

THREE GENERATIONS

The elder Monzon was waiting for his wife to speak. He had finished breakfast and had just put down the newspaper through which he had been glancing. Across the table, his wife played absently with a spoon. Her brows were knitted, but a half-smile kept twitching on her lips. She was a handsome, well-preserved woman and, her husband was thinking, a great deal more clever than she allowed herself to appear.

"It is about Chitong," she said at last. "He does not want to continue the law-course he is taking. The boy has a vocation, Celo. He wants to study for the priesthood."

"When did he speak to you?"

"About a month ago, the first time. But I told him to make sure. Last night, he said he was sure. Of course, you have noticed how devout he has been lately?"

Monzon rose. "Well, I would never have expected it of him," he said, but his wife shook her head.

"Has he not always been quiet and reserved, even as a boy?"

"Yes, but not noticeably of a religious temper."

"Only because he did not understand then. He has taken a long time maturing, Celo, but I think it is for the best. Now he knows what really calls him, and he is really very sincere. Are you glad?"

"It is a career, like all the others. Did he say what seminary?"

"We can talk that over later on. He was afraid you would refuse."

"What does he take me for? A heretic?"

The servant-girl came in to clear the table, and the señora rose and followed her husband to the sala. "Celo, when are you

going to see your father? Nena called up last night. She was crying. She says she can do nothing with the old man. Your cousin Paulo is not there anymore to help her. It seems the old man broke a plate on his head . . ."

Monzon paused, his hand on the door-knob. He had put on his hat already. Suddenly, he looked very old and tired. His wife came nearer and placed a hand on his shoulder. "Why will you not let him have his woman again, Celo? He does not have very long to live."

He stared at her fiercely. "Please do not be vulgar, Sofia," he growled, but his wife only smiled.

For all the years they had lived together, he was still startled by a certain nakedness in his wife's mind; in the minds of all women, for that matter. You took them for what they appeared: shy, reticent, bred by nuns, but after marriage, though they continued to look demure, there was always in their attitude toward sex, an amused irony, even a deliberate coarseness; such as he could never allow himself, even in his own mind or with other men.

"Well," said Doña Sofia, withdrawing her hand, "he has certainly been wild since you drove that woman away. Nena says he refuses to eat. He takes what is served to him and throws it to the floor, plates and everything. He lies awake the whole night roaring like a lion. Yesterday, Nena said, he tried to get up. She was outside and did not hear him. When she came in, there he lay on the floor, all tangled up in his blankets, out of breath, and crying to the heavens. She called in Paulo to get him in bed again, and he grabbed a plate and broke it on poor Paulo's head."

Monzon did not look at his wife's face: he knew very well what he would see. He stared instead at his hands, huge, calloused, and ugly, and suddenly they were his father's hands he was seeing, and he was a little boy that cowered beneath them and the whip they held: "Lie down, you little beast! Lie down, beast!" "Not in the face, father! Do not hit me in the face, father!" "I will hit you where the thunder I want to. I will teach my sons to answer back. Lie down, you beast!"

"Your father never could live without women," Doña Sofia

was saying. "And now you have driven that one away. It is death by torture."

"You certainly can choose your words," Monzon retorted. "You know very well what the doctor said."

"But what does it matter since he is going to die anyway? Why not let him have what he wants?"

"You do not sound like a decent woman, Sofia." He turned his back on her and opened the door. "Tell Chitong to have the car ready this afternoon. He and I will go there together."

It was still early, only half-past seven; and when he came to the Dominican church, he went in. He knew he would find Chitong there. He did not know why he wanted to. But he went in and there were few people inside. From the high windows a many-colored light filtered in, drenching the floor violet, but in the side-chapel of the Virgin it was dark, with only the gold glow of candles: he saw his son kneeling there, near the altar, saying his rosary.

Monzon knelt down himself, and tried to compose his mind to prayer, but there was suddenly, painfully, out of his very heart, a sharp, hot, rushing, jealous bitterness toward that devout young man praying so earnestly over there.

He did not understand the feeling. He did not want to understand it. Enough that this thing was clear: that he hated his son for being able to kneel there, submitted utterly to his God. Yet why should he resent that so bitterly?

His own youth had been very unhappy, yes; but whose fault was it that he had suffered so much? The old man had really been no more heavy of hand and temper than most fathers of that time. He knew that. Those times gave to the head of the family absolute dominion over his women and children. He could not remember that any of his brothers had found the system particularly oppressive. They bowed to the paternal whip as long as they had to; then broke away to marry and breed and establish families over whom they had in turn set themselves up as lords almighty.

As for the women, he had suspected that they even took a certain delight in the barbaric cruelties of their lords. His father was

never without two or three concubines whom he had whipped as regularly as he did his sons; but none of them, once fallen into his power, had bothered to strive for a more honorable status. If they went away, it was because the old man wearied of them; though at his bidding, they would return as meekly, to work in his house or in his fields, to cook his food, to wash his clothes, to attend to his children, and to bare their flesh to the blows of his anger or to the blows of his love.

Monzon had wept as a boy for his mother; but later on he had found out that she was only too thankful, worn out as she was with toil and child-bearing, for the company and assistance of these other women. If she fought the old man at all, it was in defense of her children, and especially of himself (for she had been quick to notice that he would not be so easy to break).

She had singled him out from among all sons to bear and fulfill her few childish dreams and ambitions; and in her last, long, lingering illness, this faith in him had shone in her eyes and trembled in her hands whenever he came near her, and it had frightened and terrified him. For, even then, he was beginning to realize that, though he might set himself against all those things for which his father stood as symbol, he, himself, would never quite completely escape them. Go where he might, he would still be carrying the old man's flesh along; and that flesh smouldered darkly with fires that all a lifetime was too short to quench.

Monzon buried his face in his hands. He felt strangely exhausted. Peace, he thought, peace of mind, of body: he had been praying for that all his life. Just a little peace. It was not possible that he was to go on forever and ever, divided against himself. But there was that little voice, as usual, that voice in his ears, mocking him: Your father could find peace in the simple delights of the body; but you thought yourself too good for that.

His bitterness leapt into active anger: Is this then what I get for having tried to be clean? But the voice laughed at him: When were you ever a lover of purity? All that solemn virtuousness of yours began as a gesture of rebellion against your father. And so it still is. If he had been a chaste man, your defiance would have taken a more perverse form.

And suppose I give up now, stop fighting, submit: would I be at peace? No, said the voice. You would be as miserable in your surrender to your body as you have been in your struggle against it. Besides, it is too late. Men like your father find their brief escapes in the whip, the table, and the bed. That rapt young man over there—your son!—is now groping for a more complete release. For him also there shall be peace. But for you . . .

Monzon rose. And just then his son looked around. Their eyes met. The young man stood up and came toward his father. He was still holding his beads, and his hands began to tremble. Why does the old man look so fierce? Has mother told him? He looks as if he hated me. As if he would do me a violence.

But as the boy approached, the elder Monzon turned away and walked rapidly out of the church.

"He was not angry at all," Doña Sofia said. "He was very pleased. You do not understand your father, Chitong. He does not speak much, but he is really concerned over what you are going to make of your life."

"But the way he looked at me . . ." Chitong began. He was having his breakfast and Doña Sofia sat across the table watching him.

"That, you probably imagined only."

"Oh no," insisted her son. "And suddenly, he turned away, without speaking to me." He pushed the plates away and propped his elbows on the table. "I could not pray anymore afterward. I felt empty and ridiculous. Mother, I said last night I was sure about this thing, and I still am. But have I any right . . . I mean . . . But how shall I say it!" He paused and considered for a moment, drumming with his fingers on the table. "You know, mother, he did have a hard time of it. It shows in his face. I often feel sorry for him. He had made it possible that I should not go through whatever he had to go through. But is such a thing right? And anyway, is it good for me?"

"What ever are you talking about, Chitong?"

Her son sighed and shrugged his shoulders. "Nothing," he replied, and got up.

"You are to accompany him this afternoon to your grandfather. The old man is getting worse. You are to take the car."

Chitong was standing by the window. She had never seen his face look so grave. She was worried and, rising, she approached him.

"Son," she said, "if you are going to dedicate yourself to God, then nothing else should matter to you."

"But that is it, that is it precisely!" cried the boy. "I do wish there was something else that did matter. Something big and fierce and powerful. That I would have to fight down because I loved God more. But there is nothing." He made a gesture with his hand. "Nothing. And father knows it. And that is why he despises me. And he is right."

"Your father does not despise you. How you talk."

Suddenly the boy crumpled up on his knees, his face in his hands.

"I am not sincere, mother! I am a coward! I try to run away! I am nothing! And father knows it! Father knows it! He knows everything!"

She stooped and gathered him to her breast. She was terribly frightened. She was suddenly only a woman. Men were entirely different and alien creatures. Yes, even this one, whom she had borne in her own body. This one, also.

It was a good afternoon for a drive. The wind that met their faces smelled of the rain and earth, and in the twilight became vaguely fragrant. They were silent most of the way for, usually, when they were alone together, they felt embarrassed and shy, as though they were lovers.

Chitong was at the wheel. The elder Monzon sat beside him, smoking a cigar. From time to time, he found himself glancing at his son's profile. There was a difference there, he felt. The boy looked tense, tight-strung, even ill. When the darkness fell about them, they both felt easier and the older man began to talk.

"Your mother tells me that you want to give up law."

"Did she tell you why?"

"And I could hardly believe my ears."

"I know I am quite unworthy."

"Oh, as for that, I should say that no one can ever be worthy enough. I was merely wondering at the sudden conversion."

"It was not sudden, father. I had been coming to this for a long time without knowing it."

"Well, how *did* you know?"

"I simply woke up one night and said to myself: I belong *there*. And all at once, I knew why I had been finding everything so unsatisfactory."

"We all have such moments—when everything clicks into place."

"And becomes beautiful."

"It was though the appeal of beautiful things that you found God?"

"With the senses, yes. Certainly not with the mind: I am no thinker. Nor yet with the heart: I am not a saint. I guess that's why it took me so long to realize where I was heading."

"You should have come to me for information. I could have shared my experience with you."

"Your experience, father?"

"—of a vocation. I could have—But why do you look so shocked? I was young once myself, you know."

"But what happened, father?"

"Nothing. My mother wanted me to be a priest. I was quite willing. But when she died, I abandoned the idea."

"I never knew!"

"I never told anyone—not even your mother. Shall we keep it a secret between us?"

For a moment, the wall that stood always between them disappeared, and they could touch each other. I am an unclean man, the elder Monzon was thinking, but what was depravity in me and my fathers becomes, in my son, a way to God.

And the young man thought: I am something, after all, I am this old man's desire that he has fleshed alive. It sprang from him, began in him; that which now I will myself to be . . .

The evening flowed turgid with the fragrance of the night-flowers and of their thoughts; but the moment passed and they were suddenly cold and tired. They fell silent again, and shy, as though they had loved.

The house stood at the edge of the town. Monzon always thought of it as something tremendous and eternal. Each time he went back to it, he was surprised afresh to find that it was not very big really and that it would not last much longer; the

foundations were rotting, the roof leaked, white ants were disintegrating the whole structure.

Here, at the foot of the stairs, always, he must pause and gather himself together. A shrunken, rotting house. But here it was that he had been a little boy; and the roof seemed to expand above his head till it was as high and wide as the heavens.

At the sound of their coming up, a little harrassed-looking woman came to the door to meet them. Monzon felt sorry for her. She was his youngest sister. All of them had managed to get away except this one. And she would never get away at all, he thought, as he took her fluttering hands in his. "How is he?" he asked. She merely shook her head and turned to Chitong, who bowed and kissed her hand.

It was dark in that sala; an oil-lamp on the table gave the only light. As they moved, the three of them cast huge, nervous shadows. The old man lay in the next room and they could hear his heavy, angry breathing punctuated with coughs and oaths.

"He is like that all the time," Nena complained, wringing her thin hands. "He has not eaten for days. He shouts at me whenever I enter. He tries to get up all the time and he falls, of course, and I have to call in someone to put him back." There was a pathetic pleading in the eyes she turned shyly on her brother. "He keeps asking for the girl, Celo. Maybe it would be much better . . ."

But Monzon refused to meet her eyes. "Go and prepare something, Nena. I am going to make him eat," he said. She sighed and went off to the kitchen.

The door of the old man's room stood open. When the two of them entered, the sick man, sprawled in the four-posted bed upon a mountain of pillows became silent. As in the sala, a single oil-lamp illuminated the room. The bed stood in shadow but they were aware of the old man's eyes, watching them intently.

Before those eyes, Monzon felt himself stripped, one by one, of all his defenses: maturity, social position, wealth, success. He was a little boy again and he bent down and lifted his father's enormous, damp hand to his lips, and at the contact, a million pins seemed to prick his whole body.

But Chitong came forward and kissed the old man on the

brow. The boy felt himself fascinated by those intensely hating eyes. He, too, was rather afraid of this old man; but with a difference. Even as a boy, he had felt the force of those eyes, lips, hands; but his grandfather had still been, then, in the plenitude of strength. But now, when he lay helpless, his legs paralyzed, the flesh gone loose about the bones, the face grown pale and shriveled, did he communicate all the more unbearably that pride, that exultation in simple brute power.

The boy felt himself becoming a single wave of obedience toward the old man. His lips lingered upon that moist brow as though they would drink in the old man's very brains. The feel of the wet flesh was an almost sensual delight, something new and terrifying to him and, at the same time, painful; almost as if the kiss were also a kind of death. It was a multitudinous moment for the boy. When he straightened up, he found himself trembling. And at the same time, he wanted to run away—to some quiet corner, to pray.

"Well, father, why have you sent Paulo away?" Monzon asked, speaking very loudly. The old man continued to stare at them in silence. He seemed to be checking even his breath. His thick lips were pressed tightly shut. Only his eyes spoke. His eyes hated them. His eyes sprang at their throats and wrung lifeless their voices. His eyes challenged this unafraid-pretending solid man that was his son; at the challenge, Monzon stepped nearer and abruptly stripped the blankets from the old man. For a moment they stared at each other.

Monzon had collected himself. Of you, I am not going to be afraid, his eyes told the old man. Not anymore. Often had he said that in his mind; now, he wanted to say it aloud because, almost, he believed it to be true. But he spoke to Chitong instead: "Your Tia Nena may want you to help her. If the food for your grandfather is ready, bring it in here."

When Chitong came back with the tray of food, he found that his father had taken off his coat and rolled up his shirt-sleeves. He had propped the sick man up to a sitting position and had changed his clothes.

The sick man's face had altered. He sat among the pillows, his face turned away, the eyes closed, the beautiful lips parted,

as if in anguish. His hands lay clenched on his lap. He would not look at his son. He would not look at the food.

"You are going to eat, father," Monzon told him. He had taken the tray from Chitong. He did not speak loudly now. He knew he had won. This old man of whom all his life he had been afraid: had he not just dressed him like any baby? And now, like a mere baby again, he would be fed. "You are going to eat, father," he said again in his quiet voice.

The old man turned around and opened his eyes. They were fierce no longer. They were full of tiredness and the desire for death.

Chitong felt the old man's agony as his own. He could not stand it. He had an impulse to approach his father and knock the tray from his hands. He could not trust himself to speak.

The elder Monzon must have sensed this fury, for suddenly he turned to his son. "Chitong, you must be hungry. Better go and find something to eat."

Chitong swallowed the words in his mouth and turned away. At the door he paused and looked back. His father had laid a hand against the old man's breast; with the other he tried to push a spoonful of food into the tightly closed mouth. The old man tried to evade it, but now he could not turn his face away; his son had him pinned against the bed. At last he gave up, opened his mouth, and received the food. His eyes closed and tears ran down his cheeks.

Chitong glanced at his father. The elder Monzon was smiling . . .

In the kitchen, he found his Tia Nena, sitting motionless in a corner. She looked as if she had been struck down. Her eyes were full of fear and suffering. Chitong realized that what he had felt for a moment when he kissed the old man's brow, this woman had known all her life. That was why she could not leave the old man; why, of all his children, she had remained faithful. She was in his power; and like himself, Chitong thought bitterly, she was the kind for whom life is possible only in the immolation of self to something mightier outside it.

"Did he eat?" she asked and, when he nodded, began to cry. He stooped and took her in his arms and tried to still her sobbing, but he remembered how, this morning, he, himself, had

cried in his mother's arms and was not able to find, nor in her bosom, nor in her words, the answering strength he sought . . .

Monzon, when he came out, found them sharing a scanty supper. For once, he looked quite happy. He kept rubbing his hands and smiling absently. He shook his head at Nena's offer of food.

"No, I am not hungry. And I have to go now." He took out his watch. "Is there still a bus I can take, Nena? Chitong, you are to remain with the car. Tomorrow I will come back with the doctor."

Chitong rose and accompanied his father to the door. The single lamp in the sala had gone out and they walked in darkness.

"Your grandfather is sleeping. If he wakes up, you can tell him I have gone."

They had reached the stairs. The elder Monzon paused and laid a hand on his son's shoulder. "Your mother has told you I am willing that you should follow your vocation, no?"

"Yes, father." Chitong could feel how in the dark his father's face had changed again. Even his voice had lost its momentary confidence.

"Yes. That is a good life," Monzon went on, "and it is, perhaps, the best for you."

He descended the stairs, opened the street-door below, and stepped out into the night. Chitong remained for some time at the head of the stairs, wondering just what those last words had meant.

In his grandfather's room, he spread a mat on the floor, undressed, and lay down. He had placed the lamp on a chair beside him and, now, he took out his breviary and began to read. The words that opened out to him were like cool arms into which he surrendered his troubled body. That had been a strange day, full of unrest and uncertainties; but as he read, an earlier sureness and peace came back to him.

"... my soul had relied on His word. My soul had hoped in the Lord. From the morning watch even until night, let Israel hope in the Lord. For with the Lord, there is mercy and with Him plentiful redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities . . ."

In his bed, on the other side of the room, the old man was awake and restless. Chitong could hear him turning, now to one side, now to the other. His breath came in short gasps, as

if in difficulty. He reached out with his hands. He clutched at the pillows. He tried to rise.

The boy rose from time to time to cover him up again or to pick up the pillows. The old man's hands sought and clung to the boy's arms but his eyes, Chitong saw, were closed.

Names poured from the old man's lips. He called on every woman he had ever loved. He wanted his women. He became angry and shouted for them as in the days of his strength. He commanded them to come near. He cursed and shook his fists at them. No one came. He tried to rise and fell back, moaning and beating on the bed with his hands.

Afterward, he became quiet. He must have realized that he was powerful no longer. Then he began to call on his women again, but softly, tenderly. He wooed them as a shy boy might; his lips shaped broken and beautiful phrases of adoration. But still no one came.

He fell into despair. He became furious again. He raged in his bed. He howled with all his might. He tore at the pillows. He tried to get up. The bed shook with his anger.

Chitong, lying on the floor, tried to deafen his ears to the old man's cries. He tried to read, but the words would not stand still. He closed the book and tried to sleep but, even in the intervals when the old man lay silent, he could feel him suffering, desiring, despairing, there in his bed in the darkness.

He got up and thought: I will pray for him. I will pray that he be delivered from temptation. I will pray that God quiet the fever of his flesh.

He approached and knelt beside the old man's bed, but a glance at that tortured face shot hollow all the prayers in his mouth. He felt again, as at Santo Domingo that morning, empty and ridiculous.

The sick man stared at him, yet did not see him. Those eyes saw only women and the bodies of women. Pain and desire had made him blind to all else. He stretched out his shriveled hands for the women that were not there. He had exhausted his voice; now he could only moan. Chitong could bear it no longer.

He rose and left the room. He was thinking of that woman—no, only a girl really—whom his grandfather had kept before his legs collapsed. The elder Monzon had driven the girl away, but

she might still be living somewhere in the town. His Tia Nena was still up, ironing clothes in the kitchen; he would ask her.

But she was frightened when she learned what he proposed to do. Yes, the girl was living in the town. "But your father will surely find out, Chitong, if she comes here. Oh, do not ask me how. He will. He knows everything."

The words cut through the boy. "Then, let him!" he cried. "But I am going to bring the girl back. The old man needs her. Now, tell me where she lives."

It took him almost an hour to find the house, but only a few words to make the girl come. Chitong had seen her many times before, but when she came running down the stairs and stood beside him in the moonlight, he knew that he was seeing her really for the first time.

She was not very pretty, and still very young; but her body, her eyes, the way she moved, hinted at that attractive maturity which only physical love develops. She had wrapped an old shawl around her head and shoulders, and as they hurried through the empty streets, Chitong could feel her thoughts running ahead toward the old man. But his mind, sensitive in such things, was not repelled.

There was in her, he knew, as in his grandfather, that simple unity which he, himself, had been denied. It was not strange that two such people should desire each other, or that so young a girl, when she might have more youthful lovers, should prefer the sexagenarian in whose arms she had become a woman. They had had to drive her away when he fell sick.

Chitong had been there when it happened and he recalled his father's exquisite brutality and how this girl had seemed to him, at that time, incapable of either fear or shame. She had refused to leave the house; had stood before the elder Monzon, thrusting her defiant face into his; and Chitong remembered how his father's hands had trembled, though not a nerve in his face had twitched.

Monzon had released his belt on the sly, pushed the girl away suddenly, and given her a full stroke across the shoulders with the belt. And with the belt, he had pursued her out of the room and down the stairs, slamming the door in her face. She had remained down there, screaming and kicking at the door till the police came and dragged her away.

But she was not thinking at all of those things, Chitong saw, as he hurried beside her, glancing into her passionate face. She was going to her first lover. He had called her. He needed her. Young men were only young men: they could offer nothing in love to make her wiser than she had been in such things from the very beginning. And her nervous fingers, clutching the shawl across her breasts, spoke almost aloud the violence of her need.

A few steps from the house, a woman abruptly emerged from shadow. Chitong recognized his Tia Nena. She had been running; she could hardly speak.

"Chitong," she gasped, "your father has come back. He could not find a bus." She turned to the girl: "You must not come. Go back at once!"

The girl stepped back, but Chitong grasped her hand. "Do not be afraid," he said. "You are coming."

His aunt stared at him. "Chitong, you know how it is when your father gets angry . . ."

"I am not afraid."

"I think he suspects where you went . . ."

"So much the better then. Come on."

It was the first time in his life he had made a decision. He felt released.

The elder Monzon was standing in the sala when they entered. He had lighted the lamp and now stood watching it thoughtfully, his hands locked behind him. He glanced up as they filed in. When he saw the girl, he flushed darkly and he felt again the multitude of pins pricking his flesh. He dropped his eyes at once, but the girl's image persisted before him: the fierce eyes; the small, round mouth; the long, thin, girlish neck. She had drawn her shawl away and he had seen where her breasts began and how they rose and fell with her breath.

He had a sudden, delirious craving to unloose his belt and whip her again, to make her suffer, to tear her flesh into shreds, to mutilate that supple, defiant, sweet, animal body of hers. His hands shook and his desire became an anger toward his son who had brought this voluptuous being so near.

"Who told you to bring this woman here, Chitong?" He

tried in vain to make his voice calm. He doubled his fists: the nails dug into his flesh.

Chitong stared, open-mouthed. He realized now that what he had done was an action for which his soul would later demand reasons. It was not his father before whom he stood. It was God.

The girl was standing beside him and he felt her moving away. He sprang to life. "No, no," he cried. "You are not to go! He needs you! You must not go!" He held her back.

"A fine priest you will make!" snapped the elder Monzon.

Chitong came nearer. His eyes entreated the older man to understand. He stretched out a hand; with the other, he detained the girl. He had never found it so hard to make himself articulate.

"Father," he said at last, "if it is a sin to allow him this woman, then I will take the sin on my shoulders. I will pray that it . . ."

"Release that woman!" cried the older man. "Let her go away!"

The boy's face hardened. "No, father. She is not going."

They were standing almost face to face. Suddenly, the father lifted his clenched fist and struck the boy in the face.

"Not in the face, father!" the boy cried out, lifting his hands too late to shield himself; the blow had already fallen.

Monzon, horrified, heard the boy's cry through every inch of his body. He had never before laid hands on the boy. The impulse to strike had come so suddenly. He tortured his mind for an explanation. He had not wanted to hurt the boy, no. He had, the moment before, desired the girl evil, but it was not she, either, who had prompted his fist. Was it the old man, then? Was it his father he had struck?

No. No, it was himself: that self of his, inherited, long fought, which had, the moment before, looked on the girl with strange fury. It was that self of his, which perpetuated the old man, against whom he had lifted his fist, but it was his son who had received the blow—and the blow was a confession of his whole life.

Now he stood silent, watching the boy's flesh darken where his fist had fallen, and the gradual blood defining the wound.

They stood staring at each other, as if petrified, and the girl, forgotten, slipped swiftly away from them and into the old man's room, locking the door behind her.

A clock somewhere began striking ten. Nena sat in a corner,

crying. A late cock could be heard crowing. And from the next room came the voices of the lovers: the old man's voice, tired and broken; the girl's, sharp and taut and passionate.

"No," she was saying, "I shall never leave you again. I am not going away again. No one shall take me away from you again."