

We were going to have six. That is, of course, some time in the future. The future does not bother anyone until it begins to turn into the present, so I was quite philosophical about the prospect.

But there came a morning in October when I was not sure that I wanted any breakfast, and I felt dizzy. A possibility not entirely pleasant suggested itself: I had read of lovely ladies growing deadly pale, and fainting at inopportune times, and I knew what it meant in fiction, but it just couldn't be—I was bilious, that was all; and anyone could be bilious. I had been staying in too much. I must get out and walk more.

In about three weeks, after tramping the roads and drinking lemonade and taking soda to settle my stomach, all to no effect, I was feeling pretty low in my mind. On October 20th, my birthday, I walked out the three miles to my old district. I had often walked this road and knew every foot of it. I knew I would feel better if I could sit on the moss-grown stone in the coulee where I often sat when I was coming back from Hazel School to my boarding house, and where I had dreams—such noble dreams—of being a writer. It was a bright, crisp day, with high, white clouds drifting against the ground wind. From one field I could hear a thrasher at work, with its familiar shaking rhythm that made me ache for something that was gone. Perhaps it was my far off youth, I was twenty-three that day, but the years are long to the young.

The day was so beautiful it hurt like an old tune. I could hear the geese going south, with that keening cry that always tore at my heart even when I was a child. Flocks of prairie chicken fed on the yellow stubble and then winged their way over to the straw piles, whirring then floating, then whirring again. Beside me a stunted rose bush waved its crimson haws slowly as a curling