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SINS OF THE FATHERS

I think I always knew that we were different from other people--Kit and I. "Kit" was my mother, but I always called her "Kit". She used to say that people took me for her little brother, and quite often she told people that I was her brother. Kit wasn't like other mothers. She was much prettier. At least I thought so. Especially when she had her "make up" on.

There were so many things about our life that puzzled me. So many things I did not understand, and that I wanted to know about. It was no use asking Kit, for she'd nearly always answer:

"Don't ask so many questions. I'm busy!  
Scram!"

I envied other kids who had dads. I didn't have a dad. I didn't have any relatives except Kit. Of course, there was Uncle Jim, but I never thought of him as a relative exactly. He used to come to see us several times a month. Sometimes he and Kit would go off on some trip, and I wouldn't see them for days. Other times, Kit would "throw" a party

and I would be sent to bed early. It didn't do much good, for I couldn't sleep what with all that noise going on in our house--the shouting and dancing and singing, and the radio and piano, and the clinking of glasses and popping of corks. I would be kept awake half the night. Once I went down in my pajamas and peeped in at the door of the living room, but one of the girls saw me, and Kit jumped up and took me by the ear and led me back to bed. I coaxed and begged to be allowed to stay up, but she shook her head and led me right upto the bed. She was in a sparkly sort of dress that clung to her and made her look almost naked. She had a cigarette dangling from the side of her mouth, and a glass of some drink in her hand--it spilled in bubbles over me, as she led me along.

"Now don't let me hear another word from you" said she. She gave me a kiss, and I held on to her.

"Let me go, or you'll get me all mussed up" said she.

"Aw! you're mussed up anyway" said I.

She gave me a queer look then, and she said:

"Right! I know it".

Then she looked down at me, and for some reason I didn't understand, her eyes began to brim over and a tear splashed right down on my face---- I was in bed by now. Kit looked pretty even when she cried. I remember one time Uncle Jim said she was the only woman he knew who could look lovely while crying. I don't remember what it was she was crying about then, with Uncle Jim mopping up her

tears. She wanted something he said he couldn't give her, and when she wanted anything real hard she always cried till she got it. She told me once she got more things from Uncle Jim through tears than laughs, and she said: "I just let them brim over and he falls".

Now I was "falling" too.

"Don't cry Kit" I pleaded. "I'll be good. I'll stick in bed".

"And go to sleep too."

"I can't sleep with all that noise".

"Pull the covers over your head then. I don't want you to hear anything. You're too young, and besides ---" She bent and kissed my ear ---"Little pitchers have big ears" said she.

I didn't know what that meant.

We were always moving. We moved from one neighborhood to another. Sometimes we'd move to a new town or city, but never very far from Los Angeles, where Kit said we could keep in touch with Uncle Jim. I asked her why we moved so much, as maybe I'd just be enrolled in a new school or gotten acquainted with the boys in the block, and I'd urge Kit not to move. She'd say:

"I'm tired of this dump. Besides we've got to move".

"Well but, lets stay in one place".

Kit looked at me severely.

"Now you listen to me. Once and for all understand that we move on your account--do you get me?"

I shook my head.

"Well, its this way, if we don't keep moving, someones going to walk in on us and take you away from me, see! Did you see that woman who was hanging around here this noon--the one who asked your name, and who your father was. How'd you like to have her take you?"

"She could'nt. I wouldn't go with her".

"Oh no--well now try to sell that idea to one of these goldarned 'Case workers', thots what they call them. Say, they've been tailing me ever since you were born".

"What for?"

"Did'nt I tell you not to ask so many questions. Now you get busy helping Lida packing. Scram!".

She always told me to "Scram", and I never did get any of my questions answered.

So we'd move and we'd move, and the next place it would be the same story.

We kept maids--colored maids--off and on, according to our circumstances. That was one of the things I never quite understood. When we were, what my mother would jokingly call "solvent", then we lived, as she said, on "the fat of the land". We had all kinds of good things.

Then there were lean periods, days when Kit would say she didn't know where our next meal was coming from. That

was when she'd fire the colored maids and pawn her jeweley or sell it; then her furs and clothes and even the furniture in the house. and she'd get behind with her rent and run up bills till the grocer and the butcher wouldn't give her any more credit and would pester her at both the back and front doors, and Kit would hold her head and say she "was just going nuts" over the whole situation, and though she hated to do it, she'd have to call up that Son of a Something and make up with him again. For these periods of privation always followed one of Kit's rows with Uncle Jim. They rowed a whole lot too. I used to hear them at it, after I got to bed at night. She'd scream and yell at him, and he'd snarl back at her; or she'd try to be cool and dignified, and he'd hoot at her then and burst out laughing and say:

"Be yourself, Kit-- your own cute vulgar self.  
That's the way I like you".

Sometimes she'd throw him out, as she'd tell me, and I'd hear the front door banged on him, and Kit would yell:

"I'm through, through, through".

And she'd run up to my room, and fling herself on the bed beside me and sob and cry, and I'd put my big arms around her and try to comfort her in my clumsy way.

After one of these rows, we mightn't see Uncle Jim for weeks--maybe months even, until things got too hard for Kit, and she couldn't make "two ends meet", as she said, and then she'd say she wished she hadn't quarrelled with him, and

she would 'nt have if he hadn't been so stinking drunk, and she'd  
say when he was sober there was no one nicer than he was, but  
when he was drunk, he wasn't human—he was a maniac, and how a nh  
poor girl had to put up with him as she had for years was beyond  
her.

So by and by, she'd start telephoning him and she'd  
say in a sweet sad voice:

"Hello Jimmie! How are you?"

He'd hang up the telephone. Then Kit would  
ring again, and she'd have some trouble getting him. Maybe  
he'd leave the receiver off the hook, but she'd get him  
finally, and then she'd shout all sorts of insulting names  
and things at him, and she'd say that he'd better come across,  
and come across pretty PDQ, or she'd take a little stroll  
over to his house, and have a nice personal and private  
interview with a certain somebody.

That usually brought him. I think though  
he was always glad to get back to us, for he'd act like a big  
boob when he'd come into the house, and first thing you knew  
he and Kit would be hugging and kissing each other and  
Kit would say:

"Run on Tony---Sarah!"

About Uncle Jim. Once a boy down our street  
said his mother said Uncle Jim wasn't my real Uncle, and he  
said: Better go ask her who he is".

I hurried home to Kit.

"Kit" said I, "theres a boy down the street named Jack Downs, and he said his mother said Uncle Jim was'nt my uncle--I said he was a liar and that he was my uncle. He is, is'nt he".

Kit's blue eyes got wide and dark. The cigarette slipped from between her lips.

"So they're shooting off their mouths, are they?"  
"Jack Downs says everyone's talking about us and---"  
"Let them talk! Let them" said Kit fiercely.  
"Thats all they're good for, the dirty old gossips. We'll move out of this lousy neighborhood. We'll go somewhere, where people let us live our own life in our way, and you can tell them I said so".

I think I was beginning to hate him. Although there were times when he had a curious attraction for me, yet taken all in all, I resented him. There was a rivalry between us, I suppose. I felt this more, as I grew older. Yet in spite of this, I think he tried his best to be kind to me, and in a rough sort of way I think he even was fond of me. He would have jovial moods, and then he'd talk to me, man to man. He'd roll up his sleeves and teach me how to box, and sometimes we'd wrestle and go into a clinch. He said he was going to take me fishing and hunting when his family got off to Europe, and there were lots of things we'd do together. I liked him at those times, though I couldn't drown my intuitive distrust and suspicion. I hated the way he looked at Kit--the way he kissed her--right before me. I wanted to hit him then, and my hands used to twist up into fists then.

Once he put his arm around my shoulder, and told Kit to take a look at us:

"Chip of the old block. hehe?" he chortled.

"Why not?" laughed Kit.

I didn't know then what that meant. I do now of course.

I suppose, taken all in all, he was pretty good to me, what with all the presents and fine things he brought me, but I had to keep out of his way when he was drinking, for then, as Kit said, he was 'nt human, and he might do or say anything.

On my eleventh birthday I had a party; or rather I started to have a party. We were living then in a pretty bungalow on Alpine Avenue. Eucalptus and walnut trees shaded our lawns, and we had climbing red geraniums and roses and poinsettias all over the grounds. The house was new, and ever so nice, and Kit and I liked it so much. Kit said Uncle Jim had given it to us for a birthday present, and she said this time she hoped we'd stay put. She said she had chosen the neighborhood especially because it was so quiet, refined and respectable.

We had been living there about a month, and Kit gotten acquainted with some of the neighbors, and was feeling awfully good about it. Two or three of them had even called on Kit, and she was really delighted. She said she knew she had made a good impression on them, and she hoped I'd do and say nothing to spoil that impression. She said to be very careful what I said to the neighbors, and if they asked any questions about us, I was to say Kit was a widow and Uncle Jim was my dead father's brother. I argued:

"But how can he be my dead father's brother if his name is 'nt the same as ours".

Kit saw the point and she said:

"Right you are. Lets see now. What had we better say? Well, suppose we say he's my brother".

"But he is'nt" said I stoutly. "I'm glad he is'nt to. I don't like him anyway".

Kit gave me a hard look--almost a frown. She said: "Oh, so you don't like your bread and butter, eh?"

"What?"

"Bread and butter is what I said. Thats what Uncle Jim is to us---our meal ticket. So you better get over your dislike" she added vehemently. "Besides its not natural."

"Why is'nt it?"

"Because it is'nt, and stop asking questions."

About my birthday party. Kit had the table set for about fifteen kids of our neighborhood. She said they were all children of the best and most refined families. She had sent out little printed cards of invitation, and she had called up some of their homes. Anyway, she said they had all accepted. I had a cake with eleven red candles on it, and it was a huge cake. It had to be because it was hollow inside the middle of it, and packed full of little toys and souvenirs. You pulled a string and out they jumped to the top. That was after you blew out the candles. There were all kinds of other good things on the table too--cakes and candies and little sandwiches and chicken and mushroom patties and all kinds of things. Kit said it was as good as any millionaire kid's table. And the presents! You'd have thought Kit had bought out a store.

Imagine then how we felt when no one came to my party. Not a single kid. We waited and we waited, but they just didn't come, and Kit became restless and nervous, and by and by she would say:

"They're a bit late"

or: "I wonder if that clock's right"

or: "They say it's ritzy to be late to a party".

She couldn't keep that up however, so she began calling up the neighbors, and I don't know what they said to her, but it made Kit wild, and after she had tried two or three of them, she hung up and stood by the phone looking stricken and frozen like. Then she ran suddenly up to me and she hugged me up tight, and she kind of laughed and cried a moment and then she said:

"Hell, what does it matter anyway?"

And she said she was only kidding me that she'd invited others, and we'd have a swell party just to ourselves. So I cut the cake and blew out the candles, and pulled the strings so I got all the little toys in the cake, and I ate all the stuff I could, and by and by I got sleepy and tired, and went off to bed, forgetting it all.

Loud voices in Kit's room woke me up in the middle of the night. Kit was screaming, and Uncle Jim was shouting back at her. Kit was in an awful rage, because she said that those cats had tried to eat her, and she blamed him and he said it was her own fault and that it was her idea to move into this type of a neighborhood where she didn't belong, and that possibly after calling on her, the neighbors had gotten wise to something. Kit said:

"Yes, probably wise to know"

He said:

"No---you, Kit. You could'nt fool 'em!"

"Nor could you, you dirty scuse".

He said something then that I couldn't quite catch, and I think Kit must have leaped at him, because I could hear him snort and they seemed to be struggling around the room, and then he shut off her screams by a sound as if he put his hand on her mouth, and she must've got free a moment for she yelled:

"Help! Tony! Tony!"

I couldn't stand any more. I grabbed the first thing at hand, from the andiron at the fireplace. They didn't hear me coming, as I was barefooted, and I rushed into the room. He had my mother down on the bed, and was choking her, and his own hand was all bloody, where she had bitten him. I learned that later.

I didn't mean to hurt him hard, but I was a big strong boy, past eleven, and I was excited and frightened. So I brought that iron down full force on his head. I remember how he looked as he kind of rolled over, and my mother's eyes. She said in a hoarse whisper

"Now you've done it!"

I was shaking with nervousness and fright, but I said:

"I wish I'd killed him. Maybe I will some day".

"Don't talk like that" she sobbed.

My mother and Alida managed to get him out of the house and into his car. Then Kit telephoned to some garage,

where she said his chauffeur was waiting, and she told him to come and get him. Alida kept moaning:

"Lordy, Lordy!"

Kit said:

"Shut up, will you".

"But Miss Kit ah never before—"

"Shut up I tell you" said Kit. "Now get busy packing. We're going to blow".

Then she turned to me and she said:

"Don't stand there like a dummy. Get into some clothes. We're going to beat it".

"Where we going?"

"I don't know, but we've got to get going. I don't know how badly you've hurt him, but I can't take any chances".

Alida was still moaning and muttering to herself.

Kit said:

"What's that you said?"

Her eyes rolling, the colored woman replied:

"Ah jus said ah doan want to go long with  
you Miss Kit."

"Who said you were going? Now get busy, or I'll  
skin you alive".

Kit could have done it too, though she was just about half the size of Alida. Alida was scared to death of her, though she just worshipped her too.

We took a bus to somewhere--anywhere I suppose.

We just kept going. Kit said that that was the end of Uncle

Jim so far as she was concerned, and she said she was through with him for good and all. Absolutely. And she said he was no nothing but a heel anyway. She said we had enough money to keep going for some time, and by and by she was going to put me in some nice boarding school, and I had to forget all about the past and grow up to be a gentleman. I said that I didn't want to go to any school; that I wanted to stay with her. Kit said it'd be better for me to go school than be picked up by one of these social service dames. There'd be no knowing where they'd put me then.

"I want to stay with you, Kit" I said. I was blubbering a little by now, and awfully tired.

Kit put her arm around me and I laid my head down on her lap, and I guess I dropped sound asleep, there in the bus.

For a time we just seemed to travel around on busses from place to place--motor camps, hotels, farmhouses, boarding places. Never stayed more than a day or two at any one place. Then one day Kit said:

"I'm sick and tired of this tramp's life, and anyway my money's giving out, and what's more I'm homesick".

"Homesick for what?" I asked.

"Why anywhere so long as its California. I'd even live in Glendale or Pasadena and love it".

So then she sent off a telegram, and we stuck

at that town for a few days.

I daresay you know what's coming. Yes, Kit was making up with Uncle Jim by long distance. We were going back. I sensed this before she told me, but when I started to protest, she put me sharply in my place:

"Once and for all, understand that you're not running me. Anyway you're getting too much for me--a big fellow like you, and if what you need is a man over you. If you can't get along with Uncle Jim, I'm going to pack you off to boarding school, and I mean it".

I knew I never could or would get along with him. There was something extraordinary about my aversion for him. In my boy's way, I think I even hated him.

He met us at a town on our way back. Soon as Kit saw him, she screamed his name and rushed right into his arms before all the bus passengers. The bus pulled out without us, the passengers laughing and waving their hands to Kit and Uncle Jim. I felt ashamed and humiliated. I don't know why. It didn't faze them, however. Kit seemed even pleased, and she laughed and waved back, and she said:

"I told them my husband was meeting the bus here".

"So it's husband this time" said Uncle Jim, chortling.

He was in a fine humor, and seemed awfully glad to have Kit back.

"Hope none of them recognized me" he said presently.

"Oh well, aren't I worth taking a chance for?"  
laughed Kit.

"Sure are. You look good to me".

"Good!" said Kit, "I must look a fright.  
"I've been wearing these same rags for days. Jim I need  
all kinds of new things. Both of us do-- Tony and I".

He interrupted her:

"That reminds me, where's Tony, and how is he anyhow".  
I was standing back, behind some trunks on a  
truck.

"Tony's all right" said Kit, and called to me:  
"Tony! Oh there you are-- come on and kiss Uncle Jim".

He had a wide friendly smile smeared all over his  
face, but I scowled at him.

"Why hello, hello, hello! How's the boy?"  
he said cheerily. I said sullenly:

"I'm okay, thank you".

"Betcha you're glad to get back--what?"

"Get back where?"

"Well--er--" he spluttered, "Glad to get back  
to Uncle Jim, eh."

He reached out his hand and ruffled up  
my hair, scratching my head as if I were a puppy dog. I  
pulled free, but I stood my ground, and looked him squarely in the  
eye.

"No sir, I'm not glad to get back to you" I said.  
"I hate your guts".

That was one of Kit's expressions, though I had never used it myself before. I heard Kit gasp, and her eyes got hard as stone. His face seemed to turn purple, and the bags under his eyes quivered with rage. I could see his fingers twitching.

"So that's the way he's being raised, eh?" he snarled at Kit.

"Not on your life, it's not" she burst out, and then turning on me fiercely:

"I warned you, and now you're going to see that I mean what I say. The instant we reach Los Angeles I'm packing you off to boarding school, and there you are going to stay a darned long time".

She meant it this time. Three days later, I was in a boys' so called fashionable school, at a considerable distance from Los Angeles, where Kit was again living. I stayed at that school for three years, without going home (if there was any place I could really call home) even for my Christmas or summer vacations. I liked the school however, and even during summer vacation I had a jolly time at a boy's summer camp and one summer boarding on a farm.

Don't think that Kit had gone back on me really. She came to see me whenever she could get away, as she put it, and she always told me she loved me more than ever, and I was the only thing in the world she had to live for, and she said just as soon as she was independent, as she would

be one of these darned days, she'd take me out of the school, and we'd go way somewhere together, and be together for good and all. She said, she'd have done this long ago, but the time wasn't ripe, and she wasn't independent yet, and I had complicated things by making an enemy of Uncle Jim, and hard as she tried to placate him, he was dead set against me, and she added: "Anyway he's always been jealous of you, and he's glad to have you out of the way now".

Then she added bitterly:

"But we'll show him one of these days. The time isn't far off when we can tell him where he gets off at and snap our fingers in his face".

In a dim sort way, I was realizing that Uncle Jim was right about Kit. She was kind of vulgar--vulgar in a cute way. You see I was getting a pretty big boy now, and I was awfully sensitive. Kit always talked kind of loud and shrilly, and I used to glance back, hoping none of the other fellows heard what she was saying, though if they dared to say anything about Kit I would have punched them; but none of them ever did. Sometimes the fellows would say what a pretty sister or mother I had. D told Kit this and she was tickled to death. She looked just like a girl anyway, in spite of her gorgeous clothes and diamonds. She told me Uncle Jim wasn't as tight as he used to be, and she said he'd better not be, and that she had made him loosen up and he had given her plenty. By plenty she meant fine clothes and jewelry, though he was always tight when it came down to actual cash, so Kit said. She had

She had, so she said: her car, her maid, her mink coat, her ermine coat, her sables and silver foxes, her charge accounts her jewelery, her house and everything a girl could want, except except except actual cash, as she said Uncle Jim doles it out to her, because he was afraid she might take it into her head to quit.

(5) Her diamonds fascinated me. She seemed to glitter and sparkle every time she moved her hands. Kit didn't look a bit like the other fellow's mothers. She was much prettier, so I thought, than those cool, ordinary, stand offish mothers. Though they weren't all like that.

I was thirteen now, and I had made up my mind when I got to be a man to become an architect. Kit said she hoped I'd have no leanings for the arts or the stage. She had been in vaudeville and the movies herself, so she said, and that was enough for her, and she didn't want any son of hers living that sort of a gypsy life. I told her, she needn't worry, I had my whole future planned out. I intended to make a name for myself, and plenty of money too, and when that time came, I'd take care of Kit, and she wouldn't have to worry "where the next meal came from" as she would put it. Should see. Her son was going to be one whale of a success in life. Kit said thoughtfully:

"And so you ought to be. Your father's one of the most successful business men in California and its in you".

I said:

"My father----then---is he alive?"

Kit said.

"There you go with your questions. Do you want me to bust out crying before the whole school?"

"No, no" I said hastily, glancing back. "It's all right Kitty. You tell me when you get ready to".

On the third Christmas that I'd been at the school, one of my chums invited me to be his guest at his home in Beverly Hills, over the holidays. You can bet I was tickled pink over that. I'd be right near Kit, for Beverly Hills joins on and is almost part of Los Angeles. I didn't write her about it however, for I intended to surprise her--to walk in on her.

My chum's name was Kemp Bradley, and we had taken a shine to each other. He was a swell guy, and had the room adjoining mine in the dormitory. His mother wrote to me personally, inviting me, and she said in the letter that her son's friends were her friends.

We fellows had a keen time on the journey. The family car met us at the train when we arrived. The weather was so warm, that people were still on the beaches, so the chauffeur told us, and Kemp said that they had a big swimming pool of their own, and he said we could swim all we wanted to. He said some winters in California were so mild you could go swimming most any day. Then he asked:

"Say, but you're from California, yourself, aren't you".

"Sure am, though I was born in New York".

"You were! If that doesn't beat the Dutch."

So was I. What year did you come out in?"

"Well, I was three then. I'm thirteen now.  
That's ten years ago".

"Well I'll be darned" he chortled. "That's  
the time we came out too. Wouldn't it be a laugh if it  
turned out we came in the same year on the same train and---"

We boys shook hands solemnly on that. It was a  
swell idea.

His home almost took my breath away. It was  
one of those great estates, with a big rambling Spanish type  
of house, with loggias, and solariums and patios, and the  
most marvelous swimming pool in the world. It was of colored  
tiles ---like opal---and must have covered all of a couple  
of hundred feet. Thankx What with the sun and the blue  
water, it looked for all the world like a pool in a cup of  
Mother of Pearl. Gee! It was swell. It was right under  
my bed room window too, and I was just fascinated by it.  
I just stood and stared and stared at it, and I thought to myself  
"First thing I wake up, I'm going to take a plunge in there".

But I forgot to tell you about his mother--Kemp's  
mother. She had run of the house, and right down to the ledge  
gate to meet us, and after Kemp had hugged her like a big bear,  
he introduced me, and she smiled and kissed me too. I felt  
kind of embarrassed, but I liked it too, and she laughed and  
said:

"You dear boy' Kemp has written me all about  
you, Tony, and I expect you to be my friend too".

I swallowed a lump in my throat, though I don't

know why it came there, and I said:

"Betchu my life!"

Though her hair was grey, she had a young face, with rough bobbed hair, like a girl's. She was plump and kind of comfortable looking, and I suppose she was what you would call middleaged, and she wasn't pretty, but she was kind looking. I was surprised that she dressed so plainly, for of course I knew they were millionaires. Kit dressed much better than she did, though Kit always said she hadn't a bean to her name and had to live from day to day by her wits.

"Where's dad?" asked Kemp.

"Not at home just now dwar" said his mother.

"Thats like him, and I wrote him to come on down and meet us".

"He probably didn't get your letter yet---theres one in the hall unopened I believe".

As I said, I intended soon as I woke up next day, to take a swim. Thats just what I prepared to do. I slipped on my bathing trunks, and a robe over them, and down I went.

Someone was there before me. He was lying on the sand, face down, his head on his arms, the early morning sun beating down on his back. A Jap boy, who was working around the pool strightening things up, came tiptoeing up to me and said:

"No wake boss. He sleep him off".

So I went by him without disturbing him, and

and I climbed up the ladder to make a dive. I looked down, before diving, and I saw that he had turned over. He had opened his eyes and he was staring right up at me. He was right under the diving board, and I saw him come wide awake, his blood shot eyes blinking at first and then getting wider and harder as he recognized me. Suddenly he sat up with a bound, and I saw then that he was my Uncle Jim. I was too stunned to speak and I didn't make the dive. He croaked up at me:

"What the hell are you doing here?"

I didn't answer. I couldn't.

"Come down you---"

I came down. I stood in front of him. He was still staring amazedly at me, as if he couldn't believe his eyes.

"What are you doing here?"

"I came with Kemp. He invited me".

"Kemp! He invited ---you!"

Gosh! You should have heard how he said that word "You"---just as if I were some sort of scum. I don't know what else he would have said, if just then Kemp hadn't appeared. He looked from Uncle Jim to me. Then he said:

"Have you two met? What---eh? Dad, this is my chum---Tony".

I saw Uncle Jim's eyes shifting first from Kemp to me. He licked his dry lips. Then he said:

"Well I'll be goddammed!"

That was all he said. Then he plumped back on the sand again, and rolled over, face down on his arms.

Once int my room, I got into my clothes quick as I could. Then I started to repack my things. I was doing that when Kemp came in:

"Heh! What you doing".

All I could say was:

"I got to get out of here! I got to, I tell you".

 I hardly knew what I was saying or doing. I was half sobbing with misery and excitement.

"What's the matter? What's got into you anyway".

"I just got to get out of here. I want to see my mother. Get me a taxi will you".

"Did my dad say anything to you".

I didn't answer that.

"Don't mind him. He's queer. I'll tell you what a doctor said of him, even if he is my own dad. He said he was a dipsomaniac, and that means he drinks too much. So you needn't mind anything he says. He's all right when he's sober, but he's been on a bat now for days".

I had some trouble locating my mother. She didn't live at the hotel I thought she did--only got her mail there. However, the clerk gave me the address. She had a house in Laurel Canyon in Hollywood. I got back into the taxi and gave the address to the taxi driver.

We cli-bed up winding roads to the very top of one of the high hills. The house seemed buried

in luxuriant California foliage. I was intent only on seeing my mother. There was to be a show down between us. It was only in a vague sort of way I noticed the detail about the house. I was hammering with the iron knocker on the door. There was no response for a time, and then the door was cautiously opened a few inches, and Alida's face showed. Her eyes nearly rolled out of her head, when she saw me, and she tried to shut the door on me, so that we pushed on either side, and I said:

"Open that door, you dirty coon, or I'll make chop suey of you".

I was in the hall. Alida hoarsely moaning:

"Lordy! Miss Kit's done goin' to skin me alive foh letting you in".

"You shut your mouth--or I'll shut it for you. Now where's my mother".

Her eyes rolling ~~missin'~~ Alida indicated with her big thumb. I took the stairs in a few bounds, and I burst into Kit's room.

He had beaten me to it. There he was, in my mother's room, sitting on the side of her bed, and I could see they had been rowing, for Kit's face was all wet with tears. When she saw me, she screamed, and put her head under the bedclothes, and he swung toward me, and his face looked to me like a devil's. I don't know what I said. Something. Some name I called him, and he threw back his head and gave a short ugly laugh, and then he said:

"Know what you are----you're a ----"

No need to write that word down. I knew what it meant!

All of a sudden, overwhelmingly I comprehended everything---everything about my mother and Uncle Jim. I was not fourteen, and in my poor kid's mind, the whole sordid filthy truth seemed to crowd over and crush me. I suppose I went out of my mind. Even a kid can have a brains torn. I heard a doctor say that in the courtroom. Perhaps, if he hadn't stood there, with that hateful sneering jeering smile on his face --perhaps if he hadn't called me that name, I wouldn't have done what I did.

Why was it, at that moment, I recalled so vividly what was in my mother's dresser drawer, right behind me. I stood there, staring at his hateful face, while, my hand behind me, explored and found what I wanted. I brought it swiftly round in front, aimed straight at him.

It seemed as if his face turned green. He gave out an inarticulate sort of croak and then he jumped for me. All over that room we wrestled and wrangled together, his hand like a vice on my wrist, and I biting his ~~wax~~ hand. Suddenly heard a crack. His hand loosened its hold on my wrist, and the revolver dropped with a thud on the floor right alongside where he lay doubled up.

The nigger and Kit were screaming like madwomen. Curiously enough I felt cool and old. I said to those women: "Shut up--both of you. Go out Alida, get the police. I've killed him!"

I needn't tell much more, because everyone knows about it. They told me the papers were full of it. I was locked up for a time, though people came to see me--lawyers and reporters, and social workers---Oh---all sorts of people. They wouldn't leave me alone. It made me sore too when doctors came and put me through all kinds of fool tests I would say:

"Don't bother about it. Have it your way. All right, I'm crazy".

I didn't take interest in the inquest trial even. I don't really know whether it was Kit or I on trial. One of us. Maybe both of us. All I did care about was Kit--poor, Kitty, half crazed Kit--there on the stand, crying and laughing alternately, trying to wheedle around the judge I suppose, pleading and acting and sobbing, and begging them not to take me from her---

I remember too another face there. A face looking right at me, with a strange, mothering smile. I put my head down on the rail. I couldn't smile or even look back at Kemp's mother. A fellow couldn't do that.

Months and months. I won't tell you about it all. It doesn't matter now. One day, an officer thumped on me the back, and he said:

"Come on kid--your friends are waiting for you."

I had on my school uniform. I was glad they let me wear that. It was smart and military, and you felt kind of clean in it.

The officer got into the car with me. I didn't ask any questions. I had grown as close mouthed as a clam. I didn't ask--I didn't care maybe. I just drifted with whatever might come to me. I guess the officer was one of those "Case men from the Juvenile", as my mother would have called him. He was a swell guy, even if he was a cop, and he told me I had to forget all about the past. He said it wasn't what a person had been that counted, but they was. Those are his words. I would be more grammatical. And he said that he had been a pretty tough guy himself once, and now he was a settled down family man and had a boy about my age, and he said that the boy looked like me, and that he thought him the salt of the earth. I found my tongue at last and I asked:

"Are you taking me to Kit. I have'nt seen her ages".

He looked away and cleared his throat.

After awhile he said:

"By golly! Here we are already", and I looked out of the car, and I saw a gate lodge, that seemed familiar, and as I got out of the car, I saw a boy coming out of the gates. He was Kemp. Then I knew where we were. We were at Kemp's home. I started to turn round--I wanted to get into the car again-- but it was gone--I saw it vanishing down the road. So I could'nt do a thing about it. I just stood there and looked at Kemp, and his face was contorted, and he was snuffling, and his eyes were bulging over with tears. I said gruffly:

"What you bawlin about?"

"I'm not" says he. "Gee! I'm just tickled to death about something, and so'll you be when I tell you. Say Tony, what do you think, you and I are going off together. Its all arranged. Mom says its all right too and---".

"I can't" said I dully. "Guess you don't realize that I got to go to my mother".

His eyes filled up again. He tried several times to tell me and at last blurted out:

"You c-can't Tony, cause she's ----she died Tony.  
Your mother did".

I took that in dazedly. I didn't quite comprehend what that meant. I put my hand up to my head----both my hands, and I hgld it--my poor, dumb head. I could hear Kemp jabbering away, but all I could think of was Kit---poor little cute vulgar Kit. She was my mother you know, and she'd loved me and I'd loved her an----well----I just couldn't think of her as ----

I kind of became aware of Kemp's head next to mine. We were both kind of leaning against the stone gate, and I guess he was sobbing too. I was the first to get some sort of command of myself, and I said:

"Well, can you tie that. I don't quite know what I'll do now".

Kemo brightened right up.

"You'll be with us. We're going on a long trip--- maybe to Europe. We'll always be together, you and me".

I felt kind of older than Kemp. He hadn't been through what I had. I said wearily:

"You're a swell pal all right Kemp, but I guess you don't understand. I couldn't stay with you. You don't know about me---you don't know what your father called me".

"He was your father too", Kemp flashed back.

"Yes--but it was different. He called me----"

"Well I'll tell you what I call you ---"

"Well what?"

"You're my brother" said he.