

**For it is Written:  
'The First shall be Last...'**

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*This is the story of what a woman's patience can endure, and what a man's resolution can achieve (1). For, it is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife (2), or so the women say. Men, methinks, look at things differently.*

*In the springtime of their lives it is only mother. Yes, she was so deeply imbedded in my consciousness that for the first year of school I seemed to have believed that each of my teachers was my mother in disguise (3). Later, as buds turn to blossoms, indian summer is like a woman. Ripe, hotly passionate, but fickle, she comes and goes as she pleases so that one is never sure whether she will come at all, nor for how long she will stay (4). As the rich fullness of summer decays into autumn's decline, so does man's misogamy. For by then he usually has a family, and all happy families are alike, but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion (5). But pray let me explain, for whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show (6).*

*If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth (7). Or I could start my tale with the customary child-like prattle: Once upon a time and a very good time it was, there was a moo-cow coming down along the road and this moo-cow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo....(8), but that is not me. No, my early years were anything but child-like.*

*It was my first recollection and I shall never forget it. Even today, I get the willies when I see closed doors (9). A throng of bearded men, in sad-coloured garments and gray, steeple-crowned hats, inter-mixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bare-headed, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes (10). I had returned home from spending the night with a friend, but even at the tender age of eight, I knew something was amiss. And then it dawned on me - someone had died - that was the only time people gathered in such numbers at such an early hour. But who, and how, and why?*

As it turns out, *I was the only boy, or girl either, in the public school in the town of Dugton, Claxton County, Alabama, whose father had ever got killed in the middle of the night standing up in the front of his wagon to piss on the hindquarters of one of a span of mules and, being drunk, pitching forward on his head, still hanging onto his dong, and hitting the pike in such a position and condition that both the left front and left rear wheels of the wagon rolled, with perfect precision, over his unconscious neck, his having passed out being, no doubt, the reason he took the fatal plunge in the first place (11).* Now, say what you will, but coming home to a horde of people, most of whom you do not know, nor want to know, and finding your father dead, penis in hand, and reeking of alcohol is an unsettling experience for a child. Moreover, as you shall see, it affected my relationships with women for the rest of my life.

As is usually the case, an inquest was held and investigators were there. *Miss Jane Marple was sitting by her window (12). Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who was usually very late in the mornings, save upon those not infrequent occasions when he was up all night, was seated at the breakfast table (13). Sam Spade's jaw was long and bony, his chin a jutting v under the more flexible v of his mouth (14).* What the particulars were I didn't know; comments were made, conclusions were drawn. *I had the story, bit by bit, from various people, and, as generally happens in such cases, each time it was a different story (15).* All I knew for sure, was that Claxton County, Alabama, was going to be talking about this incident for a long time. *"What's it going to be then, eh?"(16)* I asked myself. I had to get away, start over, put this shameful disgrace behind me. I would meet new people, make new friends, not tell them anything of my past. *"You better not never tell nobody but God"(17),* I told myself.

*It was a bright day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen (18).* It was fourteen years later. *I was leaning against a bar in a speakeasy on 52nd Street, waiting for Nora, my "significant other" for the last six months, to finish her Christmas shopping (Nora had a thing about getting her holiday shopping done early) when a girl got up from the table where she had been sitting with three other people and came over to me (19). It was love at first sight (20).*

"I am Myra Breckinridge whom no man will ever possess,"(21) she said.

"Call me Ishmael,"(22) I shot back.

"I couldn't help but notice that you kept staring at the door. Are you waiting for someone?" she asked.

"No," I lied, "*When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow (23)* from a swinging door, and I've been leery of them ever since." Not a great opening line, but it worked, because she asked me back to her apartment in Brooklyn. To hell with Nora I told myself, besides, she would be shopping till Easter.

"Cherry Tree Lane, No.24," she said as she swung through the door, "see you shortly." "*If you want to find Cherry Tree Lane all you have to do is ask a policeman at the crossroads.*" (24)

*Serene was a word you could put to Brooklyn, New York (25).* Her apartment was nice, a spacious studio with two bedrooms and two baths. *The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden there came through the open door the heavy scent of lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn (26).*

Suffice it to say that we had a passionate afternoon and night...but *the day broke gray and dull (27).* *What can you say about a 25 year old girl who died (28).* I didn't want to explain to the police how she had just quit breathing with "you know what" in her hand. Once again I had to get away - anywhere would do. This was "getting out of hand". I had to have help - professional help. I needed psychiatric guidance. Freud, that's who I needed, yes, Austria was the place.

*There were 117 pschoanalysts on the Pan Am flight to Vienna and I'd been treated by six of them (29).*



Why I thought the seventh would be any different I don't know.

As I stretched out on his couch, Sigmund set the tone for our conversation: *"Now, what I want is facts"*(30), he said.

Once again I started the painful narrative of my tormented life. Freud was silent throughout, much different than my six previous doctors. As I returned once again to those past incidents that have plagued my present existence, I started to cry. Mercifully, after two hours he stopped me.

Caressing his graying beard, the great doctor began: *"The idea of eternal return is a mysterious one, and Nietzsche has often perplexed other philosophers with it: to think that everything recurs as we once experienced it, and that the recurrence itself recurs ad infinitum! What does this mad myth signify?"*(31)

Not knowing if the question was rhetorical or not, I said nothing.

The last I saw of Dr. Sigmund Freud was a confused-looking man walking out the door, mumbling something about dreams, mothers and mules.

The trip back home was pleasant, albeit pensive yet rewarding. For I realized finally that *"in my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since"*(32).....  
Never, ever, while drinking, stand up on a wagon to piss on the hindquarters of a mule !!

*"All this happened, more or less"*(33).

Match numbered quotes on left with letter preceding book titles on right.  
Letters, read down, form moral to remember.

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- A) The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne
- A) Myra Breckinridge, Gore Vidal
- D) A Place To Come To, Robert Penn Warren
- D) A Clockwork Orange, Anthony Burgess
- D) To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee
- E) Peyton Place, Grace Metalious
- E) The Catcher in the Rye, J.D.Salinger
- E) The Maltese Falcon, Dashiell Hammett
- E) The Great Gatsby, F.Scott Fitzgerald
- G) The Personal History of David Copperfield, Charles Dickens
- H) The Hound of the Baskervilles, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
- H) A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, Betty Smith
- H) The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Milan Kundera
- I) The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde
- K) Catch-22, Joseph Heller
- L) Portnoy's Complaint, Philip Roth
- M) Woman in White, Wilkie Collins
- M) Something Happened, Joseph Heller
- M) Slaughterhouse Five, Kurt Vonnegut
- N) Ethan Frome, Edith Wharton
- N) The Thin Man, Dashiell Hammett
- N) The Fear of Flying, Erica Jong
- O) Love Story, Erich Segal
- R) The Color Purple, Alice Walker
- R) Moby Dick, Herman Melville
- S) Anna Karenina, Leo Tolstoy
- T) The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, James Joyce
- T) Hard Times, Charles Dickens
- U) Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austin
- U) 1984, George Orwell
- W) The Mirror Crack'd, Agatha Christie
- W) Mary Poppins, P.L.Travers
- Z) Of Human Bondage, W.Somerset Maugham