

THE ANSWER IS NOT IN THE BOOK

"We must go back to the values of our forefathers," the old professor said from shirred lips.

"How far back?" the studious pupil asked. "Back to whom? My father was a bigot—as uncommitted as a sail without wind. My grandfathers held their generation God-appointed guardians of the world, wanted to shape it all to their image. My great grandfather fought for rights and slavery. His father came on a boat with cattle to see a promised land and soon died of disease. Before that he tilled the earth and maybe always had a dream, I do not know. Behind him lay a worthless title. Robbers took the substance of it. Something worse absorbed its honor—Pride—the parade kind—the ruthless price of nobility that dehydrates without oil. From there I must resort to generalities. The Scots and Irish feuded. There was a war over opium. I also have some Latin blood. In Rome an empire cankered. Spain had an Inquisition. France begat a Napoleon. Germany wet nursed monsters more than once. Shall I look back to Greece, the ancient Hellene culture of a hundred gods and goddesses? Which values do you recommend?"

(cont.)

The professor rapped the student on the wrist and wound his robes around himself.. "Young fool,

I mean your American forebears! All those who settled this country and fought for it!"

"Oh? Strange—I think of them as men who almost wiped out the race of real Americans..."

The professor ripened with rage. "Have you learned nothing?" he rasped. "Think of the brave at Valley Forge! Recall the authors of our Constitution! Set your mind on Washington and Jefferson and Franklin and Lincoln! Those men smelted out a nation with their wills and their faith and their unmatched visions!"

He shook with righteous conviction. The sun changed color. The young man bowed his head. Shadows moved uneasily.

"I do not question those men or the stars that led them. They flew more lofty heraldry than was ever mine. But they too dropped the shields of their ancestors and forged their own designs rampant, burning the bar sinister behind them."

"Young upstart," the tutor flicked him aside, "my whole point was wasted on you. Now, class—"

"No!" he cried. "I want to be led and inspired but not from behind, not from a closed era.

Many stars have fallen. Some have burned out.

The new ones are dim and no two have the same path.

And which will show me the way?"