

was afraid to read them. She could not help but think of his life at Millings, of that sordid hotel lobby . . . Newspaper stories — yes — that was imaginable. But — poetry? Sheila had been brought up on verse. There was hardly a beautiful line that had not sung itself into the fabric of her brain.

“Poems?” she repeated, just a trifle blankly; then, seeing the hurt in his face, about the sensitive and delicate lips, she put out a quick, penitent hand. “Let me see them — at once!”

He handed a few folded papers to her. They were damp. He put his face down to his hands and looked at the floor as though he could not bear to watch her face. Sheila saw that he was shaking. It meant so much to him, then —? She unfolded the papers shrinkingly and read. As she read, the blood rushed to her cheeks for shame. She ought never to have doubted him. Never after the first look into his face, never after hearing him speak of the “cold, white flame” of an unforgotten winter night. Dickie’s words, so greatly loved and groped for, so tirelessly pursued in the face of his world’s scorn and injury, came to him, when they did come, on wings. In the four short poems, there was not a word outside of his inner experience, and yet she felt that those words had blown through him mysteriously on a wind — the wind that fans such flame —

“Oh, little song you sang to me  
A hundred, hundred days ago,