

first few rows to the left and the right of him there was hardly any face looking in his direction, he saw nothing but the backs of people directing their speech and their movements only towards members of their own side. most of them were dressed in black, in old, long, formal frock coats that hung down loosely around them. these clothes were the only thing that puzzled as he would otherwise have taken the whole assembly for a local political meeting. at the other end of the hall where had been led there was a little table set at an angle on a very low podium which was as overcrowded as everywhere else, and behind the table, near the edge of the podium, sat a small, fat, wheezing man who was talking with someone behind him. this second man was standing with his legs crossed and his elbows on the backrest of the chair, provoking much laughter. from time to time he threw his arm in the air as if doing a caricature of someone. the youth who was leading had some difficulty in reporting to the man. he had already tried twice to tell him something, standing on tip toe, but without getting the mans attention as he sat there above him. it was only when one of the people up on the podium drew his attention to the youth that the man turned to him and leant down to hear what it was he quietly said. then he pulled out his watch and quickly looked over at you should have been here one hour and five minutes ago, he said. was going to give him a reply but had no time to do so, as hardly had the man spoken than a general muttering arose all over the right hand side of the hall. you should have been here one hour and five minutes ago, the man now repeated, raising his voice this time, and quickly the afternoon, because he came that many in the morning why, he even gets to doubting his compass, until night catches him without a roof over his head and no wood collected for a camp fire. long before then she had learned how sensitive a thing was his spirit and she wanted him to go on. it must be a terrible thing to to know that one is lost. her hands were buried deep in her pockets; she found it hard to keep pace with his stride. i am always afraid of the night noises in the woods. it was the girl in her which had spoken at which he smiled, but his smile was absent minded. that is very strange, too, he accepted her lead, after contemplating it for a time. it is always the one who cant trust his compass who loses his head, once he knows hes mixed up. big louie was that way. he was lost once, for two days, before we found him; he was half mad with terror and pretty near dead with fatigue. he had been running in a big circle for hours, and we had to corner him before he would see that we were friends. hed been listening to the night noises, you see; dwelling on the blackness and the silence and his lack of a fire, until his brain was no longer any use to him. what should one do she asked him faintly, when she knew that he was waiting for her to speak. yet his answer persisted in adding to that word image which his mind was molding. quit letting yourself look back over your shoulder, to see if anything is following you he was suddenly gruff, and she knew that he was talking at himself. quit dwelling on the crackle in the brush, and the darkness, and the things you are afraid to fear. the wise man stops when he knows hes lost his bearings; he busies himself collecting wood for a fire, if not to keep the chill from his body by exercise, then because it keeps his mind off himself. and he sleeps if he the injury of which he complains are bitten, killed, or otherwise hurt by such animals. after this superstitious and idolatrous manner live those miserable and ignorant indians that inhabit the islands of the gulf of honduras; as also many of them on the continent of jucatan, in the territories whereof are most excellent ports, where those indians most commonly build their houses. these people are not very faithful to one another, and use strange ceremonies at their marriages. whensoever any one pretends to marry a young damsel, he first applies himself to her father or nearest relation: he examines him nicely about the manner of cultivating their plantations, and other things at his pleasure. having satisfied the questions of his father in law, he gives the young man a bow and arrow, with which he repairs to the young maid, and presents her with a garland of green leaves and sweet smelling flowers; this she is obliged to put on her head, and lay aside that which she wore before, it being the custom for virgins to go perpetually crowned with flowers. this garland being received, and put on her head, every one of the relations and friends go to advise with others whether that marriage