

Slight as it was, taken up and cradled in his imagination, the project fulfilled every requirement, not only of the law, but of a sufficient occupation for a young man who had been clerk to T. Rickart. It was a job; it was the curved edge of his weapon at the throat of destiny. Self-imposed was the condition of his sleeping there and subsisting on his own cookery and such alleviations as Addie from time to time sent out to him. It was so he kept formally from implicating Palomitas in his situation. It supplied the need he stood in of healing and reassurance, the ineffable consolations of twilight and the stars, the healings of the mornings. He grew brown and leaner and at ease with himself, a kind of ease which was inexplicable to Anne almost to the point of irritation. Which was perhaps why, when it was necessary for some one to go down to him with bread and letters, she so often sent Ellis.

They had talked out, brother and sister, all the possibilities of the situation, and to Anne, who valued talking solely as a means of arriving at conclusions, it was intolerable to sit sifting the dry dust of speculation. To Anne, once she had learned all that was necessary to the construction of the work in hand, of the depth of the soil and the basalt ribs of the Torr', the interest her brother and her secretary took in the intimate properties of the earth, the burrow folk dispossessed, the shrubs uprooted, the endless talk they had about it and the books they found it necessary to read, were a sort of sublimated mud-pie making. Still there was the period of suspense before Rickart's suit to be got through, and if mud-pies would do it — for they were all inextricably caught up in Kenneth's suspense, Kenneth's stake in it, and Kenneth's reaction to its possibilities.