

Chapter 1

Joseph Fenimore Cardinal was twenty-seven. He was teaching English and biology in Wilkerson College when he met the girl, a senior in his class in Early American Literature, who, he felt sure, was destined—or was it *doomed?*—to become the future Mrs. Cardinal.

Had he known that their romance, so beautiful in its inception and so aesthetic in its development, was to be scarred with imperfections and that there would be disillusioning detours through long and lonely valleys, he might have been more cautious.

But how could he have known that there would develop a love triangle that would be anything but equilateral?

Joe himself was to become the base of the triangle, and his literary-minded fiancée one of the sides. And his equally literary, equally attractive secretary—efficient, alert, constant Janice Granada—involuntarily or otherwise, was fated to play the competing role.

To Joe, until the situation came to startling and very emotional life, Janice had been only a secretary. She had been a friend, of course, but certainly not a candidate for marriage nor a would-be queen to rule his life or his literary career.

And there was yet another dimension, converting the triangle into a *ridiculously shaped trapezium*. On the horizon, and moving swiftly on cyclonic winds, was the world's way of trying to solve international problems—a philosophy that demanded blind devotion and ruthless sacrifice—the Juggernaut of War.

There was also Joe's friend and counselor, young Dr. Halford Raymond, with whom since their boyhood there had been a companionship like that of David and Jonathan.

Through the years Joe had kept his mind closed against any serious consideration of surrendering what to his friends he sometimes facetiously labelled "a basic human right"—that of remaining a bachelor without feeling a sense of guilt because of it.

There came a day, however, when Hal challenged that right, and at a time when Joe was in no particular mood to defend himself. The cross-examination was on an afternoon at the close of a round of golf two weeks before Joe was to leave for Wilkerson.

"Don't you feel guilty robbing a lonely young woman of her own basic right to marry—a certain young woman I know who seems to have been born just for you? She has an intriguing personality, is literary minded, writes poetry, loves nature, and hates war.

"She would be ideal for you and would complement you in the way your personality requires."

"Did you say complement, spelled with an *e*, or compliment, spelled with an *i*?"

"Seriously, Joe, you need a complement, and so does every man."

"Are you accusing me of having some kind of deficiency? If I remember correctly, Webster defines *complement* as 'something required to supply a deficiency.' Right?"

"Right. As a man of medicine, however, I say that every bachelor in the world is suffering from "vitamin-*wife* deficiency." And every young unmarried woman who comes to my office—one in particular—needs a husband."

Joe, who had taken his stance for a final putt at the eighteenth hole, lowered his club, looked out across the fairway, and asked, "You are referring to my secretary?"

"I am trying to open your eyes to see her, Joe. There is a girl who has everything. Now that you've taken the Wilkerson position, one of the wisest things you could do would be to marry her before you go. There's something about being married that gives a man status and prestige."

The ball rolled toward the cup and dropped in. Joe retrieved it, turned, gave Hal a level look, and said, "There is a very important reason why I cannot take your advice. And that is because I think the girl is just right for *you*. Why don't you speak for yourself, John Alden?"

Hal finished the eighteenth with an eagle. They stopped at the soft drink canteen and a little later were at Joe's rooming house.

They shook hands in mock solemnity as Joe said, "Thanks, John, for a good game. And now, you go back to your office, call Janice, take her out to dinner tonight, and speak for yourself."

Alone in his room, Joseph Fenimore Cardinal studied his face in the mirror, grinned, and muttered,

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Who is most eligible of all?

And the mirror answered evasively in the voice of a man, saying, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

Hal was right, of course. There was a deficiency—a loneliness which a literary career had not fulfilled. Neither had teaching, which profession he had chosen and in which, to a degree, he had attained success.

He turned now to his desk, unlocked it, took out his journal, and wrote: "A birdie, an eagle, and a broken neck—my par for the day."

He had known there was a weakness in his driver at the point where the shaft joined the head, but he had taped it with a new kind of tape from the pro shop.

"Broke my neck," he wrote, "lost my head—and Hal insists I ought to lose my heart as well. He may be right. He just may be right."

And now, caught up into a familiar spell which came upon him so often—a spell he had known since boyhood—he began to write:

"The conviction still is there, driving me on toward some pre-determined destiny. What it is—where it is—I do not know. But the power that pulls and sometimes seems to drag me on has never relented. I cannot resist it even if I would, for it gives me happiness—and misery. It gives me a purpose for living. It seems, in a way, to be a search for myself—to discover what I am and who I am—and why."

The phone rang. It was Janice, her voice lilting, enthusiastic. "I have happened onto something new on *The Hound of Heaven*. The material was so interesting and so thrilling I found myself almost writing the article for you—just as you would do it, of course—sort of like a ghost-writer. And your story on the pheasant hunt is ready. I like it very much—very, *very* much. It's the way I think and feel—"

He had not intended to break in. Certainly he had not intended to do it abruptly and impatiently, but he had always disliked interruptions when he was pursuing a muse. He had been about to write in his journal: "I feel sometimes as if I myself am the Hound of Heaven, in full cry on my own lonely trail. I keep running away from myself,

afraid to be caught, afraid the chase will end and there will be nothing left to pursue—and nothing of *me* to do the pursuing.”

His mind had raced ahead of him as he wrote, and the thoughts were already jostling for space on the page.

“Janice! Forgive me—but I am onto something I dare not lose. If you don’t mind—”

“Oh! I’m sorry. Forgive *me*. I’ll call later. Or, if you’ll tell me, do you want to pick it up, or should I mail it? I *did* want to talk about what I discovered on the *Hound*. I have a lot of shorthand notes I haven’t transcribed yet.”

“You can mail it—or— No! I’ll pick it up; and if you’d like to be ready, we can take a little spin out to the lake and have dinner at the Beachcomber.”

Even as he said it, he had his mind made up. He was going to play John Alden for Dr. Halford Raymond. It would not be easy for Janice to lose her position as his research secretary, but Wilkerson was hundreds of miles from here and— Well, there was no other way. Janice was the just-right complement for Hal—*just* right.

“I’d like that very much,” she had said; but there was a quaver in her voice that told him his abrupt interruption had hurt, and the knowledge of it hurt him also.

Until now Janice Granada was the only woman who had seemed the perfect complement he himself required—not for marriage but for mental companionship. With her, roaming the woods, stopping to listen to a wood thrush, watching a sunset’s slow demise—these were the refuelings his creative moods required.

Of late, however, he had been aware of an attitude of possessiveness on her part. She was becoming more than a secretary researching his stories, his magazine articles, and his lectures to student groups. So much so that at times it seemed as if he were a puppet, writing and saying the things she suggested and actually wording his descriptions in her language.

When he had hung up, he turned to the coffin his journal had become and glanced listlessly at yesterday’s quote from William Blake’s “Auguries of Innocence”:

To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,

Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.

He had been enamored with Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven*. He had phoned Janice to research it and then had quickly dashed off a rough draft for his series of articles on "The Flower Fields of the Poets"—a title borrowed from a Whittier line: "The flower-fields of the soul."

Thompson had once studied medicine but had abandoned it because of his own ill health. He had lived in poverty. He became an opium addict, wrote only three thin volumes of poetry, and died of tuberculosis at forty-eight.

There was an atmosphere in *The Hound of Heaven* not unlike the creative pursuit in his own mind. He loved the imagery, the panting flight of the soul from God, the loving pursuit of God Himself, the singing rhythms, and the colorful phrasings. This was literary beauty of the sort that inspired the reader to soar, the kind his own mother had loved and had sometimes written.

Joe closed his journal and locked it into its desk drawer, hidden from any possible prying by the eyes of a maid or of his landlady, Mrs. Crowley.

A diary, Mother Cardinal had once told him, is for a man's soul to hide in. Never leave its door unlocked.

Words of wisdom had often spilled unawares from Mother's mind; and he had remembered so many of them and built his house upon them: "Never be ashamed to love the beautiful in literature. It is the coin of wisdom, as the French writer Joseph Joubert has expressed it: 'The coin of wisdom is its great thoughts, its eloquent flights, its proverbs and pithy sentences.' Always remember that, Joe. And when you yourself have written something beautiful, it is right to feel a warmth in your heart when you look upon it—as right as it was for God to look upon His own beautiful world after He had created it and say, 'It is good.' You must always feel that way about your work, Joe, and never, *never* write anything about which you cannot say, 'It is clean, it is right, it is good.'"

Beautiful Sheilla Cardinal, lonely after Father's death in World War I, had sought and found much release from heartache and loneliness in her teaching and in her own writing. She was, as she expressed it, "Helping God keep on with His continuous work of crea-

tion—helping Him prepare young minds for the tomorrows which lie ahead.”

Mother had been sunshine and flowers and country lanes to him, and as a faithful mother, she not only counseled but occasionally, when a situation required, disciplined him as well.

“Always be a lover of nature. Be like Longfellow’s little Hiawatha, Joe, and love every wild thing of the field and woods. They are all God’s creatures. They are all your brothers. Never, never kill except for food or when you might have to, to protect your own life.”

At ten he had asked about what had happened in the war. “Did Daddy ever have to kill when he was over there?”

It was a hard question. It was harder still when he asked, “Did Daddy hate anybody when he killed, if he killed?”

She had exacted from him a promise, “Promise me, Joe, that you will always be a man of peace, like the peace the Saviour offers and gives to all who believe in Him.”

And he had promised.

That promise had been the drive behind the story of the pheasants, of which Janice had just phoned him.

He was singing in the shower as he prepared for his dinner at the Beachcomber with Janice. This would be their last, perhaps, before he would leave for Wilkerson; and it had to be the occasion of his serious attempt to play John Alden for Hal.

Again facing the mirror and now knotting a favorite tie, the song of the shower was still moving in his mind—a favorite old hymn of the church, which Mother had sung so often in the days immediately after the telegram came telling of Jeffry Cardinal’s death:

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing.

Mother had found her comfort and strength to keep on living and loving, not only in her work but in her faith in God, the Fortress. She often quoted Luther’s hymn and even more often searched the pages of the old brown Bible on her study desk in the den.

Tie knotted, coat inspected for any stray fleck of dust, hair groomed the way he liked it, Joe went out to his car, saying to himself, “All right, John Alden, this is it.”

Chapter 2

In Longfellow's *Courtship of Miles Standish*, when John Alden had spoken his piece, Priscilla had challenged him, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"

Janice might possibly allow history to repeat itself. That was a risk he was prepared to take—and he was steeled against any emotional moment that could tempt him to surrender his "basic right."

As his car moved toward The Towers, where Janice had indicated she would be waiting for him, he reviewed his situation and point of view. It may have been his love for solitude of the kind Thoreau described in his onetime boast, "I have never found the companion so enjoyable as solitude," or it may have been his own inherent need for following a dream. But it had seemed that a wife and home and children could be too interruptive for a man reaching for a literary career. He must march as Thoreau had once counseled: "If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. . . . As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler, solitude will not be solitude, poverty will not be poverty, nor weakness weakness."

It was good advice, he thought; and he had followed it—until now.

Other thoughts crowded in from his childhood.

There was the day of tragedy. After a particularly carefree afternoon in the woods with his favorite neighborhood playmate, now Dr. Halford Raymond, he had come home to find his mother missing. Mother was in the hospital, he was told.

There had been emergency surgery, and from it she had not awakened except to say, "Tell my son I died loving him."

And Joe had become a skeptic, doubting the goodness of a God who allowed such things as wars that kill fathers and sicknesses that kill mothers.

He doubted—yet he believed, for he could *feel* the presence of God all around and everywhere. Sometimes it even seemed God was in his own heart, speaking to him through his conscience.

He had lived his early years in the home of his maternal grandparents in the lake country of the north. There he had become a little Hiawatha. He had walked and talked with nature and, like Hiawatha, he had learned the language of every beast, called them all little Joseph's brothers, learned their names and all their secrets, and loved them very, very much.

In times of solitude he walked with the sighing pines, ran with the wind in his face, laughed with the hilarious laughter of the loons and mimicked their lonely twilight farewells to the day, and sang with the marsh wrens among the tall sedges of the lakeshore.

In school, his themes dealt with wildlife—beast and bird and flower and tree. Once, when he was fifteen and felt especially sad because of something he had seen that day, he wrote "The Massacre"—the pheasant story which Janice had said she liked very much. He had kept it all these years, and only last week he had discovered it in his file of memories.

Perhaps at the Beachcomber he could talk about it with Janice just before he assumed the role of John Alden.

The story, every sentence polished, every phrase carefully turned, was like a loon calling across the lake, wailing his loneliness. It opened with definitions from the dictionary:

"Bouquet: The flight of a flock of pheasants from the central meeting place of the beaters. It also refers to the meeting place of the beaters themselves.

"Beaters: Those who scour for game. . . ."

The story itself ran:

"The fifteen-year-old boy watched from the crest of the hill overlooking the west forty. He knew the field was alive with pheasants. From every direction the beaters came, moving like the spokes of a wheel toward the hub.

"The boy's heart was pounding with fear—not for himself, but for his brother pheasants.

"The circle was getting smaller and smaller, and from his hiding place on the cliff, he could see the birds getting nervous—more and more as the circle narrowed.

“Any second now there would be an explosion of feathers and the bouquet would be born—the only beautiful thing about the whole massacre. There would be a cloud of wings expanding across the sky, a score of shotguns fitted to shoulders—and fire and smoke and thunder would shatter the stillness.

“In such a little while the flight of life in hopeless search of continued life would be transformed into broken pinions and shattered bones, torn and bleeding flesh, and quivering death.

“The boy cringed when he saw the bouquet rise; his spirit reeled within him when the fire and smoke and thunder of guns destroyed the peace of the beautiful little world that belonged to pheasants only. The south forty was their own little nation—and an enemy had come to make war upon them.

“He saw the beautiful birds falling—some dropping without any flapping of wings, others limping on broken pinions to the sedge below. He saw the remains of the bouquet fanning itself against the leaden sky and remembered Bryant’s ‘To a Waterfowl’—one lone bird winging a solitary way across the crimson sky.

“The hunters had had a successful hunt; they had bagged twenty elusive birds. There would be a banquet tomorrow night in the Range Hall, tales of successful hunts of other days, much laughter and jesting, and for some, a tarrying at the bottle.

“Superior minds had devised a way to take innocent life at a cost of only a little time and gunpowder—minds that could make ammunition which could fly faster than pheasants who could only grow wings.

“The boy dragged home wearily. It was his brothers who had been killed in the war, and it was his other brothers who had killed them. And the boy who had watched from the cliff was angry at the brothers who had superior minds. He sorrowed for them and went home to a supper of pheasant, for one of the human brothers had been thoughtful of his neighbors who were getting old and feeble and could no longer work the way they used to when they were young.

“But the boy could not eat.”

* * *

The story brought his English teacher, Sheldon McMaster, all the way to his grandparents’ home to see him. Together they strolled in the woods and along the lakeshore, and when the teacher had gone, Joe was on fire with ambition.

“Where did you get the idea for your story?” McMaster asked, and Joe answered: “From my feathered brothers.”

In their walk, they came upon a little shack at the base of the cliff. “Here,” Joe said proudly, “is my study. This is my Henry David Thoreau cabin.”

His desk was made of orange crates, and his chair, a captain’s chair salvaged from his childhood home, was the one Mother Cardinal had used when she studied or graded papers or read from the old brown Book.

When McMaster had gone, his words, spoken while his hand was on Joe’s shoulder, were like a live coal in his mind: “Someday, Joe, if you keep on working and thinking and keeping clean in your mind and heart, you will help make people understand the ways of God.”

* * *

Because of his love for beautiful things and of the ways of nature, Joe found comfort in the beautiful things men had written; and like the squirrels of the forest, he stored them away in his mind—memorizing many choice selections. He came to think of his mind as having an attic where he kept his treasures of thought. The door to his attic he kept always open.

He carried the memory of his little lakeside shack all through the years that followed—the remaining years of high school, teacher’s college, and afterward. He continued writing when he could spare the time—and also sometimes at night, when the muse came upon him. But he kept his secret dreams to himself—for there were athletics and class activities and occasional dating with groups. There was so much to learn—until the time when he would build somewhere another and better Thoreau cabin, and there he would write and write and write—and dream and be free from the pressure of society.

Sometimes his own word-paintings filled his eyes with tears and his heart with pride. Comparing his paragraphs and occasional poems with those of history’s literary giants, the live coal would burst into flame—and he would feed it with fresh new fuel from the attic of his mind.

The clouded world, made sorrowful because of the loss of his parents, was still beautiful. He had found a new father and mother in the realm of thought.

The years had brought him now to within two weeks of his new

position in Wilkerson College. They had also brought him to his role as John Alden.

* * *

Janice was her usual gay and vibrant self—and for an interval as they dined in candlelight at the window overlooking the lake, he toyed with the thought of playing John Alden not for Hal Raymond but for himself. But when he looked down the lanes of the future and tried to visualize her as a wife and mother—his wife, and the mother of his children—he knew she was not for him and he was not for her. There was yet another, somewhere; perhaps she was not unlike his own mother—one who was gifted as she, a lover of literature and nature. But—well—it was simply not Janice Granada. *She* was right for Hal Raymond.

At the right moment—or what he thought was right—he told her so and was startled at her attitude.

“You’re kidding,” she said. “Hal Raymond? In a roundabout sort of way, he proposed to me himself two years ago, when he was an intern and I was in nurse’s training, but we just didn’t seem to belong. He’s sweet, perfect for almost any other girl, a wonderful doctor with a successful career ahead of him. But I almost hate nursing. I don’t like the smell of disinfectants, and I could never stand being jolted awake in the night by the phone ringing, calling him out to some emergency or other.”

And then her eyes took on a lonely look. “I’m going to miss my work with you very much, Joe—Mr. Cardinal. It’s been very satisfying—and I hope you’ll remember me with an occasional manuscript. And any research you need, write or phone me and I’ll do it.”

He promised, the hour and the crisis passed, and he left her at her apartment.

* * *

And now he was in Wilkerson, ensconced in his position. The months were rolling past, and he was lonely and unhappy. He often remembered Hal’s counsel about his need for a complement—and the pages of his diary were filled with yearnings. One entry ran, “I am still on the trail in search of myself and cannot find me. Who am I? Where am I? *Why* am I?”

And in the middle of the year there began to move across the

horizon the clouds of war, like the darkness of William Henley's "Thick Is the Darkness."

There had been a discussion of the poem in a recent class. The works of Henley, a British poet of stature, had been compared to those of Browning and Dickens and certain early American poets, including Whittier and Longfellow.

A hand was raised in the back of the classroom.

"Yes, Miss Blanchard?"

Lela Blanchard, daughter of George Wilcox Blanchard, college board member and editor of the nationally circulated weekly, *The Silver Lining*, rose from her seat in the back row. Her voice was quiet, controlled. "I think this poem indicates something serious happening to Henley. When he wrote his famous poem 'Invictus,' he thanked 'whatever gods there be' for his unconquerable soul. He himself was the captain of his fate.

"But in 'Thick Is the Darkness,' he seems to be reaching out for help beyond himself—perhaps to God—when he says:

Thick is the darkness,
Sunward, Oh, sunward!
Rough is the highway,
Onward still onward!
Dawn harbors surely,
East of the shadows.
Facing us somewhere
Spread the sweet meadows.

"He may be trying to say that there is, there *has* to be, a sunrise, and that it is east of the shadows—that God Himself is out there somewhere, and we must keep on looking *for* Him and perhaps *to* Him for the sweet meadows only He can provide—like the Shepherd that makes His sheep lie down in green pastures."

There was silence in the room—not of the thick darkness variety, but of light. And Professor Joseph Cardinal was moved to wonder if Lela Blanchard might possibly be the way out of his own thick darkness.

The shadows of war continued to roll in the east, and Joe, enlisting his mind in the cause of peace, began a series of articles in the Wilkerson College *Breeze* under the heading "Wings of a Dove." His first offering was entitled "The Massacre."

Time moved on, entries in his journal began to shine, and he was beginning to sing another of his mother's favorite hymns, "I am looking through the shadows for the beacon lights of home."

His basic right began to lose its chains; he had found the complement of which he and Hal Raymond had talked that day on the golf course.

The class had been studying the poems of Longfellow and for several days had given "Evangeline" particular attention.

"Fair was she to behold, that maiden of seventeen summers."

Literary critics called the meter of "Evangeline" dactylic hexameter, a metrical form that moved like the rhythm of the waves washing the shores of Bluebell Island.

Lela Blanchard, however, was a young woman of twenty-three, more fair, he thought, than Evangeline, and more mature.

He began to be almost painfully aware of her the day in Classroom B when she finished her examination on the history of American literature, rose, and walked down the aisle to lay her test folder on his desk—the last of the class to leave. It was just as he imagined Evangeline might have seemed to Longfellow as he traced her story through its lilting, sorrowful search for love.

When she had gone and he was alone in the room, it was like another line of "Evangeline": "When she had passed, it seemed like the passing of exquisite music."

The textbook had given the historical setting for "Evangeline" as an incident rising out of the French and Indian War. A force of British and Colonial troops had sailed from Boston to Nova Scotia, which was then called Acadia. They had deported the French inhabitants, dispossessing them of their property and settling them among other British colonies in America.

The British had put Evangeline and her lover on different ships, and thus began her lonely search with its aching heart, disillusionments, frustrations, and broken dreams.

Hawthorne had heard the story first, and he had told it to Longfellow; later, when the poem was finished, Whittier read it and said, "Longfellow was just the one to write it. If I had attempted it, I should have spoiled the artistic effect of the poem by my indignation at the treatment of the exiles by the Colonial government."

It was Lela Blanchard's comment on it, clipped to the last page of

her examination folder, that awakened Joe's more serious interest in the girl. "How cruel," she wrote, "that they should have been forced to sail in different ships; how thoughtless, how completely harsh to trample upon her heart, and his! And yet, so much of life is like that, as if a stony-hearted fate were determined to thwart us all from finding our personal Holy Grail. We seek, and when we find, we lose again; we are set to sail on different ships. There is too much of shadow, unless one can carry a lantern within to dissolve it."

And there was a final note.

"I like what the English poet Dickens said in his lyric, 'The Children':

I ask not a life for the dear ones,
All radiant, as others have done,
But that they may have just enough shadow
To temper the glare of the sun."

He was startled at the question, also appended: "Wouldn't that make a good title for a novel—*Just Enough Shadow?*"

That was all, and when he had finished reading the note, it seemed like the ceasing of exquisite music.

There was a local colonial government, and there were two British ships, both captained by small college etiquette, and, Joe Cardinal thought, rightly so. But when the school year is past, and the commencement and her graduation—

Bluebell Island, given its name because from June to September it was carpeted with bluebells and because the island itself was bell-shaped, was the setting for their first serious moments alone.

Chapter 3

Bluebell Lake, one of the many smaller lakes in the area, was part of the Blanchard Estate. First, there had been the wind-in-the-face ride with Lela in George Wilcox Blanchard's white dinghy, driving at top speed to the island itself, armed with camera, binoculars, and an attaché case containing galley proofs of *The Silver Lining*.

When their work was finished and they came back an hour before sunset, their day had changed from carefree make-believe to something which he knew was the kind of love a man should have before proposing marriage.

The conviction had been climaxed as they sat on a little knoll on the island, looking down at the lake and at the waiting dinghy. Their picnic lunch was finished and *The Silver Lining* galleys duly proofed when from the top branches of a maple there came the clear, sharp whistle of a cardinal—"Cheo-cheo-chehoo-cheo!"

Quickly he lifted his binoculars and swept them here and there among the branches. A sweet sharp pain of beauty stabbed at his heart when, from a distance, there came another song—similar, yet with a more plaintive note.

Her hand reached out instinctively as if to silence any word that might frighten or send a startled bird winging away. "It's Evangeline," she whispered. "She's answering."

The touch of her hand on his wrist was only for an instant, but the memory of it stayed. "The female also sings," she said. "I hear him often when I come here, but I've never seen their nest. I only know from what I read that they build it loosely of bark, leaves and grass in a small tree or bush. One day I'll find it, but I won't disturb it. No one has a right to disturb the nest of such beautiful lovers—or any other home of any kind. There he goes now—to meet her out there somewhere.

His binoculars swept the sky and caught a flash of magnificent red

slicing across the open space toward a hedge of bushes rimming the hill.

What he said then was unpremeditated; it was surprising even to himself. But when she gasped and then gave a low chuckle, he knew she had understood: "Me, Cardinal; you, Evangeline."

She became suddenly businesslike: "For a long time," she said, "I've been wishing Father would begin a new column that would interweave gems from the literary geniuses of yesterday with a bit of botany—birdlore and animal life. With so much low-level literature flooding the newsstands and the daily papers and the dangerous philosophies that our school kids are reading, such a column would be welcomed. Here's what we have in mind, and please don't let what I'm going to show you spoil a very enjoyable afternoon. I didn't bring you over here just for this. I've had a perfectly beautiful time, one of the finest in my life. But—"

From her attaché case, she handed him a sheet of drawing paper; and on it was a cardinal in full color. There was the striking red crest, the black throat, the black band around the neck and beak, the bill, a light red, the feet, brown, and the eyes—the one visible eye—a tiny pearl of brown.

Below the regal bird there was set in the type of a news caption:

THE CALL OF THE CARDINAL

by Joe Cardinal

An editorial insert announced in smaller type: "With this issue we introduce a new feature which we are sure our readers will like very much. We invite your comments. We know you will enjoy walking with the author down the winding trails of thought, climbing with him the hills which literary giants of old have climbed, and tossing yourself gaily into the little literary whirlwinds he makes for you. Laugh and love and grow and build your nests among the roses in his garden of ideas and high ideals."

It was signed simply, "*Editors.*"

Joe Cardinal was pleased, flattered, honored—and also deflated.

He lifted the binoculars again, searched the bushes along the hill's crest, lowered them, and studied the artistically colored cardinal and the brief, poetic, too-complimentary introduction. It had been such a gala afternoon, pretending they were Evangeline and her lover,

Gabriel. How he had enjoyed it. How much he wanted to come here again with her, go anywhere with her, just to be with her.

Daughter of an editor, concerned for the growth and popularity of their paper, she had sacrificed an afternoon—hers and his—and used her most extraordinary feminine wiles to get him to join the staff of *The Silver Lining*.

“Your cardinal,” he said simply, “has stopped singing.”

Her answer was an announcement: “He has found his mate. They’re singing with their hearts now, and we’re not supposed to hear that.”

“I notice,” he said, “that the introduction is signed, ‘Editors’—plural. Does your father know about this?”

Her answer was evasive, he thought: “Father’s a devotee of your ‘Wings of a Dove’ column in the *Breeze*. Only yesterday at the breakfast table he said, ‘If I could corral that wild young mind for *The Silver Lining*, we could put a silver lining around the whole world.’”

“You’re sure he used the adjective *wild*?”

“He is very careful in his choice of words.”

“But *wild* means, ‘*dissolute, prodigal.*’”

“In the bad sense, yes; but he meant it in the milder sense, which Funk and Wagnalls calls ‘frolicsome and gay.’”

“But I’m not frolicsome and I’m seldom gay.”

“With words you are. You make them gambol about like lambs, he says; and when you write about peace, it makes all of us want to stroll beside the still waters.”

“I’m a little confused. First I’m a wild young bronco, then I’m a frolicking lamb, and now you are asking me to be a redbird. Are you sure your father initiated all these mixed metaphors? An editor of his stature should know better.”

“*Please!* Don’t you like my cardinal? I spent three hours doing him yesterday.”

Suddenly she was very serious. “You know what the redbird is saying when he cries ‘Cheo-cheo-chehoo-cheo?’ He is calling ‘Peace! Peace! Peace.’ And with all the violence in the world—the hating and killing, the thunder of clashing ideologies—a weekly column of peaceful thoughts could help a lot. ‘As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he.’ King Solomon wrote that, remember?”

“But you yourself could write the column. Your colorful introduction couldn’t be improved upon.”

"It took me two hours," she returned. "I suffered through every word of it."

"So does every writer with everything he writes well," he said. "I'd be willing to let you caption it 'The Call of the Cardinal,' if you like. I could give you my name—"

As before, she extended her hand and touched his wrist. "I think I can't stand having you say no. You wouldn't want to shatter a young girl's dream, would you? Make me sail in a different ship? Only the British soldiers could be so cruel!"

She was pouting now in pretty pretense. He liked it, yet he was afraid of it, and he tried to think what her dream might mean to him—the expansion of his literary career? A release from teaching, which he had found too confining? What he said now was a bit mundane, he felt, but he shot the arrow into the air, to let it fall to earth—somewhere: "I make daily trips to the grocery stores and the cafes, and my landlady has a way of requiring monthly rent."

"And then," she disregarded his practical suggestion, "after a few weeks, copies of your columns will be sent to scores of newspapers across the nation and in Canada under the letterhead, Cardinal Features, Incorporated, and before we know it, you'll be calling the nation and much of the world to peace."

"You," he said firmly—and, he felt, defensively, and maybe even evasively—"are the one to write it. You have inherited a talent for expressing yourself literarily. I've seen it in all your compositions and in the little appended notes on your examination papers. And if your heart is set on captioning the column "The Call of the Cardinal," as I offered a moment ago, I'm willing to give you my name—"

"Listen," she interrupted. "There's mother's dinner bell. Hear it?"

Across the lake at the Blanchard place, visible through the shelter of evergreens, like a jewel in a setting of apple blossoms, he saw blue smoke rising from the fireplace chimney.

"We ought to go now, but—" she hesitated, and her tone was as playful as it had been earlier in the afternoon, "I do thank you for offering me your name. I'll have to think about it, but for the present, *you* Gabriel and *me* only Evangeline on board another ship."

And they were off to the dinghy for a fast spin across the waves to the Blanchard dock on the other side.

Their life jackets on and, at her insistence, he in the stern driving the powerful little motor and she in the middle seat facing him, they left Acadia behind enroute for an unknown rendezvous in the future.

At the dock, having secured the dinghy, he said lightly, "It just may be, Evangeline, that we are not the *two* we have pretended to be. I just may be a British officer, and you may fall in love with me and forget entirely your beloved Gabriel. How would that strike you?"

Lela's answer pleased him very much: "When Longfellow shot an arrow into the air, it fell to earth he knew not where—and it was a long, long time before he found it. But when he breathed a song into the air, it was the song of the cardinal, and he found it again in the pages of *The Silver Lining*. Here, be a good little boy and carry this." She handed him her attaché case.

The path to the wisteria-shaded porch was too narrow for side-by-side walking, so he let her precede him and walked behind, with Longfellow's exquisite music accompanying.

"One thing," he reminded her when the path widened at the level place leading to the broad lawn, where outdoor furniture waited always for guest or family, "Evangeline's search was long, weary, and frustrating and was rewarded only when her Gabriel was old and dying in a Philadelphia hospital."

She stopped, picked two purple violets from a cluster near a white iron settee, and handed one to him, saying, "When I was a little girl, Daddy and I used to fight battles with these. We called them Johnny-jump-ups, and we'd lock their chins, saying, 'My Johnny-jump-up can whip your Johnny-jump-up.' Then we'd each give a little jerk, and one or the other would lose its head."

It was a delaying tactic, he thought—hoped, anyway—to postpone their going into the house, where they would no longer be alone.

There was the sound of a car horn at the lane leading in from the highway.

"Daddy!" she exclaimed—and there was a light in her voice as she waved a cheerful greeting and took off on the run for the garage where the car would stop.

He followed her with his eyes, and it was not until father and daughter had come all the way back that he was aware of the violets, their heads still interlocked in preparation for battle. He waited for a chance to give them to her.

The moment came when he was alone on the porch, leafing through the galleys from *The Silver Lining*. He was recalling the pleasantries of the afternoon and looking down the lanes of the years ahead when she stopped at his chair. "I forgot," she began, "How did the battle end? Who lost his head?"

"Who lost *her* head, you mean."

"Did we pull, or didn't we?"

He opened his hand, laughed and remarked, "If you don't mind, I'd rather not. How about pressing them between the leaves of a book, just to remember this afternoon?"

Their eyes met, and he saw in hers something he had waited all his life to see in a woman. Quickly, she looked away, went back into the house, and came back out with a book entitled *Complete Works of Longfellow*.

She handed the volume to him and said, "You select the place."

He turned the pages to "Evangeline," where it spoke of the stars as being "the forget-me-nots of the angels . . . In the infinite meadows of heaven." There he placed the interlocked violets, closed the book, handed it back to her, and announced casually, "Not to be opened until Christmas."

She did not reply with words—only with her eyes, and what they said was as a dream of tomorrow. For their love was young and living, fresh as violets under morning dew, and nothing could ever diminish it. No withering sun, no ruthless hand could tear them apart.