic culture, reflecting scriptural references to wine as a gift of joy (Psalm 104:15) and a symbol of divine blessing, while excessive drinking is cautioned against as sinful. Dotty recalls Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine. In *Confessions* (Book IX, Chapter 8), Augustine describes Monica's youthful struggle with drinking wine. As a girl, she developed a habit of secretly drinking small amounts from her family's wine cellar, which eventually grew into a sinful attachment. Dotty's relationship with alcohol will follow a similar trajectory



- a. Dotty contributing funds to procure more liquor
  - b. Engaging in outrageous talk and revelry, delighted by their humor and companionship
- 6. Intoxication and Departure
  - A. Dotty becoming “higher than a balloon”
    - a. Enjoying the party immensely
  - B. Recognizing the Right Time to Leave
    - a. Departing before the merriment fades completely
  - C. Unexpected Affection
    - a. Nolan’s admiration and wistful wish that Dotty were older; she is eight years old
    - b. Dotty aware of a strange adult longing directed at her youthful charm
- 7. Return to the Tourist Home
  - A. Quiet Reentry through the Window
    - a. Stealthily avoiding detection upon return
  - B. Witnessing a Surprising Scene
    - a. Seeing Colonel Keen kiss Mary Theresa on the front steps
    - b. Dotty’s whispered exclamation and immediate move to conceal herself in bed
- 8. Confrontation with Mary Theresa
  - A. Mary Theresa Checking on Dotty
    - a. Pretending to have been asleep, Dotty feigns annoyance at being awakened
  - B. Mother’s Confession and Query
    - a. Mary Theresa hinting at a small indiscretion and asking Dotty’s opinion<sup>42</sup>
  - C. Dotty’s Revelation that She Saw the Kiss
    - a. Confessing her knowledge of what transpired
  - D. Mutual Recriminations and Closing Remarks
    - a. Mary Theresa calling Dotty a “little fraud” for feigning sleep
    - b. Dotty had kissed a Corporal and two Privates
    - c. A final appeal from Mary Theresa, admitting Dotty as her favorite child, and Dotty’s curt suggestion that they both go to sleep

<sup>42</sup> Dotty thinks her mother should settle the matter with a confessor.



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THE SOUTH'S FAMOUS SEAFOOD HEADQUARTERS. GALVESTON, TEXAS

## Chapter 5

### Overview

Dotty awakens on the Texas Gulf Coast with her first hangover, having spent a riotous evening among soldiers and locals. Despite the lingering headache, she eagerly immerses herself in the sun, sea, and the chaotic beach attractions, recording her observations in a personal diary. She stumbles into quarrels—both literal spankings from suspicious operators and power struggles with the enigmatic Colonel Keen, who monitors her exploits. Meanwhile, her father, Slywood O'Toole, reveals a harsher side as an M.P., and her mother, Mary Theresa, struggles against unwanted advances for the sake of Slywood's military ambitions. In the end, Dotty leaves the island with equal parts fascination and bitterness, determined to return someday.

### Summary

Dotty begins Chapter V by waking up with a hangover—her first—and recalls that Ninety-Proof Nolan once said mixing drinks causes a “complex screaming hangover,” whereas sticking to one type of liquor yields only a “simple” one. Naomi disputed that, saying hangovers relate to total alcohol content. Dotty decides Naomi's explanation is more accurate. Although Dotty feels unwell, she

notes that Floyd and Catherine fare worse after having each consumed a dollar's worth of soda pop.

Mary Theresa goes out to buy mild breakfasts for Floyd and Catherine, telling them to stay indoors, then takes Dotty to enjoy a big meal. Afterward, they head for the beach with bathing suits, bags, and blankets. Once Dotty swims, she writes lengthy observations in her five-year diary, describing the countless "people" of the sand and sea—tiny shell creatures, worms, fish, and crabs, including "Calico Crab," "Ghost Crab," "Mole Crab," and "Stone Crab." She mentions meeting two boys, Tommy and David, who debate whether certain shells are "cockle shells" or "Ark shells." She recalls being stung by a jelly fish, notes the worse sting of a Portugese Man-Of-War, and muses that the ocean is actually "one big animal." She also writes about Naomi's "line of business," belatedly realizing its questionable nature.

That day, Dotty roams the beach arcades, switching companions whenever she grows bored. At one gambling booth on Beach Boulevard, run by Selma, Dotty protests that the payout odds are unfair. Selma responds by flipping Dotty upside down and spanking her with a paddle—Dotty's first painful confrontation of the day. Dotty vows revenge but still ends up befriending Selma before leaving town.

Mary Theresa, less concerned about Dotty wandering, jokes that she couldn't lose Dotty even by tying her in a sack and throwing her into the Gulf. Dotty explains how one might escape such a situation "like Houdini." On their second night, Dotty is ejected from a seedy establishment by its rough proprietor, resulting in another physical thrashing when she refuses to leave. Hurt and angry, she initially swears never to return to the island but acknowledges she has fallen in love with it.

Searching for Naomi proves fruitless, so Dotty flirts with soldiers instead. She later has a "cryptic talk" with Colonel Keen, who warns that she has been under surveillance for stealing items—"mixed nuts, candy bars, magazines, souvenir shells, balloons," and more—and for befriending a "notorious woman." He orders her on a strict seven o'clock curfew, reminding her that her father is under his command, and that Dotty's actions could have consequences. Dotty pushes back, promising that if they ever "tangle on the road," the Colonel will be the one who gets hurt.

Dotty relays her worries to Mary Theresa, sensing Keen's menacing influence. Mary Theresa explains that Slywood, eager for promotion, tries to please the Colonel. Dotty then wins over the two young M.P.s who were secretly reporting on her, thus preventing further accusations from reaching Keen. Much of Dotty's final days on the island are spent at the Parisi grocery store, run by Nicki and Mary Parisi, which also serves as a sandwich bar, fruit market, and wine-and-beer spot. There, Johnny Gozzi and Ramford Riorden often hang out, and Dotty learns about Italian foods and languages—gleefully absorbing new words for bread and cheese.

Late one night, Dotty overhears an argument between her parents. Slywood O'Toole demands Mary Theresa be "agreeable" to the Colonel for Slywood's benefit. Mary Theresa accuses him of

trying to trade her for a promotion; they fight physically, with Mary Theresa clawing at Slywood and Slywood beating her. Distressed, Dotty notes how the Colonel's presence has poisoned their stay. On Sunday morning, the family attends Mass at a church on Church Street, after which Colonel Keen and Slywood send them off by bus. Thus, Dotty departs the Island City, feeling both anger and attachment, and begins the trip home.

(Ark shells), (Arkansas River), (Beach Boulevard), (Calico Crab), (Catherine), (Cheez-Its), (Church Street), (Colonel Keen), (Cockle shells), (David), (Dotty), (Floyd), (Ghost Crab), (Gulf), (Houdini), (Island City), (Italy), (Johnny Gozzi), (Mary Parisi), (Mary Theresa), (Mexico), (Mole Crab), (Naomi), (Nicki), (Ninety-Proof Nolan), (Portugese Man-Of-War), (Ramford Riorden), (Sea Palace), (Selma), (Slywood O'Toole), (Stone Crab), (Syria), (T.D.M.T.S.A.A.T.H.G.B.), (Tommy)

**Dotty:** In the novel's fifth chapter, Dotty awakens with her first hangover: "Dotty awoke with a hangover, the first she ever had in her life," yet she refuses to admit feeling bad and goes to the beach with Mary Theresa. At the beach, she swims, then writes in her diary, noting, "There are almost as many people down in the sand as there are grains of sand. I don't like the word creatures so I call everyone people," and identifying various shells and sea life, including sand dollars, calico crabs, sand snails, moss snails, ark shells, mentioning a jellyfish and the Portuguese Man-Of-War, and comparing the beach sand to river sand, describing it as "little-grained white to brown stuff." She distinguishes between sand-runners and gulls, claims gulls "are the only birds who can sleep while they're flying," refers to a dishwasher at the Sea Palace who grows homesick for the sea smell, and likens the entire sea to "one big animal, a sort of jellyfish" with fish and whales as creatures in its intestines. She realizes Naomi's profession, plans to advise her to quit, rides a surf float with David, and visits arcades, rides, and galleries. Upon seeing Selma run a gambling game, Dotty accuses her of shortchanging a winner, "You have given him only eight dollars. You should give him ten, at least," and when Selma refuses, Dotty discourages others from playing. Selma then paddles Dotty with a ping pong paddle, prompting Dotty to threaten her with legal action, claiming she will have her arrested for barratry. Later, Dotty and Selma become friends. Dotty discusses escape tricks and Houdini's methods with Mary Theresa, gets caught in a "joint" after curfew, and when told to leave, argues that she is not a child and soon to be in the fifth grade. Threatened with a "real education" by the proprietor, she is manhandled and spanked for the second time that day. Dotty seeks Naomi for wine and soldiers to flirt with, but fails to find her; instead, she flirts with soldiers and goes bicycle riding with one. Colonel Keen confronts her about stealing and associating with a "notorious woman," and Dotty denies some accusations while asserting her independence. They exchange warnings, and Dotty advises her mother to stay away from the Colonel. She identifies the Colonel's spies, charms them, and gains their loyalty. Spending time with Nicky and Mary Parisi, Dotty learns card games and about Italian food and culture, and Mary Parisi offers her a refuge. Dotty overhears a violent fight between her parents—Mary Theresa slapping and clawing Slywood, and Slywood retaliating physically—after which Dotty leaves the island with her parents, attending Mass before their departure.

## I. Morning After the Nightlife

1. Dotty's First Hangover
  - A. Waking with a mild headache from the previous night's indulgences
  - B. Reflecting on Ninety-Proof Nolan's theory that mixing drinks causes complex hangovers
  - C. Naomi's contradictory opinion, attributing hangovers simply to alcoholic content
  - D. Dotty's acceptance of Naomi's logic, due to her aptitude for cutting through falsehoods
2. Comparison of Conditions
  - A. Dotty feeling relatively better than her siblings Floyd and Catherine
    - a. Both siblings suffering from overconsumption of soda pop, feeling weaker than Dotty
  - B. Mary Theresa's Caretaking
    - a. Obtaining soft, invalid-type breakfasts for Floyd and Catherine
    - b. Advising them to remain indoors for the morning
3. Hearty Breakfast for the Undaunted
  - A. Mary Theresa and Dotty going out to have substantial breakfasts
  - B. Dotty refusing to admit feeling unwell, maintaining her resilient front
4. Preparations for a Beach Day
  - A. Changing into bathing suits and gathering bags and blankets
  - B. Heading to the beach to spend the morning, settling into the day's activities

## II. Observations and Reflections in Dotty's Diary

1. Documenting the Scene
  - A. Dotty writing in her five-year diary to preserve recent experiences
    - a. Prefers cryptic entries at times, but now writing at great length to capture this environment
2. Multitude of "People" at the Beach
  - A. Dotty's broad definition of "people"
    - a. Applying the term to all living beings, even tiny creatures in the sand
  - B. Noting various small marine life forms
    - a. Tiny shell-bearers scuttling sideways into holes and closing them<sup>43</sup>
    - b. Microscopic individuals causing ripples under the wet sand surface
    - c. Uncertain identification of crabs, fleas, and salt-water bugs
    - d. Distinguishing named species: Sand Dollar, Calico Crab, Ark shells, and Cockle shells

<sup>43</sup> Pulling the hole in after oneself is a recurrent image in Lafferty's work. He uses it both for light comedy and to make some of his deepest metaphysical points. A full analysis of this image would reveal much of his thematic and stylistic range.

3. Interactions with Other Children
  - A. Tommy (the “cockle” boy) and David (the “Ark” boy) introduced<sup>44</sup>
    - a. Tommy kissed Dotty under the pier
    - b. David desires a kiss as well, but Dotty demands some entertainment or a ride first
4. Commentary on Beach Sand and Birds
  - A. Differences Between Beach Sand and River Sand<sup>45</sup>
    - a. Beach sand finer, white to brown, more powder-like than coarse river sand
  - B. Birds on the Beach
    - a. Sand-runners (small, long-legged birds) resembling road-runners
    - a. Gulls noted for their cleverness in snatching bread before it hits the water
    - b. Gulls’ peculiar habit of sleeping while gliding, awakening suddenly before landing<sup>46</sup>
5. Sensory Impressions of the Sea
  - A. Sea’s Unique Smell
    - a. Distinct from rivers or lakes
    - b. Anecdote of the Negro dishwasher at the Sea Palace who becomes emotional upon returning to the sea smell, evidence of its power
  - B. Recognition of Grace in People
    - a. Dishwasher identified as being “in Grace”
    - b. Some beach-goers not in Grace
6. Microcosms and Living Communities
  - A. Green Slime on Driftwood and Pilings as Living Entities
    - a. Dotty regarding slime as whole cities of tiny life forms
7. Defining the Sea as a Giant Living Organism
  - A. Considering the Sea as a Single Amorphous Creature
    - a. Waves as the sea “shivering its hide”

<sup>44</sup> Dotty views the boys analytically, almost as if they belong to two distinct species. Ark shells (*family Arcidae*) are bivalve mollusks with thick, heavy, rectangular shells featuring pronounced radial ribs and a rough texture, often found in shallow sandy or muddy waters. Cockle shells (*family Cardiidae*) are bivalves with rounded, heart-shaped, glossy shells and evenly spaced ribs, commonly found in sandy or estuarine environments. While both are ribbed bivalves, ark shells are thicker and more angular, whereas cockle shells are smoother and more symmetrical, with cockles being more commonly consumed as seafood

<sup>45</sup> Dotty notices detail. Beach sand consists of coarse grains with a high salt content, shaped by wave action, and is primarily composed of quartz, shell fragments, and other minerals depending on the local geology. River sand, by contrast, is finer and smoother due to continuous water flow, with minimal salt content and a higher proportion of silts and clay particles. While beach sand is often used in coastal construction, river sand is preferred for concrete and masonry due to its superior binding properties. Dotty infers these differences on her own.

<sup>46</sup> A gull sleeping in flight is probably a symbolic image of Dotty—how Lafferty wants us to think of her at many points in the novel. Certain species of gulls, like many other birds, engage in unihemispheric slow-wave sleep (USWS), in which one hemisphere of the brain rests while the other remains awake. This allows them to maintain awareness for navigation and detect potential threats even while in motion.

- b. Gulls picking off fish as if plucking from its skin
  - c. Fish and whales seen as swallowed entities moving through its body
- 8. Reflections on Naomi and Her “Line of Business”<sup>47</sup>
  - A. Realization that Naomi, her friend from the previous night, is a whore
    - a. Recognition of a flaw in Naomi’s character despite kindness
  - B. Intention to advise Naomi to leave that line of work
- 9. Additional Marine Creatures and Plans with David
  - A. Mention of Ghost Crab, Mole Crab, and Stone Crab
  - B. David’s offer to take Dotty riding on his surf float, fulfilling her earlier condition for a kiss

### III. Adventures and Encounters on the Beachfront

- 1. Constant Search for New Experiences
  - A. Dotty accepting David’s invitation for a surf float<sup>48</sup>
    - a. Enjoying various amusements and arcades together
  - B. Quickly Moving On
    - a. Leaving David for another companion once novelty fades
    - b. Continual pattern of seeking fresh thrills and individuals
- 2. Widespread Friend-Making Despite Roguish Behavior
  - A. Dotty’s readiness to engage with anyone new
  - B. A Particular Gambling Stand Encounter<sup>49</sup>
    - a. A stand featuring a wheel with twelve numbers and a payout system

<sup>47</sup> The name Naomi carries deep resonance. A central figure in the Book of Ruth (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament), Naomi is a widow navigating hardship in ancient Bethlehem after famine forces her family to seek sustenance in Moab (Ruth 1:1–5). Her name, meaning “pleasant” or “delight” in Hebrew, takes on an ironic quality as she endures the loss of her husband, Elimelech, and both sons, Mahlon and Chilion, leaving her in a dire economic and social position. Upon returning to Bethlehem with her Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth, Naomi advises Ruth on gleaning and leveraging kinship ties for their mutual survival (Ruth 2:1–3:5). Biblical scholars recognize Naomi as both a mentor and a catalyst for Ruth’s union with Boaz, a pivotal event in the lineage leading to King David (Ruth 4:13–22).

<sup>48</sup>In the 1940s, recreational beachgoers and emerging surf enthusiasts increasingly relied on simple flotation devices—often called “surf floats”—to ride waves with greater stability and less risk than traditional surfboards. Early versions were typically made of wooden planks or cork-filled rafts wrapped in canvas

<sup>49</sup> By the 1940s, Galveston’s thriving tourist industry had fostered a well-established gambling culture that operated semi-clandestinely but was widely tolerated. The so-called “Free State of Galveston” was dominated by venues controlled by the Maceo brothers—Sam and Rosario (Rose)—who ran popular clubs such as the Balinese Room. These establishments, featuring upscale restaurants, live entertainment, and concealed gaming rooms, attracted visitors ranging from politicians and celebrities to organized crime figures. Though gambling was illegal, local authorities often turned a blind eye, viewing the industry as a lucrative contributor to the island’s economy. This period of open tolerance persisted until a series of mid-20th-century law enforcement crackdowns curtailed operations.

- b. Dotty challenging the fairness of the payout to a winning gentleman
        - i. Believing the house's "eight pay" game is too heavily in the operator's favor
- 3. Conflict with Selma, the Operator
  - A. Dotty insisting on fair odds, accusing Selma of shortchanging the winner
    - a. Mathematical arguments about percentages and house take
  - B. Selma's Hostile Reaction
    - a. Threatening Dotty for interfering
    - b. Ultimately turning Dotty upside down and paddling her severely with a ping pong paddle
      - i. Possibly the most severe public paddling seen along Beach Boulevard
- 4. Aftermath of the Paddling
  - A. Dotty's Threatened Retaliation
    - a. Swearing she will have the law on Selma
    - b. Storming away furious and humiliated
  - B. Later Reconciliation
    - a. Despite this harsh introduction, it does not become an exception to Dotty's pattern
    - b. In time, Dotty and Selma become friends, recalling their first encounter as a memorable story

## V. Confrontation with Colonel Keen and Power Struggles

- 1. Colonel Keen's Summons and Rebuke
  - A. Keen informing Dotty that she has been observed and her actions found reprehensible
    - a. Accusations of theft, fraternizing with a "notorious" woman (Naomi), and overall misconduct
  - B. Colonel Keen's Threats of Consequence
    - a. Warning Dotty that she could be sent to a detention home
    - b. Imposing a strict 7:00 P.M. curfew and forbidding conversation with strangers older than herself
- 2. Detailed List of Dotty's Transgressions
  - A. Alleged Thefts Enumerated
    - a. Mixed nuts, candy bars, magazines, souvenir shells, balloons, grape pop, peanuts, a pint of yellow wine, salt and pepper shakers, oyster fork, pennants, plus free rides on concessions
    - b. Accusation of stealing "Fritos," which Dotty denies, correcting that they may have been "Cheez-lts" instead<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> A Great Depression Texas snack, Fritos were introduced in 1932 by Charles Elmer Doolin, who purchased the recipe for fried corn chips in San Antonio, Texas, and began marketing them under the Frito Company. Cheez-lts, by comparison, made their debut earlier in 1921, produced by the Green & Green Company in



3. Exchange of Wits and Wills
  - A. Dotty's Defiance
    - a. Refusing to acknowledge Keen's authority over her life
    - b. Insisting that she is independent of his command
  - B. Keen's Assertion of Power
    - a. Claiming influence via Dotty's father, Slywood O'Toole, who serves under him
    - b. Hinting at controlling Dotty's future due to Slywood's ambition and compliance
4. Mutual Recognition of Danger and Enmity
  - A. Dotty Identifying Keen's Nature
    - a. Seeing him as sinister and full of unction rather than genuine feeling
    - b. Understanding he is a dangerous adversary
  - B. Keen Amused by Dotty's Predicament
    - a. Taking note of the spankings she received and finding them entertaining
    - b. Dotty warning Keen that she will remember his amusement and will not forget such insults
5. Dotty's Warning to Mary Theresa
  - A. Advising her mother to avoid any dealings with Keen
    - a. Suggesting the Colonel has some hold over Slywood and poses a threat
  - B. Mary Theresa's Startled Reaction
    - a. Confusion and anxiety about Dotty's bold statements and suspicions
    - b. Acknowledging that Slywood is attracted to those he perceives as stronger, giving Keen leverage over him
6. Undercurrent of Hostility and Suspicion
  - A. Realization that Keen's presence "poisons" their stay
  - B. Dotty's Determination to Undermine Keen's Spies
    - a. Discovering two young M.P.s who inform on her to Keen
    - b. Using her charm and insight to subvert them, ensuring her activities will no longer be reported to the Colonel

## VI. Cultural Immersion at the Parisi Establishment

1. Introduction to Nicki and Mary Parisi
  - A. Owners of an Italian grocery store that offers much more than basic provisions
  - B. A welcoming spot with fresh produce, ice, beer, sandwich bar, ice cream bar, and rentable beach equipment
  - C. A small shady arbor for sitting, drinking wine or beer, and a round table inside available day and night

Dayton, Ohio, before eventually coming under the Sunshine Biscuits and later Kellogg's brand portfolio. Dotty doesn't yet identify with Galveston.

2. Dotty's Integration into a New Community
  - A. Introduced by Johnny Gozzi, one of the young soldiers previously spying for Keen
    - a. Making Johnny's task simpler since he can watch Dotty easily here
  - B. Dotty spending most of three days and nights learning from the Parisis
    - a. Learning new games (dominoes, cribbage, pinochle, pitch, hearts)<sup>51</sup>
    - b. Picking up Italian phrases and culinary knowledge
3. Culinary and Cultural Revelations
  - A. Discovery that direct translations (*pane* = bread) are insufficient, as the Italian versions have richer meaning
  - B. Introduction to a vast variety of cheeses and other specialty foods
    - a. Realizing *salsiccia* and *formaggio* a universe of flavors
  - C. Exposure to items from Italy, Mexico, and Syria, broadening Dotty's gastronomic horizons
4. Offers of Future Help
  - A. Mary Parisi telling Dotty that if she is ever in trouble, she can return there
  - B. Implicit understanding between them that Dotty's life may hold more adventures and difficulties

## VII. Parental Conflict and its Aftermath

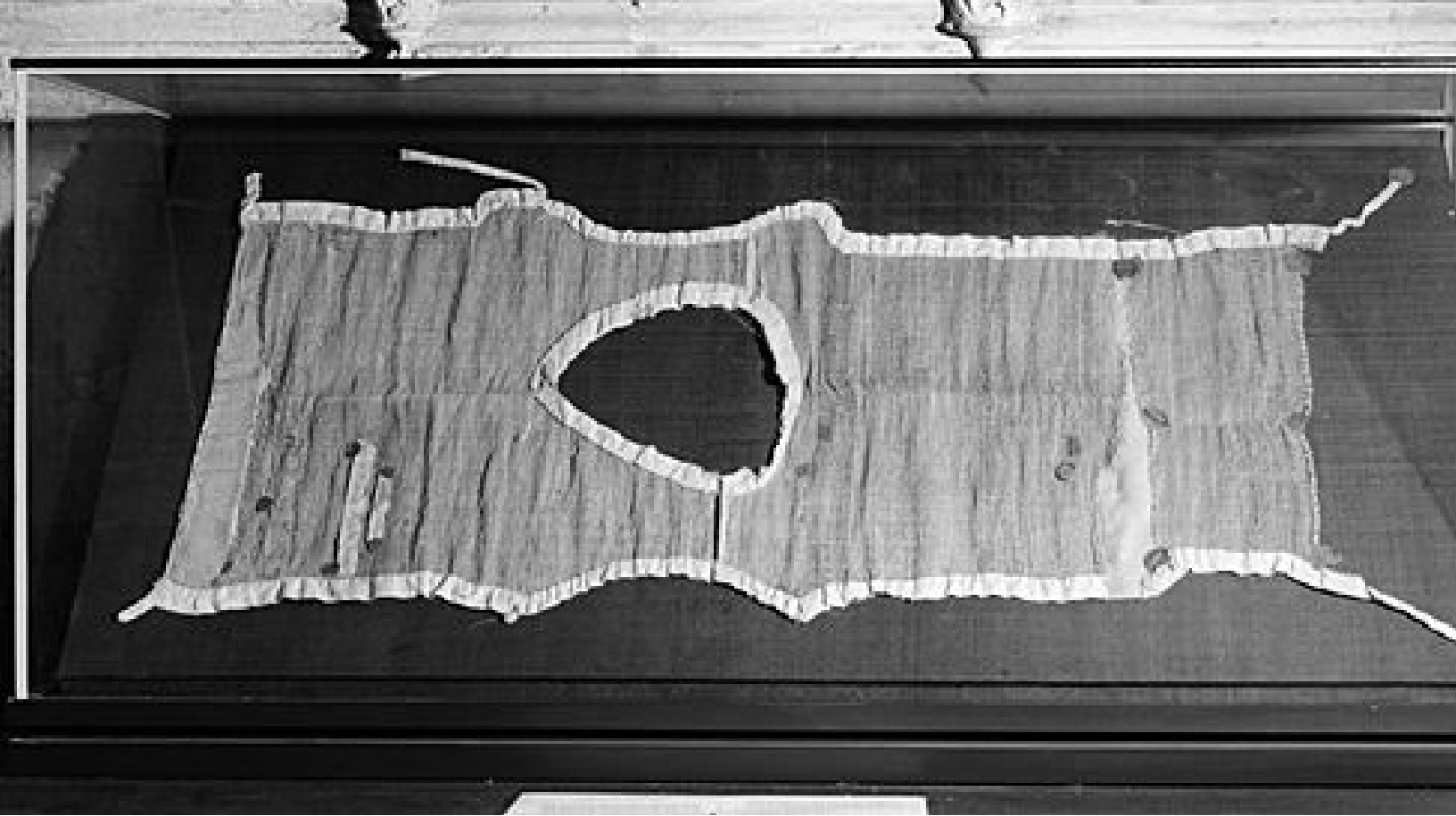
1. Overhearing a Late-Night Quarrel
  - A. On the last night in town, Dotty listens as Mary Theresa and Slywood argue
    - a. Slywood pressuring Mary Theresa to appease Colonel Keen for his career advancement
    - b. Mary Theresa resisting, accusing Slywood of trying to trade her for a promotion
  - B. Physical Altercation
    - a. Sounds of Mary Theresa clawing Slywood, drawing blood
    - b. Slywood responding by beating Mary Theresa heavily
  - C. Emotional Impact on Dotty
    - a. Incident saddening Dotty and revealing the moral decay and strain within the family

## VIII. Sunday Departure and Return Journey

<sup>51</sup> During the 1940s, traditional parlor and card games maintained widespread popularity as a form of affordable, accessible entertainment. Dominoes, with origins tracing back centuries, remained a favored pastime, while cribbage—credited to early 17th-century English poet Sir John Suckling—thrived on its strategic blend of luck and skill. Pinochle, introduced to the United States by German immigrants in the late 19th century, found renewed vigor as wartime rationing encouraged simple, at-home diversions. Pitch, sometimes called “High, Low, Jack,” had long been entrenched in rural American social life, and the trick-taking game Hearts, played with a standard deck, continued to be enjoyed for its balance of easy-to-learn rules and competitive nuance.

1. Attending Mass on the Island
  - A. Easy to find the Church, located on a main corner of town, named for Mary<sup>52</sup>
  - B. Quick breakfast after Mass, then the family prepares to leave
2. Farewell Under Tension
  - A. Colonel Keen and Slywood O'Toole escorting Mary Theresa and the children to the bus
    - a. Both men bearing physical marks of recent conflict
  - B. No resolution to the underlying tensions, only a departure from the Island
3. Dotty's Departure
  - A. Leaving behind the people, experiences, and conflicts of the Island town
  - B. Beginning the long bus ride home, carrying with her the new knowledge, memories, and scars of this transformative stay

<sup>52</sup> This is St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica, located at 2011 Church Street. Established in 1847 as the cathedral of the newly created Diocese of Galveston, it is the oldest Roman Catholic cathedral in Texas and the mother church of Catholicism in the state. Over the years, the structure has survived numerous natural disasters, including the devastating 1900 Galveston Hurricane, and underwent substantial restorations to preserve its architectural and spiritual legacy. In 1979, Pope John Paul II elevated St. Mary's Cathedral to the rank of a minor basilica.



## Chapter 6

### Overview

In this chapter, a growing estrangement develops between Mary Theresa and Slywood O'Toole, revealed through cruel letters Slywood sends from his military post. Dotty secretly reads these letters and becomes increasingly dismayed by her father's meanness. Determined to restore some goodness, she experiments with penance—wearing a burlap hair shirt and enduring hidden suffering. While continuing her religious and intellectual pursuits under Father Van Heuvel's guidance, she questions saints, theology, and whether one can remain unsoiled while living a freewheeling life. Ultimately, she strives to reconcile her high aspirations with her unfolding awareness of human frailty, including her own family's troubles.

### Summary

The chapter opens by noting that Mary Theresa no longer shares the full content of the letters from Slywood O'Toole as she once did, indicating that a "rift had begun." Instead, Mary Theresa reads only selected parts aloud and keeps the letters locked away. Dotty uses her skill with locks to read them secretly, learning that Slywood taunts Mary Theresa with details of his infidelities and demands that she endorse his allotment checks back to him. His letters call her a "drudge" and suggest she find another man if she can, and he cruelly questions the paternity of their three children. Mary Theresa, distressed, sighs and mutters but does not act decisively, leaving Dotty furious yet determined to find a solution.

Reflecting on her father's behavior, Dotty decides to undertake a secret penance, believing such self-mortification might force a change. She researches the making of a "cilicium" hair shirt but finds little modern guidance. She initially tries a strip of buffalo robe from Uncle Tim Reilly, then discards it as too bulky. She settles on burlap, wrapping it around her loins and deliberately letting it collect chiggers in the grass. Dotty endures this for three months, suffering intensely but convinced it will help.

During this time, Mary Theresa once again shares Slywood's letters with others. Their tone has become more friendly, though she keeps one overly intimate letter private. Dotty concludes that her hair shirt penance worked, but she stops wearing it, shifting to a more discreet penance she never reveals. One night, while she is feverish, Dotty prays to endure a portion of Purgatory's fire for "the most forgotten soul." In her delirium, she envisions an "old Irishwoman" thanking her for the relief. When Dotty asks for a sign, the apparition declares she will have "the measles," which she indeed contracts by morning, leaving her both amused and wary of false or true revelations.

Four years follow, marked frequently in Dotty's diary by the cryptic entry "T.D.M.T.S.A.A.T.H.G.B." "This day much the same as all that have gone before". During this period, from about her ninth to her thirteenth birthday, she believes she has made a bargain with the Lord: she vows to be as perfect as possible if God spares her family any serious evil. She continues her deep reading, especially of St. John of the Cross, finding immediate understanding in works that adult scholars often call obscure. She muses on spiritual symbols, such as the soul's "disguise of three colors"—green, purple, and white—and reflects that children can grasp these writings more naturally than adults.

In seventh grade religion class, Dotty clashes with Sister Mary Claire over Saint Theresa, "the Little Flower." Dotty bluntly calls the saint "a lightweight" and suggests she is suited only for "insipid" admirers. Offended, Sister Mary Claire sends Dotty to Father Van Heuvel. He observes that Dotty seldom visits him anymore since deciding to be "good," and he asks what she holds against the Little Flower. Dotty claims she merely finds the saint's approach limited and does not see her as a major figure on par with St. Catherine of Sienna or St. Teresa of Avila. Father Van Heuvel cautions Dotty against pride and contempt. As a result, Dotty joins a special religious class with older students whom Father believes have greater potential or interest.

Among these pupils are Joe Elias, who performs magic tricks; Agatha Perkins, who is comical and clever; Tommy Etzel, whose father donated the Blessed Virgin's altar; and Sedalia O'Conner, a serene and wealthy girl whom Dotty nonetheless warns might turn "a bit heavy" as she ages. During one lesson, Dotty asks Father Van Heuvel if it is possible to be a "free-wheeler"—boozing, gambling, beachcombing—yet remain decent. He answers that it can be difficult but not inherently impossible, cautioning that constant indulgence dulls the thrill and opens pathways to sin. Dotty, distracted by a horsefly, hears mostly the part that freedom is acceptable, missing the wisdom about moderation.

Dotty continues to expand her knowledge, especially in mathematics, surpassing nearly all her peers. She interacts with Father Van Heuvel “as an equal,” telling him that the Dutch may be “rocks” while the Irish are “birds.” She wonders why Christ did not choose an Irish apostle, then jokes that maybe Judas was Irish, given legend depicts him as red-haired. By the chapter’s end, Dotty remains confident in her intellect, still holding onto her clandestine penances while grappling with her father’s cruelty and the complexities of religious life.

(Agatha Perkins), (Ascent of Mount Carmel), (Buffalo robe), (Catherine), (cilicium), (Dark Night of the Soul), (Dotty), (Father Van Heuvel), (Floyd), (Hair shirt), (Hell), (Joe Elias), (Judas), (Lazarus), (Little Flower), (Lord), (Mary Theresa), (measles), (mysticism), (Sedalia O’Conner), (Sister Mary Claire), (Slywood O’Toole), (St. Catherine of Sienna), (St. John of the Cross), (St. Teresa of Avila), (Saint Theresa), (T.D.M.T.S.A.A.T.H.G.B.), (Thomas), (Tommy Etzel), (Uncle Tim Reilly)

**Dotty:** In the novel’s sixth chapter, Dotty becomes aware that Mary Theresa keeps Slywood’s letters locked away, but because Dotty “had a way with locks,” she remains informed and perceives that the rift between her parents “would never be closed completely.” Slywood emerges as “an ink-stained sadist” who torments Mary Theresa by detailing his misdeeds in letters. Dotty, having dreamed of Hell, is shocked that her father would choose such a path, feeling anger, shame, and frustration at her mother’s passive suffering. After her initial fury subsides, Dotty takes a practical approach and decides upon penance. She studies how to make a cilicium, or hair shirt, though references are vague. Ultimately, she settles on burlap, pressing it into crab grass to gather chiggers, and endures three months of self-imposed torment. This penance, she believes, works, for afterward Slywood’s letters become more amicable, except one too intimate to share. Dotty continues secret penances throughout life, even out of grace, to help others. She grows curious about mysticism and prays to suffer briefly in Purgatory’s fire for the most forgotten soul there, asking to spare that soul’s suffering and offering to forego water. While feverish and delirious, she experiences what she believes to be this suffering, meeting an old Irishwoman who claims to be “only a dream” and grants Dotty a sign: the measles. Dotty awakens covered in measles, amused rather than dismayed, and learns caution in demanding signs. Between nine and thirteen, Dotty attempts a one-sided bargain with God: she vows to be good, even perfect, so long as God protects her family. She assumes agreement without a sign, only later realizing God does not bargain. During this period, Dotty reads St. John of the Cross’s works and easily grasps their meaning, contrary to adult scholars who find them murky. In seventh-grade religion class, she disparages the Little Flower as limited and appealing only to “insipid” people. Sister Mary Claire finds Dotty’s views offensive, resulting in Dotty’s transfer to Father Van Heuvel’s special class, where students are more intelligent, free, and congenial to her. She befriends Sedalia O’Conner, whom she admires despite worrying Sedalia could become a “blasted Lady Bountiful.” Dotty asks Father Van Heuvel if one can remain good while living as a “rounder,” enjoying boozing, gambling, and other freedoms. He explains that per se these activities are not evil, but they must be taken in moderation and life kept Christocentric, warning that constant high pace dulls the pleasure. Distracted by a horsefly, Dotty only registers that it is possible to be a free-wheeler without sin, missing his advice about balance.

She excels academically, especially in mathematics, and treats Father Van Heuvel as an equal, discussing national temperaments. When the priest suggests the Irish excel at self-pity, Dotty counters that the world needs the Dutch too, as stable “rocks.” Dotty speculates that the Apostles could have included an Irishman, although Father Van Heuvel notes uncertainty in their ancestries. She jokes that maybe Judas was Irish, and he reminds her that legend gives Judas red hair. Throughout these conversations, Dotty shows intellectual agility, curiosity about faith and culture, and a willingness to challenge revered figures while acknowledging that certain truths, and heritage, remain elusive.

## I. Emergence of a Permanent Rift in the Family

1. Change in Correspondence from Slywood O’Toole
  - A. Mary Theresa no longer sharing entire letters with relatives as before
    - a. Reading only selected portions aloud
    - b. Keeping the letters locked away
  - B. Indication of secrecy and distress in the relationship
2. Dotty’s Access and Awareness
  - A. Dotty’s skill with locks enabling her to read the letters
    - a. Gaining close knowledge of the deepening rift
  - B. Realization that the break between her parents will never fully heal
    - a. Understanding the severity and permanence of the estrangement
3. Slywood’s Mean-Spirited Letters
  - A. Increasing cruelty and sadism in written communication
    - a. Hints and details of his misconduct and infidelity
    - b. Derogatory remarks aimed at Mary Theresa, calling her a drudge and challenging her to react
  - B. Demands for Money and Cynical Taunts
    - a. Insisting on endorsed allotment checks to fund his indulgences<sup>53</sup>
    - b. Denying the paternity of their children as a malicious jab, despite knowing the truth
4. Impact on Mary Theresa and Dotty
  - A. Mary Theresa’s Transformation
    - a. Reduced to sniveling, sighing, and muttering under emotional strain
  - B. Dotty’s Anger and Disappointment

<sup>53</sup> Allotment checks were legally designated for the dependents—often the soldier’s spouse—and issued directly in the dependent’s name. If a serviceman found himself in a situation where he needed access to those funds (perhaps due to changing financial circumstances or because he remained stateside and still needed direct control of his income), the checks still belonged to the beneficiary, not the soldier. Therefore, the wife, as the named payee, would have to endorse the allotment checks over to her husband before he could access or use the funds. In practice, this protected the dependent’s financial interests, ensuring that the amount earmarked for her support could not be unilaterally reclaimed by the serviceman without her consent.

- a. Shocked that her father chooses a path akin to self-damnation
- b. Frustrated with her mother's passivity and lack of decisive action

## II. Dotty's Practical Turn to Penance

1. Considering Spiritual Solutions
  - A. Realizing direct confrontation or argument cannot resolve the rift
  - B. Belief that extraordinary spiritual action (penance) might influence events
2. Research on the *Cilicium* (Hair Shirt)<sup>54</sup>
  - A. Difficulty Finding Instructions
    - a. References in older novels assuming common knowledge but providing no practical details<sup>55</sup>
    - b. Modern sources failing to explain construction methods or specifics
  - B. Determination to Understand and Create One
    - a. Attempting to deduce materials based on historical usage (goat's hair, camel's hair)
    - b. Considering burlap as a close substitute (sack cloth or hair cloth)
3. Experimenting with Materials
  - A. First Attempt with Buffalo Hide from Uncle Tim Reilly's Old Robe
    - a. Too thick, bulky, and easily noticeable
  - B. Second Attempt with Burlap
    - a. Worn wrapped around the loins, next to the skin
    - b. Intentionally placed in crab grass to pick up chiggers, increasing discomfort
4. The Sufferings of Penance
  - A. Intense Physical Discomfort
    - a. Three months enduring the burlap hair shirt and chigger bites

<sup>54</sup> The cilicium has a long history in Catholic penitential practice, originating in the early centuries of Christianity as a means of bodily mortification and spiritual discipline. Worn beneath one's normal attire, this coarse garment—traditionally fashioned from goat hair or other rough fibers—symbolized penitence, humility, and self-denial. Influential religious figures, including medieval saints and ascetics, frequently employed the cilicium. For instance, Saint Thomas Becket (12th century) was discovered to have worn a hair shirt beneath his robes at the time of his martyrdom. Centuries later, Saint Thomas More (16th century) is noted to have secretly donned one as part of his personal devotional life. William Roper, Thomas More's son-in-law and earliest biographer, revealed More's secret practice of wearing a hair shirt: "For after his death it was found upon his body next his skin a shirt of hair, which he had worn secretly all his lifetime, not for ostentation but for penance." Women mystics, such as Saint Catherine of Siena (14th century), were also known to use hair shirts, integrating this severe practice into their pursuit of intense spiritual union with God

<sup>55</sup> Dotty has probably read the entry "Hair-Cloth" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910). The set is a Rosetta stone for reading Lafferty for how assiduously he mines it for incidental detail.



- B. Faith in the Efficacy of Self-Mortification<sup>56</sup>
  - a. Conviction that genuine penance always yields results, known only to those who have tried it
- 5. Observed Results in the Family Correspondence
  - A. Slywood's Letters Changing Tone
    - a. Returning to his old, less cruel self
    - b. Resuming a more open, though not perfect, attitude
  - B. Mary Theresa Sharing Letters Again
    - a. Withholding only the most intimate details
    - b. Restoring some semblance of normalcy and trust

### III. Transition from Hair Shirt to Other Forms of Penance

- 1. Ending the Visible Penance
  - A. Dotty deciding the hair shirt was only a symbol and a beginning
  - B. Ceasing the external, noticeable penance now that it has served its purpose
- 2. Continuous, Secret Pences
  - A. Adopting penances so secret they can never be revealed
  - B. Belief that such penances help others even when Dotty herself may be out of Grace<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Fasting, vigils, wearing hairshirts, or using the discipline serve to subdue the passions, deepen humility, and unite the believer more closely to Christ's suffering. Such practices, encouraged particularly in monastic traditions and among saints noted for their austerity (e.g., St. Catherine of Siena, St. Francis of Assisi), aim not at self-harm, but at spiritual growth and purification. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* notes that "mortification is commanded by Christ, imposed by the Church as necessary for salvation, and indispensable as a means of effectually mortifying our evil inclinations." See "Mortification," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911). For historical and theological perspectives, see Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), pp. 187–193, and Adolphe Tanqueray, *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology* (Tournai: Desclée & Co., 1930), §§ 556–572.

<sup>57</sup> Dotty is well catechized. She knows that sacred doctrine distinguishes between actions performed while in a state of sanctifying grace—which can merit supernatural rewards for oneself or others—and those performed while "out of grace." Works done without sanctifying grace lack the supernatural merit required to benefit the doer spiritually in a salvific sense. However, the Church also teaches that God can hear and regard any earnest prayer or penance; even a sinner's petitions may contribute to the good of others through what is termed "impetration," a form of prayer asking God's blessings or favors on behalf of another. While such acts do not produce condign merit (just and proportionate reward) for the one performing them, they can still dispose the penitent soul toward conversion and potentially attract divine assistance for others. For a theological distinction between merit and impetration, see Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas*, Ia IIae, Q. 109–114 (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1952), pp. 318–327; and Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Patrick Lynch (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1974), pp. 267–273.

3. Mystical Experience in a Feverish Delirium
  - A. Intentionally Embracing Illness as a Form of Suffering<sup>58</sup>
    - a. Dotty refusing to admit illness, praying for extraordinary suffering to help a forgotten soul in Purgatory
  - B. Delirious Vision of an Old Irishwoman
    - a. Encountering what seems to be the “most forgotten soul” in Purgatory
    - b. The old woman thanks Dotty for offering temporary relief by sharing her suffering
4. Skepticism About the Authenticity of the Vision
  - A. Old Woman Admits to Being Only a Dream
  - B. Dotty Demands a Sign
    - a. Seeking some mark upon awakening to confirm the experience
  - C. Receiving the Measles as the “Sign”<sup>59</sup>
    - a. Symbolic of divine mystery and the caution needed in mystical claims
    - b. Amused reaction from Dotty, recognizing it as a lesson not to demand signs

#### IV. Four Years of Growth and Secret Bargains

1. A Period of Relative Normalcy
  - A. Four years passing with many “T.D.M.T.S.A.A.T.H.G.B.” (This day much the same as all that have gone before) diary entries
  - B. Years marking Dotty’s transition from nine to thirteen
2. Physical and Intellectual Maturation
  - A. Dotty becoming beautiful, though initially unaware of it
  - B. Highly erudite and clever; fully aware of her intellectual superiority
3. A One-Sided Bargain with the Lord<sup>60</sup>
  - A. Dotty’s Agreement: To be good, near-perfect in conduct, in exchange for the Lord’s protection from serious tragedy and disturbance in her family life
  - B. Her Assumption: That God consents to such a deal without providing explicit confirmation
  - C. Dotty will learn that God is very wary of a bargain

<sup>58</sup> “It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justifications” (Psalm 118 [119]:67, 71); “My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity” (2 Corinthians 12:9); “Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church . . . And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man” (James 5:14–15); “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you” (1 Peter 5:10).

<sup>59</sup> Stigmata are bodily marks resembling Christ’s crucifixion wounds, first recorded in Saint Francis of Assisi (1224). Subsequent stigmatics, like Saint Catherine of Siena and Padre Pio, are considered rare signs of deep spiritual union.

<sup>60</sup> “For the Lord your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords, a great God, and mighty, and terrible, who accepteth no person nor taketh bribes” (Deuteronomy 10:17).

4. Reading and Understanding Difficult Spiritual Works
  - A. Delving into novels like St. John of the Cross's *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *Dark Night of the Soul*<sup>61</sup>
  - B. Insight that what learned adults consider "profound" or "murky" can be plainly grasped by a child
  - C. Interpreting mystical symbols (green, purple, white) and concepts of the soul's journey with clarity<sup>62</sup>
5. Maintaining Wariness of Mystical Experiences
  - A. Remembering her measles "sign"
  - B. Understanding that not all visions or revelations are to be accepted at face value

## V. Dispute with Sister Mary Claire over the Little Flower

1. The Little Flower, Saint Theresa of Lisieux
  - A. Classroom discussion of the Little Flower's holiness and example
  - B. Dotty's Bold Critique
    - a. Calling the Little Flower a "lightweight" and "greatly overrated"<sup>63</sup>
    - b. Suggesting that her admirers are limited and insipid people
2. Sister Mary Claire's Offense
  - A. Shock and disapproval at Dotty's irreverent tone
  - B. Accusation of blasphemy when Dotty mocks the saint's sweetness as cloying and imagines God growing weary of it

<sup>61</sup> Saint John mentions the spiritual insight of children when he writes that divine wisdom, elusive to the learned who rely on intellectual complexity, is more readily grasped by those who approach God with simplicity and humility. In *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Saint John cites Christ's words in Matthew 11:25: "For this cause Christ declared in the Gospel: 'I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto little ones'" (Book II, Chapter 8).

<sup>62</sup> These colors transcend decoration, serving as potent symbols of the soul's spiritual journey. Green often signifies hope, growth, and the flourishing of faith; purple evokes penance, contemplation of the Passion, and the soul's purification through trials; and white conveys purity, divine illumination, and the soul's ultimate union with God. These hues appear in medieval illuminated manuscripts, stained-glass windows, and iconographic cycles, guiding the faithful's understanding of the unseen realities they represent.

<sup>63</sup> What would Dotty think about Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–1897) being declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope John Paul II on October 19, 1997? There are currently thirty-seven Doctors of the Church. Saint Thérèse, a French Discalced Carmelite nun also known as the "Little Flower," is famed for her "little way" of spiritual childhood and complete trust in God's mercy. Born Marie Françoise-Thérèse Martin, she entered the Carmel of Lisieux at the age of fifteen, living a hidden life of prayer, humility, and sacrifice. Her spiritual autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, published posthumously in 1898, quickly gained widespread readership, influencing countless believers with its accessible yet profound teaching on love and simplicity. Thérèse was canonized in 1925 by Pope Pius XI, and in recognition of her exceptional contribution to Catholic theology and spirituality, she was later declared a Doctor of the Church.

3. Consequences of Dotty's Remarks
  - A. Being sent to Father Van Heuvel for reprimand
  - B. Father Van Heuvel's Reaction
    - a. Mild amusement at seeing Dotty again, since she seldom errs now
    - b. Recognizing that Dotty's criticism stems from a different mindset than that of the saint's admirers<sup>64</sup>
4. Father Van Heuvel's Instruction and Dotty's Understanding
  - A. Acknowledging that some saints appeal to simpler minds, and that not all saints resonate with everyone<sup>65</sup>
  - B. Warning Dotty against pride and contempt for others' spiritual preferences
5. Transfer to a Special Class
  - A. Instead of returning to Sister Mary Claire's class, Dotty joins a special religion class taught by Father Van Heuvel
  - B. This class is composed mostly of eighth graders considered talented or interested in deeper inquiries

## VI. The Special Religion Class Under Father Van Heuvel

1. Composition of the Class
  - A. Eighth graders and a few selected students believed to have special talents or vocations
  - B. Dotty the youngest and previously the only younger pupil among them
2. Notable Classmates
  - A. Joe Elias, the Syrian boy who can perform card and handkerchief tricks
    - a. Claims a grandmother was a true magician in the old country
  - B. Agatha Perkins, remarkably clever and comical
    - a. Successfully transcends the handicap of her old-fashioned name
  - C. Tommy Etzel, son of a wealthy farmer who donated the Virgin's altar to the church
  - D. Sedalia O'Conner, strikingly pretty, serene, wealthy, intelligent, kind, and universally liked
    - a. Even Dotty, wary of perfection, drawn to her yet senses a latent "Lady Bountiful"<sup>66</sup> risk

<sup>64</sup> Dotty soaks up the mystical symbolism of St. John of the Cross, who draws upon imagery from the *Song of Songs* to depict the soul's ascent to divine union. The "purple" evokes the royal couch from the *Song of Songs* (cf. *Song of Solomon* 3:9–10), interpreted as the place where God "reclines," and the "secret ladder" references the soul's hidden, interior path toward perfection in the dark night of faith.

<sup>65</sup> A classic statement of this view: "In each saint, Christ lives again in a new human likeness; and because every soul is different, every soul will find in some saint the particular human expression of Christ which appeals to its own need, and which helps it along the way to Him." Caryll Houselander, *The Reed of God* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1944), pp. 117–118.

<sup>66</sup> "Lady Bountiful" comes from the patronizing character Lady Bountiful in George Farquhar's 1707 play *The Beaux' Stratagem*. It describes wealthy, usually aristocratic women who dispense charity to the poor.

3. Intellectual Freedom and Lightness of the Class
  - A. A more relaxed and stimulating environment than standard religion classes
  - B. Pupils more open-minded and “Dotty-kind” of people, supportive of inquiry and personality

## VII. Dotty’s Question About Decency and a Free-Wheeling Life

1. Dotty’s Inquiry
  - A. Can one be a rounder, a free-wheeler, a high flyer, a boozing gambler, a drifter, yet remain decent and unsoiled by sin?
  - B. Seeking reassurance that fun and transgression are not inevitably linked
2. Father Van Heuvel’s Response
  - A. Admitting that all life presents temptations
  - B. Acknowledging that many activities — drinking, gambling, roaming — are not evil in themselves, but can become so if abused<sup>67</sup>
  - C. Emphasizing that constant “high pace” living dulls enjoyment and leads to dangerous temptations
  - D. Advising moderation, a Christ-centered life, and varying the pace of fun to prevent it from turning pale and losing innocence

## VIII. Dotty’s Partial Understanding and Ongoing Pride

1. Distraction and Selective Hearing
  - A. Dotty’s attention partly on a horsefly, causing her to miss some finer points of Father’s counsel
  - B. Accepting that a free-wheeling life can be lived without moral compromise but failing to fully register the necessity of moderation
2. Intellectual and Social Confidence
  - A. Dotty’s recognized superiority in reading comprehension, mathematics, and overall cleverness
  - B. Poor handwriting as a minor flaw, yet always legible enough<sup>68</sup>

## IX. Conversations with Father Van Heuvel

<sup>67</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas writes: “There are some human actions which, taken in themselves, are indifferent” (*Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 18, a. 8), and he acknowledges the value of lawful recreation: “Play is necessary for the intercourse of human life” (II-II, q. 168, a. 3). Drinking wine in moderation is likewise permissible and only becomes sinful through excess or disordered intent (cf. II-II, q. 149, a. 2). It is the manner and motive with which such actions are undertaken, rather than the actions themselves, that determine their moral character.

<sup>68</sup> Much like Lafferty’s own handwriting.

1. Treating Him as an Equal
  - A. Dotty's lack of deference, engaging Father on an equal footing
  - B. Observing that while the Irish are "talented birds," the Dutch are "rocks" providing stability<sup>69</sup>
2. Cultural and Ecclesiastical References
  - A. Dotty's suggestion that if she had chosen, Thomas instead of Peter would have founded a different kind of Church
  - B. Father Van Heuvel clarifying that such a choice would have led to a non-Catholic tradition, with a reference to Arianism<sup>70</sup>
3. Consideration of Apostolic Origins and Ethnicities
  - A. Dotty's speculation that an Irish Apostle might have been chosen, and if so, possibly Judas
  - B. Father Van Heuvel's playful agreement that Judas was red-headed,<sup>71</sup> hinting at Irish traits and humorously acknowledging the complexity of ethnic speculation

<sup>69</sup> Cf. the Puca encounter with the old Dutch priest in *The Reefs of Earth*: "A priest came to see Henry Dulanty in his cell. He was an old Holland Dutchman, not one of your new young priests who doesn't know an Analect from the Anastasis." The priest notes that Henry Dulanty is reading the Book of Job in his cell. As Father Van Heuvel says to Dotty, "In one thing you exceed: in feeling sorry for yourselves. The Irish have brought it to a fine art." Monad in Lafferty's "long novel ... a ghost story that is also a jigsaw puzzle. And the mark of my ghost story is that there is a deep underlay that has never attained clear visibility, never attained clear publication."

<sup>70</sup> A 4th-century Christological heresy initiated by the priest Arius of Alexandria, Arianism denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ by asserting that the Son was a created being, subordinate to the Father rather than co-eternal and consubstantial with Him. This doctrinal stance challenged the central tenet of the Incarnation and the Church's understanding of the Trinity, posing a profound threat to Christian unity and identity. The controversy spread rapidly through the Roman Empire, garnering both imperial and ecclesiastical support in various regions. To combat this heresy, the Church convened the First Council of Nicaea in 325, which condemned Arianism and proclaimed the Son as "one in substance" (*homoousios*) with the Father. Despite this formal condemnation, Arian sympathies lingered for decades, influencing episcopal appointments, church politics, and imperial policy. The eventual decline of Arianism—hastened by the steadfast opposition of theologians such as St. Athanasius and reinforced by further councils—reaffirmed the orthodox Trinitarian doctrine that remains foundational to Catholic theology.

<sup>71</sup> The characterization of Judas Iscariot as having red hair does not originate in the Bible; rather, it emerges from cultural and artistic traditions in medieval and Renaissance Europe.

# Independent Organization

The Liberal Catholic church neither is Protestant nor Roman Catholic, but an independent self-governing body, Catholic, Christian and liberal, Dr. Beyhan explained. It derives its Apostolic Succession from the Archi-episcopal See of Utrecht in Holland, which became separate from

## Chapter 7

The chapter begins with the observation that the country was in a state of decline during the war years. There were more “odd and inadequate people strutting around than there would normally be”. Lafferty offers two possible explanations for this phenomenon:

- The absence of the "best and most vigorous" men who were away serving in the war allowed for "the worst elements" to take control.
- With the "most disreputable and vicious elements" away, "the mediocrities and neuters" attempted to fill their places.

### Overview

In this chapter, the end of the war coincides with deepening turmoil in Dotty's family, largely sparked by Mary Theresa's changed behavior and Slywood O'Toole's desertion from the Army. Mary Theresa works in Tulsa among rowdy companions, bringing home unsettling influences that Dotty mistrusts. When Colonel Keen reappears and Mary Theresa pursues a dubious remarriage through the “Free Catholic Church of America,” Dotty's anger and sense of betrayal intensify.

Ultimately, Dotty arrives in her mother's new home, confronts Colonel Keen, and makes a violent choice that forces her to flee. She is still not yet thirteen when she sets off alone, determined to return to the sea island she once visited.

### Summary

Mary Theresa begins commuting to Tulsa for work and returns on weekends with people who strike Dotty as coarse and troubling. Dotty complains that these individuals drink too loudly and discuss relationships that might lead Mary Theresa astray. Mary Theresa insists she has no choice but to ride with anyone available, reminding Dotty that everyone must contribute during the ongoing war.

Dotty notices that her mother's character starts to wear thin from associating with such people. Meanwhile, a letter arrives from (Colonel Keen) expressing concern over (Slywood O'Toole). Mary Theresa explains that Slywood is stationed overseas and may be ill. Dotty distrusts Colonel Keen's motives, recalling his history of manipulative behavior. Soon, word comes that Slywood, suffering from fevers and confusion, has deserted his post in (Sydney), (Australia). Mary Theresa learns this from both the Army and another letter from Colonel Keen. Dotty believes Colonel Keen has a hidden agenda and suspects he somehow engineered Slywood's disappearance.

As World War II ends in 1945, returning soldiers and closed war plants alter the social landscape. Mary Theresa keeps her job at a newly reorganized agency managing "Surplus Sales." Dotty wants to live with her mother in (Tulsa) and attend school there, but Mary Theresa forbids it. Dotty eventually discovers that Colonel Keen, now in charge of surplus property at Mary Theresa's workplace, got her a better position and a new apartment. Dotty fears her mother is entangled with him.

Two major shocks follow in the summer of 1946. First, Dotty receives a letter from Slywood in (Australia), informing her that he has remarried and will not return. Mary Theresa admits she learned the same news weeks earlier but kept silent. Next, Dotty is allowed to visit her mother, only to find Colonel Keen present with a middle-aged priest from the "Free Catholic Church of America." Overhearing talk of "legal aspects" and "ecclesiastical sanctions," Dotty presses Mary Theresa for an explanation. She learns that Mary Theresa plans to marry Colonel Keen through this new "church," claiming that her marriage to Slywood is void since he abandoned the family. Dotty calls the priest a "Judas Priest" and accuses her mother of hypocrisy.

Angered by Dotty's opposition, Mary Theresa sends her away on a bus that same day. The rest of the family shows little concern over Mary Theresa's decision, except for (Grandmother Kearns) and (Uncle Tim Reilly), who share Dotty's dismay. On September 1, 1946, Mary Theresa and Colonel Keen wed without any family present. Plans are made for Dotty to join them soon afterward and enroll in high school.



Dotty arrives by bus and is met by Colonel Keen, who offers her thirty dollars, hoping to bribe her goodwill. She responds coolly, determined to reject him. At their house, she briefly greets her mother, then claims she needs to shop. She uses nearly seventeen dollars to purchase a long-distance bus ticket, sixty-five cents for a paring knife, and thirty-five cents for friction tape. Late that night, after waiting for Colonel Keen to go to bed and Mary Theresa to occupy the bathroom, Dotty tapes the knife handle and enters Keen's room. She stabs him repeatedly, leaves the weapon, retrieves her luggage, and departs the house. Catching her bus at the last moment, she heads seven hundred miles away to the sea island city she visited years before. She is still one month and one week short of her thirteenth birthday.

(Australia), (Catherine), (Colonel Keen), (Episcopals), (Floyd), (Free Catholic Church of America), (Grandmother Kearns), (Judas Priest), (Mary Theresa), (Okie), (Sister), (Slywood O'Toole), (Sydney), (Tim Reilly), (Tulsa)

**Dotty:** In the novel's seventh chapter, Dotty bluntly expresses dislike for Mary Theresa's acquaintances, telling her mother "I do not like your friends" and insisting that she end all contact with them. Questioning the caliber of workers at the plant where Mary Theresa labors, Dotty suggests that while the nation's efforts are "titanic," more selective hiring could yield better results. She worries about her mother's naïveté, proposes moving to Tulsa to attend school and watch over her, and fears Mary Theresa will become like the "queer" people she associates with. Dotty queries the nature of Colonel Keen's letters, urging her mother to burn them unread and warning that he is "an old angle player" and certainly "after you," while also believing her father, Slywood, should be monitored. As she learns that Keen may return and settle nearby, Dotty concludes there will be trouble. She suggests Mary Theresa could have prevented certain difficulties by watching out for Slywood, and that Keen's influence has led to foul bargains and Slywood's absence. When Dotty receives a letter from Slywood declaring he has remarried in Australia and will not return, she confronts Mary Theresa about the authenticity of a priest's affiliation. Mary Theresa's evasiveness prompts Dotty to call him a "Judas Priest," suspect satanic teachings, and lament her mother's choices. They leave together for the bus station without speaking. Dotty then arrives at what is now her new home, refuses to acknowledge Keen as a stepfather—"I will just be damned if I have become any such thing"—and maintains an icy demeanor toward her mother. She takes Keen's money without revealing her intentions and goes out shopping, returning with purchases including a paring knife and friction tape. Keeping her door ajar, she waits until late at night, listening to the household's movements. When Colonel Keen retires and Mary Theresa is occupied, Dotty tapes the handle of the knife, enters Keen's bedroom, and, in response to his tentative query whether they can be friends, stabs him eight times, leaving the knife in his chest. Quietly retrieving her bag, she departs, catches a bus out of town using what was likely her nearly seventeen-dollar purchase, and heads back to the sea island town she knew four years before, carrying fifteen dollars and no hopes.

## I. Social Deterioration and Wartime Influences

1. General Decline in Public Character
  - A. Perception that something had worsened nationally during the war years
  - B. Theories for the Decline
    - a. With “the best and most vigorous” away at war, the worst elements rise in influence
    - b. With “the disreputable and vicious” away at war, mediocre types attempt to fill their roles, behaving pompously
2. Increase in Odd and Inadequate People
  - A. More “strutting” individuals than normal
  - B. A sense of social imbalance or unnatural shift in public behavior

## II. Mary Theresa’s New Work Arrangement and Associates

1. Working in Tulsa
  - A. Mary Theresa now employed sixty miles away from home
  - B. She returns only on weekends and days off
  - C. Topic of commuting distances a common conversational point
2. New Companions and Changed Atmosphere
  - A. Mary Theresa’s late-night associates, also commuting, loud and coarse
  - B. Drinking and coarse talk, unlike the dignified drinking of Uncle Tim
  - C. Casual references to “informal arrangements” beyond Dotty’s supposed understanding
3. Dotty’s Disapproval
  - A. Confronting her mother about these questionable “friends”
    - a. Mary Theresa insists they are merely coworkers, not true friends<sup>72</sup>
  - B. Mary Theresa’s Justification
    - a. National crisis demands women in jobs like welding, no room for selectivity in associates
  - C. Dotty’s Concern
    - a. Fears Mary Theresa’s naïveté and risk of being influenced by these people
    - b. Suggests joining Mary Theresa in Tulsa to protect her
4. Mary Theresa’s Resistance
  - A. Dismisses Dotty’s protective offer
  - B. Reasserts parental authority and insists Dotty remain at home
  - C. Resultant Subtle Change in Mary Theresa
    - a. Fiber of her character slightly worn
    - b. Though never coarse, she is no longer as fine as she had been

## III. Correspondence from the Colonel and Slywood’s Deterioration

<sup>72</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 23, a. 1.

1. Unexpected Letter from Colonel Keen
  - A. Addressed to Mary Theresa
  - B. Dotty's Suspicion
    - a. Recommending marking the letters "Incorrectly Addressed" and returning them
    - b. Fearing the Colonel's ulterior motives and manipulative angle
  - C. Mary Theresa's Defense of the Colonel
    - a. Claiming concern for Slywood's health and well-being
    - b. Believing Keen is genuinely interested in the family's troubles
2. Slywood's Troubling Letters
  - A. Change in Tone and Content
    - a. Signs of confusion, loss of responsibility, poor grasp of time and place
    - b. Writing reminiscent of a slow, childish mind rather than an adult
  - B. Dotty's Concern
    - a. Wondering if fevers or illness have affected Slywood's sanity
    - b. Fear that he could stumble into serious trouble if unmonitored
3. Parallel Warnings
  - A. Keen's Insincere Letters Echoing Dotty's Concern
    - a. Suggesting that Slywood, unwell and in distant postings, needs watching
  - B. Dotty's Deep Distrust of Keen
    - a. Viewing him as an "old angle player"
    - b. Suspecting hidden schemes and future complications
    - c. Keen is an Okie

#### IV. The Desertion of Slywood O'Toole

1. Information Reaching Mary Theresa
  - A. Official notification from the Army that Slywood is absent without leave in Sydney, Australia<sup>73</sup>
  - B. Visit from an Army Colonel<sup>74</sup> demanding any knowledge of Slywood's whereabouts
    - a. Warning of penalties for withholding information

<sup>73</sup> Obviously subject to severe disciplinary measures, including court-martial and imprisonment. While most Allied armies strove to maintain morale and address the underlying issues that led soldiers to abandon their posts, punishment could still be harsh. The United States Army, for example, formally charged tens of thousands of servicemen with desertion, though relatively few received the maximum penalties. See *The Deserters: A Hidden History of World War II* (New York: Penguin Press, 2013), pp. 12–45; and Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Endorsement of the Sentence of Private Eddie Slovik," in *General Court-Martial Orders, U.S. Army, 1945*.

<sup>74</sup> "Leaf colonel" is an informal reference to a lieutenant colonel, whose rank insignia bears a silver oak leaf, while "bird colonel" colloquially denotes a full colonel, recognized by a silver eagle (or "bird") insignia. The "leaf colonel" (O-5) holds a lower rank than the "bird colonel" (O-6).

- C. Notice from Colonel Keen himself
    - a. Breaking the news of Slywood's desertion more gently, allegedly out of concern
- 2. Dotty's Reaction and Suspicions
  - A. Outraged that God has not honored what she considered a "bargain"
  - B. Holding God accountable for not preventing Slywood's desertion
    - a. Believing God should have intervened or given a sign
  - C. Convinced that Colonel Keen's involvement and returned presence is no coincidence
    - a. Certain that deals have been made, that her mother has been "dealt for"
    - b. Suggesting Slywood's disappearance is part of a larger plot involving Keen
- 3. Mary Theresa's Hopes and Denials
  - A. Belief that Slywood's illness explains his irresponsible actions
  - B. Trusting that leniency may be granted if he is found
  - C. Dismissing Dotty's more sinister interpretation

## V. Post-War Adjustments and Continuing Uncertainties

- 1. The End of the War and Its Aftermath
  - A. Gradual disappearance of the odd and inadequate who had dominated during the conflict
  - B. Returned servicemen, altered by their experiences, reintegrating into civilian life
  - C. War plants now "terminated," shifting from production to paper-shuffling related to closeouts
- 2. Mary Theresa's Ongoing Employment
  - A. Still working in the same plant now handling surplus sales and termination duties
  - B. Maintaining a job that provides income and independence, though the nature of the work has changed drastically
- 3. Dotty's Desire to Join Her Mother
  - A. Dotty proposing to move to Tulsa for schooling and oversight
  - B. Mary Theresa's Refusal
    - a. Withholding permission despite improved living conditions and a larger apartment
    - b. Denying Dotty the chance to live with her, stirring Dotty's suspicion and unease
- 4. The Second Blow in the Sequence
  - A. Dotty aware that another blow has fallen, though the exact nature is unclear to her
  - B. Growing tension as Dotty tries to understand her mother's reasoning, without yet knowing the deeper involvement of outside forces

## VI. The Return and Ascendancy of Colonel Keen

- 1. Keen's Reappearance in Oklahoma
  - A. Unbeknownst to Dotty for some weeks, Colonel Keen returns from the war
  - B. He becomes the official in charge of surplus property disposal at Mary Theresa's plant

2. Keen's Influence on Mary Theresa's Life
  - A. He secures a better job for Mary Theresa
  - B. He enables her to obtain a larger, improved apartment in Tulsa
  - C. Mary Theresa experiences a mix of eagerness and apprehension as she benefits from Keen's position
3. Moral Changes in the Social Environment
  - A. The war years bring a coarsening of social life and moral standards
  - B. Mary Theresa, working in Tulsa, brings home questionable acquaintances who drink and speak coarsely
  - C. Dotty disapproves of these people, worried about their influence on her mother
  - D. Mary Theresa's moral fiber begins to wear thin under these new pressures (terrific writing by Lafferty here)
4. Slywood's Desertion and New Family
  - A. Letters from Slywood reveal he has fallen ill, grown mentally irresponsible, and deserted the Army in Australia
  - B. He has remarried and invites them to visit if they are ever nearby, though his tone is confused and detached
  - C. Dotty suspects a connection between Keen's presence and her father's disappearance
5. Pre-Wedding Weekend Visit and the "Free Catholic Church"<sup>75</sup> Revelation
  - A. Before the marriage, Dotty is allowed a weekend visit to Mary Theresa's new apartment in Tulsa
  - B. Dotty arrives to find Colonel Keen and a renegade "priest" discussing legal and ecclesiastical matters
  - C. Dotty learns that the priest belongs to the "Free Catholic Church of America," a group of which Keen is a member allowing remarriage outside traditional Church law<sup>76</sup>
  - D. Mary Theresa reveals her intent to remarry under this sect's sanction, insisting it is a

<sup>75</sup> The Liberal Catholic Church. It did not require divorcees to go through the annulment process.

<sup>76</sup> Dotty understands the importance of Catholic canon law and sacramental marriage. A marriage "annulment" (more properly termed a "declaration of nullity") is a judgment by a Church tribunal that a valid sacramental marriage, as defined by canon law, never actually existed. Unlike divorce, which dissolves a marriage bond, an annulment affirms that an essential element required for a valid marriage—such as free consent, the intention of fidelity, openness to children, or the capacity to fulfill marital obligations—was lacking from the start. A Catholic priest derives both the power of orders (the sacramental authority conferred at ordination) and the power of jurisdiction (the permission or "faculties" granted by a bishop or superior) to perform certain sacraments validly and licitly. While the priestly character itself enables him to consecrate the Eucharist or administer the other sacraments in principle, the Church typically requires proper jurisdiction for the valid administration of certain rites, especially Confession and Marriage. For Baptism, the Church teaches that in cases of necessity, anyone—even a layperson—may validly baptize. This means a "rogue" priest, though lacking official faculties, can still confer a valid Baptism, just as a layperson could, provided the correct form and intention are observed. Confession normally requires faculties from the

mature, liberal      step forward

- E. Dotty is horrified, accuses her mother of hypocrisy and moral corruption, and is sent back to Grandmother Kearns's home in anger and disbelief

## VII. Forced Separation and Mary Theresa's Second Marriage

1. General Apathy Among Relatives
  - A. Aside from Dotty, Grandmother Kearns, and Uncle Tim, the extended family shows little concern
  - B. Indifference from most relatives shows a moral gap between them and the few who are truly disturbed
2. Mary Theresa's Marriage to Colonel Keen (September 1, 1946)
  - A. Mary Theresa marries Keen with no close family present
  - B. They leave for a one-week absence following the ceremony, isolating themselves from familial scrutiny
3. Dotty's Return and Keen's Strategy
  - A. After the newlyweds return, Dotty is instructed to join them in Tulsa, while Floyd and Catherine remain behind
  - B. Keen's remark about "breaking the strongest stick first" implies he intends to dominate and neutralize Dotty's resistance
4. Dotty's Arrival in Tulsa After the Wedding
  - A. Dotty arrives, greeted only by Keen; Mary Theresa is conspicuously absent at the station
  - B. Keen attempts a conciliatory approach, giving Dotty three ten-dollar bills<sup>77</sup> in hopes of winning her over
  - C. Dotty remains hostile, distrustful, and quietly enraged
5. The Climactic Act of Violence
  - A. Later that night, Dotty prepares a kitchen paring knife, wrapping its handle for better

local bishop to be valid and licit. Without these faculties, a priest ordinarily cannot validly absolve sins, except in immediate danger of death, where the Church supplies these faculties for the sake of the penitent's salvation. Marriage is even more restrictive. The priest (or deacon) is not merely dispensing a sacrament; the spouses themselves are the ministers of the sacrament, and the priest is the authorized witness of the Church. Canon law mandates that the marriage be celebrated before a properly delegated minister and two witnesses. If a priest does not have the necessary faculties, he cannot validly witness a marriage, regardless of his ordination. If one of the parties is not free to marry—such as a woman lacking an annulment for a previous union—no priest, rogue or otherwise, can lawfully or validly celebrate the marriage. Thus, while a "rogue" priest can still validly baptize (like any layperson) and may in dire circumstances validly absolve in Confession, he cannot bypass the Church's law and witness a valid new marriage without the required faculties and conditions.

<sup>77</sup> "Then went one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, to the chief priests, and said to them: 'What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?' But they appointed him thirty pieces of silver." (Matthew 26:14–15).

grip

B. Seizing a moment when Mary Theresa is away in the bathroom, Dotty enters Keen's bedroom

C. She stabs Keen multiple times, leaving the knife in his chest

6. Dotty's Flight

A. Without hesitation, Dotty takes her bag and leaves the house immediately

B. Using the money Keen gave her, she boards a departing bus, traveling some seven hundred miles away

C. Not yet thirteen, Dotty flees into an uncertain future, driven by shock, betrayal, and grim resolve



## Chapter 8

### Overview

Dotty, having fled her mother and Colonel Keen, arrives at the seaside town where she once stayed as a child. She seeks forgiveness in confession for stabbing Colonel Keen, but at first she cannot muster true contrition. While slipping quietly into a new life with the Parisis, she enrolls in high school under a false name and gains popularity through her talent for music and her lively presence. Meanwhile, no legal charges are pressed, and Dotty finds herself free to explore the island's clubs, fishing piers, and hidden corners. Despite wrestling with guilt and uncertainty, she maintains a brisk spirit and forms a new bargain with God, hoping to shield her adopted family from tragedy.

### Summary

Dotty enters a confessional in the local Church, addressing the Father as she states that her last confession was one week and four days earlier. She admits her minor sins but also confesses to



having attempted to kill a man. The priest asks if she is contrite, and she replies that she is “desolate” yet would do it again. When he inquires about her identity, Dotty refuses to disclose her name, citing the secrecy of confession. The Father reveals that the man she stabbed is alive, worried about her, and not pursuing official charges. Dotty then explains outside the confessional that she is living with the Parisis but provides no additional details, deflecting his questions. He advises her to return daily for confession until she can honestly repent.

Meanwhile, Colonel Keen recovers from eight superficial wounds, offering no statement to investigators. When pressed about Dotty’s attack, he insists she did not truly aim to kill him and that she is simply a “wronged party.” He chooses not to search for her, believing that she fled to the same island she once knew.

Upon arriving in the island town, Dotty observes that it has emptied out after Labor Day, with beach concessions and amusements closed for the off-season. Nevertheless, the weather remains hot, and fishermen, locals, and a few tourists still frequent the beaches and piers. She enrolls in high school at the parish under the name Dorothy Parisi, which raises little surprise among islanders accustomed to the Parisis’ occasional surprises. Soon after, Dotty returns to the confessional, and the Father—deciding she must have some measure of contrition—grants her absolution, warning her never again to resort to deadly violence.

Dotty grows popular at school, mingling with older students like Hugh McDonald, Betsy Mish, Felicien Cassell, and Miriam LeBlanc. Many join her in the evenings at the Parisis’ bar and coffee shop, where they talk, study, and sample wine. Dotty also explores the local scene extensively, frequenting places such as the Sea Serpent, the Scarecrow, the Red Pirate, the Octopus Bar, and the Hop Hut. She even visits rougher spots—the Smelly Goat, the Snake Pit, and the Bloody Bucket—selling crab meat for two destitute crabbers, Sherman J. Wintergarden the Third and Jacob Norman Spencer-Cartwright.

Her ambition to master “Galveston-style” piano leads her to venues like the Jamaica Inn, the Balalaika, the Little Oyster upstairs, the French Casino, and the Jungle Club, where she persuades the musicians to let her play. She proves adept, quickly absorbing local techniques from performers like Jeannie at the Hop Hut and others who have ties to New Orleans. Over time, Dotty becomes known informally as the “Mayor of Tremont Avenue.” She excels academically with minimal effort, learning languages—including Missal Latin and Italian from Nicki Parisi and Mary Parisi—and studying local history, from the landfalls of Lafitte and Cabeza de Vaca to the devastating great wave that once claimed thousands of lives.

Inwardly, Dotty enters a new pact with God: she promises to behave flawlessly if He protects the Parisis from tragedy. Unaware that Colonel Keen quietly sends money to the Parisis for her upkeep, Dotty believes her presence benefits them financially, as her popularity draws steady customers. By the end of her first year there, she has grown to full stature, meets interesting figures like the sidewalk painter Claud Armande, and rekindles acquaintances with people such as Selma Steichert, who once paddled her.

**Dotty:** In the novel's eighth chapter, Dotty goes to confession and admits, "I killed a man." She describes herself as "desolate" yet admits she "would do it again." Asked about contrition, she replies, "I have tried hard to have contrition. I have not been able to have it. I am coming to you for help in this." When the priest requests her name, she refuses: "You have no right to ask me my name." Outside the confessional, she evades his inquiries, commenting instead on the church and the town, and referring to the missing girl named Dotty who fled to this place as "a little prig." The priest suggests she attend school, and though she protests, "I may be over-educated," she eventually agrees under pressure. "It has been a pleasure, Father," she says before leaving him, noting the shelled walks remind her of the South of France.

Registering at high school under the name Dorothy Parisi, Dotty later receives absolution when the priest discerns contrition in her. She becomes sociable, popular among her peers, and introduces them to wine drinking. She frequents various town establishments, including rough ones, and works for two old derelicts selling crab meat and fish, using the profit to buy them wine. She is a regular at clubs where she plays the piano, determined to become "the foremost Galveston-style piano player in the world." Her constant presence along Tremont Avenue earns her the nickname "the Mayor of Tremont Avenue." At school, Dotty excels academically in French, Latin, and history. She forges another one-sided bargain with God, pledging perfection in exchange for protection for herself and the Parisis.

Now living with the Parisis, Dotty is a thirteen-year-old blonde girl described as "woman-sized" and "strong as a pony." She is portrayed as a "fabulous worker" who, with her friends, becomes one of the main attractions along the beach.

## I. Confession of Attempted Murder

1. Dotty's Admission in the Confessional
  - A. Approaching the priest with a routine opening
  - B. Stating her last confession date and completion of previous penance and Communion
  - C. Confessing a serious sin among trivial ones: killing a man
2. Question of Contrition
  - A. The priest's immediate response: recognizing the gravity of the sin
  - B. Asking if Dotty is sorry for committing murder
  - C. Dotty's honest reply: she is desolate but would repeat the act
    - a. Indicates lack of true contrition

3. Attempt to Achieve Contrition
  - A. Dotty explaining her inability to feel genuine remorse
  - B. Seeking help from the priest to find contrition
4. Priest's Suspicion and Identity Query
  - A. Priest asking Dotty's name
  - B. Dotty refusing, citing the seal of the confessional and the priest's obligations
  - C. Priest acknowledging that if she is Dotty, then the victim is alive and not seriously hurt
5. Surprise and Concern Over Victim's Survival
  - A. Priest reveals man's worry about Dotty
  - B. Dotty astonished that the man (Colonel Keen implied) deduced her destination
  - C. Priest clarifying that no tracking occurred, only a guess
6. Dilemma of Confidentiality
  - A. Dotty protesting that the priest cannot reveal what he learns in confession
  - B. Priest proposing they talk outside the confessional as well, to circumvent restrictions
7. Reference to the Parisi Family
  - A. Priest asking with whom Dotty lives
  - B. Dotty initially refuses to say
  - C. Admitting that she lives with the Parisi family and priest's mild reaction ("Oh, them!")
8. Persistence of Non-Contrition
  - A. Priest revisiting the issue of contrition for attempted murder
  - B. Dotty still cannot manage genuine remorse
9. Withholding Absolution
  - A. Priest stating inability to give absolution without contrition
  - B. Dotty lamenting that without absolution she cannot go to Communion
  - C. Priest suggesting she return repeatedly to attempt contrition
10. Agreement to Keep Trying
  - A. Dotty agreeing to come back daily if needed
  - B. Priest wanting to talk on the church steps afterwards

## II. Post-Confessional Conversation Outside the Church

1. Dotty's Refusal to Cooperate
  - A. Once outside, Dotty avoids answering the priest's questions
  - B. Using evasive commentary on the church's architecture and oleanders instead of giving her name
2. Priest's Attempts to Identify Dotty
  - A. Priest referencing a phone call about a girl named Dotty fleeing from a distant impasse
  - B. Mentioning that she might have come to this town, drawn by the environment<sup>78</sup>

<sup>78</sup> The distance between Tulsa and Galveston is about 507 miles.

3. Dotty's Continued Deflections
  - A. Dotty feigning ignorance, calling Dotty "a common nickname"
  - B. Offering trivial observations about the port and its fishing instead of addressing personal details
4. Priest's Suggestion of School Attendance
  - A. Priest asking if she will enroll in their school, starting Monday (only a week late)
  - B. Advising her to ask her hosts (the Parisis) to make arrangements
5. Dotty's Reluctance and Priest's Warning
  - A. Dotty claiming over-education, not wanting more schooling
  - B. Priest insisting on legal necessity and threatening "circumspect inquiries" if she does not attend
6. Dotty's Final Non-Committal Response
  - A. Politely concluding the conversation with a remark on the shelled walks
  - B. Leaving the priest without giving him any concrete information

### III. Colonel Keen's Response and Non-Prosecution

1. Absence of Charges or Investigation
  - A. Colonel Keen ensuring no official report is made of the stabbing
  - B. Investigator's puzzlement at Keen's passive stance
2. Investigator's Concern
  - A. Pointing out that the attack could have been fatal
  - B. Emphasizing that any of the eight wounds might have been mortal
  - C. Questioning Keen on why he insists the injuries are superficial
3. Keen's Dismissal of Danger
  - A. Claiming the wounds are just minor scratches
  - B. Suggesting that Dotty never intended to kill him, only to express her grievance
  - C. Arguing that a 90-pound girl with a short blade posed no real threat to a man of his build
4. Investigator's Doubts
  - A. Noting that Keen never tried to stop her during multiple stabs
  - B. Wondering why Keen tolerated the attack instead of defending himself
5. Keen's Perspective and Motive
  - A. Acknowledging Dotty's deep sense of being wronged
  - B. Keen admitting he could not "reach her" emotionally before
  - C. Expressing a hope that, by allowing her attempt, some understanding or future rapport might be possible
6. Rejection of Pursuit
  - A. Keen refusing to trace Dotty's whereabouts
  - B. Stating he won't attempt to bring her back or punish her
  - C. Hinting at indirect ways he might ensure her well-being (e.g., sending money) without

contacting her directly

#### IV. Off-Season Reality of the Island Town

1. Post-Labor Day Changes
  - A. Galveston's shift after summer ends
    - a. Tourists depart as summer finishes and children return to school
    - b. Pleasure piers, marine exhibits, corn-dog stands, and amusement booths close or open only on weekends
  - B. The Island's Two Moods
    - a. Eight months of quiet, serving locals, seamen, and a few retirees
    - b. Four months of bustling crowds during peak season
2. Remaining Life and Warmth
  - A. Despite closures, the beach and pleasant weather remain
    - a. At least a few dozen swimmers always in the surf
    - b. Fishermen on piers, now fewer but more dedicated
  - B. Presence of Retirees and Seamen
    - a. Old men fishing daily, living out their retirement by the water
    - b. Girls from clubs visiting in daytime
    - c. Seamen traveling from nearby ports for relaxation
3. Reduced but Not Lifeless Atmosphere
  - A. Not the carnival-like setting Dotty remembered
  - B. Still, steady social interaction with a smaller, more authentic crowd
  - C. Gradual adaptation to the more subdued rhythm of island life outside the high season

#### V. Enrollment and Absolution

1. Solving Immediate Challenges
  - A. Dotty enrolling in the parish high school under the alias "Dorothy Parisi"
    - a. No one surprised that the Parisis produce a teenage daughter out of nowhere
    - b. Dotty seamlessly fitting into a new identity
  - B. Receiving Absolution at Last
    - a. Returning to the confessional daily, as advised
    - b. The priest deciding to grant absolution despite Dotty's uncertainty about her contrition<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> In the sacrament of Confession, a priest cannot infallibly read the interior state of a penitent's soul. But he is obliged to determine, to the best of his pastoral judgment, whether the individual has at least imperfect contrition (*attrition*)—a sorrow for sin motivated by fear of punishment or the ugliness of sin itself rather than pure love of God. While a penitent may be uncertain of his own contrition, the priest, guided by moral theology and pastoral experience, can help the penitent recognize and articulate genuine repentance. If the

2. Priest's Reflection on Judgment
  - A. Emphasizing the eternal significance of confessional decisions
    - a. Suggesting that what happens in confessional outweighs national legislative actions
  - B. Priest Acknowledging Risk
    - a. "Pledging" for Dotty's soul, taking a personal spiritual risk
    - b. Trusting God's guidance in granting absolution
3. Dotty's Promise and the Priest's Warning
  - A. Priest requesting Dotty refrain from further attempts on anyone's life
  - B. Dotty agreeing to try her best
  - C. Priest concluding with the words of absolution: "*Ego te absolvo*"

## VI. Integration into the Island Community

1. Popularity in School and Social Circles
  - A. Dotty accepted among the most popular students: Hugh McDonald, Betsy Mish, Felicien Cassell, Miriam LeBlanc, Anthony Gunn, Victor Hambleton, Catherine Collins, and others
  - B. Hosting gatherings at the Parisis' place where friends study, drink coffee, and wine
    - a. Introducing classmates to casual wine drinking
2. Broadening Local Acquaintances
  - A. Frequenting multiple venues: Sea Serpent, Scarecrow, Red Pirate, Octopus Bar, Wooden Ship, Oyster House, Little Mexico, Red Snapper Drive-in Emporium, Hop Hut
  - B. Accepted even in rougher spots (the "Smelly Goat," the "Snake Pit," the "Bloody Bucket") despite her youth
    - a. Selling crab meat for two old, shoeless derelict crabbers who are too disreputable to enter certain places themselves
3. Cultural and Musical Ambitions
  - A. Learning Galveston-style piano from local musicians: Jeannie at the Hop Hut, others at the Jamaica Inn, Balalaika, Little Oyster, French Casino, Beach Comber, Jungle Club
  - B. Aspiring to become the foremost Galveston-style piano player
    - a. Rapid improvement and recognition over time
4. Becoming a Known Figure
  - A. Called the "Mayor of Tremont Avenue"<sup>80</sup> by several dozen people, signifying acceptance

priest judges that the penitent at least manifests a resolve to turn away from sin, even if not fully grasping his own contrition, he may administer absolution. If not, the priest may withhold absolution until the penitent more clearly acknowledges and expresses contrition. For further discussion, see *Code of Canon Law*, can. 980; and Dominic M. Prümmer, *Handbook of Moral Theology*, trans. Gerald W. Shelton (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1957), pp. 246–250.

<sup>80</sup>23rd Street was a central thoroughfare in post-war Galveston's commercial and social life, connecting the bustling downtown core—anchored by The Strand's shops and businesses—to the residential neighborhoods and the Seawall area. Along Tremont were hotels, restaurants, movie theaters, and other small enterprises.

- and influence
- B. Excelling academically with apparent ease, rapidly absorbing languages (French, Latin, Italian) and local history
    - a. Understanding the island's role as a landfall and studying its past storms and legendary figures<sup>81</sup>
  - 5. Renewed Spiritual Bargain
    - A. Making a second pledge with God similar to the first: offering near-perfection in exchange for protection of herself and her new family, the Parisis
    - B. Unsure whether God had honored her first bargain, still hoping this new arrangement brings stability
  - 6. Economic and Social Benefits to the Parisis
    - A. Dotty's presence drawing more customers to their bar and coffee shop
    - B. Rumors of financial support, possibly from Colonel Keen, though Dotty remains unaware
  - 7. Seasonal Changes and Local Personalities
    - A. Summer brings golden crowds; Dotty and friends becoming main attractions along the beach
    - B. Introduction of various individuals who frequent the Parisis:
      - a. Claud Armande, the sidewalk painter
      - b. Kitty Kark, Arthur Braden, Cora English, Karl Zaleski, medical students debating atheism and liberalism<sup>82</sup>
      - c. Estelle Beausoleil
      - d. Finnegan,<sup>83</sup> a legendary figure in his own lifetime
      - e. Selma Steichert, an old acquaintance who once paddled Dotty, returning to the scene

<sup>81</sup> Mentions Esteban as one of these historical figures, the subject of an unpublished Lafferty novel. Estevanico, or Esteban the Moor, was an enslaved Moroccan Berber who, as part of the ill-fated Narváez expedition, arrived near what is now Galveston Island in 1528. After a harrowing journey across the Gulf of Mexico and a subsequent shipwreck, Esteban and a handful of other survivors—most notably Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca—lived for years among Indigenous peoples, moving through vast regions of present-day Texas and beyond. Estevanico's linguistic abilities, adaptability, and cultural mediation skills proved essential to survival.

<sup>82</sup> University of Texas Medical Branch, founded in 1891. See *University of Texas Medical Branch: A Seventy-Five Year History*, ed. Chester R. Burns (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966).

<sup>83</sup> Argo mythos.



## Chapter 9

### Overview

Dotty devises a playful “menu” for selling small affectionate gestures at the Parisis’ establishment, stirring a philosophical debate about moral boundaries. When a newcomer named Joe Smith provokes Karl Zaleski, a sudden brawl leaves Karl with a broken nose. Later, the local beach cop, Mossback McCarty, entertains everyone with a fanciful murder tale that highlights his penchant for tall stories. On another evening, Karl and others engage Dotty in deeper arguments about faith, morality, and logic, with Dotty defending her belief that there is more to life than pure materialism. She shares a sonnet she has written, only to face mockery from the group’s cynical poets.

### Summary

Dotty begins pours a glass of muscatel for a man who calls himself Joe Smith. He orders “a glass of muscatel and a kiss,” prompting Dotty to charge him thirty cents for the wine and one dollar for the kiss, returning three dollars and seventy cents out of his five. Joe questions the pricing, and Dotty clarifies the “kiss” cost, leading them to create a handwritten price list, labeled “Dotty Specials,” for affectionate items such as rubbing noses, small kisses, big kisses, squeezes, and bear hugs. Joe reveals



he is known as *Il Arlecchino* in Rome, Georgia and *Il Bouffon* in Paris, Texas, though he claims his real name is Joe Smith.

Karl Zaleski, present during this exchange, remarks that Dotty remains virtuous yet sells parts of her affection. He insists there “are no lines,” only merging zones of behavior. Annoyed by Karl’s stance, Joe delivers a quick hook punch to Karl’s face, knocking him out. Dotty chides Joe for using excessive force, and Joe replies that he wants Dotty to realize eventually “there aren’t any lines,” predicting he will return in two years to see if she has changed her mind.

Moments later, Tommy Katt and Mossback McCarty, the local beach policemen, arrive. Tommy and Mossback routinely appear whenever fights break out along the beach. They revive Karl, whose nose they believe is broken, and Tommy escorts him home, leaving Mossback to rest. Mossback then recounts a bizarre story about an ashen-blond woman who reported a murder on Eye One Half Street before she herself was later found to be the victim. During his elaborate story, he mentions suspicious signs—such as a neon letter going out at Bragg’s Drug Store and the aroma of Gallagher’s Rich Dark pipe tobacco—but he concludes that he had never solved the mystery. With a wry confession, Mossback admits he was never truly a homicide captain, only a longtime foot cop who enjoys inventing such tales.

On another evening—possibly some time later—Karl, whose nose has healed crookedly, restarts a philosophical argument about logic and materialism. He insists that once people accept the world “as it is,” they must discard religion and morality. Dotty counters that Karl sees only the world’s material aspect, while she sees additional dimensions, likening Karl’s stance to color-blindness. Others in the group, including Kitty Kark and Cora English, mock Dotty, predicting she will abandon her beliefs the moment she loses her virtue. Dotty rebuffs them, asserting that any loss of faith usually follows a moral failing rather than the other way around.

Spurred by these debates, Dotty composes a sonnet that celebrates her fearless delight in being alive and her conviction that the world is more than material. She reads lines such as “I am at home as much as one can be / Who knows the World a symbol and a toy.” Arthur Braden and the group respond with scorn, questioning her unfinished phrase “through the something dark” and criticizing her rhyme scheme as “impure.” They compare it unfavorably to their own experimental poetry, full of jarring images and random phrases. Dotty defends her sonnet, humorously dismissing their abstract verse as inferior to “things on the walls of mens’ rooms.”

(Arthur Braden), (Betsy Mish), (Bragg’s Drug Store), (Cora English), (Darwin), (Dotty), (Estelle Beausoleil), (Eye One Half Street), (Felix Cassel), (Freud), (Gallagher’s Rich Dark), (*Il Arlecchino*), (*Il Bouffon*), (Jeffries), (Joe Smith), (Karl Zaleski), (Kitty Kark), (Marx), (Mossback McCarty), (Nicki Parisi),

(Paris, Texas), (Petrarch), (Rome, Georgia), (Selma Steichert), (Sherman J. Wintergarden the Third), (Smelly Goat), (Snake Pit), (Tommy Katt)

**Dotty:** In the novel's ninth chapter, a man requests, "a glass of muscatel and a kiss, please, young lady," and Dotty complies, returning \$3.70 from his five-dollar bill. When he questions the charge, she calmly states, "The kiss was a dollar. You ordered it. Didn't you expect to pay for it?" and remarks, "I am not anything. I am Dotty. I try to fill all reasonable orders." After he volunteers to create a price list on a glossy piece of cardboard, Dotty names her services as "Dotty Specials" and sets incremental prices: "Rub noses five cents," "Little kiss fifty cents," "Big kiss one dollar," "Squeeze, a quarter," "Bear Hug, a dollar," "Hold Dotty on lap, fifty cents," "Sit on Dotty's lap, a dollar a minute," adding a weight surtax for heavier customers. She insists on "No free samples" and warns not to order items not listed. When Karl Zaleski comments on her virtue and nose-rubbing, Dotty cuts him off: "I will lose no virtue for a little nose-rubbing," and citing the posted rules, "The line is drawn with the cautionary phrase, 'Do not order anything not on the menu.'"

Observing a confrontation between Joe Smith and Karl, Dotty critiques impulsive violence: "You can't hit people just because they say things that aren't true," and questions Joe's actions with, "And I was beginning to like you." Engaging in intellectual debate with Karl and others, she defends logic and faith, asserting that if everyone were logical, no arguments would be needed, yet true disagreement arises among logical minds who start from different assumptions. "You conceive [the world] as wholly material," she tells Karl, "but its materialism is only one of the many things it is." She likens spiritual perception to color perception: "To the totally color-blind, the spectrum is a superstition." Addressing Cora's claim that Dotty alone sees beyond materialism, she objects that it is a matter of capacity and that "your habit of hunting in packs" makes the color-blind seem numerous. Kitty's insinuations about Dotty's eventual loss of faith provoke her to clarify that faith is not lost honestly but through vicious acts: "No person ever lost his faith without first acting viciously against it."

When Arthur criticizes a line in her sonnet, Dotty calls him "a quibbler" and notes a poem is never truly finished: "Petrarch took thirteen years to polish one sonnet." She explains her form as "Irish and Italian as I have become" and proudly admits, "Of course I'm bragging because I'm alive." Confronted with Arthur and Cora's poetry, Dotty dismisses their efforts as inferior to men's-room scrawls, justifying her knowledge by simply stating, "I clean up." Throughout this chapter, Dotty's words and small actions—serving wine, handing out kisses for a fee, establishing humorous rules, debating logic and faith, challenging poetic standards, and critiquing others' work—serve to illustrate her confident, independent personality and her distinctive worldview.

## I. The "Dotty Specials" Experiment

1. A Peculiar Order at the Parisis'
  - A. A customer requests "a glass of muscatel and a kiss" from Dotty
  - B. Dotty provides the wine, a kiss, and the correct change while charging for both items

2. Establishing a Rate Card
  - A. Customer questions the pricing, especially the one-dollar kiss
  - B. Dotty insists on fair compensation for the requested service
  - C. Collaborating with the customer (a commercial artist) to create a “Dotty Specials” price list on a piece of cardboard
3. The Menu of Affectionate Services
  - A. Listing services:
    - Rub noses: 5 cents
    - Little kiss: 50 cents
    - Big kiss: 1 dollar
    - Squeeze: 25 cents
    - Bear hug: 1 dollar
    - Holding Dotty on lap: 50 cents
    - Sitting on Dotty’s lap: 1 dollar per minute, with a surtax for very heavy individuals
  - B. No free samples, and no requests not on the menu allowed
4. Introducing the Artist (Joe Smith)
  - A. He claims various nicknames from “Rome” and “Paris,” actually Rome, Georgia and Paris, Texas
  - B. Eventually reveals his ordinary name: Joe Smith
  - C. Discussion with Karl Zaleski, who is present and makes a cynical remark about virtue being commodified
5. Philosophical Quips and Conflict
  - A. Karl’s mention of *tertiary amatory regions* and a gradual blurring of moral lines
  - B. Joe Smith’s dislike of Karl’s stance, escalates into a physical confrontation
  - C. Joe unexpectedly delivers a powerful hook to Karl, knocking him unconscious
6. Aftermath of the Punch
  - A. Dotty concerned about the unnecessary force used
  - B. Joe Smith’s cynicism: he knows lines don’t exist, all is relative
  - C. His promise to return in two years to see if Dotty has changed her outlook
  - D. Joe leaves for the time being

## II. After the Fight: Police and Crowd Reactions

1. Arrival of Tommy Katt and Mossback McCarty
  - A. The two beach cops appear promptly whenever someone is knocked out
  - B. Assessing Karl’s condition: a bloody and possibly broken nose
2. Reviving Karl
  - A. Standing him upright and shaking him awake
  - B. Karl regains consciousness, albeit with a crooked, broken nose
3. Spectators and Professional Interest
  - A. Curiosity seekers enter to find out what happened

- B. Kitty, Arthur, Cora, and some medical students observe Karl's injury with interest
- C. Comparison made to staged fights at the "Smelly Goat" to draw crowds
- 4. Removing Karl and Casual Conversation
  - A. Tommy Katt takes Karl home to tend to his injury
  - B. Mossback McCarty remains, tired from his nightly foot patrol
  - C. Mossback reminisces about past experiences, implying he once held higher rank
- 5. Gathering Audience and Anticipation
  - A. Mossback's mention of past "puzzling murders" piques interest
  - B. Listeners expect an embellished, entertaining story to follow

### III. Mossback McCarty's Murder Story

1. The Strange Woman's Report
  - A. An ashen blonde with dark eyes reports a murder on Eye One Half Street<sup>84</sup>
  - B. She refuses to give her name, claiming it is unimportant, and vanishes mysteriously
  - C. Mossback and two underlings investigate the given address
2. First Investigation: No Body Found
  - A. Finding no victim at the reported location
  - B. Returning to the station, annoyed and puzzled
  - C. Mossback notes an odd aroma in the street earlier, Gallagher's Rich Dark<sup>85</sup> (a pipe tobacco), which may be important
3. Second and Third Reports of the Murder
  - A. A nervous little man reports the same murder at the same address
  - B. Mossback, skeptical, locks him in the drunk tank rather than investigate
  - C. A patrolman (Jeffries) then calls, insisting there is indeed a murdered woman at that address now
  - D. Returning to the scene, they finally find a dead woman — the same ashen blonde who had reported her own murder earlier
4. Attempting to Solve the Mystery
  - A. Mossback gathers suspects, including pipe smokers and the drug store owner (due to a neon sign malfunction clue)
  - B. Vows to identify the killer within five minutes or resign his commission
5. The Inexplicable Conclusion
  - A. Mossback failing to determine the murderer
  - B. Admitting the "little shrimp" witness is the police commissioner who demands his

<sup>84</sup> Half-streets were created in Galveston to accommodate growing residential needs, allowing for additional housing lots without radically altering the existing block structure.

<sup>85</sup> In *The Sign of Four* (1890), Sherlock Holmes remarks that he has prepared a monograph identifying the ash of 140 different varieties of pipe, cigar, and cigarette tobacco—a skill that often aids his investigations.

- resignation
    - C. Confessing that he never solved the case
  - 6. Revealing the Truth About Mossback
    - A. Explaining that Mossback was never a homicide captain or anything more than a foot cop
    - B. Known for coming in every night to tell a different, fanciful story
    - C. The group's amused acceptance of Mossback's tall tales

#### IV. Intellectual Debates and Literary Critique

1. Another Gathering of the Same (or Similar) Crowd
  - A. Time is ambiguous; could be the same night or a year later
  - B. Similar personalities reappear, including Karl Zaleski, Kitty Kark, Cora English, Arthur Braden, Estelle Beausoleil, and presumably Dotty, engaging in intense discussion
2. Karl's Dialectic and Dotty's Logic
  - A. Karl asserting if people were logical, all truths would be self-evident
  - B. Dotty arguing that only logical minds can truly disagree; the illogical accept contradictions without conflict
  - C. Karl's stance: Accept the world as it is (materialistic, dialectic) and all superstition fades; morality and tradition are childish cloaks to discard<sup>86</sup>
  - D. Masters of suspicion: Darwin, Marx, Freud.
3. Dotty's Counterpoint on Reality
  - A. Dotty counters that the world is not purely material; materialism is only one aspect
  - B. Compares spiritual perception to color-blindness: those who cannot see certain aspects claim they do not exist<sup>87</sup>
4. Predictions and Threats to Faith
  - A. Kitty Kark suggests Dotty's faith will fail once she performs a "natural act" (loses virtue) and then the scales will fall, validating their worldview
  - B. Dotty retorts that losing faith in good faith is impossible; it happens only after a vicious act against it, resulting in blindness rather than enlightenment
5. Dotty's Sonnet and Literary Tastes
  - A. Dotty presents a sonnet she wrote<sup>88</sup>
  - B. The circle criticizes it relentlessly: Arthur Braden objects to a line not yet polished ("through the something dark")
    - Kitty Kark resents the implication of a besmirched soul
    - Karl Zaleski critiques the rhyme scheme as bastardized, neither purely Italian nor English

<sup>86</sup> Marx's dialectic and his view of religion as the opium of the masses.

<sup>87</sup> E.I. Watkin, *The Bow in the Clouds: An Essay Towards the Integration of Experience* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931).

<sup>88</sup> Dotty's sonnet demonstrates a sacramental worldview. Karl overlooks that the Italian *volta* breaks on how he and Kitty differ from Dotty; he is too busy focusing on the rhyme scheme.

6. Alternative Poetic Styles of the Group
  - A. Karl writes coarse, bizarre, anti-angel poems
  - B. Arthur uses crude language, worse than restroom graffiti
  - C. Cora offers abstract, surreal lines with no apparent logic or structure
  - D. All of them admire experimental nonsense while shredding Dotty's more structured sonnet<sup>89</sup>
7. Dotty's Resilient Perspective
  - A. Despite scorn, Dotty stands by her worldview
  - B. No consensus reached, the evening or year ending on a note of entrenched differences between Dotty's balanced stance and their chaotic philosophies

<sup>89</sup> "Blessed be all metrical rules that forbid automatic responses, force us to have second thoughts, free us from the fetters of Self." W. H. Auden.



THE SOUTH'S FAMOUS SEAFOOD HEADQUARTERS. GALVESTON, TEXAS

matchsets  
C-568

## Chapter 10

### Overview

Dotty continues living with the Parisis on the Island, balancing her studies, social life, and personal convictions. While she now performs piano at the Red Room under the stage name “Dorothy Paris,” she grapples with mild embarrassment over her foster family’s reputation and irregular church attendance. She mingles with classmates who spend their days on the beach and their nights dancing, forming a lively circle of friends that includes Betsy Mish, Hugh McDonald, and others. Dotty also receives a letter from her mother, Mary Theresa, who urges her to embrace a “mature faith” and return home, an offer Dotty refuses. Toward the end, Dotty senses a sudden, unexplained fear that someone ominous may have passed by in the street, leaving her unsettled.

### Summary

Mary Parisi asks Dotty the time, and Dotty tells her it is four o’clock in the morning. Mary Parisi offers to send away the “bunch of nuts” if they are a bad influence on Dotty, but Dotty replies that she must learn to stand against the world, believing that only she herself can truly harm her own character. Mary Parisi then asks if Dotty is ashamed of them; Dotty admits only slight embarrassment, partly because many of her schoolmates’ parents disapprove of the Parisis and note that they do not attend church. Mary Parisi offers to resume going to church and suggests that her

husband, Nicki Parisi, might also go if Dotty asked, though Mary points out that Nicki has not attended for years.

The novel describes the City on the Island as partially beautiful—particularly the Beach, the Boulevard, and the fine houses—but also containing large numbers of unpainted, dilapidated structures and poverty-stricken neighborhoods. Dotty often visits the Mexican families who shop at the Parisi grocery store and is friendly with one elderly African-American couple living on a dirt floor that was deposited in their house by a tidal wave half a century ago. The old man repeatedly insists he will remove the dirt “next week,” though many decades have passed since the wave.

A new captain takes over the sightseeing boat, ending Dotty’s tradition of riding for free. Dotty then spends time with her school friends—Betsy Mish, Hugh McDonald, Felix Cassell, Miriam LeBlanc, Victor Hambleton, and Catherine Collins—most of whom have recently graduated. They rise early to swim at the beach, enjoy elaborate meals, and drive to West Beach for solitude or East Beach to mingle with wealthy tourists. Dotty has money from her various odd jobs, which she works at unusual hours. In the evenings, they dress up, dance, and listen to bands at the local venues, including Dotty’s piano performances at the Red Room. During this carefree summer, Hugh McDonald falls deeply in love with Dotty, becoming tongue-tied around her and struggling with jealousy over the possibility she might choose someone else.

Meanwhile, Betsy Mish grows distraught, worrying she could be pregnant and planning seven novenas for divine intervention. Dotty brings Betsy to Mary Parisi for an informal examination. Mary Parisi declares Betsy is not pregnant and, believing Betsy’s troubles stem from poor guidance, gives her a painful spanking intended to shock her out of her obsessive worries. Although Betsy remains too shy to visit the Parisis often afterward, she abandons her vow-making and returns to calmer behavior.

Mary Parisi notes that Dotty’s circle of intellectual “nuts” still frequent their place, including those who openly dismiss faith. Dotty’s mother from afar, Mary Theresa, sends a letter lauding the “new mature faith” she has found with her second husband, urging Dotty to return and live with them in a pristine, overly sanitized environment. Dotty refuses, reflecting that she only bathes once or twice a week and does not share her mother’s sense of constant uncleanness. Finally, Dotty discusses music with Jeannie, referencing “goat notes” from old pagan traditions that persist in modern melodies. One day, Dotty feels a sudden internal jolt as though someone ominous passes by on the street; she runs out to see who it is, but nobody is there, leaving her frightened and confused.

(Arcadia), (Beach), (Betsy Mish), (Boulevard), (Catherine Collins), (City on the Island), (Dotty), (Dorothy Paris), (Felix Cassell), (Fort), (Goat Song), (High Middle Ages), (Hugh McDonald), (Immaculate Conception), (Jeannie), (Langue D’Oc), (Mary Parisi), (Mary Theresa), (Miriam LeBlanc), (Nicki Parisi), (Pan), (Provence), (Red Room), (Sacred Heart), (Sea Wall), (St. Anthony), (St. Joseph), (St. Jude), (Tidal Wave), (Victor Hambleton)



**Dotty:** In this chapter, when Mary Parisi asks the time—“What time is it, Dotty?”—Dotty answers matter-of-factly, “Four.” Mary Parisi expresses doubt about Dotty’s friends, calling them “nuts,” and suggests chasing them away because they are poor spenders and possibly bad influences. Dotty defends them, saying, “They are the world. If I cannot stand against them I cannot stand against anyone,” and emphasizes that nothing can hurt her but herself. Asked if she is ashamed of them, Dotty replies, “A little bit. Not very much,” leading to a discussion involving her stage name and church attendance. Mary Parisi mentions she would return to the sacraments for Nicki, and Dotty teases Mary’s use of the word “nuts” as antediluvian, explaining its varied meanings and mocking the outdated slang.

Regarding the city, Dotty’s familiarity with its diverse population is noted. She knows many Mexicans from school and their trade at the Parisi grocery, feels an affinity for them due to her Latin adoption, and is acquainted with Black families too. She questions an elderly couple about their dirt-floor home, learning that a tidal wave left soil over the wooden flooring. Dotty is distressed that a new captain on the sightseeing boat no longer lets anyone ride free, remembering how she once gave tour spiels over the loudspeaker.

During summer activities with her friends, including time on the beach and attending dances in a large ballroom, Dotty hears Victor Hambledon explain their pursuits. Their gatherings are energetic, and Dotty enjoys them. Hugh McDonald’s nervous infatuation with Dotty emerges; she comforts him warmly, “Look, Hugh boy, this is me, Dotty,” assuring him of friendship and even offering a goodnight kiss to ease his unease. When Betsy Mish is upset, Dotty brings her to Mary Parisi for examination, after which Mary spansks Betsy.

In philosophical debates with Karl Zaleski and others, Dotty questions their beliefs and social methods. As the group’s dynamics shift near summer’s end, Cora English’s distress is also noted. A letter arrives from Dotty’s mother, Mary Theresa, asking Dotty to return home. Dotty’s answer is firm: “I will just be damned if I do.”

She also discusses music with Jeannie at some point, likely reflecting on their shared interests. Late in the chapter, Dotty experiences a fearful jolt after seeing someone. She rushes to find Mary Parisi, but when they look, no one is there.

Throughout the chapter, Dotty asserts independence, questions language and culture, comforts friends, defies family requests, and remains unshaken in her resolve.

## I. Early Morning at the Parisis’

1. Late Gathering
  - A. Mary Parisi noting that it is four o’clock in the morning
  - B. Dotty acknowledging the late hour, as though it is routine
2. Concern Over Dotty’s Associates
  - A. Mary Parisi offering to send away the “bunch of nuts” if Dotty wishes
    - a. Worried that they may not be a good influence on Dotty

- b. Also noting they are poor spenders, so no financial loss
  - B. Dotty refusing, insisting that they represent “the world” she must stand against
    - a. Belief that only Dotty can harm herself, not external influences
- 3. Dotty’s Partial Shame and Name Usage
  - A. Mary Parisi asking if Dotty is ashamed of them
    - a. Dotty admitting a slight shame
  - B. Mary remarking on Dotty’s stage name “Dorothy Paris” at the Red Room
    - a. Dotty citing a “diminished ego,” calling it a stage name
    - b. The Red Room’s environment: Dotty as a piano performer
- 4. Religious Distance and Social Judgments
  - A. Dotty ashamed partly because schoolmates’ parents look down on Parisis
  - B. Mary Parisi’s rare church attendance criticized
    - a. Mary claims to have gone at Christmas (unclear which year), recalling past Easter Duty
    - b. Recognizing that Nicki has not attended for years C. Mary promising to return to the sacraments if that is the issue
    - c. Suggesting Nicki might too, out of love for Dotty
- 5. Attitudes Toward Judgment and Tolerance
  - A. Mary noting that “fine flocks” bad-mouth them, while the Parisis bad-mouth no one
  - B. Dotty affirming that she can see the difference

## II. The Contrasts of the Island City

- 1. A Tale of Two Settings
  - A. The City’s Beautiful Facades
    - a. The Beach, the Boulevard, and the architectural line between sea and sky
    - b. Many fine, foliage-buried homes, immaculate and colorful avenues
    - c. Palm trees not turning ratty, oleanders abundant and breathtaking vistas
  - B. The Gracious Fort Area
    - a. Low cliff with a fort, retired generals’ houses dignified and orderly
    - b. Warm, breezy climate suitable for outdoor living most of the year
    - c. Crowds four months a year, not vulgar, blending with the scenery
- 2. The Other Side of the City
  - A. Abundance of Unpainted Houses
    - a. Multi-story clapboard structures in disrepair, missing stairs, broken shutters nailed shut
    - b. Shack houses on stilts with children and dogs underneath in the exposed roots and ground shells
  - B. Poverty Among Negro and Mexican Blocks
    - a. Negro areas shy and hard to know, though Dotty befriends one ancient couple
    - b. Mexican areas appear temporary, with furniture outdoors, people sleeping and living outside for lack of fans or due to habit

3. Dotty's Social Integration
  - A. Affinity with Mexicans due to her adopted Latin identity and language skills
  - B. Visiting an elderly Black couple's home built over tidal mud from an old disaster
    - a. Promises to clean it out repeatedly postponed for fifty years since a wave deposited mud<sup>90</sup>

### III. Changes and Summer Social Life

1. The Sight-Seeing Boat Restriction
  - A. A new captain now runs the boat tours
  - B. Refusal to grant Dotty free rides, despite her past role giving the spiel
  - C. Dotty feeling this as a small but real cruelty in the evolving cityscape
2. Summer with Classmates
  - A. Dotty's circle: Betsy Mish, Hugh McDonald, Felix Cassell, Miriam LeBlanc, Victor Hambledon, Catherine Collins
    - a. These are from solid old Catholic families who look down on the Parisis
    - b. Dotty herself now considered part of their group, bridging worlds
3. A Regal Beach Existence
  - A. Freshly graduated (except Dotty who is slightly younger), they cherish one last free summer
  - B. Living like royalty on the beach
    - a. Early morning swims, lavish breakfasts at fancy places
    - b. Sometimes seeking remote West Beach for solitude
  - C. Well-stocked with ice chests, dressing tents, portable stoves
    - a. Enjoying crab, ham, cheese, pork, hamburgers, shish kebabs, corn dogs
  - D. Interspersing sunbathing, swimming, dancing, reading, and feasting under umbrellas
4. Rituals and Symbolisms
  - A. Victor Hambledon's anthropological humor<sup>91</sup>
    - a. Comparing their habits to Samoan scholars studying Texan beach culture
    - b. Identifying Crab Totem, Shrimp Totem, sun-worship, and dark glasses as part of "rites"
  - B. Late evenings dancing to music by Jeannie, George Dushane, or Dotty herself at local

<sup>90</sup> The 1900 Galveston Hurricane, which made landfall on September 8, 1900, remains the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history. The Category 4 storm brought wind speeds of up to 140 miles per hour and a storm surge estimated at over 15 feet, inundating Galveston Island and destroying nearly two-thirds of its structures. With death toll estimates ranging from 6,000 to 12,000, the catastrophe profoundly reshaped the island's infrastructure, economy, and population. In the storm's aftermath, Galveston undertook significant engineering feats, including raising the elevation of the city and constructing a concrete seawall to guard against future disasters. Throughout the Galveston chapters, readers will be reminded of the damage Galveston experienced.

<sup>91</sup> This alludes to Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1928).

clubs and the pleasure pier's ball room

#### IV. Hugh McDonald's Unrequited Love

1. Hugh's Change in Demeanor
  - A. Formerly witty, lively, and athletic, Hugh becomes a stuttering, trembling figure around Dotty
  - B. Loses his easy charm and humor, reduced to nervous awkwardness
2. Dotty's Understanding and Patience
  - A. Dotty fully aware Hugh is smitten with her
  - B. Attempts to reason with him, urging him not to be nervous
    - a. Emphasizing their friendship and shared camaraderie
    - b. Joking that everyone should have a "case" on her since she is a "cute kid"
3. Practical Perspective on Love
  - A. Dotty noting their youth and future uncertainties
  - B. Suggesting Hugh do nothing about his feelings for now, and if necessary, she would find him someone else in the future
  - C. Pointing out that unreciprocated love should not destroy him
4. Hugh's Inability to Relax
  - A. Continues to gasp, gulp, and tremble in Dotty's presence
  - B. Dotty's nightly ritual of kissing him goodnight to calm him
    - a. Still no return to his former personality

#### V. Betsy Mish's Crisis and Correction

1. Betsy's Withdrawal and Strange Behavior
  - A. Gradual distancing from the group
  - B. Engaging in seven novenas, fervent devotions, daily Mass at six-thirty with Dotty<sup>92</sup>
  - C. Burning dozens of candles, showing signs of deep anxiety
2. Confiding in Dotty
  - A. Betsy fearing an unwanted pregnancy
  - B. Considers making vows, even dedicating entire life to good works if "it doesn't

<sup>92</sup> A novena is a devotion consisting of nine consecutive days of prayer, often petitioning a particular saint's intercession or seeking guidance, healing, or some special grace from God. The tradition derives from the nine days that Mary and the Apostles spent in prayer between the Ascension of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:14). While not liturgically required, novenas exemplify the broader category of devotions, which are pious exercises—like the Rosary, the Stations of the Cross, or the Divine Mercy Chaplet—freely undertaken by the faithful to deepen their relationship with God, meditate on aspects of Christ's life, honor Mary and the saints, or reinforce virtuous living. Mass is the central liturgical act of the Church; devotions, by contrast, shape private spiritual practice.

happen”<sup>93</sup>

- C. Dotty, experienced in making vows, advises caution and escape clauses, ultimately proposing practical verification
- 3. Mary Parisi’s Examination and Verdict
  - A. Dotty takes Betsy to Mary for an “examination”
    - a. A humorous, non-medical method: checking fingernails, candle in eyes, half a lemon with pepper, feeling below ears while swallowing
  - B. Mary’s Diagnosis
    - a. Not pregnant, and likely never to be due to physique
    - b. Declares Betsy’s fear unfounded, restoring emotional balance
- 4. An Unexpected Disciplinary Action
  - A. Mary Parisi, offended by Betsy’s panic and lack of parental guidance, decides to spank Betsy
  - B. Betsy protests but is overruled; the “cure” is administered firmly
  - C. Result: Betsy emerges tearful but unburdened of her anxiety, vowing no more grand, desperate promises
- 5. Aftermath
  - A. Betsy returns to her normal self, relieved and more stable
  - B. Despite being “cured,” she remains shy of the Parisis, who know her secret and spanked her
  - C. Relations cool between Betsy and Dotty’s foster family, though Betsy continues her life without further such crises

## VI. Renewed Philosophical Assaults and a Letter from Mary Theresa

- 1. The Nuts’ Continued Pressure
  - A. Karl Zaleski, Kitty Kark, Cora English, Arthur Braden, and others pressing Dotty again
  - B. Reasserting their worldview: materialism, dialectic, and the “gentle exclusion” of believers
  - C. Claiming that believers never truly rise, that faith is incompatible with high achievement
  - D. Insisting that history is on their side and that all great men belong to the “party of Lucifer” rather than of the archangel Michael<sup>94</sup>

<sup>93</sup> The term “nun” technically applies to women who have taken solemn vows and live in a cloistered, contemplative setting—often in a monastery—dedicating their lives primarily to prayer and penance. These nuns, members of orders such as the Poor Clares or the Carthusian nuns, adhere to a rule of enclosure and rarely leave their convents. By contrast, “religious sisters” are often apostolic rather than cloistered; they take vows but engage more directly in ministries outside their communities, such as teaching, nursing, or social work, operating schools, hospitals, and other charitable institutions.

<sup>94</sup> Leo XIII’s prayer to St. Michael, composed after a vision reportedly revealed to him the devil’s increased activity against the Church, is a forceful plea for protection against supernatural evil. The prayer reads in part: “*Sancte Michael Archangele, defende nos in proelio; contra nequitiam et insidias diaboli esto praesidium. Imperet illi*

2. Dotty's Stalwart Defense
  - A. Dotty maintaining that materialism is only one aspect of reality
  - B. Using the analogy of color-blindness: those who cannot see spiritual truths declare them nonexistent
  - C. Reminding them that losing faith through immorality leads not to enlightenment but to blindness
  - D. Rejecting their claims that morality is merely superstition and that faith is weed-like
3. Cora English's Anguish
  - A. Cora admitting she cannot doubt God despite having repelled Him
  - B. Tormented by the string that still ties her to faith, longing for release
4. A Letter from Mary Theresa
  - A. Dotty receives a letter routed indirectly from her mother
  - B. Mary Theresa claiming to have found "the key of happiness" and a "new recension" of faith, more mature and complete
  - C. Urging Dotty to return, join her and Colonel Keen in their enlightened lifestyle
  - D. Admitting to feeling perpetually unclean despite perfect external cleanliness
5. Dotty's Response to the Letter
  - A. Dotty firmly refusing to rejoin her mother's new way of life
  - B. Mocking Mary Theresa's excessive bathing and still feeling dirty
  - C. Murmuring, "I will just be damned if I do," reaffirming her independence and disagreement with her mother's choices

## VII. Musical Metaphysics and the Whisper of Pan

1. The Duality of Sound and Spirit
  - A. Dotty explaining the nature of music as seemingly immaterial
  - B. Music considered the oldest art form, pre-dating the world, bridging the spiritual and earthly realms

*Deus, supplices deprecamur: tuque, Princeps militiae caelestis, Satanam aliosque spiritus malignos, qui ad perditionem animarum pervagantur in mundo, divina virtute in infernum detrude.*" ("Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray: and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.") Originally part of the Leonine Prayers said after Low Mass, it remains one of the most enduring Catholic prayers of spiritual warfare.

2. Celestial Chorus vs. Goat Song<sup>95</sup>
  - A. Contrasting the purity of the Celestial Chorus with the earthy “Goat Song” of Pan<sup>96</sup>
  - B. The “Goat Song” insinuating itself into human melodies across history, from early ballads to modern jazz and blues
3. Pan’s Escape and Cultural Infiltration
  - A. Ancient Pan breaking free from his valley prison
  - B. Spreading his “goat notes” among seamen, through Provence, and into the heart of Western Chivalry and romantic traditions
  - C. Contemporary music—jazz riffs, blue notes, even sugar ballads—carrying traces of Pan’s primal lust
4. Jeannie’s Role and Dotty’s Discovery
  - A. Jeannie’s playing revealing subtle “goat notes” beneath her tunes
  - B. Dotty humorously lamenting Pan’s escape, acknowledging his signature in the world’s music

### VIII. A Sudden Tremor of Fear

1. An Internal Jolt
  - A. Dotty experiencing a strange, internal shock like an earth tremor
  - B. Rushing to the front room, alarmed and unsettled
2. The Unknown Presence
  - A. Frantically asking who passed by in the street
  - B. Mary Parisi unaware of anyone, leaving Dotty pale and shaken
3. Unanswered Questions
  - A. Dotty fixated on identifying the passerby, though no one is visible
  - B. Heightening the chapter’s sense of looming mystery and foreboding

<sup>95</sup> In ancient literary sources such as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Book I, lines 689–712) and the “Homeric Hymn to Pan.” .

<sup>96</sup> Pan experienced a literary and cultural resurgence in England and beyond in the first half of the twentieth century. Writers, poets, and artists invoked him as a symbol of unspoiled nature, pagan vitality, and creative freedom, countering the perceived spiritual barrenness of industrial modernity. This fascination is evident in works by Arthur Machen (*The Great God Pan*, 1894), who recast Pan as a figure of supernatural mystery; J.M. Barrie, whose *Peter Pan* character bore echoes of the woodland spirit’s eternal youth; and D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster, who engaged with Pan’s imagery to explore themes of sexuality, vitality, and the tension between civilization and the wilderness.



## Chapter 11

### Overview

Dotty again senses a mysterious “jolt” that unsettles her, only to discover that Joe Smith—an itinerant artist who once broke Karl Zaleski’s nose—has returned to the Island. Joe immediately pursues Dotty’s time and affection, using subtle methods to press her toward a deeper involvement. Although Dotty resents the idea of surrendering to pure passion, she impulsively goes with Joe to the parish rectory to arrange wedding banns. Deeply conflicted, she later becomes furious at herself, runs along the deserted beach, and ultimately gives in to the “goat song” of her own desire. By the chapter’s end, her choice—an “ultimate choice”—points to the loss of a once-cherished innocence.

### Summary

Dotty initially feels a sudden internal shock and wonders who passed by on the street. Roughly an hour later, she experiences a lesser jolt when Joe Smith enters, though she realizes he is not likely



the cause of the first sensation. She greets Joe, who asks whether “Dotty Specials” are still in effect—recalling an old menu of paid kisses and hugs—but Dotty says she stopped offering them after they led to problematic imitations on Post Office Street.

Mary Parisi comes in and reminds Joe that he once broke Karl Zaleski’s nose, and Dotty remarks that he did so because Karl said true things Joe disliked. Joe soon leaves, promising to return in thirty minutes and intending to “monopolize” Dotty’s time for the next two weeks. After he departs, Mary Parisi asks Dotty why she might go out with Joe, recalling his parting words from two years prior; Dotty claims she is not certain she will go out with him.

Nevertheless, Joe begins spending all his available hours with Dotty or waiting for her at the Parisi’s shop. Where Karl once used the “Gentle Exclusion” technique, Joe uses persuasive tactics like the “Leading Understatement,” the “Insidious Assumption,” and “Nostalgic Recall.” Dotty notices that Joe appears around his mid-twenties or older, stands over six feet, has no socks, and travels with a pack holding painter’s tools, random gear, and books. From his conversation, it emerges he once studied anatomy in medical school but never finished.

He sets up three canvases to paint a “triptych” of Dotty: the first clothed, the second unclothed, and the third anatomically dissected. He explains how, while dismissed from medical school, he dissected a dying hobo out of curiosity—an unsettling revelation that Dotty accepts with guarded discomfort. After working an hour, Joe insists it is enough for the day; Dotty and he go to the beach, discussing his stories of frugal living in the mountains and his vow that he returned solely to be with her.

A few days later, Dotty asserts that she will only give herself to a man if they marry in the Rectory with proper banns read. Joe agrees on the spot, leading them to see the priest about scheduling the banns. To Dotty’s astonishment, the priest arranges the first reading for the next day, and the wedding is set for three weeks afterward. Dotty, troubled by the suddenness, complains to Joe that she never consented to marry him specifically; Joe merely replies that she can always challenge the banns or walk away.

Growing angrier at this forced assumption, Dotty storms downtown. They pass through one of the Clubs, interrupt a conversation about voting, then head to Beach Boulevard, where Dotty drinks at different places. At the Little Oyster, she hears George Dushane and a blonde singer produce music she calls “filthy,” comparing it to a lustful “goat song.” Joe joins in on trombone, but the intense atmosphere drives Dotty to flee by taxi, with Joe pursuing in another taxi.

She rushes along the Sea Wall and runs for miles on the sand, “burning up with anger and evil.” Joe finally tackles her to prevent her from hurting herself or running indefinitely. Dotty references Adam and Eve at “much the same time of day they did it,” musing on the reasons people succumb to sin. Joe insists he has never been “the rough one,” but admits he is scared of Dotty’s rage. In the end, Dotty chooses to yield, describing it as a “life or death choice,” implying that for “such little things souls are lost.”

(Adam and Eve), (Beach Boulevard), (Chatterbox Club), (Dotty), (Dotty Specials), (George Dushane), (Goat Song), (Jeannie), (Joe Smith), (Karl Zaleski), (Langue D'Oc), (Little Oyster), (Mary Parisi), (Pan), (Post Office Street), (Rectory), (Sea Wall), (Sugarland, Texas), (the priest)

**Dotty:** When the chapter begins, Dotty experiences a jolt, though not as severe as a previous one, and wonders who could have caused it. A man enters, and Dotty, not immediately recognizing him, says, "Is that little Dotty still around here?" and acknowledges, "Yes, I am still Dotty. I am on the verge of remembering you but I cannot quite bring it off." When the man asks if the "Dotty Specials" are still in effect, she informs him that they have long been discontinued, explaining, "It tended to lead to rough stuff...They were dynamite. You have no idea how hard it is to stop a man once you let him get started."

Mary Parisi comes in and Dotty recalls the man's past actions: "Oh, I remember you now," she says, "You are the one who broke Karl Zaleski's nose." She identifies him as Joe Smith, who once "lettered the Dotty Specials with a little brush." Joe suggests reviving the Specials, and Dotty jokes that inflation would force her to charge at least seven cents now. She states the Specials only lasted about a week and she earned about eleven dollars, with some money still owed. She admits having applied the five percent surtax on heavy customers "Several times."

When Joe Smith departs, Dotty asks repeatedly, "But where are you going?" As he promises to return in half an hour, Dotty insists she will be around for two weeks and wants to monopolize his time. Turning to Mary Parisi, Dotty says, "Mrs. Parisi, will you arrange it so that Dotty can be free?" Mary tells Dotty she can make her own arrangements. After Joe leaves, Mary expresses doubts about him, and Dotty retorts, "I did not say that I would go out with him." Later, when Mary suggests Dotty is preparing to go out and inquires if Dotty remembers what he said two years ago, Dotty answers, "No."

Dotty goes out with Joe Smith that day, and for the next two days as well. She notes that Joe uses various conversational techniques. When he sets up a triptych to draw her, Dotty asks, "Do the eerie students still come in at night?" After Joe mentions needing their help, Dotty confirms, "They still come in." When Joe says "We are wonderfully made," Dotty replies, "I have heard that we are."

Joe calls her "Dorotea mia" and doubts she remains a believer after two years. Dotty does not reply. He asks if she was left-handed before being retaught; Dotty says, "Yes." On the beach, when Joe speaks of living frugally, Dotty calculates, "That's over three cents a day," and asks if he could have cut down. When he says the only thing missing was "you," she responds, "What?" Dotty questions his timeline about wild grapes and inquires, "And where are the three masterpieces?" left with an art dealer. She notes he will need little money if he can live on a dollar a month.

When Joe persists in pursuing her, Dotty declares, "I will be had in only one way." Joe says he will fulfill any conditions. Dotty suggests going to the priest to have banns read for marriage. They go to the rectory, and Dotty sits silently, not speaking as Joe talks to the priest. Afterward, Dotty murmurs, "I did not say that I would marry you, Joe," clarifying that she never agreed to be "had" by him. She says she needs time to think, not sure if three weeks is enough.

Growing angry, Dotty tells Joe, “You are nothing special...If I were to fall into this it would mean that you and Karl and Kitty and all the others were right.” She calls herself “Just a damned animal!” and laments that she thought herself high. Entering a Club, she addresses a man, “Mister, are you listening to me?” and challenges him about his voting honesty. When told the vote was technical and about poultry, Dotty responds, “Oh,” and leaves.

She visits clubs along Beach Boulevard, having quick drinks. At the Little Oyster, Dotty finds George Dushane playing piano and orders, “Stop that right now!” Accusing him of playing “filthy music” that could damn him, she says, “It has hair on it,” meaning it is foul. She notes feeling hair rise where she didn’t know she had any. Touching the arm of the girl singing feels like touching a snake. Dotty then leaves in a taxi, gets out at the end of the Sea Wall, walks, and runs down the beach.

Joe Smith calls out, worried about her uproar; Dotty responds, “You aren't supposed to understand it. You are only incidental to it.” Joe says he’s never seen anyone so changeable, Dotty retorts, “I am not changeable. I will change only once.” Joe tackles her, and Dotty compares it to the Edenic fall, mentioning times of day and the Lord coming in the cool of the afternoon. She wonders why Adam and Eve did it, citing Curiosity and Passion. Joe claims Dotty has every choice. Dotty says he wouldn’t know what her choice means and vows he will be gone tomorrow one way or another. She refuses immediate resolution: “Not till later. Not till tomorrow.”

Finally, Dotty offers herself to Joe Smith.

## I. Renewed Inner Tremors and an Unexpected Guest

1. A Second Jolt of Unease
  - A. Dotty experiences another, milder internal shock about an hour after the first
  - B. She realizes she may have anticipated it, yet remains puzzled by its cause
2. A Familiar Stranger Enters
  - A. A man comes in, stirring Dotty’s curiosity
  - B. Dotty struggles to recall him, certain they’ve met before but unable to place him
  - C. The man inquires after “little Dotty” and the “Dotty Specials,” indicating a shared past event
3. The ‘Dotty Specials’ Revisited
  - A. Discussion of Dotty’s discontinued “Dotty Specials” (affectionate services for a fee) a. Ended due to rough behavior and parodies by Post Office Street girlsb. The originals now pale compared to wilder imitations
  - B. The man, revealed to have possibly low tastes, admits he dislikes pale imitations
  - C. Dotty counters his preferences, asserting his logic is off: low tastes wouldn’t truly benefit him
4. Identity and Memory
  - A. Mary Parisi arrives, recalling the man who broke Karl Zaleski’s nose
  - B. He corrects her: not for craziness, but for truths he didn’t want to acknowledge
  - C. Dotty remembers him now: Joe Smith, the man who once lettered the Dotty Specials menu

5. Proposals and Parting Words
  - A. Joe suggests reviving the Specials, Dotty refuses—too much dynamite to handle again
  - B. They reminisce over her brief entrepreneurial stint: one week, about eleven dollars earned, and unpaid hypothetical debts
  - C. Concluding that Joe Smith’s reappearance is not the source of Dotty’s mysterious jolt

## II. Hint of Future Entanglement

1. Joe’s Imminent Return and Plans
  - A. Joe announces he will return in half an hour
  - B. He intends to stay two weeks and monopolize Dotty’s time
  - C. Asks Mary for Dotty’s availability; Mary leaves it to Dotty’s discretion
2. Lingering Concern
  - A. After he leaves, Mary admits distrust of him
  - B. Urges Dotty to remember what Joe said two years before, anxious about what’s to come

## III. The Art of Influence and the Man from Pan’s Lineage

1. Persistent Courtship and Psychological Maneuvers
  - A. Dotty does not devote all her time to Joe, yet he spends all his free hours around her
  - B. He deploys various subtle psychological techniques unlike Karl’s direct “Gentle Exclusion”:
    - a. The “Leading Understatement”
    - b. The “Insidious Assumption”
    - c. The “Nostalgic Recall”
    - d. The “Immediacy of Experience Play”
  - C. These manipulations create a pervasive sense that Joe is constantly guiding Dotty’s thoughts and actions
2. Ambiguous Age, Identity, and Appearance
  - A. Joe’s age is hard to gauge: could be twenty-five or as old as thirty-five
  - B. His height and build are equally uncertain, but he is at least six feet tall, slim yet strong
  - C. He moves with a peculiar spring, a telltale sign of a “son of Pan” — a clue Dotty recognizes, suggesting he embodies a goatish, primal vitality
3. A Careless Poverty and a Traveling Artist’s Tools
  - A. Joe’s attire: a black T-sweater worn day and night, no socks, paint-stained pants
  - B. His pack is a miniature world: artist’s supplies, whisky, a gun, knives, pipes, rope, tools, oddities like a pantograph, a slide rule, and a coil of nylon rope
  - C. No spare clothes, further hinting at a rootless, self-sufficient existence
4. The Ten Books: A Desert Island Library
  - A. Dotty examines his ten books: linguistics, scripture in Latin and Greek, engineering

- handbooks, dictionaries, classics (Montaigne, Chaucer, Shakespeare), bawdy tales, Marx's *Das Kapital*, a poetry anthology
  - B. Joe's claim: the selection is accidental, shaped by lending, theft, and chance encounters
  - C. Their variety reflects Joe's eclectic, unpredictable intellect
- 5. Ambitious Art: The Triple Portrait of Dotty
  - A. Joe sets up three canvases for a triptych:
    - a. Dotty clothed
    - b. Dotty nude
    - c. Dotty anatomized, exposing organs and structure
  - B. He references the *Clothed and Naked Maja*, intending to surpass them by adding a visceral layer, combining physical and symbolic intimacy
- 6. Morbid Background: Unfinished Medical Training
  - A. Joe's confession: he dissected animals and one human hobo after being dismissed from medical school
  - B. He insists it was not murder, believing the hobo wouldn't have minded the dissection
  - C. Reveals Joe's detachment from conventional morality, testing Dotty's comfort and faith
- 7. A Left-Handed Heart, Nearly Centered
  - A. A brief anatomical aside about Dotty's left-handedness and heart position
  - B. A subtle moment of intimacy and control as Joe contemplates Dotty's inner being on the canvas and in her actual body

#### IV. Shifting Conditions and Testing Limits

1. A Leisurely Approach to Labor and Life
  - A. Joe's philosophy: never work more than an hour at a time
  - B. Early morning beach excursion after the initial art session
  - C. Indicates a carefree, nomadic worldview that impresses and unsettles Dotty
2. Tales of Frugality and Doubtful Feats
  - A. Joe claims to have survived three months on three dollars, living in "baby mountains"
  - B. Brags of catching minnows like peanuts, harvesting honey at the cost of stings, and painting three masterpieces
  - C. Dotty notices seasonal inconsistencies—his story has glaring holes, but she withholds overt criticism
3. Promises of Prosperity and Insidious Assumptions
  - A. Joe hints he expects money soon from a dealer selling his masterpieces to oil-rich buyers
  - B. He implies Dotty's involvement in his future lifestyle: "I could hardly ask you to live on so little"
  - C. This subtle push—an "Insidious Assumption"—pressures Dotty toward considering deeper entanglement

4. The Sole Acceptable Condition for Intimacy
  - A. On another day, Joe still pursues Dotty; she declares, “I will be had in only one way,” meaning matrimony
  - B. Joe agrees to any conditions, confident he can meet her terms
5. From Jest to Serious Intent: The Marriage Gambit
  - A. Dotty casually suggests heading to the priest for banns to be read for marriage
  - B. Both pretend to be joking, yet both walk to the rectory to continue the bluff
  - C. The priest knows them and speaks with Joe for half an hour, while Dotty remains silent and astonished
6. Commitment Arranged Without Consent
  - A. To Dotty’s shock, the first reading of the banns<sup>97</sup> will occur the next day
  - B. A wedding scheduled for three weeks from Monday, leaving Dotty stunned and in “complete wonderment of herself”
  - C. Dotty never explicitly agreed to marry Joe, yet events spiral as though her bluff has

## V. Descent into Anger, Doubt, and Primal Urges

1. Recoil from the Wedding Assumption
  - A. Outside the rectory, Dotty protests that she never agreed to marry Joe, only set conditions
  - B. Joe notes that she can still back out or disappear, leaving her free choice intact
  - C. Dotty feels manipulated, angry at the speed and audacity of Joe’s actions
2. Shattering Illusions of Higher Ideals
  - A. Dotty rails that Joe is “nothing special” and that losing her purity in this way proves the cynics (Karl, Kitty, and others) right
  - B. She calls herself “just a damned animal,” realizing her lofty self-image is collapsing
  - C. Joe tries to reassure her of his sincerity, but Dotty’s turmoil intensifies
3. Abandoning Rational Conversations
  - A. Dotty storms into a downtown club, confronts a man about his voting honesty, reveals her fiery, unbalanced mood
  - B. Returns to Beach Boulevard, drinking at various clubs, agitated with everyone and everything
  - C. Witnessing musicians playing “hairy” goat-like tunes, and a familiar dice girl seeming transformed—Dotty perceives animalistic lust and Pan’s influence everywhere
4. Fleeing the Goat Song and Inner Chaos
  - A. Dotty takes a taxi away, Joe follows in another
  - B. She heads to the remote end of the Sea Wall, running down miles of beach, fueled by

<sup>97</sup> The reading of the banns is the public announcement of a couple’s intention to marry, traditionally proclaimed on three successive Sundays, allowing objections to be raised before the wedding takes place.

- anger and a decision to finally “see what it is really like” — to give in to base instincts
- C. Joe catches her, tackles and restrains her, perplexed by her erupting fury
5. References to an Edenic Fall
    - A. Dotty’s cryptic remarks about “the same two people” at “the same time of day” — Adam and Eve’s sin in Eden
    - B. She wonders aloud why they did it, acknowledging curiosity and passion
    - C. Dotty frames her own impending choice as monumental: “a life or death choice — an ultimate choice right now”
  6. Fear and Uncertainty in Both Parties
    - A. Joe admits fear of Dotty, yet refuses to flee; he claims sincerity and no intent to harm
    - B. Dotty anticipates that tomorrow Joe will be gone, that no matter what happens, this threshold once crossed cannot be undone
    - C. The situation: Dotty surrenders her virtue not for love, but for the terrible need to know, and Joe as the son of Pan, a catalyst rather than a beloved
  7. A Forfeit of the Soul for a Trivial Cause<sup>98</sup>
    - A. Her decision, born of anger and despair, reduces a sacred matter to a mere testing of boundaries
    - B. “For such little things souls are lost” — Lafferty’s final comment underscores the tragedy of turning a momentary emotional storm into a spiritual catastrophe<sup>99</sup>

<sup>98</sup> A window into how Lafferty thinks about the City of Man: *Does a pig long remember the time before he was a pig? Does the slug remember? This is to be locked in a foul jail and told that there is no outside. By a new geometry there is an inside but no outside. Only a fool would think of an outside. Joyce was right. Good God! (to speak in the past tense), every empty-headed one of them had been right. Filth is the only diversion worthwhile. What is deceit without truth? What is treason without allegiance? What is to be said against the queers and hop-heads — can they be judged without a standard? By what right is the sadist denied satisfaction? Or the child molester his joy? Who shall abridge the freedom to own slaves? Why deny the racist the right to rule? What is subversion if we are all born subverted? What is murder but the action of matter on matter? What Heaven will avenge the killing of the unborn, since Heaven ended yesterday? What if the minister of the sects preach and recommend mortal sin as a standard? Why is it not as good a standard as any other? Is it possible to be in Hell and not know it? Are Earth and Hell of the same location, and the latter be entered with the end of belief? Yes, every last crybaby and whiner of them had been right. Damnation! The pinkos had been right, the spit-lickers, the tainted court justices and the senators. What is wrong with being tainted if the idea of the spotless no longer exists? What is wrong with being a spit-licker? Is spit not as good a food as any, if the bread of life is not?*

<sup>99</sup> “The only real sadness, the only real failure, the only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint.” Leon Bloy.



## Chapter 12

### Overview

Dotty's loss of faith leaves her convinced that the material world is all that remains, plunging her into despair. She calls off the planned marriage banns with Joe Smith and believes that "pig people" were correct all along, reducing her former ideals to illusions. Hurt and disillusioned, she drifts toward small-time scams, brushes with the law, and strained relationships with old friends like Hugh McDonald. Though Catherine Collins and others try to help, Dotty insists her soul has gone dark, and her existence becomes a lonely slog through cynicism. By the end, two years pass as Dotty remains in this bleak mindset.

### Summary

At the opening of Chapter XII, Dotty reflects that the "loss of Faith" has overtaken her completely. She observes that once a person commits a grave sin, the light goes out of the world, leaving only a purely material perspective. She declares that she has traded a spiritual kingdom for a base "mudhole," which causes her to question how she ended up so regretful.



Very early on Sunday morning, Dotty visits the priest to prevent him from reading the banns for her previously arranged wedding to Joe Smith. Distraught, she refuses to explain why she has changed her mind, only insisting that there will be no marriage. She further concludes that various thinkers and philosophies she once rejected—such as the Marxist, materialist, and cynical views—were correct about the world, while faith and spiritual ideals were illusions.

Increasingly, Dotty views existence as a “desert” of meaninglessness. Mary Parisi notices the change in Dotty’s demeanor and suggests staying with her. Dotty, however, demands a new arrangement. She learns that Joe Smith has written many hot checks to local businesses using Dotty’s reputation; on Sunday, she collects them, tears them up, and replaces them with her own IOUs or cash. Joe later returns to make restitution, claiming he never intended to flee with the money, but Dotty avoids him altogether.

Deciding to live on her own, Dotty moves from the Parisis’ place to a separate room so she can, in her words, bring men there if she wishes. She attempts working at disreputable clubs, including the “Smelly Goat,” and associates with ex-classmates like Arthur Braden and Karl Zaleski who have grown cynical. Together they try a con game, using Dotty as bait to lure a visitor named Wesley Fitzcannon. The plan fails when Dotty cannot convincingly scream; the victim reports them to Tommy Katt and Mossback McCarty, leading to Dotty’s brief jailing. Mary Parisi pays her bail, and Mossback McCarty threatens to watch Dotty closely, warning her that her downward path will only worsen.

Soon afterward, Catherine Collins visits, urging Dotty to confess and return to church. Dotty insists she has lost faith for good. She tries casual encounters with men but finds them disgusting, concluding she is not “fully emancipated” in the cynical sense. When Hugh McDonald finally locates her, she pretends to be a callous prostitute, then admits she only said so to hurt him. Hugh begs Dotty to restore herself, but she says her old beliefs were a fragile “bubble” that cannot be reassembled.

Gradually, many of Dotty’s “dupe” friends, as she calls them, drift away from her. She lives among “the free souls” those who disbelieve in anything spiritual and remarks that conversation in this “desert” can still be witty but remains colorless without true meaning. By the end of the chapter, Dotty acknowledges that two unhappy years pass in this state, with no end to her cynicism in sight.

(Angel-Face Hogan), (Arthur Braden), (Augustine), (Aquinas), (Balzac), (Bacon), (Calvin), (Carlyle), (Catherine Collins), (Christ), (Cora Carter), (Devil), (Finnegan), (Francis), (Freud), (Gibbon), (Gregory), (Hazel), (Hegel), (Hugh McDonald), (Joe Smith), (Joyce), (Karl Zaleski), (Kingsley), (Kitty Kark), (Lenin), (Little Dotty Nesbitt), (Macauley), (Marx), (Mary Parisi), (Mossback McCarty), (Nietzsche), (Petronius), (priest), (Puritans), (Roger), (Roosevelt), (Simon), (Symonds), (Tommy Katt), (Veronica), (Voltaire), (Wells), (Wesley Fitzcannon)

**Dotty:** Early in the chapter, Dotty laments her transformation: “I have traded a kingdom for a mudhole...I have made myself an animal...Have pigs regret after they have settled down to being pigs?” She visits Father before Mass on Sunday to cancel the banns and leaves without explanation. When Mary Parisi worries about her, Dotty responds, “What is worry since there is not even a promise of peace?” and admits she has lost her faith: “I have lost everything...I am as you see me...not even completed.”

Dotty investigates the hot checks Joe Smith passed under her implicit trust, discovers he wrote over a thousand dollars' worth, and tears them up. She replaces them with her own notes, some with cash, and resigns herself to a new life. She is sixteen, nearly seventeen, moves out of the Parisi's house, and considers bringing men to her room for income. She begins work at a place called the Smelly Goat and throws herself into labor.

Catherine Collins visits, and Dotty tells her, “I have lost my faith.” She explains that she lost it through pride and curiosity, calling the faithless “pig people” and acknowledging she's now one of them: “I call them the pig people, and now I am one of them.” Dotty notes that her previous position and her current disbelief are both logically sound. She says she no longer despises other sects or the middle-grounders, and warns Catherine to be careful not to lose what she still has: “I love you, even though I know there is no such thing.”

Dotty attempts a depraved life briefly—taking a couple of men—but finds it disgusting and stops. She reads extensively, including Freud and Marx, concluding they are “despairingly sound.” She sometimes leaves clever acquaintances behind to drink with “inarticulate lechers and punchies,” musing on simplicity.

Mary Parisi mentions Hugh McDonald, and Dotty admits she didn't tell Hugh where she is because he's too nice to face her current state of mind. Dotty tells Catherine she advised Hugh, “he could do better with you.” When Catherine presses her beliefs, Dotty retorts, “Stop ragging me.”

Dotty gets involved in a con game with Arthur and Karl, selecting a wealthy, amorous visitor to scam. When caught, Dotty fails at lying: “How could I possibly have given him such an impression?...I may have been indiscreet, but who could possibly have taken me for that kind of girl?” She is brought in by the police, and though Mary Parisi comes to bail her out, Dotty initially rejects help: “I know I didn't [send for you]. I don't need help from anyone.” But she soon apologizes: “You're the only one it hurts me to hurt.”

When Mossback warns her she'll look like a hag, Dotty lists women who do not: “How about Angel-Face Hogan? How about Cora Carter? And Little Dotty Nesbitt?” She confesses she once could tell if people were in Grace, but now she believes there is no such thing.

Hugh McDonald reappears and Dotty pretends not to recognize him: “Hello, mister. How did you know my name?” She teases him, pretending to be a prostitute: “Do you have money?...If you're broke, I'll let you go for free. I'm charitable tonight.” When Hugh's misery becomes clear, Dotty relents: “I have to melt when I see you so miserable...I guess I'm not fully emancipated yet.” Hugh says she's in bondage; Dotty responds, “I suspect so. But you are also.” She admits she thought she might be the one for him, but now realizes he will never be the one. Using a bubble analogy, Dotty describes her lost ideal: it was all a bubble, now burst and irrecoverable.

After Hugh leaves, Dotty remains alone in the desert of her current state, accompanied only by “free souls,” indicating that some time passes this way.

## I. A World with the Light Extinguished

1. Instantaneous Corruption of Perspective
  - A. The novel reaffirms a key principle: Faith is lost at once and with it goes the entire edifice of a meaningful spiritual world
  - B. Without Faith, humans become like gods, but petty, sorry gods — no longer children of light, but lords of a darkened realm
2. The Logical Tomb of Materialism
  - A. Everything now fits into a perfect system of logic, as if dirt is filling a coffin, entombing any spiritual dimension
  - B. Old spiritual luminosity is replaced by meaningless scientific explanations: sky color reduced to nitrogen molecule scattering<sup>100</sup>
  - C. The invisible world is gone, leaving only the immediate, practical, liberal, dialectical interpretations — words naming a dimmed, impoverished reality
3. From Sheen to Soot: The Loss of Transcendence
  - A. Once there was a “white sheen” between water and sky, now dismissed as a non-entity
  - B. Old thrill of transitioning between two worlds (visible and invisible) disappears
  - C. Replaced by a monotone existence: no spiritual grandeur, just matter and method, imposing a barren worldview
4. Succumbing to the Pig People’s World
  - A. Recognition that the materialists, cynics, and “pig people” had been right all along
  - B. Dotty now identifies herself as one of them, admitting a descent from a lost kingdom into a mudhole

## II. From a Kingdom to a Mudhole: Dotty’s First Actions Post-Faith

1. Self-Recognition of Decadence
  - A. Dotty confesses: “I have traded a kingdom for a mudhole.”
    - a. Acknowledges that she has become an animal, that flowery thoughts have no place in her new worldview
    - b. Wonders if regret will ever tire and if pigs ever regret their nature once they settle into it
2. Breaking off the Farce of Marriage
  - A. Early Sunday morning, Dotty instructs the priest not to read the banns
  - B. Admits it was all a bitter joke, providing no explanation and refusing to talk
  - C. Symbolic: Rejecting even the sham route to sanctification she toyed with earlier

<sup>100</sup> Call back to Dotty’s sonnet.

3. Confirming the Lower Order
  - A. All the “malformed,” “rooters,” and “clay-eaters” were right: there is nothing above the clay
  - B. The curse and curser vanish together with Faith. As belief fades, the serpent’s victory is confirmed in Dotty’s mind
4. Intellectual Upheaval and the Loss of Great Minds
  - A. Augustine wrong, Petronius right,<sup>101</sup> Aquinas wrong, Voltaire right,<sup>102</sup> Christ wrong, Calvin right, Francis wrong, Marx right<sup>103</sup>
  - B. A litany of revered saints and thinkers toppled, replaced by cynics, radicals, and

<sup>101</sup> For Augustine, unbridled passion compromised one’s moral freedom and jeopardized the proper love of God and neighbor, a theme he explored in works such as the *Confessions* (Book II, chaps. 1–2; Book VIII, chap. 5) and *The City of God* (Book XIV, chaps. 16–20). In contrast, the 1st-century Roman satirist Petronius, author of the *Satyricon*, depicted *luxuria* not as a spiritual peril but as a pervasive cultural phenomenon—a decadent celebration of appetites that revealed the moral hollowness and absurdities of Roman high society. While Augustine sought to reorder human desire through divine grace and moral discipline, Petronius portrayed a world reveling in excess, ridiculing the emptiness at its core rather than offering any path to reform. Thomas Aquinas, drawing heavily on Aristotle and integrating Christian doctrine, understood virtue as a habitual disposition ordered to the good and perfected by grace. In his *Summa Theologiae* (I–II, qq. 55–67), Aquinas presents the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude) and theological virtues (faith, hope, charity) as essential to achieving both natural and supernatural ends, ultimately guiding the soul toward union with God. By contrast, the Enlightenment thinker Voltaire approached virtue from a rational and humanistic standpoint. Skeptical of religious authority and metaphysics, Voltaire treated virtue as a product of reason, social obligation, and enlightened self-interest rather than divine infusion.

<sup>102</sup> John Calvin’s doctrine of total depravity, articulated in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Book II, chaps. 1–3), asserts that humanity’s nature is fundamentally corrupted by original sin, leaving no aspect of human life untainted and no one capable of meritorious good apart from God’s grace. Yet, in the Gospels, Christ’s own words seem to offer a counterpoint to any notion that humans are incapable of any good whatsoever. For example, Jesus observes: “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...” (Matthew 7:11, Douay-Rheims). This statement acknowledges human fallenness—“being evil”—while simultaneously conceding that people can perform naturally good deeds, such as caring for their offspring.

<sup>103</sup> Saint Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) rejected worldly wealth and material attachment as obstacles to loving God and neighbor. For Francis, material possessions threatened the soul’s freedom, and his life of voluntary poverty modeled an evangelical ideal that found fulfillment in divine dependence rather than earthly accumulation. By contrast, Karl Marx (1818–1883) viewed material conditions as the fundamental drivers of human history and societal structures. Hegel and Nietzsche were right, presumably because all is metaphysically immanent; More was wrong; Roosevelt was right about social engineering; Freud was right that rationality bottoms out in pre-rational drives and unconscious motivation; Lenin was right that the state is merely an ideological apparatus; etc. Joyce was right: In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Stephen Dedalus gradually discards his childhood Catholic faith, driven by intellectual awakening and disillusionment with the Church’s moral strictures and parochial authority. Initially devout, Stephen undergoes intense spiritual turmoil, particularly after the retreat sermons on hell and judgment at Belvedere College. While briefly contemplating a vocation to the priesthood, he ultimately rejects it, finding the Church’s

- Machiavellian operators
- C. A depressing thought: The world turns worse than Purgatory or even Hell, as hope and ultimate standards vanish
- 5. Asking if the Pig Remembers Former Grace
  - A. Dotty compares her state to being locked in a foul jail, told there is no outside
  - B. Every previously dismissed cynic was correct, making filth, deceit, and violation equally valid
  - C. She questions standards and morality: without Heaven or a higher law, all evils become permissible or at least indefinable
- 6. Despair at a World Without Standards
  - A. Murder becomes matter on matter, child molesters, racists, sadists all have no absolute restraint
  - B. Ministers preaching mortal sin—why not? No standard says otherwise
  - C. Considers Earth as possibly identical to Hell now that belief is gone

### III. Taking Practical Steps in a Godless World

1. Concluding that the Vile Were Right
  - A. Pinkos, spit-lickers, corrupted justices — all right in this new scheme
  - B. No difference between taint and purity if purity never existed
  - C. Dotty decides to move out from the Parisis, citing her current despondency and changed nature
2. Confrontation with Mary Parisi's Concern
  - A. Mary tries to dissuade Dotty from leaving, worried about her “good girl's heartbreak”
  - B. Dotty sarcastically dismisses worry, denies Mary's knowledge of her deed and loss of Faith
  - C. Mary sees the change clearly and asks if Dotty has lost her Faith; Dotty admits losing everything
3. Cleaning Up Joe Smith's Financial Fallout
  - A. Dotty discovers Joe Smith's hot checks: more than twenty, totaling over a thousand dollars, cashed on Dotty's reputation
  - B. She tears them up, replaces them with her own I.O.U.s or cash, covering about two hundred and fifty dollars
  - C. A practical demonstration: Dotty now manages scams and sins on a purely materialistic, responsibility-taking level
4. A Note on Joe Smith's Return
  - A. Within a week, Joe returns to pay back all he owes, having indeed expected money

demands on his conscience and imagination stifling. Embracing instead an aesthetic and intellectual path, Stephen comes to view religious orthodoxy as incompatible with artistic freedom.

- B. Mary Parisi straightens matters out; Dotty avoids Joe
- C. Joe had been sincere, but Dotty's fall was inevitable at that moment, and if not Joe, then another would have served the purpose

#### IV. Reconstructing Life in a Gutted World

1. A New Start in the Absence of Morality
  - A. Dotty is now sixteen, turning seventeen soon, having finished high school
  - B. She embraces her independence: moves out to live alone, no longer bound by the Parisis' constraints
  - C. Considers monetizing her fallen state by bringing men to her room for income, representing a further slide into pragmatic depravity
2. The Move to Her Own Apartment
  - A. She finds a place across the street, about a block down from the Parisis
  - B. In this new environment, Dotty experiments with her newfound "freedom" to sin at will
  - C. Attempts to drown her emptiness in work at various jobs along the beach and downtown, hoping activity will dull the hollowness inside
3. Migration of the Intellectual Infidels
  - A. The unbelieving students who once hovered at Parisis now follow her to her new haunt, the Smelly Goat
  - B. They bring the unfinished triptych Joe started: Dotty clothed, nude, anatomized — a constant reminder of her dissection, both literal and spiritual
  - C. They try to get other artists, like Finnegan, to finish it. *Finnegan refuses, instead painting a portrait of the old Dotty, the innocent one, though he had barely known her before*<sup>104</sup>
4. Conversations in Hell's Antechamber
  - A. Dotty continues to have lively discourse with these soulless intellectuals every night at the Goat
  - B. She learns that conversation and wit still exist even in a morally void realm
  - C. Life is reduced to a grayness, a monochrome existence where cleverness survives but no transcendent purpose

#### V. An Old Friend's Plea and the Futility of Return

1. Catherine Collins' Intervention
  - A. Catherine visits Dotty, sensing a profound change despite Dotty's silence
  - B. Catherine urges Dotty to seek Confession and restore her faith in mere minutes
  - C. Dotty denies the possibility: she has truly lost her faith, not just sinned against it

<sup>104</sup> This is the significance of the triptych of Dotty in *Not to Mention Camels*, a book that is many ways about the rejection of innocence.

2. Clarity on Losing Faith
  - A. Dotty reflects that many sin without losing faith, but she lost hers through pride and curiosity
  - B. She admits all her high ideas were a mirage, now shattered
  - C. Catherine, dismayed, recognizes how far Dotty has fallen, yet still hopes for her return to odd, faithful ways
3. Harder Work for Cheerfulness
  - A. Without faith, Dotty must struggle to feign her former vibrancy
  - B. She works at being cheerful, acknowledging that previously it came naturally
  - C. Internally, she laments that all the worst cynics and fools were correct, intensifying her disgust
4. A Bleak Intellectual Landscape
  - A. Dotty mocks her own past illusions: even “lice on the mice” were right
  - B. She considers filth and deceit now as norms in a world stripped of ideals
  - C. She bitterly acknowledges even once-despised figures as having been correct all along
5. Abandoned Attempts at Vice
  - A. Dotty tries taking a couple of men for profit but finds it too revolting to continue
  - B. She is called depraved by reputation, yet cannot fully commit to that life, revealing a lingering inner conflict
  - C. Instead, she turns to extensive reading, scanning through Freud, Marx, Russell, Irwin, Hegel, Balzac, and others who reinforce her new worldview<sup>105</sup>

## VI. Facing the Post-Faith Intellectual Quagmire

1. Modern Mind’s Contradiction
  - A. Karl Zaleski remarks on the modern emancipated mind’s acceptance of petty miracles (poltergeists) while denying spirits
  - B. It is sentimental yet feelingless, adopts new sillier mythologies, and though dedicated to pleasure finds only misery
  - C. This paradox is blamed on adolescence of thought, a shaky bridge between outdated reverence and nihilistic freedom
2. Relentless Logical Reductions
  - A. Dotty’s mind reels: if there is no faith, all revered thinkers were wrong, and all cynics were right; Francis Bacon over Roger Bacon.<sup>106</sup>
  - B. She entertains absurd historical revisions: Julian, Gibbon, Carlyle, Symonds, Wells, and

<sup>105</sup> All writers who, to varying degrees, denied the transcendent.

<sup>106</sup> Roger Bacon was a 13th-century Franciscan who integrated experimentation with medieval Christian thought, while Francis Bacon, a 17th-century philosopher, rejected scholastic traditions and pioneered the inductive scientific method.

Macauley convey truth while saints and devout scholars were deluded,<sup>107</sup> Kingsley was Right.<sup>108</sup> Cranmer and Crowell were right.<sup>109</sup>

- C. She contemplates installing the Devil as God — at least he seems to “exist” in some consistent form
  - D. Simon agrees: the Devil would be the more logical myth for a disenchanted world
3. Shuffling Associations, Avoiding Stagnation
- A. Dotty drifts among various groups, including Simon, Veronica, and Hazel, who are not medical students but share the nihilistic worldview
  - B. Converses in bars, clubs, and dubious places, noticing that without standards, clever talk continues but is hollow
  - C. Nighttime crowds offer no solace, only reinforcing the idea that Hell can have gray light and chatter

<sup>107</sup> Emperor Julian the Apostate (331–363) wrote philosophical and religious treatises challenging the Christianity of his time. Edward Gibbon (1737–1794), in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, offered a skeptical examination of Rome’s transformation and dissolution. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) imparted an interpretation of history that centered on great men. Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859), in his *History of England*, presented a progressive, Whiggish reading of the past, celebrating constitutional liberty and material progress. John Addington Symonds (1840–1893) was known for his studies of the Renaissance and classical antiquity. H.G. Wells (1866–1946) produced sweeping historical overviews and social commentaries in works like *The Outline of History*. None saw religion as the central issue of history.

<sup>108</sup> Charles Kingsley (1819–1875), an Anglican clergyman and novelist, championed “muscular Christianity” and progressive social reform, often viewing Catholicism with suspicion. In contrast, John Henry Newman (1801–1890), originally an Anglican priest who converted to Catholicism in 1845, developed a profound theological vision of faith grounded in the development of doctrine and intellectual assent to divine truth. Their famous dispute arose in 1864 when Kingsley accused Newman of dishonesty and lack of candor, prompting Newman’s eloquent defense of his spiritual journey and intellectual integrity in *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. This clash symbolized the broader religious tensions in Victorian England, with Kingsley representing the confident, socially engaged Anglican mainstream and Newman standing for a more introspective, doctrinally rigorous, and ultimately Roman Catholic vision of Christianity. See John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1864), and Charles Kingsley, *What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?* (1864).

<sup>109</sup> During the English Reformation, both Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556) and Thomas Cromwell (c. 1485–1540) helped sever England’s ecclesiastical ties to Rome and reshape religious identity under Henry VIII. Appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533, Cranmer slowly moved away from traditional Catholic doctrine, contributing to liturgical reforms and the doctrinal shifts embodied in the *Book of Common Prayer*. While he maintained certain Catholic elements, over time his theology embraced a more Protestant understanding of scripture, justification, and the Eucharist. Cromwell, as Henry VIII’s principal secretary and later vicegerent in spirituals, worked at the political and administrative level to curtail papal influence, dissolve the monasteries, and enforce royal supremacy over the Church in England. Although Cromwell’s personal religious convictions remain less doctrinally explicit than Cranmer’s, he supported policies that diminished Catholic authority and advanced Protestant sympathies. Together, their efforts fundamentally altered the religious landscape, uprooting longstanding Catholic structures and doctrine in favor of an increasingly Protestant Church of England. A major theme in *Past Master* and “Great Tom Fool.”



4. Hugh McDonald's Unsuccessful Search
  - A. Mary Parisi and Catherine Collins both mention Hugh's attempts to find Dotty
  - B. Mary refuses to tell him her location, seeing him as too nice a boy for Dotty's current state
  - C. Dotty acknowledges that inclinations seldom follow reason; Hugh won't rescue her from her new worldview
5. A Failed Con Game and Jail Experience
  - A. Dotty participates in a con with Arthur and Karl: luring a man named Wesley Fitzcannon, pretending to be assaulted, extorting money
  - B. Dotty's scream fails to convince; her acting skills lacking in sin's theatrics
  - C. Though they rob Wesley, he reports them. The police easily identify them. Mary Parisi bails Dotty out again
6. Mossback McCarty's Stern Warning
  - A. Mossback, the patrolman, threatens to get Dotty sent to a correction home if she persists in crime
  - B. He loves her like a father but vows no tolerance for real wrongdoing
  - C. Dotty cynically questions what order or conscience mean when she no longer believes in any transcendent standard
7. Hugh's Final Disillusionment
  - A. Hugh finally catches up with Dotty, still in love but shocked by her change
  - B. Dotty taunts him with offers of paid affection, then admits she can't truly live that life<sup>110</sup>
  - C. Hugh realizes he cannot help her. Dotty acknowledges she was better before but cannot go back
8. Conclusion: Settling into the Desert Years
  - A. Almost everyone decent fades from Dotty's life, leaving her with the "free souls" who are actually soulless
  - B. Without faith, no illusion of rescue remains. Time passes as she endures her chosen desert
  - C. The chapter ends with years going by, Dotty stuck in her rational, materialist Hell, full of talk and cleverness but devoid of meaning

<sup>110</sup> Don Marquis (1878–1937) was an American humorist who created "Archy," a poetry-writing cockroach, and "Mehitabel," a carefree cat, characters that commented wryly on human nature in columns and books like *Archy and Mehitabel* (1927).



## Chapter 13

**Dotty:** The chapter opens with Dotty complaining to “the stony world”: “I washed glasses today till I was blue in the face.” She engages in banter with a seaman called Frenchie, who is actually Charles Peisson, remarking, “Why how droll you are!” When she realizes he speaks English now, though he did not before, she says: “You are a fake. When I met you another time you couldn’t talk English. Why?” She struggles to recall their previous meeting: “I saw you before, and your name is Frenchie. Where and when did I see you?”

When Charles introduces himself and she learns his real name, Dotty offers better wine: “Charley, honey, we have quite good muscatel. That red wine you are drinking is sorry stuff. Frenchmen should know good wine.” She mentions having interesting friends and hopes he will meet them, yet admits they are “twisted children always looking for something new.” Dotty asks if Charles has money, hoping he will take her out, and makes a suggestive remark: “It will be fun to be made love to by a Frenchman. I never had a Frenchman. They say they are good at it.” Discovering that Charles is virtuous, she expresses disbelief: “You’re kidding. Or has the word a little different shading with the French?” She agrees to meet him, but remains doubtful.

Dotty finds something familiar in Charles, reminding her of someone from long ago and of herself. Calling herself an Okie and Charles a Breton (hence somewhat Irish), she agrees the two of them might be “best people,” but qualifies it: “And I am not best people. You may be. I am not.” She notes Charles is helping her out of an *abîme*: “It isn’t a *fossé*, it’s an *abîme*.” She admits some of her power is returning, as she can tell he is “in Grace.”

Over the next days and nights, Dotty spends time with Charles. Initially she tries to shield him from her predatory friends (the “wolves”), then considers protecting the wolves from him. Sometimes she argues on behalf of the wolves, then catches herself silently siding with the lambs. After Charles criticizes her crowd at length, Dotty says, “But you digress, Charles.”

She finds the word “manger” funny: “Isn’t manger a funny word?” She and Charles agree it’s odd and not widely used. When Arthur takes offense at Charles’s remarks, Dotty supports Charles calling them “mangy” and suggests they need an apothecary. Despite the insult, her friends surprisingly take it in good humor.

Dotty goes with Charles to the Wooden Ship, a place she doesn’t frequent, because he prefers it. She tells a reporter she is prejudiced against Texans: “I have a special prejudice against Texans...I believe it is just good sound judgment.” When Charles announces he must leave, Dotty protests: “Leave? How can you leave? Where will you go?” Realizing her feelings, Dotty confesses: “But I didn’t know till just now that I wanted to be your girl.” She begs him to return quickly, lamenting they never had the chance to discuss things: “But I’m not really a tramp...Oh, I lied, I lied. I really don’t like it. I’ll change, it’s impossible, but I’ll change.” She claims he shouldn’t believe her because she’s “such a liar,” and pleads, “I’ll perish if you leave me.” When Charles calculates how soon he might return, Dotty is comforted: “Oh, thank you, Charles...I haven’t set [my watch] for two years. It’s an hour and ten minutes slow and I haven’t even cared.”

In parting, Dotty makes a final boast regarding other women Charles might meet: “Anything they can do I can do better. You remember that.”

## I. A New Acquaintance in the Aftermath of Faith’s Loss

1. A Routine Remark and a Droll Response
  - A. Dotty complains of washing glasses till she’s “blue in the face”
  - B. A seaman responds oddly, though called “Frenchie,” he wasn’t known to speak English before
  - C. Dotty is intrigued: this man seems both familiar and completely new
2. Revisiting Memory and Names
  - A. Dotty recalls seeing him before, calling him Frenchie, yet he claims ignorance and no past meeting
  - B. He confesses that upon his arrival in port two weeks ago, he spoke no English, but rapidly relearned it
  - C. Dotty marvels at his cleverness, acknowledging the advantage of intelligence
3. From “Frenchie” to “Charles Peisson”<sup>111</sup>
  - A. The man reveals his true name: Charles Peisson

<sup>111</sup> “Peisson” appears in certain Romance dialects, notably in Occitan (a language historically spoken in southern France), as a variant related to the French “poisson” (fish). Both derive from the Latin *piscis*. Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ, Christian iconography, etc.

- B. Dotty is pleased to know his real name, dropping the nickname Frenchie
  - C. She invites him to drink better quality wine, eager to show favor and share a higher standard
4. A Refreshing Absence of Guile
    - A. Dotty asks if Charles is a drunkard, he denies it, stating he drinks for companionship in strange ports
    - B. She wants him to take her out, hoping for a pleasant escape from her nihilistic circle
    - C. Charles promises to meet her at four o'clock after her shift, but states he is virtuous and not interested in seduction
  5. A Hint of Old Ideals Rekindled
    - A. Dotty is intrigued by his virtuous claim, initially disbelieving such a word is used seriously
    - B. Charles' unaffected manner and decent stance recall Dotty's former self before spiritual collapse
    - C. He identifies as Breton, not fully French, connecting him and Dotty through Celtic roots<sup>112</sup> — both are from “mean” places producing “best people,” sparking a sense of tribal kinship
  6. Mutual Recognition of Worthiness
    - A. They acknowledge their “wonderful” heritage despite recent moral declines on Dotty's part
    - B. Charles jokes about covering Dotty up in her ditch (fossé) or grander pit (abîme), or rescuing her from it
    - C. As Charles leaves, Dotty perceives he is “in Grace,” astonishing herself by sensing grace again, hinting her lost perception may be returning

## II. Two Days of Hope and Internal Conflict

1. Introducing Charles to the Wolves
  - A. Dotty spends several days and nights roaming with Charles, exposing him to her circle of cynical, faithless intellectuals (“the wolves”)
  - B. At first she wants to shield Charles, the virtuous outsider, from these corrupted friends
  - C. Then she reconsiders, fearing for the wolves themselves if confronted by this sincere and intelligent lamb
2. Dotty's Divided Loyalties
  - A. She debates whether to side with the wolves or protect them from Charles
  - B. This oscillation reveals Dotty's lingering moral confusion: part of her wants to be loyal to

<sup>112</sup> Breton is a member of the Brythonic (or Brittonic) branch of the Celtic language family, closely related to Welsh and Cornish. It evolved from the speech of British settlers who crossed the English Channel to the Armorican Peninsula (modern-day Brittany) between the 4th and 6th centuries AD. As a Celtic language transplanted onto the European mainland, Breton retained many features of its insular Celtic origins while also absorbing influences from the surrounding Gallo-Romance languages.

- her new “pack,” and another part yearns for what Charles represents
- C. Moments arise where Dotty almost argues silently for the lamb’s point of view, suggesting her conscience may be stirring again
3. Charles Among the Rootless Wonders
    - A. Charles meets the unbelievers by night, assessing their intellectual stance
    - B. He finds them lacking in depth and skill compared to atheists he knew back home
    - C. Despite their supposed sophistication, these “rootless wonders” are poorly equipped to defend their materialist positions against a genuinely adept challenger
  4. Charm and Candor
    - A. Instead of provoking hatred, Charles’s honesty and directness fascinates the group
    - B. He ridicules their intellectual weakness gently but firmly, contrasting it with the formidable atheists of Europe
    - C. Rather than angering them, his charm and surprising empathy keep them intrigued
  5. Revealing Their Limitations
    - A. Charles points out that these people respond predictably to any challenge of truth, showing their slavish conformity
    - B. He suggests they are like Golems or Zombies, soulless constructs without individuality or real argumentation skills
    - C. They accept this criticism with unusual calm, perhaps because Charles’s manner disarms them
  6. Raising Questions of Authority and Intelligence
    - A. Karl tries to corner Charles by invoking revered liberal authorities, from Einstein to various cultural institutions<sup>113</sup>
    - B. Charles calmly asserts his own intellectual superiority in philosophical matters, dismissing Einstein’s political and philosophical naïveté
    - C. This shocks them, but Charles’s calm logic underlines that expertise in one domain doesn’t confer universal authority<sup>114</sup>
  7. No Offense Taken, Only Intrigue
    - A. Even Kitty Kark and Cora English, who might bristle at insults, find Charles’s wit appealing
    - B. Dotty notes that if it hadn’t been for their interest in him, she might not have remained so involved with Charles
    - C. His presence stirs something new: a contest of minds, and possibly a rekindling of hope in Dotty’s desolate landscape

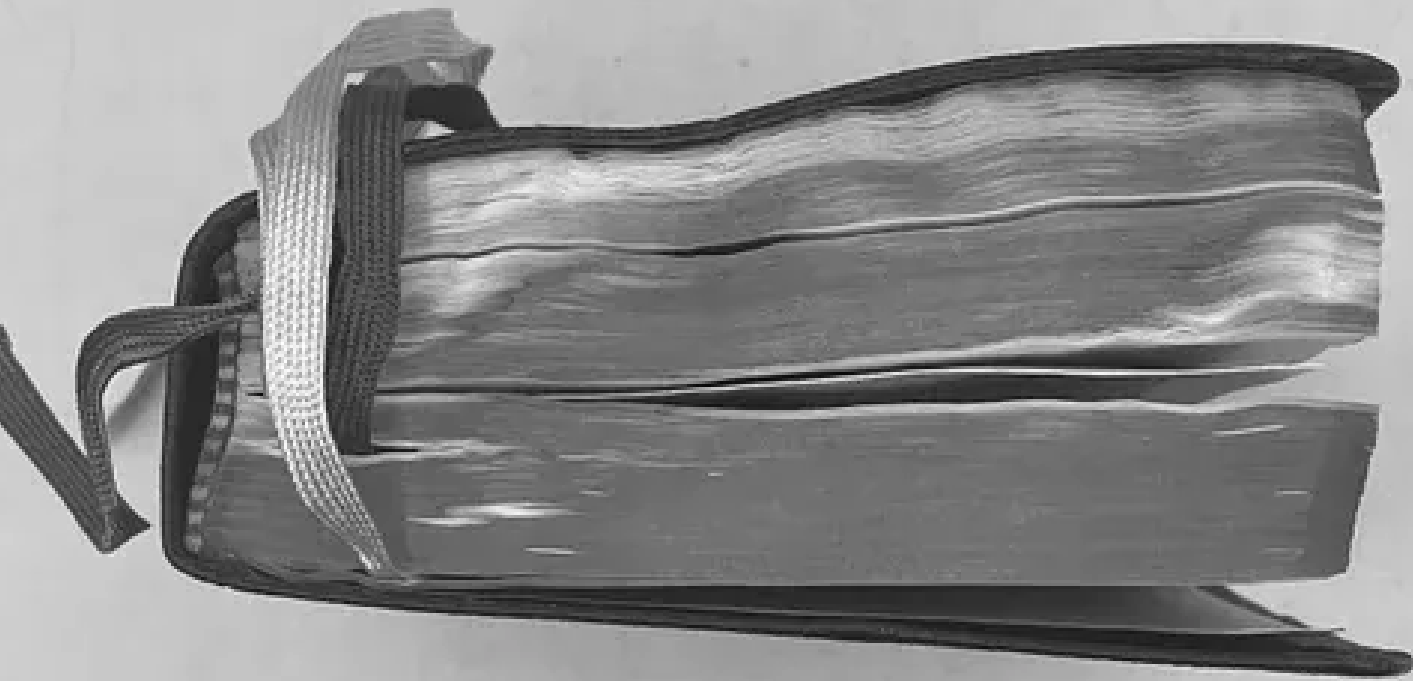
<sup>113</sup> The “ADA” probably refers to Americans for Democratic Action, a liberal political advocacy group founded in 1947 that included prominent intellectuals and politicians supportive of liberal policies. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is an international body advocating for global cooperation in education, science, and culture since its establishment in 1945.

<sup>114</sup> The unnamed poet is G. K. Chesterton, (“The Great Minimum”).

### III. Physicality, Preferences, and Approaching Departure

1. Charles's Youthful Agility and Ambiguous Age
  - A. Charles is described as a short, lean, athletic type, with a catlike or gymnast's grace
  - B. Possibly younger than his stated twenty-two years, flexible and strong, a living counterpoint to Dotty's stagnant circle
2. A Shift in Venue and Associates
  - A. Charles persuades Dotty to visit the Wooden Ship, a shift from her usual haunts
  - B. The Wooden Ship is even rougher and smellier than the Goat, populated by poorer, dirtier patrons and another French Charles, "Charles Le Marin"
  - C. Charles seeks old acquaintances and new perspectives, broadening Dotty's exposure to diverse company
3. The Yankee Reporter and the Absurdity of Prejudice<sup>115</sup>
  - A. A Yankee reporter arrives, fishing for "racial prejudice"
  - B. Aloysius McGivern and others mock him by spewing nonsensical prejudices against Englishmen, Swedes, Texans, and Yankees themselves
  - C. The reporter leaves perplexed, failing to find the simple narrative he sought
4. Culinary Adventures and Cultural Commentary
  - A. Talk of frog hunting and preparing frog legs leads Charles to offer a French culinary touch, charming the locals
  - B. Despite the grim worldview prevalent in Dotty's circle, moments of humor and cultural exchange surface, suggesting all is not uniform gloom
5. Announcing Departure and Emotional Surge
  - A. Charles reveals that he has signed on a ship leaving the next morning for Rio and São Paulo
  - B. Dotty reacts with sudden panic and longing, discovering too late that she wants him to stay
  - C. She pleads for him to remain or return soon, confessing her feelings openly and recalling how she once had standards and care
6. Promises and Timing
  - A. Charles cannot stay but promises to try returning in about eight to ten weeks
  - B. Dotty vows to count every second until then, showing that beyond all her cynicism, she still hopes for redemption or salvation from her spiritual desert
  - C. They part with the acknowledgment that while Dotty's fallen state cannot be easily undone, the spark of kindness and faith Charles represents may guide her back someday

<sup>115</sup> Probably on Ray Sprigle (1886–1957). He was a Pulitzer Prize–winning American journalist for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* who became known for his 1948 series "I Was a Negro in the South for 30 Days." Sprigle, who was white, passed as Black to report firsthand on the realities of Jim Crow segregation. He exposed Northern readers to the pervasive injustices and daily indignities faced by African Americans, creating a national conversation.



## Chapter 14

### Overview

Dotty—suffering from her broken faith and anxious for Charles Peisson’s return—prays in a silent church, begging God for just one year with him. Although she receives no direct response, she vows to rebuild her life and become a “weaving woman,” fashioning a new spiritual garment. She writes heartfelt letters to Charles, weeping at the thought he may never come back. Determined to move forward, she works at the Old Wooden Ship bar alongside Soft-Talk Susie Kutz, renovates a battered house near the Gulf, and mingles with an assortment of colorful patrons. By the end, her “first widowhood” seems near its close as she holds onto a faint but resolute hope for Charles’s eventual return.

### Summary

Dotty opens by addressing the Lord about two broken bargains—one she believes He broke and one she admits she herself broke. She sits in a dark church, recalling that she once had faith but now

sees no evidence that God acknowledges her prayers. An old priest passes by and inquires if she wishes to go to confession; she declines, then resumes praying that she might have Charles Peisson “for a year.” She references biblical images—Behemoth, whales, dragons, sparrows, and the generosity shown to these creatures—yet feels God remains silent.

Calling this phase her “first widowhood,” Dotty writes to Charles. She warns him that if he returns, she hopes to marry him, though she confesses to feeling spiritually maimed. Customers at the Old Wooden Ship bar notice her tears as she composes these letters. A man tries to coax her away from sadness by inviting her to fish for the day, but she insists that “this is the day I must cry.” She completes her message with a French postscript, aided by Ouida to place accents on words.

Next, Dotty invests her energy in buying a dilapidated house near the Gulf, using a small down payment. The house was damaged during a great flood fifty years earlier. She painstakingly cleans it, rebuilds the roof, replaces boards, and scrapes away old paint. An elderly man recalls its original colors, so she purchases light gray paint and blue for the shutters. Ship’s carpenters and other friends help her install a bathroom and repair the structure. She decorates the courtyard with an iron table, a ship’s lantern, and seashell sidewalks, hoping that if Charles returns, he will feel at home.

Dotty now works daily with Soft-Talk Susie Kutz at the Old Wooden Ship, having drifted away from more vicious companions at the Smelly Goat. She encounters numerous regulars: Sour John John Sourwine who travels widely, Kidney-Stone Stenton, Buffalo-Chips Dugan, William J. Forsythe Jr.—a woman so nicknamed after stealing a monogrammed lighter—and Gun Boat Thompson, a formidable dog who refuses to move for anyone. The bar also attracts gamblers like Alexey Ivanovich, Herman the German, and Wentworth Arbutnoth, each wearing outdated fashions and telling tales of old fortunes won and lost. Meanwhile, Dotty recognizes that her two-year slump may be ending. As she completes work on her house and reaffirms her spiritual pledge, she looks forward to Charles’s potential return, believing there is still a gambler’s chance for happiness.

(Alexey Ivanovich), (Angel-Cake Argal), (Barbecue Ben’s), (Behemoth), (Big Oyster), (Buffalo-Chips Dugan), (Catherine Cadensus), (Chekalinsky), (Charles Peisson), (Church), (Deucalion), (Dotty), (Friedrich D’or), (Galveston), (Gun Boat Thompson), (Herman the German), (Kidney-Stone Stenton), (Kitty Coyle), (Lisbon), (Marie-Theresa Thaler), (Mercedes Morrero), (Noah), (Old Wooden Ship), (Ouida), (Port Royal), (Post Office Street), (Raviola Inn), (Rio), (Roulettenburg), (Salt Water Chop House), (Soft-Talk Susie Kutz), (Sodom), (Sour John (John Sourwine)), (Tremont Avenue), (Wentworth Arbutnoth), (William J. Forsythe Jr.)

**Dotty:** In Chapter XIV, Dotty’s experiences center on an intense inner dialogue with God and a determined attempt to rebuild both her spiritual and emotional world. Without traditional action sequences, the chapter focuses on her pleas, reflections, and decisive steps toward renewal. She openly acknowledges the broken unilateral bargains that once linked her to God, conceding that



neither of them seems to believe in the other now. Yet Dotty, deeply wounded and maimed in faith, petitions for a favor: she wants Charles Peisson. She pleads in Latin, begs not for silence but for a sign or a year of happiness, offering to become a “weaving woman” who will re-thread the torn fabric of her life and faith. Although she cannot say “credo” and must settle for “utinam possem credere”—wishing she could believe—she vows to rebuild her spiritual garment and asks God to find it worthy.

Uncertain of God’s response, Dotty takes practical action. She writes a heartfelt letter to Charles, warning him that her damaged state may frighten him away. She confesses having once boasted of surpassing any São Paulo girls, but now admits to being uninformed. Desperate, she entrusts a seaman headed for Rio with a message of love, hoping that Charles will understand her sincerity. Determined to put her promises into practice, she rises early, attends Mass with Soft-Talk Susie Kutz, labors diligently, and shows kindness. She reads extensively, contemplates life at the beach, and strives to become the artisan of her own redemption.

This internal transformation parallels a physical one. Dotty buys a dilapidated house overlooking the Gulf and invests effort and care into restoring it. She installs a bathroom and shutters, repairs the roof, cleans the courtyard, revives the plants, and sets out simple yet meaningful furnishings. Renovating the house becomes a symbol of rebuilding her soul, moving from despair toward hope. She reconciles with the Parisis, distances herself from the unduped students who once influenced her negatively, and finds honest work at the Old Wooden Ship. As her house’s renovation nears completion, Dotty marks the end of what she calls her “first widowhood,” hinting at a new stage in her life. The chapter concludes with a sense of possibility and peace, despite God’s silence and the uncertain future of her connection with Charles.

### Patrons of the Old Wooden Ship

<i>Soft-Talk Susie Kutz</i>	<i>Works at the Old Wooden Ship. Has "a heart of gold set with sapphires and those other stones, the little blue ones." Helps Dotty with her "new web."</i>
<i>The Prettiest Girls in Town</i>	Kitty Coyle, Vivian Gillam, Catherine Cadensus, Angel-Cake Argal, Mercedes Morrero, Ouida.
<i>Dotty</i>	Bartender and protagonist. Also described as "a real ravisher".
<i>Gamblers in Old-Fashioned Clothing</i>	Alexey Ivanovich (has a bullet wound in his temple), Herman the German (quietly mad), Wentworth Arbutnoth (has no thumbs). These gamblers sometimes borrow money but always repay their debts.
<i>Indian-Given Gavin</i>	Only mentioned by name.
<i>Hard-Shell Pugsley</i>	Only mentioned by name.
<i>Dry-Gulch Gavaldos</i>	Pretends to be dying of thirst every time he comes in.
<i>Kidney-Stone Stenton</i>	Only mentioned by name.
<i>Buffalo-Chips Dugan</i>	Only mentioned by name.
<i>William J. Forsythe Jr. (a girl)</i>	Arrested for stealing a lighter and lying about it.
<i>Copper-Bottom Cody</i>	Only mentioned by name.

<i>Sulphur-Bottom Sullivan</i>	Only mentioned by name.
<i>Gun Boat Thompson (a dog)</i>	Customers are advised not to try to make him move.
<i>Unnamed Customer Talking to Dotty</i>	This customer spoke with Dotty as she was writing a letter.
<i>Unnamed Ship's Carpenter Who Advised Dotty</i>	This carpenter advised Dotty on the repairs to her house.

## I. Bargaining with an Absent God

1. A One-Sided Dialogue of Desperation
  - A. Dotty, once able to talk to the Lord with ease, now attempts again despite having lost her faith
  - B. She acknowledges that she and God broke bargains: one made with no reply from Him, one she made in good faith
  - C. Both now don't believe in each other: Dotty no longer believes in God, and she suspects He doesn't believe in her<sup>116</sup>
2. A Plea without Response
  - A. Dotty asks simply: "Can I have him?" — referring to Charles Peisson, presumably
  - B. She waits in the late afternoon hush of a Church, but there is only silence
  - C. An old priest passes by, asking if she wants confession; she refuses, feeling tricked by what she perceives as a divine maneuver
3. Defiance and Negotiation
  - A. Dotty accuses God of wanting everything His way, reminds Him she has little to trade now
  - B. She tries to rebuild what she broke, to reweave her faith like a spider's web, even though she cannot say "credo," only wish she could believe ("*utinam possem credere*"<sup>117</sup>)
  - C. She implores God: give her a year with Charles, drawing analogies to divine generosity shown to animals and monstrous eras, if not humans

<sup>116</sup> The Latin quoted by Dotty is from Psalm 27:1 (or Psalm 28:1 in the Hebrew numbering). The Douay-Rheims translation reads: "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord: O my God, be not thou silent to me: lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit." In this prayer, the psalmist pleads for God's attentive presence, fearing that divine silence would be tantamount to spiritual death. See *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, Psalmus 27:1, and the Douay-Rheims Bible, Psalm 27:1.

<sup>117</sup> Dotty's *utinam possem credere* means "If only I could believe." This contrasts with the emphatic opening of the Catholic Credo ("I believe"), which is a firm profession of faith recited during Mass and found in the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds. While *utinam possem credere* conveys uncertainty and a desire for belief, the Credo affirms a communal statement of dogmatic truths.

4. Silence and Interpretations
  - A. The Church grows dark; red sanctuary lamp and Virgin's candles burn quietly, signifying presence but no verbal reply
5.
  - B. Dotty senses presence but no answer, deciding that no reply isn't necessarily "no"
  - C. She resolves to work again, to try weaving a new garment for her soul, hoping that He might accept her efforts

## II. The First Widowhood: A Letter to Charles

1. A Widowhood of the Soul
  - A. The novel refers to this as Dotty's "first widowhood," a time when she is spiritually bereft, mourning the absence of Charles who has departed
  - B. She sits in the Old Wooden Ship bar, writing a letter that blends love, warning, and despair
2. A Letter of Confessions and Warnings
  - A. Dotty plans to scare Charles off by revealing her state of soul, her maimed condition
  - B. She confesses she cannot say "credo" but will pledge to rebuild her faith if that might entice God to give her a year with Charles
  - C. She openly states her intention to marry him if possible, calling herself the "plague," giving Charles the chance to avoid returning
3. Cynicism Towards the Divine and the World
  - A. Dotty bitterly mocks divine wisdom, suggesting it's easy for God to handle comets and elephants but not to solve Dotty's problems
  - B. She positions Charles as the essence of her remaining problem, linking her personal crisis directly to their relationship
4. Public Tears and Distraction
  - A. While writing, Dotty cries openly; a customer notices, mentions her Frenchman
  - B. Dotty acknowledges this day is meant for crying, turning down an invitation that might offer diversion
5. Desperate Appeals and Contradictory Claims
  - A. She writes more pages in the letter to Charles, even attempting a French segment with Ouida's help
  - B. Reminds Charles he could find better lovers elsewhere, warns him away, yet pleads for him to return and marry her
  - C. Dotty is torn between repelling him (for his own good) and yearning for his salvation
6. Sending Messages Beyond the Letter
  - A. She finds a seaman bound for Rio, instructing him to convey her love to Charles
  - B. These frantic attempts reveal Dotty's lingering hope and the depth of her attachment

## III. Idealizing the Absent Beloved and Reweaving Hope

1. Reflections on Charles Peisson's Image
  - A. Lafferty admits that few knew Charles well during his short stay
  - B. Attempts to describe Charles by analogy: he looked a bit like Tobias, a bit like the Archangel Raphael,<sup>118</sup> and strangely, even a bit like the fish from a famous painting
  - C. Confusing and mixed imagery symbolizes Charles's complexity and the difficulty of capturing his essence in words
2. Dotty's Renewed Effort: Becoming a Weaving Woman
  - A. The novel returns to Dotty's promise: she would weave anew, fashioning a new garment (a metaphor for restoring her faith and life)
  - B. This period is termed her "first widowhood."
  - C. To rebuild herself and her environment, Dotty embraces constructive labor and spiritual gestures
3. Soft-Talk Susie Kutz's Influence and Quiet Piety
  - A. Assisted by Soft-Talk Susie Kutz, Dotty attends early Mass again, though she still has not resumed the sacraments
  - B. Susie, a mysterious figure with a "heart of gold," provides a gentle guiding presence
  - C. Dotty now balances hard work, morning devotions, and meditation at the beach, striving to restore a measure of peace and purpose
4. A Grand Project: Buying and Renovating a House
  - A. Dotty invests in a battered old house with a view of the Gulf, starting a major renovation project
  - B. It is a ruin from an old flood, symbolizing Dotty's own spiritual ruin and her effort to rebuild
  - C. She wire-brushes, replaces boards, roofs it, adds shutters and a bathroom, painting it a remembered shade of light gray with blue shutters — reclaiming beauty and order
5. Creating a Welcoming Haven
  - A. Dotty places a large coffee maker, ensuring she can always offer hospitality
  - B. She cleans and arranges a courtyard and shell-paved walk, turning the derelict dwelling into a home that blends with the seascape
  - C. This physical renewal parallels her internal struggle to regain faith and integrity
6. Reconciliation and New Company
  - A. Dotty makes peace with the Parisis and many others, drifting away from the old group of soul-starved intellectuals
  - B. The Old Wooden Ship now hosts more wholesome companions, no deviants or

<sup>118</sup> The story of Tobias and the angel Raphael is found in the Book of Tobit, a Deuterocanonical text included in Catholic and Orthodox Bibles. In this narrative, the young Tobias embarks on a journey at the behest of his father, Tobit, to reclaim a sum of money. Unbeknownst to him, his traveling companion is the archangel Raphael in human disguise, sent by God to guide and protect him. Along the way, Tobias learns valuable lessons in faith, filial devotion, and virtue. The angel's assistance ultimately leads Tobias to healing remedies for his father's blindness and a blessed marriage to Sarah. In *Past Master*, the stranger who speaks to Thomas More at his execution is strongly implied to be such a figure.

- atheists, but generous, open-hearted people with honest vices and old-fashioned virtues
- C. The Ship becomes a house of champions at simple games, a place of camaraderie and normal human warmth
7. A Community without Pretenses
- A. Dotty mingles with colorful characters: fishermen, odd nicknamed men and women, each with quirks but devoid of hollow cynicism
- B. Freed from the old crowd's nihilism, Dotty breathes a simpler atmosphere, fueling her gradual spiritual healing
8. Awaiting a Gambler's Chance
- A. As her "first widowhood" term draws to a close, Dotty finishes the house and settles into a routine of work, prayerful attempts, and neighborly interaction
- B. She knows there is only a gambler's chance to restore her faith fully or to see Charles again soon
- C. Yet she clings to that chance, hoping the new garment she weaves for her soul will be acceptable to God, and that the silence in the church might someday yield an answer



## Chapter 15

### Overview

After Dotty and Charles Peisson marry in the summer of 1950, their life together seems effortlessly perfect. Charles's calm approach to untying problems allows them to navigate any challenge in a lighthearted way. They depart Galveston for a honeymoon in New Orleans, where they experience humorous mishaps, including a missing house and car, unexpected encounters with "wives" claiming Charles, and the playful antics of a woman named Patricia. Despite confusion over addresses and lost belongings, they thoroughly enjoy the city's nightlife before returning home. By the end, they remain happily united, already joking about the peculiar adventures of their trip.

## Summary

Dotty and Charles begin Chapter XV with a reflection on the nature of perfection: it cannot be difficult, or it has already failed to be perfect. Their own marriage is described as perfect from the moment Charles returns to Galveston. Charles has a knack for solving complications, not by ignoring or overpowering them, but by treating obstacles lightly and simply. Dotty and Charles's metaphorical "house" is built on shifting ground—sand, seashells, and cockleburrs—yet this arrangement suits them. Scriptural references about building on rock appear, but they note that even "the Son of Man had nowhere to rest his head," emphasizing that their seemingly fragile foundation works perfectly for them.

They marry probably in 1950, near July, and Dotty emerges from her previous spiritual "ditch," finding it was never as deep as she thought. The couple decides to honeymoon in New Orleans. Before leaving, they gather financial gifts from people like Colonel Keen and the Parisis. Dotty, once quick to reject such help, now graciously accepts it. Little Dutch Eckel lends them a car, and despite misplaced car keys, Charles's mechanical skills get them on the road.

They reach New Orleans in the early morning, where Charles promptly buys a city map to locate Ouida Garrard's relative, supposedly at 1224 Epernay. Finding no such address—just a weedy lot with signs of a fire—they approach an old house across the street. Inside, a gracious woman explains that Amelia Garrard died in a fire four years ago, leaving a fortune unclaimed. The woman rents them an apartment instead, and Dotty resolves to inform Ouida of her unexpected inheritance.

The first day passes uneventfully, until two women appear, each claiming to be Charles's wife—one from Rio, one from St. Malo. The "wife" from Rio calls herself Patricia, brandishing Portuguese documents that Dotty cannot read. She insists Charles went out for cigarettes one night and never returned. Charles denies ever seeing her. Dotty and Charles soon discover Patricia is playing pranks, having been tipped off about their honeymoon. Patricia next reappears, pretending to be a wife from St. Malo. Though Dotty questions Patricia's true identity, she and Charles embrace her antics, letting her join them on lively outings.

They spend nights exploring New Orleans's bars, clubs, and loud jazz spots. Patricia leads them through a swirl of music and crowds, while Charles humorously compares the noisy clarinets and pianos to ghosts and dying camels. At one point, Dotty commandeers a piano and demonstrates her own style, lamenting that the city's cacophony leaves little room for the authentic jazz she can play. Eventually, they end up at a bar run by the Flannel-Mouthed Irishman, who tries to impose a cover charge but fails to collect. They meet Leo Hanrahan, a philosophical dock worker forced to spend his nights out of the house. He speaks at length on philosophical "mud," bodily entrapment, and attempts to unsoil oneself.

When Dotty and Charles attempt to return to the house they rented, they find a different woman inside who denies ever having met them. Their borrowed car has vanished as well. They eventually

file a police report, though they barely know the car's make, license number, or owners' full name. Following more adventures and another night of revelry, they discover the car reappeared and the original landlady is back, greeting them warmly. No explanation resolves the contradictory events, so they simply continue to enjoy their trip.

Over the next few days, Charles visits seamen from the Saint Noire, while Dotty prowls around the rooms of their lodging, unearthing a partial clue that Amelia and Mellicent Garrard might have been two sisters taking in lodgers. They eventually depart with memories of bizarre addresses, phantom duplicates, and Patricia's comedic interventions. As they cross into Texas, Dotty finds her address book and realizes that Patricia is none other than Finnegan's sister—a final note of whimsy as they head home to begin life together.

(Amelia Garrard), (Basin Street Becaud), (Big Oyster), (Buddhists), (Canal Street), (Cat and Fiddle), (Charles Peisson), (Children of Light), (Colonel Keen), (Epernay), (Finnegan), (Flannel-Mouthed Irishman), (Harbor Lights), (Leo Hanrahan), (Little Dutch Eckel), (Mellicent Garrard), (Mesopotamia), (Monkey Bar), (New Orleans), (Old Absinthe House), (Old Wooden Ship), (Ouida Garrard), (Parisis), (Patricia), (Philip Sherrington), (Piccones), (Rio), (Saint Noire), (Soft-Talk Susie Kutz), (Son of Man), (Son of Man had nowhere), (St. Dennis), (St. Malo), (Tippio), (Three-Four-Five Club)

**Dotty:** In Chapter XV, Dotty's actions revolve around her wedding, honeymoon, and a series of confounding encounters in New Orleans. She marries Charles Peisson in July of 1950 (or a nearby year), accepts a sizeable sum of money from Colonel Keen to finance her honeymoon, and attends multiple wedding receptions—one at the Parisis' home and another at the Old Wooden Ship—before leaving for New Orleans soon after the wedding Mass. Disappointed to miss the ongoing parties in their honor, Dotty travels with Charles to the city, where they attempt to stay at an address recommended by Ouida Garrard. Instead of finding a lodging house at 1224 Epernay, they discover a vacant lot and learn from a nearby landlady that Ouida's aunt or cousin Amelia Garrard died in a fire four years earlier, leaving the property in disarray. Though Dotty suggests calling Ouida to inform her of a possible inheritance, Charles dismisses the idea. They accept lodging from the landlady, who tries without success to contact Ouida at the Old Wooden Ship. While exploring New Orleans, Dotty and Charles encounter a woman, Patricia, who first claims to be Charles's wife from Rio, producing dubious documents and demanding he return to her. Dotty refuses to yield, questioning Patricia's story and her sudden switch to a St. Malo backstory. Suspecting a prank orchestrated by friends back home, Dotty, Charles, and Patricia spend time in the city's jazz clubs, where Dotty criticizes the cacophonous music, even taking over the piano to demonstrate proper playing. After a night of revelry, they return to their rented house only to face a different woman who denies ever seeing them and refuses them entry, while their car is missing. Forced to seek refuge with Patricia, they eventually sleep and then continue exploring the city the following day, enduring more confusion as they report the missing car to the police without proper paperwork or even the car's make. Dotty recognizes Patricia's address as one from her own list of contacts, realizing that meeting Patricia was prearranged somehow. Eventually, Dotty and Charles find their



car and are allowed back into the house they had initially rented. Dotty observes the two similar landladies, inferring that Amelia and Mellicent Garrard must be behind this tangled deception, though the details remain murky. Finally, Dotty and Charles leave New Orleans and return home to Texas, where at the state line Dotty reveals that Patricia is Finnegan's sister, tying their perplexing adventures in New Orleans back to their circle of acquaintances.

### Leo Hanrahan's Non-Sacramental Philosophy

<i>Self-Introduction</i>	<i>"I am a philosopher and that is my philosophy."</i>	<i>Hanrahan identifies himself as a philosopher.</i>
<i>Origin of His Philosophy</i>	<i>"I have formed myself by sitting here and flexing and unflexing my mind."</i>	He claims his nightly routine of sitting outside his locked door from 2:00 AM to 6:00 AM has allowed him to develop his philosophical insights.
<i>Question on Purity</i>	<i>"It is a question...just how deeply a man can get into the mud without being befouled...What would you say, Frenchman?"</i>	This question introduces his central philosophical concern: the nature of purity and how it is affected by exposure to corruption.
<i>Definition of Defilement</i>	<i>"I tell you that a man is soiled when he first hears the name of mud...To unsoil himself he must make himself a spirit..."</i>	Hanrahan argues that even the idea of "mud," symbolizing corruption, is enough to taint a person. He believes true purity requires transcending the physical world and becoming a spirit.
<i>Methods for Spiritual Purity</i>	<i>"...stare at a point in infinity...stare at their navels...I stare at a point just below the level of the drink in my glass..."</i>	Hanrahan describes three methods for achieving spiritual transformation: focusing on a point in infinity, navel-gazing (a Buddhist practice), and his own method of watching the level of liquid in his glass descend, representing a journey through celestial spheres.
<i>Patricia's Counterargument</i>	<i>"My intoxication is always a celestial one."</i>	Patricia dismisses his method as drunkenness. Hanrahan counters by claiming his intoxication is of a "celestial" nature, suggesting he is achieving a higher state of consciousness.

## I. The Nature of Perfection and a Perfect Marriage

### 1. Philosophical Opening on Perfection

A. Lafferty states a paradoxical definition: perfection is nearly always impossible, yet

- never difficult. If difficulty arises, perfection fails. Perfect things are easy but rare.
- B. This sets the stage for describing something extraordinary and unexpected: a perfect marriage.
2. Charles and Dotty's Perfect Married Life
    - A. Once Charles returns, their married life is described as perfect, marked by simplicity and absence of strain.
    - B. Charles' unique skill: untying knots and resolving difficulties not by ignoring them or violently overcoming them, but by a more subtle approach. He makes complexities seem easy.
  3. House Not on Rock but Still Secure<sup>119</sup>
    - A. Lafferty recalls scripture about building a house on rock. Their "house" (metaphorical for their marriage) is built on sand, cockleburs, and clam shells — hardly stable by conventional standards.
    - B. Yet what scripture indicates as the ideal (house on rock) is not mandatory for them. Christ Himself had no place to rest, and the faithful once needed a second shirt. By implication, perfect love need not follow rigid stereotypes.
  4. All Things Will Be Added: The Essence of Their Union
    - A. Their union embodies biblical principles like "Sufficient unto the day" and "He knows you have need of these things."<sup>120</sup>
    - B. Instead of worrying over planning, position, or pride of possessions, their marriage thrives on trust, grace, and the natural ease that perfection demands.
  5. A Historical Footnote on Their Marriage
    - A. They were likely married in or near 1950, perhaps in July. The exact date can be found in church records.
    - B. Dotty emerges from her ditch (her previous spiritual slump) to discover that the pit was shallower than she feared. Charles was right: it was only a small *fossé*, not an *abîme*.<sup>121</sup>

## II. Choosing a Honeymoon Destination and Generous Support

1. No Need to Leave Paradise But Tradition Demands It
  - A. They are already in Galveston, the "only real place" for a honeymoon, so where do they go now that they must travel somewhere?
  - B. New Orleans is second-best to Galveston, so the choice is inevitable and simple.
2. Gifts and Aid from Friends and Family
  - A. They are not penniless. Charles believes in accepting kindly offered money.
  - B. The Parisis provide funds, Colonel Keen sends a fine sum, and this time Dotty accepts

119 Matthew 6:32–34.

120 Matthew 7:24–25; Luke 6:47–48.

121 Ditch vs abyss.

without resentment—signaling her new humility and trust.<sup>122</sup>

- C. Little Dutch Eckel lends them his car, Ouida Garrard arranges rooms through relatives, friends give advice on whom to see and where to have fun, making their journey well resourced.
3. Departing with Minimal Fuss
    - A. There are receptions and celebrations in their honor at home, but they slip away quickly after their wedding mass.
    - B. A slight hitch with the car keys (Dutch pretends not to find them) is no obstacle to the mechanically-inclined Charles, who starts the car without keys.
    - C. Dotty regrets missing parties, but simplicity again rules: perfection entails minimal fuss.

### III. In New Orleans: Navigating a City of Illusions

1. Early Arrival and a Missing Address
  - A. They arrive in New Orleans early, still brimming with their honeymoon excitement
  - B. Charles, ever practical, buys a map to find the home of Ouida's relative, Amelia Garrard, at 1224 Epernay Street. Dotty regards this as a mark of his sensible approach
  - C. Following the map and counting down addresses, they discover that 1224 Epernay does not exist. Instead, there is only a vacant lot with weeds and bricks
2. Inquiring and Finding Only Puzzling Tales
  - A. Across the street is a graceful old lady who offers them rooms in her own apartment house
  - B. She reveals that Amelia Garrard died in a fire four years ago, leaving a large estate unclaimed. Supposedly Ouida never knew of her death or inheritance
  - C. This unexpected news startles Dotty and Charles. The “helpful” contact is dead, and the fortune about to revert to the state. The city presents a first puzzle of shifting addresses and vanished fortunes
3. Embracing Opportunity with Good Humor
  - A. Despite the confusion, Charles and Dotty accept the offered apartment from the landlady
  - B. They resolve to call Ouida later, but Charles's French practicality surfaces again: Ouida, who lives lavishly, might not even need the money
  - C. Reflecting on the absurd and dreamlike circumstances, they continue their honeymoon unflustered, trusting they can adapt and find their own fun and purpose in the city

### IV. Illusion and Laughter in New Orleans

1. Errand of Mystery and Vanishing Houses
  - A. After settling into the old lady's apartment, Dotty and Charles discover unexpected mysteries:

<sup>122</sup> Acts 20:35.

they are told of an enormous inheritance of Amelia Garrard's—eight to ten million—but no rightful heir has appeared in four years.

B. Oddly, the promised fortune cannot be claimed and addresses sometimes vanish or don't exist; people seem to trade identities, leaving them confused.

C. Despite the strangeness, they accept the apartment, planning to call Ouida, who might be the missing heir, and decide to explore the city with a spirit of adventure.

## 2. Meeting Patricia: A Chameleon Companion

A. Patricia suddenly appears, claiming at first to be Charles's wife from Rio, then from St. Malo, weaving tales of heartbreak and desertion.

B. She constantly alters her stories, adopting accents, languages, and personas; though suspicious, Dotty and Charles soon suspect it's a good-natured prank arranged by friends back home, meant to ensure they enjoy their honeymoon fully.

C. Realizing the ruse, they embrace Patricia as a playful companion rather than an interloper.

## 3. Long Nights of Revelry and Lost Landmarks

A. Dotty, Charles, and Patricia roam New Orleans—its clubs, bars, and waterfront—meeting English seamen, shrimper folk, and assorted odd characters.

B. They immerse themselves in noise, jazz, and carnival-like chaos, searching for Edenic magic but finding only illusions: cars and even their rented house disappear, only to reappear the next day.

C. The city itself toys with them, shifting, concealing, then restoring their possessions, suggesting that friends or fate orchestrate these playful confusions.

## 4. Philosophers and Fools: Conversations at Dawn

A. In all-night bars, they meet pseudo-philosophers—like Leo Hanrahan—who muse on human existence, mud, and methods to escape the mortal coil.

B. The dialogue is a swirl of high-flown nonsense and genuine inquiry, mirroring the surreal, dreamlike quality of their stay.

C. Dotty tries to restore harmony by playing better music, but the entrenched cacophony of New Orleans nightlife resists redemption.

## 5. An Odd Network of Helping Hands

A. Patricia, slipping in and out of disguises, seems connected to people Dotty and Charles know. She procures cars from nowhere and leads them to hidden haunts.

B. Even as confusion deepens—houses locked against them, familiar landladies claiming ignorance, and their borrowed car vanishing—they trust Patricia's guidance.

C. Eventually, their apartment, car, and belongings reappear, and the first lady (or her double) reassures them that all is well. They laugh, understanding it was a grand, elaborate prank.

## 6. Departing with Mystery Intact

A. On the brink of leaving, Dotty finally finds her address book and identifies Patricia as Finnegan's sister, tying her back to their old circle at home.

B. This final revelation confirms that their friends orchestrated the escapades, blending real acquaintances with the city's madness to spice up their honeymoon.

C. Though the truth emerges, many small mysteries remain unsolved—vanishing fortunes, dual

landladies, shifting identities—but the couple is content to leave them as part of the city's charm

7. Back Home: A Return to the Real Place for a Honeymoon

A. Tired yet amused, Dotty and Charles head back to Galveston. New Orleans was bizarre and lively, but Galveston offers the simple perfection they cherish.

B. Crossing into Texas, they reflect on trickery, identity, and the nature of fun—Dotty clutching her address book, Charles musing



## Chapter 16

### Overview

Dotty and Charles begin their married life in a broken-down bed and navigate everyday hardships without ever quarreling. Charles alternates between staying at home and taking short sea voyages aboard ships like the *Spogelset*, *Der Rochen*, and *Saint Noire*. Dotty invests in parish life, attempts to bear children, and, after losing one pregnancy and nearly losing her own life, cares for neighbors' young children. Eventually, a hurricane named *Ernestine* drives the *Saint Noire* into peril, and Charles never returns. In her grief, Dotty turns her anger on God, accusing Him of betrayal.

### Summary

Charles bounces Dotty out of their bed whenever he turns over at night. He learned to flip himself mid-sleep from his time on ships with hammocks, which leads Dotty to fall onto the floor repeatedly in their old, spring-sprung mattress. Despite this inconvenience, they never quarrel.

Charles mostly works short shipping voyages to Cuba, the Islands, Central America, sometimes Rio, and once returns to France to see his family. He tries to spend long stretches at home, which pleases Dotty. They make friends beyond the old bar crowd, including other couples in their parish,

and Dotty resolves to learn about city government, taxes, and the Church. She joins the Altar Society and the Third Order, becoming active in her faith.

Dotty becomes pregnant and proclaims it joyful, calling even morning sickness “glorious.” She encourages other women to experience motherhood. Then she loses her child after stepping in front of a car. Although deeply saddened, she chooses not to “revolt” in anger. She prays, questioning God’s plan, but remains subdued despite the heartbreak.

Charles, also devastated by the miscarriage, tries to comfort Dotty. He writes letters for her to open if he dies at sea, wanting to ensure she hears from him afterward. Dotty continues praying to God but grows more aware of the starkness in suffering.

Needing to keep busy, Dotty cuts back her shifts at the Old Wooden Ship and devotes her days to watching eight or nine local children while their mothers work. She leads them on outings to beaches, fishing piers, and amusements, at times with help from a friend known as Soft-Talk Susie Kutz. She even jokes to strangers that she is the medical wonder mother of nine singletons.

During Charles’s home visits, Dotty and he take the children on bigger excursions, or simply spend time together. Dotty remains disappointed that she does not get pregnant again, chiding Charles about it in jest. She carefully keeps Charles’s shipping itineraries private, so nobody else knows that he sets sail on the Saint Noire from Caracas as a severe hurricane named Ernestine approaches.

When news arrives that the Saint Noire is in trouble, Dotty refuses to read or listen to dispatches. A cablegram eventually arrives, which she will not open. She knows Charles must be lost at sea. Consumed by grief, she furiously addresses God, accusing Him of cruelly seizing Charles and betraying their bargain. She concludes the chapter with an impassioned rejection of the divine, calling God “the Old Serpent.”

(Arkansas), (Betsy Mish), (Big Spring), (Brazil), (Brazos), (Caracas), (Caribbean), (Catherine Collins), (Central America), (Charles), (Colorado), (Concho County), (Cuba), (Der Rochen), (Dotty), (Ernestine), (Esteban), (France), (Freeport), (Galveston), (Jack Oak County), (Little Dutch Eckel), (Louisiana), (Mary Parisi), (Matagordos Bay), (Muskogee Indian), (Old Wooden Ship), (Rio), (Saint Noire), (Seeley), (Soft-Talk Susie Kutz), (Spogelset), (West Beach)

**Dotty:** In Chapter XVI, Dotty’s life is marked by domestic adjustments, community involvement, spiritual inquiry, joy in pregnancy, and profound loss. Early on, she complains to Charles about being bounced out of bed whenever he turns over, yet finds humor in it and decides she must adapt rather than sleep elsewhere. Dotty delights in having Charles at home and hopes he can secure a shore job eventually. She and Charles befriend other young couples who share similar values, including engagement with their church and their community. Dotty grows interested in civic affairs,

plans to register to vote, learns about taxes, and urges Charles to become a citizen. She joins study groups, reacquaints herself with her heritage, and becomes active in the Altar Society.

The chapter highlights Dotty's enthusiasm about her pregnancy, which she praises as a wonderful and meaningful experience. She jokes with Soft-Talk Susie Kutz that no one else seems to appreciate it as much as she does, even relishing its discomforts. She speaks of "pig people" who despise the miracle of life but notes that many strangers now treat her with kindness simply because she carries new life. Dotty also engages in philosophical reflections about creation's flaws, using the landscapes of Jack Oak County and Louisiana's marshes as metaphors, and even directs these thoughts toward God, questioning divine craftsmanship.

As time passes, Dotty maintains correspondence with Charles's family in France, visits Mary Parisi daily, and continues her service at the Old Wooden Ship. Tragically, she loses her child and is later hit by a car, yet, although grieving, she does not rebel against fate or God. Instead, she tries to find meaning, recognizing her own culpability in daydreaming and absolving the driver. Dotty cares for others' children, taking them on outings, persuading acquaintances to treat them, and infusing their days with adventure and laughter. She jokes about Charles being a pirate, turns everyday errands into fun expeditions, and dreams of travel inspired by historical figures like Esteban and Cabeza de Vaca.

Despite her playful resilience, Dotty's optimism is tested again by the absence of a new pregnancy. She challenges Charles on this, complains when he cannot repeat the miracle of conception, and then endures a more devastating blow: the news of Charles's death at sea during a hurricane. She receives a cablegram confirming her worst fear without opening it, and this final tragedy unleashes her wrath at God. She accuses the divine of cold-blooded cruelty, recalling their broken bargains and sacrifices, railing against a deity who takes all that she loves and leaves her bereft.

### Dotty's Apostrophe

<i>Idea</i>	<i>Speaker's Attitude</i>	<i>References/Examples Mentioned</i>	<i>Critique/Commentary</i>	<i>Implied Meaning/Interpretation</i>
"You think You are the only one who can make things...What could You do in this without me?"	Challenging, confrontational	Creation of a human with three billion unique cells	Asserts that God is not sole creator; the speaker claims credit for collaboration.	Suggests creative partnership between the speaker and God, questioning divine exclusivity.
"Soft-Talk Susie says it's been done before. It has not been done before."	Defensive, prideful	The uniqueness of creating a human being with so many cells	Rejects another's dismissal of originality.	Speaker insists on the uniqueness and novelty of this creation.



<i>Critique of God's "creations and poetry"</i>	Critical, blunt	Jack Oak County land, certain rivers (Arkansas, Red, Missouri), marshy Louisiana	Condemns specific natural formations as flawed, poorly made, lacking inspiration.  Compares God to an inferior Wordsworth	Compares God's natural creations to poetic works, some deemed inferior, questioning divine craftsmanship.
<i>"Land...like bricks without straw"</i>	Disappointed, scornful	Jack Oak County's thin, easily eroded land	Metaphor of land as poorly constructed building materials.	Earthly landscapes are seen as unfinished or substandard "poetry" by God.
<i>Rivers described as "sick snakes" and "aimless"</i>	Mocking, disapproving	The Arkansas, Red, Missouri rivers	Accuses God of creating rivers that are meandering, useless, and chaotic.	Suggests nature's imperfections reflect careless or haphazard divine work.
<i>"In Louisiana...You forgot to bottom the land...made marshes"</i>	Frustrated, accusing	Marshy, un-bottomed areas in Louisiana	Claims God's negligence led to swampy, foul landscapes.	Implies a divine oversight or intentional message in flawed landscapes.
<i>Comparing divine "inferior stuff" to Wordsworth and Eliot/MacLeish</i>	Culturally aware, ironic	Poets like Wordsworth, T.S. Eliot ("Eliott"), and Archibald MacLeish	Deems God's poetic attempts as sometimes as poor as human poets' worst works.	Uses literary analogy to stress that even God can produce uninspired "art" in creation.
<i>"I am told that You do good work on mountains and islands... We will see some of Your better work."</i>	Hopeful, still discerning	Brittany coast, Irish lake	Acknowledges God's talent in some places, plans to see them.	Believes divine craftsmanship varies; some places are masterpieces worth traveling to see.
<i>"Your protection... You have half-promised. A silence is half a promise."</i>	Cautiously optimistic	God's implied but unstated protection for the family	Interprets divine silence as a form of promise or covenant.	Suggests faith or trust in a non-verbal divine assurance despite criticisms.

## I. Learning to Sleep with a Sailor's Habits

1. A Bouncy, Broken-Backed Bed
  - A. Their bed is old, with two mattresses making it high and humpbacked, causing it to be very springy
  - B. Charles, accustomed to hammocks at sea, has developed a peculiar way of turning over at night: he jumps straight up and lands on his other side
  - C. Every time he does this in bed, he inadvertently bounces Dotty out onto the floor
2. Good-Humored Resignation
  - A. The noise of Dotty hitting the floor wakes them both; Charles apologizes, but finds a bit funny
  - B. Dotty acknowledges it's initially humorous but hopes to find a better way, yet she doesn't truly resent it
  - C. She suggests they continue sleeping in bed, believing perhaps she can learn to roll with the bounce rather than falling out
3. Instincts of the Sea and Home
  - A. Charles explains that he cannot easily change his sleeping instinct, as doing so might cause him to roll out of hammocks on the ship
  - B. Dotty accepts this with grace, finding even this quirk preferable to many potential marital troubles

## II. A Marriage without Quarrels and a Sailor's Homecomings

1. Harmonious Union
  - A. Charles and Dotty never quarrel; it is simply not possible for them
  - B. This fact, contrary to the "sacred clichés" of marriage that insist quarrels are inevitable, marks their relationship as unusual and deeply stable
2. Charles's Work at Sea and Onshore Layovers
  - A. Charles sails on three ships: the *Saint Noire*, the *Spogelset*, and *Der Rochen*, handling fruit, oil, or taking short trips to nearby lands<sup>123</sup>
  - B. He arranges his journeys to have long layovers at home, prioritizing time with Dotty over continuous voyages
  - C. Once he even returns to France for family blessings, but always he tries to maximize months at home
3. Integration into a More Settled Life
  - A. Dotty and Charles begin to form friendships with other young couples who share interests beyond bar-hopping
  - B. They show interest in faith, community, local government, and even saving money moderately
  - C. A new circle of friends provides stability and shared values, moving Dotty's life further

123 "Saint Noir" literally means "Black Saint" (French), "Spogelset" is likely derived from "Spøgelset," meaning "the ghost" (Danish), and "Der Rochen" is German for "the ray."

- from the reckless crowds of her past
4. Growing Intellectual and Civic Engagement
    - A. Dotty, once steeped in books but scattered in worldview, now learns systematically from clubs and discussions
    - B. She plans to register to vote when of age, hoping for a time when honest candidates appear
    - C. She discovers that she is “less of an orphan” than secular cynics—her faith, heritage, and community tie her to something larger than herself

### III. Embracing Faith, Building a Family, and Confronting Loss

1. A Renewed Spiritual Life
  - A. Dotty joins the Altar Society and the Third Order<sup>124</sup>, fully embracing her faith and church community
  - B. She becomes a “churchy,” openly dedicated to religious practices, surprising given her past struggles with belief
2. An Overflowing Cup of Happiness
  - A. Dotty describes her life as overflowing with blessings: her marriage, her restored faith, and new friendships
  - B. Charles, though unassuming, is a remarkable husband in Dotty’s eyes — kind, easy to live with, and genuinely loving
3. The Joys of Expecting a Child
  - A. Dotty becomes pregnant and finds every aspect of it joyful, even the discomforts
  - B. She muses on telling others how wonderful it is, hoping to inspire a positive perspective on motherhood
4. A Moral Compass in Her New World
  - A. Pregnancy also becomes a touchstone, revealing who among her acquaintances react with kindness or with the “pig people” attitude she once knew
  - B. Strangers show care, reinforcing Dotty’s sense of belonging in this transformed life
5. An Unimaginable Loss
  - A. Dotty loses the child unexpectedly
  - B. Charles is present and supportive, an essential comfort
  - C. The loss deeply wounds her, marking the first severe hardship since she rebuilt her faith

### IV. Physical Injury, Further Loss, and Renewed Appeals to God

1. An Accident and Hospital Vigil
  - A. Dotty, still grieving her lost child, is hit by a car while daydreaming, causing injury and a

124 .An altar society is a parish group maintaining the church’s altar and sanctuary, while a third order is a lay association linked to a religious order, practicing its spirituality without taking vows.

- brief hospital stay
  - B. She admits fault and ensures the driver knows she does not blame him
  - C. Charles and a host of friends tend her constantly, demonstrating the community's warmth and her new stability in life
- 2. Talking Again to the Silent Divine
  - A. Dotty, though injured, does not rebel as before — she is in pain and confused, but not in revolt
  - B. Still, she confronts God once more, demanding to know why He allowed her child to die and now this accident, questioning His motives, using her pain to open a dialogue on suffering and divine silence
- 3. Changing Tone and Contrition
  - A. In her address to God, Dotty swings from accusing Him of cruelty to retracting her harsh words, begging Him not to abandon her
  - B. She admits her dependence on Him, acknowledging that He holds all “the checkers” in the cosmic game
- 4. The Limits of Time and Healing
  - A. Lafferty observes that time doesn't truly heal all wounds — it can only provide a mask of composure
  - B. Dotty internalizes her pain, accepting what she cannot understand, though it leaves scars that time cannot erase
- 5. Charles's Absence and Dotty's Recovery of Purpose
  - A. As Dotty recovers, Charles eventually must return to sea; she realizes she didn't fully consider his grief and worry
  - B. Dotty adjusts her life once more: cutting back on bar work, caring for neighbors' children, finding meaning in nurturing others and exploring the bay and beyond
  - C. She transforms her grief into service, generosity, and adventure, reaffirming the life she and Charles built, even as new uncertainties loom
- 6. Future Plans and Enduring Hope
  - A. Dotty dreams of exploring bays, traveling to Ireland and France someday, and living fully despite past losses
  - B. Although she tried to become pregnant again without immediate success, she retains faith in their future together
- 7. A Second Blow: The Saint Noire and Silence
  - A. Charles ships again on the Saint Noire, leaving Dotty to trust in his return
  - B. A hurricane, “Ernestine,” strikes; Dotty fears for Charles, stops listening to dispatches, and receives a cablegram she never opens, knowing its grim message
  - C. Left with only fury at God, Dotty accuses Him of devouring all she loves. She calls Him the Old Serpent, concluding the chapter with a stark, anguished defiance<sup>125</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Job 1–2.



## Chapter 17

### Overview

Dotty arrives at the Wooden Ship bar in the early morning, unable to speak or swallow after a night of heavy drinking. Lazarus Reilly, the proprietor, and several regulars—such as Daniel, Ouida Garrard, and Aloysius McGivern—help her recover and piece together what happened. Throughout the day, other patrons come and go, engaging in domino, pitch, and checker games that last for hours on end. Dotty, though still fragile, gradually regains her mischievous energy, intercepting letters and provoking surprises for her friends—particularly Catherine Cadensus. Finally, the text reveals that Dotty continues to receive weekly letters from her late husband, Charles Peisson, which she refuses to open, unwilling to admit his death fully.

### Summary

Shortly after six in the morning, in what is called “the hour of the dog,” Dotty comes into the Wooden Ship bar in a physically shaken state. Lazarus Reilly, who is very large and often sad, holds her hands and helps her drink from a glass, noting she cannot speak or swallow at first. She tries to write something on paper but fails and rests her head on the bar in tears.

Soon, Daniel, the cleanup boy, arrives with a folk remedy involving “a chicken and cut it open alive,” which Lazarus Reilly offers to Dotty, but she declines. She slowly regains the ability to swallow and speak, and she greets Daniel as well as Lazarus Reilly. Her face is described starkly—“a box of bones,” her hair disheveled—but they all note she was beautiful only hours before and may be again later.

At about six-thirty, silent patrons—likened to ghosts—come in, take quick shots, and leave, while a long-running domino game starts at a window table. By seven, a worried young man arrives, asking if anyone has seen “that cute little Dotty” from the night before. Unaware that the changed woman by the bar is in fact Dotty, he fails to recognize her and goes away. As time passes, a pitch game also begins, fishermen purchase cases of beer and wine, and various workers take brisk morning drinks before heading to their jobs.

When Ouida Garrard enters at some point after seven, she brings Dotty her missing shoe and calls her “la pauvre Cendrillon.” Dotty’s face continues to recover; her eyes and expression gradually regain their liveliness. Aloysius McGivern kisses her near what he calls “the most beautiful curve in nature,” and Dotty empties her purse on the bar, revealing a “Go Man Go” button, a button marked “23rd Plenary Convention of the American Fluvifabricatori Society,” a rubber ball, fish hooks, dog biscuits, mismatched dice, and a tiny live turtle named Rubenstein. The same worried young man returns, but again does not recognize Dotty. She tells him to return later.

Shortly thereafter, Soft-Talk Susie Kutz comes in and brushes Dotty’s hair to a golden shine, washes her face, and begins her barmaid shift. By eleven, checker players occupy another table, and at eleven-thirty, Mr. Garnier, often wearing the only necktie in the place, arrives. He comments on Dotty’s sweet, serene, childlike beauty, and Lazarus Reilly explains she suffers but forgets. Soon after, the postman enters with letters, and Dotty intercepts one for Catherine Cadensus from “that little ol’ gopher up state.” Dotty confesses she has been responding to Catherine Cadensus’s suitor behind her back, effectively inviting him to come to town that day to surprise Catherine.

When confronted by Ouida Garrard and Soft-Talk Susie Kutz, Dotty remarks that she never reads her own letters, though she eagerly opens everyone else’s. The narrative then reveals that these letters arriving for Dotty are weekly missives from her late husband, Charles Peisson, written in advance of his death and mailed by a seaman friend. Unopened, the letters allow Dotty to deny fully that Charles Peisson has died.

(23rd Plenary Convention of the American Fluvifabricatori Society), (Aloysius McGivern), (Catherine Cadensus), (Cendrillon), (CHAPTER XVII), (Charles Peisson), (Crooked Ship), (Daniel), (Dotty), (Go

Man Go), (Lazarus Reilly), (Mrs. Schnabel), (Mr. Garnier), (Ouida Garrard), (Rubenstein), (Shrimp Boat Gorden), (snake pit), (Soft-Talk Susie Kutz), (the Wooden Ship)

**Dotty:** Dotty appears in a fragile state at six in the morning, unable to speak or swallow, at the Old Wooden Ship bar. Lazarus Reilly helps her drink slowly until her trembling subsides and she can finally talk, though she decides not to reveal what she initially wanted to say. As her hands regain steadiness, Dotty begins to fix her hair and comments on the young man who failed to recognize her in her morning condition. Throughout the morning, her appearance improves—her eyes brighten, her hair takes on a burnished gold quality after Susie brushes it, and Susie washes her face to a true radiance. Dotty demonstrates a mischievous streak when the postman arrives, predicting her letter's presence in his bag and offering to save him a walk. She tries to withhold others' letters for a while, jokingly claiming citizens can tamper with mail, though Susie and the postman object. After cherishing her own unopened letter, which she never intends to read, Dotty humorously recounts a story about leaving a bottle in a graveyard, then admits part of the tale is fabricated. She opens and reads Catherine Cadensus's letter aloud, imitating the sender's voice, and admits she has been intercepting and responding to Catherine's correspondence, setting up an unexpected meeting. Finally, she agrees to lend Ouida some of the letters but insists that their contents remain secret from her.

## I. A Morning of Quiet Desolation

1. Sorrow of the Fat Man
  - A. Lazarus Reilly a very fat man, is described as sad. Fat men may appear jolly at times, but deep within they harbor a dour sadness that never truly leaves them
  - B. His concern is profound, as though he feels Dotty's pain physically: her tremors s his bulk, her difficulty swallowing pains his throat by sympathy
2. Dotty's Weak and Mute Arrival
  - A. It is six in the morning, a grim hour when feral dogs roam the streets, adding menace to the world's dawn
  - B. Dotty enters Lazarus's bar (the Old Wooden Ship), but she can't speak or swallow properly. She's shaky, maybe battered, clearly suffering
  - C. Lazarus helps her drink from a glass, guiding her hands, patiently aiding her in taking a few sips until her shudders lessen
3. Questions and Attempted Communication
  - A. Lazarus asks if Dotty is broke or hurt; Dotty shakes her head no
  - B. She tries to write something down, but her trembling hands only produce confused, childlike scrawls
  - C. Overwhelmed, Dotty breaks down and weeps, unable to convey her ordeal in words
4. Daniel's Macabre Remedy
  - A. The negro clean-up boy, Daniel, suggests a gruesome cure involving fresh chicken blood

- and peppered onion to restore Dotty's vitality, demonstrating the bizarre folklore remedies known in these parts
- B. Dotty refuses the chicken-blood tonic, continuing to sip her drink. Bit by bit, she recovers enough control to speak and move
- 5. Emerging from Silence
  - A. After a few more sips, Dotty's voice returns haltingly
  - B. She indicates that what she wanted to say is better left unsaid, suggesting a burden on her soul or a desire to conceal some truth

## II. Reassembling Beauty and Identity

1. A Face Reduced to Bones
  - A. Dotty's face appears stark and skeletal, hair like straw — a ruin of her former beauty
  - B. Yet beneath this ravaged morning visage, a certain nobility of bone structure emerges, an odd attractiveness lurking in the worst of hangovers
2. Early Morning Regulars and Lifeless Conversations
  - A. Aloysius McGivern enters, making cryptic remarks about the beauty of nasal bones and facial curves, clearly referencing Dotty's stark features<sup>126</sup>
  - B. Other silent patrons drift in for quick shots before work, reviving just enough to shuffle back into their daily routines
  - C. A domino game starts at the window table, continuing for twenty hours, the players changing as the day wears on. It's a kind of timeless, cyclical existence in the bar
3. A Lost Young Man Returns
  - A. A distraught young man asks for "that cute little Dotty" who was having fun last night

<sup>126</sup> Vividly employs anatomical imagery to describe Dot's temporarily ravaged appearance, referring to the "inferior turbinates" and "maxillary," which are structures within the nasal cavity and upper jaw, respectively. Aloysius McGivern's remark that "the most beautiful curve in nature" lies at the junction of these features wryly elevates what would typically be perceived as disfigurement into an aesthetic ideal. There is some art satire going on. Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), the influential English painter and first president of the Royal Academy, discussed beauty and the ideal line in his *Discourses on Art*. While William Hogarth famously proposed the "line of beauty" as a serpentine curve, Reynolds mocked the idea, arguing that no single line or shape could be universally declared the "most beautiful." Instead, he maintained that beauty arises from general principles—proportion, harmony, simplicity, and variety—rather than any one definitive form. Thus, unlike Hogarth, who championed a specific "line of beauty," Reynolds placed greater emphasis on the collective effect of compositional elements and the cultivation of taste guided by a broad understanding of ideal forms. See Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), particularly Discourses III and VII.



- but fails to recognize her current skeletal form
  - B. Dotty, too transformed by the morning's ordeal, does not reveal herself, telling him Dotty will return later, a sort of playful deception
  - C. He departs, still confused.
- 4. Gradual Restoration
  - A. With each passing moment, Dotty's face softens, flesh returns to bone, eyes come alive, hair rearranged. She grows more recognizable and charming by the minute
  - B. Dotty's eyes, once dull, now sparkle again, revealing a mischievous "double rogue" nature beneath the hangover's husk
- 5. Friends and Tokens of Life
  - A. Shrimp Boat Gorden checks her pulse; Ouida soon arrives, restoring Dotty's missing shoe, completing another piece of her scattered self
  - B. Each small kindness — a shoe returned, a touch of concern — aids in Dotty's recovery and reassembly of her identity

### III. Renewing Beauty, Gathering Friends, and the Morning Crowd

1. Soft-Talk Susie's Restoration
  - A. Soft-Talk Susie Kutz arrives, immediately noting Dotty's hideous appearance
  - B. With a hairbrush and a few deft strokes, Susie transforms Dotty's straw-like hair into "burnished gold," a radiant effect lighting up the bar
  - C. After some washing and grooming, Dotty's face regains its lively freshness, her rogueish sparkle fully restored
2. Order Amid Chaos: Daily Games Commence
  - A. By eleven in the morning, more customers have arrived, including checker players at the window tables who will also play for hours
  - B. The bar accommodates these long, endless games like a timeless refuge where reality's rules are suspended
3. The Gentleman with a Necktie: Mr. Garnier
  - A. Mr. Garnier, one of the few gentlemen who wear a necktie, enters at his usual time
  - B. He observes Dotty from afar, noting her sweet, child-like serenity mixed with tragedy, unaware of her morning ordeal
  - C. Lazarus acknowledges Dotty's hidden sorrows, and Garnier admires her fortitude. Dotty greets him politely as he leaves
4. Dotty's Mail Ritual
  - A. The postman arrives, and Dotty demands to check his sack for her mail
  - B. She jokes about intercepting others' letters for amusement, opening them freely. However, she refuses to open her own letters
  - C. This paradox: Dotty pries into others' secrets yet preserves her own letters sealed.
5. Ouida's Questioning and Charles's Letters
  - A. Ouida queries why Dotty doesn't read her own mail. Dotty reveals she never opens

- letters from a certain source
- B. It's hinted these letters may be from Charles, who arranged for ongoing weekly dispatches after his death — a haunting gesture letting him “speak” to Dotty posthumously
  - C. By not reading them, Dotty denies reality, clinging to a half-fantasy where Charles is

#### IV. The Unopened Letters and Denial of Reality

1. Letters from Beyond
  - A. It is revealed that before Charles's death, he wrote fifty-two letters to Dotty, to be mailed one per week by a seaman friend, allowing him to “talk” to her for a year after he was gone
  - B. Dotty is aware of these letters. She admits to Ouida she never opens her own mail, particularly these letters
2. Clinging to Illusion
  - A. By refusing to open the letters, Dotty denies Charles's death, maintaining a fragile, suspended reality where his voice might still be alive inside sealed envelopes
  - B. This coping mechanism prevents her from fully accepting her loss, insulating her from the finality of his absence
3. A Secret Known Only to Dotty
  - A. Nobody else knows the truth about the letters, who they are from, or why Dotty refuses to read them
  - B. This private burden further isolates Dotty in her grief, even as she presents a lively, mischievous front to the world
  - C. The chapter ends with Dotty holding this secret



## Chapter 18

### Overview

Sam Engelbach, an old cattleman known as “the old gopher,” arrives in town to see Catherine Cadensus, believing she harbors romantic feelings for him based on conflicting letters. Unbeknownst to him, the passionate letters were forged by Dotty as a joke. Sam arrives and throws a wild party at the Old Wooden Ship, seemingly oblivious to Catherine’s attempts to clarify the misunderstanding. Ultimately, he reveals that he was never truly invested in marrying Catherine and is relieved to learn she isn’t psychotic. Meanwhile, Dotty, a troubled but vibrant woman, engages in self-destructive antics, including a staged suicide attempt. The story concludes with Dotty attempting to prove her self-control through sobriety and temporary employment, before she and Catherine visit Sam on his farm.

### Summary

Sam Engelbach, a small but lively cattleman from one of the German towns in Texas, arrives in Galvez to see Catherine Cadensus at the Old Wooden Ship, a renowned saloon. He has previously visited and enjoyed his time there, particularly his interactions with Catherine. Their correspondence

has confused him, as her letters alternate between polite dismissal and overwhelming passion. He eventually convinces himself that she has a split personality and decides to embrace the situation, traveling to town for an in-person encounter.

Catherine, widely regarded as the prettiest woman at the Old Wooden Ship, is anxious about Sam's arrival. Dotty, a mischievous friend, confesses that she fabricated the passionate letters to Sam, playing a prank that has now spiraled out of control. Catherine, distressed by the deception, fears hurting Sam's feelings.

When Sam arrives, he is as jovial as ever, greeting the women with kisses and treating the bar to an extravagant party. He hires a band, orders a thousand oysters and shrimp, and ensures that drinks flow freely. The party gains momentum as musicians and townspeople join in. Despite Catherine's repeated attempts to explain the misunderstanding, Sam remains distracted, sitting on various women's laps and fully enjoying himself.

As the night progresses, Catherine continues trying to broach the subject, but Sam never listens. Ultimately, when the party winds down and Sam ends up on Catherine's lap, she finally tells him about the letters. To her surprise, he already knows Dotty wrote them, having heard it from multiple women. Rather than being heartbroken, he is relieved—he had been worrying about how to reject Catherine himself.

Meanwhile, Dotty's instability becomes increasingly evident. She stages a dramatic but non-lethal suicide attempt, cutting herself superficially to gain attention. The deception is quickly uncovered by Soft-Talk Susie, who refuses to indulge Dotty's behavior. When Dotty is taken into custody for causing a disturbance, her friends refuse to bail her out at first, forcing her to face the consequences. Eventually, Catherine, Lazarus, and Aloysius pay her fine.

Dotty, still seeking validation, resolves to prove her self-control by staying sober for a week. She secures temporary work at a trucking company and later at a shipping office, attempting to pay off her house taxes. Though intelligent and adaptable, she is fired when her lack of qualifications is discovered. Dejected, she accepts Catherine's invitation to visit Sam on his farm. Catherine calls Sam collect and convinces him to send money for their trip. Before leaving, Dotty entrusts the keys to her house to Ouida, still holding a grudge against Soft-Talk Susie for her earlier toughness.

(Aloysius McGivern), (Buffalo Chips Dugan), (Catherine Cadensus), (Dotty), (Father Knight), (Galvez), (Hildegarde), (Jeannie), (Lazarus Reilly), (Little Midnight Mulling), (Mary Parisi), (Mercedes Morrero), (Miss Universe), (Mildred Davidson), (Mossback McCarty), (Ouida), (Sam Engelbach), (Schullenberg), (Sea Platter), (ShotGun Schaeffer), (Soft-Talk Susie), (Tippio), (Vivia)

**Dotty:** In Chapter XVIII, Dotty's involvement centers around the trouble she has stirred up for Catherine and her handling of emotional turmoil through feigned nonchalance. Early in the chapter, Catherine worries about her "old gopher" being in town and sounding unstable in his letters. Dotty

identifies the word “psychotic” as fitting the situation, admitting she discovered the term in letters Catherine never received. Catherine accuses Dotty of interfering and calls her vile, while Dotty shrugs off the insult, noting that even Ouida, who loves her, uses the same word. Despite their frustration, Catherine and Ouida both affirm their love for Dotty, even as they insist she must find a way out of the mess she created. Dotty says it’s like a barbed hook that will cause pain if removed, and confesses she wrote letters pretending to be Catherine, letting herself go completely.

Later, when a distraught young man returns to the bar at the Old Wooden Ship, Dotty is fully recovered from her morning weakness. She contacts Mary Parisi to report having “a live one,” implying excitement over Sam Engelbach’s arrival. During a party, Sam ends up sitting on Dotty’s lap, leading Catherine to observe that Dotty appears happy and carefree. Sam, having formed an impression of Dotty as tortured, hears Catherine explain that Dotty actually will awaken in Hell in a few hours, that she’s vivacious but weaker than the rest, and that she refuses any help. Susie believes Dotty’s husband is dead, and that Dotty, who still receives letters in his handwriting but never opens them, keeps her secrets guarded. Sam suggests taking Dotty to his farm for a couple of weeks to see if it helps her heal, and Catherine agrees to ask Dotty and possibly arrange the trip.

In another incident, Dotty fakes a suicide attempt, prompting Soft-Talk Susie to call her a “fake” and a “double-dyed fake.” Susie orders Dotty to wash the bloody linens by hand and warns her not to tamper with her bandages to fake more bleeding. Susie also threatens the others against coddling Dotty, holding them accountable if they fail to stand firm. Dotty, meanwhile, proposes a bet to prove she can stay sober for a week—simply to prove that she can. Before going on vacation with Catherine to visit Sam Engelbach, Dotty hands over the keys to her house to Ouida. This planned getaway marks another effort to address her issues, though the chapter does not confirm whether the trip ultimately brings any resolution.

## I. Introduction of Sam Engelbach’s Return

1. Sam Engelbach’s Background
  - A. Known as the “old gopher” from a German town (Castroville, Weimar, or Schullenberg)
    - a. Had previously visited Galveston (Galvez)
    - b. Enjoyed himself at the Old Wooden Ship bar
    - c. Developed a fondness for Catherine Cadensus
2. Confusing Letter Exchange
  - A. Sam wrote to Catherine after returning home
    - a. Initially received a sensible, politely discouraging reply
    - b. Subsequent letters alternated between reserved kindness and passionate “scorchers”
  - B. Noticeable Differences in Handwriting and Tone
    - a. Led Sam to suspect Catherine might have two personalities
    - b. Considered the possibility of her being “psychotic”
3. Decision to Revisit Galveston
  - A. Three successive passionate letters persuaded him
    - a. Intrigued by the mystery and inconsistent letters

- b. Willing to risk reputation and money to solve the puzzle
- B. Resolves to go back to Galveston and see Catherine in person

## II. Catherine's Exceptional Beauty and Character

1. Catherine's Unrivaled Attractiveness
  - A. Possibly the prettiest girl to ever enter the Old Wooden Ship
    - a. Surpassed even other famously beautiful women, like the "Miss Universe" who couldn't gain entry
    - b. Considered kinder and gentler than most, never wanting to hurt anyone's feelings
2. Her Gentle Nature
  - A. Unlike others who are sticky or insincere in kindness, Catherine's compassion is genuine
    - a. Extends sympathy to all, including elderly admirers like Sam Engelbach
    - b. Would rather endure discomfort herself than cause pain to another

## III. Learning the Old Gopher is Coming to Town

1. Catherine's Sudden Worry
  - A. News reaches her that Sam Engelbach, the old gopher, is returning to Galveston
  - B. She realizes she never intended to encourage him to such an extent
    - a. Wonders how he got the wrong idea
    - b. Fears hurting his feelings when clarifying the misunderstanding
2. Confiding in Dotty
  - A. Catherine turns to Dotty for help in understanding the situation
  - B. Dotty admits her "finger in it up to the elbow"
    - a. Dotty wrote the passionate "scorcher" letters, pretending to be Catherine
    - b. Resulting in the old gopher's confusion and Catherine's current predicament
3. Catherine's Reaction to Dotty's Trick
  - A. Catherine calls Dotty "vile" for leading the old man on
    - a. Deeply troubled that a kindly man may be embarrassed or distressed
  - B. Realizes Dotty's prank leaves her "on the hook" with Sam's expectations

## IV. The Old Gopher's Arrival and Initial Behavior

1. Sam's Unexpected Mood
  - A. Contrary to Catherine's fears, Sam is neither distraught nor timid
  - B. He enters the Old Wooden Ship cheerfully, kissing all the girls, announcing free drinks
    - a. Shows no immediate sign of heartbreak or demanding explanations
    - b. Instead, seems intent on celebrating and having fun
2. Catherine Attempts to Explain
  - A. Catherine tries to approach Sam to clarify the letter situation

- B. Each time, Sam is distracted, sitting on another girl's lap, ignoring her attempts
  - a. Her explanations go unheard amid laughter and welcoming chaos

## V. The Grand Party at the Old Wooden Ship

1. Sam's Generosity and Festive Spirit
  - A. Contrary to Catherine's image of him as a "poor old man" needing gentle rejection
    - a. Sam is lively, ordering that drinks be on him "for the duration"
    - b. Sends Aloysius McGivern out to hire a band or combo
    - c. Dispatches Shotgun Schaeffer to get one thousand oysters and one thousand shrimp
  - B. Others follow suit, bringing more supplies and setting a celebratory tone
2. Accelerating the Celebration
  - A. Word spreads that the Wooden Ship is "on full steam" tonight
    - a. People flock in, creating a carnival atmosphere
    - b. Musicians carry a piano in, others bring their instruments
  - B. Food and Drink Overflows
    - a. Oysters, shrimp, crackers, hot sauce, peanuts arrive in massive quantities
    - b. Additional liquor, wine, and even a barrel of crackers are brought in
    - c. Mary Parisi's catering service is summoned for professional handling

## VI. Catherine's Attempts to Explain the Letters

1. Repeated Interruption
  - A. Catherine tries multiple times to approach Sam and clarify the letter situation
    - a. She wants to tell him Dotty wrote the passionate letters
    - b. Each time, Sam is preoccupied, sitting on another girl's lap or involved in some new diversion
  - B. Impossible to Gain His Attention
    - a. Noise and laughter drown her voice
    - b. Sam's focus on fun and sociability leaves Catherine's serious confession unheard
2. Varied Company and Activities
  - A. Domino players keep at their game despite the crowd
  - B. Pitch and checker players eventually give up due to overcrowding
  - C. Barbershop quartets form, music thrives; the entire bar pulses with energy and sound

## VII. Mossback McCarty's Brief Interventions

1. The Police Check
  - A. Mossback McCarty comes by, inquiring about a possible riot
    - a. The revelers feign innocence, promise "discretion," ironically singing loudly about it
  - B. The officer leaves, resigned, while the party intensifies

2. Catherine's Growing Concern
  - A. She worries more about hurting Sam, believing he is fragile and in love
  - B. Unaware that Sam is fully enjoying himself and not troubled by misunderstandings

### VIII. Resolution as the Party Winds Down

1. Sam Finally Settling Near Catherine
  - A. Late in the night, the crowd thins and Sam comes to rest on Catherine's own lap
  - B. At last, Catherine has the opportunity to speak to him privately
2. Confession and Understanding
  - A. Catherine attempts to explain the letter mix-up, expecting to break bad news gently
  - B. Sam surprises her: he already knows Dotty wrote the "scorcher" letters
    - a. He was never misled about marrying Catherine; rather, he's relieved
    - b. Admits he was worried how to refuse her if she truly wanted marriage, now both are off the hook
3. Insights into Dotty's State
  - A. Sam and Catherine discuss Dotty's complexity and inner torment
  - B. Catherine notes Dotty's vivacity but also a hidden suffering and her refusal to be helped
4. Suggestion of a Farm Visit
  - A. Sam invites Catherine to bring Dotty to his farm, hoping a change of scenery might help Dotty
  - B. Catherine agrees to consider it, planning to ask for money for the trip later
5. Closing the Night
  - A. The party eventually ends
  - B. Soft-Talk Susie carries the sleeping Sam upstairs to a storage room, laying him on an old cot

### IX. Subsequent Developments and Dotty's New Crisis

1. Weeks Later: Susie and Father Knight
  - A. Soft-Talk Susie goes to see Father Knight about Dotty's ongoing spiritual struggles
  - B. Father Knight laments the "leakage" in the Church, the difficulty in saving souls like Dotty's who refuse all help
2. Dotty's Fake Suicide Attempt
  - A. Dotty staged a dramatic scene with superficial cuts, calling for a priest, seeking sympathy
  - B. Mossback McCarty and others see through the ruse, refusing to be manipulated again
  - C. Dotty is fined for causing a disturbance; Catherine, Lazarus, and Aloysius pay the fine
3. Consequences and Chastening
  - A. Susie forces Dotty to wash the bloodied bed linens by hand, showing no pity
  - B. Denied coddling, Dotty sobers up. She tries holding a job for a month to pay taxes on her house



## X. Small Victories and Planning for the Future

1. Brief Employment and Attempted Stability
  - A. Dotty works for a trucking company for a month, then briefly in a shipping office
  - B. Fired from the second job due to lying about qualifications, she still shows some responsibility attempting to save her house
2. Departure with Catherine for the Farm
  - A. With Catherine's vacation starting, they decide to accept Sam's suggestion: a trip to his farm might help Dotty recover further
  - B. Dotty leaves house keys with Ouida, preparing for another journey aimed at restoring her well-being



## Chapter 19

### Overview

Dotty, originally from Jack Oak County, Oklahoma, has lived mostly away from open farmland and now spends time on an Island that lacks what she considers true countryside. She and her friend Catherine visit Sam Engelbach's cattle farm, which spans over six hundred acres, and there they briefly enjoy a rustic lifestyle alongside Sam's half-sister Hulda. Dotty wrestles with memories of her deceased husband, Charles, and the unsettling weekly letters he left behind to be read after his death. Her internal conflict intensifies as she questions her faith, grapples with community expectations (such as attending Mass), and faces the haunting realization that she must reengage in life's deeper spiritual struggle. In the end, Dotty understands that her battle—particularly with grief, belief, and her connection to Charles—cannot be avoided or numbed forever.

### Summary

Dotty has not spent much time in the countryside, even though she was born in Jack Oak County, Oklahoma, which she left when she was very small; that place, she recalls, was more drifting desert than what she would call real country. She once lived in a house on Elm Road that stood on the

edge of the country, but it was actually a town home with a garden. Since returning to the Island for the second time, Dotty has not traveled far beyond it, except for short outings with Charles. She notes that the Island itself is just a sand-bar about thirty-five miles long, featuring empty spaces, dunes, and inlets, and she remarks it is not what a rancher would call country.

Sam Engelbach, they discover, is not a cattle rancher but a cattle farmer, believing that any establishment with more than one-third of its acreage under the plow is a farm. He has six hundred and eleven acres, originally six hundred and forty, except part of the land sits in the middle of the Colorado River, and another corner across the river had been sold long ago by Sam's father. Sam grows clover and row crops on the portion of the property that is plowable, while the remaining pasture—nearly two-thirds—is rough but beautiful. His house is large inside but cluttered, something Catherine declares “needs a woman's touch.” Sam responds that Catherine had her chance before to fix it up, and now he jokingly warns them not to overdo cleaning, explaining his theory that accumulated dirt can act as a preservative for a house.

Dotty assures him she is “a thin-layer-of-dust girl” by nature, but any hope of the three of them living there freely in casual comfort disappears when Sam's half-sister Hulda arrives from a neighboring farm for an extended visit. Catherine refers to Hulda as a sort of “chaperone,” jokingly asking for the German word, and Dotty supplies “Anstandsdame,” revealing a habit of knowing random answers. Despite the potential inconvenience, Dotty and Catherine win Hulda over with what Dotty calls a “peculiar brand of honey” that only city folks seem able to offer, charming her quickly. Hulda admits she once worried about the kind of girlfriends Sam met in Houston and Galveston, but now sees how wrong her impressions were and praises Dotty and Catherine as the nicest young ladies she has ever known. Hoping they will settle locally, Hulda arranges for two eligible young men—whom Dotty calls “square heads”—to escort them on Saturday night to a dance in the hall over the fire station in either Weimar or Schullenberg.

Before that Saturday arrives, however, events unfold earlier in the week. Dotty is not a strong rider, though Catherine loves horseback riding, and Dotty suffers through a ride on Monday. On Tuesday, Sam invites Dotty and Catherine to go after a coyote or a swift that has been bothering his geese and chickens, suggesting they use horses and possibly a gun. Dotty, disliking both riding and shooting, claims she is too morose to join and heads out by herself on horseback, only to dismount as soon as she's out of sight. She frees her horse, Ned (or Neddy), from the bridle because she believes bits might hurt a horse's mouth. Ned remains loyal and follows her while she walks the hills and valleys the entire day.

During her walk, Dotty jokes aloud with Ned about the concept of going “up dale” instead of “up hill,” noting that certain wordplay does not practically translate to real life. She sometimes grabs Ned's tail to help climb long slopes. From the hills, they see nearby towns, including one called Flatonia, whose name Dotty finds unappealing. She also mentions Muldoon, calling it the lone “Irish thing” in what she refers to as “Little Germany.” As they walk, Dotty reflects that Texas is not

actually ugly at close range—its intricacy of short grass, tiny flowers, and the soft hum of insects wins her admiration.

Eventually, Dotty and Ned enter a portion of Sam's land, traversing a small stream called Engelback (named after Sam or one of his forebears) and referred to lightheartedly by Dotty as "Angel Brook." Dotty feels oddly haunted there and connects the place to old plans she once had with Charles: they had intended to follow the trail used centuries ago by Cabeza de Vaca and Esteban along the Colorado River. They would drive and walk where necessary, camping on the same sites those explorers used. Dotty realizes this very spot—up a side stream from the river—matches the kind of location Cabeza de Vaca's party might have chosen for a safe camp with clearer water. She calls it Angel Brook, regrets that Charles never returned to fulfill their plan, and notes that she has shown up with Ned instead.

She finds evidence of a more recent campfire, complete with watermelon rinds and beer cans, and ironically calls these modern items "anomalous intrusions," like finding a "Landon campaign" reference in an ancient Etruscan tomb. Musing further, Dotty recalls how Cabeza de Vaca and Esteban were the first "white men" to ascend the Colorado, though Esteban was actually a Black man—Dotty jokes about the contradictory term. Later, she addresses what she calls the "Old Jew from the Beginning," marveling at the intricate detail of the grass and teasing that if she herself were creating grass, she would make a perfect duplicate for every blade instead of forging each one differently. The day grows dark, and Ned nudges her to signal it is time to go home, so Dotty painfully remounts and rides back without a bridle.

Time passes, and on the Sunday after the Saturday dance, Dotty frets about how to avoid going to church with the local Catholic community. Catherine tells her it is a simple choice to go or not to go, but Dotty worries about Hulda's opinion. Although Dotty declares she no longer believes in any of it, she still fears how Hulda might view her if she refuses to attend Mass. Catherine points out the inconsistency of Dotty being unafraid of God yet worried about Hulda's judgment. Dotty complains further about how "the Old Serpent" (her mocking name for a higher power's meddling) has maneuvered her into this awkward scenario, but she reluctantly goes to Mass, filled with sullen resentment.

Meanwhile, back on the Island, Soft-Talk Susie and Ouida discover old letters from Charles addressed to Dotty. Ouida admits to reading them, claiming Dotty told her it was fine. Ouida notes these letters were apparently meant to be delivered after Charles's death, and they contain unnervingly accurate details, as though written from beyond. Susie remarks that Charles always had a doorway into both worlds. Ouida wonders aloud if Susie, too, knows more than she seems. Susie tells Ouida to stop reading further, but acknowledges the letters might have steadied Dotty if she had read them on schedule.

Dotty and Catherine stay with Sam for two weeks. Dotty muses aloud about how being around German people is oddly comforting: they are good-humored (without what she considers genuine

humor) and seem sure of themselves even when they are wrong. She says they relieve worry through hard work, which does not appeal to her, but they never intentionally hurt anyone's feelings. Dotty jokes that everyone should be "about one-eighth German" and that the world would benefit from such a balance. During their stay, Dotty receives proposals, or at least invitations, from men with farms, feed stores, and drug stores in the area—opportunities that Hulda encourages her not to dismiss. Hulda, who lost a husband young, warns Dotty not to let her chance at remarriage slip away.

After Mass on the second Sunday, Dotty lectures Hulda on the importance of following the missal at Mass instead of reading personal devotions or praying the rosary in a random manner. Hulda explains she was never taught how to use the missal and can read English only with difficulty, but Dotty promises to send her a German-Latin version. Dotty then sarcastically accuses the "Old Jew" of engineering a scene to manipulate her, implying that the entire moment is part of a divine or cosmic trick. She vows inwardly that she will not be swayed so easily, even as she feels the presence behind these events.

When Dotty and Catherine return to the Island, Dotty asks Soft-Talk Susie for her mail. Susie says everything is in one basket, and Dotty specifically looks for the familiar weekly letter from Charles. Susie tries to prepare her for the possibility that the letters have ended, but Dotty panics at the idea that if no more letters arrive, Charles will be truly gone. Susie clarifies that there were supposed to be fifty-two letters—one for each week of a year—and that indeed a year has passed. However, Susie then reveals she actually has the letters (Dotty refused to read them earlier) and can give them to her now or one at a time, since it is just a different year. At this, Dotty directs her anger at the "perfidious Old Jew," while Susie insists Dotty take the letter and read it.

Dotty goes home and, with growing dread, finally reads one. She finds it terrifying rather than soothing. The novel resonates as though Charles really composed it from the other side, fully aware of things beyond the living world. Dotty realizes she can no longer evade the fundamental spiritual or existential contest she has been avoiding. The letter makes it clear there is an uncompromising fire to be crossed, that her outstretched hand will be bones before it is remade, and that the penalty of surrender is beyond repair. Knowing there is no safe way around it, Dotty resigns herself to reenter the struggle for her soul and sanity.

(Angel Brook), (Anstands dame), (Cabeza de Vaca), (Catherine), (Charles), (CHAPTER XIX), (Colorado River), (Dotty), (Elm Road), (Engelback), (Esteban), (Flatonia), (Galveston), (Houston), (Hulda), (Jack Oak County, Oklahoma), (Landon campaign), (Little Germany), (Muldoon), (Ned), (Neddy), (Old Jew from the Beginning), (Old Serpent), (Ouida), (Sam Engelbach), (Schullenberg), (Soft-Talk Susie), (Texas), (Uncle Tim), (Weimar), (Zen Buddhists)

**Dotty:** In Chapter XIX, Dotty ventures to Sam Engelbach's farm in Little Germany with Catherine. When Catherine suggests the house could use a woman's touch, Dotty jokingly calls herself a "thin-

layer-of-dust girl,” implying she’s no expert at tidying. She and Catherine quickly win over Sam’s half-sister, Hulda, charming her thoroughly. Dotty demonstrates a casual familiarity with German when she identifies “Anstandsdame” as the word for chaperone.

On Tuesday, Dotty joins Sam and Catherine on a horseback excursion in pursuit of a coyote or swift, though her riding and shooting skills are lacking. Preferring to be alone, Dotty rides out of sight, then immediately dismounts and walks the rest of the day. She removes the pony’s bridle, sympathizing with the horse’s discomfort, and wanders with the pony named Ned, naming distant towns they observe. Dotty finds Engelback (Angel Brook), sensing it’s haunted in part by her own past. She recalls plans with Charles to trace the trail of Cabeza de Vaca and Esteban and imagines that they would have camped here on this exact date had he lived.

At the old fire site she discovers watermelon rinds and beer cans, which she calls “anomalous intrusions,” out-of-place relics amid her historical fantasies. She reflects that Esteban, though a Black man, was the first “white man” in three states, teasing historical presumptions. Dotty addresses the “Old Jew from the Beginning,” God in her mind, questioning his detailed handiwork in creation, marveling at His grass and remarking on the artistry and flaws of nature. As evening falls, she rides Ned home without a bit or bridle, navigating in the dark with quiet confidence.

Back at the farm, Sunday approaches. Dotty anxiously asks Catherine how to avoid attending church, since she no longer believes, but fears Hulda’s judgment if she abstains. She accuses the “Old Jew” of playing tricks to force her into church attendance and claims to be free of a “Father Complex,” instead suggesting that God has a “Daughter Complex.” Reluctantly, Dotty goes to Mass but remains sullen throughout, feeling manipulated. When Dotty returns to the island, she asks Soft-Talk Susie for her weekly letter. Without these letters—reminders of Charles’s presence—she insists Charles would be dead “forever” in her heart. Susie hands her a letter and encourages Dotty to read it at home, praising Charles as a wonderful man. Though Dotty had never opened them before, this time she accepts the letter and reads it with trepidation. The letter frightens her, making her realize she cannot dodge the struggle ahead, and that the cost of losing this inner battle is permanent.

## I. Dotty’s Limited Experience of the Country

1. Dotty’s Background in Relation to Rural Areas
  - A. Born in Jack Oak County, Oklahoma
    - a. Left at a small age, no memory of genuine rural life
    - b. Jack Oak was more desert than “real country”
  - B. Lived near the country at the Elm Road house but it was actually a town garden home
    - a. Since returning to the Island, had not truly left it except for short trips
    - b. The island is a sand-bar 35 miles long, with dunes and emptiness but not farmland or ranchland

2. Distinction of Real “Country”
  - A. The island’s emptiness is not what a farmer or rancher calls “country”
  - B. Dotty’s unfamiliarity with authentic rural landscapes sets the stage for her experience at Sam’s farm

## II. Introducing Sam’s Farm and House

1. Nature of Sam Engelbach’s Operation
  - A. Sam is a cattle *farmer*, not a rancher
    - a. Definition: if more than one-third of land is under plow, it’s a farm, not a ranch
    - b. Sam’s place: 611 acres total
    - c. Originally 640 acres, but part lies in the Colorado River and some sold off previously
2. Composition of the Farm
  - A. Two-thirds is pasture, rough yet beautiful
  - B. Remaining portion: clover, row crops
3. The House Itself
  - A. Large in size
  - B. Inside looks like an auction barn
    - a. Catherine observes it needs a woman’s touch
4. Sam’s Philosophy on Dirt and Preservation
  - A. Advises not to over-clean
    - a. Dirt as a protective coating, like oil on machinery
    - b. Removing it risks rust, disintegration
  - B. Dotty jokes about her own cleaning preference
    - a. Calls herself a “thin-layer-of-dust girl”

## III. Hulda’s Arrival and the Girls’ Response

1. Introduction of Hulda
  - A. Hulda, Sam’s half-sister, arrives from a neighboring farm
    - a. Plans to stay for several weeks
  - B. Her presence imposes a certain restraint on Dotty and Catherine’s carefree living
    - a. She acts as a chaperone figure
2. Cultural and Personal Dynamics
  - A. Catherine and Dotty face Hulda’s watchful eye
    - a. Concerned about the German word for chaperone (“Anstandsdame,” Dotty claims)
  - B. The girls decide to charm Hulda using a “brand of honey” from city life
    - a. Their urban charisma and sweet manners impress Hulda
3. Hulda’s Impression of the Girls
  - A. Hulda admits she misjudged Sam’s “roguish” talk of city girlfriends

- B. Finds Dotty and Catherine to be “the two nicest young ladies” she’s known
  - a. Suggests they marry local young farmers and settle there
- 4. Hulda’s Influence on the Community
  - A. Spreads the word about Dotty and Catherine’s worthiness as good prospects
  - B. Leads to interest from local young men
    - a. By Saturday night, a pair of “square heads” (German farm boys) invite them to a dance in a hall over the fire station

#### IV. Dotty’s Solo Day in the Country

1. The Setting and Day of the Week
  - A. “Tuesday before that Saturday” – stepping back in time before the dance invitation
  - B. Catherine loves riding, and Sam invites them to chase a coyote or swift bothering his poultry
2. Dotty’s Aversion to Riding and Shooting
  - A. Dotty not adept with horses nor guns
    - a. Ridden Monday, found it a trial
    - b. Sam’s Tuesday plan: a riding hunt; Dotty opts out
  - B. Pretends to be morose, wanting solitude
3. Dotty’s Deception and Walking the Land
  - A. Rides off, then quickly dismounts away from the house
    - a. Removes pony’s bridle to spare its comfort
    - b. Pony named Ned follows her willingly, intrigued by her talk B. Chooses walking over riding, feeling uneasy on horseback
4. Exploring the Terrain
  - A. Strolls up hills, holding Ned’s tail on steep climbs
  - B. Sees towns from hilltops but not sure which: names like Flatonia, Muldoon
    - a. Considers these “square head” (German) country towns
5. Appreciating the Close-Up Beauty of Texas
  - A. Texas ugly at middle range, but lovely in close detail
    - a. Intricate short grass, flower-weeds, clover
  - B. Contrasts with her previous lack of country experience
6. Discovery of Engelback Stream
  - A. A stream named Engelback (Angel Brook), presumably after Sam’s family
  - B. Dotty senses haunting, feels it’s a camp site once planned for a trip with Charles
    - a. Remembers their dream: follow Cabeza de Vaca’s route, discover old camp sites by intuition
    - b. Feels bittersweet realizing Charles should have been here
7. Lamenting Lost Plans
  - A. Dotty recalls Charles’s absence painfully
  - B. Finds modern litter (watermelon rinds, beer cans) at the site



- a. Calls them “Anomalous intrusions” mocking archeological terms
- 8. Addressing God (“Old Jew”) and Nature’s Detail
  - A. Dotty acknowledges God’s fine detail in creation, each stem of grass unique
  - B. Admits His thorough craftsmanship, though maintains her irreverent tone
- 9. Returning at Dusk
  - A. Ned signals it’s time to go home
  - B. Dotty reluctantly mounts pony without bridle, riding back in the dark, managing quietly

## V. The Church Dilemma

1. Dotty’s Fear of Appearances
  - A. As Sunday approaches, Dotty worries about attending Mass
  - B. She no longer believes, but fears what Hulda and the local Catholics might think if she skips
2. Catherine’s Practical View
  - A. Catherine suggests Dotty either go or not go, straightforwardly
  - B. Points out Dotty fears human opinion more than God
    - a. Calls Dotty’s priorities into question
3. Dotty’s Accusations Against God
  - A. Dotty accuses the “Old Serpent” (her term for God) of obvious trickery
  - B. Sees attending Mass to avoid offending Hulda as a divine setup, a cheap psychological ploy
  - C. Calls God’s maneuver transparent, beneath dignity
4. Catherine’s Rejoinder
  - A. Reminds Dotty that if God is tricking, He also sees through her
  - B. Asks if old serpents have dignity, challenging Dotty’s logic
5. Dotty’s Reluctant Compliance
  - A. Despite anger and sulkiness, Dotty goes to Mass with the others
  - B. She is present physically, but inwardly bitter and resentful

## VI. Ouida Reading the Unopened Letters

1. Susie Catches Ouida in the Act
  - A. Ouida has taken Dotty’s unopened letters (left in Dotty’s house) and is reading them secretly
  - B. Susie confronts Ouida, asking if Dotty permitted this
2. Ouida’s Justification
  - A. Ouida claims Dotty said she could read her mail
    - a. Susie suspects Dotty didn’t truly mean it
  - B. Ouida defends her action, thinking reading the letters could have helped Dotty avoid her troubles if she had read them herself earlier

3. Revelation About the Letters
  - A. The letters are from Charles after his death — or so it seems
    - a. Ouida finds them eerie, as if Charles wrote from the other side
  - B. Susie clarifies: Charles wrote them while alive, to be mailed posthumously
    - a. Ouida insists passages suggest a knowledge beyond death
    - b. Susie advises Ouida to stop reading them
4. Potential Impact on Dotty
  - A. Ouida believes if Dotty had opened them at the proper time, she might have coped better
  - B. The letters are not merely comforting; they are unsettling, scary, and not for a “kid”
  - C. Susie acknowledges it was Dotty’s quirk not to read them. Now that time has passed, maybe Dotty can handle them, but Susie takes the letters away

## VII. Observations on the German Way of Life

1. Dotty’s Reflections on German Character
  - A. She notes living among Germans is restful
    - a. They are confident they are right, minimizing worry
  - B. Criticizes their approach to hard work as a cure for disquiet
    - a. Finds it medically unsound and personally unappealing
  - C. German humor: good-humored but humorless, serious about serious things, flighty about little ones
    - a. Believes it should be reversed
2. Dotty’s One-Eighth German Theory
  - A. Suggests everyone should be “about one-eighth German” to gain their stability without silliness
  - B. Admits it’s not enforceable; the world must come willingly

## VIII. Marriage Prospects and Rural Life

1. Opportunities to Marry
  - A. Dotty could marry a farm, a creamery, or a feed store (metaphorically speaking, meaning the men who own them)
  - B. Hulda encourages them to marry local farmers to reverse the youth migration to towns
2. Widowhood Comparison
  - A. Hulda, also widowed young, regrets not remarrying
  - B. Hints Dotty might someday regret not taking such opportunities, presuming Dotty a widow
3. Confrontation with Hulda about Mass
  - A. After second Sunday Mass, Dotty lectures Hulda on proper Mass participation

- a. Criticizes her for using a random prayer book and rosary instead of a Missal
- B. Hulda admits difficulty; Dotty promises to send a German-Latin Missal
- C. During this interaction, Dotty again accuses the “Old Jew” (her code for God) of orchestrating these situations

## IX. Return to the Island and Encounter with the Letters

1. Departing the Farm
  - A. Dotty and Catherine stay two weeks, enjoying simpler life but remaining restless
  - B. They head back to the island, keys left with Ouida
2. Asking Susie about Mail
  - A. Dotty returns and asks Susie for her mail
  - B. Susie and Ouida had discussed the letters; Susie now has them arranged
3. Dotty's Desperate Need for Letters
  - A. Fears if no more letters arrive, Charles is “dead forever”
  - B. Susie reveals she has them and can give them to Dotty; says it's not the same year, but still can fulfill Charles's intention of one letter per week
4. Dotty Reading a Letter for the First Time
  - A. Dotty reads one letter — it terrifies her
    - a. Charles wrote them as though from beyond death, foreseeing her spiritual battle
  - B. Realizes no comfort, only a warning of a fierce, unavoidable struggle
    - a. Understands the battle must be faced; it cannot be evaded or softened
5. Acceptance of the Spiritual Struggle
  - A. Recognizes penalty for loss is eternal, no bargains possible
  - B. Dotty knows she must reenter the fight for her soul, prepared to cross fire and endure hardship



## Chapter 20

### Overview

Dotty confronts a series of subtle manipulations—what she calls the tricks of an “Old Jew”—as she struggles to maintain her faith and routine. She spends Sunday morning at Ouida’s, arguing about whether to attend Mass and sensing a hidden design behind everyday events. Meanwhile, the “Old Ship” (run in part by Soft-Talk Susie Kutz) emerges as a bar and lodging house where travelers gather, and where Susie quietly helps troubled women find steadier paths. Dotty wrestles with her own need for order, recalling her mother, the Colonel, and memories of Charles Peisson as she approaches adulthood. Still prone to benders and late-night gatherings, Dotty tries to piece her life together in small steps, aware that she is neither fully lost nor fully saved.

### Summary

On a Sunday morning, Dotty goes to Ouida’s place to read the funny papers, taking the “Post” while

Ouida has the “Chronicle,” but finds Ouida still in bed. Dotty asks if Ouida is sick, and Ouida says she feels fine yet plans to skip Mass. Dotty criticizes her, calling her a “shifty-eyed weasel” and accusing the “Old Jew” of trickery, then agrees to go with Ouida but complains that she herself would have used more finesse if the roles were reversed. Dotty later realizes that these little ploys are not mere soap opera, but rather part of a “live drama” that can split open in a catastrophic way.

The text shifts to describe the Old Wooden Ship, explaining that it is neither a “lupanar” nor a “cat-house” but a barroom bordering on respectability. It houses clubs such as the “Beach Draw-Noon And Domino Fraternal Organization,” “Club Ajedrez,” “Pitch-Poker and Pinochle United,” and the “Elbow Benders Beneficent Society.” The three stories above the bar contain inexpensive rooms for lodgers, who are mostly traveling workmen overwintering in Galveston and who are not bums. Women who enter are never “tramps” because Soft-Talk Susie Kutz, who runs the place alongside Lazarus Reilly, does not allow active prostitutes inside.

Talk Susie Kutz mysteriously arrived at the Old Ship four years ago, opening the bar one morning even though Lazarus Reilly was sure he had the only key. Susie began working there, showing reasonableness in either obeying Lazarus or explaining any refusal. Susie shares Lazarus’s generosity toward customers, although he remains financially pressed. Over time, she persuades many women—some involved in prostitution and others simply down on their luck—to change their lives, finding them different jobs or encouraging them to return home. Despite rumors that Susie herself once practiced the profession, she continues her quiet mission, contributing to a cause that many claim is impossible.

The novel mentions others who work similarly, such as Melody Jane Clybourn, a little colored girl downtown who also helps many in more grinding poverty. One or two people cannot reverse a broader tide, but notes that Susie’s success is often considered “unforgivable” by certain “true pagans of dignity” who find any such reform “tinny.” Next, we learn that Ouida receives an unusual penance in confession: to plant and weed nine square yards of garden all summer on her own, as a way to learn a sense of order.

Dotty, too, comes to appreciate order, declaring to Buffalo Chips Dugan that she intends to pick up the pieces of her life. She says she will be less selfish and likens the task to a child gathering scattered toys, planning to do part of it now and the rest later. The text notes how the Colonel “put away” Dotty’s mother yet still provides for her, and that he sometimes writes to Dotty, calling her strong—though she insists she has none. A short reflection says the Colonel has a difficult road ahead, and then the perspective shifts to a vantage point on this “little rise” in Dotty’s life.

We see Dotty as having just reached her majority, working at a respectable job she dislikes, returning to her faith but lacking its former sparkle. She is sociable and occasionally plays piano at the Little Oyster, where her playing draws a crowd. She drinks heavily less often than before—around every two or three months—but she does still go on occasional benders. She enjoys hosting large gatherings of friends in her kitchen, brewing strong coffee laced with brandy or whisky, and

talking into the night. The text concludes that Dotty's soul is not fully secure, mentioning how One-Chance Hardwich, owner of the Chatterbox Club, would offer only five-to-three odds in her favor and would go no better than even money on anyone else.

(CHAPTER XX), (Avril Aaron), (Beach Draw-Noon And Domino Fraternal Organization), (Book of Wisdom), (Buffalo Chips Dugan), (Cajun French), (Catherine), (Chatterbox Club), (Chronicle), (Club Ajedrez), (Colonel), (Dotty), (Elbow Benders Beneficent Society), (Galveston), (Hildegarde), (Jeannie), (Lazarus Reilly), (Little Midnight Mullens), (Little Oyster), (Lupanar), (Mayor of Tremont Avenue), (Mercedes), (Melody Jane Clybourn), (Old Jew), (Old Ship), (One-Chance Hardwich), (Ouida), (Pitch-Poker and Pinochle United), (Post), (Post Office Street), (Soft-Talk Susie Kutz), (Tremont Avenue), (Valiant Woman), (Vivian)

**Dotty:** Dotty's Sunday morning begins with a plan to read the funny papers at Ouida's house, only to find Ouida still in bed. Confused that Ouida isn't going to Mass, Dotty reacts with surprise and annoyance, accusing the "Old Jew" of orchestrating this new development. She scolds Ouida for being a "shifty-eyed weasel," joking that if she were trying to "hornswoggle" the Old Jew, she'd use more finesse. Despite her protestations, Dotty eventually agrees to accompany Ouida to Mass, though she herself remains sulky and resentful at what she perceives as divine manipulation. The narrative notes that Dotty, who once held the unofficial title of "Mayor of Tremont Avenue," has become more moderate and sociable, though she is still prone to occasional benders and is by no means "saved" in any moral or spiritual sense.

She is no longer the brash presence who stirred up trouble with friends and acquaintances; instead, she occasionally plays piano at the Little Oyster, drawing hush and admiration from those who listen. She finds solace in gatherings at her own kitchen, where thirty or forty friends come to talk all night over coffee and brandy or whiskey. While Dotty remains unsatisfied, her days of wildness have diminished, and a seasoned gambler might even give her odds of five to three in favor of ultimate redemption. The chapter suggests an ongoing struggle between Dotty's sense of independence and her lingering spiritual unrest, as she tries to assemble the broken pieces of her life without fully yielding to either despair or faith.

## I. Another Sunday Morning Trick

1. Dotty's Sunday Routine
  - A. Dotty goes to Ouida's to read the Sunday funny papers
    - a. Ouida takes the Chronicle, Dotty takes the Post
    - b. Each has different funnies
2. Ouida Still in Bed
  - A. Dotty finds Ouida not up yet
  - B. Questions if Ouida is sick
    - a. Ouida claims to feel fine
    - b. Dotty puzzled since it's Sunday and last Mass time

3. Ouida's Refusal to Attend Mass
  - A. Ouida announces she will not go to Mass anymore
    - a. Considers it a bother
  - B. Dotty reacts strongly
    - a. Calls Ouida a "shifty-eyed weasel"
    - b. Accuses "Old Jew" (her code name for God) of setting up another obvious trick
4. Interaction with Ouida
  - A. Dotty rants about God's cheap maneuver through Ouida's sudden decision
  - B. Ouida tries to deny involvement, but Dotty suspects divine orchestration
    - a. Dotty expresses frustration that if she tried something similar against God, she'd show more finesse

## II. Recognizing the Larger Drama

1. Dotty's Realization
  - A. Admits she was wrong: these small tricks aren't the real issue
  - B. Not soap opera, but a real living drama with eternal consequences
    - a. The third act splits open, half the cast falls into a pit of fire
    - b. A uniquely effective approach no one else has done
2. Intensity of the Conflict
  - A. Dotty perceives the true spiritual battle at stake
  - B. Understands it's more than trivial manipulations — it's about ultimate salvation or loss

## III. Clarifying the Nature of the Old Wooden Ship

1. Misconceptions and Reality
  - A. Some may be puzzled about what the Old Wooden Ship (the Ship) is or who its patrons are
  - B. The answer: it isn't what rumors might suggest, and they aren't who they might seem
2. Not a Lupanar or Bordello
  - A. The Ship is not a house of prostitution (*lupanar*, cat-house)
  - B. It is a barroom bordering on respectability
    - a. Host to various clubs and fraternal organizations (e.g., domino, pitch, pinochle clubs)
    - b. Lodgings above are cheap rooms, but not for assignation—most lodgers are simply poor patrons
3. Nature of Patrons
  - A. Not hangouts for bums; wandering workmen winter in Galveston, frequenting the Ship
  - B. The girls who come there are none of them tramps
    - a. Soft-Talk Susie forbids entry to active professionals of that trade
    - b. There may be whispers about their pasts, but it's not proven

4. Susie's Mysterious Influence
  - A. Rumor that Susie took promising or well-proven "talent" from the streets and changed them
  - B. She persuades girls to leave bad professions, return home, or find honest work
  - C. Most never relapse; one exception is Avril Aaron who relapses endlessly
5. No Single-Handed Reversal of the Tide
  - A. Susie and Lazarus can't reverse all societal decay—more ground is lost daily than they regain
  - B. Still, their efforts are real and have saved many
6. No Names Named
  - A. Lafferty refuses to say which girls had what past
  - B. Catherine, for instance, not necessarily included in that group of reformed ones